

## Reaching for the Stars

# Maria Mitchell

[ 1 August 1818 - 28 June 1889 ]



## Special Scientific Achievements

**Maria Mitchell discovers a comet, which is subsequently named after her: *Mitchell 1847VI*.**

**First professor of astrology and director of the Observatory at New York's Vassar College.**

**Research on the surface properties of Jupiter and Saturn.**

**1818** Maria Mitchell is born in Nantucket, State of Massachusetts, USA, on August 1. Her father William Mitchell, an engaged astronomer and teacher, provides an environment that promotes an emphasis on education and professional activity. With his influence, Maria becomes enthusiastic about the study of mathematics and astronomy at a young age.

**1825** Apart from the private teaching of her father, she attends a famous American school, Cyrus Pierce's School for Young Ladies. Here, young women are especially encouraged in scientific subjects.

**1834** At 16, she finishes with her formal education. She becomes a teacher and assistant.

**1847** Maria Mitchell discovers a comet, which is subsequently named after her: *Mitchell 1847VI*. For this, she is awarded a Gold Medal by the King of Denmark. In order to have time for her own studies, she accepts a position as a librarian.

**1848** She becomes the first female member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. To finance her astronomical research, she continues to work in the library for almost twenty years.



**1865** Maria Mitchell accepts an appointment as Professor at Vassar College in New York, and becomes director of the Observatory there, in which she works together with her father. She works with a 12 inch telescope, the third largest in the United States. She investigates the surfaces of Saturn and Jupiter, as well as star photography. Mitchell strongly supports the promotion of women.

**1873 - 1889** Maria Mitchell, together with several other women, founds the American Association for the Advancement of Women (AAAW) and becomes president of the organization until 1876.

Until her death, on 28 June 1889, Maria Mitchell leads the Science Committee of the AAW.