

Dancy, Frank Battle ^[1]

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by Maud Thomas Smith, 1986

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Frank Battle Dancy, chemist, teacher, and businessman, was born in Tarboro, the son of William Francis and Mary Eliza Battle Dancy. He attended the schools of Mrs. William D. Pender and [Frank S. Wilkinson](#) ^[2] in Tarboro before entering the [Bingham School](#) ^[3] near Mebanesville, [Alamance County](#) ^[4], at the age of fourteen. Three years later he enrolled in [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[5], as a third generation student. His average grade for his four years was slightly higher than 93 percent, and he received several honors including the Latin medal in his freshman year and election as chief marshall in his junior year for the 1880 commencement exercises. He was graduated in 1881 with an A.B. and returned in the fall for further study in the field of chemistry. In February 1882, before he had completed work for the M.A. degree, he was named assistant analytical chemist to [Charles W. Dabney](#) ^[6] at the newly-created [Agricultural Experiment Station](#) ^[7] in [Raleigh](#) ^[8]. He remained there seven years and became the chief chemist.

During this time Dancy contributed several articles to scientific journals and other publications having to do with science or agriculture. He also collaborated with [Herbert B. Battle](#) ^[9] on [Chemical Conversion Tables for Use in the Analysis of Commercial Fertilizers](#) ^[10], published in 1885. This forty-two-page booklet was well received and brought him an unsolicited offer as professor of chemistry at Minnesota Agricultural and Mechanical College and chemist to the [Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station](#) ^[11]. Dancy declined this dual position, primarily because he wanted to remain in the North Carolina area. In 1889 he left his post at the Experiment Station to open a private laboratory. His reputation as a chemist increased considerably but his income did not, and for six months he was professor of chemistry at [Peace Institute](#) ^[12].

With the organization of the Caraleigh Phosphate and Fertilizer Works in 1891, Dancy began his business career as that company's secretary and treasurer; he subsequently was appointed general manager and, eventually, president. He also became a director of Raleigh's Commercial and Farmers' Bank. From 1894 to 1900 he lived in Norfolk, Va., first as manager of the Old Dominion Guano Company and later as a director of the Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company, which was created by the merger of the Old Dominion company and seven others. When [Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company](#) ^[13] was sold to northern financiers, Dancy became manager of its Norfolk Sales Division. In 1900 he was named managing director of the company's Georgia Sales Division; in that post he directed sales operations in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and parts of Tennessee. With headquarters in Atlanta, he became a part of Georgia's business development as a director of the Central Bank and Trust Corporation of Atlanta and other business institutions. He also was lieutenant colonel in the Georgia state troops in 1903. He served as vestryman and senior warden in the [Episcopal church](#) ^[14] and as finance committee chairman for the Georgia diocesan convention. He died in Baltimore on a job with the chemical company.

Dancy was a member (later fellow) of the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) ^[15], served as vice-president of the [Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society](#) ^[16], held membership in the [American Academy of Social and Political Science](#) ^[17] of Philadelphia, and became an associate member of the Association of Official Agricultural Chemists of Washington, D.C.

In 1887 Dancy married Elizabeth Hanrahan Grimes of Raleigh, daughter of William and Elizabeth Hanrahan Grimes. They had one daughter, Eliza Battle, and three sons, William Grimes, Frank Battle, Jr., and Bryan Grimes.

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