

Mercer, George ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 1991

23 June 1733–Apr. 1784

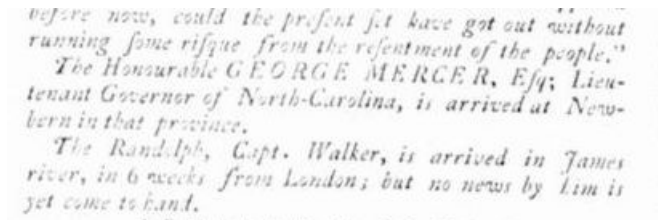


Image of notice of arrival of George Mercer, Esq; Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina, at New-bern. From the *Virginia Gazette*, March 23, 1769, p. 1. Presented by Colonial Williamsburg.

^[2]George Mercer, Virginia officer and lieutenant governor ^[3]

of North Carolina, was born at Marlborough, the family home near Mount Vernon in Virginia, the son of John, a native of Dublin, and Catherine Mason Mercer. He was educated at the [College of William and Mary](#) ^[4] and studied law. Mercer was named aide-de-camp to [George Washington](#) ^[5] in 1755, served as an officer in the [French and Indian War](#) ^[6], and was elected to the House of Burgesses in 1761 at the same time as Washington. In 1763 he was in England as an agent of the Ohio Company, in which Governor [Arthur Dobbs](#) ^[7] of North Carolina also was interested. Mercer returned to Virginia intending to distribute stamped paper for Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina under the [Stamp Act](#) ^[8] but was prevailed upon to resign. He was again in England in 1767, when he married Mary Neville of Lincoln.

On 14 Sept. 1768 a commission was issued naming him lieutenant governor of North Carolina. In July 1769 [Henry Eustace McCulloh](#) ^[9], then in London, wrote to John Harvey that "Col. Mercer of Virginia has been for sometime appointed your Lieut Govr & I do believe has thoughts of succeeding: when Mr Tryon leaves America." This did not materialize, however, but Mercer was named a member of the North Carolina Council in 1771 in the commission of Governor [Josiah Martin](#) ^[10], who was [Tryon](#)' ^[11]s successor. There is no clear evidence that Mercer ever was in the colony, although the *Virginia Gazette* of 23 Mar. 1769 reported that "the Honorable George Mercer, Esq; Lieutenant Governor of North-Carolina is arrived at Newbern in that province." Mercer, as a matter of fact, was in London for long periods representing the Ohio Company. In November 1771 Martin referred to a report that Mercer was about to become governor of a new colony on the Ohio, but again this never occurred.

A [Loyalist](#) ^[12]in sympathy, Mercer went to England sometime before the [American Revolution](#) ^[13]. There a series of misfortunes and disappointments culminated in his physical impairment and insanity. He was in France for his health in 1777, when he was informed that his commission as lieutenant governor of North Carolina was still in effect. In 1783 his wife asked the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury to continue his allowance and sought reimbursement for losses he had sustained as stamp distributor. He died in England.

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