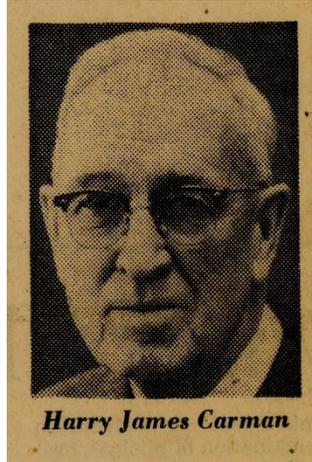


# **This Week in Saratoga County History**

## **From Farm Boy to University Dean**

**Submitted by Rachel Clothier December 16, 2021**

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“Here is a good dirt farmer gone wrong” is how Harry James Carman described himself. He started out as a poor, farm-raised country boy in Saratoga County and rose to the position of Dean of Columbia University in New York City.

Born in 1884 in the town of Greenfield to Winslow and Anna Carman he attended the Coy School District until the family moved to the hamlet of Wagman’s Ridge in the town of Saratoga. Miss Carrie Peck was his teacher in the one room school house and Harry achieved many Regents credits in her classes. In the summer of 1902, he was approached by Dr. Abram Mark Hollister who was scouting for pupils for the Corinth Teacher Training Institute. In later years Harry remembered Dr. Hollister- “Before you had departed you had won another country boy to come to Corinth in September.”

When Harry arrived in Corinth Dr. Hollister met him at the post office. It was the first time that seventeen-year-old boy had ever been away from home. As the two walked down the street Dr. Hollister asked what his plans were for the future. Carman had only planned to teach in a country school, but Dr. Hollister asked if he ever planned to go onto college. That was the turning point in his life.

After receiving his certificate from the Teacher Training Class, he taught for a couple years at a small school for a salary of \$7.50 per week. In 1905 he commenced his studies at Syracuse

University and graduated in 1909. He was hired as principal of the Rhinebeck, NY high school. Four years later he returned to Syracuse for his master's degree and taught history and political sciences at Syracuse. He attained his PhD in 1919 from Columbia University and later joined the Department of History at the college. Columbia senior students voted him the most popular professor for seven years. In 1943 he became Dean of the Teacher's College at Columbia University until his retirement in 1950.

Dr. Carman was quoted in 1945 "There is a great and difficult job facing American colleges, the job of finding and financing the submerged brains of the nation, of whatever economic level, of whatever color and creed, the young men and women with good minds must be found and fostered. They are our greatest natural resource." He was also an early advocate of gifted and talented programs in schools.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower became president of Columbia University in 1948 and went on to have a close friendship with Dean Carman. Numerous college textbooks on U.S. History were authored by Dr. Carman. He was considered an outstanding historian and served for a quarter of a century on the New York City Board of Higher Education and on the boards of many colleges. It was said that he helped revolutionize education at Columbia and establish their humanities programs.

Harry James Carman eventually returned to his small farm near Schuylerville. Neighbors said one could find his farm easily- "it's the one with all the flowers." He died in 1954 a few days before his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday. Funeral services were held at the Church of the Visitation and he is buried in Schuylerville.

In his youth he had a difficult time deciding whether to be a teacher or a farmer. He felt everyone should spend some time working the soil but he also found great rewards in the classroom.

Sources: Excerpts of letter written by Dr. Carmen to Dr. Hollister March 27, 1945, January 9, 1945 Saratogian, December 27, 1964 New York Herald Tribune and biography of Dean Carmen compiled by Clayton H. Brown. All on file at Corinth Museum.