

Bloodworth, Timothy ^[1]

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Bloodworth, Timothy

by G. Melvin Herndon, 1979

1736–24 Aug. 1814

Timothy Bloodworth, ardent patriot in the [American Revolution](#) ^[2], member of the Confederation Congress, vigorous anti-Federalist, U.S. congressman and senator, and collector of customs for the [Port](#) ^[3] of [Wilmington](#) ^[4], was born in [New Hanover County](#) ^[5]. He had two brothers, James and Thomas, who were active local politicians; their father was probably Timothy Bloodworth, who came to North Carolina from Nansemond County, Va., in the early years of the eighteenth century. A child of poverty, without formal education, young Timothy has been described as one of the most remarkable and versatile men of his era. His diligence and ambition more than made up for his lack of education as he pursued eight or ten different occupations—keeper of an ordinary and a ferry, preacher, doctor, blacksmith, wheelwright, watchmaker, farmer, and politician. He owned nine [slaves](#) ^[6] and received grants for 4,266 acres of land. Most of all, he was a consistent and vigorous proponent of democracy before, during, and after the Revolution.

Elected to the legislative assembly in 1758 at the age of twenty-two, he was returned to that body frequently during the next thirty-five years. He also served in numerous other local political positions. Bloodworth, along with [John Ashe](#) ^[7], has been credited with the formation of the [Wilmington Committee of Safety](#) ^[8] in 1775. As a member of this committee, as a legislator, and later as commissioner of confiscated property for the district of Wilmington, Bloodworth was known for his harsh treatment of suspected and known [Loyalists](#) ^[9]. He was once accused of trying to depopulate New Hanover County.

In 1784, Bloodworth was elected to Congress; he resigned in August 1787 to return home to fight fiercely against the ratification of the Constitution, serving as a member of the Hillsborough and Fayetteville conventions. Emerging as one of several prominent radical leaders in North Carolina, he opposed virtually everything proposed by the Federalists. Defeated in his bid for a seat in the Senate in 1789, he was elected to the House of Representatives the following year. He replaced [Benjamin Hawkins](#) ^[10] in the Senate in 1795, where he served until the inauguration of [President Jefferson](#) ^[11]. Bloodworth was one of the first North Carolina Republicans to be rewarded by Jefferson. Soon after his resignation from the Senate, he was appointed collector of the Port of Wilmington. He served in this capacity until he resigned in 1807, apparently because of inefficiency in office: at the time of his death in 1814 he still owed the United States \$22,500.

Bloodworth retired to his home near Burgaw, in present-day [Pender County](#) ^[12], and died while on a visit to Washington, N.C. Although he was survived by two daughters, Mary and Martha, he had been a widower since the death of his wife Priscilla in 1803.

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[Biography](#) [20]

[Public officials](#) [21]

[UNC Press](#) [22]

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[Herndon, G. Melvin](#) [23]

Origin - location:

[New Hanover County](#) [24]

[Pender County](#) [25]

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1 January 1979 | Herndon, G. Melvin

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