

## **Rhodes, James Manly** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Rhodes, James Manly**

by Ralph Hardee Rives, 1994

**1850–2 July 1941**

James Manly Rhodes, Methodist minister, educator, and college owner and administrator, was born in Four Oaks, Johnston County <sup>[2]</sup>, the son of Atlas J. K. and Spicey West Rhodes. He received bachelor's and master's degrees from Trinity College <sup>[3]</sup> and in December 1875 was received into the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

He served as pastor of the Fifth Street Methodist Church in Wilmington <sup>[4]</sup> until January 1882, when he became the first principal of Central Institute in Littleton. After 1888 it was known as Littleton Female College, and in 1912 it became simply Littleton College <sup>[5]</sup>. Except for the years 1887–88, when he was principal of the nearby Henderson Female College, Rhodes was president of Littleton College until it was destroyed by fire in January 1919. He had purchased the college property in 1889 from its stockholders and immediately began an extensive improvements program.

Rhodes was described as "a man of convictions, who felt that he had work to do." He devoted his life to the training and development of young ladies "of real refinement and culture, with those principles that enter into the formation of noble character." Though small physically, he was portrayed as "huge in determination, perseverance, [and] consecration."

About 1906 he founded Central Academy in Littleton, a military school with a farm operated by self-help students. His wife's nephew, Jesse Aiken, served as principal of the academy, which continued to function until 1919.

On 28 Nov. 1880 Rhodes married Florence Simmons (1856–88) of Virginia. After her death he married, on 27 Nov. 1889, Lula Hester (1868–1937), the daughter of the Reverend and Mrs. W. S. Hester of Oxford <sup>[6]</sup>. She was educated in Oxford, was graduated from Greensboro Female College <sup>[7]</sup>, studied in New York City, and was a teacher of voice at Littleton College. James and Lula Rhodes adopted a daughter, Lillian Bridgers Rhodes.

In 1923, following the destruction of Littleton College, the Rhodes moved to Florida, where he died in Bartow. During their last years the couple received financial assistance from the Littleton College Memorial Association, formed in 1927 through the efforts of Vara L. Herring of Raleigh <sup>[8]</sup>, former treasurer of the college, and other alumnae. The purpose of the association was to keep alive the spirit and work of the former school, and the members also gave financial support to Scarrit College in Nashville, Tenn., and North Carolina Wesleyan College <sup>[9]</sup> in Rocky Mount. A portrait of Rhodes hangs in the library of Wesleyan College.

At the time of his death Rhodes was the oldest minister in the North Carolina Annual Conference of the Methodist church. His body was returned to Littleton for burial in Sunset Hill Cemetery.

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Religious Leaders and Clergy <sup>[16]</sup>

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**Authors:**

Rives, Ralph Hardee <sup>[18]</sup>

**Origin - location:**

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Four Oaks <sup>[20]</sup>

New Hanover County <sup>[21]</sup>

Wilmington <sup>[22]</sup>

Granville County <sup>[23]</sup>

Oxford <sup>[24]</sup>

Randolph County <sup>[25]</sup>

Trinity <sup>[26]</sup>

Wake County <sup>[27]</sup>

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