

Micklejohn, George ^[1]

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by Durward T. Stokes, 1991

ca. 1717–1818

George Micklejohn, [Anglican](#) ^[2] clergyman in colonial North Carolina, was probably a native of Berwick-upon-Tweed in the north of England, but no details of his family or early life have been found nor is anything known of his education. However, the title page of a sermon printed in New Bern, which he preached in 1768, notes that he held the degree of doctor of sacred theology. The earliest documented fact concerning him is dated 16 Sept. 1764, when he was ordained. On 12 Mar. 1766 he was licensed by the bishop of London, and later in the year he was sent to North Carolina as a missionary of the [Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts](#) ^[3].

Royal Governor [William Tryon](#) ^[4] considered Micklejohn to be a valuable addition to his colony and, after stationing the new missionary briefly in St. Luke's Parish, [Rowan County](#) ^[5], placed him in charge of St. Matthew's in Hillsborough and the nearby chapels of St. Jude, St. Mary, and "a small Chapel of Ease" at the site of present-day Chapel Hill. In September 1767 he accompanied Governor and Mrs. Tryon and others to [Wachovia](#) ^[6], where on Sunday the twentieth he preached on Haggai, chapter 2, verse 6, afterwards baptizing several children from the region. Described as "tall, dark, large-boned and gaunt, with harsh features and slow, deliberate manner in the pulpit, and out," he soon gained the esteem of colonial society as well as the royal government. Legend, on the other hand, pictures him as a crank with his congregation and the common people. The Reverend [Henry Pattillo](#) ^[7], a Presbyterian, even called him a deist.

Prior to 1786 Micklejohn married Elizabeth Lockhart, the daughter of Samuel and Catherine Lockhart, and with his marriage he became allied with a number of prominent families in [Orange County](#) ^[8]. The couple's children, as named in his will, were William, Robert, James, Thomas, George, Elizabeth, and Catherine.

Zealous for the expansion of the Anglican church in the colony, Micklejohn persuaded Governor Tryon to join him in recommending Edward Jones to the bishop of London for ordination to the priesthood. When Jones arrived in London, the bishop refused on the grounds that the recommendations were not sufficient and that he was not personally acquainted with Micklejohn. Only the intervention of Tryon's influential sister, who resided in London, rescued Jones from privation and eventually obtained his ordination.

When the [Regulators](#) ^[9] in North Carolina began their activities, Micklejohn worked diligently to assist them in obtaining redress from their grievances without having to resort to violence. In 1768 he acted as a courier on several occasions, carrying messages between the rebels and royal authorities. In the Regulator documents he was respectfully referred to as "our Rector," even though there were many [Dissenters](#) ^[10] and others in the Regulator movement who were not communicants of the [Church of England](#) ^[2]. While attempting to achieve a peaceful settlement, Micklejohn remained strongly opposed to violence in any form and did not abandon in the least his loyalty to the British Crown. When Tryon assembled the militia in Hillsborough to restore order, the parish minister was requested to preach to the troops. Accordingly, he delivered a discourse that was soon published under the title, *On the important Duty of Subjection to the Civil Powers: A Sermon Preached before his Excellency William Tryon, Esquire, Governor, and Commander in Chief of the Province of North-Carolina, and the Troops raised to quell the late Insurrection, at Hillsborough, in Orange County, On Sunday September 25, 1768*. The governor was so pleased with the dynamic homily that he persuaded the colonial Assembly to have one hundred copies printed and distributed in the colony and a few sent to officials in England.

Despite his efforts on behalf of peace, Micklejohn was unable to bring the opposing sides to terms. In 1775 he dutifully opened the [Provincial Congress](#) ^[11] with prayer. When the [American Revolution](#) ^[12] began, he remained [loyal to the Crown](#) ^[13], and tradition says he was among the [Tories](#) ^[13] taken at the [Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge](#) ^[14]. Nevertheless, his name does not appear among the list of prisoners. Instead, he probably was among the Loyalists rounded up in Orange County a short while later. After lengthy negotiations he was paroled and unhappily endured the remainder of the war attempting to minister to a church that was rapidly declining. In 1793 he moved to [Granville County](#) ^[15], where he purchased a home on Grassy Creek from his friend, [Thomas Person](#) ^[16]. He ministered to congregations at St. John's, Williamsboro, and other localities; was appointed by the legislature to a board of trustees that tried unsuccessfully to establish an academy in Granville County; and was nominated but not elected to the position of professor of humanity at [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[17]. He was disappointed in 1790 when a convention he presided over in Tarborough failed in its attempt to organize the Diocese of North Carolina of the [Protestant Episcopal church](#) ^[18]. He was appointed a delegate to the Episcopal convention of 1792 in New York but did not attend.

In 1803 Micklejohn sold his land in the state and later moved to Mecklenburg County, Va., where he attended St. James's Church but apparently had no clerical connection with it. He seems never to have become reconciled to the separation from England. On one occasion, when requested to conduct a school for young children, he is said to have retorted that he would have nothing to do with the little Democrats for it had always been difficult to control them, and since the Revolution it would be impossible.

Micklejohn's will was probated on 15 Feb. 1819. He was supposedly buried near Speed's Chapel on Dockery Creek, near Smith's Cross Roads in Mecklenburg County, Va.

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