

James Thomas Rucker, son of William Parks Rucker (doctor and lawyer) and Margaret Scott Rucker, was born November 22, 1856, at Covington, Virginia, and died August 20, 1916, at Lewisburg, West Virginia. When James was fourteen years old, his father moved to Lewisburg, West Virginia to practice law, having some years before graduated from law school of the University of Virginia. In Lewisburg, James attended an academy and read law in his father's office. He did not stick to the legal profession, choosing teaching instead. His first teaching was done in the school of the Greenbrier County, West Virginia. He was married to Ida Riffe in 1882 with whom he moved to Missouri, where for several years Rucker was principal of the elementary schools and high schools in Keytesville. When he returned to West Virginia, he became principal of the grades and high school at Lewisburg. He was appointed Superintendent of the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind in 1897. Of Rucker's records Superintendent of the Schools from 1897 to 1910, his daughter says:

*“He secured an appropriation for the erection of a new and spacious school building, enlarged the shop building, built an infirmary, and installed an electric light plant, erected fire escapes and more baths. For the school he bought a farm, his pet project. My father enlarged the music department for the blind, employed the first regular physical education teachers for both boys and girls, and football and basketball were played on the campus for the first time. He permitted dancing in the school for the first time; for this he received a storm of criticism from the townsfolk.”*

It will be recalled that Rucker was the first head of the schools officially be called “Superintendent” instead of “Principal.” Until shortly before his death in 1916, Rucker was employed by the state compensation commission.