

= Alexander White (Virginia) =

Alexander White (1738 ? September 19 , 1804) was a distinguished early American lawyer and politician in the present @-@ day U.S. states of Virginia and West Virginia .

White served as an elected member of the House of Burgesses , representing Hampshire County , and as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates , representing Berkeley and Frederick counties . During the American Revolutionary War , he facilitated the release of Quaker and Hessian civilian prisoners held by patriots . In 1788 , White participated in the Virginia Ratifying Convention , in which Virginia ratified the United States Constitution . He later served as the inaugural member to represent Virginia 's 1st congressional district in the United States House of Representatives from 1789 to 1793 . White was appointed by United States President George Washington to serve as a commissioner on a board responsible for the planning and construction of Washington , D.C. ; White served on the board from 1795 to 1802 .

White was the son of Virginia pioneer settler and physician Dr. Robert White (1688 ? 1752) ; thus , he was a member of the prominent White political family of Virginia and West Virginia . He was the uncle of Virginia judge Robert White (1759 ? 1831) , the uncle of United States House Representative Francis White (1761 ? 1826) , and the brother @-@ in @-@ law of Virginia Governor James Wood (1741 ? 1813) .

= = Early life and education = =

Alexander White was born in 1738 to Dr. Robert White (1688 ? 1752) and his wife , Margaret Hoge , at " White Hall " , near present @-@ day Hayfield in Orange County (later part of Frederick County , following its creation that same year) . Through his father , White was of Scottish descent and was raised in the Presbyterian faith . White 's father , Dr. Robert White , had served as a surgeon in the Royal Navy of the Kingdom of Great Britain . Dr. White relocated to present @-@ day Frederick County between 1732 and 1735 as a " pioneer settler " , where he was one of two practicing physicians .

White was sent by his father to Scotland to receive his education , where he studied jurisprudence at the University of Edinburgh . White continued his law studies in London , England , where he was admitted to the Inner Temple on January 15 , 1762 , and matriculated at Gray 's Inn on January 22 , 1763 . White completed his law studies during the French and Indian War .

= = Political career = =

White returned to Virginia in 1765 , where he began practicing law and became a prominent lawyer in the Shenandoah Valley region . White served as deputy King 's attorney for Frederick County in 1772 . He engaged in a " distinguished career " as a lawyer with a " national reputation " .

= = = House of Burgesses = = =

White was elected as a member of the House of Burgesses in Williamsburg from 1772 to 1773 , representing Hampshire County . White served with Patrick Henry ; Henry reportedly never cast his vote without first consulting with White . White was an eloquent public speaker , and due to his Scottish Presbyterian background , he was strongly opposed to the colonial government 's preferential support of the Church of England in Virginia . Because of this stance , White presented a resolution before the House of Burgesses regarding the separation of church and state . According to historians Hu Maxwell and Howard Llewellyn Swisher , White is the first man in what is now the United States to present a resolution to a legislature regarding the freedom of religion .

During his tenure in the House of Burgesses , White served alongside James Mercer , who was also representing Hampshire County . Following his term , White was succeeded by Joseph Neville . Upon the convening of the first court of Berkeley County on May 19 , 1772 , White served as the King 's attorney for the county . White served one term in the House of Burgesses ; he was then

appointed the deputy King 's attorney for the Colony of Virginia in 1773 .

= = = American Revolutionary War = = =

While White did not engage in military service during the American Revolutionary War , he remained active in the practice of law in Winchester throughout the war 's duration . According to tradition , White facilitated the release of Quaker and Hessian civilian prisoners held by American Revolutionary patriots in a building in the southern part of Winchester . The Quakers and Hessians were imprisoned under the suspicion of their perceived support of British forces . The prisoners asked White to assist them with their release , and they paid him 100 Virginia pounds . Following the British retreat from the Philadelphia campaign , White traveled to Philadelphia to negotiate with the " executive authority " concerning the prisoners ' release to Pennsylvania , where public sentiment demanded their return . White successfully secured their release upon the condition that they affirm that " they would henceforth live by their creed and be at peace with all men . "

= = = Virginia House of Delegates = = =

From 1782 to 1786 , White was elected annually and served in the Virginia House of Delegates , representing Frederick County , a multi @-@ member electoral district , and began his first term one month after the Virginia General Assembly began its first legislative session . He served another term in the Virginia House of Delegates in 1788 .

In 1788 , White participated in the Virginia Ratifying Convention , in which Virginia ratified the United States Constitution . White is believed to have used the pseudonym " An Independent Freeholder " to author a series of essays written in support of the Constitution 's ratification . The essays were published in the January 18 and January 25 , 1788 , issues of the Winchester Virginia Gazette newspaper . White served two additional terms in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1799 to 1801 , representing Berkeley County , where he owned a significant amount of land .

= = = United States House of Representatives = = =

White served two terms as the inaugural member to represent Virginia 's 1st congressional district in the United States House of Representatives during the 1st United States Congress and the 2nd United States Congress (March 4 , 1789 ? March 3 , 1793) . White was the first person residing in West Virginia to occupy a seat in the United States Congress . During his tenure , White 's congressional district spanned from Harpers Ferry to the Ohio River . As he was previously known in the House of Burgesses , White was reportedly one of the more eloquently spoken members in the first Congress and was known for his " remarkable punctuality " .

White voted in favor of the Residence Act , the United States federal law that settled the question of locating the capital of the United States along the Potomac River in Maryland and Virginia . Three days after the Residence Act became law , the United States House of Representatives agreed upon the Funding Act as part of the Compromise of 1790 , to address the issue of funding domestic debt . On August 9 , 1790 , the Funding Act became law . White voted in support of the Funding Act ; however , according to Thomas Jefferson , White 's vote was the result of an argument that occurred at a dinner hosted by Jefferson , after which White and Richard Bland Lee changed their votes in favor of the Funding Act . Jefferson stated that White reluctantly supported the bill " with a revulsion of stomach almost convulsive " . The votes of both White and Lee carried the Funding Act measure , making the enactment of the Residence Act possible .

White was re @-@ elected to his seat in 1791 after defeating his opponents , William Darke and General James Wood . According to GovTrack , from May 1789 to March 1793 , White missed 26 of 211 recorded votes (or 12 @.@ 3 %) . White 's voting participation was higher than the median of 14 @.@ 6 % among the lifetime records of representatives serving in March 1793 . Following the adjournment of the 2nd United States Congress , and the completion of his term in 1793 , White retired from public life and went to his estate , " Woodville " , in Frederick County near Winchester .

= = = City of Washington Board of Commissioners = = =

On May 18 , 1795 , White was appointed by United States President George Washington to serve as one of the three commissioners responsible for supervising the raising of funds , planning , design , and acquisition of property and the erection of public buildings in the city of Washington and the federal district . White had been selected to replace Daniel Carroll on the board following Carroll 's resignation . While on the board , White was paid a salary of \$ 1 @, @ 600 per year for his services ; White continued to serve on the board until May 1 , 1802 , when it was abolished . He concurrently served as one of the directors of the Potomac Company , which made improvements to the Potomac River and improved its navigability for commerce .

= = Later life and death = =

White continued to practice law throughout his political career . White died on October 9 , 1804 , at his " Woodville " estate in Frederick County , Virginia . He died without children , thus leaving no descendants . White was interred at the Wood family 's " Glen Burnie " estate in Winchester , Virginia . His will was drafted on May 26 , 1804 , and proved on December 3 , 1804 , following his death . In his will , White left the bulk of his property and assets to his nephews and nieces . The will also provided freedom for his slaves . White left his " Woodville " estate to his nephew , Judge Robert White .

= = Personal life and family = =

In 1796 , White married Elizabeth Wood (September 20 , 1739 ? October 24 , 1782) , the daughter of Colonel James Wood , founder of Winchester , Virginia , and his wife , Mary Rutherford Wood . Colonel Wood was also the father of James Wood , an officer in the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War and the 11th Governor of Virginia . Following the death of his wife , Elizabeth , White remarried on June 10 , 1784 , in present @-@ day Berkeley County , to Sarah Cotter Hite , the widow of John Hite .

= = Land ownership = =

On either June 2 or November 5 , 1773 , White purchased the 260 acres (1 @. @ 1 km²) estate of Henry Heth , who had foreclosed on his mortgage agreement with William McMachen . McMachen sold the property to White for 500 pounds following his relocation to Hampshire County . White renamed the property " Woodville " , presumably after his wife Elizabeth 's family , and it remained his primary residence until his death in 1804 . " Woodville " is presently located 1 @. @ 5 miles (2 @. @ 4 km) northwest of Winchester 's Sunnyside neighborhood and approximately 1 mile (1 @. @ 6 km) northeast of Apple Pie Ridge Road (Virginia Secondary Route 739) .

White owned " valuable lands " in Hampshire County , which enabled him to represent that county while serving as a member of the House of Burgesses . On June 12 , 1769 , White and Angus McDonald purchased 297 acres (1 @. @ 20 km²) on the Little Cacapon and North rivers , and another 425 acres (1 @. @ 72 km²) on the Little Cacapon River in Hampshire County . White also owned a significant amount of land in Berkeley County , which he represented in the Virginia House of Delegates .

In October 1776 , White was named a trustee for the town of Bath , after its conveyance from Thomas Fairfax , 6th Lord Fairfax of Cameron . In October 1786 , White was also appointed a trustee for Charles Town .

= = Legacy = =

In his book , The History of the Virginia Federal Convention of 1788 (1891) , Virginia historian

Hugh Blair Grigsby remarked of White , " Perhaps no member of the able and patriotic delegation which the West contributed to our early councils exerted a greater influence in moulding public opinion , especially during the period embraced by the treaty of peace with Great Britain and by the adoption of the Federal Constitution , than Alexander White , of Frederick . "

White had a Liberty ship named for him in 1942 during World War II . The SS Alexander White , MC hull 139 , was laid down on October 11 , 1942 and launched on December 7 , 1942 . It was scrapped in 1964 .