

Explore the world of Williamina Fleming



Williamina Fleming

Horsehead Nebula

Have you ever wondered what is in the sky up above us or wanted to discover more? If you have, you will love learning about Williamina Fleming, famous female astronomer. Williamina had a nickname can you guess what it was? Read on to find out more about her.

Williamina Paton Stevens Fleming (Also known as mina, her nickname as promised above) was born in 1857 in Dundee, Scotland her parents were Mary Walker and Robert Stevens a carver and gilder they didn't have much money. When Williamina was 7 her father died so when she was 14 she became a pupil teacher so she could support her mother and siblings. In 1877 she married James Orr Fleming an accountant and widower of Isabella Barr and they migrated to Boston. When she

was pregnant James abandoned her and she had a son she named him Edward Charles Pickering Fleming.

In mid 1879 she became a maid for Pr. Edward Charles Pickering (by the way this Edward is not her son it is a different Edward). Edward Pickering was in charge of the observatory at Harvard university and he famously stated that his maid (Williamina) was capable of doing a better job than the men that worked there. After less than two years Pr. Pickering offered Williamina a job at the observatory to help him with his star mapping work. She became a computer(a person who does lots of research) and had to check photographs taken of very distant stars and find a way to organise the information. She became so good at this that she became in charge of the other women computers. Williamina found a way to classify stars based on their brightness and size. In 1911 she was awarded the Guadalupe Alemndaro medal by the ASM (The Astronomical Society of Mexico for her discovery of new stars. Cooool) She discovered nearly four hundred stars and other space objects. She was the first to discover a white dwarf (A whitedwarf is a star that has burned up all of the hydrogen they once used as nuclear fuel). One of the famous things she discovered was the Horsehead nebula. The Horsehead nebula is a dark cloud of dust. There is one located just under the star alnitak in Orion's belt. The background nebula is faint but the Horsehead shows up well in photographs. There is a lunar crater on the far side of the moon named after Williamina it is called

Fleming. Sadly in 1911 21st of may she died age 54 of pneumonia.

Williamina Fleming was an outstanding lady she discovered over four hundred stars and space objects wowie I'd say that's out of this world. In her own words " labour honestly, conscientiously, and steadfastly, and recognition and success must crown your efforts in the end " She should be remembered for her dedication to her work. What do you think?



Computers working
BY HEIDI GRUNWALDT