

Kennedy, William ^[1]

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31 July 1768–11 Oct. 1834

William Kennedy, lawyer and congressman, was the son of John and Sarah Kennedy of [Beaufort County](#) ^[2]. Nothing is known of his early life and education. As a young man he was admitted to the bar and began the practice of law in [Pitt County](#) ^[3] but later lived in Beaufort County, where he owned several large tracts of land. Generally allied with the [Federalist party](#) ^[4], he at times associated himself with the Jeffersonian Republicans.

On 4 Mar. 1803, Kennedy entered [Congress](#) ^[5] and served until 3 Mar. 1805. Reelected, he served in the session of 1809–11 but was defeated in his campaign for still another term. [Thomas Blount](#) ^[6], who won the election, died in office, and at the next election Kennedy was again elected, serving during the years 1813–15. As a member of Congress during the [War of 1812](#) ^[7], he supported the war measures of the administration, although he was one of the North Carolina congressmen who voted in 1814 to lift the embargo. Defeated in his bid for reelection, he retired to Beaufort County and made his principal seat on a plantation above the town of Washington.

Kennedy's wife, Elizabeth, died in 1818. An infant daughter had died the year before. Kennedy's will, dated 20 Sept. 1833, left a large amount of land and personal property to his three children: Frances, Sophrorisba, and William L. The bequeathed property included more than thirty enslaved people. Kennedy was buried in the family cemetery near Washington.

References:

Biog. Dir. Am. Cong. (1961), which confuses Kennedy with another man of the same name.

W. Frank Craven, "William Kennedy" (unpublished sketch in the author's possession).

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

William H. Masterson, ed., *The John Gray Blount Papers*, vol. 3 (1965).

New Jersey Gazette, 13 Oct. 1779.

Will and Estate Papers, Beaufort County (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Additional Resources:

"Kennedy, William, (1768 - 1834)." *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*. Washington, D.C.: The Congress. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=K000116> ^[5] (accessed June 10, 2014).

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Authors:

[Flowers, John B., III](#) ^[11]

Origin - location:

[Beaufort County](#) ^[12]

[Washington](#) ^[13]

[Pitt County](#) ^[14]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#).^[15]

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