

Dawson, William Johnston ^[1]

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by James Elliott Moore, 1986

1765–16 Jan. 1796

William Johnston Dawson, congressman, was born near [Edenton](#) ^[2] in [Chowan County](#) ^[3], the son of Colonel [John Dawson](#) ^[4], member of the provincial council, and Penelope Johnston, daughter of Governor [Gabriel Johnston](#) ^[5]. Dawson was reared at his maternal grandfather's estate, Eden House, in [Bertie County](#) ^[6] before being sent to England for his education. Upon his return to North Carolina, he entered politics and was elected a delegate to the [Hillsborough Convention of 1788](#) ^[7]. He was an ardent supporter of that unsuccessful bid to have North Carolina ratify the Constitution. In 1791 Dawson was elected to the House of Commons. During the same year, he was appointed to the committee of legislators entrusted with the selection of a permanent seat of government for the state and was influential in the final choice of [Joel Lane](#) ^[8]'s plantation as the future site of [Raleigh](#) ^[9].

In 1793 Dawson was appointed by the legislature to represent the Eighth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served until 1795. While in Congress, he advocated going to war with Great Britain over the British destruction of American vessels; however, the United States avoided war at this time. At the end of his congressional term, Dawson settled at Eden House, by then his mother's estate, and died there while still a young man. He was buried on the plantation.

References:

Biog. Dir. Am. Cong. (1950).

Griffith J. McRee, ed., *Life and Correspondence of James Iredell* ^[10], 2 vols. (1857–58).

John W. Moore, *History of North Carolina from the Earliest Discoveries to the Present Times* ^[11] (1880).

Additional Resources:

"Dawson, William Johnson, (Birth date unknown - 1798)." *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*. Washington, D.C.: The Congress. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=D000157> ^[12] (accessed May 28, 2013).

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Authors:

[Moore, James Elliott](#) ^[15]

Origin - location:

[Bertie County](#) ^[16]

[Edenton](#) ^[17]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#) ^[18]

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