

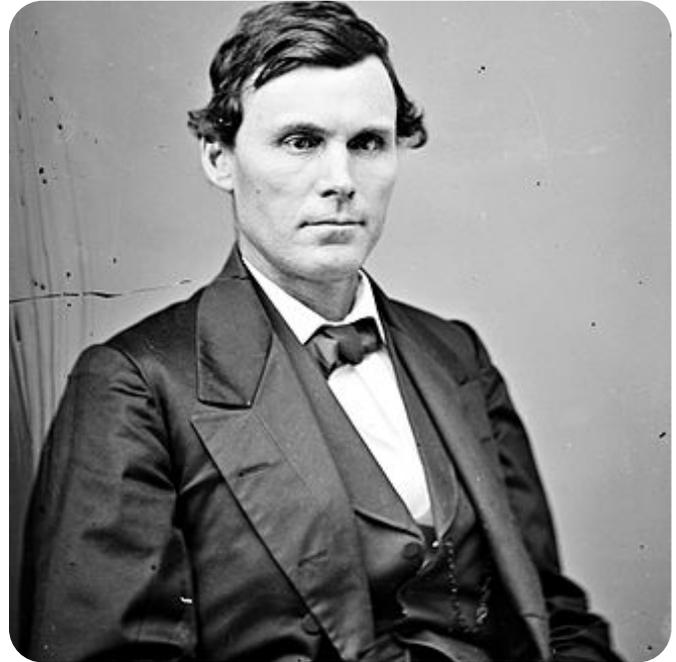
Speakers of the Oregon House of Representatives

Benjamin Harding

Marion County

1860–1861

Benjamin Franklin Harding (1823–1899) was an American attorney and politician who played a significant role in Oregon's early political development. Born in Pennsylvania, he pursued law and moved west, eventually settling in the Oregon Territory in 1850. Harding quickly became involved in local politics and was elected to the Oregon Territorial Legislature in 1850 to represent Marion County.



Harding was then appointed as the United States district attorney in 1853, and from 1854 to 1859, he served as Secretary of the Oregon Territory, the predecessor to the office of Oregon Secretary of State. In 1858, Harding was elected to the Oregon State Legislature. However, since Oregon had not yet been admitted to the Union, the assembly convened briefly before disbanding. After Oregon became a state, Harding continued his political career, still representing Marion County in the state legislature and again serving as Speaker of the Oregon House.

In 1862, Harding was elected to the U.S. Senate to fill the seat left vacant by the death of Edward D. Baker. During his time in the Senate, Harding notably supported the Thirteenth Amendment to abolish slavery, a significant vote as one of only two Democrats who voted as such.

After his political career, he retired to a farm near Salem, Oregon, and later moved to Cottage Grove, where he passed away in 1899.