

## **Robinson, Cornelius** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Robinson, Cornelius**

by Lacy Ford, 1994

**25 Sept. 1805–29 July 1867**

Cornelius Robinson, planter, commission merchant, and Confederate congressman, was the son of Todd Robinson, a Wadesboro, [Anson County](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, planter, and his wife, Martha Terry. His maternal grandfather was James Terry, a prominent Anson County Tory. Young Cornelius received his LL.B. from [The University of North Carolina](#) <sup>[3]</sup> in 1824 but never practiced law.

Sometime prior to 1828 he was lured out of his native North Carolina by the booming cotton economy of the Alabama Black Belt. Settling in the central Alabama county of Lowndes, Robinson soon established himself as a planter. On 3 Jan. 1828, in Montgomery, he married Martha Owen DeJarnette, an Anson County native of [Huguenot](#) <sup>[4]</sup> descent. Little is known about his antebellum business career except that he also had commission house interests in Mobile. Robinson served in the state militia; during the Seminole War of 1836 he was captain of Lowndes County's Benton Company, and later he rose to the rank of brigadier general.

Politically, he was a staunch Democrat who became a fierce Southern rights advocate as agitation over the issue of slavery in the territories intensified. Robinson, along with other radical Southern rights men, opposed the Compromise of 1850 because it failed to guarantee the South permanent equality with the North in the Federal system. Incensed by Third District Alabama Congressman Sampson W. Harris's support of the compromise, Robinson ran against the incumbent in the election of 1850. Harris, a bold Southern rights Democrat who suddenly found himself branded an unprincipled political opportunist by many of his former allies, won a narrow victory over Robinson and Unionist Democrat William S. Mudd.

Despite his defeat, Robinson's devotion to the Southern rights cause never faltered. Living between Montgomery and Cahaba, two urban strongholds of Southern rights extremism, he was drawn into the orbit of some of Alabama's most radical Southern rights leaders. Ultimately, he was elected to represent Lowndes at the Alabama convention of 1861 as an advocate of immediate secession.

After the Confederacy was formed, Robinson replaced John Gill Shorter in the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States when Shorter was chosen governor of Alabama. However, Robinson served in Congress for less than two months (30 Nov. 1861–24 Jan. 1862), resigning because his health prevented him from making the trip to Richmond for the next session. During the [Civil War](#) <sup>[5]</sup>, he served briefly on General [Braxton Bragg](#) <sup>[6]</sup>'s staff before failing health again forced his resignation. Returning to his home in Lowndes County, Robinson continued his planting operations even after the Confederacy's death in 1865. He died on his plantation, outliving his beloved Confederacy by only a little more than two years.

#### **References:**

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J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800–1860* (1978).

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#### **Subjects:**

[Biographies](#) <sup>[11]</sup>

[Planters](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

[Public officials](#) <sup>[13]</sup>

[Public service](#) <sup>[14]</sup>

#### **Authors:**

[Ford, Lacy](#) <sup>[15]</sup>

#### **Origin - location:**

[Anson County](#) <sup>[16]</sup>

[Wadesboro](#) <sup>[17]</sup>

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[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#).<sup>[18]</sup>

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