



## [James Furman Kemp](#) (1859-1926)

### Geology Professor, Author, Co-Founder of GSA and SEG 2015 Inductee from Mining's Past

James Furman Kemp served for 34 years as a professor of geology at Columbia University and is remembered for his life-long contributions to American geology. He was regarded with high esteem by his colleagues, and he was a trusted and revered mentor to his students who were the beneficiaries of his passion to teach and his rare talent for communicating the subjects and theories in human terms.

Born in New York on August 14, 1859, he graduated from Brooklyn's Adelphi Academy and earned an A.B. degree in 1881 from Amherst College. Kemp then attended graduate school at the Columbia School of Mines, where he received a degree in mining engineering in 1884, followed by geologic studies in Germany. Kemp worked as a member of the Cornell University geology faculty from 1886 to 1891, when he moved to Columbia University to become adjunct professor of geology. He quickly rose to the position of department head in 1892, and he remained a professor of geology for the rest of his career. The University of Massachusetts at Amherst awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1906.

His scientific reputation was well recognized throughout the field of geology, and his fruitful contributions endure to this day and to the benefit of all in the fields of geology and mining. He was one of the committee of 13 geologists who founded the Geological Society of America in 1888, and Kemp remained involved for the rest of his career, serving as Councilor from 1905-1907, First Vice-President in 1913, and President in 1921.

Kemp, part of the "Committee of Fifty" that founded the Society of Economic Geologists in 1920, served as SEG President in 1924. He helped to establish Economic Geology and served as an associate editor. He also served as a President of the New York Academy of Sciences and as

Vice-President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, as well as being a member of other scientific organizations including the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, National Academy of Sciences, and National Research Council.

James Furman Kemp authored *Ore Deposits of the United States and Canada* and *A Handbook of Rocks for use without the Microscope*, as well as numerous scientific papers for the U.S. Geological Survey and the New York State Survey.

As a sign of the appreciation held by the academic community for Kemp's long service and notable contributions, his funeral was held in St. Paul's Chapel on the campus of Columbia University, on November 19, 1926. Among the attendees were nearly the entire faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences in academic robes.