

Hodgson, John ^[1]

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ca. 1705–47

John Hodgson, Edenton ^[2] lawyer, attorney general ^[3], assemblyman, speaker of the house, provincial treasurer ^[4], judge of the admiralty court ^[5], and commissary of North Carolina troops in the War of Jenkins' Ear ^[6], served the town of Edenton for many years as commissioner and treasurer. In 1734 he was appointed attorney general by Governor George Burrington ^[7] to replace John Montgomery ^[8], who had been suspended. Hodgson qualified for the position before the Council on 29 Sept. 1734 and served until 1741, when Governor Gabriel Johnston ^[9] appointed Joseph Anderson in his place. His removal from office may have been caused by Johnston's "silencing" or disbaring the lawyers who did not agree with him. According to Governor Arthur Dobbs ^[10], who referred to Johnston's silencing of Hodgson and Samuel Swann, this was the case. Hodgson was speaker of the house and later Swann became speaker. As speaker, Hodgson was a member of the committee to revise the North Carolina laws, but it was Swann who carried through the revision of the laws after Hodgson's death.

Hodgson first served in the Assembly in 1735 (it was Governor Johnston's first Assembly) as a representative of Bertie County ^[11]. He was then elected to represent Chowan County ^[12] in 1738–39 and became speaker of the house in 1739–40. Chowan returned him to the Assembly in 1742–44 and in 1746. In 1740 Hodgson was appointed provincial treasurer for the northern district, a position he held until his death. Shortly afterwards he became involved in the controversy caused by Governor Johnston's attempt to favor the southern members of the Assembly at the expense of the northern ones. When the Assembly at New Bern was prorogued to Wilmington on 12 June 1741, Hodgson and Benjamin Hill refused to go. Other members from the northern counties agreed not to go to Wilmington or to pay taxes. Johnston was fishing in troubled waters. He favored the Wilmington area, it is believed, because he hoped to limit the number of northern members attending the Assembly in order to get some of his bills passed. Some northern members did attend and blocked the governor's moves. In 1746, however, two laws were passed providing for a southern capital and for two delegates from each of the northern counties instead of the usual five. For thirteen sessions (1741–51), the same Assembly met in the south and few members from the northern counties attended. In 1752, two years after Johnston's death, the Privy Council disallowed the 1746 laws.

Hodgson's first wife was Elizabeth Pagett (5 Nov. 1716–1744[?]), the daughter of Samuel Pagett, a physician-planter, and Elizabeth Blount Pagett, daughter of James Blount ^[13]. They were the parents of three children: Isabella, John ^[14], and Robert. Isabella married a Deloach in Halifax or Northampton County ^[15] and had two children, William John Hodgson Deloach (d. August 1788) and Sarah Blount.

With three children under the age of ten, Hodgson probably did not wait longer than the usual six months or so after his wife's death before marrying his teenage sister-in-law, Penelope Pagett ^[16], in 1744 (see her biography in volume 1, pp. 95–96). By this second marriage, he had two more sons: Samuel and Thomas Craven. Penelope qualified as Hodgson's administratrix, with her uncles John and James Blount as sureties. Her uncle Charles Blount panicked when, in checking her accounts, he discovered that she had little cash on hand to pay her husband's debts. Moreover, the court threatened to take both the children and their property away from her, believing that she—a twenty-one-year-old widow with five children ranging from ages five to twelve—was not rearing and educating them satisfactorily. Subsequently, Peter Payne was appointed guardian of John Hodgson and Charles Blount of Robert Hodgson. In October 1751 the guardianship of Isabella, John, and Robert was restored to Penelope.

Just before his marriage to Penelope Hodgson, James Craven ^[17] in April 1752 petitioned for division of John Hodgson's estate and that of his son Samuel (Penelope's first child). In April 1756 Joseph Eelbeck was appointed guardian of Isabella Hodgson (he had married her aunt, Sarah Pagett) and Charles Eliot as guardian of her brother Robert. By the following year Isabella had married, and Thomas Barker ^[18], the current husband of Penelope, was appointed guardian of John and Robert Hodgson. But three months later, in July, Robert was allowed to choose for himself, and he selected Penelope's uncle, Charles Blount.

There are no known pictures of John Hodgson. However, John Wollaston, the English painter who toured New York City, Annapolis, Virginia, and Philadelphia, did portraits of Penelope Hodgson Barker (the heroine of the Edenton Tea Party ^[19]), Betsy Barker, Thomas Hodgson in Williamsburg, Va. The Barkers were visiting his daughter Betsy, who was attending school in Williamsburg.

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