

Alexander Spotswood Biography

Alexander Spotswood

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Alexander Spotswood Biography.....	1
Contents.....	2
Biography.....	3

Biography

Alexander Spotswood (1676-1740), a British soldier, became lieutenant governor of the Virginia colony in America.

Alexander Spotswood was born in Tangier, Morocco, where his father was an army physician at an English military base. The family had been prominent in Scottish public life and strongly committed to the Stuarts during the Puritan Revolution. Young Spotswood entered the army in 1693, serving an initial term as ensign in Flanders. During the War of the Spanish Succession he was appointed lieutenant quartermaster general, later rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel. Wounded in the Battle of Blenheim, he was a prisoner of war until the Duke of Marlborough negotiated his release. On June 23, 1710, he assumed the office of lieutenant governor of Virginia.

The appointment of a British officer to serve in the Colonies was in keeping with the pattern of royal appointments in the mid-18th century. Furthermore, at a time when the colonial assemblies were taking a dominant role, a governor with military experience seemed well inclined to reassert the power of the mother country.

Spotswood impressed Virginians with his ability during 12 years as lieutenant governor. From the first he tried to develop effective means of limiting land grants to actual settlers (not speculators); successfully explored the West; wanted to control tobacco production; offered protection against pirates; reformed the systems of finance, local courts, and the militia; and sought unsuccessfully to impose his will on the Anglican Church in Virginia. Spotswood's emphasis on the power of his office, however, combined with his lack of tact in dealing with members of the council, provoked bitter quarrels and demands for his removal. He was relieved of office in 1722. Ironically, at the end, he understood that the need for harmony with the assembly would mean substantial concessions to colonial autonomy.

As a civilian, Spotswood cast his lot with Virginia. He became a Virginia gentleman, retiring to his estates at Germanna, where he produced iron and looked after the 85,027 acres he had acquired in Spotsylvania County. Returning to England in 1724, he married Anne Butler Brayne, with whom he had four children. He was appointed deputy postmaster general for the American colonies in 1730. He received the position of major general at the onset of the war with Spain in 1739. He died in Annapolis, Md., on June 7, 1740, while preparing to take part in the conflict.