

Frohock, John ^[1]

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d. [after 2 Jul.] 1772

John Frohock, colonial official and land speculator, was living in southeastern Bucks County, Pa., before 1725, the son of John Frohock, Sr., who apparently was a Quaker ^[2]. The family may have come to America from Cambridgeshire, England, as there were several graduates of Cambridge University of that name from the county. The younger Frohock was for a time an associate of his uncle, Hugh Parker, a wealthy merchant of Prince Georges (later Frederick) County, Md., and active in the trading ventures of the newly organized Ohio Company. After the death of the elder Frohock in 1748 and Parker's death in 1751, the families moved to east-central North Carolina and John Frohock soon acquired land in Northampton ^[3], Edgecombe ^[4], Halifax ^[5], and Granville ^[6] counties, as well as in Virginia. He became associated with several prominent families already there, notably the McCullohs ^[7]. By 1753 Frohock was living in the new county of Rowan ^[8] on the frontier of North Carolina. He served as justice of the peace as well as commissioner for the county and for the town of Salisbury. Within ten years he probably was the wealthiest and most influential man in that part of the province. Waightstill Avery ^[9] referred to Frohock's plantation and house as "the most elegant and large within one hundred miles." He represented the county in the Assembly during each session from 1760 through 1768, beginning with the second one called by Governor Arthur Dobbs ^[10] and lasting through Governor Tryon ^[11]'s first when he was succeeded by a Regulator ^[12].

Frohock was witness to countless wills and deeds in Anson, Mecklenburg, and Rowan counties as well as elsewhere from 1753 until as late as March 1772. Among his early activities in the province was service as surveyor for Henry E. McCulloh ^[13], the agent of George Selwyn ^[14] who owned a very large tract of land in Mecklenburg County ^[15]. Sent to survey the land in 1765, Frohock and his associates were soundly beaten by squatters. He had been one of the commissioners charged with the creation of Mecklenburg County ^[15] in 1762 and the county seat, Charlotte ^[16], in 1766. He also served on the committees named by the Assembly to build the courthouse and prison in Anson County ^[17] and the jail in Salisbury. Frohock became clerk of court in Rowan County ^[8] in 1756 and in 1769 Chief Justice Martin Howard named him clerk of the superior court for the District of Salisbury. In 1767 Governor Tryon named him a member of a small group of commissioners to run a boundary line setting off the Cherokee Indians ^[18] in the western part of the province. For £150 Frohock once sold an office to which he had been appointed. The Reverend Theodorus Swaine Drage ^[19] of St. Luke's Parish, Rowan County, reported to Governor Tryon that he was disappointed with the cooperation he received from Frohock. Nevertheless, he was a close friend of many important people in the province, including, of course, the governor. In 1767 Frohock and one of his brothers accompanied Governor and Mrs. Tryon on a visit to the Moravian ^[20] town of Bethabara ^[21].

As a public official Frohock was in a position to be suspected of and perhaps even guilty of extortion and corruption. The Regulators regarded him, along with Edmund Fanning ^[22] and others, as their enemy. Although Frohock was an officer of the Rowan County militia ^[23], rising from captain to colonel, he was eventually excused by Tryon from an active role in the conflict that developed, perhaps because he would have been a special target sought out by many Regulators. After the defeat of the Regulators at the Battle of Alamance ^[24] in the spring of 1771, William Hooper ^[25], as deputy attorney general, drew up a bill of indictment for extortion against Frohock, but the grand jury rejected it for lack of adequate evidence. Nevertheless, Frohock and his two brothers, Thomas and William, also public officials, were forced to disgorge exorbitant fees taken from some of the Regulators. A Regulator leader, James Hunter ^[26], and a delegation of his associates had precipitated this action in an appeal to Hooper.

Frohock was ill from pleurisy in the spring of 1764, and in June 1767, while in the Cherokee country, he was seriously injured when a creek bank caved in and his horse fell on him. Whether because of this it is not known, but his will was drawn up in the early fall of 1768. He continued active as clerk of court ^[27] through May 1772 although he died before the end of the year. In Hillsborough on 2 July the merchant William Johnston ^[28] gave Frohock a cordial letter of introduction to Richard Bennehan ^[29]. An extensive landowner with property in various parts of North Carolina, including a number of grist ^[30] and sawmills, he was never married and willed his property and possessions, including the rights to enslave thirty-eight people, to his two brothers, to an aunt, Mrs. Mary McManus of Halifax County ^[5], and to Mary McCulloh, daughter of Alexander. One enslaved person, named Absalom, Frohock's body servant, was to be educated for a year then given his freedom. Perhaps because of the extent of his property holdings, the will was not admitted to probate until 10 Apr. 1801.

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Additional Resources:

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