

Reed, William ^[1]

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by Vernon O. Stumpf, 1994

1670?–11 Dec. 1728

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

William Reed, acting governor, president of the Council, Proprietor's deputy, [Church of England](#) ^[3] vestryman, and Virginia–North Carolina [boundary](#) ^[4] commissioner, probably came to the colony from England. William Reed was a fairly common name in North Carolina and it has not always been possible to identify him in the records. [J. R. B. Hathaway](#) ^[5] states that the governor appeared in Currituck [Precinct](#) ^[6] as early as 1692; one of this name was a witness in court as well as a juror on 8 Oct. 1697.

According to documents in the *Colonial Records*, one William Reed on 17 Mar. 1703 answered a suit for a debt of £17. In the same year, William Reed appeared as a juror, and on 1 Aug. 1703 he brought suit to recover money owed him. On 26 Oct. 1703 Reed petitioned the General Court that a tract of land formerly in the occupation of Captain John Gibbs be granted to him.

In July 1711 Governor [Edward Hyde](#) ^[7], the Council, and the Assembly addressed a letter to [Virginia Governor Alexander Spotswood](#) ^[8] denouncing [Cary's Rebellion](#) ^[9]. Reed was one of the signers, and the following year he also signed another letter from the Council and Assembly to Spotswood petitioning for help against the [Tuscarora Indians](#) ^[10]. [Baron Christoph von Graffenried](#) ^[11] was also one of the petitioners. The Council ordered Reed on 12 Sept. 1712 to arrest mutineers who encouraged other colonists not to join the expedition against the Indians.

In 1715 the Assembly passed an act to establish the [Church of England](#) ^[3] in the colony and appointed select vestries. Colonel William Reed was named a vestryman for the Currituck Precinct parish.

Reed was first mentioned as a Proprietor's deputy and member of the Council in 1712, and he filled that position for the remainder of his life. On 30 Oct. 1718 Governor [Charles Eden](#) ^[12] appointed Reed, [Fred Jones](#) ^[13], and [Captain Richard Sanderson](#) ^[14] to the Virginia–North Carolina Boundary Line Commission. The location of the line between the two colonies had been in dispute for a number of years, and although the survey was begun in 1719, the final determination came only in 1729.

Following the death of Governor [Charles Eden](#) ^[12] on 26 Mar. 1722, Reed helped choose [Thomas Pollock](#) ^[15] as his successor on 30 March. With the election of Pollock, Reed became the ranking member of the Council in point of service. Pollock died on 30 August and on 7 September Reed was unanimously chosen "President of the Council and Commander in chief of this province till the [Lords Proprietors](#) ^[16]' pleasure be further known."

William Reed was acting governor from 7 Sept. 1722 to 15 Jan. 1724, when [George Burrington](#) ^[17] qualified. Reed had filled a majority of the provincial offices with general satisfaction. He was aggressive in arresting mutineers and prosecuting the [Tuscarora Indian war](#) ^[18] as well as an enterprising land speculator. He purchased land from the Porteskill and Yawpim Indians and pursued lapsed land patents. Nevertheless, criticism of his administration is found in a report of the Committee of Grievances, Pasquotank Precinct, 12 Apr. 1726. It was stated that "contrary to law" Reed had pretended to assume to himself a power to appoint commissioners and assessors. He had levied a tax of five shillings per poll in 1724, and he had collected it under the pretense of building a courthouse "in some place unknown," although the justices had already arranged for such a building according to their own ideas. In 1723 Reed had named himself and others as town commissioners to enlarge the town of Carteret, recently incorporated on the northeastern side of [Roanoke Island](#) ^[19].

With the Proprietors' appointment of Burrington as governor in January 1724, Reed became president of the Council. He and others were accused of selling liquor without licenses at their homes, but the charges were apparently dropped. Reed, however, was involved in several other lawsuits. He does not appear in the records as a quarrelsome man, although he was quick to defend himself when attacked. On 31 Oct. 1724 Colonel Thomas Swann of Pasquotank accused Reed and John Norton of abusing Governor Burrington. According to John Pendleton, Reed told Swann that "he would wipe his Arse" with the governor's order. Moreover, Reed reminded Pendleton that he was not Mr. Reed but President Reed.

The militant and colorful Reed was attacked by [Edmund Porter](#) ^[20], of Chowan, who was tried for sedition in March 1727. Porter shared the same sentiments as Swann in that he thought Reed was "worthy of death." Reed was on the court that tried Porter.

In his position as senior councillor, Reed assisted in inducting [Sir Richard Everard](#) ^[21] into office as the successor of Burrington on 17 July 1725. Reed's friendship with Governor Everard appears to have lasted only a short time, however,

as he joined other councillors in signing an address stating that "the great Incapacity and Weakness of our present Governor, Sir Richard Everard, whose behaviour is so extraordinary that every day produces some Extravagant action." Everard was charged with numerous offenses from tyranny towards subordinates to treason against the House of Hanover.

Reed was married twice; his first wife was named Christian and his second, Jane, but the records do not reveal their maiden names. He left several sons; the oldest was Christian who married Mary Durant, a great-grand-daughter of George Durant [22], the elder. Mary and Christian Reed had a son, William, who married Penelope Williams, also a descendant of Durant. Another son of Governor Reed was Joseph who married Elizabeth Durant, a sister of the wife of Christian. The latter couple left a large family, and among their descendants were the Peace and Kittrell families of Granville County [23]. By his second wife, Jane, Governor Reed had a son, William, who married Elizabeth Hatch, also a descendant of Durant.

Governor Reed died at his home in Pasquotank County [24]. His widow, Jane, sued for the return of her husband's property after she had been expelled from it. The Council also ordered that the arrears of the late president's salary be paid to his widow by the receiver general.

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Additional Resources:

"William Reed." N.C. Highway Historical Marker A-42, N.C. Office of Archives & History.
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