

Newnan, Daniel ^[1]

Newnan, Daniel

by H. B. Fant, 1991; Revised by Jared Dease, Government and Heritage Library, December 2022

ca. 1780–16 Jan. 1851

Daniel Newnan, Georgia planter, general, and congressman, was born in Salisbury. Daniel, his brothers John, Hugh, and Montgomery, and sisters Elizabeth (Gaither), Polly (Payne), Jenny, and Nancy survived Dr. Anthony Newnan, their physician father, who died in 1805. Their mother, Mary Montgomery Newnan, was the daughter of the wealthy Hugh Montgomery, who died in 1780.

The scion of this prestigious family attended [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[2] in 1796 but later, because of some indiscretion, fell under a parental cloud. Confident that the young man would turn out all right, a staunch friend of the Newnans, [John Steele](#) ^[3], helped Daniel get a junior commission, dated 3 Mar. 1799, in the Fourth Infantry Regiment, U.S. Army. Soon promoted to first lieutenant, the impetuous Daniel nevertheless resigned from the regulars in a letter that reached the War Department from Fort Wilkinson, Ga., on 1 Jan. 1802. Eventually he settled in the general vicinity of Milledgeville, which became the capital of Georgia about 1805.

Commissioned lieutenant colonel in the Georgia militia, he exercised statewide responsibility as adjutant general and inspector general from 13 Dec. 1806 to 10 Nov. 1817. With the outbreak of the [War of 1812](#) ^[4], he personally led "Newnan's Command" of Georgia volunteers into East Florida. In the Creek War of 1813–14, while campaigning in Alabama under Brigadier General John Floyd, Newnan distinguished himself but was felled by three balls on 27 Jan. 1814 and had to be evacuated to his own plantation in Putnam County, Ga. Mending rapidly, he rallied the state against the threat of British invasion from the harassed coastal islands. On giving up the adjutant generalship, he was immediately commissioned major general to command the Third Division of Georgia militia.

Politically a follower of Governor John Clark, General Newnan was elected from Putnam County to the lower house of the legislature of 1820–21, in which he served on a militia committee and reported for the agriculture and [internal improvements](#) ^[5] committee. Clark appointed him one of the state commissioners to help effect the Creek Treaty of Indian Springs, signed on 8 Jan. 1821, but could not get the Monroe administration to make him agent to the eastern Cherokee. On 12 Dec. 1823 the legislature chose Newnan to be principal keeper of the state penitentiary, a job he held nearly a year under [Governor George M. Troup](#) ^[6], Clark's successor and adversary. Resplendent in uniform in March 1825, when Milledgeville welcomed Lafayette, Major General Newnan resigned his commission on 14 November and the next day was elected by the Clark-dominated legislature to the position of secretary of state. He served in that capacity until November 1827, when Troup left office.

In the national election of 1828 Newnan, now identified as a resident of Baldwin County, headed the unsuccessful Clark slate of presidential electors. Next heralded to be from Henry County, where he may have had a plantation at or near McDonough, he did succeed in winning election to the Twenty-second Congress (4 Mar. 1831–3 Mar. 1833). In the first session of the House, he sat on the committee on post offices and [post roads](#) ^[7] and in the second session, on the committee on Revolutionary claims. During his stay in Washington, the tariff issue helped fragment the set factions in Georgia, and soon a Union party and a States' Rights or Nullification party emerged. As a candidate for the latter, Newnan failed to be reelected in 1834. Governor William Schley, though a Union man, recognized Newnan's availability and, by an executive order of 2 Jan. 1837, reconstituted him adjutant general of Georgia, an office he headed as colonel until 25 Dec. 1837 and thereafter as brigadier general until 22 Dec. 1840.

Much of Newnan's personal life is untold. Records of his native county in North Carolina are said to contain a letter that he wrote on 1 Nov. 1813, from Eatonton, Ga., to Captain John Fulton of Salisbury. In case of death in the Creek War, Newnan wanted everything left to his own small children, with a double portion to Mary, presumably Newnan's wife. In 1820 the Newnan household in Putnam County—besides Newnan and wife—consisted of three boys aged between ten and twenty-six, two girls aged between ten and twenty, and about 12 enslaved people who mostly labored in agriculture. What happened to members of the family is conjectural, but the aging general lived out his final years in a rural setting several miles east of Rossville, Walker County, Ga., just below Chattanooga and the Tennessee line. At the census of 1850, he was recorded as a seventy-year-old farmer, with only eighteen-year-old Hamilton Montgomery with him.

In 1853, after Newnan's death, the community of Newnan Springs, where he had lived, was shunted into the new county of Catoosa. In 1927 the citizens of Newnan Springs and of the distant city of Newnan, named for him, joined forces to place a bronze tablet to mark his grave in a cemetery near modern Newnan Springs Methodist Church.

References:

Biog. Dir. Am. Cong. (1971).

Daniel L. Grant, *Alumni History of the University of North Carolina, 1795–1924* (1924).

W. Edwin Hemphill, ed., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, vols. 5–8 (1971–75).

George Rockingham, *Sketches of Some of the First Settlers of Upper Georgia, of the Cherokees, and the Author* (1926).

Jethro Rumple, *A History of Rowan County, North Carolina* (1929).

H. M. Wagstaff, ed., *The Papers of John Steele*, 2 vols. (1924).

George White, *Historical Collections of Georgia* (1854).

Subjects:

Biographies ^[8]

Military personnel ^[9]

Planters ^[10]

Public officials ^[11]

Authors:

Fant, H. B. ^[12]

Origin - location:

Rowan County ^[13]

Salisbury ^[14]

From:

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

1 January 1991 | Fant, H. B.

Source URL:<https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/newnan-daniel>

Links

[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/newnan-daniel> [2] <https://www.ncpedia.org/university-north-carolina-chapel-hi> [3] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/steele-john> [4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/war-1812> [5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/internal-improvements-0> [6] <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/george-troup-1780-1856> [7] <https://www.ncpedia.org/post-roads> [8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [9] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/soldiers> [10] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/planters> [11] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/public-officials> [12] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/fant-h-b> [13] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-13> [14] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-19> [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>