



William B. Bankhead

April 12, 1874 - September 15, 1940

Washington, District of Columbia

William Brockman Bankhead, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives and Alabama Democrat who steered much of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal legislation through the chamber, died in Washington, D.C., on September 15, 1940, of an abdominal hemorrhage. He was sixty-six and still in office. Days earlier he had fainted before a campaign keynote in Chicago; the hospital vigil that followed ended a Speakership begun when Jo Byrns died in 1936.

Born April 12, 1874, in Moscow, Lamar County, Alabama, into the Bankhead political family, he took degrees from the University of Alabama and Georgetown Law before a House career that stretched from 1917 until his death. Liberal by Southern Democratic standards of the era, he backed labor measures that irritated many regional colleagues while never forgetting the district math that kept him returned. Tallulah Bankhead, his daughter, carried the surname onto stages and screens; William kept it on the Speaker's rostrum.

Roosevelt's 1940 ticket left Bankhead without the vice-presidential nod he had hoped for, yet he remained loyal enough to open the president's reelection campaign. The body failed before the speech. Zadok Lorenzo Weatherford finished the House term; the Speakership passed to Sam Rayburn.

He died in Washington on September 15, 1940. Alabama still counts the Bankheads among its durable political clans.

Bankhead's quieter craft was procedural power - Rules, Majority Leader, then Speaker - the unglamorous machinery that turns White House ambition into statutes. Notice Nearby keeps the death date so September 15

remembers an Alabama liberal who died in harness between New Deal victories and a war the country had not yet fully entered.

Services

Died in Washington, D.C., September 15, 1940, while serving as Speaker of the U.S. House. Alabama Representative; father of actress Tallulah Bankhead.

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