

Slingsby, John ^[1]

Slingsby, John

by William S. Powell, 1994; Revised December 2021

d. 29? Aug. 1781

See also: [Elizabethtown, Battle of](#) ^[2]

John Slingsby, [Loyalist](#) ^[3] officer, was a native of England and at his death was reported to have been heir to "the Beverly Farm . . . a fine estate some twelve miles from London." Many members of the Slingsby family lived in Yorkshire, however. One Henry Slingsby held 12,500 acres in the area of present [Stanly County](#) ^[4], N.C., as one of the Huey/Crymble Associates' 1.2 million-acre speculation surveyed in 1744. Scottish port records indicate that John Slingsby, master of *The Caesar*, bound for Brunswick, sailed from Glasgow during the midsummer term 1770. With stores in [Wilmington](#) ^[5] and [Cross Creek](#) ^[6], the firm of John Slingsby and Company engaged in extensive trade.

When steps were taken to halt trade between England and the colonies, Slingsby demonstrated an extreme willingness to cooperate. Large shipments of goods for his stores in Wilmington and in Cross Creek arrived at Wilmington on 10 Dec. 1774. The former was valued in excess of £1,923 and the latter at £1,018. He promptly turned this stock over to the [Committee of Safety](#) ^[7] for sale to the highest bidder. Slingsby himself thereupon entered bids that were slightly higher than the appraised values. He also reported that a shipment of gunpowder had not been put aboard in Glasgow, the port of origin.

In February 1775 additional goods belonging to Slingsby were sold and on 7 March he was paid for fifty pounds of gunpowder. Still he seems to have been ambivalent about supporting the Revolutionary cause. On that same day, 7 March, he was one of eight merchants, a planter, and two tailors who declined to sign the Continental Association. Nevertheless, on 13 March he had a change of heart and signed. On 25 Oct. 1775 the Safety Committee of Wilmington appointed him one of seven members of the [Committee of Secrecy and Correspondence](#) ^[8]. On 20 November he was one of several men named to see to the protection of the channel of the [Cape Fear River](#) ^[9], and as a member of the Wilmington Safety Committee he attended eleven meetings between 25 Oct. 1775 and 5 Feb. 1776. On 18 April, however, he and nine other prominent men of the region were "permitted" to withdraw from the [Provincial Congress](#) ^[10].

Apparently there is nothing to suggest what role Slingsby played in the [Revolutionary War](#) ^[11] until the British under Major James H. Craig occupied Wilmington on 1 Feb. 1781. He was then appointed a colonel in the Kings Militia—a term they preferred to [Tories](#) ^[12]—and placed in command of the Loyalists in [Bladen](#) ^[13] and [Brunswick](#) ^[14] counties. On 14 August he and two other officers led a raid on Cross Creek. About a week later, with some three hundred men, he appeared unexpectedly in [Elizabethtown](#) ^[2]. He had with him a number of "paroled rebels" but was told by Loyalist leader [David Fanning](#) ^[15] that it was "imprudent and unsafe" to hold them. Under cover of darkness early the next morning the rebels, who had concealed some arms, fired on the Loyalist camp, mortally wounded Slingsby, and fled into the woods. The Loyalists lost eighteen killed, wounded, or captured, and the local militia seized a large quantity of supplies and ammunition.

Slingsby married Arabellah McNeill McAllister, the daughter of Donald Taynish McNeill, and they had a son and two daughters, only one of whom, Annie Jean, survived her parents. Peter Duboise, a New York Loyalist who also was in North Carolina for a time, was Slingsby's brother-in-law. Annie Jean Slingsby married the Reverend [William Bingham](#) ^[16], founder of the noted [Bingham School](#) ^[17] in [Alamance County](#) ^[18].

Slingsby's death was deeply mourned by both sides in the struggle. He was cited for his kindness, his good character, and especially for the severe penalties he imposed on troops under his jurisdiction for warring on unarmed men, women, and children. He was praised for his devotion to the cause in which he believed, and his widow and children were afterwards treated with great respect.

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Subjects:

American Revolution (1763-1789) [24]

Biographies [25]

Military personnel [26]

Authors:

Powell, William S. [27]

Origin - location:

Bladen County [28]

Brunswick County [29]

Cumberland County [30]

Fayetteville [31]

New Hanover County [32]

Wilmington [33]

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1 January 1994 | Powell, William S.

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Links

[1] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/slingsby-john> [2] <https://ncpedia.org/elizabethtown-battle> [3] <https://ncpedia.org/loyalists> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/stanly> [5] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/wilmington> [6] <https://ncpedia.org/fayetteville> [7] <https://ncpedia.org/committees-safety> [8] <https://ncpedia.org/committees-correspondence> [9] <https://ncpedia.org/rivers/cape-fear> [10] <https://ncpedia.org/provincial-congresses> [11] <https://ncpedia.org/american-revolution> [12] <https://ncpedia.org/tory> [13] <https://ncpedia.org/bladen-county-1700s> [14] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/brunswick> [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/fanning-david> [16] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/bingham-william> [17] <https://ncpedia.org/bingham-school> [18] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/alamance> [19] <https://archive.org/details/americanloyalis00sabigoog> [20] <https://archive.org/details/sketchesnorthca00footgoog> [21] <https://archive.org/details/cu31924092215486> [22] <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=Markers&k=Markers&sv=I-11> [23] <https://archive.org/details/northcarolinahis1964nort> [24] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/us-revolution> [25] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [26] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/soldiers> [27] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/powell-william-s-0> [28] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal--5> [29] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/brunswick-> [30] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal--4> [31] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-48> [32] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal--7> [33] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-39> [34] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>