

## **Mebane, Alexander** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Mebane, Alexander**

by Thomas E. Baker, 1991; Revised by SLNC Government and Heritage Library, July 2023

**26 Nov. 1744–5 July 1795**

Alexander Mebane, statesman, was born at Hawfields, Orange County <sup>[2]</sup> (near present-day Mebane, Alamance County <sup>[3]</sup>), the son of Scot-Irish settlers, Alexander and Mary Tinnin Mebane. After attending the county's common schools, Mebane remained in Orange County and in time became a prosperous farmer. He married Mary Armstrong of Orange County on 25 Feb. 1767.

Mebane began a long career of public service in December 1776, when, as the result of a special election, he was chosen one of Orange County's delegates to the Provincial Congress <sup>[4]</sup> meeting at Halifax <sup>[5]</sup>. In the same year he served as justice of the peace of Orange County <sup>[2]</sup>. In 1777 Mebane became the first sheriff of Orange County under statehood, serving through 1780.

During the American Revolution <sup>[6]</sup>, he served in the Orange County militia, probably with the rank of colonel. He is known to have been present at the capture of Governor Thomas Burke <sup>[7]</sup> by a group of Tories <sup>[8]</sup> under David Fanning <sup>[9]</sup> at Hillsborough on 12 Sept. 1781. Mebane escaped and made his way on foot to Hawfields, warning the citizenry that the raiders were nearby. The next day the marauders were ambushed by a hastily assembled Patriot force, resulting in the Battle of Lindley's Mill <sup>[10]</sup>, <sup>[11]</sup>. Continuing his militia ties after the war, Mebane was commissioned in 1788 as colonel of horse for the Hillsborough District and in 1789 as brigadier general of the district.

The last two decades of his life were Mebane's most active politically. In 1783 and 1784 he was both a member of the House of Commons <sup>[12]</sup> and auditor of the Hillsborough Convention of 1788 <sup>[13]</sup>, which met to consider the ratification of the U. S. Constitution. Aligning himself with the Anti-Federalist <sup>[14]</sup> faction, he voted with the majority in refusing to ratify the Constitution as presented, without a bill of rights. At the behest of Mebane and others a second convention was called at Fayetteville in 1789 <sup>[15]</sup>. There Mebane supported an unsuccessful effort to place five proposed amendments before the U. S. Congress <sup>[16]</sup>. Defeat of this plan led him to oppose ratification a second time. On 19 Nov. 1789, however, a majority vote of the convention was returned in favor of ratification.

Also in 1789 Mebane was named one of the original trustees of the newly established University of North Carolina <sup>[17]</sup>. In that capacity, he was a member of the committee that in early November 1792 selected New Hope Chapel hill as the site for the university. On 8 Dec. 1792 Mebane was named one of the commissioners to erect the university buildings and to lay out the town of Chapel Hill. Fittingly, he was present for the laying of the cornerstone of the first building on 12 Oct. 1793.

Mebane attained his highest public office in 1793, when he was elected to the Third Congress of the United States <sup>[18]</sup>, sitting from March 1793 to 3 Mar. 1795. In the first year of his term, he married Anne Claypoole of Philadelphia; his first wife, Mary, had died on 2 Sept. 1792.

At the adjournment of the Third Congress, Mebane returned to Hawfields, where he remained until his death. He was survived by six daughters and four sons: Jennet (or Jeanette, who married Richard Stanford <sup>[19]</sup>), Mary Hodge, Fanny, Susannah, Elizabeth, Nancey, James, William, Robert, and John Alexander.

#### **Additional information from NCpedia editors at the State Library of North Carolina:**

This person enslaved and owned other people. Many Black and African people, their descendants, and some others were enslaved in the United States until the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in 1865. It was common for wealthy landowners, entrepreneurs, politicians, institutions, and others to enslave other people and use enslaved labor during this period. To read more about the enslavement and transportation of African people to North Carolina, visit <https://aaahc.nc.gov/programs/africa-carolina-0> <sup>[19]</sup>. To read more about slavery and its history in North Carolina, visit <https://www.ncpedia.org/slavery> <sup>[20]</sup>. - Government and Heritage Library, 2023

#### **References:**

*Biog. Dir. Am. Cong.* (1961).

E. W. Caruthers, *Revolutionary Incidents and Sketches of Character, Chiefly of the "Old North State"* (1854).

Walter Clark, ed., *State Records of North Carolina*, vols. 12–13, 15, 19–23, 25 (1895–1906).<sup>[21]</sup>

*Debates and Proceedings of the Congress of the United States: Third Congress* (1849).

Halifax *North Carolina Journal*, 16 Jan., 13, 20 Mar., 18 Dec. 1793, 9 Apr. 1794.

Orange County Superior Court Records (1795).

William L. Saunders, ed., *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, vols. 7, 10 (1890).<sup>[21]</sup>

#### **Additional Resources:**

"Mebane, Alexander, (1744 - 1795)." *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*. Washington, D.C.: The Congress. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=M000622><sup>[16]</sup> (accessed June 2, 2014).

#### **Subjects:**

[Biographies](#)<sup>[22]</sup>

#### **Authors:**

[Baker, Thomas E.](#)<sup>[23]</sup>

#### **Origin - location:**

[Orange County](#)<sup>[24]</sup>

[Hillsborough](#)<sup>[25]</sup>

[Rockingham County](#)<sup>[26]</sup>

#### **From:**

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.](#)<sup>[27]</sup>

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