

Forbes, William ^[1]

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d. ca. September 1751

William Forbes, colonial official, immigrated to North Carolina from Scotland early in the 1730s. Settled in the Lower Cape Fear region, he soon gained the notice of Governor [George Burrington](#) ^[2], who placed him on the royal council briefly in 1733 to fill the vacancy of a recently deceased member. With over 1,400 acres of land in [Bladen County](#) ^[3], Forbes became a prosperous man. In 1734 he was made a justice of the peace for Bladen, and in 1736 he assumed the same office in [New Hanover County](#) ^[4]. He was liked by fellow Scot [Gabriel Johnston](#) ^[5], the new governor, who named him assistant baron of the exchequer court in 1735. In May Johnston also nominated him to the Privy Council; although confirmed by the council six months later, Forbes for some unexplained reason did not take his seat until January 1741. However, he did serve in the lower house of assembly from Bladen in 1736 and 1739 and was made county [sheriff](#) ^[6] in the latter year. Late in 1743 he was appointed as one of the [surveyors](#) ^[7] for the [Granville grant](#) ^[8] and performed that service the following year. At some point in the early 1740s Forbes apparently purchased a home in or near [Brunswick](#) ^[9]. He was named to the vestry of [St. Philip's](#) ^[10] Parish in 1741 and to the committee to prepare the defense of Brunswick against the [Spaniards](#) ^[11] in 1747.

Forbes's service on the council was marked by uneven attendance and a lack of controversy except for an argument with [James Murray](#) ^[12] over seniority in October 1749, an argument that Murray won. Afterwards Forbes dropped out of politics, disabled by "sickness and old age" as Governor Johnston reported. When he dictated his will in New Hanover in September 1751, Forbes mentioned no family and left his whole estate, including the rights to enslaved six people, to two friends in the county.

References:

William S. Price, "'Men of Good Estates': Wealth Among North Carolina's Royal Councillors," *North Carolina Historical Review* 49 (1972).

William L. Saunders, ed., *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, vols. 3 and 4 (1886).

Wills of New Hanover County (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Additional Resources:

"Order of the Privy Council of Great Britain concerning the appointment of William Forbes, James Innes, and Thomas Wardroper to the North Carolina Governor's Council, November 6, 1735." *Colonial Records of North Carolina* vol. 6, Raleigh [N.C.]: P. M. Hale, printer to the state. 1888. 22-23. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr04-0013> ^[13] (accessed March 5, 2014).

"An Act for erecting a Fortification on the lower Part of Cape Fear River, for applying thereto the Powder Money already arisen, or which shall arise, by Shipping coming into the Port of Brunswick." *Complete revisal of all the acts of Assembly, of the province of North-Carolina, now in force and use: together with the titles of all such laws as are obsolete, expired, or repealed: with marginal notes and references, and an exact table to the whole*. Newbern [N.C.]: Printed by James Davis, printer to the Honourable the House of Assembly. 1773. 94-95. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/complete-revisal-of-all-the-acts-of-assembly-of-the-province-of-north-carolina-now-in-force-and-use-together-with-the-titles-of-all-such-laws-as-are-obsolete-expired-or-repealed-with-marginal-notes-and-references-and-an-exact-table-to-the-whole/1955563?item=2085443> ^[14] (accessed March 5, 2014).

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Subjects:

[Biographies](#) ^[16]

[Colonial period \(1600-1763\)](#) ^[17]

[Public officials](#) ^[18]

Authors:

[Price, William S., Jr.](#) ^[19]

Origin - location:

[Bladen County](#) ^[20]

[Brunswick County](#) ^[21]

New Hanover County ^[22]

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Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.^[23]

1 January 1986 | Price, William S., Jr.

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[1] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/forbes-william> [2] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/burrington-george> [3] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/bladen> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/new-hanover> [5] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/johnston-gabriel> [6] <https://ncpedia.org/sheriff> [7] <https://ncpedia.org/surveyors> [8] <https://ncpedia.org/granville-grant-and-district> [9] <https://ncpedia.org/brunswick-town> [10] <https://ncpedia.org/st-phillips-church> [11] <https://ncpedia.org/spanish-invasions> [12] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/murray-james> [13] <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr04-0013> [14] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/complete-revival-of-all-the-acts-of-assembly-of-the-province-of-north-carolina-now-in-force-and-use-together-with-the-titles-of-all-such-laws-as-are-obsolete-expired-or-repealed-with-marginal-notes-and-references-and-an-exact-table-to-the-whole/1955563?item=2085443> [15] <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr04-0411> [16] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [17] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/colonial-period> [18] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/public-officials> [19] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/price-jr-william-s> [20] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-5> [21] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/brunswick-> [22] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal--7> [23] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>