

Chowan Supporter

Raynor Leader In Early Years

By

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Although not present at the Mulberry Grove meeting of 1848, James Rascoe Rayner was one of the many Baptist laymen who played a role in putting Chowan on its feet during its first years. It is unfortunate that little information has survived about him as he appears to have been active in the affairs of his day. Most of what we do know of Rayner comes from letters written by him in the 1840's and fifties and now in the possession of a descendant of his—Mrs. James H. Cable of Altadena, California.

Born on August 31, 1807 in Bertie County, N.C., he was the second child of Enock Rayner and his wife Penelope Rascoe. Where Rayner received his education is a mystery, but his writings indicate that he was fairly well-trained for his day. He was married in 1831 to Frances Florentine Levana Lawrence and settled on a farm near the Merry Hill community. They were the parents of nine children before she died at the age of thirty-four in December, 1847.

James Rayner spent nearly all of his life in Bertie County except for occasional trips to Raleigh and Philadelphia. He made his living by farming and engaging in the naval stores industry. His letters speak of many of the activities on an antebellum plantation. For instance, in a communication dated Nov. 24, 1842, he told his wife "I hope you will endeavor to manage to the best advantage. Have the pork killed as soon as the acorns are gone. You must get your father to get salt for you or if you will send



to Windsor to Roulhacs you can get it. Keep Rose ploughing all the time that the weather will admit of it. Inquire about those staves at Mr. Riddick's if they are not in danger of being stolen. If your father sells his see if you can not get him to sell ours. When Ganza and Dick are done getting those dead trees up make Dick plough and Ganza clear up that peice (sic) of land on the road. . . . get James Mack to build that house I was talking to him about."

Also, Rayner was active in government affairs and represented Bertie County in the State Legislature during the 1842-1843 session. His surviving letters tell of raging debates and his disgust for partisan politics.

Unfortunately, we know little of James Rayner's involvement with the Baptist faith except he was a member of Cashie Church at Windsor, where his father-in-law Rev. Reuben Lawrence served as pastor for twenty years.

As the father of five sons and four daughters, Rayner was vitally interested in the educational facilities of his day. His concern appeared in a letter to his wife, written from Raleigh on January 13, 1843. He said "I would rather that you would attend to the instruction of the children than anything else in the world. I know our children are not lacking in sense but it is the lack of instruction that makes them behind others that I have seen here."

Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that Rayner was a member of Chowan's Board of Trustees in 1849 and 1850. His oldest daughter Aura attended the school during his second year as a trustee. A letter written by him to her, dated May 10, is now displayed in the Antiquities Room of Whitaker Library. Apparently, he was not satisfied with her academic progress or the manner in which Chowan was being run for he wrote:

"I have no doubt Dr. Wheeler told you I was not at all pleased with your not having made more progress in writing and composition than you have. I do not believe there is enough attention paid to your studies in that respect for certainly if there had you would do better than you are. You are put under no restraint and not compelled to study and improve as you ought, it does appear to me your teachers think more what sort of appearance you will make upon the promanade, at church, at parties and concerts and how well you will sing than they do about storing your mind with useful knowledge such as would be useful to you in after life. There has been more wrangling about promanading and getting to concerts and parties than there has been in any other school in the state. My patience is threadbare. I have almost come to the conclusion to resign as one of the trustees and have nothing more to do with it unless I could conduct it as it should be, for when there is a teacher that places the girls under restraint as Miss Haskell, she is passed by — I hope you will make good use of your time and try to improve in letter writing and composition and not go on any excursions or parties unless every person concerned are agreed to it."

Apparently, James Rascoe Rayner's patience reached the breaking point and he resigned because he did not serve as a trustee after 1850. The surviving data on the remainder of his life is brief. His wife had died several years prior to this time, and he married Mary Elizabeth Collins Mebane, a wealthy Bertie County widow. Settling at her Chowan River plantation "The Hermitage," he died there at the age of forty-five on Sept. 27, 1852.

Such was the life of one of Chowan's early trustees who couldn't accept the way things went at a Baptist girls' school in 1850. It is interesting, and even amusing, to wonder what he would think of Chowan today.



SIGNING UP—Professor Robert Mulder, of the English Department, checks a student registration form prior to enrolling him in an English course. Registration for the spring semester was conducted January 16th.

Plans Outlined For Talk-Ins

Plans are being made for Talk-Ins, 1973, a project sponsored annually by Student Personnel. The series would consist of four talk-ins. They will be conducted in the Askew Baptist Student Union and will begin at 7:00 p.m. "Time will be called at 8:00," said Dean Lewis. "Those wanting to continue talking may do so but each talk-in will officially last only one hour."

Each talk-in will be composed of six discussion groups. A group will consist of a discussion leader and seven or eight students anxious to share their ideas and willing to consider those of others.

Group leaders will be asked to be extremely conscious about dominating the discussion. The role of the group leader will vary according to the group. However, the primary purpose of the leader will be to provide an atmosphere where varied views can be projected.

Faculty members have been asked to serve as group leaders. Resource people will be asked to participate in the talk-ins on crime and transcendental meditation.

The first talk-in has been scheduled for January 30, 1973. "Come Back to the Garden, Hugh Honey," an article which first appeared in *Dialog*, V(Winter, 1966), pp. 38-43 and was reproduced in *Changing World*, *Changing Family*, Lutheran Press, Philadelphia, 1967, pp. 124-132.

"Come Back to the Garden, Hugh Honey" attacks Hugh Hefner's Playboy philosophy and compares it to the traditions of American religion and morality. "For those who are trying to discover some kind of meaning in the sex revolution, the article will be thought provoking and as a result may want to dip further into the writings of the king of bunnies and playboys, Hugh Hefner!" remarked Dean Lewis. "Living with Crime," an ar-

ticle from the December issue of *Newsweek*, pp. 31-36, will serve as the springboard for the second talk-in on February 13. The last sentence of the article reads, "It is only natural that Americans should turn to bolstered police and stronger locks to fight their fear and the criminal; the danger is that in the end they will put themselves in prison."

"Resource persons of the area have been invited to participate in this particular talk-in," said Dean Lewis.

The third discussion will be held on February 20 and will be on abortions. The article for this talk-in has not yet been selected. "We would like for citizens in the College community to recommend articles for this talk-in," said Dean Lewis.

The popular press has had difficulty in deciding whether transcendental meditation is a drugless high, a kooky fad or a medical miracle. The last talk-in will be based on "transcendental meditation and the science of creative intelligence," an article by Paul H. Levine, a chief scientist of the Astrophysics Research Corporation in Los Angeles, from the December, 1972 *Phi Delta Kappa*, pp. 231-235.

"With the help of Dr. Hargus Taylor, we are hoping to bring a specialist to this talk-in."

Through the years the talk-ins have grown in popularity. They provide an opportunity for students to make new friends. Also, faculty, staff and students can meet each other in a setting other than a classroom or office. Through shared ideas participants should develop new perspectives or a tolerance for those with different attitudes and values.

Dr. Hargus Taylor has agreed to grant the maximum two assembly absences to those participating in two talk-ins. Those participating in one talk-in will receive one approved assembly absence.

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, January 31, the 31st day of 1973. There are 334 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history:

On this day in 1958, Explorer I, the first United States earth satellite, was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida.

On this day:

In 1531, Holy Roman Emperor Charles II appointed his sister, Mary of Hungary, as regent to the Netherlands.

In 1606, Guy Fawkes, a conspirator against the government in England, was executed.

In 1865, in the Civil War, General Robert E. Lee was named commander in chief of the Confederate armies.

In 1943, in World War II, the Soviets announced that they had destroyed German forces encircling Stalingrad.

In 1944, in the Pacific, the American invasion of the Marshall Islands began with a landing at Kwayalein.

In 1950, President Harry S. Truman announced he had ordered development of a hydrogen bomb.

Ten Years Ago: Britain accused France of trying to dominate Europe after the French exercised a veto right to keep the British out of the European Common Market.

Five Years Ago: South Vietnam's president Nguyen Van Thieu declared martial law in the face of mounting guerrilla attacks throughout the country.

One Year Ago: There was violence coupled with a general strike in Northern Ireland to protest the killing of 13 civilians by British troops.