Sir James Hall Encyclopedia Article

Sir James Hall

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Sir James Hall

1761-1832

English geochemist who defended James Hutton's theory that Earth's internal heat is responsible for geological change. Abraham Werner argued that Earth's surface and distribution of rocks were the result of a great deluge, noting—in opposition to Hutton—that basalts cool to glassy substances and limestone subjected to heat decomposes. Hall's experiments demonstrated that slowly cooled molten basalts yield crystalline structures and that limestone will not decompose at a high temperature if subjected to high pressure.