

Jamieson, Alexander

*A celestial atlas: comprising a systematic display of the heavens in a series of thirty maps: illustrated by scientific description of their contents and accompanied by catalogues of the stars and astronomical exercises*, London: G. & W.B. Whittaker, 1822.

[2], 64 p., xxx [30] leaves of plates: ill., 30 col. maps ; 23 x 29 cm. Engraver or Printer: Neele & Son; Russell (Firm)

Alexander Jamieson was a resident of Kensington, London who, although he was greatly interested in astronomy, did little actual observing himself. He was the author of *A Grammar of Logic and Intellectual Philosophy on Didactic Principles* and began preparing a series of large star maps in 1820, which were unfortunately abandoned due to their expense. This book is a catalogue of stars and constellations, astronomical exercises and hand coloured celestial maps. These include two celestial hemispheres centred on the equatorial poles using a polar projection and geocentric orientation as well as a map of the principal stars seen from Great Britain. Jamieson's atlas is less cluttered than its predecessors, since it only included those stars visible to the naked eye; it was dedicated to King George IV.

It is rare to find constellation images in modern-day star atlases. Instead, lines are drawn connecting the major stars to produce stick-figure representations of the constellations. Often there are no representations, just boundary lines drawn around the area of the sky assigned to that constellation. Although these atlases are much more advanced, and show stars and deep-sky objects beyond the visibility of the naked eye and whose positions have been computer-generated with great accuracy and located in a coordinate system that is current and very precise much has been lost in terms of artistry and mythology. In fact what made previous maps appealing were their anthropomorphic and historic qualities: those features that are now just seen as so much unnecessary superficial clutter.

Adapted from: Nick Kanas, *Star Maps: History, Artistry, and Cartography* (Springer Praxis Books, 2007)

