

Primary Source: The Regulators Organize ^[1]

In 1766, farmers in Orange County had become increasingly frustrated and agitated by what they saw as government corruption. These included corrupt local magistrates, the brazen abuses of power by local Orange County official and land speculator Edmund Fanning, and the lack of representation they had in local affairs. Although earlier efforts to sustain organized resistance had been largely unsuccessful, by 1768 a group had officially organized as "Regulators." One of the "straws that broke the camel's back" spurring them to organize was the recent approval given by the colonial Assembly to build a "palace" for Governor Tryon at a cost of 15,000 pounds^[2]. In 1766 the Assembly had given the Governor 5,000 pounds to begin construction. In January 1768, an additional 10,000 pounds had been approved to complete the project, at a total cost of 15,000 pounds. We can't really say how much that would be in dollars today since it is difficult to compare the colonial era to the modern day, but we know it was a lot of money and would have been considered so by modest farmers living in the backcountry. The cost to build the palace would be paid for by increasing the "poll" tax. "Poll" means "head", and poll taxes were taxes paid to the county for each male adult, regardless of wealth.

News of the cost and approval by the Assembly would have reached Orange County and surrounding areas not long after. And by March the Regulators officially organized in response to the mounting grievances. Many of them were Quakers from the area west of the Haw River, and they saw this civic protest as part of their moral and religious duty. In January of 1768, they organized themselves into an "Association" and began calling themselves "Regulators". They solicited "subscriptions" -- this meant that those who joined would be subscribers to the cause and would sign a statement about the cause. The effort to gain supporters -- and subscriptions -- would have been advertised and likely appeared in newspapers. Eventually as word traveled, supporters to the Regulator cause were gathered from a wider area in the Piedmont, reaching as far west as Mecklenburg County.

Below is the text of one of the earliest advertisements of a subscription to join the organization of Regulators. Subscribers agreed to resist paying taxes and fees they considered unlawful and to petition their representatives to change laws they considered unfair. There were several subscription advertisements published by the Regulators at the time.

You may wonder where these subscription advertisements record has come from! It is likely the newspapers or other print documents that contained the subscriptions no longer exist. Today our remaining record of these documents are contained in the [Colonial and State Records of North Carolina](#) ^[3]. At some point in time, the texts of these original documents were transcribed and included in the published volumes of the State's records.

We the under written subscribers do voluntarily agree to form ourselves into an Association to assemble ourselves for conferences for [regulating](#) publick [Grievances](#) ^[4] & abuses of Power in the following particulars with others of like nature that may occur

1. [That we will pay no Taxes until we are satisfied they are agreeable to Law and Applied to the purposes therein mentioned](#) unless we cannot help and are forced.
2. That we will pay no Officer any more fees than the Law allows [unless we are obliged to it and then to shew a dislike to it & bear open testimony against it.](#)
3. That we will attend our Meetings of Conference as often as we conveniently can or is necessary [in order to consult our representatives on the amendment of such Laws as may be found grievous or unnecessary](#) and to choose more suitable men than we have heretofore done for [Burgesses](#) and [Vestry men](#) and to Petition His Excellency our Governor the [Honble](#) the Council and the Worshipful House of representatives His Majesty in Parliament &c. for [redress](#) ^[5] of such Grievances as in the course of this undertaking may occur and to inform one another [& to learn, know and enjoy all the Priviledges & Liberties that are allowed us and were settled on us by our worthy Ancestors the founders of the present Constitution in order to preserve it in its ancient Foundation that it may stand firm & unshaken.](#)
4. That we will contribute to Collections for [defraying](#) ^[6] [necessary expences](#) attending the work according to our abilities.
5. That in Cases of differences in Judgment we will submit to the Majority of our Body.

To all which We do solemnly swear or being a Quaker or otherwise scrupulous in Conscience of the common Oath do solemnly affirm that We will stand true and faithful to this cause until We bring them to a true regulation according to the true intent & meaning of it in the judgment of the Majority.

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