

Dawson (Dauson, Dosson, Dowson), Anthony ^[1]

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by Mattie Erma E. Parker, 1986

ca. 1643–October 1717

Anthony Dawson (Dauson, Dosson, Dowson), council member and general court justice, came to North Carolina in or before 1687. In a deposition made in 1695, Dawson indicated that he was born about 1643. He may have been the same Anthony Dawson who was living in Dorchester County, Md., in 1679. If so, he immigrated to Maryland in 1665 with his father, William Dawson, and married Rebecca Osborne, daughter of Henry Osborne of Calvert County, Md. However, there is no evidence in North Carolina records that Dawson had a wife or children. Dawson settled in Perquimans Precinct, where he took up by patent the 100 acres to which he was entitled by transporting himself and one John Chapman into the colony. He acquired an additional 590 acres by purchase. Dawson, who gave his occupation as "carpenter," soon became a captain in the North Carolina militia. By January 1693/94, he was a member of the council. He probably was also a member of the Assembly, as he was elected to the council by that body. As council member he was ex officio justice of the general court, which was then composed of the council members. He held office through December 1696. He also was active in an unofficial capacity. His name frequently appears as witness to wills and other documents, as appraiser of estates, and as attorney in court actions. For several years the Perquimans Precinct court was held at his house.

In February 1697/98 an episode occurred that resulted in Dawson's banishment from North Carolina. Apparently acting in his capacity as captain of the militia, Dawson undertook to secure "as a wreck for the proprietors use" a ship of the royal navy, HMS *Swift Advice*, which had been cast ashore in Currituck Precinct. The ship had been abandoned by its commander and crew off the Virginia coast during a storm. Local inhabitants were pillaging the wreck when Dawson and others under his direction seized it for the proprietors ^[2] and removed guns, sails, rigging, and other furnishings. Under pressure from the commander of the *Swift Advice*, who came from Virginia to salvage the wreck for the Crown, Dawson and his assistants were indicted and tried on charges of feloniously rifling, spoiling, and embezzling the king's ship of war. Dawson was found guilty and condemned to death by hanging, but his sentence was commuted to banishment, effective 26 May 1698.

After his exile, Dawson went to New Jersey and settled in Newton, Gloucester County, where he spent the remainder of his life. In his will he left his estate to a "cousin" (probably nephew), John Dawson, of Burlington County, N.J., whom he named sole heir and executor.

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Colonial Court Records (scattered documents re. HMS *Swift Advice*, boxes 188–89, 191–92).

Perquimans County Deeds, Book A (microfilm).

Perquimans Precinct Court Minutes, 1688–93, 1698–1706.

Additional Resources:

Anthony Dawson in Colonial and State Records Index: https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/indices/D#D_i_016221 [6]

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