



## Joseph Henry

1797-1878

Michael Faraday's great discovery in 1831 of electromagnetic induction was being independently duplicated at about the same time by an American physicist Joseph Henry, but Faraday was credited with the discovery because his results were published first. Henry became famous, however, as the discoverer of the inductance (called self-inductance) of a coil and as the developer of powerful electromagnets capable of lifting thousands of pounds of weight. He was also America's foremost nineteenth-century physicist and the first secretary of the newly-formed Smithsonian Institution.

Henry was born near Albany, New York, and his early years were spent in poverty. His ambition was to become an actor until by chance at age 16 he happened upon a book of science, which caused him to devote his life to the acquisition of knowledge. He enrolled in the Albany Academy and upon graduation became a teacher there. In 1832 he joined the faculty of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton, and in 1846 joined the Smithsonian Institution. In his honor the unit of inductance was given the name *henry* 12 years after his death.

(Source: D. Johnson, J. Johnson and J. Hilborn, *Electric Circuit Analysis*, Prentice-Hall, 1989)