

Hooper, George ^[1]

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by Vernon O. Stumpf, 1988

Ca. 1744–19 June 1821

George Hooper, Wilmington merchant, clerk of court, commissioner of navigation, alleged Loyalist ^[2], and later first president of the Bank of Cape Fear ^[3], was a native of Boston, Mass. He was a younger son of Mary Dennie and the Reverend William Hooper, who became rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in 1747. George received his preparatory education at the Boston Latin School but unlike his brother, William, the Signer ^[4], who studied law, he went into service in a merchant house. After William was admitted to the bar in Boston in 1764, he and his two younger brothers, George and Thomas ^[5], went to Wilmington, N.C., where they were welcomed by the planters, merchants, and lawyers of the lower Cape Fear River ^[6]. The Hooper brothers were said to be handsome, with charm, grace of manner, and cultivated minds but tempered by an aristocratic reserve. In the firm of George and Thomas Hooper, they both prospered in handling British and American goods.

In 1775 George Hooper was a member of the committee to value houses in Wilmington. On January 16, 1778 Governor Richard Caswell ^[7] appointed him clerk of court, and later in the year he was named one of the commissioners for navigation on the Cape Fear River ^[6]. On June 8, 1780, Hooper resigned his position



North Carolina scrip from the Bank of Cape Fear, 1801. From the collections of the North Carolina Museum of History.

^[8]as clerk of court after he and some of his fellow merchants were suspected of being Tories ^[9]. However, it is doubtful whether the George Hooper listed as a prisoner of the Patriots after the Battle of Camden ^[10] in August 1780 was George Hooper the Wilmington merchant.

Hooper and his brother Thomas then went to Charleston, S.C., where a branch of their company was located. From Charleston, George carried on an extensive correspondence with his influential father-in-law, Archibald Maclaine ^[11], Wilmington lawyer and Patriot leader in the General Assembly ^[12]. Maclaine attempted to restore the citizenship and property of George and Thomas; he was ably supported in his efforts by William Hooper ^[13]. Eventually, the North Carolina General Assembly ^[12] allowed George to return as a citizen where he again prospered and later became the first president of the Bank of Cape Fear, chartered in 1804.

Hooper married Katherine Maclaine, the daughter of Archibald ^[11] and Elizabeth Rowan Maclaine, who inherited several plantations and Wilmington town lots. They had at least two children who grew to adulthood: Archibald Maclaine ^[14], lawyer and editor of the *Cape Fear Recorder*, and Mary Hooper Fleming. George and Katherine Hooper were members of St. James Episcopal Church in Wilmington, where Hooper died.

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Additional Resources:

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