

Plater (or Plato), Richard ^[1]

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d. ca. September 1705

Richard Plater (or Plato), General Court justice, attorney general, comptroller of the customs, and clerk of the Council, probably was from Norfolk County, England, where his mother, Dorothy Plater, was living in 1705. He was said by a contemporary resident of North Carolina to have come to that colony from Virginia or Maryland. He may have been the Richard Plater who arrived in Maryland in 1666, the only individual bearing the name who has been located in the available records of Maryland or Virginia.

Plater had settled in the North Carolina colony, then called Albemarle ^[2], by February 4, 1687/88, when he witnessed the will of a resident of Pasquotank Precinct. The move may have been influenced by the presence of relatives in Albemarle, as he appears to have been the brother-in-law of Henry Palin and the brother of Mary Clark, widow of John Clark. His relation, if any, to several colonists bearing the Plater name has not been determined.

By February 1690/91 Plater was clerk of the county court of Albemarle, then the highest court of law in the colony. By the following May he was clerk of the Council. He was replaced in those positions by September 1694. In November 1694 he took the oath as customs collector for Pasquotank and Perquimans precincts, serving as deputy for Francis Tomes, customs collector for the colony. In November 1695 he became comptroller of customs, a position equal in rank to that of collector and with duties overlapping the collector's to a degree. The lack of clear delineation of duties and remuneration led to disputes between Plater and Tomes, which eventually were resolved by the General Court. Plater's tenure as comptroller lasted at least through 1697.

In October 1696 Plater took the oath as attorney general. In that position he handled two important suits brought in the General Court on behalf of the Lords Proprietors ^[3] on the claim that substantial sums were due the Proprietors from the estate of the recently deceased Seth Sothel ^[4], former governor of the colony. The suits were eventually dismissed on grounds stemming from Sothel's status as a Proprietor as well as governor.

In July 1700 Plater took office as a justice of the General Court ^[5]. He sat on the court through July 1703. During that period he continued to hold office as attorney general, stepping down from the bench to conduct cases, as was the custom in that day. While he was a judge, as well as earlier, he also practiced before the court as a private attorney. His public career seems to have ended about July 1703, although he appeared twice before the court as a private attorney in 1704.

Plater lived in Pasquotank Precinct, where presumably he owned land, although no record of his holdings has been located. It is not known whether he was married. He died about September 1705, when he made his will, which was probated the following January. He bequeathed property that he owned in England to his mother, Dorothy Plater of Linn in the County of Norfolk, England, and to a Madam Sarah Beacher of the County of Bucks, England. With the exception of bequests of clothing to the three people he enslaved and small sums of money to four North Carolina residents, apparently unrelated to him, he left his North Carolina estate to Anthony Hatch, whose relation, if any, is not known.

References:

J. Bryan Grimes, ed., *Abstract of North Carolina Wills* (1910).

J. R. B. Hathaway, ed., *North Carolina Historical and Genealogical Register* (1900–1903).

Mary Weeks Lambeth, *Memories and Records of Eastern North Carolina* (1957).

North Carolina State Archives (Raleigh), particularly Colonial Court Records (boxes 148, 192), Council Minutes, Wills, Inventories (1677–1701), and Will of Richard Plater (24 Jan. 1705/6).

Mattie Erma Edwards Parker, ed., *North Carolina Higher-Court Records, 1670–1696 and 1697–1701* (1968, 1971).

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Additional Resources:

The North Carolina Historical and Genealogical Register. Genealogical Publishing Com. http://books.google.com/books?id=IHlxq9iDgYQC&printsec=frontcover&vq=plater&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=plater&f=false ^[6]

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