

Carteret (Cartrett, Cartwright), Peter ^[1]

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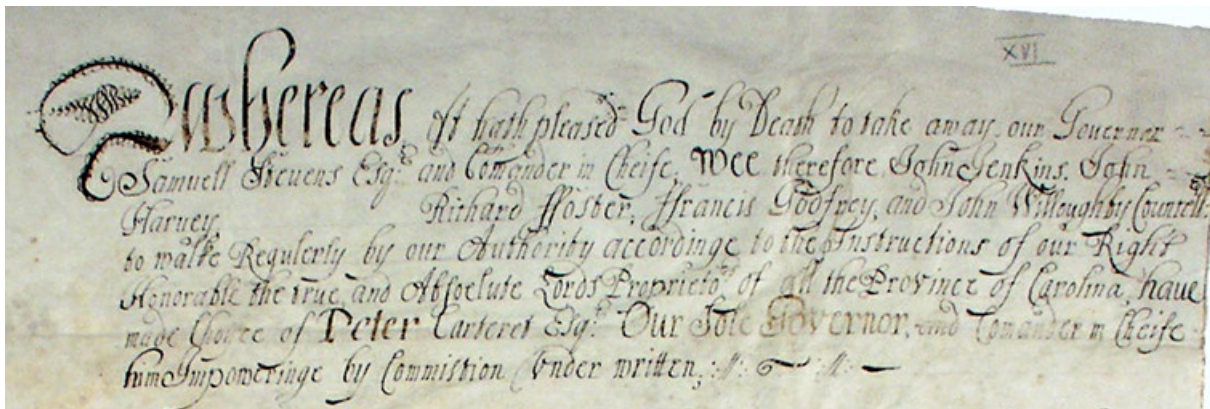
Carteret (Cartrett, Cartwright), Peter

by Mattie Erma E. Parker, 1979

b. 1641

Peter Carteret (Cartrett, Cartwright), governor, secretary, and council member in North Carolina, was the son of Helier de Carteret and Rachella Cloche Carteret of Saint Peter's Parish, Isle of Jersey. He was fourth cousin to Sir George Carteret, one of the original proprietors of Carolina.

On 3 Dec. 1664, the Carolina proprietors ^[2] appointed Carteret secretary, council member, and assistant to the governor for the North Carolina colony, then called Albemarle. Carteret arrived in Albemarle on 23 Feb. 1664/65 to assume his offices. On 28 Oct. 1668, Governor [Samuel Stephens](#) ^[3] appointed him lieutenant colonel of the Albemarle Militia. On 17 Jan. 1670, Sir George Carteret appointed him his deputy for Albemarle, validating under the recently adopted [Fundamental Constitutions](#) ^[4] Carteret's earlier appointments, made under a different constitution. On 10 Mar. 1670, the Albemarle council appointed Carteret governor to fill the vacancy created by Stephens's death. The appointment was later confirmed by the proprietors, and Carteret continued as governor until his return to England in about June 1672.



Part of the document appointing Peter Carteret as governor, 1670. Image from the North Carolina Digital Collections.

^[5]In addition to his official duties, Carteret had responsibilities as agent for four of the proprietors, including his cousin, who had launched a joint business venture in Albermarle. The enterprise, located on Collington (then Colleton) Island and the nearby mainland, was a plantation on which a variety of activities were envisioned. In addition to the principal products of the colony, which were corn, [tobacco](#) ^[6], [hogs](#) ^[7], and cattle, the Collington Island plantation was intended to produce [wine](#) ^[8] and [whale oil](#) ^[9] in quantity for export to England and [horses](#) ^[10] for export to Barbados.

On his arrival, Carteret found the Collington Island plantation hardly begun and its prospects far below the expectations of the investors. Needed laborers were lacking, and livestock and supplies, for which the investors had paid, had not been delivered. Carteret succeeded in producing some tobacco and whale oil for sale, but on the whole the venture failed. Frequent [hurricanes](#) ^[11] destroyed buildings and fences; droughts, floods, and windstorms destroyed crops; disease and vermin killed livestock; and epidemics prevented the laborers from working for long periods. Moreover, the project was inadequately financed, and Carteret often found himself paying the running expenses from his own pocket. Two years after his return to England, he was still trying to get reimbursement for the £330 he had advanced.

As governor, Carteret faced yet more serious problems. The disasters that befell the Collington Island venture had likewise afflicted the colonists. Such calamities, combined with already existing handicaps, had reduced the settlers to poverty and near starvation. Dissatisfaction in the colony was increased upon receipt of the newly adopted Fundamental Constitutions, which imposed a form of government the colonists considered impracticable and land policies they deemed ruinous. Carteret, who sympathized with the settlers, was able to dispel the dissension that had previously rent the colony and to achieve a degree of unity, but he could do little to improve economic conditions without authority from the proprietors.

In the spring of 1672 the Albemarle council decided that Carteret should go to London as agent of "the People of

Albemarle" to explain to the proprietors the problems of the colony and "treat with the Lords" for changes in policy. Although Carteret undertook the mission expecting to return, his departure in early summer marked the end of his association with Albemarle. On reaching London, he found that the proprietors had no interest in the colony. In fact, they then expected to dispose of Albemarle to Sir William Berkeley ^[12], who in return was expected to convey to them his interest in the remainder of Carolina. Although that expectation was never realized, it prevented the proprietors from taking any action respecting Albemarle for several years.

For a time, Carteret hoped to return to Albemarle, either as an official under Berkeley or in connection with the Collington Island property, which he proposed be turned over to him in lieu of the money owed him. He apparently had relinquished that hope by November 1676, when he gave power of attorney over his Albemarle affairs to William Crawford ^[13], who had assisted in managing the Collington Island plantation. Crawford appears to have liquidated Carteret's interests in Albemarle within the next few years.

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Additional Resources:

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Lords Proprietors. "Whereas it hath pleased God by death to take away our governor Samuel Stephens Esq...." 1669/70. North Carolina Digital Collections. <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p15012coll11/id/161> ^[5] (accessed February 7, 2013).

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