

## **Gaither, Nathan** <sup>[1]</sup>

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by C. Sylvester Green <sup>[2]</sup>, 1986

**1788–12 Aug. 1862**

Nathan Gaither, physician and congressman, was born in the northern part of Rowan County that later became Davie County <sup>[3]</sup> near the present site of the county seat, Mocksville. He was the youngest son of Nicholas and Margaret Watkins Gaither. The Gaither family had come to North Carolina from Maryland when others had gone to Kentucky. Young Gaither is described as having "received a fair English education at Bardstown College" in Kentucky. He then studied medicine in Philadelphia, where he was one of eighteen students who volunteered to receive the new smallpox inoculation as an experiment. During the War of 1812 <sup>[4]</sup> he was a surgeon to a regiment of Kentucky volunteers and afterward settled in Columbia, Ky., to practice medicine. Elected to the Kentucky House of Representatives, he served two terms between 1815 and 1818. In 1828 he was a presidential elector on the successful Democratic <sup>[5]</sup> ticket of Andrew Jackson <sup>[6]</sup> and John C. Calhoun <sup>[7]</sup>. In the same election Gaither was himself a candidate for Congress and won a seat in the House of Representatives. He served in the Twenty-first and Twenty-second congresses between 1829 and 1833 but was defeated in his bid for a third term. In 1849 he was a delegate to the Kentucky constitutional convention and from 1855 to 1857 he again served in the state legislature. Between service in the General Assembly and in Congress, Gaither continued his medical practice.

In 1817 he married Martha Morrison of Madison County, Ky., and they became the parents of Edgar B., W. N., George B., Margaret, Kate, and Mattie. Edgar was a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy <sup>[8]</sup>, and he and George served in the Mexican War <sup>[9]</sup>. A grandson served in the Confederate <sup>[10]</sup> Army. Dying in the midst of the Civil War <sup>[11]</sup>, Nathan Gaither's last remarks to his longtime medical partner were "I have outlived the liberties of my country and it is time for me to die."

### **References:**

*Bio. Dir. Am. Cong.* (1961).

*Filson Club History Quarterly* 30 (1956).

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W. H. Perrin and others, *Kentucky, A History of the State* (1887).

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### **Additional Resources:**

"Gaither, Nathan, (1788 - 1862)." *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*. Washington, D.C.: The Congress. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=G000010> <sup>[12]</sup> (accessed August 20, 2013).

### **Subjects:**

Biographies <sup>[13]</sup>

Physicians, Dentists, Pharmacists, and other Medical Professionals <sup>[14]</sup>

Public officials <sup>[15]</sup>

### **Authors:**

Green, C. Sylvester <sup>[16]</sup>

### **Origin - location:**

Davie County <sup>[17]</sup>

### **From:**

Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press. <sup>[18]</sup>

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