

Houston, Christopher ^[1]



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by M. Elaine Doerschuk, 1988

18 Feb. 1744–27 May 1837

Christopher Houston, farmer, soldier, and town planner, was born in Lancaster County, Pa., the fourth son of Robert Houston, a successful Scottish immigrant wheat farmer, and his wife Martha Worke of Philadelphia. Reared in Lancaster County, he was educated by private tutors and in schools in Philadelphia. In 1765 he joined the great wave of settlers migrating from Pennsylvania to the Carolinas and late in the year arrived at [Fort Dobbs](#) ^[2] in [Rowan County](#) ^[3]. Houston settled along the [Catawba River](#) ^[4] and with his brother-in-law and his brother, James, established the first mill in the area at Hunting Creek.

Houston played an active role in the [Revolutionary War](#) ^[5], both as a civilian and as a soldier. As a civilian, he was responsible for procuring goods for the community from Virginia. As a soldier, he served from 1776 to 1782 in the North Carolina Rangers along with his brother James. Both fought in the [Battle of Ramsour's Mill](#) ^[6], near present-day Lincolnton, in which James was killed. Houston participated in the [Battle of Kings Mountain](#) ^[7] and was one of a band of patriots assembled by General [Nathanael Greene](#) ^[8] to fight in the Battle of Guilford Court House.

After the war Houston went back to Hunting Creek, where he founded a neighborhood school in his home and served as a town planner. The 1788 Act to Divide the County of Rowan into Rowan and Iredell counties stated that "George Davidson, Christopher Houston, Joseph Sharpe, Jeremiah Nielson, and [John Nisbett](#) ^[9] are directed to agree and contract with workmen for the erecting and building of a courthouse, prison, and stocks for the use of the county of Iredell, at the place that they agree on." During the American Revolution John Oliphant of Rowan County had conveyed a land site of fifty acres to Fergus Sloan, also of Rowan County. Sloan deeded the fifty acres to the newly appointed town commission, and the new county seat, named Statesville, was established in 1789. Shortly after helping to establish Statesville, Houston recognized the need for a town on Hunting Creek, so he founded Houstonville, the second postal station in [Iredell County](#) ^[10]. He served as the first postmaster of the new town.

In 1812 Houston and his wife, with their son James and twenty-seven slaves, moved to Maury County, Tenn. He helped James clear his land and in return James deeded some of the property to his father. Houston spent the rest of his life farming and working in James's marble and slate factory near Columbia, Tenn. He died in Maury County ten days after suffering a "stroke of palsy."

A staunch Presbyterian, Houston was well known for instructing his family and slaves in religious matters. He was considered a good master to his slaves, whom he freed in his will, stipulating that they were to be sent to Liberia. Whiggish in politics, he opposed the presidency of [Andrew Jackson](#) ^[11], favored the United States Bank, and spoke out against secession in the South Carolina [Nullification Crisis](#) ^[12] of 1832.

Houston was married twice, first to Sarah Mitchell in 1767. She died in 1821, and he married Elizabeth Simpson in 1826. He had seven children: Martha, John, [Lillias](#) ^[13], James, Placebo, Samuel, and Sarah.

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Additional Resources:

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