Committees of Safety [1]

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Committees of Safety

by Carmen Miner Smith, 2006

Committees of Safety were a network of committees authorized by the Continental Congress, endorsed by the Second Provincial Congress [2] of North Carolina and the North Carolina Assembly, and established in late 1774 and early 1775 to enforce the Continental Association banning all trade with Britain. The committees, located in 18 counties and 4 towns throughout North Carolina, performed such duties as spreading Whig [3] propaganda, making military preparations, enforcing price ceilings on strategic items, seizing and selling imported goods, reshipping slaves [4] and other imports, punishing violators of the Continental Association with boycotts, and regulating public morals. The Committees of Safety, particularly the Wilmington-New Hanover committee, one of the most active, contributed to the breakdown of the royal government in North Carolina by causing Governor Josiah Martin [5] to flee in fear in June 1775 to Fort Johnston [6], on the mouth of the Cape Fear River [7], and then to the British warship *Cruizer*.

The Assembly, dissolved by Martin on 8 Apr. 1775 for its endorsement of the Committees of Safety, was replaced by the Third Provincial Congress of North Carolina on 20 Aug. 1775. The congress proceeded to declare itself the temporary government and created the Provincial Council to oversee security in the colony and direct the activities of the Committees of Safety.

References:

Lindley S. Butler, *North Carolina and the Coming of the Revolution, 1763-1776* (1976).

Leora H. McEachern and Isabel M. Williams, eds., *Wilmington-New Hanover Safety Committee Minutes, 1774-1776* (1974).

Additional Resources:

"The Committees of Safety." *Revolutionary North Carolina*. LearnNC.org. http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-revolution/4968 [8]

Whitaker, Bessie Lewis. "The provincial council and committees of safety in North Carolina." Chapel Hill [N.C.]: The University Press. 1908. https://archive.org/details/provincialcounci00whituoft [9]

"Minutes of the Orange County Committee of Safety, Orange County (N.C.). Committee of Safety, August 27, 1776." Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr10-0352 [10]

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