

Spaight, Richard ^[1]

Spaight, Richard

by Gertrude S. Carraway, 1994

1730–March? 1763

Richard Spaight, colonial secretary, councilman, and clerk of the Assembly, was born in Carrickfurgus, Ireland, the son of George and Margaret Dobbs Spaight, who were married on 7 July 1729. His paternal grandparents were James and Mary Tomkins Spaight of Carrickfurgus; his maternal grandparents were Richard Dobbs and a second wife, Margaret Clugston, of Belfast.

Accompanying his uncle, royal governor [Arthur Dobbs](#) ^[2], to North Carolina, Spaight arrived in [New Bern](#) ^[3] in 1754. From 14 Dec. 1754 and for almost a year he was paymaster for the North Carolina regiment in the illfated expedition against the [French and Indians](#) ^[4] on the Ohio River. In October 1755 Governor Dobbs appointed him secretary and clerk of the Crown for the province. Occasionally Spaight acted as Dobbs's secretary.

Commissioned in 1757 as a member of the governor's Council, he died before qualifying. He was named to a 1758 committee "to erect a city" and build public structures at Tower Hill as the provincial capital. In 1759 he was appointed to a committee to finish the courthouse at New Bern, but two years later that act was repealed and he was named to a smaller committee of three members for that purpose. He was also a justice of the peace.

In 1756 he married Elizabeth Wilson, the daughter of Colonel William and Mary Vail Jones Wilson. Colonel Wilson built two fine brick dwellings: Bellair, a few miles northwest of New Bern, the only country mansion of the kind still standing in the region; and Cleremont, on Brice's Creek, across the [Trent River](#) ^[5] from the town. Cleremont was destroyed by Federal troops during the [Civil War](#) ^[6].

Mary Wilson, his wife's mother, was the daughter of Jeremiah and Mary Lillington Vail and the granddaughter of Major Alexander Lillington. At the time of her marriage to Colonel Wilson, she was the widow of [Frederick Jones](#) ^[7]. After Wilson's death she married [Roger Moore](#) ^[8] of Orton Plantation. Her three husbands were said to have been chosen respectively for love, money, and prestige. Madam Moore (1705–64), as she was called, often went to New Bern from Cleremont in an elegant boat with three liveried oarsmen. Her stall in Christ Church was twice as large as the others. Presidents George Washington and James Monroe, as well as other distinguished visitors, are reported to have worshipped in it. Some of the gold of the regal socialite is reputed to be still buried at Cleremont. A nearby street is named Madam Moore's Lane.

To her daughter Elizabeth and Richard Spaight was born [Richard Dobbs Spaight](#) ^[9] (1758–1802), who was governor of North Carolina for three one-year terms, 1792 to 1795. A grandson, Richard Dobbs, Jr. (1796–1850), was governor for one year, 1835–36.

Of Richard Spaight, the Reverend John McDowell, Anglican missionary at Brunswick, wrote on 26 Mar. 1763 to the secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in London: "Mr. Spaight, one of the King's Council & your late secretary is lately dead, he came over with his excellency and was a very sprightly gay young man."

Spaight left considerable property. Governor Dobbs and Frederick Gregg qualified as guardians of his young son, Richard Dobbs. Spaight, his wife, his mother-in-law, and his grandson were among the eleven persons buried in the Spaight cemetery at Cleremont.

References:

Alexander B. Andrews, "[Richard Dobbs Spaight](#) ^[10]," *North Carolina Historical Review* 1 (1924).

Marshall DeLancey Haywood, *Governor William Tryon and His Administration in the Province of North Carolina* ^[11] (1903).

William L. Saunders, ed., *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, vols. 5–^[12]6 ^[13] (1887–88).

Alan D. Watson, *Richard Dobbs Spaight* ^[14] [1987].

Additional Resources:

Search results for 'Richard Dobbs Spaight' in the North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program: <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?MarkerId=C-7> ^[15] (accessed July 30, 2014).

UNC Library. "Letter from Richard Spaight to the Board of Trade of Great Britain. Spaight, Richard, 1730-1763. July 21,

1760. Volume 06, Pages 268-272." Documenting the American South: Colonial and State Records of North Carolina. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr06-0087> ^[16] (accessed July 30, 2014).

UNC Library. "Memorandum by Richard Spaight to the Board of Trade of Great Britain concerning charges against him by the North Carolina General Assembly, including supporting depositions. Spaight, Richard, 1730-1763. June 1760. Volume 06, Pages 272-276." Documenting the American South: Colonial and State Records of North Carolina. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr06-0088> ^[17] (accessed July 30, 2014).

UNC Library. "Power of attorney for Richard Spaight and Alexander McCulloch to act for George Augustus Selwyn. Selwyn, George Augustus, 1719-1791. May 11, 1757. Volume 05, Pages 773-775." Documenting the American South: Colonial and State Records of North Carolina. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr05-0293> ^[18] (accessed July 30, 2014).

Wheeler, John H. 1880. *Sketch of the life of Richard Dobbs Spaight of North Carolina* Baltimore: William K. Boyle, printer. <https://archive.org/details/sketchoflifeofri00whee> ^[19] (accessed July 30, 2014).

Subjects:

[Civil War \(1861-1865\)](#) ^[20]

[Biographies](#) ^[21]

[French and Indian War](#) ^[22]

[Public officials](#) ^[23]

[Public service](#) ^[24]

Authors:

[Carraway, Gertrude S.](#) ^[25]

Origin - location:

[Craven County](#) ^[26]

[New Bern](#) ^[27]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[28]

1 January 1994 | Carraway, Gertrude S.

Source URL: <https://ncpedia.org/biography/spaight-richard>

Links

[1] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/spaight-richard> [2] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/dobbs-arthur> [3] <https://ncpedia.org/gazetteer/search/New%20Bern> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/french-and-indian-war-0> [5] <https://ncpedia.org/gazetteer/search/Trent%20River> [6] <https://ncpedia.org/history/cw-1900/civil-war> [7] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/jones-frederick> [8] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/moore-roger> [9] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/spaight-richard-dobbs> [10] <https://www.worldcat.org/title/richard-dobbs-spaight-governor-of-north-carolina-1792-1795/oclc/851441215> [11] <https://archive.org/details/governorwilliam00haywgoog> [12] <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89067595538;view=1up;seq=13> [13] <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89067595520;view=1up;seq=11> [14] <https://www.worldcat.org/title/richard-dobbs-spaight/oclc/017445571> [15] <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?MarkerId=C-7> [16] <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr06-0087> [17] <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr06-0088> [18] <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr05-0293> [19] <https://archive.org/details/sketchoflifeofri00whee> [20] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/civil-war> [21] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [22] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/french-and-indian> [23] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/public-officials> [24] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/public-service> [25] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/carraway-gertrude> [26] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-16> [27] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-41> [28] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>