

Gatlin, Alfred Moore ^[1]

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Gatlin, Alfred Moore

by James D. Everhart, Jr., 1986

b. 20 Apr. 1790

Alfred Moore Gatlin, lawyer and congressman, was born in [Edenton](#) ^[2], one of six children of James and Mary Gatlin of Craven County. Alfred's older brother James, Jr., was the father of Radford Gatlin, eponym of Gatlinburg, Tenn. The will of James Gatlin, probated in 1801, directed that his property be rented, sold or otherwise completely "appropriated to the use of raising and educating my son Alfred." A guardian was appointed by the Craven County Court in 1804 to oversee Alfred's education. He pursued classical studies in New Bern before entering [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[3], where he received an A.B. in 1808 and an M.A. in 1812. Deeds settling a family estate in June 1810 reveal that Gatlin was then living in New Bern. A [Chowan County](#) ^[4] marriage bond of January 1813 shows him to have been bondsman at the Edenton wedding of Thomas S. Singleton and Harriet H. Skinner. Gatlin may have studied law in Edenton, although after he was admitted to the bar in 1823 he is said to have commenced practice in [Camden County](#) ^[5].

Concurrent with the birth of his legal career in 1823, Gatlin was elected to the Eighteenth Congress. A Democrat, he represented the First Congressional District which then included Hertford, Gates, Chowan, Perquimans, Pasquotank, Camden, and Currituck counties. Gatlin defeated incumbent [Lemuel Sawyer](#) ^[6], a native and resident of Camden County. It is thought that this campaign inspired the minor plot in Sawyer's play *Blackbeard* (1824), which describes the defeat of an honest candidate (Sawyer) by an unscrupulous opponent. Sawyer subsequently staged a successful comeback, frustrating Gatlin's own bid for reelection. This seems to have ended Gatlin's political career, although he may have served as a colonel in the local militia.

Gatlin's later life is obscure. He acquired over 400 acres of land in [Camden County](#) ^[5] just south of the county seat of Jonesborough (now Camden). About 1830 he built the substantial sidehall plan house that still stands on the property. In 1835 Gatlin sold all his real estate to Meriam Grandy, a Camden County businesswoman, and emigrated to Florida. The scanty records available do not reveal the details of his marriage, which must have taken place during his Camden residency. In 1840, Gatlin's household in Tallahassee included one boy age 10-15, two girls under 5, one girl 5-10, one girl 15-20, and three women 20-30, as well as five slaves. Gatlin either died or left Florida before 1850. However, North Carolina natives James Gatlin (age 20) and Louisa Gatlin (age 16) are probably his older children. Louisa may be the daughter of Alfred Gatlin who is said to have married into the Dubose family in Florida.

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[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[20]

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