

Beard, Lewis ^[1]

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by James S. Brawley, 1979; Revised November 2022.

1754–11 Dec. 1820

Lewis Beard, county and state official, was born in Salisbury of German ancestry. His father, John Lewis Beard, was born in Germany but immigrated to Philadelphia as a young man. John Lewis Beard was naturalized in Salisbury in 1755 and took an active and leading role in the affairs of his county and town. He was by trade a butcher, a tanner, an innkeeper, and a large land owner. During the [Revolution](#) ^[2] he supplied the [Continental Army](#) ^[3] with shoes. Lewis Beard's mother was Christine Snapp, daughter of Lawrence Snapp, a German immigrant who owned a plantation on the Yadkin River seven miles from Salisbury.

Lewis Beard added to the family possessions, subsequently acquiring thirteen lots in Salisbury and almost fifteen thousand acres in Rowan [Montgomery](#) ^[4], and [Burke](#) ^[5] counties, some of it in ore properties. He operated a large store on the town square and lived in his home on the present site of the post office. He had two large plantations on the Yadkin River. The plantations were powered through the use of enslaved labor, and 30 people worked for and were enslaved by Beard. In 1818, he secured from the legislature the right to erect a bridge over the stream on his own lands. He employed [Hiel Town](#) ^[6], noted builder and architect, to design the bridge, which cost \$30,000; its pier can still be observed upstream from Interstate 85. This bridge, the first across the Yadkin, attracted wide attention and was used as a model for future bridges erected in North and South Carolina.

One of the county's wealthiest inhabitants, Beard gained the confidence of his countrymen and was frequently called to important trusts, which he "executed with zeal, integrity and ability." In 1786 he was appointed assessor of the town lands, and on 2 Aug. 1796 he was named public treasurer of the county, a position he held for life. In 1800, as treasurer, he let the contract for the building of a new brick courthouse on the square to replace the original wooden one. He was appointed high sheriff of Rowan and served from 1787 until 1791. He represented Salisbury in the House of Commons in 1791–92 and Rowan in the senate in 1793. In 1808 he was named a director of the Salisbury branch of the [Bank of Cape Fear](#) ^[7] on the recommendation of his friend and neighbor, [General John Steele](#) ^[8].

Beard married Susan Dunn, daughter of John Dunn, in 1785; they were the parents of one son, John Beard, Jr., and two daughters. One daughter, Christine, married [Charles Fisher](#) ^[9]; another, Mary, married Moses A. Locke.

Beard was buried in the family plot in the old Lutheran Cemetery in Salisbury. His widow died in 1840.

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