

## **Wilson, Lewis Feuilleteau** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Wilson, Lewis Feuilleteau**

by Neill R. Mcgeachy, 1996

**June 1752–11 Dec. 1804**

See also: [Wilson, Hugh](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

Lewis Feuilleteau Wilson, physician and minister, was born on St. Christophers Island in the West Indies. The names of his parents are unknown, but his father was a wealthy English planter who, about 1758, moved his family from the West Indies to London so that they could receive a good education. On the voyage, young Wilson's older brother died. Lewis attended a grammar school in London and in 1769 went to New Jersey with an uncle and entered Nassau Hall (now [Princeton University](#) <sup>[3]</sup>), where he was graduated with honors and an A.B. degree in September 1773.

Shortly after graduation he returned to England intending to enter the Anglican ministry. His father, who had become a wealthy merchant and a man of some influence in London, was able to procure for him "what they call, 'a good living' in the city, and urged him to take orders in the Episcopal church." Because he refused to do so, his father threatened to disinherit him, but young Wilson would not give in. Later, on his return to Princeton, he told friends that he had been unable to find "the least prospect of either influence or happiness" in the [Church of England](#) <sup>[4]</sup>. About the time of his quarrel with his father, an aunt died and left him a legacy of approximately one thousand dollars, which he used to outfit himself, procure a small library, and pay for his passage to America. Here he entered into the study of theology under Dr. John Witherspoon, president of Princeton.

When the [Revolutionary War](#) <sup>[5]</sup> forced the closing of the college, Wilson went to Philadelphia and studied medicine for two years. He then worked as a surgeon in both the Continental army and the incipient navy. In 1781 he received news of his father's death and of a legacy in his will of £500. He sailed for England, secured the money, and returned to Princeton to practice his profession. In 1786 the Reverend [James Hall](#) <sup>[6]</sup>, D.D., a college friend, persuaded him to move to Piedmont North Carolina. This he did in August 1786 and shortly afterwards married Margaret (Peggy) Hall, the daughter of Captain Hugh Hall, a brother of his intimate friend, James Hall.

Wilson soon established a successful medical practice in the area, but his own conscience, troubled by his abandonment of theological studies, and the urging of friends and admirers led him to give up medicine and resume his pursuit of the ministry through study with James Hall. The Presbytery of Orange licensed him to preach in 1791, and on his acceptance of the calls of the Fourth Creek (now First Presbyterian, Statesville) and Concord ([Iredell County](#) <sup>[7]</sup>) Presbyterian churches, the Presbytery ordained and installed him as pastor in June 1793.

In 1802–3 Wilson, Hall, and other ministers began participating in the revival that swept across the country. This led to a controversy with his church officers at Fourth Creek and threatened to split the congregation. To bring peace, Wilson resigned and devoted the last few years of his life to Concord alone. At age fifty-two he died at his home after a short illness and was buried beside his beloved friend James Hall in the Bethany Presbyterian Church cemetery, located on U.S. 21 north of Statesville.

Wilson and his wife had seven children, three sons and four daughters. Two of the sons followed their father into the ministry: the Reverend [Hugh Wilson](#) <sup>[2]</sup> was the first settled Presbyterian minister in Texas, and the Reverend Lewis F. Wilson, Jr., served churches in Virginia and what is now West Virginia.

#### **References:**

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**Subjects:**

Biographies <sup>[9]</sup>

Religious Leaders and Clergy <sup>[10]</sup>

Physicians, Dentists, Pharmacists, and other Medical Professionals <sup>[11]</sup>

**Authors:**

Mcgeachy, Neill R. <sup>[12]</sup>

**Origin - location:**

Cabarrus County <sup>[13]</sup>

Concord <sup>[14]</sup>

Iredell County <sup>[15]</sup>

Statesville <sup>[16]</sup>

Orange County <sup>[17]</sup>

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