

WILLIAM McDOWELL

1792 – 1796

Kentucky's first governor, Isaac Shelby, appointed William McDowell the first auditor of the state in 1792.

The third son of Judge Samuel McDowell and Macy McClung, William was born in Rockbridge, Virginia, on March 9, 1762. He saw active service during the Revolution as one of the Virginia militia. He was educated at the best schools in Virginia and moved to Kentucky in 1784. An attorney, he settled near Danville which at that time was the educational and political center of the district. William McDowell was appointed by the Virginia legislature in 1787 as one of the first trustees of the town of Danville.

He was chosen to represent Mercer county as its first senator in the Virginia legislature. After serving from 1792 to 1796 he was reelected in 1800 and two years later was chosen to represent the county in the house. He was the commonwealth's attorney from 1797 until 1810. At that time he was appointed the United States District Judge for Kentucky, a position in which he served with distinction for years.

He was married to Margaretta Madison, the daughter of John Madison and a cousin of President Madison. One of the brothers of Margaretta was James Madison, the first American-born bishop of the Episcopal Church of Virginia. Another brother was George Madison who would serve as the hero governor of Kentucky. (George Madison succeeded William McDowell as state auditor in 1796).

Margaretta and William McDowell had six children. Their son, Samuel, represented Warren county in the legislature in 1823 and 1824. Their daughter, Agatha, was married to James G. Birney, the abolition candidate for president in 1844. William McDowell died in Bowling Green.