



Joseph Austin Holmes (1859-1915)

1994 Inductee from Mining's Past

Joseph A. Holmes was born in Laurens, South Carolina, and graduated from Cornell University with a B.S. degree in 1881. Holmes' career began as a professor of geology and natural history at the University of North Carolina. During this time, largely through his efforts, the North Carolina legislature created a Geological Survey for the state, to which he was appointed as director in 1891. He performed his duties in this position, in addition to his teaching, until 1905.

After directing the Department of Mines and Metallurgy at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, he was appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt as chief of the U. S. Geological Survey laboratories for testing fuels. Under Holmes's leadership, this became a focal point of many of the conservation efforts of the Roosevelt and Taft Administrations related to development of this country's coal resources. When the U.S. Bureau of Mines was established, Holmes was named as its first director.

Under Holmes's leadership, the Bureau of Mines revolutionized the safety practices in the mining industry in the United States. The safety records of today's mines are in large measure a tribute to the practices promoted by Joseph Holmes.