

## **Joe Webb Peoples (1907 - 2000)**

Joe Webb Peoples was the Director of the State Geological and Natural History Survey of Connecticut from 1960-1990. After obtaining bachelor-of-arts and master-of-science degrees from Vanderbilt University, he went on to graduate school at Northwestern University and took a Ph.D. in geology from Princeton University in 1932. He joined the faculty of Wesleyan University as chairman of the Geology Department in 1935. He held that position until his retirement in 1975.



Dr. Peoples served the war effort by working on strategically important chromite deposits for the U.S. Geological Survey from 1940 to 1945. In 1944, he was named assistant Chief Geologist of the USGS. In 1945, he returned to Wesleyan as the George I. Seney Professor of Geology. A year later, he was made a commissioner of the State Geological and Natural History Survey, a position he held until 1960, when he became the director of that organization.

As the director of the Connecticut Survey, Dr. Peoples worked with his friend Link Page to integrate the USGS with geologists in colleges and universities to undertake a mapping effort that resulted in the modern bedrock and surficial geologic maps of the state. He was also instrumental in assuring that dinosaur tracks discovered during construction on state property, in 1967, were not destroyed. As a result of his efforts, Dinosaur State Park in Rocky Hill, CT stands as a lasting tribute to him.

Sid Quarrier, the Survey's first full-time employee, was kind enough to share the following reflection: "Joe initiated an orderly process of mapping and served to challenge and focus a broad range of people in the geologic community on interesting and critical geologic problems through annual summer field conferences. Student field assistants were an important part of this program and many students got excellent field training and met a lot of people in the geologic community. As we went into the 1970s, many applied and environmental topics related to geology were brought into these conferences. Joe's broad view of the role of science in both education and in applied areas enabled him to foster regional fellowship and successfully integrate the USGS into our programs."