

## Rippy, James Fred <sup>[1]</sup>

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## Rippy, James Fred

by Mark C. Stauter, 1994

**27 Oct. 1892–10 Feb. 1977**

James Fred Rippy, historian and educator, was born in a log house near Nubia, in Sumner County, Tenn., the son of Robert Sidney and Mary Frances Grant Rippy. He grew up on a subsistence farm until a fire that destroyed several of their buildings forced his parents to join relatives in Richardson, Tex., in 1902. In Texas, Rippy was graduated from Richardson High School in 1907 and entered [Southwestern University](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, Georgetown, in 1909, where he became a member of Kappa Alpha fraternity and was a champion orator and debater. Elected to Phi Beta Kappa, he was graduated in 1913 and then taught for one year at Clebarro College, a small Campbellite school in Cleburne, Tex.

In the fall of 1914 Rippy enrolled at [Vanderbilt University](#) <sup>[3]</sup> as a graduate student in history; he stayed one year, receiving a master of arts degree. On 19 Aug. 1915 he married Mary Dozier Allen, of Nashville, Tenn., the daughter of Purdy McFerrin and Bettie Dozier Allen. For the next two years Rippy taught at the Duncan School for Boys in Nashville before accepting a Native Sons Fellowship to the University of California in 1917.

At [Berkeley](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, Rippy studied Hispanic American history under the direction of Herbert Eugene Bolton. After his dissertation, "The Relations of the United States and Mexico, 1848–1860," was accepted for the Ph.D. degree in 1920, Rippy was named to an instructorship in Latin American history at the University of Chicago. There his excellent record of publication and effective teaching earned him rapid promotion—to assistant professor in 1923 and to associate professor the next year. In 1924 Rippy taught at the summer school of [The University of North Carolina](#) <sup>[5]</sup>. In the spring of 1926, while a visiting professor at Stanford University, he was offered a full professorship at [Duke University](#) <sup>[6]</sup>, which was then in the midst of its initial expansion program. Desirous of returning to his native South, Rippy accepted the appointment and assumed his duties in the fall.

In Durham his career continued to advance. He was a popular lecturer, an editor of the Duke University Press (1929–36), and a productive scholar. His publications included a biography of Joel R. Poinsett (1935) and an edition of [Furnifold M. Simmons](#) <sup>[7]</sup>'s papers and memoirs (1936). In 1935 Rippy served as a U.S. delegate to the Pan-American Conference on History and Geography. He held both Guggenheim (1927) and Carnegie (1928) fellowships. In 1933–34 he was president of the [North Carolina Literary and Historical Association](#) <sup>[8]</sup>. He also sat on the editorial boards of the *Hispanic-American Historical Review* and the *American Historical Review*.

In 1936 Rippy returned to the University of Chicago, where he stayed until his retirement in 1958. During his distinguished career he directed over one hundred theses and dissertations in his field, and he wrote, edited, and was coauthor of over a score of major publications. In 1960 he received the William Volker Award for distinguished service as a scholar and teacher, and in 1961 Southwestern University honored him with the D.Litt. degree.

Rippy was the father of three sons: James Fred, Jr., Robert Allen, and Frazier Winston. He was a member of the San Martin Society and the Bolivarian Society of the United States. Upon retirement, Rippy and his wife returned to [Durham](#) <sup>[9]</sup>, where they lived until poor health necessitated a move to [Wilmington](#) <sup>[10]</sup> in 1972. Rippy, a Democrat and a Methodist, died in Wilmington and was buried in [Oakdale Cemetery](#) <sup>[11]</sup>.

### References:

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*Wilmington Morning Star*, 12 Feb. 1977.

### Additional Resources:

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[Biographies](#) [14]

[Educators](#) [15]

[Historians](#) [16]

[Writers, journalists, and editors](#) [17]

## Authors:

[Stauter, Mark C.](#) [18]

## Origin - location:

[New Hanover County](#) [19]

[Wilmington](#) [20]

[Durham County](#) [21]

[Durham](#) [22]

[Duke University](#) [23]

[Orange County](#) [24]

[University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#) [25]

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[6] <https://ncpedia.org/duke-university>

[7] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/simmons-furnifold>

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[9] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/durham-city>

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