

Sanderson (Saunderson), Richard ^[1]

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by Mattie Erma E. Parker, 1994

Ca. 1641–1718

Richard Sanderson (Saunderson), council member and justice, settled in the Currituck ^[2] area of what is now North Carolina in 1661. According to a deposition that he made in 1711, he was born about 1641. Nothing more is known of his early life.

By 10 Nov. 1681 Sanderson had become a member of the Council of the North Carolina colony, which was then called Albemarle ^[3]. He probably was also a member of the Assembly, for his seat on the Council was one filled by the Assembly, which ordinarily elected its own members to the Council seats it controlled. Sanderson sat on the Council again in 1687 and 1689.

By March 1693/94 he was serving on the Council in the reorganized government established after the ousting of Governor Seth Sothel ^[4]. Sanderson appears to have remained a Council member from that time through 1712 with the exception of the years 1707–9. In the 1690s and afterwards he sat as a Lord Proprietor's deputy, and for the last portion of his tenure he was deputy of "the heirs of Seth Sothel." As deputy to Sothel's heirs he did not attend Council meetings, probably because of a question as to his legal status in that capacity, for the Proprietors did not recognize the heirs' claim to Sothel's Proprietorship and made other disposition of Sothel's share in Carolina. In January 1712/13 the Council issued an order calling attention to Sanderson's consistent absence from meetings and directing that he attend the next meeting or be suspended and replaced. Sanderson appears to have ignored the order.

As Council member he was an ex officio justice of several courts held by the Council, including the Palatine's court, the Court of Chancery, and, until 1698, the General Court. He also was an ex officio member of the upper house of the Assembly, which was composed of the Council members.

In the political struggles between Anglicans and dissenters ^[5] in the early 1700s, Sanderson, an Anglican, supported the establishment of the Anglican church and the imposition of political disabilities on dissenters. He also supported his church in private life. He was on the vestry of Currituck Parish at the time it was organized and apparently continued to serve until his death. Much of the time he was senior warden. An Anglican missionary who had lived in Sanderson's home for about a year reported in 1710 that Sanderson intended to bequeath valuable properties to the Currituck Parish. If Sanderson's will contained such provisions, however, they were not executed, for the will was set aside as invalid.

Sanderson continued until his death to live in Currituck, where he had settled as a young man. He patented about 900 acres of land and acquired considerable wealth in cattle and other property. About 1700 he owned at least one vessel, the *Richard*, a shallop of four tons, which was engaged in the coastal trade. At one time he was a partner in a venture involving a large stock of cattle bought from Seth Sothel's estate, but the nature of the venture is not clear.

Sanderson was married at least twice, but the name of only his last wife is known. About 1711 he married Demaris Coleman, widow of Ellis Coleman. By this time he already had grown children.

Late in July 1718, after his death, his widow took his will to court for probate, but probate was prevented by a caveat entered by Sanderson's son Richard. Subsequently the courts held the will invalid, as the scribe, one William Alexander, testified that some provisions were not written on orders from Sanderson but at the direction of Sanderson's wife.

Sanderson had two sons and two daughters. One son, Richard, followed in his father's footsteps and served on the Council for many years. Another son, Joseph, was a member of the Assembly in 1722 and 1725 but otherwise appears not to have been active in politics. Both Richard and Joseph lived in Currituck for a time, but Richard moved to Perquimans Precinct ^[6] about 1714. Richard died in 1733, survived by a son, also named Richard, and two daughters, Grace and Elizabeth. Joseph died before October 1746, survived by his wife, Julian, and seven sons: Richard, Samuel, Joshua, Thomas, William, Benjamin, and Joseph. One of Sanderson's daughters, whose name is not known, married Henry Woodhouse, by whom she had a son, Hezekiah. The other daughter, Susanna, married one Tulley and subsequently one Erwin.

Sanderson's widow, Demaris, married Thomas Swann soon after her husband's death, but she died about a year later.

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