

**GOVERNOR SAMUEL ASHE, 1796-1798, n.d.**

Arrangement: By record series, then chronological

Reprocessed by: James Mark Valsame

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**Samuel Ashe** (1725 – February 3, 1813), judge and governor, was born near Bath, where his father, John Baptista Ashe, was speaker in the assembly representing the Beaufort Precinct. His father and his mother, Elizabeth Swann, moved to the Cape Fear region, where Samuel's brother John, later general, Stamp Act patriot, soldier, and colonial legislator, was born. Samuel's parents died before he was ten and he was raised by his uncle, Sam Swann, head of the Popular party and speaker of the assembly.

After being educated in law, Ashe returned to the Wilmington district and became assistant attorney for the Crown. Notwithstanding this close British alliance, he was one of the first prominent men to become a zealous patriot, organizing revolutionary groups as early as 1774, when the colonial governor refused to convene the legislature. Ashe and seven others were appointed by the people to prepare a notice urging that the counties elect delegates to meet August 20th at Johnston Court House, in what became the first revolutionary convention held in the state. The next January Ashe was made a member of New Hanover's committee of safety. Later that year he became a member of the provincial congress. In August 1776, as president of the council of safety he organized an expedition under General Griffith Rutherford against the Indians. At the Halifax congress of November 13, 1776, Ashe was appointed to the committee to frame the North Carolina Constitution. One of the first acts of Governor Richard Caswell, once the constitution was adopted, was to appoint Ashe as judge to hold the first court under the authority of the State of North Carolina.

The first legislature under the new constitution elected Ashe speaker of the senate; that legislature also made him presiding judge of the state court. He served in this capacity until 1795, when he was elected governor, and held the governorship for three terms. It is interesting to note that just as Samuel was the first judge to hold court in North Carolina by popular decree, his brother, General John Ashe, was the first to receive a military commission at the hands of the people.

Although early in life he was a strong Federalist, Ashe later stood warmly for states' rights and became ardently Jeffersonian. Always interested in education, he served on the board of Innes Academy in Wilmington and was president of the board of trustees of The University of North Carolina. Ashe married first a cousin, Mary Porter, to whom were born three sons, John Baptista, Cincinnatus, and Samuel. John Baptista, after a distinctive military career, was speaker of the house and a member of the Continental and U.S. Congresses; he was elected governor but died before being inaugurated. After the death of his first wife, Ashe married Mrs. Elizabeth Merrick, by whom he had several children; only one, Thomas, lived to maturity.

Although no portrait is known to exist, Samuel Ashe is described by James Sprunt, in a quotation from G. J. McRee, as being "of stalwart frame, endowed with practical good sense, a profound knowledge of human nature, and an energy that eventually raised him to the bench and the post of governor." Asheville (previously Morristown), Asheboro, and Ashe County were named in his honor. He died at Rocky Point, Pender County, where his grave is well marked and

kept in the cemetery of his once lovely plantation, The Neck.

Source: Whiteside, Heustis P., "Samuel Ashe," Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, Volume 1, A-C, William S. Powell, ed., Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979, p. 54.

## Governors' Papers

<u>Box</u>	<u>Contents</u>
<b>G.P. 21</b>	<b>Correspondence, March 10, 1796</b> <b>Correspondence, December 5, 1796</b> <b>Correspondence, December 23, 1796</b> <b>Correspondence, December 25, 1796</b> <b>Correspondence, December, 1796</b> <b>Correspondence, April 3, 1797</b> <b>Correspondence, January 13, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, January 29, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, January 31, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, February 8, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, February 9, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, February 10, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, February 13, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, February 14, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, February 17, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, February 20, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, March 1, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, March 4, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, March 8, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, March 11, 1798 [1789]</b> <b>Correspondence, March 17, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, March 22-24, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, March 27, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, March, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, April 2, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, April 6, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, April 9, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, April 11, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, April 12, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, April 24, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, April 27, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, June 1, 1798</b> <b>Correspondence, June 10, 1798</b>

**Correspondence**, June 12, 1798  
**Correspondence**, June 18, 1798  
**Correspondence**, July 23, 1798  
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**Correspondence**, September 4, 1798  
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### **Governors' Letter Books**

<u>Volume</u>	<u>Contents</u>
<b>G.L.B. 12</b>	<b>Letter Book</b> , December 24, 1795-August 15, 1797 [Volume also includes: Governor's Journal, December 24, 1795-November 3, 1796; List of Grants executed by W. R. Davie, 1799 (December 12, 1798-October 8, 1799; March-December, 1818)]