

Simpson, John ^[1]

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by Armistead J. Maupin, 1994

8 Mar. 1728–1 Mar. 1788

John Simpson, Revolutionary ^[2] leader, was born in Boston, the son of John and Mary Randall Simpson. Shortly after 1750 he moved to Beaufort County ^[3], N.C., with a group of New Englanders. In 1757 he was commissioned lieutenant by Governor Arthur Dobbs ^[4] in Captain John Hardee's militia company, and in 1760 he was elected one of Beaufort County's representatives in the Assembly. Having introduced the bill to create a new county to be named Pitt, he was appointed one of the commissioners to set it up. The county seat was established at Hardee's Chapel a few miles southeast of the present city of Greenville. Following the creation of Pitt County ^[5], Simpson was elected to represent it in the colonial Assembly for three consecutive sessions between 1764 and 1769 and for three more between 1773 and 1775.

During that time, when the Regulator uprising took place, Simpson was colonel of the Pitt County militia. Governor William Tryon ^[6] called on him to provide troops for the protection of the Assembly against threats by the Regulators ^[7]. Although Simpson was not present at the Battle of Alamance ^[8] in 1771, some of the troops from his regiment participated.

On the eve of the American Revolution, between 1774 and 1776, Simpson represented his county in the first four Provincial Congresses ^[9]. As a member of the colonial Assembly in 1774, he was also a delegate to the First Provincial Congress, both bodies being composed of virtually the same men and meeting in the same hall. Simpson was one of those whom royal governor Josiah Martin ^[10] condemned for their Revolutionary activity. In addition, he was named to the Council of Safety ^[11] in 1776 and served two terms on the Council of State in 1778 and 1779. He represented Pitt County in four sessions of the General Assembly ^[12], serving in the House of Commons in 1778 and 1782–83 and in the senate in 1780–81 and 1786–87.

During much of the Revolutionary period Simpson was a justice of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions ^[13]. In 1780 he was promoted to the rank of brigadier general, but there is nothing to suggest that he saw active military service.

In 1758 Simpson married Elizabeth, the daughter of John Hardee, and they became the parents of nine children: Mary Randall, Susannah, Elizabeth, Samuel, Alice, John Hardee, Ann, Joseph, and Sarah. Susannah married Lawrence O'Bryan, Ann married John Eason, and Sarah married Dr. Joseph Brickell. The others never married. Simpson was buried in Pitt County on the south side of the Tar River at the old Hardee place, five miles south of Greenville.

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Additional Resources:

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