

Gallaway, James ^[1]

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by Lindley S. Butler, 1986; Revised by Jared Dease, Government and Heritage Library, December 2022

d. 1798

James Gallaway, merchant and state legislator, was born probably in Scotland and moved to North Carolina before the American Revolution. His uncle, Charles Gallaway, was by 1765 living in the section of [Rowan County](#) ^[2] that is now [Rockingham County](#) ^[3]. Charles, a merchant, formed a partnership with Constantine Perkins of Pittsylvania County, Va., called Charles Gallaway and Company. On 1 Sept. 1778, James became a partner in this mercantile company. The Gallaways had widespread commercial interests across Piedmont North Carolina and southern Virginia. They became large landowners, accumulating thousands of acres in the Dan River Valley in present Rockingham County and some land in Virginia. Although not as active in public affairs as his nephew James, Charles Gallaway was appointed to the [Committee of Safety](#) ^[4] for the Salisbury District on 9 Sept. 1775. He attended the first [state convention for ratification](#) ^[5] of the federal Constitution at Hillsborough in 1788, as well as [the second](#) ^[6] in Fayetteville the following year, and served a term in the state senate in 1791.

James Gallaway was active in the General Assembly from 1783 until 1789. Representing [Guilford County](#) ^[7], he served two terms in the House of Commons (1783 and April 1784) and two terms in the state senate (October 1784 and 1785). When Guilford County was divided on 29 Dec. 1785, creating from the northern half the county of Rockingham, Gallaway became the new county's first senator and was reelected for four terms (1786–89). A very industrious senator, he served in various sessions on committees on public taxes, finance, propositions and grievances, and Indian affairs, as well as on a number of special and joint committees dealing with petitions and specific issues. His progressive outlook is demonstrated by his legislative support for bills which lessened criminal punishment, permitting limited emancipation of some enslaved people, reforming fiscal policy, encouraging education, and sponsoring [internal improvements](#) ^[8]. In 1784 he was named a trustee for the improvement of navigation on the Dan and [Roanoke](#) ^[9] rivers. Gallaway introduced the bill for the [Dismal Swamp Canal Company](#) ^[10] and was appointed a member of the Virginia-North Carolina joint commission on the canal that met in Fayetteville in December 1786. The canal company was chartered in 1790.

As a strong [Anti-Federalist](#) ^[11] and influential senator, Gallaway had a key role in opposing the ratification of the federal Constitution and any measure that strengthened the federal government at the expense of the states. In the April 1784 session of the House of Commons, he signed a protest against ceding the state's western lands to the national government. When ratification of the Constitution became the central issue of the November 1787 General Assembly, he supported an unsuccessful senate resolution opposing the proposed convention.

Gallaway was elected to Rockingham County's Anti-Federalist delegation to the Hillsborough convention that opened on 21 July 1788. Although [Willie Jones](#) ^[12] was the Anti-Federalist leader, Gallaway seconded the various motions made by Jones, and on the third day of the convention he moved that the convention become a committee of the whole to debate the Constitution. In the ensuing debate Gallaway was one of the chief opponents of the Constitution, and the Anti-Federalist majority succeeded in preventing ratification at Hillsborough. In the Fayetteville convention of November 1789, however, the Federalists dominated. The defeat of Willie Jones left Gallaway as the leading spokesman of the Anti-Federalists. He was appointed to the convention rules committee, and on the second day he successfully maneuvered to prevent immediate ratification, ensuring another lengthy debate on the Constitution. Although it was finally ratified, Gallaway secured five additional amendments to be proposed to Congress.

After 1789 Gallaway did not return to public office, but continued his careers as a partner in Charles Gallaway and Company and as a planter. In 1790, he was recorded as having enslaved twelve people. Gallaway married Elizabeth Spraggins of Halifax County, Va., and they had two sons, one of whom was named James E.

References:

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