

Benjamin Franklin Mudge

Tintype portrait of Benjamin Franklin Mudge, 1817-1879, who was the first State Geologist of Kansas. In 1862, geologist Mudge was invited to deliver a series of lectures before the Kansas legislature. The body passed legislation to organize a state geological survey and decided to make Mudge the state geologist, "an honor," he said, "entirely unsought, yet thoroughly enjoyed." Mudge was elected professor of geology and associated sciences at the Kansas State Agricultural College. He published the first "Geology of Kansas," a 65-page report issued in 1866, and the first geological map of the state in 1875. Born in Maine in 1817, Mudge grew up in Massachusetts, attending academies there and graduating from Wesleyan University in Connecticut in 1840. Mudge studied natural science and history, but also completed the classical course and studied law. He was admitted to the bar and embarked on a political and legal career, but Mudge always maintained his interest in geology and natural history. During the summer of 1861, in order to demonstrate his antislavery convictions, Mudge moved his family to Quindaro, Wyandotte County, Kansas, a bustling river town with a reputation as an important point on the Underground Railroad and as a stronghold of the free-state movement during the preceding years. After leaving the agricultural college in 1873, Mudge collected specimens for Yale University and was named geologist under the State Board of Agriculture. Mudge also was a founding member of the Kansas Natural History Society, which became the Kansas Academy of Science. Mudge, who gathered the nucleus of the college's mineral collection, was later remembered as a one of the foremost pioneer scientists of Kansas. A biographer said he was "outstanding not only as a great explorer and collector of geological and paleontological specimens," he was also "recognized as an enthusiastic and inspiring teacher and was highly esteemed by the people of the State."

Date: Between 1861 and 1865

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