

### **Elias Nelson Conway**

Born: May 17, 1812, at Greeneville Tennessee

Died: February 28, 1892, at Little Rock, Arkansas

Served: 1852-1860

Brother to Arkansas's first governor, Elias Conway was born in Tennessee and in 1833 moved to Little Rock, studied surveying, was appointed U.S. Deputy Surveyor, and served as Arkansas's auditor from 1835 to 1849. Conway declined the 1844 Democratic gubernatorial nomination, but accepted it in 1852. He was sworn into office on November 15, 1852, as Arkansas's fifth governor, and was re-elected to a second term in 1856. During his administration, the office of state geologist was created, major improvements were made to the state's roads and also in the state penitentiary, and large land grants were given to the state's infant railroad system. His greatest accomplishment was restoring the state's solvency, which he did by creating a court of chancery to settle the affairs of the ill-managed state Real-Estate Bank. After leaving office, Conway retired from public life.

### **Henry Massie Rector**

Born: May 1 1816, at Fountain Ferry, Kentucky

Died: August 12, 1899, at Little Rock, Arkansas

Served: 1860-1862

Henry Rector relocated to Arkansas in 1835 to manage lands he had inherited from his father, a land surveyor and speculator. In 1842, Rector was appointed U.S. marshal for Arkansas and in 1848 was elected to the state Senate. Through the 1850s, Rector remained active in politics and the law; in 1859 he was elected to the state's Supreme Court. In 1860, Rector stood for governor and won against a candidate fielded by the Johnson-Conway-Sevier "Family" political machine. In office, Rector proved a reluctant secessionist, although he authorized the seizure of U.S. arsenals in Little Rock and Fort Smith. After the secession vote of May 6 1861, Rector headed the state's mobilization, cooperating with more ardent secessionists. In October 1862, Rector campaigned once more for governor (the constitution adopted by the Secession Convention in 1861 had shortened the governor's term to two years). Rector lost the election and submitted his resignation to the Legislature. During the war, Rector served as a private soldier in the state's reserve corps. After the war, Rector returned to cotton farming and served in the Constitutional Convention of 1874.

### **Harris Flanagin**

Born: November 3, 1817, at Roadstown, New Jersey

Died: October 23, 1874, at Arkadelphia, Arkansas

Served: 1862-1864

Harris Flanagin taught mathematics and studied law before relocating to Arkansas in 1839. He was selected to the secession convention in 1861 and although a reluctant rebel, became captain of a company of the Second Arkansas Mounted Rifles, seeing action in the battles of Pea Ridge and Wilson's Creek. In the summer of 1862, a group of former Unionists, Whigs and Democrats unhappy with the Rector administration, promoted Flanagin as a gubernatorial candidate. Once in office, Flanagin urged the legislature to come to the aid of soldiers' families, to stabilize the state's finances and to suppress profiteering and moonshining but generally took a passive approach to exercising executive powers. In 1863, as Union forces advanced upon Little Rock, Flanagin simply went home

to Arkadelphia, assuming that his duties were finished. He was recalled by Confederate authorities, however, and presided over the Legislature's 1864 session in Washington. At the end of the war Flanagan returned to his law practice. In 1874 he served as a delegate to the state's constitutional convention.

### **Isaac Murphy**

Born: October 16, 1799, at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Died: September 8, 1882, at Huntsville, Arkansas

Served: 1864-1868

A lawyer and educator, Isaac Murphy was twice elected to the General Assembly of Arkansas from Washington County in 1846 and 1848, later relocating to Huntsville. In 1861, Murphy was selected for the Secession Convention. Murphy was ultimately the only delegate to vote in favor of staying in the Union. Upon the fall of Little Rock an election was held with the approval of President Lincoln and Murphy was elected governor. During the Murphy administration Arkansas began healing its war wounds even as the war continued in the southern parts of the State. Murphy took a low-key approach to governance and stated publicly, "We have all done wrong." By the start of 1866 Murphy's plans began to erode: The elections of 1866 saw a pro-Confederate legislature elected which increased Murphy's problems dramatically. Murphy decided to remain in office and worked for the best interests of the State while taking abuse from both sides. When Murphy left office his administration left a budget surplus even though his administration had begun with no funds. Murphy returned to Huntsville and took up farming and law once again and lived a quiet life with his family. Murphy died unexpectedly in 1882. Even former Confederates remembered him fondly in later years and textbooks that berated the "carpetbagger governments" reserved kind words for Isaac Murphy's temperate tenure.

### **Powell Clayton**

Born: August 7, 1833, in Bethel County, Pennsylvania

Died: August 25, 1914, at Washington, D.C.

Served: 1868-1871

Powell Clayton arrived in Arkansas in 1863 as a young Union cavalry officer. He bought property near Pine Bluff and remained in Arkansas after the war's end. Clayton helped establish the Arkansas Republican party and in 1868 was its candidate for governor. The gubernatorial election in that year was conducted with the referendum on ratifying the state's first Reconstruction constitution (which restored the governor's term of office to four years); on March 26 the people voted and on April 1 Clayton was confirmed as governor. In office, Clayton used patronage effectively to build a wider partisan base, putting Republicans into appointive offices whenever possible. During his service the Legislature enacted many significant measures, including levee and roads improvements, swamp reclamation, establishment of free public schools and schools for the deaf and the blind, as well as a prohibition of racial discrimination in transportation, housing, education and restaurants. Clayton's administration is better remembered, however, for controversies such as the declaration of martial law by the governor in response to the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, accusations of corruption in state aid to railroads, and bitter factional fighting within the newborn Republican Party. In 1871, Clayton sought and gained a U.S. Senate seat from Arkansas. At the end of his term Clayton returned to Arkansas and the

leadership of the state Republican Party, controlling federal patronage in the state and effectively establishing the tradition of “Post Office Republicanism.” In 1897 Clayton was appointed ambassador to the Republic of Mexico and served until 1905, when he resigned and retired to Washington D.C.

### **Elisha Baxter**

Born: September 1, 1827, in Rutherford County, North Carolina

Died: May 31, 1899, at Batesville, Arkansas

Served: 1873-1874

Elisha Baxter, a merchant, settled in Arkansas in 1852 and soon became involved in Democratic Party politics, serving in the state legislature and as a prosecuting attorney. During the Civil War Baxter was a lukewarm Union man but after the war, he helped establish the new Republican Party. His political rise resulted from quarreling within the Republican Party: in 1872, the “regular” Republicans were challenged by an insurgent movement opposed to party corruption at the national level and to Powell Clayton’s harsh executive style as governor. The insurgent, or “Brindletail” faction’s gubernatorial candidate was Joseph Brooks, an Iowa-born “carpetbagger.” Baxter was chosen as the “Regular” candidate and in the election of 1872 the official vote count, while widely disputed, favored Baxter. Once in office, Baxter sought to conciliate his old opponents, Republicans and Democrats alike, but his overtures to Democrats, plus a controversial refusal to issue railroad bonds, united Republican opposition toward this Republican governor. In April 1874 Baxter was physically removed from the State House and Brooks was sworn in as Governor by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. In the month that followed, the two governors’ supporters clashed but ultimately President U.S. Grant upheld Baxter’s legitimacy in office. He returned to the State House on May 15 to finish his term. He remained active in politics for a few years more but ultimately retired to his farm near Batesville where he practiced law until his death.