

Wade, Thomas ^[1]

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by Carol E. Dalton, 1996

1720–Fall 1786

Thomas Wade, merchant, Revolutionary soldier, and legislator, was born possibly in [Craven County](#) ^[2]. His father was probably the English immigrant John Wade. About 1743 Thomas Wade married Jane Boggan, a sister of Captain [Patrick Boggan](#) ^[3] of [Anson County](#) ^[4]. They had five children: Holden, Thomas, George (b. 1747), Mary, and Sarah. Throughout his life Wade was a communicant of the Anglican church.

In 1746 he received a land grant in Surry County, Va., but returned to North Carolina and settled in [Granville County](#) ^[5] a year later. From 1761 to 1774 he owned land on Lynch's Creek and in Saint David's Parish (Chesterfield District), S.C., where he was the commissary general of purchases for the colony. Moving to Anson County in 1770, he became a tavern keeper at Anson County Courthouse and a large landowner in Mount Pleasant. For the next two years he served as a justice of the Anson County Inferior [Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions](#) ^[6].

Wade was a staunch opponent of British imperial policies. While serving as chairman of the Anson County Meeting of Freeholders (1774), he was elected a member of the Anson Committee of Correspondence. The next year he signed a petition protesting the establishment of the North Carolina–South Carolina boundary line and was elected a delegate to the [Provincial Congress](#) ^[7] held in Hillsborough. During 1775 Wade was a captain of the Anson committee to recruit men and to procure firearms for the rebel cause. As a member of the Provincial Congress (1775–76), he was appointed to reorganize the Anson County Inferior Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions on which he again served from 1776 to 1778. In addition, he was chosen a commissioner for Anson County to supervise prisoners, especially former Loyalists, and to take care of "unhappy women and children."

The Provincial Congress of 1776 selected Wade as colonel of the [Salisbury District of Minute Men](#) ^[8]. After pursuing Tories in the Pee Dee River area in 1778, he worked to obtain such needed supplies as salt, shoes, and cattle for the state [Board of War](#) ^[9]. In 1780 Tories used his home as a rendezvous and took £50,000 worth of property and his crop. In the following year he participated in several encounters with the British. He won a battle at Raft Swamp in August 1781 against the Tory officers Neil and Ray, identified only as Loyalists from [Bladen County](#) ^[10]. Later, while returning from fighting in the [Neuse River](#) ^[11] area, Wade's troops were surprised by the Loyalist John Neil at Piney Bottom on Little Rockfish Creek. During the skirmish Wade's protégé, "a motherless boy," was killed although he had begged for mercy. Returning to Anson County, Wade raised a force of a hundred men and avenged the boy's death by executing many of the Loyalists and destroying their property. On 1 Sept. 1781 he lost a battle at Drowning Creek to Colonel [David Fanning](#) ^[12]. Wade's final battle was at Lindley's Mill in present [Alamance County](#) ^[13], where he fought under General [John Butler](#) ^[14].

When the war ended, Thomas Wade was elected to represent Anson County as a senator in the [General Assembly](#) ^[15]. While serving in New Bern, Hillsborough, and [Halifax](#) ^[16] where the Assembly met in 1780, 1782, and 1783, he was chairman of the Committee on State Papers and on Petitions. In the 1783 session he sat on the committee that laid out the streets of Fayetteville. In addition to his senatorial duties, he was sheriff of Anson County in 1785. He was elected in 1786 to serve another term in the senate but died before taking his seat after becoming ill in Cheraw, S.C. He was buried in the family burial ground in Mount Pleasant. The next year, the General Assembly voted to change the name of New Town to Wadesborough in his honor.

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