

Royster, Frank Sheppard, Sr. ^[1]

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by M. D. Edmondson, 1994; Revised by SLNC Government and Heritage Library, July 2023

24 Dec. 1849–1 Mar. 1928



Engraving of Frank Sheppard Royster Sr., circa 1906. Image from Archive.org.

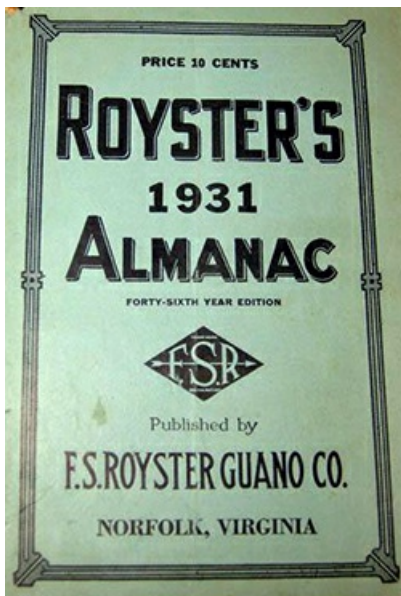
^[2]Frank Sheppard Royster, Sr., industrialist and philanthropist, was born in [Granville County](#) ^[3] on the farm of his father, Marcus D., near Oxford. Marcus, the son of Francis and Elizabeth Sheppard Royster, was of Scot-Irish descent. He married Frances Young Webb, daughter of John and Margaret Howard Webb, also of Granville County. Marcus and Elizabeth spent their lives on the land they tilled for their livelihood.

Frank S. Royster, the third oldest of five children, attended Oak Hill Academy, near his father's home. At age twelve he was sent to Bethel Academy, [Person County](#) ^[4], under the care of the Reverend T.J. Horner. He remained with Horner until the end of the [Civil War](#) ^[5], when he returned home to help on the farm and in his father's store. In 1870 Royster started his business career as a clerk for O.C. Farrar in Tarboro. He later became a partner in Farrar's merchandising firm, which furnished all kinds of supplies to farmers. Royster was credited with the discovery of the remedy for cotton rust and the use of baint, a salt imported from Germany, in the manufacture of fertilizer.

In 1881 he founded in Tarboro the firm of Royster and Strudwick to provide general supplies to farmers and to manufacture and sell fertilizer. Ten years later he established and became president of F.S. Royster and Company, in Norfolk, Va., as a wholesale dealer in flour, sugar, and provisions. The firm also began producing fertilizer on the premises rented from M and M Steamship lines. From this humble beginning S. Royster and Company became the largest independent, closely held fertilizer firm in the country, with some twenty-five manufacturing plants in the southeastern and middle western United States. The management was continuous and successful, stemming from the business ethics and principles of its founder and his associates. Royster remained president until shortly before his death.

A leader in civic and religious affairs and an elder in the [Presbyterian church](#) ^[6], Royster gave generously to the Norfolk General Hospital, Union Theological Seminary at Richmond, Va., and countless civic causes. He was the first president of the Norfolk-Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce and a director of the Norfolk and Western Railway, Chesapeake Steamship Company, and Virginia National Bank.

He married Mary Rice Stamps of Milton on 5 Nov. 1874. The Roysters had two sons, William S. and Frank Sheppard, Jr., and two daughters, Mrs. Richard Dickson Cooke of Norfolk, Va., and Mrs. William H. White, Jr., of Charlottesville, Va.



Cover of an almanac put out by the F.S. Royster Guano Co., 1931. Image from the North Carolina Museum of History.

^[7]References:

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E.G Williams and Bro. "F.S. Royster." *Biographical history of North Carolina from colonial times to the present*. Greensboro, N.C. : C. L. Van Noppen. 345. <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924092215478#page/n499/mode/2up> ^[2] (accessed March 25, 2013).

F. S. Royster Guano Company. "Almanac, Accession #: [H.1993.427.64](#) ^[7]." 1931. North Carolina Museum of History.

Subjects:

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Authors:

[Edmondson, M. D.](#) ^[14]

Origin - location:

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From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[18]

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