

by the independent General Assembly provided for by the new Constitution and scheduled to meet on April 8, 1777.²²

With reference to Caswell's influence in the Halifax Convention, John D. Toomer, speaking at a State Constitutional Convention in Raleigh in November 1835, stated:

A Congress was convened in Halifax in 1776 to form a Constitution for our State. The most popular man in the country was Richard Caswell who was President of that Congress and the most influential member in that body. On the ratification of the Constitution, he signed it as presiding officer. Such was his influence in that body that tradition says he dictated the principles if not the terms of the instrument.²³

The Halifax Convention also appointed Justices of the Peace to conduct the civil government of the several counties. Justices appointed for Dobbs County were Thomas Edwards (Hookerton), Henry Goodman (Southwest Creek), Robert Simms (Wayne County area), William Hooker (Rainbow Mill section of Greene County), Thomas Williams (near present Walstonburg), William Whitfield, Junior (near Seven Springs section), Robert White, Junior (Kinston area south side of Neuse), George Miller (Kinston), Joseph Pipkin (Grantham section of present Wayne County), Constantine Whitfield (Whitfield's Ferry on Neuse River south of La Grange), John Cobb (Kinston), Joshua Herring (Falling Creek), William Sasser (Stoney Creek Church area—now near Goldsboro), Spyers Singleton (between Hookerton and Snow Hill) and Etheldred Ruffin (Ruffin's Bridge—formerly Peacock's Bridge near Stantonburg).²⁴

On January 16, 1777, pursuant to his election temporarily

²² Caswell was on the same day made Grand Master of the North Carolina Order of Masons, thus becoming the Second Grand Master of the Order in this State. The Masonic Order stood in the forefront of freedom and counted among its members a very large number of the civil and military leaders who led the State to Independence. For Caswell's appointment as Grand Master, see "A Funeral Oration on the Most Worshipful and Honorable Major-General Richard Caswell, Grand Master of the Masons of N. Carolina Delivered in Christ-Church Before St. John's Lodge No. 2, of New Bern, on Sunday, the 29th of November, 5789 [1789 A. D.]" by Francois Xavier Martin, Duke University Library, Rare Book Collection.

²³ *Raleigh Register* and *North Carolina Gazette*, Nov. 24, 1835.

²⁴ *State Records*, Vol. XXIII, p. 993. Locations of these Justices are suggested in parentheses by the authors on the basis of various records noted concerning their lands or residences.