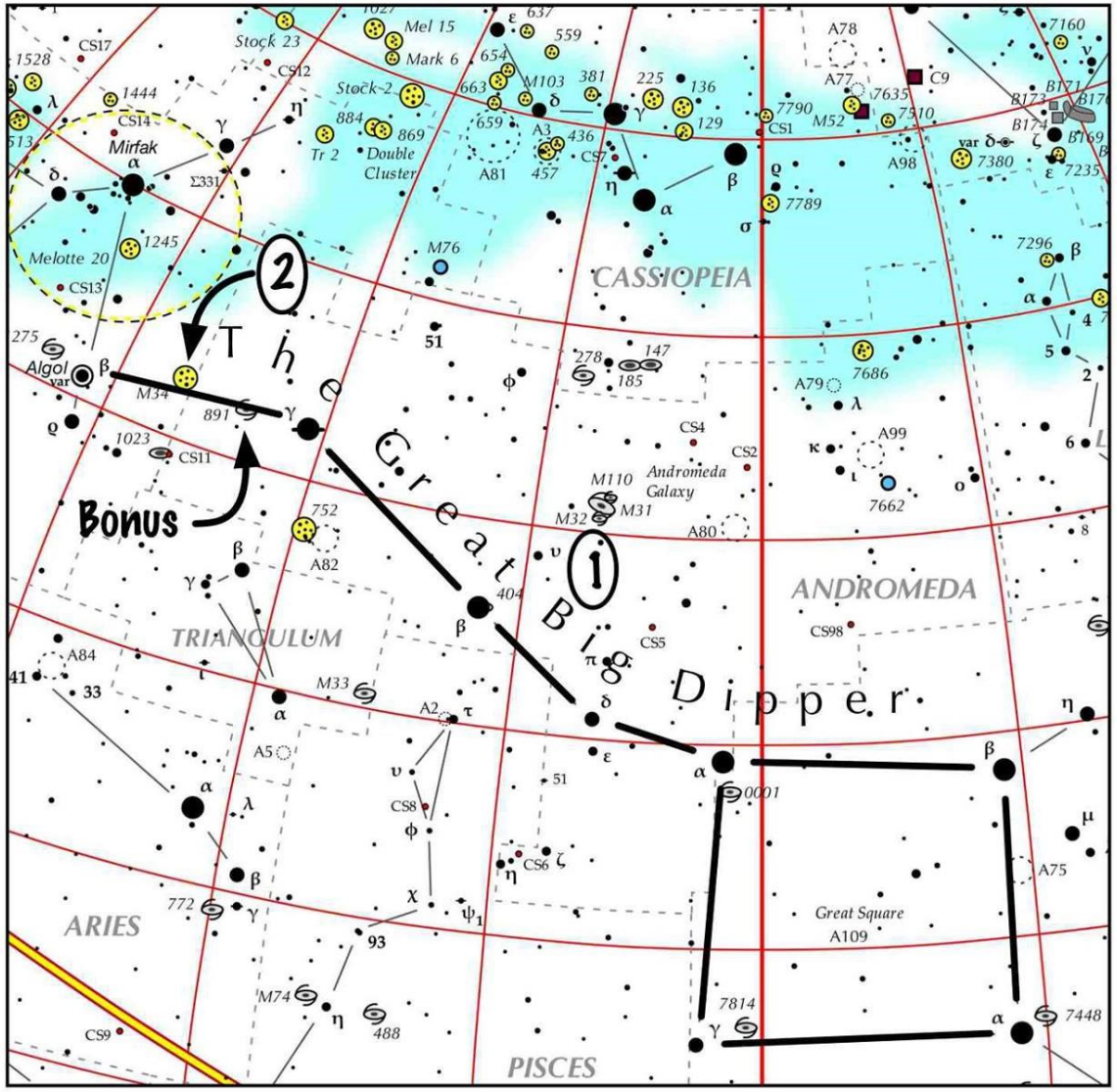
Deep Sky Object: December 2017 – Open Cluster M34

1 At 8 p.m. in early and mid December, the **Great Square of Pegasus** lies just southwest of the Zenith. To its upper left, twinkle three moderately bright stars in Andromeda and one in Perseus, forming an extended handle for the Great Square – "The Great Big Dipper."

2 **To find the open cluster M34:**
1. About 1/2 way along the last segment (from Gamma And to Beta Per) of the Great Big Dipper lies M34.
2. Seen as a round grainy smudge in binoculars, this cluster contains upwards of 400 stars 1500 light-years away.

Bonus: the flat galaxy NGC 891
If the sky is particulary dark and transparent, try spotting the galaxy NGC 891. It will appear as a very faint, elongated smudge lying half way between M34 and Gamma And. A six inch or larger telescope will be needed.

Distance: 27 million light-years