

Council, Arthur ^[1]

Council, Arthur

by Paul A. Rockwell, 1979

1755–April 1777

Arthur Council, Revolutionary War officer, is noted as one of the youngest and most active leaders of the early revolutionary movement in North Carolina. He was the son of Joanna Willis and Captain James Council but whether he was born in Bladen or in [Cumberland County](#) ^[2] is a matter of dispute, as his father owned much land in both. Captain James Council had moved to [Bladen County](#) ^[3] in the 1750s from Virginia, where his family had been established since the early seventeenth century. He took up land granted to him for service in the [French and Indian War](#) ^[4], and he soon became active in the movement toward independence. He was a member of the [provincial congress](#) ^[5] at Halifax in the spring of 1776, representing Campbellton; paymaster of militia troops in the Wilmington District; and holder of other local offices. Arthur Council first appears in the records of the region in November 1770, when he was made an ensign in the Sixth Company, Cross Creek Militia. His name also appears on the 1771 list of Cumberland County officers.

On 13 Mar. 1772, young Council was one of thirty-four residents of Campbellton who signed a petition to Governor [Josiah Martin](#) ^[6] requesting a new charter for the town, "empowering . . . Freeholders within two miles of the Court-house of Cambelltown or seized of an Estate of their own . . . to elect a Member to represent them in the General Assembly." Council was elected to represent Campbellton in the provincial congress at Halifax in April 1776; his father represented Bladen County, and both were active members. The younger man served on a number of committees, three of which were charged with investigating the activity of certain [loyalists](#) ^[7]; he also served on a committee to investigate the availability of salt in the Cross Creek area and another to investigate the accounts of one Matthew Ramsey, public official. Council was present on 12 Apr. when the congress adopted the famous resolves calling on all the American colonies to join together in declaring independence from Great Britain.

Four days later, Council was commissioned captain in the Sixth Continental Regiment being raised in the Wilmington District; in June he was authorized to receive the arms for his company. In the spring of 1777 the regiment was in camp near Little River on the coast about thirty miles from the Cape Fear, where it was feared the British would attempt a landing. There Council, just twenty-two, died. A journal kept by Hugh McDonald, a volunteer in the regiment, recorded: "Not more than three weeks after the brigade was embodied, my Captain, Arthur Council, a young man who had been raised near Cross Creek, and whose father's house is yet known by the name of Council Hall, died. This young gentleman was distinguished in the regiment for modesty, gentility and morality. Shortly after the death of Council, his first lieutenant who was known by the name of Philadelphia Thomas White, became our Captain, and he was as immoral as Council was moral."

Council was buried in the Gause family tomb not far from Little River, by the wish of his sister, Margaret, who was married to William Gause, owner of the immense Gause plantation. During [Reconstruction](#) ^[8], the remnants of the Gause family moved to Louisiana and elsewhere, sealing the family tomb before they left. A rumor circulated that gold and jewels were buried in the mausoleum, and when, in the 1940s, a Gause descendant searched out the tomb, it was discovered that vandals had succeeded in breaking the walls. The visitor removed the remains of his relatives and took them away for reburial elsewhere.

In August 1784, Council's heirs were awarded 3,840 acres of land for his revolutionary service.

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Additional Resources:

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