

Duckenfield, William ^[1]

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Duckenfield, William

by Mattie Erma E. Parker, 1986

d. ca. February 1721/22

William Duckenfield, member of the North Carolina Council and justice of the General Court, came to the colony before June 1683 from Cheshire, England. For many generations his family had belonged to the Cheshire gentry. By May 1684 Duckenfield was a member of the Council of the colony, a position that he also held in November 1687. Surviving records do not show whether he was on the Council in the intervening years. He was again a Council member from November 1694 to September 1695. In that period he was ex officio justice of the [General Court](#) ^[2], which was then held by the Council. He appears also to have been a member of the Assembly in those years. In November 1699 and again in March 1701, he was commissioned justice of the Chowan Precinct court although the length of his service is not known.

A communicant of the [Church of England](#) ^[3], Duckenfield served on the vestry of St. Paul's parish from 1701, when the parish was established, until 1715, and at times was warden. Church services were sometimes held in his home, which was headquarters for at least two of the Anglican missionaries sent to the colony. In 1721 he donated fifty-two acres of land to the vestry of "the southwest parish" for a church building and other uses that the vestry might deem "convenient for promoting the true worship of God."

On 28 Nov. 1694 Duckenfield married Susannah Garraway Hartley, widow of [Francis Hartley](#) ^[4] and daughter of John and Frances Garraway. The couple had no children so far as surviving records show. At the time of his marriage and for some years before, Duckenfield lived on Little River in Perquimans Precinct. Before 1699, however, he moved to a plantation on Salmon Creek, then in Chowan Precinct but now included in [Bertie County](#) ^[5]. By patent, purchase, and marriage he acquired extensive landholdings, particularly in Chowan. Although he cultivated or leased several plantations, his transactions in land appear to have been speculative in part. He also participated in the profitable fur trade, apparently in conjunction with a mercantile business. He seems to have obtained skins and furs from small-scale traders in exchange for imported goods and to have exported furs and skins to Virginia, England, and elsewhere to pay for the goods he imported. Through his various enterprises he acquired sufficient wealth to live comfortably for his time and place. Christoph von Graffenreid reported that Governor [Edward Hyde](#) ^[6] and his family "found pretty good lodgings" at Duckenfield's plantation, where they stayed for a time following their arrival in the colony. Graffenreid referred to Duckenfield as "a good old English nobleman."

Duckenfield died shortly before 27 Feb. 1721/22, when his will was proved. His wife apparently died before the date of the will, 17 May 1720, as she is not mentioned in it. Duckenfield bequeathed some furniture and an annuity of £40 to a brother, John, who lived in his home. He made lesser bequests to a cousin, Charles Barber, and a friend, [Moseley, Edward](#) ^[7] (node/6701)">[Edward Moseley](#) ^[8]. His executor and principal legatee was a nephew in England, [Nathaniel Duckenfield](#) ^[9], son of his brother, Sir Robert Duckenfield.

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