

Heaton, David ^[1]

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by Max Williams, 1988

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David Heaton, lawyer, bureaucrat, and congressman, was born in Hamilton, Ohio, the son of James and Mary Heaton. He attended Miami University ^[2] in Oxford, Ohio, in 1841–42, read law, and was admitted to the Ohio bar, practicing in Middletown until 1857. During some of this time he also served as a justice of the peace, and for a brief period after December 1852 he was editorial co-manager of the local newspaper, *The Middletown Emblem*. In 1855 he was elected to the Ohio state senate and served one term before moving to Minneapolis, Minn., in 1857. Characteristically seeking political preferment, Heaton was soon elected to the Minnesota state senate for the first of three terms. He had been postmaster in Middletown from 1849 to 1852, and after settling in Minneapolis he was postmaster there. He was the author of *Summary Statement of the General Interests of Manufacture and Trade Connected with the Upper Mississippi* ^[3], published in Minneapolis in 1862.

In 1863, after serving five years, Heaton resigned his senate seat to accept appointment by Salmon P. Chase as special agent of the Treasury Department and U.S. Depository in New Bern, N.C. Later he declined the position of third auditor in the Treasury Department in order to pursue his fortune in the conquered South.

In the fall of 1865 Heaton became president of the New Bern National Bank, but this was merely a prelude to his activities in Reconstruction ^[4] politics. One of the founders of the North Carolina Republican ^[5] party, he was author of the platform adopted by that party on 27 Mar. 1867, contributed frequently to the Republican press, and was influential in the councils of the Union League ^[6]. Heaton was one of the leading Carpetbaggers in the Constitutional Convention ^[7] of 1868 and was chairman of the committee on the bill of rights. His ambition led him to compete with Joseph C. Abbott ^[8] and Albion W. Tourgée ^[9] for prestige and power in that assemblage. To gain a following, Heaton sometimes supported the position taken by native southerners; especially notable was his defense of the death penalty in rape cases.

Once the work of the convention was completed, congressional elections were held. In the Second District Heaton defeated the Conservative candidate, Thomas S. Kenan ^[10], and was thus eligible for a seat in the Fortieth Congress. He took the oath of office on 15 July 1868 and was assigned to the Committee on Elections; he also served as chairman of the Committee on Coinage, Weights, and Measures. His most successful legislative venture seems to have been in securing for his constituents a post road ^[11] from Pollocksville via Palo Alto to Swansboro. Heaton was reelected and served without distinction in the Forty-first Congress until his death in Washington. His last words are said to have been "God bless the colored people!" A few days before his death he was renominated for the Forty-second Congress. He was buried in the National Cemetery, New Bern.

Heaton married Mary Vaness in Hamilton, Ohio, on 29 Nov. 1843 and they became the parents of Harriet, James, and Cornelia.

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Additional Resources:

"Heaton, David, (1823 - 1870)." *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*. Washington, D.C.: The Congress. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=H000432> ^[12] (accessed August 19, 2013).

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Authors:

Williams, Max R. ^[16]

Origin - location:

New Bern ^[17]

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