

Arrington, Archibald Hunter ^[1]

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Arrington, Archibald Hunter

by D. A. Yanchisin, 1979

13 Nov. 1809–20 July 1872



North Carolina Museum of History.

^[2]Archibald Hunter Arrington, planter, lawyer, and representative in the [U.S. Congress](#) ^[3] and the [Congress of the Confederate States of America](#) ^[4], was born at the family home in Hilliardston on Swift Creek, about fifteen miles north of Nashville in [Nash County](#) ^[5]. His mother, Elizabeth Nicholson, was the widow of Allen Mann; his father, John Arrington, was an influential and wealthy planter of Nash County who had served in the state senate and who, on his death in 1830, willed his three children, Samuel Lewis, Elizabeth Ann Williams, and Archibald Hunter, over sixty slaves and extensive property and money. A namesake and nephew, [Archibald Hunter Arrington Williams](#) ^[6], was a prominent figure in the state during the latter part of the century. Arrington—"Baldy," as he was affectionately called by friends and constituents—was educated in the local schools of Nash County and at Bobbit's celebrated Louisburg Academy; he read law under [Judge William H. Battle](#) ^[7].

Although Arrington became involved in politics, his primary interest was the management of his estates and related commercial activities. While he remained in North Carolina to develop the family fortune, his older brother, Samuel Lewis, moved to Alabama, where the Arringtons had substantial interests. The two brothers remained confidants, regularly corresponding about business affairs, politics, family, and friends, and Arrington often made extended visits to Alabama to look after his interests there. His activities so enlarged the fortune left by his father that his estate was valued at over \$300,000 in the 1860 census; he was one of the few agricultural entrepreneurs in [antebellum](#) ^[8] North Carolina to possess over a hundred slaves. His personal life, characterized by a hospitable and industrious nature, a passion for blooded horses, and a strong consciousness of family ties, was typical of his class.

Even Arrington's engagement in government reflected an elitist sense of responsibility. While his legislative career was undistinguished, essentially passive and negative, he was an extremely able campaigner. Standing as a staunch [Democrat](#) ^[9] when that party was very much in the minority in the state, he was elected to the Twenty-seventh and Twenty-eighth Congresses, 4 Mar. 1841–3 Mar. 1845. In 1840 he defeated the incumbent, General M. T. Hawkins of

Warren County ^[10], in the Sixth Congressional District, and in a memorable campaign of 1842, he was successful against the seemingly invincible Edward Stanley. His bid to the Twenty-ninth Congress, after redistricting, was thwarted by J. R. J. Daniel ^[11] in 1844. There was an attempt in 1858 to bring him into the gubernatorial election, but, following his own inclination and the advice of his nephew, Jonathan A. Williams, Jr., he demurred in favor of Duncan K. McRae ^[12]. McRae, despite Arrington's counsel, was bested by John W. Ellis ^[13]. Always a defender of southern rights, Arrington was a member of the state's secession convention. In 1861 he was elected to the First Confederate Congress ^[14] for the Fifth District and performed workmanlike service on the Committee for Indian Affairs ^[15]; he was defeated for reelection in 1863 by the belligerent antisecessionist Josiah Turner ^[16]. His last major political service was performed as a delegate to the Union National Convention of 1866. Locally prominent, he was long the presiding justice for the court of pleas and quarter sessions ^[17] in his county, and he was appointed a county commissioner following the 16 May 1868 act to better govern the former rebel areas.

Arrington's family ties attached both him and his brother closely to their Mann half-relations and extended into the Battle, Cooper, Drake, Williams, and Wimberly families of North Carolina. Arrington's first wife, Mary Jones Arrington (1820–51), was the daughter of Peter Arrington (1768–1837), purportedly the richest man in Nash County, and the mother of Mary Arrington Thorpe (d. 1883) and John Peter (b. 1851). Arrington's second wife, Kate Wimberly (1834–71), who was the daughter of Robert D. Wimberly of Edgecombe County, ^[18] bore him nine children, of whom six sons lived to maturity.

Arrington was interred in the family burial plot at his plantation in Hilliardston. Presumably, his family still owns the portrait or copies mentioned in a will he prepared in 1858.

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Additional Resources:

Archibald Hunter Arrington papers, 1744-1909. UNC Libraries: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/blogs/afam/index.php/archibald-hunter-arrington-papers-1744-1909/> ^[19]

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Origin - location:

Nash County ^[27]

From:

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1 January 1979 | Yanchisin, D. A.

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