



John Van Nostrand Dorr

Dakota Images

John Van Nostrand Dorr, a major figure in the history of precious metal milling technology, began his career in the gold mills of South Dakota's Black Hills.

Dorr was born in Newark, New Jersey, on 6 January 1872. As a teen-ager, he worked in the laboratories of Thomas A. Edison. After graduating in 1894 from Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, Dorr came to the Black Hills, where he worked for several mining companies as an assayer, chemist, and metallurgist. Upon forming his own milling company, the Lundberg and Dorr (later the Lundberg, Dorr and Wilson), in 1901, Dorr began work on several inventions for increasing the efficiency of the cyanide method of gold extraction. The classifier, which separated crushed ore pulp into sands and slimes, and the thickener, which removed water from the slimes as an intermediate step in their leaching, were so useful that they were adopted by mills throughout the United States and Europe.

To handle the manufacturing of his inventions, Dorr opened an office in Denver in 1907 and, after leaving the Black Hills in 1913, located sales offices in New York. His engineering firm, Dorr and Petrie, specialized in adapting his inventions to other industries and eventually had offices in Paris, London, and Berlin. Dorr retired in 1961, having received several honorary degrees throughout the years, including an honorary Doctor of Engineering degree from the South Dakota School of Mines. He was also the recipient of numerous chemical and mining industry awards and was a member of several chemical, metallurgical, and engineering societies. John Van Nostrand Dorr died on 29 June 1962.

by CAROLYN TORMA

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