

Pugh, Whitmell Hill ^[1]

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by J. Marshall Bullock, 1994

1781–1834

Whitmell Hill Pugh, physician, planter, and state legislator, was one of ten children born to William Scott and Winifred Hill Pugh of [Bertie County](#) ^[2]. The Pughs, who had moved to Bertie County in the late 1720s from [Chowan County](#) ^[3], were a large and prominent family. Whitmell Pugh received medical training in North Carolina under Dr. [Simmons J. Baker](#) ^[4] before attending the medical college of the [University of Pennsylvania](#) ^[5] in Philadelphia. There he studied under Dr. Benjamin Rush and was graduated in 1804. While in Philadelphia, Pugh was a member of the Philadelphia Medical Society.

Returning to Bertie County, Pugh married his cousin Mary Whitmell Bryan Hill, the widow of John Hill, on 11 Mar. 1806. He resided at his wife's home, Woodville Plantation, in the village of Hotel (now [Woodville](#) ^[6]). In addition to his medical practice, Pugh raised hogs on a large scale and hauled the meat to Richmond. In 1813, 1814, and 1815 he represented Bertie County in the House of Commons, and in 1816 and 1817 the legislature elected him a member of the Council of State.

In 1819 Pugh moved to Louisiana with his brother Augustin and half brother Thomas. The Pugh brothers settled in Lafourche Parish and established large cotton plantations. According to family tradition, it was at the urging of his wife that Pugh began planting sugarcane on his plantation, New Hope, in 1826. Pugh's brothers followed suit, and their sugar plantations flourished; the Pugh family became the most prominent in the parish and among the wealthiest in the state.

Pugh, who had retained his property in Bertie County, regularly visited North Carolina and sent his children there for their education. Pugh and his wife were the parents of four surviving children: Maria Augustus Hill, William Whitmell Hill, Harriet Eliza, and Mary Winifred Hill—all born in Bertie County. Harriet and Mary studied at the [Moravian](#) ^[7] girls' academy in [Salem](#) ^[8], while William attended the Union Academy in Bertie County and [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[9]. William resided at his father's Bertie County plantation before returning to Louisiana, where he became a wealthy planter and prominent political figure; he served in the state legislature and in the state constitutional convention of 1852.

Returning from a trip to North Carolina, Whitmell Pugh contracted pneumonia and died. He was buried at Madewood, Lafourche Parish, La., the plantation of his half brother Thomas. Mrs. Pugh died in 1854; both were Episcopalians. Pugh's Bertie County home, Woodville, a handsome example of Federal-style architecture, still stands as a private residence.

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