

Fisher, Charles ^[1]

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by Daniel M. McFarland, 1986

20 Oct. 1789–7 May 1849

Charles Fisher, congressman and speaker of the House of Commons was born near Salisbury, the son of Frederick Fisher, who moved to Rowan from Shenandoah County, Va., before the American Revolution and served in the militia during that war. The son was educated by tutors, among whom were [John Robinson](#) ^[2] of [Cabarrus County](#) ^[3] and [William McPheeters](#) ^[4] of Raleigh. He studied law but never practiced that profession. Fisher began his public career when elected to the state senate from [Rowan County](#) ^[5] in 1818. At the end of that year, however, he defeated a Dr. W. Jones in a special election to fill the seat vacated by Congressman [George Mumford](#) ^[6] of the Salisbury District upon his death. Two years later he won reelection by defeating John Long. He declined to be a candidate for a third term. In Congress he served on the public buildings, manufactures, elections, and public lands committees. During his brief tenure in Washington he became a strong supporter of John C. Calhoun.

Returning to North Carolina, Fisher was elected to represent the borough of Salisbury in the House of Commons. During the next fifteen years he was returned to the house seven times by Salisbury and four times by Rowan County, and in the sessions of 1830 and 1831 he was speaker of the house. In the legislature Fisher supported western interests. In 1821 he introduced resolutions calling for a constitutional convention that might shift more power to the western part of the state. In 1823 he was a leader in a constitutional reform convention held in Raleigh. By 1829 he was supported by western legislators as their candidate for U.S. senator, but [Bedford Brown](#) ^[7] obtained the post. When the [constitutional convention finally met in 1835](#) ^[8], Fisher represented Rowan County.

Fisher was ardent in whatever cause he undertook and was usually loved or hated. As early as 1822 he supported the presidential aspirations of Calhoun. In December 1823 he attempted to block the Roanoke forces and their campaign to elevate W. H. Crawford to the presidency. In the House of Commons he introduced the Fisher Resolutions denouncing the nomination of presidents by caucus, but the resolutions failed to pass. In 1828 he supported a [Jackson](#) ^[9]-Calhoun coalition against Adams, but when Calhoun later broke with Jackson, Fisher followed his leader in opposing Jackson's administration. Fisher was a delegate to the Philadelphia antitariff convention of 1831, a leader of the Barbour forces in 1832, and an open supporter of [nullification](#) ^[10] by 1833. Nullification was such an explosive issue in Rowan County that [David Caldwell](#) ^[11] challenged Fisher to a duel, which fortunately never occurred.

By 1834 Fisher was willing to become a Whig if the Whigs would support Calhoun, but the Whigs were reluctant to oblige and Fisher eventually joined the southern wing of the Democrats. In 1838 he returned to the hustings, again campaigning under the Democratic banner, and defeated Dr. [Pleasant Henderson](#) ^[12] in a bitter congressional contest by fewer than two hundred votes. Once more he took his place on the elections and public lands committees on which he had served long ago. He was not a candidate to succeed himself in 1840, but in 1844 he was persuaded to run again against [Daniel M. Barringer](#) ^[13]. He was defeated by fewer than fifty votes, the first time he had ever lost a popular election. Although he was approached in 1846 as a possible Democratic gubernatorial candidate, he declined to run.

Charles Fisher married Christine Beard, daughter of [Lewis Beard](#) ^[14] and granddaughter of John Lewis Beard. She died in 1848. The following year the old congressman died while on a business trip and was buried in Hillsboro, Miss., survived by two daughters and a son. The son, [Charles F. Fisher](#) ^[15], served a term in the state senate from Rowan County and died in the Battle of First Manassas fighting for the [states' rights](#) ^[16] his father had so fervently championed.

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