

## **Orange County Inhabitants Petition Governor Tryon** <sup>[1]</sup>

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*Following protests and violence in Hillsborough in the spring of 1768, residents of Orange County, North Carolina petitioned Governor Tryon in May to address the problem of illegal fees demanded by court officials. Below is a transcription of the original petition. In the petition they appear to apologize for the violence but also state that they felt ignored by the Assembly. They ask the Governor for protection and to address their complaints. The transcription includes annotations with definitions and historical commentary.*

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### **To the Governor & Council &.**

The humble Petition of us the Subscribers sheweth that We the Inhabitants of Orange County pay larger Fees for recording Deeds than any of the [adjacent](#) <sup>[2]</sup> Counties and many other Fees more than the Law allows by all that We can make out from which a jealositie prevails that [we are misused](#) and [application has been made to our representatives to satisfy us](#) But we were disregarded in the said application [upon which the said discontent growing more and more so as to threaten a disturbance of the public peace](#), we therefore beg that those matters may be taken under your serious consideration and [interpose](#) <sup>[3]</sup> in our Favour so that we may have a fair hearing in this matter and [be redressed](#) <sup>[4]</sup> where we have been wronged Our complaints are too numerous and long to be notified in a Petition, but have sent herewith copies of the Applications Petitions &c that has been made on this Occasion with a small sketch of our Misusage and begging your protection and aprobatation in so just and equitable an undertaking and an opportunity to be heard We conclude your humble Petitioners.

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**To His Excellency William Tryon Esqre Capt. General Governor & Commander in Chief in and over the Province of No. Carolina**

Alex. Mebane  
John Butler  
John Holt  
Wm. Percy  
Tho. Kennedy  
Christopher Woodhull  
David Philips  
Jas. Wise  
James M. Cant  
Peter Holt  
William Davis  
William CNeal  
Wm. Perry  
David Simmons  
John Richard  
John Powell  
John Hannon  
William Jackson  
Samuel Barks  
J. Allison  
William Sorokin  
William Wiley  
William Horbio  
John Murray  
James M. Brown  
Wm. Galbreath  
William Boney  
And. Galbreath  
John Rainey

Signature page of the original Petition of Orange County, 1768. From the Colonial Governors' Papers at the State Archives of North Carolina.

[5]

The Petition of We the Subscribers Inhabitants of Orange County True & Faithfull Subjects to His most sacred [6] Majesty King George the Third Humbly sheweth

That Whereas We your Petitioners have for a long time imagined that We have been imposed and exacted upon by Sheriffs and other Persons not only in taxing their Fees or Suits receiving Sums on Executions but also in collecting the Public Levys and have seen many enormities [7] (as We apprehended them) committed under colour of their Offices some few specimens of such grievances [8] We herewith send to be laid at your Excellcys feet for your inspection and this we are emboldened to do from the Assurances given us by your private Secretary Mr Edwards that you would graciously hear our Complaints that you would redress as far as in your Power our grievances, where found real and where only imaginary kindly excuse the Trouble in compassion to our ignorance — This goodness Sir, we acknowledge We have not only forfeited all title to, but also rendered ourselves liable to severe and heavy punishment by our late illegal & unwarrantable

[conduct](#) in holding unlawful Assemblies to consult means of redress within ourselves in taking away goods distrained by the Sheriffs, to satisfy the Public demands, and in attempting by forcible means the release of certain Prisoners, taken by virtue of the Chief Justices Warrant — For which offences (infinitely more criminal than we apprehended or imagined and which we now see would certainly be productive of the most dangerous consequences) We your Excellys Petitioners thoroughly convinced of our Errors and heartily sorry for our past conduct yet conscious to ourselves, of our loyalty to our most gracious [Sovereign](#) <sup>[9]</sup>, of our firm attachmt to the Blessings of the British Constitution Our readiness to submit to the Laws of our Country, in paying the public dues for the support of Government when known, and our most cordial and warmest wishes for the Ease, Peace, Quiet and happiness of your Excellency's Administration throw ourselves on your Excellency's [clemency](#) <sup>[10]</sup> having nothing to offer in excuse for our errors or [inmitigation](#) <sup>[11]</sup> of our past offences but only that the partys [aggrieved](#) <sup>[12]</sup> were generally ignorant men, and at the same time in such necessitous Circumstances that their utmost industry could scarce afford a wretched subsistance to their Families, much less enable them to engage in uncertain Law Suits, with the rich and powerful, (tho' injured) for we have often seen with Astonishment and concern, [the cause of Justice unsuccessful in Courts of Law, this we then interpreted as some great defect in Justice, which we now understand was owing to errors in proceedings](#) Thus Sir, has want of knowledge and misapprehension been the cause of all our late unwarrantable behaviour and in many instances the cause and foundation of our Complaints. We therefore your humble Petitioners in the most [suppliant](#) <sup>[13]</sup> manner submit ourselves to your Excellency's mercy and forgiveness and our grievances to such your compassionate consideration as to you in your great wisdom and goodness shall seem meet. And your Petitioners as in duty bound shall ever pray &c. &c. &c.

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2009

**People:**



<sup>[27]</sup> Portrait believed to be of

Governor William Tryon

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Petition Signers:

Alexander Mebane <sup>[28]</sup>

John Butler <sup>[29]</sup>

**Primary Sources:**

To His Excellency William Tryon Esq<sup>r</sup> Captain  
General Governor and Commander in Chief in and  
over the Province of North Carolina with his  
Majesties Honorable Council and General Assem-  
bly now sitting

Whereas we your Humble Petitioners the Inhabitants  
of Orange County for the great confidence reposed in  
you and being well convinced by many striking  
Proofs especially by the Act of the last General  
Assembly that your good Design and Chief Motive  
is to promote the Tranquility and secure the  
Interest and property of the whole Community  
and that your chief aim is not to promote private  
but Publick good

We your Humble Petitioners are therefore  
emboldened to set forth to your Considerations  
by way of Petition our Humble Desires touching  
the passing a law whereby every single Justice  
of the peace may be empowered to grant a  
warrant and give Judgment for the sum of  
Five pounds in Colonial Money of this Province  
with Stay of Execution for three months the  
Defendant giving sufficient Security

by virtue of such a Law we Humbly conceive  
that each Creditor may as effectually obtain his  
Right and with much less trouble and cost to  
himself and Debtor than by Law as now  
Established and forasmuch as a Multiplicity of  
Suits will consequently lie before each Justice  
in this Province we Humbly submit to your  
wisdoms to Tax small fees on every proceeding on  
such warrant as well for the Justice as for the party  
which may in some Degree be Equivalent to their  
trouble

[5]

Petition of Orange County, 1768

Primary Source Collection Colonial Governors' Papers, State Archives of N.C.<sup>[30]</sup>

3 January 2018

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