

Harris, Thomas ^[1]

Harris, Thomas

by Mattie Erma E. Parker, 1988

d. October 1677

Thomas Harris, clerk of the council and public register, settled in the North Carolina colony, then called Albemarle ^[2], in or before 1665. He probably migrated from Virginia, where there were several men named Thomas Harris, but none of them has been identified as the Albemarle settler.

Harris first appears in North Carolina records on 15 Nov. 1665, when he was clerk of the Albemarle Council. He held that position through most of the following decade. By 5 Nov. 1675 he held the office of public register, which was equivalent to secretary for the colony. His tenure probably was ended at some stage of the disorders that afflicted the colony in 1676 and succeeding years. Harris lived near Muddy Creek in Perquimans Precinct, where he held 600 acres by patent and additional land by purchase. In the early 1670s he was operating a public house, or inn. At his death he left a substantial estate in addition to his land.

He was married at least once and had two sons, Thomas and John. His wife, Diana, was listed among his headrights ^[3] in 1669, when he received two land grants. It appears, however, that Diana was not the mother of Thomas, although it is clear that she was the mother of John. Harris bequeathed his estate to his wife and sons, provided Thomas, who had left home, should return within five years; otherwise, the estate was to go to Diana and John. Thomas appears not to have returned. Although a Thomas Harris was in Albemarle in the 1680s and later, the available evidence indicates that he was not the son named in Harris's will.

By March 1680/81 Harris's widow had remarried. Her second husband was William Foster, a Perquimans neighbor, who administered Harris's estate. After Foster's death, Diana was married to Thomas White and subsequently to Thomas Mercer. In 1687 or 1688 Harris's son John married Elizabeth Waller, widow of Thomas Waller and daughter of George ^[4] and Ann Durant ^[5]. Elizabeth died soon after the marriage, and Harris remarried. His second wife, Susanah, gave birth to a daughter, Sarah, on 20 Sept. 1689. John Harris died between May and November 1693. Sarah, his only surviving child, married Nathaniel Nicholson.

References:

Albemarle Book of Warrants and Surveys, 1681–1706, and Council Minutes, Wills, Inventories, 1677–1701 (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

J. Bryan Grimes, ed., *Abstract of North Carolina Wills* (1910).

J. R. B. Hathaway, ed., *North Carolina Historical and Genealogical Register*, 3 vols. (1900–1903).

Mattie Erma E. Parker, ed., *North Carolina Higher-Court Records, 1670–1696*, vol. 2 (1968), and *1697–1701*, vol. 3 (1971).

Perquimans Births, Marriages, Deaths and Flesh Marks, 1659–1739 (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

William S. Price, Jr., ed., *North Carolina Higher-Court Records, 1702–1704*, vol. 4 (1974).

William L. Saunders, ed., *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, vol. 1 (1886).

Additional Resources:

Colonial and State Records, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr> ^[6]

Subjects:

Colonial period (1600-1763) ^[7]

Biographies ^[8]

Public officials ^[9]

Authors:

Parker, Mattie E. E. ^[10]

Origin - location:

Coastal Plain ^[11]

From:

Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press. ^[12]

Source URL:<https://ncpedia.org/biography/harris-thomas>

Links

[1] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/harris-thomas> [2] <https://ncpedia.org/history/colonial/albemarle> [3] <https://ncpedia.org/headrights> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/durant-durand-duren> [5] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/durant-ann> [6] <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr> [7] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/colonial-period> [8] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [9] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/public-officials> [10] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/parker-mattie-e-e> [11] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-pl> [12] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>