Williams, Christopher (Kit) Harris [1]

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by Vernon O. Stumpf, 1996

18 Dec. 1798–27 Nov. 1857

Christopher (Kit) Harris Williams, lawyer and Whig [2] congressman from Tennessee, was born near Hillsborough, Orange County [3]. He was the son of John, a veteran of the French and Indian War [4] and of the Ninth North Carolina Continental Line in the American Revolution [5], and Elizabeth Duke Williams. Of Welsh origin, the family moved to Virginia in the late seventeenth century but settled in Piedmont [6] North Carolina in the eighteenth century, afterwards living along Panther Creek in Surry [7] (now Jackson [8]) County. Christopher Williams studied law and was admitted to the bar about 1820.

By the early 1830s Williams was living in Lexington, Henderson County, Tenn. In 1831, described as "a Clay man," he was defeated for a seat in the General Assembly but soon participated in the successful campaign to elect Davy Crockett [9] to the U.S. Senate. His work for William Henry Harrison for president in 1836, however, was ineffective. Williams, soon recognized as an outstanding speaker, contributed to the election of John Bell [10] to the U.S. Senate. Williams [11] himself was elected as a Whig to the Twenty-fifth, Twenty-sixth, and Twenty-seventh Congresses, serving from 4 Mar. 1837 until 3 Mar. 1843. He failed to win reelection in 1842. A delegate to several state and national conventions, he was elected to the Thirty-first and Thirty-second Congresses, during 4 Mar. 1849–3 Mar. 1853, but did not run for another term. Returning to Tennessee, he resumed the practice of law in Lexington, where he died and was buried in the Lexington Cemetery.

Williams and his wife, Jane Allison (b. ca. 1805), had two sons, Duke (1827–56) and Christopher (ca. 1830), four daughters, Nancy Allison (1832–40), Sarah C. (ca. 1837), Laura J. (ca. 1840), and one born between 1830 and 1835 whose name has not been found. They were the grandparents of John Sharp Williams [12] (1854–1932), a U.S. representative and senator from Mississippi (1893–1909, 1911–23) who was the Democratic [13] minority leader in the Fifty-eighth, Fifty-ninth, and Sixtieth Congresses.

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