

Gaither, Basil ^[1]

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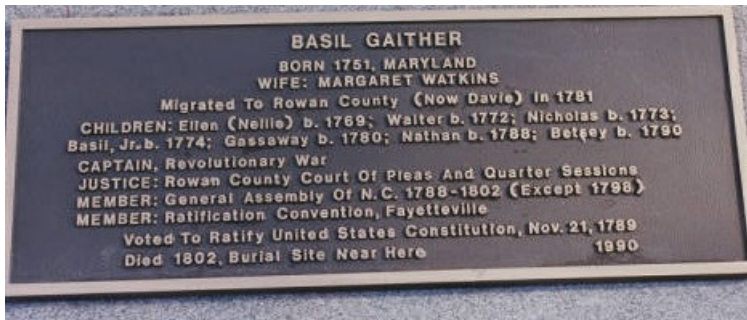


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Gaither, Basil

by Kent Gaither, 1986

d. August 1803



Basil Gaither Plaque. Image courtesy of DigitalINC.

^[2]Basil Gaither, [Rowan County](#) ^[3] senator, was born in Anne Arundel County, Md., the son of Edward and Eleanor White Gaither, both Maryland natives. He was directly descended from John Gater, a German immigrant to Jamestown, Va., in 1621, who upon settling in Maryland became the first of a distinctive line of Gaithers in that colony. Basil was the brother of [Burgess Gaither](#) ^[4], who also became a prominent politician. After spending their childhood in Maryland, the two brothers moved in 1781 to a portion of North Carolina that is now [Iredell County](#) ^[5]. Burgess remained in Iredell whereas Basil settled in Rowan County.

Basil Gaither was first involved in colonial affairs when he was commissioned into the Maryland militia on 30 Aug. 1777. He rose to the rank of first lieutenant in Captain Bristow's Revolutionary Company. After his arrival in North Carolina, he served as senator from Rowan County every term from 1788 to 1802 with the exception of 1798. In that capacity he played a major role in the controversial political issue of county creation in the late 1780s. In 1788, he and other [Federalists](#) ^[6] helped pass a bill to create Iredell County. He was then appointed to a commission responsible for running the dividing line separating newly formed Iredell County from Rowan County. From 3 Mar. 1798 to 28 June 1799 he served on a committee investigating the infamous land warrant issue involving [James Glasgow](#) ^[7], North Carolina's secretary of state. The investigation concerned fraudulent warrants issued to persons who neither appeared in [Revolutionary](#) ^[8] muster rolls nor were lawfully entitled to land by voucher. Gaither aided in uncovering this practice as well as exposing related forged powers of attorney. As a result of the investigation, the [General Assembly](#) ^[9] passed an act in 1799 authorizing judges of the supreme court to meet in [Raleigh](#) ^[10] for purposes of land grant; it also empowered the government to commission judges to investigate James Glasgow.

In the late 1780s Gaither was among the conservative leaders of the state who supported ratification of the Constitution. Although not a seasoned politician, he exemplified a rising class of men who by natural leadership ability and education were worthy of the confidence of the masses. Gaither denounced the professional, educated politician as unaware of the needs of the common man. His esteem in Rowan County was demonstrated in his long and continuous service in the General Assembly.

Due to his age and failing health, Gaither retired from public life in 1802 and died in the following year. He was survived by his wife Margaret Watkins, also a Maryland native, and seven children who all remained in North Carolina.

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Additional Resources:

Memorial Plaque: Basil Gaither migrated to the Forks of the Yadkin in 1781, served as a Justice on the Rowan Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions and in the N.C. General Assembly, died in 1802 and was buried in Joppa Cemetery.

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