

Rollins, Edward Tyler, Sr. ^[1]

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by [C. Sylvester Green](#) ^[2], 1994

12 Mar. 1864–22 June 1931

Edward Tyler Rollins, Sr., newspaper publisher, was born at [Cary](#) ^[3], the son of Wyatt Paul and Eliza Jane Smith Rollins. His early education was meager, and his formal schooling did not extend beyond the grammar grades of Page's School. He moved to [Durham](#) ^[4] about 1880 and worked first for the North Carolina Railroad and then for Blackwell Tobacco Company. In 1895 he became part owner of the *Durham Morning Herald* and for thirty-six years that paper was his life. In October 1894 three printers, W. W. Thompson, Zeb V. Council, and one Gates had formed a partnership to publish a small daily, the *Morning Herald*. In November another Durham paper, the *Daily Globe*, suspended publication, its composing room foreman, Joe H. King, joined the partners, and the fledgling paper became the afternoon *Globe-Herald*. By January 1895 Council and Gates withdrew and Thompson and King retained ownership. Immediately, they reverted to a morning paper and restored the name, the *Morning Herald*. In February 1895 Thompson sold his half of the business to E. T. Rollins, and the partnership with King continued for twenty-four years. Rollins assumed responsibility for the business end of the operation, although he did help with gathering local news. King served as editor, makeup man, reporter, and advertising manager.

From the beginning, the King-Rollins partnership was successful. Carl C. Council became a partner with Rollins in 1918, when he purchased the interest of King. The Durham Herald Company, as it became known, bought the afternoon *Durham Sun* ^[5] in 1929, and a 24-hour, seven-day-week newspaper service was provided for Durham. Rollins insisted that his paper should be profitable and should serve the community with conviction, courage, and accuracy. Fair in all his dealings, he inspired loyalty among his employees and was quick to compliment one for a job well done. He was always amenable to suggestions from them for improving the papers.

In service to the community, Rollins served on the boards of directors of several banks and building and loan associations. His advice was sought by local firms whose heads had come to know him through advertising. He was a director of the Durham Chamber of Commerce during its initial years.

His principal extracurricular obsession was economic administration of government, especially at the local level. To have a voice in that, he was a member of the Durham City Council for five years and was one of the first advocates of the council-manager form of government. In his stress on economy, he was not parsimonious, only insistent that expenditures be made on the basis of good judgment with full value for every dollar spent, a concept he used in his business. Rollins was one of the first publishers in the area to purchase a linotype machine as early as 1899.

The schools of Durham and [Durham County](#) ^[6] were also among his special interests, and he was vocal in his opposition to what he labeled "slip-shod" financial administration of the schools. He insisted on the control of public expenditures "by the idea of permanent public service." His convictions were so strong that he refused in 1925 to run for reelection to the council because he opposed a proposed added countywide tax. It was said of him that "he hated hypocrisy—shunned flattery and was utterly frank. He was a man of many parts and all of them admirable and wholesome."

Rollins married Bessie Steed of Oxford on 13 June 1900, and they were the parents of four children: Elizabeth (Mrs. P.G. Wallace), Mary Webb (Mrs. W. Y. Pickell), Steed, and Edward Tyler, Jr. He died at his home in Durham and was buried in Maplewood Cemetery.

References:

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