

Maule, William ^[1]

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by Charles B. Lowry, 1991; Revised by Jared Dease, Government and Heritage Library, December 2022

1690–1726



William Maule, Surveyor General, "This Plane as here delineated and Layed Out represents the Island of Roan-Oak in North Carolina Containing Twelve Thousand Acres of Land and Marsh. As Surveyed Anno 1718 by Wm. Maule, Surye. Genl." Map, published 1718. From the collections of the State Archives of North Carolina. Presented by North Carolina Maps.

^[2]William Maule, planter, politician, and military leader, belonged to a noted Scots family, though little is known of his youth. After being captured twice by the French in the War of Spanish Succession, he arrived about 1709 in Virginia, where countryman [Thomas Pollock](#) ^[3] was in self-imposed exile due to the ascendancy of his political adversaries in North Carolina led by [Thomas Cary](#) ^[4]. Pollock recommended young Maule to Surveyor General [John Lawson](#) ^[5], who apparently took no sides in the political struggles, and the next year Maule was involved as Lawson's deputy in the first attempt to lay out the northern boundary. The Virginia and North Carolina commissioners immediately disagreed over the use of instruments, which the latter asserted were faulty, a judgment that was vindicated in 1729. This was a propitious event for the career of a newcomer, as were political developments occurring at the same time.

In 1711 the arrival of Governor [Edward Hyde](#) ^[6] in North Carolina precipitated the abortive Cary's Rebellion and the return of Thomas Pollock and ascendancy of the Albemarle "party" over the Bath men. Maule was closely identified with the Albemarle group and Hyde. The [Tuscarora war](#) ^[7] (1711–13) followed hard on Cary's Rebellion and offered a man of military experience a new opportunity. From 1712 to 1713 Maule led the North Carolina Volunteers effectively at the height of military operations. Thereafter he was known as "Col. William Maule of Chowan, Gentleman." During this time he had remained deputy surveyor, and in 1714 he became [surveyor general](#) ^[8] of the colony, a post he held until 1723. After the war Maule, with the exception of his surveyorship and an appointment to the vestry of the Southwest Parish of

Chowan, was not politically active, concentrating instead on building his fortune.

As surveyor general Maule was well placed to expand his landholdings, and during the years he served he laid claim to over 16,000 acres—all located in Chowan Precinct, principally in the western portion, which became Bertie Precinct in 1722. Although these were the normal benefits of office during the eighteenth century, it has been argued that a large number of irregularities occurred during Maule's tenure and the situation improved only with the succession of Edward Moseley [9]. There were complaints against him in the Council [10], and Maule, unlike John Lawson, was not the least bit concerned about the rights of the Indians. As deputy surveyor he had attempted through sharp dealing to deprive the Wyanoke Indians of lands; he later continued the pressure on the Meherrin Indians [11] begun by Thomas Pollock, taking land for himself and allowing encroachment by settlers. He was also dilatory in laying out the lands of the Tuscarora, and in this matter complaints were heard in the Council as late as 1722.

In addition to lands he acquired through patent and purchase, Maule's marriage to Penelope Golland, the stepdaughter of Governor Charles Eden [12], brought him the governor's land and Eden House in 1722. While the income from his surveyorship was lucrative—Eden charged that he had withheld fees that were rightfully the governor's—Maule was also an active planter. Moreover, he dealt in the coastal trade, shipping naval stores [13] and North Carolina's more important export at the time, cattle. On occasion, he bought, sold, and traded enslaved people and indentured servants and supplemented his income by mercantile activities and ferry keeping on the Chowan.

By the early 1720s Maule, a more mature and experienced man, had entered the political arena. Ultimately, he served in the Council (1724–25), as a judge of the vice-admiralty court (1724–25), as a justice of the peace in Bertie Precinct (1724–25), and in the Assembly [14] (1725–26). The politics of this period has long been defined in terms of the conflict between the established Albemarle group led by Thomas Pollock and the rising planters, eventually known as "The Family," led by Edward Moseley. Maule's career, like that of Frederick Jones [15], the chief justice, illustrates how difficult it is to maintain these categories when one examines closely the marital and social ties of the men involved. Maule was associated with Thomas Pollock and governors Hyde and Eden. Yet, like Jones, he maintained close contacts with the opposition through his business dealings and friendship with Edward Moseley. He was apparently on good terms with John Porter [16] and his brother Edmund, both of whom were key figures in the opposition to Hyde in Cary's Rebellion. Perhaps Maule was gradually drawn into the circle of the opposition due to the fact that his interests, like the opposition's, were essentially in frontier expansion and because his younger brother, Dr. Patrick Maule, had become prominent in Bath County. It may also be that the death of his old benefactor, Thomas Pollock, in 1722 forced him to take new political directions.

As a member of the Moseley faction, Maule was closely allied with Governor George Burrington [17] during the latter's first administration (1724–25). Burrington counted him among the most influential leaders of the time. Burrington actively supported frontier expansion, especially in the South, and by remaining in the colony after his dismissal from office, defined the alignment of factions in his successor's term. Within less than two years, the Albemarle party was able to engineer the removal of Burrington and the appointment of Sir Richard Everard [18] as governor. Maule's tenure on the Council [10] came to an abrupt end.

The Assembly [14] had been the focus of the opposition led by Moseley since 1715, and when it convened for its first session in 1725, William Maule was one of the burgesses for Bertie. He quickly became one of the leaders in the Assembly's battle with Everard [18] over the governor's right to prorogue the lower house. In April 1726 he was again present when the new Assembly convened. Maule must have been ill during this time, for he made his will. By late 1726 his promising political career was cut short by his untimely death. It is speculative, but likely that Maule—whose experience, wealth, and connections were equal to those of the other leaders of the rising Cape Fear group—would have enjoyed the same eminence as Edward Moseley had he lived as long.

Maule divided his estate, notably the plantations of Mount Gallant, Calledonia, and Scotts Hall, between his wife Penelope and his daughter of the same name. The administration of his estate and the guardianship of his daughter he assigned to his brother, Dr. Patrick Maule, of Beaufort and Hyde. Maule's daughter Penelope married Dr. William Cathcart [19] but apparently had no children. His wife married first John Lovick [20] and, after his death, Governor Gabriel Johnston [21], and into this line passed the greatest portion of Maule's estate.

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Additional Resources:

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