

Hampton, John Robinson ^[1]

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by David Pfaff, 1988

1 Apr. 1807–9 Feb. 1880

John Robinson Hampton, politician and planter, was the son of George W. and Cornelia Henderson Hampton. Hampton, whose father was sheriff of Mecklenburg County ^[2] in 1810, was born in Charlotte and raised as a Presbyterian ^[3]. Little is known about his youth except that he was orphaned at an early age, and, having received only three months of formal education, he learned the printing trade. He left North Carolina to set up a newspaper in Macon, Miss., before moving to Tuscaloosa, Ala., where he married Frances Ann Webb. In 1843, after having two children, Henry and Susan, they moved to Union County, Ark., where Frances soon died. He later married Nancy Gabeen by whom he had two sons, J. E. and George, and two daughters, Charlotte and Fannie.

Hampton's political career began in 1843, when he was appointed to a commission to select a county seat for Union County. Shortly afterwards he moved to Bradley County and settled on a 1,300-acre plantation, Forest Home. A Democrat ^[4], he was elected in 1846 to represent Bradley County in the state senate, then reelected to serve in 1848–49 and 1850–51. During the latter term he was elected president of the senate, and because of his position he served as acting governor in September 1851 during the absence of Governor John Roane ^[5]. He was returned to the senate by Union County in 1852. In the following year, he and several others incorporated the Cairo and Fulton Railroad.

While serving as senator from Bradley and Union counties in 1856–57, he was again elected president of the senate. From 21 April to 14 September 1857, he became acting governor for the second time when Governor Elias Conway ^[6] had to leave the state due to illness. In 1856, the county seat of Calhoun County was named for Hampton ^[7]. Bradley and Dallas counties sent him back to the senate in 1858 and 1862.

In 1861 Hampton was chosen one of Arkansas' six electoral delegates supporting Jefferson Davis's bid for the presidency of the Confederacy. In the fall of 1864 Hampton was a delegate from Bradley and Dallas counties to the Confederate legislature in Washington, Ark., then the state capital while a part of the state was in federal hands. His political career ended with service as senator from the Eighteenth District in the general assemblies of 1877 and 1879. He died in office and was buried in the Bradley County cemetery.

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Additional Resources:

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