

Phenney, George ^[1]

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by Robert E. Lee, 1994

d. April 1737

George Phenney, governor of the Bahama Islands, customs collector in the southern colonies, and Council member, served effectively in the Bahamas from 1721 to 1727, between the two administrations of the famous Woodes Rogers. He was efficient and well liked; his wife also was popular and acted as courier on at least one occasion, taking letters from the governor to London. After leaving the governorship, he was accused of impropriety in court martialing an officer against whom he had a grudge and confining him in a dungeon for eighteen months. There also was fear that his actions might contribute to the return of pirates to the islands.

On 3 Dec. 1731 Phenney sought appointment as surveyor general of customs for the Southern District in America as well as a seat on the councils of those colonies. His appointment came on 24 Feb. 1732, when he was also named to the councils of Virginia and South Carolina; membership on the [North Carolina Council](#) ^[2], in which he took an active part, was added on 30 Nov. 1733. Phenney took up residence in North Carolina, although the date of his arrival in the colony is unknown. The fate of his first wife is also unknown, yet his marriage to Penelope Golland Lovick, the stepdaughter of Governor [Charles Eden](#) ^[3], took place in North Carolina after 25 June 1734. Eden had died on 26 Mar. 1722 at Eden House on the west bank of Chowan River, across from Edenton. Penelope Golland became one of the wealthiest women in the province and was for a long time mistress of Eden House, Governor Eden's wife having died on 4 Jan. 1716 at age thirty-nine.

Eden House, noted for its "splendid hospitality" and the "refined society generally assembled there," became the residence of Phenney and his new wife. Penelope, incidentally, was married four times: first to Colonel [William Maule](#) ^[4]; second to Captain [John Lovick](#) ^[5], secretary of the province, at one time sole owner of Roanoke Island; third to George Phenney; and finally to Governor [Gabriel Johnston](#) ^[6]. Johnston governed the colony for eighteen years (1734–52), longer than any other governor—Proprietary, royal, or state.

The Southern District for which Phenney was surveyor general of customs consisted of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, the Bahama Islands, and Jamaica. Perhaps he regarded North Carolina as a central location. His will, dated 23 June 1736, was probated on 23 June 1737. The bulk of his estate was left to his wife with provision for a then unborn child. In fact, she gave birth to a son about four months before Phenney's death. The *Virginia Gazette* of 6 May 1737 reported that the death of this son a short while before "afflicted him so much, that it occasioned his Death."

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