

Eden, Charles^[1]

CHARLES EDEN

Governor: 1714-1722

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: [Charles Eden](#) ^[3], *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*

Charles Eden (1673-1722) was governor of North Carolina during a period of progressive change. Although there are but a few surviving records generated by Eden personally, most of those correspondence with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, he is generally credited with the improvements made during his administration. Eden's early life is even more of a mystery than his colonial career. There are no records of his activities, public or private, prior to his appointment in 1713 to become the next governor of North Carolina. Since the surviving part of his tombstone bears a portion of what was the Eden of Durham family crest, it can be assumed that he was from this notable family of County Durham, England.

An assembly that Eden called in 1715 passed far reaching governmental reforms. The contemporary legal code was revised to include new laws intended to target behaviors that led to the widespread disturbances that occurred during previous administrations. Perhaps with the idea of enhancing trade, immigration and communication, several transportation issues were addressed, including plans to improve roads, build new roads and establish shipping channels. It was at that time that the [Church of England](#) ^[4] was officially established in North Carolina, as well. Though a vestryman and devout Anglican, Eden was tolerant of religious diversity in the colony and the laws reflected that. The governor sent troops to South Carolina in 1715 to fight alongside those colonists in their war with the [Yemassee Indians](#) ^[5]. South Carolinians had been of military assistance during North Carolina's war with the Tuscarora.

Although extant records fail to fully document the relationship, Charles Eden is probably best remembered for his alleged association with the pirate Edward Teach, or [Blackbeard](#) ^[6]. The primary document used to substantiate it is a letter from [Tobias Knight](#) ^[7], Secretary of the Province, which was found among Teach's papers after his death. The letter indicates that Knight is expecting a visit from Eden shortly and that the governor would surely be "glad to see" Teach. While the statement is interesting, it is also both vague and conjecture. It seems that a great deal of what has been accepted as fact about Teach, his piracy and his personal life, has been drawn from ambiguous references and fictionalized sources.

Charles Eden married Penelope Golland, a widow with two children. He never had children of his own. In 1718 the [Lords Proprietors](#) ^[8] made Eden a [landgrave](#) ^[9], the highest rank in the [Carolina nobility](#) ^[10], although it is unclear whether he ever took advantage of the land to which a landgrave was entitled. His was the last such appointment in the colony. Eden died at his beloved plantation, "Eden House," on March 26, 1722, and was buried there. Shortly afterwards, the town nearest his home, known as "the Town on Queen Anne's Creek", was renamed [Edenton](#) ^[11] in his honor. Charles and Penelope Eden's remains and gravestones were moved to St. Paul's Churchyard in Edenton in 1889.

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