

Davis, Justina ^[1]



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By Jaquelin Drane Nash, 1986

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1745–6 Dec. 1771

Justina Davis, second wife of Governor [Arthur Dobbs](#) ^[2] and later wife of [Abner Nash](#) ^[3], who became governor of North Carolina after her death, was born probably in [Brunswick](#) ^[4]. She is thought to have been the daughter of John Davis and his wife, Rebecca Moore, who was the granddaughter of the second Landgrave Thomas Smith and of Governor James Moore, both of South Carolina. Justina married [Governor Dobbs](#) ^[2] when she was fifteen and he in his seventies. A savage lampoon, purporting to be a letter written by a North Carolinian to a friend in Maryland, indicates the ridicule and scorn aroused by this match:

"Our Old Silenus of the Envigored age of Seventy Eight who still Damns this Province with his Baneful Influence grew stupidly Enamored with Miss Davis a Lovely Lady of sprightly fifteen of a good Family and some Fortune. After much doting parade, Young Miss (for surely parents know best) is persuaded to be a Governor's Lady altho she loved and was beloved by Dear Eighteen Y_____g M_____r Q_____n-ce [Quince?] The day is fixed the nuptial feast provided when Lo a Discovery is made which surpasses in Villainy the Description of the most envenomed Satyrst. It is much above my power I'll humbly therefore attempt the Tale in Common Homespun phrase The catastrophe was truly Poetic Justice. When the Antedeluvian had agreed, the Old Fellow old in every human characteristic but sense and virtue sends for his Secretary a man of motly cast They form a conveyance of his whole Estate to his son (not even leaving a reversion of his Potatoe Lands near Carrick Fergus) [the Dobbs family seat in Ireland] which he enters into and Dispatches a Messenger with it to one of the Supr Court Judges Its proved *secundem Legem* How was this scheme marred. Some secret power blows the matter Some friendly Sylph protects the Lady The Deed's discovered Her friends warm with indignation send for the youth, the Pensive & Dejected Lover—relate the Injury, propose immediately to consummate the marriage Hymen attends Venus & Apollo add Ringlets and ten thousand Charms to adorn the Lovely pair. Assist me some poet or assist me Dr. Betty with your Fancy They are married. The Leecher waits, 10,11,12 past, the Day wakes, Accursed jealousy takes place, his old Teeth of Enormous length that for many years despised to be clothed with Gums shake in his jaws with Rage He orders his horse to the chariot and feebly in his course would Emulate a Youthful passion he enters her parents house demands the Lady, is conducted into the apartment of Youth Love and Virtue Here I stop. for no pen can describe the Rage and Ridicule."

It is not known who "young Mr. Quince" was, nor if the young pair were indeed engaged to be married. Records indicate that Justina was a dutiful and loving wife to the aged governor. Upon his death at their home, Russellborough, near Brunswick, she wrote to her stepson in Ireland: "I have lost one of the best and tenderest of husbands."

Justina later married [Abner Nash](#) ^[3]. They lived, it is thought, on King Street (now Main Street) in [Halifax](#) ^[5], where she bore him three children: Abner, who died young; Margaret, who married Thomas Haslin; and Justina, who died unmarried. Mrs. Nash died at the untimely age of twenty-six and was buried in [Halifax](#) ^[5], where her tombstone may still be read: "Mrs. Justina Nash / O. B. 6th December An Dom 1771 / in the 25th year of her age."

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[Biographies](#) [7]

[Women](#) [8]

Authors:

[Nash, Jaquelin Drane](#) [9]

Origin - location:

[Columbus County](#) [10]

[Halifax County](#) [11]

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1 January 1986 | Nash, Jaquelin Drane

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