

Donnell, Richard Spaight ^[1]

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by Gertrude S. Carraway, 1986

20 Sept. 1820–3 June 1867



Browne, William Garl(?), circa 1845.
"Richard Spaight Donnell." North Carolina
Portrait Index, 1700-1860. Chapel Hill: UNC
Press. p. 73. (Digital page 87).

^[2]Richard Spaight Donnell, congressman and speaker of the North Carolina House of Commons, was the son of Judge [John Robert Donnell](#) ^[3] and namesake of his grandfather, Governor [Richard Dobbs Spaight, Sr.](#) ^[4] A native of New Bern, he attended [New Bern Academy](#) ^[5] and Yale College and was graduated in 1839 from [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[6]. Admitted to the bar the next year, he began to practice law at New Bern. As a [Whig](#) ^[7], he was elected from [Craven County](#) ^[8] to Congress, serving from 1847 to 1849, but did not seek renomination.

Donnell moved to Washington, N.C., where he opened a law office and was one of the founders of the Bank of Washington in 1851. In 1855 he was one of the founders of Pamlico Bank. From [Beaufort County](#) ^[9] he served in the 1858 state senate and the 1860 North Carolina House of Commons. He was a delegate to the 1861–62 state Secession Convention and then returned to the house. Upon the resignation of Robert B. Gilliam of [Granville County](#) ^[10], he was chosen speaker of the house for the 1863 session and was renominated for the 1864–65 sessions. At the second 1865–66 session he resumed his seat in the house from Beaufort County; he also attended the [1865–66 state Constitutional Convention](#) ^[11].

Donnell died in New Bern. Over his grave in Cedar Grove Cemetery a tall monument is inscribed: "Beaufort County, his chosen home, records her gratitude for many years of distinguished services upon his honored tomb." He left no will and Mary S. Shepard administered his estate.

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Additional Resources:

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Browne, William Garl(?), circa 1845. "Richard Spaight Donnell." North Carolina Portrait Index, 1700-1860. Chapel Hill: UNC Press. p. 73. (Digital page 87). <https://www.worldcat.org/title/832326?oclcNum=832326> ^[2]. Accessed 10/14/2014.

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Origin - location:

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