



Governor Harris Flanagin

During the Civil War, citizens of Arkansas elected an Arkadelphia man to serve as leader of the state's Confederate government. Harris Flanagin became Arkansas governor in 1862 and held that office during some of the most tumultuous years in American history.

Flanagin was born in New Jersey in 1817. He moved first to Pennsylvania and then to Illinois before settling in Greenville in 1839, then the county seat of Clark County, where he began practicing law. In 1841, he became a deputy sheriff, and in 1842, was elected state representative and served one term. In 1848, he was elected to the state senate.

Harris Flanagin married Martha E. Nash of Washington (Hempstead County) in 1851, and the couple had three children--Duncan, Nash, and Laura. Following Arkansas's secession from the Union in 1861, Flanagin joined the Second Arkansas Mounted Rifles and was commissioned a captain. The company traveled to Missouri and saw a great deal of active service. Following the Battle of Wilson's Creek (Elk Horn), Flanagin was made a colonel.

Arkansas's new constitution provided for the election of a governor in 1862. Even though he continued his military service during the war and was out of the state, Flanagin was elected governor of Arkansas, defeating incumbent Henry M. Rector. Harris Flanagin returned to Arkansas and took over the helm of state government.

Flanagin's time as governor was not an easy one. Following the occupation of Little Rock by Union forces in September of 1863, Flanagin moved state government operations to Washington in southwest Arkansas. The loss of Little Rock was a huge blow to the South's cause in the state, and Confederate authority diminished during the next few months. Flanagin called the Confederate General Assembly into session for the last time in the fall of 1864, ending meaningful political activity for Confederate Arkansas. Confederate armies in the eastern United States surrendered in April of 1865, followed by those in the Trans-Mississippi several weeks later. The last military action in Arkansas occurred in southeast Arkansas in late May, 1865.

Following the Civil War, President Andrew Johnson required some ex-Confederates and high-ranking officials such as former Governor Harris Flanagin, to apply for presidential pardons on an individual basis. Flanagin received a pardon from the president in December of 1865, but remained disfranchised until 1873. In 1874, as Reconstruction came to a close in Arkansas, Flanagin became a member of the Constitutional Convention and was selected chairman of the Judicial Committee. While in Little Rock working to form the state's new constitution, he became ill and returned to Arkadelphia a very sick man. He died October 23, 1874, and is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery.