

Merchant (or Marchant), Christopher ^[1]

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by Mattie Erma E. Parker, 1991

d. ca. November 1698

Christopher Merchant (or Marchant), Council member, clerk of Council, customs collector, clerk of precinct court, and deputy escheator, was in the North Carolina colony by November 1679. In November 1681 he was clerk of the Council, and in March 1694/95 he was a Council member. Nothing more is known of his service in those capacities, which no doubt was longer than surviving records show. In the 1690s he was customs collector for the Currituck port, a position that he held from 1696 or earlier until his death. In April 1694, and probably as early as 1690, he was clerk of court for Currituck Precinct. He held that office through July 1697. In 1695 and presumably other years he was deputy escheator for Currituck.

Merchant's plantation, consisting of 908 acres, lay in northern Currituck, an area then claimed by Virginia as well as North Carolina. In 1696, when he was customs collector for Currituck under commission from London officials, the Virginia Council ordered his arrest on a charge that he was collecting customs in Virginia without presenting authorization to officials of that colony. The incident seems to have been settled without a trial. When the boundary between the colonies was surveyed in 1728, the Merchant plantation, then owned by Christopher's grandson, was found to lie in North Carolina.

Merchant died between 6 Nov. 1698, when he made his will, and 1 Mar. 1698/99, when the will was probated. He left bequests to his wife, Abiah; his son, Willoughby; his daughter, Abiah; and his daughter's husband, Thomas Tooley.

Although Merchant was survived by only two children, he had at least thirteen grandchildren. Abiah and Thomas Tooley had five daughters: Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, and two whose names are unknown, although records show that they became the wives of Edward Old and William Leary. Willoughby and his wife, Elizabeth, had at least eight children. Willoughby died about February 1726/27, survived by his wife; by sons Christopher, Caleb, Keader, Willoughby, Haberniah, and Gideon; and by daughters Jane and Elizabeth. The Christopher Merchant who was appointed justice of Currituck Precinct Court in 1728 no doubt was Willoughby's son.

References:

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J. R. B. Hathaway, ed., *North Carolina Historical and Genealogical Register*^[3], vol. 1 (1900).

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Additional Resources:

Search page for the Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/search> ^[5]

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[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#).^[11]

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