

# GOVERNORS OF NORTH CAROLINA

From the Proprietary Period Down to the Present Time



HERE have been four distinct periods in the political history of North Carolina; first was the Proprietary Period, 1663-1728, when chief executives of the colony were selected by Lords Proprietors; second, the period of Royal Government, 1728-1775, when the Governors were selected by the King; third, the interval between the expulsion of the last Royal Governor and the inauguration of the first constitutional Governor, 1775-1777, called, for convenience, the period of Provincial Government; fourth, the period of Constitutional Government, 1777-1911.

**Proprietary Period.**  
During the Proprietary Period there were twenty-seven chief executives. In this number, however, the names of John Jenkins, John Harvey, Philip Ludwell, Thomas Cary and Thomas Pollock appear twice, so that there were actually twenty-two different persons who presided over the affairs of the colony during the Proprietary Period. Some of these served as Governors in their own right, others as Deputy-Governors, and still others simply as Acting-Governors by virtue of being president of the council when a vacancy occurred in the Governor's office. The first Governor, as is well enough known, was William Drummond, who was selected by William Berkeley, Governor of Virginia, and one of the Lord Proprietors, at the request of the other Proprietors. He served from October, 1663, to October, 1667. Returning to Virginia he was hanged by Governor Berkeley's order for participation in Bacon's rebellion. Lake Drummond, in the great Bismal Swamp, perpetuates his name. Samuel Stephen, who succeeded Drummond, served from October, 1667, to December, 1669, dying in office. Thomas Eastchurch, who was appointed Governor in November, 1676, never qualified. At the time of his appointment he was on a visit to England. On his return to his government he stopped at the Island of Nevis, where he speedily fell in love with a Creole lady, of course very beautiful and equally very wealthy. He remained to pay his court, sending his friend, Thomas Miller, to Carolina to conduct the government until his arrival. Eastchurch won his bride but lost his office. When he finally reached Virginia with his bride he found Carolina in revolt against Miller. The rebels refused to recognize Eastchurch's commission. While endeavoring to persuade the Governor of Virginia to give him aid in seizing the government of Carolina by force, he died, it is said of chagrin. Thomas Miller was deposed by the rebels who set up a government of their own, nominally under the leadership of John Culpepper, but really under that of George Durant, who seems to have been the first example in North Carolina politics of a party boss. Seth Sothel, a Lord Proprietor, was sent over in 1678 to quiet the troubled waters. On his way across the Atlantic he was captured by pirates and four years elapsed before he arrived to take possession of his office. He proved himself to be the worst Governor in the whole lot, and in 1689, after seven years of misrule, was deposed by the people and expelled from the province. From 1689 to 1712 North Carolina was governed by Deputy-Governors, the Governors themselves residing at Charleston, S. C. In 1712 Edward Hyde, a near kinsman of Queen Anne, became the first Governor of North Carolina as a separate and distinct province from South Carolina. Governor Hyde died in 1712, a victim of yellow fever. Charles Eden, 1714-1722; George Burrington, 1724-1725; and Sir Richard Everard, 1725-1728, were the other Governors of North Carolina under the Proprietors. From 1712 to 1714, and again in 1722, Thomas Pollock as president of the council, was Acting-Governor, owing, in the first instance to the death of Governor Hyde, and in the second to the death of Governor Eden. Upon the death of Pollock, 1722, William Reed became Acting-Governor until the arrival of Burrington in 1724.

**Royal Governors.**

The crown purchased the province from the Lords Proprietors in 1728, during the administration of Governor

Everard. Everard continued in office, as the representative of the crown, until the arrival of Burrington, the first Royal Governor, in 1731. There were in all six Royal Governors: George Burrington, 1731-1734; Gabriel Johnston, 1734-1752; Arthur Dobbs, 1754-1765; William Tryon, 1765-1771, and Josiah Martin, 1771-1775. Between the death of Johnston, in 1752, and the arrival of Dobbs, in 1755, Matthew Rowan, as president of the council, was Acting-Governor; and between the departure of Tryon, in June, 1771, and the arrival of Martin, in August of the same year, James Hasell was Acting-Governor. Burrington was removed from office on complaint of the colonists; Johnston and Dobbs died in office; Tryon, on account of his efficient administration in North Carolina, was promoted to the Governorship of New York, and Josiah Martin was driven out of the province by the revolutionists in 1775. Johnston, Rowan, Dobbs, Tryon and Martin were honored by having counties named for them. The names of Johnston and Rowan still remain. In 1791, Dobbs was abolished and the territory which it embraced was divided into Lenoir and Glasgow. Glasgow was named in honor of James Glasgow, Secretary of State, but upon his being convicted of issuing fraudulent land grants in what is now Tennessee, the name of the county was changed to Greene, in honor of General Nathaniel Greene. In 1779 the name of Tryon county was changed to Lincoln, in honor of Benjamin Lincoln, the Revolutionary general. Martin county, formed in 1774, was originally named for Governor Josiah Martin. It, too, would likely have been changed after the Revolution but for the popularity of Alexander Martin, a Revolutionary patriot, who became Governor in 1782 and again in 1790. So the name was retained in his honor.

**Provincial Government.**

In 1775, after the expulsion of Governor Josiah Martin, it became necessary to institute some kind of government in the province to take the place of the overthrown royal government. This government consisted of a system of committees, called Committees of Safety. It was designed at first that there should be one committee in each town, one in each county, one in each of the six districts into which the province was divided, and one, called the Provincial Council, or Council of Safety, for the province as a whole. Over and above these committees was the Provincial Congress. This scheme of government was in full and complete operation from October, 1775, to January, 1777. The chief executive officer of the system was the president of the council. There were three presidents: Cornelius Harnett, from October 18, 1775, to August 21, 1776; Samuel Ashe, from August 21, 1776, to September 27, 1776, and Willie Jones, from September 27, 1776, to October 25, 1776. This provincial government was superseded by the government established, under the Constitution of 1776, by the Provincial Congress of November-December, 1776. The Constitution went into effect January 1, 1777.

**The Constitutional Government.**

This period of our government may be divided into three distinct periods according to the methods of choosing the governors and the terms of their service. The first period extends from April 18, 1777 to December 31, 1836; the second, from January 1, 1837 to 1868; the third period from 1868 to the present. During the first period the governor was elected by the Legislature. The term was one year and no person was eligible to the office for more than three years in any six successive years. During the second period the governor was elected by a direct vote of the people. The term was two years and eight successive years. During the third period the method of election was unchanged, but the term was made four years, and no governor is eligible to succeed himself.

**Governor Under Constitution of 1776.**

Article XV of the Constitution of 1776 reads as follows: "That the Senate and House of Commons, jointly at their first meeting after each annual election, shall by ballot elect a governor for one year, who shall not be eligible to that office longer than three years in each six successive years."

This Constitution was adopted by the Provincial Congress December 18, 1776. The first Assembly was not to meet until April 7, 1777. In order to bridge the gap, the Congress, by a special ordinance appointed Richard Caswell governor until the Assembly should choose his successor. On April 18, 1777, the Assembly chose him to succeed himself.

Of twenty-four governors chosen by the Legislature thirteen were elected three times in succession. They were as follows: Richard Caswell elected April 18, 1777, April 18, 1778, May 3, 1779; and again November 9, 1784, December 9, 1785, December 16, 1786; Samuel Johnston, December 13, 1787, November 11, 1788, November 16, 1789 (resigned December 5, 1789 to accept election to United States Senate); Alexander Martin, December 5, 1789, November 17, 1790, December 30, 1791; Richard Dobbs Spaight, December 11, 1792, December 20, 1792, January 2, 1795; Samuel Ashe, November 14, 1795, December 13, 1796, December 2, 1797;

Benjamin Williams, November 24, 1799, November 26, 1800, November 25, 1801; James Turner, December 6, 1802, November 28, 1803, November 24, 1804; William Hawkins, December 7, 1811, November 28, 1812, November 10, 1813; William Miller, November 20, 1814, November 25, 1815, November 23, 1816; John Branch, December 6, 1817, December 5, 1818, December 7, 1819; Gabriel Holmes, December 7, 1821, December 7, 1822, December 6, 1823; Hutchins, G. Burton, December 7, 1824, December 6, 1825, December 29, 1826; and David L. Swain, December 6, 1832, December 9, 1833, December 10, 1834. Besides being elected for three terms in 1790 and 1791, Alexander Martin had already served two terms, having been elected governor April 22, 1782 and again April 25, 1783; and Benjamin Williams, after serving three terms from 1799 to 1802, again served one term from November 25, 1807 to November 28, 1808.

Those who served only two terms were: Nathaniel Alexander, November 25, 1805 to November 24, 1807; David Stone, November 28, 1808 to December 1, 1810; John Owen, December 12, 1828 to December 18, 1830; and Montford Stokes, December 18, 1830 to December 6, 1832. The following served one term only: Abner Nash, April, 1780 to June 25, 1781; Thomas Burke, June 25, 1781 to April 22, 1782; William R. Davie, December 3, 1798 to November 24, 1799; Benjamin Smith, December 1, 1810 to December 7, 1811; Jesse Franklin, December 7, 1820 to December 7, 1821; James Iredell, December 8, 1827 to December 12, 1828; and Richard Dobbs Spaight, Jr., December 10, 1835 to December 31, 1836.

Richard Caswell was elected governor more times and served longer terms than any other man since the Revolution. He was elected seven times—December 19, 1776, April 18, 1777, April 18, 1778, May 3, 1779, November 9, 1784, December 9, 1785, and December 16, 1786. After Caswell comes Alexander, Martin, who was chosen governor five times—April 22, 1782, April 25, 1783, December 5, 1789, November 17, 1790, and December 30, 1791.

The following counties contributed the governors during this period: Lenoir, Richard Caswell; Craven, Abner Nash, Richard Dobbs Spaight, and Richard Dobbs Spaight, Jr.; Orange, Thomas Burke; Guilford, Alexander Martin; Chowan, Samuel Johnston and James Iredell; New Hanover, Samuel Ashe; Halifax, William R. Davie and John Branch; Moore, Benjamin Williams; Warren, James Turner, William Hawkins, and William Miller; Mecklenburg, Nathaniel Alexander; Bertie, David Stone; Brunswick, Benjamin Smith; Surry, Jesse Franklin; Sampson, Gabriel Holmes Bladen, John Owen; Wilkes, Montford Stokes; and Buncombe, David L. Swain. Warren county had the governor for six years in succession—William Hawkins, 1811-1814, and William Miller, 1814-1817.

In 1802, John Baptista Ashe was elected governor, but died before he could qualify. James Turner was then elected. Samuel Johnston was elected for his third term November 16, 1789, but resigned almost immediately to become the first Senator from North Carolina in the Federal Congress. William R. Davie resigned in 1799, after having served one term only, in order to accept the position to which he had been appointed by the President of the United States as Special Ambassador to France, together with Chief Justice Oliver Ellsworth and William Van Ness Murray, American Minister at The Hague, to negotiate a treaty with Napoleon Bonaparte.

David L. Swain was the youngest man ever elected governor of North Carolina, being only thirty-one at the time of election. His fellow countyman, Zebulon B. Vance, was thirty-two when elected governor. Richard Dobbs Spaight, Jr., governor 1835-1836, was the son of Richard Dobbs Spaight, governor 1792-1795—this being the only instance in the history of North Carolina in which both father and son became governor.

**Governors Under the Constitution of 1835.**

The Convention of 1835 changed the method of electing the governor and the term of office. After that date the governor was elected by a direct vote of the people, and his term of office was changed from one to two years. It was provided that no person should serve for more than two terms successively. In case of a vacancy the President of the Senate succeeded. There was no lieutenant governor. Eight Governors were elected under the Constitution of 1835 and two Presidents of the Senate succeeded to the office by reason of vacancies.

The first governor chosen under the provisions of the Constitution of 1835 was Edward B. Dudley, of New Hanover, who took his seat December 31, 1836. The last governor thus elected was Jonathan Worth, who took his seat December 15, 1865 and was forced out of office by the reconstruction government July 1, 1865.

Edward B. Dudley, John M. Morehead, William A. Graham, David S. Reid, Thomas Bragg, John W. Ellis, Zebulon B. Vance and Jonathan Worth

were elected for two terms. Charles Manly was defeated for re-election. Warren Winslow, President of the Senate, succeeded to the office of governor upon the resignation of David S. Reid, who had been elected United States Senator, and Henry T. Clark, President of the Senate, became governor upon the death of Governor Ellis, July 7, 1861. Governor Vance was turned out of office May 29th, 1865 by military order and was succeeded by W. W. Holden as Provincial Governor. In the election of 1865 Holden was defeated by Worth. In 1868, under the new Constitution, Holden was elected Governor. Unwilling to wait for the constitutional beginning of his term, he induced the military commander of the district to issue an order removing Governor Worth and placing Holden in office July 1, 1868. He served until March 22, 1871, when, having been convicted in an impeachment before the Senate, of high crimes, he was removed from office and declared incapable of again holding office in North Carolina. He was succeeded by the Lieutenant-Governor, Tod R. Caldwell.

**Governors Since 1868.**

Since 1868 the Governor has been elected by the people for a term of four years. No Governor can succeed himself. The Constitution of 1868 created the office of Lieutenant-Governor, who succeeds to the office of Governor in case of a vacancy. Since 1868 the State has had thirteen Governors. Four Lieutenant-Governors have succeeded to the Governor's office. Caldwell became Governor in 1871 upon the impeachment and conviction of Holden; Brogden, in 1874, upon the death of Caldwell; Jarvis, in 1879, upon the election of Vance to the United States Senate, and Holt, in 1891, upon the death of Fowle. Caldwell and Jarvis were afterward elected Governor in their own right.

All told, North Carolina has had seventy-six Governors or Acting-Governors, exclusive of the two Governors of "Virginia" (Raleigh's Roanoke colony), and the three Presidents of the Council of Safety from 1775-1776. Since the adoption of the Constitution of 1776 there have been forty-seven chief executives of the State. These have been furnished by the following thirty counties: Lenoir, Craven, Orange, Guilford, Chowan, New Hanover, Halifax, Moore, Warren, Mecklenburg, Bertie, Brunswick, Surry, Sampson, Bladen, Wilkes, Buncombe, Wake, Rockingham, Cumberland, Northampton, Rowan, Edgecombe, Randolph, Burke, Wayne, Pitt, Alamance, Forsythe and Person. The following counties have given the State two or more Governors: Craven—Nash, Richard Dobbs Spaight, Sr., Richard Dobbs Spaight, Jr.; Orange—Thomas Burke and William A. Graham; Guilford—Alexander Martin and John M. Morehead; Chowan—Samuel Johnston and James Iredell; New Hanover—Samuel Ashe and Edward B. Dudley; Halifax—William R. Davie, John Branch and Hutchins G. Burton; Warren—James Turner, William Hawkins and William Miller; Brunswick—Benjamin Smith and Daniel L. Russell; Buncombe—David L. Swain and Zebulon B. Vance; Wake—Charles Manly, W. W. Holden and Daniel G. Fowle; Rockingham—David S. Reid and Alfred M. Scales; Edgecombe—Henry T. Clark and Elias Carr; Wayne—Curtis H. Brogden and Charles B. Aycock.

Counties have been named in honor of Caswell, Burke, Ashe, Davie, Swain, Graham and Vance.

Of these forty-seven Governors it is known that there are portraits of at least thirty-nine. No portrait is known to exist of Caswell, Burke, Ashe, Alexander, Stone, Franklin, Holmes, the younger Spaight. It is possible, however, that there may be portraits of at least some of these in existence. The State ought to possess a collection of portraits of all her Governors. Would it not be a fine thing if each of the counties which have furnished the State with Governors would present their portraits to the State?



**DR. HENDERSON'S LECTURES.**

Anecdotes and Reminiscences of Bernard Shaw, Mark Twain and Ibsen. (Salisbury Post.)

Dr. Archibald Henderson's lecture at Mrs. Charles Price's last evening was heard by a large and appreciative audience. A beautiful musical program was rendered by a number of the city's most talented artists, after which Hon. A. H. Price introduced the distinguished author. Dr. Henderson's lecture, which followed, was a literary treat. His impression of Europe and of the distinguished people he had met, were all most interesting and delightfully told. His anecdotes and reminiscences of Bernard Shaw, Mark Twain, Ibsen and other great men that he had known were especially happy and illuminating.

The evening was in all respects, a most delightful one and Salisbury people are extremely fortunate in being among the first to hear the brilliant author, critic and philosopher after his long absence abroad.



John Trotwood Moore, author of "Jack Ballington—Forester," has gone into the Tennessee mountains to gather local color for his new book, "The Bishop of Milk-Sick Creek."