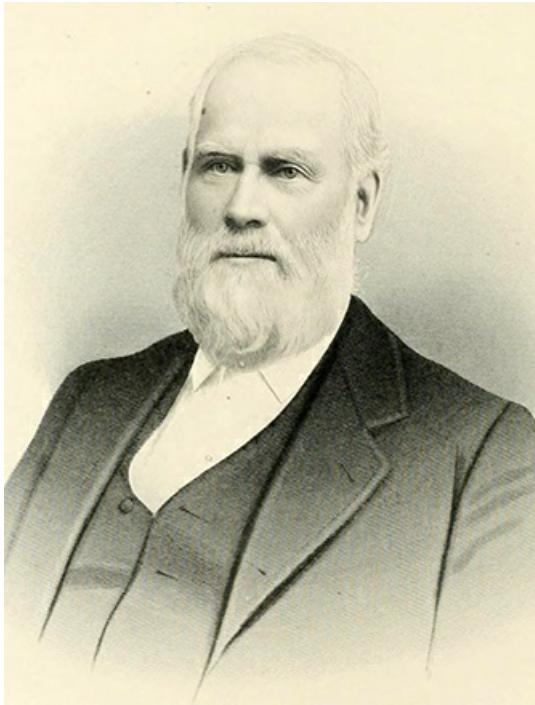


Hawkins, William J. ^[1]

Hawkins, William Joseph

by Buck Yearns, 1988; Revised by Jared Dease, Government and Heritage Library, December 2022

27 May 1819–28 Oct. 1894



An engraving of William Joseph Hawkins published in 1892. Image from the Internet Archive.

^[2]William Joseph Hawkins, physician and railroad official, was born on his father's plantation in Franklin (now Vance ^[3]) County. His grandfather was Revolutionary War Colonel Philemon Hawkins II ^[4] and his father was John Davis Hawkins ^[5], one of the largest planters in his district; his mother was Jane A. Boyd of Mecklenburg County, Va. For several years William studied at home under tutors and at the Spring Grove Academy in Franklin County ^[6]. In 1837 he entered The University of North Carolina ^[7], but transferred after two years to William and Mary College, graduating with distinction in 1840. In 1842 he was graduated from the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania and began practicing at Ridgeway, N.C.

Hawkins quickly developed a large medical practice. By 1850, his property and real estate was valued at \$13,000. This value included the twenty-five people Hawkins enslaved. Soon, however, he became absorbed in the business world. Following his father's interest, he invested in the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad and was appointed to its board of directors. In 1855 he became president of the railroad.

Four years of heavy traffic, accentuated by the inability to maintain rails and rolling stock properly, had reduced the Raleigh and Gaston to a deplorable condition by 1865. To revitalize the line, Hawkins conceived the idea of acquiring and completing the Chatham Railroad and of leasing the North Carolina Railroad ^[8] and several others to form the Raleigh and Augusta Airline. In October 1869, he offered an annual rental of \$240,000 for a twenty-year lease of the North Carolina Railroad. The directors were receptive to the offer, but the Raleigh *Sentinel* contended that the figure was ridiculously low and termed it "Plundering the State." The stockholders became convinced that Hawkins, W. W. Holden ^[9], and M. S. Littlefield ^[10] were plotting to defraud them and in November voted against the lease. The inability to acquire the North Carolina Railroad defeated Hawkins's plan, but the Seaboard Airline ^[11] grew out of his concept. By 1873 the Seaboard completely controlled the Raleigh and Gaston, and the friends of the North Carolina Railroad accused Hawkins of selling out to the Virginia-based railroad. Soon the Seaboard was selling tickets from Boston to Atlanta. Hawkins remained president of the Raleigh and Gaston until rheumatism forced his retirement in October 1875.

Hawkins was also a large stockholder in and a director of the Raleigh National Bank, and in 1870 he was instrumental in the founding of the Citizens National Bank of Raleigh. He became its president in 1890 and served until his death. From 1881 to 1891 he was a trustee of The University of North Carolina. He died in Philadelphia, where he had gone for medical treatment.

On 4 Jan. 1844 Hawkins married Mary Alethea Clark, daughter of David Clark of Halifax County ^[12]; they had two sons, Colin M. and Marmaduke J., before her death in September 1850. On 27 Dec. 1855 Hawkins married Mary's sister, Lucy Norfleet Clark; they had two daughters, Louise and Alethea. The second Mrs. Hawkins died on 9 Oct. 1867, and on 12 May 1869 Hawkins married Mary Ann White, daughter of Andrew B. White of Pottsville, Pa.; they had one daughter, Lucy C.

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"Yours Truly, W. J. Hawkins." *Cyclopedia of eminent and representative men of the Carolinas of the nineteenth century*.

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Origin - location:

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