

This Month's Stiff: Andre Maria Ampere

Entered Mortal Coil: 20 January 1775

Assumed Room Temperature: 10 June 1836



“Oui, I’m a Pretty Boy!”

After enjoying a brief sabbatical, here is yet another treatise churned up from the dank depths of my twisted mind. Maria makes it an even dozen dudes for our ongoing saga of the pioneers who have made our modern electronic world possible. I doubt if any of us will make a contribution to science so epic as to have a fundamental unit of measure named after us, or perhaps some element or natural phenomenon. “Hey Professor Smith! It measures out to 0.932 Neidlingers!!! Only +3.2% from our calculations!” *Yeah...in my wildest dreams!* To recap, for those of you who have tuned in late, here is a list of our past honorees on this internet website; Messrs. Maxwell, Tesla, Armstrong, Marconi, Ohm, Volta, Hertz, Morse, DeForest, Fessenden, and Henry. So, without further delay, I present our current dude, Mr. Andre Maria Ampere.

Maria can accurately be described as a child-computing prodigy. How many of us can claim to have mastered the calculus while only in our early teens? Maria had a paper rejected for publication by the Academie de Leon at age 13 as he used infinitesimals in his calculations: he was totally ignorant of the use of the differential calculus at the time and subsequently enlisted the services of a monk to tutor him in this complex subject. He learned the new math quickly. Impressive.

A series of tragedies then befell the Ampere family. Andre's sister died from an illness in 1792. Later, his father lost his head to the executioner's guillotine. Understandably, the young intellectual's world was shattered by these events, and he went into a deep funk for the better part of 18 months. It took the love of a woman to snap him out of his destructive reverie. The girl's name was Julie. The couple wed in 1797 and had a child. Unfortunately, Julie died in 1803. Ampere remarried in 1806, and had another child, Albine. But fate was not kind to Andre, as he and Jenny were legally separated at the time of Albine's birth. He subsequently gained legal custody of the child. His children, however, did not bring much joy to the scientist, and he was quite distressed by their behavior in later years. Andre was a singularly unhappy man.

Despite this personal baggage, Ampere made steady progress in his career, progressing steadily from a humble position as a mathematics professor to a recognized scholar. He was elected to the *Institut National des Sciences* in 1814 for a paper on partial differential equations. Of course, Ampere's claim to immortality was assured with the 1826 publication of the paper “*Memoir on the*

Mathematical Theory of Electrodynamical Phenomena, Uniquely Deduced from Experience", which described the properties of electric current, its relationship to magnetism, and how these properties could be demonstrated by a series of experiments. He also established experimental verification of Avogadro's Number, an important constant in the field of chemistry. For Maria's discoveries, the unit of electrical current, the **Ampere**, designated by the letter **A**, was named in honor of him.

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