

THE FIRST SOUTH CAROLINA REVOLUTION

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Almost from the beginning of the colony of Carolina, the settlers were at odds with one another and the Lord Proprietors. "From the various principles which actuated the populace of England, and the different sects who composed the first settlers of Carolina, nothing less could be expected, but that the seeds of division should be imported into that country with its earliest inhabitants."¹ An early quarrel with the proprietors was "Great discontents prevailed with respect to the terms on which lands were granted, and particularly with respect to the payment of quit rents and the fees of civil officers."² The government of the colony would enact laws which the proprietors would veto.



Seal of the Lord Proprietors

¹ Hewat, Carroll Vol 1: p. 56.

² Cooper, Vol 1, p. 427, Brevard's Comments. "Quit rents" were annual fees to be paid to the Proprietors for land granted. Typical quit rents were one shilling for every hundred acres

The disagreements between the colonial government and the proprietors degenerated to the point that Governor Thomas Smith petitioned the proprietors in 1694 to send one of their own to live in the colony and have full power to heal grievances. John Archdale, a Quaker, was chosen by the proprietors to go to the colony. Beginning in 1695, Archdale served as governor a little more than one year.

The civility that Archdale achieved did not last long. Captain James Moore became governor in 1700 and served for about two and one-half years. Moore was an ambitious man. Britain was at war with France and Spain at the time and Moore sought to advance himself by attacking the Spanish settlement of Augustine, without orders from England. At the end of 1702, he mounted a costly expedition from the colony which failed for lack of mortars necessary to conquer the castle there. As part of this expedition, Moore had pressed into service several vessels which he ordered burned rather than letting them fall into the enemy's hand. An Assembly was called resulting that "great Debates and Divisions arose, which, like a Flame, grew greater and greater..."³ Nathaniel Johnson became Governor in 1703 during the midst of this controversy. Writing later, Archdale said of Johnson that he "by a Chymical Wit, Zeal and Art, transmuted or turn'd this Civil Difference into a Religious Controversy; and so setting up a Standard for those call'd the High-Church, ventured at all to exclude all the Dissenters out of the Assembly, as being those principally that were for a strict Examination into the Grounds and Causes of the Miscarriage of the Augustine Expedition;..."⁴

In November 1706, under Governor Johnson, Act 256 was enacted which established the Church of England as the official church of Carolina. In this act there were very onerous provisions which forbade marriages outside of the Church of England and provided public funds for the support of the Church.

In 1715, many of the Native American tribes in South Carolina rose up against the colonists in the Yemassee War. "In this War near 400 of the Inhabitants were destroy'd, with many Houses and Slaves, and great Numbers of Cattle, especially to the Southward near Port-Royal, from whence the Inhabitants were entirely drove, and forced into the Settlements near Charles-Town."⁵ In the early 1700s, an active and lucrative trade with Native Americans in deer skins and Indian slaves was being conducted through the port of Charles-Town from areas of up to one thousand miles away. The colonists suggested that the war "...was attributed to some ill Usage they had receiv'd from the Traders, who are not (generally) Men of the best Morals; and that no doubt of it, might give some cause to their Discontents;..."⁶ All, or most, of the traders living within the Native American towns were killed. Colonists lived in fear of annihilation for about two years until the Cherokees shifted their allegiance from the warring tribes to the colonists. A great debt accrued to the colony from this war and greatly increased dissatisfaction with the proprietary government.

In 1719, the colonists revolted against the proprietary government and elected a peoples government with James Moore II serving as governor. The colonists petitioned King George I to make Carolina a royal colony. In 1720, Francis Nicholson was appointed as the first royal governor of South Carolina. The Lord Proprietors retained ownership in Carolina until 1729 when the Crown purchased all their interests in South Carolina.

³ Archdale, Carroll Vol 2: pp. 109 - 110.

⁴ Ibid, Carroll Vol 2: p. 110.

⁵ Yonge, Carroll Vol 2: p. 145.

⁶ Ibid, Carroll Vol 2: p. 145.

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