

Primary Source: Orange County Inhabitants Petition Governor Tryon ^[1]

Following protests and violence in Hillsborough in the spring of 1768, residents of Orange County, North Carolina petitioned Governor Tryon in May to address the problem of illegal fees demanded by court officials. Below is a transcription of the original petition. In the petition they appear to apologize for the violence but also state that they felt ignored by the Assembly. They ask the Governor for protection and to address their complaints. The transcription includes annotations with definitions and historical commentary.

To the Governor & Council &.

The humble Petition of us the Subscribers sheweth that We the Inhabitants of Orange County pay larger Fees for recording Deeds than any of the adjacent ^[2] Counties and many other Fees more than the Law allows by all that We can make out from which a jealositie prevails that we are misused and application has been made to our representatives to satisfy us But we were disregarded in the said application upon which the said discontent growing more and more so as to threaten a disturbance of the public peace, we therefore beg that those matters may be taken under your serious consideration and interpose ^[3] in our Favour so that we may have a fair hearing in this matter and be redressed ^[4] where we have been wronged Our complaints are too numerous and long to be notified in a Petition, but have sent herewith copies of the Applications Petitions &c that has been made on this Occasion with a small sketch of our Misusage and begging your protection and approbation in so just and equitable an undertaking and an opportunity to be heard We conclude your humble Petitioners.

To His Excellency William Tryon Esqre Capt. General Governor & Commander in Chief in and over the Province of No. Carolina

The Petition of We the Subscribers Inhabitants of Orange County True & Faithfull Subjects to His most sacred ^[5] Majesty King George the Third Humbly sheweth

That Whereas We your Petitioners have for a long time imagined that We have been imposed and exacted upon by Sheriffs and other Persons not only in taxing their Fees or Suits receiving Sums on Executions but also in collecting the Public Levys and have seen many enormities ^[6] (as We apprehended them) committed under colour of their Offices some few specimens of such grievances ^[7] We herewith send to be laid at your Excellcys feet for your inspection and this we are emboldened to do from the Assurances given us by your private Secretary Mr Edwards that you would graciously hear our Complaints that you would redress as far as in your Power our grievances, where found real and where only imaginary kindly excuse the Trouble in compassion to our ignorance — This goodness Sir, we acknowledge We have not only forfeited all title to, but also rendered ourselves liable to severe and heavy punishment by our late illegal & unwarrantable conduct in holding unlawful Assemblys to consult means of redress within ourselves in taking away goods distrained by the Sheriffs, to satisfy the Public demands, and in attempting by forcible means the release of certain Prisoners, taken by virtue of the Chief Justices Warrant — For which offences (infinitely more criminal than we apprehended or imagined and which we now see would certainly be productive of the most dangerous consequences) We your Excellys Petitioners thoroughly convinced of our Errors and heartily sorry for our past conduct yet conscious to ourselves, of our loyalty to our most gracious Sovereign ^[8], of our firm attachmt to the Blessings of the British Constitution Our readiness to submit to the Laws of our Country, in paying the public dues for the support of Government when known, and our most cordial and warmest wishes for the Ease, Peace, Quiet and happiness of your Excellency's Administration throw ourselves on your Excellency's clemency ^[9] having nothing to offer in excuse for our errors or in mitigation ^[10] of our past offences but only that the partys aggrieved ^[11] were generally ignorant men, and at the same time in such necessitous Circumstances that their utmost industry could scarce afford a wretched subsistence to their Families, much less enable them to engage in uncertain Law Suits, with the rich and powerful, (tho' injured) for we have often seen with Astonishment and concern, the cause of Justice unsuccessful in Courts of Law, this we then interpreted as some great defect in Justice, which we now understand was owing to errors in proceedings Thus Sir, has want of knowledge and misapprehension been the cause of all our late unwarrantable behaviour and in many instances the cause and foundation of our Complaints. We therefore your humble Petitioners in the most suppliant ^[12] manner submit ourselves to your Excellency's mercy and forgiveness and our grievances to such your compassionate consideration as to you in your great wisdom and goodness shall seem meet. And your Petitioners as in duty bound shall ever pray &c. &c. &c.

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People:

^[26]

Petition Signers:

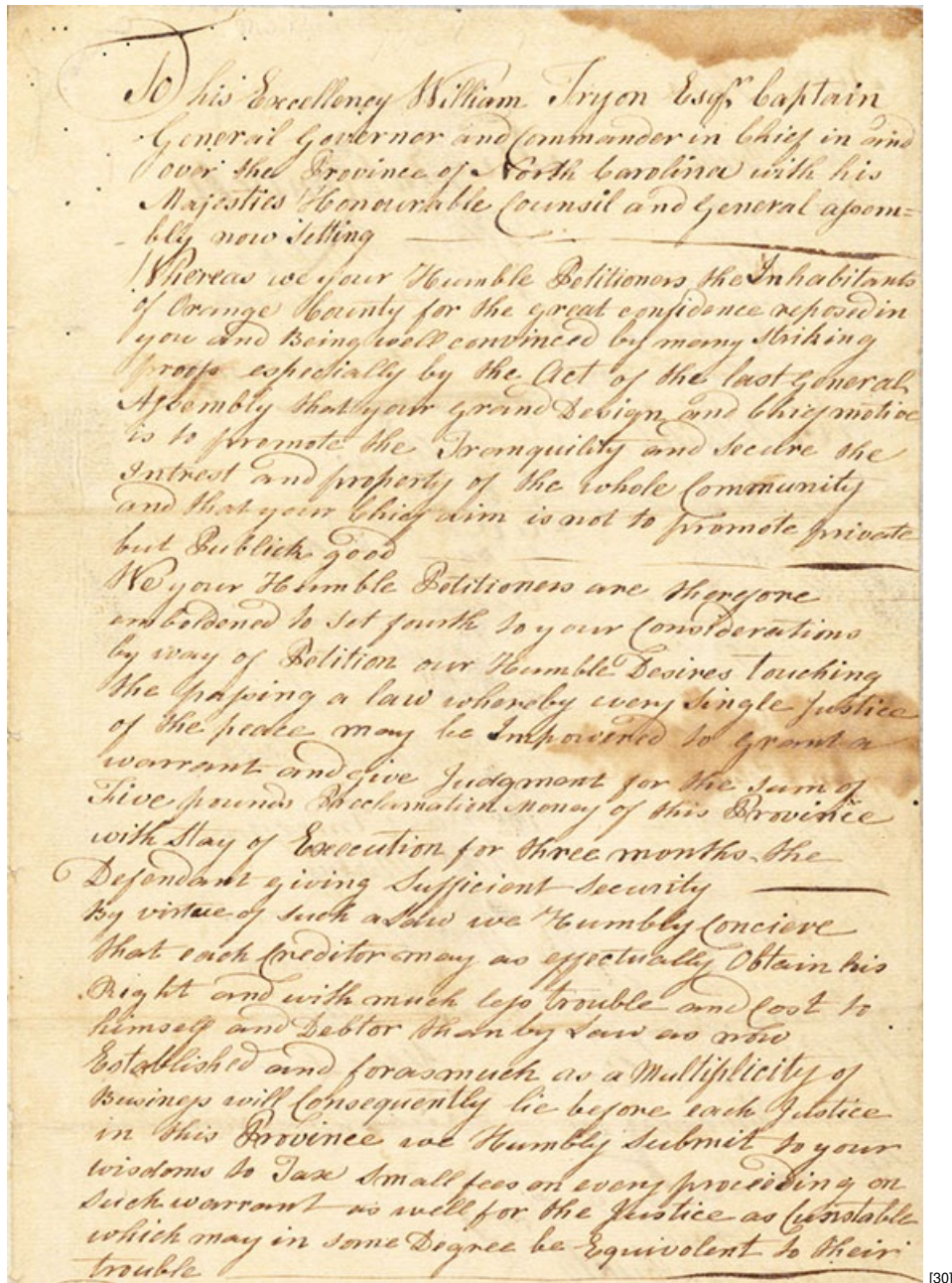
Alexander Mebane [27]

John Butler [28]

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Primary Sources:



To his Excellency William Tryon Esq. Captain
General Governor and Commander in Chief in and
over the Province of North Carolina with his
Majesties Honorable Council and General Assem-
bly now sitting
Whereas we your Humble Petitioners the Inhabitants
of Orange County for the great confidence reposed in
you and being well convinced by many striking
proofs especially by the Act of the last General
Assembly that your good Design and Chief motive
is to promote the Tranquility and secure the
Interest and property of the whole Community
and that your chief aim is not to promote private
but Publick good
We your Humble Petitioners are therefore
emboldened to set forth to your Considerations
by way of Petition our Humble Desires Touching
the passing a law whereby every single Justice
of the peace may be empowered to grant a
warrant and give Judgment for the sum of
five pounds Provincial Money of this Province
with Stay of Execution for three months the
Defendant giving Sufficient Security
By virtue of such a law we Humbly conceive
that each Creditor may as effectually Obtain his
Right and with much less trouble and cost to
himself and Debtor than by Law as now
Established and forasmuch as a Multiplicity of
Business will consequently lie before each Justice
in this Province we Humbly submit to your
wisdom to Tax small fees on every proceeding on
such warrant as well for the Justice as Constable
which may in some degree be Equivalent to their
trouble

[30]

Petition of Orange County, 1768

from the Colonial Governors' Papers, State Archives of N.C. [31]

Alex. Mebane
 John Butler
 John Holt
 Wm. Dancy
 John Kennedy
 Christopher Holt
 David Philips
 John Wise
 James McCall
 Peter Holt
 William Davis
 William Neal
 Henry Jones
 David Simmons
 John Richards
 John Powell
 John Hennen
 William Jackson
 Samuel Barks
 J. Wilson
 William Braxton
 William Wiley
 William Horbio
 John Murray
 James Newbold
 Courtenay
 William Galbreath
 William Dancy
 And. Galbreath
 John Rainey

[30]

Signature page of the original Petition of Orange County, 1768. From the Colonial Governors' Papers at the State Archives of North Carolina.

Regulator Movement Digital Collection, State Archives of North Carolina^[32]

3 January 2018

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