

Furman, Robert McKnight ^[1]

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by W. Buck Years, 1986

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Robert McKnight Furman, editor and state official, was born in Louisburg to William H. and Rebecca Furman. Despite the fact that his father was a tailor of modest means, Robert attended the Louisburg Academy and the Norfolk Military Academy. When the Civil War ^[2] began, he was the youngest man in his company to enlist but was discharged after a few months for reasons of health. He reenlisted in 1864 and was appointed second lieutenant in Company H, Seventy-first North Carolina Regiment, where he served under General Joseph E. Johnston ^[3] until the end of the war.

In 1866, Furman took charge of the Louisburg Eagle ^[4] and managed it for one year before establishing the *Henderson Index* and, in 1869, the Norfolk Courier ^[5]. In 1870, he moved to Raleigh and worked on the Sentinel ^[6] for over a year. Moving to Asheville ^[7] in 1872, he bought the *Citizen*, at that time a vigorous Democratic ^[8] weekly, which he operated until 1876, when Jordan Stone joined him as coowner and proprietor.

Furman's first venture into politics occurred in 1872, when on four successive ballots in the Democratic convention he received the next highest vote for the office of secretary of state. In 1876, the state senate elected him its clerk, a position he held until 1892 when he was elected state auditor. In 1880 and 1892, he was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. In 1896, the Fusionists ^[9] took over the state administration and Furman was relegated to private life. Two years later he returned to Raleigh and became editor of the Morning Post ^[10], which he managed until his death in Beaufort.

Furman's contemporaries described him as a man of "fine personal appearance, [and] affable manner." On 18 June 1873, he married Mollie Mathewson of Tarboro.

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