

Balch, Hezekiah James ^[1]

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by H. J. Dudley and George Troxler, 1979

1745–76

Hezekiah James Balch, [Presbyterian](#) ^[2] clergyman and [revolutionary](#) ^[3] leader, was born at Deer Creek, Hartford County, Md., the son of James and Ann Goodwin (or Goodwine) Balch. His brothers were the Reverend Steven B. Balch of Georgetown; the Reverend James Balch (25 Dec. 1750–12 Jan. 1821), whose ministry was mainly in Tennessee; and William Balch of Georgia. His cousin, the Reverend Hezekiah Balch (1741–1810), was a Hopkinsian whose ministry was spent in several states, including Tennessee. The parents of Hezekiah James Balch moved to [Mecklenburg County](#) ^[4] about 1751. Young Balch was graduated from Nassau Hall (now [Princeton](#) ^[5]) in 1766 in the same class with [Waightstill Avery](#) ^[6]. The Donegal Presbytery in Pennsylvania licensed him to preach and sent him as a missionary to Virginia and North Carolina in 1768. In June 1769 he presented a call to Donegal Presbytery from Rocky River and Poplar Tent congregations in what was then Mecklenburg County. Balch was ordained and transferred to Orange Presbytery when the Carolinas were separated from Virginia's Hanover Presbytery in May 1770. Balch served as pastor of the two congregations until his death early in 1776. He conducted a school at his home and was a member of the board of trustees of [Queens College](#) ^[7] in [Charlotte](#) ^[8], chartered in 1771.

According to local tradition, Balch married Martha Sconnel (McConnel or McCandless), and they had two children. In March 1769, Balch purchased land between English Buffalo and Coddle creeks about four miles from the present city of Concord. He built his home on this or on an adjoining tract purchased later.

Balch was an active supporter of the revolutionary movement in Mecklenburg County, was a member of the [Mecklenburg Resolves](#) ^[9] convention of 31 May 1775, and signed the resolves.

He is said to have served briefly as captain of a Maryland company in the Continental Army, but he died early in 1776 and was buried in Poplar Tent Church cemetery. The grave site was unmarked until 1847, when funds were raised to erect a monument, and a local resident who had been present at the burial pointed out the location of the grave. Balch's widow married George Marlin McWhorter and moved to Tennessee.

The date of Balch's death has been questioned, but he has been confused with two other Presbyterian ministers who served in both North Carolina and Tennessee, one of whom was his brother, James. It is clear that Hezekiah James Balch died in 1776, because the Mecklenburg County court minutes of June 1777 note the appointment of his wife and two members of his family to administer his estate.

References:

Galusha B. Balch, *Genealogy of the Balch Families in America* (1897).

W. Hamilton Eubank, *Historical Sketch of Poplar Tent Church* (1924).

William Henry Foote, *Sketches of North Carolina, Historical and Biographical* (1846).

Luther Thompson Hartsell, "Mecklenburg Records Prove Balch Died in 1776," *Uplift* 21 (1941).

Thomas H. Spence, Jr., *The Presbyterian Congregation on Rocky River* (1954).

Additional Resources:

Hezekiah James Balch (1745 - 4/1776), Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County: <http://cmstory.org/content/hezekiah-james-balch-1745-41776> ^[10]

Lives and times of the 27 signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence of May 20, 1775; pioneers extraordinary, by Victor C King: <https://www.worldcat.org/title/lives-and-times-of-the-27-signers-of-the-mecklenburg-declaration-of-independence-of-may-20-1775-pioneers-extraordinary/oclc/8503724> ^[11]

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