

Primary Source: George Sims' An Address to the People of Granville County ^[1]

On June 6, 1765, North Carolina backcountry teacher George Sims drafted an address expressing dissatisfaction with government officials and accusing local court officers of malpractice. He blamed corrupt lawyers and public officials for the problems of small farmers in the area we now call the Piedmont. His address found a receptive audience in Granville County (today Vance County) and surrounding frontier counties like Orange. The address circulated widely in the area, and it led to increased agitation by residents. And it was later used by Regulator leaders to bolster their movement against government corruption. Sims address has become known as the "Nutbush Address," named after the area of then Granville County (present-day Vance County) known as Nutbush.

Read the address below:

Gentlemen, it is not our mode, or form of Government, nor yet the body of our laws, that we are quarrelling with, but with the [malpractices](#) ^[2] of the Officers of our County Court, and the abuses which we suffer by those empowered to manage our public affairs...

[L]et us make an estimate of the difference between getting our livings by honest industry and getting them by these cursed practices. We will suppose ourselves all to be men, who labour for our livings, and there is a poor man among us, who [has dealt for about 4 or 5 pounds in such things as his family could not possibly do without](#) and in hopes of being spared from the lash of the law till he can sell some of his effects to raise the money; [he gives a judgment bond to his Merchant, and before he can accomplish his design his bond is thrown into Court](#), and [Benton the poor mans Burgess](#) has it to enter on the Court docquet and [issue an execution the work of one long minute](#) Well, Gentlemen, what has our poor neighbour to pay Mr. Benton for his trouble? Why, nothing but the [trifling](#) ^[3] sum of [forty one shillings and five pence](#). Well he is a poor man, and cannot raise the money. We will suppose Mr. Benton [condescends](#) ^[4] to come to terms with him. Come (says he) and work. I have a large field and my corn wants weeding (or something like that). I will give you [1/6](#) a day, which is the common wages of a labourer in these times till you pay it off because you are a poor man, and a neighbour I will not take away your living. Well how many days work has our honest neighbour to pay Mr. Benton for his trouble and expense in writing about a minute? Why, he must work something more than 27 days before he is clear of his clutches. Well the poor man reflects within himself. At this rate says he when shall I maintain my own family. I have a wife and a parcel of small children suffering at home and I have none to labour but myself, and here I have lost a month's work and I do not know for what, my merchant not yet paid, I do not know what will be the end of these things; however, I will go home, and try what I can do towards getting a living. Stay neighbour, you must not go home, you are not half done yet, [there is a damned Lawyers mouth to stop before you go any further, you impowered him to confess that you owed £5, and you must pay him 30/ for that](#), or, else go and work nineteen days for that pick-pocket at the same rate, and when that is done, [you must work as many days for the Sheriff, for his trouble](#), and then go home and see your living wrecked and tore to pieces to satisfy your merchant.

Well Gentlemen, if this were the case, would it not be a melancholy thing? But it is worse by ten degrees than any thing that you have yet heard. It is not a persons labour, nor yet his effects that will do, but if he has but one horse to plow with, one bed to lie on, or one cow to give a little milk for his children, they must all go to raise money [which is not to be had](#). And lastly [if his personal estate \(sold at one tenth of its value\) will not do](#) then his lands (which perhaps has cost him many years toil and labour) must go the same way to satisfy these cursed hungry caterpillars, that are eating and will eat out the bowels of our Commonwealth, if they be not pulled down from their nests in a very short time, and what need I say, Gentlemen, to urge the necessity there is for a reformation. If these things were absolutely according to law, it would be enough to make us turn rebels, and throw off all submission to such [tyrannical](#) ^[5] laws.... But, as these practices are [diametrically](#) ^[6] opposite to the law, it is our absolute duty, as well as our Interest, to put a stop to them, before they quite ruin our County. Or, [Are become the willing slaves of these lawless Officers, and hug our chains of bondage](#) and remain contented under these accumulated [calamities](#) ^[7]? No, Gentlemen, I hope better things of you... [F]irst, let us be careful to keep sober, that we do nothing rashly; but act with deliberation. Secondly, Let us do nothing against the known and established laws of our land, that we may not appear as a [faction](#) ^[8] [endeavouring](#) ^[9] to [subvert](#) ^[10] the laws, and overturn our system of government. But, [let us appear what we really are, To wit, free subjects by birth, endeavouring to recover our native rights according to law](#), and to reduce the malpractices of the Officers of our Court down to the standard of law....

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Sims, George. "An Address to the People of Granville County," June 6, 1765. *InState and Colonial Records of North Carolina*, Volume 07, Pages 89-90. Transcription by Documenting the American South, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr07-0020> ^[11] (accessed June 10, 2018).

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[colonial](#) ^[13]

[courts](#) ^[14]

[government](#) ^[15]

[history](#) ^[16]

[North Carolina](#) ^[17]

[North Carolina History](#) ^[18]

[Page](#) ^[19]

[Regulators](#) ^[20]

[Students](#) ^[21]

[Teachers](#) ^[22]

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^[26]

George Sims drafted his protest address in the Nutbush area of Granville (present-day Vance) County, N.C. A [Highway Historical Marker](#) ^[27] is located near the site at Townsville, N.C.

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