

# THE END OF BRITISH CONTROL OF NORTH CAROLINA

## PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

### **Source 1: Excerpt from the minutes of the meeting of the New Bern Committee of Safety, July 17, 1775**

The following letter from General Gage to his Excellency Governor Martin was intercepted and has fallen into the hands of the committee of this Town and County of Craven. It appears to have been written in answer to a letter wrote by the Governor to General Gage of the 16th of March last in solicitation of arms and ammunition to be sent him to this Town. The profound silence and quietness in which this province was then in could give little occasion for the introduction of arms and ammunition among us and as his Excellency seems to have early concerted schemes hostile to the liberties of the people of this Province the Committee think it expedient to publish a matter so very alarming and whereby the lives perhaps as well as liberties of this people would have been in the greatest danger had the Governor's plan of operations succeeded.

Retrieved online at: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.php/document/csr10-0050>.

### **Source 2: Excerpts from a letter from British General Thomas Gage to North Carolina's colonial Royal Governor Josiah Martin, April 12, 1775**

Your letter of the 16th March, I have had the pleasure to receive and am glad to hear many of the people in your province are beginning to find they are misled and that they seem inclined to disengage themselves from the arbitrary power of the Continental Congress and of their committees. I wish I could say as much of the people of this province ... their leaders by their arts and artifices still keep up that seditious and licentious spirit that has led them on all occasions to oppose Government and even to acts of rebellion...

I am sorry it is not in my power to supply you with the number of arms you request. I have them not to spare in the present conjuncture of the service here. I may assist you with some powder but can get no safe opportunity from this to send it to you. I shall order you a supply by way of New York, and whatsoever may be in my power to assist you to keep up the present good disposition of the loyal part of your province I shall be happy to do and am sorry I cannot at present do more.

Retrieved online at: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.php/document/csr10-0051>.

### **Source 3: Extract from the *Cape Fear Mercury* (a pro-Patriot newspaper published in Wilmington, North Carolina), July 28, 1775**

As this party [of members of North Carolina's Patriot militia] was returning from the fort [Fort Johnson, which the patriots attacked and burned on the night of July 18, 1775], they were met by a detachment of near 300 men from Bladen County who had turned out at a minute's warning and we are well assured the people were in motion in several other counties at a greater distance. This we mention with pleasure as a proof of the readiness of the people upon any emergency in defense of their rights and privileges...

Retrieved online at <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.php/document/csr10-0464>.

### **Source 4: Excerpts from the "Fiery Proclamation" of North Carolina's Royal Governor Josiah Martin, August 15, 1775 (abridged)**

Whereas I have seen a publication in the *Cape Fear Mercury* which appears to be proceedings of a general meeting of people styling themselves committees of the district of Wilmington ... declaring me an enemy to the interests of this province in particular and America in general ...

And whereas by the evil, pernicious and traitorous councils and influence of the well-known leaders of these seditious committees, a body of men was assembled in arms in Wilmington on the 16th or 17th day of July last, for the purpose ... of removing the King's artillery from Fort Johnston... I thought it proper to answer and to dissuade the deluded multitude from involving themselves in the criminal enterprise of removing the King's artillery, which had been dismantled by my authority and not by Captain Collet ...

and I am to lament that ... they proceed under the lead of the said John Ashe and other evil-minded conspirators ... to the said Fort Johnston and wantonly in the dead hour of night set on fire and reduce to ashes the houses and buildings within His Majesty's said Fort that had been evacuated and disarmed and was entirely defenseless ...

and seeing that the said committee as it is called have artfully by insidious compliments and flattery and by their contemptible applause of the outrages and violences perpetrated in and about Fort Johnston endeavored to reconcile the minds of the people to treason and rebellion ...

And whereas I have also seen a most infamous publication in the *Cape Fear Mercury* importing to be resolves of a set of people styling themselves a Committee for the County of Mecklenburg most traitorously declaring the entire dissolution of the laws, government, and constitution of this country and setting up a system of rule and regulation repugnant to the laws and subversive of His Majesty's government, and another publication in the said *Cape Fear Mercury* of the 14th of last month, addressed "To the Committees of the several Towns and Counties of North Carolina appointed for the purpose of carrying into execution the Resolves of the Continental Congress" bearing date at Philadelphia June 19th 1775 signed William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, Richard Caswell ...

And whereas I consider this a most open and daring attempt to stir up unnatural rebellion in this colony against His Majesty and His government,

I do hereby advise, forewarn, and exhort all His Majesty's subjects within this province to forbear making any choice of delegates to represent them in the intended convention at Hillsborough as they would avoid the guilt of giving sanction to an illegal assembly...

And ... I think it proper in tenderness and pity to the poor misguided multitude ... hereby to offer promise and to declare to all each and every of them His Majesty's most gracious pardon for all violences done and committed to the date hereof on their return to their duty to the King and obedience to lawful government and renouncing their seditious and treasonable proceedings and I hereby offer ample reward and encouragement to the people or any of them who shall yield and deliver up to me the few principal persons who seduced them to the treasonable outrages herein before recited to be dealt with according to law.

And whereas, the people in many places have been seduced to the choice and appointment of military officers among themselves which is an usurpation and invasion of His Majesty's just and lawful prerogative ... I do hereby forewarn the people against any and every such election of officers to which they are invited and caution them against any obedience and regard to any persons who have been or may be so chosen and appointed hereby declaring every such election illegal, unconstitutional, and null and void to all intents and purpose ...

And whereas, it appears that the assembling convention at Hillsborough will bring the affairs of this country to a crisis which will make it necessary for every man to assert his principles, I do hereby conjure

the good people of this province as they tender & regard the blessings of British subjects that they do firmly persist and persevere in their duty and allegiance to His Majesty... And I do hereby strictly require and command all His Majesties justices of the peace, sheriffs and other officers, and all other His Majesties liege subjects to exert themselves in the discovery of all seditious treasons and traitorous conspiracies, and in bringing to justice the principals and accomplices therein. And I do further strictly enjoin them to give all manner of aid, countenance, assistance and protection to all His Majesty's loyal and faithful people, and all persons are hereby required to take notice and govern themselves accordingly.

Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the said Province on board His Majesty's sloop *Cruizer* in Cape Fear River, this 8th day of August Anno Dom: 1775...

*Retrieved online at: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.php/document/csr10-0081>.*

*(Note: Minor punctuation and spelling changes may have been made to the original text of some sources to make them easier to use in an educational context.)*

## RELEVANT FACTS

- During the Colonial era, North Carolina had an elected House of Burgesses which could propose laws for the colony, but the colony's governor was appointed by the king of Great Britain. At the beginning of the American Revolution, North Carolina's British governor was Josiah Martin. Before the American Revolution, North Carolina's British colonial governor and his family lived in a mansion called Tryon Palace, located in New Bern, North Carolina.
- Since the 1760s, North Carolinians were actively involved in the protests against the taxes and restrictions that Great Britain tried to impose following the end of the French and Indian War. For example, North Carolinians actively participated in the protests and boycott of British products in response to the Stamp Act of 1765.
- In 1774, following the Boston Tea Party, Great Britain passed several laws intended to punish the Massachusetts colony and send a warning to the people of other colonies. In the 13 colonies, these laws became known as the "Intolerable Acts." In the summer of 1774, leaders from 12 of the 13 colonies agreed to send representatives to a "Continental Congress" in Philadelphia to discuss how to respond to the Intolerable Acts. In order to prevent North Carolina's elected leaders from choosing representatives to attend this meeting, Governor Martin refused to allow the colony's elected House of Burgesses to meet. So, local leaders from throughout North Carolina organized a Provincial Congress in the town of New Bern, which chose representatives to attend the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. The representatives at the meeting that became known as North Carolina's First Provincial Congress also recommended that each North Carolina county form a "committee of safety" to protect the rights of colonists and, if necessary, confront British authorities.
- In April 1775, as tensions continued to rise throughout the 13 colonies, representatives from across North Carolina met for a second time. This meeting became known as North Carolina's Second Provincial Congress. This meeting was held to discuss how best to support the decisions made by the First Continental Congress to promote and protect colonists' rights.
- Both congresses were held in the town of New Bern, where Governor Martin lived. The Second Provincial Congress was held at essentially the same time and in the same place where North Carolina's House of Burgesses was scheduled to meet. Many of the colonies elected representatives in the House of Burgesses also attended the Second Provincial Congress. Although Governor Martin declared both meetings to be illegal, he was not able to stop either meeting from taking place.

- ◆ Immediately following the Second Provincial Congress, people in New Bern received news of the battles of Lexington and Concord, which had taken place earlier that month. In response to this news, on the night of May 24, 1775, Governor Martin fled Tryon Palace and secretly traveled to Fort Johnston at the mouth of the Cape Fear River (near Wilmington), where several British warships were anchored. With this departure, the British lost control of North Carolina's capital city.
- ◆ In July 1775, Governor Martin received reports that the Wilmington Committee of Safety planned to attack Fort Johnston. The British officer who commanded the fort informed the governor that he did not think his troops would be able to defend the fort from an attack by the Patriots. So, the British abandoned the fort, and Governor Martin moved onto a British warship anchored in the Cape Fear River (the *HMS Cruizer*). Five days later, on July 18, 1775, Patriot militia forces attacked and destroyed the fort.
- ◆ Governor Martin continued to live aboard a British warship throughout the summer and fall of 1775. Although the British government still recognized him as the governor of the colony, he could not leave the ship, which remained ready to flee the colony at a moment's notice. From aboard the ship, on August 8, 1775, Governor Martin issued his "Fiery Proclamation," denouncing the safety committees.
- ◆ In September 1775, North Carolina's Third Provincial Congress met in the town of Hillsborough, North Carolina. Representatives from every county of North Carolina attended this meeting. During the meeting, delegates declared that the Provincial Congress was the highest power in the colony. Representatives at this Congress divided North Carolina into six zones and agreed to create a militia force to defend each zone from the British and their Loyalist allies.
- ◆ In 1776, Governor Martin wrote to the British Army headquarters in New York requesting British troops to come and help restore his power in North Carolina. The British military commander in New York agreed to send 1,500 British redcoats to North Carolina if Governor Martin could organize a Loyalist militia to meet the British soldiers in Wilmington and fight with them to recapture the state. Governor Martin was able to recruit 1,600 North Carolinians who were living around the town of Fayetteville and who agreed to support Great Britain. Governor Martin sent out British soldiers to train this Loyalist militia force.
- ◆ In February 1776, as the Loyalist troops were marching to Wilmington to meet up with the British redcoats, they were intercepted northwest of Wilmington by Patriot forces at a bridge over Moore's Creek. This creek was too deep for Loyalist troops to cross, so the Patriots knew that the Loyalists would have to cross the bridge to reach Wilmington. Before the Loyalists arrived, the Patriots took off the top boards of the bridge so that the Loyalists were unable to cross. As the Loyalists attempted to cross the bridge, the Patriots defeated the Loyalist troops with minimal damage to their men (only one Patriot died and one Patriot was injured). The Loyalists who survived the battle were allowed to return to their homes as long as they promised not to ever fight for the British. When the British military commander in New York heard that Governor Martin's Loyalist militia had not only been defeated but disbanded, he ordered the British redcoats who were on their way to Wilmington to be sent to Charleston instead. Following the battle, Governor Martin also left North Carolina and fled to Charleston, South Carolina.
- ◆ Josiah Martin returned to North Carolina for a brief period of time near the end of the American Revolutionary War. He accompanied General Cornwallis' army as it marched through North Carolina in 1780 and 1781. Martin promised Cornwallis that many North Carolinians remained loyal to Great Britain. However, the British did not receive any support from the people of North Carolina and were not able to hold territory in the state for any significant amount of time. In October 1781, Cornwallis' troops were defeated at the Battle of Yorktown, which ended the American Revolutionary War.
- ◆ In March 1781, after General Cornwallis lost 25 percent of his soldiers at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse (in present-day Greensboro), Josiah Martin left North Carolina and never returned to the state. He died in England a few years later in 1786.

HISTORICAL SOURCE ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

Using information from the sources, describe Governor Martin’s request to General Gage and General Gage’s response.

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*Using information from the sources, evaluate the credibility of Governor Martin’s claim (as reported in General Gage’s response) that many North Carolinians “are beginning to find they are misled and that they seem inclined to disengage themselves from the arbitrary power of the Continental Congress and of their committees.” In your response, provide evidence to support or refute Governor Martin’s claim.*

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*In your own words, summarize Governor Martin’s warnings and offers to the people of North Carolina in the “Fiery Proclamation” (Source 4).*

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*In your own words, summarize Governor Martin’s commands to “His Majesties liege subjects.”*

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**Using information from the sources, write a paragraph describing the chain of events that resulted in the end of British control of North Carolina in 1775 and 1776.**

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# THE END OF BRITISH CONTROL OF NORTH CAROLINA

## HISTORICAL SOURCE ANALYSIS QUESTIONS: GRADING AND INSTRUCTION GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS

**Using information from the sources, describe Governor Martin’s request to General Gage and General Gage’s response.**

- ♦ Students are expected to conclude that Governor Martin requested military assistance (“arms and ammunition”) from General Gage to maintain British control over North Carolina and that General Gage did not provide the assistance that Governor Martin requested.

**Using information from the sources, evaluate the credibility of Governor Martin’s claim (as reported in General Gage’s response) that many North Carolinians “are beginning to find they are misled and that they seem inclined to disengage themselves from the arbitrary power of the Continental Congress and of their committees.” In your response, provide evidence to support or refute Governor Martin’s claim.**

- ♦ Students are expected to infer that Governor Martin’s statement that many North Carolinians “are beginning to find they are misled and that they seem inclined to disengage themselves from the arbitrary power of the Continental Congress and of their committees” is not a very credible claim.
- ♦ To support this inference, students can use following information:
  - The fact that Governor Martin was forced to move out of the governor’s mansion and seek refuge on a British warship docked in the Cape Fear River
  - The fact that North Carolina’s Patriot militia was strong enough to destroy Fort Johnston
  - The statement in a pro-Patriot newspaper article (Source 3) that several hundred North Carolinians “turned out at a moment’s notice” to support the Patriot cause

**In your own words, summarize Governor Martin’s warnings and offers to the people of North Carolina in the “Fiery Proclamation” (Source 4).**

- ♦ Students are expected to identify the following warnings:
  - The warning not to vote for delegates to attend the Hillsborough Convention
  - The warning not to vote for military officers for the pro-Patriot militia
  - The warning not to obey elected Patriot leaders
- ♦ Moreover, students are expected to identify the following offers made by Governor Martin in the “Fiery Proclamation”:
  - The offer of pardon for past actions to those who renounce the Patriot cause
  - The offer of reward to those who help the British to catch Patriot leaders

**In your own words, summarize Governor Martin’s commands to “His Majesties liege subjects.”**

- ♦ Students are expected to explain that Governor Martin commanded “His Majesties liege subjects” (justices of the peace, sheriffs, and other officers) to help the British capture Patriot leaders and to aid the British forces in any way they can.

**Using information from the sources, evaluate Governor Martin’s ability to act upon his warnings, offers, and commands. In your response, provide evidence from the sources to support the claim that Governor**

***Martin is in either a strong position or a weak position to act upon the warnings, offers, and commands made in this proclamation.***

- ♦ Students are expected to conclude that Governor Martin was not in a strong position to act upon the warnings, offers, and commands made in the “Fiery Proclamation.”
- ♦ To support this claim, students could provide the following evidence:
  - *Governor Martin wrote the Fiery Proclamation on a ship in the Cape Fear River, after he had been forced to flee the governor’s Mansion and lost Fort Johnston.*
  - *Several months after the Fiery Proclamation, Loyalist forces were defeated at the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge.*
  - *General Gage never sent British Redcoats to recapture North Carolina as Governor Martin had hoped.*

## HISTORICAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT: GRADING AND INSTRUCTION GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS

***Using information from the sources, write a paragraph describing the chain of events that resulted in the end of British control of North Carolina in 1775 and 1776.***

- ♦ A high-quality student response will include the following details:
  - *The meeting of the First Provincial Congress of North Carolina in Wilmington in July 1774*
  - *The participation of North Carolina delegates in the First Continental Congress in the autumn of 1774*
  - *The meeting of the Second Provincial Congress of North Carolina in New Bern in April 1775*
  - *The departure of Governor Martin from his official residence (Tryon Palace) in May 1775*
  - *Governor Martin’s unsuccessful attempt to persuade British General Gage to provide weapons and ammunition to help him maintain British control of North Carolina*
  - *Governor Martin’s abandonment of Fort Johnston and relocation to a ship near the mouth of the Cape Fear River*
  - *The destruction of Fort Johnston in July 1775*
  - *Governor Martin’s unsuccessful attempt to persuade North Carolinians to continue supporting the British in the Fiery Proclamation of August 1775*
  - *The meeting of the Third Provincial Congress of North Carolina in Hillsborough in September 1775, despite Governor Martin’s warnings and commands*
  - *Governor Martin’s attempt to organize a Loyalist militia to support a British invasion of North Carolina in the winter of 1776*
  - *The defeat of the Loyalist militia at the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge in February 1776, which led to the departure of Governor Martin from the state*