

Pollock, Thomas ^[1]

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Pollock, Thomas

by W. Conard Gass, 1994

6 May 1654-August 1722

See also: [Thomas Pollock](#) ^[2], Research Branch, NC Office of Archives and History

Thomas Pollock, lawyer, planter, colonial official, and acting governor of the colony of North Carolina, was a native of Glasgow, Scotland, and a descendant of Pollok of Balgra, Renfrewshire, Scotland, who, according to legend, saved the life of James IV of Scotland from an attack by a wild boar. Thomas Pollock settled first in Maryland but moved to North Carolina in 1683 as the deputy of Lord Proprietor [Carteret](#) ^[3] and long served as the agent of both Carteret and Lord Proprietor Beaufort. For over thirty years Pollock held numerous military and civil offices under the colonial government. He was a member of the governor's Council for a longer term than any other person. Further, he served ably on the first vestry of St. Paul's Parish, [Edenton](#) ^[4], and in 1701 contributed money towards the construction of a new church building, which was completed in 1705.

In addition to practicing law, Pollock was a merchant and also carried on extensive planting operations. He eventually owned about one hundred slaves, and from the time of his arrival in the colony to his death he accumulated large tracts of land along the Chowan, Roanoke, and Trent rivers. One of his plantations in [Bertie County](#) ^[5] included 40,000 acres. He also owned two lots in Bath and New Bern. The town of New Bern was rebuilt largely under his leadership after the [Tuscarora Indian war](#) ^[6] (1711–15).

Well educated, wealthy, and closely identified with the Proprietary and royal interests, Pollock was in full sympathy with the ideals and ambitions of the privileged classes of the colony. An ardent supporter of the [Church of England](#) ^[7], he disliked all [Dissenters](#) ^[8] but was especially opposed to the [Quakers](#) ^[9], whose theology he detested and whose politics he distrusted. In the Glover-Cary dispute (1708) over whether Quakers should be required to swear, rather than affirm, allegiance to the English sovereign as a condition for holding public office, he supported acting Governor [William Glover](#) ^[10] in opposition to the Quakers and their political allies under the leadership of [Thomas Cary](#) ^[11]. After Cary's triumph Pollock followed Glover into exile in Virginia. During [Cary's Rebellion](#) ^[12] (1711) against Governor [Edward Hyde](#) ^[13], Pollock was Hyde's principal lieutenant. A firm believer in law and order, Pollock was imprisoned soon after his arrival in the colony for opposing the illegal activities of [Seth Sothel](#) ^[14], governor from 1682 to 1689, who openly accepted bribes, arbitrarily deprived citizens of their freedom, and unlawfully seized their property.

Upon the death on 8 Sept. 1712 of Governor Edward Hyde, Pollock as president of the Council became acting governor and served for about two years until the arrival of Governor [Charles Eden](#) ^[15] in 1714. As governor, Pollock succeeded in uniting the colony's quarreling factions and with the aid of troops from South Carolina vigorously prosecuted the war against the Tuscarora that had begun in 1711. Pollock again became acting governor upon the death on 17 Mar. 1722 of Governor Eden and served until his own death some five months later.

Pollock's first wife was Martha Cullen West (1663–1701), apparently a native of England; she was the widow of [Robert West](#) ^[16] and a daughter of [Thomas Cullen](#) ^[17], colonial official, planter, and Indian trader, who had come to North Carolina from Dover, England, about 1669. Of the children of Thomas and Martha Cullen West Pollock, two sets of twins died in infancy. One daughter, Martha (1694–1719?), and three sons, Thomas (1695–1733), [Cullen](#) ^[18] (1697–1750), and George (1699–1736), lived to adulthood. Governor Thomas Pollock's grandson, Thomas Pollock III (1731–77), married Eunice Edwards (1743–1822), a daughter of Jonathan Edwards, the famous New England minister. Frances (1771–1849), daughter of Thomas and Eunice Edwards Pollock, married [John Devereux](#) ^[19], a native of Ireland, who acquired a reputation as a financial wizard. Of their three children, Frances Ann Devereux (1807–76) became the wife of [Leonidas Polk](#) ^[20] (1806–64), Episcopal bishop and Confederate general, and [Thomas Pollock Devereux](#) ^[21] (1793–1869) was a lawyer, planter, and from 1826 to 1839 reporter of the [North Carolina Supreme Court](#) ^[22].

Governor Thomas Pollock's second wife was Esther Wilkinson (d. 1716), widow of Colonel [William Wilkinson](#) ^[23]; they had no children together. Pollock's residences included a plantation on Salmon Creek and Balgra, his plantation on Queen Anne's Creek, where he was buried. His remains were later moved to St. Paul's Church, Edenton.

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