

# The Napoleon Series

## Maps and Mapmakers of the Napoleonic Wars Part II: French Mapmakers – the Cassinis and Maraldi

By: [Richard Tennant](#)

### The Cassini Dynasty

**Giovanni Domenico Cassini** (8 June 1625 – 14 September 1712)<sup>1</sup>

He was an Italian mathematician, astronomer, astrologer and engineer. Cassini was born in Perinaldo, near Imperia, at that time in the County of Nice, part of the Duchy of Savoy. Cassini is known for his work in the fields of astronomy and engineering. Cassini discovered four satellites of the planet Saturn and noted the division of the rings of Saturn; the Cassini Division was named after him.

In 1669 Cassini moved to France and through a grant from Louis XIV of France helped to set up the Paris Observatory, which opened in 1671; Cassini would remain the director of the observatory for the rest of his career until his death in 1712. For the remaining forty-one years of his life Cassini served as astronomer/astrologer to Louis XIV ("The Sun King"); serving the expected dual role yet focusing the overwhelming majority of his time on astronomy rather than the astrology he had studied so much in his youth.

During this time, Cassini's method of determining longitude was used to measure the size of France accurately for the first time. The country turned out to be considerably smaller than expected, and the king quipped that Cassini had taken more of his kingdom from him than he had won in all his wars. Cassini had two sons; the younger, Jacques Cassini, succeeded him as astronomer and geodesist under the name of Cassini II.

More information can be found at: [Giovanni Domenico Cassini](#)

His image can be seen at: [Giovanni Domenico Cassini](#)

**Jacques Cassini** (18 February 1677 – 16 April 1756)<sup>2</sup>

He was born at the Paris Observatory. Admitted at the age of seventeen to membership of the French Academy of Sciences, he was elected in 1696 a fellow of the Royal Society of London, and became maître des comptes in 1706. Having succeeded to his father's position at the observatory in 1712, in 1713 he measured the arc of the meridian from Dunkirk to Perpignan, He also wrote *Eléments d'astronomie* (1740), and he published the first tables of the satellites of Saturn in 1716. The asteroid 24102 Jacquescassini is named after him.

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<sup>1</sup> [Giovanni Domenico Cassini](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Jacques Cassini](#)

His image can be seen at: [Jacques Cassini](#)

**César-François Cassini de Thury** (17 June 1714 – 4 September 1784), also called Cassini III or Cassini de Thury.<sup>3</sup>

In 1739, he became a member of the French Academy of Sciences as a supernumerary adjunct astronomer, in 1741 as an adjunct astronomer, and in 1745 as a full member astronomer. In January, 1751 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. He succeeded to his father's official position in 1756 and continued the hereditary surveying operations. In 1744, he began the construction of a great topographical map of France. The post of director of the Paris observatory was created for his benefit in 1771 when the establishment ceased to be a dependency of the French Academy of Sciences.

His chief works are:

La méridienne de l'Observatoire Royal de Paris (1744), a correction of the Paris meridian;  
Description géométrique de la terre (1775);  
Description géométrique de la France (1784), which was completed by his son 'Cassini IV'.

A portrait of him can be seen at: [César-François Cassini de Thury](#)

**Jean-Dominique, comte de Cassini** (30 June 1748 – 18 October 1845), known as Cassini IV<sup>4</sup>

He was born at the Paris Observatory. In 1784 he succeeded his father as director of the observatory. In 1783 he sent a memoir to the Royal Society in which he proposed a trigonometric survey connecting the observatories of Paris and Greenwich for the purpose of better determining the latitude and longitude of the latter. His proposal was accepted, resulting in the Anglo-French Survey (1784–1790). The results of the survey were published in 1791.

## The Miraldi family

**Giacomo Filippo Maraldi** <sup>5</sup>(August 21, 1665 – December 1, 1729) His name is also given as Jacques Philippe Maraldi.

He was a French-Italian astronomer and mathematician. Born in Perinaldo (modern Liguria) he was the nephew of Giovanni Cassini, and worked most of his life at the Paris Observatory (1687 – 1718). He also helped with the survey based on the Paris Meridian. He also is the uncle of Jean-Dominique Maraldi. Craters on the Moon and Mars were named in his and his nephew's honour.

**Giovanni Domenico Maraldi** (17 April 1709 – 14 November 1788) His name is also given as Jean-Dominique

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<sup>3</sup> [César-François Cassini de Thury](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Dominique, comte de Cassini](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Giacomo Filippo Maraldi](#)

Born at Perinaldo, Liguria, Maraldi came to Paris in 1727 and became a member of the French Academy of Sciences in 1731. Maraldi retired to Perinaldo, Italy in 1772.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [Giovanni Domenico Maraldi](#)