

Lord Dunmore

John Murray, fourth Earl of Dunmore and the last colonial governor of Virginia, is recalled in West Virginia history for the frontier conflict known as [Dunmore's War](#). He also held the titles of Viscount Fincastle and Baron of Blair, and both Fort Fincastle at Wheeling (later [Fort Henry](#)) and Fort Blair at Point Pleasant (later [Fort Randolph](#)) were named for him. Dunmore was born in 1732.

In 1770, he was appointed governor of New York, and the following year was named governor of Virginia. In 1772, the Virginia House of Burgesses named two counties in his honor, Dunmore and Fincastle. Concerned about the safety of the forward settlements in the upper Ohio Valley and attracted by the possibilities of land speculation, he visited the Forks of the Ohio (Pittsburgh) and authorized the rebuilding of a stockade there, Fort Dunmore.

With renewed hostilities on the frontier in the spring of 1774, Dunmore mustered two armies to travel to the Ohio country and make war against the Shawnee. The northern army, under his own command, proceeded to Fort Dunmore, then down the Ohio River to the Hocking River, southwest of present Parkersburg. The southern army, under Col. [Andrew Lewis](#), advanced to the mouth of the Kanawha River, there defeating the Shawnee under Cornstalk at the [Battle of Point Pleasant](#).

On June 1, 1775, as Revolutionary fervor surged in Virginia, Governor Dunmore took refuge with his family on a British warship, and in 1776 he returned to England. He served as governor of the Bahamas, 1787–96, and died at Ramsgate, England, March 5, 1809.

Dunmore was one of the most unpopular figures of his day, accused of deliberately delaying his troops while the Indians attacked Lewis at Point Pleasant and despised for emptying the powder magazine at Williamsburg at the start of the Revolution. Every place in Virginia named in his honor was later renamed.

Written by [Philip Sturm](#)