

Johnston, Lancelot ^[1]

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by Anna Withers Bair and Katharine K. Kendall, 1988

1748–19 Sept. 1832

Lancelot Johnston, physician, Revolutionary War ^[2] surgeon, and planter, was born in Ardess, County Fermanagh, Ireland, of Scottish ancestry. He received his medical education at the Medical College of the University of Dublin and emigrated to America before 1769, settling in that part of Orange County ^[3] that soon became Caswell County ^[4]. In 1771 he served for two months in the militia, and on 10 May 1777 he was commissioned by the Continental Congress as surgeon of the Ninth Battalion, Continental Army, "raised for the defending of American liberty and for repelling every hostile invasion thereof." On 26 Nov. 1778, he was appointed regimental surgeon of the Continental troops to be raised in the Hillsborough and Salisbury districts to assist in South Carolina, and was advanced £150 for the purchase of medicine and supplies. After the Battle of Camden ^[5] he was sent there to help care for the wounded. His arrival was welcomed by the overworked Dr. Hugh Williamson ^[6], of Edenton ^[7], who wrote to the speaker of the North Carolina House of Commons: "We were happily reinforced by Dr. Johnston, a Senior Surgeon of great skill and Humanity in the Continental Service."

After the war, Johnston continued to serve as a physician to the residents of Caswell County and environs; he also was a planter of the farms he owned in the area. He died at his home in St. David's District (now Locust Hill township) and was buried in the family cemetery nearby.

In 1774 Johnston married Zerurah Rice, the daughter of Thomas Rice of Caswell County. They were the parents of six children: William, Lancelot, Elizabeth (m. Dr. E. E. Jones ^[8]), and Polly (m. a Mr. Slade), all of whom moved to Madison, Ga.; and Thomas (m. Jane Bethell) and Zilphar (m. James Yancey ^[9]), both of whom remained in North Carolina. Portraits of Dr. and Mrs. Johnston, said to have been painted by Thomas Sully, were sold by the family in the 1930s, but photographs of the portraits are owned by several descendants including Mrs. F. F. Bahnson, Jr., of Winston-Salem and Mrs. Clifford Bair of Chapel Hill.

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Authors:

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Origin - location:

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Orange County ^[20]

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