

## William Tryon and the Regulation

This section will help you meet the following objective:

**8.1.06** Identify reasons for the creation of a distinct North Carolina colony and evaluate the effects on its government and economics.

**8.2.01** Trace the events leading up to the Revolutionary War and evaluate their significance.

**As you read, look for:**

- the reasons for the Regulator movement
- vocabulary terms **capital, appropriate, Regulator, extortion, militia**



**Above:** This costumed guide plays the part of Royal Governor William Tryon at Tryon Palace in New Bern.

**When Arthur Dobbs died in 1765**, his assistant, William Tryon, was appointed the new royal governor. Tryon and his wife (the former Margaret Wake for whom Wake County was named) were already influential residents of the Cape Fear. Tryon had more of a military background than had his predecessors, Johnston and Dobbs. He soon combined his organizational skills with his professional ambitions to bring change to North Carolina. In fact, Tryon did more in a decade to alter life in the colony than anyone else had done in the previous century.

Tryon's goals for the colony were straightforward. He wanted North Carolina to be better organized to take advantage of its economic resources. He also wanted the people of the colony to be more respectful of authority, particularly toward the government officials in charge of the colony. Tryon wanted to please his boss, the king back in England, by making North Carolina finally pay its own way.

### Tryon's Reforms

Tryon quickly moved the colony toward his goals. First, he convinced the General Assembly to have a permanent **capital** (seat of government). The Assembly agreed upon New Bern as the best central place along the coast. It **appropriated** (set aside) a large sum of money for a building that would house both the royal government and its governor. The capitol—later in North Carolina history called Tryon Palace—was completed in 1770. Its wide halls and impressive meeting rooms made it the finest structure ever seen in the colony, one that rivaled the public buildings in New York, Charles Town, or Williamsburg.

Second, Tryon got the General Assembly to reorganize the Church of England in North Carolina. He tried to make residents accept it as the established religion of the colony. At the time, only port towns like Edenton, New Bern, Bath, and Wilmington had strong churches, and even they had a problem keeping pastors. By 1769, Tryon had repaired old churches and built six new ones, including small chapels for worship out in the farming areas.

Third, Tryon was able to stimulate growth in the economy. He increased customs collections in the ports of the colony, despite the beginnings of protests about British taxation that would lead to the American Revolution. He helped merchants like James Hogg, a Highland Scot, set up a store in Wilmington with branches in Cross Creek and Hillsborough. He even encouraged the expansion of the wharves on Portsmouth Island on the Outer Banks to ease shipping through the Outer Banks.

Fourth, Tryon gained more control over the colony by having his allies appointed to local offices in the backcountry counties. He helped well-educated Englishmen get these positions, the most important of whom were Edmund Fanning in Hillsborough and John Frohock in Salisbury.

### The Regulator Movement

All of Tryon's measures improved the organization of North Carolina, but each came with a cost that was borne by the average taxpayer in North Carolina. Residents near the coast could easily see a return for their higher taxes, since town life in the ports improved during Tryon's day. But the newcomers to the backcountry were not so sure. They claimed, rightly, that a palace in New Bern was so far away that few of them would ever see it. Why build such an extravagant building, especially when the money could be used to improve the roads from the backcountry to the coast?

Few of the backcountry residents were Anglican, and they had little desire to pay taxes for a minister they would not listen to. In Salisbury, the Anglican minister sent by Tryon never got paid because the members elected to the church council (called the *vestry*) were Presbyterians. Since these Irishmen never took an oath of allegiance to the Church of England, they could not collect the taxes owed to the preacher.

Most of all, the backcountry settlers were angry that Tryon had done little to stop bad government. It was commonly believed that backcountry

## Did You Know?

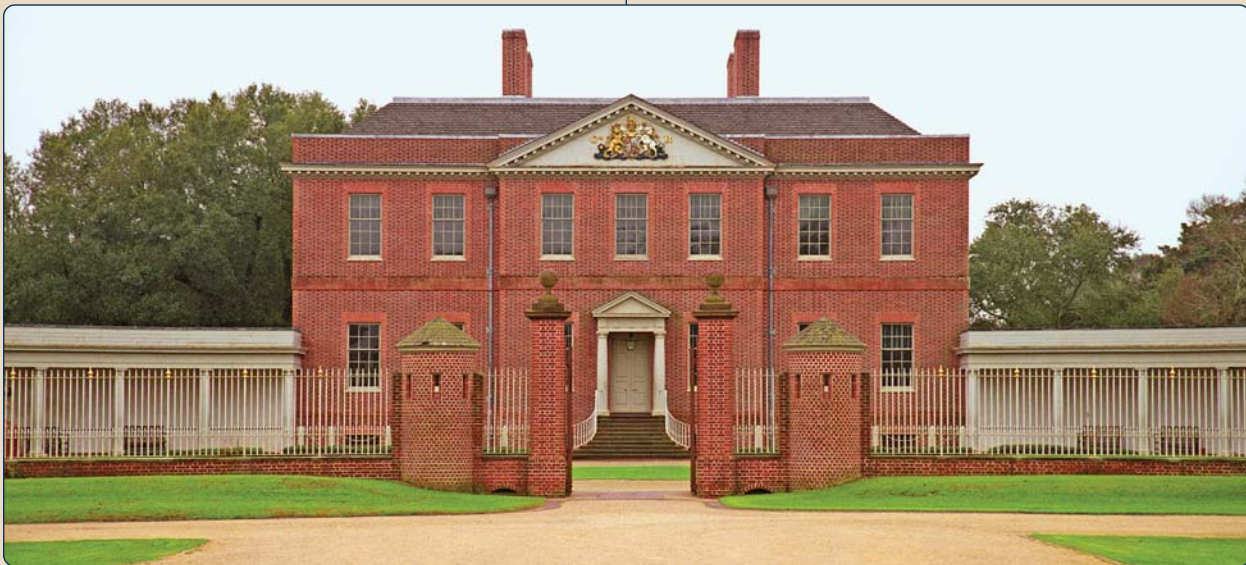
One of the new chapels was New Hope Chapel on a hilltop about ten miles south of Hillsborough. It would give name to the town of Chapel Hill after the American Revolution.



**Above:** St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Edenton is the second-oldest church still standing in North Carolina.

# CAROLINA PLACES

## Tryon's Palace



**No one had ever seen a house like it in North Carolina.**

When the governor's residence was completed in 1770 in the newly designated capital of New Bern, it rivaled any government building in the British Empire. The message was clear: The British were in charge of the colony, and this house was to be the seat of power. As Governor Tryon noted at the opening celebration, the building was to be "an honor to British America."

Tryon brought to the colony his own architect, John Hawk. Hawk employed both North Carolinians and craftsmen from other colonies for the fine interior woodwork. Some of the finely carved features of the house came directly from England. The most important decoration was the carved "arms of George III," the official symbol of the king's authority, that was put into place above the front door. That was one reason critics throughout the backcountry disliked the haughty Tryon and his "palace."

The house had three floors. Servants worked in the basement storerooms. The official business of the colony was con-

**Above:** The heavy gates at Tryon Palace at New Bern were intended to remind North Carolinians of the king's authority over the colony.

ducted on the first floor. The governor had his office there, and the Provincial Council, made up of the leading men, met in the large room next to it. The governor also hosted official ceremonies in the council room. The governor and his family lived on the second floor. Two small buildings flanked the main structure. One building was a kitchen; the other, a stable.

Tryon moved into the house in 1770 and stayed there for only a couple of years. While in residence, the Tryons gave very popular receptions and parties for the members of the Assembly. After the Battle of Alamance, Tryon was named governor of New York, and he went to live in Manhattan. Tryon's successor, Josiah Martin, lived there until he had to flee the colony at the start of the American Revolution.

After the War for Independence, Richard Caswell, the first governor of the state of North Carolina, lived and worked in

the Palace. When state government was moved inland to cope with the war in 1779, the palace lost its official status. For a while, it was used as a school. When President George Washington visited New Bern in 1791, he described the building as “hastening to ruins” because no one was keeping it up. The building burned down to its foundations after hay stored in it caught fire in 1798. Eventually, only one of the service buildings remained. It was used as an apartment.

During the 1940s, North Carolina citizens who wanted to reveal more about the state’s history became determined to rebuild the palace, using Hawk’s original plans. After World War II, they raised enough money to pay for the reconstruction. The Palace opened in 1959, and has been one of the leading tourist destinations in the state since then.

**Right:** The Tryons entertained quite a bit and had one of the best kitchens in the colony. The slate floors were easier to clean up than wood. **Below right:** The main meal of the day was served in the early afternoon. **Below left:** The Tryon family had their living quarters on the upper floor.





**Above:** To the Regulators, Edmund Fanning represented the corruption and unfairness of government. In 1770, they beat him severely and wrecked his house.

officials were just as corrupt as in the Proprietary period. One backcountry resident described court hearings as “more obscene than learned.” The problem had grown worse since 1763. When Lord Granville died, thousands of his land grants were involved in the settlement of his estate. People were not even sure that they owned their property. Moreover, many newcomers to the Granville District who had surveyed their land claimed that courthouse officials would only register the title if they were paid a bribe. These bribes angered many people. Residents of Orange County believed that Edmund Fanning, in particular, was guilty of lining his pockets with unearned coins.

The backcountry residents began to protest the same year Tryon became governor. In the summer of 1766, Uwharrie residents gathered at Quaker meeting houses to talk about their grievances. Hundreds signed petitions calling for “honester regulation.” The petitioners soon took the name **Regulators**, and their principal spokesman was Herman Husband. The Orange County miller had complained about conditions as early as 1755. “All we want,” Husband claimed, “is to be governed by law, and not by the will of officers.” Despite the promise by Governor Tryon to deal with the injustices, the Regulators were unable to get much relief. For example, the sheriff of Orange County no

longer went house to house to collect taxes, as was the custom. Instead, people had to pay their taxes at selected places that were often far from home. If they failed to come on time, the sheriff increased their tax bill.

### Tensions Mount

Matters worsened in 1768. When one Regulator’s mare was seized to pay off a debt, citizens marched on Hillsborough to get it back. While there, some of them fired shots into Edmund Fanning’s house. Other Regulators threw John Frohock out of the courtroom in Salisbury.

Fanning had Husband thrown in jail, accusing him of being behind all the disorder. Hundreds of people from all walks of life marched on Hillsborough to get him released. Fanning was forced to let Husband go and promise to have Governor Tryon deal with the problem.

Even though two Regulators, Rednap Belk, a schoolteacher, and James Hunter, a small farmer, walked all the way to New Bern with evidence of corruption, Tryon did little. Instead of trying to get the

### Did You Know?

**In the backcountry, taxes were supposed to be paid in money, not in trade goods. There was little cash money in the backcountry.**

## Did You Know?

**Judge Richard Henderson was the man who later financed Daniel Boone's settlement of Kentucky.**

Assembly to take action, Tryon held military parades in Hillsborough, Salisbury, and Charlotte to show he was the real power in the colony. Fanning was tried for **extortion** (charging illegal fees) and found guilty, but he was fined only a penny. Husband, tried for inciting a riot, was found not guilty.

Frustrated backcountry settlers saw little being done about their grievances in 1769 and 1770. In September 1770, Regulators again marched on Hillsborough. Some waved cow whips; others, pitchforks. They took over the courtroom and attacked a number of public officials. The next day, they learned that Judge Richard Henderson had fled town. Furious and frustrated, the Regulators dragged Fanning out of his house and tore it down, board by board. Later, someone burned down Judge Henderson's farm in nearby Granville County.

The mayhem in Hillsborough prompted Governor Tryon to take strong measures. He got the Assembly to pass the Johnston Riot Act, named for Samuel Johnston, a nephew of former governor Gabriel Johnston. The new law called for strict punishment for all public acts of disorder. It was passed over the objections of Herman Husband, who was a representative from Orange County. Tryon then used the Riot Act to arrest

**Above: In the fall of 1768, Governor Tryon confronted the Regulators at Hillsborough. He ordered them to disband, demanded payment of taxes, and warned public officials against charging illegal fees.**





**Above: General Hugh Waddell tried to march to Hillsborough, but he was greatly outnumbered and turned back.**

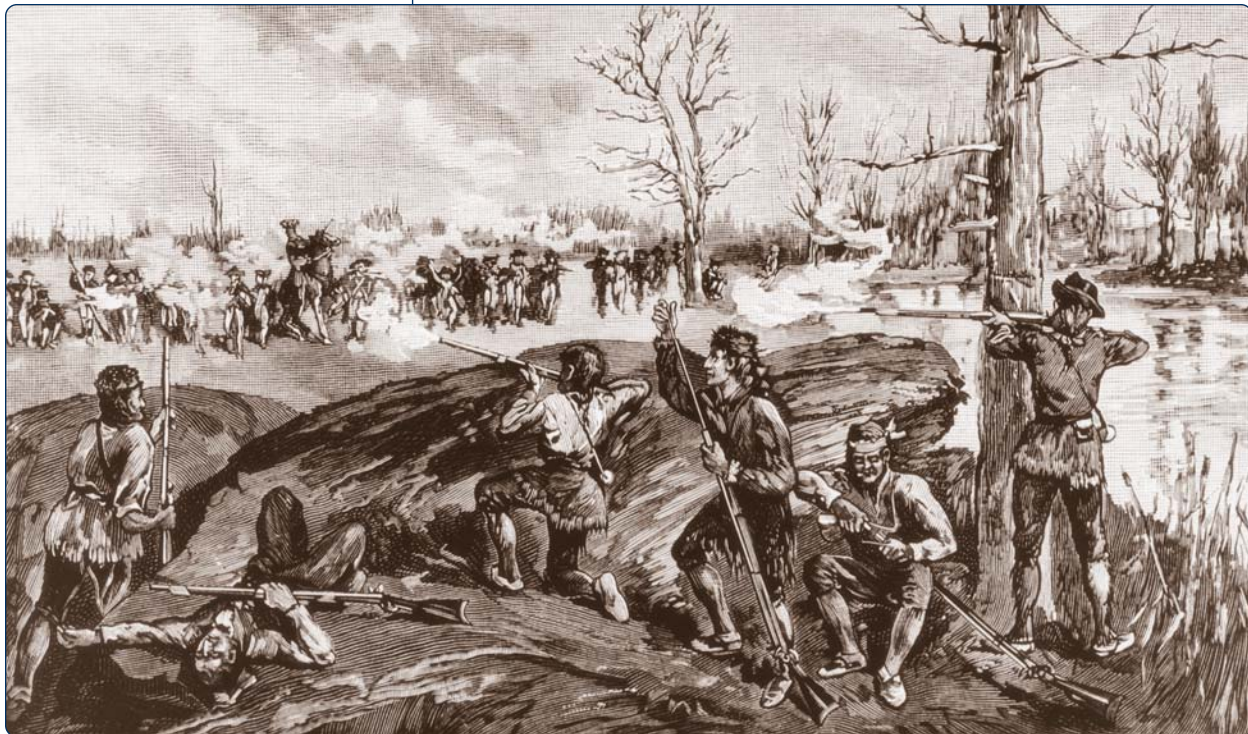
Husband, and he called out the **militia** (citizen soldiers) to prevent the Regulators from rescuing him. Fearful that they too might be assaulted by angry backcountry residents, the Assembly passed several laws better regulating the collection of public fees. Later, a New Bern grand jury refused to indict Husband under the Riot Act, and he was allowed to return home.

### The Battle of Alamance

Governor Tryon, assuming that the Regulators would rise again, gathered militia from across the Coastal Plain and marched on Hillsborough “against the insurgents.” Fanning joined him with a few Orange County soldiers. Hugh Waddell, who had been in command at Fort Dobbs, tried to march from Charlotte with others in an effort to surround the Regulators. Thousands of shouting Regulators kept Waddell from crossing the Yadkin River. Tryon continued marching west from Hillsborough.

The Regulators gathered at Alamance Creek, about fifteen miles southwest of Hillsborough. On May 16, 1771, Tryon ordered them to disperse. When they did not, he ordered the militia to fire upon them. The Battle of Alamance lasted a couple of hours. The Regulators, who had no commander and no organization, ran out of ammunition and fled through the woods. At least 20 were killed and another 150 wounded. Husband, at the first shot, fled all the way to Pennsylvania.

Tryon made sure that every backcountry resident knew never to challenge the authority of the Crown. He executed one Regulator even before



the battle, ordering him shot right in front of the other protestors. The day after the battle, he hanged another without a trial. Tryon then marched his small force toward Salisbury. His troops demanded loyalty oaths from everyone they met along the way. To show they meant business, Tryon's troops dismantled Herman Husband's farm down to the lowest fence railing. Eventually, more than six thousand backcountry men came into Salisbury and Bethabara to gain a pardon.

After returning to Hillsborough, twelve more Regulators were tried and condemned. Tryon pardoned six of them and hanged the rest. By English tradition, all condemned people are entitled to last words. When a Regulator with a noose around his neck started to criticize Fanning, the villain knocked over the barrel that held the man up, choking him in mid-sentence.

The end to the Regulation did not solve any of the problems North Carolina faced in the 1770s. The king promoted Tryon to governor of New York. Fanning went along as Tryon's secretary. He eventually became a general in the British Army. Herman Husband never returned to North Carolina. As an old man, he helped lead a similar fight against unfair taxes in Pennsylvania, the Whiskey Rebellion of 1792. He went to jail during that rebellion as well. Like Husband, many other Regulators fled. Some went to the westernmost part of South Carolina, others over the Blue Ridge to the upper tributaries of the Tennessee River. Those who stayed often faced poverty. Jemima Merrill, whose husband had been hanged at Hillsborough, stayed at her Abbot Creek farm, near today's Lexington, with eight children and "a large barn . . . that is completely empty." She told a passing Moravian minister that she felt "hard-hearted and unbelieving" about the promise of life.

Josiah Martin, who became royal governor after Tryon, was surprised at Tryon's reaction to the Regulation. Although he tried hard to make amends and once again get North Carolina on the path to government and commerce, he could do little. The sheriffs of the various counties still owed the colony more than £66,000, equal to millions of dollars today. To make matters worse, within two years of Martin's arrival, the American Revolution broke out.

## It's Your Turn

1. North Carolina had no established capital until the 1760s. Where was North Carolina's first capital?
2. Who were the Regulators?
3. Why did the General Assembly pass the Johnston Riot Act?



**Above:** This granite monument marks the site of the Battle of Alamance. **Opposite page, below:** This fanciful depiction of the Battle of Alamance shows Regulators hiding behind rocks that are not on the battlefield. It does show however, how much better organized the Coastal Plains militia (shown in the distance) were during the battle.