

**GEORGE WYLLYS**  
**Governor of the Colony of Connecticut 1642**

**Born:** 1590 at the manor of Fenny Compton, Warwick, England

**College:** Attended several universities in England.

**Political Party:** None

**Offices:** Assistant to the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony 1634, 1635, 1636

Assistant to the General Court of the Colony of Connecticut 1639, 1640, 1643, 1644

Deputy Governor of the Colony of Connecticut 1641

Governor of the Colony of Connecticut 1642

**Died:** March 9, 1645 in Hartford, CT

George Wyllys was born 1589 or 1590 at the manor of Fenny Compton, Warwickshire, England, the son of Richard and Hester (Chambers) Willis. His family was an old one, of great wealth. He attended several universities in England, but biographers make no mention of him graduating. His main focus in any training would have been to gain the necessary experiences and background to take his father's place as one of the landed gentry. It was probably during his university years or shortly thereafter that George Wyllys became a Puritan.

On November 2, 1609, he married Bridget Young at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-on-Avon. The couple had three children before she died in 1629. In 1631 he married Mrs. Mary Brisbey, widow of Alexander Bisbey and daughter of Francis and Alice (Ferney) Smith, and they had one son.

George and Mary Wyllys and the children immigrated to New England early in the 1630's. By 1634 he had been appointed an Assistant to the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

A man of considerable wealth, he sent his steward, William Gibbons, along with twenty domestics and indentured servants, to Hartford in 1636 to purchase lands and oversee building of a house. He had the largest home lot of any of the early Hartford settlers, and one of the largest homes in Connecticut. The famous Charter Oak stood on his

property. Governors Wyllys, Webster, Welles, and Hopkins all built homes along the same street, which was called Governors' Row until, in more recent times, its name was changed to Popieluszko Court.

He and Mary and the children arrived in Hartford in 1638. He was elected as one of six Assistants to the General Court in 1639-41 and 1643-44.

Wyllys' one-year term as governor contained a number of important events. There was a continuing rumor that the Naragansetts were going to form an alliance with several other Indian tribes, and try to destroy the English settlers. Connecticut had to keep itself in a state of military readiness. Wyllys and the General Court sent John Haynes and Edward Hopkins as their delegates to a meeting in Boston which eventually resulted in the Articles of Confederation between the colonies of Massachusetts Bay, New Haven, and Connecticut, answering a long-standing need for cooperation between the New England colonies. In December of 1642, the General Court created and passed the first penal code in Connecticut, naming twelve capital crimes.

After his term as governor expired, Wyllys served as an Assistant to the General Court of the Colony of Connecticut and was also chosen to be a Commissioner from Connecticut to The United Colonies of New England in 1643. He died in Hartford, Connecticut on March 9, 1644/5. His estate at the time of his death, which included slaves, was greater than any Connecticut resident's until 1680. He is buried in the Hartford's Ancient Burying Ground and his name appears on the Founders Monument.

Governor Wyllys' home in Hartford stood until 1827, when it was torn down. Wyllys Street in Hartford is named after him.

**Sources:**

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**Portrait:** There is no known portrait of George Wyllys.

Prepared by the History and Genealogy Unit, Connecticut State Library, April 1999.