Origins of the Old South:

Revolution, Slavery, and Changes in Southern Society, 1776-1800

Matthew P. Spooner

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
2015

© 2015
Matthew P. Spooner
All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Origins of the Old South:
Revolution, Slavery, and Changes in Southern Society, 1776-1800

Matthew Spooner

The American Revolution and its aftermath posed the greatest challenge to the institution of slavery since the first Africans landed in Jamestown. Revolutionary defenses of the natural equality of man provided ammunition for generations of men and women opposed to racial subordination while the ideological strains of the struggle sounded the death knell for slavery in Northern states and led significant numbers of Southerners to question the morality and safety of slaveholding. Most importantly, the bloody and chaotic war in the South provided an unprecedented opportunity for slaves to challenge their bondage as tens of thousands of black men and women fled to the British, the swamps, or the relative anonymity of the cities.

Merging social, military, and economic history, "Origins of the Old South" examines how, in the attempt to rebuild their society from the ravages of war, black and white Southerners together created the new and historically distinct slave society of the "Old South." The first two chapters of the dissertation demonstrate how the struggle to contain the disorders of a civil war amongst half a million enslaved African-Americans transformed the Southern states—the scene of the war's bloodiest fighting after 1778—into a crucible in which men, land, and debt melted into capital. State governments redistributed thousands of slaves and millions of acres of land to purchase supplies and raise troops from within a weary populace; the estates of many of the South's most important planters, comprising roughly ten percent of the region's real and personal

wealth, were confiscated and sold at auction at a fraction of their value; and wartime prestige coupled with the departure of prominent loyalists allowed a legion of “new men” to come into control of the new state governments.

The result was the ascendance of a new class of merchant planters, who pushed the locus of Southern development inland, and major changes in the contours of black life in the region. The remaining three chapters of the dissertation examine these twinned consequences of the Revolution over the following three decades. Chapter three follows the experience of enslaved men and women after the war, tracing their movement throughout the Atlantic World and across the boundary between slavery and freedom during the conflict. Chapter four then looks at the impact of the region's ill-fated antislavery push during and immediately after the war, while chapter five shows how early national state governments drove slavery's expansion and closed the revolutionary moment in the process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Abbreviations Used	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Preface	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Disorder, Slave Property, and the American Revolution in the Southern States	20
Chapter 2: The Spoils of War: Slaves, Debt Slaves, Debt, and Social Change in the Revolutionary South	65
Chapter 3: Shades of Freedom: War, Mobility, and the Ironies of Liberty	120
Chapter 4: The Short, Unhappy Life of Antislavery Sentiment in the Post-Revolutionary South	172
Chapter 5: Canals, Courts, and the Twilight of the American Revolution	231
Coda	271
Bibliography	274

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

Catt. – Catterall, Helen Tunnicliff, ed. *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*. 8 vols. Reprint; New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968.

CSR – Saunders, William L., et. al., eds. *The Colonial and Early State Records of North Carolina*. 26 vols. Raleigh, NC: P.W. Hale, 1886-1914.

CVSP – Walker, R. F., et. al., ed. *Calendar of Virginia State Papers, and Other Manuscripts*. 11 volumes. Richmond: J.H. O'Bannon, 1875-93.

DUL – Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, NC.

GHA – Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA.

GSA – State Archives of Georgia, Morrow, GA.

HLP – Laurens, Henry. *The Papers of Henry Laurens*. Ed. David R. Chesnutt. 16 vols. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1968-2002.

LiVa – Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA

LOC – Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

LCC – Papers of the Loyalist Claims Commission, The National Archives, Kew, UK.

NSA – North Carolina Department of History and Archives, Raleigh, NC.

NYHS – New York Historical Society, New York, NY.

NYPL – New York Public Library, New York, NY.

RRG – Candler, Allan D. ed. *The Revolutionary Records of the State of Georgia*. 3 Vols. Atlanta, GA: The Franklin-Turner Company, 1908-10.

SCDAH – South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, SC.

SCHS – South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC.

SCL – South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

SHC – Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC.

UVA – Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

VHS – Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

WCL – William Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I can only hope that some of what is contained within my dissertation reflects the extraordinary help and guidance I have received these past long years. I could not have hoped to receive the support I did from so many generous and brilliant people and I will be forever grateful.

My career as a historian began my first semester at Bowdoin College in Patrick Rael's introductory lecture on the relationship between war and society. In his lectures and over a chessboard Patrick showed me the excitement to be found in puzzling the problems of the past and the power of history to understand the injustices of the present. During my four years at Bowdoin he was both a mentor and friend, and much of my success (though none of my faults) are owed to him and to others on Bowdoin's faculty, especially William Watterson, Scott Sehon, and Dallas Denery.

I could not have written more than a few lines of my dissertation without the financial support of numerous foundations and the help of the many archivists and historians I met during my three years of sojourning through the southeastern states. For all the wonders of the digital humanities there will never be a replacement for speaking to the scholars and thinkers who work in our archives. I must particularly thank—among many others—Laura Clark Brown at the University of North Carolina's Southern Historical Collection; Jeffrey Crow at the State Archives of North Carolina; Meg McSweeney, William Tatum, and Kathie Ludwig at the David Library of the American Revolution; and Graham Duncan and Brian Cuthrell at the University of South Carolina's South Caroliniana Library.

Along my way I was lucky enough to meet and receive insight from many of the historians who have influenced this project. Among many others, Peter Wood gave me encouragement and no small amount of inspiration during the first leg of my journey, as did Peter Coclanis. At the Omohundro Institute, Ronald Hoffman made me feel welcome and in long conversations in his office reconvinced me that the work I was doing was important. Eugene Genovese, who I last saw a few weeks before he died, gave me the often caustic but incredibly useful feedback one might expect over many long lunches in Atlanta. And Richard Dunn has been both a needed friend and a generous supporter, sharing notes and thoughts from his decades of working on slavery in Virginia and Jamaica.

During my graduate career at Columbia University I was blessed to learn from some of the most brilliant minds I hope to encounter, not least among my fellow colleagues. I could not have hoped to survive my graduate career without the encouragement and intellectual prowess of Thai Jones, Michael Woodsworth, Melissa Borja, Yuki Oda, Jessica Adler, Tamara Mann-Tweel, and Benjamin Lyon, Bryan Rosenblithe, Sarah Kirshen, Justin Jackson, and many others. Eric Wakin at the Columbia Rare Books and Manuscripts Library lent me support of every kind over more than five years. Bryan Rosenblithe, Claire Edington, and Daniel Navon saw me through the best and worst times and I will ever be in their debt.

I am most grateful for the time I was able to spend learning from Columbia's faculty and staff. Sharee Nash was patient with me over the years and in the end perhaps did more to concretely assist me than anyone in New York. This project began in a conversation with Steven Mintz and owes much to the questions he asked more than five

years ago.Elizabeth Blackmar is a brilliant teacher and the strongest advocate a graduate student could ask for. Evan Haefeli, whose knowledge of Early America intimidated and inspired me during my first few years, opened up new ways of thinking about the Revolution and aided me in navigating the eighteenth-century after many years in the nineteenth. Christopher Brown shaped my thinking on Atlantic slavery after he arrived at Columbia during my second year and was always a friend first and foremost as well as a wonderful mentor. So much of this project has come from what I have learned from Barbara Fields, whether on long walks in Riverside Park or in her History of the South course, which I sat through three times and would sit through again every chance I get. Finally, my advisor Eric Foner has been a tireless and unwavering supporter of myself and so many others. I remain in awe not only of his mastery of American history and his work, which sets the bar to which all young historians should aspire, but also of his generosity. As busy as Eric is, whenever I needed a recommendation or advice and encouragement he made time without hesitation. I am still unsure of how he does this but the many fine students he has nurtured and guided is a testament to his unique and unmatched capacity as a mentor. So to him, and to all others, thank you.

Far more than any dissertation or class, the most important thing that happened to me at Columbia was meeting my future wife Elizabeth Hinton the very first day I arrived as a visiting student. Whether walking hand in hand through Brooklyn or exploring the Virginia Piedmont, these seven years we have spent together have made me a better person. There is no one I would rather continue exploring the world with than my best friend. Her love and support has been my strength, and her strength has been my inspiration.

Lastly, as a troubled and moody child growing up somewhere in suburban America I often did all I could to keep myself from being where I now am. My parents provided me with more second chances than I can count, often at great sacrifice. Yet they have always been my most ardent and unwavering supporters, and my sister Mary has been my most important sounding board and companion these thirty years.

My mother died suddenly in the middle of writing this dissertation. While I miss her more than I can say, and while I have often needed her smiles, insight, and reassurances in the time I have spent since with this project, everything that is good about me and what I do comes from her. I miss you and I love you. Thank you, Mom.

PREFACE

This dissertation, perhaps more than most, is defined as much by its silences as by its arguments. It contains discussions of the American Revolution without a full exploration of ideology that so dominates historical literature on the period. It makes claims about sectionalism with little mention of Constitutional debates the splintering into Federalist and Anti-Federalist factions that so defined the politics of Early America. It examines racial violence and the suppression of antislavery sentiment while purposefully eliding the Haitian Revolution. And it gestures towards the origins of the antebellum South while stopping short of the emergence of cotton, the crop that dictated the development of southern society through the first six decades of the nineteenth century.

To a certain degree at least, these silences are by design. Very much a beginning, the dissertation attempts to deemphasize events and themes that have acquired more explanatory power than they can rightly bear. As much as any period in our history, our understanding of the American Revolution remains confined within narratives that have been passed down from the earliest historians of the period like David Ramsay and George Bancroft. Even the most critical historians of the period, such as the Progressive scholars like Carl Becker and Charles Beard who revealed—shockingly—that the revolutionary generation was like any other driven by power and self-interest, conformed to the same sequence of events as those historians who proceeded and followed them.

This dissertation does not escape convention, of course, but by placing strong emphasis on the revolutionary South and on the understudied 1780s it does hope to be

one step towards a fuller conception of this country's birth, one that includes all that was brutal alongside all that was glorious about independence. The history of the Revolution is an origin story, and we like all people define ourselves by the tale of our creation. For that reason, Americans do not like to talk about the Revolution in the South, despite the fact that more than half the War of Independence occurred there and, in a very real sense, the struggle was decided on the battlefields of places like Camden and Cowpens. And for that same reason, popular understanding of the Revolution evades the inseparable connection between the existence of slavery and the emergence of a nation premised on human liberty. Whatever this dissertation's faults, I hope that I have succeeded at least in joining other recent scholars of the revolutionary South in providing a modest corrective, in painting a picture of the Revolution as an event as disordered, fractured, and contentious as America itself.

The work of this dissertation started many years ago as I read the opening paragraph of Carl Bridenbaugh's *Myths and Realitiesm,* in which he wrote that "in 1776 there was no South; there never had been a South." It is ironic, therefore, that its most frequently used words are "South" and "southern." I am aware that these terms, a product of the project's conception and of the necessity of conflating broad changes into single phrases or sentences, result in problematic generalizations. Yet in writing I at least remained cognizant that the South of the Revolution—like the South of today—was a world of many different outlooks and interests. Virginia's Northern Neck was not its Southside, nor were the swamps of South Carolina's lowcountry the same as the rolling hills of its Piedmont. Indeed, when I began to research and write, I sought to explain how these many souths came together, and to explore the rise of a self-conscious planter

class through the expansion of slaveholding and the reconstitution of planter-slave relations after the tumult of a long and bloody Revolution. As such, use of these overly broad terms are at some level an imprecise and teleological argument, for the transition from many souths to a South sufficiently unified in its interests that it would precipitate a Civil War remains a puzzle that demands explanation. Whatever its flaws, the work that follows seeks simply to show that the origins of this self-conscious "Old South" can be found in the struggle for independence, a war for liberty that helped birth a new world for slavery.

INTRODUCTION

"There is no villain, no idiot, no saint; there are just men: men who crave ease and power, men who know want and hunger, men who have crawled."

W.E.B. DuBois, "The Propaganda of History" (1935)

The American Revolution was a revolution, and revolutions are never easy. In 1775 the thirteen future states were colonies, enmeshed within the largest and most powerful empire of the 18th century. Of differing descent, occupation, ambition, and religion, British colonists across the Americas were bound to a system whose breadth and reach seemed to be daily increasing. Free men and women from Georgia to Massachusetts thought of themselves as British subjects and identified with people in England as much as they did with other colonists. Parties and dances began with toasts to the health of George the Third and printers, lawyers, and clerks dated their documents by the year of his reign.[1] Economically, the colonies depended on Britain for credit and goods, and they in turn sent the overwhelming bulk of their commodities on British ships for consumption in British markets. Militarily, settlers depended on British force for protection in the west and American planters and merchants depended on British sea power to protect their cargoes shipped east.

In 1783 those colonies were recognized by Britain as free and independent states, all conjoined into the first modern republic. This was an extraordinary achievement, one

[1] The complex relationship between colonial subjects and their monarch is discussed at length in Richard L. Bushman, *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985) and Brendan McConville, *The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of British America, 1688-1776* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

that required an unprecedented degree of political, military, and economic mobilization. In every colony the changes wrought by the Revolution—an event marked by blood, loss, and strain as much as by ideas and institutions—were real and lasting. Yet in the South, where the "yelps for liberty" were loud and where armies and partisans engaged in a chaotic and protracted struggle in a countryside containing nearly half a million slaves, the changes ran deepest. There, the struggle to contain the disorders of war within an export economy premised on the labor of enslaved men and women resulted in the greatest transfer of property, and especially human property, that the nation would see until the Civil War. Consequently, the American Revolution in the southern states marked a moment of historical rupture, disrupting the lives of black southerners while simultaneously raising a new class of merchant planters into a vacuum created by ruin, debt, and war. A generation later, the forces unleashed by the Revolution were consolidated with the emergence of a domestic slave trade and with short-staple cotton, a crop that came to the region at the invitation of those who leveraged power and wealth gained in war to create the mature slave society of the Old South

Progressive historians like Carl Becker and Charles and Mary Beard to recent scholars like Ira Berlin, William Freehling, and David Brion Davis have long shown that the challenges of the Revolution profoundly altered the development of American slavery both in the South, where the chains of bondage were drawn tighter, and in the North, where the struggle for independence set slavery on the path to eventual extinction.[2] And

---

[2] See most notably, David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (New York: Oxford, 1974); Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (New York: Oxford, 1968); Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*

even if popular works continues to downplay the more brutal aspects of the Revolution, which almost by definition requires excluding discussion of the southern theater,[3] over the past five decades historians have produced a steady stream of fine scholarship on the both the scope of the war in the South and the impact that the fighting and ideological strains of the conflict had in shaping the political economy of the region. Recent work on Virginia especially has illustrated both the role played by Indians, slaves, and poor white citizens in pushing the state towards independence. And as Michael McDonnell and Woody Holton—to give two examples—have shown, the shift in perspective from Founders and imperial politics to local conflicts and marginalized groups allows for a richer understanding of how internal dissension drove the creation of a unified yet always fractured state.[4]

Yet despite the increasingly inclusive histories of the Revolution, scholars generally remain far more impressed by continuities than discontinuities between the colonial era and the Early Republic, particularly in regards to slavery and the southern

---

(New York: The New Press, 1974); William W. Freeling, *The Road to Disunion: Volume I: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Recent scholarship has particularly focused on the role of slaves in shaping the beginnings of the Revolutionary conflict.

[3]As illustrated in the ever growing literature on the Founding Fathers especially, but even the best textbook on the conflict—Robert Middlekauf's *The Glorious Cause*—devotes but one chapter in a 548 page book to the southern theater, despite more than half the war taking place there. Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American War for Independence* (New York: Oxford, 1988).

[4] See especially Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves & the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Michael A. McDonnell, *The Politics of War: Race, Class, and Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Gary Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*: *The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

states. The reason is partly historians' tendency to focus on the ideological contradictions between slavery and this country's revolutionary inheritance, and partly the general segregation of studies of slavery from studies of American history more generally.[5] Only a few scholars of New World slavery likely disagree with the assertion, made in one of the best synthetic works on the subject, that "in North America revolutionary transformations had been almost wholly concentrated in the political domain … Changes in the underlying property regime and in social relations had been modest."[6]

---

[5] Those works that do emphasize change again focus on emancipation and the ideological challenges of slavery. See for instance, William R. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Duncan MacLeod, *Slavery, Race, and the American Revolution* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Donald Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765-1820* (New York: Oxford, 1971). Today's leading books on the Revolution, on the other hand, focus overwhelmingly on political change and rarely examine slavery at any length. Most notably, see the nearly complete absence of any mention of slavery in Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1992).

[6] Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (New York, NY: Verso, 1989), 267. A seeming exception to this rule is Gordon Wood's *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, which argues that the Revolution was "the most radical and far-reaching event in American history." Yet Wood, in putting forth a triumphalist and teleogical view of the Revolution's democratizing impact, understandably has little to say about slavery. Apologetically, he writes that "One obvious dependency the revolutionaries did not completely abolish was that of nearly a half million Afro-American slaves, and their failure to do so, amidst all their high-blown talk of liberty, makes them seem inconsistent and hypocritical in our eyes. Yet it is important to realize that the Revolution suddenly and effectively ended the cultural climate that had allowed black slavery … to exist throughout the colonial period without serious challenge." Wood is certainly correct that the Revolution marked a turning point, and yet my project will compliment the work of other historians in proving that there was absolutely no straight line between the Revolution and emancipation. Although the ideas of the Revolution combined with the new social relations of a burgeoning free labor society to end slavery in the Northern states, my dissertation will examine the way these same ideas could just as easily be melded to reinforce chattel slavery, making the institution of slavery so resilient that it would take the blood of one million Americans to cleanse. Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1992), 8, 186.

An opening instead of an answer, this dissertation hopes to point towards a new direction in our understanding of slavery and the Early National South by arguing that the War for Independence in the southern states needs to be taken seriously as a total war, a real and material experience that touched everyone and everything and left nothing unaltered as a result. Indeed, the very nature of the southern colonies transformed the conflict there into something far more revolutionary than what was experienced to the northward, where changes in politics and socio-economic relations were not modest.[7] But in the southern colonies, where state leaders struggled to raise men and materiel from within an export-based colonial economy premised on slave labor, and where the openings created by the conflict allowed tens of thousands of black men and women to flee plantations and take up arms, the Revolution became something far more revolutionary, thoroughly reshaping the contours of southern Society.

At its core, this dissertation might be considered a modest response to a simple, old, and still urgent question: how did a struggle in the name of freedom lead to the development of the most politically powerful slaveholding class in modern history? There was much that was noble about the creation of the American nation. The Enlightenment ideas that drove the movement towards independence provided the ideological ammunition for generations of abolitionists and the opening words of Jefferson's Declaration still represent that which is most beautiful about this country, a

[7] Due to the long-standing dominance of the northerner's experience during the Revolution there is a much longer and richer literature about what occurred in New England and the mid-Atlantic states during and after the war, and this dissertation very much follows the spirit of earlier progressive works that depict the Revolution as a transformative moment in American Development, such as the work of the Beards, John Franklin Jameson, Carl Becker, and Staughton Lynd.

dream "of equal daughters, of equal sons." Yet the actual experience of a long and bloody war produced immense social changes for black and white southerners. The first two chapters of this dissertation examine the disorder that marked the Revolutionary South, which allowed black men and women unprecedented opportunities to challenge their condition. This same disorder simultaneously posed nearly insurmountable challenges to state governments forced to control internal hostile populations of slaves, Indians, and loyalists while raising the men and materiel needed to defeat the world's most powerful military. These linked problems of control and supply eventually led to a forced redistribution of property and capital. States used slaves as currency to enlist troops and to purchase supplies while confiscating between six- and nine-percent of the region's wealth from those loyal to the Crown. Perhaps more significantly, the chaos of war and rising value of slaves led to the wholesale plundering of enslaved Africans from plantations by roving bands of so-called "banditti" and British and American soldiers. This redistribution of property through legal and illicit means helped to form the basis of the antebellum South, a society that grew out of its colonial predecessor yet remained distinct from what came before and what would come after. To give but one example, the need to dispose of stolen black men and women across state lines or in the Caribbean precipitated the growth of the domestic slave trade that bound the planters of Virginia's Tidewater to the nabobs of Mississippi so strongly that together they would self-immolate in the Second American Revolution of 1861.

If the first two chapters of this dissertation attempt to conceptualize the Revolution as an opening through which men rose and fell, the final three are about the struggle to close that window as white and black southerners reconstituted their world

from the ravages of war. For black men and women, the material and ideological strains of the Revolution opened fissures in southern society where the boundary between slavery and freedom became momentarily fluid. As the third chapter seeks to show, a principal story of the post-war South was the attempt by slaveholders to close these openings and to fix black men and women on one side of the slavery/freedom divide, and the struggle of slaves and freedpeople to maintain the spheres of autonomy created among burning plantations and marauding armies.

The Revolution marked no less a dramatic change for white southerners, as the transfer of property through confiscation and plunder combined with the ruin or banishment of much of the region's colonial elite to allow for the rise of a new class of merchant planters, who shifted the locus of southern development inland and wed the growing power of the new state governments to the expansion of plantation slavery. As shown in the fourth chapter, securing the future of slavery meant in part constraining the Revolution's more radical influences through legislation and through violence. And as argued in this dissertation's concluding chapter, the needs of slavery's expansion and the need to capitalize on wartime gains also meant employing state power to expand the reach of the market deep into the southern interior. When the cotton arrived at the behest of those who dragged slaves and currency into the backcountry, it did not radically shift the contours of southern development as generations have simply assumed. Rather, the unimaginable wealth generated through cotton production retarded the agricultural experimentation and internal construction that marked the post-war years while raising the price of land and slaves to a point where the economic gains made during the Revolution were no longer possible in the former southern colonies. In other words, even

as it fueled the rise of industrial capitalism and birthed brutality and exploitation on an unprecedented scale, in terms of southern development cotton was not necessarily a revolutionary force but a crop that consolidated forces set loose by Revolution.

The southern society that emerged from the revolutionary period was a historically distinct slave society, yet the world the Revolution made grew from the world that it found.[8] The brutality, disaffection, and disruption that marked the War for Independence and the resultant social changes can be understood only within the context of the colonial South. The southern colonies were fractured and variegated yet everywhere similar in two respects. First, the South was overwhelmingly rural. Even more so than in Northern colonies, where fishing, nascent industry, and shipping occupied an increasingly significant amount of capital and labor,[9] nearly every household within the southern colonies depended almost entirely on agricultural output. In the Chesapeake colonies of Maryland and Virginia, tax collectors, clergy, and other officials

[8] The point that the slave society of the Old South was historically distinct both from its colonial predecessor and its Atlantic counterparts will be argued at length throughout this dissertation, but the work of Eugene D. Genovese remains the starting point for understanding the singular aspects of antebellum southern society. See especially Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Old South* (New York: Beacon, 1963).

[9] Largely because of the increasing importance of domestic maritime industries, Northern seaports grew extremely rapidly in the prerevolutionary decades. Compare this to the largely stagnant population growth of the South's one real city, Charleston, whose population had been eclipsed by six Northern cities by 1775. See Gary Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), esp. 1-64; Benjamin Carp *Rebels Rising: cities and the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

measured their salaries not in ounces of gold or silver but in pounds of tobacco.[10] In every colony, though most notably in Georgia, royal governors took massive grants of land and slaves in lieu of more sizable annual income.[11] Everywhere goods from salt to silk were purchased on extended lines of credit not settled until after harvest, and rare was the planter or farmer who did not grow most of the food consumed by his family and hands.[12] Even many of the men and women who lived year round in Charleston, the one true city southern city before the war, primarily obtained their food not through trades but from their plantations or farm plats outside the city.[13]

Second, the societies of the southern colonies were remarkably dynamic even by the standards of the 18th century. Driven by improving rates of mortality, a growing trade

---

[10] Before the law was repealed in 1758 under the "Two-Penny Act" due to popular pressure following bad harvests, planters where charged relative taxes in pounds of tobacco to support Anglican Clergy. De to tobacco being an extremely bulky commodity, of course, most payments in tobacco were done through tobacco notes, or bills of exchange that drew on tobacco inspected and stored at large tobacco warehouses along the water. Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

[11] For instance, Sir James Wright, the last royal governor of Georgia, owned some 120,000 acres of land, all of which was confiscated and sold or granted by the state during and after the war.

[12] Tobacco farms, for instance, generally had as much if not more land under cultivation for corn—which was used both as feed and as the staple of slaves' diet—as tobacco. This is best detailed in Lorena Walsh's work, most particularly Lorena S. Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[13] The most complete set of merchant ledgers from the prerevolutionary South are found in the John Hook papers at the William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, NC [hereafter cited as "DUL"]. Hook's activities before the war, though not after, are examined in depth in Ann Smart Martin's excellent *Buying Into a World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

in enslaved men and women, and the immigration of “a mix’d Medley from all Countries, and the off Scouring of America” to the northward,[14] each of the southern colonies experienced rapid population growth from mid-century onward. As a succession of imperial conflicts pushed Indians further west, and as impediments to westward movement drove settlers further south, migrating households headed towards the fresh lands of Georgia and the Carolinas. North Carolina’s non-Indian population soared from 70,000 in 1750 to over 180,000 in 1770 as Scotch-Irish and German Moravians emigrated en masse from Europe and settlers from New England and Mid-Atlantic colonies bought up the state’s cheap and abundant land.[15] The number of South Carolinians grew from 40,000 in 1740 to 120,000 in 1770 and Georgia’s population grew from less than 7,000 in 1761 to nearly 20,000 a decade later, an increase royal governor Sir James Wright attributed to “the great inducement people have had to come and settle in a Province, where they could get fresh and good Lands at a moderate price and plenty of good range for Cattle Horses and Hogs and where they will not be so much pent up and confined as in thick settled Countrys” to the North.[16]

---

[14] Quoted in Charles Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities:Societies of the Colonial South* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 122.

[15] Robert McClure Calhoon, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781* (New York: Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich, 1965), 442.

[16] For South Carolina population number, see Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, *American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932) and Stella H. Sutherland, *Population Distribution in Colonial America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936). For Georgia and quotation, “Report of Sir James Wright on the Condition of the Province of Georgia, on 20th Sept. 1773,” in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah, GA: 1873): 158-175, 167.

As the population of the southern colonies increased so too did the number, value, and variety of southern exports. The annual sterling value of products exported from South Carolina rose from £100,000 in 1734 to well over £500,000 in 1775, growth driven both by the expansion of planters into indigo after 1740 and ever increasing production of rice. The export value of the latter rose over 30% from 1766 to 1772 alone, by which time the great wealth brought by such a tiny grain had made white South Carolinians by far the wealthiest British subjects in North America, with per capita wealth more than triple that of New Englanders.[17] Over the same period, the value of Virginia's exports, well over 40% of the value of all exports from the thirteen colonies by 1770, rose nearly as rapidly despite the declining profitability of its exhausted older lands, growth aided in part by diversification wheat production for bourgeoning European markets.[18] Most impressively, North Carolina's economy grew by over 800% from 1740 to 1772. This growth, driven by steady migration from the North along the Great Wagon Road into the fertile lands of the Carolina Piedmont, eclipsed that of every other American colony.

Rapid growth brought upheaval and change, particularly in the backcountry (generally understood to refer to the lands above the fall line) where the greatest

---

[17] Carl Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities*, 122; Joyce Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 8. For a comparison of per capita wealth, see Alice Hanson Jones, *Wealth of a Nation to Be: The American colonies on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 303. The best succinct comparison of American economies is James F. Sheperd, "British America and the Atlantic Economy," in Ronald Hoffman, et. al., eds., *The Economy of Early America: The Revolutionary Period, 1763-1790* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1988): 3-44.

[18] A change detailed in Paul E.G. Clemens, *The Atlantic Economy and Maryland's Eastern Shore: From Tobacco to Grain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).

demographic and economic change occurred. Observers everywhere gazed with amazement at the speed and diversity with which the southern interior developed and expanded. The Anglican itinerant Charles Woodmason remarked in the 1760s that the country was "most surprisingly thick settled beyond any spot in England of its like extent," and North Carolina's royal governor Josiah Martin expressed similar shock when on his tour of the province he found the "back areas" of his province populated "beyond belief."[19] From Virginia to Georgia, settlers spread out into small and semi-autonomous communities, mostly along old Indian routes and inland waterways, forming places with names like Ninety-Six or Old Freund Town, small towns and farming villages that either developed into trading posts and inspection stations or quietly disappeared as settlers continued to press ever westward.

Although new colonists brought different experiences and different ambitions with them from the North and from Europe, throughout the colonial period the population of the southern interior remained overwhelmingly white. Indeed, although slavery undergirded the growth of the southern economy and provided the basis for the continuing economic and political dominance of coastal districts, the South in 1775 differed greatly from the slave society of the pre-Civil War era.[20] Even though slaves comprised not less than a third of the total population of every colony below

---

[19] Both quoted in Ronald Hoffman, "The 'Disaffected' in the Revolutionary South," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Exploration in the History of American Radicalism* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976): 273-317, 290.

[20] The term was first employed in studies of American slavery by Ira Berlin, who in turn borrowed it from Moses Finley. See Berlin's *Many Thousands Gone* and Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: Markus Weiner, 1980).

Pennsylvania, slave populations above the fall line remained small and slave agriculture secondary to subsistence agriculture when compared to the regions along the coast. In South Carolina, where the disparity was most extreme, only 14,000 white inhabitants of the three coastal parishes of Beaufort, Charleston, and Georgetown worked more than 70,000 enslaved laborers, annually producing 140,000 barrels of rice and 15,000 pounds of indigo before the war.[21] By contrast, only 6,500 slaves lived beyond the state's fall line in 1768 among more than 60,000 white men and women.[22] In both Georgia and North Carolina, slaveholding—though on a lesser scale—was similarly concentrated along the coast, where the majority of slaves produced rice and indigo as well as naval stores and smaller amounts of grain and tobacco.[23] Only in Virginia, oldest of the mainland colonies, had large-scale plantation agriculture spread inland, as aspiring planters moved away from the entailed and exhausted land on the eastern seaboard and into the Piedmont region. Yet even there the number of slaves remained significantly lower as a total and percentage share of the population and, as a result, in Virginia as elsewhere the interests of the interior and coast frequently and widely diverged.[24]

---

[21] Stella H. Sutherland, *Population Distribution*, 139, 239-40.

[22] *Ibid*.; for number of slaves, Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1990), "Table 2: Slave Population, 1760-1768," p. 20.

[23] Marvin L. Kay and Lorin Lee Cary, *Slavery in North Carolina, 1748-1775* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984).

[24] Plantations in Virginia remained much smaller than those in South Carolina, however. Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1998), 40-1.

Importantly, the limit on slaveholding in the backcountry was not, as some historians have argued, a "disinclination" towards slaveholding among inhabitants, though real antislavery sentiment certainly did exist within the region, particularly among the many religious communities of Quakers and Moravians. Instead, the most important factor limiting the inward spread of slavery was the interior's lack of access to the global market. Despite a dip in slave prices before the war slaves remained prohibitively expensive, a standard male field hand costing more than £40 sterling, or more than half the total value of the majority of estates in backcountry South Carolina.[25] In a society in which specie was scarce, capital primarily invested in land, and in which credit and manufactured goods could be obtained only from abroad, heavy investment in slave agriculture could only be made in areas from which bulky agricultural commodities could reach the Atlantic Ocean safely and at relatively little cost. In the young and developing colonial South, this meant along the coast or within the Virginia piedmont, where earlier investment in transportation along with the existence of deep inland waterways allowed for the proliferation of tobacco merchants, who in turn brought with them the goods and credit necessary for the creation and maintenance of large slave plantations.[26]

---

[25] For estimated value of upcountry estates see Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, "Table 3: Distribution of Property and Slaves: 1754-1774," p. 22. Slave prices were highly varied by year and by region, but the standardized value of £40 comes from the fixed value set by wartime legislatures for determining reimbursement for owners whose slaves had been executed or killed while in public service.

[26] For the development of slavery in Virginia's interior see Jacob M. Price, "The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Trade," *William and Mary Quarterly* (hereafter *WMQ*), 3rd Series, vol XI (1954): 179-99; H. H. Soltow, "Scottish Traders in Virginia, 1750-1775," *Economic History Review*, vol 12, No 1 (1959): 58-83. This growth was in turn driven by the increasing size of the British firms who participated in the American Trade. See Jacob M. Price and Paul G.E. Clemens, "A Revolution of Scale in Overseas Trade: British Firms in the Chesapeake Trade, 1675-1775," *The Journal of Economic*

Of course slaveholding on a smaller scale could and did exist further inland. Particularly after the Seven Years War, when the threat of Indian attacks lessened and the population of backcountry communities surged, slaveholding increased in the interior of each southern colony. Indeed, one Charleston planter estimated that "Upwards of two thirds" of slaves imported into Charleston had gone inland in the years before the war. "These people some of them come at the Distance of 300 miles from Chs Town," the planter Peter Manigault remarked in 1772, "and will not go back without Negroes, let the Price be what it will."[27] Even so, slaves in the interior lived and worked in much smaller households, perhaps producing indigo (ideal because of its low bulk) or tobacco but just as often operating grist mills or growing limited amounts of hemp and flax to serve a local market. Without powerful changes in the economic, political, and social structure of the southern colonies, therefore, there is little reason to think that slavery's inland expansion would have continued any more rapidly than it had in the four decades before the 1775.

Regardless, before the Revolution the backcountry was in its birth throes. Young and inchoate, and lacking the unifying influences of slavery and the market, the developing interior was fraught with tensions both between groups within who sought to impose different visions onto the region and with established interest on the coast. Eventually these tensions erupted into the so-called "Regulator" movements that engulfed North and South Carolina and reverberated throughout the southern colonies, events

History (hereafter *JEH*), vol 47, no 1 (March, 1987): 1-43.

[27] Peter Manigault to William Blake, n.d., in "The Letterbook of Peter Manigault, 1763-1773," ed. Maurice A. Crouse, in *South Carolina Historical Magazine* [hereafter cited as *"SCHM"*], vol 70, no. 2 (1969), 191.

which—though typically described as separate phenomena—together reveal the strains and upheaval experienced by backcountry inhabitants reacting the slow yet inexorable changes brought on by economic growth and market expansion. In South Carolina, where migrants to the backcountry could more easily purchase slaves, generally hailed from older slaveholding regions, and enjoyed better access to the export market thanks to an extensive system of rivers, Regulators drew from aspiring elites who sought to make their societies more orderly to promote slave-based market culture. More than anything else, this meant protection for property. In a graphic description of the violent and chaotic nature of backcountry South Carolina, Charles Woodmason wrote: "Here Vile and Impudent fellows, would come to a Planters House, and Tye him, Lye with his Wife before his Face, Ravish Virgins, before Eyes of their Parents, a dozen fellows in succession … All the Merchant Stores were broke up. No Pedlars with Goods could travel. No Woman venture abroad. And numbers abandon'd their Habitations … They penetrated, at length to the Lower Settlements and stole many Negroes."[28] Correctly perceiving elites in Charleston to be unsympathetic or indifferent, South Carolina Regulators carried out extrajudicial hangings and whippings to intimidate alleged thieves and drive out so-called "white Indians," a term used for hunters, trappers, and subsistence farmers who chafed under the order aspiring planters sought to impose.[29]

---

[28] Charles Woodmason, *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and other Writings of Charles Woodmason*, ed. Richard J. Hooker (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 256.

[29] For the best discussion of the South Carolina Regulation and its impact on the development of the South Carolina see Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, esp. chapters 1-2. See also Richard Maxwell Brown, *The South Carolina Regulators: The Story of America's First Vigilante Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).

In North Carolina, on the other hand, the strongest support for the Regulation came from the "Old Granville District," an area notable not only for huge irregularities in rents and titles but also for the narrowest disparity of wealth and the largest concentration of small and non-slaveholding farmers below Maryland.[30] There, market access for backcountry settlers remained onerous even as merchants, lawyers, and tax collectors forced farmers to engage in market activity to meet a rising swell of obligations.[31] Blocked from direct coastal access by lack of rivers and what Josiah Martin called "the most broken and difficult country I have ever seen," North Carolinian farmers forced to pay quitrents and taxes in salable commodities sent their bulky hogsheads of tobacco northward along expensive wagon roads to Virginia, thereby greatly reducing profit margins and leaving them far more susceptible to shocks in the always volatile worldwide tobacco market.[32] The aptly named and woefully underappreciated Herman Husband, who gave eloquent voice to families increasingly wary of the changes being thrust upon them by their forced participation in market exchange, explained pithily that

[30] Kay, "Regulators," in Young, *The American Revolution*, 74.

[31] The best short discussion of the influx of these interlopers from England or the coast is James P. Whittenburg, "Planters, Merchants, and Lawyers: Social Change and the Origins of the North Carolina Regulators," in *WMQ*, 34, 2 (April, 1977): 215-238. By far the best comprehensive study of North Carolina Regulators is Marjorleine Kars, *Breaking Loose Together: The Regulator Rebellion in Pre-Revolutionary North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Kars also emphasizes the role of evangelical religion in the development of Regulator arguments and organization.

[32] Josiah Martin, quoted in NCR XIII 396. Jacob Price notes that the depressed worldwide market for tobacco in the 1760s hit North Carolina's backcountry farmers particularly hard during the same period that taxes were increasing, two trends which were not lost on farmers at the time. Jacob M. Price, "Reflection," in Hoffman, 306. For the best discussion on the abysmal state of internal navigation within inland prerevolutionary North Carolina see Christopher Crittenden, "Overland Transportation in North Carolina, 1763-1789," in *North Carolina Historical Review*, VIII (1931): 239-57.

as soon as land was cleared and roads built "comes the great men from Virginia and the southern government with their tribes of Negroes settling quarters under overseers… we destroy one native and in his room import three or ten more from Africa that are more foreign by one half both in nature, shapes, and colour, and all under the plausible pretence of doing our labour when the most happy constitution of any place is the plenty of business to employ the poor."

The reaction to Husband's plea, as compared to that of South Carolina Regulator leaders, revealed much about what planters, politicians, and farmers alike could expect from armed rebellion of one sort or another. Whereas the South Carolina Regulation ended with increased representation for backcountry elites and expansion of the colony's district court system, Governor William Tryon ended the North Carolina revolt in 1772 through force. Tryon marched over 1,000 well armed militia from the coast to shatter hastily assembled and ill-equipped Regulator forces at the Battle of Alamance Creek and then he hanged seven Regulator leaders for treason. Husband and other surviving Regulator leaders fled the province, with Husband moving to the Allegheny Mountains in Pennsylvania where he lived as a mystic and hermit before being again condemned to die for his alleged role in the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion.[33] Yet his demands and brief but bloody rising presaged the fracturing of society during the war that would arrive just four years later, when the hopes and anger held by white and black southerners burst forth with a tremendous and revolutionary fury.

[33] The Hessian soldier turned traveler Johann Schoepf stumbled upon Husband in the 1780s, where he was obsessively mapping the Allegheny region and charting "out the names of all the future kingdoms of Ezekiel." Johann Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation*, trans. Alfred J. Morrison (Reprint: New York, Burt Franklin, 1968), 292-6.

Chapter 1: Disorder, Slave Property, and the American Revolution in the Southern States

Although the last decades of the colonial era were marked by upheaval and change, they proved only a foreshadowing of the dislocation and disorder that defined the struggle for American independence. With the arrival of the Revolutionary crisis, the divided white population of the southern colonies and their concentrated enslaved population set the conditions for a densely complex struggle involving a multitude of belligerents, each competing for advantage as their relative fortunes waxed and waned.[1] The tensions between neighbors and between the coast and interior created by the rapid expansion of the backcountry still simmered only a few years after the Regulation. By 1780 they had exploded into a full blown civil war in which, as one loyalist observer in South Carolina observed, "the whole province resembled a piece of patch work, the inhabitants of every settlement, when united in sentiment being in arms for the side they liked best and making continual inroads into one another's settlements."[2] The increasing reliance on commodity production for export that drove the South's booming economy left southerners and state governments incapable of sustaining a bloody conflict without

---

[1] In the best study of slavery in the Revolutionary South, Sylvia Frey argues that the conflict ought to be understood as a "triagonal war" fought between the British army and its supporters, whig leaders, and slaves. The reality was still more complex, as the shifting loyalties of individuals and the continuing danger posed by Indians and non-partisan bands of "roving banditti" add multiple and often ambiguous dimensions to Frey's very useful model. See Frey's excellent and exhaustively researched book *Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), esp. ch. 4.

[2] Robert Gray, "Colonel Robert Gray's Observations on the War in Carolina, 1782," *SCHM*, XI, 3 (July 1910): 139-51.

resorting to unprecedented and extraordinary means once those exports ground to a halt. Most importantly, the rapid growth of the South's American-born slave population along the coast presented a danger that—as all sides understood—necessarily affected every aspect of strategy and policy in the southern theater. When the full force of fighting moved southward in 1778 these problems pushed the region into a crucible of chaos and violence from which a new society would emerge, shaped by the contours of conflict but drawn out from its colonial inheritance.

Throughout the war, the greatest challenges and the deepest changes involved the 450,000 enslaved men and women who lived below Mason and Dixon's line. Slaveholders, many of whom read ancient history avidly, were well aware that slaves always posed a threat to a society at war, and they knew from their experiences during imperial wars that continued dominance over a labor force rested upon the unified force of the dominant population.[3] From the beginning of the Revolutionary conflict, individuals and state officials within the newly formed southern states took extraordinary

---

[3] Indeed, every major slave revolt or scare in the United States came during a time of general unrest among the white population. The Stono Revolt and 1741 New York slave conspiracy came during imperial war, Gabriel's during the Haitian Revolution, Denmark Vesey during furious debates surrounding the Missouri Compromise, and Nat Turner during the most vocal agitation from abolitionists. This point has been elaborated at length elsewhere, most notably Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion (*Reprint; New York: Norton, 1996); Douglas Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993); James Oakes, *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion* (New York: Harper, 1990). More general surveys conveying the same include Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (Reprint; New York: International Publishers, 1983) and Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1979). On slaveholders' appreciation for ancient history, see for instance Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

steps to monitor slaves and loyalists, and they repeatedly responded to real or perceived threats with swift and brutal violence. Most immediately, this meant quieting murmurs of freedom from slaves who overheard and appropriated the revolutionary rhetoric trumpeted in every town and all across the land. When Charleston authorities heard that the well-known free black pilot Thomas Jeremiah was holding "nightly meetings of Negroes" and informing them "there is a great war coming soon" to "help the poor Negroes," they promptly hanged "Jerry" and burned him at the stake.[4] A month later they moved even more swiftly to execute a slave in St Bartholomew's Parish said to be preaching to "great crouds [sic] … that the old King had rec'd a Book from our Lord by which he was to Alter the World (meaning to set the Negroes free)."[5]

In the early years of the revolutionary crisis planters tried to dismiss the increasingly widespread resistance of black men and women as little more than "thoughtless imitation." But as shouts of "Liberty!" from both white southerners and black southerners grew louder, and as authorities throughout the South learned of more real or imagined conspiracies, fears of general insurrection mounted.[6] Slaveholders everywhere took steps to increase direct oversight of slaves by the state while repeatedly urging white southerners to watch the enslaved population with a close and wary eye. For obvious reasons, the first step was to disarm slaves, many of whom had enjoyed limited access to firearms for hunting during the colonial period. State governments

---

[4] Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution,* 161; William R. Ryan, *The World of Thomas Jeremiah: Charles Town on the Eve of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford, 2010); J. William Harris, *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A Free Black Man's Encounter with Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[5] Thomas Hutchinson, quoted in Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 62.

[6] Henry Laurens to John Lewis Gervais, June 17, 1775 in *HLP*, VII, 217.

issued specific and often detailed instructions to militias and patrols, such as that issued given by the Georgia Council of Safety, which directed in 1776 that "houses of all overseers and negroes throughout the Province … be forthwith searched, and all guns and ammunition (except one gun and thirteen cartridges for each overseer)" should be taken.[7] Action under a similar directive was carried out by a specially convened "Committee of Inspection" in Dorchester Maryland, which concluded that "The insolence of the Negroes in this county is come to such a height" as to warrant immediate disarmament. In one North Carolina county alone, "eighty guns, some bayonets, swords, etc." were confiscated from slaves, a testament to slaves' access to the materiel of war and, perhaps, their tendency to hoard weapons and other items as they waited for their opportunity.[8]

[7] "Journal of the Council of Safety, Jan 8th, 1776," in Allen Daniel Candler, *The Revolutionary Records of Georgia*, vol. I, p. 92.

[8] Quoted in Peter H. Wood, "Liberty is Sweet: African-American Freedom Struggles in the Years before White Independence," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993): 149-184, 165.

SIR,

AS the Committee of Safety is not sitting, I take the Liberty to enclose you a Copy of the Proclamation issued by Lord Dunmore; the Design and Tendency of which, you will observe, is fatal to the publick Safety. An early and unremitting Attention to the Government of the SLAVES may, I hope, counteract this dangerous Attempt. Constant, and well directed Patrols, seem indispensably necessary. I doubt not of every possible Exertion, in your Power, for the publick Good; and have the Honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient and very humble Servant,

P. HENRY.

HEAD QUARTERS, WILLIAMSBURG,
November 20, 1775.

Patrick Henry Circular Letter, William Augustine Washington Papers, DUL

Control also meant strengthening the institutions and practices within each state that aimed to limit the movement and assemblage of slaves. Slaveholders knew, as two Georgia delegates to Congress informed John Adams, that "the Negroes have a wonderful art of communicating intelligence among themselves; it will run several hundreds of miles in a week or fortnight" and so talk of liberty and revolt might spread easily and widely.[9] In 1775 the white population was warned, in Virginia Governor Patrick Henry's words, that only "An early and unremitting Attention to the Government of the SLAVES" could preserve "the publick Safety," and in each colony "Constant, and

[9] Quoted in Sidney Kaplan, "The 'Domestic Insurrections' of the Declaration of Independence," *Journal of Negro History,* vol 61 (1976): 243-55, 247.

well directed Patrols" were made an increasing priority.[10] Following Patrick's directive, officials in Richmond County, Virginia spent a full third of their 1776 expenditure of 19,000 pounds of tobacco on patrols, a three-fold increase from a few years before.[11] Individual slaveholders took heed as well. In South Carolina, the merchant William Ancrum warned his overseers that any "lenity" might encourage resistance and reported that slaves fleeing "to the woods to shun labor or punishment … were hunted down or shot as wild beasts."[12] And, if slaveholders needed any more urging, fear had grown so great by 1776 that state governments took the unprecedented step of offering generalized cash bounties "For the head of every such slave making Resistance" and became more liberal with their compensation for owners of murdered and executed slaves.[13]

Most importantly, state governments rapidly took steps to strengthen the disciplinary apparatus that had been developed over the previous century for monitoring and punishing slaves. Restrictions on the use of force by the white population were loosened and the discretionary power of local armed forces was increased. Whereas slaveholders, always anxious to protect chattel property, had earlier urged that care and due process be given to captured slaves, they now began to allow, in the case of North Carolina, "Patrolers [to] shoot one or any number of Negroes who are armed and doth not willingly surrender their arms, and they have Discretionary Power, to shoot any Number

---

[10] Patrick Henry, "Circular Letter, November 20, 1775," William Augustine Washington Papers, DUL.

[11] Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 157.

[12] William Ancrum to Marlow Pryor, December 23, 1776, William Ancrum Letterbooks, SCL.

[13] "Journal of the Commons House of Assembly," *RRG*, 14, 292-3.

of Negroes above four, who are off their Masters Plantations."[14] The English woman Janet Schaw, observing the frantic actions of white militia and patrolers in late 1775, wrote that it seemed as though "Every man is in arms and the patroles going thro' all the town, and searching every house, to see the are all at home by nine at night."[15] And indeed, within a week of a suspected conspiracy at least one slave was shot dead and forty more arrested in the county where Schaw resided.[16]

At the same time that slaveholders sought to contain a restless slave population the bourgeoning patriot movement made efforts to reduce the different but equally dangerous threat posed by both Indians and loyalists. In both cases governments first attempted using softer methods than they did with enslaved laborers. Patriot governments tried to use bribes of arms and ammunition to persuade Cherokees and other Indian nations to aid them both against the British and in capturing runaway slaves. Yet when these efforts failed, and the bulk of Indian support in the Southwest fell to Britain, governments showed little hesitancy in employing force to suppress this threat as well. In a little discussed but highly significant campaign, General Andrew Williamson led a party of hastily formed militia through the western parts of Georgia and the Carolinas in early 1776, burning Cherokee towns and fields and slaughtering what Indians they could find. Significantly, Williamson recruited his men not with money but with promise of

[14]"Proceedings of the Committee of Safety in Pitt County, July 8, 1775," *CSR,* Vol. 10, p. 87.

[15] Janet Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality; Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the Years 1774 to 1776* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921).

[16] *Ibid*., 94-5. Perhaps the most striking account of this episode can be found in a letter from Col Simpson to Richard Cogdell, 15 July 1775, Richard Cogdell Papers, NSA.

plunder in all forms including, in explicit language, Indian slaves, anticipating the direction all southern state governments would take by the end of the war. Although South Carolina's government eventually decided that "subjecting prisoners of war to a state of slavery … would involve this State in many difficulties" and retroactively disallowed Williamson's offer, Indian slaves were still taken, bought and sold through at least the 1790s.[17]

Similarly, in an effort to close ranks against the enslaved population and the British government in the pre-war years, patriot leaders made continued and personal appeals to known British sympathizers deemed to be "men of influence" in hopes of dampening vocal enthusiasm for the mother country, particularly among recent immigrants in the backcountry. In South Carolina, several prominent rebel leaders, including planter William Henry Drayton, merchant Joseph Kershaw, and the Reverend William Tenant, made an extended tour of the backcountry of the southern states to win support for the patriot cause.[18] Patriot leaders also extended material inducements,

---

[17] *JSCA*, p. 94-5, 102-3. It is impossible to know how many Indians were kept in defiance of the state's decision, but traces exist. For instance, an Indian women "at some time captured" was sold in 1795. "Bill of Sale to Benjamin Huger, 1795" Baker-Grimke Collection, SCHS. Some lasting significance of William's actions are detailed in Edward Countryman, "Indians, the Colonial Order, and the Social Significance of the American Revolution," *WMQ*, vol 53, no 2 (April, 1996): 342-362; Colin G. Calloway, "The Continuing Revolution in Indian Country," in Frederick E. Hoxie, et al, eds., *Native Americans and the Early Republic* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1999): 3-33.

[18] Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State,* 83. Drayton related the urgency of his mission to the Council of Safety, stating that "Vigorous measures are absolutely necessary. If a dozen persons are allowed to be at large, our progress ahs been in vain, and we shall be involved in a civil war in spite of our teeth." Even he could not predict what would come to the backcountry in the last years of the war, however. William Henry Drayton to the Council of Safety, 31 August 1775, in Robert Wilson Gibbes,

including money and military commissions, to prominent individuals they feared might "turn tory" because, as South Carolina officer and governor William Moultrie later recalled, "It was thought not only useful, but political to raise them, because the most influential gentlemen in the backcountry were appointed officers, which interested them" in the patriot cause.[19]

Yet, when softer tactics failed, as they often did, the same disciplinary apparatus used in the effort to quell potential slave uprisings could be employed to suppress loyalist sentiment by force. Examples of violence and intimidation by armed bands of patriots are numerous but two are instructive. After James Cotton, a leading figure in Anson County, North Carolina refused to applaud and sign a set of Resolves of the Continental Congress in late 1774, instead replying to that those who did "would all be deemed Rebels and their Principals would be hanged," he was verbally threatened and told by one whig sympathizer that "if he could get me before the Court House near So. Carolina he would be my butcher." A week later, a company of militia entered his house, forced him out of bed at gunpoint, and marched him towards South Carolina, presumably so the earlier threat might be realized. When Cotton escaped and returned home, hiding in the woods at day and traveling along the road at night, he found that "the Rebels laid my corn fields flat to the ground in many places," burned his house and stole or slaughtered his

---

Documentary History of the American Revolution (3 vols; New York: D. Appleton, 1855-1858), I, 153.

[19] William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution, So Far as it Related to the States of North and South Carolina, and Georgia* (New York: David Longworth, 1802), vol. I, p. 64.

livestock.[20] If Cotton heard about Thomas Brown of Georgia, he might have considered himself lucky. When 130 armed men marched to Brown's home and demanded he sign a pledge of support to the patriot cause, he, like Cotton, refused. In response, the band first destroyed his house and then scalped, sliced, and beat Brown within an inch of his life.[21]

Struggles by patriots to maintain order among loyalists and slaves, and efforts by both groups to organize and assert themselves, intensified exponentially once the first shots of the Revolution were fired at Lexington and Concord. Almost immediately, loyalist militia companies formed in the interiors of Virginia and the Carolinas. Some 1900 backcountry loyalist militia in South Carolina, led by some former Regulators, laid siege to the important trading town of Ninety-Six in July, 1776 and—foreshadowing events to come—vicious fighting between militia and partisan bands reduced the surrounding district to "a frontier. Plantations lie desolate, and hopeful crops are going to ruin."[22] An additional 1400 Scottish Highlanders, most recent immigrants, joined with over 200 former Regulators to form a militia company in northwest North Carolina that

---

[20] "Deposition of James Cotton Concerning Treatment of Loyalist in Anson County, On Board his Majesty's Sloop *Cruizer*, 13 August 1775," *CSR*, X, 127-9.

[21] Brown, not incidentally, would regain strength and become one of the most effective Loyalist partisans during the war. Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Knopf, 2011), 25-7; Gary D. Olson, "Thomas Brown, Loyalist Partisan, and the Revolutionary War in Georgia," in *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* [hereafter cited as *"GHQ*"], vol 54 (1970): 183-208.

[22] Reverend James Creswell to William Henry Drayton, 27 July 1776, in Robert Wilson Gibbes, ed., *Documentary History of the American Revolution: Consisting of Letters and Papers Relating to the contest for Liberty, Chiefly in South Carolina, from Originals in Possession of the Editor, and other Sources*, *1776-1782* (3 vols; New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1854-7), vol. 2, 30-1.

planned to march on whig-controlled districts along the coast.[23] Both of these threats were repressed by smaller yet better equipped patriot forces at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge in February 1776. Soon afterwards, armed whig forces rapidly disarmed and paroled loyalists everywhere, ending the threat of full blown loyalist uprisings in the war's early stage. Even still, smaller bands of loyalist partisans continued terrorizing whigs who then retaliated in kind, resulting in a rapidly escalating cycle of retaliatory violence. In a statement illustrative of the violence that saturated the southern backcountry, Benjamin Cleveland and William Lenoir, magistrates and ambitious landholders in backcountry North Carolina, petitioned the legislature to explain the brutal killing of two suspected British sympathizers in early 1776. Acknowledging that their actions amounted to murder, the two justified themselves by explaining that they were "sensible to the great good done by extra judicially exterminating those direful wretches from amongst us which tend so much to the Annoyance of all others in the surrounding areas." The killers and their followers were quickly pardoned.[24]

While backcountry patriots sought to root out support for the Crown, the concentrated slave populations along the Eastern seaboard quickly transformed initial fighting there into something far more revolutionary. Removed from the pockets of strong loyalist sentiment within the interior, smaller numbers of British and loyalists on

---

[23] A. Roger Ekirch, "Whig Authority and Public Order in Backcountry North Carolina, 1776-1783," in Ronald Hoffman, et. al., eds., *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1985): 99-124, 104-7.

[24] "Petition to the North Carolina Assembly, n.d. [1776-77?]," in William Lenoir Papers, Box 31, SHC.

the coast—royal governors and other ranking officials, along with a small number of citizens not cowed by a half decade of whig intimidation—faced a hostile population without direct military support from the British armies occupied by concurrent events in New England. Not willing to leave or surrender, they turned to the one source of manpower they knew they could employ and which they knew patriot leaders feared.

The first and most important move towards employing slaves as a British military asset occurred in Virginia in November, 1775. Having fled his residence in Williamsburg and living aboard a small flotilla at the head of the James River, Royal Governor John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, contemplated the most extraordinary measure taken in the young conflict. His actions represented the culmination of more than a year of agitation by slaves, threats by whigs, and a mounting feeling of desperation among British officials. Seven months earlier a group of slaves, always listening and knowing the Governor's predicament, offered their services in exchange for freedom, echoing an alleged plot from two years earlier in which slaves around Williamsburg were accused of meeting at night to select a leader "who was to conduct them when the English troops should arrive--, which they foolishly thought would be very soon and that by revolting to them they should be rewarded with their freedom."[25] Not yet ready to abandon hope that he could bring outspoken rebels back into the Empire's fold, Dunmore demurred. After patriots marched with torches before the Governor's palace following his secret removal of gunpowder in April, however, Dunmore privately reconsidered setting rebels' slaves against them. Seven months later, Dunmore finally did what all sides had long

---

[25] James Madison to William Bradford, November 26, 1774, William T. Hutchinson and M.E. Ratchel, eds., *The Papers of James Madison* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962-), 1:129-30.

anticipated and issued his declaration, declaring on November 7, 1775, "all indented servants, Negroes, or others (appertaining to Rebels) free, that are able and willing to bear arms, they joining His Majesty's Troops."[26]

The response was electric. The Continental Congress urged Virginia to "resist Dunmore to the utmost."[27] Washington, aware of the potential ramification of Dunmore's words, warned that "If that man, Dunmore, is not crushed before the Spring he will become the most dangerous man in America. His strength will increase like a snowball running down hill."[28] So great was the panic engendered by Dunmore's proclamation that the news pushed numerous slaveholders and non-slaveholders alike towards rebellion.[29] The militia commander that arrested Thomas Cotton, for instance, declared to his men that "[Royal Governor Josiah] Martin and his damned officers will set the Negroes on to kill us."[30] Even members of Parliament, including Edmund Burke, condemned Dunmore's actions or murmured nervously about its consequences.[31]

---

[26] Dunmore's Proclamation, quoted in Robert L. Scribner, ed., *Revolutionary Virginia, the Road to Independence: A Documentary History* (Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 1981), 42.

[27] Quoted in Benjamin Quarles, "Lord Dunmore as Liberator," *WMQ*, vol 15, no 4 (Oct., 1958): 494-507, 495.

[28] Quoted in Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1989), 112-3.

[29] See especially Robert Olwell, " 'Domestick Enemies': Slavery and Political Independence in South Carolina, May 1775-March 1776," *Journal of Southern History* [hereafter cited as *JSH*], LV (Feb 1989): 21-48.

[30] *CSR*, X, 129.

[31] For concern with Dunmore's proclamation within Britain, see Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 70-1.

Perhaps predictably, the shrillest outcries over Dunmore's proclamation were directed towards slaves themselves. Two weeks after Dunmore's proclamation, a writer to the *Virginia Gazette* informed slaves that Dunmore intended not to liberate those who fled to him but to sell them to the West Indies and warned that "should there by any amongst the Negroes weak enough to believe that Dunmore intends to do them a kindness, and wicked enough to provoke the fury of the Americans against their defenceless fathers and mothers, their wives, their women and children … they must expect to suffer if they fall into the hands of the Americans."[32] However, it was not Dunmore but Virginia authorities who began selling escaping slaves to the West Indies en masse, and similar actions were taken in the Carolinas and Georgia by the early months of 1775 as patriot governments looked for a way to both separate "those dangerous Negroes among us" while compensating slaveholders.[33]

Despite the known dangers and increased vigilance among the white population, Dunmore's promise of freedom precipitated first a trickle, and then a flood, of slaves towards British encampments along the coast. Seeing little alternative once slaves themselves had pressed the issue, British leaders everywhere began to harbor the slaves who reached them and employ them in limited military actions where they could. In the area around Charleston small parties of black foragers raided plantations and whig outposts from a cramped base of operations on Sullivan's Island outside the harbor, and Governor Wright of Georgia used the growing number of slaves on Tybee Island outside Savannah to conduct similar operations. Some prominent and wealthy loyalists took

---

[32] *Virginia Gazette* (Williamsburg), November 25, 1775.

[33] Se for instance, *CVSP,* 79.

individual steps to protect their position and fend off armed militia, including Wright's brothers outside Savannah who took the previously unthinkable step of arming their own slaves to repel whig bands.[34] In Virginia, Dunmore formed at least 300 male slaves out of the more than 2,000 slaves who reached him into what he named his "Ethiopian Regiment." One can only imagine the reaction of white Virginians to seeing their former slaves dressed in military uniforms emblazoned with the revolutionary words, "Liberty to SLAVES."[35] Indeed, one must suspect it would be difficult to find a witness to Dunmore's legion who believed in the myth, actively promulgated before and after the Civil War, of the docile and contented slave.

As with the initial actions of loyalists, however, concerted efforts by whig forces eventually suppressed the immediate threat of organized, British-backed slave resistance. Dunmore's regiment was defeated at the Battle of Great Bridge in December, 1775 and—as would occur throughout the war—small pox, cholera, and other diseases ravaged the "Black party" of men and women huddled around his rag-tag army. After his numbers had been whittled down to a few hundred, Dunmore was reduced to running his tenders up and down the James River, plundering plantations and burning fields, before removing to British-occupied New York City. In Georgia and South Carolina, whigs turned to small bands of Catawba Indians (as well as white irregulars dressed as Indians) to hunt

[34] The Georgia Council of Safety reported in May, 1776 that "Messrs [Germain and Charles] Wrights have built a strong for ton their plantation, with twenty white men and all their slaves armed, and considerable quantity of provision and ammunition." "Journal of the Council of Safety, May 4, 1776," *RRG*, I, 123.

[35] The best discussion of Dunmore's actions remains Benjamin Quarles's "Lord Dunmore as Liberator," *William & Mary Quarterly* [hereafter cited as *WMQ*], vol 15, No. 4 (Oct. 1958): 494-507, a version of which appears as chapter three in his *Negro in the American Revolution*.

down roving parties of black foragers and shatter local encampments. Catawba warriors and South Carolina troops led by future signer of the Constitution Charles Cotesworth Pinckney killed and captured over 50 slaves on Sullivan's Island in December 1775. Six months later a brigade of Georgia Militia, dressed as Indians, launched a brutal assault on Tybee Island, killing at least one British Marine and capturing several dozen of the nearly 200 slaves living there. No existing document records the fate of the captured slaves except a report that the Georgia party acted with "the most savage barbarity."[36] Most likely those slaves not tortured and executed were sold to the Caribbean, though there is some indication that the Catawba allies were promised bounties from the captured slaves.[37] Following a failed assault on Charleston in June, 1776—the last major military operation in the South for more than two years—additional captured slaves in South Carolina were rounded up and most likely executed.[38] No record of their fate exists but it probably mirrored that of three slaves in Dorchester, Maryland, who after killing a white man and attempting to reach Dunmore were captured and sentenced to be "taken to the place of execution and there each of them to have their right hands cut off and to be hanged by the neck until they were dead; their heads to be severed from their bodies and their bodies to be divided each of them in four quarters and their heads and quarters to be

---

[36] For a number of reasons, not the least of which was the intentional or unintentional destruction of documents by Union forces during the Civil War, documentation from the Revolutionary South is comparatively sparse.

[37] Jim Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Slaves, and Indians in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 82.

[38] Benjamin Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 138.

set up in the most public places of the county."[39] The situation in the Revolutionary South left little room for subtlety.

After the departure of the bulk of British forces by the beginning of 1777, a period of very uneasy peace began. Organized "banditti" operating from British held East Florida continued to launch raids in Georgia and even lower South Carolina and privateers continued to make forays into areas by the coast, stealing slaves and livestock and burning plantations when able. Though these raids did not endanger patriot control they seriously threatened private property and significantly disrupted attempts to supply rebel armies. For example, one incursion led by Thomas Brown out of Florida in early 1778 resulted in the loss of over 2,000 head of cattle and over 200 slaves. Most raids resulted in much fewer losses, yet there are numerous reports of losses of 50 or even 100 or more being taken by a single British party.[40]

Regardless of the actual loss of slave property, livestock, and other goods, the amount of energy spent by patriot forces protecting their slaves and protecting themselves *from* their slaves continued to hinder the war effort as local leaders kept militia at home and as militia refused to march northward while such threats remained.[41] As fighting and

---

[39] Dorchester County Court, quoted in Ronald Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissension: Economics, Politics, and the Revolution in Maryland* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 185.

[40] Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 83-4.

[41] Greater losses would come, but even in 1776/7 significant plundering operations were being carried out by British and loyalist forces and, to a lesser extent, by patriot forces (though the situation would soon reverse). Planter Leven Powell of Loudon County, VA received word that British ships in Chesapeake Bay "have taken about 300 Negroes from Gloucester, Lancaster and Northumberland [counties] … My brother who came up from there the night past said that several people … have lost every slave they

raids continued problems of manpower mounted, for whig leaders became increasingly unable to maintain morale or raise the number of men that the war required. When Congress attempted to regularize troop numbers in the Continental Army by requiring states to fill quotas of troops in 1777, for instance, the results were less than encouraging. No southern state ever reached even a third of its quota despite increasingly lucrative bounties and, from 1777 to 1783, even militant Virginia found only 248 men willing to serve for the duration of the entire war.[42] Poor southerners, who comprised the great bulk of both state troops and the Continental line had lost what Charles Royster termed the "rage militaire" by late 1776 and, anxious to grow a full harvest and provide for their families, showed little interest in brutal campaigning several hundred miles away.[43] In response, whig leaders made major concessions. They rewrote state constitutions to provide more equitable representation, increased allotments of food, clothing and pay, and provided for the popular election of officers.[44] Yet even these efforts, which would

---

were possessed of." Richard Graham to Leven Powell, 20 Feb 1777, Leven Powell Papers, Swem.

[42] Michael A. McDonnell, *Politics of War*, 461.

[43] Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), esp. 221-2.

[44] The narrative of these changes has been discussed with great depth and care by a number of scholars. See in particular Michael McDonnell, *The Politics of War: Race, Class, and Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute, 2007); Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*;; John R. Maas, "' A Complicated Scene of Difficulties': North Carolina and the Revolutionary Settlement, 1776-1789," Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2007; Michael McDonnell and Woody Holton, "Patriot vs. Patriot: Social Conflict and the Origins of the Revolution in Virginia," *Journal of American Studies*, 34, 2 (Aug., 2000): 231-56.

powerfully affect the political development of the region, failed to raise enough troops to meet quotas or even maintain militia numbers.

Southern leaders found it even more problematic to supply those soldiers who did make it to the field. Although the former colonies had printed paper money in the past to finance their participation in imperial wars, they had normally done so by establishing sinking funds or other financial mechanisms to retire paper currency within a few years. The Revolution quickly demanded a different set of fiscal responses. After 1777, depreciation skyrocketed as state governments and the Continental Congress had little recourse but to print money continuously. Congress issued an astounding £25,000,000 worth of paper currency by the end of 1776, and the states did their best to keep pace.[45] Remarkably, the "Continental" continued to trade roughly at par through 1778, and most state currency depreciated only to roughly 3 to 1 over the same period.[46] Rising inflation and disagreements between states as to the value of currencies made it nearly impossible to supply their respective militias in the field, let alone a Continental Army that was consuming over 900,000 pounds of flour and 800,000 pounds of fish and meat per month in 1778.[47]

Even if states had possessed the means, there was little to buy. Cut off from the British Empire and encircled by a constant and modestly effective blockade, the thirteen

---

[45] E. James Ferguson, *The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776-1790* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 26.

[46] Alan D. Watson, *Money and Monetary Problems in Early North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of History and Archives, 1980), 38-42; Charles Calomiris, "Institutional Failure, Monetary Scarcity, and the Depreciation of the Continental," *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 48, 1 (March, 1988): 47-68.

[47] R. Arthur Bowler, *Logistics and the Failure of the British Army in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 70.

colonies simply could not supply either their armed forces or the general populace with essential items like salt, let alone guns, textiles, and other manufactured goods.[48] The war did produce a vibrant domestic textile industry, yet the long-term ramifications of homespun—to be examined in depth in the fifth chapter of this dissertation—proved far more important than the contribution the industry made to clothing ragged armies and militia.[49]

Basic manufactured items like finished metal became especially difficult to come by. Although some 257 furnaces and forges had been built in the colonies, with roughly 25% of them in the South,[50] they were mostly small operations and prohibited by British imperial law from producing the heavy iron needed to wage war. Their capital disappearing, states tried offering land grants and generous bounties to private interests to construct ironworks and forges, but these rarely came anywhere close to producing what was required.[51] In addition to lacking basic experience, operators of mines, forges, and other manufactories lacked manpower. It is an indication of how desperate states were for lead and iron that within a few years of the war's beginning they stopped executing captured slaves or selling them to the West Indies and began sending them west to work in places like lead mines and iron works (often a death sentence still, though a slower

---

[48] See James A. Henretta, "The War for Independence and American Economic Development," in Ronald Hoffman et al., eds., *The Economy of Early America* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1988): 45-87.

[49] See James A. Henretta, "The War for Independence and American Economic Development," in Hoffman, et. al., eds., *The Economy of Early America*: 45-87.

[50] Ronald L. Lewis, *Coal, Iron, and Slaves: Industrial Slavery in Maryland and Virginia, 1715-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 9-12.

[51] William Hill, *Col. William Hill's Memoir's of the Revolution*, ed. A.S. Salley, Jr. (Columbia, SC: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1921).

one).[52] Despite these efforts, southern industry remained woefully undermanned. As an overseer in western Virginia complained in 1777, "How an iron work is to be kept in blast without hands, teams, waggons, corn, wood cutters, mine horses etc is a mistery [sic] to me. And why the 10 negro men ordered by Congress to be sent here are not sent I know not, thirty would be too few." Those few who had arrived were "so naked & barefooted that they will not long be alive," a situation that would be repeated in manufactories and plantations across the South as the war dragged on and manufactured items disappeared.[53]

To make matters worse, whig leaders found it extremely difficult to move those foodstuffs and manufactured items that could be procured to the front lines. The basic infrastructure of the southern states, built on the cheap to support a colonial economy premised on bringing goods for export to the coast, prevented the effective movement of goods into the interior where they were now needed.[54] As a result, the problem of transport and supply fell to private interests, and speculation; corruption, and price gouging became recurrent themes throughout the war. The early historian of the Revolution David Ramsay observed in 1785 that "at no period of time were fortunes

---

[52] "Journal of the Committee of Safety," in *Calendar of Virginia State Papers, and Other Manuscripts*, ed. R.F. Walker, et. al. (Richmond: 1875-93), vol. 8, p. 77, 79, 81, 98, 113, 156, 183.

[53] James Milles to Thomas Person, March 19 1777, Person Family Papers, SHC

[54] An original and useful observation made in John Shy, "Logistical Crisis and the American Revolution: A Hypothesis," in John A. Lynn, ed., *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994): 161-179.

more easily or rapidly acquired" than in the lull from 1776 to the British invasion.[55] For the few who eluded roving partisans and banditti on the roads and had access to capital and political influence, Ramsey's observation certainly seemed true. The loyalist Alexander Chesney recalled in his journal that in a trade between the back country and Charleston he made "with care 300 per cent" on each journey, and Wade Hampton—who more than anyone illustrated the advancement one could make if lucky, ambitious, and unscrupulous enough—was clearing thousands of pounds every few months bringing food and grain to Savannah and Charleston from 1776 to 1778.[56] Elsewhere, merchants and planters alike turned to the time-honored tradition of hoarding necessary articles, especially salt and grain. The practice sparked riots in Virginia and elsewhere, provoking rebel leader Edmund Pendleton to grumble that "all honest men must be ruined by these Harpies if we can't find some way to stop the Torrent of Extortion, which appears to have no bounds."[57]

None of these issues—generating the manpower and materiel needed to supply an increasingly desperate fight; containing slaves, loyalists, and partisans from both sides; managing the war-weariness of an increasingly disillusioned and starved populace—waned as fighting continued in the north. Yet when the full force of fighting moved

---

[55] David Ramsay, *The History of the Revolution of South-Carolina, From a British Province to an Independent State, in Two Volumes*, (Trenton, NJ: Isaac Collins, 1785), vol. 1, 177.

[56] "The Journal of Alexander Chesney," E. Alfred Jones, ed., in *The Ohio State University Bulletin,* vol. 26, 4 (October, 1921), 8. Existing papers related to Hampton are extremely limited but what exists is discussed at length in Ronald Edward Bridwell, "The South's Wealthiest Planter: Wade Hampton of South Carolina," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1980.

[57] Edmund Pendleton to Gen. William Woolford, 13 September 1777, Edmund Pendleton Letters, SHC.

south with the British invasion of Georgia in late 1778, a society slowly tearing along these seams exploded into bloody and desperate civil war. In the backcountry, nascent or suppressed British sympathies reemerged emphatically as emboldened loyalists again formed militia companies and joined with British units to harass patriot forces and exact retribution for earlier treatment. The renewed presence of British troops willing to harbor slaves and utilize slave labor again sparked mass desertions of enslaved men and women from plantations and encouraged resistance among those who stayed.[58] Money turned utterly worthless, supplies ran still lower, and violence escalated as the countryside finally descended into the conflagration of plundering and murder foreshadowed in the years from 1775 to 1777.

In the end, the British armies would depart and the patriot side would emerge the victorious heirs of a new nation. Yet the bloodshed and disorder that victory required left a society shaken and forever changed in its wake.

Between 1778 and 1783 the Continental and British armies fought ferociously and constantly, with neither side able to gain a decisive advantage. Spurred by the disastrous defeat of Burgoyne's army at Saratoga, as well as the belief that the South contained legions of loyal subjects willing to bear arms for the royal cause, British generals and political leaders in London decided to shift fighting to the South. A series of rapid British victories, culminating in the taking of Savannah in December 1778 and Charleston a year later, resulted in huge American losses of men and materiel and

[58] Complaints about slaves simply refusing to work, or demanding better treatment, are numerous. For one well documented case, see the Josiah Smith Letterbooks, SHC.

allowed the British to establish firm control of lower coastal areas. Over the next three years brutal fighting engulfed the backcountry of the Carolinas and Georgia as both sides, aided by whig and loyalist militia, fought for control of the interior. Early on, the main British force commanded by Lord Cornwallis and partisan dragoons led by Banastre Tarleton enjoyed a string of decisive victories culminating in the smashing of the main American army under Horatio Gates at Camden, South Carolina in August, 1780. Royal government was reestablished in Georgia and South Carolina as whig leaders fled into hiding within the backcountry.

Yet despite their repeated successes in the field, the British army could not overcome two ultimately decisive problems. First, they were never able to establish lasting control outside of areas near their main military presence at Savannah and Charleston. Almost as soon as British forces left a given area whig forces, acting either in small bands or larger outfits, returned to reestablish a patriot presence and often brutally punish those who had offered support to the king. As a result, the British were never able to stabilize their lines of supply or convince the great bulk of citizens that their protection could be relied upon and the promised outpouring of loyalist support never materialized, especially after the main loyalist militia was routed at King's Mountain, North Carolina, in October 1780. Second, although large patriot armies were taken at Savannah, Charleston, and Camden, significant forces under leaders like Andrew Pickens, Charles Sumter, Francis Marion and Nathanael Greene could never be brought to the field and decisively defeated, leaving them free to harass British supplies and restrict British movement. After the shocking and total defeat of Tarleton's forces at the Battle of Cowpens in January 1781 the only effective British army in the field under

Cornwallis began the slow and haggard march through North Carolina into Virginia. After Washington's captured Cornwallis's army at Yorktown, whig and loyalist bands continued struggling for power within the interior of the Carolinas and Georgia. Significant British military actions became limited to the immediate vicinity of Charleston and Savannah, however, and the situation continued until the final departure of British troops under the terms of the Treaty of Paris in 1783.[59]

Despite the vivid descriptions of contemporaries, historians of the American Revolution do not always convey the full scope of disorder that southerners experienced after 1778.[60] Plantations were burned, sometimes repeatedly, by each side.[61] Neighbors

---

[59] For the far more nuanced and extended treatment that military operations in the South deserve see, among many others, John Richard Alden, *The South in the Revolution, 1763-1789* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 207-366; Jerome J. Nadelhaft, *The Disorders of War: The Revolution in South Carolina*. (Orono, ME: University of Maine Press, 1981); John W. Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution: A Battlefield History* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003); John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985); Jim Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*. For the best work on the critical role played by whig militia forces, and for some of the most incisive thoughts about mobilization and politicization during the war, see the essays in John Shy, *A People Numerous & Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[60] See, for example, Robert Middlekauff's still standard history of the Revolution, which devotes but one chapter to the war in the South and makes little mention of plundering, looting, or beheadings. Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 434-91. Very important exceptions to this claim exist, of course, generally among works that emphasize the Revolution as a moment of social rupture such as McDonnell, *The Politics of War* and Nash, *Unknown American Revolution*. Other works that focus specifically on the war in the southern backcountry have emphasized the growing disorder as well.

[61] James Green, a North Carolina merchant, was not atypical when he petitioned the British claims commission, complaining that "Your Memorialist is a Sufferer by the continued Persecution of Ill Fortune from different Quarters. He has been pillaged by rebels as being a Loyal Subject—and despoiled by his Majesty's Loyal Subjects as if he were a Rebel!" Quoted in Christopher Crittenden, "Commerce in North Carolina, 1763-1789," Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1936, p. 142.

beheaded one another as warnings, wounded prisoners were run through with swords, and widows and children were turned out of their burning homes.[62] Nathanael Greene, trying to make sense of what was happening in the Carolinas in 1782, came closest, perhaps, to capturing the essence of affairs when he explained to his superiors that "The whigs and tories pursue one another with the most relentless fury killing and destroying each other whenever they meet … For want of civil government the bands of society are totally disunited, and the people, by copying the manners of the British, have become perfectly savage."[63]

The "savagery" of the Revolutionary South, which far surpassed anything seen in the North (where actions could hardly be termed civil), resulted less from the tactics employed by either side than from the intensification of the same two problems of order and supply that had undermined the war effort in the southern states from the beginning. The collapse of state governments and the presence of British troops throughout the South shattered the structures of authority that southern whigs had erected to maintain order among slaves and loyalist insurgents. Now that military might was desperately needed to combat British soldiers and partisans, economic disruption and the loss of control over the region's primary labor force rendered patriot officials entirely incapable of raising sufficient soldiers and materiel.

---

[62] A loyalist named Love was lynched upon returning home after the war by neighbors who remembered him slaying wounded rebels after a skirmish. Aedanus Burke to the Governor, 14 December 1784, in Aedanus Burke Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina [SCL]. In North Carolina "a British officer was asked why he plundered the Farm and burned the House of the Widow Brevard. His answer was 'She has seven sons in the rebel army.'" Joseph Brevard Papers, SHC.

[63] Quoted in Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War,* 84.

Under immense pressure from the circumstances of war and from slaves themselves, both patriot leaders and British commanders hastened the reshaping of southern political economy by turning to slave property to resolve the crisis, although they did so in different ways. British commanders found their hand forced by the actions of tens of thousands of slaves who reached their lines and who pushed them towards actions they would not otherwise have countenanced. Indeed, the British army, in attempting to quell one revolution, became itself a revolutionary force. Henry Clinton's "Philipsburg Proclamation" of 1779, which made Dunmore's plan applicable to slaves of rebels everywhere, was merely British policy catching up to facts on the ground. By 1779 slaves had already become part of the British army. The Hessian officer Johann Ewald said of Cornwallis's army that "Every soldier had his Negro, who carried his provisions and bundles. This multitude always hunted at a gallop, and behind the baggage followed well over four thousand Negroes of both sexes and all ages."[64] Though most of these slaves served officers as cooks or valets, British commanders showed little hesitation arming slaves when short of manpower. During the failed American attack on Savannah in 1779, the British armed slaves who fought ferociously alongside British regulars. Perhaps most famously, British officers in Charleston organized former slaves into a legion of "Black Dragoons," who took part in larger military actions after 1781. The Dragoons also foraged among patriot plantations, carrying off "everything they could

[64] Johann Ewald, *Diary of the American War: a Hessian Journal*, trans. Joseph P. Tustin (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 203.

… Cattle, sheep, Hogs, horses & half the provisions" at a single plantation one night and "some twenty to thirty heads of Cattle and half as many Negroes" at another.[65]

Whether a slave escaped to the British and gained lasting freedom, or whether a slave lasted only a few hours in wooded swamps, they radically inverted the basis of the only world they knew and presented the purist claim to the Revolution's promise of liberty. Yet the collective actions of all slaves during the War for Independence did not amount to revolution. Separated for their entire lives by many miles, invigilated by armed and wary combatants, and still fractured by language and experience, those slaves who did escape to British lines or used force against white owners or overseers acted individually or in small units. Slaves therefore remained dependent on other forces—the British army, a frightened slaveholder—as they sought the full realization of their burgeoning dreams of liberation. As a result, even as the individual actions of several thousand slaves pushed southern slavery to its most critical crisis until the Civil War,[66]

---

[65] Thomas Bee to Governor Mathews, 9 December 1782, Thomas Bee Papers, SCL.

[66] The debate over actual numbers is a long and contested one. Immediately after the Revolution contemporaries claimed losses that most historians today believe are serious exaggerations, particularly Jefferson's assertion that Virginia lost some 30,000 slaves, 27,000 of whom died of disease. David Ramsay's estimate that South Carolina lost 25,000 of her 110,000 slaves seems like far less of an exaggeration given circumstantial evidence. Of recent historians, most have relied on Sylvia Frey's estimate—made using both patriot claims as well as the marked rise in the black population of the British West Indies—of between 80,000-100,000 slaves lost both North and South. Given the level of slave populations in the 1790 census this number appears far too high despite its being used by Ira Berlin and other scholars. More recently Cassandra Pybus has advanced the substantially lower estimate of 25,000 North and South, which seems far too low. Regardless of the actual number, however, the psychological effect to thousands of southern slaveholders cannot easily be underestimated, and it is their efforts to reconstruct slavery in light of this fact which will be the central focus of my dissertation. For slave numbers, see David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution* (Reprint; Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1990), vol.

even as they asserted themselves with their blood and with their sweat, they remained bound within a wartime society in which all sides became increasingly driven to obtain and protect private property.

As human property, slaves posed innumerable challenges for even the most sympathetic British commanders. As Dunmore had earlier, British commanders after 1778 showed little hesitation arming slaves when short of manpower. During the failed American attack on Savannah in 1779 the British armed slaves who then fought ferociously alongside British regulars.[67] Naval captains employed slaves extensively on British ships, particularly those tenders charged with harassing American property along the coast by launching continued raids inland in which an increasing number of slaves were "captured" or "recruited," depending on the source. Interracial bands of partisans continued to operate out of Florida or within the backcountry, placing citizens "in Constant Dread and Fear of being Robb'd and Murdered," as inhabitants of one North Carolina county phrased it.[68] Perhaps most famously, British officers in Charleston organized former slaves into a legion of "Black Dragoons," which took part in larger military actions after 1781 and were tasked with foraging among patriot plantations in the

---

1, 174; Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 211; Cassandra Pybus, "Jefferson's Faulty Math: The Question of Slave Defections in the American Revolution," WMQ, vol. 62, no. 2 (June, 2005): 243-264.

[67] The significance of this action stretched well beyond the immediate battle. As will be detailed in a later chapter, nearly a decade later bands of maroons operating between Savannah and Charleston, calling themselves the King of England Soldiers, were said to be "the very fellows that fought & maintained their ground against the brave Lancers at the siege of Savannah, and they still call themselves the King of England's Soldiers." Col. James Jackson to Gov. Mathews, 1787, Joseph Vallence Bevan Papers, GHS, Savannah, GA.

[68] Petition of Jacob Alford and the Inhabitants of Anson County, January 1779, General and State Assembly Records, NSA.

later years of the war.[69] Other slaves were put to work on abandoned plantations in an attempt both to control the swelling enslaved population within army lines and to provide money and supplies for British troops.[70]

The labor and intelligence provided by slaves was vital to the British war effort.[71] However, neither British commanders nor British policymakers could escape the quandary that slaves remained valuable property and that they had a pressing need to finance their war while maintaining the loyalty of British sympathizers, the most prominent of whom were slaveholders. Although both Dunmore's and Clinton's proclamations offered freedom only to the slaves of *rebel* owners, all sides knew that slaves did not honor the distinction. Amid the confusion of war and the massive displacement of people, slaves of loyalists could and did claim to be the slaves of rebels, provoking a budding tension between loyal planters and British commanders. In Charleston British authorities received numerous complaints about "Negroes leaving the Service of their Masters and coming to the British Army," behavior which not only hindered planters' efforts at harvest but also caused "the Negroes to contract Bad Habits, such that might be dangerous to the community hereafter … as well as many more mischievous effects." Other loyal planters demanded, and apparently received, rebel

---

[69] Thomas Bee to Governor Mathews, 9 December 1782, Thomas Bee Papers, SCL.

[70] The story of sequestered estates is an interesting one, detailed more fully in Jeffrey J. Crow, "What Price Loyalism? The Case of John Cruden, Commissioner of Sequestered Estates," *North Carolina Historical Review*, vol LVIII, no 3 (July, 1981): 215-233; Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 178-81.

[71] To give a single example, slaves provided intelligence about the state of supplies in Charleston during the British siege in 1780. Additionally, an enslaved man aided in the capture of the city by leading British soldiers on a hidden path through swamps outside the city to envelop American forces. Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 108-10.

slaves as compensation for property destroyed or slaves plundered by rebel parties.[72] Caught between the need to assuage loyalist anger, recognition of their responsibility to slaves they continually and indiscriminately employed, and a deeper understanding of black soldiers and servants generated by continual interaction and mutual dependence, British commanders acted with trepidation. In response to complaints received in Charleston, slaves were returned only to loyalist masters who could give positive identification of their slaves and agreed "not to resent the Behaviour [sic] of the Slaves for having left his service," on risk of not having his slave returned a second time.[73]

For patriot leaders, the use of slave property was much more straightforward. Some 6,000 black men did serve in American forces during the war, representing about three-percent of total patriot enlistment.[74] Yet mobilization never threatened slavery in the South the way it did in the North, as the vast majority of black troops came from Northern states, particularly Rhode Island. No southern state authorized the use of enslaved soldiers, though in every state owners used slaves as substitutes and slaves, claiming to be free, could always find a recruiting officer eager enough to meet his quota

---

[72] "Memorial of James Wright to Lord Germain, Bart. Governor of the Province of Georgia and several other gentlemen, Late Inhabitants of that Province and others who have Property Within," 6 January 1779, Letters of Sir James Wright, *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3 (1873), 249-50.

[73] Above quotes all taken from Records of the Board of Police, 13 June 1780, Microfilm, South Carolina Department of Archives and History [SCDAH], Columbia, SC. In the months before the exchange with the board of police, at least four dozen slaves had been returned to loyalists by authorities in Charleston under like conditions. Reverend Jenkins Memorandum Book, May, 1780, SCHS.

[74] Philip D. Morgan and Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, "Arming Slaves in the American Revolution," in Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006): 180-208, 198.

that he asked few questions.[75] When local leaders and generals did suggest meeting manpower shortages by arming slaves, they were invariably rebuffed by planters and state legislatures.[76] Of course, state governments and patriot commanders did not hesitate to employ slaves on public works, though in every case they stretched themselves to compensate slaveholders both for hired time and for loss of property if a slave died in public service.[77] Slaves who remained on plantations, suffering miserably as wartime shortages left them bereft of food and clothes, received concessions from owners and overseers who realized their tenuous position and sought to prevent desertion.

Yet the overwhelming response of patriots to the problems posed by human property was to use slaves in ways that reduced them strictly to property, a course of action dictated both by the commitment to maintaining slavery and the difficulty of waging total war within a fractured and export-dependent society. In a very real sense, slave property became the imperfect solution to the logistical and material problems that had plagued the South from the beginning. The reasons were many. Perhaps most importantly, the war created conditions under which slaveholding became enormously profitable in areas, particularly the backcountry, where it could not flourish before. On

---

[75] Lorenzo J. Greene, "Some Observations on the Black Regiment of Rhode Island in the American Revolution," *Journal of Negro History*, vol. 37 (1952): 142-72. In one instance, an officer was court martialed for waiting until after receiving his recruiting bonus before reporting his enlistment of slaves to authorities. “Records of the Court of Goochland County,” *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, vol. 1, p. 582.

[76] Many southerners suggested such a course of action but the two most famous were John Laurens and Nathanael Greene. For Laurens, see Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 136. For Nathanael Greene’s plan see Greene to Governor John Rutledge, 9 December 1781, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vol. 10, p. 22.

[77] See for instance, “Petition of John Calvert, Feb. 5, 1780,” *Journal of the Assembly and House of Representatives,* ed. William Edwin et. al. (Columbia: USC Press, 1970), vol. 1, p. 270.

the one hand, in their desperate need to purchase arms and supplies from abroad, state governments purchased slave-grown commodities, particularly tobacco, at hugely inflated prices in order to obtain specie or exchange for supplies directly.[78] For those in areas away from the fighting, this provided a huge incentive to increase output either by purchasing slaves or, if possible, by hiring slaves from owners desperate to remove their hands from the path of the British army.[79] Additionally, produce from the backcountry—wheat, hemp, flax, corn—which could not be sold at a distance profitably before the war became hugely important to the supply of the patriot war machine, strongly encouraging backcountry inhabitants to enter the slaveholding ranks and allowing enormous profits to those with established slave operations and also to merchants who brought backcountry produce to armies in the interior.[80]

The profits to be made in areas throughout the South made slave property increasingly desirable above all other forms of property. Slaves available for purchase became so scarce, and buyers so eager, that planters and merchants everywhere

---

[78] North Carolina purchased tobacco at 50 shillings sterling a hundred weight both during and after the war when the commodity had normally traded at roughly 32 shillings before. Papers of the Joint Standing Committee on Finance, Tobacco Subcommittee, 1786-1787, NSA.

[79] One well-documented case is Patrick Henry's hire of nineteen slaves from Georgia planter Joseph Habersham. See "Joseph Habersham and Joseph Clay Account Book," Joseph Habersham Papers, GHS; "Agreement of Hire Between Patrick Henry and Joseph Habersham," Patrick Henry Papers, Swem. Henry hired Habersham's slaves at the very high price of roughly £15 per hand per annum.

[80] Wade Hampton made substantial profits supplying both patriot and loyal armies. He and his brothers supplied over 136,000 pounds of corn meal alone to Sumter's troops in 1782-1783. Bridwell, "South's Wealthiest Planter," 95-7.

complained that "Negroes cannot be had in this country for any price."[81] Alexander Drummond wrote a correspondent to tell of him to "lay out the vile trash, which we call money in Young negroes … people are dayle [sic]] coming from all parts to purchase them at the most enormous prices.[82] Even as early as 1776, before depreciation had truly set in, slaves were bringing "between £700 & £800" pounds on credit or currency.[83] By the end of the war a slave could bring several times that much, even allowing for inflation. In 1780 Virginia, Alexander Drummond reported with amazement that the state had valued a "corn field Negro, lately hanged for murder, at seven thousand pounds and a Negro woman was sold the other day for four thousand pounds." Understandably, both Drummond and other speculators shied away from land and money for they "all gave it, that Tobacco, and Slavs [sic], would command the greatest prices in for the foreseeable future."[84]

At the same time as the value of slaves continued to rise, the states continued to print paper money to compensate for their lack of specie. Consequently, the only legal tender possessed by states, Drummond's "vile trash," depreciated at a rate far faster than before the British invasion even as the cost of commodities rose by an estimated one-

---

[81] Joseph Clay to 'Dear Sir,' 18 November 1780, Joseph Clay Letterbooks, vol. 3, GHS.

[82] Alexander Drummond to Colo. Coles, 5 April 1780, Robert Carter Related Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

[83] William Ancrum to Marlow Pryor, 23 December, 1776, William Ancrum Letterbooks, SCL.

[84] Alexander Drummond to Col. Coles, c. 1780, Carter Family Related Papers, VHS. Similarly, a field hand was sold at public auction in Georgia for the astounding sum of £7605. *RRG*, vol. 2, p. 216.

thousand percent.[85] By 1779 South Carolina's currency sat at roughly 66 to 1; a year later it traded at 400 to 1. By 1779 South Carolina's currency traded at roughly 66 pounds in paper money to a single pound sterling; a year later it traded at 400 to 1. In Georgia and North Carolina, where inflation was greatest, state notes traded as high as 12,000 to 1 by 1782.[86] Money depreciated at such a rate that, as one South Carolinian remarked, "those who retained it, a few days later could not purchase half the value of what they had given for it."[87] In an interaction that illustrates both the dwindling value of currency and the increased assertiveness displayed by slaves during the war, one North Carolina planter reported with obvious alarm that a slave peddling fish in Hillsborough had refused to sell his wares without hard money and "audaciously superadded, 'Not a d—m'd Son of a B—ch in the Town shall have any without it.'"[88]

Put differently, by 1780, as currency became widely regarded as worthless even by those who might previously have been forced to accept it, and as the British invasion reduced production of salable commodities, slave property was the only form of *movable* property retaining significant (and indeed, rapidly appreciating) value. The rising value of slaves relative to other mediums of exchange, combined with the material insufficiencies of the southern states detailed above, crystallized a context in which

[85] Elizabeth Cometti, "Inflation in Revolutionary Maryland," *WMQ*, 8 (1951): 231-33.

[86] "Table of Depreciation," Governor's Papers, Georgia State Archives [GSA], Morrow, GA.

[87] "Extract from the Life of C.W. Peale, written by himself," in Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

[88] Reverend Purcell to Governor Abner Nash, 1780, *CSR,* vol. 15, p. 15-17.

private interests, state governments, and the British army together effected a massive transfer of human property, one unmatched until the Emancipation Proclamation.

For state governments, the transfer of human property took three general forms. First, beginning in 1777 and especially after 1780, every southern state passed laws confiscating the property of British sympathizers. Through the confiscation acts, states came to control thousands of slaves in addition to those captured fleeing to the British or taken from enemy lines. As did British commanders, state governments compensated some patriots for property lost (or, in the case of a Richard Henderson of Georgia, "to assist his family in distress") by delivering them slaves.[89] The bulk of confiscated slaves, however, were first put under the care of state-appointed commissioners who oversaw their labor on public works or sequestered loyalist plantations and then sold them during and after the war in order to generate capital and retire increasingly sizable state debts. In the end, sales of confiscated estates failed to raise significant amounts of needed hard money or make much impact on southern states' considerable debt. They did, however, allow certain men to enrich themselves by purchasing property on long credit, worthless currency, and often with certificates and "indents," or promissory notes issued by the state in exchange for impressed goods and services rendered.

States also used the confiscated and captured slaves under their control to directly pay for needed supplies or to meet financial obligations. Georgia, suffering from some of the bloodiest fighting and experiencing the greatest depreciation of currency, in one instance used "three hundred and twenty one pounds, fifteen shillings and six pence in

[89] Henderson was given two adult slaves and one young slave. Journal of the General Assembly, 20 July 1782, *RRG*, vol. 2, p. 343.

negroes" to repay a debt owed for purchase of whiskey.[90] Georgia also used confiscated slaves to compensate officials, the executive council of the state eagerly voting both itself and the governor slaves as payment in lieu of worthless currency or obligations on the state.[91] North Carolina sold slaves to "defray the expenses of their delegation to the Continental Congress."[92] Black men and women were doled out as rewards for meritorious services like the assassination of loyalists, such as one given to a Captain John Norwood in South Carolina in 1782 "as a Reward for having Killed a certain John Masterson a notorious & mischievous enemy of the Country."[93] Other slaves were sold abroad, most likely to French and Dutch colonies in the West Indies, in exchange for specie, which was then used to pay for supplies from foreign merchants who had wisely decided to stop accepting state money or credit.[94] At certain points states even tried to sell slaves to other states in an attempt to obtain hard money. In 1782 South Carolina governor John Mathews wrote to Virginia Governor Benjamin Harrison asking the latter to preside over a sale of one hundred fifty slaves "to be disposed of for Cash, to answer some pressing necessities of Government. The army in this State, is altogether supplied by certificates, we have no trade, consequently no money can be brought into the

---

[90] "Journal of the General Assembly, May 17 1782," *RRG,* II, 337.

[91] *Ibid*., 20 August, 1782.

[92] Petition of Benjamin Sheppard, 1789, Petitions, Craven County, General and State Assembly Records, NSA.

[93] Petition of Alexander Chavis, 12 December 1793, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[94] E. James Ferguson, *The Power of the Purse*, 74.

Country." Harrison responded that to do so would be impossible, for no hard money existed in Virginia either.[95]

Finally, by the end of war the need to raise troops and the desirability of slave property above all else led each southern state to begin offering slave bounties to recruit soldiers because, as James Madison's brother Thomas put it, "no Sum in Money could be offered that would be thought sufficient by the Soldier … and Negroes were a desirable property."[96] Immediately after the British invasion, states had simply increased earlier forms of cash bounties. North Carolina's enlistment bounty rose from £100 in 1778 to $500 in 1780 and then an astounding £3,000 in 1781. When paper currency did not work, the state began in 1780 offering an additional 200, then 640, then up to 12,000 acres in western land in addition to clothing and a guarantee of provisions for the soldier's family.[97] Other more drastic measures to fill military ranks similarly proved insufficient. In addition to providing land and cash bounties, South Carolina passed a vagrancy law in 1778 that ordered the immediate enlistment of "all idle men, beggars strolling or straggling persons" as privates in one of the state's six regiments. However, just as increasing bounties did little to improve manpower shortages, the vagrancy law failed to meet the state's quota and instead pushed vagrants westward or into neighboring

[95] John Mathews to Benjamin Harrison, March 15, 1782, in Benjamin Harrison Papers, Brock Collection, Huntington Library; Governor Harrison to Governor Mathews, Apr 30 1782, in R. McIlwane, ed. *Official Letters of the Governors of Virginia* (Richmond, VA: Virginia State Library, 1958), vol. 3, p. 199-200.

[96] Thomas Madison to William Preston, 30 November 1780, Preston Family Papers, VHS.

[97] CSR, 24, p. 338, 368-9; 420. Paul V. Lutz, "A State's Concern for the Soldiers' Welfare: How North Carolina Provided for Her Troops During the Revolution," in *North Carolina Historical Review*, vol. 42 (July, 1965): 315-18.

provinces.[98] Just as increasing bounties did little, however, the vagrancy law appears to have had the ultimate effect not of filling the state's quota but of pushing vagrants out west or into neighboring provinces.[99]

As the military situation grew more desperate, and as enticements in land and currency or certificates consistently failed to generate needed soldiers, states turned to using human property as bounties, knowing it was the one form of valuable and movable property they possessed which poor farmers coveted. Slave bounties differed from state to state. Virginians taxed large planters one slave per every twenty owned to go towards enlistees, a policy that expressed lingering resentment towards the state's First Families as much as it did considerations of practicality.[100] Other states initially tried to use confiscated slaves to furnish recruitment bounties, with Georgia using slaves as direct payment to purchase horses for a new regiment of future governor James Jackson's Light Dragoons.[101] When states could not meet demand, and as confiscated slaves were sold or employed in public works, certain military and political leaders in South Carolina and Georgia finally turned to a more extreme measure. Beginning with the so-called "Sumter's Law," named after Thomas Sumter, who first implemented the scheme in

[98] Walter J. Fraser, Jr., "Reflections of 'Democracy' in Revolutionary South Carolina?: The Composition of Military Organizations and Relationships of the Officers and Men, 1775-1780," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, vol. 78, 3 (July, 1977): 202-212, 205.

[99] Fraser, "Reflections on Democracy in South Carolina," 205

[100] L. Scott Philyaw, "A Slave For Every Soldier: The Strange History of Virginia's Recruitment Act," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol 109 (April, 2001): 364-79.

[101] James Stalling to Colonel James Jackson, July 24, 1782, James Stalling Letter, GHS; *RRG*, vol. 2, 306.

April 1781, soldiers were recruited on the promise of *future* plunder in slaves, from one "grown negro" for each private up to "three grown negroes and one small negro" for colonels.[102] Despite the fact that Sumter's Law essentially authorized a system of state-sanctioned plunder, a crime punishable by death in normal times, his plan was soon adopted by other men attempting to form similar regiments, including Andrew Pickens in South Carolina and James Gunn in Georgia (though many other military officials, including Nathanael Greene and Francis Marion, looked on the scheme with horror). Sumter's plan proved such a powerful inducement that, after several years of trying, he suddenly found he had little trouble filling his ranks. Even more impressive than the speed of enlistment were the facts that more than 94% of those who joined him had avoided prior long-term service and that his promise of plunder drew men from as far away as North Carolina.[103] Several hundred slaves were distributed amongst Sumter's troops during the war, and at the end of the conflict South Carolina still owed more than 570 "Grown Negroes" and 44 "small Negroes" to the men of his brigade. Importantly, the great majority of those who enlisted with Sumter, and with other regiments under similar plans, were poor farmers. The majority of them would never in their entire lifetimes have been able to accumulate the capital necessary to purchase the slaves they were now given.[104]

---

[102] Richard Hampton to John Hampton, 2 April 1781, in Gibbes, *Documentary History*, vol. 2, p. 47.

[103] For an excellent discussion of Sumter's regiment and the social impact that slave bounties had on the development of the South Carolina backcountry see Justin Liles, "Thomas Sumter's Law: Slavery in the Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2011, p. 104-5.

[104] A number of soldiers never received their promised slaves, receiving promissory notes payable instead; many of these were, in turn, purchased by officers who

The greatest transfer of human property during the War for Independence, however, came not through bounties or sales of confiscated estates but through the mutually enforcing relation between plunder and corruption engendered by the rising value of slaves and the disorder into which the fighting degenerated. Indeed, with the British army trapped along the coast by 1782, plundering became the prime object of the war both for many soldiers and for the endlessly sprouting bands of banditti and privateers who seemed to be everywhere increasing.[105] Although details remain hard come by, and although we will never know exactly how many slaves were taken by whom or from where, it is clear and will be further shown in the next chapter that some of the leading figures in the early republican South enriched themselves this way. Wade Hampton stole slaves and sold public horses for slaves and purchased the promissory notes of soldiers under his command as he rose from a middling trader in 1776 to the wealthiest slaveholder in South Carolina by 1800 largely through his position as a colonel in Sumter's state troops.[106] Future Georgia politician James Gunn was accused by multiple parties of similarly selling public horses for slaves and of plundering from rebel sympathizers as well as loyalists, and it is quite clear that Sumter and other officers serving in his legion kept more than their fair allotment of slaves taken from backcountry

---

eventually used them to accumulate confiscated estates and western land. Bridwell, "The South's Wealthiest Planter," 206.

[105] The endless amount of plundering led to increasing acrimony by the commanders on each side tasked with negotiating a peace. For example, General Alexander Leslie, in charge of the British Garrison at Charleston, threatened Nathanael Greene to retaliate in kind if he could not get South Carolina troops under his command (including Sumter's) to stop plundering loyalist plantations. Alexander Leslie to Nathanael Greene, 4 April 1782, Alexander Leslie Letterbooks, Microfilm, NYHS.

[106] Wade Hampton to Richard Hampton, 30 January, 1782, Hampton Family Papers, SCL.

estates.[107] Many unscrupulous British officers and soldiers did the same, selling to the Caribbean many of the slaves who had come to them in hopes of obtaining their freedom.[108]

Along with engrossment by military officers who advanced themselves through plunder, innumerable private operators sought profit or entrance into the slaveholding ranks through similar behavior. Inhabitants of Amelia County, Virginia, petitioned the legislature for a detachment of militia to prevent further loss of slaves from "small bands … who have been making night time raids and seem to be ever increasing."[109] In 1780, James Wright reported of Georgia that "this Province has been so much Distressed by the Rebellion, by Plundering Party's … most of the Inhabitants are dispersed and Gone, and the Number of Negroes Greatly diminished."[110] And in North Carolina residents of multiple counties complained repeatedly of "small parties of banditti … who take our Negroes and bring them to the southern province."[111] So bad did the situation appear by the end of the war that Colonel Thomas Wade of the state's Continental Line wrote to General Greene and informed him that "This Country will be Ruined … by the Whig and

[107] George R. Lamplugh, "The Importance of Being Truculent: James Gunn, the Chatham Militia, and Georgia Politics, 1782-1789," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 60, 2 (Summer, 1996): 226-238, 228.

[108] It is impossible to know how many slaves were sold by British troops, but the number was surely in the thousands. Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 209-12.

[109] "Petition of the Inhabitants of Amelia County, 1781," *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, II, 684.

[110] James Wright to Lord Germain, 17 May, 1780, "Papers of James Wright," *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3, 308-9.

[111] Petition of Jacob Alford and the Inhabitants of Anson County, January 1779, General and State Assembly Records, NSA.

Torys that form small parties under no Orders and plunder the Country."[112] For the most part it appears that these smaller bands operated independently, though often in the guise of serving one side or the other, and it is quite clear that they drew from the same ranks as the men who enlisted in military service under plans similar to Sumter's. Plunder and robbery, therefore, became a primary means of hastening the ascendency of some and the decline of others in a Revolutionary South in which fortunes were made and lost as if overnight.

Even for those who did not directly participate in plunder the situation proved ripe for profit. It is clear that by the end of the war the plunder of human property had become so frequent that numerous individuals acted as middlemen, taking slaves from "banditti" and selling them to those who asked no questions both within and outside the lower colonies. A number of slaves taken from Georgia appear to have been moved through Florida by "Chapts that Call themselves Torys that are Frequently going by with Negroes to Sell to the Spaniards, they tell the Indians anything to get liberty to pass through with their stolen property."[113] Other individuals, such as one John Kains of Virginia, facilitated the movement of stolen slaves and horses from plundered plantations in Virginia and North Carolina down into the backcountry of South Carolina.[114] The

[112] Thomas Wade to Nathanael Greene, 29 April, 1781, *Papers of Nathanael Greene*, vol. 8, p. 175.

[113] Timothy Barnard to Major Cain, 13 April 1784, John Habersham Papers, GHS.

[114] Cornet Elholm to Peter Horry, March 3, 1782, in Gibbes, ed., *Documentary History*, 3, p. 262; Francis Marion to Horry, March 8, 1782, in *Ibid*., p. 266-7; Marion to Horry, March 10, 1782, in *Ibid*., p. 267-8. Kains was either at the time or had previously served under Francis Marion in the light horse and had been accused of similar practice a year earlier. He was court martialed in Marion's brigade for "Plundering Negroes hoggs & other goods." Francis Marion Orderly Book, vol. 3, March 3, 1781, Huntington Library.

profits to be made through stealing and human property appear to have been so great that even better known more respectable men became involved. The wealthy North Carolina merchant Joseph Westmore declined to accept payment for his shares in a wartime slaving venture, for instance, instead taking four male slaves valued at £400 sterling apiece as his profit.[115] And in a tantalizing set of letters, the merchant and wartime profiteer David Ross informed his business partner John Hook that, due to "our inability to receive sufficient crops" to sell in 1778 and 1789, the best profits to be had would be in a "Negro Adventure," a term that—given Ross's other interests and the state of the Atlantic slave trade—clearly refers to selling slaves taken either by privateers or smaller plundering parties operating within Virginia.[116] The same David Ross was given authority by Washington to dispose of "unclaimed Negroes or Mullattoes" after Cornwallis's surrender, a task that no doubt involved continuing the trade in slaves at large personal profit.[117] By 1790 Ross had risen from relative obscurity to become the wealthiest man in Virginia, one of many rapid ascendancies the war, and the peculiar nature of human property, would allow.[118]

[115] Joseph Westmore Journal, 1780-1784, DUL.

[116] David Ross to John Hook, October 28, 1778; David Ross to John Hook, 17 November, 1788; both in John Hook Papers, DUL.

[117] "After Orders, Oct 25 1781," Orderly Book of Gen. Anthony Wayne, 1781, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

[118] Ross's enormous wealth is detailed in Jackson Turner Main, "The One Hundred," *WMQ*, vol 11 (1954): 354-84. Unfortunately, as with so many individuals from the period, extremely few of Ross's papers survive.

By the end of the war large areas of the South barely resembled the prosperous, rapidly growing society inhabitants had known before the war. Fields lay fallow, plantations smoldered. Many of the era's leading men had been ruined, either by debt, destruction of property, or confiscation, while other men emerged with wealth and political power unimaginable before the war. Planters in Georgia and South Carolina had lost perhaps a full quarter of their slaves and those slaves who remained often refused to work or hid in the swamps and woods. Everywhere, men and women, black and white, scrambled to make sense of a new world and the opportunities and dangers it presented.

Chapter 2: The Spoils of War: Slaves, State Debt, and Social Change in the Revolutionary South

Measured in terms of property and power, civil wars and revolutions invariably produce winners and losers. The American Revolution, which was both things and one, made "new men" and destroyed fortunes across the young Republic. But in the Southern states, where loyalism and disaffection ran high, and where armies and partisans engaged in a desperate civil war amongst half a million slaves, the fires of war burned longest and hottest.[1] By 1781, the pressure of fighting a total war within a fractured and slave-based society transformed the War of Independence into a crucible, within which land, property, and people melted into capital that could never again be acquired or lost so easily. Of those who lost the most, some chose the wrong side; others happened to live in the path of foraging armies or marauding bands; still others lacked the access and power to protect what they had and to recover what had been taken from them. For those who leveraged the disorders of war to engross land, slaves, and influence, however, political and economic gains rested strictly upon force, whether force of arms, influence, or political and military office.

This chapter examines the primary means through which, first, the transforming hand of the Revolution ruined once powerful planters and merchants and, second, raised

---

[1] For levels of disaffection, see Michael McDonnell, "The Other Three-Fifths: Reconsidering the War for Independence and the American Revolution," paper presented at The American Revolution Reborn, May 31, 2013, Philadelphia. Also Ronald Hoffman, Ronald Hoffman, "The 'Disaffected' in the Revolutionary South," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Exploration in the History of American Radicalism* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976): 273-317.

others into the resulting economic and political vacuum.[2] To be sure, many of the South's pre-war planters supported the patriot cause, and many profited handsomely and secured greater political power as a result of the conflict. Yet the nature of the war—both in terms of where and how it was fought—placed the greatest pressure on older planting areas along the coast in Georgia and the Carolinas, where slaves deserted in great numbers and where the arrival of the British army forced lowcountry residents to openly affirm allegiance for one side or the other. At the same time, the war allowed for unprecedented political and economic advancement for men, many of whom hailed from the backcountry, who accumulated capital and obtained a level of influence over state governments that they could never have dreamed of before 1776.

However, the contours of the war narrowed the types of capital that Southerners might acquire and constricted the avenues through which the value of that capital might be realized. The drain of specie, the disruption of agricultural production, and the emissions of millions of dollars worth of paper currency combined to foreclose the possibility of accumulating wealth simply in the form of plundered or embezzled monies.[3] Instead, the wealth that could be realized almost wholly consisted of slaves, debt, and land. I have argued in the previous chapter that the conditions of war worked to

---

[2] As indicated in the introduction and signaled by the phrase 'transforming hand of revolution' indicates, this paper is very much in line with an old and rich historiographical tradition that asserts the Revolution as a moment of profound change. Beginning with progressive historians like Carl Becker and John Franklin Jameson, it continues in the work of scholars like Ronald Hoffman, Michael A. McDonnell, Staughton Lynd, and Alan Kulikoff.

[3] For deprecation see especially E. James Ferguson, *The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776-1790* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1961).

reduce enslaved men and women to the bare essence of property, with thousands being plundered or used as callous cash payment to troops or to raise materiel. Yet in their effort to wage and win the war, states also distributed millions of acres of land—or rather of *rights* to land—in the form of certificates and warrants, and issued millions of pounds worth of debt to citizens and speculators who by the end of the war became the states' primary creditors.[4]

In order to secure title to plundered slaves, to increase the value of land that itself had become wildly depreciated, and especially to realize debts owed by states that lacked the means to repay them, those who ascended in the cauldron of revolution wed themselves to the expanding power of state governments. Most strikingly, during the tumultuous years 1781 and 1782, with the patriot war effort at its lowest ebb and with backcountry residents for the first time overrepresented in wartime assemblies, state governments became the primary means of continuing the forced transfer of property that had marked the war from the beginning. In the confiscation of loyalist property – in essence plunder through legislation – state governments allowed paper fortunes to be transmuted into estates and slave property. And in pushing for the expansion of courts, appointment of government officials, the building of canals, and creation of legislative districts during and immediately after the war, those in ascendency sought to suppress the disorders and close the fissures in Southern Society through which they had risen, in the

[4] More than 80% of state debt was held by private citizens, either in various forms of specie certificates or "special indents" purchased or as payments owed to soldiers and suppliers. See for instance, W. Robert Higgins, "The South Carolina Revolutionary War Debt and its Holders, 1776-1780," *South Carolina Magazine of History and Biography*, 72, 1 (Jan., 1971): 15-29.

process joining the interests of the new states to the expansion and entrenchment of slavery.

Like a tornado, the destruction of war reached across the South broadly but unevenly. Although losses were uneven for merchants and planters, with some losing all and others losing almost nothing, they tended to be greatest among the estates and merchant houses near the Atlantic. As men and women moved now north, now south, to escape armies and partisans, simply being on the road at the wrong time might be enough to lose a life or a livelihood. As they fled the partisan fighting around the High Hills of Santee in South Carolina, the widow Martha Mismore lost her "Negroe boy, Horse & Cart, most of our Familys clothing, and all Hoggs and livestock" to a roving band of whig partisans who left them stranded and nearly naked at the side of the road.[5] "A poor unfortunate soul" making his way from North Carolina to the relative quiet of Virginia in 1781, who managed to straggle into the Moravian settlement at Salem after he "was beaten and had all his property taken by Liberty Men to the South of here."[6] Occurring almost entirely in the backcountry, where the reach of the state was weakest and existence for recent migrants especially fragile, the literal highway robbery of some among the thousands displaced by the fighting might be enough to reduce a lineage to

[5] Claim of Martha Mismore, Papers of the Loyalist Claims Commission, British National Archives, Kew, England [hereafter LCC], A.O. 13/24/359-61.

[6] David Adeleide L. Fries, et. al., *Records of the Moravians of North Carolina*, 13 Volumes (Raleigh, NC: State Department of History and Archives, 1968-2006), IV, 482.

dependency even if could hardly be said to be as lucrative as the wholesale plunder of plantations.[7]

Losses of property were everywhere devastating, but the most significant loss of slave property corresponded directly to proximity to either the British or American armies. For large slaveholders in particular, the presence of the British line could and did precipitate mass desertions of enslaved laborers that could ruin the grandest of fortunes. Planters in the lowcountry parish of St. John's-Berkley, a rice area with a concentrated slave population near the British headquarters in Charleston, lost more than half their laborers to plunder or desertion during the war.[8] Fifty miles up the coast, planter Jonah Horry saw almost every one of his seventy slaves desert to the British in 1781.[9] And as British armies snaked their way along the coast and through the Carolina backcountry late in the war, slaves deserted in small groups or en masse. After Cornwallis's army moved from North Carolina into Virginia during the summer of 1781, the doctor Richard Honyman reported that neighbors along Cornwallis's route had lost "20, 30, 40, 50, 60, or 70 Negroes besides their stocks of cattle, sheep and horses," and William Lee claimed

---

[7] It's worth noting that, with but two exceptions I've found, all claims entered into the Loyalist Claims Commission for property lost while traveling were claims for less than £100 and most far less than that. Given that the expense and effort required to file a claim was prohibitive to many of the vulnerable who escaped, and the thousands more who did not, it is safe to assume that these instances occurred far more frequently than the records show. See, for instance, Peter M. Mitchell, "Loyalist Property and the Revolution in Virginia," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1965.

[8] Papers of the South Carolina Commision for the High Road, St. John's-Berkeley Parish, 1775-1784, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC [hereafter SCHS].

[9] Notice in *South-Carolina Weekly Gazette, Feb 22, 1783*.

that “all of my neighbors” had “lost every slave they had in the world, and Mr. Pardise all but one” to desertion and foraging parties.[10]

Because slaves comprised such a high percentage of real and personal wealth in the South, often more than half of a household’s total worth,[11] planters were understandably most distraught about the desertion and seizure of slaves that became widespread by 1781. Yet within the chaos of the war any moveable property was subject to impressment or plunder. The loyalist Peter Taylor of South Carolina wrote to his wife that his lowcountry plantation had “been ransacked over and over by both parties and what the one left the other took away. A few negroes was living on it but the Chief part taken to Charleston, not a single Horse, nor any other Stock left on it.”[12] In Georgia, the Royal Governor James Wright despaired that “this Province has been so much Distressed by the Rebellion, by Plundering Party’s … most of the Inhabitants are dispersed and Gone, and the Number of Negroes Greatly diminished.”[13] So bad did the situation appear by the end of the war that Colonel Thomas Wade of the state’s Continental Line wrote to Nathanael Greene to inform him that “This Country will be Ruined … by the Whig and

---

[10] Quoted in Michael McDonnell, *The Politics of War: Race, Class, and Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Prss, 2007), 439, 441.

[11] This was particularly true among small slaveholders. See, for instance, Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[12]Peter Talor to Isabella Taylor, 16 Jan 1783, in Taylor Family Papers, SCL.

[13] James Wright to Lord Germain, 17 May, 1780, “Papers of James Wright,” *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3, 308-9.

Torys that form small parties under no Orders and plunder the Country."[14] Earlier in the war, and close to the Virginia Assembly in Williamsburg, the outspoken supporter of the crown Rev. John Agnew witnessed "Armed parties … with Drums, Guns & Bayonets & with wanton outrage & profanity" interrupt his sermons and "the most violent mobs … surround his house in the night time, and shoot at his negroes." During his imprisonment, "the greater Part of his best Negroes were caught & with the slaves of other Loyalists forcibly sent off in wagons of the Officers … to the Settlements in the back Country," only a single example of the shift in wealth and the enormous disruption in the lives of enslaved men and women precipitated by the structure of war.[15]

After three years of continuous fighting, the results were plain. William Moultrie, riding from Philadelphia through the backcountries of Virginia and the Caorlinas, could only describe the countryside through which he rode as having "been so completely chequered by the different parties, that not one part of it had been left unexplored; consequently, not the vestiges of horses, cattle, hogs or deer, etc. was to be found … no living creature was to be seen, except now and then a few camp scavengers, picking the bones of some unfortunate fellows."[16] Nor was the devastating contained to rural areas. The destruction of war touched thousands more who lived in towns along the coast or in trading settlements within the interior. Indeed, one of the primary ways the Revolution reshaped the structure of commerce in the Southern states by halting and then redirecting

[14] Thomas Wade to Nathanael Greene, 29 April, 1781, *Papers of Nathanael Greene*, VII, 175.

[15] Memorial of Reverend John Agnew, Claim of John Agnew, LCC, A.O. 13/27/70.

[16] William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, 2, 354-5.

production of agricultural commodities,[17] and it destroyed former centers of commerce and helped create new ones in their stead. Because the main port towns tended to be dominated by merchants, who in the South acted more as factors than wholesalers and so leaned Tory far more than their northern counterparts,[18] patriots and occasional British forces rarely hesitated to burn some of the region's important towns to the ground. British forces under General Augustine Prevost in 1780 burned the town of Sunbury, Georgia, which was rapidly approaching Savannah in importance during the late colonial period, and which William Bartram described in 1773 as "a sea-port town beautifully situated on the main between Medway and Newport rivers … and providing a Port of entry for rice, cattle, lumber, shingles, and slaves."[19] Sunbury would never return to its pre-war prominence; nor would the neighboring town of Ebenezer, an important hub for merchants dealing in rice, silk, and cotton that was abandoned during the Revolution as residents sought refuge from raiding parties and warring armies.[20] In 1776, patriot forces spent three full days looting and then burning £300,000 worth of property in Virginia's most important port of Norfolk, the main trading center for tobacco factors operating in the Virginia and Northern North Carolina tidewater and a town noted for its "many fine

---

[17] The subject of chapter 5.

[18] An observation made many years ago in Arthur Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York: Reprint edition; Beard Books, 1939).

[19] William Bartram, quoted in Charles C. Jones, Jr., "The Dead Towns of Georgia," in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, IV (Savannah, GA: Morning News Steam Press Printing House, 1878), 48.

[20] *Ibid.,* 169; 40-41.

houses and cobble streets."[21] Norfolk would be rebuilt after the war, but it never regained its importance as Virginia's primary port of entry, instead being rapidly surpassed by Richmond. Nor did it regain its grandeur. In his travels a decade later, the French writer Francois-Alexandre-Frederic duc de La Rochefoucault-Liancourt described the once prominent Norfolk as "one of the ugliest, most irregular, and most filthy towns that any-where can be found. The houses are low and unsightly, almost all constructed of wood." And despite residing in Virginia's only deepwater port, La Rochefoucault noted the new merchants in Norfolk owned but six vessels of their own and had witnessed most of their business move elsewhere.[22]

Calculating the exact amount personal and real property destroyed by armies or seized by partisans is impossible, though cumulative losses by both sides were certainly in the millions of pounds sterling. Thomas Jefferson, although prone to exaggeration,[23] estimated that Virginians lost more than £3,000,000 worth of property during Cornwallis's slow march towards Yorktown. On his own property Jefferson claimed that Cornwallis had "burned all the tobacco houses and barns on the farm, … Wasted the

[21] John E. Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia: 1775-1783* (Williamsburg, VA: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988), 81-4, 82.

[22] Francois-Alexandre-Frederic La Rochefoucault-Liancourt, *Travels through the United Sates of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797*, vol. III (Second edition; London: R. Philips, 1800), 11-2.

[23] Cassandra Pybus, for instance, rightfully concludes that Jefferson grossly overestimated Virginia's loss in slaves (though Pybus probably underestimates the same number). Cassandra Pybus, "Jefferson's Faulty Math: The Question of Slave Defections in the American Revolution," WMQ, vol. 62, no. 2 (June, 2005): 243-264.

fields in which the crop of that year was growing" and "killed or carried off every living animal, cutting the throats of those which were too young for serve. Of the slaves he carried away thirty."[24] For some, like John Harleston and Arnoldus Vanderhorst in lowcountry South Carolina, ruin was nearly total. Vanderhorst claimed losses—including slaves, dwelling houses, hogs, and firewood—of over £40,000 pounds sterling from "depradations by the British" during the war. Similarly, Harleston declared himself in "compleat ruin" after the loss of 64 slaves and all his horses and cattle to desertion and plunder.[25] Other large planters, like Henry Laurens, appear to have been lucky enough to escape the war with only minimal loss, a fact that Laurens attributed to the affection of his workforce but which likely had far more to do with the distance of Laurens's Mepkin plantation from the British front and several severe punishments that he had issued at the beginning of the conflict.[26]

Jefferson, Vanderhorst, and other patriot supporters did recover to a degree after the conflict, although their losses were often crippling in the post-war years.[27] For the

---

[24] Thomas Jefferson to William Jones, Jan. 5, 1787, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Barbara Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008); for figure see Thomas Jefferson, quoted in John Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia*, 318.

[25] Petition of John Harleston, 11 May 1783, Petitions, Legislative Papers, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, SC [hereafter SCDAH].

[26] Laurens had his plantation manager sell or imprison at the Charlesotn work house several slaves during the early years of the war, either because the slaves eloped or spoke favorably of the British. John Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens, 8 May, 1778; Henry Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens, 19 June 1778, in *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, vol. 13, David R. Chesnutt and C. James Taylor, eds. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 273-7, 491-5.

[27] Fairly or not, for the rest of his life Jefferson blamed his inability to repay his creditors in part to Cornwallis's "useless depredations." Arnoldus Vanderhorst petitioned

southerners who actively supported the crown, however, plunder of property and slave desertion almost uniformly led to ruin. Even the wealthy planters who obtained money in the post-war years through the Loyalist Claims Commission rarely received even half of losses claimed, and relief had to be spent in new lands and on accumulated debts. Despite having taken the state's loyalty oath, Richard Pearis, who had earlier raised a loyalist militia, "found himself ruined by means of Colonel Thomas and his party, who burnt and destroyed his houses, mills, grains, and furniture, his Negroes and stocks of cattle sold, and the spoils distributed amongst him and his men." Upon complaint, Pearis was confined in the Charleston jail, where a committee found him "sick and shut up with common criminals."[28] "Two of the South Carolina backcountry's wealthiest merchants, Eli Kershaw and Moses Kirkland, were banished and they or their executors spent the post-war years attempting to assuage their creditors rather than rebuild their once considerable fortunes. Before he died in a shipwreck in 1787, Kirkland had petitioned the Loyalist Claims Commission for over £12,000 to account for losses including thirty slaves, lands in South Carolina and Georgia, and thousands of pounds worth of debts and certificates he was left unable to realize.[29] And after Kershaw died at the war's end, his

---

the state of South Carolina for relief years after the war, and his family remained encumbered by debt for decades. Thomas Jefferson to Jared Sparks For the struggle of Jefferson and his peers with debt in the post-war years, see Herbert E. Sloan, *Principle and Interest: Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Debt* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2001); Petition of Arnoldus Vanderhorst, April 29, 1786, in Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.

[28] Memorial of Richard Pearis, 17 September 1776, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[29] Claim of Moses Kirkland of Ninety-Six District, LCC, A.O. 13/36/259-305. See also, "Sketch of Moses Kirkland," in Alexander Chesney, "The Journal of Alexander Chesney, a Sotuh Carolina Loyalist in the American Revolution," E. Alfred Jones, ed., in *The Ohio State University Bulletin,* vol XXVI, no 4 (October, 1921), 105-8.

executors spent the post-war years corresponding with merchants in England and planters in Jamaica as they tried to recover slaves he lost in order to pay the substantial debt he had left behind.[30]

The stories of the Kershaws, Kirklands, and so many others ruined by the war of war often are critical to understanding the Revolution's impact on southern development.[31] In their experience and the experience of the men who replaced them at the pinnacle of their society, we can better understand that the American Revolution was a decisive break in the history of the South. Indeed, the fixed hierarchy for which the South was known in both the colonial and antebellum eras made revolution and civil war a necessary precondition for the meteoric rise in fortunes witnessed during the post-war years. The immense capital required to enter the ranks of the economically and politically dominant planter class limited the social fluidity that marked western frontier regions and Northern cities in later years. Yet, for one revolutionary moment hundreds of planters and trading houses melted away in a historical instant. At the same time, the struggle for independence released an immense amount of paper capital into the southern states, capital that could be acquired for a mere fraction of its worth and with relative ease by men who possessed the power and the means. The only problem was then realizing in tangible property the full value of the capital that had been gained.

---

[30] See for example, Charles Ogilvie to "Dear Sir" [John Chesnut], April 5, 1783, in Williams-Chesnut-Manning Family Papers, SCL.

[31] An important recent exception to treating loyalist loss as ancillary to the revolutionary story is Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Knopf, 2011).

If disorder and destruction begot loss and ruin through desertion and plunder, it also allowed for accumulation by the same means, and some of the South's wealthiest post-war figures gained at least a foothold in the planter ranks this way. Generally speaking, however, the wealth accumulated through plunder needs to be divided between that taken illicitly and that taken under the auspices of the emerging Southern state governments. As shown in the previous chapter, privateers, bands, highway men and rogue soldiers were responsible for the loss of thousands of slaves and thousands more livestock and other items of property. The attempt to dispose of those stolen slaves in distant places led to the emergence of a lively trade in enslaved men and women who were forced across state lines or onto ships bound for the Caribbean. Precisely because it was illicit, however, and because banditry posed such a severe threat to the security of property that both the Southern states and the British army held dear, banditry never matched in scale or in scope of state-directed plunder, though of course the line between the two was never distinct.[32]

Plunder by definition is the taking of property through force, but state-directed plunder, in turn, can be distinguished as plunder through arms—through impressment or at the hands of the regiments of state troops and militia who made engrossment in slaves and other goods a primary object of fighting—or plunder through legislation, that is, confiscation. Through plunder, some of the South's wealthiest post-war figures gained at least a foothold in the planter ranks this way. Martin Armstrong, a patriot leader in Surry County North Carolina, operated a thriving business among the Moravian towns of Salem

[32] It should be repeated that, as shown in the previous chapter, there were large scale plundering operations that worked out of East Florida, though slaves taken there tended to return to Georgia or be sold into the Caribbean.

and Bethabara, selling "for a fair price" goods he had taken during his campaigns in South Carolina.[33] In Georgia, James Gunn and James Jackson—the former a future politician and planter, the latter a future senator and governor—commanded troops accused on numerous occasions of taking "Negroes for the benefit of the officers."[34] Indeed, members of the Georgia Continental Line complained that the only soldiers serving the state who received payment towards the end of the war were Jackson's state troops, who were paid only because "they were amply rewarded with Negroes taken by themselves in prompt pay."[35] Gunn was also personally accused of selling public horses for slaves and of plundering from patriot sympathizers as well as loyalists.[36] Other future leaders of the Georgia backcountry did the same, with Elijah Clark – who founded a Georgia dynasty that included two future senators – splitting spoils of slaves with a brigade under South Carolinian Andrew Pickens after defeating loyalist militia commanded by the important backcountry trade Thomas Waters in 1782.[37]

---

[33] Cory Joe Stewart, "The Affairs of Boston in the North Carolina Backcountry During the Americna Revolution," Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2010, 113.

[34] George R. Lamplugh, "The Importance of Being Truculent: James Gunn, the Chatham Militia, and Georgia Politics, 1782-1789," in Georgia Historical Quarterly, vol LX, no 2 (Summer, 1996): 226-238.

[35] Petition from Sodiers of the Georgia Continental Line, in "Copys of Letters&c from Committee of Officers, January, 1783," in "Papers of Lachlin McIntosh," Lilian M. Hawes, ed., *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 1 (1956) p. 68.

[36] George R. Lamplugh, "The Importance of Being Truculent: James Gunn, the Chatham Militia, and Georgia Politics, 1782-1789," in Georgia Historical Quarterly, vol LX, no 2 (Summer, 1996): 226-238, 228.

[37] Louise Frederick Hays, *Hero of the Hornet's Nest: A Biography of Elijah Clark, 1733 to 1799* (New York: Stratford House, 1946), 162.

In South Carolina, perhaps the most significant seizure of property came at the hands of state troops raised by prominent post-war figures like Pickens and Thomas Sumter. Devoid of specie and unable to raise troops through paper currency or land bounties, South Carolina and then Georgia and North Carolina attracted recruits with the promise slaves to be taken as *future* plunder from loyalists and British lines. The results were predictable. The men under Sumter's command began "impressing" slaves and other property from the disaffected or patriot supporters as well as from those accused of loyalist sympathies. Most prominently, Wade Hampton—who again rose from a landless shopkeeper in 1775 to owning 137 slaves in 1785 and died the wealthiest planter in the South—entered the slaveholding ranks by taking a large number of slaves while at the head of a regiment of troops under Sumter's command, as we have seen. Records of Hampton's wartime actions remain scarce, but there is evidence he took a large number of slaves and horses on at least three occasions.[38] In 1782, he wrote his brother Richard saying that he had "recovered" twenty-seven slaves from the Combahee plantation of prominent loyalist Elias Ball; he directed Richard to take the slaves away from the fighting and towards their possessions around present-day Columbia.[39] A few months earlier, Hampton's troops attacked a loyalist militia outpost and "Kild thirteen of the Enemies Guard at Friday's Ferry, took a number of horses & Several negroes."[40]

---

[38] The paucity of Hampton's records is evidenced in the findings of Richard Bridwell's exhaustive 1,000 page dissertation. Bridwell, "The South's Wealthiest Planter."

[39] Wade Hampton to Richard Hampton, 30 January, 1782, Hampton Family Papers, SCL.

[40] Thomas Sumter to Nathanael Greene, Oct 3, 1781, *The Papers of Nathanael Greene*, 8:193.

Sumter and other officers under his command profited similarly, if not quite as grandly. William Ancrum, an important Charleston merchant who was later banished and then amerced by the state, claimed that on one occasion troops under Sumter's command had taken sixty-three slaves from his estate, as well as "Horses, Cattle, and Other Property" which were then divided amongst the officers.[41] The widow Anne Lord claimed that "74 Negroes were taken away by Order of General Sumter and distributed among the State Troops … and also was taken away … 22 head of horses, 100 head of Cattle, and upwards of 100 head of Sheep besides considerable other property."[42] Not that Sumter and his men particularly discriminated between the property of tories and whigs: South Carolina's courts were swamped after the war by claims of patriots who charged that they were deprived of slaves and other goods despite showing no loyalist tendencies.[43] Understandably, Sumter, Hampton, and others claimed to "not remember" exactly how many slaves they took during the last three years of the war.[44] Yet Sumter, like Hampton, Pickens, Gunn, and Jackson, rode the glory of and spoils of to post-war wealth and prominence. Sumter so enlarged his slaveholdings during the war that in October 1781, while on sabbatical from his command, he ordered 578 yards of "course

---

[41] Memorial of William Ancrum, in William Ancrum Claim, LCC, A.O. 13/96/27-52, 29.

[42] Petition of Anne Lord, relative to sundry Negroes, Horses, &c, taken from the estate of Andrew Lord on the Congarees by General Sumter, March 17, 1783, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[43] See for instance *Porter v. Dunn,* in Elihu Bay, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Superior Court of Law in the State of South Carolina, since the Revolution* (Charleston, 1788), p. 51-6.

[44] Depositions of Wade Hampton, Thomas Sumter, Richard Hampton, etc., 1785, in Account of Negroes for Public Service, Forfeited Esate Papers, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

negro cloth," enough for one hundred enslaved men and women. Sumter used his posting to gain other items of prestige as well: after the war he was known for having a large library, rare in the backcountry, which he had ordered taken away by troops under his command from the lowcountry estate of a wealthy loyalist in 1781.[45]

Had the transfer of property been limited strictly to plunder by force, either by troops or by banditti, the social changes resulting from the American Revolution might have allowed only a relative few entry into the slaveholding ranks. In their struggle to contain the disorders of war and win their independence, however, patriot leaders and partisans pushed the transforming hand of revolution deeper and broader into Southern society. To raise soldiers and materiel, states released millions of acres of land and millions of dollars worth of state debt into private hands which those ambitious and unscrulpulous enough were quick to acquire. Then, through the sale of confiscated estates and the opening of western land offices, state governments provided the accumulators of war-time capital to realize the paper wealth they had acquired in land and slaves.

Patriot officials' decision to use land, slaves, and debt to fund the war resulted directly from the region's lack of specie, disrupted agricultural production, and depreciated currency. The use of land bounties and paper money for military recruitment was nothing new, of course. Colonial assemblies had used land bounties to raise troops

---

[45] Claim of James Carey, cited in Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise fo the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 103.

during the Seven Years War and other conflicts.[46] What distinguished the actions of Southern state governments, both from previous conflicts and from their counterparts to the Northward, was instead the *scale* of their issuances during the Revolution. Ignoring Indian claims to the land on which they lived, Georgia alone issued 1,458 individual warrants for land, ranging from 140 to over 2000 acres, to fighting men, and another 2,923 to households and individuals as "rewards" for not plundering the countryside, distributed among a prewar population of 18,000 white men and women.[47] North Carolina issued warrants for more than two million acres of land in Kentucky and the western part of the state to purchase supplies and to meet enlistment bounties, which by 1782 began at 640 acres for a private and could run as high as 12,000 acres for a commissioned officer.[48] Virginia similarly released millions of acres of land in present day Kentucky and South Carolina hundreds of thousands more in the state's still sparsely populated upcountry.[49]

Just as they issued land to raise soldiers, states began issuing various forms of debt to purchase supplies and pay soldiers. At the outset, of course, each state emitted millions of dollars worth of currency that circulated alongside the continental currency issued by Congress for similar purposes. By 1780, as disruptions caused by the British

---

[46] E. James Ferguson, *Power of the Purse, 6-8;* Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years War and the Fate of Empire in British North America* (New York: Knopf, 2000).

[47] E.M. Coulter, *A Short History of Georgia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), 121-2.

[48] Clark, ed., The Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, XXIV, 369.

[49] Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia*, 84.

invasion rendered money useless and when supplies were most desperately needed, states turned to special "certificates" or "indents," theoretically payable in specie with interest payable in between three and seven years. Often a certificate might simply be a slip of hastily scrawled paper, written by a quartermaster and given to a resident with a rough estimation of how much cattle, wood, or grain had been impressed from him or her.[50] More often, however, indents were issued directly by the State Treasurer and given to those who directly loaned state governments money in specie, or to whom the state had obligations remaining at the end of the war. Some 382 of the enlisted men in Sumter's troops, for instance, found that the bulk of slaves they had taken were claimed by officers and were instead given indents by the state in lieu of a slave,[51] payable in specie at seven percent interest. And, rather than return the black men and women those soldiers had taken, the state then issued 240 more indents to Carolinians with claims against Sumter's men.[52]

---

[50] Josiah Collins, for instance, was given a certificate worth £240 sterling for a sloop taken from him by patriot troops in 1779 outside Hillsborough, and countless other examples can be found in treasury accounts within state archives. Claim of Josiah Smith, War Claims, Treasurer's Papers, Legislative Papers, NSA.

[51] In part, this was because the state was only obliged to pay troops "healthy and sound Negroes." Slaves who officers did not think fit this description could be and were withheld from troops and kept by the officers who appraised them.

[52] Adam Summers was given the seven-percent interest bearing indents in 1783 in return for eight slaves taken from his plantation. Petition of Adam Summers esquire, respecting Sundry Negroes, Horses Waggons &c taken from him by a Detachment from General Sumters Brigade under the Command of Colo Hampton, March 5, 1784, in Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH; Report of the Committee to Examine and Settle the Accounts of Brigadier General Sumter and Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Hammond, March 11, 1784, in *The State Records of South Carolina, Journals of the House of Representatives, 1783-1784*, ed. Theodora J Thompson and Rosa S Lumpkin (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), p 519.

Complicating matters further still, the disorder of war and the hasty methods with which state officials printed (or handwrote) their certificates, currency, and indents allowed for the additional circulation of a large number of counterfeit notes. As with so much in this period, extant records are scarce but the problem of counterfeiting was severe enough to warrant constant discussion and further undercut states currency and credit. In 1778, for example, "four villains" were accused of having "been for a few months past imposing upon the settlers [in the South Carolina backcountry] … with counterfeit 60 dollar Bills," half a million dollars worth of which were captured with them and another half million reported to have already been emitted.[53] A band of "liberty men" moving into backcountry North Carolina from Georgia in 1781 similarly had in their possession, along with a "plundered Negroe boy," "much paper money, counterfeit silver and gold."[54] And after the war, state governments reported hundreds of thousands of dollars more worth of counterfeit certificates and currency which came into the treasurers office in exchange for confiscated estates or western land claims.[55]

In other words by the end of the war the Southern states had become flooded by pieces of paper bearing *rights* to land, slaves, and money—all of specious and fluctuating value—but not those items themselves. Yet paper can do little to feed a family after

---

[53] Josiah Smith to John Rodgers, October 10, 1779, in Josiah Smith Letterbooks, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC [hereafter SHC].

[54] Bethebara Diary, July 29, 1778, in Adelaide L. Fries, et. al., eds., *The Records of the Moravians of North Carolina* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1926), vol. 3, p. 1555.

[55] See for instance, *Laws of the State of North Carolina*, James Iredell, ed. (Edenton: Hodge & Wills, 1791), p. 539.

armies destroy or impress a harvest, and the right to 640 acres of western land can be a distant prospect for a poor farmer who doubts the state's ability to survive, let alone ever grant him the land he is owed. With states' credit nearly gone, especially with the war at its lowest point for the patriot cause in 1781 and 1782, the value of both currency and specie certificates and indents were valued at a fraction of their nominal worth.

Along with the black men and women discussed in Chapter One, this array of handwritten notes, treasury certificates, land claims and other debt vehicles circulated as mediums of exchange during the war as a substitute for non-existent hard money and salable goods. Often southerners exchanged one for another: it was not uncommon, for example, to purchase land with slaves or slaves with land. The poor farmer William Camp sold "one negro wench named Else" that he had "acquired" during the war to Col. James Brisby of the Virginia line for "Seventy pounds in land paid in full."[56] A year earlier, recognizing that the value of slaves was increasing while the value of land depreciated rapidly as states issued increasing numbers of land warrants, the Virginia planter Richard Corbin chided his son John for the latter's decision to "furnish negroes in part of paymt [sic] for Donisham's Land at Moss Neck."[57] In the piedmont Virginia county of Louisa, Richard Morris similarly bought of one Benjamin Lewis "for and in the consideration of the sum of one hundred & fifty pounds in land … two negroes named

---

[56] Bill of Sale, 11 April 1783, in Morris Family Papers, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA [hereafter UVA].

[57] Richard Corbin to John Tayloe Curbin, 22 December 1782, Richard Corbin Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA [hereafter VHS].

Jerry and Jenny."[58] And immediately after the war the only way to obtain preemption warrants and to raise money to clear Kentucky land was to "sell a Negro immediately. This I am unwilling to do but it must be done," as nothing retained similar value.[59]

However, because states issued so many promissory notes and land claims, which circulated alongside countless counterfeit notes,[60] and because the promise of western land was a distant prospector to farmers with a starving family to feed, these peculiar forms of capital circulated at wildly uneven advantage. During the war circulating paper was invariably drawn towards those who had access to military and political office, and especially those with tradable goods. Because the war—with its destruction, interruption of harvests, and drain on the necessary articles of life—imposed the direst circumstances on the most vulnerable in Southern society, those with influence and possessed of necessities like grain and salt could negotiate the value of circulating capital to enormous advantage. Indeed, those who benefitted the most from the war tended to belong to a rising class of merchants who could purchase warrants and certificates with goods but lacked the encumbrance of pre-war debt that ruined so many prosperous planters and leading merchants of the colonial period.

---

[58] Bill of Sale from Benjamin Lewis of Richmond to Richard Morris, 3 January 1784, in Morris Family Papers, VHS.

[59] Quoted in Craig Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 125-6.

[60] In 1778, for example, "four villains" were accused of having "been for a few months past imposing upon the settlers [in the South Carolina backcountry] … with counterfeit 60 dollar Bills," half a million dollars worth of which were captured with them and another half million reported to have already been emitted. Bethebara Diary, July 29, 1778, in Adelaide L. Fries, et. al., eds., *The Records of the Moravians of North Carolina* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1926), vol. 3, p. 1555; *Laws of the State of North Carolina*, p. 539.

Examples of officers using their positions to accumulate paper fortunes are numerous, but the cases of backcountry North Carolina leaders William Lenoir and Benjamin Cleveland are especially striking. Both possessed relatively large estates around present-day Wilkes County immediately before the war and gained further prestige commanding militia units during the tumultuous years preceding the British invasion in 1778. Lenoir, for one, obtained a considerable start in accumulating capital when, in 1776, he raised a company of 3500 men and led them into Cherokee towns in the west of the state. His expedition destroyed homes, burned cornfields, and brought back "two Indian wives and mixed-blood children, four blacks, 80 horses, cattle, and deerskin." Upon returning to Wilkes, Lenoir used his position to command the sale of the plunder, slaves included, which garnered high prices that he then used to supply further militia outfits for further gain.[61] Cleveland, at the head of another troop of militia, ransacked the homes of supposed back country loyalists in the early years of the war, then similarly reinvested his plunder, both in a gristmill and in raising still more troops of militia.[62]

Early accumulation begot more paper wealth for both men as the fighting worsened, specie drained out of the southern states, and the paper capital in circulation consequently increased. Because state laws required a soldier's warrants to be signed by officers before they could be entered into a land office, which themselves were generally

---

[61] Jim Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 71.

[62] Benjamin Cleveland to William Lenoir, Oct 4, 1782, Lenoir Family Papers, SHC.

located far away from upcountry families,[63] many enlisted men found it easier to simply sell their shares or land to officers like Cleveland and Lenoir.[64] After the Battle of King's Mountain in 1778, where Lenoir had served as a captain, he bought up his men's shares of the substantial plunder taken after the battle in exchange for items like "a new bridle and saddle."[65] As the war continued, he purchased dozens of warrants and his men's "wages for soldiering" for small items or nominal sums of paper that, though wildly depreciated, was still required for soldiers' immediate needs.[66] By 1780, Lenoir had acquired 10,000 acres worth of land warrants.[67] Within four years, he held warrants for over 100,000 acres of western land and had grown his holdings in Wilkes County from roughly 1,000 to 4,876 acres, nearly twice as much as the county's next highest landholder. A year later, he had doubled his holdings, and by the 1790s he joined Cleveland in numerous schemes to become the backcountry's most powerful magistrates and prolific speculators.[68]

---

[63] Indeed, the location of land offices would become a major political issue in the immediate post-war years, particularly in Georgia where land fever ran especially high.

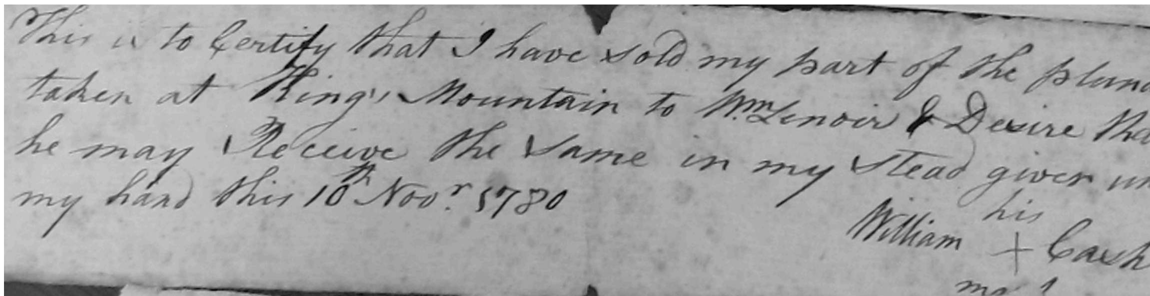
[64] Hayes, *Hero of the Hornets Nest*, 174-5.

[65] Receipt of payment from William Lenoir to Coward Finch, 1788, in Receipts, Lenoir Family Papers, SHC. See also Receipt of Payment from William Lenoir to William Combs, in *ibid*.

[66] Thankfully Lenoir was a fastidious record keeper, and the dozens of receipts for shares of plunder or "wages for soldiering" that he purchased from his men are found in *ibid*.

[67] Inventory of William Lenoir's Taxable Property, Lenoir Papers, Box 28, SHC.

[68] Tax Lists, Lenoir Papers, Box 47, SHC.


This is to Certify that I have sold my part of the plun
taken at Kings Mountain to Wm Lenoir & Desire tha
he may Receive the Same in my Stead given un
my hand this 10th Novr 1780
William his + Cash

Receipt of William Lenoir from William Cash, Lenoir Family Papers, SHC. Significantly, nearly all of the two-dozen extant receipts for soldiers pay or land are written in Lenoir's hand, with only one soldier apparently able to sign his name.

The importance of wartime office and access to transferrable goods in accumulating capital can be seen more starkly still in the example of another patriot profiteer, David Ross, who used wartime riches to become the richest man in Virginia in the 1780s, owning over 400 slaves and some 100,000 acres of land.[69] Because, as is the case with so many other Southerners from the period, so few of Ross's personal papers survive, little is known about him before the Revolution. It is clear, however, that in the 1770s he established himself as a speculator in lands and as a storekeeper around Petersburg, and by at least 1776 he was wealthy enough to purchase Oxford Iron Works from its distressed owners near present-day Lynchburg. Despite being accused of Toryism in the early years of the conflict, his ownership of the ironworks and connections to patriot leadership led to appointment as commercial agent for the state, responsible for supplying Virginia troops with clothing, lead, grain, and other items.[70]

---

[69] Jackson Turner Main, "The One Hundred," *WMQ*, 11, (1954), p. 363.

[70] Charles B. Dew, "David Ross and the Oxford Iron Works: A Study of Industrial Slavery in the Early Nineteenth-Century South," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 31, 2 (April, 1974): 189-224, 190-3.

With lead and iron so desperately needed, Virginia's assembly allowed Ross the use of slaves taken from Dunmore or sequestered from loyalists, whose labor they apparently allowed him to extract for entirely personal profit. He was paid £50 per ton of shot in Pennsylvania Currency, the only state currency that maintained some its value and the only state notes that Dutch and British creditors would accept as payment.[71] Indeed, such was the need for lead and iron that state governments and Congress sent "public Negroes" to man mines and forges in Virginia and South Carolina, allowing private citizens the use of public labor for personal gain.[72]

Ross earned substantial profits, both from supplying lead and iron to the Virginia line and from his control over supplies of items like corn, fodder, blankets, and even women's clothing (when cotton and woolens could not be found) before joining the State Assembly in 1783.[73] His reputation was such that in 1778 he was able to send an agent to purchase slaves out of the state with a letter of credit for £10,000 pounds currency.[74] At

[71] Captain Daniel Joy to George Muter, in *CSVP*, Vol. I, p. 370.

[72] Such was the case at the works owned by William Hill and Isaac Hayne in South Carolina, and by Thomas Person in Virginia. It should be said that even the use of confiscated or captured slaves was often not enough to keep the furnaces running, with Person's manager Thomas Milles complaining in 1777: "why the 10 negro men ordered by Congress to be sent here; are not sent I know not, thirty would be too few seeing no which hands can be hired except one or some times two for to cut a few Cards & begone. If the country want this Work to be conducted to Effect the above hands must Instantly be supplied, the Negroes that are here are not sufficient to do anything at all in the wood cutting way. More than their number are wanted for other uses, were they cloathed but they are so naked & barefooted that I wonder they are alive." Thomas Milles to Thomas Person, Person Family Papers, Swem.

[73] For women's clothing, see David Ross to Col. Davies, Dec 1 1781, in *Ibid.*, 633; for a mention of some of the other items Ross supplied see Major John Pryor to Colonel William Davies, June 27, 1781, in *ibid.*, 185.

[74] David Ross to John Hook, 17 November 1778, in John Hook Papers, DUL.

the same time he ordered his business partner in Petersburg, John Hook, to use dry goods and currency to gather certificates and warrants from the surrounding area, giving him a substantial paper fortune in land and money that nearly doubled after the Assembly voted him thousands of acres in return for his services after the war.[75] Hook himself used his connections with Ross and warrants purchased though his store in Petersburg to become a wealthy landholder in the post-war period, owning some 5,000 acres in Franklin County, Virginia by 1799.[76]

In the Carolinas and Georgia, where the fighting was fiercest and so emissions of warrants and certificates the greatest, men like Wade Hampton augmented gains made through plunder by acquiring paper fortunes in similar manner. Hampton, the man who most clearly exemplifies the enormous heights that could be reached through plunder and profiteering, had been savvy enough to use his part ownership in a frontier store to invest heavily in the "backcountry trade" before the British invasion, making substantial profits. In one trip in 1779, Hampton received £3210.10 in certificates for flour alone.[77] Like Lenoir, he used this money to purchase supplies and raise a troop of soldiers under Sumter, which then allowed him direction over plundered slaves and, armed with a

---

[75] David Ross to John Hook, 17 November, 1778 [separate letter from previous], DUL.

[76] For a discussion of John Hook's rise to become a moderately wealthy backcountry storekeeper before the war and for his engrossment afterwards, see Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), figure for land on p. 199-200.

[77] Ronald Edward Bridwell, "The South's Wealthiest Planter: Wade Hampton I of South Carolina, 1754-1825," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1980, p. 84.

command and with stores, put him in the position to purchase thousands of pounds worth of certificates and thousands of acres worth of warrants from the soldiers in his brigade.[78]

Just as Hampton used wartime gains in certificates and slaves to found the South's wealthiest dynasty,[79] Richard Bennehan used his position as a backcountry merchant to buy up warrants and certificates and begin the rise of the Cameron Family, whose name remains prominent today on the streets and buildings of Durham and Chapel Hill.[80] Bennehan "laid out money" in the purchase of warrants and "laid out goods" to gather up "proclamation money" in the early years of the war and, judging by his tax lists, accumulated substantial amounts of western land at the same time.[81] So too did James Gunn in Georgia and prominent lowcountry patriot political leaders Charles Pinckney and Edward and John Rutledge, each purchasing the debt and land of his state and in so doing becoming further committed to the state's capacity to make good on its obligations.[82]

These were but a few of many across the South who traded the various forms of capital in circulation to acquire substantial paper fortunes out of the most mundane of

---

[78] *Ibid*., 206.

[79] Hampton was called the South's "wealthiest planter" by 1815. Bridwell, "South's Wealthiest Planter."

[80] The Duke Blue Devils men and women's basketball teams play in Cameron Arena, for instance.

[81] Charles Johnson to Richard Bennehan, 14 May 1783; Tax Lists, 1778-1791, both in Cameron Family Papers, SHC. [check Johnson letter in bento]

[82] George R. Lamplugh, "The Importance of Being Truculent: James Gunn, the Chatham Militia, and Georgia Politics, 1782-1789," in Georgia Historical Quarterly, vol LX, no 2 (Summer, 1996): 226-238, 228.

ordinary items. If a soldier in a Virginia craved whiskey to calm his aches and troubles, or shoes to protect his worn feet, he bought what he needed with what he had to trade, a promise of payment or promise of land. But, because the value of his paper rights to land or specie had uncertain value, that soldier could do so only at extreme disadvantage. In Maryland, merchants offered immediate credit for salt, grain, and other necessities, accepting in exchange currency and land warrants at not more than a seventh of their value.[83] The North Carolina merchant John Hawrie wrote to an associate in the Continental Army barracks at Albemarle County, Virginia, in mid-1782 instructing him to "procure all the Soldiers Rights that you can for me … for these Claims you may pay in Leather, Whiskey Casks or whatever I have that is in your possession, provided they can be got at Six to one." Hawrie also noted that "a great number of militia certificates are now Circulating. Perhaps you can procure a number of these for Leather Shoes or Whiskey" at a still more discounted rate.[84] Another piedmont planter, William Cabell of Cumberland County, bought his share of certificates in items such as bacon and wheat. In an instance illustrative of the way goods could be turned into capital and back again, Cabell purchased a certificate received by one John Higgs in exchange for wheat which

---

[83] James A. Henretta, "The War for Independence and American Economic Development," in Ronald Hoffman et al., eds., *The Economy of Early America* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1988): 45-87, 69. Commenting on the transfer of land and warrants, Washington complained that "Speculation, peculation, and an insatiable thirst for riches had infected every order of men." Quoted in Edward C. Papenfuse, Jr., *In Pursuit of Profit: The Annapolis Merchants in the Era of the American Revolution, 1763-1805* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 94.

[84] John Hawrie to Bolling Clark, 21 June 1783, Clark Family Papers, DUL. He also had Clark sell a horse he had obtained for specie certificates. John Hawire to Bolling Clark, 7 July 1783, in *ibid*.

had itself been acquired for "three bushels & a half of corn."[85] In Georgia, the farmer John Lumpkin traded 800 acres and several certificates for a bridle and a shotgun.[86]

The disorder that defined the Revolutionary created a moment in which new men, some of whom had established themselves as traders or landowners before the war and some—like Hampton—who began with almost nothing, were able to acquire paper fortunes worth hundreds of thousands of acres of land and hundreds of thousands of pounds in certificates and indents. The problem for those who bought up paper rights during and after the war was taking the capital they had acquired for so little and realizing it for the largest gains possible. Everyone understood that the precarious financial situation of state governments and the Confederation Congress meant that state currency and debt would not be redeemed in hard money any time soon. Horatio Turpin of western Virginia wrote his brother after the war lamenting that he could not dispose of his paper in specie, which "would suit me much better, because I then could purchase in any part of the Country that shou'd please me."[87] Flush with paper that had little use outside of that which was legally created, Turpin and others instead turned their energies towards realizing their acquired certificates, warrants, and other liquid capital by retiring

---

[85] William Cabell Commonplace Book, Cabell Family Papers, VHS.

[86] William Bacon Stevens, *A History of Georgia, from its First Discovery by Europeans to the Adoption of the Present constitution in MDCCXCVIII* (New York: D. Appleton, 1847),

[87] Horatio Turpin to Philip Turpin, 20 June 1785, Philip Turpin Papers, VHS.

old debts and accumulating the region's two traditional repositories of wealth: land and slaves.

From the earliest days of the conflict, mobs and many officials compelled creditors to accept state debt and depreciated currency to satisfy debts. Attempting to win support from small farmers, states passed historically progressive debtor legislation, making currency legal tender before the total collapse of state money in 1780.[88] And if a creditor refused to comply with the law, as many did, that creditor faced being branded as a Tory, making his land and property fair game for plundering whig partisans and soldiers. As a result, merchants who had established themselves as major creditors suffered huge losses even if they had supported the patriot cause from the beginning. John Chesnut, who had dominated the backcountry trade with the Kershaw Brothers and Moses Kirkland, found himself near ruin after discovering that his British creditors had little sympathy for the fact that before coming to the British lines he had been forced "Receive in payment for Pryor Specialties & Contracts a nominal money which naturally and daily Depreciated in Value."[89] Indeed, pre-war creditors found that being forced to accept paper currency for debts could precipitate property loss as quickly as plunder. The prominent South Carolinian merchant and patriot Alexander Gillon had gone to Europe in 1779 and 1780 to buy frigates for the American navy. Upon his return "the large debts he was owed – some £586,000 in currency, was paid in 1779 and 1780 money, which

---

[88] Virginia, for example, allowed citizens to repay pre-war debts into the state treasury in certificates and currency at face value and then shielded them from their displaced creditors after the war. Herbert Sloan, *Principle and Interest*, 14; Michael A. McDonnell, *Politics of War*, chap. 8; E. James Ferguson, *Power of the Purse*, 214.

[89] Petition to the Honourable Col. Nisbet Balfour, Commandant at Charleston, John Chesnut, n.d. [1782?], Williams-Chesnut-Manning Family Papers, SLC.

depreciation made almost entirely useless." The Moravians of North Carolina found themselves so endangered by the "money they were forced to accept" that the community at Salem decided to spend all the cash they had in 1778 (though they did not get "12% of its real value") and resort to autarky, devising a system of tickets which circulated as the Moravians' independent currency within the town until "goods could later be redeemed in hard money."[90] And in Virginia, a Mr. Holt sold fifty slaves in order to avoid total bankruptcy. On his way to the sale, Holt remarked bitterly to an acquaintance who had profited by paying debts in currency that "your money was sure … you had suffered little in comparison with what he had by the war, & had not been obliged to take the paper Currency."[91]

On the other hand, the immense legal and extralegal pressure on creditors to accept state currency allowed large debtors to relieve their obligations and even take out new loans at huge advantage. Wade Hampton had taken out a large loan from one John Brailsford in 1779, which because of depreciating currency became nearly a total loss for the latter.[92] William Lenoir, one would suspect with no small satisfaction, paid off loans he had taken to purchase his pre-war holdings in currency and certificates in 1778 and

---

[90] Salem Diary, August 3-8, in *Records of the Moravians of North Carolina*, vol. 3, 1304-11.

[91] William Douglass to Francis Jedone, 12 October 1783, Jerdone Family Papers, Swem.

[92] After the war, Hampton—like many others—simply leveraged his position to ignore the rest of the balance due. Petition of John Brailsford, 12 December 1792, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

1779, much of which presumably came from the men he had commanded.[93] Debtors with obligations to prominent loyalists like Moses Kirkland or to Scottish tobacco factors could be luckier still; many of them used claims of toryism to ignore obligations that could be called in with only the greatest difficulty and middling success.[94]

As important as debt retirement was, especially to the creditors who comprised the region's colonial elite, during the second half of the war patriot leaders focused on devising means through which paper capital could be translated into solid property at the expense of ruined merchants and loyalist planters. Even before states began the bulk of confiscated estate sales, loyalists awaiting the British evacuation of Savannah and Charleston proved desperate to dispose of as much of their personal and real property as they could before they departed. Pierce Butler, who would own over 1,000 slaves at the time of his death in 1822, acquired his choice plantation on "Robin's Neck," containing "a dwelling house, office, barn, 20 slave cabins, six indigo vats, machine driven pumps, and 197 cleared and fenced acres" from a fleeing loyalist for "20 prime slaves"—a deal he could only strike during the war only because slaves could be carried away while a plantation could not.[95] In England and despairing of ever again seeing America, the once prominent Gloucester County, Virginia merchant Jonathan Watson accepted £3,500 in

[93] Receipts of Payment from William Lenoir, 1778, 1779, in Lenoir Family Papers, SHC.

[94] Kirkland, for instance, appears to have lost, in addition to his slaves and land, £1,022 sterling that was never recovered. Claim of Moses Kirkland, LCC, A.O. 13/36/259-305

[95] Pierce Butler to Morgan Brown, Jan 24, 1793, *The Letters of Pierce Butler, 1790-1794: Nation Building and Enterprise in the New American Republic*, ed. Terry Lipscomb (Columbia, SC: 2007), p. 226-8.

currency for his estate that had been valued at over £8,000.[96] Wade Hampton, who seems to have always been in the right place at the right time to enrich himself to the fullest, purchased lots in Charleston and land along the Saluda and Congaree Rivers from a Scottish merchant who was forced to flee after refusing to take an oath of allegiance. He also purchased the land, personal property, and backcountry store of a prominent pre-war trader named William Curry for only £6,500 current money as Curry sat waiting for a ship to carry him away from Charleston. Best of all, Hampton purchased much of Curry's property on credit; when the South Carolina legislature confiscated Curry's holdings, including his debts, Hampton kept the land and Curry lost the loan.[97]

Other leading patriots similarly leveraged the plight of loyalists who were desperate to sell what they could before they departed for uncertain futures. If a loyalist found that his estate was to be confiscated, for instance, he would take whatever he could for slaves and other property.[98] Others, like William Curry, found that the best they could do was sell slaves and valuable lowcountry land on credit, which was often never paid. South Carolinians Charles Pinckney, his cousin Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and Edward Rutledge all enriched themselves hugely in this fashion. Rutledge and C.C.

---

[96] Peter M. Mitchell, "Loyalist Property and the Revolution in Virginia," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1965, 79.

[97] Bridwell, "The South's Wealthiest Planter," 90-2.

[98] Thomas Timms bought two slaves and took them into backcountry South Carolina from a loyalist named James Cook, and seems to have retained them. Others were not so lucky, however—another man, John North, had the slave he purchased from the same Cook seized after Cook's property was confiscated. Petition of Thomas Timms, respecting Two Negroes he had Purchased from James Cooke, 29 January 1783; Petition of John North, Respecting a Negroe he Purchased from James Cook (whose Estate is confiscated) and taken from him by the Commissioner for Forfeited Estates; both in Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

Pinckney bought Peter Taylor's valuable plantation in Christ Church parish "containing 1400 acres, more or less and his lands on Edisto of about 1100 acres and also his Negroes about Eighty Three at the Plantation, Horses & Hogs, for the sum of four Thousand Guineas, Payable on the Xchange [sic] of London."[99] And like Wade Hampton the law partners Rutledge and Pinckney never paid a fraction of what they promised. As late as 1788 the agent for Taylor's widow Isabella wrote her to complain that "I have not gotten a farthing of what Mr. Pinckney and Rutledge owe." Another creditor made the same discovery when he tried to have the two repay a debt owed for property purchased during the war: "there is little prospect of recovering any thing from Rutledge & his Colleagues, who will now be very great Men & have little inclination to part with any property they have in possession."[100]

Still other prominent patriot leaders acquired property through more questionable means and then used the power and influence they had gained to quiet complaints. William Lenoir was accused of convincing an elderly planter, "ill educated and without much property," to sell valuable land in Wilkes County "for a paltry sum … having told him it was worthless."[101] Similarly, in 1782 William Davis, a lieutenant colonel in the North Carolina line, accused his brother-in-law and governor of the state Abner Nash of defrauding him of his entire fortune three years earlier. According to Davis, Nash had invited him for a dinner before the latter departed with his regiment for the front. Nash

---

[99] Peter Taylor, note and invoice, 17 March 1785, in Taylor Family Papers, SLC.

[100] Peter Taylor to Roger Smith, 26 November 1788, in *ibid*.; Isaac King to Joshua Ward, 16 June 1783, Isaac King Letterbooks, SLC.

[101] Affadavit of David Hicks, 1806, in William Lenoir Papers, SHC.

apparently offered a large sum of money to rent and manage Davis's estate while he was gone. Then, at some point in the festivities, when Davis "was very much in Liquor … There was a Particular Bottle for me … the Rum had a physical taste, but, not being Suspicious, it past off, tho' I am now very certain there was Lodanum in the Rum." The next morning, Davis awoke to find that he had at some point signed "a Bill of Sail [sic] which took every thing from me, both real and Personal, nothing of Property left. My Fourteen Consisted of 28 Negroes, 1000 acres, a fine Place, on which were a Saw Mill, a Pretty Stock of Cattle, Sheep & Hoggs."[102] No charges were ever brought against the governor, nor against William Lenoir, who some years later leveraged his position as a state general, a justice of the peace, and landholder to silence the accusations of one Benjamin Powell, who claimed publicly at a tavern that "he (Genl. Lenoir) was a plunderer, and he can prove it." Powell later recanted, no doubt under substantial pressure, learning that in the Revolutionary South what mattered was not who plundered whom but rather who possessed the means to turn plunder into power.[103]

It was through state-directed sales of estates and slaves confiscated from loyalists, however, that the holders of political power and state debt used the expanding power of their governments to destroy prominent pre-war families and provide the primary means of realization for the paper capital now in circulation. This plunder through legislation, in truth differing from the sale of property plundered by backcountry partisans only in its

---

[102] William Davis to Thomas Burke, 18 April 1782, in CSR, XVI, 596-98.

[103] Affidavit of Benjamin Powell, 13 September 1800, in William Lenoir Papers, SHC.

scale and in the means of purchase. It is true that states did not confiscate the lands of every loyalist, and—as Robert M. Weir has argued in an influential essay—the restoration of confiscated estates proved a powerful means of both easing tension and further asserting states' legislative authority in the post-war years.[104]

Regardless of how many loyalists were eventually struck from confiscation lists, the tangible result of confiscation was the seizure and sale of between five and ten percent of all personal and real wealth in the Southern states.[105] This was a huge sum, whose scale has perhaps not been fully appreciated by historians, especially when one considers that nearly all confiscated land was purchased in certificates and depreciated currency that, as argued above, had been acquired for very little. Confiscated estates, in other words, provided the most significant avenue through which officers, politicians, and rising merchants could transmit the peculiar capital they had acquired into slaves and some of the most valuable property in the South. At the same time, confiscation and amercement, or a one time punitive capital tax, either ruined or weakened the owners of

---

[104] Robert M. Weir, " 'The Violent Spirit,' the Reestablishment of Order, and the continuity of Leadership in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina, in Ronald Hoffman, Thad Tate, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press for the Capitol Historical Society, 1985): 70-89. Weir's thesis is expanded at length in Rebecca Brannon, "Reconciling the Revolution: Resolving Conflict and Rebuilding Community in the Wake of Civil War in South Carolina, 1775-1860," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2007; and, to a slightly lesser extent, Aaron N. Coleman, "Loyalists in War, Americans in Peace: The Reintegration of the Loyalists, 1775-1800," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kentucky, 2008.

[105] Calculated from Tax Records, State Papers, GHS compared to claims from Georgia in LCC; and also from W. Robert Higgins, "A Financial History of the American Revolution in South Carolina," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1970, 214; and Peter M. Mitchell, "Loyalist Property and the Revolution in Virginia," 23.

many of the largest pre-war estates, thereby further opening the fissures through which rising men might climb.

The Continental Congress had first suggested confiscation as a solution to fiscal difficulties in 1777, and Southern state governments had practiced piecemeal confiscation throughout the war to meet immediate expenses.[106] North Carolina and Georgia had confiscated so-called "vacant lands" belonging to English proprietors as early as 1775. Lord Grenville's several hundred acres in northwest North Carolina were seized by the states' legislature in 1777 with much of it being sold to those in a position to pay rather sizable entry fees of up to £40 per 100 acres (which, of course, was payable in heavily depreciated currency) and the rest being given away as soldiers' warrants.[107] South Carolina and Georgia both tried to sell slaves for specie, which proved lucrative to those with hard money in hand since slaves could be had for less than half their pre-war value.[108] And all Southern states preemptively confiscated land from Indian tribes. Indeed, the vast majority of the millions of acres of lands that states set aside to retire debt and pay soldiers were comprised of land that had been understood as belonging to Indian tribes before the Revolution, thereby ensuring that the displacement of Native Americans would be a priority after the war.

---

[106] Discussed in Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, p. 48, and elsewhere.

[107] "Minutes of the General Assembly, 1781," *CSR*, XVII, 715.

[108] Bill of Sale to Daniel Fridig, Treasurers Account, SCDAH. Fridig purchased 11 slaves for roughly £21 each in specie, far below the £40-£60 usually commanded before the war.

The formal confiscation and sale of loyalist property, however, came in the second half of the war, with the British occupying the coast and with plundering and disorder at its peak throughout the Southern interior. It is not coincidental that the most stringent confiscation acts were passed by legislatures comprised of the same officers and backcountry merchants who had spent the previous years leveraging the exigencies of war to accumulate paper and state debt. There were several reasons: first, the state constitutions passed during the war, though still dominated by older planting interests, allowed for far greater backcountry representation than the colonial governments.[109] Moreover, both because a significant proportion of pre-war politicians had "turned Tory," and because the war imbued militia and Continental officers with a significant amount of influence and prestige, the ranks of wartime Assemblies were flooded with men with little or no political experience. In Virginia, Landon Carter scoffed at the inexperienced representatives who came into Williamsburg in 1778 and 1779, many from the west and south of the state, calling them and "unfit for government."[110] Similarly, a Savannah conservative dismissed the Georgia Constitution of 1777—among the most democratic revolutionary constitution, with a weak Governor and a unicameral legislature—as having been drawn up by backcountry representatives "at a nightly meeting in a

[109] Jackson Turner Main, "Government by the People: The American Revolution and the Democratization of the Legislatures," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 23, 3 (July, 1966): 391-407; Main, "The American States in the Revolutionary Era," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Sovereign States in an Age of Uncertainty* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press for the Capitol Historical Society, 1980): 1-30.

[110] For the "new men" in the Virginia assembly, see Emory Evans, *A Topping People: The Rise and Decline of Virginias Old Political Elite, 1680-1790* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 189-94; quote on p. 193.

Tavern."[111] Even Edward Rutledge, one of South Carolina's most important patriot leaders, said he expected "damn Strange things" from his state assemblies, comprised of men the political insider did not know.[112]

Additionally, absent from the assemblies that met in 1781 and 1782—particularly in Georgia, where the brutal nature of the fighting had radicalized legislatures to their fullest extent—were lowcountry leaders who had been scattered or banished to St. Augustine by the British. As a result, the governments that met in 1781 and 1782 and enacted the most significant punishments of loyalists were for the first time actually overrepresented by backcountrymen and military officers. The South Carolina Assembly that met at inland Jacksonborough, for example, read like a military and militia roll, with men like Thomas Sumter, Francis Marion, Andrew Pickens, Wade Hampton and his brother Richard among those present.[113] The Georgia legislature met at Augusta after the British retreated from the backcountry settlement in 1781 and there, too, the overwhelming majority of those present were military men, including James Jackson, James Gunn, and many others.[114]

---

[111] John Wereat to George Walton, 30 August 1777, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, XII (1918) 66-74.

[112] Quoted in Edward McCrady, *History of South Carolina in the Revolution, 1780-1783* (New York: MacMillan, 1902), 528.

[113] Walter B. Edgar, ed., *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives, Volume I Session Lists, 1692-1973* (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), 187-91; Justin Liles, "Thomas Sumter's Law: Slavery in the Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2011, p. 104-5.

[114] Leslie Hall, *Land and Allegiance in Revolutionary Georgia* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 151.

These inland legislatures, composed of a majority of new men whose interests were tied to leveraging wartime gains to the fullest extent, passed acts of confiscation that continued the plundering engaged in by both sides. Those who held paper had to create avenues through which they could profit from wartime accumulation, and they and their allies in state legislatures crafted confiscation legislation towards that specific end. For this reason, as supporters and detractors of the controversial confiscation acts alike noted, the loyalists whose estates were most likely to be confiscated were those with the most property to confiscate. The South Carolina lawyer Aedaenus Burke, perhaps the most outspoken critic of the punishments inflicted on loyalists, noted that the committees that added names to confiscation and banishment lists talked far less about a given man's political leanings than "what Estate he has." When the focus turned to determining the loyalties of a wealthy Carolinian, men in the legislature shouted "a fat sheep; a fat sheep—prick him! prick him!"[115] As a result, the makeup of the roughly 1200 men and women who had their property confiscated and sold in the region was disproportionately composed of the wealthiest Southerners with suspect loyalty, regardless of where their allegiances actually lay in 1781.[116]

Just as drafters of the confiscation act aimed their legislation towards redistributing as much wealth as possible, they also designed the structure of actual sales

[115] Both quoted in Weir, "The Violent Spirit," 83.

[116] William Ancrum, for instance, petitioned the South Carolina assembly after the war, claiming he had been neutral in the conflict and so the confiscation of his substantial property was unjust. Ancrum, who had seen over 60 slaves taken by Sumter, had another 32 sold at estate sales; he was later reimbursed in partial value in indents, amerced at twelve percent, which he decried as nowhere near the value of the slave property he had lost. Petition of William Ancrum, 1790, in Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

to the advantage of those who had accumulated paper. The acts passed in 1781 and 1782 throughout the South permitted between two-thirds and the entirety of confiscated property to be bought with various forms of paper, the rest being payable in specie or specie indents on credit of up to seven years. The Acts also dictated that most sales be held on very short notice, sometimes only a few days ahead, limiting wide access to auctions to those with political connections. And finally, although the legislatures supposedly tried to limit engrossment by dividing confiscated lands into smaller tracts (from 240 to 640 acres, depending on the state), they put no limit on the *number* of tracts a single purchaser could buy. George Turner in Philadelphia lamented in a letter to a South Carolina correspondent that the state's confiscation acts should have been designed "to create an equal Division of Property; to break a growing Influence; to swell the Coffers of the State; but above all, to encourage Population." Crafted properly, they might "draw down Swarms of Emigrants and your Losses in the War would be exceeded in two years … And in this you would find a sovereign Balsam against Speculation." Yet everything in the acts prevented them from doing any such thing. Instead, "the Poor of your state, unable to lay down such Security, continue in their unprofitable state, and the Wealthy and Influential are thus invited to a dangerous Accumulation of Riches, to the impolitic Preclusion of the Rich and Poor of every other State in the New World."[117]

The result was the further transfer of property from many of those who had been at the pinnacle of society in 1775 but had been replaced there by the men raised upward by the Revolution. In the end, Georgia sold over 200,000 acres of land, much of it valuable and cleared, along with slaves and other personal property and received in return

---

[117] George Turner to "Dear Sir," 13 October 1782, in George Turner Papers, SCL.

more than £1.5 million in currency and certificates.[118] Virginia sold 400,000 acres and chattel property that in total retired over £3 million in currency and several hundred thousand pounds sterling.[119] North Carolina sold millions of acres, and although South Carolina seized only 238 named estates in its first confiscation act, those estates contained over 300,000 acres and thousands of slaves belonging to leading merchants and wealthy lowcountry planters.[120]

In confiscating and selling loyalist property, state legislatures legislated away fortunes that had taken generations to build. From 1782 until early 1785, appointed commissioners sold all the property of the wealthiest men in Georgia: Governor James Wright lost roughly 25,000 acres, slaves, and the three "most beautiful plantations in the Province" valued at over £160,000 sterling.[121] His brothers Germain and Charles lost only slightly less property, and the Lieutenant Governor John Graham lost even more, 26,000 acres spread across more than a half dozen estates.[122] Additionally, the state sold most of the land on Tybee Island, already a profitable point of production for rice and long-staple cotton, and over 1,000 lots in neighboring Savannah and the stores and

---

[118] Hall, "Land and Allegiance in Revolutionary Georgia," 173.

[119] Mitchell, "Loyalist Property and the Revolution in Virginia," 133.

[120] Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 79.

[121] Ralph Bett Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), 57.

[122] Kenneth Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia, 1763-1789* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 10-11.

surrounding lands of the majority of Scottish merchants who had moved into the backcountry.[123]

Among the 237 large estates confiscated in South Carolina (including perhaps a third of all lowcountry estates over 1,000 acres) was the great Wadboo Barony, 12,000 prime cleared acres belonging to the descendants of Sir James Colleton, one of the original colonial proprietors.[124] Also confiscated were the lands of the former governor of South Carolina and New Jersey, Thomas Boone, who lost a "great and valuable estate" of several thousand coastal acres.[125] The lands of John Bailey, a prewar politician and planter who owned significant tracts on Hilton Head, realized £100,926.5 in Carolina currency at estate sales in 1782 and 1783, only slightly less than the 40,333 acres belonging to the estate of Sir William Baker, a London merchant and absentee landlord.[126] What property remained of Moses Kirkland and Eli Kershaw in the backcountry was sold, as was over 400 Charleston lots belonging to "important Merchant

[123] Robert S. Lambert, "The Flight of the Georgia Loyalists," *The Georgia Review*, 17, 4 (Winter, 1963): 435-48.

[124] See Margaret Colleton Papers, SLC; Jerome Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War,* ???; Claim of Margaret Colleton, LCC, A.O. 12/44/291; Kathy Roe Coker, "The Case of James Nassau Colleton before the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates," in *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 87, 2 (April, 1986): 106-16.

[125] Memorial of Thomas Boone, Claim of Thomas Boone, LCC, A.O. 13/100/18-21, 13/125/76-145.

[126] After Bailey died, his grandson Peter Bailey petitioned and received bonds for the lands which were sold, though no actual property was returned to him (or typically to any other loyalist). Kathy Roe Coker, "Absentee Loyalists in South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 96, 2 (April, 1995): 119-134, 126-7, 123-4.

houses," whose substantial debts given to planters before the war the confiscation acts rendered inoperative.[127]

In North Carolina, the state assembly took lands belonging to the maligned Edmund Fanning in the town of Hillsboro and the surrounding backcountry county of Orange and the 800,000 acres belonging to his associate Henry Eustace McCullough, who for all practical purposes owned neighboring Rowan County.[128] Nathaniel Duckenfield, a British baronet, lost 4,000 acres in backcountry Bertie County, along with a Connor Dowd who had served in the loyalist militia and lost an additional 7,000 acres in Cumberland County. Virginia legislators confiscated the great estate belonging to Lord Fairfax and took the 50,000 "prime" acres belonging to Sir John Johnson.[129] Dozens of leading merchants in the Piedmont and along the Tidewater had their stores, lands, and slaves taken and sold, representing about half of all the estates sold in the state.[130]

---

[127] Kathy Roe Coker, "The Punishment of Revolutionary War Loyalists in South Carolina," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1987, p. 49, 58.

[128] For a discussion of Edmund Fanning's role in the North Carolina Regulation see The best short discussion of the influx of these interlopers from England or the coast is James P. Whittenburg, "Planters, Merchants, and Lawyers: Social Change and the Origins of the North Carolina Regulators," in *WMQ*, 34, 2 (April, 1977): 215-238; Marjorleine Kars, *Breaking Loose Together: The Regulator Rebellion in Pre-Revolutionary North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

[129] J. Franklin Jameson, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement* (Revised edition; Beacon Press, 1964), 34-5.

[130] Mitchell, "Loyalist Property and the Revolution in Virginia," 87.

The land, slaves, mills, bridges, water wheels, warehouses, storefronts, silver, horses, cattle, and clothing belonging to these and over a thousand other men and women sold, at auction, for millions and millions of pounds worth of state debt in the form of certificates and currency. But therein lies the rub. Because of depreciation, everyone agreed that confiscated estates sold for a fraction of their worth even if the auction records displayed impressive nominal sums. Charles Carroll estimated in the *Maryland Gazette* that because of the "hasty sale of the British property," often sped deliberately to keep prices low, confiscated estates had been sold "at a quarter perhaps of the real value."[131] And indeed, in memorials submitted to the British Loyalist Claims Commission most claimants estimated that their land sold for a third or less of its supposed value.[132] Even Southerners who obtained some relief after the confiscation of their property had been reversed post-sale generally agreed with that assessment. George Clitherall of Charleston petitioned the South Carolina House of Representatives well into the 1790s because although his name had been removed from the confiscation list his slaves had already sold for "very inferior" prices, and the value of compensatory bonds given to Clitherall and other amerced Southerners was attached to the value of currency received at sale.[133]

---

[131] Quoted in William Arthur O'Brien, "Speculative Interests and Maryland Politics, 1780-1788," MA Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1967, p. 34.

[132] See, for example, claim of George Bowness of Norfolk, VA, LCC, A.O. 9/8/29, who claimed his land sold at a third of its actual worth. George Fyffe of South Carolina claimed his land sold at a seventh of its value.

[133] Since neither South Carolina nor other states returned property after an estate sale, compensatory bonds served to exacerbated the considerable debt and other hardships of those whose names were removed from confiscation or banishments after their property had been already sold. See, among many other petitions submitted by

Yet despite the fact that the currency used to purchase estates and other items from the state was nearly worthless, the fact that estates were sold at auction, on short notice, for huge *nominal* sums limited the potential buyers of estates to those who were had been in a position to accumulate otherwise valueless currency. That estates were sold at auction, for instance, largely precluded using the $200 dollars in currency given to a private in the Continental line, or a certificate given as compensation for impressment of wheat, wooden rails, or cattle. After all, $200 could not allow a given man or woman to purchase more than a few cattle or hogs at estate sales where slaves and prime land sold for thousands of pounds in nominal worth.[134] Yet for officers who had bought up their soldiers' warrants, politicians who were given compensation in large amounts of currency, and merchants who used the items of every day life to engross in certificates, the sale of confiscated estates allowed for the realization of paper fortunes and the obtainment of land and slaves that simply would not have been available outside of the tumults of revolution.

The general paucity of records from the Revolutionary era make it difficult to delineate precisely who bought what in each state, but enough examples exist to confirm that those who purchased confiscated land and slaves did so with script originally issued to men and women whom history has largely forgotten. Benjamin Guerard, who would

---

Clitherall until at least 1797, Petition of George Clitherall of Charleston District, 11 May 1785, in Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[134] At a sale of confiscated estates at New Bern, North Carolina, in 1780 slaves belonging to William Cormick sold for as much as £5,000 current money. "An Account of Sales of the Estate of William W. Cormick, at New Bern," Treasurer's and Comptroller's Papers, Lands, Estates, Boundaries, and Surveys: Confiscated Lands, NSA.

serve as governor of South Carolina after the war, purchased confiscated property amounting to £6,308 sterling, all in certificates, yet only £310 worth of those certificates had been originally granted to him. Edward McCready and John M. Verdin in South Carolina similarly bought up £1,651 sterling worth of certificates, less than a third of which had been issued to in their name.[135] The widow Barbara Hill purchased a 246-acre tract "with certificates issued to veterans of the Revolution" in 1785.[136] Wade Hampton bought a number of important tracts, including a large estate belonging to one David Friday and a store and land in the Granby area from John Chesnut, using currency the state had paid him in exchange for flour and in certificates he had no doubt purchased from his men.[137] The South Carolina planter and politician Thomas Bee and the important post-war merchant Maurice Simons, obtained 7,000 and 5,000 acres respectively in the certificates issued to other people.[138] And Edmund Blount in North Carolina bought five slaves for £1,600 in current money and certificates that were not in his name.[139] Not only were these and other buyers able to use worthless paper to obtain some of the region's wealthiest land, the fact that states allowed some or all purchases to

[135] W. Robert Higgins, "A Financial History of the American Revolution in South Carolina," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1970, p. 215-19, 213.

[136] Petition of Barbara Hill, 1791, in Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[137] Bridwell, "The South's Wealthiest Planter," 473.

[138] John A. Hall, "Quieting the Storm: The Establishment of Order in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Oxford, UK, p. 58-64.

[139] Memorial of Edmund Blount, 1790, Joint Select Committee Reports and Papers, General Assembly Records, NSA.

be made on credit further enhanced the ability some to leverage their influence and pay little or nothing at all.[140]

The short notice given for sales and the fact that some property could be purchased on bond further enhanced the ability of those with influence to purchase estates extremely cheaply, or even for nothing, as many who bought estates on whole or partial credit simply did not repay what they had purchased. The commissioners appointed to oversee the sales of confiscated estates, who invariably had connections to the military or legislature, were in especially prime position to profit. Nicholas Long, who had served as a procurement officer for North Carolina at no small personal profit, oversaw several large sales at New Bern and Hillsborough. At one sale that he oversaw, where land and slaves realized £12,658 in certificates and "specie to be paid on credit," Long allowed himself to purchase five sales and 640 acres entirely on credit.[141] Griffith Rutherford in backcountry North Carolina similarly bought up slaves and land on credit at sales he oversaw, adding these gains to the some 13,000 acres in land he entered using accumulated soldiers' warrants after the war.[142]

---

[140] By 1782, for instance, Georgia had sold land, slaves, and other goods for currency and £281,716.7 in bond of which only £93,783 had been paid by 1787. Robert S. Lambert, "The Confiscation of Loyalist Property in Georgia, 1782-1786," in *William and Mary Quarterly,* 20, 1 (1962): 80-94, 92.

[141] "Return of Confiscated negroes & Lands Sold to Sundry Persons in the District of Hillsborough by the Commissioners of Confiscated Property," 1786, Treasurer's and Comptroller's Papers, Lands, Estates, Boundaries, and Surveys: Confiscated Lands, NSA.

[142] James A. MacDonald, "Politics of the Personal in the Old North State: Griffith Rutherford in Revolutionary North Carolina," Ph.D. Dissertation, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2006, p. 162.

In the end, the sale of confiscated estates resulted in the breakup of large colonial landholdings into tracts that were purchased by a small number of buyers, and a similar breakup of slave families.[143] In other words, confiscation did not, as John Franklin Jameson wrote long ago, promote "agrarian democracy."[144] But neither was it merely a transfer of property from one group of rich individuals to another, as more recent studies have argued.[145] Considered properly, alongside plunder, purchase from loyalists, land grants, and political turnover, confiscation was absolutely critical to the consolidation of wealth and power of a new group of merchants, politicians, and planters. In Georgia, for instance, the top twelve purchasers of confiscated land were all connected with the Revolutionary cause and the estimated 42,000 acres and several hundred slaves that they purchased provided one concrete realization for the paper wealth that their influence and political or military positions had allowed.[146] In Virginia, the two largest purchasers of confiscated land were David Ross and William Cabell, both of whom—as we have

---

[143] Generally larger slaveholdings were sold to multiple buyers, and one must suspect that this involved separation of family members. Among the many items sold of the property of William W. Cormick, for instance, were eight slaves, each of them going to different buyers. An Account of Sales, of the Estate of William W. Cormick, the 1, 2, 3, 4 of February 1780,Treasurer's and Comptroller's Papers, Lands, Estates, Boundaries, and Surveys: Confiscated Lands, NSA.

[144] James Franklin Jameson, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement,* 68.

[145] Such is the argument in Lambert, "The Confiscation of Loyalist Property in Georgia," and Mitchell, "Loyalist Property in Revolutionary Virginia."

[146] Estimate in Lambert, "The Confiscation of Loyalist Property in Georgia," 92.

seen—used access to goods and influence to buy up certificates and currency and then translated those gains into a full fifth of all forfeited land sold by the state.[147]

Every revolution must suppress its successors, so it is not surprising that immediately after the war Southern state governments turned to the twinned tasks of restoring order and restratifying their society. It is too simple to say that the state governments passed laws concerning debt, taxes, property rights, and vagrancy merely to further the interests of rising planters and merchants, although—like their wartime predecessors—the new governments were comprised of a much higher percentage of "new men" than their colonial antecedents. Rather, with the fighting nearing an end, those who had used the war to better their position through the state now found themselves forced to use their control over state governments to secure what gains they had acquired through means not possible outside of revolution.

If, as Robert Weir argues, the forgiveness of loyalists and the removal of many names from the lists of confiscation and banishment helped cement the legislative power of state governments over their subjects, the retreat from confiscation in the post-war years also helped to place the state more firmly behind the protection of property, regardless of how that property had been acquired.[148] The fact that confiscation was essentially plunder, and that it legitimized the state's right to seize a person's property in

[147] The amount they purchase is detailed in Mitchell, "Loyalist Property in Revolutionary Virginia," 200.

[148] Weir, "This Violent Spirit."

the starkest terms, had been the primary criticism of the few patriots who spoke out against confiscation from the beginning. Aedanus Burke, who admitted he was one of only two who spoke out against confiscation at South Carolina's Jacksonborough assembly of 1782, said during debates over the Act that confiscation would "bring so many families & their children to beggary & ruin" while also making property insecure: "can Property be secure under a numerous democratic Assembly wch [sic] undertakes to dispose of the property of the Citizen?" he asked.[149]

Although no one replied to Burke at the time, once victory seemed certain and attention turned to the reimposition of order, many patriots who had profiteered with abandon suddenly came to agree. South Carolina Governor John Rutledge had already spoken out against plunder upon returning from Philadelphia in late 1781, declaring in an open letter perhaps directed at Sumter that extralegal seizure of property "threatened the bonds of our society" and immediately after the British evacuation of Charleston in late 1782 his and other state governments states enacted strong measures to secure property. South Carolina, for instance, required those who had acquired slaves without title during the war to post notice for the original owners to produce title, though only about 80 notices appear to have been posted.[150] Perhaps more urgently, each state raised additional special regiments of state troops to put down both maroon communities and the "bandits

[149] Quoted in Rebecca Brannon, "Reconciling Revolution," 124-5.

[150] If slaves were left unclaimed after 90 days in the workhouse, rightful title would go to the current holder. David J. McCord, *The Statues at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: A.S. Johnson, 1841), vol. 4, 612-4. Number of notices posted based on a database search of the *State Gazette of South Carolina*, 1783-1784.

and horsethieves" who continued to exist on the fringes of Southern society and forcibly take slaves and other property well into the late 1780s.[151]

As will be examined further in Chapter Five, states also began to roll back confiscation and other wartime measures that infringed upon the right to property. Sales of confiscated property slowed considerably after 1782, with most states allowing amercement at twelve-percent of an estate's value in lieu of sale to hundreds who petitioned the legislatures in the early 1780s.[152] In no small irony, men like James Jackson in Georgia and Edward Rutledge and in South Carolina who had purchased significant tracts of confiscated land made significant money as lawyers the 1780s representing accused loyalists in court.[153] Indeed, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, who had benefitted so greatly from purchasing property from distressed or banished loyalists, now made £4,000 per annum in the post-war years, once bragging to a friend that he made "50 guineas before breakfeast" while riding the circuit.[154] South Carolina began stepping back from other forms of state-directed plunder like Sumter's Law as well, with prominent wartime profiteer Charles Pinckney arguing in repeated cases *against* the logic

---

[151] See Petition of John Warden, 1 March 1785, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH; James Iredell, *Laws of the State of North Carolina*, II, 483; *Calendar of the State Papers of Virginia*, XI, 392.

[152] More than half the petitions to the South Carolina House of Assembly from 1782-1785 involved the confiscation lists.

[153] James Jackson claimed that in 1783 he made in his legal practice alone "three thousand five hundred pounds sterling," mostly in confiscation cases. William Omer Foster, Sr., *James Jackson: Duelist and Militant Statesman, 1757-1806* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1960), 25.

[154] Marvin R. Zahniser, *Charles Cotesworth Pinckney: Founding Father* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 78.

which had buttressed both Sumter's law and the confiscation acts, claiming instead that Sumter's law was an unlawful act and that the Revolution had only strengthened the right to property for all Carolinians, regardless of loyalty.[155]

Yet even as they stepped back from explicit endorsement of property seizures in one form or another, states did little to revert property gains that had been made during the war. No state returned confiscated property after it had been sold, although unsold property was occasionally restored after amercement. Instead, those who successfully petitioned to be removed from the confiscation lists received paper treasury notes, which might be reinvested in western land or sold to make ends meet but were poor substitutes for slaves or prime and cleared agricultural areas.[156] South Carolina's Assembly passed a law indemnifying Sumner and his officers from suits over unlawfully seized slaves, again offering paper as compensation instead of restoration of property.[157] And courts across the South, which seemed to be increasing daily, reaffirmed the property rights of the purchasers of either confiscated estates or other slaves taken by patriot forces.[158]

---

[155] See the case of *Porter v*. Dunn, in which Pinckney defended Sylvester Dunn whose five slaves were taken from him by Sumter's troops and taken to South Carolina while Dunn served in the British militia. In Elihu Hall Bay, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Superior Courts of South Carolina, since the Revolution* (Charleston, SC: 1798), 51-6.

[156] Calhoon, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 412.

[157] Liles, "Thomas Sumter's Law," 261.

[158] In 1793, for example, the Virginia appeals court sided with a man named Pierce, who had purchased a slave named Jack Robinson taken by a privateer, declaring that the Robinson had been condemned in a court of admiralty and so, regardless of whether he had been rightfully taken from his original owner, he was now legally owned by Pierce. Hooe v. Pierce, Fall 1793, in Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, ed., *Judicial Cases*

As lawmakers and courts retreated from the wartime position that state-authorized plunder was legitimate while simultaneously reaffirming the rights of those who had prospered through that very means, they began to close the fissures the war had opened. A year after the fighting ended, an anonymous writer wrote in *The South Carolina Gazette* declared that "Where the rule of law is not supreme, LIBERTY cannot be secure."[159] As the strength of the state expanded, as courts and magistrates everywhere increased, those who had waged a revolution used the wealth and influence accumulated during war to resituate the meaning of liberty once again firmly in the right of property, regardless of how that property had been acquired just a few years earlier.

Concerning American Slavery and the Negro, volume I (Reprint; New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 101.

[159] *State Gazette of South Carolina* (Charleston, SC), 13 February 1784.

Chapter 3: Shades of Freedom: War, Mobility and the Ironies of Liberty

The Revolution meant more, and appeared to offer more, for the nearly half a million black men and women who lived and labored below Mason and Dixon's line than it did for any other group of Americans. From the beginning of the conflict, black southerners made clear that their loyalties lay, in Benjamin Quarles's words, "not to a place nor to a people, but to a principle."[1] During the first days of the Stamp-Act debates, black Charlestonians took to their city's streets, staking the strongest claim to the Revolution's promise with chants of "Liberty!"[2] Long before Lexington and Concord, slaves gathered on plantations to organize flight and armed resistance, and those on one Virginia plantation formally elected leaders "to conduct them when the English troops should arrive."[3] Black men and women appeared before royal governors and military officers, pledging their support in exchange for freedom.[4] And when the full force of war

---

[1] Quote from Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Reprint; Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1996), xxvii.. Similarly, Sylvia Frey argues that the war in the South ought to be understood as a "triangular war," one between tories, whigs, and slaves. See her excellent and exhaustingly researched book *Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), esp. ch. 4.

[2] Peter H. Wood, " 'Taking Care of Business' in South Carolina: Republicanism and the Slave Society," in Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise, eds., *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1978), 277.

[3] James Madison, quoted in Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 53.

[4] It is well documented that Dunmore's 1775 Proclamation was inspired by the scores of slaves who had gathered in front of his mansion in Williamsburg during the months before the governor's flight in November, 1775. John Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783* (2nd Edition; Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2007), 38.

moved south, dividing white Southerners and disrupting the forms of discipline buttressing slaveholder authority, slaves asserted their claim to the Revolution's principle of liberty with their voices, their arms, and their feet. By the end of the conflict in 1783, tens of thousands of slaves from the Southern states had departed America's shores to forge new lives and new communities from Nova Scotia to England to Sierra Leone.[5]

This collective story, of black men and women seizing the opportunities presented by war to obtain their freedom abroad or within the young United States, remains the primary interpretation of black Southerners' experience during the Revolutionary era half a century after Quarles first published *The Negro in the American Revolution*.[6] Yet the stories of slaves like Boston King and Thomas Peters, who through trial and heroism gained their freedom, are the stories of a small fraction of the hundreds of thousands of black men and women touched by America's struggle for independence. The preeminence of their narratives, published because they *did* escape slavery, continues to dominate the history of the black experience in the Revolutionary period and reinforces an understanding of the American Revolution as an emancipatory moment, however

---

[5] For various estimates on slave desertions and deaths see David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution* (Reprint; Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1990), vol. 1, 174; Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 211; Cassandra Pybus, "Jefferson's Faulty Math: The Question of Slave Defections in the American Revolution," WMQ, vol. 62, no. 2 (June, 2005): 243-264.

[6] Important exceptions exist, but examples of this trend include many of the best works on the period. See Sylvia Frey, *Water From the Rock;* Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon, 2006); James W. St. George Walker, *The Black Loyalists: the Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford, 2009); Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

fleeting.[7] Historians of American slavery during the early national period, most notably Ira Berlin, have focused attention on those enslaved men and women who escaped slavery through their own actions or through manumission, and who in so doing created a new class of free black Americans that radically altered the social landscape of the Americas and indeed of the entire Atlantic world.[8] Historians who have focused on the experience of the enslaved during the War of Independence itself have similarly worked to construct a narrative of the Revolution as a moment that allowed for unprecedented resistance and opportunity for black Americans.[9] Still others have written on the abolition of slavery in the North or have drawn a direct line from the ideology of the American Revolution to the eventual eradication of American slavery in the Civil War.[10]

Rather than focus on an American Revolution that either strengthened slavery or marked slavery's eventual demise (for it did both), this chapter seeks to reframe the black

---

[7] Boston King, perhaps the most famous of the Black Loyalists, related his story in a 1794 autobiography,*The Life of Boston King …*, excerpted in Vincent Caretta, *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2003).

[8] See most notably, Berlin, "The Revolution in Black Life," in Alfred P. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb, IL: University of Northern Illinois Press, 1976): 349-381; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Panethon, 1974).

[9] The titles of the most important books on this subject highlight their emphasis. Sylvia Frey, *Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the Americna REvolution and their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon, 2006); James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: the Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford, 2009).

[10] Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

revolutionary experience as being defined simply by movement: movement across space and time and into crevices in society where the boundary between slavery and freedom became momentarily fluid. Most black men and women experienced the period as a time of tremendous hardship, of suffering as much as opportunity. The overwhelming majority of black southerners remained slaves, whether they stayed in America or left with the British army. Their stories, as inspiring, heartbreaking, and important to this nation's development as the stories of those who gained freedom, have been almost entirely overlooked. Instead, they have been hidden by our collective tendency to see continuity instead of rupture in slavery in the transition to the early national period, and by our desire to recover that which was good and laudable from all that was contradictory about the Revolution and its ideals. Yet it was through the labor of once and future slaves that Southerners constructed a new society from the ashes of war, and it is in their lives that we can continue to reevaluate the fuller impact of the struggle for independence on the twinned development of the emergent "South" and Slavery.

This dissertation has attempted to demonstrate that the American Revolution, considered both as a political and ideological revolution as well as a protracted and brutal civil war, profoundly transformed the political economy of every state. But, as we have seen, in the the disorder and chaos that followed the breakdown of authority in the Revolutionary South created unprecedented opportunity for slaves to challenge their status through flight or violent resistance. At the same time, the ideological pressures of fighting a war for liberty among half a million slaves gave birth to the first swell of antislavery sentiment and the widespread manumission of slaves in the Upper South. The same fissures and openings that allowed for the rise of new visions for slavery's future or

extinction also produced, on a daily basis, tremendous hardship, both on plantations and in the forced removal of thousands of slaves across the Atlantic World. Moreover, in the aftermath of war slaveholders and legislatures worked to contain the contagion of liberty and seal shut the openings that the war had made. Focusing on the hardships experienced by black Americans both slave and free does not diminish or ignore the importance of those like King or Peters who escaped. Rather, it seeks to redirect our attention towards those who struggled against but did not entirely or permanently break free from a society pushed more fully towards slavery by the force of revolution.

As with changes in property ownership and political power among white southerners, changes in the life of black Americans during and after the Revolution must be located within the disorders of war. Among the burning plantations and battling armies, fleeing peoples and plundering banditti, the ideological and material strains of the Revolution created fleeting spaces in Southern society in which shades of freedom became blurred and fluid. The conflict allowed for at least temporary autonomy for some enslaved men and women, whether as freedmen and freedwomen, as maroons, or as the countless number of slaves who moved about as freemen.[11] Yet these spaces in which degrees of freedom became shaded were fleeting, and just as often the movement into and out of them proved limiting and disruptive. The war itself witnessed the emergence of an interstate slave trade, one that had begun with the expansion of white settlement into the Southern backcountry before the war and which by the end of the Revolutionary

[11] A Henrico county petition from 1781 complained to the Virginia Legislature that during the war "reason to believe that a great number of slaves which were taken by the British Army are now passing in this Country as free men." Quoted in Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 18.

era would see tens of thousands of slaves leaving their homes in coffles headed south and west.[12] Demand for labor and lack of credit hugely accelerated the hiring of slaves around the Chesapeake, which significantly strained black community and family life on a more local scale. Throughout the Revolutionary era, black Southerners' increased movement between slavery and freedom, between plantations, and between town and country sparked a flurry of slave conspiracies real or imagined. As a result, the capacity of enslaved and free black Southerners for movement, in both a real and abstract sense, became the most clearly contested site of struggle for black and white Southerners in the Early Republican South.

Over the course of nearly three centuries, the complex of men, governments, and institutions that constituted the Atlantic Slave Trade removed more than twelve million people from their homes in Africa and thrust them into the yawning economic engine of the American plantation complex.[13] Although only 3% of the slaves transported to the Americas came to the future United States before 1808, more than a third of those arrived in the half century before the American Revolution. The majority of these recent arrivals, in turn, were marched into the backcountry, where a bourgeoning population and a growing demand for slave grown crops—particularly tobacco—led to an expansion of

[12] Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, chap. 2; Gregory O'Malley, *Final Passages: The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619-1807* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 267-83.

[13] Figures from the Atlantic Slave Trade Database, www.slavevoyages.org.

slave culture into the interior of the continent.[14] As the Charles Town planter Peter Manigault explained in 1764, "The great planters have bought few Negroes within these two Years. Upwards of two thirds that have been imported have gone backwards" because of cheap land and high prices for indigo.[15] Yet the expansion of slavery remained constrained during the colonial period, both by backcountry planters' relative lack of access to the world market and by the threat that Indians and outlaws in the region posed to the security of slave property. As a result the pre-war movement of slaves away from the coast and into the interior paled in comparison to the decades that followed, when the revolutionary generation forcibly removed Indian tribes and wealth of purchased and plundered slaves to clear millions of acres of newly opened western land.

Since the introduction of bonded labor in the early seventeenth century, the need to limit the movement of enslaved populations, to fix black people within space and within society, had induced colonial governments to pass increasingly regimented restrictions on the autonomous mobility of their labor force. As the plantation system developed in the Chesapeake and spread into the Carolina and Georgia low-country the need to regulate an ever growing number of increasingly African and always resistant workers produced a long set of increasingly uniform codes governing the behavior of enslaved men and women. Yet, as a number of scholars have noted, before the end of the

[14] The increased demand for tobacco resulted largely from the rise of Glasgow traders and the French tobacco monopoly. See the work of Jacob Price, especially *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1694-1791, and of its Relation to the British American Tobacco Trades* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1973).

[15] Peter Manigault to William Blake, in Maurice A. Corouse, ed., "The Letterbook of Peter Manigault, 1763-1773," in *Southern Historical nad Genealogical Magazine*, LXXX, no. 2 (1969), p. 191.

eighteenth century regulation of slaves or indentured servants tended to be local, laws or court rulings generally being passed in response to particular circumstances, such as a dispute over a slaves' legal status or an insurrection scare.[16] Although from the outset white Southerners were acutely aware of the dangers posed by slaves' congregating at night or moving between plantations to trade or share information, a weak disciplinary apparatus and a small relative population of slaves meant that through the 1660s these problems were more an annoyance to be dealt with individually. Similarly, though planters in the young colonies understood that the numerous communities of maroons existed within the swamps or forests at the outskirts of settlement, the danger and expense of chasing down these communities led many officials in the early colonies to often turn a blind eye.[17]

Even if enforcement remained local by the time of the American Revolution, each colony had passed a comprehensive law or set of laws aimed at restricting slave autonomy, most importantly through limiting their movement and their accumulation of property. Virginia's slave code of 1680, which along with Barbadian slave codes became the model for laws of other colonies, declared "no Negro or slave may carry arms, such as any club, staff, gun sword, or other weapon, nor go from his owner's plantation

---

[16] See for instance: Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (Reissue; W.W. Norton, 2003); A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color: Race & The American Legal Process: The Colonial Period* (New York: Oxford, 1977).

[17] Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 67; Hugo Prosper Leaming, "Hidden Americans: Maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1979.

without a certificate."[18] Six years later, the first law enacted by South Carolina regarding slaves or servants was one imposing a fine on free persons who traded with any bonded laborer without written permission from their owner.[19] These and similar laws were strengthened regularly and other practices that allowed slaves some measure of independence, such as hiring out on their own time, similarly came under the purview of government officials.[20] By 1740, when South Carolina's legislature combined sixty years of haphazard legislation into a single slave code in response to the most violent slave insurrection of the colonial period, southern colonies had devised the basic practices—requiring slaves to carry passes, regular patrol duty for white men, calling hastily formed tribunals of freemen to punish slaves as quickly as possible—that would govern governments' response to slaves' potential or actualized capacity for resistance until emancipation.[21]

---

[18] Act X, 1680, in Jane Purcell Guild, *Black Laws of Virginia: A Summary of the Legislative Acts of Virginia Concerning Negroes From the Earliest Times to the Present* (Fauqier, VA: Afro-American Historical Association, 1996), 45.

[19] McCord, ed., *Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, vol. 2, 22. On the impact of the Stono Rebellion, see Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion (*Reprint; New York: Norton, 1996); Peter Charles Hoffer, *Cry Liberty: The Great Stono River Slave Rebellion of 1939* (New York: Oxford, 2011); Mark M. Smith, "Introduction," in Smith, ed., S*Stono: Documenting and Interprtening a Southern Slave Revolt* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005).

[20] South Carolina passed an act against hiring in 1712 in response to complaints about the practice of allowing "slaves to do what and go wither they will and work where they please" upon the condition that they pay masters for their time. Quoted in Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, p. 69.

[21] McCord, ed., *Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, vol. 7, 343-402. See also M. Eugene Sirmans, "The Legal Status of the Slave in South cArolina, 1670-1740," *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 28, no. 4 (November, 1962): 462-73; Robet Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country,*

Together, these laws, regulations, and customs defined the presence and status of slaves in the colonial South. Yet, as argued in Chapter One, the disciplinary apparatus that undergirded them was almost entirely disrupted as the force of war and revolution divided Southern society and fractured the region into a shifting patchwork of local conflicts among two belligerents, each incapable of exerting full control even over the areas firmly under their command. Especially after the British invasion of Georgia, the strains of the conflict undermined the ability of both militaries and individual slaveholders to restrict slaves' movement. At the same time, the presence of the British army offered a tangible promise of freedom for those slaves who could reach their lines, creating a situation in which the struggle between slaves and slaveholders became more intensely personal and local and often left a slave's status and opportunities dependent upon contingent circumstances and no small amount of fortune. By the end of the war, newly reorganized state governments would again take up the task of bringing the regulation of their enslaved population under more central control, and the British army would find itself tasked with negotiating the competing claims of slaves under their protection and the slaveholders whose property rights the army had sworn to protect. How each chose to do so, and how those choices affected the experiences of hundreds of thousands of black men and women who remained within the United States or who found

---

1740-1790 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1860* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). For the best discussion of the slave laws as they affected social relations in the South, albeit in a much later period, see Mark V. Tushnett, *The American Law of Slavery, 1810-1860: Considerations of Humanity and Interest* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

themselves flung across the Atlantic Ocean, emerged in response to the resistance of slaves and the efforts of slaveholders during the Revolution.

From the beginning of the conflict, the breakdown of oversight and state authority presented enslaved men and women with enlarged opportunity to run away as they always had during times when the white population was divided. During the Revolution the decision of a slave to do so, and their success if they did, depended largely on contingent circumstances, a fact shown most clearly in the huge disparity in the number of runaways from given areas. Although runaways during the war tended to be young, male, and engaged in a craft, the single most important factor in determining the likelihood of a slave to abscond was proximity to British forces. The importance of a tangible destination to encourage massive slave flight can be also be seen in the fact that the vast majority of runaways from the Chesapeake eloped in two large waves, first in 1775 when Virginia Governor Lord Dunmore openly offered freedom to the slaves of rebels who could reach his flotilla, and then later after the British army under Cornwallis invaded the state from Carolina in 1780. In both instances, the presence of a force openly willing to harbor slaves provoked thousands of desertions. Dunmore's flotilla received several thousand black refugees, and the stream of black refugees trailing the British army on Cornwallis's slow march numbered in the thousands. In the backcountry as well, slaves primarily fled to British detachments. And throughout the war the presence of British flotillas served as a beacon to a steady flow of slaves attempting to escape in small canoes or handmade rafts.[22]

---

[22] Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 124.

By and large, when slaves absconded they did so individually or in mass desertions from neighboring plantations, a fact that suggests to a certain extent the pull that family ties might have in determining whether a given slave decided to attempt a run to British lines. In Virginia, those planters who lost slaves tended to lose them in large groups, both at the beginning and end of the war. Slaveholders themselves attempted as best they could to prevent escape, and the daily struggle over the movement of slaves was beyond all other thing a highly localized and personal conflict. Individual planters took special care to monitor their slaves, and the fact that slaves appear to have been more likely to desert from larger plantations suggests the importance of steps taken by planters themselves to closely invigilate their slaves.[23] Richard Bennehan, scion of the wealthiest family of antebellum North Carolina, wrote to his overseer in the wake of Dunmore's Proclamation that "It is said the Negroes have some thoughts of freedom. Pray make Scrub sleep in the house every night and that the overseer keep in Tom," presumably to limit their opportunity for escape or assembling.[24] Slaveholders also sought to preclude the most likely avenues of escape, with the Georgian planter and politician Edward Telfair requesting of his overseer in 1776 "for a guard over the row gallies … also, that his negro pilots be taken up and confined, and that some guard boat be stationed in Savannah River to prevent negroes from going down to Cockspur." Additionally, Telfair ordered his overseer "to cause all the negro pilots belonging to him to be confined in

[23] Compiled from Loyalist Claims.

[24] Richard Bennehan to James Martin, 15 February 1776, Cameron Family Papers, SHC; also quoted in Peter H. Wood, "Liberty is Sweet," 179.

some secure place."[25] Slaveholders understood as well the importance of kinship in facilitating or inhibiting a slaves' decision to escape, and planters such as Georgia's Lachlan McIntosh, made sure to separate slave men from women at night.[26]

For their part, state and local authorities did what they could to restrict the movement of slaves on a wider scale by increasing patrols and active militia. In particular, states devoted a significant portion of their limited resources to keeping slaves away from waterways. What patrols could be mustered were instructed specifically to watch rivers and the coastline. Legislatures in Georgia, Virginia, and South Carolina passed laws barring any black man from operating a boat or canoe without a white man present despite a long history of solo black pilots running cargo downriver and within harbors. Given the well-known tendency of militiamen to neglect patrol duty, by 1777 every state had also imposed heavy fines on militia commanders who missed patrol watch, and commanders were given explicit orders and monetary incentives to apprehend slaves found out at night or "alone or in groups upon the roads of the country."[27] Following the fall of Charleston and Savannah and the scattering of state legislatures in 1779 and 1780, however, whig leaders found their capacity to directly restrict slave

---

[25] "Notice of Edward Telfair, Esq," 1776, in *The Revolutionary Records of the State of Georgia* [RRG], ed. Allen D. Candler (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner, 1908-10), I, 184.

[26] See Joyce E. Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation & Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), n. 219.

[27] Patrick Henry, Circular Letter, 1775, in William Augustine Washington Papers, DUL. Levying heavy fines on patrolers is an excellent example of states increasing enforcement of existing laws as well as passing new restrictions in response to perceived wartime threats. See also *CVSP*, 3, p. 481.

movement reduced to almost nothing outside of areas controlled by the American army. By the end of the war, states could do little but encourage or tacitly allow local militia or armed bands to summarily shoot slaves found off their plantation past curfew, often dismissing resulting suits from a dead slaves' owner, actions that in themselves abetted the vigilantism that marked the later years of the Revolution in the South.[28]

Despite increased efforts by both state officials and slaveholders, pockets of autonomy continued to develop and proliferate as fighting worsened, and increasing numbers of black men and women enjoyed greater self-determination and ease of movement even if they never left their homes. Although fleeing planters and overseers generally tried to carry away what slaves they could, the haste of flight and the unwillingness of slaves to accompany them meant that many enslaved communities operated independently for extended periods during the war. Sometimes planters left behind drivers or elderly slaves to tend stock or even try to raise a crop.[29] More often, and especially in lowcountry areas where the black population was densest and the fighting was frequent and fierce, slaves tended to themselves for weeks, months, and occasionally years. For some this meant growing small amounts of food and remaining at home, like the slaves belonging to a Mr. Cotter of Georgia whose slaves were found "living on some potatos and small amount of forage, they look half dead and are intirely

---

[28] Georgia, at least, offered bounties of £4 for the head of a slave claimed to have been "making resistance." See "Journal of the Commons House of Assembly," *RRG*, 14, 292-3.

[29] Samuel Stiles of Georgia, for instance, wrote in 1779 that he had left "Primis and Parker and old woman named Doll to look after my stock and everything" on his Ogeechee plantation. Samuel Stiles to William Telfair, Feb 21, 1779, Edward Telfair Papers, Duke Special Collections, Duke University Libraries [DUL], Duke University, Durham, NC.

[sic] in want of clotheing."[30] For others it meant marronage in the swamps along the coast or among the wooded wilderness of the interior. Some slaves, unable to reach British lines, hid for months on the outskirts of plantation communities, "causing great mischief with petty theft and unruliness."[31] In other cases, small groups of slaves took advantage of the chaos of war and formed small bands or communities with varying degrees of success and organization. One of Robert Carter's slaves named Dick led "33 other slaves" to run away and hide in the swamps around Virginia's Tidewater in summer of 1781, for which Carter—the future emancipator—ordered Dick sold "for dear skins" upon his apprehension.[32] Although maroons often stole from nearby plantations, not hesitating to use violence when needed, they attempted to develop self-sufficient communities where able, building small huts and harvesting crops on patches of dry land in swamps or on the sides of hills or mountains and sometimes sustaining themselves for years amid the disorders of war and reconstruction.[33]

But the forces of revolution cut both ways, especially for black southerners, and the localized independence the war brought came with a steep price. The same wartime

---

[30] Joseph Clay to Mr. Cotter[?], Joseph Clay Letterbooks, II, microfilm, Georgia Historical Society [GHS], Savannah, GA.

[31] Memorial of Joseph Locke, Sep 1784, General and State Assembly Records, North Carolina State Department of Archives and History [NCSA], Raleigh, NC.

[32] Robert Carter to William Prescott, 16 Apr 1782, Robert Carter Letterbooks, DUL.

[33] Josiah Smith complained to a Doctor J.J. Tubby of violence and "Depredations" committed by "the Marronage Negros" around Charleston who in one raid in February 1780 beat a local minister to death. Josiah Smith to Doctor J.J. Tubby, 22 August, 1780, Josiah Smith Letterbooks, SHC. The most extensive study of maroon activity during the Revolution can be found in Hugo Prosper Leaming, "Hidden Americans: Maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas."

conditions that allowed slaves freedom from white oversight also produced immense suffering from want of necessities. Black men and women were universally the last to receive a share of the South's dwindling supply of food and other essentials. Planters turned tobacco fields to corn and potato for the purposes of feeding starving slaves and themselves, and throughout the war slaves lacked adequate clothing. The merchant Josiah Smith, managing a rice plantation in South Carolina during the war, complained repeatedly to his employer and to merchants that he was unable to obtain winter clothing for his slaves for several years, "and the miserable wretches seem close to wasting away."[34] Slaves on other plantations went without new shoes for years even as their owners sought to increase output to take advantage of hefty profits to be made supplying foodstuffs and other salable goods during the war.[35] Not insignificantly, the scarcity of negro cloth or other items of clothing led a number of planters to turn to cotton harvesting for the first time. William Ancrum wrote to an overseer in 1777 that he hoped the man had "raised some Cotton to help out for Clothing for the Negroes, there being very little prospect of procuring any cloth for that purpose here."[36] Some years later, Whitemarsh Seabrook reminisced that the "necessities of the war, and the state of things existing for

[34] Josiah Smith to George Appleby, 2 December 1780, in Josiah Smith Letterbooks.

[35] The plantation ledger of Richard Bennehan of North Carolina showed shoe purchases from 1773-8 and 1783-6 but none for the intervening years, when the fighting was fiercest. "Slave Ledger," Cameron Family Papers, SHC.

[36] William Ancrum to C. Irving, Aug 15 1777, in William Ancrum Letterbooks, SCL.

some time after it, greatly increased the number of domestic fabricators" of wool and cotton "for the purpose of clothing negroes."[37]

The breakdown of authority that allowed autonomy and at least limited mobility for some slaves led to the forced movement of thousands and thousands of others. The banditti discussed in the previous two chapters engaged in wholesale seizure of slaves and other property. In response, as states and local military forces became increasingly incapable of preventing prevent plunder, slave flight, and marronage, slaveholders in the lower South in particular made the decision to drive slaves to other areas, often hundreds of miles away. In their diaries, the Moravians of backcountry North Carolina noted during the last three years of the conflict the passing of dozens of "Gentlemen for the South" who were "bringing their negroes and cattle" away from occupied or especially dangerous areas in South Carolina in Georgia. On one particular day, Moravians in Salem reported "many more parties, with negroes, passing through fleeing from South Carolina" whose number they estimated in the hundreds.[38] Along the way slaves suffered from hunger and exposure, as well as from men of both sides who plundered men and women from the coffles they met. John Habersham, himself a prominent patriot leader from Georgia, reported to the Moravians that he had lost oxen and "some negroes" to a

---

[37] Whitemarsh B. Seabrook, *A Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton, form the Earliest Ages to the present time, with especial refernce to the Sae-Island cotton plant, including the Improvements in its Cultivation, and the Preparation of the Wool, &c. in Georgia na dSouth Carolina; read before the Agricultural Society of St John's Colleton, November 13, 1843, and the State Agricultural Society of South-Carolina, December 6th, 1843, and By both Societies ordered to be published* (Charleston, SC: Miller & Browne, 1844), 11. Other planters simply traded the cotton they harvested for the food they did not have. John F. Mercer to Battaile Muse, 13 Oct, 1782, in Battaile Muse Papers, DUL.

[38] *Records of the Moravians of North Carolina*, IV, 1545.

band of "*Liberty men*" in the backcountry town of Salisbury and several more to illness and starvation as they made their way to the relative stability of the Virginia Piedmont.[39]

The same ties of community and kinship that kept certain groups on plantations were evident as well in slaves' resistance to forced removal. Some slaveholders went to great lengths to hide the fact of their slaves' imminent removal by separating them prior to their separation from friends and family. The South Carolina planter William Snow wrote to his overseer to give special instructions on securing slaves for removal in anticipation of the British arrival. Snow told his overseer Mr. Rhodes to first "get cousin Billy to bring Mathias over to your house on business, then secure him well in Tom's care; then fetch Ben from cousin Stephen's and Ruth at Daniel's; these negroes, if they are not well secured, will get away … have no mercy on these negroes or they will deceive you." Rhodes, Snow insisted, needed to deceive them instead, always keeping "his mind still from black or white until you are ready to set off, or the negroes will hide out of the way." Snow and other planters were especially wary of tipping their hands to the leaders of plantation communities, and he warned his overseer that "If you say the least about Ruth, she will run off, for she is an arch bitch."[40] Yet even once on the march, slaves continued to respond by running away or with violence. The men in charge of Virginia's western lead mines, where numerous slaves were sent after having been seized, captured, or purchased by the state, complained on numerous occasions of slaves "going off with the British" or escaping beyond white settlements to the westward.[41] And

[39] *Records of the Moravians of North Carolina*, IV, 1542.

[40] William Snow to Mr. Rhoades, Sep 1 1781, Francis Marion Papers, NYPL.

[41] *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, VIII, pgs. 77, 79, 98, 113, 156, 183.

if slaves did manage to escape their movement to strange lands might provide opportunity. Where few recognized their face, the space created by the constantly shifting population might allow slaves to slip into the fissures of half-freedom while the fighting raged. Notably, the disorder allowed some displaced slaves like one Chapman Badgett to exist halfway between slavery and freedom for years, passing as free for eight years after allegedly murdering his owner en route from Goochland County, Virginia to Kentucky in 1775.[42]

The forced movement of slaves by their owners was significant, but as we have seen the largest forced movement of slaves during the war itself came at the hands of roving "banditti" and privateers who for obvious reasons could not hope to claim or sell their stolen property from whence they took them. Although slaves had been sold into the Southern backcountry for decades, the deliberate movement of slaves across state border to facilitate illegal sales during the war vastly accelerated the emergence of a nascent interstate slave trade and the movement of at least several hundred—and probably a thousand—slaves from the coast into the interior. In the process, plunderers and traders forcibly moved black men and women hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles from their homes for sale across the Americas.

Throughout the war, Southern state legislatures and army commanders received complaints from planters who had heard rumors that their lost property was being taken to remote areas. Often the complaints involved slaves who were taken and sold over state borders, such as the slaves of Mary Young, a Georgia widow, who claimed that two of

---

[42] *Virginia Gazette*, Feb 3, 1781.

her slaves had been stolen by a band led by a John Garnet and sold in South Carolina.[43] Yet the majority of complaints, particularly from the interior, showed slaves being consistently moved west. Nathanael Greene instructed Elijah Clarke to move west in 1782 to deal with "parties living over the mountains who are carrying away Negroes and committing other enormities which want checking" and some of the first slaves in the western territories of Tennessee, Kentucky and the Mississippi River Valley arrived during the war with apparently dubious title.[44] Some went further west still, taken by Indians in raids or given them in return for military service. Many years later, Benjamin Hawkins from Georgia returned from treaty negotiations with the Creek Indians and marveled at the large number of slaves living among them who called themselves the "King's Gifts," having been granted to the tribe (presumably from the plantations of patriots) during the war.[45]

Particularly towards the end of the war, however, an increasing majority of slaves were taken Southeast for sale. Many of those taken along the coast by privateers or bands operating from ships ended up in Florida or the Caribbean. The loyalist Alexander Paterson of South Carolina and then Florida wrote to the governor of East Florida, saying that during the war "he lost 3 slaves 2 Men & 1 Woman" to a band of raiders operating

[43] Petition of Mary Young, in *RRG*, II, p. 223.

[44] Nathanael Greene to Elijah Clarke, Papers of Nathanael Greene, 8:357. Craig Thompson Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010); Henry O. Robertson, "Tories or Patriots? The Mississippi River PLanters during the American Revolution," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* (Autumn, 1999): 445-462. See also John R. Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers: Three Regions in Transition* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 75-99.

[45] Benjamin Hawkins, "Sketch of the Creek Country," *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, III (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1848), 6.

out of Georgia, who sold them in Dominica.[46] Sometimes slaves went in both directions. The lawyer William Ancrum informed the heirs to the Colleton estate that during the war a band of plunderers had taken slaves from their plantation in South Carolina. While in St. Augustine awaiting sale, the slaves were then captured by an American privateer and brought from Florida to North Carolina. There, the slaves were condemned as a lawful prize and sold, whereabouts Ancrum could not say.[47]

Just as the fissures of war allowed or forced slaves through space, it allowed or forced them between slavery and freedom. By the end of 1782, as commissioners in Paris worked on a peace treaty and as British soldiers in the South withdrew to Charleston and Savannah, the dislocations created by the conflict created a short window in which the status of individual slaves and the status of black Southerners as a whole became contested. Black men and women, whether with the British army, on plantations, or marooned in the swamps, struggled to hold onto the freedom and privileges gained during the war. At the same time slaveholders, patriot officials, and British army commanders sought to secure property and contain the contagion of liberty unleashed by the Revolution as best they could. As a result, freedom became a temporarily fluid thing, and slaves and free black Southerners alike found themselves able—however fleetingly—

---

[46] The Memorial of Alexander Paterson, late of the Province of East Florida," in William Henry Siebert, ed., *Loyalists in East Florida, 1774:1785: The Most Important Documents Pertaining Thereto Edited with an Accompanying Narrative* (Deland, FL: Florida State Historical Society, 1929), II, 124-9, 127.

[47] William Ancrum to Margaret Colleton, 1783, Margaret Colleton Papers, SCL.

to take advantage of the post-war confusion as they fought to assert themselves in a post-war order being constructed around the institution of slavery.

The movement from slavery to freedom and then often back again can be seen most clearly in the tens of thousands of slaves who escaped from plantations and reached the British army during the war. Even before the peace, British officers had done what they could to regulate slave movement and respect the property rights of the loyalist citizens who streamed into British posts. The Board of Police, created to maintain order in British-occupied Charleston during the war, responded to General Alexander Leslie's request to deal with "that very great Inconvenience … found from Negroes leaving the services of their Masters and coming to the British Army." Fearing that "many bad Consequences would most certainly arise unless they could be sent back to their Labour," slaves at Charleston not claimed by a loyalist owner or British officer were forced to work on sequestered plantations without wages even though Commanders remained unsure of their ultimate status.[48] Even those slaves claimed by slaveholders could work or be out at night only with a ticket and dram shops and other suspected meeting places for black Charlestonians were closed.[49] Under pressure from loyalist citizens in Savannah, officers there similarly worked to prevent slaves from moving at night,

---

[48] "At a Council held at the Commandants, Tuesday, June 13 1780," in "Records of the Board of Police," microfilm, SCHS. For information on sequestered estates, see Jeffrey J. Crow, "What Price Lyoalim? The CASe of John Cruden, Commissioner of Sequestered Estates," in *The Norh Carolina Historical Review*, LVIII, 3 (July, 1981): 215-233.

[49] Frey, *Water from the Rock,* 120-1.

restricted liquor sales to black men, and rebuilt a work-house "for the reception and correction of disorderly Negroes."[50]

Once the British evacuation of the South became imminent, slaves crowded into cities and attached themselves to officers or soldiers, with decidedly mixed results. Despite the emphasis in historical literature on those slaves who found freedom by escaping with the British, slaves within British lines found themselves far more likely to be returned to slavery, either in America or abroad. The thousands of slaves who trailed Cornwallis on his slow march to Yorktown huddled in small pox infested camps outside the port, and were seized by American soldiers and slaveholders after the General's surrender.[51] A few attached themselves to sympathetic French soldiers who, much to Americans' consternation, took them to Philadelphia where rumors of impending emancipation already abounded.[52] General Washington, slaveholders, and state governors complained at length to French commanders "of Negroes being concealed at Williamsburg amongst the Troops" with expectations of receiving freedom. Some eventually found freedom or new masters in Pennsylvania, yet far more were eventually returned to slavery either through seizure by American forces or sale to French colonies

[50] "Presentments of the Grand Jury of Chatham, October 1782," Joseph Bevan Vallence Papers, GHS.

[51] For the ghastly effects of small pox on slaves with the British, see Elizabeth Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002).

[52] Governor Harrison to General Washington, July 11, 1782, in *Official Letters of the Gvoernor of Virginia*, 265-6.

in the Caribbean.[53] Those slaves unable to leave with the French were detained around Williamsburg and Yorktown under a commission headed by David Ross. If an owner could provide proof of ownership of a given slave, the slave was returned to him and his wrath. If not, Ross and other commissioners sold slaves at a series of auctions in York and Gloucester, Virginia, for current money, certificates or other forms of depreciated wartime currency.[54]

Even so, thousands more slaves made their way with the British army from the South to New York in hopes of cementing their claim to freedom. Yet there too slaves found that liberty, despite promises made by officers and by British commanders, was a contingent thing, based as much upon good fortune as anything else. Southern slaveholders, including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, hired "agents" to kidnap and forcibly return property rumored to be living within the city. In March of 1783 one Hessian officer reported that "Almost five thousand persons have come into this city to take possession again of their former property."[55] Black men and women were dragged out of their beds at night and shackled for the return South, an experience that Boston King recalled "filled us with dread and deprived us of sleep."[56] Other

---

[53] Governor Harrison to Count Rochambeau, June 26 1782, in *Official Letters of the Governors of Virginia*, ed. H.R. McIlwaine, III, p. 257-8. Governor Harrison to the Virginia Delegates in Congress, July 6 1782, in *Ibid.,* 260.

[54] The consequences of sale of slaves and land through depreciated currency or state certificates will be the subject of chapter 3. "After Orders, Oct 25, 1781," Anthony Wayne Orderly Book with Washinton's Army, Huntington Library, Pasadena, CA. Ross put notices for the slaves in Virginia newspapers, for instance see *Virginia Gazette,*, Jan 5 1782.

[55] Quoted in Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 63.

[56] *Ibid.,* 65-7.

Southerners wrote to delegates in the Continental Congress, hoping to enlist their aid in returning slaves from Philadelphia before the departure of French troops or their finding Northern patrons.[57] Although the slaves of Washington and Jefferson avoided capture, numerous other slaves were not so lucky. The experience of one of the unfortunate ones, a young girl named Dinah, neatly captures the vast distances that slaves traveled during the war in hopes of achieving freedom. She explained to a Virginia constable that after the death of her master in South Carolina she fled to the British in Charleston, who took her to New York where she took up work as a cook with an officer. Willingly or unwillingly officer then brought her back to Virginia, then to New York, where she was captured before the British evacuation and brought back to Virginia for sale.[58]

For the thousands of slaves who embarked with the British army at New York, Savannah, and Charleston, the movement between freedom and slavery was no less fluid. It is worth reiterating that the great majority of the black men and women, at least 85% of them, who embarked did so as the property of officers or loyalists.[59] Despite the fact that British officers on the ground secured the labor of escaped slaves with the promise of freedom, the British government and individual soldiers and officers remained committed to the preservation of slavery and to protecting the material interests of its subjects. Indeed, during the evacuation of both Savannah and Charleston British commanders went to extreme lengths to secure transport for human property whether a slaveholder or

[57] Governor Harrison to the Virginia Delegates in Congress, July 6 1782, in *Official Letters of the Governors of Virginia,* III, 260.

[58] *Virginia Gazette*, March 16, 1782.

[59] Number based on estimates in Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock*, ch. 6.

soldier could prove title to them or not. Still other slaves left with officers who had taken them as plunder in the field or employed them with the promise of freedom after the war.[60] Slaves were also kidnapped by British officers and sailors, a group of whom bound and sold a slave who had been lured onboard their ship docked in Philadelphia "with promises of freedom in Antigua."[61] Regardless of how they came into the possession of fleeing loyalists or officers, however, they left under the auspices of the British government. One transport fleet headed from Savannah to St. Augustine in 1782 contained only fifty white men and over nineteen hundred slaves,[62] a portion of the at least 4,000 black Southerners, including 150 black soldiers, who left Savannah in total, with at least another 8,000 leaving Charleston.[63]

The British government took them throughout the Atlantic world, though the overwhelming majority went to British possessions in the Caribbean basin where planters hoped to find land and privateers and officers expected the slaves in their possession to easily sell. Some 12,000 individuals from the thirteen colonies went to East Florida,

[60] Alexander Leslie, overseeing the evacuation at Charleston, wrote that he apprehended "a number of Negroes the property of citizens of Persons in this Province, which were allowed as servants to the officers … are now embarked on board the different transports" leaving the city. Leslie to General O'Hara, 3 May 1782, General Alexander Leslie Letterbooks, NYPL.

[61] William Brownson and George Wald to Unknown, Aug 13 1782, Edward Telfair Papers, DUL.

[62] See communications of Alexander Leslie in Siebert, ed., *Loyalists in East Florida*, p. 115, 116, 126-7. For the specific instance of 50 white men traveling with fifty slaves, see Alexander Leslie to Captain Swiney, 6 July 1782, in Alexander Leslie Letterbooks, NYPL.

[63] Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 201.

where a number of loyalists had relocated with their movable property to uncleared land granted them by the British government. There, slaves were almost immediately put to the backbreaking work of clearing swampland for cultivation near present day Jacksonville. Many worked for up to two years "without provisions, money, cloathing or implements of agriculture, and in the most deplorable circumstances" in the unhealthy environs between the St. John's and St. Mary's rivers.[64] Other slaves belonging to masters without landed property remained around the capital of St. Augustine, where colonists' fear of the exploding black population led Governor Patrick Tonyn to pass a series of restrictions similar to wartime measures in the colonies. Tonyn declared that the large number of black men and women in the city, the majority of whom claimed to be and believed themselves to be freed during the war, were required to "produce an Authenticated certificate of Manumission" or be confined in the city's jail. Since few slaves possessed such certificates, the city's prison swelled by six fold within a year.[65]

Far more slaves were taken by the British army to the Caribbean, where the commitment to maintaining slavery and the ever present desire for forced labor forced many more "freed" men and women back into slavery. Sylvia Frey has calculated that some sixty-five thousand slaves were brought into the port of Kingston between 1775 and 1785 alone, and many thousand more went to the relatively unpopulated Bahamas where

---

[64] Patrick Tonyn, quoted in Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Knopf, 2011), 97.

[65] Patrick Tonyn to Governor Zespedes, 6 December 1784, in Joseph Byrne Lockey, ed., *East Florida, 1783-1785: A File of Documents Assembled, and Many of them Translated* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1949). 328-31.

loyalists hoped to purchase cheap land.[66] Wherever they landed, they similarly faced restrictive laws and arduous labor. And as in Florida, those claimed by the few loyalists able to procure land were set about clearing swamp and forest for cultivation of tropical crops, including cotton, which some displaced loyalists thought could be a profitable new staple (Indeed, as will be seen later, cotton cultivation was, in a real sense, brought back into the United States by loyalists who had left and settled in the Bahamas).[67] More frequently, loyalists despaired of finding profitable employment for their slaves and decided instead to sell them to local planters. Those sold generally found themselves in the fields, where they suffered from the backbreaking labor of sugar cultivation, which reduced many to a state near death. Simon Taylor, one of the wealthiest planters of Jamaica, told his agents in 1785 to stop purchasing slaves arriving from the mainland because they "are a set of soft Angola and Mundigo Negroes who are too lazy ever to provide provisions for themselves … & if not given themselves up [to die] they take to dirt-eating which is inevitable death."[68] In one remarkable but overlooked instance, the British engineer James Moncrieff appears to have taken as many as eight-hundred slaves with him on a transport from Charleston to the Mosquito Coast in present day Guatemala.

[66] Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock,* 182-3.

[67] Whitemarsh Seabrook, *Memories of Cotton,* p. 198-99.

[68] Quoted in Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 258-9. Dirt eating, frequently reported among newly landed slaves, seems to have been driven from severe nutrition deficiency.

Moncrieff hoped to make a fortune harvesting mahogany there, but exposure, starvation, and attacks from Indians left all but a handful dead within a year.[69]

As in the mainland colonies, the disruptions of war precluded any easily resolution to the confusion created by competing claims for slave ownership between officers, slaveholders, and slaves themselves. However, unless they could find support from an officer or local officials, a slave's claim to freedom was invariably trumped by those who claimed them as property and complicit officials all too happy to diminish the number of free black persons by one number. Patrick Tonyn's aide in East Florida informed him "that five out of six of the Slaves in this Country, are held without any title deeds, and Bills of Sale were never given with the Negroes."[70] As a result, there and elsewhere officials required only the testimony of one or more white persons to establish claim to a black person's life and body. In other words, unless they had support, slaves who understood themselves free could be and frequently were officially reenslaved with title given simply on hearsay. If proper testimony could not be had, white men could and did simply forge bills of sale or titles to the slaves they claimed.[71] In several documented cases, British officers claimed as property the slaves who had been in their service during

---

[69] Greg Elliot to James Moncrieff, Sept 23 1783; "Memorial of Moncrief to the Right Honourable Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury, n.d. [1780s]," James Moncrieff Papers, WCL.

[70] James Hume to Patrick Tonyn, July 26, 1784, in *East Florida, 1783-1785*, 328-31.

[71] Fracis Philip Fatio to Vincent Manuel de Zespedes, Aug 30, 1784, in Lockey, *East Florida*, *1783-1785*.

the war, presumably assuming they would receive freedom when the conflict ended.[72] Such was the complaint made by John Cruden, who had been placed in charge of sequestered estates and became something of a crusader for both the freedmen and his personal pocketbook after the war. Writing from the island of Tortuga, which had become a clearing house for slaves after the war, Cruden reported to a Mr. C. Nisbet that "many Negroes the property of the inhabitants of the Southern Provinces, have been offered for sale, and by people who have no right to dispose them." Most often, Cruden reported, these persons were indeed officers who had served in South Carolina and "enticed them onto boats at the evacuation of Charles Town," using slaves' perceived chance to grasp freedom as a means of personal enrichment.[73]

Finally, in the clearest illustration of the fluidity of movement across space and across slavery and freedom during the war and immediate post-war period, a large number of the black men and women who left the South as freedpeople or as slaves found themselves returned to the United States after only a few months or years. Sometimes they were kidnapped or plundered by the same bands of banditti who had been engaged in manstealing during the war and continued their activities for some years after. William Cunningham and Daniel McGirt, both of whose names had been particularly notorious in the Carolina and Georgia backcountry, led bands of black and white men who engaged in a lively trade taking transplanted slaves from Florida and selling them

---

[72] Claim of William Hunter, LCC, P/O 882; Carole Watterson Troxler, "Re-enslavement of Black Loyalists: Mary Postell in South Carolina, East Florida, and Nova Scotia," in *Acadienis*, XXXVII, 2 (Summer, 2008): 70-85.

[73] John Cruden to C. Nisbet, March 25, 1783, Guy Carleton Papers, NYPL.

back into Georgia and South Carolina.[74] Another group, led by a close associate of the incoming Spanish Governor Zespedes, was accused by loyalists of similar actions.[75]

More frequently, slaves were forcibly returned to the United States through sale. The glut of loyalists arriving with many slaves and little land eventually drove down the price of slaves on Caribbean islands to a point where slaveholders complained they could not receive even a fifth of their value. Rather than try to hire out their slaves or purchase land, numerous loyalists instead decided to sell their slaves back to the mainland, where the demand for slaves was rapidly increasing, and use the proceeds to relocate to England. In one case, the loyalist Elias Ball, one of South Carolina's wealthiest planters before the war, tried to set up a plantation and turn a profit by moving his 175 slaves to East Florida. After that experiment failed at a cost of more than 30 slaves dead, he sold the slaves back to his cousin (also named Elias) in South Carolina.[76] In another instance, slaves were seized from Jamaica and sold back in the Carolinas to settle debts owed by the exiled backcountry merchant Eli Kershaw.[77] In certain cases, merchants from the mainland actively sought to use their connections to loyalists to buy back departed black men and women because, as Savannah merchant Joseph Clay explained, these slaves

---

[74] Eventually both were exiled to NEw Providence, where they went with a number of slaves also presumably taken during the war or immediately after. Vincente Manuel de Zespedes to Bernando de Galvez, St. Augustine, Aug 9, 1784, in Lockey, *East Florida*, *1783-1785*, 243.

[75] Memorial of John Fox, July 25 1785, in *Ibid*., 667-8.

[76] Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 126-7.

[77] William Cumine to John Chesnut, 12 Sept 1784, John Chesnut Papers, SCHS.

were preferable for their being already "seasoned."[78] Another 4,000 men and women from Florida were taken with slaveholders who opted to move back to America rather than leave with the British after control of the colony was transferred to the Spanish.[79] And in at least one case, a slave deceived by and then sold by an American sailor in Dominica requested to be returned to his master in the United States to avoid slavery in the Caribbean, suggesting the [80]

In at least a few cases, black loyalists were reenslaved after several years of freedom. Mary Postell ran away from her owner in South Carolina and received a certificate of freedom from British officers during the war. At the war's conclusion, her certificate was taken and she was ordered into the service of a loyalist, Jesse Grey, who put Postell and her children to work harvesting a small plot in East Florida. After Postell fled Grey, again claiming freedom, she found passage to Nova Scotia where she lived for several years before being seized and claimed by Grey and his brother John. Postell was sold for 100 potatoes to a man named Singleton, who took her from her young daughters

---

[78] Joseph Clay to Edward Telfair, Dec 6, 1784, Joseph Clay Letterbooks, GHS.

[79] Joseph Byrne Lockey, "Introduction," in *East Florida, 1783-1785*, 10.

[80] Charles Winstone to James Irvin, 6 Jan 1778, wrote "I take the Liberty of informing you, that on Sunday last the 4th inst I was lucky enough to secure for you a Negro Man named Sharpe, who tells me he is your property – he was on board of a French Packet Boat bound for Martinique to Guadaloupe, under the care of an American Sailor, who I suspect intended to dispose of hum at the last mentioned island _ The fellow informs me, he was taken in your Shallop returning to Granada, after he had been at St Vincent, by an American Privateer and carried into St Lucia, that he was afterwards carried to Martinique, and from thence was going to Guadaloupe. That he was under the care of the American Sailor, who pretended to have purchased him from one Munro the Captain of the Privateer. Sharpe Himself made the discovery in consequence of which it came to my knowledge, nad as the King's Solicitor General of this Island I thought it my Duty to interfere. Charles Winstone Letter Book, WCL.

Flora and Nelly and sold her in North Carolina. Although young, her struggle for freedom and years of labor had apparently left her broken and she sold for a mere £5 current money.[81] About the same time a man named Isaac Wheeler arrived in Charleston with a number of black men and women also taken from Nova Scotia, where they had probably been kidnapped after living for years as freedpeople. Officials posted notice and many of the slaves were claimed by planters from neighboring states. The state gave possession of those slaves not claimed to Wheeler in return for his "service" in returning these men and women from freedom to slavery.[82]

The £5 paid for Mary Postell could not have covered even the cost of bringing her from Nova Scotia to Carolina, and the return of at least some of the slaves who arrived with Wheeler cost more than if they had been bought on the open market, as their owners were forced to pay fees to the court, to the jailer, and to Wheeler himself. Yet as the confusion of war settled, and as the social fluidity of the war and immediate post-war period dissipated, the material value of those men and women was secondary to the need of white Southern society to strengthen the institution of slavery by reaffirming the intractability of a slave's legal status. The experience of a Revolutionary war fought in the name of liberty necessarily provoked a strong and increasingly uniform reaction among white people as well as slaves. If the Revolution was, as John Shy wrote, "a

---

[81] Carole Watterson Troxler, "The Reenslavement of Black Loyalists." Troxler's short but excellent article covers new and important ground and is deserving of wider attention.

[82] Letters Concerning the Negroes from Nova Scotia, 1785-1786, General State Assembly Records, Legislative Papers, NCSA. Wheeler's being given the slaves is mentioned in Richard Caswell to "Dear Sir," July 10, 1786, in *Ibid*.

political education by military means," then slaves learned the deepest lesson.[83] At Great Bridge, Virginia, remember, black men wore sashes emblazoned with the words "LIBERTY to SLAVES."[84] At Charleston, black southerners took up arms and fought in black troops like the Black Dragoons. In some places black men apparently even served as officers in loyalist militia.[85] Everywhere, black men and black women served among British or patriot armies, and everywhere slaves and freedpeople watched and listened and remembered.

Immediately upon the conclusion of the war, the struggle over movement entered a new phase as slaveholders and state governments responded to the experience of seeing armed former slaves and the consequences of the Revolution by passing new regulations on slave movement and by erecting new legal frameworks which aimed to recodify the distinction between slavery and freedom and seal the gaps that the war had opened. Like the colonial laws that preceded and informed them, postwar statutes sought to fix black people on one side of the freedom/unfreedom divide that had been blurred in the conflict. Yet the specific ways that legislatures sought to do so, and the extent to which new laws and labor regimes increasingly recognized black men and women as subjects while

---

[83] John Shy, "The American Revolution: The Military Conflict Considered as a Revolutionary War," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, ed., *Essays on the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1973): 121-56, 147.

[84] John Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2007), 38.

[85] After the war, the widow of a loyalist petitioned against the confiscation of her property by saying that her husband "accepted the Command of the Goosecreek Company of loyalist militia] chiefly to prevent its being given to a blackm man." Petition of Mrs. Mary Brown, in behalf of her husband Archibald Brown, 15 Feb 1783, in *Journal of the South Carolina House of Representatives, 1783-1784*, 144-5, 144.

simultaneously restricting black peoples' capacity for autonomy, advancement, and property ownership, bespeaks the extent to which the grounds on which the negotiation between slaves and slaveholders had shifted.

With plantations ruined and slaves scattered, the first priority for white Southerners after the war was the straightforward but difficult task of returning slaves to plantations and those slaves off plantations and returning their labor force to work. For slaveholders this first meant simply finding those slaves they had lost or who had run off and attempting to bring them back to the plantation by force or, on occasion, through bargaining. It was not always an easy task. Charlestonians petitioned the state legislature to deal with the "numerous slaves, some falsely claiming to be FREE, who loiter in the city and refuse to return to service."[86] In urban areas and on plantations slaveholders complained that the taste of freedom during the war had eroded slaves' willingness to work. One Georgia planter observed that "freedom has ruined these wretches," and in a particularly startling instance given later developments, the North Carolina planter and Anglican minister Charles Pettigrew found that he was unable to sell his unruly slaves in the French colony of St. Domingue. Planters there, he wrote home, "were too suspitious [sic] of their Morals, when brought from the Continent" and after hiring out several slaves for trial found himself forced to try to sell them back in the United States.[87]

---

[86] Memorial of the Inhabitants of Charleston, 4 Aug 1784, in Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[87] Charles Pettigrew to Mary Pettigrew, 11 March 1785, Pettigrew Family Papers, SHC.

In the aftermath of war, the Southern legal system became backlogged with competing property claims on slaves, and southern jails filled with black men and women found off plantations or in cities, often claiming to be free. In South Carolina and Georgia especially, where the use of slave property to fund the war effort led to widespread confusion over slave ownership, courts were flooded with actions of trover initiated by slaveholders seeking either compensation for slaves taken or restoration of property. In a typical case that neatly illustrates both the confusion surrounding property and the widespread dispersal of slaves during the war, a Dr. Turnbull brought suit against a Mr. Ross to recover slaves who had been stolen and taken to East Florida, then escaped into Georgia, before being captured by the state there and sold to a new owner who was attempting to move with them further west into the Georgia backcountry.[88] In several cases, slaves were also simply granted to white Southerners in return for service or for losses during the war, and black men and women claiming to be slave or free often remained in overcrowded jails for months or years before being sold to new owners many miles from their home.[89]

At the same time, however, the widespread confusion and competing claims for slaves did give black men and women a degree of bargaining power over the extent of their movement, especially in determining where and how they might be employed, at least in the immediate post-war years. In 1784, for example, John Dreyless wrote to

---

[88] Turnbull v. Ross, in Elihu Hall Bay, *Reports of Cases argued and Determined in the superior Courts of law in the State of South-Carolina, since the Revolution* (Charleston, 1798), 19-22.

[89] See, for instance, the case of Chapman Badgett, who claimed to be free, but was held in Surry County jail before being sold at auction. *Virginia Gazette*, Feb 8, 1783.

Henry Laurens's agent John Lewis Gervais about a slave who had found his way to New York and for obvious reasons refused to return to Laurens's rice plantation in South Carolina. Dreyless wrote that the slave, Ishmael, "pretends to know nothing" of coming from South Carolina or of the whereabouts of other eloped slaves, and "says he will go back to you willingly before the final evacuation of this place but not at present, and I find it is not in my power to convince him." Dreyless also explained why, telling Gervais "it is dangerous attempting to lay hold on one that is not a person but real property."[90]

Other slaves used the disorder and the swell of shifting people who scattered across the region to hold onto the half-freedom afforded by the war for as long as they could. Chapman Badgett, mentioned above, returned to Virginia after killing his owner and found work for eight years before being detained in Surry County in 1783. He claimed to be free, as did a great number of black men and women taken up during the conflict. As long as they could avoid the eye of authority, Chapman and other slaves might enjoy autonomy within the anonymity created by a swell of displaced peoples. Yet, as ever, the forces of revolution moved both ways, and without recognized proof of freedom and among strangers that same confusion that allowed for shades of freedom left slaves with little recourse when authorities set to fix them in place. Badgett had used the shroud of anonymity to move within his space of semi-freedom and so he lacked papers or personal ties as he traveled through Northwestern Virginia. As a result, he had little to leverage after being taken up in 1783 by a planter who felt "apprehensive, from every circumstance, that the said Badgett is a slave." Within a few months Chapman, like the

---

[90] John Dreyless to John Lewis Gervais, 14 April 1784, John Lewis Gervais Papers, SCL.

overwhelming majority of those captured after British defeats or attempting to reach enemy lines, was sold, the space he had existed within during war closed with the coming of peace.[91]

The desire to repair fortunes and restore order through work also afforded a certain room for maneuver to slaves who had escaped or been plundered during the war and found communities elsewhere, including among white southerners who might aid a slave in holding on to his new identity and environs. This was especially true for those slaves who, in contrast to Badgett, managed to forge connections with white neighbors who supported their claims on new identities and new situations, if not freedom. Joseph Clay of Savannah became embroiled in a long controversy over a slave named Ned, who had been taken by his overseer in Georgia and claimed as that overseer's property during the war. Some time afterward, Ned had been again stolen, condemned as a lawful prize, and sold to a Mr. Beck in Bladen County, North Carolina where he had lived for several years, married a wife near Beck's plantation, and apparently fathered a child. Clay finally tracked Ned down in 1787 but was unable to return Ned to Georgia despite several trips northward and legal action. Title to Ned having been lost during the war, Clay tried to prove ownership by having several individuals identify Ned, but Ned "having become fixed in his new environs" simply claimed to be someone else, repeatedly denying his name or that he had ever lived in Georgia. With white men in the county backing his claim to a new name and new life, Ned successfully remained in North Carolina despite

[91] *Virginia Gazette*, Feb 3, 1781.

pleadings from Clay that lasted until at least 1788.[92] Slaves in cities could also leverage confusion and planters financial distress for greater control over their time, and occasionally even for monetary wages. Recoiling at the newfound assertiveness of his slave Nanny, the Charleston merchant and planter De Tollenare wrote to Judge John F. Grimke in May of 1784 about the "audacious behavior of my wench" who "looks upon me as a mere Cypher." Nanny, who during the war had made a trade hiring herself out in Charleston, refused either to return to the plantation or to give to her owner the money she had earned, yet De Tollenare found he could do little but beg Grimke to "assert himself upon her, for she is a mischievous wench and I find I have little in my power to do."[93]

Yet as during the war, the cases of Ned and Nanny prove the exception to the rule. The same circumstances that allowed them some control over their movement led to forced relocation for thousands of other black men and women. The financial distress of post-war planters led to innumerable slave sales in the 1780s, such as that of the Georgian planter Thomas Barkley who died intestate and whose seventeen slaves were sold to fifteen different individuals in 1784.[94] Even more frequently, drained finances left planters unable to adequately employ their labor force and the post-war years saw the growth of an extensive hiring system, particularly in Virginia where the failing tobacco

[92] Joseph Clay to John Beck, 7 Nov 1787; Joseph Caly to Judge Williams, 19 Nov 1787; Joseph Caly to J. Wright Stanley, 20 Aug 1788; Clay to Stanley, 16 Sep 1788, Joseph Clay Letterbooks, GHS.

[93] F. De Tollenare to John F. Grimke, 23 May 1784, John F. Grimke Papers, SCHS.

[94] Account of a sale concerning the estate of Thomas Barkley, 1784, Inestate Records, General State Records, GSA.

market led to a glut of slave labor as planters rapidly converted to wheat production and mixed farming.[95] Sometimes hired slaves were moved hundreds of miles, to work on plantations in other states or in the interior where a number of rising merchant planters had acquired estates and found older planting families eager to hire their slaves cheaply.[96]

The strain on black family life that hiring, sale, and especially the forced removal of slaves to freshly opened lands in the backcountry can be seen in the growing number of runaways and black on white violence in the post-war years. Joseph Clay complained to a correspondent that a number of slaves had run off and attempted to reach Savannah after being hired out to a planter near Augusta.[97] A man named John Jones, for instance, petitioned the state of South Carolina for relief in 1785 after a slave of his, upon discovering he was to be marched to the Georgia backcountry for sale, killed his overseer and took to the woods before being discovered and hanged.[98] Runaway slave advertisements in Virginia frequently reported slaves taken up on the east coast who had

---

[95] Discussed in fine detail in Sarah S. Hughes, "Slaves for Hire: The Allocation of Black Labor in Elizabeth City County, Virginia, 1782 to 1810," in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 35 (April, 1978): 260-86.

[96] In one instance, Charles Pinckney and Edward Rutledge spread hundreds of slaves on plantations across South Carolina which they had acquired from distressed loyalists or confiscated estate sales after the war. See Roger Smith to Peter Taylor, 21 Aug 1786, Taylor Family Papers, SCL.

[97] Joseph Clay to Mr. Thomas, Dec 4, 1788, in Joseph Clay Letterbooks, GHS.

[98] Petition of John Jones, n.d. [1785?], Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

fled from the west of the state or from Kentucky in hopes of returning to their family along the coast.[99]

Such runaways, and the explosion in the number of free black men and women in the South during and after the war, meant that the second primary response of slaveholders and state officials to the problem of slave movement was determining the legal status of slaves claiming to be free and creating new regulations to negotiate, if not entirely contain, the emergence of free black communities, particularly in urban areas. Of course there had always been black men and women living as free in the pre-war South, though they seem typically to have been either elderly or the mixed offspring of slaveholders, and their numbers were small. The only pre-Revolutionary count of free black people in the South, a census done in Maryland in 1755, counted only 1,800 freemen, nearly all of whom were inform or of mixed descent. Some time after the war Virginians similarly remembered that "less than thirty years ago, the number of free negroes was so small that they were seldom to be met with."[100]

The fracturing and fluidity of the war, however, swelled the number of free black men and women as white Southerners looked on with apprehension. During the war, Virginians complained that "there is reason to believe that a great number of slaves who were with the British Army are now passing in this Country as free men," and each state

[99] See the case of Billy, in *Virginia Herald and Fredericksburg Advertiser* (Fredericksburg), Aug 2 1792.

[100] Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 3-5.

legislature found itself dealing with similar observations and fears of white residents.[101] Importantly, post-war "pro-slavery" petitions and memorials were concerned exclusively with the perceived threat that free black men and women posed to a still fragile social order and did not attempt to justify slavery as an institution despite the growth in anti-slavery sentiment throughout the South. A typical petition, submitted to the South Carolina House of Assembly in 1783, warned legislators of the "great disturbance being caused by the number of Negroes claiming to be free … who we fear impart bad habits to our Negroes in this part of the country."[102] A 1784 petition from Hanover County, Virginia, similarly took the existence of slavery as a matter of fact while urging lawmakers to stop the "evils that have Arisen from a Partial Emancipation," particularly an alleged tendency for freemen to act as "Agents, Factors, and Carriers … of Slave Property stolen from their masters. Another petition, submitted by residents of Henrico County, Virginia, in 1785, echoed the Hanover petition and many others when it too spoke of the "Horrors arising from Emancipations," which was "productive of, very bad effects … as many of the Slaves, liberated by that Act, have been guilty of Thefts and Outrages, Insolence and Violences."[103]

Lawmakers responded in kind. On the one hand, within three years of the war's end, each state responded to confusion over the status of "slaves passing as freemen" by

---

[101] Quoted in Ira Berlin, "The Revolution in Black Life," in Alfred P. Young, *The American Revolution: Studies in American Radicalism*, 358.

[102] Presentments of the Grand Jury of Camden, 22 Oct 1783, in Grand Jury Presentments, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[103] Both Virginia petitions reprinted in Fredrika Teute Schmidt and Barbara Ripel Wilhem, "Early Proslavery Petitions in Virginia," *WMQ,* vol. 30, no. 1 (1973): 133-146, 138, 140.

passing legislation that attempted to more clearly define both racial categories and the permanence of 8slaves' status as chattel. The North Carolina Assembly passed an Act in June, 1784, that determined "Every person of descent from someone with Negro blood shall be considered a Negro … and from a Negro and an Indian a Mestizo."[104] South Carolina's House of Assembly similarly formed a special committee in 1785 in response to a series of petitions over the increase in freedmen, declaring a year later that it was legal for any white person to demand proof of freedom from any unfamiliar black person. If a black person did not or could not provide proof, "it shall be lawful for the Negro to be committed to jail and sold by the Sherriff, proper notice having been posted so that rightful owners may submit claim."[105] Predictably, the greatest flurry of legislation surrounding the status of black people came from Virginia, which along with Maryland experienced the largest increase in free black population. The state declared in 1785 that "Every person of whose grandfathers or grandmothers anyone is or shall have been A Negro, shall be deemed a Negro … and every person with one-fourth part or more of white blood, shall be a mulatto." The same year slaves were defined as those people "who were so on the first day of this Assembly, and the descendents of the females from them."[106]

At the same time, states strengthened existing laws and wartime declarations aimed at stopping the free movement of black people both free and enslaved. The first

---

[104] *CSR, XVII,* 284.

[105] *Journal of the House of Representatives, 1785-1787*, 327.

[106] Acts of the Virginia Assembly, Chaps. LXXVII, LXXXI, in Purcell, *The Black Laws of Virginia*, 62, 84.

post-war session of the Virginia Assembly passed a law declaring that "it shall be lawful for any justice of the peace to commit" black men and women "wandering through the country … to the gaol of his comity, … and to confine him, her, or them in close gaol for three months," after which they were to be sold at auction if unclaimed.[107] As the state's free black population grew and as complaints about slaves passing as free grew louder, the Governor strengthened such provisions in 1793 by signing legislation that explicitly put into writing that all black people without freedom papers were to be presumed slaves. If a black man or woman could not produce such papers, he or she was to be detained detained for six months and, if unclaimed, sold back into slavery. In another attempt to fix black people's status, that same year Virginia also required all free black men living in town to register their name, age, color, wife, children, and profession with the clerk of a local court on pain of imprisonment and possible enslavement. And even if, as Kirt von Daake has recently argued, black people avoided compliance with such registration laws as best they could, this and similar legislation the legislation effectively barred unregistered slaves from access to courts or other avenues of legal recourse.[108]

Every other state passed numerous similar laws strengthening white southerner's authority of black people enslaved and free in the attempt to eliminate the spaces between slavery and freedom opened by the Revolution. Georgia made it lawful for any white

---

[107] An act to Strengthen an Act for the Regulation of Slaves, 1783, in William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legilsature, in the year 1619* (Richmond: George cochran, 1823), XI, 23-25.

[108] Kirt von Daacke, *Freedom Has a Face: Race, Identity, and Community in Jefferson's Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 19-23; see also Gerald Mullin's aged but still required *Flight or Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford, 1972), esp. chaps 6-8.

man to "detain a Negro found traveling at night."[109] Although black men and women could find sympathetic white Southerners willing to testify that they were of good character and known to their communities as free, the push to close the barrier between slavery and freedom led to the reenslavement of numerous black people claiming to be free. Advertisements posted by constables or jailkeeps in the immediate post-war period reveal countless instances in which a black man or woman who claimed to be free was confined and, presumably in most cases, sold.[110] In at least one instance, a black man in Gloucester County, Virginia, was confined as a slave in spite of the fact that he produced a signed certificate of three years of serving in the Continental Army, showing that in his case as in others the states' commitment to slavery trumped revolutionary service.[111]

Because of the threat they posed to property and the encouragement they gave to eloping slaves on plantations, Southern states responded with special force to the black men and women who sought to protect their claim to freedom collectively in the many small communities of maroons that had formed during the latter half of the Revolution. Special militias were called to deal with such communities when found, and every southern state increased patrols in areas where maroons were suspected of lurking. The most famous instance concerns a large group of maroons who ran away during the war and continued to live in the swamps along the Savannah River for at least five years afterwards. Calling themselves the "King of England Soldiers," the maroons—many of

---

[109] *RRG*, III, 421,

[110] See for instance, *Charleston Evening Gazette*, 14 Oct 1783; *Georgia Gazette*, 2 Feb 1784; *Virginia Gazette*, 12 Dec 1783.

[111] *Virginia Gazette*, Jan 13 1784.

whom received their political education while fighting for the British at the Battle of Savannah—stole livestock, occasionally assaulted white men who came upon them, and continued to encourage defections of slaves from Georgia and South Carolina. Governor James Jackson, who had risen to prominence in large part through the use of hundreds of confiscated slaves to supply his state legion during the war, wrote to the Governor Mathews of South Carolina in 1787 that "if something is not done about them I dread the consequences. They are as daring as any & dangerous in their independent state."[112] Eventually, a joint militia of several hundred men from the two states found their camp on Bear Creek in Georgia, which the maroons had made into a fortress "with breastworks four feet high and only one narrow entry" surrounding twenty one houses and large fields planted with rice and potatoes. After a fierce battle in which at least one white man was killed, the maroons were dispersed, and those captured were sold for the benefit of the militiamen who found them.[113]

In their effort to close the gaps that the war had opened between slavery and freedom, post-war assemblies made concerted efforts to restrict the movement of those black persons recognized as free and to limit as best as possible interactions between slaves and freemen. Despite the acknowledged perceived danger posed by free black people to the security of slavery, as well as widespread pressure and actions taken by states and individual slaveholders, the number of free black southerners continued to

---

[112] James Jackson to Governor Mathews, May 3, 1787, in Joseph Vallence Bevan Papers, GHS.

[113] James Gunn to James Jackson, May 6 1787, in Joseph Vallence Bevan Papers, GHS. More primary sources on the King of England soldiers can also be found in Timothy James Lockley, ed., *Maroon Communities in South Carolina: A Documentary Record* (Columbia, SC: University of South CArolina Press, 2009).

grow after the war through a rash of private manumissions. The ideological pressure of the Revolution manifested itself most fully in the Southern states in the passage of laws authorizing for the first time slaveholders to grant freedom to their slaves through will or deed. Being "convinced that to retain men in Slavery is contrary to the true Principles of Religion, Justice, and the late Revolution," a number of planters in the Upper South in particular freed large number of slaves immediately after the war.[114] The majority of emancipators were motivated by religion, and in Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia they appear to have come from the ranks of Quakers, Swedenborgians, Moravians, and other religious sects.[115] As Eva Shepard Wolf has shown, the vast majority of these manumissions came immediately after the war, when the pull of revolutionary ideals and the still uncertain shape of southern society was developing.[116]

The fate of newly emancipated slaves varied, but in all cases freedom remained uncertain and freedmen and freedwomen faced increasing hardships as Southern society closed ranks against them in the post-war decades. In some instances, manumitting slaveholders set newly freed slaves upon small freeholds on the land they had formerly cultivated. Robert Carter, Robert Pleasants, and Richard Randolph—wealthy Virginia slaveholders all—devised a number of devices to ensure "such Negroes as are set free

---

[114] From Robert Carter's famous "deed of gift," 8 Jan 1791, Robert Carter Papers, DUL.

[115] See Pre-1820 Deeds of Manumission, LiVi; Records of Manumission, SCDAH; Manumission Entries, GSA. This is also argued in Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, chaps. 1-2.

[116] Eva Shepard Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation: Emancipation in Virginia from the Revolution to Nat Turner's Rebellion* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

will not become a burden to society," requiring as a condition of their emancipation that slaves worked (sometimes for small wages) on the land given to them and not become "idle and vagrants."[117] More frequently, however, freed slaves moved to cities, attempting as best they could to make a livelihood jobbing at small trades or hiring themselves out as laborers.[118]

Wherever newly freed men and women made their home, their capacity to move about, to accumulate property, and to assemble with other slaves as acted upon the belief expressed by a Virginia assemblyman named Roberts, that "If the blacks see all of their color slaves, it will seem to them a disposition of Providence, and they will be content. But if they see others like themselves free, and enjoying rights, they are deprived of, they will repine."[119] States passed acts similar to one ratified by North Carolina in 1784, which made it unlawful for any assemblage of black people, slave or free, after dark or on the Sabbath.[120] Always fearful of theft, states passed especially stringent punishments on those free black people accused of purchasing goods from slaves. In North Carolina and Georgia, freedmen and women might face reenslavement if found in possession of stolen

---

[117] Quotes from Memorial of Robert Pleasants to the Governor and Council of Virginia, 1790, in Robert Pleasants Papers, Brock Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. For Randolph and Carter, see respectively Melvin Patrick Ely, *Israel on the Appomatox* : *A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom before the Civil War* (New York: Vintage, 2005); Andrew Levy, *The First Emancipator: The Forgotten Story of Robert Carter, the Founding Father Who Freed His Slaves* (New York: Random House, 2005).

[118] Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, chap. 2.

[119] Quoted in Peter Joseph Albert, "The Protean Institution: The Georgraphy, Economy, and Ideology of Slavery in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1976, p. 150.

[120] *CSR*, XXXII, 48. See also Purcell, *Black Laws of Virginia*, 126; *Records of the General Assembly of South Carolina*, *1783-1785*, 284.

goods, and in Virginia both slaves and freedmen caught "peddling goods" with one another were given "39 stripes, on their bare back."[121] To the same end, states tried to bar free black people from occupations which allowed them mobility and opportunities to meet other slaves. States expressly forbade free black men (and often slaves) from manning river boats or obtaining pilot licenses after the war, despite the region's long tradition of black boatmen, and freedmen were forbid in South Carolina at least from hiring out slaves from their owners.[122]

White Southerners' efforts to contain the region's new population of free black people was most marked in North Carolina, which was the only state in the Union that passed wartime legislation, tellingly called "An Act to Prevent Domestic Insurrections," expressly forbidding private manumissions. The 1777 act made it legal for any white person to apprehend any black person claiming to be free for detainment and eventual sale,[123] yet there as elsewhere individuals—particularly Quakers—attempted to set their slaves free regardless, often illegally allowing them to work for their own wages or to live as free on land allotted them by their owners. But as the post-war generation solidified against the growing presence of freed slaves, their position was rendered increasingly untenable. White North Carolinians inundated the legislature with petitions against the "scurrilous practice of allowing slaves to live as free," and in several instances

---

[121] *CSR*, XXXII, 291; Purcell, *Black Laws of Virginia*, 74.

[122] Black Laws of Virginia, Purcell; North Carolina Slave book; Gerogia State Archives ← find in photocopie from storage

[123] "An Act to Prevent Domestic Insurrection, and for Other Purposes," in *CSR*, XI, 288-9.

slaves who had thought themselves free were again reenslaved.[124] In one instance, 134 men, women, and children who had been set free by North Carolina Quakers during the war were arrested in 1791 and, under a retroactive reading of the 1777 act were eventually separated and sold.[125] In another, a woman named Amy who had been living as free in the town of Wilmington for over a decade was seized upon the death of her nominal owner. Discovering that the owner, Alexander Stafford, died intestate and considerably in debt, she and her three daughters were sold separately in auction to cover claims on Stafford's estate.[126]

Other states attempted to restrict and manage the growth of the new caste of free black citizens by barring freedmen and freedwomen from enjoying the fruits of freedom, particularly the accumulation of property. At least South Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia levied additional taxes on freedmen, with South Carolina requiring free black households pay a poll tax three times that of a white household with the same number of family members. Because Charleston had the largest free black population of any Southern city, the steps taken by the City Council there foreshadowed steps taken by municipal authorities across the region. Beginning with the retaking of Charleston by patriot forces in 1782, the city passed numerous restrictions and levied onerous fines on black

[124] Petition of the Citizens of Wilimington, Apr 23, 1786, in General State Assembly Records, Legislative Papers, NSA.

[125] See "A LIST of EMANCIPATED BLACKS, taken up and sold by order of the County Courts of Pasquotank, Perquimons and Chowan, in consequence of several actso f the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, since the passing of the first act in the year 1777, to the present time," Iredell, *Laws of North Carolina*.

[126] "Petition of Joseph White, Administrator of all and singular the goods of Alexander Stafford, late of the County of Perquimany," in General State Assembly Records, Legislative Papers, NSA.

tradesmen and workers in response to white residents' fears and repeated complaints from tradesmen about competition from black workers. The city council passed an ordinance in 1783 that for the first time required all enslaved and free black tradesmen to have purchase badges, thereby making *visibile* on which side of the freedom/unfreedom divide a black man or woman stood. Wilmington, NC, passed a similar ordinance, requiring free blacks to register with their resident counties and wear a "badge of cloth ... to be fixed on the left shoulder, and to have thereon wrought in legible capital letters the world FREE."[127] Additionally, and not coincidentally, the annual cost of the badges, which would remain a mark of Charleston society through the Civil War and are expensive tourist items today, varied depending upon trade, with the cost of some (40 shillings hard money to be a butcher) seemingly prohibitive.[128] The city also passed ordinances at the end of the war imposing a curfew on black residents, again enslaved or free. Slaves found without badges, or out too late in the evenings, faced heavy fines and reenslavement if they could not pay the fees.[129]

Beginning in the early 1790s the Southern states experienced a flurry of real or imagined insurrection scares, culminating in Gabriel's rebellion of 1800 in Richmond,

---

[127] Jeffrey J. Crow, "Slave Rebelliousness and Social Conflict in North Carolina, 1775 to 1802," in *William & Mary Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 1 (Jan., 1980): 79-102, 92.

[128] See a list of city ordinances published in the *Charleston Evening Gazette*, 28 July 1786. See also, Harlan Greene, Harry S. Hutchins, and Brian E. Hutches, *Slave Badges and the Slave-Hire System in Charleston, South Carolina, 1783-1865* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008).

[129] H.M. Henry, *Police Control of the Slave in South Carolina* (Emory, VA: 1914), 47.

Virginia. Historians have attributed increasingly violent and outspoken resistance during this period to the increasing urban populations of freed black people and, most importantly, to information arriving from the island of Saint Domingue, where ex slaves engaged in the greatest slave rebellion the world had ever seen.[130] And it is true that the imprint left by the Haitian Revolution on the minds of slaves and terrified slaveholders cannot be understated.[131] Yet the brief stories of Chapman, Ned, Amy, and Mary and others a new context for understanding the choice taken by a growing number of black Southerners to take up arms for their freedom. As authorities closed the fissures in society and tried to contain the most radical impulses of the Revolution, black people found it more difficult to hold on to the spaces between slavery and freedom opened during the fighting. Black men and women, all of whom had been touched by the Revolution and who had heard in taverns and on farms that all men are created equal, faced an increasingly stark choice, one expressed by a slave named Glasgow who hanged alongside Gabriel: "Yes, I have a rose for my freedom, and I have never got it but, damn it, I will either die or be free."[132]

---

[130] The influence of urban connections and of the Haitian Revolution in explaining Gabriel is especially strong in Douglas Egerton's excellent book, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1993).

[131] For broad analyses of America's reaction to the Haitian Revolution, see Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2008); James Alexander Dun, "Dangerous Intelligence: Slavery, Saint Domingue, and the Haitian Revolution in the Early American Republic," Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 2011.

[132] Glasgow quoted in Peter J. Albert, "The Protean Institution," 217.

Chapter 4: The Short, Unhappy Life of Antislavery Sentiment in the Post-Revolutionary South

The defining irony of the revolutionary South was that the high water mark for antislavery sentiment in the region also began an era of slavery's expansion and entrenchment premised in large part on extreme violence against both black and white opponents of slavery. In January of 1778, young John Laurens, aide-de-camp to George Washington and son of South Carolina's revolutionary leader Henry Laurens, wrote to his father with the idea of raising black soldiers from among the state's one-hundred thousand slaves. Inspired by the formation of a black regiment in Rhode Island's Continental Line, John requested that his father give him all the "able bodied men Slaves, instead of leaving me a fortune" as his inheritance, explaining that he was "tired of the Languor with which so sacred a War as this, is carried on." John's plan, he explained, "would advance those who are unjustly deprived of the Rights of Mankind to a State which would be a proper Gradation between abject Slavery and perfect Liberty."[1] Although Henry had earlier expressed misgivings about the institution that had made him

---

[1] John Laurens to Henry Laurens, Jan. 14, 1778, in Philip M. Haer, et. al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1968-2002), vol. 12, 305. Laurens's plan to raise a regiment of black troops has been discussed many times but the most comprehensive treatment can be found in Gregory D. Massey, *John Laurens and the American Revolution* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2000). See, among countless other treatments, Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 60-72; Donald L. Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), 118-22; Jack Rakove, *Revolutionaries: A New History of the Invention of America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010), chap. 5. For the Rhode Island regiment, see Lorenzo J. Greene, "Some Observations on the Black Regiment of Rhode Island in the American Revolution, *Journal of Negro History*, 37, 2 (April, 1952): 142-77.

rich as both slave trader and planter,[2] he cautioned his son that the state would reject the plan and that his slaves would "interpret your humanity to be an Exchange of Slavery a State & circumstances not only tolerable but comfortable from habit, for an intolerable one."[3] Yet John pressed his case with words remarkable for any American at the time, let alone a South Carolinian: "I have long deplored the wretched Sate of these men," he wrote, "and considered in their history the bloody wars excited in Africa to furnish America with Slaves, the Groans of despairing multitudes toiling for the Luxuries of Merciless Tyrants … I am tempted to believe that this trampled people have so much human left in them, as to be capable of aspiring to the rights of men by noble exertions, if some friend to mankind would point the Road, and give them prospect of Success."[4]

At his father's urging, John remained silent for a year. In 1779, however, after the British army had taken Savannah and pressed into South Carolina, John—now with Henry's tacit blessing and lukewarm support from southern delegates meeting in Philadelphia—presented his idea before the Continental Congress and, after summary debate, the assembly approved the plan. John returned to South Carolina with a recommendation, though not a directive, that the state raise 3,000 "able bodied Negroes," who would serve in exchange for their freedom and whose owners would be

---

[2] Two years earlier the elder Laurens had told his son that—although "I am not the Man who enslaved them—he was "devising means for manumitting many of them" despite his awareness that "great powers oppose me, the Laws and Customs of my Country, my own & the avarice of my Country Men." Henry Laurens to John Laurens, Aug. 14, 1776, in *HL*, vol. 11, 223-5. Henry owned over 300 slaves at the time. Massey, *John Laurens and the American Revolution*, 123.

[3] Henry Laurens to John Laurens, Jan. 28, 1778, in *HL*, vol. 12, 367-8.

[4] John Laurens to Henry Laurens, Feb. 2, 1778, *ibid*., 390-93.

compensated with $1,000 in continental currency.[5] Predictably, the state's legislature summarily tabled the proposal despite a desperate need for manpower and John's plea that "Those very blacks which have hitherto been regarded as our greatest weakness may be converted into our greatest strength" under his scheme.[6]

Although his plan went nowhere, and although South Carolina's public was aware and disapproved of his idea, John Laurens was still elected to South Carolina's House of Delegates that winter. When he took his seat in 1779 he raised the notion of a slave regiment once more, only for it to be tabled again in the face of more vociferous criticism and fears in the press that miscegenation might follow emancipation.[7] Yet despite facing fervent admonishments over the third iteration of his proposal, John was reelected in 1781, and at the Jacksonborough Assembly he sat on the legislature's most important committee, that tasked with drafting the state's banishment lists and overseeing the sale of confiscated estates. There John pled for a fourth time in January of 1782 to raise a regiment of 2,500 black troops under his command, this time from among slaves sequestered on loyalists' plantations. As it had before, his idea set off "Great alarm" both in Congress and among citizens in South Carolina and Georgia who, in the midst of slave resistance and revolutionary war, argued that the sight of armed black men would spark

---

[5] Worthing Chancey Ford and Roscoe R. Hill, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904-1918), vol. 13, 385-8.

[6] John Laurens to John Rutledge, May 1779, quoted in Massey, *John Laurens and the American Revolution*, 137.

[7] For miscegenation claims see Aedanus Burke to Arthur Middleton, Feb. 5, 1782, in Joseph W. Barnwell, ed., "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 26 (Oct., 1925), p. 194.

open rebellion.[8] And yet, even though his most widely known idea brought scorn and derision from public and private circles, when John died in a skirmish against British soldiers (ironically) plundering slaves along the Combahee river that August, both his countrymen and fellow southerners mourned him as "South Carolina's most favourite Son," with John Adams writing to a grieving Henry that "Our Country has lost its most promising Character."[9]

Eight years later, only a few miles from where John Laurens died, a mob beat a farmer named Thompson half-dead after he drunkenly declared that the "Negros have as much Rite [sic] to Liberty as the whites."[10]

If South Carolinians could reelect and mourn their foremost critic of slavery during the war—albeit one with the state's most famous name and a close association with George Washington—a generation later shades of Laurens's sentiments brought censure, cudgels, and rope. Although historians have long understood that the South's white population retreated from the scattered criticism of slavery that trickled to the surface during the revolutionary era, most scholars have located the end of the South's brief and tepid antislavery turn in the fires that spread from St. Domingue and engulfed the Atlantic World in the 1790s. And understandably so, for the Haitian Revolution

[8] Massey, *John Laurens and the American Revolution*, 218-22.

[9] The quote about him being the South's favorite son comes from the loyalist paper at Charleston, which in its eulogy lavishly praised the "moral *excellence* of his Character." *Royal Gazette* (Charleston, SC), Sep. 7, 1782; John Adams to Henry Laurens, Nov. 6, 1782, in *HL*, vol. 13, 97-8.

[10] Grand Jury Presentments o St. Johns Parish, Grand Jury Presentments, 1790, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

reverberated throughout the slaveholding colonies of the New World and became a reference points for opponents and proponents of slavery for generations.

This chapter, however, locates the South's retreat from antislavery in the United States's own bloody revolution, the same fracturing event that let loose vocal criticism of slavery across the region. In doing so, this chapter does not mean to deemphasize the historical importance of the greatest slave revolt in human history. The Haitian Revolution was an event that—in David Brion Davis's words—"like the Hiroshima Bomb … could be rationalized but never really forgotten, since it demonstrated the possible fate of every slaveholding society in the New World."[11] Instead this chapter seeks simply to show that the American South's experience in its own struggle for independence had already convinced many slaveholders and many nonslaveholders alike of the danger posed by the contagion of liberty. Like an inoculation, the simultaneous criticism of slavery and resistance by slaves that characterized the revolutionary South helped seal the region off from the slow march towards emancipation and drew the gaze of its inhabitants inward. Long before the first ships arrived in southern ports bearing frightening news from Le Cap and Port-au-Prince, southern mobs and courts were employing terror through violence and through legislation to defer the Revolution's promise of liberty for the black laborers who bore the South's future on their backs.

The American Revolution did not birth the antislavery sentiment voiced by Laurens and hundreds of others throughout the Revolutionary United States, of course.

---

[11] David Brion Davis, "Exile, Exodus, and Promised Lands," The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Stanford University, February 22-23, 2006.

As Davis insisted more than half a century ago, the contradiction between slave as property and slave as human being produced an undercurrent of ambivalence that had accompanied slavery's development since before bondsmen and bondswomen built the roads that all led to Rome.[12] In the decades preceding the struggle for American independence, however, this long-standing ambivalence merged with Enlightenment ideas about human rights and nature to become a more fully articulated belief among scattered communities, particularly the Society of Friends, that slavery was an evil that had to be purged from the world.[13] During the 1760s, some of the most vocal Quaker opponents of slavery like John Woolman and Anthony Benezet petitioned legislatures, wrote to prominent slaveholders, and published antislavery treatises—widely discussed if not widely appreciated—that confronted colonists with the hypocrisy of "Advocates of Liberty … [keeping] Negroes in the most deplorable state of SLAVERY."[14] Although their work did little to effect legal changes in any of the American colonies, Woolman, Benezet, and others had a profound impact on the Quaker meetings they visited and on religious thinkers in America and England. In particular, Benezet's pamphlets strongly influenced John Wesley, urged in his 1774 *Thoughts Upon Slavery* that "Liberty is the

---

[12] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Western Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966); Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of New World Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2-26. See also Moses Finley's classic essay "Was Greek Civilization Based on Slave Labour?," *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte*, vol. 8 (Apr. 1959): 145-64.

[13] The turn towards opposition to slavery as an aspect of Quaker self-definition crystallized during the period of introspection among the Society of Friends that was a reaction to the violence and internal strife of the Seven Years War. Davis, *Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, 291-333.

[14] Anthony Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her colonies, in Short representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominion* (Philadelphia: Henry Miller, 1766), 3.

Right of every Human Being," and whose opposition to slavery would prove crucial in the antislavery stance of post-Revolutionary evangelical sects.[15]

Although the belief that slavery was a sin requiring immediate expungement remained restricted to religious sects, particularly in times of crisis even a wide range of southerners voiced concerns about the institution throughout the colonial period, though their criticisms tended to focus not on slavery as a moral wrong but as a danger to white society. During the War of Jenkin's Ear in the late-1730s and in the midst of debates about the introduction of African laborers to Georgia, for example, freeholders from the colony's settlement at Darien petitioned the Trustees in England that slavery was "shocking to human Nature; that any Race of Mankind and their Posterity should be sentenc'd to perpetual Slavery." At war and with Spanish enemies at their doorstep in neighboring Florida, the Darien petitioners focused their pleas with the "Scene of Horror that [slavery] must bring about" and asked the colony's trustees to consider prohibiting the introduction of slaves for "our own Sakes, our Wives and Children, and or Posterity."[16] Planters in Virginia and Maryland voiced similar worries during the very different imperial crisis of the 1760s, with more than a few complaining that slavery was a burden and, occasionally a curse. Most famously, the planter Arthur Lee published a series of addresses in the *Virginia Gazette* that were reprinted and widely circulated in 1767 and 1769 wherein he declared that slaveholding was not only "a violation both of justice and religion" but also "dangerous to the safety of the community in which it

[15] John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (London, 1774), 24.

[16] Harvey H. Jackson, "The Darien Antislavery Petition of 1739 and the Georgia Plan," *WMQ*, vol. 34 (Oct. 1977): 618-31, 619, 621.

prevails; that it is destructive to the growth of arts and sciences."[17] Lee's fellow Virginian George Mason voiced a similar opinion in letters to George Washington a few years earlier, musing that "perhaps the primary Cause of the Destruction of the most flourishing Government that ever existed was the Introduction of great Numbers of Slaves—an Evil very pathetically described by the Roman Historians."[18]

However, by conceptualizing slavery as a harbinger of some distant calamity, Lee, Mason, and other planters could see slavery as a danger but also one that—as Jefferson and many others would do after the war—might be displaced onto the hopes of future generations. It required a radical change in perception for one to jettison the wealth and power that bondspeople provided to a slaveholders' world, both as labor and as capital. The planters who felt ill at ease before and after the Revolution responded to pangs of conscience and anxiety by warily shrugging their shoulders, much in the way

---

[17] Lee's addresses were reprinted by the Philadelphia printer Joseph Crukshank, who also printed important antislavery tracts by Wesley, Benezet, and the earlier Quaker abolitionist John Woolman. Arthur Lee, "Address," *Virginia Gazette*, Williamsburg, VA, March 19,1767; reprinted Philadelphia: J. Crukshank, 1767. See also Richard K. MacMaster, "Arthur Lee's 'Address on Slavery': An Aspect of Virginia's Struggle to End the Slave Trade, 1765-1774," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 80 (April, 1972): 141-57.

[18] Arthur Lee, *op. cit.*; George Mason to George Washington, 23 December, 1765, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Theodore J. Crackel (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008). Enclosed with Mason's letter was a scheme to ban the slave trade, prefaced with a similar screed about slavery's effects on morals: "The Policy of encouraging the Importation of free People & discouraging that of Slaves has never been duly considered in this Colony, or we shou'd not at this Day see one Half of our best Lands in most Parts of the Country remain unsetled, & the other cultivated with Slaves; not to mention the ill Effect such a Practice has upon the Morals & Manners of our People: one of the first Signs of the Decay, & perhaps the primary Cause of the Destruction of the most flourishing Government that ever existed was the Introduction of great Numbers of Slaves—an Evil very pathetically described by the Roman Historians—but 'tis not the present Intention to expose our Weakness by examining this Subject too freely," *The Papers of George Mason, 1725-1792*, ed. Robert A. Rutland (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), vol. 1, 61.

Patrick Henry did in a letter to the important Quaker abolitionist Robert Pleasants in 1773. Henry praised Quakers' efforts to force the issue of slavery to the fore and he expressed misgivings similar to those articulated by other Virginians. Yet he also explained, not a little apologetically, that he could not extricate himself from his position, for he was "drawn along by the general Inconvenience of living without them; I will not, I cannot justify it," as he wrote. Instead, the best that Henry and other slaveholders could hope for was to "treat the unhappy Victims with lenity; it is the furthest advance we can make towards Justice," or at least the furthest that the boundaries of his and his contemporaries' imaginations could carry them.[19]

If the American Revolution did not introduce the idea that slavery was an injustice or an abasement of the Enlightenment principles that ground the independence movement, the fracturing of the war—the savage warfare and ruinous debt and new governments and beautiful ideas—forced all Americans to pause and consider the future of their world. For white southerners, the conflict simultaneously reinforced old fears and understandings while opening new possibilities of thinking, and nowhere was the Revolution's push towards new possibilities more clear than in debates over slavery's place in southern society. The violence of the war and the sight of armed and marauding former slaves lent a new urgency to long-standing fears about the threat that slaves posed to the security of white men and women. The challenge of raising men and materiel from within a slave society reinforced the understanding that slavery could be a fatal weakness

---

[19] Patrick Henry to Robert Pleasants, Jan. 18, 1773, in Pleasants Papers, Brock Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. Henry's letter has been reprinted numerous times and has been discussed and quoted at length in other places, notably David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolutions* (reprint; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 197.

in times of war. These challenges were felt acutely by military men in particular, and combined with the desperation of waging a protracted and difficult struggle that many commanders believed they would lose, these challenges opened the space in which men like Laurens and Nathanael Greene could reimagine the role of black Americans during the war and moving forward.

Laurens and Greene were the most famous critics of slavery during the war, but the Revolution touched countless others in similar fashion. Most importantly, for those predisposed to question slaveholding, the experience of the conflict – of white men bleeding for liberty while drawing blood to keep the region's enslaved population subjugated – made the defining contradiction of the revolutionary moment plain. "What a stupendous, what an incomprehensible machine is man," Jefferson wrote to a French correspondent in 1786, "Who can endure toil, famine stripes, imprisonment & death itself in vindication of his own liberty, and the next moment … inflict on his fellow men a bondage, one hour of which is fraught with more misery than ages of that which he rose in rebellion to oppose?"[20] And if Jefferson and the overwhelming majority of his peers did not act directly on the misgivings he expressed in his inimitable, evasive way, slaveholders far less perceptive than Jefferson still perceived the hypocrisies saturating their era and the world they sought to rebuild.

In the brief revolutionary moment, and out of these misgivings and the immense pressure of war, every state but North Carolina would take steps to end slavery or ease restrictions on manumission. Quakers and other longstanding opponents of bondage took

---

[20] Thomas Jefferson to Jean Nicholas Demeunier, June 26, 1786, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Barbara Oberg, et. al., eds. (Online Edition; Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Rotunda, 2008).

renewed vigor and a new vocabulary to chastise slaveholders with their own revolutionary declarations. Friends and leaders of ascendant religious communities of Baptists and Methodists joined older critics in taking a public stance against slavery, and in the possibilities offered by the creation of a new nation, many of these individuals found the optimism they needed to form the South's first organized antislavery societies.[21] Although the numbers of southerners who remained committed to slavery dwarfed that of those who freed their bondspeople, the post-Revolutionary decades still experienced, for the first and only time in western history, hundreds of voluntary manumissions over a very short period of time, including mass emancipations by some of the largest slaveholders within the Chesapeake.[22]

This revolutionary moment was short-lived. Within less than a generation manumissions had petered out in the Upper South, antislavery societies had been reduced to a nullity, and the South Carolinians who had twice reelected to the legislature the most prominent critic of slavery in the state's history could respond to even the suggestion of equality with extreme violence like that inflicted on the farmer Thompson. Yet the

[21] Like manumissions, these were concentrated in the Upper South, although antislavery societies were formed in Charleston, Savannah, Beaufort, and elsewhere in the Deep South. Gordon E. Finnie, "The Antislavery Movement in the Upper South Before 1840," *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 35, 3 (Aug., 1969): 319-42, 319-26.

[22] American slavery, including that in Thirteen Colonies, had always seen a steady drip of slave emancipations, especially in Spanish and French possessions. Yet these had primarily been reserved for mixed-blood offspring or the infirm. No slaveholding society had witnessed or would witness the sudden rash of voluntary emancipations and mass manumissions seen in the two decades following the American Revolution. For recent surveys of manumission in the Atlantic world, see Rosemary Shute and Randy J. Sparks, eds., *Paths to Freedom: Manumission in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009); Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, eds., *From Slavery to Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (London: Frank Cass, 1999).

physical and ideological manifestations of the South's antislavery turn, however limited and brief, were critical to the development of the mature antebellum South. Most importantly, the region's free black population, which had numbered but a few thousand before the war, swelled to over 100,000 by 1810.[23] The black men and women freed by manumitters, liberalized jurists, and state legislatures in the revolutionary decade provided the bulwark for resistance to slavery until the Civil War.

All actions beget reactions, and the growth of a new class of African-Americans for whom no clear legal category existed soon precipitated a swift but uneven response from the South's white population. With the memory of revolutionary violence fresh in their minds, heightening old fears about the safety of white men and women amidst an ocean of black faces, southern legislatures and juries set the boundaries of black citizenship and freedom that would remain in place through the antebellum era. Even if emancipation petered out and antislavery voices were silenced, post-war southerners were forced to consider in practice and in law what defined a slave, and what precisely was the place of freedmen and freedwomen in a society where black skin no longer directly correlated to enslavement. In this new world, what constituted evidence of a black man's status as slave or free? Were free black men and women citizens, and if not what rights and privileges did they enjoy?

The rise of a free black population was the most visible and lasting legacy of the revolution's antislavery challenge, but the reconsideration and self-reflection forced by the period left an unmistakable impact on the region's white population as well. Just as

[23] Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters,* 15. Not only were free black southerners few in number, but a far smaller number were of purely African descent.

the manumission and elopement of tens of thousands of black men and women forced a redefinition of legal and social practices, the experience of the conflict led many to reconceptualize their understanding of the place of slavery in their society. Like the later fully developed proslavery theorists of the antebellum period, which emerged in response to the criticism of abolitionists,[24] the cries for liberty during the 1780s and 1790s and the contradictions that the revolution stripped bare precipitated the development of new rationales for an institution as old as recorded history. While few in the Early Republic described slavery as any sort of "positive good," slaveholders still felt compelled to respond to chargers from Quakers and from within their own ranks that their way of life was an affront to God and the ideals of the Revolution. At the same time, conflict with northern neighbors began the South's move towards ideological isolation and sparked inclinations that, perhaps, southerners' way of life was not a little peculiar. As a result, the post-war years saw the articulation of the basic defenses for slaveholding—that slaves lived in comparative comfort, that slavery introduced Africans to Christianity—that southerners employed to explain themselves to the world and to themselves for generations.

Finally, new defenses of slavery and legislated restrictions on the rights of enslaved and free black people combined with new religious conceptions to set in motion a process that Willie Lee Rose long ago termed the "domestication of domestic

---

[24] See Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A history of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 323-45; Eugene D. Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (Reprint; Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 195-234.

slavery."[25] In time, this process would end in an ideology of slaveholder self-understanding that historians since Eugene Genovese have called "paternalism." The concept of paternalism has clouded as much as it has clarified in historical literature, in part because Genovese's attempt to conceptualize slave society as a totality tended to render black men and women as constructs as much as actors, and in part because "paternalism" has become a token phrase that has lost the theoretical rigor that Genovese imbued within it. Moreover, historians like James Oakes, Walter Johnson, and Edward Baptist have undercut aspects of Genovese's definition of the slave/slaveholder relationship by focusing on the commodification of black people that Genovese deemphasized but that underwrote the entire slave system.[26]

Whatever the problems with the concept of paternalism, it is undeniable that the soil upon which the ideology of antebellum planters developed was distinct from that which trod upon by their revolutionary predecessors. An understanding of planter-slave relations that conceptualized the planter as a paternalistic guardian and that rested upon an "insistence upon mutual obligations—duties, responsibilities, and ultimately even rights" required a stability that could flower only after internal critics had been silenced

---

[25] Willie Lee Rose, "The Domestication of Domestic Slavery," in Rose, *Slavery and Freedom*, ed. William W. Freehling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982): 18-36.

[26] Historians have taken special aim at Genovese's argument that the slave south was within but distinct from the world capitalist system that grew around it, though in the process they have—to a certain extent—deemphasized the central contradiction of property in man that Davis insisted upon. Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside an Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). See also Edward Baptist's excellent essay along similar lines, " 'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-Eyes Men': Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States," *The American Historical Review,* vol. 106 (Dec. 2001): 1619-50.

and the frequent outbursts of black revolt and marronage that characterized the period were suppressed. It would be hard to find a slaveholder who viewed the world through a "paternalistic" lens after armed black men pillaged plantations or rushed with fixed bayonets through the streets of Savannah. In other words, paternalism was a fiction that elided the violence inherent in the system, but extreme violence was needed to produce the calm in which that fiction might emerge. And indeed, even before the specter of Saint Domingue reawakened slaveholders' memories of the violence of the Revolution, southern states had sharpened the mechanisms of dominance over both black and white opponents of slavery that provided the base for paternalistic ideology of later years. That they did so in response to the antislavery pull of the Revolution captures the double movement of the period, neatly captured in the chapter's opening allegory that openness to the ideas of a man like John Laurens led rapidly to the violent silencing of similar words voiced by later critics like the farmer Thompson.

The experience of 137 slaves belonging to Quakers in Pasquotank County, North Carolina illustrates the contradictory impulses of the revolutionary period in microcosm. Quakers had been among the first settlers in North Carolina, with at least a dozen Friends living in the colony by 1672. Encouraged by the colony's established religious freedom (Anglican presence was negligible before 1700) and by investors eager to sell their land patents to large communities of Quakers, Moravians, and other religious sects, North Carolinian Quakers developed into a significant presence in the swampy land along the Virginia border by century's end. John Archdale, a Quaker, served as North Carolina's royal governor from 1695 to 1698, the only Quaker governor to serve in that role outside

of Pennsylvania.[27] Friends in North Carolina and every other colony held slaves, sometimes in large numbers,[28] although as early as 1693 Quaker meetings there had discussed the antislavery writings of the Philadelphia Quaker George Keith. By 1741, the year a group of 143 Friends arrived from England and when the North Carolina legislature reasserted its sixty year old prohibition on "freeing any Negroe or Mulattoe … by will or deed,"[29] the colony had the largest Quaker Yearly Meeting in North America except Philadelphia, with as many as thirteen Monthly Meetings closely linked to five Meetings across the border in southeastern Virginia.[30]

During the 1760s, the Yearly Meeting in North Carolina joined other Meetings in becoming increasingly vocal in its opposition to slaveholding. Influenced in part by the influx of Quakers from Pennsylvania after the Seven Years War, where the Yearly Meeting had prohibited the buying and selling of slaves in 1755, and by the proliferation of antislavery writings from Quakers in the North and in England, the North Carolina Meeting tepidly moved towards opposition to slavery over the next decade. Monthly and yearly meetings contentiously debated the subject in response to Epistles from Philadelphia brethren, and finally the state's Yearly Meeting advised "all friends to be careful, not to buy or Sell" slaves in 1768, provided "it can be reasonably avoided." Four

---

[27] Stephen Bureauguard Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery: An Institutional History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1896), 3.

[28] At least two members of the Piney Creek Monthly Meeting in Perquimans County held forty slaves a piece by 1752. Piney Creek Monthly Meeting Minutes, April 4, 1752, Piney Creek Monthly Meeting Papers, SHC.

[29] An Act Concerning Servants and slaves, 1741, in Walter Clark, *The Colonial and State Records of North Carolina* (Raleigh, State Printing Office: 1886-1890), XI, 191-204, 202.

[30] Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery*, 42.

years later, the Yearly Meeting moved further and fully forbade purchasing or selling slaves to non-Quakers, declaring the importation of slaves a "Great Evil and Abomination … by which Iniquitous Practice Great Numbers of our fellow Creatures with their Posterity are Doom'd to Perpetual and Cruel Bondage; without any Regard being had to their Having forfeited their Natural Rights to Liberty and Freedom." Finally, "feeling persuasion that Keeping our fellow men in Bondage is inconsistent with the Law of righteousness," the Yearly Meeting "earnestly and affectionately advised" members "to Cleanse their Hands of slaves as soon as they Possibly can."[31]

The problem for the Quakers, who remained concentrated in coastal Pasquotank County around Elizabeth City, was that manumission was expressly forbidden under state law. The North Carolina Meeting had written to London in 1776 requesting advice on how to release slaves from bondage when statutes allowed county courts to seize and sell freed slaves to the highest bidder.[32] Inspired by the sense that America was moving towards, as one Friend put it, a "full embrace of Liberty," and on the suggestion of the London Meeting for Sufferings, slaveholding Friends in North Carolina—like those nearby in Virginia—began releasing bondsmen and bondswomen into a state of half-slavery as early as 1772, relinquishing their property rights by declaration if not in law "until the approaching Day when Freedom will be the recognized Right of all Men and Women within the colony."[33] In anticipation of the manumission statutes that the colony's Quakers believed to be at hand despite their invariably tabled petitions to the

[31] "Minutes of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting," in J. William Frost, ed., *The Quaker Origins of Antislavery* (Norwood, PA: Norwood Editions, 1980): 253-8, 254.

[32] *ibid*.

[33] *ibid*., 255-6.

legislature, as many as 200 black men and women worked under the guardianship of the Pasquotank County's Monthly Meeting, with half the profits of their labor repaid to them as wages.[34]

With the coming of the War of Independence, the embrace of liberty anticipated by southern Quakers mixed with the white population's fears about internal security to produce the multivalent push and pull that marked the response to the Revolution's contradictions. Lord Dunmore's Proclamation, made outside Williamsburg just 80 miles from the Pasquotank Meeting House, set off panic throughout North Carolina precisely because it seemed to confirm the longstanding fears and articulated by a North Carolina delegate to the First Continental Congress, who warned state legislatures in July 1775 that British in the colony intended to "loose Indians on our Frontiers, and to raise the Negroes against us." In response to these premonitions, the Committee of Safety in Pasquotank and other counties ordered patrollers to search slave quarters for arms and set a 9 o'clock curfew for all Negroes as early as 1774. And when word of Dunmore's proclamation reached the state, North Carolinian jurist James Iredell claimed that the scheme, which had drawn not a few black men and women across the border from North Carolina, was evidence of Britain's "diabolical purpose of exciting our own Domestics (Domestics they forced upon us) to cut our throats, and involve Men, Women, and Children in one Universal Massacre."[35]

As North Carolina Committees of Safety, legislatures, and militia sought to suppress the internal threat posed by restive black men and women made suddenly urgent

---

[34] Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery*, 184.

[35] "Address," June 6, 1776, in Donald Higginbotham, ed., *The Papers of James Iredell* (Raleigh, NC: State Department of State Archives and History, 1972), I, 313.

by the coming of the war, the nominally freed slaves in Pasquotank County appeared especially threatening. The local committee had been alerted in late 1776 that several black men under the guardianship of the Monthly Meeting had eloped to the British, as had a number of other illicitly emancipated slaves in Virginia.[36] State officials were especially alarmed by the news as the Quaker community in North Carolina was concentrated between Pasquotank Bay outside Camden, which was occupied by British frigates as early as January, 1776, and between the Great Dismal Swamp, which had long served as a refuge for runaway slaves. Indeed, throughout the war, the Swamp proved a special point of concern, with one North Carolinian reporting in 1777 that the swamp "was infested by concealed royalists, and runaway negroes, who could not be approached with safety. They often attacked travellers [sic], and had recently murdered a Mr. Williams."[37] In response, the legislature raised special troops of militia in Pasquotank to "monitor the area around the Great Dismal Swamp … for Negroes" in late 1777, and slaveholders caught between British ships and maroons were ordered to keep a cautious eye on black men and women in the area.[38]

Amidst the spiraling fear of slave insurrection in revolutionary North Carolina, when in 1776 neighbors in Pasquotank confirmed to the legislature that Quakers there

---

[36] *CSR*, XII, 182. At least 22 slaves who had been "freed" by Robert Pleasants, about whom much more will be said presently, similarly eloped to Dunmore and other British commanders during the early years of the war. Robert Pleasants to General William Phillips, 14 May, 1781, PRO 30/11, 10-11, Cornwallis Papers, The National Archives, Kew, UK.

[37] Elkanah Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution, or Memoirs of Elkanah Watson, Including Journals of Travels in Europe and America, from 1777 to 1842, with his Correspondence,* ed. William Watson (New York: Dana and Company, 1856), 51-2.

[38] CSR, XXIV, 80.

had indeed illegally emancipated their slaves, the response was swift and unequivocal. Non-Quakers in the county petitioned the legislature asking for assistance against the "great Dangers posed by the Negroes freed by the People called Quakers, against the Law of the State, who pass Information to the Enemy … and encourage Insurrection by others of their Color."[39] The legislature promptly declared that "the Conduct of the said Quakers in setting their Slaves free at a tie when our open & declared Enemies were endeavoring to bring about an insurrection of the Slaves was highly criminal & reprehensible."[40] The state ordered sheriffs in Pasquotank and neighboring Perquimans County to take inventory of the black men and women in the possession of Friends, and then to seize and "sell the said Negroes to the highest bidder, with the proceeds going to benefit the defense of this State."[41] By war's end, at least 137 slaves belonging to the Quakers of Pasquotank were taken up and sold to 42 different buyers.[42]

The fate of the Pasquotank slaves was a tragedy that shaped the lives of white and black southerners for generations. In direct response to the perceived danger posed by the slaves illicitly freed by the county's Quakers, North Carolina became the only southern state to expressly forbid emancipation while other southern states increasingly

---

[39] Petition of Residents of Pasquotank County, 1778, in County Records, Pasquotank County, 1776-1779, NSA.

[40] Report of the Committee for taking under consideration the Petition of the People of Pasquotank relative to the slaves liberated by the Quakers, 27 January 1779, Joint Select Committee Papers, Legislative Papers, NSA.

[41] Minutes of the House of Assembly, *CSR*, XXIV, 142.

[42] "A LIST of EMANCIPATED BLACKS, taken up and sold by order of the County Courts of Pasquotank, Perquimans and Chowan, in consequence of several acts of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, since the passing of the first act in the year 1777, to the present time," in John F. Grimke, *Laws of the State of North Carolina,* II, 418.

eased manumission statutes. "Whereas the evil and pernicious Practice of freeing Slaves in this State has been widely practiced, and ought at this Time to be guarded against by every friend and Wellwisher to his Country," the state passed a law tellingly titled "An Act to Prevent Domestic Insurrections" in late 1777.[43] The law reaffirmed the earlier prohibition on manumission except through grant by the legislature. Unlike earlier acts however, it also expanded the power to seize freed slaves beyond sheriffs and magistrates "to any white Free holder," and financially incentivized these seizures by granting a portion of the proceeds that slave's eventual sale to be given to the apprehending white man or woman.

As a result of this legislation, hundreds slaves who had been freed, and countless more who perhaps never had been emancipated, were seized and sold during and after the war in addition to the 137 from Pasquotank. The Quakers railed against the state's decision with all the fury they could muster, but to little avail. Thomas Nicholson in Perquimans County, for example, wrote to the man who had captured his manumitted slaves and collected a portion of the price they brought at a sale in late 1779. "I fully believe that thou never hereafter will be able to drink any more than that deadly poison in the one-fifth of the sale-money of any more of the negroes that I have manumitted," Nicholson wrote, and he suggested the man "submit thyself to so deep a purgation, as to cause thee to vomit up against the portion for the gain of oppression, which thou hast greedily swallowed."[44] In a freedom suit filed in 1791, the lawyer for a black woman

[43] Acts of the North Carolina General Assembly, 1777, in *CSR*, XXIV, p. 14-5.

[44] Thomas Nicholson to "B.H.," 6 November, 1779, in Roger Bruns, ed., *Am I Not a Man and a Brother: The Antislavery Crusade in Revolutionary America, 1688-1788* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1977): 450-2, 451.

named Judy, who had been freed at some point before 1775 by her Quaker owner in Perquimans County and sold under the 1777 law, similarly declared that the Act had precipitated "the taking apprehending and dragging of Negroes (as confessedly done in this case) who had been living quietly and peaceably with their masters from their houses, in the Night." The lawyer borrowed from Revolutionary declarations, claiming that the practices encouraged by the Act were "unjust & incompatible with liberty … a violation of the Bill of Rights of this Country," and the belief that "all Men possess certain natural & unalienable rights to life Liberty & Property." Yet as they would in almost every single suit brought relative to slaves who had been freed and then seized and sold under the 1777 Act, the courts confirmed Judy's sale and separation from her home and children.[45]

As the tale of the Pasquotank slaves shows, in North Carolina as in the rest of the southern states the rising tide of liberty combined with fears stoked by the experience of the Revolution to produce a slaveholding regime more aware and restrictive of internal dissension over slavery. The concentration of illegally emancipated slaves near British lines provoked North Carolina legislators to move more decisively than others. Yet everywhere the eventual movement was the same. Even before the Haitian Revolution reawakened memories of wartime experiences, courts, state governments, and mobs had moved decisively to blunt the challenge of the Revolution and to attempt to channel its contradictory impulses in a single direction.

---

[45] The story of Judy and similar cases are related in chapter 3 as well. Case of Judy, n.d. [1791?], Perquimans County Slave Papers, 1759-1799, NSA.

In the southern states as a whole, the mix of optimism and fear that characterized the period produced contradictory impulses similar to that experienced in compressed fashion within North Carolina. On the one hand, the strain of containing the region's enslaved population from escaping to British lines or disappearing within the chaos of the conflict convinced far more slaveholders that slavery was the burden that many had long claimed, and the violence slaveholders witnessed convinced many others that slavery posed an urgent danger. The war years saw far more slaves react to their circumstances with outright resistance, particularly—as we have seen—as slaveholders attempted to remove them from their homes either for sale or to escape the path of one army or another.[46] Residents of lowcountry parishes outside Charleston reacted with horror at the 200 "black Dragoons" outfitted by the British that far outpaced actual actions that the Dragoons undertook, which were generally limited to foraging and plunder of cattle from patriot plantations. The planter Thomas Bee, applying for relief from "several people of the neighborhood" asked Governor Mathews for relief from the "ravages of the Black Dragoons who have been out four times within the last ten days plundering & robbing," for Bee and his acquaintances feared "their Designs seem nothing less than Murder."[47] Similarly, around the Chesapeake the sight of slaves serving in British and loyalist units set off a flurry of fears among planters that their former bondsmen would leverage their military service to extract revenge on their former bondsmasters. In 1782, the planter and militia colonel George Corbin reported of the "horrid dangers" posed by the barges of soldiers and slaves that remained in Chesapeake Bay. The slaves who made "incursions"

[46] See the case of Chapman Badgett, discussed in the previous chapter.

[47] Thomas Bee to Governor Mathews, 9 December 1782, in Thomas Bee Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC [hereafter SCL].

into the countryside had fomented the "bloody plots formed by these wretches against the Chief inhabitants of the Country … a conspiracy of the tories, British and Negroes, who had prepared themselves with ropes as instruments of death" and had allegedly "marked their intended victims" with strange, presumably African, markings on their doors.[48] And residents in North Carolina's Anson County remained "in Constant Dread and Fear of being Robed and Murdered by a Set of Robbers and Horse Thieves … the most part are Mullattoes [sic] and Negroes, and Chiefly come from the South Province."[49]

If real or imagined violence committed by black southerners sparked fears that white residents would not soon forget, the difficulties of keeping slaves fixed on plantations and forcing them to work when opportunities for assertion and escape appeared so frequently convinced many slaveholders that slaveholding was not only dangerous but also not worth the trouble. In Georgia, the planter John Berrien decried "the desertion of those villainous negroes" from his plantation during the war, and he "cursed the hour that I became a Georgian."[50] William Douglass and Francis Jerdone, joint partners in a foundry supported in large part by the labor of captured slaves supplied by the Virginian state legislature, exchanged letters through the latter half of the war that reflected growing concern that the burden of running their operation outweighed the expected profits that seemed further and further away. After two slaves named George

---

[48] Colonel George Corbin to Colonel Davies, 2 May 1782, William Pitt Palmer, et. al., eds., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts, Preserved in the Capitol at Richmond* (Richmond, 1875-82), vol. 3, p. 149.

[49] Petition of Jacob Alford and the Inhabitants of Anson County, February 1779, House Assembly Papers, Petitions, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

[50] John Berrien to Lachlan McIntosh, 17 June, 1785, Major John Berrien Papers, New York Historical Society, New York, New York (hereafter NYHS).

and Ben escaped to a British vessel in August, 1782, Douglass wrote Jerdone that "there are few greater curses in life to be tyed to a parcel of Negroes and to make them do their duty." Jerdone agreed: "Happy indeed may it be said justly are those who has a living independent of such wretches."[51] These sentiments, which were echoed throughout the southern states, did not lead directly to manumissions on a large degree. Jerdone, in fact, substantially expanded his slaveholdings throughout the 1780s and 1790s.[52] Instead, the experience and sentiments of white people like Douglass and Jerdone led some to consider alternatives to a system "that it seems to us can only bring Ruin," as a resident of Hillsborough, North Carolina opined in 1783.[53] And, for a brief revolutionary moment, many were willing to at least listen.

To military men like John Laurens, these feelings were compounded by the enormous difficulty of fighting the British army while containing the South's enslaved population, and the situation caused at least a few additional military commanders to reconsider the wisdom of employing slaves only as chattel. The war left few doubters that slavery was a dangerous vulnerability during time of war, not only because slaves were an "internal enemy," but also because of they were a major drain on supplies and available manpower.[54] Political leaders and commanders in the southern theater

---

[51] William Douglass to Francis Jerdone, 30 August 1782; Francis Jerdone to William Douglass, 26 March 1783, in Jerdone Family Papers, Swem Memorial Library, College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA.

[52] Lists of Polls, 1784-1791, in Jerdone Papers, Swem.

[53] William Waters to Governor Nash, Jan 18, 1783, in Walter Clark, *The Colonial and State Records of North Carolina* (Raleigh, State Printing Office: 1886-1890), XI, 392.

[54] "Internal enemies" is taken from Alan Taylor's excellent examination of Virginian slaves during the wars of the early Republic, though Taylor focuses mainly on

understood, as South Carolinian delegate Isaac Huger reported to the Congressional committee reviewing Laurens's plan for slave soldiers, that it was "impossible to raise a large number of men" from southern states as they "desired to remain at home to prevent Insurrections among the Negroes, and to prevent the desertion of them to the Enemy."[55] Washington, among others, shifted his position on arming slaves with the fortunes of the war effort, as expediency and urgency during wartime often trumped fear and prejudices. And after South Carolina had rejected the first iteration of Laurens's slave soldiers plan, the newly appointed head of the Continental Army in the South, Nathanael Greene, urged governor John Rutledge to reconsider. South Carolina and her sister states had no choice but to arm enslaved men, Greene urged, for the "number of whites in this State are too small, and the state of your finances are too small to raise a force in any other way." Moreover, arming some from the state's more than 100,000 slaves would turn "what has been your greatest weakness into a strength … And I am persuaded that incorporation of a part of the negroes would rather tend to secure the fidelity of others, than elicit discontentment, mutiny, and desertion among them."[56] South Carolina rejected Greene's plea as it had Laurens's, and in keeping with the period Greene would accept as a gift from Georgia a confiscated plantation and several dozen slaves, having retreated towards ease and status once the fighting was done.

---

flight and resistance during the War of 1812. Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013).

[55] Isaac Huger, quoted in Gregory Massey, "The Limits of Antislavery Thought," *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 63 (Aug., 1997): 495-530, 515.

[56] Nathanael Greene to Governor Rutledge, 9 December, 1781, in Nathanael Greene Letters, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA [hereafter GHS].

In a crucible that saw military commanders seeking alternative uses for black men and women and planters cursing their lot and fearing for their lives while an increasing number of southerners became drawn to the preaching's of evangelical itinerants, long-standing antislavery advocates outside of North Carolina found increasing numbers of courts and legislatures willing to at least countenance open opposition to the institution. Reflecting on David Ramsay's history of the Revolution just two years after the conflict had ended, Henry Laurens could already wistfully reminisce on the war years some in Carolina as a time "when we solemnly engaged against further importations, under the pretense of working by gradual steps to a total abolition. We were then indeed in a religious mood & had appealed to God," though the situation had changed so rapidly that Laurens warned a correspondent that if Ramsay's book contained any declarations against slavery "it will not prove pleasing to the general Inhabitants of this State."[57]

Imbibing, as Laurens had, the feeling that the air of revolution, with its talk of liberty and its widely supported movement against the importation of slaves, made emancipation near at hand, Quakers in Virginia followed their North Carolina brethren in emancipating slaves as before the war despite the fact that Virginia, like every other southern state, had explicitly forbidden manumissions except for meritorious deed confirmed by the legislature.[58] By 1770, Robert Pleasants and other Quakers had begun submitting manumission bills to legislators with the request that they place before the Virginia House a law repealing the colony's 1723 restriction on manumission, "which

[57] Henry Laurens to John F. Grimke, 31 January 1785, *HL,* vol. IX, 530-1.

[58] James H. Kettern, "Persons or Property? The Pleasants Slaves in the Virginia Courts, 1792-1799," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Launching the 'Extended Republic': The Federalist Era* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1996): 136-55, 138.

prevents a man from rewarding faithfulness with freedom in his servant and deprives the owner of the liberty of disposing in that manner of what the same law hath made his property; a privilege which I believe has been enjoyed by almost every age of the World, before the introduction of slavery into America."[59] Although these bills were invariably tabled or dismissed, the willingness of the Burgesses to at least discuss the measures gave Quakers like Robert's father John Pleasants III the confidence to draft wills which provided for emancipations "which now seem close at hand." John owned 212 slaves when he died in 1776, and the Pleasants family of Quakers had held slaves since at least 1680. Yet convinced like other Quakers that slaveholder was a sin that needed to be immediately extirpated, and "fearing for his Soul … while suffering from the Bloody Flux," in the will John drafted in 1771 he expressed that his "desire is, respecting my poor slaves, all of them as I shall die possessed with shall be free if they choose it when … the laws of the land will admit them to be set free without their being transported out of the country."[60] Like the illicitly manumitted slaves in North Carolina, the black men and women belonging to John Pleasants remained in a state of half-freedom, working for wages under the guardianship of Robert and his sister Mary.[61]

As the community of Friends around Henrico County devised similar deeds of manumission during the 1770s in anticipation of an eventual emancipation bill, Quakers there and throughout the South continued to implore legislatures to ease restrictions on

---

[59] Robert Pleasants to Col. Bland, 15 March 1770, Robert Pleasants Letterbook, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

[60] Edward Pleasants Valentine, *The Edward Pleasants Valentine Papers: Abstracts of Records in the Local and General Archives of Virginia relating to the Families of* … (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979), 1117.

[61] Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation*, 153.

black freedom. Again in keeping with the openness of the period, editors of the *Virginia Gazette* were willing to publish Robert Pleasants' extended article against slavery in 1777 in which Pleasants claimed that the dispute between Britain and the colonies had "produced many just observations … the eyes of most people are opened to look with abhorrence on a State of Slavery and to behold the Valuable blessing of liberty in its full luster." Pleasants closed by asking Virginia's reading public if they might not extend "that blessing of Liberty to all fellow men," and perhaps a few heeded his call.[62] In South Carolina, Quakers similarly petitioned the legislature in 1777, asking that "an Act be passed to allow the People of this State to free their slaves … it being in keeping with their Conscience and the express Will of God and of the Revolution."[63] And even in Georgia, where the Quaker presence was least pronounced, the state's few Friends requested legislators assistance in "setting this Country … towards full Realization of that Liberty" the state's citizens bled for.[64]

In response to these petitions and to the strains of the war, between 1778 and 1784, after nearly a decade of similar urging by Quakers in petitions and at the height of revolutionary optimism, every southern state but North Carolina passed bills easing restrictions on manumission. Although these bills contained important restrictions, requiring manumitted slaves to neither young nor infirm and in South Carolina and

[62] Article in the *Virginia Gazette*, 177-?, transcribed in Robert Pleasants Letterbook.

[63] Petition of the People Called Quakers, 1777, in Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[64] John Alderson to Lachlan MacIntosh, 18 June 1780, Lachlan MacIntosh Papers, GHS.

Georgia requiring owners to post bond for slaves' behavior,[65] the same brief window that produced enormous social dislocations among white society, as examined in previous chapters, also marked the high tide of antislavery thought in southern history. Despite the passage of far more liberal manumission laws in 1783 than had previously existed, general emancipations by slaveholders in Georgia and South Carolina were relatively few, though from them grew the free black population by more than three fold in Charleston and Savannah between 1790 and 1810.[66] Yet in Virginia and Maryland, where the steady decline of tobacco markets had long led planters to seek an alternative vision of the Chesapeake's future, the post-Revolutionary years saw hundreds of slaveholders release their slave holdings.[67]

The language used by manumitters echoed earlier Quaker petitions and makes clear that the impetus towards emancipation was a blend of religious motives and an attempt to resolve the contradiction between slavery and freedom produced during the Revolution. Influenced both by Quaker agitation and increasingly vocal criticism of slaveholding from Methodist and Baptist leaders, emancipators tended to see the Revolution as a confirmation of biblical principles, no doubt part of the reason why the language of the Revolution proved so powerful a motivator, at least to those willing to be

---

[65] William Waller Henning, *The Statues at Large: Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619* (Richmond: George Cochran, 1823), XI, 39-40; Benjamin Joseph Klebaner, "American Manumission Laws and the Responsibility for Supporting Slaves," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 63 (Oct., 1955): 445-53.

[66] "Urban Population Growth, 1790-1810," Table 5, Ira Berlin *Slaves Without Masters*, 55.

[67] Although some of the deeds of manumission entered in county courts simply confirmed the earlier illegal manumissions by Quakers. Wolf, *Race and Liberty*, 42-6.

motivated. In a deed of manumission that employed words typical of post-war emancipators, two slaveholders in York County, Virginia, declared in 1789 their motives being that "The American bill of rights coinciding with the Voice of nature proclaims Liberty and freedom to be indubitable right of all Mankind … And as no Law moral or divine can or could give me a just right in the persons of my fellow creatures … and I wish to do unto others as I would be done unto."[68] Richard Copland similarly emancipated his twenty-four slaves in Campbell County in 1784 due to a conviction that "from natural reason, it seems to me that God created all men free, a fact confirmed by the late Revolution."[69] As these and dozens of other similar deeds show, if the Revolution was not the primary driver for emancipation, it did provide the language through which Corbin and others could articulate their misgivings and, in that language, perceive manumission as a means of escaping the weight of their conscience.

If the contradiction that drove emancipators seems self-evident to us now, the barriers to taking that significant step remained largely prohibitive to most slaveholders. Although manumitters echoed sentiments shared across the young United States, blending religious directives with a sense of the nation's providential mission, rejection of the wealth and status that accompanied slave ownership required a sudden change in perspective akin, and often hand in hand with, religious conversion. As such, even in the Upper South where the number of manumissions dwarfed those in the lowcountry, the ranks of manumitters remained very small. Nowhere was the radically altered worldview

[68] Quoted in Peter J. Albert, "The Protean Institution: The Geography, Economy, and Ideology of Slavery in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 1976, p. 272.

[69] Richard Copland Deed of Manumission, 1784, Campbell County Free Negro and Slave Records, 1784-1867, LiVa.

required for the transition to emancipation more clear than in the case of the two most prominent emancipators of the period, Richard Randolph and Robert Carter III, scions of two of Virginia's oldest families who together freed more than one thousand black men, women, and children. Although both men had expressed discomfort with slaveholding during the 1770s, neither acted upon their reservations for almost a decade after the Revolution had ended and continued to buy and sell slaves in the interim. As detailed in the previous chapter, Carter showed little hesitation selling eloped slaves during and after the war, and in the confusion that followed he too hired an agent to seek escaped slaves within the British lines after Yorktown.[70] Not even the fact that some of his slaves served the Continental Army dissuaded him from resorting to typical punishments like sale and flogging.[71]

For Carter, Randolph, and most other manumitters, it cannot be overemphasized that it required a moment of intense personal transformation for a Virginian discomforted by slavery to take the step to liberate his bondsmen and bondswomen. Randolph had been strongly influenced early in life by the antislavery leanings of his stepfather St. George Tucker and his mentor George Wythe, yet it took a string of tragedies within his family and vivid visions of his own death for him to draft a will in 1792 that provided for the eventual emancipation of his 500 slaves.[72] For Robert Carter, the step towards

---

[70] Robert Carter to the Commanding Officers, who now have the care of Sundry negro Slaves under the protection of part of the British army, at the Towns of Portsmouth, Yorktown, Gloucester, and other places, in the State of Virginia, 30 October 1781, in Robert Carter Letter Books, Duke.

[71] Robert Carter to William Prescott, 16 April 1782, in *ibid*.

[72] Melvin Patrick Ely, *Israel on the Appomattox: A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom from the 1790s Through the Civil War* (New York: Vintage, 2004), 23-9.

emancipation after a decade of buying and selling slaves despite his misgivings followed his conversion to an obscure religious sect. Carter had sponsored a Baptist church on his plantation, where he had often shared communion in brotherhood with his slaves. Yet Carter wrote his "Deed of Gift," in which he stipulated the emancipation of 511 black men and women, only after he experienced "a most profound change" in his religious outlook and converted to Swedenborgianism, a radical Calvinist sect defined by a belief in universal equality of spirit and fervent millennialism so uncommon in the Early Republic that it took years before Carter could find an English translation of the sect's founding texts.[73] And for both men, securing the eventual freedom of their slaves involved labor that stretched decades, alienated peers, and required the aid of descendants who were forced to carry on the work of emancipation long after both Randolph and Carter had passed.[74]

Precisely because emancipation required such profound effort and transformation, even in the Chesapeake private manumissions in the Chesapeake freed only about 10,000 out of the South's 1.2 million slaves by 1810.[75] This does not diminish the significance of these emancipation, for the birth of a new class of free black people and, consequently,

[73] Andrew Levy, *The First Emancipator: Slavery, Religion, and the Quiet Revolution of Robert Carter* (New York: Random House, 2006), 140-4; Louis Morton, *Robert Carter of Nomini Hall* (Charlottesville, VA: Dominion Books, 1941), 245-8.

[74] This was especially true in Randolph's case, as he died less than two years after drafting his will in 1792. Guardianship of the slaves scheduled to be free under his will—the last of whom was not freed until the 1820s—was assumed by his widow, Judith. Carter's children, as we will see, fought his Deed of Gift for decades in the Virginia Courts, and after he died advocacy for his slaves fell to the executor of his estate. Ely, *Israel on the Appomattox*, "Preface," 28, 247; Levy, *First Emancipator*, 152-74.

[75] This is a sharply downwardly revised estimate from the more often cited figure of 30,000, in Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation*, 8.

the formation of the South's antebellum legal codes in the backlash provoked by the small number of emancipations. Even so, the willingness to countenance antislavery arguments within the openings of the revolutionary years, which precipitated emancipations and the plans of men like Laurens and Greene, seeped more broadly across southern society through the courts. Although state and county judges would prove a primary means of rolling back many of the gains made by antislavery advocates during the Revolution by the mid-1790s, they showed a remarkable willingness to defend the rights of slaves and the claims freedpeople in the immediate post-war years. Unsurprisingly, this was especially true in Virginia—where George Wythe and St. George Tucker sat on the state's highest court—and in Maryland, the two states most prone to manumissions. For example, unlike their counterparts in North Carolina, in suits brought against emancipators by their heirs, Tucker and fellow Virginia judges repeatedly reaffirmed the right of Quakers to have emancipated their slaves in *anticipation* of the 1782 law before any such law was passed despite their having no legal ground to do so.[76]

In both Maryland and Virginia, with few exceptions the courts also upheld the numerous freedom suits brought before the court by black men and women who had either been displaced during the war or saw in the revolutionary moment a new opportunity to challenge their bondage. In a remarkable case, *Toogood v. Scott*, decided in Maryland in 1783, the court found in favor of Eleanor Toogood, who claimed her freedom "by reason of her being a descendant from a free white woman," her great grandmother Mary Fisher. Eleanor's fair skinned grandmother had seen her freedom suit

[76] See "Moorman v. Moorman" and "Pleasants v. Pleasants," in Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, ed., *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Free Negro* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1926), vol. 1, 88-9, 92-3 [hereafter *Catt*.].

denied by the same court in 1734, as had Eleanor's mother twenty years later. Within the revolutionary moment, however, the court had been pushed far enough towards antislavery possibilities that in 1783 appellate judges reversed the previous two decisions and finally affirmed Eleanor's three-generation old claim through a judgment based mostly on her appearance and on hearsay.[77] The same Court of Appeals similarly upheld the freedom of Mary Butler, a slave who also claimed liberty by right of a white great-grandmother and whose ancestors had failed in their claims.[78] Other mixed-race men and women found courts momentarily more accepting as well. After several reversals, Virginia's Court of Appeals confirmed the freedom of Mary and Bess Jenkins as descendants of Indians (enslavement of Indians was forbidden under a 1735 statute) only on the basis of the fact that Mary and Bess "had a tawny complexion, with long straight black hair."[79] Even the highest courts of Georgia and South Carolina followed suit in reversing precedent to sustain freedom claims during the early 1780s, although the Deep South saw far fewer freedom suits and courts never affirmed extralegal manumissions as did their counterparts in Maryland and Virginia.[80] As with everything during the Revolutionary era, of course, such reliance on perceived racial characteristics cut both ways. A poor and tawny skinned "white" woman became so fearful of the threats posed to anyone perceived as black that she carried on her person a "certificate of whiteness."

---

[77] "Toogood v. Scott," 26 May 1783, in Thomas Harris and John McHenry, eds., *Maryland Reports, Being a Series of the Most Important Law Cases, argued and Determined in the Provincial Court and Court of Appeals in the State of Maryland* (New York: Isaac Riley, 1809), vol. 2, p. 27-38.

[78] "Butler v. Craig," *Catt.*, vol. 4, 50.

[79] "Jenkins v. Tom," *Catt*, vol. 1, 99-100.

[80] See "Negro Samson v. Whitaker," in *Catt.*, vol. 2, 272.

On her certificate, registered with the county clerk, was written: "Philip Bethea, one of the Justices of the peace for Georgetown District, being duly sworn on the holy Evangelist of Almighty God saith that he knew Philisha Bunton many years and … knows her to be an English woman & clear of any Negro blood Indian or Mulatto."[81] In a post-revolutionary world where the distinction between color and slavery was collapsing, appearance did indeed mean everything.

As significant as the South's antislavery turn might have been, the relatively few freedom suits brought and the paltry number of manumissions relative to the region's total enslaved population should caution historians against envisioning the revolutionary period as a "lost moment" in the history of emancipation, as many have done through the years.[82] Although those who labored to end slavery in the new republic were righteous and sincere,[83] and although Jefferson and others dreamed wistfully that the institution might soon wither and die, total abolition was never a true possibility below Pennsylvania. The wealth generated through the labor of enslaved African-Americans provided the base for political control in the lower states. The capital bondspeople represented, more than half the total investment in the region, underwrote the South's

---

[81] The claim that Philisha was poor is based on her leaving her mark. Affidavit of Philip Bethea, Deed Book, Marion County Clerk's Office, Georgetown District, SCDAH.

[82] Most recently the "lost moment" thesis has been advanced in the works of Gary Nash. See Nash, *Race and Revolution* (New York: Roman & Littlefield, 1990); Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African-Americans in the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[83] For the best among recent studies of changes in early antislavery see Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

entire credit economy, particularly in the post-war years when specie was practically non-existent. At the same time, even if historians have argued that the Founding Fathers should have simply left slaveholding states out of the Union, with the young United States encumbered with tens of millions of dollars worth of debt and reliant on customs and excise charges, most northern representatives understood that the nation needed the southern states—whose exports represented seventy-percent of the Thirteen Colonies' total in 1775[84]--as much as the southern states needed the Union. And for individual slaveholders, as argued above the act of manumitting slaves and thereby depriving heirs of their estate and membership in the planting class required an intense shift in perspective like that experienced by Randolph and Carter and enormous effort on the part of both slaves and emancipators. Indeed, such was the hold of slavery on the region that when total emancipation did come it cost five years of Civil War and 750,000 lives.[85]

Yet even if the Revolution could not realistically have ended slavery, the perceived threat to social order from freedpeople, internal critics of slavery and increasingly from northern states, led the vast majority of southerners to see closing the revolutionary moment as essential to the security of the region. Most directly, the post-revolutionary years were characterized by a regime of terror and violence directed against both black southerners and the increased number of antislavery white residents. Within a decade after the war was over, and in spite of having eased restrictions on manumission, southern legislatures—influenced by members who had risen during the war on wealth in

[84] John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), Appendix 1.

[85] For a recent upward revision of Civil War casualties, see J. David Hacker, "A Census-Based Count of the Civil War Dead," *Civil War History*, vol. 54, no. 4 (Dec. 2011): 306-47.

slaves and western land and whose rising value depended on slavery's expansion—actively sought to suppress internal criticism by censuring the South's fledgling number of antislavery societies and taxing and fining Quakers and other antislavery religious communities. Southern writers and politicians increasingly found themselves compelled to respond to both charges of slavery's immorality as well as the practical concerns created by the movement of escaped slaves northward during the war, concerns that would result in articulation of a separate southern interest and lead delegates to the Constitutional Convention to push for a Fugitive Slave Clause.[86] The retreat of evangelical sects from revolutionary antislavery, which has stood as central to historians' understanding of the emergence of a fully conscious antebellum South, was important, especially to planters' self understanding, but it was only one part of a retrenchment that began even before the war had ended.[87] In other words, despite the best intentions of evangelical preachers and real or erstwhile emancipators, the actions of mobs, legislatures, and courts in time would make retreat less the choice of evangelical sects than their only option.

The plainest evidence of the increasing violence directed towards black men and women during and immediately after the Revolution is the fact that killings by courts and

[86] The clear link between southern black men and women who northern states refused to return southward after the war and the fugitive slave clause, examined briefly in this chapter, is one that historians have not appeared to previously made.

[87] See most prominently, Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolutions*, esp. chapters 2 & 5. Sylvia Frey's *Water from the Rock*, though otherwise masterful, concludes on an unsatisfying note in part because she explains the post-war retrenchment of slavery in similar fashion despite highlighting the violence of the period throughout the rest of her book. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 243-330.

by mobs increased to such a level that legislatures in North and South Carolina, their treasuries already exhausted by the costs of war, simply stopped compensating masters for executed slaves, despite having eased restrictions in the war's early years. Their counterparts in Virginia and Georgia were similarly hesitant and tended to compensate masters only after much delay and trepidation. In an effort to confirm slaveholders' property in their slaves, all southern states had clauses allowing masters' compensation written into slave codes by the early eighteenth-century.[88] During the early 1780s, and then again during the height of the insurrection fears that coincided with the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution, executions and extralegal killings of black men by white militia and mobs reached an unprecedented level, which led states to repeal acts allowing for compensation both to discourage slaveholders from acting too harshly and to save what was left of dwindling coffers.[89]

The increase in executions and extralegal killings came in response to continuing violence by slaves against their owners after the Revolution as black men and women responded forcefully to the closing of revolutionary opportunities. In Virginia, violent acts committed by black southerners increased over fifty-percent from 1785 to 1794 as compared to the immediate prewar years.[90] Accusations of poisoning in particular became more frequent throughout the South, which may have reflected the heightened fear of black people in wake of the Revolution as any illness came to be seen as the result

[88] See for instance North Carolina's blanket slave code of 1741, modeled on South Carolina's 1740 code. *CSR*, XXIII, 191-204.

[89] An Act to Repeal an Act Allowing for Compensation of Executed Slaves, General Assembly Records, April-June 1784, House Bills, Legislative Papers, NSA.

[90] Philip J. Schwarz, *Twice Condemned: Slaves and the Criminal Laws of Virginia* (New York: Lawbooks Exchange, 1998), 231, 271.

of slaves' machinations. In North Carolina, for example, the slaveholder John Warnock applied for compensation for the execution of his slaves Charlie and Bess in 1785 who he delivered to the county court on claims that they had poisoned his three children. *After* Charlie and Bess had been swiftly hanged, Warnock's claim on the state treasury was rejected as witnesses adjudged Warnock's children as having more likely died of typhus than poison.[91]

More than increased black on white violence, however, the frequency of slave executions and murders came from states legislators and residents' concerted effort to destroy even the slightest inkling of black resistance. In the immediate post-war years, every southern state passed laws providing for more speedy trials of slaves. North Carolina, for example, passed a law in 1783 allowing for a single justice of the peace (as opposed to the traditional three) to inflict punishment on slaves accused of misdemeanors "not to exceed forty lashes." Georgia in 1784 allowed magistrates to convene "a jury of three freeholders," as opposed to three magistrates, to decide the fate of slaves accused of even capital offenses as quickly as possible.[92]

Again in response to the fears engendered by the Revolution, these hastily assembled groups of freeholders also proved exceedingly willing to condemn slaves to death for offenses that would have brought lashes in earlier or later years. Examples are numerous, but even a few are illustrative of white southerners' willingness to inflict death of slaves accused of stealing items worth a small fraction of the appraised value of the condemned slaves. A slave in Virginia was hanged in 1787 "for the crime of Burglary,

---

[91] Petition of John Warnock, 11 February 1785, Petitions, Legislative Papers, NSA.

[92] *CSR*, XXIV, 496-7; *Statues of the State of Georgia*, III, 284-5.

he having broken into the meat house of Robert Spilsbe Coleman, and stolen therefrom six pieces of Bacon, of the value of Three pounds ten shillings."[93] Five years earlier the same court had executed a slave named James, appraised at ninety pounds sterling, for stealing twenty gallons of brandy, valued at only "four pounds current money," current money, as we have seen, being worth hardly anything at all.[94] That same year, freeholders in neighboring Gloucester county executed three slaves for stealing "two bushels of Indian Corn, valued at 10 pence" and in 1786 the county court of Southhampton County condemned a slave named Ben, valued at one-hundred pounds, to die for stealing forty pounds of bacon and a stick of bacon worth forty shillings.[95] North Carolina's legislature rejected repeated claims for compensation from the masters of two slaves caught breaking into a barn and stealing four bushels of corn in 1783. South Carolina's Assembly likewise refused to give compensation for a slave named Hannah who stole a hog from a neighboring plantation in 1785, nor for two slaves executed for "committing a Robbery on the High Way."[96] Judged simply by an economic calculus, the punishments doled out for slaves accused of theft or illegal assemblage appear not a little absurd. Yet the juries and judges who condemned black men and women to die or crimes that would have received corporal punishment at other points in the region's history

---

[93] Sherriff's Petition of Relief, 1787, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, vol. 4, p. 280-1.

[94] ibid., vol. 3, 383.

[95] ibid., vol. 5, 473-4; vol. 7 239-40.

[96] Senate Joint Committee Papers, April-June 1784, Legislative Papers, NSA; Petition of John Alderson, 14 May 1785, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH; Petition of John Dorsias and William Bellamy, 1787, ibid.

reflected the urgency felt by white society surrounded by a sea of black faces whose revolutionary capacity had been made all too plain during and after the war.

As remarkable as the severity of punishments determined by courts and juries was the speed with which they did so, often carrying out an execution before a master might appeal for mercy. After Thomas Lucas's slave Peter was accused of "having robbed a Hen house at Wilmington [NC] of a few Fowls," Peter "was apprehended and without your Petitioner having notice, so that he might have attended and used circumstances in favor of his slave, which notice would have taken but a very short time, the said Peter was precipitously tried and executed, *more your petitioner believes from a supposed necessity of striking terror into a gang of runaways* … than from any particular act of Villainy by the said slave." North Carolina's assembly rejected Lucas's claim, as they did with most others, despite his repeated applications through the 1790s.[97]

These executions represent only the most extreme end of a broader spectrum of violence that drew from the fears of slaveholders and, perhaps even more so, nonslaveholding white southerners, who participated in the violence directed against black people accused of crimes from theft to libel to murder. Poor freeholders actively protested against clemency for slaves pardoned of minor crimes like the slave James from Spotsylvania County. After James was recommended as a "proper object of mercy" to the Virginia legislature in 1785, thirty eight residents of the County petitioned the House of Burgesses against clemency for fear it would "encourage like acts among the Negroes

[97] Petition of Thomas Lucas, 1788, Petitions, General and State Assembly Records, NSA. Emphasis added.

in this country."[98] Similarly, residents of James City, Virginia, protested vociferously against the pardon of two enslaved women who had received clemency at the request of their owner in 1792. After an overseer had accused Nelly and Daphne of leaving a fence open and "Exposing the corn crop to the sheep," the overseer struck Nelly "repeatedly with a small cane … the woman Daphne, as soon as she saw Nelly closely fighting with the overseer, ran to the place where they were engaged … They beat him on the ground with their fists with great fury a considerable time" until the overseer expired. Thirty-eight petitioners against the women's pardon urged that "it would be extremely dangerous to allow the wench Nelly to escape unscathed and so beg that her execution be fulfilled." The legislature acceded to the fury of James City's white residents, and although Daphne was sold to the West Indies, Nelly was whipped, burned, and then hanged, her owner receiving no compensation.[99]

In addition to protesting the increasingly rare pardons given to slaves accused of felonies, the memories of the Revolution and perceptions of slaves' growing assertiveness during the post-war years produced a broader acceptance of casual violence as a necessary component to securing the safety of the South's white community. A non-slaveholder named Laird Sellar demanded that North Carolina refund the payment he was forced to pay the owner of a slave Sellar beat to death during a dispute on board a ferry. "If the act was unlawful," Sellar argued, "it was meritorious to rid of the world of a daring lawless villain who by his frequent depredations, and menaces, struck terror on all women and children within the vicinity of his range." When Sellar's demand was

---

[98] *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, vol. 3, p. 383.

[99] William Lee to the Governor, Enclosing a Petition Numerously Signed against the Pardon of Nelly, a Slave, 22 September 1792, Petitions, James City Papers, LiVa.

rejected, more than thirty residents of Raleigh submitted a supporting petition requesting his relief, as the slave Arthur had been "at large and making threats to the women of the said county."[100]

The idea that any white person was not only justified in beating or killing a slave but also that it was "meritorious" to do so both echoed words of wartime vigilantes and reflected white southerner's perception that their safety rested upon a very fragile equilibrium.[101] Indeed, immediately after the war and before the Haitian Revolution, both slaveholding and non-slaveholding white people seemed to see slave insurrections everywhere. For example, in 1786 a William Moulson wrote Governor Harrison of Virginia with a warning that "A dangerous insurrection of the Negroes is meditated, and a little after Harvest they mean to carry it into effect," information Moulson had gleaned after interrogating (and probably torturing) two runaways he believed to be "Principle instigators" in a plot that never came.[102] Remembering the experience of the war, paranoid white southerners saw maroons as a particular threat and states moved swiftly to destroy the outlying settlements of black men and women that persisted after the war, often dismembering captured maroons as a warning to other black people. After the "Outraged committed by a number of runaway negroes, became so enormous, that the safety of the people was in danger, " residents of Hanover County, North Carolina in 1795 formed a militia party and summarily shot without trial four black men they

---

[100] Petitions of Lard Sellars and Sundry Inhabitants of Raleigh, 1802, Petitions, General State Assembly Records, NSA.

[101] See the case of William Lenoir and Benjamin Cleveland, who likewise explained their murder of loyalists in North Carolina by claiming it was a meritorious act, examined in Chapter 1.

[102]WJ Moulson to Governor Harrison, May 6, 1786, *CSP*, 4, p. 132.

captured within the surrounding woods, who later were found only to have been hunting.[103] After being warned by James Jackson that a group of "Runaway Negro Banditti" were "as daring as any & their independent state, from the ease they enjoy, forbode what I dread to express, a capital insurrection," Georgia's Governor Edward Telfair promised a ten pound reward for the body or head of any of the group's members, much in the way the state had offered bounties for resisting slaves during the Revolution. When one such runaway, a slave named Lewis, was convicted for belonging to a maroon community outside Savannah in 1787, a Georgia court sentenced the man "to be hanged, until he shall be dead … After which his head is to be cut of and stuck upon a pole to be set up on the Island of Marsh outside the Glebe Land" in the Savannah River.[104] South Carolinians similarly dismembered a runaway named Titus who they convicted of being an accessory to the murder of his owner after having joined a band of "outlawed Runaways" in 1793, placing Titus's head on the "High Road."[105]

If white residents of the countryside were fearful of the black men and women who hid behind the tree line or within the swamps, those in the region's growing cities looked with increasing unease at the number of freedpeople and hired slaves who became

[103] Petition of Henry Taylor, 1796, General State Assembly Records, Petitions, NSA.

[104] Betty Wood, "Until He Shall Be Dead, Dead, Dead:' The Judicial Treatment of Slaves in Eighteenth-Century Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 71 (Fall, 1987), p. 392.

[105] Petition of Susanna St. =John, Widow of the Late Doctor Stephen St. John, 3 December 1793, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

more prominent in urban trades in the immediate post-war decades.[106] As discussed in the previous chapter, officials in Charleston and other cities severely curtailed the capacity of freedmen and women to ply trades through fines or entrance fees. Yet at the urging of residents they also passed laws prohibiting masters from hiring out their slaves despite it being a long-standing practice throughout the United States. Restrictions in Charleston in particular became so severe that widows in the city petitioned the legislature for monetary relief, having been "used to send their baskets in streets by slaves to sell goods, as they had for decades past … but being deprived of the right thereof by a late order … they have no chance to dispose a least of their goods and are unable to provide maintenance for themselves and their fatherless children."[107]

And just as white southerners outside urban areas sought new methods for swiftly dealing with real or imagined threats from black men and women, those in cities pushed officials to construct more gaols and more workhouses to supplement the current ones that overflowed with black people detained under new restrictions. The nation's first workhouses built solely for the keeping of slaves (most city gaols had a wing that served as a workhouse during the colonial period) were built during or immediately after the war. The first iteration of Charleston's workhouse, perhaps the most infamous in the country, was built by the British during their occupation. Savannah built its first in 1783, in response to residents who repeatedly listed as a grievance in petitions and grand jury

---

[106] For the growth of black tradesmen after the war, see John J. Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire: Renting Enslaved Laborers in Antebellum Virginia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012). Sarah S. Hughes, "Slaves for Hire."

[107] Petition of Sundry Widows of Charleston, 1783, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

presentments "the want of a work house, for the keeping of disorderly negroes."[108] Immediately after the Revolution, wary officials sentenced black men and women for terms that could last years or, in at least one case, even a lifetime, where they experienced unimaginably harsh conditions. The owner of a man named Figaro petitioned the City Council for relief in the 1790s because "it appears that from the Intense cold the said Figaro had suffer'd in the Work House … & from the strong pressure of the Irons on his Legs he was taken with a swelling about the ankles, which turned into sores … & one of his feet rotted off entirely." Despite his owner's plea, Figaro had been implicated in a conspiracy and deemed to dangerous to release. Figaro was thereupon sold for a pittance to the Caribbean, his final fate predictable if not recorded.[109]

Because the Revolution demonstrated in starkest terms the danger that slavery posed to southern society, and because the connection between slave assertion and revolutionary rhetoric was inescapable, the majority of southern white men and women increasingly saw white critics of the institution as being nearly as much a threat to internal security as slaves themselves. As South Carolinian planter and politician Pierce Butler explained the need to crush the swell of antislavery in 1792, "I am sure the folly of some idle People in America will sooner or later give us trouble with our Negroes, perhaps Insurrection. It must be at all times crushed in the Bud for if it gets any head we

[108] Presentments of the Grand Jurors for the County of Chatham, October, 1782, Joseph Vallence Bevan Papers, GHS.

[109] Petition of James Delaire, 10 December 1798, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

must suffer in the Suppression, by the number of citizens who must fall" in putting down a revolt.[110]

The same forces of the Revolution that led some to consider alternatives to slavery, in other words, convinced many more of the need to silence dissension on the subject through law and violence, a notion that grew with the perceived threat from the region's increasing enslaved and free black population. In part, the growing concern with white antislavery voices stemmed from the simple fact that even the most modest critic of slavery was seen as disruptive to the safety and economy of the region. At the tail end of the conflict, for example, William Bland of Virginia blamed the escape of "his fellow George" on one of his white tenants, who as George was in the process of being sold southward had told the slave that he "would be dam'd if he was in their places if he would ever go to the plantation again."[111] Yet far more concerning was the supposedly poisonous influence of freedpeople and antislavery voices on laborers' inclination to revolt. As Charles Lee warned his older brother Henry in 1776, "your dominion over the blacks is founded upon opinion; if this opinion falls, your authority is lost."[112] Cementing that opinion, in turn, required closing ranks around an institution especially as it was coming under scrutiny from within and without the region.

---

[110] Pierce Butler to Roger Saunders, 8 September 1792, *The Letters of Pierce Butler, 1790-1794: Nation Building and Enterprise in the New Republic*, ed. Terry W. Lipscomb (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), p. 59-61.

[111] Whether George would have eloped without convincing is besides the point, as Bland blamed not the slave but the influence of an antislavery white man. William Bland to Theodrick Bland, June, 1783, Bland Family Papers, VHS.

[112] Charles Lee to Henry Lee, 5 April 1776, quoted in Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1961), 122.

Because they were at the center of the era's rising antislavery tide, the Society of Friends came under special scrutiny both from state officials and the general public. During the war, white southerners turned a wary eye at both Quakers and Moravians for their long-standing position of refusing to serve in either the militia or army. While both sects regularly received special tax and military exemptions during the colonial era, continued refusal to serve during a Revolution in which all states suffered for manpower elicited scorn and harsh penalties. This was especially true in Georgia, where worries about the British were exacerbated by the constant threat of Indian raids along the state's borders. As a writer to the *Augusta Chronicle* mocked in 1784, "the grunting broad-brimmed Quakers, ever remote from the scene of peril, and equally averse to discharge any duty of that society whose protection they enjoy, would have our military establishments not encreased [sic], but diminished," leaving "a brave and rapidly encreasing multitude of frontier settlements of the barbarous massacre of savages of all colours," black and red.

Southerners' mistrust and anger over Quakers' refusal to serve increased exponentially as Friends continued their steady stream of anti-slavery petitions and publications after the war. Both because of the strong Quaker presence in the state and the state's prohibition on manumission, North Carolina's legislature received by far the most petitions, between three and six a year through the early 1800s, though legislators in each state read and either dismissed, condemned, or tabled at least two dozen such pleas for abolition through 1808.[113] Quaker memorials in turn brought letters, petitions, and

---

[113] Tally based on petitions in state archives in each state. For North Carolina average see both Miscellaneous Petitions; and Petitions, General Assembly Records [1774-1809], NSA.

presentments from southerners wishing the contagion of liberty that revolution had unleashed to be sealed once more in the bottle. The Grand Jury in Edenton, North Carolina warned to the Assembly in 1790 that even discussing Quaker memorials on slavery might "render that specie of Property of Small Value, the Lives of the Citizens unsafe that Risings of the Negroes are greatly encouraged," and on at least one occasion angry North Carolinians burned a house and barn belonging to a Friend.[114]

Unlike the self-imposed isolation of Quakers and Moravians, evangelical preachers in the new nation actively sought large audiences of both white and black Americans. Indeed, early itinerants among both Baptists and Methodists wrote of their being "impressed with the enormous weight of the galling yoke of oppression" they witnessed in the southern states and found enslaved men and women eagerly receptive of preaching's about spiritual equality.[115] Many of the first evangelicals into the region also spoke privately and openly against slavery, and for a small number of southerners preaching and their conversion precipitated a shift in perspective akin to that experienced by Robert Carter and Richard Randolph.[116]

Yet with fears of slave insurrection present in white southerners' mind, when public sermons condemned slavery they quickly could and often did turn violent. In his journals, the first Methodist Bishop Thomas Coke described the sharply changed mood of

---

[114] Petition of the People Called Quakers, 17 December, 1793, General Assembly Records, 1791-93, NSA; Presentments of the Grand Jury at Edenton, 1790, Grand Jury Presentments, County Records, NSA.

[115] James Meachem, quoted in James D. Essig, *The Bonds of Wickedness: American Evangelicals Against Slavery, 1770-1808* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 41.

[116] Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism,* 32.

a crowd in 1785 Virginia. His preaching elicited "a rapturous reception" from listeners until he began a fiery indictment of slaveholding, whereupon "the crowd was provoked to retire from the barn and to combine together to flog me." Coke managed to escape the lash only by fleeing to the house of a local Justice of the Peace.[117] Preaching in the Carolinas, James O'Kelly faced similar threats of violence on at least three occasions. "Twice the clubs have been raised to eat me," he sermonized to a meeting of black men and women in 1786, and "once the pointed dagger was presented to me."[118] And one woman in Maryland offered "rioters … 50 pounds if they would give 100 lashes" to Francis Asbury after hearing him characterize slaveholders as tyrants.[119] Asbury and his fellow evangelicals characterized the violence they experienced as persecution, and indeed it was. It was also directed intimidation, informed by the spiraling fear of insurrection and intended, in no organized manner, to limit the avenues through which new religious sects could pursue the converts they so eagerly sought.

The response of state officials to the perceived antislavery threat was aimed at the same ends and more organized and conscious. Even before the war had ended, the combined anger over antislavery criticism and refusal of armed serve led legislatures in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina to tax both Moravians and Quakers at three

---

[117] Thomas Coke, *Extracts of the Journals of the Rev. Dr. Coke's Three Visits to America* (London, 1790), 35.

[118] James O'Kelly, *Essay on Negro Slavery* (Philadelphia: Pritchard and Hall, 1789), 20.

[119] Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Reverend Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, from August 7, 1771 to December 7, 1815* (New York: N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821), vol. 2, 49.

times the normal rate.[120] Quakers in North Carolina complained to the state Assembly during the war that rising taxes drove them to bankruptcy, and that many had lost their "estates, their houses … and will have to sleep on their neighbor's floor."[121] A decade later the situation had not much improved: Friends near Ninety-Six in South Carolina requested relief from the onerous tax burden, which they claimed was "threatening them with starvation" after a poor harvest.[122]

The outspokenness of religious sects and figures made them the most frequent but hardly the only targets of censure and intimidation. Emancipators were faced with frequent threats and both they and the black men and women they manumitted were beaten, threatened, and—in the case of three of Richard Randolph's slaves and many others—forcibly held in bondage by claimants on an estate whose slaves had been emancipated.[123] An oft-quoted anonymous neighbor wrote to Robert Carter after his Deed of Gift had begun going into effect to complain that "a man has almost as good a right to set fire to his own building though his neighbors is to be destroyed by it, as to free his slaves," and Carter's agent informed him of beatings and thefts committed by

---

[120] Stephen Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery*, 65-7; Jon F. Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), esp. chapter 3. During the 1780s, county governments followed suit and began taxing both sects at the higher rate as well. "Bethsheba Diary," *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, ed. Adelaide L. Fries, vol. 3 (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1926).

[121] "Remonstrance of the People Called Quakers," 1 November 1781, House Joint Assembly Records, General State Assembly Records, NSA.

[122] "Petition of the People Called Quakers," 14 October 1788, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[123] Melvin Ely, *Israel on the Appomattox*, 65.

white men against his slaves-turned-tenants through 1801.[124] This harassment by slaveholding and non-slaveholding white southerners combined with intense social pressure and forced silences to quiet at least vocal criticism from within planter ranks. Jefferson of course first published his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, which contained passages lamenting slavery's influence on the manners and safety of his native state, anonymously for fear of the reaction his writings would elicit among his peers.[125] And Virginia's House of Burgesses would not even distribute the copies of Jefferson's fellow lawyer St. George Tucker's *Dissertation on Slavery* the latter submitted in 1796 despite his being one of the two most important lawyers and jurists in the state along with the even more antislavery minded George Wythe.[126]

As a result both of the South's momentary liberalization of manumission laws and then the concerted reaction that followed, many of the region's most fervent critics of slavery simply left. Before Baptists and Methodists reversed their position on forbidding slaveholding among their ranks, the South's push to close ranks around slavery drove many antislavery minded Methodists in particular westward. David Rice and David Barrow left Virginia for Kentucky, where they waged a losing fight to prohibit the introduction of slavery in the territory as it prepared for statehood. Tellingly, Rice's first argument against bringing bondsmen into Kentucky spoke directly to what he and other

---

[124] Anonymous to Robert carter, 5 August, 1796, Robert Carter MSS, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

[125] Joseph C. Miller, *The Wolf by the Ears*, 114.

[126] Douglas Ambrose, "Of Stations and Relations: Proslavery Christianity in Early National Virginia," in John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay, eds., *Religion and the Antebellum Debate Over Slavery* (Athens, GA University of Georgia Press, 1998): 14-48, p. 37..

Kentuckians experienced during the War of Independence: "It cannot be consistent with the principles of good policy," Rice wrote in a widely circulated pamphlet during the state's constitutional debate in 1792, "to keep a numerous, a growing body of people among us, who had no strength to us in the time of war; who are under the strongest temptation to join the Enemy … who will count so many against us in an hour of danger and distress."[127] After slavery was prohibited in the Ohio Territory under the Northwest Ordinance and after the reopening of the Atlantic Slave Trade, a growing number of likeminded southerners sought escape from slavery and intimidation there. Perhaps unsurprisingly, members of the Society of Friends made the greatest exodus. David Ramsay remarked in his 1809 *History of South Carolina* that "many of the Quakers have left Carolina in disgust, and settled in Ohio, where slavery is prohibited."[128] Once in Ohio, migrants wrote back to their former home to tell of the "Eden … free of the black cloud of forboding" that covered the states they had departed, as one wrote to North Carolina Methodist minister Edward Dromgooel in 1788.[129]

Despite the efforts of southern transplants to convince their friends and relatives to abandon slaveholding or join them in the new land to the northwest, their departure worked strongly to help cement southern opinion on slavery. The momentary opportunity

---

[127] Rice's pamphlet also paid notice to the fresh reminder of the dangers posed by slavery given southerners by the rebellion in St. Domingue. David Rice, *Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good Policy, Proved by a Speech Delivered in the Convention, Held at Danville, Kentucky* (Philadelphia: Parry Hall, 1792), 13.

[128] David Ramsay, *History of South Carolina: From its First Settlement in 1670 to the Year 1808* (Newberry, SC: WJ Dufie, 1809), 23.

[129] David Jarrat to Edward Dromgooel, 22 March 1788, Edward Dromgooel Papers, SHC. See also Philip J. Schwarz, *Migrants Against Slavery: Virginians and the Nation* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2001).

for manumission and the opening of the free western territories, products of the most liberal impulses of the Revolution, in fact allowed those most likely to continue their opposition to slavery to instead remove themselves from the system altogether. This was particularly true for emancipators within the upper ranks of the planting class, who when they freed their slaves likewise relinquished the influence that had accompanied their now abandoned social status. Robert Carter, for example, died in a poorhouse in Baltimore, having vacated both his wealth and the substantial political power that he might have leveraged had the 1782 manumission law never been passed.[130] Likewise, under duress from overtaxing, harassment, and frustration, by the turn of the 19th century the Society of Friends had largely disappeared from the southern seaboard where many like John Pleasants had wielded considerable wealth and influence. Even in North Carolina, where Quaker presence was strongest, the state's thirteen Monthly Meetings dwindled to four by 1801 and one by 1820.[131] Largely gone as well by 1800 were the state and local abolition societies, who had experienced similar censure and punishment at the hands of freeholders and legislatures. The Maryland and Alexandria, Virginia, Abolition Societies, both founded in 1790, lasted not longer than a year, the former destroyed after being heavily fined for abetting the escape of two slaves to Philadelphia and the former drained of its funds and membership as Virginia's Quakers sought free soil to the west.[132]

---

[130] Andrew Levy, *The First Emancipator*, 246-8.

[131] Stephen Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery*, 205.

[132] *Maryland Journal* (Baltimore), February 10, 1792; February 14, 1792.

The departure of the most prominent opponents of slavery, however small their number, left in its wake both the physical manifestations of the region's antislavery turn in the form of freedpeople and a population of white southerners armed with a greater sense of their society's uniqueness and with refined rationalizations of the institution that defined their world. The most common defenses of slavery in the 1780s did not specifically detail slavery as a positive good but drew on older biblical rationalizations and from the Revolution's emphasis on the sanctity of property rights and simultaneous threat *to* property in the form of fleeing slaves and roving bandits. Petitioners in Halifax County, Virginia, for example, prefaced typical arguments about bondage being justified within the Old and New Testament with demands that that the House of Burgesses take action against emancipating Quakers in 1785, whose agitation rendered their slave property insecure. Yet they had waged a war for independence "so that our Property might be secure in the Future," a goal for which they had "risked our Lives and Fortunes and waded through Seas of Blood."[133] Similarly, it is perhaps unsurprising given the simultaneous elevation of property rights and extreme fragility of property ownership during the Revolution, that the greatest opponent Virginia's manumission law of 1782, and then the greatest proponent of its repeal, was Governor Benjamin Harrison, who Robert Pleasants claimed "hath suffered more than any one person that I know of, in his stock, household furniture, and Negroes: there being, as it is said, near forty of them gone away with the British army and all of them valuable."[134]

---

[133] Petition from Halifax County, 1785, in Frederika Teute Schmidt and Barbara Ripel Wilhelm, "Early Proslavery Petitions in Virginia," *WMQ*, 30 (January, 1973), 139.

[134] Robert Pleasants to Evan Thomas, 4 February 1781, Robert Pleasants Letterbook, DUL.

These early arguments not for slavery but against emancipation matured as antislavery voices grew over the next decade and as the South's continued commitment to bondage and states' decision to reopen the slave trade brought the region's leaders into more frequent confrontation with northern politicians and writers. Yet even as the South became more aware that its self-interests were growing apart from its sister states to the northward, the spokesman who began to speak *for* slavery as well as against emancipation drew on the still vivid memories of the Revolution.

This struggle to contain the South's slave population and the radical impulses of the Revolution was written into the Constitution. Although many historians have recognized the debates over the Constitution's fugitive slave clause as a key moment in the development of sectional divisions, few if any have drawn the connection between South Carolina's push for the clause and a heated exchange with Massachusetts during and immediately after the war.[135] In May of 1779, "several inhabitants of Waccamaw [South Carolina] were plundered of a number of their Negroes by a party of the British, which Negroes were take by Privateers and carried to the State of Massachusetts.[136] Coming at the same time that the Massachusetts Supreme Court was weighing cases that would end slavery in the Bay State in 1783, officials there refused to return the thirty-nine black Carolinians—among whom was the wife of Prince Hall, an important black

[135] The two most recent works on slavery and the Constitution do not mention the Massachusetts-South Carolina dispute at all, nor do any of the earlier texts I've examined on the subject. See David Waldstreicher, *Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008); George William Van Cleve, *A Slaveholder's Union: Slavery, Politics, and the Constitution in the Early American Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[136] Petition of Samuel Hasford, Respecting Negroes Belonging to Sundry People on Waccamaw River, 21 February 1784, *Journal of the South Carolina Senate*, 322.

leader and migrationist in Somerville—after they protested their looming reenslavement. South Carolina hired two separate agents to "recover" the slaves, yet upon arrival in Massachusetts each found officials reluctant to hand the black men and women over despite South Carolina's demands and pleas that "the very great Ravages, which the War has occasioned in this Sort of Property … necessitate the Return of these Valuable Negroes."[137] After a third request was again rebuffed, South Carolina officials protested vociferously and Governor Benjamin Guerard accused Massachusetts of placing the slaves "in a very ungenerous, vexatious and Cruel Situation" and termed Massachusetts's choice to harbor the slaves "an illegal detention … contrary to the Articles of Confederation, and a gross Violation of the Sovereignty and Independence of this State."[138]

When delegates met in Philadelphia in 1787 to reconfigure the ties that bound the Union together, delegates from South Carolina arrived carrying the complaints of residents still seeking the return of the thirty-four black men and women who had now been living in relative freedom for almost a decade. Indeed, the dispute—which, despite the passage of the fugitive slave clause, ended with the slaves remaining free in Massachusetts—made clear the difficulty in securing slave property within a Union where half the states seemed headed towards emancipation. In language that directly informed southern delegates to the Constitutional Convention, Guerard's successor William Moultrie warned John Hancock in 1785 that Massachusetts's actions threatened not only economic relations but the solidity of the new nation as well. "I am sorry to

---

[137] Samuel Hasford to John Hancock, August 1783, Letters, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[138] Message from Governor Geurard, 26 February 1784 in *ibid.,* 325.

Observe that the solid Harmony which should Subsist between the States in the Union, has not been manifested by that [Massachusetts]] government to us," Moultrie complained.[139] In pushing to embed safeguards against similar actions in the future, South Carolina's lead delegates used similar language, threatening to abruptly leave the Convention if the subject of abolition was broached, an act that would "tear up the fabric of the South."[140]

That very fact that Pinckney, Smith, as well as North Carolina delegate William Blount, could speak of a "South"—Pinckney clarified that "When I say Southern, I mean Maryland, and the states Southward"—[141]speaks to the extent to which many southerners had come to understand themselves as unique within the Union just eleven years after the nation had been founded. Sectional lines became more apparent still at the First Congress in 1790 during the debates over a usual touchstone for southern: a Quaker petition, this one from Pennsylvania. Three years after the Constitutional Convention senators from Georgia and the Carolinas spoke fluently of "southerner's rights" and "southern states," and George Washington recognized slavery as unique to the South when he spoke about "our section's felicity" in a letter to Patrick Henry.[142] Revealing the South's sectional consciousness and foreshadowing the developments of a period seven

---

[139] Message of the Governor to the House, 24 January 1785, *Journal of the South Carolina House of Representatives, 1785-1787*, p. 15.

[140] William Loughton Smith, quoted in Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Towards the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1968), 327.

[141] Charles Pinckney, quoted Donald Essig, *Bonds of Wickedness*, 17.

[142] George Washington, quoted in Richard S. Newman, "Prelude to the Gag Rule: Southern Reaction to Antislavery Petitions in the First Federal Congress," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 16 (Winter, 1996): 571-99, 576.

decades later, the ever fiery William Loughton Smith threatened Congress during debates on the Quaker petition that if the general emancipation called for was ever enacted it would result in a long and bloody civil war.[143]

The news of the slave uprising on St. Domingue, which first reached Charleston in August of 1791, renewed white fears of slave insurrection and provided—as America's own revolution had—the language and a destination to foment resistance among freed and enslaved black southerners. Yet as has been argued, the stories that flooded in from St. Domingue consolidated and reaffirmed fears that had marked the South in the 1780s while driving the region further towards isolation both from its sister states to the north and from the stream of migrants arriving from the Caribbean and Europe. Coming at the same time that jurists and legislators were rolling back the antislavery gains of the early 1780s and formulating new restrictions on black people, in other words, the main influence of the Haitian Revolution on the South was to lend renewed urgency to white citizen's efforts at retrenchment in the face of reinvigorated black resistance and the flurry of slave conspiracies that sounded the final death-knell for organized antislavery thought by 1802.

---

[143] William Loughton Smith, quoted in Joseph Gales, ed., *The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1934), p. 1242-3.

Chapter 5: Canals, Courts, and the Twilight of the Revolutionary Moment

When did the revolutionary era end? David Ramsay, writing in 1785, mused that although the fighting had ended years earlier the Revolution would continue "until the Seat of Government is made fully secure" at home and in the eyes of other nations.[1] Philadelphia's Benjamin Rush, in an oft-quoted phrase, wrote of a revolution in the "hearts and minds of men" when he claimed in 1787 that while the war was over, "this is far from being the case with the American Revolution. On the contrary, nothing but the first act of the great drama is closed."[2] Today historians offer different bookends in their dissertations, monographs and course syllabi, their stopping points depending upon their starting premises. For military historians, perhaps the Revolution ends with the Peace of Paris and the close of the formal conflict. For historians of the politics of the period, perhaps the era fades with the ratification of the Constitution and the death of the revolutionary system of government under the Articles of Confederation. Or perhaps, as a few have argued, the Revolution stretches well into the 19th century, with the Jacksonian era that, finalizing the democratizing process begun with independence.[3]

The revolutionary South conceptualized in this dissertation was a moment of rupture, a break with the colonial era in which the strains of war produced a period of rapid social change within the former southern colonies. Its American Revolution must

---

[1] David Ramsay, *History of the American Revolution*, *in Two Volumes* (Philadelphia: R. Aitken & Son, 1789), II, 481.

[2] Benjamin Rush, quoted in Edmund Morgan, *The Challenge of the American Revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1976), 198.

[3] See for instance Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1992).

therefore end with the closing of the window for opportunity for both black and white southerners, and the forcing of that window westward onto the frontier lands of Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Indeed, the story of the post-war years is in many ways the story of how the merchant planters who ascended during the war sought to cement their position and prevent the advancement of others behind them through similar means. To that effect, the previous chapter argued that a critical aspect of that closure was securing the sanctity of slave property by silencing critics of the institution and erecting barriers to emancipation and advancement by free black men and women, thereby stuffing the more radical genie of the Revolution back into its bottle.

This chapter closes the dissertation with a discussion of the often violent expansion of market culture into the southern interior in the first decades of the American Republic. As we have seen, those who gained the most during the period—the Wade Hamptons, William Lenoirs, and David Rosses—did so by acquiring the power that accompanied military and political office and by accumulating the wealth the Revolution made available in slaves, state debt, and military land. In order to increase their wealth and further their political status, these men and many alongside them spent the post-war years attempting to remake the southern countryside, transforming the colonial backcountry of broken land and subsistence farms into fertile soil for commercial agriculture. They brought the market inland in two primary ways. First, they did so by improving and creating the lines of transportation needed to bring crops to the coast. Taking advantage of newly activist state governments and slave prices that plummeted with the reopening of the Atlantic Slave Trade after the war and the debt crises of the post-war years, southerners threw money and slaves into clearing unusable land, digging

canals, and opening new roads and waterways to bring bulky slave-produced goods to the ocean. This enterprise built upon the movement of slaves and worked to greatly increase the demand for a heightened domestic traffic in slaves during the 1780s and 1790s. And second, in order to order the upcountry for market culture much as the South Carolina Regulators had sought to do in the 1760s, ascendant planters used state government to create dozens of new courts and legislative districts. In doing so, these states enhanced the authority of leading men in local affairs and brought far greater numbers of southerners into contact with governments more finely attuned to the needs of slavery's expansion.

These developments, in turn, allowed still greater accumulation of wealth and authority through official appointment and by greatly increasing the value of western land and, rapidly, slaves. Combined with the rampant debt and scarcity of money that occupied all southerners' minds in the post-war period, the twinned expansion of the state and the market effectively ended the opportunities for rapid advancement in the old southern colonies that the crucible of Revolution had made momentarily possible. If many of the Early Republic's leading planters had risen through the war from humble origins, the events that culminated in the closing of the Atlantic Slave Trade and the spread of cotton culture placed slaves and prime land well out of reach for most of those who sought to emulate what Hampton, Lenoir, and their had accomplished.

Historians may disagree about whether the struggle for independence was a revolution for or against government, with many looking at the neutered federal state under the Articles of Confederation as an argument for the latter view. Yet when one

takes into account state and local government, even a cursory glance at the record shows that post-war Americans made far more frequent demands on the state and felt the hand of authority far more closely than they had in the colonial era. Perhaps nowhere was increased interaction with government more clear than in the petitions that flooded state legislatures during and after the war, as southerners and their northern neighbors attempted to use the sovereignty now invested within them to remake the world as they desired. In a sense, these petitions reflected a real democratization of politics during the period that Gordon Wood and others have outlined. The new state of South Carolina received roughly four hundred petitions from 1780 to 1790, a three-fold increase from the number received by the colonial assembly from 1760 to 1770.[4] North Carolinians similarly petitioned their state government at three times the rate they had before the war, and the demands contained within their petitions and memorials accounted for roughly a quarter of legislation, up from less than ten-percent before 1775.[5] Early National Virginians, who inherited the strongest southern state government from the colonial period, still doubled their rate of petitioning in the 1780s and 1790s, while Georgia's new legislature experienced more than a six-hundred-percent increase in memorials, petitions,

---

[4] Count based on a survey of the online catalog for the South Carolina State Department of Archives and History. For a northern example, see Christopher Pearl's fantastically detailed examination of the expanding local government of revolutionary Pennsylvania. Christopher Ryan Pearl, " 'For the Good Order of Government:' The American Revolution and the Creation of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1740-1790," Ph.D. Dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 2013.

[5] Gregory Scott King-Owen, "The People's Law: Popular Sovereignty and State Formation in North Carolina, 1776-1805," Ph.D. Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2011, 27-8; 49.

and presentments as the state's tiny population exploded with the opening of Indian lands after the war.[6]

Petitions contained innumerable complaints and desires, from tax relief to want of religious instruction, but the most notable thread running through post-war memorials by backcountry residents was their desire for expanded access to the market. Most obviously, this meant improvements in communication. Indeed, of 138 sampled petitions from North and South Carolina submitted between 1776 and 1789, 72 called for some form of action involving transportation, such as the clearing of a waterway, construction of a road, or licensing of a bridge or ferry. The second primary issue in post-war petitions was courts, as 64 of the sampled 138 contained either a call for more courts or protest against the suits and lawyers that accompanied them.[7]

There were obvious reasons why both poor and wealthy backcountry residents demanded better roads and waterways. Outside of the Virginia Piedmont, where slave culture had spread up inland rivers after the 1740s but where transportation could hardly be called "smooth," the southern backcountry was notoriously difficult to access. North Carolina's last Royal Governor Josiah Martin had described the colony's interior as "the most broken difficult and rough country I had ever seen," a problem exacerbated by the practice of boxing, firing, and felling trees to produce the turpentine and other naval

[6] For Georgia see Leslie Hall, *Land and Allegiance in Revolutionary Georgia* (Athens, GA University of Georgia Press, 2001), 211-2. Virginia number based on estimate from online catalog of the Library of Virginia.

[7] Survey of Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH; and Petitions, General and State Assembly Records, NSA.

stores that underwrote North Carolina's economy.[8] His counterpart James Wright in Georgia similarly reported to the Board of Trade in 1773 that his colony could not be traversed "more than a few miles from its rivers."[9] And after the war, South Carolina's William Drayton's tour of the state's backcountry was often frustrated by the "stony and broken roads" that delayed him on what seemed a daily basis.[10]

Difficulty of travel essentially barred most backcountry residents from participation in the world market. Indeed, again outside of the tobacco grown in the Virginia Piedmont, the only slave grown commodity that upcountry planters could consistently and profitably produce and market during the colonial era was indigo, which required a relatively substantial capital investment but when finished into small cakes of dye was of exceedingly low weight (a small wagon could carry 800 pounds or more of indigo even across bad roads, a small fortune).[11] Removal from the market, in turn, seriously depressed the value of land within the interior as slaves and commercial agriculture simply could not flourish, a problem that colonial speculators like George Washington and Henry Laurens had faced. Laurens, who partnered with John Lewis Gervais to purchase large parcels of land around Ninety-Six District in South Carolina

---

[8] Quoted in Christopher Crittenden, "Commerce in North Carolina, 1763-1789," Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1936, 22.

[9] James Wright, "Report of Sir James Wright on the Condition of the Province of Georgia, on 20th Sept. 1773," in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah, GA: 1873): 158-175, 162.

[10] Keith Krawyczynski, "William Drayton's Journal of a 1784 Tour of the South Carolina Backcountry," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 97 (Jul., 1996): 182-205, 194.

[11] See, among other places, John A. Hall, "Quieting the Storm The Establishment of Order in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina," Ph.D. Dissertation, Oxford University, 1989, 242.

during the 1760s, found that before the war the only buyers for broken land removed from roads and navigable rivers were religious sects who purposefully sought isolation. Yet even his attempt to sell his lands to Moravians in the 1760s fizzled when the Germans' initial surveyors found the paths to Laurens's 16,000 acres far too difficult even for them.[12]

If the desire of speculators and isolated residents for better navigation is understandable, less obvious is the reason why legislatures who largely ignored such requests before the Revolution became so suddenly active in remaking the countryside after the war. Residents of the backcountry had been asking for better means of transport from the area's first settlement in the 1740s. Aspiring planters in particular needed means of bringing grain, hemp, and other commodities to the markets in cities along the coast or rivers, even if the cost of bringing grain to the Atlantic market proved prohibitive for upcountry crops. Indeed, as Rachel Klein has shown, along with the desire for better order in the form of courthouses and jails—as we will see another request fulfilled after independence—the inattentiveness of the South Carolina legislature to calls for transportation improvements to the state's middle country was a primary impetus for the Regulation of the 1760s.[13]

---

[12] Henry Laurens to Richard Oswald, 7 July 1964, *HL*, 4: 331-2; Matthew A. Lockhart, " 'Under the Wings of Columbia:' John Lewis Gervais as Architect of South Carolina's 1786 Capital Relocation Legislation," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 104 (Jul., 2003): 176-197, 178-9.

[13] North Carolina's Regulation, as discussed in the introduction, was in some ways an opposite reaction to the encroachment of market culture. Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1990), chap. 2.

Earlier calls for more government had sparked armed conflict in both Carolinas, but after the Revolution, states became more active in developing the interior for two primary reasons. In part, states acted simply because they were the entity most able to do so. As Jackson Turner Main and others have shown, even if states emerged from the war heavily encumbered by debt, seven years of Revolution also considerably swelled the size of government. Indeed, bringing more citizens into the fold through the creation of new political and military offices was a primary means by which patriots gained support.[14] At the same time, the financial needs of waging a long and bloody struggle led state and local governments to expand their revenue sources by a large margin. It is one of the great ironies of the Revolution that although taxation may have been a leading cause for the break with Britain, newly minted American citizens found themselves taxed exponentially more heavily after the war was over.

During the colonial era royal governments tended to levy only a simple and regressive poll tax, with occasional luxury taxes like charges on carriages and additional levies during times of war, relying primarilyfor income on custom and excise charges and fees for land purchases. Although neither poll taxes nor tariffs disappeared during the war—in fact, both increased—the declining volume of American trade and the need to support troops while sustaining credit led politicians to find new items to tax everywhere and at a substantially higher rate. At the peak of Revolution Virginia tripled its property tax—which, since property now needed to be valued, led to a further proliferation of state officials in the form of tax collectors and assessors. At the same

[14] An argument borrowed from Jackson Turner Main, *The Social Structure of Revolutionary America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965).

time, the state raised imposts and taxed liquor and luxuries like billiard tables.[15] Counties and cities found new reasons to levy their own taxes as well. The council of Charleston, which had levied no city tax before the war, now charged its own fees (in addition to state fees) on liquor as well as goods brought into the city from the interior or the ocean, imposts that brought in more than three times the total revenue than that legislated by the entire colony before the war.[16]

The increase in taxation—and consequently revenue—gave states far more capital to improve the countryside. At the same time, the necessity of paying taxes in currency or specific, salable commodities drew countless numbers of men and women into the market who by choice or inability did not participate in commercial production before 1775. In other words, as states became more capable of starting improvement projects (even if they were, as we will see, often incapable of finishing them), men and women increasingly required market access to obtain the money necessary to provide the state with revenue, lest they risk the loss of their property to sheriffs all too eager to sell their land and homes. Citizens in Chowan County, South Carolina, for example, petitioned the state soon after the war "for the clearing of waterways, which at present cannot be passed but by a small raft" because the consequent lack of trade left residents "without money to pay the taxes which seem daily increasing, so our property is taken by the sheriff and sold

---

[15] Like every state, Virginia's means of taxation shifted dramatically throughout the course of the war as it juggled its need for revenue with its need to placate a restive population, in Virginia as elsewhere one thing remained consistent: whenever a new tax law was written it sought to substantially raise taxes one way or the other. For Virginia, see Robin Einhorn, *American Slavery, American Taxation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1-9; 44-9.

[16] Hall, "Quieting the Storm," 79-81.

at not a sixth of its value."[17] The grand jury of Augusta, Georgia, similarly called for the betterment of road to Savannah so that "People might not see Ruin at the high cost of transporting Goods … for sale."[18] Understandably, legislatures were sympathetic to easing the capacity of citizens to pay their dues, especially when efforts to retire state debt through collection of taxes in currency became an obsession for legislators after the war.

The second and more important reason that demands for better access to the interior met with warmer response after the war was that the Revolution tied the interests of substantially more households, and more substantial households, to the development of the backcountry. Even if some coastal elites begrudged the growing influence of the interior, the forces of the Revolution still drove financial interests of even older planting families inward. On the one hand, cut off from standing relations with English and Scottish merchant houses and removed from the British Empire's networks of trade, coastal cities like Charleston, Savannah, and Williamsburg suddenly depended heavily on large shipments of foodstuffs, building materials, and military stores like saltpeter from the southern interior.[19] Supporters of the Santee-Cooper Canal, whose shareholders consisted mostly of coastal luminaries like the Rutledge brothers, Ralph Izard, and

---

[17] Petition of the Residents of Chowan County, June 14, 1784, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[18] Presentments of the Grand Jury at Augusta, 1787, Grand Jury Presentments, General State Papers, GSA.

[19] A shift discussed more broadly in John J. McCusker and Russell Menard, *The Economy of British North America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 351-75.

William Moultrie,[20] advertised their project as "a saving to the upper country, of the wear and tear of 22 waggons, and the labour of 40 men, who may well remain at home and be beneficially employed." Yet they also claimed that their canal and similar improvements would allow "grain, hemp, flax, and other goods from the middle and upper country to be received by the wanting citizens of Charleston" at lesser cost, thereby benefitting the merchants cut off from or marginalized in the Atlantic trade.[21]

Along with requiring backcountry goods to feed and rebuild the South's swelling port cities, state legislators sponsored inland navigation because of their increasingly substantial financial interest in the rising value of backcountry land. Unsurprisingly, Americans who supported the patriot cause with their arms and voices also tended to do so with their wallets, and the generally wealthy men who served in state government were large holders of state debt.[22] Since land sales became a primary method of retiring state debt in the form of certificates and indents during and after the war, particularly in Georgia and the Carolinas—where states released millions of acres within their boundaries in addition to land in western territories—the Revolution accelerated coastal planters' long-standing habit of speculating in large backcountry tracts. In South Carolina, Charleston planter-politicians like the Pinckney cousins, the Rutledges, and

---

[20] "List of Members of the Santee-Cooper Canal Company," *Rules of the Company for Opening the Inland Navigation, Between the Santee and Cooper Canal, Agreed to on March the 23rd, 1786* (Charleston, SC: Bowel and Markland, 1786).

[21] "A Friend of Inland Navigation" [Edward Rutledge], "The Santee-Cooper Canal," *Charleston City Gazette and Advertiser*, March 6, 1796.

[22] Evidence of the overlap of legislators and debt holders for at least Georgia and South Carolina can be found in W. Robert Higgins, "South Carolina Revolutionary Debt and Its Holders, 1776-178," *South Carolina Historical Magazine,* 72 (Jan., 1971): 15-29; Alex M. Hitz, "Georgia Bounty Land Grants," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 38 (Dec., 1958): 337-48.

Ralph Izard used their position to gobble up backcountry land immediately after the war and consequently ardently supported internal navigation in the following decades.[23] In Virginia prominent politicians and Tidewater planters such as John F. Mercer and Theodrick Bland, each of whom served as a state delegate and in Congress, were likewise avid purchasers of soldiers' land and unimproved areas in the state's Southside.[24] In Georgia, perhaps as many as nine out of ten legislators held substantial claims (more than 1,000 acres) for land in the western and northern parts of the state, having either purchased them as warrants or through the state's notoriously corrupt practice of selling huge portions of land taken from recently dispossessed Indians.[25] Most famously, for instance, George Washington, among the most prolific of speculators before and after the Revolution, had been championing the opening of a canal system along the Potomac River since the 1750s.[26]

---

[23] Izard even dreamt of an "Izardtown" being built on some of the approximately 11,000 acres he purchased above the fall line. Ralph Izard to Charles C. Pinckney, 18 Jan 1795, Ralph Izard Papers, SCL; John and Edward Rutledge Papers, SCHS.

[24] Bland in particular saw better transportation as a means of relieving his frustration as he tried to sell land. Jacob Rubsamen to Theodrick Bland, 3 Aug, 1784, Bland Family Papers, VHS;

[25] Leslie Hall, *Land and Allegiance in Revolutionary Georgia*, 240-2; W. Robert Higgins, " A Financial History of the Revolution in South Carolina," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1970, 312-6. For the disputes over land that invariably arose as eastern speculators placed claims on often inhabited western land during and after the war, see for North Carolina and Georgia Jeffrey J. Crow, "Liberty Men and Loyalists: Disorder and Disaffection in the North Carolina Backcountry," and Edward J. Cashin, " 'But Brothers, It Is Our Land We Are Talking About": Winners and Losers in the Georgia Backcountry," both in Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate and Peter J Albert, eds., *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1985).

[26]

The coast's growing need for backcountry produce and the desire of eastern planters to see their investment of money and debt in western land helped to join the interests of traditional power brokers to those of ascendant backcountry merchant-planters, whose influence as we have seen increased by leaps and bounds during the war. The need to maintain support among backcountry residents led coastal elites to begrudgingly allow far greater participation in government by their western neighbors. In South Carolina, where the disparity was most extreme, the backcountry contained nearly three-quarters of the state's white population by 1775 yet held only three out of forty-eight seats in the colony's lower house and no seats on the Governor's Council in 1774. Their numbers expanded to eleven of the twenty-nine members sitting at the 1778 session of the state assembly and then to a majority in the 1782 Jacksonborough Assembly. Every other state followed suit to some degree, with more conservative Virginia allowing western representatives a quarter of the seats in their lower house to more radical Georgia's coastal elite ceding a substantial majority in their unicameral assembly.[27]

The backcountrymen who assumed political office during and after the war, nearly all of whom had served the United States in some capacity during the Revolution,

---

[27] Jerome J. Nadelhaft, *The Disorders of War: The Revolution in South Carolina*. (Orono, ME: University of Maine Press, 1981), 69-72. The argument that the Revolution led to an expansion of representation is inarguable and made many places, most notably Jackson Turner Main, "Government By the People: The American Revolution and the Democratization of the Legislatures," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 23 (June, 1969): 391-407; For South Carolina specifically see Robert Weir's classic article, "The Harmony We Are Famous For: An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 26 (Oct., 1969): 473-501; David Morton Knepper, "The Political Structure of Colonial South Carolina, 1745-1776," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1971, esp. "Conclusion."

speculated with even greater fervor in soldiers' land and so also stood to benefit from better navigation into the interior. More than half of South Carolina's major speculators came from the upcountry, for example, with revolutionary leaders like Thomas Sumter and the Hampton brothers foremost among them.[28] Georgia's most prolific speculators were similarly patriot profiteers, including James Gunn and James Jackson, and backcountry military men like our Benjamin Cleveland and William Lenoir acquired tens of thousands of acres through grants and soldiers' warrants in North Carolina.[29]

In addition to wanting to increase the value of their speculative land holdings as much as possible, these backcountry politicians also required better market access to make profitable use of their expanding investment in slaves. As we have seen, the Revolution greatly accelerated the spread of slaveholding into the interior, as plunderers and profiteers took their human prizes west alongside slaves transported by states to work in backcountry mines and forges. Because of the prestige and influence conveyed by wealth and because of southern states' typically high property requirements for office holding, those who increased their slave property during the war were overwhelmingly also those who represented the backcountry in state and national government. Of the more than 350 backcountrymen who served in South Carolina's legislature in the two decades after the Revolution, only 11 were non-slaveholders, even if more than half of

---

[28] Rachel Klein estimates that of South Carolinians who gained tracts of 2,000 or more acres during and after the war, 64 percent were from the interior. Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 179-80.

[29] Somewhat ironically, Jackson would make his later political name railing against other speculators in the Yazoo controversy of the 1790s. For Jackson, William Omer Foster, Sr., *James Jackson: Duelist and Militant Statesman, 1757-1806* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1960), 214; for Lenoir see Tax Receipt, 1784-1804, Lenoir Family Papers, SHC.

the state's large slaveholders in 1810 had arisen from humble roots.[30] Likewise, all but one member of Georgia's 1784 legislature held slaves, and only 17 nonslaveholders served in North Carolina's state assembly through the 1780s and 1790s.[31]

It is true, as Rachel Klein has argued, that a shared interest in slaveholding helped to bind the interests of lowcountry and backcountry politicians who had so frequently quarreled during the colonial era.[32] Yet backcountry planters, unlike their lowcountry brethren, also desperately required shortening the distance between interior and coast to extract more than marginal value from the blood and sweat of their bondsmen. As a result, backcountry ascendants were the ones who most frequently brought forth legislation calling improvement of navigation, and they were the ones who set about remaking the interior with or without state aid. As enslaved men and women moved into the upcountry through plunder and increasingly through purchase as the Atlantic Slave Trade reopened with a vengeance, slaveholding legislators and their peers in the interior employed a hugely varied set of uses for their enslaved laborers, in part to continue the work of opening the backcountry for the market, but also to avoid what one remarked as the "the Danger that inevitably results from the Idleness of these fellows."[33]

---

[30] Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 153; Mark David Kaplanoff, "Making the South Solid: Politics and the Structure of Society in South Carolina, 1790-1815," Ph.D. Dissertation, Cambridge University, 1979, 22-6.

[31] *RRG,* III, 512-4; John Maas, " 'A Complicated Scene of Difficulties:' The Revolutionary Settlement in North Carolina, 1776-1789," Ph.D. Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2007, 512.

[32] This is the primary argument of Klein's *Unification of a Slave State*, to which this chapter and this dissertation as a whole are deeply indebted.

[33] William Douglass to Francis Jerdone, 30 August 1782, Jerdone Family Papers, Swem.

Given the association of the southern upcountry with cotton monoculture in later years, the experimentation with different uses for newly acquired slave labor during the early years of the Republic is indeed startling. Cut off from British markets and supplanted by producers in the Caribbean and East Indies, planters in the middle country of Georgia and South Carolina abandoned indigo, their former staple, that they had sent in annual shipments of as much as 200,000 pounds before the war.[34] William Lenoir's brother Thomas, for example, who had risen from owning no slaves to twenty-three by 1801, tried to grow traditional backcountry crops like indigo and hemp but as the ranks of his slaves grew he also employed them in producing grain, peach brandy, mulberry trees, and flaxseed with middling success.[35] In his 1784 tour of the Carolina backcountry, William Drayton described similar crop diversification when observing a typical member of the rising backcountry planter class on the Saluda River near present day Greenville, SC. The man owned nine slaves, "recently acquired," with which he "plants 130 acres of corn, tobacco & European Grain. … This man, besides the Crop of his Field, makes his Family's & his Negroes' clothes with grown cotton & flax; the cloth is neat & dyed with his indigo."[36] Wade Hampton, ever an innovator, even tried growing sugar in the hard soil around present-day Columbia, an experiment that amounted to little but did prepare

[34] John Drayton, *A View of South-Carolina, as Respects her Natural and Civil Concerns* (Charleston: W. P. Young, 1802), 148-51; Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (New York: Peter Smith, 1941), II, 609-12.

[35] Thomas Lenoir to William Norwood, 26 Oct 1800, Lenoir Family Papers, SHC.

[36] William Drayton, "Tour of the South Carolina Backcountry," 198.

him for his later expansion into sugar plantations in the Louisiana Territory in the 1810s.[37]

In addition to trying sugar and other crops ranging from hemp to barley, like other ascendant backcountry planters Hampton also used his swelling labor force to construct private works in order to both stretch the market's reach and to find additional means of extracting value from otherwise idle slaves. Hampton put the nearly 200 enslaved men and women he had acquired by 1790 to work building a range of improvements, from a wharf at his plantation on the Congaree River for his private use to a series of toll ferries and bridges. Before his foray into cotton planting at the end of the decade, Hampton came to own at least two turnpikes and four toll bridges in the area around present-day Columbia, as well as another major toll bridge across the Savannah River his laborers built in partnership with those belonging to fellow patriot profiteer James Gunn.[38]

If Hampton represented the extreme end of experimentation with crops and various forms of construction and labor-saving machinery, he was also typical in eventually settling on tobacco production as the easiest way to extract profit from his slaves. By the end of the 1780s, he, most other slaveholders, and not a few nonslaveholders in the southern backcountry were growing varieties of tobacco, the great bulk of which further increased the need for transportation improvements. In part, the spread of tobacco culture resulted from the predominance of Virginia migrants in the movement of people to the south and west after the war. These migrants brought their

---

[37] Ronald E. Bridwell, "The South's Wealthiest Planter," 481.

[38] Ibid., 435-62; Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *A History of Transportation in the Eastern Cotton Belt to 1860* (reprint; New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 58-60.

experience with tobacco cultivation to fresh lands in northern Georgia and western North Carolina especially, which before long supplanted Virginia as the primary tobacco growing region in the United States.[39] Yet even more so, planters turned to tobacco because the slaves they now owned represented an annual fixed cost that had to recouped.

The turn of Hampton and others to tobacco was influenced, in part, by their coming to see—in a wartime speculator's words— "Tobacco, and Slavs[sic] the safest investment" as currency continued to depreciate and specie remained scarce after the conflict.[40] Yet post-war developments continued to encourage the spread of production that, as shown in chapter one, was directly encouraged by states after 1778. For one thing, Philadelphia financier Robert Morris successfully struck an agreement with the French Estates-General to sell more than 20,000 hogsheads annually through his contacts in Piedmont Virginia and backcountry North Carolina.[41] North Carolina also continued its wartime policy of purchasing tobacco at artificially inflated rates, giving £50 per hundredweight as opposed to post-war market price averages of £25-35, cementing the hold of tobacco on the region. And every state from Georgia to Maryland encouraged

---

[39] Joyce Chaplin, "Creating a Cotton South in Georgia and South Carolina, 1760-1810," *Journal of Southern History*, 57 (May, 1991): 171-200.

[40] Alexander Drummond to Col. Coles, c. 1782, Letters of the Carter Family of Redlands, 1771-1821, Carter-Smith Papers, UVA.

[41] Charles Rappleye, *Robert Morris: Financier of the American Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 209-13; Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture*, 604-7.

payment of taxes and land entry fees in tobacco as a means of acquiring commodities that could be sold for specie and help retire state debt.[42]

As a result, even if wartime disruptions precipitated a permanent loss of market share for older tobacco areas around the Chesapeake, the spread of production into new areas like the Southside allowed Virginia to match its prewar exports by 1785 while Georgia and the Carolinas exported exponentially more hogsheads than they ever had before.[43] Writing to a British correspondent in 1784, the Savannah merchant firm Clay, Telfair, & Co. proclaimed that while "Rice, Indico, used to be our Staples for European Remittances, Tobacco is now becoming equally so. Several thousand HH [hogsheads] will be made this year and the quality equal to James or York Rivers."[44] And indeed, Georgia's annual shipments of tobacco hit almost six million pounds by 1792 as compared to 170,000 pounds before the war.[45] Production in South Carolina's middle country similarly skyrocketed to the point that Wade Hampton and his brother Richard were sending 40,000 pounds of tobacco to Charleston by 1786, from where exports increased to nearly 10,000 hogsheads per year by 1800 from 636 in 1783.[46]

---

[42] Papers of the Tobacco Subcommittee, 1786-1787, Joint Standing Finance Committee, General and State Assembly Records, NSA; "Intelligence, Halifax," *North Carolina Gazette*, Feb 16, 1788.

[43] For the spread of market culture into the Southside, see Richard Beeman, *Evolution of the Southern Backcountry: A Case Study of Lunenburg County, Virginia, 1746-1832* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 163-7.

[44] Clay, Telfair & Co. to Thomas Hinde, 31 July 1784, Clay Telfair & Co. Letterbooks, GHS.

[45] Melvin Herndon, "Samuel Edward Butler of Virginia Goes to Georgia, 1784," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 52 (Jun. 1968): 115-31, 116.

[46] Richard Hampton Memorandum, 1786, John Chesnut Papers, SCL; Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture*, 607.

More than other agricultural commodities, including the cotton that would soon replace it, profitable tobacco production demanded expanded infrastructure. Even during the war, planters around Camden, South Carolina, who had begun to grow the plant in response to wartime stimuli were calling for "betterment of the Roads so that Tobo. can be brought to Chston."[47] The great difficulty of carrying 1,000 lb. hogsheads barrels many miles led to a flurry of such requests through the 1780s as petitioners in the Carolinas, Georgia, and remoter areas of Virginia linked the need for transport to their increasing dependence on tobacco. And at the same time they called for additional roads and better waterways, aspiring planters demanded the creation of inspection stations modeled on those in Virginia in order to "weed out the Trash," or poor quality tobacco, and consequently raise prices for the crop.[48] In response, Georgia and North and South Carolina opened more than four dozen inspection warehouses above the states' fall lines, while the new Virginia state government opened additional warehouses in the Piedmont and Southside. New inspection stations further encouraged production by reducing the distance required to bring tobacco to market and around remote warehouses tobacco boom towns appeared seemingly from nowhere. A visitor described one such town, Petersburg, Georgia, as a "handsome, well built town … which has risen out of the

[47] Petition of the Residents of Camden, 1781, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[48] Petition of the Citizens of Union, Spartanburg, Greenville, Chester, and York Counties, 1789, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

Woods in a few years as if by enchantment," much in the way tobacco production in the area had itself appeared from seemingly from nothing.[49]

As tobacco prices crashed during the Wars of the French Revolution in the 1790s, Petersburg and other tobacco towns quickly faded back into their surroundings. Yet combined with the other factors discussed above, the spread of tobacco helped to reshape the southern interior in the decades after the Revolution. In addition to new warehouses and inspection stations that gave birth to market centers like Petersburg, states north and south issued an astounding 326 charters to build roads and bridges, turnpikes and canals between 1775 and 1801, a total that dwarfed the number of such issuances during the entire colonial period and do not include other improvements, like the clearing of waterways and improvement of existing roads.[50] Virginia alone incorporated thirty-three turnpike companies between 1780 and 1819 to stretch the market's reach from the coast across the Piedmont and towards the Blue Ridge Mountains.[51] North Carolina's legislature spent the immediate post-war years passing acts to clear various rivers (four in 1784 alone) and commissioning canals to connect the branches of the Catawba River to inland waterways, canals that a later supporter suggested would produce "brilliant

---

[49] Nor was Petersburg an anomaly; at least six such towns rose and then fell with inspection stations in Georgia alone. Charles Colcock Jones, *The Dead Towns of Georgia* (Savannah, GA: Mohino News Steam Printing, 1878), 233-8, quote on 234.

[50] Curtis P. Nettels, *The Emergence of a National Economy: 1775-1815* (Armonk, NY M.E. Sharpe, 1962), 291.

[51] John J. Zaborney *Slaves for Hire: Renting Enslaved Laborers in Antebellum Virginia* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), 125; for improvements in early national Virginia see also A. Glenn Crothers, " 'The Projecting Spirit:' Social, Economic, and Cultural Change in Post-Revolutionary Northern Virginia, 1780-1805," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Florida, 1998. esp. 451-467.

advantages .. the liberal encouragement of agriculture and manufacture, and the promotion of industry, knowledge, and learning."[52]

South Carolina and Georgia's legislatures echoed these promises as they sought means of opening the interior with no less vigor. In his initial address to the South Carolina legislature in 1785, Governor William Moultrie asked the assembly to speed the opening of "inland navigation to facilitate the Conveying of our produce to Market, which is of great importance to the State, particularly in that Valuable but Bulky Article of Tobacco which is now of so much Consequence to our Trade, and by its Very great increase will in a few years be our first staple."[53] That year alone, the state heeded his call by incorporating two canal companies—the Santee-Cooper Canal Company and the Ashlee River Company—as well as two turnpike corporations and several companies for building bridges and clearing rivers. Georgia did not charter companies for the construction of canals, but its assembly passed more than two dozen acts ordering the clearing of roads and waterways by 1800 and did so with comparable optimism. Chartering a stock company to render the Savannah River navigable from Augusta to the tobacco town of Petersburg, GA, Georgia's legislature declared that easier passage of goods would "speed the Prosperity of this country ... and bring the interests of her inhabitants together."[54]

---

[52] Quote from *North Carolina Gazette,* 24 Sep 1791; Christopher Crittenden, "Inland Navigation in North Carolina," 153; for acts clearing waterways, CSR, XXIV, 747, 602, 961-2.

[53] Message from the Governor, 17 Feb 1785, *The State Records of South Carolina, Journals of the House of Representatives, 1785-1786*, ed. Lark Emerson Adams and Rosa Stoney Lumpkin (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1979), 97-8.

[54] Journal of the Assembly, June 14, 1789, House Papers, General Records, GSA.

Although states did not hire workers and engineers to build improvements themselves, they often provided substantial support for construction through tax exemptions or other financial incentives. The troubled history of the Santee-Cooper canal company is especially illustrative of the unprecedented steps that states were willing to take to encourage inland navigation, especially when those building improvements were also members of a state's expanding political elite.

Along with George Washington's equally grand and beleaguered Potomac Canal Company, the Santee-Cooper canal was to be the largest and deepest manmade waterway in the new Republic.[55] Henry Laurens and other Charlestonians had long desired to cut a channel across the twelve mile stretch between the tributaries of Charleston's Cooper River to the tributaries of the Santee, which meets with the Congaree River near Columbia, thereby linking South Carolina's great ports to the waterways of the backcountry.[56] Calls for connecting the two rivers were ignored or postponed through the 1760s but began in earnest almost as soon as the British evacuated Charleston in 1782. The Company For Opening the Inland Navigation Between the Santee and Cooper Rivers finally convened in March of 1786, and as said above contained many of Charleston's leading merchants and planters and several notable representatives of the backcountry like Wade Hampton and Thomas Sumter.[57] Initially, the canal was to be funded by contributions by the company's stockholders, whose twice annual contributions of £5

[55] For Washington's dream and the long and expensive history of the Potowmack Company, see among other sources Douglas R. Littlefield, "The Potomac Company: A Misadventure in Financing an Early American Internal Improvement Project," *Business History Review*, 58 (Winter, 1984): 562-585.

[56] F.A. Porcher, *The History of the Santee Canal* (Charleston, 1903), 5-7.

[57] *Rules for the Company Opening the Inland Navigation*, op. cit.

specie was thought to be enough to both purchase necessary land and to hire slaves, the price of whom had bottomed out by 1785 after having skyrocketed during the Revolution.[58]

Given the ease with which the Company's initial members believed the project could be completed (its designer, a Swedish engineer named John Christian Senf, thought it might take only two years), it was perhaps predictable the canal would be beset with difficulties from its inception. Actual construction was delayed six years as stockholders missed payments and lowcountry residents refused to sell land along the canal's projected path. Yet once laborers began the backbreaking work of digging the trench, the company's board found itself delayed and facing lawsuits from angry planters whose rice fields were being repeatedly flooded by overflow in the construction of canal locks.[59] Moreover, as enslaved laborers died under the strain of digging a thirty-five foot wide and twelve foot deep canal for twelve hours a day through swampland, neighboring slaveholders refused to hire out their hands until the company agreed to pay the exorbitant rate of £25 per season, further depleting the company's finances.[60]

By the time initial construction halted entirely in 1791, it had become clear that the project could not be completed without direct state intervention. The legislators who

---

[58] For slave prices in South Carolina, see Peter C. Mancall, et. al., "Slave Prices and the South Carolina Economy, 1722-1809," *The Journal of Economic History*, 61 (Sep., 2001): 616-639, Table 1.

[59] Douglas W. Bostic, *Sunken Plantations: The Santee Cooper Project* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2008), 12.

[60] For dimensions of the canal, Mabel L. Webber, ed., "Col. Senf's Account of the Santee Canal," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine,* 28 (Jan., 1927): 8-21. For deaths of slaves see, for instance, Col. Senf to William Moultrie, March 15, 1795, William Moultrie Papers, SCL. For rates paid, Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *A History of Transportation in the Eastern Cotton Belt,* 58.

had sunk considerable sums of money into the project were all too happy to oblige. First, South Carolina lent financial assistance through three separate lotteries in 1792, 1794, and 1795, putting up £25,000 in state money each time, with £9,000 of the proceeds going to benefit the canal.[61] Second, the state confiscated land from at least three poor white men whose lands lay along the path of the canal and compensated two additional planters for land taken in an early use of eminent domain in the Early Republic. Finally, given the difficulty of hiring adequate labor, the state gave the company permission to import three-hundred Africans for the express purpose of working on the canal despite the state having banned the importation of slaves in 1785.[62] Indeed, allowing duty free imports of African slaves in the midst of the slave trade ban was a primary means of remaking the southern countryside. In neighboring North Carolina, three merchants who invested their wartime profits in the Lake Company in the southeast of the state were allowed to privately commission a slave ship, the *Guineaman*, to purchase 80 slaves in Africa for the sole purpose of digging a six mile canal needed to drain a huge swath of swampland for rice cultivation. The slaves lived and worked for three years inside of a wooden cage, shoveling dirt between staves of wood, in order to make arable thousands of acres around Lake Phelps and establish the Collins family, Pettigrew family, and other

[61] See sample advertisement for a canal lottery in *Charleston City Gazette and Advertiser*, March 6, 1796.

[62] "An Ordinance to Empower the Company for Opening the Inland Navigation Between the Santee and Cooper Rivers, to Import into this State Three Hundred Negroes, for the Purposes Therein Mentioned," *The State Records of South Carolina, Journals of the House of Representatives, 1792-3*, 429.

leading families of antebellum North Carolina on land where no white person dared stay in 1775.[63]

Like the drainage of Lake Phelps, construction of the Santee-Cooper canal took years and ran massively over budget. When the canal finally opened in 1800, it had cost over $800,000 in public and private investment and the lives of dozens of black men and women. While its investors would never recoup their investment, the canal and more modest projects like improved river navigation did succeed in greatly speeding the transportation of backcountry goods to market. A Dumfries merchant estimated in 1803 that these improvements had halved the time it took a shipment of tobacco to reach Richmond from above the fall line, considerably reducing the cost of shipment.[64] Similarly, in his classic 1934 dissertation, Christopher Crittenden estimated that better roads and newly cleared waterways reduced the time and cost of bringing tobacco and other goods from the state's interior to its rapidly growing port towns like Wilmington by as much as fifty-percent.[65]

The pressure applied by states in the form of the taxes which demanded market participation, the closing distance between the backcountry and the ocean, and the expanding infrastructure of warehouses and inspection stations transformed older subsistence economies of largely small farms into a system of staple economies geared towards the production of a single crop through chattel labor. And, as in every market

---

[63] For the story of the lake company, see the Isaiah Collins Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC. Also, Pettigrew Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, NC. Also see Peter Wood, "Digging Black History," *Southern Exposure*, 11 (April, 1983).

[64] Diary, 1791-1804, Brevard Family Papers, SHC.

[65] Christopher Crittenden, "Commerce in North Carolina," 143.

economy, the shift towards staple production led rapidly to a rise in prices and a consolidation of landholding. For example, in his study of early national Lunenburg county, Richard Beeman calculated that in the two post-revolutionary decades the number of middling farmers owning between 200 and 500 acres dropped from 40% to 27% while the percentage of households owning land dropped from 80% to 65%.[66] Similar consolidation of land ownership occurred across the South, like in Orangeburg, South Carolina, where the number of farmers owning less than 500 acres dropped by more than half by 1800 while the number of large landowners owning 1,000 or more acres increased by a third.[67]

The decline of landownership that accompanied expanded market participation led both to an exodus of white men to fresh lands in the west and to a substantial increase in tenancy, which in turn further reduced opportunity and allowed for greater consolidation of wealth and power by now dominant planters. As William Lenoir's landholdings expanded in the 1780s through the early 1800s, for instance, so too did the number of tenants he employed constructing improvements like a gristmill and river ferry and growing tobacco, corn, and grain on his property. A typical tenancy agreement, an indenture signed between Lenoir and a former member of his militia company, William Combs, in 1782 allowed Combs the use of land, tools, seed and "one Negro Wench" in exchange for a full 75% of Combs's crop.[68] By 1790, Lenoir had fifteen tenants in addition to his twenty-two slaves working his lands, a number that increased to twenty-

[66] Richard Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry*, 172-3.

[67] Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 413.

[68] Indenture between William Lenoir and William Combs, 1782, Lenoir Family Papers, SHC.

three and twenty-six respectively by 1801. Tenants like Combs had little recourse against landlords, who frequently distrained goods and took a share of crops above what was agreed upon.[69] Combined with high rent like that charged by Lenoir, the lack of recourse for tenants further shrunk opportunity for poor southerners. As a number of historians have argued, the post-revolutionary years saw the rise of lifelong tenancy, as men like Combs who had missed the revolutionary moment for advancement and were unable or unwilling to move west remained mired at the bottom of society.[70] Combs still worked Lenoir's lands at least as late as 1798 and probably until the whole of his labor had been extracted and fully poured into his landlord's growing wealth and influence.[71]

Just as the spread of the market and the consolidation of property pushed poorer southerners in the former colonies into an increasingly permanent underclass, so do did the rising prices of land barred even wealthy newcomers from entering the planting ranks as many had during the war. If a planter like Lenoir or Hampton was able to acquire land cheaply during the flood of warrants and certificates in the wartime and post-war years, they could augment their holdings by selling their holdings at substantial profit as the land bubble grew by the late 1780s. Hampton was rumored to have made more than ten thousand dollars after the capital of South Carolina moved to Columbia, in part through

---

[69] In 1782 a tenant accused Battaile Muse of stealing 1,500 pounds of grain and two horses but his suit was either ignored or dismissed in court. Stephen Donaldson to Battaile Muse, 4 Dec 1782, Battaile Muse Papers, VHS.

[70] See especially Willard F. Bliss, "The Rise of Tenancy in Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 58 (Oct., 1950): 427-41; Thomas J. Humphrey, "Conflicting Independence: Land Tenancy and the American Revolution," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 28 (Summer, 2008): 159-82, esp. 179-82.

[71] Combs's name appears in Lenoir's account of corn received from tenants. Corn Accounts, 1785-1801, Lenoir Family Papers, SHC.

his machinations.[72] Yet those who attempted to emulate wartime speculators within the boundaries of the former colonies were almost invariably led towards ruin if they attempted entrance into the land market by the mid-1790s. Most famously, Robert Morris died in a Philadelphia debtor's prison after overextending his credit and holding onto his wartime land purchases for too long. Other newcomers, like the brothers Timothy and Samuel Green, similarly found that by the end of the 1780s the window for opportunity had largely been shut. The Greens moved from Worcester, Massachusetts with substantial capital in the hopes of making a quick fortune by purchasing backcountry land in 1792. Yet by 1794, the Greens found that cheap soldiers' warrants "had been principally bought up, there seems very little opportunity for Speculating in any thing … I fear we are too late."[73] And indeed, after they had been ruined within two years by overpaying for land, Samuel wrote to his brother in 1796 that they were so short of cash that he saw "no prospect of every seeing N England again." Samuel, like many others who arrived as the revolutionary moment was closing, could only look at the fortunes enjoyed by men like Hampton, despair, and "curse the hour I became a Speculator."[74]

The shortened distance between the interior and the coast allowed by better roads and waterways made it possible for ascendant planters to expand their landholdings and transform the southern backcountry more fully into a slave-based staple economy. Yet

[72] Matthew A. Lockhart, " 'Under the Wings of Columbia.' "

[73] Samuel Green to Timothy Green, 29 November 1794, Samuel Green Papers, SLC.

[74] Samuel Green to Timothy Green, 14 April 1796, Samuel Green Papers, SLC.

the expanding market required more than just access; it also needed a population disciplined to the demands of an increasingly commercial, cash-based economy. Just as backcountry residents petitioned state legislators to request government aid for inland navigation, they repeatedly demanded easier access to the law through an expansion of the district and county court system that had heavily favored coastal interests during the colonial era. Indeed, requests for access to coastal markets and to courts were often inseparable in the memorials that flooded state houses during and after the Revolution. A typical petition like one submitted by residents of midland Anson County, North Carolina, in 1777 complained of the "Great Hardships and disadvantages in Crossing the many Bad Water courses and the great distance of Travelling to attend the County Courts by those living in Remote parts of the Country."[75]

Calls for greater local government only increased as post-war shortages of money and increasingly heavy tax burdens dragged backcountry residents into the market through debt suits and other legal measures. Poorer white residents like the Anson County petitioners demanded shorter distances to travel as actions were brought against them, while the backcountry merchants and planters who increasingly transitioned into post-war creditors needed speedier means of collecting defaulted loans.[76] At the same time, much like the Regulators of the 1760s, those who increasingly invested their capital into slaves and property within the backcountry desired far greater government

---

[75] Petition of the Inhabitants of Anson County, April, 1777, General State and Assembly Papers, NSA.

[76] Indeed, Jackson Turner Main has called the toxic combination of increased debt and shortage of money the "problem which affected every aspect of life, every economic question, and every political question." Jackson Turner Main, "Sections and Politics in Virginia, 1781-1789," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 12 (1955): 95-112, 98.

intervention to put down the communities of maroons and bandits who continued to infest large swaths of the southern interior after the war. Aedaenus Burke claimed that "robbers and thieves" had put an end to trade around Camden, SC, for instance, and Joseph Clay wrote to a correspondent in 1787 that merchants were wary of shipping goods from Augusta to Savannah by road for risk that their goods would be stolen by "Highwaymen."[77] Given the propensity of black men and women especially to escape into the still sparsely inhabited backcountry landscape, aspiring planters needed the insurance that came with jails and patrols before they could fully transition into slave-based commercial agriculture.

As a result of these pleas from both the poorer and wealthier members of the backcountry, the reach of government rapidly intruded into the southern interior as towns, counties, and districts proliferated immediately after the war. South Carolina's 1785 court act replaced the state's six district courts with courts in thirty-four revised counties.[78] In the 1780s Virginia divided existing counties like Tazewell, splitting its one judicial district into eight. In 1785 the state also passed a district court bill similar if more modest to that passed by South Carolina, creating new counties and expanding the jurisdiction of county courts over debt cases and punishment on civil matters.[79] Two

[77] For Burke, Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 116; for Clay, Joseph Clay to John Oulderman, 22 March 1787, Joseph Clay Letterbooks, vol. 5, GHS.

[78] Laura Edwards, *The People and their Peace: Legal Culture and the Transformation of Inequality in the Post-Revolutionary South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 48.

[79] Maxwell Bloomfield, *American Lawyers in a Changing Society, 1776-1876* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 18. For division of counties in the west and south of the state, W.C. Pendleton, *History of Tazewell County and Southwest Virginia* (Tazewell, VA: W.C. Hill Printing Company, 1920), 386-92.

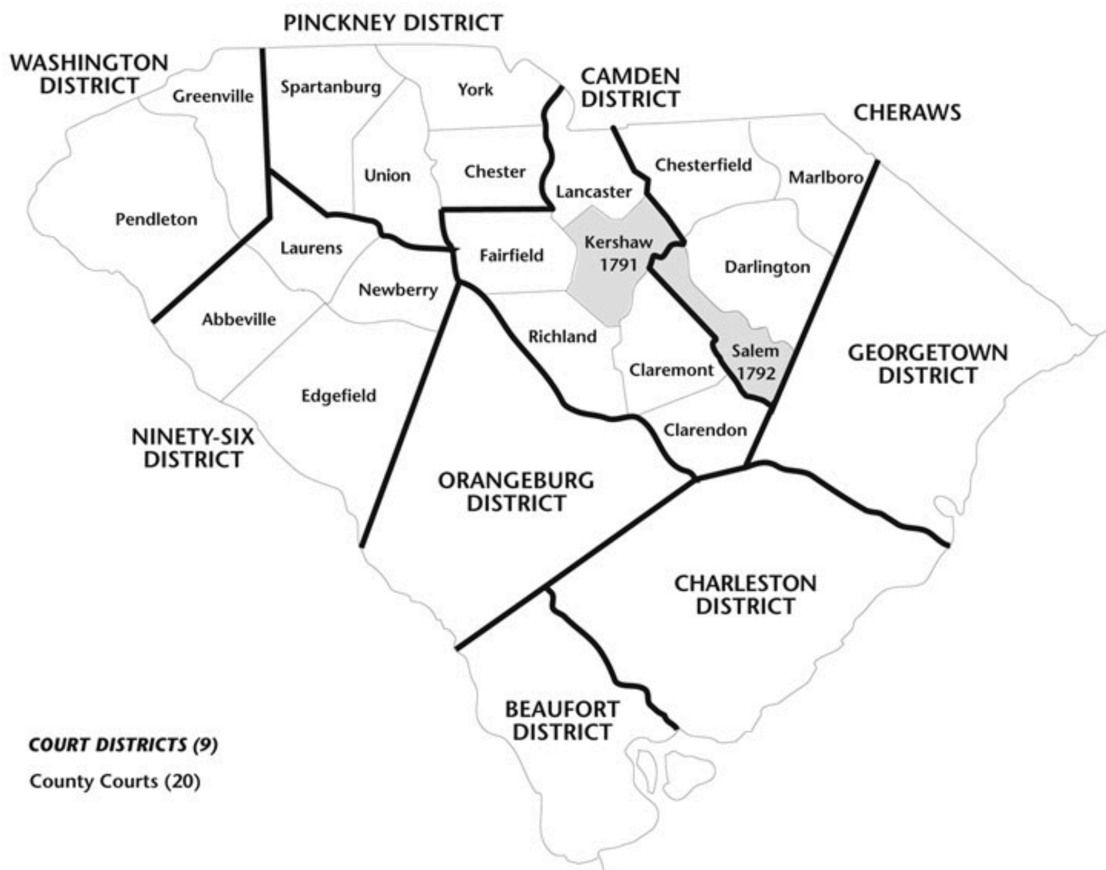
years later, North Carolina replaced its eight district courts with superior courts in each of its growing number of counties while expanding the jurisdiction of those courts over criminal matters and civil cases up to £20.[80] And in 1789 Georgia followed suit by creating fourteen new counties, each with a court and three magistrates who decided suits up to £50 as well as all criminal cases short of those that carried punishment of death or dismemberment.[81]

Visually, just a simple glance at the county maps of North and South Carolina that follow, which show county formation before and in the decade after the war, gives a sense of the increased contact that all southerners had with justices, magistrates, and other officials as compared to the colonial years.

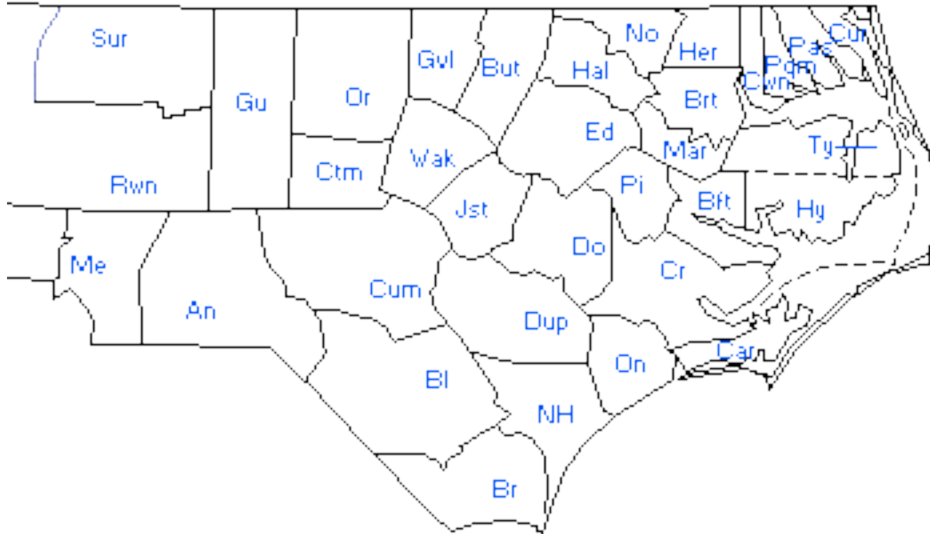
[80] Laura Edwards, *People and their Peace*, 49.

[81] T.R.R. Cobb, ed., *A Digest of the Laws of Georgia: In Force Prior to 1851; with Explanatory Notes and References* (Athens, GA: Christy, Kelsa, and Burke, 1851), I, 382.

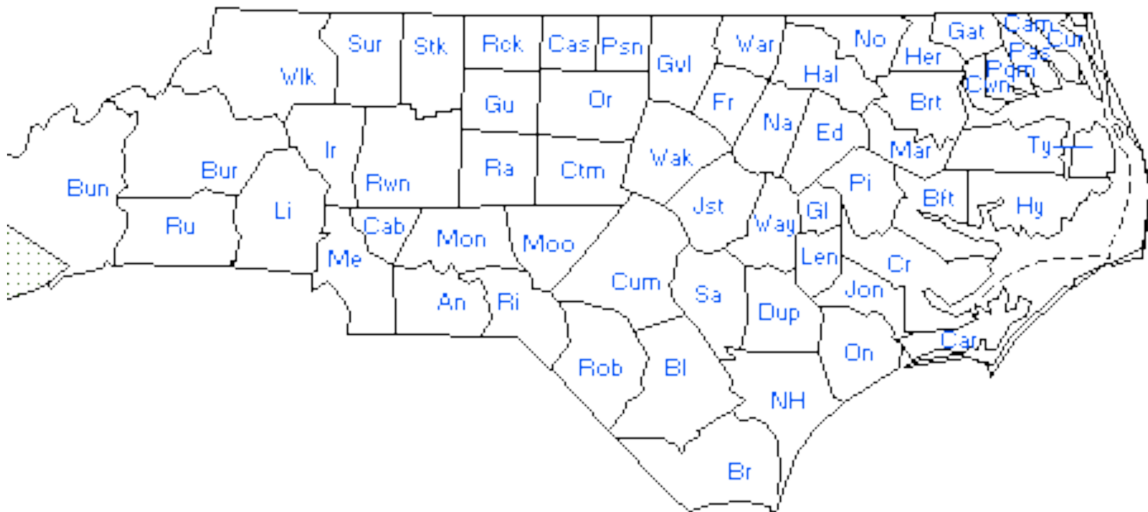
South Carolina Court Districts, 1774. Courtesy South Carolina State Archives Online.



South Carolina Court and County Districts, 1790. Courtesy South Carolina State Archives Online.



North Carolina Counties, 1774. Courtesy county formation maps, ancestry.com.



North Carolina Counties, 1796. Courtesy county formation maps, ancestry.com.

New counties and dozens of additional courts did ease the hardship of debtors who found themselves sued by a litany of creditors and by states seeking unpaid taxes. Yet, like rising land prices and expanding waterways, they also served to consolidate power in the hands of the wealthiest residents and to bring the countryside within the purview of the market. Most obviously, ascendant backcountry planters who pushed

hardest for new judicial districts did so in large part for greater control over local affairs. It is not surprising, in other words, that 1780s legislation should expand the power and number of county courts, "of whose judges the majority of the Assembly is composed," as Thomas Burke of North Carolina complained in 1783.[82] Like the ascendant planter-politicians who formed them, most of the justices in new counties had little prior political experience but had served in the Revolution and were among the largest landholders in their respective areas. In six North Carolina counties, for instance, 82 of the 109 justices of the peace who served from 1780 to 1800 had never held office before, but of those more than half owned ten or more slaves and nearly all had fought in the Revolution.[83] William Lenoir and Benjamin Cleveland took their position as Justices of the Peace in backcountry North Carolina immediately after the state expanded its system of courts and counties and served through the 1790s. And, of course, Wade Hampton solidified his expansive influence by serving as both sheriff and justice of the peace for Camden County for a decade after taking office in 1791.[84] At the same time as giving leading men greater control over the affairs of their neighbors, the redistricting of counties and the placing of courthouses was done in such a way that, as Rockingham, NC petitioners complained, the general population could not "prevent them [magistrates] from choosing

---

[82] Thomas Burke to Mr. Williams, 20 May 1783, Thomas Burke Papers, SHC.

[83] Sheldon Fred Koesy, "Continuity and Change in North Carolina, 1775-1789," Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1963, 88. Even in older planting areas like Virginia's Northern Neck, justices of the peace uniformly gained their influential positions through revolutionary war service. Albert H. Tillson, Jr., *Accommodating Revolution: Virginia's Northern Neck in an Era of Transformation, 1760-1810* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 411.

[84] For Hampton, Bridwell, "The South's Wealthiest Planter," 241

that place, whereby, a single individual might have all the advantages and the people none, which is the case in this County."[85]

With new counties and courts came additional companies of militia and slave patrols and closer observance of the stringent racial codes and regulations that restricted black peoples' movement after the war. New courts meant stocks and whipping posts as well if backcountry residents white or black decided to disrupt the working of the market through theft or destruction of property. And, of course, more courts meant more frequent debt suits and increased attention to the maintenance of roads and waterways that brought with them rising land prices and commercial agriculture. In short, the expansion of state power through the proliferation of judicial districts and officials forced a far greater number of southerners into the market while greatly undermining their capacity to resist its encroachment. One traveler in the South Carolina backcountry remarked that since the passage of the state's court act "lawyers have flocked to all parts of the country … and lawsuits have multiplied beyond all former knowledge."[86] Petitioners in the county of Orangeburg summed up the difference between economic matters in the pre- and post-revolutionary years in 1788 when they complained that "Those petty quarrels and trifling disputes which were heretofore settled by a reference to friends or subsided of themselves when men had time to cool and reflect are now

[85] Petition of the Residents of Rockingham County, 1794, Petitions, General and State Assembly Records, NSA.

[86] Edward Oliphant, *The History of North America and its United States, Including Also a Distinct History of Each Individual State …* (Edinburgh: J. Johnstone, 1800), 373.

constantly brought into court."[87] And, in these increasingly local courts, cases like the debt suits that represented a substantial portion of business were adjudicated by the men who had emerged from the Revolution as the region's primary creditors.[88]

In addition to controlling debt suits and the laying out of roads and waterways to their advantage, the proliferation of counties allowed leading men to further consolidate wealth and power through the sheriff sales that became the most frequent target of ire from poorer residents. Inhabitants of Winton County, SC, for instance, complained in 1788 that as a result of the increased number of debt suits and the "lack of a circulating medium or Specie," poorer residents of the county "cannot possibly acquire either by the produce of our Infant Farms, which have been just immurging [sic] from the Ruins & Devestation of the late war, sufficient money to pay our taxes and discharge our debts, whereby the Debtor loses his all to the benefit of the Creditor."[89] And indeed, the distressed estate sales that followed debt suits or unpaid taxes—presided over, of course, by local magistrates or sheriffs—provided a further means of accumulating wealth for those already at society's pinnacle. Even though officials were by law not allowed to purchase property at sales they oversaw, that rarely stopped them from buying up neighbors land and goods through third parties, like four slaves and a two wagons that

[87] Petition of the Residents of Orangeburg County, 1788, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH.

[88] In Fairfax County, Virginia, for instance, the percentage of suits concerning debt increased to 56% after the Revolution as compared to only 17% before. Jason M. Barrett, "The Market's Virtue: Law and Political Economy in Jeffersonian Virginia: Fairfax, Loudon, and Prince William Counties," Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1996.

[89] Petition of a Number of Inhabitants of Winton County, 20 October 1788, Petitions, Legislative Papers, SCDAH. Roughly a dozen similar petitions were submitted to the state's legislature in 1788 alone.

Hampton bought soon after his appointment as Camden sheriff in 1791 or Lenoir's purchase of a neighbor's tools and home in 1788.[90]

Given their association with debt suits and subsequent ruin, it is not surprising that poorer citizens often resisted the operation of courts and the market in the debt-ridden years of the post-war period. When John F. Grimke attempted to open a session of the Camden district court in 1785, for instance, "the Malcontents" in the county surrounded him and "made me a Prisoner in the Court House," refusing to allow him to continue his business and, eventually, to flee the town.[91] Nor were the Camden rioters alone—that same year the *South Carolina Gazette* reported that mobs had shut "every court in this state outside of Charleston."[92] Similar actions closed county courts in at least four counties in North Carolina and in Augusta, GA during the 1780s and as late as 1791 backcountry residents like those in Winton County, SC, were breaking into courthouses and setting them afire."[93]

In an effort to assuage the anger of backcountry residents, southern states did pass debtor legislation, yet even these actions disproportionately advantaged those who had accumulated wealth and power during the war. In response to the riot at Camden and elsewhere in South Carolina, for instance, the state emitted a marginal amount of currency and passed the so called "Pine-Barren Act" in 1785, which forced creditors to

---

[90] For Lenoir, Receipts, 1786-1791, Lenoir Family Papers, SHC; for Hampton, Bridwell, "South's Wealthiest Planter," 241.

[91] "John F. Grimke's Eyewitness Account of the Camden Court Riot, 1785," ed. Robert A. Becker, *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 83 (Jul., 1982): 209-13, 211.

[92] *State Gazette of South Carolina* (Charleston, SC), 6 Oct 1785.

[93] For 1791 Winton Court Riot, Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 136.

accept devalued pineland as payment for debts. Although some poorer residents no doubt found relief under the act, the greatest beneficiaries were those who had accumulated large amounts of soldiers' land, as the law allowed them a premium means of disposing land that would otherwise be worthless.[94] Similarly, Virginia's courts and legislature stood by the state's 1777 Sequestration Act into the 1790s, which forgave British debt to those who had paid currency into its treasury during the Revolution—again, favoring those who acquired wartime state debt.[95]

To those who had failed to accumulate the various forms of capital that circulated during the Revolution, on the other hand, these and other forms of post-war debt legislation did little, and the region's poor were faced with the stark choice to either move west or face the suits and stocks that appeared with each new county court. In place of those white southerners who moved west, enslaved men and women marched into the southern backcountry in increasing numbers, generating enormous wealth and watering with their sweat and blood the land now opened to commercial agriculture. Within fifteen years of the start of the War for Independence, more than two-thirds of Virginia's slaves lived in the state's Piedmont and less than half in its Tidewater, while throughout the state the increased hiring of slave labor had given a majority of the state's white

---

[94] Robert A. Becker, "Salus Populi Suprema Lex: Public Peace and South Carolina Debtor Relief Laws, 1783-1789," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 80 (Jan., 1979): 65-75.

[95] Eventually, the state would accede to the collection of debts, with disastrous results given the indebtedness of Virginia's planter class. Charles F. Hobson, "Recovery of British Debts in the Federal Circuit Court of Virginia, 1790 to 1797," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 92 (Apr., 1984): 176-200. For the effects of debt more generally on the decline of Virginia's gentry, see Emory Evans, *A Topping People*, and especially Herbert E. Sloan, *Principle and Interest: Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Debt* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2001).

citizens a direct stake in the slave system.[96] By 1790, two years before Eli Whitney invented his gin on a plantation that had (not coincidentally) been confiscated from Georgia's royal governor James Wright, more than half of the state's slaves lived within the interior, up from less than a third before 1775.[97] And before Wade Hampton ushered in the cotton era by turning a $100,000 profit on his 1799 harvest, 50,000 more enslaved men and women lived above South Carolina's fall line than had a generation before.[98] In other words, with the expansion of the market came the shrinking of opportunity for advancement in the southeastern states. By the close of the slave trade in 1808, the cotton baronies of the Old South had been founded, the ownership of the great rice fields had once more been consolidated, and the domestic slave trade begun in earnest, the trails cut by Chesapeake slaves wrapping south and west like ribbons, tying the fractured societies of the South more tightly to one another and to an institution they only now could begin to see as peculiar. The revolutionary South had ended.

---

[96] For Piedmont figure, Philip D. Morgan and Michael L. Nicholls, "Slaves in Piedmont Virginia, 1720-1790," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 46 (Apr., 1989): 211-51. For the increased involvement of Virginia's white population in slavery through hiring out, Richard S. Dunn, "Black Society in the Chesapeake, 1776-1810," in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution* (Reprint; Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986): 49-82.

[97] Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 110, 214.

[98] Philip Morgan, "Black Society in the Lowcountry, 1760-1810," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution:* 83-142.

Coda

In 1876, exactly one hundred years after Jefferson wrote that all men are created equal, Wade Hampton III rode a campaign of terror against freedmen and freedwomen to election as governor of South Carolina.[99] It is fitting, in a way, that the final gasp of the slaveholding South should culminate in the election of one of the original Wade Hampton's descendents, and that his elevation should be premised on violence similar to that which deferred freedom for millions after the first American Revolution. The South Carolina of Wade Hampton III was not his grandfather's South Carolina, of course. By the Civil War the United States produced more than two billion pounds of cotton annually, a far cry from the six million pounds grown in 1799, the year the first Wade Hampton helped to usher in the cotton boom.[100] A southern upcountry overwhelmingly white and fractured in 1776 had given way to cotton monoculture that fueled the rise of modern capitalism in the northern states and in Europe, and the slave kingdom stretched thousands of miles beyond the western boundaries of the original thirteen colonies.

Yet as this dissertation has tried to show, the South that seceded from the Union in 1860 was a direct legacy of the American Revolution and of the changes wrought by Wade Hampton and others like him, and by the millions of black Americans they and their descendants enslaved. There is a tendency among scholars to treat the expansion of and retrenchment of slavery during the early nineteenth-century as inevitable, pushed

---

[99] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 572-90; Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Giroux, & Strauss, 2007).

[100] Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014), 102, 106.

forward by the need for fresh lands to grow the cotton necessary to feed the hungry maw of the industrial revolution.

Would the southern United States have turned to cotton and the expansion of slavery had the colonies remained with Britain? Almost certainly – slavery was nowhere more secure than with the commercially savvy planters of the southeastern coast in 1760. But the United States that did break from Britain, and the American slavery that developed in the antebellum period, bore the weight of the Revolution. The experience of this country's struggle for independence produced the men and women who began America's march towards the Pacific and economic expansion in the early nineteenth-century. They, like their children and like us today, found in the ambivalence and irony of the Revolution justification and meaning for the America they sought to create precisely because the true meaning was indecipherable. And they, like their descendants, struggled with the central contradiction bequeathed by the Revolution—that of freedom's inseparability from slavery, of what Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence and of who Jefferson owned at Monticello— a contradiction that we still carry in our prisons, our segregated cities, and our foreign wars.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscript Sources Cited

William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, NC

Robert Carter Letterbooks
Clark Family Papers
John Hook Papers
Battaile Muse Papers
Edward Telfair Papers
William Augustine Washington Papers

Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA

Joseph Vallence Bevan Papers
Joseph Clay Letterbooks
Clay, Telfair, & Co. Letterbooks
Samuel Elbert Papers
Nathanael Greene Letters
John Habersham Papers
Joseph Habersham Papers
John Houston Papers
Port of Savannah Records
Richard Leake Plantation Journal
James Stalling Letter
Samuel Stiles Accounts
Eli Whitney Manuscripts

Huntington Library, Pasadena, CA

Brock Collection
Benjamin Harrison Papers
Francis Marion Orderly Books
Orderly Book of Gen. Anthony Wayne
Robert Pleasants Papers

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Robert Carter Manuscripts
Wade Hampton Papers

Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA

Free Negro and Slave Records, 1784-1867

William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

African-American Collection
Charles Goore Letterbook
William Knox Papers
Charles Lachlin Memoir
Leckie Family Papers
James Moncrieff Papers
Henry Strachey Papers
Charles Winstone Letter Book
George Wray Papers

The National Archives, Kew, UK

Cornwallis Papers
Papers of the Loyalist Claims Commission

New York Historical Society, New York, NY

Major John Berrien Papers
Alexander Leslie Letterbooks
Joseph Reed Papers

New York Public Library, New York, NY

Guy Carleton Papers
Francis Marion Papers

North Carolina Department of History and Archives, Raleigh, NC.

County Court Records
County Census and Tax Records
General and State Assembly Records
    House Bills
    Joint Select Committee Reports and Papers
    Papers of the Joint Standing Committee on Finance
    Treasurer's and Comptroller's Papers
Richard Cogdell Papers
Isaiah Collins Papers
Pettigrew Family Papers

State Archives of Georgia, Morrow, GA

General State Records
- Inestate Records
- Manumission Entries
- Governor's Papers
- Tax Papers and Treasurer's Records

South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, SC

Legislative Papers
- Forfeited Estate Papers
- Grand Jury Presentments
- Petitions
- Treasurer's Papers

Records of the Board of Police

South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC.

R.W. Allston Papers
Baker-Grimke Collection
Ball Family Papers
Thomas Bee Papers
John Chesnut Papers
Timothy Ford Papers
Gaillaird Collection
John F. Grimke Papers
Reverend Jenkins Memorandum Book
John Laurens Papers
Manigault Family Papers
John Martin Papers
Charles Pinckney Papers
Charles Cotesworth Pinckney Papers
Joel R. Pointsett Papers
Papers of the South Carolina Commision for the High Road, St. John's-Berkeley Parish
Vanderhorst Family Papers

South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC

Ebenezer Appleton Papers
William Ancrum Letterbooks
Aedanus Burke Papers
Burke and Grimke Papers

Pierce Butler Papers
John Ewing Calhoun Papers
Margaret Colleton Papers
Henry William DeSaussure Papers
John Lewis Gervais Papers
Samuel Green Papers
Hampton Family Papers
William Hill Papers
Ralph Izard Papers
Isaac King Letterbooks
John C. Meleney Research Files
Andrew Pickens Papers
Philip Porcher Account Book
Edward Rutledge Papers
Taylor Family Papers
George Turner Papers
Williams-Chesnut-Manning Papers

Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC

Alexander Brevard Papers
Joseph Brevard Papers
Thomas Burke Papers
Cameron Family Papers
Cleveland Family Papers
Edward Dromgooel Papers
Lenoir Family Papers
Edmund Pendleton Letters
Person Family Papers
Pettigrew Family Papers
Piney Creek Monthly Meeting Papers
Josiah Smith Letterbooks

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

Morris Family Papers
Person Family Papers
Joseph Watkins Papers

Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA

Adams Family Papers
Bland Family Papers
Robert Carter Papers

Robert Carter Family and Related Papers
Carter-Smith Papers
Richard Corbin Papers
Mercer Family Papers
Morris Family Papers
Philip Turpin Papers

Swem Memorial Library, William & Mary College, Williamsburg, VA

Patrick Henry Papers
Jerdone Family Papers
Leven Powell Papers

Newspapers Cited

Alexandria Advertiser (Alexandria, VA).
Augusta Gazette (Augusta, GA).
Baltimore Republican (Baltimore, MD).
Charleston Evening Gazette (Charleston, SC).
Columbian Herald (Charleston, SC).
Federal Gazette and Baltimore Advertiser (Baltimore, MD).
Georgia Gazette and Advertiser (Savannah, GA).
Maryland Gazette (Baltimore, MA).
Royal Gazette (Charleston, SC).
State Gazette of South Carolina, Charleston, SC.
Virginia Gazette, Williamsburg, VA.
Virginia Herald and Fredericksburg Advertiser (Fredericksburg, VA).

Printed Primary Sources Cited

Asbury, Francis. *The Journal of the Reverend Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Epicopal Church, from August 7, 1771 to December 7, 1815*. 2 vols. New York: N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821.

Bay, Elihu. *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Superior Court of Law in the State of South Carolina, since the Revolution*. Charleston, 1788.

Benezet, Anthony. *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her colonies, in Short representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominion*. Philadelphia: Henry Miller, 1766.

Bruns, Roger, ed. *Am I Not a Man and a Brother: The Antislavery Crusade in Revolutionary America, 1688-1788*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1977.

Butler, Pierce. *The Letters of Pierce Butler, 1790-1794: Nation Building and Enterprise in the New American Republic*. Terry Lipscomb, ed. Columbia, SC: 2007.

Candler, Allan D. ed. *The Revolutionary Records of the State of Georgia*. 3 Vols. Atlanta, GA: The Franklin-Turner Company, 1908-10.

Caretta, Vincent, ed. *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2003.

Catterall, Helen Tunnicliff, ed. *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*. 8 vols. Reprint; New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968.

Chesney, Alexander. "The Journal of Alexander Chesney." E. Alfred Jones, ed.*The Ohio State University Bulletin,* vol. 26, 4 (October, 1921): 1-28.
Cobb, T.R.R. ed. *A Digest of the Laws of Georgia: In Force Prior to 1851; with Explanatory Notes and References*. Athens, GA: Christy, Kelsa, and Burke, 1851.

Coke, Thomas. *Extracts of the Journals of the Rev. Dr. Coke's Three Visits to America*. London, 1790.

Drayton, John. *A View of South-Carolina, as Respects her Natural and Civil Concerns*. Charleston: W. P. Young, 1802

Ewald, Johann. *Diary of the American War: a Hessian Journal*, trans. Joseph P. Tustin. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979.

Ford, Worthing Chancey and Roscoe R. Hill, eds. *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*. 34 vols. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904-1918.

Fries, David Adeleide L., et. al., eds. *Records of the Moravians of North Carolina*. 13 Volumes. Raleigh, NC: State Department of History and Archives, 1968-2006.

Frost, J. William, ed. *The Quaker Origins of Antislavery*. Norwood, PA: Norwood Editions, 1980.

Gibbes, Robert Wilson, ed. *Documentary History of the American Revolution: Consisting of Letters and Papers Relating to the contest for Liberty, Chiefly in South Carolina, from Originals in Possession of the Editor, and other Sources, 1776-1782*. 3 vols. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1854-7.

Guild, Elaine Purcell, ed. *Black Laws of Virginia: A Summary of the Legislative Acts of Virginia Concerning Negroes From the Earliest Times to the Present*. Fauquier, VA: Afro-American Historical Association, 1996.

Gray, Robert. "Colonel Robert Gray's Observations on the War in Carolina, 1782." *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, XI, 3 (July 1910): 139-51.

Greene, Nathanael. *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*. Dennis M. Conrad, et. al., eds. 13 vols. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1976-2005.

Grimke, John Faucheraud. "John F. Grimke's Eyewitness Account of the Camden Court Riot, 1785." Ed. Robert A. Becker. *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 83 (Jul., 1982): 209-13.

______. *Public Laws of South Carolina to 1790* (Philadelphia, PA, 1790).

Harris, Thomas and John McHenry, eds. *Maryland Reports, Being a Series of the Most Important Law Cases, argued and Determined in the Provincial Court and Court of Appeals in the State of Maryland*. New York: Isaac Riley, 1809.

Hawkins, Benjamin. "Sketch of the Creek Country." *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, III. Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1848.

Hening, Walter. *The Statutes at Large being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legilsature, in the year 1619*. Richmond: George Cochran, 1823.

Hill, William. *Col. William Hill's Memoir's of the Revolution*, ed. A.S. Salley, Jr.. Columbia, SC: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1921.

Iredell, James. *Laws of the State of North Carolina*. Edenton: Hodge & Wills, 1791.

_____. *The Papers of James Iredell*. Donald Higginbothom, ed. 3 vols. Raleigh, NC: State Department of Archives and History.

Jefferson, Thomas. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*. Barbara Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney. Online edition; Charlottesville: University of Virginia Rotunda, 2008.

Krawyczynski, Keith. "William Drayton's Journal of a 1784 Tour of the South Carolina Backcountry." *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 97 (Jul., 1996): 182-205.

Laurens, Henry. *The Papers of Henry Laurens*. Ed. David R. Chesnutt. 16 vols. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1968-2002.

Lockey, Joseph Byrne. *East Florida, 1783-1785: A File of Documents Assembled, and Many of them Translated*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1949.

Lockley, James ed. *Maroon Communities in South Carolina: A Documentary Record*. Columbia, SC: University of South CArolina Press, 2009.

Madison, James. . *The Papers of James Madison*. M.E. Ratchel, et. al., eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962 – present.

Manigault, Peter. "The Letterbook of Peter Manigault, 1763-1773." Ed. Maurice A. Crouse. *South Carolina Historical Magazine*. vol 70, no. 2 (1969).

Mason, George. *The Papers of George Mason*, *1725-1792*. Robert A. Rutland, ed. 3 vols. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1970.

McCord, David J. *The Statues at Large of South Carolina*. Columbia, SC: A.S. Johnson, 1841.

McIlwane, R. ed. *Official Letters of the Governors of Virginia*. 3 vols. Richmond, VA: Virginia State Library, 1958.

McIntosh, Lachlan. "Papers of Lachlin McIntosh." Lilian M. Hawes, ed.. *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 1 (1956).

Middleton, Arthur. "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton." Joseph W. Barnwell, ed. *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 26 (Oct., 1925).

Moultrie, William. *Memoirs of the American Revolution, So Far as it Related to the States of North and South Carolina, and Georgia*. New York: David Longworth, 1802.

O'Kelly, James. *Essay on Negro Slavery*. Philadelphia: Pritchard and Hall, 1789.

Oliphant, Edward. *The History of North America and its United States, Including Also a Distinct History of Each Individual State*. Edinburgh: J. Johnstone, 1800.

Ramsay, David. *The History of the Revolution of South-Carolina, From a British Province to an Independent State, in Two Volumes*, (Trenton, NJ: Isaac Collins, 1785).

_____. *History of the American Revolution*, *in Two Volumes*. Philadelphia: R. Aitken & Son, 1789.

_____. *History of South Carolina: From its First Settlement in 1670 to the Year 1808*. Newberry, SC: WJ Dufie, 1809.

Rice, David. *Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good Policy, Proved by a Speech Delivered in the Convention, Held at Danville, Kentucky*. Philadelphia: Parry Hall, 1792.

La Rochefoucault-Liancourt, Francois-Alexandre-Frederic. *Travels through the United Sates of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797*. 3 vols. Second edition; London: R. Philips, 1800.

Rules of the Company for Opening the Inland Navigation, Between the Santee and Cooper Canal, Agreed to on March the 23rd, 1786. Charleston, SC: Bowel and Markland, 1786.

Saunders, William L., et. al., eds. *The Colonial and Early State Records of North Carolina*. 26 vols. Raleigh, NC: P.W. Hale, 1886-1914.

Schaw, Janet. *Journal of a Lady of Quality; Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the Years 1774 to 1776*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921.

Schmidt, Frederika Teute and Barbara Ripel Wilhem. "Early Proslavery Petitions in Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly,* vol. 30, no. 1 (1973): 133-146.

Scribner, Robert L., ed. *Revolutionary Virginia, The Road to Independence: A Documentary History*. Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 1981.

Schoepf, Johann David. *Travels in the Confederation*. Trans. Alfred J. Morrison. Reprint: New York, Burt Franklin, 1968.

Sensbach, Jon F. *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Siebert, William Henry, ed. *Loyalists in East Florida, 1774:1785: The Most Important Documents Pertaining Thereto Edited with an Accompanying Narrative*. Deland, FL: Florida State Historical Society, 1929.

Valentine, Edward Pleasants. *The Edward Pleasants Valentine Papers: Abstracts of Records in the Local and General Archives of Virginia relating to the Families of Pleasants and Valentine*. Baltimore: Genelalogical Publishing Company, 1979.

Walker, R. F., et. al., ed. *Calendar of Virginia State Papers, and Other Manuscripts*. Richmond: J.H. O'Bannon, 1875-93.

Washington, George. *The Papers of George Washington*. Theodore J. Crackel, ed. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008.

Watson, Elkanah. *Men and Times of the Revolution, or Memoirs of Elkanah Watson, Including Jouranls of Travels in Europe and America, from 1777 to 1842, with his Correspondence*. Ed. William Watson. New York: Dana and Company, 1856.

Webber, Mabel L., ed.. "Col. Senf's Account of the Santee Canal." *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine,* 28 (Jan., 1927): 8-21

Wesley, John. *Thoughts Upon Slavery*. London, 1774.

Woodmason, Charles. *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and other Writings of Charles Woodmason*. Ed. Richard J. Hooker. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1962.

Wright, James. "Papers of James Wright." *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*. Savannah, GA: 1873.

Secondary Works Cited

Albert, Peter Joseph. "The Protean Institution: The Georgraphy, Economy, and Ideology of Slavery in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1976.

Alden, John Richard. *The South in the Revolution, 1763-1789*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1957.

Anderson, Fred. *Crucible of War: The Seven Years War and the Fate of Empire in British North America*. New York: Knopf, 2000.

Aptheker, Herbert. *American Negro Slave Revolts*. Reprint; New York: International Publishers, 1983.

Baptist, Edward. "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-Eyes Men': Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States." *The American Historical Review,* vol. 106 (Dec. 2001): 1619-50.

Barrett, Jason M. "The Market's Virtue: Law and Political Economy in Jeffersonian Virginia: Fairfax, Loudon, and Prince William Counties." Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1996.

Becker, Robert A. "Salus Populi Suprema Lex: Public Peace and South Carolina Debtor Relief Laws, 1783-1789." *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 80 (Jan., 1979): 65-75.

Beeman, Richard. *Evolution of the Southern Backcountry: A Case Study of Lunenburg County, Virginia, 1746-1832*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.

Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

_____. *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*. New York: The New Press, 1974.

Blackburn, Robin. *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, *1776-1848*. New York, NY: Verso, 1989.

Bliss, Willard F. "The Rise of Tenancy in Virginia." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 58 (Oct., 1950): 427-41.

Bloomfield, Maxwell. *American Lawyers in a Changing Society, 1776-1876*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.

Bostic, Douglas W. *Sunken Plantations: The Santee Cooper Project*. Charleston, SC: History Press, 2008.

Bowler, R. Arthur. *Logistics and the Failure of the British Army in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Brannon, Rebecca. "Reconciling the Revolution: Resolving Conflict and Rebuilding Community in the Wake of Civil War in South Carolina, 1775-1860." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2007.

Bridenbaugh, Carl. *Myths and Realities: Societies of the Colonial South*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952.

Bridwell, Ronald. "The South's Wealthiest Planter: Wade Hampton of South Carolina." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1980.

Brown, Christopher Leslie and Philip D. Morgan, eds. *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006.

Brown, Richard Maxwell. *The South Carolina Regulators: The Story of America's First Vigilante Movement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963.

Bushman, Richard L. *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Calhoon, Robert McClure. *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781*. New York: Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich, 1965.

Calomiris, Charles. "Institutional Failure, Monetary Scarcity, and the Depreciation of the Continental." *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 48, 1 (March, 1988): 47-68.

Carp, Benjamin. *Rebels Rising: cities and the American Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Chaplin, Joyce. *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

_____. "Creating a Cotton South in Georgia and South Carolina, 1760-1810." *Journal of Southern History*, 57 (May, 1991): 171-200.

Clemens, Paul E.G. *The Atlantic Economy and Maryland's Eastern Shore: From Tobacco to Grain*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980.

Coker, Kathy Roe. "Absentee Loyalists in South Carolina." *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 96, 2 (April, 1995): 119-134.

_____. "The Case of James Nassau Colleton before the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates." *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 87, 2 (April, 1986): 106-16.

_____. "The Punishment of Revolutionary War Loyalists in South Carolina." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1987.

Coleman, Aaron N. “Loyalists in War, Americans in Peace: The Reintegration of the Loyalists, 1775-1800.” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kentucky, 2008.

Coleman, Kenneth. *The American Revolution in Georgia, 1763-1789*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1958.

Cometti, Elizabeth. “Inflation in Revolutionary Maryland,” *WMQ*, 8 (1951): 231-33.

Coulter, E.M. *A Short History of Georgia*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1933.

Crittenden, Christopher. “Commerce in North Carolina, 1763-1789.” Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1936.

_____. “Overland Transportation in North Carolina, 1763-1789.” *North Carolina Historical Review*, VIII (1931): 239-57.

Crothers, A. Glenn. “ ‘The Projecting Spirit:’ Social, Economic, and Cultural Change in Post-Revolutionary Northern Virginia, 1780-1805.” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Florida, 1998.

Crow, Jeffrey J. “What Price Loyalism? The Case of John Cruden, Commissioner of Sequestered Estates.” *North Carolina Historical Review*, vol LVIII, no 3 (July, 1981): 215-233.

_____. “Slave Rebelliousness and Social Conflict in North Carolina, 1775 to 1802.” *William & Mary Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 1 (Jan., 1980): 79-102.

Crow, Jeffrey J. and Larry E. Tise, eds., *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1978.

David, David Brion. *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of New World Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006

_____. *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

_____. *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Dew, Charles B. “David Ross and the Oxford Iron Works: A Study of Industrial Slavery in the Early Nineteenth-Century South.” *William and Mary Quarterly,* 31, 2 (April, 1974): 189-224.

Drescher, Seymour. *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Dun, James Alexander. "Dangerous Intelligence: Slavery, Saint Domingue, and the Haitian Revolution in the Early American Republic." Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 2011.

Edgar, Walter B. ed. *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives, Volume I: Session Lists, 1692-1973*. Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1974.

Edwards, Laura. *The People and their Peace: Legal Culture and the Transformation of Inequality in the Post-Revolutionary South*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Einhorn, Robin. *American Slavery, American Taxation*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Egerton, Douglas R. *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Egerton, Douglas. *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Ely, Melvin Patrick. *Israel on the Appomatox* : *A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom before the Civil War*. New York: Vintage, 2005.

Essig, Donald. *Bonds of Wickedness: Evangelicals Against Slavery, 1770-1808* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983.

Evans, Emory. *A Topping People: The Rise and Decline of Virginias Old Political Elite, 1680-1790*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009.

Fenn, Elizabeth. *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2002.

Ferguson, E. James. *The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776-1790*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1961.

Finger, John. *Tennessee Frontiers: Three Regions in Transition*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001.

Finley, Moses I. *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*. New York: Markus Weiner, 1980.

_____. "Was Greek Civilization Based on Slave Labour?" *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte*, vol. 8 (Apr. 1959): 145-64.

Finnie, Gordon. "The Antislavery Movement in the Upper South Before 1840." *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 35, 3 (Aug., 1969): 319-42.

Flanders, Ralph Bett. *Plantation Slavery in Georgia*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1933.

Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

Foster, Sr., William Omer. *James Jackson: Duelist and Militant Statesman, 1757-1806*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1960.

Fraser, Walter J. "Reflections of 'Democracy' in Revolutionary South Carolina?: The Composition of Military Organizations and Relationships of the Officers and Men, 1775-1780." *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, vol. 78, 3 (July, 1977): 202-212.

Freehling, William W. *The Road to Disunion: Volume I: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Frey, Sylvia. *Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Frey, Sylvia and Betty Wood, eds. *From Slavery to Emancipation in the Atlantic World*. London: Frank Cass, 1999.

Friend, Craig. *Kentucke's Frontiers*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010.

Genovese, Eugene D. *From Rebellion to Revolution: Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1979.

_____. *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Old South*. New York: Beacon, 1963.

_____. *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation*. Reprint; Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988.

Gordon, John W. *South Carolina and the American Revolution: A Battlefield History*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003.

Gray, Lewis Cecil. *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*. 2 vols. New York: Peter Smith, 1941.

Greene, Evarts B. and Virginia D. Harrington. *American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.

Greene, Harlan, Harry S. Hutchins, and Brian E. Hutches. *Slave Badges and the Slave-Hire System in Charleston, South Carolina, 1783-1865*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008.

Greene, Lorenzo J. "Some Observations on the Black Regiment of Rhode Island in the American Revolution." *Journal of Negro History*, vol. 37 (1952): 142-72.

Hacker, J. David. "A Census-Based Count of the Civil War Dead." *Civil War History*, vol. 54, no. 4 (Dec. 2011): 306-47.

Hadden, Sally E. *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001

Hall, John A. "Quieting the Storm: The Establishment of Order in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Oxford, UK.

Hall, Leslie. *Land and Allegiance in Revolutionary Georgia*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001.

Harris, J. William. *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A Free Black Man's Encounter with Liberty*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Hays, Louise. *Hero of the Hornet's Nest: A Biography of Elijah Clark, 1733 to 1799*. New York: Stratford House, 1946.

Henry, H.M. *Police Control of the Slave in South Carolina*. Emory, VA: 1914.

Herndon, Melvin. "Samuel Edward Butler of Virginia Goes to Georgia, 1784." *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 52 (Jun. 1968): 115-31.

Higginbotham, A. Leon, Jr. *In the Matter of Color: Race & The American Legal Process: The Colonial Period*. New York: Oxford, 1977.

Higgins, Robert W. "A Financial History of the American Revolution in South Carolina." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1970.

_____. "The South Carolina Revolutionary War Debt and its Holders, 1776-1780," *South Carolina Magazine of History and Biography*, 72, 1 (Jan., 1971): 15-29.

Hitz, Alex M. "Georgia Bounty Land Grants." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 38 (Dec., 1958): 337-48.

Hobson, Charles F. "Recovery of British Debts in the Federal Circuit Court of Virginia, 1790 to 1797." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 92 (Apr., 1984): 176-200.

Hoffer, Peter Charles. *Cry Liberty: The Great Stono River Slave Rebellion of 1939*. New York: Oxford, 2011.

Hoffman, Ronald. *A Spirit of Dissension: Economics, Politics, and the Revolution in Maryland*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.

Hoffman, Ronald, et. al., eds., *The Economy of Early America: The Revolutionary Period, 1763-1790*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1988.

Hoffman, Ronald and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Launching the 'Extended Republic': The Federalist Era*. Charlottesvile, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1996.

_____. *Sovereign States in an Age of Uncertainty*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1980.

_____. *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1985.

Holton, Woody. *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves & the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

_____. "Patriot vs. Patriot: Social Conflict and the Origins of the Revolution in Virginia." *Journal of American Studies*, 34, 2 (Aug., 2000): 231-56.

Hughes, Sarah S. "Slaves for Hire: The Allocation of Black Labor in Elizabeth City County, Virginia, 1782 to 1810." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 35 (April, 1978): 260-86.

Humphrey, Thomas J. "Conflicting Independence: Land Tenancy and the American Revolution." *Journal of the Early Republic*, 28 (Summer, 2008): 159-82.

Isaac, Rhys. *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

Jackson, Harvey H. "The Darien Antislavery Petition of 1739 and the Georgia Plan," *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 34 (Oct. 1977): 618-31.

Jameson, J. Franklin. *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement* (Revised edition; Beacon Press, 1964), 34-5.

Jasanoff, Maya. *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*. New York: Knopf, 2011.

Johnson, Walter. *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

_____. *Soul by Soul: Life Inside an Antebellum Slave Market*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Jones, Alice Hanson. *Wealth of a Nation to Be: The American colonies on the Eve of the Revolution*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

Jones, Charles C. *The Dead Towns of Georgia*. Savannah, GA Mohnino News Steam Printing, 1878.

Jordan, Winthrop. *White Over Black: American Attitudes Towards the Negro, 1550-1812*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1968.

Kaplanoff, Mark David. "Making the South Solid: Politics and the Structure of Society in South Carolina, 1790-1815." Ph.D. Dissertation, Cambridge University, 1979.

Kars, Marjoleine. *Breaking Loose Together: The Regulator Rebellion in Pre-Revolutionary North Carolina*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Kay, Marvin L. and Lorin Lee Cary. *Slavery in North Carolina, 1748-1775*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

King-Owen, Gregory Scott. "The People's Law: Popular Sovereignty and State Formation in North Carolina, 1776-1805." Ph.D. Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2011.

Klebaner, Benjamin Joseph. "American Manumission Laws and the Responsibility for Suporting Slaves." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 63 (Oct., 1955): 445-53.

Klein, Rachel. *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808*. Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1990.

Knepper, David Morton. "The Political Structure of Colonial South Carolina, 1745-1776." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1971.

Kurtz, Stephen G. and James H. Hutson, ed., *Essays on the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1973.

Lambert, Robert S. "The Confiscation of Loyalist Property in Georgia, 1782-1786." *William and Mary Quarterly,* 20, 1 (1962): 80-94.

_____. "The Flight of the Georgia Loyalists." *The Georgia Review*, 17, 4 (Winter, 1963): 435-48.

Lamplugh, George R. "The Importance of Being Truculent: James Gunn, the Chatham Militia, and Georgia Politics, 1782-1789." *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 60, 2 (Summer, 1996): 226-238.

Leaming, Hugo Prosper. "Hidden Americans: Maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1979.

Lemann, Nicholas. *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War*. New York: Farrar, Giroux, & Strauss, 2007.

Levy, Andrew. *The First Emancipator: The Forgotten Story of Robert Carter, the Founding Father Who Freed His Slaves* (New York: Random House, 2005

Lewis, Ronald T. *Coal, Iron, and Slaves: Industrial Slavery in Maryland and Virginia, 1715-1865*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979.

Liles, Justin S. "Thomas Sumter's Law: Slavery in the Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2011.

Littlefield, Douglas R. "The Potomac Company: A Misadventure in Financing an Early American Internal Improvement Project." *Business History Review*, 58 (Winter, 1984): 562-585.

Lockhart, Matthew A. " 'Under the Wings of Columbia:' John Lewis Gervais as Architect of South Carolina's 1786 Capital Relocation Legislation." *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 104 (Jul., 2003): 176-197.

Lutz, Paul V. "A State's Concern for the Soldiers' Welfare: How North Carolina Provided for Her Troops During the Revolution." *North Carolina Historical Review*, vol. 42 (July, 1965): 315-18.

Lynn, John A., ed. *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994.

Maas, John A. "' A Complicated Scene of Difficulties': North Carolina and the Revolutionary Settlement, 1776-1789." Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2007.

MacDonald, James A. "Politics of the Personal in the Old North State: Griffith Rutherford in Revolutionary North Carolina." Ph.D. Dissertation, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2006.

MacLeod, Duncan. *Slavery, Race, and the American Revolution*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

MacMaster, Richard K. "Arthur Lee's 'Address on Slavery': An Aspect of Virginia's Struggle to End the Slave Trade, 1765-1774," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 80 (April, 1972): 141-57.

Main, Jackson Turner. "Government by the People: The American Revolution and the Democratization of the Legislatures." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 23, 3 (July, 1966): 391-407.

_____. "The One Hundred," *WMQ*, vol 11 (1954): 354-84.

_____. "Sections and Politics in Virginia, 1781-1789." *William and Mary Quarterly,* 12 (1955): 95-112.

_____. *The Social Structure of Revolutionary America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965.

Mancall, Peter C., et. al. "Slave Prices and the South Carolina Economy, 1722-1809." *The Journal of Economic History*, 61 (Sep., 2001): 616-639.

Martin, Ann Smart. *Buying Into a World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

Massey, Gregory D. *John Laurens and the American Revolution*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2000.

_____. "The Limits of Antislavery Thought," *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 63 (Aug., 1997): 495-530, 515.

Mathews, Donald G. *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845*. Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978.

McConville, Brendan. *The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of British America, 1688-1776*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

McCrady, Edward. *History of South Carolina in the Revolution, 1780-1783*. New York: MacMillan, 1902.

McCurry, Stephanie. *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

McDonnell, Michael. "The Other Three-Fifths: Reconsidering the War for Independence and the American Revolution." Paper presented at The American Revolution Reborn, May 31, 2013, Philadelphia.

______. *The Politics of War: Race, Class, and Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute, 2007.

McCusker, John J. and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

McKivigan, John R. and Mitchell Snay, eds. *Religion and the Antebellum Debate Over Slavery*. Athens, GA University of Georgia Press, 1998.

Middlekauf, Robert. *The Glorious Cause: The American War for Independence*. New York: Oxford, 1988.

Mitchell, Peter M. "Loyalist Property and the Revolution in Virginia." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1965.

Morgan, Edmund. *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*. Reissue; W.W. Norton, 2003.

_____. *The Challenge of the American Revolution*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1976.

Morgan, Philip D. *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry*. Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1998.

Morgan, Philip D. and Michael L. Nicholls. "Slaves in Piedmont Virginia, 1720-1790." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 46 (Apr., 1989): 211-51.

Morris, Thomas D. *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1860*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Morton, Louis. *Robert Carter of Nomini Hall*. Charlottesville, VA: Dominion Books, 1941.

Mullin, Gerald W. *Flight or Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*. New York Oxford, 1972.

Nadelhaft, Jerome J. *The Disorders of War: The Revolution in South Carolina*. Orono, ME: University of Maine Press, 1981.

Nash, Gary. *The Forgotten Fifth: African-Americans in the Age of Revolutions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

_____. *Race and Revolution*. New York: Roman & Littlefield, 1990.

_____. *The Unknown American Revolution*: *The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America*. New York: Penguin Books, 2004.

_____. *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Nettels, Curtis Putnam. *The Emergence of a National Economy: 1775-1815*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1962.

Newman, Richard. *The Transformation of Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Oakes, James. *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion*. New York: Harper, 1990.

O'Brien, William Arthur. "Speculative Interests and Maryland Politics, 1780-1788." Masters Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1967.

Olson, Gary D. "Thomas Brown, Loyalist Partisan, and the Revolutionary War in Georgia." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly,* vol. 54

Olwell, Robert. "'Domestick Enemies': Slavery and Political Independence in South Carolina, May 1775-March 1776," *Journal of Southern History* [hereafter cited as *JSH*], LV (Feb. 1989): 21-48.

_____. *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Pancake, John S. *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985.

Papenfuse, Jr., Edward C. *In Pursuit of Profit: The Annapolis Merchants in the Era of the American Revolution, 1763-1805*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975.

Pearl, Christopher Ryan. " 'For the Good Order of Government:' The American Revolution and the Creation of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1740-1790." Ph.D. Dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 2013.

Pendleton, W.C. *History of Tazewell County and Southwest Virginia*. Tazewell, VA: W.C. Hill Printing Company, 1920.

Piecuch, Jim. *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Slaves, and Indians in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008.

Phillips, Ulrich Bonnell. *A History of Transportation in the Eastern Cotton Belt to 1860*. Reprint; New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Philyaw, L. Scott. "A Slave For Every Soldier: The Strange History of Virginia's Recruitment Act." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol 109 (April, 2001): 364-79.

Porcher, F.A. *The History of the Santee Canal*. Charleston, 1903.

Price, Jacob M. *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1694-1791, and of its Relation to the British American Tobacco Trades*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1973.

______. "The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Trade." *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd, vol XI (1954): 179-99.

Price, Jacob M. and Paul G.E. Clemens."A Revolution of Scale in Overseas Trade: British Firms in the Chesapeake Trade, 1675-1775." *The Journal of Economic History,* vol 47, no 1 (March, 1987): 1-43.

Pybus, Cassandra. *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty*. Boston: Beacon, 2006.

_____. "Jefferson's Faulty Math: The Question of Slave Defections in the American Revolution." *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 2 (June, 2005): 243-264.

Quarles, Benjamin. "Lord Dunmore as Liberator." *William & Mary Quarterly,* vol 15, No. 4 (Oct. 1958): 494-507.

_____. *Negro in the American Revolution*. University of North Carolina Press, 1961.

Rakove, Jack. *Revolutionaries: A New History of the Invention of America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010.

Rappleye, Charles. *Robert Morris: Financier of the American Revolution*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011.

Robertson, Henry O. "Tories or Patriots? The Mississippi River PLanters during the American Revolution." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* (Autumn, 1999): 445-462.

Robinson, Donald. *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765-1820*. New York: Oxford, 1971.

Rose, Willie Lee. "The Domestication of Domestic Slavery," in Rose, *Slavery and Freedom*. Ed. William W. Freehling. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982: 18-36.

Ryan, William R. *The World of Thomas Jeremiah: Charles Town on the Eve of the American Revolution*. New York: Oxford, 2010.

Schlesinger, Arthur. *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776*. New York: Beard Books, 1939.

Schwarz, Philip J. *Migrants Against Slavery: Virginians and the Nation*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2001.

______. *Twice Condemned: Slaves and the Criminal Laws of Virginia* (New York: Lawbooks Exchange, 1998.

Shute, Rosemary and Randy J. Sparks, eds. *Paths to Freedom: Manumission in the Atlantic World*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009.

Seabrook, Whitemarsh B. *A Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton, form the Earliest Ages to the Present Time, with Special Reference to the Sea-Island cotton plant, including the Improvements in its Cultivation, and the Preparation of the Wool, &c. in Georgia and South Carolina*. Charleston, SC: Miller & Browne, 1844.

Selby, John E. *The Revolution in Virginia: 1775-1783*. Williamsburg, VA: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988.

Shy, John. *A People Numerous & Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Sloan, Herbert E. *Principle and Interest: Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Debt*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2001.

Soltow, H.H. "Scottish Traders in Virginia, 1750-1775." *Economic History Review*. Vol 12, No 1 (1959): 58-83.

Stewart, Cory Joe. "The Affairs of Boston in the North Carolina Backcountry During the Americna Revolution." Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2010.

Stevens, William Bacon. *A History of Georgia, from its First Discovery by Europeans to the Adoption of the Present constitution in MDCCXCVIII*. New York: D. Appleton, 1847.

Sutherland, Stella H. *Population Distribution in Colonial America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1936.

Taylor, Alan. *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2013.

Tillson, Albert Jr. *Accommodating Revolution: Virginia's Northern Neck in an Era of Transformation, 1760-1810*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2010.

Tise, Larry E. *Proslavery: A history of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990.

Troxler, Carol Ann. "Re-enslavement of Black Loyalists: Mary Postell in South Carolina, East Florida, and Nova Scotia." *Acadienis*, XXXVII, 2 (Summer, 2008): 70-85.

Tushnett, Mark V. *The American Law of Slavery, 1810-1860: Considerations of Humanity and Interest*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Van Cleve, George William. *A Slaveholder's Union: Slavery, Politics, and the Constitution in the Early American Republic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

von Daacke, Kirt. *Freedom Has a Face: Race, Identity, and Community in Jefferson's Virginia*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2012,

Waldstreicher, David. *Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2008.

Walker, James W. St. George. *The Black Loyalists: the Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.

Walsh, Lorena. *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Watson, Alan D. *Money and Monetary Problems in Early North Carolina*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of History and Archives, 1980.

Weeks, Stephen B. *Southern Quakers and Slavery: An Institutional History*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1896.

Weir, Robert. "The Harmony We Are Famous For: An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 26 (Oct., 1969): 473-501.

White, Ashli. *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*. Baltimore: JHU Press, 2008.

Whittenburg, James P. "Planters, Merchants, and Lawyers: Social Change and the Origins of the North Carolina Regulators." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 34, 2 (April, 1977): 215-238.

Wolf, Eva Shepard. *Race and Liberty in the New Nation: Emancipation in Virginia from the Revolution to Nat Turner's Rebellion*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2006.

.

Wood, Betty. *Slavery in Colonial Georgia*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984.

_____. "Until He Shall Be Dead, Dead, Dead:' The Judicial Treatment of Slaves in Eighteenth-Century Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 71 (Fall, 1987).

Wood, Gordon. *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1992.

Wood, Peter H. *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*. Reprint; New York: Norton, 1996.

_____. "Digging Black History." *Southern Exposure*, 11. April, 1983.

Young, Alfred F., ed., *The American Revolution: Exploration in the History of American Radicalism*. Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976.

______. *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*. Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993.

Zaborney, John J. *Slaves for Hire: Renting Enslaved Laborers in Antebellum Virginia*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012.

Zahniser, Marvin R. *Charles Cotesworth Pinckney: Founding Father*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1967.

Zilversmit, Arthur. *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.