

McGuire (or McGwire), Thomas ^[1]

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by William S. Price, Jr., 1991

fl. 1754–1802

Thomas McGuire (or McGwire), colonial official, the youngest son of William M. McGuire of Dublin, completed his studies in law at Gray's Inn, London, in 1754. By early 1760 he was in North Carolina serving as a judge of the vice-admiralty court. In 1763 he married Rebecca Dry, the daughter of [William Dry](#) ^[2], a prominent figure in the [Lower Cape Fear](#) ^[3]. She died a few years later, and McGuire apparently never remarried.

McGuire progressed steadily in North Carolina. In March 1764 he was named justice of the peace for [Brunswick County](#) ^[4] and also represented the county in the [Assembly](#) ^[5] in the session of 1764–65. In October 1767, by royal appointment, he became attorney general of the colony. In that post he urged strong measures against the [Regulators](#) ^[6] during Governor [William Tryon](#) ^[7]'s administration. In 1773 Governor [Josiah Martin](#) ^[8] nominated McGuire to a vacancy on the royal Council, but he was not sworn in until April 1775. McGuire supported resolutions against the [Provincial Congresses](#) ^[9], but Patriot leaders seem not to have condemned him for it. Indeed, Governor [Richard Caswell](#) ^[10] offered him the attorney generalship of the state in 1779 and the legislature approved, although McGuire refused it. He remained on his plantation in [Bladen County](#) ^[11] throughout the war and never took any oath contrary to his allegiance to the Crown.

In July 1785 McGuire returned to England after selling his North Carolina holdings for a total of £3,500. In England he claimed a loss of £645 per year for his attorney generalship and received an annual compensation from the Loyalist Claims Commission until 1802, when he probably died.

References:

Audit Office, Loyalist Claims, English Records (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

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Joseph Foster, *Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn* ^[13], 1521–1889 (1889).

William S. Powell, ed., *The Correspondence of William Tryon and Other Selected Papers* ^[14], 2 vols. (1980–81).

William L. Saunders, ed., *Colonial Records of North Carolina* ^[15], vol. 6 (1888).

Virginia Gazette, 27 Aug. 1767.

Additional Resources:

Search for Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Documenting the American South, UNC Libraries:

<https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/search> ^[16]

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