

Stanford, Richard ^[1]

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by Roy Parker, Jr., 1994

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Richard Stanford, congressman and teacher, was born in Dorchester County, Md., near Vienna, the son of Richard Stanford, whose father had arrived in Maryland from Scotland in 1633. He moved to the Hawfields district of Orange County ^[2], N.C., in 1789 and opened an academy in September 1790. Among his pupils was Thomas Hart Benton ^[3]. Elected as a Republican to the Fifth Congress in 1797, Stanford served ten terms and died in office. A Jeffersonian Republican before it became fashionable, he later cooled towards Thomas Jefferson and joined the circle of "Quid" ^[4] Republicans arrayed around Nathaniel Macon ^[5] of North Carolina and John Randolph of Virginia. In a district that included much of the state's Piedmont population, he survived several vigorous attempts to unseat him. At one point he had served longer in Congress than any member of the House of Representatives. He did not, however, exert wide personal influence, being especially in the shadow of Macon. He was periodically a member of the important claims committee and in the Tenth Congress sat on the new post office and post roads ^[6] committee.

In 1810 he advocated war with Great Britain but then switched to become an ardent antiwar Republican, along with a North Carolina colleague, William Kennedy ^[7]. In 1808 the state's leading Federalist ^[8], Duncan Cameron ^[9], had opposed him, but Stanford won by a "huge majority." Jeffersonians grew bitter in 1812 because of his antiwar stand and ran James Mebane ^[10] against him, but Stanford again won handily. In 1814, however, Roger Tillman came within 103 votes of unseating him.

During sessions of Congress, Stanford was well received in the tiny social life of Washington and in the older community in Georgetown. He lodged in the increasingly popular Crawford Hotel in Georgetown along with Thomas M. Randolph of Virginia, William Gaston ^[11] of North Carolina, and a geographically mixed group of House and Senate members. He died there of erysipelas ^[12] and was buried in the new Congressional Cemetery.

While living in the Hawfields district, Stanford met and married Jeanette, the daughter of Alexander Mebane, Jr. ^[13] They were the parents of at least two daughters: Ariana, who married Elijah Graves of Granville County ^[14], and Mary Mebane, who married Andrew Stith of Virginia. Following the death of his wife, Stanford married Mary (Polly) Moore in 1803; she was the daughter of General Stephen Moore ^[15]. By his second wife Stanford was the father of Lawrence and Adeline.

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