
Albert H. Purdue (*Arkansas, Tennessee*)

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Albert Homer Purdue was born near Yankeetown, Ind., on March 29, 1861. Raised on a farm, he received what limited education he could from the local Yankeetown school. He entered Indiana State Normal School at Terre Haute and graduated in 1886 when he was 25. He then taught school in Missouri and served as assistant superintendent of the U.S. Indian School at Albuquerque, N.M.

In 1893, A.H. Purdue received an A.B. degree from Leland Stanford University, after which he took a year of graduate work. During part of 1892 and 1893, he worked for the Arkansas Geological Survey, under Dr. John C. Branner, state geologist.

During 1894 and 1896, he completed graduate work in geology at the University of Chicago, and upon leaving, he became professor of geology at the University of Arkansas. In 1902, mining was added to his chair, and in 1912 the university conferred upon him the degree of LL.D. From 1907 to 1912, he was ex officio state geologist of Arkansas.

Meanwhile, beginning in 1895, he worked several summers with the U.S. Geological Survey in Arkansas, spending much of his time doing detailed mapping. During his later years in Arkansas, he was given a steady increase in committee and other administrative work. Also, the state of Arkansas had ceased funding the state survey after T.B. Comstock's report on gold and silver in the state, under Dr. Branner, which exposed widespread deception and outright fraud by promoters. Purdue wanted to continue his scientific investigations, so in March of 1912 he resigned from the University of Arkansas to become state geologist of Tennessee.

While ex officio state geologist of Arkansas, Purdue oversaw the completion of three publications under the auspices of the Arkansas Geological Survey: *Slates of Arkansas*, 1909, authored by Purdue; *Bibliography on the Geology of Arkansas*, by J.C. Branner, in *Slates of Arkansas*, 1909; and *Coal Mining in Arkansas, Parts I and II* (privately published), 1910, by A.A. Steele. Purdue was an early advocate of conservation, speaking out in 1910 concerning uncontrolled and unregulated mineral development and its problems.

While at the University of Arkansas, A.H. Purdue had a student, H.D. Miser, who eventually became a co-worker and for a short time after Purdue's departure, was even ex officio state geologist of Arkansas while on leave from the U.S. Geological Survey.



In *Slates of Arkansas*, Purdue described and named many of the oldest formations exposed in the Ouachita Mountains, including the Collier Shale and the Crystal Mountain Sandstone. In 1907, publication of U.S. Geological Survey Folio 154 marked the beginning of cooperative work by Purdue for the U.S. Geological Survey.

In 1912, Purdue picked up the administrative duties of the Tennessee Geological Survey with an experienced hand. By 1914, he had authored two administrative reports on the Survey's activities for 1912 through 1914. He also authored a state survey publication, *The Zinc Deposits of Northeastern Tennessee*, in 1912. In 1917, Purdue and Miser co-authored U.S. Geological Survey Folio 202, *Eureka Springs-Harrison*, part of his continued association with the USGS. During his appointment as state geologist of Tennessee, he authored a series of short, popular-interest pamphlets and publications, relating the study of geology, industry, and its benefits to the citizens of Tennessee.

While at the Tennessee survey, he continued his predecessor's efforts, hired a permanent chemist to the staff, and was involved in the establishment of a Division of Forestry, headed by a forester. He believed that the public should benefit from the efforts of the state survey and was less concerned with abstract topics of geology.

Purdue died in Nashville, Tenn., on December 12, 1917, at the age of 56. He was buried in Little Rock, Ark.

Purdue's former student, friend, and co-worker, Hugh D. Miser, carried on Purdue's geologic work in Arkansas, which resulted in a number of co-authored publications after his passing. In 1918, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 691-J, *Asphalt Deposits and Oil Conditions in Southwestern Arkansas*, was published, followed by USGS Atlas Folio 215, for Hot Springs, in 1923. Finally, in 1929, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 808, *Geology of DeQueen and Caddo Gap Quadrangles, Arkansas*, completed Purdue's professional authorship and was a fitting ending to his geologic career.

Biography adapted from Wilson (1981).