

Bignall, Robert ^[1]

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by Claiborne T. Smith, Jr., 1979

ca. 1730–87

Robert Bignall, [revolutionary](#) ^[2] patriot, first appears in the records of [Edgecombe County](#) ^[3] in 1756, when he was witness to several deeds. His antecedents are unknown. He was one of the first settlers in the town of Tarboro when it was laid out in 1760, and he became a wealthy merchant. At the onset of the [Revolution](#) ^[2], Bignall was a member of the North Carolina [Provincial Congress](#) ^[4] held at New Bern in 1775; he was later a member of the committee of safety. In 1779 he was president of the council and acting secretary of state. Later he advanced the state sixty thousand pounds for public expenditure.

His will, dated 5 June 1786 and probated in October court in 1787, devised a large amount of silver plate and other personal property. The lengthy inventory of his estate included an undated certificate of money of his own "lent to [Governor Caswell](#) ^[5] for the use of North Carolina."

Bignall was married, prior to 1767, to Margaret Parish of Norfolk County, Va., who died before him. According to his will, he had sons Robert and Edward, underaged at the time of his death, and daughters Sarah, Peggy, and Ann, the wife of Joseph Speed of Mecklenburg County, Va. Of the sons, Robert married Elizabeth, the daughter of [Blake Baker](#) ^[6] of [Halifax](#) ^[7], and Edward married Peggy Washington Haywood, the daughter of [Egbert Haywood](#) ^[8].

References:

Deeds and Wills of the County of Edgecombe (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

William L. Saunders, ed., *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 vols. (1886–90).

Sons of the American Revolution, North Carolina Society, *Lineage Book of Past and Present Members* (1951).

Joseph W. Watson, *Estate Records of Edgecombe County, 1730–1820* (1970).

Additional Resources:

CSR Documents by Bignall, Robert, ca. 1730-1787, Colonial and State Records, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/creators/csr10389> ^[9]

An Abstract of North Carolina Wills from About 1760 to About 1800: Supplementing Grimes' Abstract of North Carolina Wills 1663 to 1760. Genealogical Publishing Com, 1965: [Google e-book](#). ^[10]

A Manual of North Carolina. North Carolina Historical Commission, 1913: [Google eBook](#) ^[11]

Subjects:

[American Revolution \(1763-1789\)](#) ^[12]

[Public officials](#) ^[13]

Authors:

[Smith, Claiborne T., Jr.](#) ^[14]

Origin - location:

[Edgecombe County](#) ^[15]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#).^[16]

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