

Blount, William Grainger ^[1]

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by William Blount Stewart, 1979

1784–21 May 1827

William Grainger Blount, congressman, was the oldest son of Southwest Territory Governor [William Blount](#) ^[2] and his wife, Mary Grainger, the daughter of Colonel William Caleb Grainger of Wilmington. William Grainger ("Billy") Blount was born at Piney Grove on Great Contentnea Creek, Dobbs (now [Pitt](#) ^[3]) County. [Hugh Williamson](#) ^[4] addressed a letter to William Blount on 28 Nov. 1782 at "Piney Grove, near Washington"; though Piney Grove was near Washington, it was closer to New Bern in [Craven County](#) ^[5]. Blount first studied at the [New Bern Academy](#) ^[6], of which his father was an original trustee.

In 1790, President Washington appointed William Blount, a former Continental officer and North Carolina signer of the federal Constitution at Philadelphia, the Governor of the Territory of the United States South of the Ohio River, better known as the Southwest Territory. He moved to Upper East Tennessee and established residence in the house of William Cobb. Two years later, Governor Blount moved with his wife and sons to elegant quarters in Knoxville. Billy was eight years old when he made this first trip to his new home in Knoxville. This house, known as the [Blount Mansion in Tennessee](#) ^[7], the oldest dwelling west of the Appalachian Mountains, was built in 1792 for William Blount, and it was here that Billy grew up and spent his formative years.

Blount studied French and music with a Mr. Fournier in 1794, and in 1797 he was tutored in Latin by the Reverend Samuel Carrick, a Presbyterian minister. Later Carrick became president of Blount College (now the University of Tennessee); Billy's sister Barbara enrolled in the college and became one of America's first five co-eds.

When Governor Blount died on 21 Mar. 1800, the education of his children was taken over by his half brother [Willie Blount](#) ^[8], who was also their legal guardian. Willie Blount, who served as the secretary to Governor William Blount, had been educated at Princeton University and was himself elected governor of Tennessee. He saw to Billy Grainger's legal training and had him admitted to the bar in 1805. Billy practiced law in Knoxville and also had avid agricultural pursuits. He was elected Tennessee secretary of state (1811–15) and subsequently was elected to the Fourteenth Congress to fill the Democratic seat left vacant by the death of [John Sevier](#) ^[9] on 24 Sept. 1815. He took his seat on 8 Jan. 1816 and, reelected to the Fifteenth Congress, served until 3 Mar. 1819; he declined to run again, so that he could return to peaceful Tennessee and the practice of law and farming.

That Blount had a sense of pride and love of his family is attested by the two brick monuments with stone tops in the old First Presbyterian Church Cemetery at Knoxville, which he had placed at the grave of his father, Governor William Blount, and that of his beloved aunt, Ann Blount Harvey (Mrs. James Harvey), the sister of John Gray and William Blount. Blount moved to Paris, Tenn., in Henry County, some two hundred miles from Knoxville, where he set up a law practice and became the leading citizen. His new career was short lived, however: he died suddenly at age forty-three. His grave is located in the Paris, Tenn., City Cemetery.

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