

Rhodes, Henry ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 1994

1715?–December 1780

Henry Rhodes, colonial office-holder and Revolutionary leader ^[2], was the son of Henry and Mary Rhodes. In 1751 he inherited his father's "manner plantation," in Onslow County ^[3], where the county militia mustered and trained in October 1754 and perhaps at other times as well. In 1758 he was one of the executors of the will of James Gray. His earliest public service apparently was as a justice of the peace for Onslow County; commissioned by Governor Arthur Dobbs ^[4], he took the oath of office on 4 Jan. 1759 and remained a justice for the rest of his life. On 3 July 1759 he was also sworn in as sheriff of the county, a position he held longer than any other colonial sheriff in North Carolina.

Early in 1774 he was elected to represent Onslow County in the House of Commons of the colonial Assembly ^[5] and attended sessions that met in New Bern on 4–7 Apr. 1775. He also served in the Second Provincial Congress ^[6], which met on 3–7 April at the same time. These were sessions of the final royal legislature and the beginning of the state government. Both bodies were composed of virtually the same men meeting in the same hall, the Congress an hour before the Assembly. Rhodes again represented his county in the Third and the Fifth Provincial Congresses ^[6] (August–September 1775 and November–December 1776). It was at the last of these meetings that a constitution for the state was drawn up. The congresses took the steps necessary to form a civil government for North Carolina as well as to lay the foundations for military activity.

Although there is nothing to suggest that Rhodes engaged in active military service, he was made lieutenant colonel of the Onslow militia on 9 Sept. 1775, and his appointment was renewed on 22 Apr. 1776. Though few participants are identified in surviving records, Rhodes probably was present at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge ^[7] with his command of minutemen. He was serving as a county justice in 1776 and 1777 when he also was a member of the county committee of safety and of the Council of Safety ^[8] for the Wilmington District. Rhodes's name was mentioned for appointment to the Council of State ^[9] but, instead, he was appointed treasurer of the Wilmington District. As a member of the legislature Rhodes was one of the commissioners named in 1778 to superintend the printing of bills of credit for the state. His commission was renewed in 1779 and in 1780, and he was the only member to serve all three years. The commission produced paper money ^[10] for North Carolina.

Rhodes's first wife was Mary Woodhouse (d. 5 June 1769), and they were the parents of Sarah, Elizabeth, Woodhouse, Aliff, and Mary. On 15 Aug. 1770 he married Elizabeth Ward, by whom he had two more children: Henry, who died as a young man while attending school in Wilmington, and Henrietta.

Deeds indicated that Rhodes was buried in a family cemetery at Stones Creek plantation, where his father had lived and was buried in the Stone Bay area on property later occupied by Camp Lejeune ^[11]. The grave was not found, however, when the site was acquired for the military base.

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