

Burton, Hutchins Gordon ^[1]

HUTCHINS GORDON BURTON

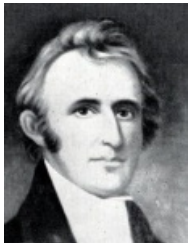
Governor: 1824-1827

by Wilson Angley

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

See also: [Hutchins Gordon Burton](#) ^[3], *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*



Governor Hutchins

G. Burton. Despite some uncertainty as to place, Hutchins Gordon Burton (1774-1836) appears to have been born in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, the son of John Burton and the former Mary Gordon. Orphaned as a small boy, Burton was reared by his uncle, Colonel Robert Burton, in what is now [Vance](#) ^[4] (then Granville) County. He attended the [University of North Carolina](#) ^[5] from 1795 to 1798, studied law under Judge [Leonard Henderson](#) ^[6], and in 1806 began the practice of law in [Charlotte](#) ^[7]. Burton married the former Sarah Wales Jones, daughter of Revolutionary patriot [Willie Jones](#) ^[8] of [Halifax](#) ^[9].

Burton was elected from Mecklenburg County to the lower house of the General Assembly in 1809 and 1810, and from the latter year until 1816 served as the state's attorney general. He then returned to the House of Commons representing the town of Halifax, his wife's hometown. In 1819 he was elected to the United States House of Representatives, where he served for the next five years. In his committee assignments, he focused largely on the workings of the [U.S. Post Office](#) ^[10], military and judicial affairs, and the improvement of transportation. In 1824 he supported the unsuccessful candidacy of William H. Crawford for president of the United States.

It was in 1824, as well, that Burton resigned his seat in Congress to begin his first term as governor of North Carolina, having been elected after six ballots over [Montfort Stokes](#) ^[11] and [Alfred Moore](#) ^[12]. Two successive terms would follow, comprising the maximum three terms permitted under the existing constitution.

As governor Burton repeatedly emphasized the need for public education, especially on the primary level. Sadly, he observed, it was arguably more difficult to obtain "the common rudiments of education" than when the state constitution was adopted half a century earlier. Though he also stressed the need for [internal improvements](#) ^[13], he considered education to be of even greater importance. In 1825 a significant milestone was achieved with the creation of the [Literary Fund](#) ^[14] to provide support for common schools. As governor, Burton was president of the board charged with the fund's management. Unfortunately, the available monies proved woefully inadequate for their intended purpose. Frustrated by the shortage of funds, Burton supported several lotteries with educational objectives, including the preparation of a state history.

In 1825 Burton presided over the festivities associated with the visit of General Lafayette of Revolutionary War fame. Two years later he hosted the visit of future president, Martin Van Buren [15]. Following his third term as governor, Burton returned to Halifax and later made plans to move to Texas. It was while en route to examine property there that he died near Lincolnton on April 21, 1836. He was interred at Beatty's Ford in the Unity Church cemetery.

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