

York, Tyre ^[1]

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Tyre York, physician and politician, was born in Rockford, Surry County ^[2], the son of Michael York, a Surry County farmer. After attending the common schools in his home county, young York entered the Charleston Medical College in Charleston, S.C. He completed his medical training in 1857 and the next year married Eliza Crumpler, also of Surry County. They had three daughters: Emma, Euaia, and Alice.

In 1859 he moved to Trap Hill in Wilkes County ^[3] to pursue a career in medicine. Despite his later political duties, he always remained an active country doctor, serving the people of Wilkes, Surry, Ashe, and Alleghany counties. He also did some farming although he did not own or enslaved any people.

During the Civil War he was a peace man, sympathizing with the many western North Carolinians who evaded Confederate service. In fact, he often gave medical treatment to those hiding out in the mountains or caves and would supply certificates of ill health to others who were seeking to avoid army service. He himself served as a surgeon in the home guard to avoid active duty.

Before the war York was a Whig ^[4] but was not politically active. Afterwards, however, he entered public life as a Democrat ^[5], serving as clerk of the Wilkes County Court in 1865, a member of the House of Commons ^[6] in 1865, 1866, 1870, and 1879, and a state senator for the 1876 and 1881 terms. York was a successful Democratic politician in a predominantly Republican ^[7] county because he fought for the interests of the common people. He favored such reforms as reduction of taxes and the salaries of elected officials; his platform sought to work for the people in every way. He also showed a willingness to treat Black people fairly. In 1881, as chairman of the Joint Committee on the Psychiatric Hospital, he sought the appropriation of sufficient funds to complete the psychiatric hospital at Goldsboro for the state's black residents. He also led the fight to get the state to donate a portion of its land to Shaw University ^[8] in Raleigh for the construction of a building to house a new Department of Medicine. In 1882 York changed his political affiliation, joining the liberal Republican–Anti-Prohibition Coalition in North Carolina. He said that he switched parties because the Democrats failed to keep their promise to the people to abolish the internal revenue laws and because they advocated Prohibition ^[9]. Adamant in his opposition to Prohibition, York was the first person in the 1881 state legislature to speak against the issue when it was first introduced in the senate. He felt that the Prohibition bill was a "dangerous piece of class legislation" that violated people's rights, liberties, and privileges. Therefore, he accepted the nomination for Congress in the Seventh District on the liberal Republican–Anti-Prohibition Coalition ticket. Winning that campaign, he served in the Forty-eighth Congress (1883–85) but did not seek reelection in 1884. Instead, he was North Carolina's unsuccessful Republican candidate for governor that year.

In 1887, as leader of the Republican party in North Carolina's lower house, he displayed a keen interest in the common man, advocating all bills proposed for the benefit of the working classes and causing the formation of a Committee on Labor, of which he became chairman.

York retired from politics in the late 1880s except for serving as a presidential elector in 1896, returning to his medical practice and agricultural pursuits. He died at Trap Hill and was buried in the community cemetery.

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Additional Resources:

"York, Tyre, (1836 - 1916)." *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*. Washington, D.C.: The United States

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Origin - location:

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