

Dawson, John Gilmer ^[1]

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by Albert W. Cowper, 1986; Revised December 2021

19 Apr. 1892–18 Jan. 1966

John Gilmer Dawson, lawyer and legislator, was born in Institute Township, [Lenoir County](#) ^[2], the son of John H. and Ann Daly Dawson. His grandparents were Thomas J. Dawson and Huldah Daniels. The founder of the Dawson family was Christopher Dawson, who served as a captain in the militia and was the father of Colonel Levi Dawson of the Continental Army.

Dawson was educated in the Kinston public schools and, after working for several years as a clerk in Kinston, studied law at [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[3] from 1906 to 1909. Soon after receiving his license to practice in 1908, he joined the firm of Loftin and Vassar in Kinston. L. R. Vassar later moved to Lumberton and served on the [North Carolina Supreme Court](#) ^[4]. Dawson continued to practice law with the firm of Loftin and Dawson until Loftin's death. He was an active member of the Kinston bar until he died.

A lifelong member of the [Democratic](#) ^[5] party, Dawson served in the [General Assembly](#) ^[6] from 1919 through 1923—in his last year, as speaker of the house. He also served as chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee. In the legislature he became closely associated with Governor [O. Max Gardner](#) ^[7], and many expected that Dawson would attempt to succeed him, but Dawson did not offer himself as a gubernatorial candidate. Although, he continued to be influential in the Democratic party.

As a lawyer, Dawson was highly respected; as a speaker, he was without peer. He was a lifelong member of the Lenoir County Bar Association, the [North Carolina State Bar Association](#) ^[8], the [American Bar Association](#) ^[9], and the [American Judicature Society](#).

On 23 Nov. 1911 Dawson married Margaret Regina Weyher, daughter of Dr. Victor E. Weyher, a prominent Kinston physician who was born in Austria. Their children were Victor, born 27 Jan. 1916, and Ann (Mrs. Seavy Highsmith), born 1 Dec. 1919. Both Dawson and his wife were members of St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Kinston, and at times he served on the vestry. He also served on the board of trustees of The University of North Carolina (1911–53) and was a member and one-time president of the [General Society of Cincinnati](#). ^[10] Dawson also represented Lenoir County in the North Carolina Senate in 1957.

References:

Daniel L. Grant, *Alumni History of the University of North Carolina* ^[11] (1924).

Talmage E. Johnson and Charles Holloman, *Kinston and Lenoir County* ^[12] (1954).

Additional Resources:

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http://collections.si.edu/search/record/npq_SSSA5914 ^[13]

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North Carolina Manual. North Carolina Historical Commission, 1917. http://books.google.com/books?id=KdUGAQAAIAAJ&dq=john+gilmer+dawson+unc&source=gbp_navlinks_s&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false ^[15] (accessed May 28, 2013).

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[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[21]

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