

Butler, William ^[1]

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by James K. Huhta, 1979

fl. 1768–73

William Butler, farmer and insurgent, was probably born in Virginia before 1730 and was likely the son of William and Frances Watson Butler. He was one of at least seven children: brothers Aaron, General John of [Revolutionary War](#) ^[2] rank, and Edmund; half-brother William Watson, Jr.; and two sisters. Sometime previous to 1760 he married a woman named Phebe, by whom he had four children, Thomas, William, Jr., Edmund, and "Sister McConnell." In 1768, while living near Sandy Creek in [Orange County](#) ^[3], he was appointed a county tax collector; in 1770 he was appointed a deputy sheriff in Orange County.

Butler, described as "an able man of but little property," emerged as a principal leader of the [Regulators](#) ^[4] by the late 1760s. He was central in events at Hillsborough in 1768 and 1770 and at Alamance Creek in 1771. Butler, along with two others, was declared an outlaw by the governor of North Carolina in June 1771. After the events at Alamance Creek, Butler apparently fled North Carolina and, by May 1773, settled at the "headwaters of Walker's Creek" in Fincastle County, Va. In 1772, [John Butler](#) ^[5] of Orange County sought unsuccessfully to obtain a pardon for his brother from Governor [Josiah Martin](#) ^[6] and then warned William against planning to settle in North Carolina again. William's brother Aaron was then living in [Cumberland County](#) ^[7], while William Watson, Jr., was resident near [Charlotte](#) ^[8]. Nothing is known of the further life of William Butler.

Following Butler's death, his wife, Phebe, left Virginia in 1805 and settled with her son Edmund in Simpson County, Ky., near her nephew, Aaron Butler, Jr., who owned land in Sumner and Madison counties, Tenn. Phebe was still alive in 1826. William Butler, Jr., served in the [Revolutionary War](#) ^[2], settled in [Iredell County](#) ^[9], and possibly acquired 311 acres of land in the Ninety Six District of South Carolina in 1788. William's son was Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Butler.

References:

William S. Powell, James K. Huhta, and Thomas J. Farnham, eds., *The Regulators in North Carolina* (1971).

William L. Saunders, ed., *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 vols. (1886–90).

Southern Historical Collection (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), for William Butler Papers and Regulator Papers.

Additional Resources:

Regulator Papers, 1766-1781 (collection no. 00626-z). The Southern Historical Collection. Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/r/Regulator_Papers.html ^[10] (accessed July 9, 2013).

The Regulators, LearnNC: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-revolution/4253> ^[11]

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