

Quince, Richard ^[1]

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by James M. Clifton, 1994

1714–July 1778

Richard Quince, merchant, planter, and jurist, was one of the most earnest and zealous Patriots of the Cape Fear ^[2] region during the American Revolution ^[3]. Baptized on 30 Mar. 1714 at St. Lawrence's Church, Thanet, near Ramsgate, England, he was the son of Richard Quince[y] (1682–?) and Jane Parker (1686–1773) and scion of a long-established and well-connected merchant family of London and the Isle of Thanet whose name had usually been spelled Quincey. About 1740 he settled in Brunswick Town, N.C., and maintained his connection with his merchant brother in Ramsgate, John Quince (1716–1801). A marriage soon afterwards with Mary (probably the widow of Thomas Gibson) produced three sons: Richard, Jr., Parker ^[4], and John. When Spanish ships shelled Brunswick ^[5] in September 1748, Quince was one of those whose property was damaged.

Quince quickly became a successful merchant, ultimately owning several ships that carried on extensive trade with the other mainland colonies and the West Indies. In addition to his commercial activities in Brunswick, he also engaged in merchandising in Wilmington, where he maintained a second home. Further, he became extensively involved in planting, acquiring in 1770 Orton Plantation ^[6], which he continued to plant until his death and which remained in the family through Richard, Jr., until 1796.

Though the elder Richard Quince was unquestionably one of the most successful merchants and planters along the colonial Cape Fear River ^[7], it is his career of public service for which he is chiefly remembered. As early as 1745 he was a commissioner of the town of Brunswick. Later, he served for many years as a justice of the superior court and a judge of the vice-admiralty court. In addition, he served his church well for many years as warden at St. Philip's, Brunswick.

Quince performed his greatest service during the Revolutionary period. During the Stamp Act crisis of 1765–66, he organized the Sons of Liberty in the town of Brunswick and played a major role in events there. In the 1770s he was the leading member of the town's Committee of Correspondence ^[8], designed to create Revolutionary sentiment against the British. In 1774, with the closing of the port of Boston following the Boston Tea Party, he joined his son Parker and many other Lower Cape Fear merchants and planters in furnishing aid for the relief of Boston.

With the coming of the Revolution, Quince joined his sons Richard and John as a member of the Brunswick Committee of Public Safety ^[9], of which he became chairman. He also sat on the Wilmington District Committee of Safety and became active in military preparations, arming merchant ships and providing money from his own resources for the purchase of munitions. He contributed greatly to the organizing of the militia of Brunswick County ^[10], whose regiment his sons Richard served as first major and Parker as second major.

Quince did not live to see the outcome of the Revolution; he was buried in the churchyard of St. Philip's Church ^[11] adjoining his Orton Plantation. His sons Richard and Parker (John died in 1775) continued their efforts to see the cause through to a successful conclusion. Doubtless the greatest personal loss for all of them during the war was their beloved Brunswick town ^[12], burned by British soldiers and marauding Tories.

Quince's descendants married into the leading families of the Cape Fear—Davis, Hasell, Moore, and Walker—and they achieved personal success and contributed to the public weal for generations.

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