

Jenkins, John ^[1]

Jenkins, John

by Lindley S. Butler, 1988

d. 17 Dec. 1681

See also [John Jenkins](#) ^[2], NC Office of Research & History

John Jenkins, Proprietary governor of [Albemarle County](#) ^[3], was born in England and may have been the John Jenkins who was graduated from Clare College, Cambridge, in 1642. On 14 May 1653, he patented 1,000 acres in Westmoreland County, Va. By September of that year he was licensed by the Council of State in England as the master of a vessel bound for Bermuda. Jenkins appears to have resided on Egg Neck in Northampton County, Va., on a 400-acre grant he received in March 1655, but by 1662 he was in Albemarle County, [Carolina](#) ^[4]. On 5 Sept. 1663 [Sir William Berkeley](#) ^[5], governor of Virginia and a Lord Proprietor of Carolina, granted Jenkins 700 acres south of the Perquimans River on Harveys Neck, a tract that he had already settled. In addition to his plantation, he was recorded in 1680 as owning one ship, a [bark](#) ^[6].

The long public career of John Jenkins in Albemarle County began when he became a member of the [Council of Governor](#) ^[7] [Samuel Stephens](#) ^[8], sometime between 1667 and 1670. On 20 Jan. 1670, Jenkins was commissioned a deputy for the Earl of Craven, a position that also entitled him to a seat on the Council. The Council advised the governor on executive decisions and comprised the upper house of the General Assembly and the General Court, the highest court in the colony. With the exception of several months when he was forcibly removed from office, Jenkins was on the Council from the term of Governor Stephens until 1681.

By April 1672, Jenkins was appointed deputy governor by Governor [Peter Carteret](#) ^[9], who was dispatched to England by the Council to present a list of grievances to the [Lords Proprietors](#) ^[10]. Jenkins had been appointed lieutenant colonel of the colony's militia in 1670, and after becoming the deputy governor he was called Colonel Jenkins. During his tenure as commander of the militia, the colony fought and won its first Indian war—the [Chowanoc War](#) ^[11] of 1675–77.

During this period a factional struggle for control of the colony surfaced. The anti-Proprietary party, composed of many of the earliest or precharter settlers, was led by John Jenkins; the Proprietary party was led by [Thomas Eastchurch](#) ^[12], who became [speaker of the Assembly](#) ^[13]. Unrest was encouraged by the weak direction given the colony by the Proprietors, uncertain Proprietary land policy, geographic isolation, and the [Navigation Acts](#) ^[14] passed by Parliament which unfavorably regulated the intercolonial trade. In the fall of 1675 Jenkins was arrested and deposed by Eastchurch, but by March 1676 he had been released and returned to power.

Continuing as acting governor until July 1677, Jenkins relinquished his office to [Thomas Miller](#) ^[15] who had been authorized by Eastchurch, recently commissioned governor by the Proprietors, to serve as acting governor. Excesses in the persecution of his opponents led to Miller's ouster in [Culpeper's Rebellion](#) ^[16] in December 1677, and a rebel council governed the colony for eighteen months until the summer of 1679. Although not a leader of the rebellion, Jenkins was an important member of the rebel council. The rebel council was superseded when the Proprietors appointed [John Harvey](#) ^[17] president of the Council and acting governor in February 1679, but the widely respected Harvey died in December of that year. Upon election by the Council, Jenkins filled the vacancy, serving for two years until his death.

Jenkins was survived by his wife Joanna, who married [Thomas Harvey](#) ^[18], later governor of the colony, on 13 Apr. 1682. Joanna Harvey died on 27 Mar. 1688. The Joanna Jenkins who married Robert Beasley on 9 Sept. 1689 may have been the daughter of John Jenkins.

There are few glimpses of the personality of John Jenkins in the sparse records of the period. His political enemies characterized him as "the most active and uncontrollable" of their opponents. Yet George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, said in November 1672 that he was received "lovingly" by the governor and his wife and that the governor "courteously" guided him the next day through the forest. For nearly seven years Jenkins, deputy governor and president of the Council, served as chief executive of Albemarle County—longer than anyone else in the Proprietary period, and he was a key figure on the rebel council during its eighteen-month ascendancy. Except for the six months in 1675–76, the periods in which Jenkins was at the helm were characterized by stability. His effectiveness as governor stands in sharp contrast to the unrest and political chaos that typified much of the history of Albemarle County.

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