

**Biographical Directory
of American Colonial
and Revolutionary
Governors
1607-1789**

by

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MECKLER BOOKS

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EDEN, Robert, 1769-1776

Born on September 14, 1741 in Durham, England, the son of Robert, a member of Parliament for Durham, and Mary (Davison) Eden. Brother of ten, including John, William (later Lord Auckland), Thomas, Morton (later Lord Henley) and Catharine. Married on April 26, 1765 to Caroline Calvert, who was the sister of the sixth Lord Baltimore, Maryland's proprietor; father of Frederick Morton, William Thomas and Catherine.

Commissioned at the age of fifteen as a Lieutenant Fireworker in the Royal Regiment of Artillery; during the Seven Years' War became Ensign, and later Lieutenant and Captain, while serving with the Coldstream Guards in Germany. Commissioned Lieutenant Governor of Maryland in 1768, and arrived in the province to assume that office in June of 1769.

Although he was personally one of Maryland's most popular lieutenant governors, Eden was soon confronted by colonial hostility over the Townshend Acts, and shortly after his arrival he prorogued the Maryland General Assembly until November 1769 rather than run the risk of a legislative protest. When the Assembly did meet, however, it went ahead and endorsed non-importation of British goods as a means of demonstrating opposition to the new tax laws. Less than a year later Eden was again faced by recalcitrant legislators, as the Assembly demanded a reduction in clerical incomes and fees paid to proprietary officials. As a result a stalemate developed between the "court party" in the Council and the Assembly, which lasted for over three years. While the issue was finally settled by a compromise, popular leaders in Maryland like Thomas Johnson and William Paca made use of the controversy to enhance their own position at the expense of proprietary power. By the summer of 1775, when the Maryland Council of Safety was established, Eden's executive authority had already been severely eroded, and in June 1776 he retreated to the British warship *Fowey* at the request of the province's Patriot faction.

Several weeks later Eden left for England, where in September 1776 he was created a Baronet. He returned to Maryland after the Revolution had ended in order to assert his claim to some property, and died in Annapolis, Maryland on September 2, 1784.

Bibliography: Bernard C. Steiner, *Life and Administration of Sir Robert Eden*, in *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*, vol. XVI, nos. 7-9 (Baltimore, 1898); "Correspondence of Governor Eden [1769-1777]," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, II (1907), 1-13, 97-110, 227-44, 293-309; Rosamond R. Beirne, "Portrait of a Colonial Governor: Robert Eden," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, XLV (September-December 1950), 153-75, 294-311. *DAB*.