



Earle Sloan (*South Carolina*)
C. William (Bill) Clendenin
(*South Carolina State Geologist*)

Earle Sloan (1858–1926) was a native-born South Carolinian. His quick perceptive mind, strong inherent drive, and charismatic personality helped him to become a successful Charleston businessman, and a nationally recognized chemical, civil, and mining engineer. Early in his career, he gained renown for his painstaking field study of the 1886 Charleston earthquake. His professionalism resulted in his appointment as head of the South Carolina Geological

Survey on May 1, 1901. He served in this position until 1911.

Sloan was born on Cherry Hill Plantation near Pendleton, S.C., on October 18, 1858. He was a descendant of the prominent Earle family of Virginia and South Carolina. His father served as a colonel in South Carolina's Fourth Regiment during the Civil War. Three of his great-grandfathers also fought in the Revolutionary War. Sloan attended country schools before his family moved to Charleston. In 1878, he enrolled at the University of Virginia, where his academic interests were toward chemistry and geology. Following his graduation in 1881, he pursued further graduate studies in chemistry and geology until 1882, but his career interests were in petrography, engineering, and mining.

In 1883 and 1884, Sloan worked as a mining consultant for the Norfolk and Ouray Mining Co. of Ouray, Colo. From 1884 to 1886, he was involved with exploration for iron and coal deposits in Alabama. Early in 1886, he formed a partnership with William H. Echols; together they built railroads, founded the town of Ensley, Fla., and prospected for minerals. The partnership disbanded in 1887.

When the Charleston earthquake struck on August 31, 1886, Sloan left his consulting business to study the impact of the earthquake. W.J. McGee, U.S. Geological Survey, met him in September 1886, and was so impressed with Sloan's credentials that McGee quickly recruited him as an assistant geologist to help in the study of the Charleston earthquake. Before McGee left South Carolina, he gave Sloan the assignment to carry out field studies of the epicenters of the earthquake. Sloan produced an acclaimed report for the USGS on October 16, 1886 (Peters, 1986). The University of Virginia was so impressed with his observations that it conferred a doctorate degree on him.

From 1888 to 1890, Sloan prospected for bauxite, iron, and coal in northwestern Georgia and Alabama. During this time, he became interested in phosphate deposits in South Carolina, which could be used as agricultural fertilizers. For the next two decades, Sloan played an instrumental role in the development of South Carolina's phosphate industry. During that period, he worked as a mine superintendent at one company and as president at another. Later he was a co-owner of the Etiwan Phosphate works.

In 1901, he became state geologist of South Carolina, a post he held until 1911. Because State appropriations were not enough, much of the field work that he conducted was at his own expense. Most of his work was on the Coastal Plain, but he did investigate the metamorphic rocks in the Piedmont. During his tenure as state geologist, Sloan discovered a number of previously unclassified fossils. Many of his specimens were personally donated to the Charleston Museum and to the Smithsonian Institution. He also wrote several valuable papers on clay, mineral resources, and different geologic formations. During this period, four of Sloan's reports were published by the State, the most complete of these being *Catalogue of the Mineral Localities of South Carolina*, published in 1908. His greatest contribution, however, was in his assistance to others by pointing out prominent exposures, helping to collect fossils, and providing information on mineral resources.

In his lifetime, Earle Sloan was involved in many different organizations. Professionally, he was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Museum of Natural History, the Association of American State Geologists, and the American Institute of Mining Engineers. Socially, he was a member of a number of clubs in Charleston. He succumbed to cancer on August 19, 1926, at the age of 68.