Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers

Savary, Felix

Born

Paris, France, 4 October 1797

Died Estagel, Pyrénées-Orientales, France, 15 July 1841

A student and then faculty member at the École Polytechnique, Felix Savary was the first to compute the orbit of a binary star in 1827, showing that the orbit is elliptical and, therefore, that Isaac Newton's laws of gravity apply outside the Solar System.

The double star Ursa Majoris is made up of bright components with a 60-year period; it was an ideal candidate for applying Newton's law of gravitation to the stars. William Herschel had discovered the pair (1780), and Friedrich Struve had more recently measured it, but it was Savary who just beat John Herschel in making the calculation (published in *Connaisance des Temps pour l'an 1830*).

Savary is better known to physicists as the colleague of André-Marie Ampère and to mathematicians for describing the geometrical figure known as the roulette.

Selected Reference

Aitken, Robert Grant (1935). *The Binary Stars*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc