

Clinton, Richard ^[1]

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by Alvaretta K. Register, 1979

1721–96

Richard Clinton, county and early state official, is believed to have been a natural son of [John Sampson](#) ^[2] and a nephew of Colonel Charles Clinton, the father of Governor George Clinton and of General James Clinton of New York. The Clintons came from Ireland with Colonel John Sampson in about 1736 and were among the first to settle in the wilderness on the headwaters of the Northeast branch of the [Cape Fear](#) ^[3].

In 1775, Clinton represented [Duplin County](#) ^[4] in the [provincial congress](#) ^[5] held at Hillsborough. In February 1776 he organized a company of militia minutemen from upper Duplin and as captain of the company took part in the defense of [Wilmington](#) ^[6] against the British. He was appointed colonel of cavalry in 1787 and later brigadier general of the Fayetteville District. When the state government of North Carolina was established by the adoption of the constitution at [Halifax](#) ^[7] in 1776, Clinton became one of the first members elected to the House of Commons from Duplin; he continued as a representative from Duplin in each succeeding annual session until the creation of [Sampson County](#) ^[8] at the April session of 1784. He was elected Sampson's first senator for the fall session of 1784 and was reelected as senator for eight of the following annual sessions. He also represented [Sampson](#) ^[8] in the conventions held at [Hillsborough in 1788](#) ^[9] and at [Fayetteville in 1789](#) ^[10]. He was one of the first justices of Sampson County and served as its first registrar of deeds. The seat of Sampson County was named Clinton in his honor.

In 1763, Clinton married Penelope Kenan (d. 1814), daughter of Thomas Kenan and his wife, Elizabeth Johnston Kenan. The Clintons had nine children: William Sampson, who married first Sarah Seawell and second Patience Cook; Richard, married to Ferebee Hicks; Nancy Ann, married to Owen Holmes (1762–1814); Mary Eliza (1784–1858), who married Alfred Rowland (1777–1829); Rachel, who married Jacob Rhodes (ca. 1758–1824); Arabella, married to Isaac Lanier; Elizabeth, married to David Bunting; Owen; and Thomas.

References:

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Alvaretta Kenan Register, *The Kenan Family* (1967).

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Additional Resources:

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