

# ANNALS OF IOWA

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## EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

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JAMES H. LEES

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James H. Lees was born in Yorkshire, England, July 26, 1875, and died at Garden Grove, California, August 6, 1935. Burial was at his boyhood home, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

His parents were Henry Lees and Sarah Turner Lees, both natives of Yorkshire. James came with them to America in 1881, when he was six years old. The family settled upon a claim in southeastern South Dakota. This country was indeed on the frontier at that time. Their home was a two-room frame house, sodded for warmth. There was a school, but reading matter was scarce. The Bible and the few books they had brought from England were read over and over. They could not think of life without music, so a reed organ had been brought with them. The father had been a pipe organ player and a singer and the mother a choir singer in England, so they and the two children furnished music for the neighbors, and their little house on the prairie became the meeting place for church and other gatherings.

After three years they were sought by other English people, and they moved to the Fields Brothers' large farm for blooded stock near Cedar Falls, Iowa. Here again was a touch of their native land. At fifteen James entered the preparatory department of the State Normal School and received an impress from President H. H. Seerley and other teachers that endured for a lifetime. He was graduated from the Normal School and, after teaching for a time, received the A. B. degree from Coe College, Cedar Rapids, in 1901.

The next two years were spent at the State University of Iowa under the guidance of another great man, Dr. Samuel Calvin. From him James Lees received the inspiration that led to the choice of the field of geology as a life work. After receiving the degree of Master of Science in 1903, he spent the next three years at the University of Chicago as a graduate student and research assistant. In 1906 he went to Des Moines as assistant



*James H. Lees*

state geologist in the Iowa Geological Survey, and he held this position for twenty-eight years with Dr. Calvin and Dr. George F. Kay as state geologists. Some years later he completed his thesis and received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Chicago in 1915. The Survey was moved to Iowa City in September, 1933, but Dr. Lees resigned his position in June, 1934, on account of ill health.

Dr. Lees was a member of Phi Kappa Phi, a scholastic honor society at Coe College, and of Sigma Xi, honor scientific fraternity. He was secretary of the Iowa Academy of Science from 1914 to 1924 and was president in 1931. He also served as president of the Iowa Conservation Association in 1923, and held membership in the American Association for the Advancement of Science and in the Geological Society of America.

Dr. Lees' work had taken him to every county in Iowa, and he was familiar with the geology of every part of the state. He made a study of economic geology, especially the coal mines and the water supply. He wrote many articles on Iowa geology, among them "The Des Moines River Valley," "History of Coal Mining in Iowa," and several articles on deep wells. His thorough knowledge of the geology of the state enabled him to give valuable advice to those interested in the development of the natural resources of the state. Moreover, he rendered distinct service to the State Park Board when information was sought regarding the areas within the state which should be set aside as state parks.

Dr. Lees edited five volumes of reports while Dr. Calvin was state geologist and fifteen volumes during the administration of Dr. George F. Kay. In his editorial work he was painstaking in his efforts to make every report of the Survey as free as possible from error. He knew correct English and was familiar with the latest and best approved methods used in the editing of American geological publications of high standards of excellence.

The many friends of Dr. Lees will remember him not alone for his scientific and editorial work but for his unselfishness, his sincerity, his trustworthiness, and his sensitive regard for human personality.

He was married in 1906 to Agnes Mae Crane, and two sons, Robert and Laurence, were born to them.

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