

Hyde, Edward ^[1]

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1667–8 Sept. 1712

See also: [Edward Hyde](#) ^[2], Research Branch, NC Office of Archives and History



Modern copy of an original portrait of Edward Hyde. Image from the North Carolina Museum of History.

^[3]Edward Hyde, first to hold the office of governor of North Carolina, was probably born at the family estate of Norbury Manor in Cheshire County, England. He inherited the family manors of Norbury and Hyde and other estates through his father, Robert (d. April 1670). His mother was Phillis or Felice (d. February 1668), the daughter of Ralph Sneyd of Keel and Bradwell in Staffordshire, who brought as her dowry a small amount of property in Shelmenthorpe, Yorkshire.

Hyde's family connections were of great importance to him, for through them he was able to claim kinship with two of England's monarchs, [Queen Mary II](#) ^[4] and [Queen Anne](#) ^[5]. Mary, Anne, and Edward Hyde were descendants of a common ancestor, Robert Hyde (d. 1528) of Norbury and Hyde of Cheshire County. Hyde was the head of a landed family which had held the manor of Hyde since the days of the Norman Conquest. Norbury Manor had been acquired by marriage during the reign of Henry III. Edward Hyde's mother died a year after his birth and his father died when he was three. He had two sisters, Anne and Penelope, both of whom lived to maturity and subsequently married. The young orphans were raised at Denton by their grandmother, Anne Brooke Hyde, until her death in 1687.

Hyde entered Oxford University at age sixteen, enrolling in Christ Church College on November 23, 1683, but did not receive a degree. Little is known about Hyde's early career except that he worked under financial problems. Around 1690 or 1691, he sold Norbury Manor, which the Hydies had held for 450 years, along with his Shelmenthorpe property to the [Leigh family of Lyme](#) ^[6].

In 1692, Hyde married Catherine Rigby, the daughter of Alexander Rigby, of Leighton in Lancashire, by whom he had four children: Anne (b. 1693), the oldest; Penelope (b. 1697), who lived to the age of sixty-nine; Derby Lawrence (b. 1700), who died at age eleven in North Carolina; and Edward, who died a bachelor in Spain.

By 1708, as Hyde himself admitted, he had been reduced "by divers unhappy accidents and great misfortunes . . . to a very deplorable condition" and was facing "utter ruine." Hyde was able to secure some help through the patronage and support of his distant cousin, Lawrence Hyde, first Earl of Rochester, the uncle of Queen Mary and Queen Anne and the second son of Edward Hyde, first Earl of Clarendon. Rochester's position as the head of the [Church of England](#) ^[7] party made him a prominent Tory leader at the time. Edward Hyde was a friend and debtor to Rochester. In July 1702, Rochester secured Queen Anne's appointment to the post of provost marshal of Jamaica with leave to remain in England and appoint a deputy. This position did not prove very lucrative, for in June 1704 Hyde memorialized the [Board of Trade](#) ^[8] to assist him in recovering the fees due him from his deputies in the island colony.

Hyde's 1708 petition for a governor's post in Carolina also demonstrates his relationship with Rochester and Anne. Although Colonel Edward Tynte had just been named governor of all of Carolina, the post of deputy governor of northern Carolina was available. The deputy governor was normally chosen by the governor for all of Carolina, but early in 1709 the Proprietors issued orders to Colonel Tynte to commission Edward Hyde as deputy governor of northern Carolina. The Proprietors' decision was likely influenced by Anne and Rochester.

Hyde again petitioned Queen Anne for help. This time he sought a grant that would enable him to transport his wife and family to Carolina. On April 4, 1709, a royal warrant for 146 pounds 13 shillings and 4 pennies was issued in Hyde's favor to be paid from "the arrears of the yearly rent of 20 marks reserved and made payable to us by the Proprietors of our Province of Carolina upon their charter." Hyde received authorization from Queen Anne for passage for himself and his party on board a naval vessel to Virginia. Hyde and his traveling party were allowed to live and eat aboard the *Rameleis* while waiting to set sail for Virginia. The Hyde party numbered fifteen and consisted of his wife, children, and a number of servants. The voyage to Virginia was aboard HMS *Kinsale*. On August 13, 1710, the *Kinsale* moored in the James River, and on August 19, Hyde went ashore.

The political administration of the Carolina colony was unstable by the time of Hyde's arrival. He soon learned that Colonel Tynte, governor of all Carolina, had died at Charleston and that no one else in America had the authority to issue him his commission as deputy governor of northern Carolina. Without the commission he had no legal claim to the post. In addition, Hyde was faced with a tumultuous political atmosphere in the Carolina colony. [Thomas Cary](#)^[9] and [William Glover](#)^[10] both sought the deputy governorship until Glover and many of his supporters fled to Virginia.

The arrival of Hyde in Virginia without a perfected commission now added greater confusion in North Carolina. There was indisputable evidence that the Lords Proprietors intended for Hyde to become deputy governor, but he lacked the necessary documents to establish a legal claim to the office. His arrival in Virginia was the signal for renewed political activity among the North Carolinians. Hyde had already been informed of most of his colony's problems, and the exiled Glover supporters soon flocked about him to give their side of the controversy.

Governor Cary quickly made it clear that he would be unwilling to surrender his deputy governorship to Hyde and began to arm his followers. Cary found strong support among the nonconformists who, according to one observer, "did not want to have such a great Tory [Hyde] for governor."

Faced with a determined Cary and lacking the legal right to his post, Hyde remained in Virginia until the Proprietors in London issued further instructions. Individuals and delegations from North Carolina conferred with him at Norfolk and Williamsburg. [William Byrd](#)^[11], who dined with Edward and Catherine Rigby at the home of Governor Spotswood, characterized Hyde as "a jolly, good natured man but no valiant politician."

Political pressure against Cary increased and demanded Hyde's assumption of the governorship. Those who favored Hyde's acceptance built their case upon his kinship to and his approval by the queen, and the notice that Governor Tynte had given the North Carolina Council before his death that a new deputy governor was coming out. Finally "after Long debates" Cary and his followers entered into a written agreement with Hyde's supporters to accept Hyde as president of the Council but not as deputy governor until new orders came from the Lords Proprietors. This agreement was ultimately signed by all of the Proprietors' deputies in North Carolina including Thomas Cary.

Hyde now moved into the colony and settled with his family in "a rather fine dwelling" at the [William Duckenfield](#)^[12] plantation on Salmon Creek not far from Balgra, the residence of Colonel [Thomas Pollock](#)^[13], one of his chief supporters. Duckenfield and Hyde were neighbors in Cheshire, and related by marriage.

Hyde assumed responsibility for the government on January 22, 1711. From the beginning his position was precarious. Much of his support came from Cary's opponents. Hyde's Council reorganized the courts, which had been dormant since 1708, and called for the meeting of an Assembly in March. The activities of this Assembly soon brought Hyde and his followers into conflict with Cary's supporters. The Assembly enacted laws voiding acts of the courts in North Carolina since 1708 and calling into question the legality of many of the actions of Cary and his government. Within a short time, Cary and [John Porter, Sr.](#)^[14] were arrested and impeached on charges of high crimes and misdemeanors, but they quickly escaped from the custody of the provost marshal, denounced Hyde, and proclaimed Cary as the true chief executive of the colony. Soon Cary had a large body of armed followers in Bath County where he fortified a plantation on Bath Creek with fortifications and artillery.

The armed uprising that followed is known as [Cary's Rebellion](#)^[15]. The events of this rebellion show clearly that Hyde's hold on the government was tenuous, and that the harshness and extreme nature of the laws adopted in the March Assembly had cost him a great deal of support.

Hyde marched overland from the Albemarle to Bath with a force of armed men to recapture Cary, but retreated when he found Cary's position too strong to attack. Cary's supporters armed two vessels and sailed to attack Hyde and his followers in the Albemarle. The assault was repelled by Hyde's small force, and Cary's vessels with their cannon were captured. Hyde meanwhile sought support from the Governor of Virginia, Alexander Spotswood, who offered to mediate the dispute. When Cary refused to accept Spotswood's mediation, the Virginia governor dispatched a force of Marines from the guard ships off Chesapeake Bay to North Carolina to aid Hyde in suppressing the Cary forces. On July 17, 1711, HMS *Enterprize* anchored off Currituck Inlet and sent three boats with fifty-five men under the ship's lieutenant to the assistance of Hyde. Cary and four of his chief lieutenants fled into Virginia where they were captured by the authorities and jailed. Spotswood sent them to England to be tried, but after a year of hearings they were released for lack of proper

evidence.

For the first time since his arrival, Hyde was now in full control of the North Carolina government although he still lacked a commission. In July 1711, Catherine Hyde returned to England, probably with the intention of obtaining a proper commission for her husband. In December 1710, the Proprietors had voted to make Edward Hyde an independent governor of North Carolina although they did not seek Crown ^[16] approval of his appointment until the following June. Catherine remained in England until she received the signed commission for her husband.

Shortly after the events of Cary's rebellion Hyde faced another challenge in his governance of the colony. Ongoing disputes with American Indian people in North Carolina challenged Hyde's authority. Predatory practices of white traders, the capture and enslavement of American Indian people by white enslavers, and the continuing encroachment of white settlers onto Tuscarora hunting grounds instigated the Tuscarora War ^[17]. The Tuscarora War began on September 22, 1711 ^[18] when the settlements in Bath County were attacked by the Tuscarora ^[19] and several smaller American Indian tribes.

Word of the attack soon reached Hyde in Albemarle County ^[20], which had been spared from the damage. Hyde found himself in an awkward situation. The hatred and ill feeling engendered by Cary's Rebellion hampered efforts to secure full cooperation from the North Carolinians. The Quakers comprised an important segment of the Albemarle population, but due to the denominational belief in pacifism and their persecution under some of the laws Hyde had created, they refused to take up arms. Nevertheless, Hyde moved to mobilize the colony for war. Thomas Pollock was named major general and plans for a retaliatory campaign were made. Messengers were dispatched to Virginia and South Carolina to solicit help. Little assistance came from Virginia, but South Carolina collected a force of thirty-three white soldiers and 495 soldiers from various American Indian tribes under Captain John Barnwell to go to the aid of its sister colony.

This help was desperately needed, for Pollock's effort in mid-October to lead a force of about 200 men against the American Indian tribes failed due to the broken morale among a majority of his troops. Hyde found that massacre and warfare against the different American Indian tribes had failed to erase dissensions within the colony. Governor Spotswood reported of the North Carolinians that the "Spirit of disobedience to which they have long been accustomed, still prevails so much he can hardly persuade them to unite for their common safety." In November, an Assembly, called to make plans for the conduct of the war, instead sought to restore several opponents of the Hyde government to office and had to be dissolved by Hyde.

Barnwell arrived on the Neuse late in January 1712 and immediately attacked the Tuscarora towns. Cutting a wide and destructive swath through the Tuscarora country, he reached Bath only to find that no one had been informed of his coming because the messenger from Charleston had been captured and taken prisoner by a French privateersman.

The Hyde government now bestirred itself to provide support for Barnwell. A new Assembly was hastily convened. It thanked Barnwell for his help and made plans to support Barnwell and his men while they assisted with the war against the Tuscarora and other American Indian tribes. The Assembly ordered Barnwell to grant no peace or terms to any American Indian tribes' towns involved in the massacre.

However, despite the plans made by the Assembly, very few North Carolinians joined Barnwell's troops and very little supplies were provided to Barnwell for his men. Angered by the scarcity of supplies, Barnwell wrote the governor of South Carolina and observed "the people regard him [Hyde] no more than a broom staff, they pay much more deference to my cutlass." Barnwell attacked Hancock's Fort and after a siege forced the aligned tribes to sue for terms which were granted. His decision to sign a treaty of peace with them countermanded his instructions from the North Carolina government. Barnwell's actions displeased North Carolina government officials and, failing to receive praise or rewards he felt he had earned, Barnwell followed his own authority. He lured a number of the Tuscarora and American Indian people to a conference, took them prisoner, enslaved them, and shipped them off to South Carolina to be sold. The various American Indian tribes in the Bath County area retaliated immediately, and soon the war was being waged as fiercely as ever.

On January 24, 1712, the Proprietors signed Hyde's commission, and Catherine Hyde sailed almost immediately with it for America. On May 9, 1712, Hyde presented his commission to the Council and was sworn in as governor of North Carolina.

Hyde now led a colony whose resources were almost exhausted. An Assembly, called to meet in July, enacted a stringent conscription ^[21] law which proved difficult to enforce. On July 31, 1712, Governor Hyde issued a proclamation pardoning all those who had taken part in Cary's Rebellion except for Cary and four of his chief lieutenants in an effort to unify the colony. Hyde also announced his intention to take personal command of the military activities against the aligned American Indian tribes. The governor declared that he planned to establish his headquarters at Bath Town and Neuse "that I may be nearer at hand to give such necessary orders, as shall be necessary for the better prosecution of War and I shall always be ready to do the country, the best service even to the hazarding of my life for them, so I hope I shall have . . . the necessary quantity of my militia forces as shall enable [me] to end the war with honor or make such a peace as shall not reflect upon the British Glory." Plans for the campaign were prepared, and Hyde began to gather recruits for the expedition.

Hyde contracted yellow fever before he could enact his plans. The North Carolina colony experienced two yellow fever epidemics in subsequent years (1711 and 1712), and Hyde contracted it on September 1, 1712. Eight days later, Hyde died at his plantation at the head of Albemarle Sound. The governor's Council was in session at Hyde's estate when he became ill, and Graffenried later recalled that "we all became sick at the Governor's with the great heat and without doubt

because we ate so many peaches and apples, so that eventually, in a few days the Governor died, which caused me much business, since he was a very good friend of mine." Three days later the Council elected Thomas Pollock to head the government until the Lords Proprietors' wishes could be known. The site of Hyde's burial is still unknown, but it was most likely on the plantation he had rented in Chowan (now Bertie ^[22]) County.

Catherine Rigby Hyde was named administrator of the governor's estate after Hyde's death. She remained in the colony until March 1713, when she apparently returned to Hyde Hall in England. In 1714, her daughter Anne married George Clarke, of Swanswick near Bath in Somerset, a nephew of William Blathwayt. The couple at once moved to New York, where Clarke eventually became lieutenant governor and served as acting governor from 1736 to 1743. Here they were joined by Catherine Hyde, who remained in New York until her death in 1738; she was interred in the same vault as Lady Cornbury in Trinity Church. Because Anne Clarke alone of the Hyde children had issue, the manor of Hyde passed ultimately to the Clarke family which thereafter assumed the hyphenated name of Hyde-Clarke.

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