

Harris, Reuben Rivers ^[1]

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by William F. W. Massengale, 1988

1867–11 Jan. 1933

Reuben Rivers Harris, educator, was born in Unionville, Ky. After briefly studying law, he turned to teaching and for fourteen years was principal of the public schools in Decatur, Ala. Having prepared himself for the ministry, he served [Episcopal](#) ^[2]parishes in Florence and Gadsden, Ala., until 1908 when he accepted an invitation to become headmaster of [Christ School](#) ^[3] south of [Asheville](#) ^[4], N.C. He proceeded to convert the school from one of four impoverished Episcopal mission schools in the Blue Ridge Mountains into what came to be recognized as "one of the most important institutions of learning in the southern mountains." It drew its students from the surrounding areas as well as from low-country South Carolina, New Orleans, La., and Virginia.

The course of study at Christ School offered "a thorough education and training in good citizenship and the knowledge of Christ and His church." Citizenship was taught by allowing the students to operate the school's physical plant, including a farm, and by permitting them to enforce discipline. The chapel was the central focus of the school. High Church services were sung and an Angelus was rung twice a day. Mass was said every morning and evensong came with twilight.

While in New Orleans on a fund-raising trip Headmaster Harris, who had not enjoyed good health in recent years, became ill and died. He was buried outside the wall of a new chapel erected in his memory. Harris was survived by his wife, Emiline Rigard Harris, formerly of Akron, Ohio, and three sons and a daughter. One son, [David Page Harris](#) ^[5], succeeded him as headmaster of Christ School.

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Additional Resources:

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