

Clitherall, James ^[1]

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by Tom Parramore, 1979

ca. 1740–ca. 1804

James Clitherall, physician and Loyalist ^[2], was the son of John and Magdalen Clitherall of New Bern. Sent by his father in 1760 to study medicine at the University of Edinburgh, he became one of the few natives of North Carolina to receive a European university education during the colonial period. During 1760 and 1761, Clitherall was a student of Dr. William Cullen, then one of the leading medical teachers in the world. Clitherall did not receive a degree from Edinburgh but remained for seven years in Scotland and England in the capacity of a medical apprentice. In 1767 he returned to America, settling at Charleston, S.C., and soon establishing himself as a physician of prominence there. He inherited large tracts of land from his father and amassed a fortune in his own right by virtue of a successful practice.

Clitherall was a confirmed royalist and experienced difficulties with South Carolina authorities following the outbreak of the American Revolution ^[3]. He remained at Charleston but served as a physician to a regiment of South Carolina Tories and signed a letter of congratulations to Cornwallis ^[4] following the British victory at Camden. For the latter act he was banished to Florida. He returned to Charleston after the war, finding part of his property confiscated and his medical practice beyond rebuilding. He retired to a plantation near Charleston, called Preston, and remained there for the rest of his life as a gentleman farmer. He is said to have died in virtual impoverishment, the victim of a corrupt overseer. His first wife, Elizabeth [Inglis?], died in 1769, and Clitherall was married a second time, in 1775, to Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, widow of Thomas Loughton Smith. Clitherall had four children, one of whom, Dr. George Campbell, became a distinguished physician.

References:

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