

Bodley, Joshua ^[1]

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by [William S. Powell](#) ^[2], 1979

1705–3 Feb. 1775

Joshua Bodley, attorney and land agent, may have been a native of Dublin, Ireland. He was living in the port city of Lorient, Brittany, France, on 3 Nov. 1755, when a marriage contract was drawn up with Jeane Henriette Damery or D'Amory, minor daughter of Jean and Helen Julienne Faret Damery. By this contract he settled on her forty thousand livres and guaranteed that her personal property, including jewels, would remain her own, free of any claim from him. These terms suggest that the fifty-year-old Bodley was comfortably fixed at that time.

On 1 Sept. 1756, Bodley was described as of the Parish of St. James's, Westminster, London, when he was appointed an agent in North Carolina for Earl Granville, who owned an interest in about half the land in the colony. Bodley was replacing Benjamin Wheatley, whose son was apparently brought up in Bodley's household. In September 1756, Bodley and Thomas Barker were appointed personal attorneys to Thomas Child, and in late May 1757, Bodley was named by the council to be one of the justices of [Chowan County](#) ^[3]; he probably was then a resident of [Edenton](#) ^[4]. In the same month, acting as Granville's agent, he commissioned [John Haywood](#) ^[5] to collect and receive Lord Granville's [quitrents](#) ^[6] in [Edgecombe](#) ^[7] and [Johnston](#) ^[8] counties. Conditions on Granville's lands were so unsettled and the question of quitrents and taxes so unstable that residents complained to the attorney general for relief. He advised a petition to the earl or an appeal to the assembly. A committee investigated the recent activity of Thomas Corbin and Joshua Bodley, both agents of Granville, and concluded that they had followed Granville's instructions concerning the manner of issuing land grants and taking fees. That their instructions had been changed from time to time, however, the people were unaware. Corbin, it was concluded, had been doing some questionable things, but the house was satisfied with Bodley's conduct. Nevertheless, in late January 1759, both men were seized by a band from [Edgecombe County](#) ^[7] and taken by force to Enfield, the county seat. Those who took Bodley were drunk. They afterwards thrust a Bible into his hand and tried to make him take an oath "to something he would not attend to," but he was able to obtain his release. He was already trying to provide relief for the people who were complaining of Corbin's past actions. The charges against Bodley were certainly less serious than those against Corbin, and he was released first. As one witness later testified, Bodley "lukily got out of their hands." In April, Granville confirmed the appointment of both these men as his agents, and he also named [Thomas Child](#) ^[9], attorney general of the colony, to be his auditor.

At the same time Bodley was having trouble with the people of Edgecombe County, he also had trouble with a member of the assembly and temporarily with the governor. Bodley charged that assembly member Francis Brown had forsworn himself in legislative hearings into complaints against the proprietary agents. Brown assaulted Bodley and challenged him to a duel. A legislative committee investigated and found that the accusation against Brown was justified, and Brown was dismissed from the house. Bodley charged also that Corbin had said, in his hearing, that Governor [Arthur Dobbs](#) ^[10] had granted land the governor knew to be Granville land. An investigation made it clear that Corbin had lied, and after the governor had given him ample opportunity to support his statements, Corbin was dismissed from the council and from his position as an associate justice. To show that no disrespect was intended to Earl Granville, Dobbs sometime before 3 Aug. 1760 appointed Bodley to be associate justice in Corbin's place. In the same month, Auditor Thomas Child removed Bodley as Granville's agent because Bodley "hath under Colour of the Powers and Authorities so given to him by the said Earl as aforesaid behaved himself greatly to the prejudice and Hindrance of his Lordship's Interests and contrary to the general Trust and Confidence in him by the said . . . Commission." Child accused Bodley specifically of failing to submit a final account of receipts, disbursements, charges, and proceedings.

[Maurice Moore](#) ^[11], writing from the Cape Fear on 27 Jan. 1770 to [Samuel Johnston](#) ^[12], said that Bodley had spent several days with him. Bodley was, said Moore, "a very respectable Gent and highly merits the friendly regard of every good man." Moore asked Johnston, "Does it not lie in your way to lend him an assisting hand in his Difficulties? If it does, to do so, would be to act a part worthy of yrself."

Bodley's home was Pembroke Plantation near [Edenton](#) ^[4], and at his death he was buried there. (The federal government later took over the plantation for a fish hatchery, and in about 1911 his body was removed to St. Paul's churchyard in Edenton.) Sir [Nathaniel Duckenfield](#) ^[13] wrote to James Iredell on 26 Mar. 1775 from Manchester, England: "I received a letter a few days ago from Mr. Pearson in which he tells me that Mr. Bodley is dead. I think that compliments of congratulations are more proper than those of condolence to be presented to Mrs. Bodley on this occasion." Within two years the widow was married to [Stephen Cabarrus](#) ^[14], who was born only one year before she and Bodley had been married. Bodley was also survived by a sister in Waterford, Ireland.

References:

Don Higginbotham, ed., *Papers of James Iredell*, vol. 1 (1976).

North Carolina Historical and Genealogical Register, vol. 1 (Oct. 1900).

notes in the possession of Miss Elizabeth V. Moore, Edenton.

William L. Saunders and Walter Clark, eds., *Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*, 30 vols. (1886–1914).

Additional Resources:

Minutes of the North Carolina Governor's Council (May 17, 1757 - May 30, 1757)^[15] Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries

Minutes of the North Carolina Governor's Council (Dec 01, 1757 - Dec 15, 1757)^[16] Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries

Minutes of the North Carolina Governor's Council (Dec 01, 1758 - Dec 23, 1758)^[17] Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries

Minutes of the Lower House of the North Carolina General Assembly (Nov 23, 1758 - Dec 23, 1758)^[18] Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries

Preface to Volume 5 of the Colonial Records of North Carolina (1887)^[19] Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries

Power of attorney for Thomas Child to act for John Carteret, Earl Granville (Apr 25, 1759)^[20] Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries

Revocation of the power of attorney for Joshua Bodley to act for John Carteret, Earl Granville (Aug 15, 1760)^[21] Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries

Power of attorney for Francis Corbin and Joshua Bodley to act for John Carteret, Earl Granville (Sep 01, 1756)^[22] Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries

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Colonial period (1600-1763) ^[24]

Public officials ^[25]

Authors:

Powell, William S. ^[26]

Origin - location:

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Johnston County ^[28]

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