


William Herschel
AD 1738 – AD 1822

German-born astronomer who became Astronomer Royal of England and discoverer of the planet Uranus. He also showed that infrared light carried energy below the visible spectrum.

Giuseppi Piazzi
AD 1746 – AD 1826

Italian astronomer who established an observatory at Palermo, from which he observed the asteroid Ceres, and (simultaneously with Bessel) determined the parallax of Cygni 61, finally...

Joseph Fraunhofer
AD 1787 – AD 1826



German optician who discovered the dark absorption lines of the sun's atmosphere.


John Herschel
AD 1792 – AD 1871

Son of William Herschel, he became a mathematician and astronomer who originated the use of the Julian day system, discovered many moons of Saturn and Uranus.

Percival Lowell
AD 1855 – AD 1916

American astronomer who fueled speculation of the existence of canals on Mars.

Annie Jump Cannon
AD 1863 – AD 1941



Working with Edward Pickering, Cannon catalogued the spectra of over 200 000 stars and developed the current system of stellar classification.

Cecilia Payne
AD 1900 – AD 1979

English-American astronomer who showed that the sun was primarily composed of helium. Her over two million observations were used to determine paths of stellar evolution.


Clyde Tombaugh
AD 1906 – AD 1997

American astronomer who discovered many asteroids and the dwarf planet Pluto.

Henrietta Swan Leavitt
AD 1868 – AD 1921

American astronomer who recognized the period-luminosity relationship of Cepheid variables, allowing determination of distances to galaxies containing such variables.

Heber Curtis
AD 1872 – AD 1942



American astronomer working at Lick Observatory, determined that Andromeda was a separate galaxy but incorrectly thought the Sun was near the center of the galaxy.

Harlow Shapely
AD 1886 – AD 1972

American astronomer working at Mount Wilson who thought (incorrectly) that Andromeda was part of the Milky Way, but did observe supernovae.

Edwin Hubble
AD 1889 – AD 1953

American astronomer who demonstrated the existence of other galaxies and discovered the red shift, allowing us to determine that distances to galaxies is increasing (the universe is expanding).