

Croom, William ^[1]

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by John Baxton Flowers III, 1979

4 Jan. 1772–9 May 1829

William Croom, planter, politician, and militia officer, was born probably on his father's dwelling plantation on Lower Falling Creek in Dobbs (now [Lenoir](#) ^[2]) County. His father, Major Croom, Sr., a son of Daniel Croom, Irish progenitor of the family in North Carolina, sold his patrimony in Virginia in 1743, when he was twenty-one, and settled a plantation on Lower Falling Creek. William Croom's mother was Olive Avery. In May 1771, Major Croom, Sr., and his eldest son, Joshua, were engaged to transport matériel for Governor [William Tryon](#) ^[3] when he marched against the [Regulators](#) ^[4] on the western frontier of the colony. Both Major and Joshua Croom served in the revolutionary militia; Major was a member of the committee of safety for the New Bern District in 1775 and 1776 and was appointed commissioner of magazines for that district in February 1779. Joshua Croom served in both the House of Commons and the state senate and was one of the outstanding public figures of [Lenoir County](#) ^[2].

It was in a home of public service that William Croom was reared. His early education is now obscure, but he was undoubtedly well educated. In 1793, when he was twenty-one years old, he succeeded his brother Joshua in the state senate. Reelected to the senate in 1794, 1795, 1805, 1806, and 1807, he manifested there a keen interest in agriculture.

Croom was an officer in the state militia, rising to the rank of major general. During the [War of 1812](#) ^[5] he was in command of the Second, Third, and Twelfth brigades of militia from [Lenoir](#) ^[2] and [Jones](#) ^[6] counties. During July 1814, when the British fleet under Admiral Sir George Cockburn landed and sacked Ocracoke and Portsmouth islands off the North Carolina coast, Croom rushed his three brigades to defend New Bern against what was prematurely reported to be an invasion of the mainland.

After the war, Croom retired to Newington, a large estate about three miles east of Kinston in Lenoir County that had formerly belonged to General [Richard Caswell](#) ^[7], first governor of the State of North Carolina. In 1826, Croom established planting interests in Gadsden County, Fla., though he never became a Florida citizen. Before his death he added to his landholdings the historic Tower Hill Plantation, established by royal Governor [Arthur Dobbs](#) ^[8], and the Rountree Plantation, both of which adjoined Newington.

Croom's first wife, Mary Bryan, was a daughter of Colonel [Nathan Bryan](#) ^[9] and his wife, Winifred Bryan, of [Jones County](#) ^[6]. The Crooms had four children: [Hardy Bryan](#) ^[10], who married Frances Henrietta Smith of New Bern; Susan Matilda, who married Edmond Whitfield of White Hall in [Wayne County](#) ^[11]; Bryan, who married Eveline, sister of the Right Reverend [Francis Lister Hawks](#) ^[12]; Richard, who married Winifred, daughter of General Bryan Whitfield of Spring Hill in Lenoir County and his second wife, Winifred Bryan.

On 20 Apr. 1809, Croom married Elizabeth Whitfield, a daughter of General Bryan Whitfield by his first wife, Nancy Bryan. Elizabeth Whitfield Croom was born 19 July 1787; she died at Kinston on 27 June 1831 and was buried beside her husband. Elizabeth and William Croom had six children: Nancy Bryan, who married Dr. Edward Croom Bellamy of [Nash County](#) ^[13]; William Whitfield, who married Julia Stephens, a daughter of Cicero Stephens of New Bern; John Quincy, who died young; Betsy, who married Stephen Bellamy of Nash County; George Alexander, who married Julia Church of Athens, Ga.; and Anne.

References:

S. M. Lemmon, *Frustrated Patriots: North Carolina and the War of 1812* (1973).

Lenoir County Records (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Emma Morehead Whitfield, *Whitfield, Bryan, Smith and Related Families* (1948).

Lillian F. Wood, *Daniel Croom of Virginia, His Descendants in North Carolina* (1945).

Additional Resources:

Colonial and State Records Search, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries:
<https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/search> ^[14]

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