

# A Century of News

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people

By Shar

## 100 Years Ago

The News and Herald, Winnsboro, S.C., December 15, 1886.

### James H. Rion

Perhaps no event in the history of Winnsboro has produced a deeper impression than the death of Col. James H. Rion, which occurred at his home at three o'clock on the morning of Sunday the 12th inst. Sudden death carries with it ever something more of sadness than that which arises from the announcement that a man, having run his course, having finished his work, has been called hence to Eternity. This is especially true when the summons comes to one upon whom the community justly looked as a model of prudence, temperance and those other virtues the practice of which is enjoined as well as a means of prolonging life as of discharging its several duties. From the standpoint of human judgment, Col. Rion seemed to have before him many years of activity and usefulness. To close and interested observers there had been, for some months past, signs of a falling off in activity, but these even were not always observable. On the very day which was Col. Rion's last on earth, it was remarked that he was in unusually fine spirits. It was the anniversary of his wedding day. To celebrate this, he had at his home a few of his friends, besides those members of his family living in Winnsboro. It was about six o'clock on Saturday afternoon when he was stricken with a severe pain which caused him, conscious as he seemed to be of the bodily infirmity with which he was afflicted, to utter at once the word *angina*. It was at first supposed that he had suffered a stroke of paralysis, but it was soon apparent that his own diagnosis was

the true one. He was dying of neuralgia of the heart. Perfectly conscious, though at times suffering great pain, he conversed freely with those around, touching the condition of his affairs, the disposition of his estate, and other matters sacred to those to whom he spoke. The end at last was painless and peaceful.

James Henry Rion was born in Montreal, Canada, on the 17th April, 1828. His parents were English, his father being an engineer in the English army. He was educated chiefly in Pendleton, S.C., where he was an inmate of the family of John C. Calhoun. He was prepared to enter the West Point Military Academy, but afterwards became a student in the South Carolina College. From this institution he graduated, with the first honor of his class, in December, 1850. Early in 1851, he came to Winnsboro, taking a professorship in Mount Zion Institute. He was admitted to the bar in 1854, and from that time.....and successfully to the profession of which he stood in the very front rank. On the breaking out of the War of Secession he was elected colonel of the Sixth Regiment of South Carolina Volunteers, and served with that command until his resignation in June, 1861. Returning home he at once raised a company, which was afterwards assigned to the Seventh Battalion of Rifles, commanded by the late Col. P.H. Nelson. Of this fine body of troops Col. Rion was soon made major, and, upon the death of Col. Nelson in 1864, was promoted to the position of lieutenant-colonel...

...At the close of the war Col. Rion resumed the practice of his profession, and very soon acquired an extensive clientage. Few important causes have been heard in the courts in Fairfield, in which he was

not engaged as counsel. His practice was by no means confined to Fairfield, but extended into other counties, covering perhaps a larger territory than that of any other lawyer in South Carolina.

He was likewise counsel for several railroad companies, and for the Winnsboro National Bank.

It was as a lawyer that Col. Rion achieved his reputation in South Carolina. The qualities that brought him success were a fine intellect well trained, admirable business habits, industry and punctuality in his profession, and devotion to his clients' interests. It was not only the great lawsuit involving large interests and promising great rewards, but also the rights and interests of the humblest, that excited his sympathy, and called forth a zealous discharge of his duty. Some of his ablest efforts in the courthouse were those in which there was no hope of gain even in the event of success.

Col. Rion never held public office - preferring to devote himself to his calling as a lawyer. More than once the highest honors of his profession were at his command, but he made it understood that he would accept no office whatever. In the course of his life he filled several places of honor and trust. He was major of the battalion of cadets in Mount Zion Institute, and received from them the gift of a handsome sword and belt. In 1858 he was elected colonel of the 25th Regiment of State militia. In 1859 he was made president of the Planter's Bank of Fairfield. He was for many years a useful member of the Mount Zion Society, and the chairman of its Board of Trustees. He was on the Board of Trustees of the South Carolina College, and that institution had nowhere a warmer or truer friend. He was a director of the Winnsboro National Bank, and a director of the Charlotte, Columbia

& Augusta, and of the  
Greenville & Columbia R.