

Stewart, Alexander ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 1994

9 Dec. 1725–30 July 1772

Alexander Stewart, public official and perhaps a poet, was born in Scotland but was clerk of court in Beaufort County ^[2], N.C., by 1751. He may have been the Stewart who represented one of the borough towns in the Assembly ^[3] in 1746, although his given name and the town are not cited in the records. It was he, however, who represented Pitt County ^[4] in 1771. In April 1758 Alexander Stewart, Robert Palmer, and Francis Corbin ^[5] were surety for five hundred pounds that Palmer would faithfully execute the duties as receiver of powder and lead in the port of Bath. Stewart was witness to many wills and land grants in Pitt County ^[4] beginning in 1761, the year after Pitt was formed from Beaufort. He himself had grants in 1768 for a total of 300 acres and an additional grant for 320 acres on 13 Mar. 1772, shortly before his death. The fact that he acquired land just four months before his death suggests that his death was unexpected.

Stewart's wife was named Elizabeth. Their daughter died in 1760 at the age of nine months, but a son, John, born in 1766, lived to the age of thirty-six. There may have been other children. They were all buried in the cemetery at Yankee Hall near Pactolus in Pitt County, but some of the markers are broken too badly to be read. Stewart's body was placed in a brick vault with a stone slab bearing the following inscription:

Here Lies Interred the Body of
COL. ALEXANDER STEWART
Born in Scotland ye 9th of December 1725
Died ye 30th of July 1772

1
Oh Have I Sat With Secret Sighs
To View my Flesh Decay
Then Groaned Aloud With Frightened Eyes
To See the Tottering Clay.

2
But I Forbid My Sorrows Now
Nor Dare the Flesh Complain.
Diseases Have their Pleasure Too
The Joy Overcomes the Pain.

3
My Cheerful Soul, Now all the day
Sits Wafting Here and Sings,
Looks Through the Ruins of Her Day
And Practices Her Wings.

4
Had But the Prison Walls Been Strong
And Been Without a Flaw
In Darkness She had Dwelt too Long
And Less of Glory Saw.

5
But How the Everlasting Hills
Thro' every Chink Appear
And Something of the Joy she Feels
While She's a Prisoner Here.

6
Oh May These Walls Stand Tottering Still
The Breaches Never Close
If I Must Here in Darkness Dwell
And All This Glory Lose.

7
Or Rather Let the Breach Decay

The Ruins Wider Grow
Till Glad to the Enlarged Way
I strook my Pinions Through.

Because attempts to trace the origin of these verses have been unsuccessful, it is believed that they may have been written by Stewart.

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Powell, William S. ^[12]

Origin - location:

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Pitt County ^[14]

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