Blount, William

by Stanley J. Folmsbee, 1979

26 Mar. 1749–21 Mar. 1800

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His senatorial career was cut short by the so-called Blount Conspiracy, caused by a rumor that Spain was about to cede New Orleans and the Louisiana country to France, which action, it was expected, would deny the Americans the right to use the Mississippi River for the export of their surplus products. Blount therefore took over the leadership of a scheme, already being developed, to organize an expedition of frontiersmen and Indians to help the British, then at war with Spain and France, take New Orleans, Louisiana, and Florida away from Spain. Great Britain was bound by the treaty of peace of 1783 to permit free navigation of the Mississippi River by Canadians and Americans. Before the plan could be put in operation, a letter Blount had written about it fell into the hands of federal authorities, and as a result he was expelled from the Senate. He was also impeached by the House of Representatives but was acquitted in trial before the Senate, because of lack of jurisdiction. Blount remained popular in Tennessee, where he was elected to the state senate and its speakership. He did not run for reelection and was out of office at the time of his death.

On 12 Feb. 1778, Blount married Mary Molsey Grainger, the daughter of Caleb Grainger of the Cape Fear region of North Carolina. They had seven children: Cornelius, Ann, Mary Louisa, William Grainger, Richard Blackledge, Barbara, and Eliza. Blount was buried in the churchyard of the First Presbyterian Church, Knoxville, Tenn., where a marble slab marks his grave.

References:


*DAB* vol. 2 (1929).


M. J. Wright, *Some Account of the Life and Services of William Blount* (1884).

Additional Resources:


Tennessee History for the Classroom: [http://www.tennesseehistory.com/class/Blount.htm](http://www.tennesseehistory.com/class/Blount.htm)


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