

McLane, James Woods ^[1]

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by [William S. Powell](#) ^[2], 1991

22 May 1801–26 Feb. 1864

James Woods McLane, teacher, clergyman, and church official, was born in Charlotte, probably the son of George McLane, the only one of the name recorded under the various spellings of the surname in the 1800 census for [Mecklenburg County](#) ^[3]. The family moved to Illinois when he was quite young, and after local schooling McLane entered [Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass](#) ^[4]. It has been said that he rode horseback for the thousand-mile journey from his home. Following his graduation from [Yale College](#) ^[5] in 1829, he taught school for several years in New London, Conn., before returning to Andover to study theology. While at the seminary, from which he was graduated in 1835, he served as a tutor.

In 1836 McLane became pastor of the newly organized [Madison Street Presbyterian](#) ^[6] Church, in New York, where he remained until 1844, when he was called to the First Presbyterian Church in Williamsburgh, Long Island, N.Y. The latter church had recently suffered two splits—one over abolitionism, when seven members left, and another when twenty-three transferred to the Old School Presbytery. Under McLane's leadership, however, the breach was healed, and within a few years the congregation erected a large new brick church. He served there until 1863, when ill health forced his retirement.

McLane was a delegate to the General Assembly of his church and devoted many years of service to ecclesiastical and benevolent institutions. He also was the director and recorder of the Union Theological Seminary and secretary of the Presbyterian Church Election Fund. The American Bible Society's Committee on Versions engaged him to collate various editions of the English Bible in order to prepare a standard copy for adoption by the managers of the society in 1851. This work, it was reported, "he performed with great fidelity, pains-taking and accuracy." Under the [pseudonym](#) ^[7] "Coneroy," he contributed articles on biblical revision to the *New York Observer* and sometimes sent pieces to the *Quarterly Review* as well. In recognition of his scholarly contributions, New York University awarded him an honorary doctor of divinity degree in 1852.

In 1833 McLane married Ann Huntington Richards of New London, Conn., and they had six children, one of whom, James Woods, Jr., became a noted surgeon and president of the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

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Subjects:

[Biographies](#) ^[9]

[Religious Leaders and Clergy](#) ^[10]

[Educators](#) ^[11]

Authors:

[Powell, William S.](#) ^[12]

Origin - location:

[Mecklenburg County](#) ^[13]

[Charlotte](#) ^[14]

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1 January 1991 | Powell, William S.

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