

## Minerals in the Australian Museum – 1901 to 1945

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**ABSTRACT.** The first full time mineralogist in the Australian Museum was appointed in 1881. Since then there has been an unbroken succession of full time curators none of which curiously enough was born in Australia. This has meant that there has been continuing activity in the Mineralogy Department. This part of the history deals mainly with important acquisitions to the collections, research particularly in mineralogy and meteoritics, field work undertaken, and the striking development in display and numerous other activities relating to the general work carried out by the Museum in education. There were two curators (or mineralogists as they were called) during the period 1901/1945 – Charles Anderson and Thomas Hodge-Smith. In addition to giving an account of their work, this paper throws some light on their character and personality. Their relationship with notable private collectors is touched on.

CHALMERS, O., 1992. Minerals in the Australian Museum – 1901 to 1945. Records of the Australian Museum Supplement 15: 111-128.

Since the first part of this history was published (Chalmers 1979b), additional information about Felix Ratte, assistant in mineralogy (1881-1891) has come to light. Fortuitously, in the early 1980's, Chalmers met Mrs Yvonne Emery of Nowra, a granddaughter of Felix Ratte. She made available photographs and various documents, copies of which are now preserved in the archives of the Museum. Among these are Ratte's marriage certificate and the birth certificate of his only son Prosperé, the father of Yvonne Emery; his diploma from the Ecole Imperiale Centrale des Arts et Manufactures, Paris, which he was awarded in 1870 (his name is given as Auguste Felix on the diploma); and directions on a process for the extraction of cobalt, nickel and manganese from their ores devised by Ratte and W.A. Dixon, Lecturer in Chemistry at the Sydney Technical College. According to Mrs Emery, Ratte did not handle financial matters very well. And before going

to New Caledonia he had done geological work in Indo-China where he caught malaria. Recurring bouts of the disease had a depressing effect on him and this together with his financial problems were the contributing factors that led him to commit suicide. He is buried in Gore Hill cemetery. Mrs Emery also had evidence that for a short time before taking the position at the Museum, he was Lecturer and Professor of Chemistry, Metallurgy and Botany at the Ballarat School of Mines. His name in a book presented to him when he left Ballarat is inscribed A.F. Ratte.

### Charles Anderson – Museum Mineralogist (1901-1921)

Charles Anderson (1876-1944) was appointed