Alexanderson, Gerald L.

About the cover: The cycloid and Jean Bernoulli. (English) Zbl 1228.01011


The author explains details of the frontispiece and title page of Jean Bernoulli’s “Opera Omnia” from 1742, with special emphasis on the depicted cycloid as the solution of the famous brachistochrone problem. He gives also a brief historical account of the latter.

Reviewer’s remark: The article raises also the following question: “Just to add an element of extravagance, the dedication of the Opera Omnia is accompanied by a lavish engraving, if anything, outdoing the one of Bernoulli himself – but this time of the patron “Fridericus III Rex Borussiae” (Prussia). Something seems wrong, however: Frederick III of Prussia was not king until the late 19th century, long after the publication of the Bernoulli work. It would have made sense were it Frederick II (the Great) who became king in 1740, two years before the publication date of the Opera Omnia.”

It seems to the reviewer that this mystery can be solved: The engraving refers to Frederick III, Elector of Brandenburg (1657–1713), who became the first King in Prussia in 1701 (therefore, later often referred to as Frederick I of Prussia, though this was less common in the first half of the 18th century since the king title didn’t apply to his homeland of Brandenburg). So Rex Borussiae is merely used as an additional title, without the “Prussia count”. The close relation of Bernoulli to the Prussian Academy founded by this king may provide an ample explanation for the dedication.

Reviewer: Olaf Teschke (Berlin)

MSC:

01A50 History of mathematics in the 18th century

Biographic references:

Bernoulli, Jean

Full Text: DOI

References:


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