

Miller, Thomas ^[1]

THOMAS MILLER

Governor: 1677

by Dennis F. Daniels

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<https://www.dncr.nc.gov/about-us/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program> ^[2]

See also: [Thomas Miller](#) ^[3], *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*

Thomas Miller (d. ca. 1685) served as Albemarle's governor for about six months in 1677, during which time his government was overthrown in an uprising known as Culpeper's Rebellion. Miller originally resided in Ireland working as a merchant and apothecary. By 1673 he had settled in Albemarle and become a leader in the proprietary faction. In 1676 the anti-proprietary faction led by [John Jenkins](#) ^[4], regained partial control of Albemarle from proprietary leader [Thomas Eastchurch](#) ^[5]. They indicted Miller for treason and blasphemy and for speaking disparagingly of the [Lords Proprietors](#) ^[6]. Miller was imprisoned and later sent to Virginia in May 1676 for trial. The Virginia Council acquitted Miller; he left for London where he joined Eastchurch.

Miller and Eastchurch met with the proprietors in the fall of 1676. They presented their version of the events in Albemarle to the proprietors who accepted their story. The Lords Proprietors issued commissions appointing Eastchurch as governor of Albemarle and Miller as council member and secretary. Miller also received an appointment as customs collector. The two men left for Albemarle in summer 1677.

The ship carrying Miller and Eastchurch stopped in the West Indies. During this stopover Eastchurch met a wealthy woman and married her. Wishing to stay longer, Eastchurch commissioned Miller as acting governor. Miller arrived in Albemarle in July 1677 and claimed the governor's office. He authorized the collections of fees and tried anti-proprietary faction members for various offences. Miller called for the election of a new assembly but disfranchised the anti-proprietary faction. Miller's assembly imposed fines on the anti-proprietary faction to punish them. Miller caused more antagonism by having the assembly levy high taxes and by using public money to pay his armed guards.

In December 1677 Miller's arrest of Zachariah Gillam for customs violations and his attempted arrest of anti-proprietary leader George Durant sent Albemarle into rebellion. Led by [John Culpeper](#) ^[7] and [Valentine Bird](#) ^[8], an armed group imprisoned Miller and his followers. Gaining control of the government, the anti-proprietary faction brought Miller to trial. The trial was discontinued when Eastchurch, who was in Virginia, issued a proclamation calling on the colonists to disarm, to free Miller and others, and to restore the rightful government. The proclamation stopped the trial proceedings and saved Miller from the prospect of execution for treason. However, Miller remained imprisoned for two years before being freed by friends.

Miller went to London and complained to Lords Proprietors, the Commissioners of Customs, and the Privy Council about what happened. He obtained the arrest of Zachariah Gillam and John Culpeper when they were in London. But, Gillam was released due to lack of evidence, and Culpeper was acquitted of treason. Miller obtained some justice receiving monetary compensation from the royal treasury. He received an appointment as customs collector in Poole, England, in March 1681. In July 1682 he transferred to a better customs post in Weymouth. In short order he was removed from the position and imprisoned for embezzling. Miller died in prison prior to October 1685.

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