

Flanagan, Edward Gaskill ^[1]

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by John D. Neville, 1986

3 Dec. 1875–17 June 1942

Edward Gaskill Flanagan, businessman and politician, was born in Greenville, the son of [John Flanagan](#) ^[2] and Mary Wise Gaskill. After completing his education at the Greenville Academy, he went to Texas where for two years he worked on a ranch near San Antonio. He returned to Greenville to head the John Flanagan Buggy Company established by his father. The company successfully made the transition to the automobile age by becoming Greenville's Ford dealership and in 1934 sold more Ford automobiles than any other dealer. Flanagan was also president of the Twin County Motor Company, the Ford dealer in Rocky Mount. As the John Flanagan Buggy Company also made and sold coffins, Flanagan studied embalming in Georgia and became a funeral director. He served as president of the North Carolina Funeral Directors and Embalmers Association from 1909 to 1910 and helped both to create the State Board of Embalmers and to institute the examining and licensing of undertakers and embalmers. He was the first to take the test and to be licensed.

From 1915 until his death Flanagan was president of the Guarantee Bank and Trust Company in Greenville (now merged with Wachovia) and a director of the [Wachovia Bank and Trust Company](#) ^[3]. He was the founder and first president of Carolina Sales Corporation of Greenville as well as a director of the Occidental Life Insurance Company and of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation of Charlotte. He served on the Greenville City School Board (1915–42) and was a charter member of the board of trustees for East Carolina Teachers College (now [East Carolina University](#) ^[4]), serving as vice-chairman of the board and as chairman of the building committee. [Flanagan Building](#) ^[5] was named in his honor.

A [Democrat](#) ^[6], Flanagan served four terms (1927–29 and 1931–33) in the North Carolina House of Representatives and one term (1937) in the North Carolina Senate. There he supported the growth of East Carolina, the improvement of highways, the reform of prisons, and the expansion of institutions for the tubercular. He was an opponent of slot machines and the law forbidding them bears his name. A delegate to the Democratic national conventions of 1928, 1932, and 1936, Flanagan, who was a Baptist, actively supported Al Smith in 1928.

On 18 Oct. 1899 he married Rosa Mildred Hooker. They had six children: E. Graham, Rosamond (Mrs. Tyrus Wagner), John, Charles, William, and Gertrude. The latter two died in infancy. Flanagan was buried in Cherry Hill Cemetery, Greenville. Portraits of him are in the possession of Mrs. E. Graham Flanagan, Sr., and Mrs. Tyrus Wagner, both of Greenville.

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