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Robert G. Brooking

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“MY ZEAL FOR THE REAL HAPPINESS OF BOTH GREAT BRITAIN AND THE COLONIES”: THE CONFLICTING IMPERIAL CAREER OF SIR JAMES WRIGHT

by

GREG BROOKING

Under the Direction of Dr. Charles G. Steffen

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the life and conflicted career of Sir James Wright (1716-1785), in an effort to better understand the complex struggle for power in both colonial Georgia and eighteenth-century British Empire. Specifically, this project will highlight the contest for autonomy between four groups: Britains and Georgians (core-periphery), lowcountry and backcountry residents, whites and Natives, and Rebels and Loyalists.

An English-born grandson of Chief Justice Sir Robert Wright, James Wright was raised in Charleston, South Carolina following his father's appointment as that colony's chief justice. Young James served South Carolina in a number of capacities, public and ecclesiastical, prior to

his admittance to London's Gray's Inn in London. Most notably, he was selected as their attorney general and colonial agent prior to his appointment as governor of Georgia in 1761.

Wright collected more than public offices in his endless quest for respect and social advancement. He also possessed a voracious appetite for land and became colonial Georgia's largest landowner, accumulating nearly 26,000 acres, worked by no less than 525 slaves. As governor, he guided Georgia through a period of intense and steady economic and territorial growth. By the time of the American Revolution, Georgia had become fully integrated into the greater transatlantic mercantilist economy, resembling South Carolina and any number of Britain's Caribbean colonies.

Moreover, Governor Wright maintained royal authority in Georgia longer and more effectively than any of his North American counterparts. Although several factors contributed to his success in delaying the seemingly inexorable revolutionary tide, his patience and keen political mind proved the deciding factor. He was the only of Britain's thirteen colonies to enforce the Stamp Act of 1765 and managed to stay a step or two ahead of Georgia's Sons of Liberty until the winter of 1775-1776.

In short, Sir James Wright lived a transatlantic life, taking advantage of every imperial opportunity afforded him. He earned numerous important government positions and amassed an incredible fortune, totaling over £100,000 sterling. His long imperial career delicately balanced dual loyalties to Crown and colony and offers important and unique insights into a number of important historiographic fields.

INDEX WORDS: Sir James Wright, Colonial Georgia, Colonial America, American Revolution, American South, Atlantic world, Imperialism, Loyalist studies, Transatlantic, Native America

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Leslie, whose uncompromising belief in me may have actually made a believer out of me and who taught me, in the words of e. e. cummings that “it takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.”

To my children, Alex, Gabrielle, and baby Michael, whose beautiful souls have kept many a late night at the word processor brilliantly lit with love.

To my mom, who taught me to dream and then dream some more.

To my dad, who first kindled my love of history across many a hallowed ground.

To my brothers, Tracy, Kevin, and Brian, who set the bar unbelievably high.

To my sister, Meredith, whose example of patient determination and fortitude continue to inspire.

To my McCuens, Al, Nell, Lisa, and Janie, who have provided just enough barbecue and beaches to remind me of the importance of family.

To my Armisteads, Mike, who taught me to live alive all day and that life is best enjoyed by letting go, digging deep, and being open to the possibilities within; and Jonathan, who taught me that Will Ferrell is the solution to many a problem.

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In a moment of deep gratitude for his transatlantic and multiethnic patrons, friends, and inspirations, the gifted colonial American naturalist William Bartram noted that “on the recollection of so many and great favours and blessings, I now, with a high sense of gratitude, presume to offer up my sincere thanks.” My academic debts are wondrously immense and beyond my meager abilities to adequately repay. No efforts will be spared, however, in both expressing my heartfelt thanks to those who have graciously given of themselves. My thank you to them is the earnest promise to pay their kindness forward.

My dissertation advisor Dr. Charles Steffen nourished this dissertation with a gentle patience that is rare in academia. Along with the other members of my committee, Dr. Steffen offered sage advice and keen insight into both my topic and the historians craft. Dr. Jim Piecuch’s unequaled understanding of the complexities of colonial and revolutionary America in the South have bolstered virtually every page of this dissertation. Dr. Jeff Young also saw the value and unique academic opportunities inherent with my project. His spirit and uncanny ability to reduce complex concepts have made me a better historian. Drs. Wendy Venet and Ian Fletcher have taught me the academic and personal value of examining history through the lens of those less represented. I have been blessed with an incredibly brilliant committee and, more importantly, I have been blessed with an incredibly thoughtful and generous committee.

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knowledge of colonial and revolutionary Georgia. Moreover, Mary has transcribed thousands of eighteenth-century documents. Although she has published many of them, she afforded me unfettered access to those transcriptions awaiting publication. Anyone who has read James Wright's handwriting can appreciate the yeoman's work involved in such a laborious task. Like a bloodhound, Ken Thomas has tracked much of James Wright's genealogy and spent many afternoons patiently walking me through the complex maze of eighteenth-century genealogy. Another genealogist, Sandra Boling, has expertly deciphered Sir James Wright's will without the use of the Rosetta Stone. Charles Baxley has taught me the value of fellowship. His unflagging support and passion for both history and my success is truly humbling. Dr. Carol Berkin interrupted a family vacation to both offer invaluable insight about my work and encourage my daughter to cultivate her artistic spirit. Dr. Greg Urwin advocated on my behalf numerous times and to great affect. He also made the long journey to the David Library to personally treat me to a fine lunch. Dr. Robert Calhoun's enthusiasm first instilled me the belief that I belong. Professor Robert S. (Bob) Davis supported my research with by answering incessant questions and providing valuable insight about the Georgia frontier. Dr. Stan Deaton at the Georgia Historical Society and Dr. Lee Ann Caldwell at the Center for the Study of Georgia History were early and constant supporters of my research. Alain St. Pierre from Emory University's Woodruff Library went far beyond the call of duty in helping me navigate the library's immense collections.

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INTRODUCTION: JAMES WRIGHT AND THE HISTIOGRAPHY OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY GEORGIA

A special session of the rebel Council of Safety convened in Savannah on the chilly evening of January 18, 1776, in the Long Room at Tondee's Tavern at the northwest corner of Broughton and Whitaker streets. Although fearful of the recent arrival of two British men-of-war at Tybee Island, council members resolved to plunge Britain's youngest colony deep into the maelstrom of rebellion by ordering the arrest of royal Governor Sir James Wright and three members of his Council – Josiah Tattnall, John Mulryne, and Anthony Stokes. Upon the instructions of this extralegal assembly, Major Joseph Habersham immediately set out to execute these orders.¹

At the very moment the rebel Council was planning the destruction of nearly two decades of Wright's inexhaustible work and dreams, the governor was greeting dinner guests at the Executive Mansion on St. James's Square.² This was no ordinary dinner party, however; it was a meeting between the highest ranking ministerial officials and the discussion focused on the town's ever-growing mobocracy. While seated at Wright's mahogany dining table under the re-

¹ "At a special meeting of the Council of Safety," January 18, 1776, p.m., in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah, GA, 1901), 5.1:38 (hereafter *GHS Collections*).

² For a contemporary street and building map of Savannah see, Paul Pressly, *On the Rim of the Caribbean: Colonial Georgia and the British Atlantic World* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013), xiii.

assuring gaze from a portrait of King George II, the Loyalists were startled by a noise at the front door.³

Within just a few tense moments, Major Habersham entered the dining room and with apparent grace and dignity, bowed to the assembled guest and marched to the head of the table. Placing his arm on Governor Wright's shoulder, he stated: "Sir James, you are my prisoner."⁴ The Council of Safety reconvened a few hours later and resolved that each of those arrested be permitted to return "to their respective homes upon their parole assuring that they will attend his Excellency the Governor's house, at nine o'clock to-morrow morning." Wright's parole had come upon his promise that the "peace of the town shall not be disturbed by any persons from the ships of war."⁵

Soon thereafter, the promised safety of parole seemed more dubious with each passing day. On more than one occasion, shots were fired into Sir James's home.⁶ Three weeks later and fearing for his life, Governor Wright secured his safety in the pre-dawn hours of February

³ For further details concerning Wright's property, see Sir James Wright's Loyalist Memorial, The National Archives, Audit Office 13/85 (hereafter TNA, A/O). In the 107-page typed transcript of his claim, Wright does not mention his arrest, only that, "in Feb. 1776 I was under the necessity of retiring & went on board His Majesty's ship *Scarborough*." This is a reference to his escape under cover of darkness.

⁴ "Discourse delivered before the Georgia Historical Society, at the celebration of their second anniversary, by William Bacon Stevens, M.D.," in *GHS Collections*, 2:28-30. See also, William Bacon Stevens, *A History of Georgia* (Philadelphia: E. H. Butler & Co., 1859), 2:127-129; Charles Colcock Jones, Jr., *History of Savannah* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co., Publishers, 1890), 219-221; Jones, *The History of Georgia* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1883), 2:211-212; and Hugh McCall, *History of Georgia* (Atlanta: A. B. Caldwell, 1909), 300-301.

⁵ "At a special meeting of the Council of Safety," January 18, 1776, 11 p.m., in *GHS Collections*, 5.1:39.

⁶ Jones, *History of Georgia*, 2:212; Jones, *History of Savannah*, 220; Stevens, *History of Georgia*, 2:128.

11. Although both Wright's Loyalist claim and extant correspondence are mute on the subject of shots being fired into the governor's mansion, the historic record offers irrefutable proof that he was both harassed and feared for the safety of himself and his family.⁷ In a letter to Lord George Germain, the Secretary of States for the American Department, he wrote: "in order to avoid the rage and violence of the Rebels . . . , [I] was reduced to the necessity of leaving the town of Savannah in the night."⁸ Thus it was for Georgia's most popular and successful colonial governor, whose efforts doubled the colony's boundaries and enriched many a parvenu. Thus patriotism to King and Crown clearly had a steep price tag.

The lives of Revolutionary era Loyalists have only recently become a fashionable topic of historical inquiry.⁹ Aside from a consistent interest maintained by genealogists, serious historical interest in Loyalists and loyalism has been regrettably scant. Historian John Ferling opined in the preface to his comparative biography of George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson that those occupying the top tiers in the colonial hierarchy, made "decisions that impacted countless lives, determined the shape of the [American Revolution] and to some extent its length, and certainly were important to the outcome of the conflict." These well-heeled aristocrats, he argued, were ideological conduits to the citizenry, giving "voice and meaning to

⁷ The veracity of the account concerning shots fired into Wright's home cannot be conclusively affirmed or refuted. He did not mention such an episode in either his Loyalist claim or in any extant correspondence. However, Josiah Tattnall, who was arrested at the same time as Wright, mentioned in his claim that Wright had been continually harassed and "insulted." See, Josiah Tattnall, Loyalist Claim, TNA, A/O 12/4. Historians Stevens and Jones have produced thoroughly researched and generally trustworthy histories of Georgia. It is clear that Stevens and Jones are working from the same source (or, perhaps Jones's source is Stevens).

⁸ Wright to Germain, February 12, 1776, in TNA, Colonial Office 5/657 (hereafter TNA, C/O).

⁹ See Loyalist historiography below.

previously ill-defined or unarticulated aspirations.”¹⁰ But what of those Loyalist leaders, those men and women, white, black, and red, who held equally strong convictions and also made innumerable impactful decisions? They have too often been neglected, simply cast as villains in American “patriot” historiography because, as Thucydides once wrote, “the people made their recollection fit in with their sufferings.”¹¹ “Patriots” who remained loyal to their King and country were confined to the status of secondary figures, traitorous scoundrels in the rich drama of the War of Independence.

This work seeks, in part, to revive meaningful inquiry into the Loyalist perspective through the lens of Sir James Wright, the most influential of all southern Loyalists. To date, no historian has undertaken the task of fully chronicling the life of this important imperial figure in both Georgia and British imperial history. Wright was Georgia’s longest tenured and final colonial governor, faithfully serving Kings George II and George III from 1760 until the British expulsion from Savannah during the summer of 1782. During his administration Wright helped to engineer Georgia’s economic, political, and social ascension from a barely sustainable “fledgling province” to one that was, in his own words, “making a very rapid progress towards being an opulent and considerable province,” indeed the “most flourishing colony on the continent.”¹²

¹⁰ John Ferling, *Setting the World Ablaze: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), x-xi.

¹¹ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Trans. Richard Crawley (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1910), 133.

¹² James Wright to the Board of Trade, 8 June 1768, in TNA, C/O 5/650. See also, Allen D. Candler, et al., eds. *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1904-1989), 28.2:251-259. Wright was not prone to exaggeration. In 1761 Georgia’s exported goods valued at £15,870, compared to an astonishing £121,677 a dozen years later. See James F. Shepherd and Gary M. Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1972). See also, table 1.

Furthermore, he emerged from the imperial crisis of the mid-1760s with his authority and reputation still intact. In fact, during the Stamp Act crisis of 1765 Georgia was the only province to successfully distribute any stamps, though doing so cost Wright a great deal of political capital.

Wright's story is deeply captivating. He enjoyed a comfortable existence on two continents and, though not at the apex of power, he both resided near and influenced those at the very pinnacle of power. He proved himself to be one of Britain's most able colonial governors and, once that portion of the empire had been lost, most ardent defenders of King George's loyal subjects in the American southeast. His story is certainly unique and merits attention on its own. More importantly, however, his story is emblematic of many colonial American stories – of men and women who sacrificed all, for a variety of motivations, in the name of loyalty, order, and conservative eighteenth-century values. Averse to change and incapable of believing that the mother country plotted to enslave the Americans, Wright, unlike many imperial officials, often questioned the wisdom of the government's policy but firmly believed that reform must come from within the constitutional system in place.

Wright lived in an emerging transatlantic world which linked people, goods, and cultures. Thus, as man of the Atlantic – he equally split the first two-thirds of his life between the cosmopolitan capitals of Great Britain and South Carolina – Wright's background and dual identity afforded him the unique ability to understand the needs and desires of people on both sides of the Atlantic. Moreover, his family owned a long tradition of service to the Crown, both in Britain and America. His desire to augment the family's status and fortune necessitated a certain degree of unquestioned loyalty to the wisdom of Crown and Parliament. It certainly required the fortitude to implement parliamentary legislation, odious or otherwise. Likewise, he assiduously acquired land and firmly entrenched himself among Georgia's burgeoning planter aristocracy. His

desire to secure Georgia's economic future endeared him to the colony's local power brokers. Walking this political tight rope required great dexterity and Wright truly endeavored to honorably serve both his country and his colony. "It has ever been my desire," he wrote to the Duke of Hillsborough, "to discharge my duty to the King & People with integrity, & to the utmost of my power."¹³

Born in London on May 8, 1716, Wright's father Robert moved the family to Charleston nine years later in expectation of his appointment as South Carolina's Chief Justice.¹⁴ James lived most of the next thirty-five years in that important colonial entrepôt.¹⁵ During this period he established himself as a full-fledged member of Charleston's planter elite, serving as the colony's attorney general and colonial agent.

Fully utilizing the station into which he was born, Wright embarked on a legal career in 1740. Shortly thereafter he married Sarah Maidman (1720-1764) in February 1742.¹⁶ She bore him nine children before her death aboard the HMS *Epreuve*, along with their twenty-year-old

¹³ Wright to the Duke of Hillsborough, 31 May 1768, in unpublished Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, 37:311-313. The unpublished Colonial Records comprise volumes 29-39 and may be found at the Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia (hereafter, MsCRG). See also, Reply of James Wright to Upper House of Assembly in reply to address of congratulations upon return to Georgia from England, 15 February 1773, in *CRG*, 17:688-690. For the best study of the limited power wielded by Britain's southern colonial governors, see Ruth Carol Cunningham, "The Southern Royal Governors and the Coming of the American Revolution, 1763-1776" (PhD diss., University of New York at Buffalo, 1984).

¹⁴ The appointment did not become official until February 25, 1731. See, Walter Edgar, ed., *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 2:30. James Wright's grandfather, also named Robert, served as Lord Chief Justice of England from 1685-1688. See, William Cobbett, *Parliamentary History of England* (London: R. Bagshaw, 1809), 5:279-340, for example.

¹⁵ Wright returned to London twice: first, as a student at the Inn of Courts; second, as South Carolina's colonial agent

¹⁶ *South Carolina Gazette*, February 20, 1742.

daughter, also named Sarah, in 1764.¹⁷ In 1747 Wright became South Carolina's attorney general, a position he held until becoming that colony's agent to London ten years later. After spending three years fulfilling his duties in London, the Crown appointed him Lieutenant Governor of Georgia, a temporary expedient until he replaced the popular, but ill, Henry Ellis, becoming the third (and final) royal governor of Georgia. A true eighteenth-century conservative, Wright believed government to be the purview of the independently wealthy, virtuous citizen.¹⁸ Moreover, he possessed a thorough familiarity with the southern colonies and a keen understanding of the British imperial system. As governor, Wright, whom one historian termed "an aristocratic servant of the king," oversaw colonial Georgia's greatest era of economic and territorial expansion.¹⁹ His tenure represented royal government at its most effective in no small part because of both his personal investment in the colony as well as his belief that local matters be subordinated to imperial concerns.²⁰

¹⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 29, 1764. This report, the only first newspaper account, was relayed to the *Gazette* by Jacob Lobb, and states that the ship was lost on October 5, 1764. Lobb's letter was also printed in the December 3, 1764 issue of the *Boston Evening Post*. For the ship's departure, see *Georgia Gazette*, March 15, 1764. See, Wright to Board of Trade, September 26, 1764 in *CRG*, 28, part 2: 54-55. See, Habersham to William Russell, October 10, 1764, in *GHS Collections*, 6:26-27. For further insight into the death of Sarah Wright and its impact on Wright, see Frank Lambert, *James Habersham: Loyalty, Politics, and Commerce in Colonial Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 142-143. Incidentally, Georgia's only newspaper, the *Georgia Gazette* did not mention this incident until months later.

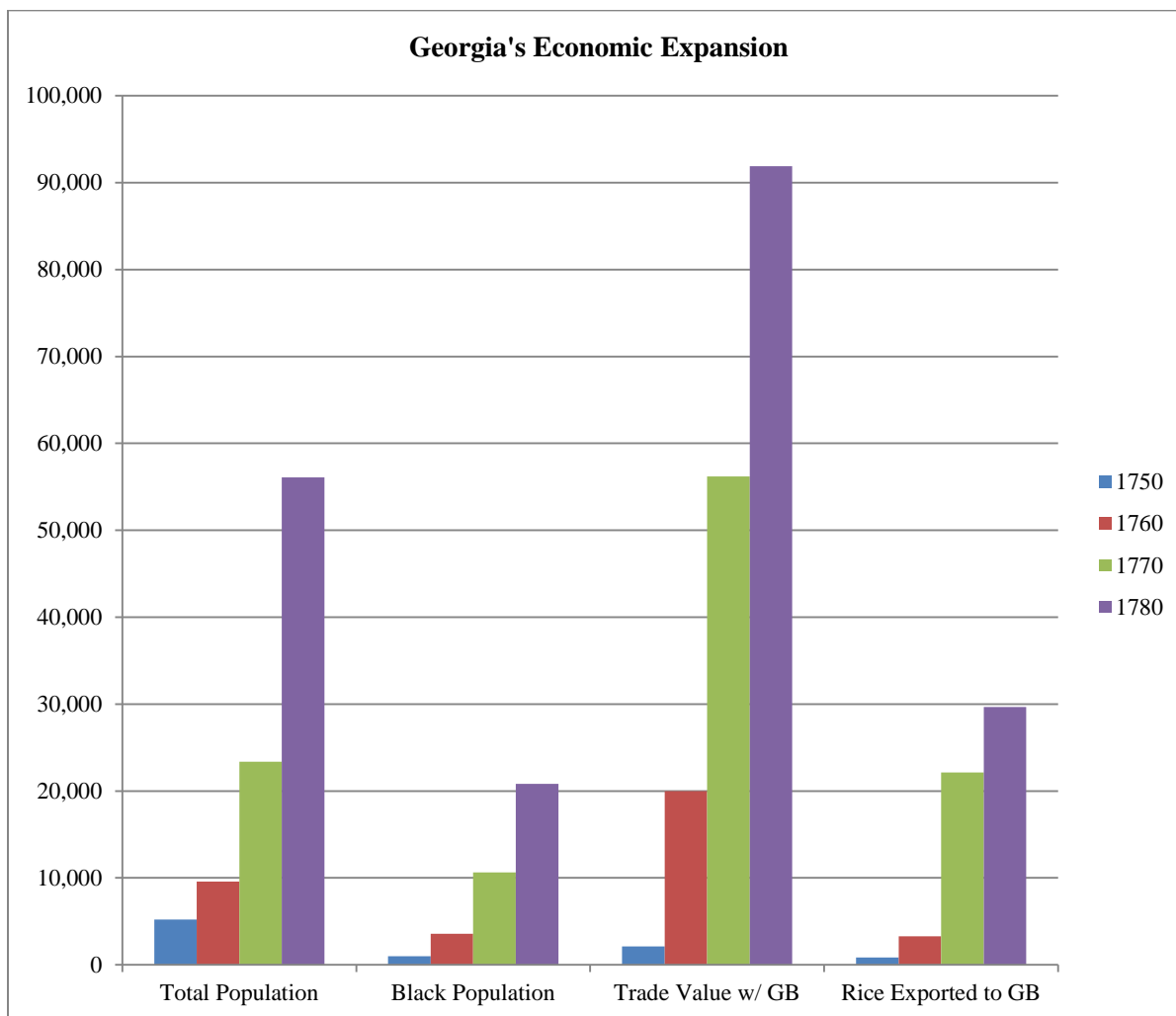
¹⁸ On the eve of the Revolution, Wright's estate was valued at £80,000, making him the wealthiest man in Georgia. See, W. W. Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia, 1754-1775* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 84.

¹⁹ James F. Cook, *Governors of Georgia* (Huntsville, AL: Strode Publishers, Inc., 1979), 19.

²⁰ Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 83; Robert M. Calhoon, *The Loyalists of Revolutionary America, 1760-1781* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973), 21. See also, Ronald G. Killion and Charles T. Waller, *Georgia and the Revolution* (Atlanta: Cherokee Publishing Company, 1975), 6.

He believed that Georgia's future rested on agricultural expansion which required peace with the Indians and a revision of the colony's land laws. He oversaw two massive cessions of Indian land (1763 and 1773) and worked diligently to maintain peaceful relations with the Native Americans. He also understood that treaty obligations applied to both parties, although guaranteeing the colonists' obedience proved quite difficult. Lastly, Wright insisted that, against significant opposition from some corners, ceded land only be granted to settlers, not speculators.²¹

²¹ Cook, *Governors of Georgia*, 20. For the determined resistance concerning Wright's land policies, see Allan Galloway, *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

Table 1.1. Georgia's Economic Expansion, 1750-1780.²²

²² Data extracted from John J. McCusker, "Colonial Statistics," in *Historical Statistics of the United States*, edited by Susan B. Carter, et al., (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), 5:627-772. The "trade value" is the value, in pounds, of both imports and exports with Great Britain. There is no data for 1760, so the value listed is a rough estimate utilizing the data from 1759 and 1761. Georgia's export value peaked in 1775 at £113,777. There is no data for the years 1776-1779. Rice exports are classified by number of barrels. There is no data for the years 1774-1780, so the value listed is for 1773.

Although widely hailed from London to Savannah for his efforts, the 1773 cession would soon contribute directly to Britain's loss of Georgia during the Revolutionary crisis because backcountry settlers believed that subsequent British policy favored Indians.²³ Though earnestly intent on ensuring Georgia's economic viability, Wright established himself as a true agent of the Crown. He diligently and, perhaps, inflexibly worked to secure the Crown's interests in Georgia, confident that the ultimate good of both colony and Crown could be achieved in this manner.²⁴

Although a popular governor, the differing political views of some Georgians surfacing at the close of the French and Indian War in 1763 exerted increasing pressures on Wright, most notably with the passing of the Stamp Act in 1765.²⁵ In spite of colonial objections and personal misgivings about the Act, he wielded his authority and spent much of his political capital to ensure the protection of Georgia's stamp distributor and the actual sale of stamps. Wright was the only one of the thirteen colonial governors to successfully navigate these treacherous waters, though Parliament's repeal of the measure greatly disheartened Wright.²⁶ Georgia's political climate, however, remained relatively calm for nearly a decade afterward and even though he

²³ For a brief, but detailed inspection of Wright's Indian policy, see Edward J. Cashin, "Sowing the Wind: Governor Wright and the Georgia Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution in *Forty Years of Diversity: Essays on Colonial Georgia*, ed. Harvey H. Jackson and Phinzy Spalding (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 233-250.

²⁴ Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 83; Cook, *Governors of Georgia*, 21.

²⁵ Naturalist John Bartram observed that Wright "is universally respected by all the inhabitants they can hardly say enough in his praise." See, John Bartram, *Diary of a Journey Through the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida: From July 1, 1765 to April 10, 1766* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1942), 29.

²⁶ Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 103-125.

faced sporadic challenges from the so-called “Liberty” faction, Wright emerged generally unscathed.²⁷

Wright returned to England in 1771 amidst this relative calm, where he remained until 1773. His official reason for returning was to secure approval for a cession of Native American land near Augusta.²⁸ It also appears that Wright did not plan on returning to Georgia. In May 1772, he asked his friend, James Habersham, to sell some, if not all, of his personal property.²⁹ Toward the end of Wright’s stay in England, the Crown recognized his service with a baronetcy, possibly as an inducement for Wright to return to Georgia.

Upon his return that spring he could rest comfortably, content that he was likely the most powerful governor in the colonies and that his fidelity and efficacy as a royal agent was unrivaled. However, his actual utility as a leader of colonial Georgians had peaked. The Liberty faction, according to Wright, were “very busy in Sending Hand Bills, Letters and Public Invitations &c &c to stir up” Georgians against the Coercive Acts.³⁰ The situation worsened during the next six months and Wright lamented the lack of military personnel to keep “every thing quiet & orderly.”³¹

²⁷ Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 126-144 and, separately, 145-161.

²⁸ Cashin, “Sowing the Wind,” 240.

²⁹ Habersham to James Wright, May 30, 1772, in *GHS Collections*, 6:180-182. Wright placed Habersham in charge of his numerous plantations during his absence. See Lambert, *James Habersham*, 117 and 152-153.

³⁰ Wright to Dartmouth, July 25, 1774, in Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 164.

³¹ Wright to Dartmouth, December 20, 1774, in Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 166.

During these troublesome times, the governor delivered a beautifully crafted speech which epitomized his conservative views.³² On 18 January, Wright stood before the Assembly to discuss the “alarming situation of American affairs.” He pleaded with the legislators to disregard the “voices and opinions of men of over-heated ideas,” and to “consider coolly and sensibly of the terrible consequences” of arraying themselves in opposition to the “mother country.” With a coolness of his own, Wright reminded them that “where there is no law there can be no liberty.” This last would be a central tenet of his political ideology. Frustrated and tired, he then added a deeply personal statement, reminiscing about his nearly fifteen years in the colony and expressing his affection for the people of Georgia.

Believe me, I am at this time actuated by further motives than a show only of discharging my duty as the King’s governor. I have lived amongst and presided over you upwards of fourteen years, and have other feelings. I have a real and affectionate regard for the people, and it grieves me that a Province that I have been so long in . . . should, by imprudence and rashness of some inconsiderate people, be plunged into a state of distress and ruin.³³

His experience as a transatlantic Briton made him especially attuned to the arguments emanating from London as well as the colonies and had served him well as he worked tirelessly

³² Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1967). Bailyn’s investigation into the intellectual genesis of American revolutionary thought provides invaluable insight into what proved to be, perhaps, the most frustrating challenge Wright faced during the Revolutionary crisis. Wright simply could not fathom the rebels’ state of mind and the fact that, even at his most persuasive, he could not effectively communicate with them.

³³ All quotes from Governor Wright’s Speech to the General Assembly, and Their Answer, January 18, 1775 in George White, ed., *Historical Collections of Georgia* (New York: Pudney & Russell Publishers, 1855), 50-51. See also, Killion and Waller, *Georgia and the Revolution*, 113-114.

to bridge the gap between the colonies and Britain. But the overly polemical 1770s and the ever-widening ideological gap proved to be much more than he could successfully negotiate. He was simply too inflexible, as were his political opponents. Wright's plea seemed to have the desired impact, though. That spring, according to historian W. W. Abbot, the "leaders of the Liberty faction despaired of ever swinging the pendulum in their direction."³⁴

Unfortunately for Wright this serenity would be short-lived as Georgians learned that fighting had erupted on Lexington Green in Massachusetts. The loosely organized Liberty Boys seized the opportunity and abruptly and violently unleashed their anger upon Wright. In a matter of weeks, the situation evolved from hopeful optimism to utter despair and, by mid-summer 1775, Wright believed himself to be in grave danger and asked to be allowed to return to England. For all intents and purposes, he had been removed from power in every meaningful sense of the word. The de facto loss of power became tangible when, on January 18, 1776, the Rebels placed Wright under arrest.³⁵

Sir James spent three years in England while the American Revolution devolved into somewhat of a stalemate in the northern colonies. While there, he worked tirelessly to convince royal officials of the propriety of a southern expedition. Ultimately, the British "Southern Strategy" was based, in part, on both the intelligence and ideas Wright proffered.³⁶ The successful

³⁴ Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 168. See also, Wright to Dartmouth, March 23, 1775, in MsCRG, 38, part 1: 371-374.

³⁵ Kenneth Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia, 1763-1789* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1958), 68-69. See, James Wright's Loyalist Claim, in TNA, A/O 12/4/32, 12/71/324, 12/99/70, 12/109/308 and A/O 13/10/65-86, 13/37/480-548, 13/84/644-647, 13/85/449-603, 13/94/448-456, 13/139/4-5.

³⁶ See especially, Wright to Germain, February 12, 1777, in Robert G. Mitchell, "Sir James Wright Looks at the American Revolution," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 53 (Winter 1969): 514

British invasion of Savannah during the winter of 1778-1779 restored crown authority in Georgia and Wright selflessly returned to Georgia in July 1779.

Within a month, his position and personal safety were again in serious peril as a French fleet arrived at Tybee Island. Although British and Loyalist forces repelled the ensuing siege of Savannah, Wright never possessed the military and patronage options within Georgia to fully restore crown authority. Almost three years after his return to Savannah, General Sir Guy Carleton, the new British commander-in-chief in America ordered the complete evacuation of Savannah and Georgia; much to the utter astonishment, heartbreak, and anger of Wright who still believed that even a meager force of troops could protect the province. Two months later, he left Georgia, never to return.

Upon his return to England, an embittered Wright worked assiduously to receive compensation for himself and other southern Loyalists.³⁷ In his official Loyalist claim, he reported the loss of 231 slaves and 23,544 acres of land. The Loyalist Commission accepted his claim for property loss valued at £100,260.11. After much haggling, they awarded him £32,977, the largest single award granted to a Loyalist.³⁸

Barely three years after the fall of the provincial government in Georgia, Wright died at his home on Fludyer Street, Westminster, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. During his

(hereafter, *GHQ*); James Wright Memorial, October 8, 1777, in MsCRG, 39:4-9; and Wright to Germain, October 8, 1777, in *GHS Collections*, 3:245-248.

³⁷ Kenneth Coleman, "James Wright" in *Georgians in Profile: Historical Essays in Honor of Ellis Merton Coulter*, ed. Horace Montgomery (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 60.

³⁸ Mitchell, "The Losses and Compensation of Georgia Loyalists," *GHQ* 68, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 233-243. Wright's claim amounted to 11% of all of Georgia claims, his award totaled 14%. See also, Lambert, "The Confiscation of Loyalist Property in Georgia, 1782-1786," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Series, 20, no. 1 (January 1963): 80-94 (hereafter, *WMQ*).

three decades as governor, Georgia grew to maturity as a colony, thriving economically, socially, and politically. He was, according to historian Kenneth Coleman, “the best qualified royal governor of Georgia and one of the most able chief executives ever to hold that position in Georgia’s long history.”³⁹ Indeed he was. Amidst the whirlwind of the imperial crisis in 1773, Wright addressed the Upper House of the Georgia Assembly: “I ever meant to discharge my duty as a faithful servant of the Crown, and can with the greatest truth declare I also meant at the same time to promote to the utmost of my power and abilities the true interest of the people.”⁴⁰

The February 27, 1786 edition of Charleston’s *Columbian Herald*, a short-lived semi-weekly newspaper, reprinted an obituary from a December 12 London newspaper that must have elicited mixed emotions from the lowcountry elite:

On Sunday last died Sir James Wright, Baronet, late Governor of Georgia, in the 71st year of his age. As he presided in that province for two and twenty years with distinguished ability and integrity, it seems to be a tribute justly due to his merit as a faithful servant of his king and Country. Before the commotions in America, his example of industry and skill in the cultivation and improvement of Georgia was of eminent advantage; and the faithful discharge of his executive and judicial commission was universally acknowledged, by the people over whom he presided, none of his decrees as Chancellor having ever been reversed.⁴¹

HISTORIOGRAPHY

This work will afford special attention to five historiographic areas: revolutionary-era Loyalism, the Atlantic realm, the frontier, lowcountry slavery, and Native American relations.

³⁹ Kenneth Coleman, ed., *A History of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 47-48.

⁴⁰ Reply of James Wright to Upper House of Assembly in reply to address of congratulations upon return to Georgia from England, February 15, 1773, in *CRG*, 17:688-690.

⁴¹ *Columbian Herald*, February 27, 1786. Interestingly, no mention was made in the *Columbian Herald* of Wright’s service to South Carolina as attorney general and colonial agent. The February 23 edition of the *Gazette of the State of Georgia* also reprinted this obituary, though in a much more concise, impersonal manner.

Although this introduction has artificially separated these fields, they are in fact inseparable. Anthropologist Sydney Mintz perfectly illustrated this point in his 1996 essay on the Caribbean. “Lifeways of all the peoples we study,” he insisted, “are forever subject to influences from elsewhere, and are forever in flux.... They are historical products, processual products, such that most categories and continuum run the risk of immobilizing and misrepresenting them.”⁴² Their very interconnectedness is what make this project complex and intriguing.

“FORMAL AND ALOOF”: HISTORIOGRAPHY OF JAMES WRIGHT

Only four historians have delved substantially into the career of James Wright: Kenneth Coleman, W. W. Abbot, Edward Cashin, and Robert Calhoun. Additionally, William J. Tolleson wrote his 1938 masters’ thesis about Georgia’s former governor, relying solely on secondary and printed primary sources. Of these, however, none has devoted more time and effort to studying the life of Wright than Coleman. Any examination of Wright’s life must begin with a thorough evaluation of his work. As early as 1954, the former University of Georgia professor busied himself with preparations for a Wright biography.⁴³ Although this project never reached fruition, Coleman did publish several essays.⁴⁴

⁴² Sydney Mintz, “Enduring Substances, Trying Theories: The Caribbean Regime as Oikoumene,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2, no. 2 (June 1996): 292. See also, John McCusker and Kenneth Morgan, eds., *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁴³ See Trevor Reese to Kenneth Coleman, November 29, 1954, in which Reese states that Coleman’s proposed biography of Wright “would certainly be of value and ought to shed some light on the social and more personal aspects of colonial government.” Kenneth Coleman Papers (unprocessed), MS3478, Box 8, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia, Athens (hereafter, Coleman Papers, Hargrett Library).

⁴⁴ Coleman, “James Wright,” 40-60; Coleman, “James Wright and the Origins of the Revolution in Georgia,” in *The Human Dimensions of Nation Making: Essays on Colonial and Revolutionary America*, ed. James Kirby Martin (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976): 105-120 and Coleman, “Oglethorpe and James Wright: A Georgia Comparison,” in *Ogle-*

He deemed Wright to be “ideally qualified to be a colonial governor – probably better qualified than most of his fellow governors.”⁴⁵ Moreover, Coleman recognized that Wright “identified himself completely with the colony and became a leader in many ways,” maintaining an unusually strong relationship with both houses of the Georgia legislature for much of his tenure.⁴⁶ This relationship allowed him to successfully navigate the early years of the imperial crisis. Coleman understood the vital positive impact Wright made upon Georgia’s economic and spatial growth.⁴⁷ He ably negotiated the Indian land cessions of 1763 and 1773 and maintained, with great difficulty, Indian peace. Coleman’s essential conclusion was that Wright was an eighteenth-century conservative who believed in hierarchy, order, and duty, especially to the Crown, although in the end Wright simply could not understand the changes happening in his midst.⁴⁸ Coleman’s understanding is astute, although not entirely accurate. His portrayals of the governor tend to depict Wright as an unquestioning bureaucrat. This study will definitively illustrate that though Wright was obedient, he was no sycophant. Additionally, this investigation

thorpe in Perspective: Georgia’s Founder after Two Hundred Years, ed. Phinzy Spalding and Harvey Jackson (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1989): 122-130. See also, Coleman, “James Wright and the Growth of Georgia, 1760-1776,” (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Historians Association, 1960) and Coleman, “Sir James Wright: Georgia’s Last Colonial Governor,” (Paper presented at Valdosta State College, 1967). Each of these presented papers are located in the Coleman Papers, Hargrett Library.

⁴⁵ Coleman, “Oglethorpe and James Wright: a Georgia Comparison,” 126.

⁴⁶ Coleman, “Oglethorpe and James Wright: a Georgia Comparison,” 127. See also the quote within the title of this dissertation, for example.

⁴⁷ Coleman, “Sir James Wright: Georgia’s Last Colonial Governor,” 8. He wrote: “Wright’s greatest successes as governor undoubtedly came in the economic growth of the colony which he fostered so carefully and where he made considerable progress.”

⁴⁸ See “Wright biographical memo” in Coleman Papers, Hargett Library.

hopes to illuminate aspects of Wright's career which relate to Native Americans and Blacks that Coleman generally omitted.

Cashin's portrait of Wright is similar to that of Coleman, although he does centrally locate the backcountry inhabitants, both "red" and "white." While Cashin's examination of Wright is essentially spatially and temporally limited to the frontier and the pre-Revolutionary era, he found a colonial governor whose praises were sung from "Whitehall to Savannah."⁴⁹ Ironically, though, Cashin dated the genesis of Wright's demise to the very land cession which initially made him so popular. The 1773 Land Cession, according to Cashin, angered two significant backcountry groups who would become a thorn in his side during the war. The Creeks were resentful that the Cherokees had given up certain lands that both tribes jointly claimed and the backcountry "Crackers" believed that prices for the new lands unfairly excluded them. Additionally, Cashin insisted that missteps in British imperial policy "precipitated a war in the backcountry" and "thus the seeds of war had been sown by an official policy that sought to protect the Indian trade while promoting rapid settlement by people hostile to the trade."⁵⁰

This thesis has real merit and a deeper examination should provide answers to at least a few questions. First, where exactly does the backcountry fit into the greater Revolutionary crisis in Georgia? Second, what was the British imperial policy regarding the Georgia backcountry? Did it differ from the policies in South Carolina, for example? Were there alternatives? Finally,

⁴⁹ Cashin, "Sowing the Wind," 233.

⁵⁰ Cashin, "Sowing the Wind," 234 and 239. See also, Cashin, "But Brothers, It is Our Land We are Talking About": Winners and Losers in the Georgia Backcountry," in *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution*, eds. Ronald Hoffman, Thad Tate, and Peter Albert (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1985). Louis DeVorsey judged Wright's backcountry policies an abject failure. Louis DeVorsey, "The Colonial Georgia Backcountry," in *Colonial Augusta: "Key of the Indian Countrey,"* Cashin, ed. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986).

did James Wright's aristocratic, conservative leanings play a decisive role in backcountry policy?

William Abbot devoted five of the eight chapters in *The Royal Governors of Georgia* to James Wright. Abbot examined Wright's positive impact on colonial Georgia during the 1760s and early 1770s, the governor's response to the Stamp Act crisis, the growing friction between the House of Assembly and Wright, and, lastly, the triumph of the Liberty faction. Abbot, like other Wright investigators, rightfully depicted the governor as "formal and aloof, sometimes stern and . . . [at times] unyielding, even arrogant."⁵¹ Interestingly, Abbot disagreed with Cashin's assessment of the genesis, or at least the primary cause, of Georgia's entry into the war. He believed that colonial Georgians lacked the imagination "to reject the advantages of explosive prosperity and rapid expansion under the patently invaluable leadership of Sir James Wright for" the abstract notion of "fundamental rights."⁵² Instead, he argued, Georgians were swept away in the tide of the revolutionary fervor of the other colonies. Most incendiary of these colonies was neighboring South Carolina. Wright's correspondence consistently reveals his enmity for the rabble rousing Carolinians who incessantly stirred trouble in Georgia.⁵³ The primary criticism of Abbot's analysis of Wright is that his, like Coleman's, is essentially a top-down approach.

⁵¹ Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 86. Coleman acknowledged that Wright enjoyed great popularity among the "better sort of people" – the only kind he desired popularity with." Coleman, "James Wright," 41. Cashin characterized Wright as being contemptuous of the backcountry sort as being the "worst kind of people." Cashin, "Sowing the Wind," 236, 238, and 241, for example. Calhoon noted Wright's "aloofness" as well. Calhoon, *The Loyalists of Revolutionary America*, 7.

⁵² Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 181. See also, Abbot, "A Cursory View of Eighteenth-Century Georgia," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 61 (1962): 339-344.

⁵³ For example, see Wright to George Germain, March 20, 1776, in *GHS Collections*, 3:239-241. In a letter written from the safety of one His Majesty's ships, Wright complains that Georgians are now "totally under the Influence and Direction of the Carolina People." See also, David R.

Lastly, Robert Calhoon strategically positioned his erudite study of Wright in what he termed the “pride of place – chapter one.”⁵⁴ Calhoon described an astute, yet conflicted, governor who struggled with a dual identity as both Briton and colonist. Wright’s thorough “knowledge of the eighteenth-century development of the Southern mainland colonies” and his understanding of the complexities of British imperialism equipped him better than most colonial governors.⁵⁵ Notably, Calhoon sensed in Wright a deep feeling of insecurity, though not a personal insecurity. Wright’s insecurity lay in Georgia’s rapid success under his leadership. The celerity with which Georgia’s elite, specifically planters and merchants, attained their status and wealth made them less likely to play second fiddle to an appointed leader. Moreover, Calhoon found in Wright a defender of American liberties, citing a 1775 letter from the governor to the Assembly. Wright argued, “You may be advocates for liberty: so am I, but in a constitutional and legal way. You, Gentlemen, are legislators, and let me entreat you to take heed how you give a sanction to trample upon law and government, and be assured that it is an indisputable truth that where there is no law there can be no liberty.”⁵⁶ Calhoon has spent his entire career exploring the complex lives and ideologies of Loyalists, and he centrally locates Wright in his studies. Again missing from his analysis of Wright is a nuanced examination of Wright’s role in Georgia’s race relations. This, as with Coleman, Cashin, and Abbot, is most indicative of the era in which much of their work was produced.

“TORTURED BY A DUAL PATRIOTISM”: LOYALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

Chestnutt, *South Carolina’s Expansion into Colonial Georgia, 1720-1765* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989).

⁵⁴ Calhoon, e-mail message to the author, August 19, 2011.

⁵⁵ Calhoon, *The Loyalists of Revolutionary America*, 4-5.

⁵⁶ Wright to the Assembly, January 18, 1775, in *CRG*, 1:34.

There are a number of incredibly useful introductions to Loyalists and Loyalism. Front and center are the works of Robert Calhoun, the doyen of Loyalist studies for more than four decades. His magnum opus, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781*, placed the Loyalists within a broad interpretive framework of the Revolution – ideological, political, military, and social.⁵⁷ His most recent work, *Tory Insurgents*, has carried his work into the twenty-first century with a focus on the relationship between ideas, actions, and patterns of practice.⁵⁸ William Nelson's groundbreaking study, *The American Tory*, examined the Loyalists' political ideology as well as their many sufferings.⁵⁹

These works, however, owe a tremendous debt to the pioneers of Loyalist scholarship. Most notable, perhaps, was Lorenzo Sabine's 1864 *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution*. Though not error-free, Sabine's trailblazing study painted a stark and deeply humanizing portrait of the Loyalists. Moses Coit Tyler and Claude H. Van Tyne submitted turn-of-the-century works with an eye toward the intellectual foundations of Loyalism.⁶⁰ Other notable surveys of Loyalism include two edited volumes by Esmond Wright: *Red, White, and True Blue: The Loyalists in the Revolution* and *A Tug of Loyalties*, Wallace Brown's *The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution*, Leslie F. S. Upton's *Revolutionary*

⁵⁷ Calhoun, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America*. This work also provides numerous mini-biographies of Loyalists.

⁵⁸ Calhoun, Timothy Barnes, and Robert Davis, eds., *Tory Insurgents: the Loyalist Perception and Other Essays* (Columbia: USC Press, 2010).

⁵⁹ William Nelson, *The American Tory* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1961).

⁶⁰ Moses Coit Tyler, *The Literary History of the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (New York: F. Ungar Publishing Company, 1957) and Claude H. Van Tyne, *The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: P. Smith, 1929).

versus Loyalist; and the narrative works of North Callahan: *Royal Raiders* and *Flight from the Republic*.⁶¹

Four specific categories of Loyalist monographs or scholarly essays inform this dissertation: those which examine the characteristics which distinguished Loyalists from Rebels; those which scrutinize the Loyalists at war; those which examine Loyalists in exile, and those which seek to explain the Revolution through the eyes of its most powerful Loyalists. The majority of the works in the first category place Loyalism firmly in the eighteenth-century conservative movement. Likely the most impressive of these is Janice Potter's, *The Liberty We Seek*.⁶²

The second category of specific utility to this work is Loyalists at war. Historians investigating this topic must consult Paul Smith's *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy*. Smith convincingly argued that Britain's failure to subdue the rebellion can largely be placed on its inability to determine exactly how to utilize the Loyalists.⁶³ Additionally, there are a number of studies with particular relevance to Georgia. The best of these is Jim

⁶¹ Esmond Wright, ed., *Red, White, and True Blue: The Loyalists in the Revolution* (New York: AMS Press, 1976) and Wright, *A Tug of Loyalties: Anglo-American Relations, 1765-85* (London: Athlone Press, 1975); Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: Morris, 1969); Leslie F. S. Upton's *Revolutionary versus Loyalist* (Waltham, MA, 1968); and North Callahan, *Royal Raiders: the Tories of the American Revolution* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963) and Callahan, *Flight from the Republic: the Tories of the American Revolution* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967).

⁶² Janice Potter-MacKinnon, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). See also, William Pencak, *America's Burke: The Mind of Thomas Hutchinson* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982); Joseph Tiedeman, Eugene Fingerhut, and Robert Venables, eds., *The Other Loyalists: Ordinary People, Royalism, and the Revolution in the Middle Colonies* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009) and John Ferling, "The American Revolution and American Security: Whig and Loyalist Views," *Historian* 40, no. 3 (May 1978): 492-507.

⁶³ Paul Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964).

Piecuch's, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1783*. Piecuch's work is especially valuable because of its inclusion of Native Americans and blacks. Patrick Furlong, Martha Searcy, and Gary Olson also address the unique situation in Georgia, especially along the frontier.⁶⁴

The next category of especially useful Loyalist historiography for this project is Loyalists in exile. Mary Beth Norton's *The British-Americans* employed the experiences of exiled Loyalists to reimagine their experiences during the revolutionary era.⁶⁵ Much more recently, Maya Jasanoff has scrutinized the Loyalist diaspora and the communities they created.⁶⁶

Biographical studies complete the Governor Wright-specific Loyalist categories. This category includes works that could also neatly fit into the categories above. The most valuable of these is Bernard Bailyn's *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*. The Hutchinson revealed through Bailyn's erudite and sensitive inquiry is a man very much like James Wright. "I am quite certain," Bailyn wrote, that "the reasons for the ultimate failure of this otherwise successful and impressive politician ... [was] his calculatingly pragmatic approach to politics, his insensi-

⁶⁴ Patrick Furlong, "Civilian-Military Conflict and the Restoration of the Royal Province of Georgia, 1778-1782," *Journal of Southern History* 38, no. 3 (August 1972): 415-442; Martha Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest in the American Revolution, 1776-1778* (; and Gary Olson, "Thomas Brown, Loyalist Partisan, and the Revolutionary War in Georgia, 1777-1782," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* (1970). See also, Robert Allen, ed., *The Loyal Americans: The Military Role of the Loyalist Provincial Corps and their Settlement in British North America, 1775-1784* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1983) and Thomas Allen, *Tories: Fighting for the King in America's First Civil War* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010).

⁶⁵ Mary Beth Norton, *The British-Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England*.

⁶⁶ Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*. See also, Robert Calhoon, G.A. Rawlyk, and T. M. Barnes, eds., *Loyalists and Communities in North America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994); Phyllis Blakely and John Grant, eds., *Eleven Exiles: Accounts of Loyalists in the American Revolution* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1982); Christopher Moore, *The Loyalists: Revolution, Exile, and Settlement* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1984).

tivity to the moral ingredients of public life and to the beliefs and passions that grip people's minds, and his incapacity to respond to aspirations that transcend the ordinary boundaries of received knowledge, prudence, and common sense."⁶⁷

Though less specifically relevant to Governor Wright, Carol Berkin's *Jonathan Sewall: Odyssey of an American Loyalist* has provided great insight into the transatlantic struggles endured by many Loyalists, as does John Ferling's biography of Joseph Galloway.⁶⁸ Although not a biography in the strictest sense, W. W. Abbot's *The Royal Governors of Georgia, 1754-1775* is indispensable as a source for illuminating Wright's career.⁶⁹ Edward Cashin's penetrating analysis of backcountry Loyalist Thomas Brown is quite useful as a guide to the complex drama which unfolded on the Georgia and South Carolina frontier.⁷⁰

So what do we know of the American Loyalists? The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century produced grand narratives of the Revolution as an example of American exceptionalism, pitting the Loyalists as mere foils to the inexorable march of progress.⁷¹ Recent historiography, however, clearly illustrates that Loyalists were virtually indistinguishable from their Rebel counter-

⁶⁷ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974), vii.

⁶⁸ Carol Berkin, *Jonathan Sewall: Odyssey of an American Loyalist* and John Ferling, *The Loyalist Mind: Joseph Galloway and the American Revolution*. See also, Lawrence H. Gipson, *American Loyalist: Jared Ingersoll*; Sheila Skemp, *William Franklin: Son of a Patriot, Servant of a King*; and Geraldine Meroney, *Inseparable Loyalty: A Biography of William Bill*.

⁶⁹ W. W. Abbot, *The Royal Governors of Georgia, 1754-1775*.

⁷⁰ Ed Cashin, *Thomas Brown and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier*.

⁷¹ Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*.

parts. Demographically, they fit comfortably in virtually any and every economic, ethnic, and racial category we can devise to categorize humans.⁷²

Both groups truly identified themselves as Americans, rather than Britons. Both groups admired and sought to emulate British culture. Both groups believed in the value of empire. Yet, in spite of these similarities, the Loyalists opposed independence. Personal issues – social, economic, and local – figured much more prominently in the decision-making process than did political ideology.⁷³ For example, Rebel intimidation pushed many Americans from a neutral position into the waiting arms of the Crown and Parliament. Moreover, family ties often dictated a person's loyalty. Others were motivated by personal economic interests. And still others simply feared change, felt more secure nestled in the British bosom, or could not comprehend that the rebellion could succeed. Of course, each of these motivations could be juxtaposed on their rebellious brethren.⁷⁴

“WEBS OF MUTUAL DEPENDENCE”: HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ATLANTIC

The Atlantic Ocean basin, directly connecting Europe and Africa with the Americas, is, perhaps, the best exemplar of this concept of interconnectedness. Eliga Gould refers to the At-

⁷² For a multiethnic emphasis see, Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*. Cassandra Pybus and, to a lesser extent, Maya Jasanoff explore the motivations of both free and enslaved blacks in supporting the British cause. Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty*; Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*; Ellen Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: Putnam's, 1976); and John Pulis, ed., *Moving On: Black Loyalists in the Afro-American World* (New York: Garland, 1999).

⁷³ For an investigation of Loyalist ideologies see, Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts*.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Wallace Brown, *The King's Friends: The Composition and Motives of the American Loyalist Claimants*.

lantic as an interconnected zone, created through the dissemination of people, products, and ideas.⁷⁵ But what exactly is the “Atlantic zone?” There is no single, or even agreed-upon, definition, a situation that Philip Morgan and Jack Greene admitted is problematic and opens the field to criticism because it is “impossible to speak with confidence of an Atlantic system, region, or civilization.”⁷⁶ David Armitage added that Atlantic history “has no agreed upon canon of problems or events, or processes. It follows no common method or practice.” It is, he said, like the ocean itself, “fluid, in motion, and potentially boundless.”⁷⁷ Moreover, there is no singular Atlantic to be studied. Rather, as Morgan and Greene have written, “the Atlantic was multitudinous, comprised of enormous variations, and lacked unity.”⁷⁸ Karin Wulf has defined the Atlantic World as “a way of conceptualizing the connections that developed and deepened in the early modern period” which focuses on the “traffic in people, commodities, culture and ideas, as well as plant and animal life and pathogens.”⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Eliga Gould, “Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds,” *American Historical Review* 112, 3 (December 2007): 784. See also, Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 59.

⁷⁶ Philip Morgan and Jack Greene, “Introduction,” in *Atlantic History: A Critical Reappraisal*, eds. Jack Greene and Philip Morgan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5-6. See also, Pamela Scully and Diana Paton, “Gender and Slave Emancipation in Comparative Perspective,” in *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World*, eds. Pamela Scully and Diana Paton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 4.

⁷⁷ David Armitage, “Introduction,” in *Britain and the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, eds. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 26. See also, Nicholas Canny, “Atlantic History and Global History,” in *Latin America and the Atlantic World, 1500-1850: Essays in Honor of Horst Pietschmann*, eds. Renate Pieper and Peer Schmidt (Köln: Böhlau, 2006), 25-34.

⁷⁸ Morgan and Greene, “Introduction,” 7.

⁷⁹ Karin Wulf, “No Boundaries?: New Terrain in Colonial American History,” *OAH Magazine of History* 25, 1 (2011), 7.

What appears certain is the Atlantic basin became integrated between roughly 1500 – 1800 creating “for the first time in human history,” according to David Eltis, a truly hemispheric community “in the sense ... that everyone living in it had values which if they were not shared around the Atlantic were reshaped in some way by others living in different parts of the Atlantic basins, and ... where events in one small geographical area were likely to stimulate a reaction – and not necessarily just economic – thousands of miles away.”⁸⁰ Jack Greene’s extensive studies of the Atlantic have led him to a similar conclusion. “Pan-Atlantic webs of association linked people, objects, and beliefs across and within the region,” he wrote in 2009. “Though always fragmented, the early modern Atlantic world came to be increasingly united through a variety of connections.”⁸¹

The study of Atlantic history affords special consideration to the multicultural, global, and cosmopolitan at the expense of the traditional imperial / nationalistic histories. Morgan and Greene praise Atlantic history for “raising historical discussions of the Atlantic world to a level that transcends both nations and empires, ... describing experiences and connections that were multiracial, multiethnic, multinational, and multi-imperial; it has provided students of small or

⁸⁰ David Eltis, “Atlantic History in Global Perspective,” *Itinerario* 23, 2 (1999): 141. See also, Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours*, 84; Nicholas Canny, “Writing Atlantic History,” *Journal of American History* 86, 3 (1999): 1107; and Erik Seeman, “Jews in the Early Modern Atlantic,” in *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500-2000*, eds. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erik Seeman (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2007), 39.

⁸¹ Greene, “Introduction,” 8. See also, David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 16; Hancock, “The British Atlantic World: Coordination, Complexity, and the Emergence of an Atlantic Market Economy, 1651-1851,” *Itinerario* 23, 2 (1999): 108, 119; Wim Klooster, “Rise and Transformation of the Atlantic World,” in *The Atlantic World: Essays on Slavery, Migration, and Imagination*, eds. Wim Klooster and Alfred Padula (New York: Prentice Hall, 2004), 30; and William O’Reilly, “Genealogies of Atlantic History,” *Atlantic Studies* 1 (2004), 60-84.

marginalized groups and places within a broader context that offers the possibility of escaping from the parochialism formerly associated with such studies.”⁸²

This supranational world created, according to J. H. Elliot, a “distinctly transnational space.”⁸³ A space in which individual cultures merged, creating a distinctively new culture. For example, Ira Berlin has discovered a group he terms “Atlantic creoles,” peoples of mixed ancestry who emerged from Euro-African contact in the Atlantic “became part of a new [cosmopolitan] culture that emerged along the Atlantic littoral” in the 1500s.⁸⁴ These Creoles, Berlin maintained, acted as intercultural mediators, “transcend[ing] the confines of particular nations and cultures.”⁸⁵ Colonial historian Trevor Burnard utilizes the term creole in discussing elite Marylanders “development of a provincial consciousness” within a transatlantic world, which sought to eschew “simple imitation” of British culture in an attempt to create something wholly new.⁸⁶ Paul Lovejoy’s take on the syncretic nature of the Atlantic has attributed substantial agency to slaves who brought their myriad cultures to the Americas, creating a uniquely African-American culture.⁸⁷ Clearly, then, as geographer D. W. Meinig stated in the early 1990s, “Instead of a European discovery of a new world, we might better consider it as a

⁸² Morgan and Greene, “Introduction,” 24.

⁸³ J. H. Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 235.

⁸⁴ Ira Berlin, “From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 53, 2 (April 1996): 254. See also, Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 29-63; and Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: a History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 21-50.

⁸⁵ Berlin, “From Creole to African,” 262.

⁸⁶ Trevor Burnard, *Creole Gentlemen: The Maryland Elite, 1691-1776* (New York: Routledge, 2002), especially chapter 7 (quotes on page 3 and 217).

⁸⁷ Paul Lovejoy, *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery* (New York: Continuum, 2009).

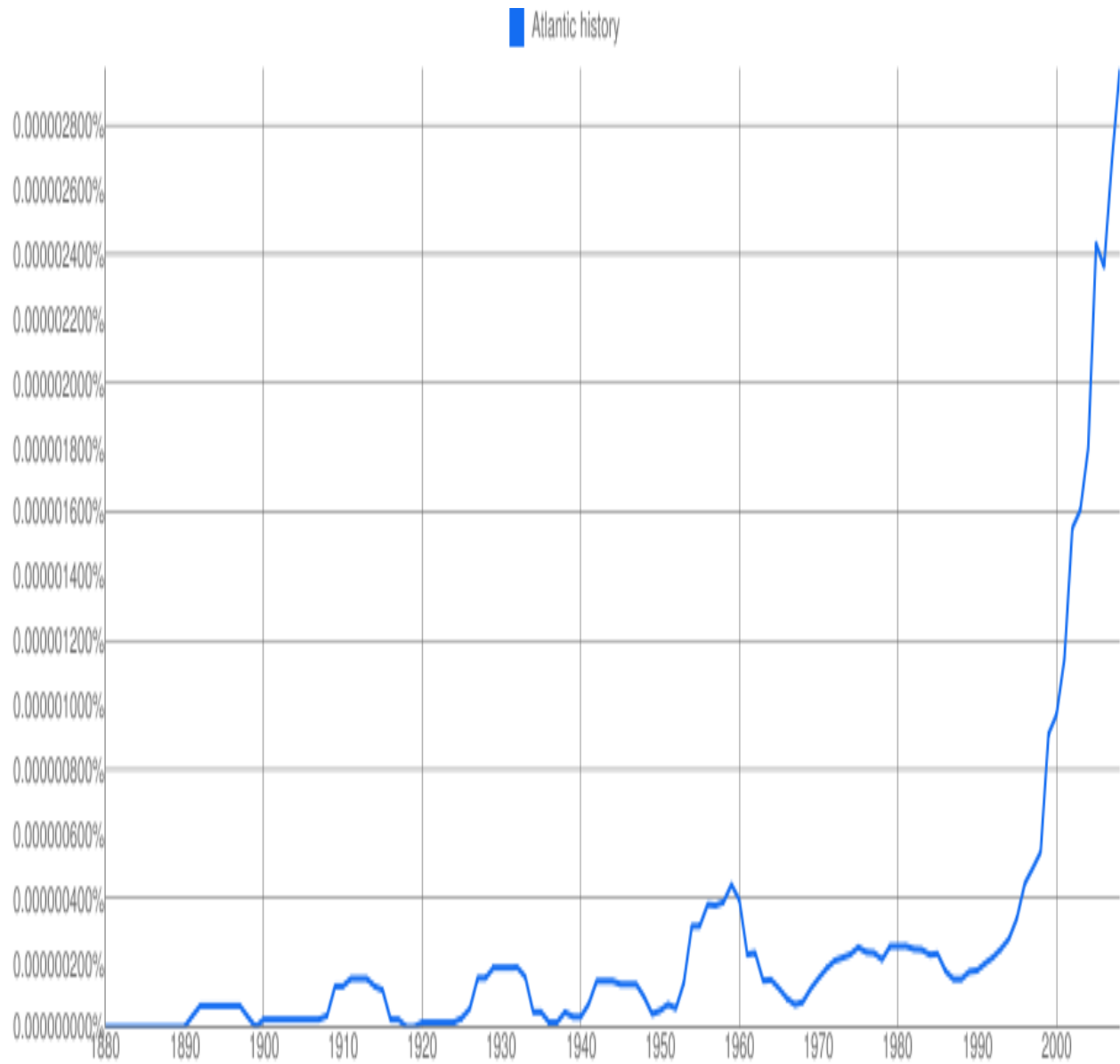
sudden and harsh encounter between two old worlds that transformed both and integrated them into a single new world.”⁸⁸

The notion of the Atlantic as a historiographically significant subject emerged during, and immediately after, the Second World War.⁸⁹ During the past three decades, however, interest in the loosely defined field has exploded (see table 2). Moreover, the field has been dominated by historians of colonial America seeking a broader understanding of American institutions.

⁸⁸ D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 65.

⁸⁹ Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours*.

Table 1.2. Occurrences of the TERM “Atlantic history” in books.⁹⁰



⁹⁰ Data generated from using Google Books Ngram viewer.

Modern American colonialists can no longer examine their subjects in isolation because, as Paul Gagnon has said, “The plain fact is that American history is not intelligible ... without a firm grasp of the life and ideas” of those parts of the globe outside of North America.⁹¹

“BEYOND THE PALE”: BACKCOUNTRY HISTORIOGRAPHY

At the 1893 annual meeting of the American Historical Association, Frederick Jackson Turner delivered a monumental essay about the significance of the frontier in American history. Henceforth, any discussion of the American frontier must begin with Turner. In his opening remarks, he stated: “The existence of an area of *free* (emphasis added) land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.”⁹² Native American Poet Laureate N. Scott Momaday described the frontier as a dream. “It is,” he said, “what people who have come here from the beginning of time have dreamed. It is a dream landscape to the Native American, it’s full of sacred realities.”⁹³ These statements ably describe the backcountry juxtaposition, in which one people wished to perpetuate their dream while another sought to create a new one.

Turner coined, at least in a historical sense, the terms “frontier” and “section,” viewing the former as a “migrating region, a stage of society rather than a place.” Sections, on the other

⁹¹ Paul Gagnon, “Why Study History?” *Atlantic Monthly* (November 1988): 46.

⁹² Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 1. The inhabitants of said land would certainly have found Turner’s claim that the area was “free” to be dubious. James Merrell rightly observed that the backcountry had been quite settled by the time of European arrival. See, James Merrell, *The Indians’ New World: Catawbas and their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989).

⁹³ N. Scott Momaday, in *Ken Burns Presents – The West: A Film by Stephen Ives*, DVD, directed by Stephen Ives (2004, Walpole, NH: Florentine Films).

hand, were molded out of frontiers and exhibited signs of community and stability.⁹⁴ He spoke of waves of migrants trekking their way into the wilderness, battling the environment and the Native Americans, to build new lives for themselves. According to Turner, it was a gloriously relentless and inevitable assault resulting in the cultural and geographic birth of an exceptional America. Leonard Thompson and Howard Lamar defined the frontier as a zone with 1) a defined territory; 2) the presence of multiple cultures; and 3) observable interaction between these cultures.⁹⁵ Historian Richard Beeman has found great similarities between the various backcountry regions during the colonial area: rapid population influxes, significant economic opportunity, substantial social mobility, notable ethnic and religious diversity, and a consistent commitment to agricultural pursuits.⁹⁶ Subsequent historians have expanded, revised, and, more recently, rejected Turner's thesis, painting a more objective and nuanced frontier and, although, many historians agree with his definitions of "frontier" and "section," most find his assessment that the settling of the frontier was a progressive event very problematic.

Philip Morgan and Bernard Bailyn have underscored the boundless and shifting nature of the frontier.⁹⁷ In addition to the geographic fluidity of the frontier, recent research has painted

⁹⁴ Turner, *Frontier in American History*, 21.

⁹⁵ Leonard Thompson and Howard Lamar, "Comparative Frontier History," In *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa*, Leonard Thompson and Howard Lamar, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 3-14.

⁹⁶ Richard R. Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry: A Case Study of Lunenburg County, Virginia, 1746-1832* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984). See also, Gregory Nobles, "Breaking into the Backcountry: New Approaches to the Early American Frontier, 1750-1800," *William and Mary Quarterly* 46, 4 (October 1989): 643-644.

⁹⁷ Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 10. See also, Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry*, 8-9, 30; George William Franz, *Paxton: A Study of Community Structure and Mobility in the Colonial Pennsylvania Backcountry* (New

the frontier as a culturally and ethnically diverse place. John Mack Faragher contended the backcountry was a “mixed cultural world” in which both goods and culture were exchanged.⁹⁸ Robert Mitchell has argued that the southern colonial backcountry was culturally quite “lumpy” and “regionally diverse,” due in no small measure to the impact of religious variance.⁹⁹ Joshua Piker has recently urged historians to reconsider this notion of the backcountry as an amorphous locale. He asserted that while this may have been true prior to the mid-eighteenth century, the backcountry evolved, at least in terms of European-Native relations, “from a geographically amorphous and culturally diverse frontier into a narrowly defined and rigidly exclusionary border.”¹⁰⁰

York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 7-8; Michael A. Bellesiles, *Revolutionary Outlaws: Ethan Allen and the Struggle for Independence on the Early American Frontier* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 46-51; Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 28; Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1763-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 195-199 and Earl Carville, “Place Your Bets: Rates of Frontier Expansion in American History, 1650-1890,” in Earle Carville, In *Enduring and Evolving Geographic Themes*, Alexander B. Murphy and Douglas L. Johnson, eds. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 195.

⁹⁸ John Mack Faragher, *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer* (New York: Holt, 1992), 19. For a specific reference to colonial Georgia as a fluid space, see Joshua Piker, “Colonists and Creeks: Rethinking the Pre-Revolutionary Southern Backcountry,” *The Journal of Southern History* 70 (August 2004): 510.

⁹⁹ Robert Mitchell, “The Southern Backcountry: A Geographical House Divided,” In *The Southern Colonial Backcountry: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Frontier Communities*, David Colin Crass, et al., eds. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 12. For the notion of religion and diversity in the backcountry, see Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 105-106 and Nobles, “Breaking into the Backcountry,” 653.

¹⁰⁰ Piker, “Colonists and Creeks,” 537.

Who comprised this diverse region, this peripheral outpost, this imperial frontier?¹⁰¹

Backcountry settlers hailed from Britain's northern colonies, migrating southward; they hailed from coastal regions, moving into the interior; and they hailed from Europe, traversing the ocean. According to Carl Bridenbaugh, the backcountry was populated by an eclectic mix of Scots-Irish, Quakers, and German immigrants from Pennsylvania.¹⁰² David Hackett Fischer has traced the origins of the southern backcountry settlers to the borderland between England and Scotland as well as the region between Ulster and Scotland.¹⁰³ Robert Mitchell rightfully maintained that the backcountry "acquired settlers from various sources."¹⁰⁴

Whether they hailed from the northern colonies, the eastern seaboard, or places abroad, settlers were seeking greater economic opportunity and freedom. Jack Greene has written that settlers were motivated by the desire for some semblance of independence.¹⁰⁵ Gregory Nobles

¹⁰¹ For this notion of the frontier as a periphery, see Wilma Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 123-145. Dunaway utilized Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory to argue that the backcountry always operated within a capitalist-like economy, with its base in London. Eric Hinderaker concurred. Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*. See also, Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). Bernard Bailyn has also compared the frontier to a "periphery, a ragged outer margin." See Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 112-113.

¹⁰² Carl Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities: Societies of the Colonial South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952). See also, Piker, "Colonists and Creeks," 507-508 and 534.

¹⁰³ David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 642-650.

¹⁰⁴ Mitchell, "The Southern Backcountry," 21.

¹⁰⁵ Jack P. Greene, "Independence, Improvement, and Authority: Toward a Framework for Understanding the Histories of the Southern Backcountry during the Era of the American Revolution," In *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution*, Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate, and Peter J. Albert, eds. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1986), 12-13.

suggested frontier migrants came from “well-defined ethnic, religious, and kinship groups” of the “lower-middling status” who sought “greater opportunity.”¹⁰⁶ Alan Taylor observed that the backcountry was an escape for the “spiritually and physically restless.”¹⁰⁷

In many instances, the settlers sought to both emulate the eastern elite and transpose eastern societal norms onto the backcountry. Perhaps the most overt efforts to imitate eastern elites was the desire to own slaves. Historians Rachel Klein and Allan Galloway have posited that although most backcountry settlers did not own slaves, doing so was a primary goal.¹⁰⁸ Richard Beeman contended that slavery lay at the heart of parvenu planters’ socioeconomic plans as they sought to recreate the hierarchical society which existed in the east. He found it ironic that these aspiring planters sought to emulate the eastern colonial elite who themselves sought to imitate the British gentry.¹⁰⁹ Nobles found that “settlement everywhere on the colonial frontier involved clear attempts to transplant familiar forms of family and community life.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Nobles, “Breaking into the Backcountry,” 648.

¹⁰⁷ Taylor, *Liberty Men*, chapter 5.

¹⁰⁸ Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: the Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Klein, “Frontier Planters and the American Revolution: The South Carolina Backcountry, 1775-1782,” in *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution*, Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate, and Peter J. Albert, eds. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986); Klein, “Ordering the Backcountry: The South Carolina Regulation,” *William & Mary Quarterly* 38, 4 (October 1981): 661-680; Klein, “Who Should Rule at Home? The Revolution in the Carolina Backcountry,” in *Major Problems in the History of the American South*, Paul Escott, David Goldfield, Sally McMillen, and Elizabeth Turner, eds. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); and Alan Galloway, *Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁹ Beeman, *Evolution of the Southern Backcountry*, 60-96. See also, Albert Tillson, *Gentry and Common Folk: Political Culture on a Virginia Frontier, 1740-1789* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 16-19 and Dunaway, *The First American Frontier*, 108-115.

¹¹⁰ Nobles, “Breaking into the Backcountry,” 648.

Mirroring elite behavior and transferring eastern culture proved quite problematic in the backcountry because the frontier tended to modify accepted community mores and guidelines.¹¹¹ Nobles and Beeman observed that such efforts met with consistent failure.¹¹² Perhaps because, as Thomas Slaughter maintained, “the frontier had a logic all its own,” which produced, independent actors . . . beyond the pale of eastern values and many eastern laws.”¹¹³

This is not to say, however, that there were not substantial similarities between the backcountry and coastal areas. Historians have found significant similarities between the two regions.¹¹⁴ A fair portion of colonial America’s “eastern values” and “eastern laws” were derived from its European ancestry. Frontier life thus created a uniquely polyglot American culture, leading Turner to opine that a closer examination of this region would fully reveal the “really American part of our history.”¹¹⁵

Although settlers often desired to emulate the eastern elite, they were mercilessly derided as social outcasts by those residing in the coastal regions of North America. Nobles asserted that the eighteenth-century elite viewed the settlers as virtually synonymous with the Indians, especially the Scots-Irish.¹¹⁶ Albert Tillson rightfully asserted that backcountry settlers were consistently belittled by those in the East as being the “dregs of human society who spend their time

¹¹¹ Joan E. Cashin, *A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 61-72.

¹¹² Nobles, “Breaking into the Backcountry,” 648 and Beeman, *Evolution of the Southern Backcountry*, 13.

¹¹³ Thomas Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 62.

¹¹⁴ Greene, “Independence, Improvement, and Authority.” See also, Nobles, “Breaking into the Backcountry,” 643-644.

¹¹⁵ Turner, *Significance of Sections in American History* (New York: P. Smith, 1950), 32.

¹¹⁶ Nobles, “Breaking into the Backcountry,” 644 and 650.

murdering wild beasts.”¹¹⁷ For example, the Reverend Samuel Frink described Georgia’s backcountry settlers as the “Refuse of Virginia North Carolina Maryland &c” who knew “little more than the Indians themselves, & are certainly worse in their behavior.”¹¹⁸ James Wright concurred, referring to settlers as “a set of almost lawless white people who are a sort of borderers and often as bad if not worse than the Indians.”¹¹⁹ Historian Kenneth Lockridge proffered an interesting rationale for such comments. He noted that the elite criticisms of settlers were tied, at least in part, to their fear that they held little sway in backcountry affairs.¹²⁰

The haughty attitude of the eastern elite no doubt led to significant conflict during the imperial crisis (roughly, 1760-1783).¹²¹ At the onset of the Revolution, the lowcountry elite in Georgia and South Carolina comprised only one-quarter to one-third of the population, but thoroughly dominated colonial politics, a situation which caused notable conflict in the Carolinas.¹²² While the lowcountry elite had become accustomed to preserving their hegemony through deference, the backcountry settlers were inclined to behave accordingly. Jack Greene has urged cau-

¹¹⁷ Tillson, *Gentry and Common Folk*, 10.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Nobles, “Breaking into the Backcountry,” 644. See also, Elizabeth Perkins, “Border Life; Experience and Perception in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley,” Ph.D. Diss. (Northwestern University, 1992), 201-202.

¹¹⁹ James Wright to Earl of Shelburne, 15 August 1767, in *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, Allen D. Candler, et al., eds. (Atlanta and Athens: Franklin and University of Georgia Press, 1904-1989), 37: 240-242.

¹²⁰ Kenneth Lockridge, *The Diary, and Life, of William Byrd II of Virginia, 1674-1744* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 139.

¹²¹ Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry*. See also, Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*; Klein, “Frontier Planters and the American Revolution”; Klein, “Ordering the Backcountry”; Klein, “Who Should Rule at Home?”; and Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 642-650.

¹²² Walter Edgar, *Partisans and Redcoats: the Southern Conflict That Turned the Tide of the American Revolution* (New York: Perennial, 2003), xi.

tion when considering the effectiveness of deference as a means of maintaining social order in the backcountry.¹²³

By the early 1760s, backcountry inhabitants in the Carolinas and Georgia began to develop their own political identity and agency.¹²⁴ As such they made themselves heard, citing English traditional law and Lockean theories to assert their rights.¹²⁵ Backcountry leaders did not typically seek full autonomy. Rather, they desired a more efficient and locally responsive government.¹²⁶ Jeffrey Crow thoughtfully argued that the subsequent hostilities between the back- and lowcountry “reflected [these] deep-seated class tensions ... which pitted back country farmers against the provincial elite.”¹²⁷ Continental general Nathanael Greene lamented the result of such regional strains: “Nothing can be more unfortunate to a people than to have a general inclination to plunder each other, it destroys the merit and glory of the Soldier and distresses and disgraces the Citizen.”¹²⁸

¹²³ Greene, “Independence, Improvement, and Authority.” See also, Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry*.

¹²⁴ Nobles, “Breaking into the Backcountry,” 643.

¹²⁵ Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors*. See also, Tillson, *Gentry and Common Folk*, 45.

¹²⁶ Tillson, *Gentry and Common Folk*, 64-77; Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 127-131; Bellesiles, *Revolutionary Outlaws*, 138-141; and Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry*, 43-51.

¹²⁷ Jeffrey Crow, “Liberty Men and Loyalists: Disorder and Disaffection in the North Carolina Backcountry,” in *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution*, Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate, and Peter J. Albert, eds. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985), 127-128.

¹²⁸ Nathanael Greene to Isaac Shelby, 2 August 1781, in Showman and Conrad, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 9: 127.

Interestingly, though, the Revolutionary war also served to unify large segments of the colonial population, especially in the South.¹²⁹ Slaughter observed that the Revolution provided an “occasion, and a language, for resolving [these] perennial complaints of wilderness life.”¹³⁰ Beeman clearly stated how these adversaries came together during the war with Britain. He argued that Rebel (Whig) governments subdued the Indians and local banditti, made legislative concessions to the settlers, provided for debtor relief, and extended religious toleration.¹³¹

“MINUET”: EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SLAVERY HISTORIOGRAPHY

As noted above, backcountry leaders and the lowcountry elite found common ground regarding slavery. A discussion of slavery, as with all things historical, is multifaceted and complex. This project will, however, afford special attention to two primary issues: proslavery ideology and the broader institution as a whole, with the understanding that the latter itself must be further subdivided.

In *Domesticating Slavery*, historian Jeffrey Young revealed how a sophisticated slave ownership ideology emerged in Georgia during the eighteenth-century. The seemingly simple act of “domesticating” their chattel gave slaveowners a moral justification for human bondage.

¹²⁹ Louis DeVorse and Carl Bridenbaugh date the unification process to the late 1760s and early 1770s. See, DeVorse, “The Colonial Georgia Backcountry,” 20; Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities*, chapter 3; Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); and Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry*.

¹³⁰ Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 31-32. See also, Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry*, 141-142; Tillson, *Gentry and Common Folk*, 101-137; and Daniel P. Barr, “Beyond the Pale: An Overview of Recent Scholarship Pertaining to the Colonial Backcountry,” *Early America Review* (Fall 1998). <http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/fall98/explore.html>.

¹³¹ Beeman, *The Evolution of the Backcountry*. See also, Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*; Klein, “Frontier Planters and the American Revolution”; Klein, “Ordering the Backcountry”; Klein, “Who Should Rule at Home?”

From U. B. Phillips to Eugene Genovese, historians have debated proslavery ideology. Since the early 1960s, however, the polemical dust has settled into two distinct corners. The first views slaveowners as “racist but savvy entrepreneurs who embraced liberal democratic values.”¹³² The contrasting opinion envisions masters as “would-be paternalistic stewards who defended their” ordered society against the “specters of capitalism and egalitarianism.”¹³³ George Frederickson conditionally concurred, believing that proslavery thought supported Enlightenment principles, but only as a prerogative for whites.¹³⁴

Genovese has argued that planters’ sense of paternalism highly valued “family and status” and adhered to a “strong code of honor.”¹³⁵ Slaveowners, he insisted, could defend their institution because, unlike wage employers in the North, they could offer their “employees” kindness and intimacy because they were “bound under many sacred obligations to treat [the slaves] with humanity at all times.”¹³⁶ Moreover, masters believed Christianity provided the foundation

¹³² Jeffrey R. Young, *Domesticating Slavery: The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 4.

¹³³ Young, *Domesticating Slavery*, 4. Joyce Chaplin has suggested that proslavery theory in the lowcountry was humanitarian in nature. See Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). See also, Drew Gilpin Faust who maintained that proslavery *thinkers* were reform-minded individuals who mirrored the social improvement movement then taking shape in the Atlantic region.

¹³⁴ George Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper Row, 1971).

¹³⁵ Eugene Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), 28. See also, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Not everyone, however, agreed that paternalism existed in the nineteenth century. See, James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Norton, 1998).

¹³⁶ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 602. Conversely, Daniel Kilbride theorized that the planter elite was intimately connected with the elite elements of northern society. Kilbride, “Cultivation, Conservatism, and the Early Nation-

for both slavery and a hierarchical society.¹³⁷ Young has found an “organic” justification in the creation of this hierarchy: The Bible and a social theory which emphasized the mutually beneficial nature of paternalism.¹³⁸ Ralph Morrow agreed, finding substantial evidence that proslavery ideologues sought to strengthen the moral foundations upon which slavery rested. Owners consistently expressed “guilt and doubt” about the institution of slavery.¹³⁹

Young, however, has suggested an alternative approach; albeit one that encompasses the two existing camps. His evaluation of commercial, cultural, and political developments has unveiled a proslavery ideology which emerged as a “form of cultural capital, mirroring numerous elements of the anti-slavery sentiment spreading across England and the northern colonies. Thus, according to Young, it was only through slaveowners’ wide-ranging participation in a “transatlantic intellectual community” that this ideology could mature – a philosophy which ultimately led to their cultural isolation from Western society.¹⁴⁰

al Gentry: The Manigault Family and their Circle,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, 2 (Summer 1999): 221-256.

¹³⁷ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 245. See also, S. Max Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). Edelson argued that lowcountry society was especially hierarchical and elitist. For this notion of elitism and class strife in Georgia, see also Mart A. Stewart, *“What Nature Suffers to Groe” : Life, Labor and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002).

¹³⁸ Young, *Domesticating Slavery*. Young has also traced the roots for proslavery ideology to the ancient Greeks and Romans as well as more modern philosophers like John Locke. See also, Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* and Erskine Clarke, *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. Clarke locates paternalism at the heart of what he called “Christian imperialism.”

¹³⁹ Ralph Morrow, “The Proslavery Argument Revisited.” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 48 (June 1961), 84. See also, Clarke, *Dwelling Place*. Clarke expertly illustrated the degree to which owners struggled with this issue.

¹⁴⁰ Young, *Domesticating Slavery*, 5 and 10. Michael O’Brien has also argued for the existence of a truly transatlantic element of Southern proslavery thought. O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order:*

By the middle of the eighteenth-century, lowcountry slaveowners became increasingly concerned about their transatlantic image. Modern enlightened thought looked askance at the peculiar institution and, ever desirous to emulate the British elite, they feared that their status as masters severely hampered the realization of this goal.¹⁴¹ Accordingly, Young insisted, southern proslavery ideology began to evolve, moving from a harsh patriarchalism to a gentler paternalism. He maintained that this trend accelerated in the nineteenth-century precisely when the capitalist markets saturated the young republic and a burgeoning American bourgeoisie defined the home as a “sanctuary of love and comfort.”¹⁴²

Crucially, this paternalistic ethos which links societal interests with communal interests, something Young called “corporate individualism,” provided a poignant rebuttal to the charges levied by the anti-slavery factions. Moreover, corporate individualism defined freedom as a conditional right, reserved for those who exhibited *moral* maturity (emphasis added). This self-serving individualism provided slaveowners’ with the moral excuse to subordinate certain members of society for the owners’ betterment.¹⁴³ It is the very individualized nature of southern paternalism that Young feared is too often overlooked in favor of the more traditional Genoesean paradigm.¹⁴⁴ Thus, this new southern cultural capital which pressed so diligently to refute what they deemed to be the modern corrupting influences just beginning to inculcate the north,

Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

¹⁴¹ Young, *Domesticating Slavery*, 18.

¹⁴² Young, *Domesticating Slavery*, 8. See also, Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeomen Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Lowcountry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁴³ Young, *Domesticating Slavery*, 10.

¹⁴⁴ See, Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*.

“proceeded from the same domestic standards that under-pinned middle-class family life in the North.”¹⁴⁵

Writing in the early twentieth century, Ulrich B. Phillips set the tone for subsequent slavery studies. The son of a slaveowner, Phillips believed Africans to be ideally suited to slave labor. Moreover, he posited that blacks were beneficiaries of a benign, albeit patriarchal, institution.¹⁴⁶ In a similar, though not identical, vein, Genovese has argued that slavery was a mutually beneficial, paternalistic enterprise.¹⁴⁷ Kenneth Stampp disagreed, insisting that rather than a paternalistic endeavor, slavery was a practical system of ruthlessly controlling and exploiting the labor force for maximum profit.¹⁴⁸ Frank Tannenbaum’s transatlantic study also depicted North American slavery as particularly brutal and without benefit to the laborer.¹⁴⁹

Peter Wood has utilized the terms “slave labor camp” and “gulag” to define “plantation.”¹⁵⁰ Philip Morgan added that “no region in the United States had a harsher form of slavery

¹⁴⁵ Young, *Domesticating Slavery*, 10.

¹⁴⁶ Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1918).

¹⁴⁷ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*.

¹⁴⁸ Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956).

¹⁴⁹ Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1947). Tannenbaum’s central thesis in comparing North American and Latin American slavery was that the latter was a milder, more beneficial to the slave, less racist, and was abolished with much less bloodshed.

¹⁵⁰ Peter Wood, “Slave Labor Camps in Early America: Overcoming Denial and Discovering the Gulag,” in Carla Gardiner Pestana and Sharon V. Salingers, eds. *Inequality in Early America* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999).

than the lowcountry.”¹⁵¹ Building upon Tannenbaum’s work, Stanley Elkins argued that slavery was so thoroughly barbarous that bondsmen suffered deep psychological wounds. This “Sambo” thesis described slaves as “docile, but irresponsible, loyal, but lazy, humble, but chronically given to lying and stealing, [accompanied by behavior] full of infantile silliness and talk inflated with childish exaggeration. His relationship with his master was one of utter dependence and childlike attachment.”¹⁵² Both Tannenbaum and Elkins found North American slavery to be substantially more savage than its Brazilian counterpart. Carl Degler added that although official secular and religious policy may suggest a gentler form of servitude, the application of such intentions was generally ignored.¹⁵³

Historians have since repudiated Elkins’ “Sambo” thesis, arguing that rather than being docile, needy children, slaves exhibited great agency. Genovese has posited that slaves continually negotiated the terms of the servitude and shared mutual obligations and mutual dependence with their owners.¹⁵⁴ Erskine Clarke extended this notion to include a mutual vulnerability.¹⁵⁵ Ira Berlin beautifully expressed this complex relationship.

The minuet between master and slave, when played to the contrapuntal music of paternalism, was a constant, as master and slave continually renegotiated the small space allotted them. But the stylized movements – the staccato gyrations, the seductive feints, the swift withdrawals, and the hateful embraces – represented

¹⁵¹ Philip Morgan, *African American Life in the Georgia Lowcountry: the Atlantic World and the Gullah Geechee* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 3.

¹⁵² Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 82. See also, Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1987).

¹⁵³ Carl Degler, *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1971).

¹⁵⁴ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*.

¹⁵⁵ Clark, *Dwelling Place*.

just one of many dances of domination and subordination, resistance and accommodation.¹⁵⁶

In looking at the race question from the more common form of interracial interaction, that between non-elite whites and blacks (slave or otherwise), Timothy Lockley has noted that “racial barriers were indeed ‘lines in the sand,’ lines that were impermanent, movable, and vulnerable, but still existed.”¹⁵⁷ Aside from negotiating the terms of their bondage, slaves exhibited agency through the perpetuation of their traditional culture.

Genovese depicted an autonomous slave community, rife with cultural and social variety, notable for the limited ways in which masters exhibited control of their chattel.¹⁵⁸ Clarke observed that in the lowcountry, Gullah culture was allowed to freely form and mature, in no small measure due to the virtual absence of whites from such plantations.¹⁵⁹ Mary Beth Norton observed the many ways in which slaves perpetuated their culture, through naming practices, the transference of trades, and the establishment of intricate extended kinship networks within and between plantations.¹⁶⁰ Peter Wood fully rejected the “Sambo” thesis, emphasizing not just slave agency, but value. He insisted that the role of the “black majority was major rather than

¹⁵⁶ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 4. See also, Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944); John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of American Negroes* (New York: Knopf, 1947); and John Blasingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

¹⁵⁷ Timothy Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 165.

¹⁵⁸ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. See also, Kolchin, *Unfree Labor*.

¹⁵⁹ Clarke, *Dwelling Place*. See also, Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint* and Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*.

¹⁶⁰ Mary Beth Norton, Herbert G. Gutman, and Ira Berlin, “The Afro-American Family in the Age of Revolution,” in *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution*, Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

minor, active, rather than passive. Negro slaves played a significant and often determinative part in the evolution of' South Carolina.¹⁶¹

In Many Thousands Gone, Ira Berlin has provided a broad metahistory of American slavery, examining its temporal evolution and geographic uniqueness.¹⁶² In studying slavery over such a comprehensive space and time, Berlin has discovered a very dynamic and fluid institution. As such, it is best understood when viewed generation by generation, rather than as a monolithic, static institution. His study depicted slaves as active agents in their own lives, constantly negotiating the terms of bondage.

Berlin tackles three basic issues: racism, generations of slavery, and the geography of slavery. Unlike Barbara Fields, he believes that slavery had more of an impact on race than the other way around, growing in the North to enhance the self-worth of the "common man" and in the South to reinforce the planter patriarchy.¹⁶³ Likely the most important aspect of Berlin's book is his examination of the five generations of slavery: charter, plantation, revolution, migratory, and freedom. The charter generation was known for its cultural sophistication. Large numbers of this generation were Atlantic Creoles, products of the vast, multicultural transatlantic world, who often served as cultural mediators.¹⁶⁴ Fluidity best defined this era of slavery. Plantation generation slaves were less fortunate than their predecessors and successors as they

¹⁶¹ Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Norton, 1975), 56.

¹⁶² Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*.

¹⁶³ Barbara J. Fields. "Ideology and Race in American History." in *Race and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

¹⁶⁴ Berlin defined the Atlantic Creoles as people of mixed ancestry who emerged from Euro-African contact in the Atlantic and "became part of a new [cosmopolitan] culture that emerged along the "Atlantic littoral." Berlin, "From Creole to African," 254.

were forced to work, typically, on large plantations and under increasingly harsh conditions. These slaves were members of the first American “slave societies.” Slave societies were societies in which slavery and slave-produced goods dominated the economy. Berlin maintained that during this era, the term “black” became synonymous with “slavery” and “inferior.”

Diversity marked the revolutionary generation.¹⁶⁵ The era of the American Revolution brought about increasing numbers of free blacks in the colonies.¹⁶⁶ In the North slavery was soon abolished; in the South, bondsmen were generally very quick to capitalize on both the rhetoric of liberty and the disruptions of war to rebel or escape.¹⁶⁷ The migratory generation is noted for its geographic move to the American interior. Berlin characterized this era of bondage as the most pernicious, violent, and dehumanizing in the history of North American slavery. He also

¹⁶⁵ See also, Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961); Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); and Jim Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008).

¹⁶⁶ More on this topic later, but also see, Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 308-311.

¹⁶⁷ See also, Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*; Frey, *Water from the Rock*; Piecuch, *Three Peoples*; and Gary Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: the Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006). Nash has written several books which deal with this subject. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); *Nash, Race and Revolution* (Madison: Madison House, 1990); Nash, *Race, Class, and Politics: Essays on American Colonial and Revolutionary Society* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); and Nash, *Red, White, and Black: the Peoples of Early North America* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000).

emphasized the organic, temporally and spatially, nature of slavery, arguing that it did not evolve in a linear fashion.¹⁶⁸

In his comparative study of slavery in the Chesapeake and the South Carolina lowcountry, Philip Morgan argued that ecological concerns created two distinct forms of slavery.¹⁶⁹ He also maintained, much like Berlin, that eighteenth-century slavery was quite different from its predecessor and successor. Importantly, he finds an inverse relationship between autonomy and material comfort.

Although slave labor was not essential to the production of tobacco, it was, perhaps, more profitable than free labor. Tobacco plantations were typically smaller (thus employed fewer slaves) and more agriculturally diversified. The work of producing tobacco, however, was especially tedious, time-consuming, and virtually year-round. Additionally, it required nearly constant maintenance and supervision, most often from white overseers. With this constant supervision, it proved difficult for blacks to create a distinct culture.

Moreover, because tobacco did not require a large number of hands (slave or otherwise), there grew in the Chesapeake a large non-slaveholding population of tobacco farmers. This, coupled with soil exhaustion, pushed tobacco cultivation further into the interior over time. Morgan also suggested that, for a variety of reasons, Chesapeake slaves enjoyed a more healthy diet and faced less severe punishment than their lowcountry brethren.

¹⁶⁸ See also, Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Morgan also noted that ecological concerns were primary factors in determining the regional variations of slavery.

¹⁶⁹ Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*.

In the Carolina and Georgia coastal regions, the most important crop was rice, which necessitated a large workforce (unlike the Chesapeake). Thus, rice plantations were larger, employed more slaves (typically male), and created an overall demographic black majority.¹⁷⁰ Additionally, rice did not exhaust the soil and thus there was much less need for the population, black and white, to relocate. Slaves on these plantations were assigned daily tasks, after the completion of which they were “free” to do as they pleased. The task-system, along with the deadly nature of the swampy areas on which these plantations resided, afforded slaves more autonomy than their Chesapeake counterparts. Thus, they could build generational communities and develop a unique culture of their own.¹⁷¹

In addition to the temporal and spatial similarities and differences within North America, slavery must also be explored in the greater transatlantic context. Patrick Manning’s study of the history of black people during the past five hundred years is not nation-state specific, but rather one of an interconnected international people.¹⁷² Importantly he acknowledged the Atlantic Ocean to be a fluid pathway which connected migratory Africans with one another and others. Moreover, he gives agency to blacks and a central importance in the creation of the modern world. Miles Ogborn has noted just such a contribution in the formation of the transatlantic slave trade. “African merchants and rulers,” he wrote, “skillfully negotiated their place in the

¹⁷⁰ See also, Wood, *Black Majority*.

¹⁷¹ Clarke, *Dwelling Place*.

¹⁷² Patrick Manning, *The African Diaspora: A History Through Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). See also, Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*; Berlin, “From Creole to African”; and Wood, *Black Majority*.

new Atlantic economy,” setting its terms and conditions.¹⁷³ S. Max Edelson has placed lowcountry slavery squarely within a global framework, effectively employing the core-periphery model as a method of better understanding colonial servitude. He suggested that colonial planters, and merchants, were especially inventive, augmenting their English agricultural roots with the knowledge and -labor of African slaves. Moreover, they proved especially adept at maximizing the unique advantages offered by the lowcountry landscape. Thus, they were admirably successful in both their pursuit of wealth and status in the emerging transatlantic economy.¹⁷⁴

Historians have sufficiently proven that Africans successfully maintained their culture after coming to the New World. In *Black Majority*, Peter Wood noted the utility of slaves in the intellectual importation of rice production into the Carolina lowcountry.¹⁷⁵ Judith Carney has also emphasized the diffusion of crops and agricultural knowledge from Africa to the New World as part of the Columbian Exchange, many of which became American staples. Similarly, Paul Lovejoy emphasized the syncretic nature of the diaspora, defining it as a “web of connections” which guaranteed the perpetuation of African cultures.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives: Britain and the World, 1550-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 126.

¹⁷⁴ Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*. Studies concerning the Atlantic / global nature of the slave trade continue apace. See also, Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1944); Phillip Curtain, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (New York, 1969); Joseph Inikori and Stanley Engerman, eds., *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economics, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe* (Durham, NC, 1992); Herbert Klein, *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: the Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1997); David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (New York, 2000); Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis*.

¹⁷⁵ Wood, *Black Majority*.

¹⁷⁶ Paul Lovejoy, *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 21. Lovejoy correctly acknowledges that it is difficult to ascertain identities because of their fluidity. See al-

The American Revolution proved an especially important epoch in the history of North American slavery. The war resulted in both the expansion and curtailment of black liberty. This “simultaneous expansion of black bondage and black autonomy provides a central theme for understanding Afro-American life in the Revolutionary lowcountry.”¹⁷⁷ Sylvia Frey asserted that the British acceptance, albeit reluctantly, of blacks into their forces weakened the peculiar institution.¹⁷⁸ Philip Morgan acknowledged that although slavery became more racialized, lowcountry slaves gained more independence from their masters.¹⁷⁹ Gary Nash observed that the “Revolution represents the largest slave uprising” in American history as slaves found the greatest opportunities for applying [revolutionary ideology] by fleeing to the very forces against which Americans directed their ideological barbs.”¹⁸⁰ On the other hand, Berlin argued that the Revolution extended slavery by both “strengthen[ing] the plantation regime” as well as giving “rise to a new slave order on the frontier.”¹⁸¹ Douglas Egerton agreed, insisting that the Founders failed, not having fully fulfilled the promise of the Revolution.¹⁸²

so, Michael Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) and Morgan, *African American Life in the Georgia Lowcountry*.

¹⁷⁷ Berlin, “Introduction,” in *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution*, Berlin and Hoffman, eds., xix. See also, Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 4 and 326, for example.

¹⁷⁸ Frey, *Water from the Rock*.

¹⁷⁹ Philip Morgan, “Black Society in the Lowcountry, 1760-1810,” in *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution*, Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

¹⁸⁰ Nash, *Race and Revolution*, 57-60. See also, Christopher L. Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2006) and Manisha Sinha, “To ‘Cast Just Obliquely’ on Oppressors: Black Radicalism in the Age of Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 64, 1 (January 2007): 149-160.

¹⁸¹ Berlin, “Introduction,” xv and xxi.

¹⁸² Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

During the war, slaves were both victims of and active players in the system. The British and Rebels both used slaves for their own political and military ends.¹⁸³ The British failed to properly utilize the significant numbers of blacks who flocked to their standard during the war.¹⁸⁴

The British government's failure to establish an official policy concerning slaves meant that, as Ira Berlin observed, they "proved to be unreliable liberators ... as they feared identification as the slaves' friend would drive slaveholding Loyalists into the Patriot camp."¹⁸⁵

In many ways, though, the British were in a very difficult situation. They hesitated to identify themselves as a friend to the slaves because they feared that such a move would push the non-committed as well as the Loyalists into the Rebel camp. As Benjamin Quarles has written, "the latent distrust of the slave seems to have been deliberately exploited by Southern patriots as a means of arousing animosity toward the British and of coercing those who were lukewarm or timid about breaking with England ... such propaganda was effective in stilling any inclination

¹⁸³ Piecuch, *Three Peoples*. See also, Frey, *Water from the Rock*; Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*; Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*; Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth*; Nash, *Race and Revolution*; and Nash, *Red, White, and Black*.

¹⁸⁴ Piecuch, *Three Peoples*. See also, Frey, *Water from the Rock*. Frey calculated that the 30% of Savannah's slaves fled to the British during the 1779 siege. Quarles argued that the British were more aggressive at such endeavors during the early stages of the war. Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*.

¹⁸⁵ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 296-298. See also, Piecuch, *Three Peoples*. Piecuch added that this failure also led to Britain's military defeat in the South.

to make a warrior of the Negro.”¹⁸⁶ Winthrop Jordan confirmed this theory, maintaining that the constant fear of a slave uprising provided common cause between Rebels and Loyalists.¹⁸⁷

In spite of these obstacles, slaves proved adroit at working the system. Ellen Wilson argued that even though the British may have failed as liberators, slaves were “accustomed to sorting out degrees of exploitation. If their goal was freedom, the British offered the quickest route to it, almost the only route, in fact, in the South.”¹⁸⁸ Peter Wood concurred, finding that “local slave leaders ... were attentive and active participants ... [who] sought to capitalize on the white struggle in their plans for freedom.”¹⁸⁹ Such activities culminated in freedom for thousands of former slaves, who sought refuge elsewhere in the Atlantic basin. For most, though, the Revolution “served to tighten the shackles of slavery.”¹⁹⁰

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¹⁸⁶ Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 14. See also, Piecuch, *Three Peoples* and Frey, *Water from the Rock*.

¹⁸⁷ Jordan, *White over Black*. See also, Frey, *Water from the Rock*; Piecuch, *Three Peoples*; and Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution* (New York: Ecco, 2006), 16-17.

¹⁸⁸ Ellen Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1976), 3. See also, Frey, *Water from the Rock* and Piecuch, *Three Peoples*.

¹⁸⁹ Peter Wood, “‘The Facts Speak Loudly Enough’: Exploring Early Southern Black History,” in Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie, eds. *The Devil’s Lane: Sex and the Race in the Early South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 12.

¹⁹⁰ Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006). See also, Duncan MacLeod, *Slavery, Race, and the American Revolution* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 8; and, to a lesser extent, Maya Jasonoff, *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Knopf, 2011).

“A portrait of eighteenth-century South Carolina and Georgia,” according to Joshua Piker, “should begin with a basic fact: the Deep South was an ethnically diverse and economically fluid place,” which was “neither [Indian] country nor European territory.”¹⁹¹ As such, Richard White argued that the frontier was a “middle ground” in which neither side held an inherent advantage. Alan Taylor agreed, more or less, believing the northern frontier exhibited a contentious “middle ground.” Conversely, in his study of the Carolina Catawbas, James Merrell found a region in which the Europeans held a distinct advantage.¹⁹² Even less trusting of this supposed “middle ground,” Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney have insisted that Native Americans lacked sufficient power to construct a true middle ground.¹⁹³

Trade proved a decisive factor in both determining the nature of Native-European relations as well as in the backcountry contest for land between Natives and Europeans. The purveyors of trade, according to Ned Blackhawk, were the most instrumental in defining the terms

¹⁹¹ Piker, “Colonists and Creeks,” 510. Inhabiting this region, he stated, “meant liminality for all concerned.”

¹⁹² Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge, 1991); Alan Taylor, *Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996); and Merrell, *The Indians’ New World*; Collin Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1997); Claudio Saunt, “‘Our Indians’: European Empires and the Native American South,” in Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erik Seeman, eds., *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500-2000* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007).

¹⁹³ Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 4. See also, Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

of European imperialism.¹⁹⁴ Prior to roughly 1750, the mutual desire for commodities created a generally cooperative social environment between Europeans and Indians.¹⁹⁵

The increasing desire, though, for European trade goods dramatically weakened the Indian tribes, resulting in an undermined negotiating position, an expansion of internecine tribal conflict, a dramatic over-hunting of certain commodities, alcoholism, and an alteration in intra-tribal politics.¹⁹⁶ As Gregory Nobles has written, “trade transformed Indian culture, and it became the ultimate means of establishing European dominance.”¹⁹⁷ Piker added that contact between the two groups “gradually became dangerous, a development that cannot be attributed solely to an onrushing horde of colonists,” after the mid-eighteenth-century.¹⁹⁸

Merrell convincingly argued that the Indians’ feelings and reactions to their encounters with Europeans were similar to those felt by the Europeans. “Like their new neighbors, Indians had to blend old and new in ways that would permit them to survive in the present and prepare

¹⁹⁴ Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Merrell, *The Indians’ New World*, Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); and James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: the Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

¹⁹⁵ Piker, “Creeks and Colonists.” See also, Merrell, *The Indians’ New World*, 169. Merrell has highlighted the fact that upon initial contact, the Europeans were the outsiders, but by the end of the 18th century, the roles had reversed.

¹⁹⁶ Merrell, *The Indians’ New World*. See also, Kathryn Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Richter, *Facing East*; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*; Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*; White, *The Middle Ground*; Taylor, *Divided Ground*; and Cashin, *Guardians of the Valley: Chickasaws in Colonial South Carolina and Georgia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009).

¹⁹⁷ Nobles, “Breaking into the Backcountry,” 646.

¹⁹⁸ Piker, “Creeks and Colonists,” 505.

for the future without utterly forsaking their past.”¹⁹⁹ Daniel Richter suggested that during the eighteenth-century, Europeans and Natives shared many things in common: they both participated in an expanding Atlantic economy and they both adhered to fairly rigid class divisions. Unfortunately for the Natives, however, these differences did not lead to understanding and tolerance.²⁰⁰ Instead, interracial backcountry relations were similar in many ways to those between blacks and whites. As Ira Berlin wrote about the seductive minuet danced between master and slave, James Merrell has found a similar relationship between Europeans and Natives.²⁰¹

Such seductive dances, filled with alternating embraces and assaults, inevitably led to great violence on the frontier. Although intertribal violence existed before the arrival of Europeans, their appearance greatly accelerated it.²⁰² Joshua Piker asserted that post-1750 Creek experiences diverged dramatically from their predecessors, primarily being “characterized by threats and violence.”²⁰³ In fact, he suggested that the generally harmonious interactions of the pre-1750 era “almost guaranteed conflict between Europeans and Indians . . . [as] newcomers from the west [Natives] encountered others from the north and east . . . [and] their mutual arrival led to a competition for resources.”²⁰⁴

Global warfare only exacerbated such tensions between Natives and Europeans, most notably the Seven Years’ War, also known as the French and Indian War, and the American Revo-

¹⁹⁹ Merrell, *The Indians’ New World*, viii-ix.

²⁰⁰ Richter, *Facing East*. See also, Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*.

²⁰¹ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*; Merrell, *The Indians’ New World*, Richter, *Facing East*, Taylor, *Divided Ground*.

²⁰² Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*.

²⁰³ Piker, “Colonists and Creeks,” 530.

²⁰⁴ Piker, “Colonists and Creeks,” 509.

lution. In their totality, these two wars spelled doom for the Indians.²⁰⁵ The conclusion of the Seven Years' War proved disastrous for the Natives for two primary reasons: 1) after 1763 they found themselves with significantly reduced negotiating power, as they were now unable to leverage the French against the British; and 2) by the mid-1760s and beyond, more and more colonists flocked to the backcountry.²⁰⁶ This population influx “increasingly produced hostility, not mutuality; cross-cultural encounters were centered on the exchange of threats and violence, not food and labor.”²⁰⁷ Europeans actively sought the support of Indians during both conflicts. By the conclusion of the Revolution, James Merrell noted, “Americans had come to regard the Catawbas as something of a nuisance, a ragged, insignificant people hardly worth a second thought, or even a first.”²⁰⁸

As they had done during the Seven Years' War, the Indians typically allied themselves with the side which offered them the greatest autonomy. “The logic of nearly two hundred years of abrasive contact” with settlers, Gary Nash observed, compelled the Indians to side with the British,” who had consistently attempted to “halt the influx of settlers onto Indian land.”²⁰⁹ The British decision, however, to ally with the Native Americans was, according to Edward Cashin, a

²⁰⁵ James Axtell, however, argued that the “contest for North America was fought largely in times of declared peace.” Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 4.

²⁰⁶ Fred Anderson, *The Crucible of War: the Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000). See also, Cashin, *Guardians of the Valley*; Merrell, *The Indians' New World*; Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, and Taylor, *Divided Ground*.

²⁰⁷ Piker, “Colonists and Creeks,” 536.

²⁰⁸ Merrell, *The Indians' New World*, 281.

²⁰⁹ Nash, “The Forgotten Experience: Indians, Blacks, and the American Revolution,” in William Fowler and Wallace Coyle, eds. *The American Revolution: Changing Perspectives* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1979), 39.

“major miscalculation . . . [because] it ensured that [these] land-hungry backcountry settlers, most of whom were ‘Indian haters,’ would support the rebels.”²¹⁰ Piecuch added that Native, just like black, resistance “had a galvanizing effect for all whites, regardless of their political inclinations,” thus “strengthening the Whig opposition in the backcountry.”²¹¹ Moreover, British policy regarding the Indians was quite flawed. The British erroneously believed the Indians would do, and only do, as they were instructed. British officials, at least in London, also conceived of the Indians as a single entity, rather than a variety of tribes. “Finally,” according to Piecuch, “British officials failed to realize the animosity that existed between the Indians and backcountry whites, regardless of whether the latter were Loyalists or Whigs. This produced the paradox of committed Loyalists alternately fighting the rebels and joining with their white opponents against their erstwhile Indian allies,” contributing to the Rebel victory.²¹²

²¹⁰ Cashin, “But Brothers,” 249-250. See also, Piecuch, *Three Peoples* and Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*.

²¹¹ Piecuch, *Three Peoples*, 70.

²¹² Piecuch, *Three Peoples*, 15-16.

CHAPTER 1: JAMES WRIGHT'S PEDIGREE AND MANUFACTURING A TRANS-ATLANTIC FIEFDOM

An examination of James Wright's family history reveals much about both Wright and transatlantic opportunities. The patriarch, Wright's grandfather, reached the pinnacle of the judicial profession and could count King James II among his closest friends. This friendship, however, would soon cost him his life, dying a political prisoner after the Glorious Revolution. James's father undertook the arduous task of resurrecting the family's name and fortune, a task which required he relocate his family to the British Empire's periphery in Charleston, South Carolina. His appointment as colonial Chief Justice enabled him to both invest in valuable low-country lands and find appropriate affluent matches for his sons and daughters. He proved so successful in augmenting the modest wealth he brought from London that by the time of his death a decade later, he could glory in the knowledge that all of his children would have far better opportunities than his father had given him.

James Wright's grandfather, Chief Justice Sir Robert Wright, was born c. 1634 to Jermyn Wright (c. 1608-1681) and Anne Bachcroft (sometimes Butchcroft) in Wangford, County Suffolk.²¹³ He entered Gonville and Caius College at Cambridge on April 1, 1651. From there he gained admission to Lincoln's Inn on June 14, 1654 and was called to the bar on June 25, 1661, even though, one contemporary noted, he was so inadequate at the practice of law that he proved

²¹³ Stuart Handley, "Wright, Sir Robert (c.1634-1689)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30056> (hereafter, "Sir Robert Wright").

incapable of writing his own opinions.²¹⁴ His marriage to Dorothy Moore (d. 1662) sometime before 1660 brought him an estate near King's Lynn valued at £1,000, where he practiced law on the Norfolk circuit, where he continued to do well after her death in 1662.

Shortly thereafter, he married Susannah Wren (1633-c. 1681), the daughter of Bishop Matthew Wren from Ely, a cathedral town near Cambridge, sometime between 1662 and 1665. This marriage, like his first, brought with it enhanced social prestige and significant wealth though, according to Roger North, his "voluptuous unthinking course of life" resulted in a seemingly endless train of debt, from which he often sought succor from his "very intimate" patron the Right Honorable Francis North, Lord Guilford.²¹⁵ This connection with North is of great importance in understanding the career of James Wright because Francis North was the father of Frederick, Lord North, British prime minister from 1770-1782. It is possible that the North family also served as young James Wright's patron.

Undoubtedly these connections, and likely others, helped secure his election to Parliament on a variety of occasions, beginning in April 1668. As a Member of Parliament, he actively supported the court and was thought to be someone of use in that arena, being appointed to no less than 56 committees.²¹⁶ The opposition leader, the Earl of Shaftsbury, referred to him as

²¹⁴ Augustus Jessopp, ed., *The Lives of the Right. Hon. Francis North, Baron Guilford; The Hon. Sir Dudley North; and The Hon. And Rev. Dr. John North by The Hon. Roger North* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), 1:324 (hereafter, *Francis North*).

²¹⁵ Jessopp, ed., *The Lives of the Right. Hon. Francis North, Baron Guilford; The Hon. Sir Dudley North; and The Hon. And Rev. Dr. John North by The Hon. Roger North* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), 1:324. For the "intimate" quote see, Woolrych, *Memoirs of the Life of Judge Jeffreys*, 152.

²¹⁶ Basil D. Henning, ed., *The House of Commons, 1660-1690* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1983), 1:767. See also, the online edition: <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/wright-robert-1634-89>.

“doubly vile.”²¹⁷ That same year he was briefly incriminated in the 1678 Popish Plot after the House of Commons learned that Edmund Coleman had corresponded with and even visited Wright a few days prior to his arrest. Wright loudly proclaimed his innocence, arguing: “I hope the House hath opinion of me, that I am a Protestant, and not a Papist. It is hard that a man should have his papers searched. I have many clients, and such reflections may ruin me. I hope you will be pleased to justify me in this matter.” Fortunately for Wright, the subsequent search of his chambers and hearing by the House Commons resolved that Wright did not communicate “with Mr. Coleman, as to the plot now under examination.”²¹⁸

Wright decided to not stand for reelection in 1679, but he did become Cambridge’s deputy recorder. His steadfast support of the court led to his being knighted (an honor which would be bestowed on his grandson a century later) on May 15, 1680.²¹⁹ On April 24, 1681, shortly after the death of his second wife, Susannah, Wright exchanged vows with Anne Scroggs, whose father Sir William Scroggs of South Weald, Essex, was the lord chief justice. That same month, likely upon Scroggs’s recommendation, Sir Robert became the chief justice of Brecon.²²⁰

²¹⁷ Quoted in Basil D. Henning, ed., *The House of Commons, 1660-1690* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1983), 1:767.

²¹⁸ Quoted in Anchitell Grey, ed., *Debates of the House of Commons* (London: D. Henry and R. Cave, 1763), 6:128.

²¹⁹ William A. Shaw, *The Knights of England* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1971), 254. Shortly thereafter he was made the king’s serjeant and serjeant-at-law. Foss, *The Judges of England*, 7:30-31 and 203-205.

²²⁰ Handley, “Sir Robert Wright.” Sir William Scroggs is described as having a “mean extract, having been a butcher’s son. Roger North, *The Lives of the Right Hon. Francis North ... The Hon. Sir Dudley North ... and the Hon. And Rev. Dr. John North* (London: Henry Colburn, 1826), 1:313-316 (hereafter, *The Lives North*). Historian J. P. Kenyon, however, has refuted this ancestry in *The Popish Plot* (London: Sterling Publishing, 2001), 202. Robert Paston, 1st Earl of Yarmouth, has also been identified as a patron of Wright. See, Handley, “Sir Robert Wright.”

As it were, Anne Scroggs married a man not dissimilar to her own father. Scroggs's debauched lifestyle and "coarse" and "violent" courtroom manner made him, according to historian J. P. Kenyon, the subject of many satirists.²²¹ Jonathan Swift, in fact, judged him to be a "vile and profligate ... villain."²²² Contemporaries and historians alike have derided Scroggs's legal abilities.²²³ A close acquaintance, Sir Roger North, described him as witty, but a man whose "course of life was scandalous; [whose] discourses [were] violent and intemperate [and whose nature] could not avoid extremities."²²⁴

Wright was appointed a baron of the exchequer on October 30, 1684, on the basis of a recommendation from Lord Chancellor George Jeffreys and in spite of Lord Keeper Francis North's objection.²²⁵ Apparently, North's objection can be attributed Wright's questionable financial arrangements made at the Lord Keeper's expense. On this occasion, North proffered that Wright "was the most unfit person in the world to be judge."²²⁶ According to Jeffreys's biographer, Wright's financial woes led to his pleading to Jeffreys that "unless he were made a judge,

²²¹ Kenyon, *The Popish Plot*, 133-134.

²²² Jonathan Swift, "Versus on the Death of Dr. Swift," in Walter Scott, *The Works of Jonathan Swift* (Edinburgh: White, Cochran, and Co., 1814), 326-344.

²²³ John Pollock, *The Popish Plot: A Study in the History of the Reign of Charles II* (London: Duckworth, 1903), 317-332 and North, *The Lives North*, 312-326.

²²⁴ Peter Helm, *Jeffreys: a New Portrait of England's Hanging Judge* (New York: Crowell, 1967), 48.

²²⁵ Edward Foss, *The Judges of England* (London: John Murray, 1864), 7:13 and 15. Handley, "Sir Robert Wright." Wright later testified, however, that it was the future earl of Ailesbury's recommendation which landed him this position. See also, George Gibbs, *The Judicial Chronicle: Being a List of the Judges of the Courts of Common Law and Chancery* (Cambridge: James Munroe & Company, 1834), 16-19.

²²⁶ Woolrych, *The Memoirs of the Life of Judge Jeffreys*, 151-152.

his ruin was sealed.”²²⁷ The record indicates that Wright eagerly latched onto Jeffreys’s coat-tails, and in return, Jeffreys admired Wright’s “easy character.”²²⁸ He often entertained the Lord Chancellor and accompanied him during his exile in the aftermath of Monmouth’s rebellion.²²⁹ On October 10, 1685, shortly after he returned to England, King James II transferred him to the King’s Bench.²³⁰ His continued backing of the crown’s prerogative earned him another promotion two years later, this time as chief justice of common pleas. This proved to be short-lived, though, as eight days later, on April 21, 1687, he became chief justice of the King’s Bench and a frequent correspondent.²³¹

Controversy soon followed this flood of promotions. Robert Bruce, 1st Earl of Ailesbury, believed Sir Robert had been promoted beyond his abilities, but acknowledged that he “behaved himself with modesty.”²³² Nineteenth-century historian Edward Foss opined that Wright’s as-

²²⁷ Humphrey Woolrych, *Memoirs of the Life of Judge Jeffreys* (London: Henry Colburn, 1827), 151.

²²⁸ Woolrych, *Memoirs of the Life of Judge Jeffreys*, 151 and 309.

²²⁹ Humphrey Woolrych, *Memoirs of the Life of Judge Jeffreys* (London: Henry Colburn, 1827). Foss, *The Judges of England*, 7:280-284.

²³⁰ W. Toone, *The Chronological Historian* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1826), 1:320.

²³¹ Rapin de Thoyras, *The History of England* (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1747), 4.2:260. The date of this appointment was on April 13, 1687. See also, Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1886), 1:462. Macaulay described him as “ignorant to a proverb; yet ignorance was not his worst fault. His vices had ruined him.” Macaulay, *The History of England*, 2:274. For examples of correspondence exchanged between James II and Wright see, Item 1287, James II to Robert Wright, July 13, 1688, in E. K. Timings, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: James II, 1687-1689*, 3:226-245; Item 437, James II to Wright, October 23, 1687, in *ibid.*, 3:181; and Item 1097, Wright to James II, June 6, 1685, in *ibid.*, 1:177.

²³² William E. Buckley, ed., *Memoirs of Thomas, Earl of Ailesbury* (Westminster, 1890), 1:171.

cent resulted solely from the likelihood that he would be a “supple [instrument] of the ruling powers.”²³³

Later that year, Wright fined William Cavendish, the 4th Earl of Devonshire £30,000 for assaulting Colonel Thomas Colepeper in the king’s presence, an offense he styled akin to “pulling the king off his throne.”²³⁴ Though his continued and unflagging support for the crown garnered him the most important judicial positions available in England, it would also prove his demise. On June 29, 1688, he presided over the infamous trial of the seven bishops who had been imprisoned for seditious libel due to their opposition to King James II Declaration of Indulgence, which granted religious freedom to many Christian sects.²³⁵ Although Sir Robert proclaimed the bishops had been guilty of libel, the court itself was split over the issue, resulting in their acquittal. Circumstances alone accounted for Wright’s continued presence on the bench, but – shortly after landing, William of Orange brought up impeachments against both Sir Robert

²³³ Edward Foss, *The Judges of England* (London: John Murray, 1864), 7:4.

²³⁴ Handley, “Sir Robert Wright.” For more on Devonshire’s trial see, T. B. Howell, comp., *Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors* (London: T. C. Hansard, 1816), 11:1354-1370.

²³⁵ For a contemporary transcript of the fiery trial see, *The Proceedings and Tryal in the Case of the Most Reverend Father in God William Lord Archbishop of Canterbury* (London: Thomas Basset, 1689). See also, Agnes Strickland, *The Lives of the Seven Bishops Committed to the Tower in 1688* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1866). For a modern treatment of the trial see, William Gibson, *James II and the Trial of the Seven Bishops* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), especially 116-139 and Scott Sowerby, *Making Toleration: the Repealers and the Glorious Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), especially chapter 6. See also, William Cobbett, *Parliamentary History of England*, 5:279-340.

and Jeffreys, accusing Wright of, among other crimes, taking bribes “to that degree of corruption as is a shame to any court of justice.”²³⁶

Even though King James II granted Wright a “free and general pardon,” he found himself forced to continue to maintain his innocence throughout the next twelve months.²³⁷ “I am sensible of the great accusations against me,” he wrote to Sir Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby on January 10, 1689, but I have “unwillingly gotten into a round [and been] pressed along by the force of it, against his own inclinations,” but few would listen and Wright soon fled.²³⁸ His flight, in fact, would later be lampooned:

Farewell Brent, farewell William,
Farewell Wright, *worse than Tresilian*;
Farewell chancellor, farewell mace,
Farewell prince, farewell race.²³⁹

He was apprehended by Sir William Waller while hiding out in Old Bailey on February 13, 1689, and committed to Newgate prison by Sir John Chapman, the Lord Mayor of London.²⁴⁰ In May, he was brought before the House of Lords to answer for his actions in the Devonshire case,

²³⁶ For the quote see, *Seventh Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London: George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1879), part 1:420. See also, Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:512.

²³⁷ Item 1635, “Warrant to the Attorney or Solicitor General,” October 6, 1688, in Davies, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: James II, 1687-1689*, 3:106.

²³⁸ For the quote see, Basil D. Henning, ed., *The House of Commons, 1660-1690* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1983), 1:768.

²³⁹ Foss, *The Judges of England*, 7:283.

²⁴⁰ Handley, “Sir Robert Wright.” Foss incorrectly stated that Wright was captured on January 15, 1689. Foss, *The Judges of England*, 7:283. The House of Lords journal for February 14, 1689 state: “Yesterday Lord Chief Justice Wright was apprehended by Sir William Waller at the Old Bailey.” See, February 14, 1689, William J. Hardy, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: William and Mary, 1689-1690*, 1-11.

which the Lords insisted had been a clear breach of Parliament's privilege.²⁴¹ Wright maintained that, "as to the breach of privilege, [he] was misguided by precedents ... [and] if he was mistaken, he begged pardon."²⁴² Again, his pleas fell on deaf ears and the Lords returned him to Newgate in short order and he died of "prison fever" later that week.²⁴³ On the eighteenth of June a decision was made to except his name from the Indemnity Bill.²⁴⁴

James Wright's father, Chief Justice Robert Wright, was from Sedgefield, County Durham, about 250 miles from London.²⁴⁵ He was born in 1666 to Robert Wright and his second wife, Susannah Wren and attended Eton College from 1677 to 1683, at which time he enrolled at Cambridge University, Gaius College and was admitted to the Middle Temple.²⁴⁶ In 1689, the same year his father died in Newgate prison, the younger Wright married Alice Johnson Pitt, the heiress of John Johnson and widow of Baldwin Pitt, Esquire. According to the Sedgefield Parish Register, Alice died in November 1723.²⁴⁷

²⁴¹ T. B. Howell, comp., *Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors* (London: T. C. Hansard, 1816), 11:1368. See also, *Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors* (London, 1730), 4:300-392 and *The History and Proceedings of the House of Lords* (London: Ebenezer Timberland, 1742), 1:363-364.

²⁴² Howell, *Complete Collection of State Trials*, 11:1370.

²⁴³ Andrew Clark, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood* (London: Clarendon Press, 1894), 3:303.

²⁴⁴ Handley, "Sir Robert Wright."

²⁴⁵ John Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland* (London: Henry Colburn, 1835), 2:615.

²⁴⁶ John Venn, comp., *Biographical History of Gonville and Caius College, 1349-1897* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), 1:473-474.

²⁴⁷ October 7, 1689 and November 27, 1723, in Sedgefield Parish Records.

<http://dustydocs.com/link/11/26761/84548/marriages-1581-1729.html>.

Just one week later, Wright married Isabella Bulman, a spinster from St. Giles in the Fields Parish. The marriage took place at St. James's Duke Place Church, which happened to be considered a "run away church" or marriage mill. Though the details of Robert's two marriages, especially while he lived in England, are mostly absent from the historical record, it is quite clear Isabella and not Alice bore all of his children. Thus, it appears that Robert Wright had two simultaneous relationships. Moreover, the record indicates that none of his children were legitimate. Furthermore, it is conceivable that this controversy motivated Wright to relocate his family to South Carolina. According to Charles Sanderson, Wright had been sent to South Carolina in 1725 "by [Lord Proprietor John] Cotton to establish those people in their disaffection caused by the ill behavior of Lds Proprietors."²⁴⁸ This letter is in accord with the South Carolina Proprietary records, which date his appointment as that province's chief justice on May 28, 1725.²⁴⁹ Unlike his father, who mightily struggled with the intricacies of the law, Robert proved to be a very capable judicial officer.²⁵⁰ In recommending Wright to the Duke of Newcastle, Arch

²⁴⁸ Charles Sanderson to William Cotesworth, January 23, 1725/6, in Cotesworth MSS CK 1/68, Gateshead Public Library, Gateshead, United Kingdom. This letter was transcribed by Joyce Ellis. She is the author of *A Study of the Business Fortunes of William Cotesworth* (New York: Arno Press, 1981).

²⁴⁹ Item 633, May 28, 1725, from St. James's, in K. G. Davies, ed., *Calendar State Papers*, 34:367-381.

²⁵⁰ See, for example, Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina under the Royal Government, 1719-1776* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), 63.

Hutchinson cited Robert's thirty successful years as a barrister.²⁵¹ In one of their appointment letters to Wright, the Lords Proprietors cited his "knowledge, skill, and experience."²⁵²

Charlestonian Elizabeth Hyrne penned an inquisitive letter to her brother which discussed the arrival of the Wright family. "Here is laity arrived," she said, "one Mr. Robert Wright a gentleman of large family of both sons and daughters." The family "appear to be [a] very genteel people and to have a good substance. It is said they have now 4 or 500 pounds in England at a place called Sagefield near Newcastle [and] he has been a member of the English Parliament." She continued her report of Charleston's newest immigrants: "He has brought over a coach [and] servants in livery." She concluded her letter with a very interesting and insightful query. "What was his reason for leaving England?" she asked. Answering her own question, she added that "some say his father was a judge in King James's reign and that being a non [juror he] was weary of heavy taxes, but I believe they indever to keep it privett be it so or not however he is like to make a good settler [as] he has bought a large plantation with some buildings upon it upon Ashley [R]iver and has paid a great deal of money for it."²⁵³

Although the Proprietors had appointed Wright to the position of chief justice, they possessed tenuous power over that colony during the 1720s before finally losing complete control in

²⁵¹ Arch Hutchinson to Duke of Newcastle, June 16, 1730, in Hoyt Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar: Lawyers in Colonial South Carolina" (PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 1984), 152. See also, James Henretta, *"Salutary Neglect": Colonial Administration under the Duke of Newcastle*, 114-115.

²⁵² Lords Proprietors to Robert Wright, May 27, 1725, in Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar," 152.

²⁵³ Elizabeth Hyrne to Burrell Massingberd, January 21, 1725. The transcription of this letter can be found at: <http://hyrneletters.wordpress.com/genealogy/mr-robert-wright/>.

December 1729.²⁵⁴ Wright's lifetime appointment, however, caused some concerns and necessitated a five-year delay in finalizing his position.²⁵⁵ "Some of the ministers," Thomas Lowndes wrote, feared "the ill consequences it might be to have that officer for life," and agreed to change his appointment to read at "His Majesty's pleasure."²⁵⁶ Accordingly, King George II appointed Wright Chief Justice of South Carolina on November 30, 1730. His appointment became official in South Carolina on March 24, 1731.²⁵⁷ Wright must have felt a deep sense of satisfaction at this moment. Even though it had taken decades, he had in some measure redeemed the family name.²⁵⁸

Redemption or not, Wright was indeed his father's son and his inflexibility and crown-centric worldview courted controversy throughout his tenure, a trait which was also deeply ingrained in his son, James. In August 1731, the chief justice inserted himself as mediator of a

²⁵⁴ For fuller context of how the people of South Carolina wrested control of their province and persuaded the Crown to assume its governance see, McCrady, *The History of South Carolina*, chapters 5-6.

²⁵⁵ Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar," 152-153.

²⁵⁶ Item 1039, Thomas Lowndes to Alfred Popple, December 23, 1729, in Cecil Headlam, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, 36:565-578. See also, McCrady, *History of South Carolina under the Royal Government*, 107-109.

²⁵⁷ Charles Hart to Governor Robert Johnson, February 23, 1730, in South Carolina State Archives, ST 463, 62 B, page 654 and Robert Johnson to Robert Wright, March 24, 1731, in South Carolina State Archives, ST 464, 64, pages 187-188. See also, Item 345, July 21, 1730 and Item 569, November 30, 1730, in Headlam, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, 37:200-220 and 37:357-376.

²⁵⁸ News of Wright's appointment had been published in virtually all of London's newspapers. For example see, *London Gazette*, January 16, 1731; *Daily Courant*, January 20, 1731; *Daily Post*, January 21, 1731; and *Country Journal or The Craftsmen*, January 23, 1731. Interestingly, however, London's *Daily Advertiser* mentioned in its announcement of his appointment on April 14, that "we hear [Wright] will shortly set out for that place." Perhaps Wright had returned to London, briefly or otherwise, after his arrival in Charleston in 1725.

feud between Thomas Lowndes and royal Governor Thomas Johnson.²⁵⁹ Eighteen months later, he became embroiled in a virulent controversy between surveyor general James St. John and the South Carolina Assembly, which resulted in the latter refusing to pay Wright's salary, claiming he "hath lately invaded and violated the known privileges of this house."²⁶⁰ Their anger with Wright continued for years as they refused to pay his salary from 1731-1736, prompting South Carolina's Lieutenant Governor Thomas Broughton to intercede on his behalf.

In January 1737, Broughton informed the Assembly that Wright "hath duly, and punctually held the Supreme Courts of Judicature for several years past ... for which five years' service, attendance, and expenses, occasioned by the discharge of that important station he hath received no more than £1,400." He added that Wright was due £3,600 in arrears and implored them "that he has suffered considerably for want of a suitable and timely recompense, so I doubt not but you will now provide for him."²⁶¹ The lower house conceded, in a sense, and granted Wright £1,000 per annum for his services henceforth.²⁶² They still refused, though, to make amends for withholding his salary for five years, prompting Governor William Bull to beseech

²⁵⁹ Wright to Thomas Lowndes, August 6, 1731, in Carl Vipperman, *Rise of Rawlins Lowndes*, 26-29.

²⁶⁰ For example, *South Carolina Gazette*, May 5, and May 12, 1733 and *Daily Courant* (London), April 13, 1733. See also, Vipperman, *Rise of Rawlins Lowndes*, 32-37; McCrady, *History of South Carolina under the Royal Government*, 150-163 and, generally, chapter 9; Benjamin Labaree, ed., *Royal Instructions*, 1:370-371; Smith, *South Carolina as a Royal Province*, 42-48, 129-131 and 294-303. See also, James Haw, *John & Edward Rutledge of South Carolina*, 4; Lonn, *Colonial Agents of the Southern Colonies*, 279; and Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History*, 181-182.

²⁶¹ Proceedings, January 15, 1737, in J. H. Easterby, ed., *Colonial Records of South Carolina, Journal of Commons House, 10 November 1736 – 7 June 1739* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1951), 177.

²⁶² Proceedings, January 15 and 18, 1737, in Easterby, ed., *Colonial Records of South Carolina, Journal of Commons House, 10 November 1736 – 7 June 1739*, 176-177 and 181-182.

them to take care of the chief justice. “I take it for an allowed maxim both by the laws of God and man,” he declared, “that the labourer is worthy of his hire. I therefore think it proper to remind you that the chief justice hath duly held the Supream Courts of Judicature for more than years past and hath received from the publick no more than £1,400 currency.”²⁶³ The issue remained unsettled two years later as Bull again chided the Assembly, without success.²⁶⁴

Clearly then, Wright’s tenure as chief justice had been filled with frustration and an acrimonious relationship with the lower house of assembly. In many ways, this made him no exception to the general pattern throughout the southern colonies during the middle third of the century as the assemblies engaged in a never-ending series of power struggles with royal officials.²⁶⁵ Importantly, however, Wright’s decade-long battle with the Assembly resulted in the attainment of judiciary independence, an achievement according to historian Edward McCrady, “of great importance.”²⁶⁶ It is also important to note that James Wright was an impressionable young provincial attorney throughout this controversy and quite likely developed a distrust of popularly elected officials as a result of his father’s difficulties.

An epidemic fever struck the lowcountry in the fall of 1739 and claimed Robert Wright as one of its victims on October 12.²⁶⁷ While Wright lay stricken and confined to his bed, a

²⁶³ Proceedings, February 4, 1738, in Easterby, ed., *Colonial Records of South Carolina, Journal of Commons House, 10 November 1736 – 7 June 1739*, 470.

²⁶⁴ Proceedings, February 23, 1739, in Easterby, ed., *Colonial Records of South Carolina, Journal of Commons House, 10 November 1736 – 7 June 1739*, 626.

²⁶⁵ See Jack Greene, *The Quest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963). For the issues most relevant to Wright see, 129-147 and 330-343.

²⁶⁶ McCrady, *History of South Carolina under the Royal Government*, 182 and 460-464. See also, for example, *South Carolina Gazette*, May 15, 1736.

²⁶⁷ *South Carolina Gazette*, October 27, and November 24, 1739.

friend of his informed the Duke of Newcastle in London of the lamentable situation. “The Chief Justice of South Carolina is a very worthy gentleman,” James Oglethorpe wrote, and “I hope he may long continue but as all men are mortal and he is sick of an illness which hath been fatal in Carolina” his fate seems clear.²⁶⁸ Lieutenant Governor Bull informed the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations that “this province has been lately visited with an epidemical fever which raged chiefly in Charleston and carried off great numbers of people, amongst whom died Mr. Chief Justice Wright.”²⁶⁹

Unfortunately, his will has not survived.²⁷⁰ We can, however, determine that he owned no less than 10,000 acres of land in various South Carolina counties.²⁷¹ We can also surmise he possessed significant wealth. According to historian George Rogers, the Charles Pinckney’s

²⁶⁸ Item 420, James Oglethorpe to Duke of Newcastle, from Savannah, October 12, 1739, in Davies, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, 45:192-215. See also, Item 405, Oglethorpe to Trustees of Georgia, from Savannah, October 5, 1739, *ibid.*

²⁶⁹ Item 469, William Bull to Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, from Charleston, November 20, 1739, in Davies, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, 45:215-234 and George Dunbar to Herman Verelst, October 7, 1739, in *ibid.*, 45:198. See also, *Daily Post* (London), December 5, 1739; *London Evening Post*, December 6, 1739; and *Universal Spectator and Weekly Journal*, December 8, 1739. This issue cites a letter from Charleston which stated that a “severe sickness” has “taken upwards of 100 people, amongst whom are Robert Wright, Esq., Chief Justice.” *South-Carolina Gazette*, December 1, 1739, which mentions that Robert Wright died on October 12, 1739. See also, Item 469, November 20, 1739, from Charleston, in K. G. Davies, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, America and West Indies*, 45:215-234; *South-Carolina Gazette*, October 27, 1739. The newspaper notes the appointment of Thomas Dale as Chief Justice, replacing the recently deceased Wright.

²⁷⁰ South Carolina State Archives, Charleston Bundle, Index of Wills and Inventories, page 220A. His will is listed as 3X2; his inventory as 3Z7.

²⁷¹ See, for example, South Carolina State Archives, Series S372001, Volume 00R0, Page 100 and 421. These two documents indicate his lease and/or sale of 10,400 acres plus land in Amelia Township in 1737 and 1739. See also, his numerous land grants and plats in the South Carolina State Archives. For example, Series S213019, Volume 0002, Page 390, for a land grant of 302 acres in Craven County on June 25, 1736 and Series S213184, Volume 0003, Page 210, for a plat for 2,000 acres in Queensboro Township on October 1, 1736.

“great mansion” had been “designed to emulate, if not excel, the finest mansions of that day,” including that of former “Chief Justice Robert Wright’s home.”²⁷² Aside from his £1,000 annual salary, of which he received intermittent portions, there are numerous records indicating the sale of sizeable tracts of land.²⁷³ Wright also reaped profits from his plantation(s), presumably from the sale of rice which, aside from supplying much of the lowcountry’s wealth, brought substantial material wealth to his sons as well.²⁷⁴

Robert Wright’s widow and James Wright’s mother, Isabella, continued the chief justice’s legal struggle concerning his unpaid salary. In January 1744, she submitted a memorial to the Assembly requesting his past due salary so that she “might be better enabled to perform his last will and testament.”²⁷⁵ Mrs. Wright’s frustration continued, however, as that defiant legislative body determined that the people of South Carolina “is not liable to any further claim” from the estate of Chief Justice Wright.²⁷⁶ Isabella Wright died on November 21, 1752.²⁷⁷

²⁷² George Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckney’s*, 68.

²⁷³ For example, see South Carolina State Archives, Series S213003, Volume 002E, Page 46, which lists the sale of 6,000 acres to George Anson. There are also numerous advertisements for the sale of land in the *South Carolina Gazette*. See, for example, *South Carolina Gazette*, August 30, 1735 and April 6, 1738,

²⁷⁴ The Wright family placed an advertisement for a June 25, 1741 estate sale “at the plantation late of Robert Wright, Esq.; deceased, near Dorchester, a parcel of very good slaves, and sundry other things.” See, *South Carolina Gazette*, June 11, 1741. Additionally, there are at least two instances in which slaves fled the chief justice’s Dorchester plantation. See, *South Carolina Gazette*, October 4, 1735 and July 23, 1737.

²⁷⁵ Proceedings, January 21, 1744, in Easterby, ed., *Colonial Records of South Carolina, Journal of Commons House, 20 February 1744 – 25 May 1745*, 541-543.

²⁷⁶ Proceedings, April 12, 1744, in Easterby, ed., *Colonial Records of South Carolina, Journal of Commons House, 20 February 1744 – 25 May 1745*, 87. See also, Proceedings, April 13, 1744, in *ibid.*, 93.

²⁷⁷ *South-Carolina Gazette*, November 27, 1752.

The chief justice and his second wife, Isabella, had seven children of which James Wright was likely the sixth.²⁷⁸ Although records are incomplete, we can rather confidently construct an accurate sketch of the Wright children – Isabella, Anne, Robert, Jr., Charles, Jermyn, James, and Susannah – in large part thanks to a contemporary pedigree chart recently rediscovered in the Davy’s Suffolk Collection at the British Library.²⁷⁹

Two extant records establish Isabella Wright as being the first-born child to Robert and Isabella. Both the Davy pedigree chart and her obituary identify her as the eldest child. Her date of birth is unclear, but since we know Anne to have been born in 1704, we can surmise that Isabella was likely born in 1702 or 1703. She first married James Graeme, though the location and year is uncertain. Marriage was the primary means by which colonial aristocratic families augmented and perpetuated their wealth and power, especially in eighteenth-century Charleston, where these familial alliances “among business partners or among the families of planters” deeply cemented lowcountry society.²⁸⁰ Moreover, such relationships also fortified the important transatlantic bonds so critical to the Empire because, as historian Jack Sosin has noted, “business and politics in England during the eighteenth century rested largely on personal relations. Ties

²⁷⁸ A great debt is owed to professional genealogists Mary Bondurant Warren (Athens, GA) and Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., (Decatur, GA) for their inexhaustible assistance and endless support in tracking down the Wright family pedigree, a project which began prior to my own interest.

²⁷⁹ The key sources for Wright’s genealogy are “Collection of Pedigree and Genealogical Memoranda of the Family of Wright,” Davy’s Suffolk Collections, Volume 80, Pedigrees WIN-WYT, Y-Z, British Library, Additional Ms. 19156, pages 232-233 and 244-245 (hereafter Davy MS); Sir James Wright, Pedigree Chart, Ms. JP 84.861, College of Arms, London, www.college-of-arms.gov.uk (hereafter College of Arms Pedigree Chart); Will of Sir James Wright; Loyalist Claim of Sir James Wright; various birth, marriage, and death notices; and John Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland*, 4 volumes (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1977).

²⁸⁰ Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, 23-24.

of amity, marriage, and blood” connected periphery with the core.²⁸¹ Graeme had been a successful Charleston attorney “whose talents,” in the words of Governor James Glen, “have raised him to the head of the bar.”²⁸² Glen thought so highly of Graeme that he appointed him chief justice of the province, which the king soon confirmed.²⁸³ Graeme did not enjoy the fruits and satisfaction of his appointment for long as he passed on August 29, 1752.²⁸⁴ Three years later Isabella exchanged vows with Governor Glen’s brother, Dr. Thomas Glen, at St. George’s Parish in London on the eighteenth of September.²⁸⁵ She likely never returned to America and passed away the week before Christmas 1775.²⁸⁶

The second daughter, Anne Wright, was born in 1704 and married twice. Little is known about her first husband, William Walter, who died c. 1738-1739.²⁸⁷ It is probable, however, that Walter had been affluent because each of her sisters had married well. Additionally, a Walter White owned no less than three plantations, including the well-known Crowfield plantation in St.

²⁸¹ Jack Sosin, *Agents and Merchants*, 3.

²⁸² Quoted in McCrady, *History of South Carolina under the Royal Government*, 261.

²⁸³ *South Carolina Gazette*, October 3, 1751. June 6, 1749, Series S213003, Volume 2H, Page 11 and March 23, 1750, Series S213003, Volume 2H, Page 414, South Carolina State Archives. See also, McCrady, *History of South Carolina under the Royal Government*, 262.

²⁸⁴ *South Carolina Gazette*, September 1, 1752. McCrady, however, recorded his death as September 7, citing an undated *South Carolina Gazette* from September of that year. See, McCrady, *History of South Carolina under the Royal Government*, 262.

²⁸⁵ John Chapman, ed., *The Register Book of Marriages belonging to the Parish of St. George, Hanover Square, in the County of Middlesex* (London, 1886), 11:59.

²⁸⁶ *Middlesex Journal, and Evening Advertiser*, December 26, 1775. “Mrs. Isabella Wright, wife of Dr. Glen [brother of former SC governor James Glen] and **eldest** sister to SJW died in Edinburg last week.”

²⁸⁷ *St. Andrews Society, of the City of Charleston, South Carolina* (Charleston: Walker, Evans & Cogswell, 1892), 31.

James's Goose Creek Parish.²⁸⁸ James Wright also owned a sizeable plantation in this district.²⁸⁹ Ann later married her first cousin, the merchant and attorney, Richard Lambton on November 27, 1750 in Charleston's St. Philip's Church.²⁹⁰ She died in Charleston in 1770.²⁹¹

Robert Wright, Jr. was born c. 1706. Near his twenty-first birthday, he married the sixteen-year-old heiress, Gibbon Cawood. Historian Annette Laing has quite skillfully recreated the ensuing controversy. The "midnight ceremony at her mother's house" while she was away in London, she wrote, "occurred without the knowledge or consent of the bride's guardians" and created quite the uproar in Charleston, resulting in the disgraceful resignation of the minister, Brian Hunt.²⁹² Both Cawood's mother and guardians refused the young couple's request to mar-

²⁸⁸ Henry Smith, "The Ashley River: Its Seats and Settlements," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 20.2 (April 1919): 106-107.

²⁸⁹ Michael Heitzler, *Goose Creek: A Definitive History* (Charleston: The History Press, 2005), 1:156-158. Wright owned the 508-acre Retreat Plantation which bordered the Cooper River.

²⁹⁰ For the wedding record see, Alexander Salley, ed., *Register of St. Philip's Parish, Charles Town, South Carolina, 1720-1758* (Charleston: Walker, Evans & Cogswell, 1904), 192. The register is also the source for her marriage to William Walter in that it identified her as Ann Walter. For Lambton's profession see, College of Arms Pedigree Chart. See also, for example, George C. Rogers, ed., *The Papers of Henry Laurens* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), 2:197n; *ibid.*, 4:55n.; Clara Langley, ed., *South Carolina Deed Abstracts* (Greenville, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1984), 4:41, 240, and 308.

²⁹¹ *South Carolina Gazette*, November 6, 1770. See also, "Records Kept by Colonel Isaac Hayne," Alexander Salley, ed., *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 10.3 (July 1909): 159.

²⁹² Annette Laing, "'A Very Immoral and Offensive Man': Religious Culture, Gentility and the Strange Case of Brian Hunt, 1727," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 103.1 (January 2002): 6. See also, Fred Witzig, "The Great Anti-Awakening: Anti-revivalism in Philadelphia and Charles Town, 1739-1745," Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2008, 106-115 and Sidney Charles Bolton, "The Anglican Church of Colonial South Carolina, 1704-1754: a Study in Americanization," Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1973, 230-239. Additionally, W. W. Manross, comp., *The Fulham Papers in the Lambeth Palace Library* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965). The Fulham Papers contain the full correspondence between the priest and his superiors in London concerning the controversial marriage.

ry. Moreover, they were confident that such a union was not possible without their consent, especially because the affair of the young couple, according to the Reverend Alexander Garden, had been “so eminently & universally” known. Yet, Wright, Cawood, and the Reverend Hunt proceeded with their clandestine and, in Garden’s words, “scandalous” ceremony.²⁹³ The minister defended his behavior with the claim “that [the marriage] may be an happy match.”²⁹⁴ Perhaps the minister’s hopeful proclamation had been correct as the couple welcomed their first child on October 28, 1728. Nearly three years later, however, Mrs. Wright died.²⁹⁵ Did he consciously defy the wishes of his superiors because he viewed the young Gibbon Cawood as an avenue to wealth and prestige? It is difficult to ascertain if Wright, Jr., was a hopeless romantic or if his character was indeed questionable.

With a toddler to care for, Robert wasted little time in finding a new wife, marrying Mary Blamyer on June 22, 1733.²⁹⁶ Records indicate that Wright, like his father and brother James, had been an attorney, substantial landholder, and slaveowner.²⁹⁷ Among the numerous sales of

²⁹³ Reverend Alexander Garden to the Bishop of London, May 26, 1727, from Charleston, quoted in, “Letters to the Bishop of London from the Commissaries in South Carolina,” edited by George Williams,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 78.2 (April 1977): 128-132.

²⁹⁴ William Tredwell Bull to the Bishop of London, May 13, 1728, quoted in “Letters to the Bishop of London from the Commissaries in South Carolina,” edited by George Williams,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 78.1 (January 1977): 29-32.

²⁹⁵ A. S. Salley, ed., *Register of St. Philip’s Parish, Charles Town, SC, 1720-1758* (Charleston: Walker, Evans & Cogswell Co., 1904), 66 and 237.

²⁹⁶ Brent Holcomb, comp., *South Carolina Marriages, 1688-1799* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1980), 277.

²⁹⁷ See, for example, South Carolina State Archives, Series S213184, Volume 0003, Pages 215 (June 24m 1736) and 219 (December 3, 1736); S372001, Volume 00Q0, Page 359 (1736-1737); and S372001, Volume 00R0, Page 36 (1737). These documents detail his ownership of nearly 10,000 acres of land during the 1730s. Robert Wright, Jr., placed an ad for a runaway slave named Clement, who “speaks very good English ... and is suspected to be harboured by some Negroes.” See, *South Carolina Gazette*, June 20, 1743. An ad placed in the same paper on De-

land, slaves, and various sundry items by Robert, Jr., is an advertisement in the *South Carolina Gazette* for the sale of “a choice parcel of slaves, among which are many very good sawyers, one very good tight cooper, and several field slaves.”²⁹⁸ Unfortunately, an exhaustive search for Wright’s obituary has yielded no results. But an approximate year of death can be determined by cross-referencing advertisements in the *South Carolina Gazette* with deed records at the South Carolina State Archives. As mentioned before, Robert Wright advertised a sale in March 1749. Not quite one year later, his eldest daughter, Gibbon Wright, deeded twenty-six slaves to her half-siblings and stepmother.²⁹⁹ It is reasonable to assume she inherited those slaves from her father. Thus, it appears that Robert Wright, Jr., died in 1749.

The date of birth for Robert and Isabella Wright’s fourth child, Charles, cannot be determined, but both the 1785 College of Arms pedigree chart and the Davy Chart list his birth before that of Jermyn Wright. Since we know Jermyn was born on August 1, 1711, and Robert, Jr., was born in 1706; we can deduce that Charles was born between 1707 and 1711. Charles was an attorney, merchant, and planter.³⁰⁰ As early as 1733, Charles and Jermyn engaged in joint busi-

ness. On October 5, 1743, added to the description of Clement, nothing that he was a “Mustee Fellow ... about 5 feet 8 inches high.” See also, *South Carolina Gazette*, September 12, 1748 for a similar ad.

²⁹⁸ *South Carolina Gazette*, March 27, 1749.

²⁹⁹ South Carolina State Archives, South Carolina Deeds, Volume 21, Page 148 (January 26, 1750).

³⁰⁰ See for example, any number of land grants and land plants in South Carolina State Archives, Series K10005, Reel, 0004, Plat, 02431 (No date); Series S213184, Volume 0003, Page 224 (October 19, 1736). Regarding his being an attorney see, 1754-1755, Series S372001, Volume 2P0, Page 473, South Carolina State Archives, which identified Charles Wright as the attorney for Jermyn Wright.

ness ventures.³⁰¹ In June of that year, they announced the sale of “a lusty, stout, white servant boy, able for any work, aged about 16 years, that hath 5 years, within a few days, to serve.”³⁰²

Charles owned many plantations, including (at least) one on the Ponpon River, near Dorchester, which utilized slave labor.³⁰³ He also owned a store near the Ponpon Bridge where he sold a variety of goods, including “choice slaves, well vers’d in plantation business.”³⁰⁴ In 1749, they served as Indian agents, responsible for the sale of goods to the native inhabitants of South Carolina.³⁰⁵ The Wright brothers’ partnership was typical amongst the larger colonial merchant

³⁰¹ It is rare to find a mention of either of these brothers in isolation of the other. They clearly had a very tight bond – working (and worshiping) together, living near one another, and performing various civic responsibilities in tandem. For example, in 1767 the brothers were listed as grand jurors of St. Peter’s Parish; in 1756 and 1765, they were both listed as justices of the peace in Granville County; and in 1782 they had their neighboring and joint plantations confiscated by the Rebels. See, Manuscript Act No. 958, South Carolina State Archives; *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 20 (1919): 74 and *SCHM* 34 (1933):195.

³⁰² *South Carolina Gazette*, June 2, 1733. This partnership remained active and occasionally vibrant into the 1770s. They jointly owned the Rochester plantation on the Savannah River. *South Carolina Gazette*, June 5, 1762. The brothers also served as Justices of the Peace for Granville County. *South Carolina Gazette*, October 31, 1765.

³⁰³ *South Carolina Gazette*, July 2, 1741, in which Charles offers a reward for a “stray’d or stolen” brown gelding from his pasture near Ponpon Bridge. Later that month, he and his brother James advertised the sale of the estate of John Walter (likely a relative of their brother-in-law, William Walter). The notice in the paper states that interested parties may contact Charles at his place at Ponpon. *South Carolina Gazette*, July 16, 1741. See also, *South Carolina Gazette*, July 20 and 27, 1747, for example, in which Wright advertises the sale of several lots in Ansonborough and Wright placed a runaway slave notice in the February 11, 1745 issue of the *South Carolina Gazette*. He placed another runaway notice on July 2, 1750, this time a “tall negro named Titus, [who] has a spot upon his left eye, a scar under his right head, and a great many upon his back; one of his legs has been broke.” See also, the advertisement offering for sale Charles Wright’s 550-acre Dorchester Plantation, including “very good buildings, and a very good orchard with most sorts of the best fruits. Also a parcel of slaves, and some household furniture.” *South Carolina Gazette*, February 8, 1748.

³⁰⁴ *South Carolina Gazette*, December 20, 1742.

³⁰⁵ See for example, the May 5, 1749 payment of £64 to the Wright brothers for the sale of goods to the Indians. J. H. Easterby, ed., *Colonial Records of South Carolina, 28 March 1749 to 21 November 1749*, 51, 70, and 107; an invoice for £1,204 from the Wright brothers on May 9,

firms. In their case, Charles Wright conducted the business from South Carolina while brother Jermyn handled the firm's London affairs.³⁰⁶

Sometime in 1749, Charles and Jermyn Wright expanded their portfolio by joining the Charleston mercantile firm of Robert Stiell and John Hume.³⁰⁷ Within a few years the brothers became heavily involved in lowcountry real estate.³⁰⁸ By the mid-1750s, it seems as though the brothers had begun shifting their focus from their mercantile business to real estate and planting. Correspondence between Charleston grandee Henry Laurens and the Liverpool merchants Rawlinson and Davison might provide some insight into the brothers' motivations. Jermyn Wright has left London privately which must induce us to think that he is not a man of so good a fortune as we thought."³⁰⁹

1749, in *ibid.*, 78, 82, 205-206, 212, 256-257; the debate between Jermyn Wright and South Carolina's colonial agent, James Crockatt, concerning the acceptability of the goods offered by the Wright's, May 8, 1750, in *Colonial Records of South Carolina, 23 April 1750 to May 1750*, 91; and Lonn, *Colonial Agents of the Southern Colonies*, 180-181.

³⁰⁶ See, Peter Manigault to Ann Manigault, December 24, 1753, in Maurice Crouse, "Peter Manigault's Letters," *South Carolina History and Genealogical Magazine* 32.4: 272. See also, Jack Sosin, *Agents and Merchants*, 3 and an invoice of sundry goods shipped from London by Jermyn Wright, May 10, 1749, in *Colonial Records of South Carolina, 28 March 1749 to 21 November 1749*, 78 and 82.

³⁰⁷ See, petition of "partners" Charles Wright, Jermyn Wright, and John Hume, June 1, 1749, in *Colonial Records of South Carolina, 28 March 1749 to 21 November 1749*, 268-269. Two otherwise reliable sources, however, indicate the partnership began in 1751. George C. Rogers, ed., *The Papers of Henry Laurens* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), 1:149n and John C. Van Horne, ed., *The Letterbook of James Abercromby, Colonial Agent*, 47.

³⁰⁸ In addition to the numerous sales identified in the *South Carolina Gazette*, see also the dozens of "Judgment Rolls" involving either and both brothers. For example, South Carolina State Archives, Series S136002, Box 41B, Item 13A (1756); Series S136002, Box 44A, Item 102A (1757); and Series S136002, Box 47B, Item 1A (1759).

³⁰⁹ Henry Laurens to Rawlinson & Davison, September 25, 1755, in Hamer, ed., *Papers of Henry Laurens*, 11:343-344.

In June 1754, Charles and Jermyn offered for sale “intire or in parcels the[ir] house and lands . . . , commonly called the Point [near Ansonborough], containing seventeen acres.³¹⁰ In 1756, the brothers offered another plantation, this time their 1000-acre rice and indigo Cow Savannah plantation, including valuable European goods.³¹¹ The inseparable brothers became embroiled in a controversy in 1763 when they sold to Henry Laurens a sizeable tract of land whose “title [was] not so clear and easy.” Ultimately, the Provost Marshall had to sell a variety of Wright lands in order to satisfy Laurens and the court.³¹²

Likely because of their recent misfortunes in Charleston, the brothers relocated to the East Florida-Georgia border where, according to James Wright:

they were extremely well settled on the banks of the St. Mary . . . and had two very good plantations on the Georgia side of the River, on one of which they had built an exceeding good dwelling house with every other convenient out building and they had another settled plantation on the Florida side of the River on which three plantations they had upwards of 100 Negroes and had resided for nine years past.³¹³

³¹⁰ *South Carolina Gazette*, June 20, 1754. This land was still for sale in December. *Ibid.*, December 5, 1754.

³¹¹ *South Carolina Gazette*, January 22, 1756. The advertisement last appeared in the July 22, 1756 issue. The brothers offered other lands and goods throughout the next couple decade. See, for example, the massive sale advertised in the *South Carolina Gazette* on April 29, 1766. On this day alone, they tendered seven jointly-owned lots for sale in Craven and Greenville Counties, totaling 7,550 acres (including one parcel of 3,450 acres). Some of these, and others, were still for sale well into the 1770s. *South Carolina Gazette*, December 24, 1771.

³¹² For example, Henry Laurens to Jermyn Wright, November 24 and December 26, 1763; Laurens to Thomas Mears, December 21, 1764; Laurens to John Remington, March 22, 1765, in Hamer, *Papers of Henry Laurens*, 4:54-55, 108-110, 546, and 593 and Laurens to [], January 30, 1766; Laurens to Duke Bell, February 4, 1767; and Laurens to James Wright, September 25, 1767, in *ibid.*, 5:57-58 and 64-66. See also, Rawlins Lowndes (Provost Marshall) to Charles Wright, 1755-1756, Series 372001, Volume 2Q0, Page 59, South Carolina State Archives.

³¹³ “The Case and Sufferings of Jermyn and Charles Wright, by their brother Sir James Wright, Baronet, Governor of Georgia,” in Mary Bondurant Warren, ed., *Georgia Governor and Council Journals, 1778-1779: Savannah under Siege* (Athens, GA: Heritage Papers, 2007), 7.

It was here, along the St. Mary River, that Charles Wright would die shortly after hostilities erupted between the Americans and the British. In August 1776, Rebel leaders decided to attack the fort constructed by the Wright brothers with the goal of arresting them, seizing their slaves, and burning their plantations. According to their brother James, they were “obliged to fly with their Negroes ... [into East Florida] where they remained in the woods in very great distress.” During these tumultuous months, Charles Wright “contracted diseases and dyed in February 1777,” as did two dozen of his slaves.³¹⁴ Brother Jermyn would survive all of his siblings, dying in 1799 in London.

Susannah seems to have been born shortly before or after James, perhaps 1713-1714 or 1716-1717. She married John Hume in Charleston about twenty years later, though the date is unclear.³¹⁵ As mentioned earlier, John Hume was a successful Charleston merchant and lawyer, who partnered with Charles and Jermyn Wright around the middle of the century.³¹⁶ Hume also possessed substantial enough land holdings to also own slaves.³¹⁷ The exact date of Susannah

³¹⁴ “The Case and Sufferings of Jermyn and Charles Wright, by their brother Sir James Wright, Baronet, Governor of Georgia,” in Mary Bondurant Warren, ed., *Georgia Governor and Council Journals, 1778-1779: Savannah under Siege* (Athens, GA: Heritage Papers, 2007), 7.

³¹⁵ Kenneth Scott, “Some South Carolina Marriage Bonds, 1733,” *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 63 (September 1975): 180.

³¹⁶ For an idea of Hume’s wealth, see James Hume, Loyalist Claim, AO 13/35/328-365, which maintained that John Hume left behind £8,266.13.6 in property in Georgia and South Carolina in 1777. See also, any number of the hundreds of advertisements offering newly imported wares (especially wines) in the *South Carolina Gazette*. For example, *South Carolina Gazette*, November 10, 1746; January 1, 1752; June 7, 1760; October 31, 1765; and April 24, 1770.

³¹⁷ Concerning John Hume’s landholdings, see for example, *South Carolina Gazette*, December 24, 1771; February 20, 1772; and September 6, 1773. See also any number of land grants. South Carolina State Archives, Series S213184, Volume 12, Page 230 (April 25, 1765); Series S213019, Volume 23, Page 288 (March 15, 1771); and Series S213184, Volume 17, Page 162 (July 3, 1772). Regarding slaves, see for example, the runaway slave notices in the *South Carolina Gazette*, November 4, 1766 and March 7, 1769.

Wright Hume's death has not been discovered, though she had certainly passed prior to her husband as evidenced by their son, Chief Justice James Hume's (East Florida), Loyalist claim. John Hume passed away at some point between March 1779, when we know he was Secretary of the Province of Georgia, and March 29, 1781, when his son James placed a notice for an estate sale for John Hume in the *Royal Georgia Gazette*.³¹⁸

The laborious task of tracking James Wright's ancestry has shed great light on his life and career. It is evident that James Wright hailed from a family that wielded great power but also, at times, lost that power. His family's story reveals the integration of a once-important English family into the colonial economic and political power structure in an effort to redeem the family's fortunes. Each step along the way, the Wright family married well and consolidated its holdings. Wright had a grandfather who intimately served as King James II's chief justice and a father who faithfully upheld the prerogative of King George II as the chief justice of South Carolina. It is also clear that James Wright came from substantial money. His father brought significant wealth to Charleston in 1725 and augmented his holdings throughout his life. As importantly, he helped to ensure that his sons and daughters married well and received practical and/or classical educations. Sir James Wright was acutely aware of his own ancestry. He followed in the path of both his father and grandfather, choosing a career in the legal field. Moreover, just as his father and, to a lesser extent his grandfather, he possessed a keen legal mind and deep sense of devotion to the English constitution as represented by Crown and Parliament.

³¹⁸ *Royal Georgia Gazette*, March 29, 1781. John Hume had been expelled from Georgia on October 7, 1777. James Hume, Loyalist Claim, AO 13/35/328-365. Regarding John Hume's position in Georgia in 1779 see, *London Gazette*, April 20, 1779 and *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 14, 1779.

CHAPTER 2: A VIEW FROM THE PERIPHERY: JAMES WRIGHT AND THE MAKING OF AN IMPERIAL ARISTOCRAT

In the summer of 1737, James Graeme, Master of Solomon's Lodge in Charleston, nominated twenty-one year-old "James Wright, Esq., who was Junior Warden to be Senior Warden."³¹⁹ This appointment is a clear indication that from a very young age, others deemed Wright worthy of leadership positions. This belief became more apparent the next month when Wright was unanimously elected master of the lodge.³²⁰ In its simplest terms, eighteenth-century American freemasonry was a fraternity of leading men who sought to "promote friendship, society, mutual assistance, and good fellowship."³²¹ The *South Carolina Gazette* announced just two months prior to Wright's appointment that: "At the request of the antient and honourable society of free and accepted masons, at the theatre in Queen Street, ... will be performed a comedy called the 'Recruiting Officer.'"³²² This play, written by the Irish playwright George Farquhar in 1706, was one of the most popular plays of the century, following the sexual exploits and social follies of two soldiers.³²³ After the play, which was performed "to the satisfaction and

³¹⁹ *South Carolina Gazette*, July 30, 1737. Solomon's Lodge was the only lodge in Charleston at this time. See, Henry Whitemore, comp., *Free Masonry in North America from the Colonial Period to the Beginning of the Present Century* (New York: Artotype Printing and Publishing Co., 1889), 41 and Hugo Tatsch, *Freemasonry in the Thirteen Colonies*, 85-86. The first meeting of freemason's in South Carolina occurred on the evening of October 28, 1736, at "Mr. Charles Shephard's in Broad Street." *SC Gazette*, November 6, 1736.

³²⁰ *SC Gazette*, August 27, 1737.

³²¹ Whitemore, *Freemasonry*, 3.

³²² *SC Gazette*, May 28, 1737.

³²³ George Farquhar, *The Recruiting Officer, A Comedy* (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1819).

entertainment of the whole audience,” Wright and his fellow masons returned to the “Lodge at Mr. Shephard’s.” Wright maintained his membership in the society throughout his time in Charleston.³²⁴

At this time, it was a new organization with only a handful of lodges dispersed among the largest colonial cities – Philadelphia, Boston, and Charleston.³²⁵ “Freemasonry’s real impact on America is [quite] significant,” according to author Mitch Horowitz, who added that “as a radical thought movement that emerged from the Reformation, [it] was the first widespread and well-connected organization to espouse religious toleration and liberty.”³²⁶ Though Horowitz’s work has made a case for the importance of freemasonry in shaping the worldview of the Founding Fathers, would-be Loyalists also dearly held such principles.³²⁷

Although James Wright frequently appeared in legal documents and newspapers in the middle third of the eighteenth-century, a full accounting of his early career is impossible to create. Enough evidence exists, however, to construct an dependable and nuanced sketch of Wright’s long journey to the pinnacle of power in colonial America. From an early age, James

³²⁴ See, for example, *SC Gazette*, January 3, 1743.

³²⁵ Whittemore, *Freemasonry*, 41. The first lodge meeting in America took place at “The Hoop” in Philadelphia in June 1731. See also, *South Carolina Gazette*, August 31, 1734.

³²⁶ Mitch Horowitz, “Masons and the Making of America,” *U.S. News & World Report*, September 14, 2009. See also, Horowitz, *Occult America: the Secret History of How Mysticism Shaped our Nation* (New York: Random House, 2009).

³²⁷ Madison Clinton Peters, *The Masons as Makers of America: the True Story of the American Revolution* (Brooklyn: The Patriotic League, 1917). Peters’ “history” seeks to illustrate the vital importance of freemasonry in the founding of the United States. See also, Sidney Morse, *Freemasonry in the American Revolution* (New York: Kessinger Publishing, 1992); and Philip Roth, *Masonry in the Formation of our Government, 1761-1799* (New York: Kessinger Publishing, 1995). For a more balanced approach see, Steven Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1998).

occupied a central role in provincial Charleston – landholder, attorney, clerk in the Court of Exchequer, attorney general, and, lastly, colonial agent.

In March 1735, James Wright registered his first land plat with provincial officials in Charleston, a 1,000 acre parcel bordering the Pee Dee River in Queensborough Township.³²⁸ Although only about twenty-years-old at the time, this acquisition marked the beginning of an unquenchable, lifelong thirst for land that culminated with the purchase and development of eleven lowcountry Georgia plantations.³²⁹ Any examination of Wright's holdings in South Carolina, however, is destined to be incomplete, but we can verify his ownership of significant swaths of land. James received six South Carolina land grants amounting to 3,115 acres.³³⁰ In addition to these six, Wright registered plats for eight other pieces of land. All told, Wright held 9,810 acres of land divided amongst fourteen plots. Of these, only six plats were registered before Wright became Georgia governor and fully two-thirds of his entire South Carolina acreage had been acquired during a three-month flurry on the eve of the American Revolution.³³¹

³²⁸ March 9, 1735, Series S213184, Volume 3, Page 181, South Carolina State Archives. See also, for example, *South Carolina Gazette*, January 20, 1757, which mentioned a James Wright plantation at Wambaw, near (or on) Echaw Creek.

³²⁹ Wright reported in his Loyalist Claim that he owned 25,578 acres at the outset of the Revolution. James Wright Loyalist Claim, The National Archives, Audit Office 12 and Audit Office 13 (hereafter, AO 12 or AO 13).

³³⁰ September 17, 1736, Series S213019, Volume 41, Page 104; July 13, 1737, Series S213019, Volume 41, Page 149; July 4, 1754, Series S213019, Volume 5, Page 447; August 3, 1755, Series S213015, Volume 21, Page 153; February 1, 1758, Series S213019, Volume 8, Page 197; February 1, 1758, Series S213019, Volume 8, Page 198, South Carolina State Archives.

³³¹ The issue of Wright's aggressive land speculation in the months prior to the war will be discussed in some depth in chapter 5. For the additional plats see, January 20, 1763, Series S213184, Volume 7, Page 388; February 25, 1767, Series S213184, Volume 20, Page 516; March 27, 1767, Series S213184, Volume 10, Page 84; October 17, 1774, Series S213184, Volume 20, Page 515; December 28, 1774, Series S213184, Volume 20, Page 515; December 28,

Almost without fail, lowcountry residents with means purchased land with the intention of stocking it with slaves, who in turn would produce goods whose sale would afford the owner opportunities to purchase even more land and, consequently, more slaves.³³² Slavery was the single most important factor to the burgeoning eighteenth-century lowcountry economy. Moreover, human property comprised nearly one-half of the colony's personal wealth. Slave ownership was desirable that 80% of all estates owned slaves, and this includes many with, according to historian William Bentley, "low levels of wealth, such as small farmers."³³³

It is unclear when James Wright purchased his first human being, but the first such extant bill of sale in the South Carolina State Archives is dated December 4, 1749, when he purchased Cesar.³³⁴ Seven years later, Wright purchased nine additional slaves from the estate of Joshua Wilkies.³³⁵ As a basis for comparison, on the eve of the Revolution, Wright owned 523 slaves and 25,578 acres of land. Proportionally speaking, then, it is not unreasonable to assume that he

1774, Series S213184, Volume 20, Page 516; January 4, 1775, Series S213184, Volume 20, Page 516; January 20, 1775, Series S213184, Volume 13, Page 270, South Carolina State Archives.

³³² See, for example, Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: the Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1990), chapter 1; Alan Galloway, *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), chapter 1; Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia, 1730-1775* (Athens: UGA Press, 1984), chapter 6; Julia Floyd Smith, *Slavery and Rice Culture in Low Country Georgia, 1750-1860* (Knoxville: UT Press, 1985), chapter 2; Paul Pressly, *On the Rim of the Caribbean: Colonial Georgia and the British Atlantic World* (Athens: UGA Press, 2013), chapter 8

³³³ William G. Bentley, "Wealth Distribution in Colonial South Carolina," Ph.D. diss. Georgia State University, 1977;

³³⁴ December 4, 1749, Series S213003, Volume 2I, Page 148, South Carolina State Archives. For other such purchases see, for example, July 11, 1754, Series S213003, Volume 2I, Page 642 (for the purchase of Cato).

³³⁵ March 27, 1754, Series S213003, Volume 2I, Page 647, South Carolina State Archives. Their names: Simon, Hopes Prince, Bullock Prince, Essex, Sarah, Betty, Carolina, Bella, and Hagar.

owned approximately two hundred slaves while he lived in South Carolina. Admittedly, this assumption would have to be based on the supposition that Wright cleared and planted on all of his South Carolina lands.

In many ways, Wright's life mirrored that of any number of lowcountry planters. These extremely ambitious parvenus exploited the power derived from land ownership to obtain governmental and societal positions of leadership. They in turn utilized these positions of authority to establish connections at the imperial center in London and to further augment their personal wealth. Although a confident identification of these contacts is difficult to ascertain, it can be surmised that Wright's English heritage afforded him certain advantages in this burgeoning transatlantic world, it was his keen analytical mind and determination to succeed which ensured his status as a colonial leader and, ultimately, a founder of Georgia's first planter elite.³³⁶ Additionally, his Loyalist claim after the Revolutionary War identifies one merchant firm with whom he had a close relationship. Moreover, the claim also indicates that Wright had numerous personal relationships with merchants, although without providing specific names.³³⁷ The *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* recognizes no fewer than five merchants with whom Wright corresponded on a semi-regular basis.³³⁸ Lastly, it must not be forgotten that Wright's brothers, Jermyn and Charles, also owned a firm in South Carolina.

³³⁶ Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite, passim* and Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, chapter 1.

³³⁷ See, for example, James Wright Loyalist Claim, AO 12/4 and AO 13/37. The former mentions the firm of Shubrick & Clempson; the latter reveals that Wright has exhausted his credit with numerous merchants.

³³⁸ See, for example, "Memorial of Merchants to the Board of Trade," June 6, 1781, in *CRG*, 28, part 2:404-407. The memorialists included six firms, of whom Wright personally corresponded with five: John Nutt, Davis Strachan & Co., Clark & Milligan, Graham & Simpson, and Shubrick & Clempson.

Although Wright was a prolific land speculator and planter, he considered the law to be his profession and ran a lucrative firm from the mid-1730s through the 1750s. According to historian Hoyt Canady, only twelve percent of South Carolina attorneys actively practiced law twenty or more years.³³⁹ Wright first engaged in legal activities as early as 1735 upon receiving his royal commission, likely at the behest of his father, the chief justice, as Remembrancer Clerk of the Pleas and Estreats of the Court of Exchequer.³⁴⁰ The Court of Exchequer, one of the busiest colonial courts, heard cases concerning royal financial matters.³⁴¹ The newspaper's designation of Wright as "Esq." may suggest that the youthful Wright was already acting as an attorney. According to Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*, the term "esquire" referred to: a "title of dignity, and next in degree below a knight," "younger sons of noblemen," or "a justice of the peace."³⁴²

South Carolina's entire legal community operated from Charleston because, at least during Wright's years in the colony, no courts existed beyond the town's borders.³⁴³ Thus, Charleston became the hub of all legal activity and was the destination of all South Carolinians in need of legal advice. Attorneys with transatlantic connections earned the best salaries, and James Wright had deep and generational contacts in London. Beginning in the early 1730s, shortly after the Crown took control of the province, Charleston witnessed a tremendous economic boom.

³³⁹ Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar," 269.

³⁴⁰ *South Carolina Gazette*, December 6, 1735. Without providing a citation, Canady stated Wright opened his practiced in Charleston in 1736. Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar," 281-282.

³⁴¹ Peter Charles Hoffer, *Law and People in Colonial America*, 6.

³⁴² Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language* (Dublin: Thomas Ewing, 1768). For a comprehensive study of the legal profession in colonial Charleston see, Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar."

³⁴³ For a physical description of the city see, John William Gerard De Brahm, *Report of the General Survey in the Southern District of North America*, ed. by Louis De Vorsey, Jr. (Columbia: USC Press, 1971).

As one of the British Empire's most important peripheral entrepôts, Charleston was dominated by its merchant oligarchy that heavily relied on attorneys to secure debt collection, as did their London factors.³⁴⁴ Thus, Wright's international network garnered him, in the words of George Rogers, "the fattest fees" in the province.³⁴⁵ According to Canady, Wright's merchant connections were unrivaled, as evidenced by his high-end clientele.³⁴⁶

Before continuing the investigation into Wright's legal career, however, we must look at his legal training at Gray's Inn.³⁴⁷ The famous London Inn of Court admitted James on August 14, 1741, six full years after the first reference to his practicing law.³⁴⁸ Wright's actual attendance at Gray's, or any other Inn, must be questioned. Historian Hoyt Canady opined that Wright likely never attended the Inn, citing James's "steady" case load from 1736 through 1757. Canady's thesis has real merit and justifies further exploration.³⁴⁹ Just two months after his admit-

³⁴⁴ *SC Gazette*, April 3 and November 22, 1742; January 31 and April 11, 1743; October 8, 1744; February 18 and October 28, 1745. These are but a few examples which can be consistently found in the newspaper through the 1750s.

³⁴⁵ Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, 15.

³⁴⁶ Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar," 282-283. His clients included the likes of James Crockatt; Ebenezer Simmons, Benjamin Smith and James Crockatt; John Watson and John MacKenzie; Joseph Wragg and Richard Lambton; Paul Trapier, Robert Stoll and John Hume; and John Barksdale and Company.

³⁴⁷ Without mentioning a source, Canady wrote that Wright attended Eton, Cambridge as well as Gray's Inn. I can find no primary source for Wright's attendance at Eton, Cambridge. However, Alfred Jones has suggested James Wright, Jr., "is believed to have been at Eton College from 1753 to 1763." This is likely Canady's source and consequent mistake. Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar," 227 and Jones, ed., *American Members of the Bar*, 221-223.

³⁴⁸ Joseph Foster, *The Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn, 1521-1889* (London: Hansard Publishing Union, 1889), 375. See also, Hoyt Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar: Lawyers in Colonial South Carolina" (PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 1984), 438; Kenneth Coleman Papers, MS 3478, Hargrett Rare Manuscripts Library, University of GA and Alfred E. Jones, *American Members of the Inns of Court*, 221-223.

³⁴⁹ Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar," 281.

tance, he is listed in the *South Carolina Gazette* as a contact regarding the purchase of several Charleston lots.³⁵⁰ In January 1742, James is identified in the same paper as the sole legal contact in a debt collection case. In fact, the advertisement requires that those “who make default in payment by the first of March next, their bonds and notes will without distinction be put into the hands of James Wright., Esq., Attorney at Law.”³⁵¹ Many such ads consistently appeared in the Charleston paper until the late -1740s and without significant gaps in time.³⁵² In addition to these newspaper advertisements, the *Gazette* announced James’s wedding to Miss Sarah Maidman, a young lady of great beauty, merit and fortune.”³⁵³ Furthermore, there is no mention of Wright whatsoever in the London papers during this period.

The only possible exception to this supposition might be a two-year period from November 1746 to April 1748, in which Wright’s name does not appear in the *South Carolina Gazette*.³⁵⁴ Moreover, the provincial legal records during this period are also silent until May 29, 1747, when James’s appointment as attorney general is entered.³⁵⁵ Gray’s Inn never called Wright to the bar, but this would not have been a requirement because, according to legal histori-

³⁵⁰ *SC Gazette*, October 17, 1741.

³⁵¹ *SC Gazette*, January 9, 1742.

³⁵² See, for example, *SC Gazette*, February 13, April 3, and November 22, 1742; January 31 and April 11 (which announced Wright’s election to the vestry of St. Philip’s Church), 1743; April 2, (the paper indicates that Wright was in Charleston in December 1743 and April 1744), and October 8, 1744; and February 18, 1745. As noted, these are just a few of many such evidences that Wright lived in Charleston through much of 1746. Wright continued his active leadership at St. Philip’s until he left Charleston for good in 1757. See, for example, *SC Gazette*, April 10, 1749.

³⁵³ *SC Gazette*, February 20, 1742. Sarah Maidman will be more fully introduced in chapter 3.

³⁵⁴ Wright did not appear in the *SC Gazette* between November 10, 1746 and April 18, 1748.

³⁵⁵ May 29, 1747, Series S213003, Volume 2H, Page 1 and September 27, 1747, South Carolina State Archives. Wright replaced James Abercromby. Additionally, there is no mention of Wright in the London newspapers from 1741-1750.

an David Lemmings, “London’s policy of centralizing judicial systems encouraged the development of infant bars around the supreme courts at important commercial and administrative centers” like Charleston.³⁵⁶ Moreover, as Julie Flavell has noted, “it was sarcastically said that gentlemen were called to the bar only for paying fees and producing a certificate of having dined a certain number of times in the hall of the inn.”³⁵⁷ Thus, the most likely scenario is that he attended Gray’s Inn for the primary purpose of making the necessary connections and earning sufficient credentials in order to be officially named South Carolina’s attorney general.³⁵⁸

Located at the very heart of London, the Inns of Court provided young affluent students with unfettered access to the political and economic center of the Empire. Gray’s Inn occupied Reginald de Gray’s Portpoole manor house across Fleet Street from Middle Temple.³⁵⁹ Even though it was the least well-known (and respected) of the four Inns, Gray’s Inn was immortalized by alumnus and patron Francis Bacon, who lauded the gardens as providing the “greatest refreshment to the spirits of man.”³⁶⁰ In 1747, Gray’s Inn had in fact been described as the destination for “Beaus’ or Whorers” rather than for serious students.³⁶¹

³⁵⁶ David Lemmings, *Professors of the Law: Barristers and English Legal Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, 62-64, 119, 230-231, and 302. Alfred Jones stated that Wright entered Gray’s Inn in 1741 and was later called to the bar. Jones, *American Members of the Inns of Court*, 221-223.

³⁵⁷ Flavell, *When London was the Capital of America*, Kindle edition, Loc. 1712 and Lemmings, *Professors of the Law*, chapter

³⁵⁸ The only reference to James Wright at the Gray’s Inn Library and Archives is his 1741 admittance. There is no record of his physical attendance or being called to the bar. The Honourable Society of Gray’s Inn, Library and Archives, London, England.

³⁵⁹ Blackham, *Story of the Temple, Gray’s and Lincoln’s Inn*, 84-86.

³⁶⁰ Francis Bacon, “Of Gardens,” in *The Essays* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), chapter 46. See also, William R. Douthwaite, *Gray’s Inn: Its History & Associations*, chapter 8 and Andrée Hope, *Chronicle of an Old Inn: Or, A Few Words about Gray’s Inn*, 70-92.

³⁶¹ R. Campbell, quoted in Lemmings, *Professors of Law*, 64.

Whether or not James Wright physically attended Gray's Inn is of minor consequence. The fact that he had been admitted, however, is of great importance.³⁶² The wealthiest colonial families often shipped their sons across the Atlantic in order to obtain a proper and "polished" education, especially in the law which by the mid-eighteenth-century had clearly become the "pre-eminent English profession."³⁶³ Prior to 1815, there were 236 American-born members of an Inn of Court. Of those, at least 146 attended Middle Temple; 43 entered the Inner Temple; 32 enrolled at Lincoln's; and only 9 matriculated at Gray's Inn. In large measure because of their wealth (as well as their desire to emulate the British gentry), South Carolinians alone contributed one-third of these students, easily outdistancing all other colonies.³⁶⁴

Moreover, according to MP Edmund Burke, many colonial elites "seem to have thought that there was an advantage in being able to claim membership of an Inn ... as a sort of qualification for other things."³⁶⁵ In 1747, the *London Magazine* observed that "if a man is a clever fellow, [the legal profession] 'tis [a] sure step to an estate. 'Tis necessity that has driven the practitioners of the law hither, from Europe, and other parts of America, and I remember few that had

³⁶² For a detailed examination of Gray's Inn see, Robert Blackham, *Story of the Temple, Gray's and Lincoln's Inn*.

³⁶³ For the notion of gaining a fine polish in London see, for example, Eric Stockdale, *Middle Temple Lawyers and the American Revolution*, 42-43 and Skemp, *William Franklin*, 28. For the importance placed on the legal profession see, Wilfrid Priest, *Professions in Early Modern England*, 64-89.

³⁶⁴ Alfred Jones, *American Members of the Inns of Court*, xxviii. Six Americans attended multiple Inns. Seventy-four South Carolinians attended an Inn. For a slightly lower, but still hefty, percentage see, Stockdale, *Middle Temple Lawyers*, TI1-TI7. See also, Lemmings, *Professors of the Law*, chapter 6 and William Sasche, *Colonial Americans in Britain*, chapter 5.

³⁶⁵ Quoted in, Stockdale, *Middle Temple Lawyers and the American Revolution*, 42-43. See also, Julie Flavell, *When London was the Capital of America*, Kindle edition, location 1346, 1712, and 2298.

not made it very well worth their while.”³⁶⁶ Benjamin Franklin’s son, William, was just one such American. His biographer observed that Franklin used his time at Middle Temple “as a springboard from which to launch his career.”³⁶⁷

Burke’s reference to the prestige connected with such affiliation cannot be overstated, especially in light of the fact that the actual legal training provided by the Inns was suspect and usually of an autodidactic nature. The questionable education provided by the Inns became an increasingly important issue throughout the eighteenth-century as calls for “a more real and substantial knowledge” of the law reverberated throughout the Empire.³⁶⁸ Historian Julie Flavell has noted that the “instruction actually received at [the Inns] was often thin on the ground ... but association with them gave one a definite social purchase.”³⁶⁹ Legal scholar Eric Stockdale has noted that students learned their craft by “teach[ing] themselves, with the help of books and regular attendance in courts,” visiting the House of Commons and House of Lords, and forming learning cooperatives.³⁷⁰ With both his grandfather and father serving on the high court, Wright certainly received a practical legal education to go along with his hands-on training as a clerk and, quite possibly, a legal apprenticeship.

³⁶⁶ *London Magazine*, July 1746.

³⁶⁷ Sheila Skemp, *William Franklin*, 39-42.

³⁶⁸ Lemmings, *Professors of the Law*, 134 and, more generally, chapter 4.

³⁶⁹ Flavell, *When London was the Capital of America*, Kindle edition, location 1346. For the opposite point of view see, Blackham, *Story of the Temple, passim.*, especially 84-86.

³⁷⁰ Stockdale, *Middle Temple Lawyers*, 39-41 and Flavell, *When London was the Capital of America*, Kindle Edition, Loc. 1910.

The supposition that Wright served as the province's attorney general, at least on some level, becomes more plausible when a 1737 grand jury specifically identified him as such.³⁷¹ Such a designation, however, conflicts with documentation at the South Carolina State Archives, which first dates his commission as attorney general on July 6, 1744.³⁷² It is likely, then, that Wright received a temporary and, likely purely local, commission resulting from the inability of the current attorney general to fulfill his responsibilities.³⁷³ In any event, an Assembly committee directed the lieutenant governor to pay Wright £250 for his services as attorney general.³⁷⁴ Upon full consideration, however, the House denied this request, as they were wont to do. Much like his father (and other officials), Wright experienced incessant frustrations in collecting his salary from the provincial assembly.³⁷⁵

As attorney general, for example, in 1756, Wright found provincial authorities increasingly alarmed with the rising numbers of Acadians now living in Charleston, most of whom were

³⁷¹ *SC Gazette*, November 5, 1737.

³⁷² July 6, 1744, Series S213003, Volume 2F, Page 91, South Carolina State Archives. There are two additional attorney general commissions located at the Archives. See, May 29, 1747, Series S213003, Volume 2H, Page 291 and August 23, 1750, Series S213003, Volume 2H, Page 291.

³⁷³ A January 1742 issue of the *SC Gazette* referred to Wright as merely an "attorney at law." *SC Gazette*, January 9, 1742.

³⁷⁴ "House Proceedings," March 4, 1737, in J. H. Easterby, ed., *Colonial Records of South Carolina, Journal of Commons House, 10 November 1736 to 7 June 1739* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1951), 282-283 (hereafter *CRSC*).

³⁷⁵ See, for example, "House Proceedings," February 2, 1738, in Easterby, *CRSC, 10 November 1736 to 7 June 1739*, 450, 456. See also, various dates, 636 and 661; *CRSC, 12 September 1739 to 26 March 1741*, 59 and 109; *CRSC, 14 September 1742 to 7 May 1743*, 109, 375, 377, 401, and 521; *CRSC, 20 February 1744 to 25 May 1745*, 87, 93, 113, 325, 396, 410, 416-417, and 428; *CRSC, 10 September 1745 to 17 June 1746*, 61, 74, 144, 147, and 159. Similar such disputes can be found in the *CRSC* throughout Wright's entire tenure as attorney, which ended in 1757. Regarding the House's penny-pinching ways concerning other officials' see, *CRSC, 20 February 1744 to 25 May 1745*, 396, in which they disallowed certain charges submitted by attorney general James Abercromby. See also, Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar," 70.

Catholic and destitute. Governor James Glen was “truly concern’d,” he informed the South Carolina Assembly, “to see the inhabitants of this province so grievously burthen’d with subsisting the great number of Accadians now amongst us.” Glen intended to “have shipped off the single men,” but was uncertain of the “legality of doing such an act.” Accordingly, he concluded, “I thought it advisable to take the opinion of His Majesty’s Attorney General [James Wright].” Wright advised him that such an action would indeed be “illegal & unwarrantable.”³⁷⁶

Fiscal disputes with the Assembly aside, he collected significant earnings as an attorney general. An examination of the *Colonial Records of South Carolina* from 1735 to 1757 (the years in which we know Wright served the colony as attorney general) reveals that James earned a minimum of £3,395 (see table 1). The extant record shows that Wright received compensation in nineteen of these years. Clearly, then, the record is incomplete. However, working with the available data, Wright averaged no less than £180 per year in attorney general fees. Upon closer scrutiny, we find a total of fifteen payments dispersed over twelve intermittent years. The average payment amounted to £227. The most consistent payment schedule occurs from 1749 to 1757, in which Wright received twelve payments (or 1.33 per year), totaling £3,111, for an average of £346 per annum and £260 per payment. A simple extrapolation of these figures over the entirety of Wright’s tenure yields a total attorney general income of £6,587 for an annual average of £347. In trying to estimate Wright’s wealth, we must also consider the estates of South Carolina’s legal community. During the eighteenth-century, nineteen percent of lawyers possessed wealth greater than £5,000 sterling. Their combined assets accounted for nearly 95% of the entire profession’s wealth. Additionally, seventeen percent of these attorneys owned more than

³⁷⁶ James Glen to South Carolina Council, February 21, 1756, in *CRSC, 20 November 1755 to 6 July 1757*, 120.

100 slaves. Although Wright's wealth is not included in this survey of wealth distribution, we must assume that his net worth was either comparable or exceeded these figures.³⁷⁷ To place this amount in perspective, economic historians John McCusker and Russell Menard estimate the average wealth per free white male in British America in 1774 to be £74, compared to a figure of £131 in the southern colonies.³⁷⁸ Additionally, for example, Thomas Jefferson averaged £175 per annum in attorney's fees by the 1770s. According to historian John Ferling, this salary was approximately seven times the annual income of an urban tradesman.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁷ Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar," 323.

³⁷⁸ John McCusker and Russell Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1067-1789* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1991), 61; McCusker, W. Robert Higgins, Richard Bean, Alice H. Jones, James Shephard, Carville Earle, and Russell Menard, "Colonial and Pre-Federal Statistics," in William Lerner, et. al., eds., *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1975), Part 2: 1175; and Peter Lindert and Jeffrey Williamson, "American Incomes 1774-1860," available online at: http://emlab.berkeley.edu/users/webfac/cromer/e211_f12/LindertWilliamson.pdf. See also, "American incomes 1650-1870," at <http://gpih.ucdavis.edu/tables.htm>.

³⁷⁹ John Ferling, *Jefferson and Hamilton: The Rivalry that Forged a Nation*, location 685.

TABLE 2.1. PAYMENTS RECEIVED FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL SERVICES.³⁸⁰

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PAYMENTS</u>	<u>AMOUNT (£)</u>	<u>AVERAGE (£)</u>
<1738	0	0	0
1739	1	33	33
1740	0	0	0
1741	0	0	0
1742	0	0	0
1743	1	167	167
1744	1	84	84
1745	0	0	0
1746	0	0	0
1747	0	0	0
1748	0	0	0
1749	1	284	284
1750	2	596	298
1751	1	337	337
1752	2	375	188
1753	1	411	411
1754	2	267	134
1755	1	300	300
1756	1	171	171

³⁸⁰ For Wright's payments, see for example, *CRSC*, 10 November 1736 to 7 June 1739, 661; *CRSC*, 14 September 1742 to 7 May 1743, 401; *CRSC*, 20 February 1744 to 25 May 1745, 113; *CRSC*, 28 March 1749 to 21 November 1749, 166 and 228; *CRSC*, 23 April 1750 to 31 May 1750, 76; *CRSC*, 21 November 1752 to 6 September 1754, 354; *CRSC*, 12 November 1754 to 23 September 1755, 128; *CRSC*, 20 November 1755 to 6 July 1757, 180. Note: data is incomplete.

A significant portion of Wright's legal responsibilities, whether as attorney or attorney general, revolved around naval issues. For example, in May 1743, the Assembly urged Chief Justice Benjamin Whitaker to heed Wright's advice to prosecute "such persons as have erected buildings in front of the curtain line, contrary to the laws of the province."³⁸¹ The next year, on July 6, James was appointed Advocate for the Vice-Admiralty Court.³⁸² The following winter, the lower house requested that James bring a suit against a Mr. Comett for trading with "His Majesty's enemies."³⁸³ The next year Wright "libeled Captain [Edward] Morris, master of a merchant ship in lying in Charles Town harbor, for sending armed aboard a flag of truce for the purpose of taking by force deserters whom he suspected were on board. Wright charged that the action was contrary to the law of nations ... and an affront to the peace and dignity of the king."³⁸⁴ Governor James Glen sought Wright's advice concerning a piracy case in 1749.³⁸⁵

In sum, Wright practiced law in Charleston from the mid-1730s through the 1750s, trying more cases (471) than any other eighteenth-century South Carolinian.³⁸⁶ He ranked in the top fifteen percent of colonial South Carolina attorneys in cases tried before the Chancery Court,

³⁸¹ "House Proceedings," May 4-5, 1743, in Easterby, *CRSC, 14 September 1737 to 7 May 1743*, 431 and 434. A curtain line was a line on the bay used for defenses.

³⁸² July 6, 1744, Series S213003, Volume 2F, Page 90, South Carolina State Archives.

³⁸³ "House Proceedings," February 21-22, 1745, in *CRSC, 20 February 1745 to 25 May 1745*, 355 and 357.

³⁸⁴ Charles McLean Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History: England's Commerical and Colonial Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 245.

³⁸⁵ "Proceedings" on various dates, in Easterby, ed., *CRSC, 28 March 1749 to 21 November 1749*, 272 and 277-278.

³⁸⁶ Canady, "Gentlemen of the Bar," 271. Additionally, only 14% of South Carolina lawyers during this period tried more than 100 cases.

Vice-Admiralty Court, and Court of Common Pleas.³⁸⁷ His success as an attorney can be attributed to his transatlantic connections and solid reputation. Moreover, according to Canady, Wright occupied the top tier of “his profession even though he faced stiff competition.”³⁸⁸ Along with the likes of Charles Pinckney, James Graeme, and Robert Hume, Wright led the charge in bringing respectability to the legal profession in Charleston.

The South Carolina Assembly convened during the first week of November 1756 to choose its new colonial agent to represent their interests in London. After three weeks of debate and negotiations, James Wright accepted their invitation. Wright, however, was not their first choice. But after William Middleton declined the Assembly’s offer, a hotly-contested power struggle between South Carolina’s Council and Assembly ensued. The Assembly maintained the appointment was their sole prerogative. Although the two houses compromised with the selection of Wright, the lower house gained the upper hand concerning future appointments.³⁸⁹ Such

³⁸⁷ Canady, “Gentlemen of the Bar,” 276-277, 443-444, and 439-440. In sheer volume of the number of cases tried along with the number of years practicing in a specific court, Wright ranked: 6th in the Chancery Court; 5th in the Vice-Admiralty Court; and 7th in the Court of Common Pleas. It is likely that Wright would rank number one in each of these lists had he not become South Carolina’s colonial agent and, subsequently, Georgia’s governor.

³⁸⁸ Canady, “Gentlemen of the Bar,” 281-282.

³⁸⁹ For the debate and appointment of Wright see, “Proceedings,” November 5, 9, 11, 16, 17, 18, and 19, 1756, in *CRSC, 20 November 1755 to 6 July 1757*, 288-299. For the controversy see, South Carolina Agent Act, November 19, 1756, in Colonial Office Papers 324 / 60; Cooper and McCord, eds., *South Carolina Statutes*, 4:34-35; Jack Greene, *Quest for Power*, 266-271; Michael Kammen, *A Rope of Sand*, 51-52 and 267; Ella Lonn, *Colonial Agents of the Southern Colonies* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1945), 70-77; Roy W. Smith, *South Carolina as a Royal Province*, chapter 4; and Beverly Bond, “The Colonial Agent as a Popular Representative,” *Political Science Quarterly* 35.3 (September 1920): 372-392. For Wright’s appointment see, Cooper and McCord, eds., *SC Statutes*, 4:34 and South Carolina Committee of Correspondence to Wright, July 8, 1757, in W. H. Lyttelton Papers, Clements Library, University of Michigan.

squabbling over the appointment of agents was commonplace by the middle of the eighteenth-century, especially in the southern provinces.³⁹⁰

Wright busied himself during the winter of 1756-1757 with settling his personal and business affairs in South Carolina, either in an effort to liquefy some assests in order to cover his London expenses or, perhaps, because he never planned to return to America. He had, according to eighteenth-century historian William Bacon Stevens, discharged his duties as attorney general with “ability and diligence.”³⁹¹ In February, he advertised the sale of his Cooper River plantation in the *South Carolina Gazette*.

To be sold by the subscriber, his plantation, 7 miles from Charles-Town, pleasantly situated on Cooper river, containing about 530 acres, one half uncleared, on which is a great quantity of fire-wood; the greatest part of the cleared land is fit for indigo and provisions, and the rest of it for rice. There is upon it a very good brick dwelling house, a neat garden, and several convenient outhouses. Any person inclinable to purchase the same, may treat with me in Charles-Town.³⁹²

Just four weeks after this advertisement first appeared, impatient and eager to return to London, Wright decided to simply auction his plantation.³⁹³ Later that spring the lower house urged Wright to “speedily embark for England” and within a couple of months, he completed his preparations for moving to England by requesting:

all persons that have any demands upon him so come and receive satisfaction: And in order to intitle himself to the benefit of the proviso in the attachment act of this province gives the public notice that he hath taken his passage for Great-Britain, and in ends to embark and depart this province early in next month and that he is ready in the mean time to appear, give bail, or answer, as the case may

³⁹⁰ Michael Kammen, *A Rope of Sand*, 48-52; Lonn, *Colonial Agents of the Southern Colonies*, chapter 4; and Jack Greene, *Quest for Power, passim*.

³⁹¹ William Bacon Steven, *History of Georgia*, 2:18.

³⁹² *SC Gazette*, February 3, 10, 17, and 24, 1757.

³⁹³ *SC Gazette*, March 3 and 10, 1757.

require to any action, summons or suit, that shall be brought or issued against him.³⁹⁴

After months of preparation, Wright finally embarked for Europe, sans family, on the seventh of August.³⁹⁵ We know that his family did not join him because, later that month, his wife Sarah placed an advertisement announcing that a Gambian “Negro man, named Titus, a tall well made fellow, and pretty black” had run away from the Wambaw plantation. Mrs. Wright offered a £25 reward for assistance in recovering their property. Interestingly, she added that, if Titus returned of his “own accord, within three months, [he] shall not receive any punishment.”³⁹⁶

“I got to Plymouth,” Wright informed South Carolina’s governor William Henry Lyttelton, on November 7, 1757, “after a most exceptional passage” of nearly ninety days. He wasted no time in assuming his duties and obtaining the proper certifications from the Board of Trade and Plantations as well as the Admiralty. James noted that George Montague, the Earl of Halifax, and Sir George Lyttelton both “promised to assist me in my solicitations” as agent.³⁹⁷ Successful agents would need such important support because their responsibilities, according to historian Jack Greene, “were legend.”³⁹⁸

Wright’s responsibilities included, but were not limited to, the securing of favorable legislation, the promotion of provincial trade, forwarding varied professional and personal corre-

³⁹⁴ “Proceedings,” May 21, 1757, in *CRSC, 20 November 1755 to 6 July 1757*, 466. *SC Gazette*, June 23 and July 21, 1757.

³⁹⁵ *SC Gazette*, August 18, 1757.

³⁹⁶ *SC Gazette*, August 25, and September 1, 1757. Although Titus’ fate is not known, the ad appeared in the *Gazette* only two more times.

³⁹⁷ James Wright to W. H. Lyttelton, November 9, 1757, in Lyttelton Papers, Clements Library.

³⁹⁸ Greene, *Quest for Power*, 266.

spondence to and from South Carolina, and protesting unfavorable regulations.³⁹⁹ In short, colonial agents were power brokers, negotiating the slippery terrain of ministerial politics. The successful navigation of imperial politics required agents to negotiate a veritable labyrinth of offices and boards. For example, Wright first had to submit memorials or petitions to the Secretary of State, who often redirected him to the Privy Council, who then forwarded him to the Board of Trade, who consulted legal counsel concerning the matter before reversing the entire process until a decision had been made.⁴⁰⁰ Benjamin Franklin frustratingly wrote to the Pennsylvania Assembly describing the process as a “kind of labour in vain to attempt making impressions on such immovable objects; ‘tis like writing on the sands in a windy day.”⁴⁰¹ Throughout this process, agents such as Wright had to constantly grease the wheels of imperial government by proffering gratuities and bribes to anyone who could aid their cause. Massachusetts’s agent William Bollan sardonically wrote that the “expenses necessarily attending the negotiation of business here are ... considerable.”⁴⁰² South Carolinian Peter Manigault similarly observed that agents must possess sufficient “interest with people in power” in London in order to “keep fair with the ministry.”⁴⁰³ For his services, South Carolina paid Wright an annual salary of £200 plus expenses.⁴⁰⁴ He also received a percentage of all funds he collected for the province from the ministry.

³⁹⁹ Greene, *Quest for Power*, 266; Kammen, *A Rope of Sand*, 4-5, and 16-17; and Lonn, *Colonial Agents of the Southern Colonies*, chapter 5.

⁴⁰⁰ Kammen, *A Rope in the Sand*, 62.

⁴⁰¹ Franklin to Pennsylvania Assembly, June 10, 1766, in www.franklinpapers.org.

⁴⁰² William Bollan to Josiah Willard, April 19, 1754, in Kammen, *A Rope in the Sand*, 59.

⁴⁰³ Peter Manigault to Andrew Rutledge, February 26, 1754, in Greene, *Quest for Power*, 266.

⁴⁰⁴ Lonn, *Colonial Agents of the Southern Colonies*, 309.

Typically this commission amounted to 1 ½ to 2 ½ percent and often far exceeded the agent's annual salary.⁴⁰⁵

Shortly after his arrival in London, Wright secured temporary quarters in the home of fellow Carolinian William Ruge, before finding suitable accommodations of his own.⁴⁰⁶ As Flavell has so ably demonstrated, there existed in London a vibrant and affluent community of South Carolinians, consisting of the Laurens, Wright, DeLancey, Manning, Izard, Moultrie, Lowndes, and Brailsford families.⁴⁰⁷ These wealthy planters and merchants established tight-knit extended kinships in London's fashionable West End on Fludyer and Berners Streets. These colonists were so numerous that a London entrepreneur opened a business on nearby Birch Lane called the "Carolina Coffee House."⁴⁰⁸

James Wright spent much of his brief tenure as colonial agent focusing on just two recurring issues – colonial defense and trade.⁴⁰⁹ Agents were typically bound by the instructions re-

⁴⁰⁵ Kammen, *A Rope of Sand*, 43, 47-48, and 60 and Lonn, *Colonial Agents of the Southern Colonies*, 319.

⁴⁰⁶ On the inside frontmatter page of volume 1 of the William Henry Lyttelton Letterbook at the Clements Library, like in the leafs that come before the text, there appears a list of several addressees, including Among them is "To James Wright at the House of Wm. Rugg Esqr. Conduit Street."

⁴⁰⁷ Flavell finds no less than fifty South Carolina families living in London's west end. Flavell, *When London was the Capital of America*, *passim.*; Maurice D. McInnis, *In Pursuit of Refinement*, *passim.*; and Carl Vipperman, *Rise of Rawlins Lowndes*, 79-85.

⁴⁰⁸ Flavell, *When London was the Capital of America*, Kindle Edition, Loc. 573. See also, Kammen, *A Rope of Sand*, 16-17.

⁴⁰⁹ Regarding Wright's efforts in securing funding, troops, materiel, and Indian gifts for South Carolina's defenses see, correspondence between Wright and the Assembly (August 5 and November 26, 1758; March 25, May 15, September 4, 1759; and February 13, 1760), in "Letterbook of Charles Garth and James Wright," South Carolina State Archives; various Wright letters to Lyttelton (May 18, June 16, August 5, and November 25, 1758 and March 31, May 15, and September 4, 1759), in Lyttelton Papers; various correspondence between Wright and the Board of Trade (November 22, 1757; January 27 and December 6, 1758; and March 1 and 23, 1759), in

ceived from their provincial legislature, excepting scenarios in which timing did not permit transatlantic consultations.⁴¹⁰ These instructions, however, proved to be the bane of most colonial lobbyists. Wright incessantly complained to both Governor Lyttelton and the Assembly about their neglect in submitting timely and clear instructions.⁴¹¹

Nearly two years after James departed for London, Sarah Wright finally loaded her family aboard the *HMS Pingssin* and departed for London.⁴¹² Just nine months later, James Wright informed the Assembly that he had “obtained the appointments of Lt. Governor of Georgia, and Chief Justice of Carolina [and that] I expect to leave England towards the end of summer, and shall continue to serve the province as agent to the utmost of my power, to the day I may leave London in my way to Carolina, I hope my past services have been agreeable to the province, This I know that nothing was omitted that occurred to me as beneficial, nor any pains spared, and possible more might have been done, if there had been a proper correspondence.”⁴¹³

Colonial Office Papers 5 / 376 and 5 / 403; “Proceedings,” November 22, 1758 and February 24, March 29, and April 7, 1759, in James Munroe, ed., *Acts of the Privy Council*, 5:363-367; various proceedings (January 16, 1759 and March 28, April 7, and July 8, 1760), in *Journal of the Committee for Trade and Plantations*, 11:1, 100, and 123; and Lonn, *Colonial Agents of the Southern Colonies*, 187-192 and 337-338. Concerning Wright’s labors on behalf of South Carolina’s trade see, for example, Benjamin Franklin to James Wright, July 9, 1759, in Lyttelton Papers; various James Abercromby letters (March 6, April 20, April 26, and June 13, 1758), in John C. Van Horne, ed., *Letterbook of James Abercromby, Colonial Agent*, 233-234, 242-243, 256-257, and 257-258; and Wright to South Carolina Assembly, June 13 and November 26, 1758, in “Letterbook of Charles Garth and James Wright,” South Carolina State Archives.

⁴¹⁰ Kammen, *A Rope of Sand*, 39-42.

⁴¹¹ See, for example, Wright to South Carolina Assembly, August 5 and November 26, 1759; September 4, 1759; and February 13, 1760, in “Letterbook of Charles Garth and James Wright,” South Carolina State Archives.

⁴¹² *SC Gazette*, March 3, 1759.

⁴¹³ Wright to South Carolina Assembly, January 5, 1760, in “Letterbook of Charles Garth and James Wright,” South Carolina State Archives. Wright’s departure in the summer is confirmed

The *South Carolina Gazette* reported in the spring of 1760 that “The Hon. James Wright, Esq., Agent to solicit the affairs of this province in Great-Britain, is appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Georgia **and** [like his father three decades before] Chief Justice of this province.”⁴¹⁴ Samuel Urlsperger, the Lutheran minister and leader of the Salzburg emigrant community in Georgia, expressed great hope in Wright’s appointment: “may God let this change redound to the good of the country.”⁴¹⁵ Prior to his departure, the Charleston aristocracy then residing in London and other “gentlemen concerned in the Carolina trade gave a genteel entertainment [honoring James Wright], at the King’s-arms in Cornhill.”⁴¹⁶ After settling his affairs, Wright departed England and began the long voyage to Georgia.⁴¹⁷

By his early forties, then, James Wright had amassed a small personal fortune, rubbed elbows with some of the Empire’s most important figures, and accumulated a number of important provincial and imperial positions. He would soon face his most difficult opportunity to date – governor of Georgia. The youngest of Britain’s thirteen colonies, Georgia was in 1760 a “fledgling province” and somewhat of an afterthought in the minds of imperial officials. Wright’s task

in James Abercromby to Francis Fauquier, November 1, 1761, in George Reese, ed., *Official Papers of Francis Fauquier*, 1:417-419.

⁴¹⁴ *SC Gazette*, March 1, 1760 and *New-York Gazette*, March 31, 1760. See also, Henry Ellis to William H. Lyttelton, March 7, 1760, in Ed Cashin Papers, Augusta State University; Proceedings, “May 13, 1760,” in James Munroe, ed., *Acts of the Privy Council*, 5:397-398; and Journal entry, May 13, 1760, in *Journal of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantation*, 11:107.

⁴¹⁵ Reverend Samuel Urlsperger, Journal entry, March 17, 1760, in *Detailed Report on the Salzburger Emigrants who Settled in America*, edited by George Fenwick Jones (Athens: UGA Press, 1993), 17:140-141.

⁴¹⁶ *SC Gazette*, September 6, 1760. See also, the *London Chronicle*, June 14, 1760.

⁴¹⁷ James Abercromby to Francis Fauquier, October 1, 1761, in Reese, ed., *Official Papers of Francis Fauquier*, 1:417-419.

would be to validate Georgia's existence by transforming it into a beneficial cog in Britain's mercantilist machine.

**CHAPTER 3: “AN UNUSUALLY ABLE CROWN OFFICIAL”: JAMES WRIGHT BE-
COMES GEORGIA’S FINAL COLONIAL GOVERNOR**

Throughout the spring and summer of 1758, during the French & Indian War, roving bands of defiant Indians began filtering into the South Carolina and Georgia backcountry, having been forced from the northern colonies by Brigadier General John Forbes.⁴¹⁸ These “gangs,” as Georgia Governor Henry Ellis called them, had recently “robbed & murdered a whole family not 40 miles from” Savannah. These attacks, he added, were the result of Georgia’s neglected condition, which had left the backcountry in a “very unpleasant & hazardous situation.”⁴¹⁹

Similarly, on the morning of May 12, 1759, the *South Carolina Gazette* fired a warning shot that reverberated throughout the heretofore peaceful southern colonies. “Many horrid murders have lately been committed, by [the Cherokees], on the Yadkin and Catawba Rivers.”⁴²⁰ Alarming news continued to pour in from the backcountry in the weeks that followed. Maximil-

⁴¹⁸ Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 219-236.

⁴¹⁹ Henry Ellis to the Board of Trade, October 25, 1758, in Candler et al., ed., *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, 28, pt. 1:165-167 (hereafter, *CRG*). Ellis bitterly complained throughout his three years as governor about the dearth of military support Georgia received from England. See, for example, Ellis to Pitt, July 10, 1760, in *CRG* 28, pt. 1:280-283. James Wright would spend the better part of twenty-five bemoaning this very dearth of support from the ministry.

⁴²⁰ *South Carolina Gazette*, May 12, 1759. For the Anglo-Native conflict in the Southeast from 1758-1763, see Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 457-471; David Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 193-228; Louis DeVorse, Jr., *The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies*, 112-180; Gary Nash, *Red, White & Black*, 233-239 and 252-262; and Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 38-63. For this conflict’s impact on Georgia see, Edward Cashin, *Governor Henry Ellis*, 73-94 and *CRG*, 28, pt. 1: *passim*.

ian Moone, a *mestizo*, confirmed that a party of young Cherokee warriors had recently returned to the town of Settico with nearly two dozen white scalps.⁴²¹

There existed in these provinces a deep concern that the Creek and the Cherokee nations would unite and wage war against the colonists. Both Ellis and South Carolina Governor William Henry Lyttelton put their militia on full alert. Ellis, in fact, went a step further and sent agents armed with gifts into the backcountry to entice the Creeks to attack the Cherokees.⁴²² This was a common tactic utilized by the British in their attempt to contain an often numerically superior frontier foe.⁴²³ Conversely, Native tribes had spent the better part of a century and a half playing the British and the French against one another.

Ellis's policy likely forestalled an intense Cherokee war, but it was the Creeks who proved to be the most immediate danger, attacking and killing several traders near Augusta in May 1760.⁴²⁴ Aware of his inability to fully engage the Creeks militarily, Ellis wisely accepted his Council's advice "to suffer justice to give way to prudence and to make use of every means in your power to prevent this colony from being involved in a war and to restore the public tranquility."⁴²⁵

Henry Ellis had quite literally devoted four years of his life to Indian policy and it wore on him deeply. It was, however, Georgia's climate which "officially" drove Ellis to write in 1759: "as my health continues in a very bad state, and there appears no prospect of recovering it

⁴²¹ *South Carolina Gazette*, June 9, 1759.

⁴²² W. W. Abbot, *The Royal Governors of Georgia*, 77-80.

⁴²³ James Wright would often resort to this tactic during his tenure as governor.

⁴²⁴ Ellis to the Board of Trade, June 7, 1760, in *CRG*, 28, pt.1:250-252.

⁴²⁵ Journal of the Upper House, June 2, 1760, in *CRG*, 16:498-499.

from here, I am at length reduced to the necessity” of begging leave to return to England and requesting that a lieutenant governor be appointed.⁴²⁶ Ellis’s final letter from Georgia betrayed a truer sense of his dissatisfaction: “I cannot help expressing my surprise that His Majesty’s southern provinces should be suffered so long to continue exposed as they are.”⁴²⁷ In all likelihood, then, the governor had simply tired of managing a colony without adequate support from London. This very frustration would plague Wright throughout his time as governor.

The logistics involved in Ellis’s resignation illustrate the difficulties of managing a transatlantic empire in the eighteenth-century. Ellis penned his resignation in November 1759, but it did not reach the Board of Trade until March 11, 1760.⁴²⁸ It would be another two months before the commissioners acted upon Ellis’s request, appointing South Carolina’s Attorney General James Wright to be Georgia’s new lieutenant governor.⁴²⁹ Thus it was amidst this atmosphere of great uncertainty in the backcountry and scarcity of resources with which to keep the Creeks at bay that James Wright became Georgia’s third and final colonial governor.

After a grueling Atlantic voyage, the Wrights arrived in Charleston on the third of September. What should have been a moment for reflective joy, however, had become one of unutterable misery because, according the *South Carolina Gazette*, “Mr. Wright lost [his infant

⁴²⁶ Ellis to the Board of Trade, November 25, 1759, in *CRG*, 28, pt.1:218-219.

⁴²⁷ Ellis to the Board of Trade, October 20, 1760, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 1:288-290. See also, Ed Cashin, *Henry Ellis*, chapter 6 and Abbot, *The Royal Governors of Georgia*, chapter 3.

⁴²⁸ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, Tuesday, March 11, 1760, in *Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, K. H. Ledward, ed., 11:91-101.

⁴²⁹ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, Tuesday, May 13, 1760, in *Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, K. H. Ledward, ed., 11:104-111. See also, Copy of an Order in Council, May 13, 1760, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 1:249

daughter, Elizabeth] in the passage, which was privately interred yesterday.”⁴³⁰ Due to the dearth of personal correspondence we can only surmise that this tragedy deeply impacted Wright, a supposition supported by logic and his later correspondence which portrays a deeply devoted father. James likely spent the next several weeks visiting with friends and family and settling his personal affairs. One month after their arrival in Charleston, the Wrights set sail for Savannah.⁴³¹

The family reached its destination on September 11, as the *South Carolina Gazette* reported that Wright “arrived [in Georgia] in good health.”⁴³² Reverend Samuel Urlsperger observed the celebration that followed Wright’s commission: “Yesterday about noon we heard heavy cannon fire from Savannah, which is presumably a sign that the new governor has announced his commission from the king.”⁴³³ The reverend was correct as the *South Carolina Gazette* observed that Georgia held its largest celebration in honor of Wright’s arrival. Governor Ellis informed his superiors in London that Wright had indeed safely arrived and, moreover, “seems to be a very capable & worthy man.”⁴³⁴ The Assembly also praised Wright for his repu-

⁴³⁰ *South Carolina Gazette*, September 13, 1760. “Collection of Pedigree and Genealogical Memoranda of the Family of Wright,” Davy’s Suffolk Collections, Volume 80, Pedigrees WIN-WYT, Y-Z, British Library, Additional Ms. 19156, pages 232-233 and 244-245.

⁴³¹ *South Carolina Gazette*, October 11, 1760.

⁴³² *South Carolina Gazette*, October 18, 1760. See also, Journal entry, September 16 and 26, 1760, in *Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants*, 17:245 and 248-249. Reverend Urlsperger noted on the sixteenth that “our new governor, Mr. *William* Wright, has landed in Charleston.”

⁴³³ Journal entry, November 5, 1760, in *Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants*, 17:260.

⁴³⁴ Ellis to the Board of Trade, October 20, 1760, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 1:288-290. For his part, Wright complimented Ellis, acknowledging he was “not insensible of the merit and abilities of that gentleman.” See, “Speech of the Honourable James Wright,” in *South Carolina Gazette*, November 15, 1760.

tation for “integrity and uprightness joined with solid sense and sound judgment,” which would surely “make us a happy and flourishing people.”⁴³⁵

The transfer of Georgia from proprietary to royal authority on October 31, 1754, unified the administration of Britain’s North American colonies.⁴³⁶ This, of course, meant that Georgia’s colonial governors, of whom James Wright would be the third and final, served as the official representative of the king.⁴³⁷ For his services as chief executive, James Wright received an annual salary of £1,000, which he augmented with the collection of a variety of fees. As with his position as attorney general, Wright’s responsibilities as governor were extensive. He was authorized to appoint many provincial officials, to grant land, to pardon all crimes excepting treason and murder, and to remit fines and forfeitures. Additionally, he was the colony’s commander-in-chief which empowered him to erect forts and declare martial law. As Georgia’s vice-admiral, he presided over cases involving violations of maritime law.⁴³⁸

James Wright brought an immense array of skills to Georgia in 1760. He had a firm grasp of colonial and imperial government, mercantilism, planting, and the law. Moreover, his relentless desire to succeed professionally and personally was exactly what the colony needed upon his arrival. Of this, historians are unanimous in their judgment. He was, in the words of historian Kenneth Coleman, “ideally qualified” for his new position, much more so “than most of

⁴³⁵ *South Carolina Gazette*, November 22, 1760. See also, Journal of Assembly, November 6, 1760, in *CRG*, 13:439-440.

⁴³⁶ For the establishment of civil government in Georgia see, Order of Council March 8, 1754, in *CRG*, 26:439-443. For the appointment of Georgia’s first governor, John Reynolds see, Order of Council, August 6, 1754, in *CRG*, 26:459. For the inauguration of royal government under Reynolds see Proceedings, October 31, 1754, in *CRG*, 7:10-15.

⁴³⁷ In succession, Georgia’s colonial governors were John Reynolds (1754-1757), Henry Ellis (1757-1760), and James Wright (1760-1783).

⁴³⁸ Kenneth Coleman, *Colonial Georgia: a History*, 174-180.

his fellow governors.”⁴³⁹ John Ivey Brown, a graduate student of Coleman’s, noted that Wright was the only colonial governor of Georgia with any actual qualifications for his position.⁴⁴⁰ Historian Robert Calhoon concurred, claiming Wright’s “intimate knowledge of British administration and of colonial needs and conditions made him an unusually able Crown official. He was driven, however, not only by heady success and self-confidence but also by the dim apprehension that his position was precarious.”⁴⁴¹ Biographer Randall Miller added that “Wright was intelligent, diligent, and politically savvy.”⁴⁴² Lastly, historian William Abbot has observed that James enjoyed “a steady and sound, and growing understanding of politics.”⁴⁴³

In spite of the significant qualifications he brought to the position, Wright had never served in such a position of leadership and it took time to acclimate himself to his new role. Much of his correspondence during 1761 and 1762 was of a rambling and repetitious nature, and he sometimes failed to grasp the true importance, or lack thereof, of a number of issues. James proved, however, to be a fairly quick study and his correspondence by the mid-1760s exhibited

⁴³⁹ Coleman, “Ogelthorpe and James Wright: a Georgia Comparison,” in *Oglethorpe in Perspective: Georgia’s Founder after Two Hundred Years*, edited by Phinizy Spalding and Harvey H. Jackson (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 122 and 126. See also, Coleman, “James Wright,” in *Georgians in Profile*, edited by Horace Montgomery (Athens: UGA Press, 1958), 41-42 and Coleman, *Colonial Georgia*, 193; and Coleman, “James Wright and the Origins of the American Revolution,” in James Kirby Martin, ed., *The Human Dimensions of Nation Making*,” 104-106.

⁴⁴⁰ John Ivey Brown, “Relations Between Georgia’s Royal Governors and their Assemblies.” MA thesis (University of Georgia, 1970), 44.

⁴⁴¹ Robert Calhoon, *Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 4-6.

⁴⁴² Randall Miller, “A warm & zealous spirit”: *John J. Zubly and the American Revolution* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1982), 2.

⁴⁴³ Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 85. For a focused discussion of the Native American issues confronted by Wright in the first years of his tenure see, *ibid.*, 84-102.

confidence and a keen understanding of Georgia's unique problems – namely issues arising from fragile Native relations.

In one of his last letters as governor, Henry Ellis provided an honest assessment of the state of public affairs in Georgia, describing them as being in “as good a situation, as could reasonably be expected” in light of worsening relations with the Indians.⁴⁴⁴ James also expressed grave concerns regarding Georgia's frontier in his first letter to the Board of Trade after arriving in the province. After a useful meeting with Ellis, Wright acknowledged that “I am more convinced of the necessity of immediate succor, and of the continuance of some troops, even after the present difficulties are surmounted,” for without such measures, Georgia must inevitably “decline.”⁴⁴⁵ Wright also utilized the occasion of his first speech as governor to pay special attention to the “one object which is very striking and which requires our immediate attention; I mean the dangers of this province in general is exposed to from the Creek Indians.”⁴⁴⁶ Consequently, Wright encouraged Georgians to join him in solidifying the province's defense network. Fortunately for Georgians, Wright had experience in dealing with such issues in his capacity as colonial agent for South Carolina and they would occupy his time for the next three decades.⁴⁴⁷

Throughout the month of November 1760, Governor Wright met with nearly 150 Creeks in Savannah who desired a complete resumption of trade with the English. *The South Carolina*

⁴⁴⁴ Ellis to the Board of Trade, October 20, 1760, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 1:288-290.

⁴⁴⁵ Wright to the Board of Trade, October 23, 1760, in *Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, Tuesday, May 13, 1760, in *Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, K. H. Ledward, ed., 11:154-161. See also, Same to Same, October 23, 1760, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 1:291.

⁴⁴⁶ “Speech of the Honourable James Wright,” in *South Carolina Gazette*, November 15, 1760.

⁴⁴⁷ See, for example, *Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, February 1 and 20, March 28, and April 7, 1760, in *Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, 11:83, 190-191, 100, and 123. These journal entries illustrate Wright's presentation of South Carolina's Indian affairs, explanations of intelligence, and lobbying efforts.

Gazette reported that “by his prudent and proper management, every one of them, to all appearance, had gone away perfectly well satisfied, giving the strongest assurances of their good dispositions.”⁴⁴⁸ Shortly after the New Year, he notified the Board of Trade that the Cherokees had endeavored to incite the Creeks to wage war against the English and implored the commissioners to adequately fund Georgia’s defenses.⁴⁴⁹ He wrote another letter in January, requesting “immediate succor [as] we are in much need of some assistance.”⁴⁵⁰

Indian affairs dominated James’s first few months and we can see very vividly displayed Wright’s modus operandi as Georgia’s governor. He was a thoroughly direct communicator and avoided schemes and flattery, preferring instead to find equitable solutions to the problems he encountered.⁴⁵¹ Wright warned the Creeks that ill behavior on their part would result in a similar fate that befell the Cherokees in Virginia and the Carolinas, who “are now naked and in want of every thing.”⁴⁵² In January 1761, Creek head man, the Wolf King, personally promised the governor that his nation desired friendly relations with the colonists.

⁴⁴⁸ *South Carolina Gazette*, December 16, 1760; *New York-Mercury*, January 19 and April 20, 1761; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 23, 1761; and *Boston News-Letter*, April 30, 1761.

⁴⁴⁹ Wright to the Board of Trade, December 23, 1760, in National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom, Colonial Office 5/648 (hereafter, CO) and Journal of the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, December 23, 1760, in *Journal of the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations*, 11:167. See also, Wright to Jeffrey Amherst, February 2, 1761, in CO 5/60 and *Boston News-Letter*, February 19, 1761.

⁴⁵⁰ Wright to the Board of Trade, January 7, 1761, in CO 5/391.

⁴⁵¹ For the meetings with the Creeks see, “Minutes of the Governor and Council,” November 7-21, 1760, January 29, March 4 and 31, and July 28, 1761, in *CRG*, 8:414-433, 469-470, 512, 520-521, and 540-546. See also, *South Carolina Gazette*, December 16, 1760.

⁴⁵² “Governor Wright’s answer to the written Indian talk,” November 7, 1760, in *CRG*, 8:414-416. See also, Jeffrey Amherst to Wright, March 18, 1761, in CO 5/60, in which Amherst suggested that British success against the Cherokees would likely convince the Creeks to maintain their loyalty.

The Wolf King made answer to [Wright's statement] to the following effect: That his honour had said a great deal of the friendship that had subsisted between their forefathers and the English, and desired he would look on him to have the same good heart and esteem for the English that they had; that for his part he had but one tongue and that always had been and still was truly English. That he knew this land had been given to the white people that they might live thereon, and the children of both [emphasis added] people grow up together, which he desired and hoped they would continue to do.⁴⁵³

For his part, Governor Wright assured both legislative houses that “no measure in my power have been omitted, [which] I thought might make a good impression on our neighbours the Creek Indians.” He added that although the colony had enjoyed several peaceful months, even stronger defenses were need to ensure provincial prosperity. The Assembly acknowledged Wright's “vigilant and prudent measures” in securing peace during “this critical conjuncture,” but the “heavy expences we are obligd to lay upon our constituents” necessitated postponing the construction and repair of fortifications.⁴⁵⁴ Such short-sighted action by the Assembly especially agitated James because he possessed little leverage in negotiating with the Indians “for they well know we have no force to oppose them.”⁴⁵⁵

Frontier events during the summer of 1761 illustrate both Wright's keen insight into the Native American problem and his determination of the colonists' culpability in creating or augmenting those problems. Following the murder of a settler near Augusta by a band of young

⁴⁵³ “Minutes of the Governor and Council,” January 29, 1761, in *CRG*, 8:469-470.

⁴⁵⁴ “Speech of the Honourable James Wright” and “The Humble Address of the Upper-House of Assembly,” March 25, 1761, in *South Carolina Gazette*, April 4, 1761. For the refusal to finance defensive fortifications see, “The Humble Address of the Commons House,” May 21, 176, in *CRG*, 13:567-569. It should also be noted that Wright began this speech with the announcement that George II had passed. On February 5, 1761, Wright learned that his appointment as governor would continue under George III. See, “Minutes of the Governor and Council,” February 5, 1761, in *CRG*, 8:484-491.

⁴⁵⁵ Wright to the Board of Trade, February 28, 1761, in John Ivey Brown, “Relations Between Georgia's Royal Governors and their Assemblies.” MA thesis (University of Georgia, 1970), 47.

warriors, Wright came to the conclusion that many of the problems arising in the backcountry revolved around the Indian trade.⁴⁵⁶ Specifically, Wright believed there to be far too many Indian traders in the backcountry, many of whom were the “very worst & most abandoned set of men.” He concluded that trade was to be his most important asset in ensuring good behavior from the Indians and accordingly sought to restrict and regulate the unfettered trading on the frontier in order to maintain a proper balance between supply and demand so as to ensure the Indians never had too much nor too little goods.⁴⁵⁷ With this in mind, Wright devised a plan to grant licenses and specific territories to a set number of traders. Although his policy was sound and, if successful, would have eased the tensions in the backcountry, the settlers viewed it as an example of imperial interference and he was forced to abandon the idea a few years later.⁴⁵⁸

By the winter of 1761, the troubles with the Creeks had subsided as Wright had, through sensitive and deft handling of the various Creek headmen, successfully earned their trust. Moreover, the general triumph of British arms against the French and the Cherokees provided ample motivation for the Creeks to remain on friendly terms. That said, not all was quiet on the Georgia front; the French had not yet resigned themselves to defeat. Several months earlier, a French

⁴⁵⁶ “Minutes of the Governor and Council,” August 4, 1761, in *CRG*, 8:553-557. The white settler had “gave [the young Creeks] punch until they got drunk,” and then insulted them, after which they murdered him and set out for Cherokee country. Interestingly, Wright’s friend, Henry Laurens, also believed colonial “avarice & misconduct” to be the cause of much of the frontier discord. See, Henry Laurens to John Ettwein, November 10, 1760, in Hamer, ed., *Papers of Henry Laurens*, 4:39-43. See also, Coleman, *Colonial Georgia*, 195.

⁴⁵⁷ For Wright’s attempts to regulate traders see, “Minutes of the Governor and Council,” March 10, 1761 and February 19 and October 5, 1762, in *CRG*, 8:514-515, 649, and 756. For Wright’s assessment of the character of Indian traders see, Wright to the Board of Trade, August 27, 1764, in *CRG*, 28, part 2:50-52.

⁴⁵⁸ “Minutes of the Governor and Council,” July 3, 1761 and August 1764, in *CRG*, 8:522-525 and *CRG*, 9:202-204 and Wright to the Board of Trade, August 27 and December 11, 1764, in *CRG*, 28, part 2:50-52 and 69-70.

privateer had landed at Tybee Island and, according to Wright, “taken five of Mr. Thomas Tucker’s negroes ... [along with] Mr. Edward Tucker and four of his negroes.”⁴⁵⁹ James responded by calling on John William Gerard de Brahm’s assistance in constructing fortifications on Cockspur Island. The legislature approved Wright’s request and construction began immediately on Fort George.⁴⁶⁰ James warned the Board of Trade of the variety of measures the French had undertaken to excite the Creeks into hostilities against the Georgians and requested additional funds for defensive measures, including Indian gifts.⁴⁶¹ Wright’s indefatigable exertions in securing Georgia’s defenses and his patient and honest diplomatic efforts with the Native Americans were largely responsible for maintaining peace, albeit a constantly tenuous one, in Georgia.⁴⁶²

Rumors began swirling throughout the spring of 1763 that the French and Spanish had agreed to withdraw their forces from North America. The first issue of James Johnston’s *Georgia Gazette* announced intelligence concerning the “conclusion of peace” in France.⁴⁶³ A few weeks later, in the May 5th issue, news from Paris confirmed that the “ministry are intirely occu-

⁴⁵⁹ “Minutes of the Governor and Council,” July 28, 1761, in *CRG*, 8:540-541.

⁴⁶⁰ “Minutes of the Governor and Council,” April 22, May 25 and 27, 1762, in *CRG*, 8:673-675, 687-688, and 688-690. See also, *South Carolina Gazette*, August 1, 1761 (detailing Wright’s “sending an express” to Charleston informing them about the privateer); *SC Gazette*, August 8 (which provided the full account); *New York-Mercury*, September 7, 1761; and *Boston Evening Post*, September 14, 1761.

⁴⁶¹ Wright to the Board of Trade, September 15, 1761; same to same, February 20, 1762; and same to same, June 10, 1762, in *Journal for the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations*, 11:244-245, 275, and 303.

⁴⁶² The documentary record is clear in this regard and modern historians have formed a unanimous consensus. See,

⁴⁶³ *Georgia Gazette*, April 7, 1763. For Johnston see, Alexander Lawrence, *James Johnston: Georgia’s First Printer* (Savannah: The Pigeonhole Press, 1956).

pied in reducing the definitive treaty into order.”⁴⁶⁴ It was later reported from London that “peace will not be proclaimed till after the expiration of hostilities in the East Indies, which term is not out till the 3d of May.”⁴⁶⁵ Word of the definitive treaty did not reach Savannah until late May or early June and the *Gazette* printed it in toto.⁴⁶⁶ Wright predicted a prosperous future resulting from the Peace of Paris. “Now that ... this province [along with the removal of the Spanish threat from the Floridas] will be freed from every obstacle that has obstructed its growth & prosperity, and be no longer chec’t & cramp’t, I have no doubt of its making great strides, & very soon becoming usefull to the Mother country.”⁴⁶⁷

This letter provides a nice summation of Wright’s view of his and the colony’s role on the periphery of empire. James was an unabashed believer in mercantilism, constantly and with single-minded purpose endeavoring to build Georgia’s comparably infant agricultural, lumber, and naval stores industries while simultaneously working to expand Georgia’s frontier and population in order to meet the needs of the imperial core.⁴⁶⁸ In fact, Coleman opined that “this concept of empire and the colony’s place in it is essential to any understanding of James Wright.”⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁴ *Georgia Gazette*, May 5, 1763.

⁴⁶⁵ *Georgia Gazette*, May 26, 1763.

⁴⁶⁶ *Georgia Gazette*, June 2, 1763.

⁴⁶⁷ Wright to the Board of Trade, June 10, 1763, in *CRG*, 28, part, 1:445-447. For an insightful analysis of Indian affairs in Georgia in 1763 especially pertaining to the Augusta congress of 1763 see, David Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, chapter 11; Louis DeVorsey, *The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies*, chapter 7; and Helen L. Shaw, “British Administration of the Southern Indians, 1756-1783,” PhD diss., (Bryn Mawr College, 1931), 20-26.

⁴⁶⁸ Coleman, “James Wright and the Origins of the American Revolution,” in James Kirby Martin, ed., *The Human Dimensions of Nation Making*, 109; J. Snapp, *John Stuart and the Struggle for Empire*, 180; Coleman, “Ogelthorpe and James Wright: a Georgia Comparison,” in *Ogelthorpe in Perspective: Georgia’s Founder after Two Hundred Years*, 127; Coleman, “James Wright,” in *Georgians in Profile*, 41-42; Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 86; Calhoun, *Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 4. For the intimate connection between mercantilism and the

With the successful termination of the French and Indian War, Wright shifted his energies from the maintenance of Indian peace to the establishment of long-term geographic settlement. In June 1763, he received instructions from the Board of Trade to work closely with Indian Superintendent John Stuart to secure a cession of Indian lands.⁴⁷⁰ From his vantage, however, the governor expressed doubts about the willingness of the Indians to engage the British in such conversations because their affection to the colonists had not lately been the “most cordial & friendly.”⁴⁷¹ Such animosity existed between the two peoples that Wright reported that “three men have been killed” by a group of Creeks with long-established ties to the French.⁴⁷² The reason for the renewed frontier violence must be firmly placed at the feet of the backcountry settlers who, according to Creek leader The Mortar, “appear to believe that the red people have no lands.”⁴⁷³

Amidst this less-than-ideal atmosphere, Wright proceeded apace in organizing the Indian congress with the southern royal governors: Thomas Boone (South Carolina), Arthur Dobbs

founding of Georgia see, Coleman, “The Founding of Georgia,” in *Forty Years of Diversity*, 4-24; Coleman, *Colonial Georgia*, 142-143; Harold Davis, *The Fledgling Province*, 95-97; Trevor Reese, *Colonial Georgia: A Study in British Imperial Policy in the Eighteenth Century*, 14 and 121-122; Julie Sweet, *William Stevens: Georgia’s Forgotten Founder*, 11-12 and 127; James Bonner, *History of Georgia Agriculture, passim.*; and Jack Greene, “Travails of an Infant Colony: the Search for Viability, Coherence, and Identity in Colonial Georgia,” in *ibid.*, 275-310.

⁴⁶⁹ Coleman, “James Wright and the Origins of the American Revolution,” in James Kirby Martin, ed., *The Human Dimensions of Nation Making*,” 105.

⁴⁷⁰ Wright to the Board of Trade, June 22, 1763, in *CRG*, 28, part 1:447 and same to same, November 23, 1763, in *ibid.*, 453-454.

⁴⁷¹ Wright to the Board of Trade, June 10 and June 22, 1763, in *CRG*, 28, part 1:445-447 and 447.

⁴⁷² Wright to the Board of Trade, September 7, 1763, in *CRG*, 28, part 1, 450-451.

⁴⁷³ “At a Meeting of the Head Men of the upper Creek Nation,” April 5, May 8 and May 15, 1763, in *CRG*, 9:71-74. Wright received this talk and read it to the Council on June 18.

(North Carolina), and Francis Fauquier (Virginia).⁴⁷⁴ In a letter to Fauquier, he admitted that although “accommodations would be better in Charles Town,” it was best to meet in Augusta.⁴⁷⁵

The governors of Virginia and North Carolina arrived at Charleston in early October, joining South Carolina’s governor and Superintendent Stuart. Their first order of business was to lodge a formal complaint to Governor Wright concerning the “inconveniences attending a journey by land or water to Augusta,” maintaining that aside from providing a more comfortable setting, Charleston would have afforded them the opportunity to better “check & control” Indian behavior.⁴⁷⁶ Wright’s response reached Charleston a week and a half later. He certainly agreed with their points, but noted that convincing the Creeks to proceed beyond Augusta would be a dubious proposition and that he remained convinced that “the King’s intentions might be more effectually executed at Augusta.”⁴⁷⁷ It is likely the Creeks feared traveling beyond Augusta lest they fall victim like the Cherokees in 1759 who had been captured and held as hostages by the South Carolinians as a means of ensuring the good behavior of their countrymen.⁴⁷⁸

Nefarious reports continued to swirl in Charleston and the governors remained uncomfortable with journeying to the Georgia backcountry, relaying intelligence that the Cherokees had

⁴⁷⁴ The entire proceedings of the Congress at Augusta can be found in, “Journal of the Congress,” CO 5/65, part 3 and “Minutes of the Southern Congress at Augusta, Georgia ... October 1, 1763 – November 21, 1763,” *Colonial Records of the State of North Carolina*, 11:156-207 (hereafter, *CRNC*).

⁴⁷⁵ Wright to Francis Fauquier, June 22, 1763, in Reese, ed., *Official Papers of Francis Fauquier*, 2:983-985. See also, Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray, Indian Trader*, 218-219 and Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 237-238.

⁴⁷⁶ Boone, Dobbs, Fauquier, Stuart to Wright, October 4, 1763, in *CRNC*, 11:157-158.

⁴⁷⁷ Wright to Boone, Dobbs, Fauquier, Stuart, October 8 (reached Charleston on October 14), in *CRNC*, 11:159-160.

⁴⁷⁸ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 238.

not wanted to go to Augusta because two of their number had been murdered by the Creeks. Consequently, the governors expressed a frustration with which Wright could surely empathize: “we are in great hopes that the late acts committed by the Upper Creeks are not the acts of the nation in general.”⁴⁷⁹ Wright decided the best of course of action at this moment was to personally go to Augusta to meet the Creeks “in case they will not proceed to Charles Town and can be prevailed on to wait at Augusta.”⁴⁸⁰ The Charleston contingent forwarded Wright’s letter to Stuart at Augusta and informed him that “a material part of your duty [is] to discover and prevent the ill effects of private tamperings & insinuations thrown out to the Indians.”⁴⁸¹

Superintendent Stuart arrived at Augusta on the eleventh. He informed Governor Boone that leaders from the Chickasaws and especially the Upper Creeks were upset because no governors had yet arrived at the congress. One Creek leader said, according to Stuart, “that he had come punctually at the time and to the place of appointment and expected to have seen the governors that it was their hunting season when they should have been in the woods providing for their families” and accused the English of “speaking with two tongues.” Ultimately, Stuart wrote, he had “with great difficulty” prevailed upon the Creeks to “wait here ten days.”⁴⁸²

Accordingly Boone, Dobbs, and Fauquier immediately sent Stuart’s letter to Wright and themselves set out for Augusta on October eighteenth.⁴⁸³ For his part, James sent the same information concerning Stuart’s conclusion that neither the Chickasaws nor the Creeks would cross

⁴⁷⁹ Boone, Dobbs, Fauquier to Wright, October 14, 1763, in *CRNC*, 11:160-161.

⁴⁸⁰ Wright to Boone, Dobbs, Fauquier, October 11, 1763, in *CRNC*, 11:161-163.

⁴⁸¹ Boone, Dobbs, Fauquier to Stuart, October 15, 1763, in *CRNC*, 11:164-165.

⁴⁸² Stuart to Boone, Dobbs, Fauquier, October 15, 1763, in *CRNC*, 11:165-168.

⁴⁸³ Boone, Dobbs, Fauquier to Stuart, October 18, 1763, in *CRNC*, 11:170-172; Boone, Dobbs, Fauquier to Wright, October 18, 1763, in *ibid.*, 172.

the Savannah River.⁴⁸⁴ Wright then began his own two-day trek along the Savannah River to greet them. The *Georgia Gazette* reported in late October that Indian trader Lachlan McGillivray's mounted troop escorted the governor to meet with the Indians and other southern governors.⁴⁸⁵

On October 23, Stuart wrote that the Creeks had planned to leave without notice, fearing the English planned to take revenge for the recent "murders committed by the Mortar." A Chickasaw interpreter informed the superintendent who quickly assuaged their concerns.⁴⁸⁶ The four governors arrived at Augusta on November 3, and the congress officially began two days later with about seven hundred Indians present. Governor Wright opened the talks and informed the leaders of the various tribes (Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, and Catawba) that the four governors and Captain Stuart were in full accord. The superintendent then unveiled the reasons for this "friendly" meeting and expressed the "Great King's good disposition toward his red children." King George III, Stuart said, "wishes to extend the commerce of his subjects" as well as that of the Indians, and to live "in peace and brotherly friendship together" with the Indians.⁴⁸⁷

The various Native leaders issued their formal individual responses on the 7th and 8th of November. Their declarations reveal how desperately tribal leaders desired to maintain positive relations with colonial officials in order to maintain the constant flow of European goods. Chickasaw leader Pia Matta voiced his gratitude "for the services already done them" by the British and iterated that "he and his are few but faithful ... [and] as good friends as if they

⁴⁸⁴ Wright to Boone, Dobbs, Fauquier, October 18, 1763, in *CRNC*, 11:174.

⁴⁸⁵ *Georgia Gazette*, October 27, 1763. See also, "Minutes of the Governor and Council," October 11, 1763, in *CRG*, 9:97-99.

⁴⁸⁶ Stuart to Boone, Dobbs, Fauquier, October 23, 1763, in *CRNC*, 11:176-177.

⁴⁸⁷ "Stuart's opening remarks," November 5, 1763, in *CRNC*, 11:180-183.

sucked one breast. Altho his skin is not white his heart is so and as much as any white man.” Finally, he readily admitted that “he could not do without the white people.” Captain Ellick represented the Upper and Lower Creeks, those present as well as those who could not personally attend. He then proceeded to outline the geographic scope of the cession. After a few more Creeks articulated their sentiments, the Choctaw leader verbalized his nation’s desire “to be under the English.” Cherokee spokesman, the Prince of Chota, followed and notified the governors of their desire to receive more traders in their country. He then “presented a pipe and some tobacco as a testimony of friendship between the Cherokees and the white people.” Finally, and the only Native to not utilize a translator, the Catawba chief Colonel Ayres spoke. He complained that his lands were “spoilt [as] he had lost a great deal both by scarcity of buffalos and deer” due to white settler encroachment. He concluded his statement, however, by presenting the governors with strings of white beads as “tokens of the friendship he professed for them all and which he desired might continue.” On the 9th, Ellick and an unnamed Creek articulated their desire that their “children will grow up without interruption” of peaceful relations and prosperous trading along the roads to Savannah, Charleston, and beyond. Cherokee leader Atakullakulla (or, the Little Carpenter) also presented a string of beads and informed the governors of his wish that only “good traders . . . not rioting fellows who commit disturbances” be allowed to open stores.⁴⁸⁸

Later that day, the governors and Stuart responded to each tribal spokesman. To Pia Matata, they acknowledged the repeated evidences of his fidelity and assured him that this meeting had added “additional strength and brightness” to their “chain of friendship.” To Captain Ellick,

⁴⁸⁸ “Talks of the Chickesaw, Upper & Lower Creeks[,] Chactaw[,] Cherokee & Catawba Indians to” Wright, Dobbs, Boone, Fauquier, and Stuart, November 7-8, 1763, in *CRNC*, 11:183-192.

they promised to fully exert themselves in “putting a stop to” the ill behavior of the whites “between Augusta and the Creek country.” To Red Shoes, they expressed their sincere desire “that your whole nation will [continue] to embrace the offers of good will which we have made you and that one heart only may be in the bosoms of the white people and the Chactaws.” To the Cherokees, they explained that “your towns [have] but lately [been] cleared from blood” and that trade, at least in Georgia and South Carolina, should soon be placed upon a better footing. And, finally, to the Catawbias, they guaranteed that “our King and Father holds out his arms to receive and protect you from all your enemies and is very sensible of your constant love and friendship.”⁴⁸⁹

Upon the satisfaction of all involved, a full treaty was agreed upon. First and foremost, the treaty outlined the new boundary as:

extending up Savannah to Little River and back to the fork of Little River and from the fork of Little to the ends of the south branch of Brian Creek and down that branch to the Lower Creek path to the main stream of Ogeechee River and down the mainstream of that river just below the path leading from Mount Pleasant and from there in a strait line cross to Santa Seville on the Altamaha river and from then to the southward as far as Georgia extends or may be extended to remain to be regulated agreeable to former treaties and His Majesty’s royal instructions.

The two sides also agreed that Indian complaints of whites illegally trading or trespassing should be made directly to the colonial governor before action was taken. They also renewed the decades-old eye-for-an-eye provision concerning satisfaction for murders committed by either party.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ “Answer of the several Governors and the Superintendent to” the various Indian leaders, November 9, 1763, in *CRNC*, 11:192-200.

⁴⁹⁰ “A Treaty for the Preservation and Continuance of a Firm and Perfect Peace and Friendship...,” November 10, 1763, in *CRNC*, 11:200-204.

Indian affairs, be they related to trade or security, dominated the first three years of James Wright's governorship. More than anything, he proved himself capable of handling his new position with dexterity, patience, and common sense. He also proved to his superiors in London that he could be faithfully relied upon to further His Majesty's interests along the southern frontier and could confidently report to General Jeffrey Amherst that "we hope [the treaty] will be agreeable and demonstrate that nothing in our power has been omitted" in securing such an important concession.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹¹ Wright to Jeffrey Amherst, November 10, 1763, in Amherst Papers, Clements Library.

**CHAPTER 4: “A MAN OF HONOR AND A FAITHFUL SERVANT OF THE CROWN”:
JAMES WRIGHT AND THE STAMP ACT, 1765-1766**

The *Georgia Gazette* reported on March 15, 1764, that Governor James Wright’s “lady and eldest daughter . . . went aboard the *HMS Epreuve*, in order to go to England.”⁴⁹² Two weeks later Councilman James Habersham wrote to “lady” Sarah Wright and assured her that her husband was well. “I do myself the pleasure,” he stated, “of visiting the governor very often, and next week, we propose going for a few days to regale ourselves with viewing the fertile swamps and delightful pine groves on the banks of the Great Ogeechee River.”⁴⁹³

Several months later, in July, London’s *St. James’s Chronicle* published an extract of a letter from Portsmouth which expressed great apprehension that the *Epreuve* “is lost, she not being heard of these four months.”⁴⁹⁴ But despair quickly turned to elation as the *Chronicle* announced three days later that the vessel had “put into Cape Fear some time ago, dismasted, and is now on her passage home.”⁴⁹⁵ Silent weeks turned into silent months and there was still no word from the *Epreuve* until the *London Evening Post* recorded that a correspondent from Portsmouth announced the arrival of a sloop of war, which the writer hoped was the *Epreuve*.⁴⁹⁶ On No-

⁴⁹² *Georgia Gazette*, March 15 and 22, 1764.

⁴⁹³ James Habersham to Sarah Wright, March 31, 1764. James Habersham Papers, MS 337, folder 1. Georgia Historical Society.

⁴⁹⁴ *St. James’s Chronicle*, July 21, 1764. See also, *Lloyd’s Evening Post* (London), July 23, 1764.

⁴⁹⁵ *St. James’s Chronicle*, July 24, 1764. See also, *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, July 25, 1764 and *London Evening Post*, July 26, 1764.

⁴⁹⁶ *London Evening Post*, September 8, 1764.

vember 14, *Lloyd's Evening Post* confirmed its readers' fears: the vessel had indeed foundered.⁴⁹⁷

Only the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, however, provided details concerning the *Epreuve* when it published a letter from Captain Jacob Lobb to Commander Archibald Kennedy. The letter was dated Cape Fear, October 24, 1764:

As I have this opportunity to write to my Lord Colvill, by meeting Mr. Tongue, who will take it to New York, shall beg the favour of you to forward it, as it contains a misfortune I lately met with, I shall give you a short account of. The 5th inst. [October] at noon, had a hard gust of wind, with smart rain; clewed up all the sails, and handed all but the minzensail, which blew to pieces; the wind shifted from S.E. to N.E. and N.W. and laid her hatches in the water which made me heave over 4 of the lee guns, and was cutting away the mizzen mast, but the wind blew it away 14 feet above the deck, though the mizzen topsail yard was on deck, and the topmast struck. The main mast was spring in two places; the sloop not righting, nor veering obliged us to cut away the main mast; she then wore, and made good weather. I am sorry to acquaint you the EPREUVE, Captain Blake, is lost, and all perished. Governor Wright's Lady and daughter were on board.⁴⁹⁸

Governor Wright's dear friend James Habersham informed a London correspondent of the disaster. "Our present tranquility is greatly alloyed by the (I fear) loss of our worthy governors lady and two daughters. What a stroke is this to the poor gentleman. There are few such good wives, tender mothers, and affectionate friends remaining! But we must repine, least we charge God foolishly. You would be surprised and pleased to see how magnanimous the governor behaves. He appears to have a friendship for and a confidence in me and therefore I have been as much with him as possible, and I really feel so much with him and for him that I almost forget I have any concerns of my own to attend to."⁴⁹⁹ Habersham's own wife had recently died

⁴⁹⁷ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, November 14, 1764.

⁴⁹⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 29, 1764. See also, *Boston Evening Post*, December 3, 1764.

⁴⁹⁹ Habersham to William Russell, October 10, 1764, in *GHS Collections*, 6:26-27.

and he had found comfort in his relationship with Governor Wright. Their mutual loss strengthened their bond and, according to historian William Abbot, “Habersham went so far as to make plans for moving into the governor’s house with Wright”⁵⁰⁰ Sadly, the governor has left no extant correspondence exists which could shed light on the toll this must have taken on James Wright and his family, but a letter from former South Carolina governor William Henry Lyttelton does indicate the depth of Wright’s sufferings. “I have heard very lately of poor Governor Wright,” he wrote to William Knox from Jamaica, “who was then in pretty good health, but his spirits have never recovered from the severe shock of that unhappy event which affected you also so deeply.”⁵⁰¹ In the spring of 1765, as the imperial crisis began to unfold, the *Georgia Gazette* printed a poem about the loss of the *Epreuve*:

A watery trial ... the greatest suff’rer, overwhelm’d with grief ... and thinks no sorrow equal to his own; his sorrows such as will no comforts bear, unwip’d away by oceans briny tears ... Yet still the great, the glorious Lord of all, in all he does is still supremely just ... nor sends us woes for which he knows no cure ... with comforts equal knows to sooth the mind ... and when emerg’d from trouble’s stormy sea, stand calm and pleas’d before the God of all ... there all the good shall meet, and never part no more.⁵⁰²

Thus it was, amidst this incomprehensible personal tragedy, that James Wright set sail on his most difficult professional voyage.

In April 1764, reeling from the immense debt incurred during the French and Indian War, the British Parliament passed the Sugar Act and announced their intention to consider a colonial

⁵⁰⁰ W. W. Abbot, *The Royal Governors of Georgia*, 110. Abbot cites Habersham’s letter to William Knox (January 29, 1766). Although this letter does mention his decision to move in to Wright’s home, he does so for fear of his personal safety and not because, as Abbot suggests, the two have become so close and mutually supportive grief counseling.

⁵⁰¹ W. H. Lyttelton to William Knox, October 20, 1765, in *Manuscripts of Captain H. V. Knox*, 91-92.

⁵⁰² “The Mourning,” *Georgia Gazette*, March 21, 1765.

stamp act.⁵⁰³ The Massachusetts lower house dispatched a circular letter encouraging their sister assemblies to “unite in the most serious remonstrance” against the Sugar Act as well as the proposed stamp measure.⁵⁰⁴ The Stamp Act became law on March 22, 1765, and required that all legal documents, newspapers, pamphlets, broadsides, lease’s, bills of sale, bond’s, insurance policies, ship’s clearances and college diploma’s be produced on official stamped paper. The Georgia Assembly objected to the Stamp Act, arguing not that Parliament had no right to tax them, but that the taxes, especially the stamp duty, would place an unbearable financial burden on Georgians. They also questioned the notion of virtual representation.⁵⁰⁵ Then, in July, the As-

⁵⁰³ For the Stamp Act in Georgia see, Kenneth Coleman, *Colonial Georgia*, 245-252; and Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia*, 16-24; Charles Risher, Jr., “Propaganda, Dissension, and Defeat: Loyalist Sentiment in Georgia, 1763-1783,” Ph.D. Diss. (Mississippi State University, 1976), chapter 2; Carl Garrigus, “Profit and the Press: Georgia Newspapers from the Stamp Act to Nullification,” Ph.D. Diss. (Georgia State University, 1997), S. F. Roach, “The Georgia Gazette and Stamp Act: A Reconsideration,” chapter 2; *GHQ* 55.4 (Winter, 1971): 471-491; Ashley Ellefson, “The Stamp Act in Georgia,” *GHQ* 46.1 (March 1962):1-19; Randall Miller, “The Stamp Act in Colonial Georgia,” *GHQ*, 56.3 (Fall, 1972): 318-331; Percy S. Flippin, “The Royal Government in Georgia, 1752-1776,” *GHQ* 8.1 (March, 1924): 1-37 and *GHQ* 8.2 (June 1924): 81-120; Carol R. Cunningham, “The Southern Royal Governors and the Coming of the American Revolution, 1763-1776,” PhD Diss. (University of New York at Buffalo, 1984), 93-106; John Ivey Brown, “Relations between Georgia’s Royal Governors and their Colonial Assemblies,” MA thesis (University of Georgia, 1967), 62-100; Andrea Lynn Williams, “Sir James Wright in Georgia: Local and Imperial Conflict in the American Revolution,” Honors Thesis (The College of William and Mary, 2012), 16-32; Hugh Atkinson, “Georgia and the Stamp Act Crisis,” MA thesis (Georgia State University, 1965), X-X; William Tolleson, “Governor James Wright, 1760-1776,” MA thesis (University of Georgia, 1938), X-X. For the Stamp Act in general see, Morgan & Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*; Morgan, ed., *Prologue to Revolution: Sources and Documents on the Stamp Act Crisis, 1764-1766*; Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, X-X; and Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, X-X.

⁵⁰⁴ Quoted in Morgan & Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, 107.

⁵⁰⁵ Committee of correspondence to William Knox, April 15, 1765, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 6:30-33 and James Habersham to Knox, October 28, 1765, in *ibid.*, 44-46.

sembly sent a letter to their colonial agent urging him to join with the other agents in protesting the recent legislation.⁵⁰⁶

That summer, the Massachusetts House of Representatives again led the colonial opposition movement. This time, however, they dispatched a circular letter which called for the colonies to send delegates to a congress in New York.⁵⁰⁷ Although Georgia's legislature was not in session when the letter arrived at Savannah, Assembly Speaker Alexander Wyllly requested that Governor Wright call the legislature into session, but he refused. The speaker then usurped Wright's prerogative and summoned the delegates to Savannah to discuss the letter. Sixteen of the twenty-five soon arrived. Speaker Wyllly then advised the legislators in Massachusetts that Georgia would not be physically represented at the Stamp Act Congress, but that the province would endorse its resolutions.⁵⁰⁸ It is important to note that Wright did not confront Wyllly concerning his insubordination. Wright was a man who was highly concerned with form and respect. Could his silence on this matter have betrayed his tacit approval of either Wyllly's behavior or the actions of the assembly? Wright would have certainly complained either to his superiors or to the Speaker himself if he had been opposed to such measures. Additionally, Wright's friend, long-time imperial official, W. H. Lyttelton thought it laughable that the ministry believed the stamp measure would be followed in America: "I do not see how the Mother Country can hope for the future that her laws will be obeyed in such distant dominions."⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁶ Committee of correspondence to William Knox, July 18, 1765, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 6:40-41.

⁵⁰⁷ Morgan & Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, 108.

⁵⁰⁸ "Proceedings," October 29, 1765, in *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, 14:269-274 (hereafter, *CRG*).

⁵⁰⁹ Lyttelton to Knox, October 20, 1765, in *Manuscripts of H. V. Knox*, 91-92.

William Knox, one of Wright's closest friends and a fellow rice planter, served as the provincial agent in London.⁵¹⁰ Rather than robustly present the Assembly's protest memorial against the Sugar and Stamp Act, Knox authored a pamphlet which actually defended the Parliamentary right of taxation.⁵¹¹ Governor Wright received a copy of Knox's pamphlet in July, but tried to suppress its becoming public knowledge upon the advice of Habersham. Habersham informed Knox that he had seen his missive, and "in perusing it I soon knew it to be yours, returned it to the governor, and desired it might not get abroad, fully persuaded, it would not suit our present meridian."⁵¹² Moreover, it appeared that Wright had been displeased by Knox's behavior as evidenced by a letter Habersham wrote to the colonial agent. "I think not one of your friends," Habersham opined, "up stairs can justify your making that publication ... [and] I am sure your particular friend [Wright] does not approve of it, and very heartily wishes it had never appeared."⁵¹³ Wright's closest confidant added that "it appears to me an insult on the most common understanding to talk of our being virtually represented ... when we are speaking of the indefeasible birth right of a British American subject."⁵¹⁴ Positive proof does not exist, but the available evidence all points towards the belief that Wright thought the stamp policy unwise.

⁵¹⁰ See, Leland Bellot, *William Knox: The Life & Thought of an Eighteenth-Century Imperialist* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 61-80.

⁵¹¹ William Knox, *The Claim of the Colonies to an Exemption from Internal Taxes Imposed by Authority of Parliament Examined* (London, 1765).

⁵¹² Habersham to Knox, July 17, 1765, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 6:38-40.

⁵¹³ Habersham to Knox, October 28, 1765, *Collections of the GHS*, 6:44-46.

⁵¹⁴ Committee of correspondence to William Knox, April 15, 1765, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 6:30-33 and James Habersham to Knox, October 28, 1765, in *ibid.*, 44-46. Historian W. W. Abbot suggested that Habersham was "certainly Wright's" closest advisor. See, Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 110.

Portions of this anonymously published tract, however, soon appeared in the *Georgia Gazette* in August 1765. Before long, the author's identity had been established and Knox predictably drew the ire of many Georgians, especially after he was named an undersecretary of state for trade and plantations.⁵¹⁵ In mid-November, the Assembly resolved that they no longer desired Knox's services. Rather than come to the aid of his friend, Wright proffered a suggestion for his replacement.⁵¹⁶ Conversely, the governor's Council, of which Knox had been a former member, refused to abandon him and instead communicated their appreciation for his performance. The Commons House then asked South Carolina's agent Charles Garth to submit their petitions and memorial and voted to pay him £50.⁵¹⁷ Not only did he perform this service, he remained Georgia's de facto agent until the completion of Knox's term.⁵¹⁸

Georgia's opposition to the Stamp Act remained relatively muted until late October 1765, when the Speaker laid before the Assembly documents just arrived from the Congress in New

⁵¹⁵ Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia*, 104. For more on this, see Habersham to Knox, July 18, October 28 and 30, 1765, in *Collections of the GHS*, 6:40-41, 44-46, and 46-49. For the Assembly's discussion concerning the removal of Knox see, for example, "House Journal," October 28, November 15, December 14, and December 16, 1765, in *CRG*, 14:266-268, 292-294, 315-317, and 317-322.

⁵¹⁶ Wright to the Assembly, December 19, 1765, in *CRG*, 14:327.

⁵¹⁷ "House Journal," December 14, 1765, in *CRG*, 14:315-317. Garth had been named James Wright's successor as South Carolina's agent. For more on his career as colonial agent see, Joseph Barnwell, "Charles Garth, M.P., the Last Colonial Agent of South Carolina in England, and Some of His Work," *SCHGM* 26.2 (April, 1925): 67-92; L. B. Namier, "Charles Garth and His Connexions," *English Historical Review* 54 (July 1939): 443-470 and Namier, "Charles Garth, Agent for South Carolina," *English Historical Review* 54 (October 1939): 632-652. Kenneth Coleman noted that MP Charles Garth had actually voted in favor of the Stamp Act, but opined that this information had not been known in Georgia. See, Coleman, *Colonial Georgia*, 251. This assertion, however, is refuted by Lewis Namier, who stated: Garth "was one of the minority of 49 who voted against the stamp act" on February 6, 1765. Namier, "Charles Garth, Agent for South Carolina," *HER* 54 (July 1939): 644.

⁵¹⁸ "House Journal," January 14 and 21, 1766, in *CRG*, 14:328-329 and 335-336, for example.

York. The House then directed that they be published in the *Georgia Gazette*.⁵¹⁹ The full record, including the “Journal of the Proceedings of the Congress,” was laid before the Assembly on November 25. After two weeks of deliberation, they voted to fully endorse the proceedings from New York and forward them to London.⁵²⁰

October 25 was a day of celebration throughout the colonies, honoring the accession of George III. As was wont to happen during such festivities, a number of partygoers in Savannah lost their inhibitions. Coupled with the heightened tensions regarding Parliamentary taxation, some members of this raucous crowd paraded effigies of the stamp distributor throughout Savannah’s streets. The *Georgia Gazette* reported that the burning of the effigy occurred “amidst the acclamations of a great concourse of people of all ranks and denominations.”⁵²¹

The Stamp Act had been scheduled to take effect on November 1, 1765. In Georgia, however, there were neither stamps nor distributor. In fact, Governor Wright had not even received an official copy of or, as he dryly noted, “one scrape of a pen about” the onerous legislation.⁵²² This fact, however, did not reduce the societal strain along Savannah’s wharf as the Liberty Boys (or, as Wright called them, “the sons of licentiousness”) made their presence fully known throughout the late fall.⁵²³ The *Georgia Gazette* reported that George Baillie, Simon

⁵¹⁹ “Proceedings,” October 29, 1765, in *CRG*, 14:269-274 and *Georgia Gazette*, October 31, 1765.

⁵²⁰ “Proceedings,” November 25 and 29, December 2-14, 1765, in *CRG*, 14:299-317. For a full accounting of the petitions and declarations of the Stamp Act Congress see, Morgan & Morgan, *The Stamp Act Congress*, 110-116.

⁵²¹ *Georgia Gazette*, October 31, 1765 and Wright to Conway, January 31, 1766, quoted in Jones, *History of Georgia*, 2:60-64. This letter is also in the unpublished *CRG*, 37:103-109. Georgia State Archives.

⁵²² Wright to the Board of Trade, November 9, 1765, in *CRG*, 28.2:129-130.

⁵²³ Wright to Conway, March 15, 1766, in unpublished *CRG*, 37:123. Georgia State Archives.

Munro, and Thomas Moodie had all received menacing letters from “The Townsmen,” who accused them of being involved with the dreaded stamps and warned them of the “fatal consequences” of such actions. Unequivocally denying their involvement, the three offered the significant reward of £50 for the name or names of the instigator of these rumors.⁵²⁴

As fall turned into winter, Wright lamented that “too much of the rebellious spirit in the northern colonies has already shewn itself here, indeed the people have been for many months past stimulated by letters” sent from the other colonies.⁵²⁵ Not long thereafter, Governor Wright offered a reward for the identity of the penman who accused his best friend James Habersham of being the stamp distributor.⁵²⁶ The Assembly unanimously agreed to pay the reward in the hopes of showing their “detestation and just abhorrence of such malignant” behavior.”⁵²⁷ During these difficult days, Habersham confided to William Knox that he and Wright were “upon the most friendly and intimate terms, and most of my vacant hours are spent with him.”⁵²⁸

Just a few days later a number of inebriated sailors assembled on the anniversary of Guy Fawkes Day and constructed a stamp collector effigy on a scaffold. They proceeded to traipse throughout the town, sporadically chanting “no stamps, no riot act!” They soon hung the symbolic stamp man in front of Machenry’s Tavern, about four blocks east of Wright’s home.⁵²⁹ Although the spirit of those participating in such behavior was innocent enough and no property had been damaged, the Sons of Liberty determined to publicly notify the distributor, whoever he

⁵²⁴ *Georgia Gazette*, October 31 and November 14, 1765.

⁵²⁵ Wright to the Board of Trade, November 9, 1765, in *CRG*, 28.2:129-130.

⁵²⁶ *Georgia Gazette*, October 31 and November 14, 1765.

⁵²⁷ “Journal of the Assembly,” October 31, 1765, in *CRG*, 14:276-280.

⁵²⁸ Habersham to Knox, July 17, 1765, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 6:38-40.

⁵²⁹ *Georgia Gazette*, November 7, 1765.

may be, that they found his position and the legislation to be quite loathsome and demanded that he resign his position post haste.⁵³⁰

During the interim, as Georgians waited for the stamps and the legislation to arrive, Wright and his council made a number of preemptive decisions. First, they determined that the stamps and their distributor would be protected. Second, Wright issued a proclamation prohibiting riotous behavior. Third, they called on all peace officers and magistrates to be especially attentive to their duties. On a more practical level, they closed the land office and suspended the provincial courts until further notice and made the important decision to permit vessels to clear customs with a certificate stating the stamped paper had not yet arrived.⁵³¹

Wright observed with great concern the “spirit of faction and sedition” that now existed in the colony and informed a London official that the Sons of Liberty had frequently met and resolved upon traitorous measures to prevent the enactment of the Stamp Act.⁵³² Those Sons had, in fact, abused and insulted him. Worse yet, Wright bemoaned to his superiors in London, “I have very nearly seen the power & authority his most sacred Majesty has been graciously pleased to vest in me, wrested out of my hands, a matter my Lords too cutting for a good subject & servant to bear.” He fully exerted himself in preventing “mobs from daring to attempt to obstruct the due course of law.”⁵³³ Habersham noted in a letter to Knox that “we are here in the

⁵³⁰ *Georgia Gazette*, November 7, 1765.

⁵³¹ For the Council meeting see, “Governor in Council,” November 12, 1765, in *CRG*, 9:438-439. For the proclamation see, *Georgia Gazette*, November 14, 1765.

⁵³² Wright to Conway, January 31, 1766, in Jones, *History of Georgia*, 2:60-64.

⁵³³ Wright to the Board of Trade, January 15, 1766, in *CRG*, 28, part 2:132-134.

utmost confusion and our honest governor, who will not submit an inch to the phrenzy of an unthinking multitude, is laboring night and day to prevent the worst consequences.”⁵³⁴

Wright received a copy of the Stamp Act “in a private way” in late November and “thought it his indispensable duty to take” the required oaths, which he did on the twenty-second.⁵³⁵ He closed the port of Savannah on December 4 and, finally, the stamps, sans distributor, arrived on the fifth aboard the *HMS Speedwell*, a day in which there were dozens of vessels in the river and many that were ready to depart. The governor and his Council considered the appointment of a temporary distributor, but voted five to four against such a measure.⁵³⁶ Two days later, however, the Council reversed its decision and advised Wright of the propriety of such a measure, should an applicant come forth.⁵³⁷ Though no *pro tem* agent had been appointed, some Savannah merchants proffered a petition to fill the position. Printed in the February 13 issue of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* was an extract of a January 6 letter from Georgia, complaining that “of late some of our merchants (finding their interest concerned) ... have even endeavoured to suppress the spirit of liberty.”⁵³⁸

A number of gentlemen visited Wright the evening the stamps arrived and “assured him that they never had such intention [to seize the stamps] ... and that whatever threats might have

⁵³⁴ Habersham to Knox, January 29, 1766, in *CRG*, 9:56.

⁵³⁵ Wright to the Board of Trade, December 2, 1765, in *CRG*, 28, part 2:130-132 and “Governor in Council,” November 22, 1765, in *CRG*, 9:439-440.

⁵³⁶ “Governor in Council,” December 16, 1765, in *CRG*, 9:454-458; Habersham to Knox, December 4, 1765, in *Collections of the GHS*, 6:49-50; and Habersham to Daniel Roubadeau (in Philadelphia), December [January] 17, 1765, in *Collections of the GHS*, 6:57-58.

⁵³⁷ “Governor in Council,” December 18, 1765, in *CRG*, 9:459-460.

⁵³⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 13, 1766. It should be noted that the merchants circulated a petition rather than placing an advertisement because the *Georgia Gazette* did not publish an issue during the crisis.

been thrown out must have been by loose, idle persons and not by the people of the town, *who on the contrary had impowered them to assure his Excellency*” that the stamps would not be harmed.⁵³⁹ He informed the Council on the sixteenth that the stamp “law is declared to be in force.” Habersham reported to a business colleague in Philadelphia that “we have agreed to make use of stamps to open our ports but on no other occasion.”⁵⁴⁰ Moreover, they unanimously denied a merchant petition to allow the currently loaded vessels to depart because an indefinite delay would be financially ruinous.⁵⁴¹

It seems the perceived betrayal by the merchants invigorated and compelled the Liberty Boys into action. One of them wrote that they gathered en masse in the center of town and “marched to the governor’s gate” on the afternoon of January 2, 1766.⁵⁴² The captain of the Georgia Rangers, whom Wright had called into town to maintain order, informed him that approximately two hundred Liberty Boys were assembling near the wharf and had, in Wright’s words, “declared they were determined to go to the fort and break open the store and take out and destroy the stamped papers.” Desiring to head off a potential disaster, Wright “armed myself,” collected fifty-four Georgia Rangers and marched to Fort Halifax on the outer edge of town where they collected the stamps and relocated them to the center of town at the guardhouse, which they accomplished without violent confrontation.⁵⁴³

⁵³⁹ “Governor in Council,” December 6, 1765, in *CRG*, 9:453-454.

⁵⁴⁰ See also, Habersham to Daniel Roubadeau (in Philadelphia), December [January] 17, 1765, in *Collections of the GHS*, 6:57-58.

⁵⁴¹ “Governor in Council,” December 16, 1765, in *CRG*, 9:454-458.

⁵⁴² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 13, 1766.

⁵⁴³ Wright to the Board of Trade, February 1 and February 7, 1766, TNA, Colonial Office 5/649 (hereafter CO 5). All CO 5 documents were obtained from either the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington’s Crossing, PA or the Georgia State Archives, Morrow, GA.

With musket in hand, Wright then confronted the crowd assembling near his home. He pushed his way to the middle of the crowd and demanded what they meant by such behavior. They asked if he intended to appoint a stamp distributor. He forcefully responded that their behavior was no “manner to wait upon the governor” and that he “would not violate his oaths to his Majesty.”⁵⁴⁴ Moreover, he assured them that, “in four months time, they would find he was a friend to liberty, while their measures were destructive of it; and a good deal more to this effect.” Unimpressed, the crowd dispersed but promised to return if Wright acted in a way contrary to their liberty. Anxiety ran so high that Wright maintained a minimum of forty men on duty every night and patrolled Savannah’s streets alongside the soldiers, because without which such measures, “I am confident [the stamps] would have been destroyed.” In fact, Wright informed the Board of Trade that “for the first four nights I had not my clothes off.”⁵⁴⁵

George Angus arrived around noon the next day. Having already made arrangements that he be the first to learn of Angus’s arrival, the governor quickly dispatched the Rangers to safely and quietly escort the distributor to Wright’s home, which they did on the fourth. On the seventh, the *Georgia Gazette* notified its readers that Angus had been appointed distributor.⁵⁴⁶ To head off a disturbance, the governor issued a proclamation threatening “all such persons as have, or hereafter may be concerned in such riotous and unlawful assemblies ... [with prosecution and

⁵⁴⁴ Wright to the Board of Trade, February 1 and February 7, 1766, TNA, Colonial Office 5/649 *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 13, 1766.

⁵⁴⁵ Wright to the Board of Trade, January 15, 1766, quoted in Percy Scott Flippen, “The Royal Government in Georgia, 1752-1776,” *GHQ* 8.2 (June 1924): 91-92; Wright to Conway, January 31, 1766, quoted in Jones, *History of Georgia*, 2:62-64; and *South Carolina Gazette*, January 21, 1766. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 13, 1766.

⁵⁴⁶ *Georgia Gazette*, November 7, 1765.

punishment] to the utmost rigour of the law.”⁵⁴⁷ Within fairly short order, however, Angus felt obliged to retire to the “country to avoid the resentment of the people.” He ultimately left Georgia at the end of March, never to return.⁵⁴⁸

Wright re-opened Savannah’s port on January 7 after an informal agreement was reached between the Liberty Boys and the town’s merchants.⁵⁴⁹ The vessels currently waiting to disembark purchased the stamped paper and sailed, making Governor Wright the only of Britain’s thirteen colonial governors to successfully issue the stamps.⁵⁵⁰ There occurred then a general agreement to not purchase additional stamps until the fate of their official protests had been determined.

Once the news of the arrival of the stamps and George Angus filtered to the backcountry, rumors made their way to Savannah that some rabble-rousers from South Carolina had enflamed Georgia’s backcountry inhabitants, who were making their way to Savannah in force. Wright then reached out to “many of the most sensible & dispassionate people” beyond Savannah, urging them to help ease the rising tempers in their quarter. As the month came to a conclusion without incident, Wright believed “his weight & credit was sufficient to check & prevent all commotions & disturbances in the country.”⁵⁵¹

Governor Wright, however, had been too confident. He learned that some “incendiaries from Charlestown came full fraught with sedition and rebellion, and have been about the country

⁵⁴⁷ *Georgia Gazette*, November 14, 1765.

⁵⁴⁸ Coleman, *Colonial Georgia*, 248.

⁵⁴⁹ Wright to Thomas Gage, January 20, 1766, Thomas Gage Papers, American Series, William Clements Library, University of Michigan.

⁵⁵⁰ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 13, 1766.

⁵⁵¹ Wright to the Board of Trade, January 15, 1766, in *CRG*, 9:132-134.

and inflamed the people to such a degree that they were again assembling” in large numbers.⁵⁵² In spite of the absence of the inflammatory frontiersmen, reports circulated through Savannah that the Liberty Boys planned to shoot Wright if he contravened their wishes. Meanwhile Habersham had been warned to not to leave his home.⁵⁵³ The threats had so frightened Habersham that he determined “to take shelter ... in the governor’s” home.⁵⁵⁴

Proving his dexterity, Wright quickly responded by again moving the stamped paper to Fort George on Cockspur Island just south of the town. But he did not simply relocate the stamped paper; he sent nearly all of his Rangers with it, leaving the town virtually defenseless. There is no way of determining Wright’s reasoning for such a risky move, but historian W. W. Abbot has likely hit upon it. “The stamped paper,” he wrote, “had become a symbol so far beyond its practical importance,” that Governor Wright decided to simply remove it.⁵⁵⁵ As January became February and no motley crew marched into town, Wright again breathed a momentary sigh of relief.

Governor Wright soon learned that a large armed group still planned to enter the city, surround his home, and in Wright’s words, “extort a promise from me that no papers should be issued till his Majesty’s pleasure be known on the petitions sent home.” Additionally, Wright not-

⁵⁵² Wright to Conway, January 31, 1766, in unpublished CRG, 37:103-109. Georgia State Archives and Wright to the Board of Trade, February 1, 1766, in *CRG*, 9:135-136. Wright blamed South Carolina’s Sons of Liberty for Georgia’s troubles throughout the entire imperial crisis.

⁵⁵³ Habersham to George Whitefield, January 27, 1766, in *Collections of the GHS*, 6:54-56.

⁵⁵⁴ Habersham to Knox, January 29, 1766, in *Collections of the GHS*, 6:56.

⁵⁵⁵ Wright to Conway, January 31, 1766, in unpublished CRG, 37:103-109. Georgia State Archives. Abbot, *The Royal Governors*, 117.

ed that if he failed to comply, they intended to “shoot me.”⁵⁵⁶ Wright clearly feared for his life, as did any number of his supporters. James Habersham confided to the Reverend George Whitefield that “my very flesh trembles” while awaiting the arrival of the frontier rabble.⁵⁵⁷ Seemingly on cue, though, Captain Robert Fanshawe returned aboard the *Speedwell* and, according to Governor Wright, “promised me the assistance of twenty men . . . if the villains should come to town.”⁵⁵⁸

The backcountry radicals finally arrived in Savannah on the fourth, loaded with guns, flags, and drums. Wright, however, had fully secured the city with nearly one hundred armed men, including the Rangers, about twenty sailors from the *Speedwell*, and several dozen well-disposed citizens. Discretion being the better part of valor, the rebels turned back, but only after squabbling amongst themselves for nearly three tense hours. Additionally, they fired a final and ultimately empty salvo, promising to return with additional Liberty men from South Carolina.⁵⁵⁹

With the dispersal of the “vile incendiaries,” Wright exhorted the moderate Liberty men in Georgia to help quell any remaining pockets of insurrection in the colony, especially in the backcountry. His efforts proved fruitful as he was assured by the frontier leaders that “they never will appear in arms again, or oppose his Majesties authority.”⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁶ Wright to the Board of Trade, February 1, 1766, in *CRG*, 28, part 2:135-136; Wright to Conway, March 10, 1766, in unpublished *CRG*, 37:116-118; Wright to Gage, February 1, 1766, Gage Papers, Clements Library; Wright to Conway, January 31, 1766, in unpublished *CRG*, 103-109; Wright to the Board of Trade, February 7, in *CRG*, 28, part 2:136-137.

⁵⁵⁷ Habersham to Whitefield, January 27, 1766, in *GHS Collections*, 6:54-56.

⁵⁵⁸ Wright to the Board of Trade, February 7, 1766, in *CRG*, 28, part 2:136-137.

⁵⁵⁹ Wright to the Board of Trade, February 7, 1766, in *CRG*, 28, part 2:136-137 and Wright to Conway, February 7, 1766, in unpublished *CRG*, 37:110-111. Georgia State Archives.

⁵⁶⁰ Wright to Conway, March 10, 1766, in unpublished *CRG*, 37:116-118

Even the typically oppositional Commons House seemed to be in step with Governor Wright's actions throughout the entire crisis.⁵⁶¹ The Assembly had been in session throughout the entirety of the Stamp Act crisis and the only reference to the tax in the House journal had been that body's adoption of the Stamp Act Congress's petitions and memorial.⁵⁶² Moreover, the governor and Assembly exchanged no correspondence concerning the odious measure.

News of the repeal of the Stamp Act reached Savannah in May. Once the Assembly reconvened in July and they received official word of the revocation from Governor Wright, they congratulated one another that no property had been damaged in Georgia. Although most Georgians reveled in their comparative civility as well as the successful lobbying against the Stamp Act, Wright feared that his zealous enforcement of the Stamp Act would cost him his position in Georgia. In a June 1766 letter to Henry Seymour Conway, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, he noted that a number of Liberty Boys had recently "been very industrious in propagating a report, that my conduct in endeavouring to enforce the Stamp Act, was disagreeable & disapproved of at home, and therefore a Lieut. Governor is coming over and that I am to be superseded."⁵⁶³

In September, Lord Shelburne promised Wright that such rumors had no factual foundation. This assurance, however, cannot have been entirely true. In June 1766, a London newspaper reported that: "notwithstanding so many reports have been inserted in all the papers relative to the change of a certain American governor [Wright], it is now said, his conduct has not been

⁵⁶¹ For the contentious nature of the provincial assemblies in the middle of the eighteenth century see, Jack Greene, *The Quest for Power: the Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776, passim.*

⁵⁶² The Assembly had been in session from October 22, 1764 through March 6, 1766.

⁵⁶³ Wright to Conway, June 24, 1766, in unpublished CRG, 37:97-98.

disapproved of on this side of the water.”⁵⁶⁴ That said, he chided the governor for his conduct during the crisis, reminding Wright “that it is the duty of His Majesty’s governors to conduct themselves as not to create groundless jealousies or suggest suspicion that they are capable of beholding with ill will or wishing to restrain the just & decent exercise of that liberty which belongs to the people.”⁵⁶⁵ Wright angrily responded the following January:

I am perfectly sensible my Lord how essential the prerogatives of the Crown are to government, & that I cannot be too vigilant in observing, or too firm in resisting the first approaches to any encroachment on them. I hope none will be made or attempted, but if they should, your Lordship may rest assured that I shall firmly resist them, & that with such a degree of mildness & moderation as I think your Lordship wishes I should do, and as I have always hitherto done. Judging it to be better policy, and that it often proves an easier way to govern & carry ones point, than by shewing a morose or arbitrary disposition. Surely my Lord it would be most absurd and improper for any governor by his conduct to create groundless jealousies, or give room for suspicion, that he could wish to restrain the just and decent exercise of that liberty w[hi]ch belongs to the people, such a conduct my Lord would not only betray great weakness, but clearly shew a bad man, & a bad heart. Your Lordship has not been pleased to hint what may be deemed the just and decent liberty of the people and w[hi]ch I’m afraid will be a difficult matter to settle, as I am very apprehensive that what may be judged so, in Great Britain, will not in America.⁵⁶⁶

Moreover, Wright found the Stamp Act’s repeal to be horrifically short-sighted, a sign of imperial weakness, and a portent of doom.

During the fall of 1765, the naturalist John Bartram journey through Georgia and noted in his journal that Governor Wright was “universally respected by all the inhabitants [who] can hardly say enough in his praise.”⁵⁶⁷ James Habersham agreed, writing that “our governor has

⁵⁶⁴ *Lloyd’s Evening Post and British Chronicle*, June 5, 1766.

⁵⁶⁵ William Petty, Earl of Shelburne, September 22, 1766, in unpublished CRG, 37:126-127.

⁵⁶⁶ Wright to Shelburne, January 5, 1767, in unpublished CRG, 37:174-175.

⁵⁶⁷ John Bartram, *Diary of a Journey through the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida: From July 1, 1765 to April 10, 1766* (Philadelphia: 1942), 29.

behaved with unusual firmness & spirit” and “has on this critical occasion behaved like himself, I mean like a man of honor and a faithful servant of the Crown”⁵⁶⁸ Even Wright confirmed his popularity in a letter to Secretary Conway: “I have the great pleasure to find that many of the better sort of people begin to see that my firmness in the discharge of my duty to his Majesty, and perseverance in my endeavors to convince & set them right on this occasion, will redound to the interest and happiness of the province & people in general”⁵⁶⁹

James Wright’s unequaled success in distributing any stamps as well as minimizing civic disruption lay in his preparation, which afforded him the opportunity to seize the initiative. In fact, he maintained that he had been handicapped by the absence of more troops. This is a complaint James consistently lodged from his arrival in Georgia through his expulsion in the summer of 1782 as the British withdrew from America.⁵⁷⁰ He emerged from the Stamp Act crisis deeply confident in his abilities. He also emerged from the quarrel deeply disillusioned by the wisdom of imperial policy. As Abbot rightly acknowledged, “there is not a scrap of evidence that Wright at any time before 1765 overtly questioned any decision of the Board of Trade; after 1765 he disagreed with these gentlemen often.”⁵⁷¹ Wright also began to question the wisdom and integrity of Georgia’s provincial elite.

Not only was he the only of thirteen mainland governors to issue the stamped paper, he did so in the face of widespread popular opposition to the tax and while preventing mob vio-

⁵⁶⁸ Habersham to Daniel Roubadeau (in Philadelphia), December [January] 17, 1766, in *Collections of the GHS*, 6:57-58. Same to George Whitefield, January 27, 1766, in *ibid.*, 6:54-56.

⁵⁶⁹ Wright to Conway, March 10, 1766, in unpublished CRG, 37:116-118.

⁵⁷⁰ In fact, Wright presented numerous memorials as South Carolina’s agent bemoaning the lack of troops to secure that province.

⁵⁷¹ Abbot, *The Royal Governors of Georgia*, 122.

lence.⁵⁷² In spite of these successes, however, Wright likely paid a steep price. First, his renewed confidence resulted in increasingly less flexibility in future quarrels with the Assembly. Second, he clearly identified himself as a Crown man first and a Georgian second. Third, the entire affair exacted a significant personal toll. Lastly, the Liberty Boys had both tasted the sweet nectar of liberty and learned that Parliament lacked the fortitude to enforce its legislation.

Wright clearly foresaw the ramifications of this and confided to Secretary Conway:

... after the people in a country have been inflamed to the highest degree ... it's not to be supposed or expected that all heats & party spirits can subside at once ... and this province is not without some violent republican spirits, full of rancor against the government & Parliament, and still fix't in their strange mistaken ideas of liberty, and that no power can tax or restrain them &c but themselves.⁵⁷³

He added that such “republican spirits” would positively “rather cherish those ideas, than recede from them.”⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷² During the crisis, the *Georgia Gazette* published sixteen issues which commented about the Stamp Act. Of these, fifteen were decidedly against the act. See, Garrigus, “Profit and the Press,” 18 and A. A. Lawrence, *James Johnston: Georgia's First Printer* (Savannah: Pigeonhole Press, 1956). See also, Gage to Wright, April 26 and [?], 1766, in Gage Papers, Clements Library. Gage complimented Wright for being the only governor to not “yield to the torrent of popular fury.”

⁵⁷³ Wright to Conway, June 24, 1766, in unpublished CRG, 37:97-98.

⁵⁷⁴ Wright to Conway, July 23, 1766, quoted in Abbot, *The Royal Governors of Georgia*, 123.

**CHAPTER 5: “INSOLENCE, WANTONNESS, & MISCHIEF”: JAMES WRIGHT AND
THE GEORGIA FRONTIER**

“I think it very necessary to acquaint yor Lordship,” James Wright chided the Earl of Shelburne in November 1766, “that I am apprehensive of some disturbance & mischief gathering & breaking out amongst the Indians, indeed I have long expected this would be the consequence” of the ill-conceived royal Proclamation of 1763 which emasculated the colonial governors by ordering them to grant licenses to any colonist who desired to trade with the Native Americans. Governor Wright begged Shelburne’s forgiveness as he did not want to speak out of turn, but explained that duty required his making the ministry aware of the detrimental effects of the proclamation. The primary difficulties arising from such legislation were that the Indians were “overstock’ t with goods,” which led to “insolence, wantonness, & mischief.” This economic imbalance, Wright argued, had led to innumerable “irregularities & abuses committed by the traders ... who are generally the very worst kind of people.” This in turn would likely occasion a never-ending cycle of violence and retribution.⁵⁷⁵

As Wright predicted, the Georgia backcountry erupted in sporadic and unending lawlessness and bloodshed. The frontier settlers around Augusta sent a petition to the governor in July 1767, “complaining of great plunder and depredations committed on their stock of horses and

⁵⁷⁵ Wright to the Earl of Shelburne, November 29, 1766, in MsCRG, 37:146-149. Georgia State Archives. Wright had proffered similar warnings as early as August 27, 1764. “The Indian trade [is] running into great confusion, numbers of people [are] applying for licenses, and 3 or 4 persons were trading in one & the same town, which was productive of almost continual disputes & quarrels between the traders & the Indians. By so many persons trading in one town, the Indians [have become] over supplied with goods, which I conceive to be a bad policy.” See, Wright to the Board of Trade, August 27, 1764, in TNA, CO 5/649.

cattle by a party of Creek Indians.” After the latest theft, a number of angry and obstinate settlers pursued a group of Creeks to demand the return of their horses. After coming upon a much larger body of Indians than they expected, however, the Georgians determined to lay in wait in the hopes of capturing some of them at night but, according to the petitioners, “one of [the Indians’ dogs] yelpt which alarmed” them and elicited “their war hoop” and a cacophony of musket fire, sending the colonists scurrying off. The petitioners, “terrified at the thoughts of loosing [sic] our stock and very possibly our lives,” implored the governor for assistance, lest their settlement be forced “to break up.”⁵⁷⁶ They also petitioned General Thomas Gage, commander-in-chief of the British army in North America, complaining that the “inconsistency of [Indians] behaviour and the consequences that may attend it has given us no little uneasiness.”⁵⁷⁷

In early August, Governor Wright dispatched a missive to the Creek leaders in northeast Georgia. Even though James viewed the Indians through the eighteenth-century racist prism, he firmly believed in the value of honoring treaty obligations. He reminded them of their obligation under the 1763 treaty to “prevent any of your people from giving any disturbance” and in the event that “any damage be done” to the English, “satisfaction shall be made for the same to the party injured.” In fact, Wright said, “I know perfectly well that I have taken the utmost care and pains that all the white people should conform” to the treaty and “I have always been ready to do you full justice” when they have violated their obligations. The governor proceeded to recommend the Creeks not “suffer any of your people to settle on the Oconee River,” or anywhere

⁵⁷⁶ “Governor in Council,” July 29, 1767, in *CRG*, 10:245-249 and “Governor in Council,” August 4, 1767, in *ibid.*, 249-280. See also, John Stuart to Thomas Gage, August 17, 1767, in Gage Papers, American Series, Clements Library, University of Michigan.

⁵⁷⁷ Augusta Magistrates to General Thomas Gage, July 30, 1767, in Gage Papers.

TABLE 6.1. GEORGIA'S COLONIAL POPULATION.⁵⁷⁸

1750	5,200	4,200	1,000
1760	9,578	6,000	3,578
1765	11,300	6,800	4,500
1770	23,375	12,750	10,625
1773	33,000	18,000	15,000
1780	56,071	35,240	20,831

⁵⁷⁸ John McCusker, ed., "Colonial Statistics," in *Historical Statistics of the United States: Earliest Times to the Present*, Susan B. Carter, et al., eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 5:651-653. James Wright to the Earl of Dartmouth, December 20, 1773, "Report of Sir James Wright to the Earl of Dartmouth on the Condition of the Province of Georgia, September 20, 1773," in The National Archives, Colonial Office 5/663 (hereafter TNA CO). "I suppose the number of white men, women, and children in the whole province may be 18,000 and upwards, and the number of blacks is computed at 15,000." See also, Mary Bondurant Warren, ed., *Georgia Governor and Council Journal, 1772-1773* (Athens: Heritage Papers), 156-162 and James Martin Grant, "Legislative Factions in Georgia, 1754-1798: a Socio-political Study," Ph.D. Diss. (University of Georgia, 1975), 2.

“near the white people.” Essentially then, Wright wished for a significant geographical “no-man’s land” separating the less disciplined members of both races.⁵⁷⁹

The surplus of Indian traders along the colonial frontier was not the only reason, however, for the increased hostilities between the Indians and colonists. A rapid and insufficiently regulated population explosion throughout the first decade of Governor Wright’s tenure also exacerbated the already tenuous relationship between the two groups. Many historians have maintained that the southern tribes lived in distinct and separate spheres from their backcountry counterparts. Moreover, these scholars insist that when their worlds did occasionally intersect, violence quickly ensued.⁵⁸⁰ But James Wright’s experience clearly contradicts such findings. He found the interplay between these two groups to be all-too-frequent and excessively violent, requiring him to construct a virtual barrier to prevent such closeness. Historian Joshua Piker, however, has found Wright’s understanding of the frontier to be much more common than has previously been suggested. He declared that “Indian-European contact was not rare, and it only grad-

⁵⁷⁹ “Governor in Council,” August 4, 1767, in *CRG*, 10:249-280. Wright’s talk to the Creek Nation can be found on pages 275-278. See also, De Vorse, Jr., *The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies*, 153-155. For the Treaty of Augusta in 1763, see chapter 3 in this dissertation. See also, John Juricek, ed., *Georgia Treaties, 1733-1763* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1989), 348-361.

⁵⁸⁰ See David Corkran, *The Cherokee Frontier: Conflict and Survival*; Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540-1783*; Ed Cashin, “Sowing the Wind: Governor James Wright and the Georgia Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution,” in *Forty Years of Diversity*; Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray*; Cashin, “‘But Brothers, It is our Land We Are Talking About’: Winners and Losers in the Georgia Backcountry,” in *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution*; J. Russell Snapp, *John Stuart and the Struggle for Empire*; Marjolene Kars, *Breaking Loose Together: The Regulator Rebellion in Pre-Revolutionary North Carolina*; John Pitts Corry, *Indian Affairs in Georgia, 1732-1756*; Kathryn Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*; E. R. R. Green, “Queensboro Township: Scotch-Irish Emigration and the Expansion of Georgia, 1763-1776,” in *WMQ* 17 (April 1960); Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Poverty, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816*; and J. Leitch Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People*.

ually became dangerous, a development that cannot be attributed solely to an onrushing horde of colonists.”⁵⁸¹

During this period, the colony’s population increased by 144% to 23,375 by 1770. Although the number of white Georgians increased by over 100%, the income potential of slavery lay at the heart of this phenomenal growth as the number of blacks increased by nearly 300 percent. Indeed, Wright’s vast personal wealth heavily relied upon the labor of slaves. At the outset of the American Revolution, James owned 25,578 acres and 523 slaves.⁵⁸² To counterbalance this trend, however, Wright assiduously promoted white settlement beyond Savannah’s environs because increased habitation guaranteed better frontier security. Moreover, he sought to restrict the size of land grants to “100 acres to the master or head of the family and 50 acres for the wife, child & each slave,” because Wright believed that absentee landowners would result in an increasingly disproportionate racial composition in Georgia which would lead to greater unrest, especially on the frontier.⁵⁸³ Particularly Wright feared that slaves would find common cause with the Native Americans in the backcountry. The governor also wanted to populate the backcountry with only the “better sort of people” – in other words, those who could afford to purchase land and who actually aspired to live on and cultivate their new land.⁵⁸⁴ He outlined his plan for “populating the colony” to the Board of Trade in 1763. He insisted that smaller land

⁵⁸¹ Joshua Piker, “Colonists and Creeks: Rethinking the Pre-Revolutionary Southern Backcountry,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Aug., 2004), 505.

⁵⁸² James Wright Loyalist Claim, The National Archives, American Office 12/4.

⁵⁸³ Wright to Lord Hillsborough, December 27, 1771, in *The Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, 13:287-294; Wright to Hillsborough, December 12, 1771, in Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution*, 3:269-275; and, for the quote see, Wright to Shelburne, May 15, 1767, in MsCRG, 37:206-212.

⁵⁸⁴ James Habersham to Wright, August 22, 1772, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 6:203.

grants distributed to “the middling sort of people, such as have families, & a few negroes” would best serve the colony’s needs.⁵⁸⁵ Wright reasoned that purchasers of land “will of course be something better than the common sort of back country people, and ... will naturally be more industrious and better disposed to protect it.”⁵⁸⁶ The process of establishing a formal “no-man’s land” and augmenting the frontier population with the “better sort” of white settlers took nearly a decade, but the “New Purchase” of 1773 added approximately 1 ½ million acres of “very fine land” to the province’s territory.⁵⁸⁷ But the story of James Wright and the “New Purchase” takes us back to 1763.

Shortly after Governor Wright reached an accord with the various Indian tribes in 1763, he informed the Board of Trade that the recently ratified treaty would soon lead to a “most flourishing” state of affairs in the province as the terms “seem extremely well calculated to make these southern colonies become considerable & *beneficial* [emphasis added] to Great Britain.”⁵⁸⁸ Idealism soon gave way to the stark reality that all was not quiet on Georgia’s northeastern frontier. In ceding the lands they deemed most likely to have been trespassed upon, the Creeks

⁵⁸⁵ Wright to the Board of Trade, December 23, 1763, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 1:454-456. See also, for example, Wright to the Board of Trade, July 5, 1764, in *CO* 5/649.

⁵⁸⁶ Wright to Hillsborough, December 12, 1771, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 2:350-377 and Wright to Hillsborough, May 31, 1768, in *MsCRG*, 37:311-313.

⁵⁸⁷ James Wright to the Earl of Hillsborough, December 12, 1771, in *CRG*, 28, pt.2:350-376.

⁵⁸⁸ Wright to the Board of Trade, December 23, 1763, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 1:454-456 and Wright to the Board of Trade, February 4, 1764, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 2:6-10. For an overview of this growing conflict on Georgia’s frontier see, for example, Louis De Vorsey, Jr., *The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies*, 149-180; Ed Cashin, “Sowing the Wind: Governor Wright and the Georgia Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution,” in *Forty Years of Diversity: Essays on Colonial Georgia*, Jackson and Spalding, eds., 233-250; David Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 253-273; Kathryn Holland Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels*, 139-163; Jack Sosin, *The Revolutionary Frontier*, 61-81; Ed Cashin, *William Bartram and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier*, 38-75; Ed Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray, Indian Trader*, 231-251; and Allan Galloway, *The Formation of a Planter Elite*, 127-152.

hoped to eliminate the very actions that had caused such frontier turmoil. Younger and less trusting Indians, however, viewed this English “land grab” as confirmation of French warnings.⁵⁸⁹ Writing less than a month later, Wright informed his superiors in London that his worst fears had come to fruition. “Fourteen people,” he lamented, “have been murdered ... by some runagate Creek Indians” along the Georgia-South Carolina border.⁵⁹⁰ Though the details were murky, the situation threatened to precipitate a full-blown conflagration in the backcountry, which could be devastating for the province. “If there should be a war,” Wright wrote:

this province will certainly stand in great need of assistance, for my Lords if an handfull of Indians at the northward have been able to massacre so many people & so greatly to distress those populous & opulent countries Pensilvania, New Jersey &c., where there are also a great number of His Majesties troops, what may or may not be the fate of Georgia?⁵⁹¹

Governor Wright immediately initiated a dialogue with South Carolina Governor Thomas Boone, Indian Superintendent John Stuart, and a number of Creek leaders. Stuart issued a formal protest to Tugulki of Coweta and the Creeks in the middle of January 1764, who all promised satisfaction.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁹ Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 229-239. See also, Tugulki (Young Twin) to Wright and John Stuart, January 16, 1764, in Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776* (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 2002), 8. Young Twin blames the murders on “seven that has been among the Cherokees these four or five years.”

⁵⁹⁰ Wright to the Board of Trade, January 17, 1764, in TNA, Colonial Office 5/648.

⁵⁹¹ Wright to the Board of Trade, March 27, 1764, in Gage Papers, American Series, Clements Library. See also, Thomas Gage to Wright, March 20, 1764, in Gage Papers, American Series, William Clements Library and James Habersham to William Knox, March 13, 1764, in *Historical Collections of Georgia*, 6:18-20.

⁵⁹² Stuart to Tugulki and the Creeks, January 13, 1764, in Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 9. Coweta Headmen to Stuart, February 6, 1764; Lower Creeks to Stuart, March 6, 1764; and Upper Creeks to Stuart, ca. mid-February, 1764, in Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 10-12.

Wright's initial suggestion was that trade should be suspended with the Creeks only if they refused to give satisfaction for their malfeasance.⁵⁹³ Boone responded much more aggressively, having grown tired of repeated "talks & expostulations."⁵⁹⁴ Governor Wright, however, was keenly aware of his limited bargaining position. He lamented to Lord Halifax at the conclusion of the 1763 treaty that he possessed "no [real] coercive power over the traders" or Indians.⁵⁹⁵ Wright, however, was nothing if not patient and cautious. "Its a matter that I apprehend ought not to be too hastily done," he advised Boone, "for it is very probable it may bring on a war," for which Georgia "is nearest, weakest & most exposed to their ravage."⁵⁹⁶ General Gage fully concurred, fearing that such a measure "would be look't upon as a declaration of war." Instead of pressing trade restrictions, however, Gage urged Wright and Stuart to incite inter-tribal tensions in the hopes that an British alliance with the Creeks' native rivals would set them straight.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹³ Wright to John Stuart, February 23, 1764, in Gage Papers, American Series, Clements Library.

⁵⁹⁴ Thomas Boone to Wright, March 7, 1764, in Gage Papers, American Series, Clements Library.

⁵⁹⁵ Wright to Lord Halifax, November 10, 1763, in TNA CO 323/17.

⁵⁹⁶ Wright to Boone, March 21, 1764 and William Bull to Thomas Gage, April 11, 1764, in Gage Papers, American Series, Clements Library. Gage later applauded Wright's judgment in this instance. "It give me great satisfaction that my sentiments on the situation of the Indian affairs conincided so entitely with your own, and it appears already that by not being too hasty and precipitate, you have avoided an Indian war. Gage to Wright, August 11, 1764, in Gage Papers.

⁵⁹⁷ Thomas Gage to Wright, May 2, 1764, in Gage Papers, American Series, William Clements Library. See also, Gage to Wright, March 20, 1764, in Gage Papers, American Series, William Clements Library. For Gage's suggestion see, Gage to Wright, May 2 and Gage to Stuart, May 1, 1764, in Gage Papers. Gage then informed Lord Halifax in London that he desired Wright "that all means should be used to avoid a war with the Creeks, but if it is unavoiadable, it behoves us to protract it, till we are better prepared." Gage to Halifax, May 12, 1764, in Clarence E. Carter, ed., *Correspondence of General Thomas Gage*, 1:26-29.

In addition to considering a trade embargo with the Creek Nation, Wright urged the legislature to better enforce the existing measures designed to regulate frontier trade and squatting. James explained his reasoning to the Board of Trade that spring, emphasizing Georgia's unique circumstances. "I [am] being clearly convinced," he wrote, "that most of our broils with & insults received [from the Creeks] have been occasioned by the persons trading with the Indians, & other vagabonds who have neither property nor habitation."⁵⁹⁸ Creek headmen confirmed trader misconduct, complaining that the colonists had violated the treaty. "We have long been silent," Emistisegu bemoaned, but "a white man Robt. Sallit has run out of this nation & occasioned much disturbances." Oakchoy King echoed these sentiments, insisting that "many of these disturbances is owing to white men, who are very guilty ... who are very impudent & occasions uneasiness." He added: "our forefathers lived in perfect friendship with you. They had room to hunt, to kill game to supply their wants.... We desire nothing else, & we hope you'll not encroach upon our lands; as hunting is our only dependence."⁵⁹⁹ By late summer, it appeared that Governor Wright's patience had indeed paid off and he could report to London that the frontier violence had subsided.⁶⁰⁰

In spite of the recent calm in the backcountry, Wright keenly understood that the present situation likely offered only a temporary respite. He again implored the Board of Trade in late August to regulate the Indian trade because, in his estimation, traders "are not the honestest or soberest people, and I found they were in general undermining one another, and in order to get

⁵⁹⁸ Wright to the Board of Trade, May 26, 1764, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 2:28-32.

⁵⁹⁹ "Talks at a meeting between traders and Headmen of the Creek Indians," April 10, 1764, in TNA, CO 5/649 and Wright to Gage, April 16, 1764, in Gage Papers, American Series, Clements Library.

⁶⁰⁰ Wright to the Board of Trade, July 23 and August 6, 1764, in TNA, CO 5/649.

the greatest share of the trade, each endeavoured to make the Indians believe that the other cheated them, which raised jealousies & ill blood amongst them all, & disorders were frequently committed.”⁶⁰¹ Additionally, Wright worked to improve Georgia’s frontier defenses. In June, he requested Captain James Mark Prevost of the Royal Americans to send a force to Augusta. The governor also sought repairs to Fort Augusta, but the Assembly’s refusal to adequately supply the garrison coupled with the ministry’s reluctance to do so led to a significant reduction in the garrison.⁶⁰²

At the end of August, the Upper Creek leader, The Mortar, extended an olive branch to Governor Wright. For years, The Mortar had, according to Wright, been “our greatest & most active enemy.” The Creek headman freely admitted in his “talk,” that he was “most thoroughly sensible of the many outrages & hostilities that I have committed against the English, during my attachment to the French interest, but am now extremely sorry for it, & humbly beg forgiveness.” He presented the governor with a white wing and a string of white beads with the hope “that the great old path between Augusta and the Nation may be kept white & clean, and that they may be supplied with goods &c by that path, as they want to know no other.” This last statement is critical and confirmed Wright’s fear of the glut of traders now roaming the backcountry because The

⁶⁰¹ Wright to the Board of Trade, August 27, 1764, in TNA, CO 5/649.

⁶⁰² Wright to Gage, June 6, 1764, in Gage Papers; Gage to Halifax, August 10, 1764 in TNA, CO 5/83; and Gage to Wright, August 11, 1764, in Gage Papers. See, Shelburne to Gage, November 14, 1767, in *Correspondence of General Thomas Gage*, 2:53-55; Wright to the Earl of Shelburne, April 6, 1767, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 2:213. See also, Gage to Lord Barrington, February 22, 1767, in *Correspondence of General Thomas Gage*, 2:408-410; Wright to Gage, February 25, 1767, in Gage Papers; Gage to Wright, February 27, 1767, in Gage Papers; Gage to Shelburne, April 3, 1767, in TNA, CO 5/83; Gage to Wright, April 30, 1767, in Gage Papers; Gage to Captain Ralph Phillips, May 8, 1767, in Gage Papers; Wright to Gage, May 16, 1767, in Gage Papers; and Gage to Wright, May 16, 1767, in Gage Papers, in which Gage stated: “am sorry that the reduction of the troops of Rangers should give you so much uneasiness.”

Mortar referred to the “old path” that Wright had restricted until the Proclamation of 1763, which opened the trader floodgates. Wright’s response resounded with paternalism. I “am very glad that the great being, and master of breath has opened your eyes,” he wrote:

and that you now see & are convinced that the English are your real & best friends, and that the French only instigated you against the English to involve you in misery and ruin.... And this is what I have been endeavouring to convince all your people of ... and that it was & is your true interest to be good friends with, & hold fast by the great King & his English subjects, in him you will always find a father, & a friend to supply all your wants, but he will expect a gratefull return, and that you protect his white children.⁶⁰³

The governor promised the Creek chief that he would encourage the traders to utilize the “old path,” but only if their safety could be guaranteed. The entire affair seemed to have subsided as General Gage expressed his pleasure that “this most inveterate and troublesom enemy [The Mortar] is at length inclined to peace.”⁶⁰⁴ In December, Wright informed the Board “that the storm did blow over.” Interestingly, he posited that had Governor Boone’s proposal for a complete termination of trade been followed, “I’m firmly persuaded we should haver had a war with the Creek Indians.”⁶⁰⁵ Accordingly, Wright argued to the Board that the royal governors, and not Superintendent Stuart, must possess final authority concerning Indian affairs because “lodging the supreme political power, in any other hands ... may be attended with embarrassing & bad

⁶⁰³ Wright to the Board of Trade, August 27, 1764, in TNA, CO 5/649. The Mortar’s talk was delivered August 13 and Governor Wright then replied on August 24. See also, The Mortar to Wright, August 24, 1764, in Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties*, 15-16. For more on The Mortar’s relationship with the French during the war see, Corkran, *Creek Frontier*, 183-192.

⁶⁰⁴ Gage to Wright, September 28, 1764, in Gage Papers.

⁶⁰⁵ Wright to the Board of Trade, December 14, 1764, in TNA, CO 5/649.

consequences.”⁶⁰⁶ Thus, with a sense of self-confidence if not conceit, Wright emphasized his worth to the empire.

With the matter at least temporarily settled, Governor Wright and the Georgia legislature turned their attention to boosting the colony’s population. In March 1766, Wright signed into law “An Act for encouraging settlers to come into this province.” Two groups of settlers utilized the prospects of this legislation to establish Georgia settlements. First to arrive en masse were a group of Quakers from North Carolina who established a new home near Little River just north and west of Augusta. The Quakers named their settlement Wrightsborough in honor of the governor. The second group of immigrants moved into an area along the Ogeechee River just to the southwest of Augusta that came to be known as Queensborough. These Scotch-Irish dwellers had been described as being overburdened by taxes in Ireland. Within a few short years Wrightsborough numbered about sixty families, compared to seventy in Queensborough.⁶⁰⁷ These settlers were consistently at odds with the Creeks. Indian trader George Galphin believed

⁶⁰⁶ Wright to the Board of Trade, December 29, 1764, in TNA, CO 323/20. For the quote see, Wright to the Board of Trade, August 19, 1765, in *CRG*, 28, pt.2:110-111. During the mid-to-late 1760s, Superintendent Stuart often butted heads with Wright and the other southern governors over this issue. See, for example, Stuart to Gage, July 21, 1767, in Gage Papers. Stuart argued that the governors understand neither the frontier nor the Indians. However, by the fall of 1768, Wright desired to fully absolve himself of the responsibility of controlling the Indian trade. See, Wright to Stuart, September 26, 1768, in Helen Louis Shaw, “British Administration of the Southern Indians, 1756-1783,” Ph.D. Diss. (Bryn Mawr College, 1931), 43.

⁶⁰⁷ De Vorsey, *Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies*, 159-160; Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray*, 235; Ralph Scott, “The Quaker Settlement of Wrightsborough, Georgia,” *GHQ*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Summer, 1972): 210-223.

that their behavior would be the cause of the next frontier conflagration.⁶⁰⁸ Ultimately, however, and to the governor's dismay, King George III repealed the law.⁶⁰⁹

The 1766 bill provided for the establishment of a new township, whose land, survey, and registration would be provided for at public expense as soon as no fewer than forty Protestant families, consisting of at least one man and one woman, provided a sufficient testimony verifying their solid character.⁶¹⁰ Again, these families of "good character" would augment Georgia's militia, strengthen its frontier defenses, and support the colony's growing economy in addition to lessening the negative effects of the backcountry "Crackers," as Wright referred to them.

Captain Gavin Cochrane, who commanded Fort Augusta, vividly described these "Crackers" in a letter to the Board of Trade.

The practice of horse stealing is very common [in Augusta], which is very scandalous, owing to a lawless set of rascals who often come here. They are nicknamed Crackers and bring their peltry to sell.... [They] are too apt to occasion discontent amongst the Indians by grossly imposing on them.... [These rabble rousers] often change their places of abode ... [and] get merchants by degrees to trust them with more and more goods to trade with the Indians and at first make returns till they have established some credit, then leave those that trusted them in the lurch.... [Worse yet, they] delight in cruelty.⁶¹¹

Historian Delma Presley defined the colonial Georgia "Crackers" as "an unbeloved invader. He was an outsider, a herdsman, a squatter, a hunter, and an Indian fighter." These lower class in-

⁶⁰⁸ George Galphin to Stuart, June 2, 1768, in Gage Papers.

⁶⁰⁹ Wright to the Board of Trade, June 8, 1768, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 2:251-259.

⁶¹⁰ Robert & George Watkins, *A Digest of Laws of the State Of Georgia* (Philadelphia: R. Aitken, 1800), 1:125.

⁶¹¹ Gavin Cochrane to the Board of Trade, June 10 – November 14, 1766, in Cashin, ed., *Setting our to Begin a New World*, 139-142. See also, Cochrane to Lord Dartmouth, June 27, 1766, in *Manuscripts of the Earl of Dartmouth*, 2:45.

habitants were a “restless, land-hungry, and hardy folk” who “generally reflected some of the strengths and weaknesses of” Scots Lowlanders.⁶¹²

Historian Edward Cashin opined that if “given the choice between Indians and Crackers, Wright and other royal officials seemed to prefer the Indians.”⁶¹³ The governor claimed this group of “lawless white people” to be “as bad if not worse than the Indians.”⁶¹⁴ General Gage insisted that “we must always expect quarrels between the Indians and the back inhabitants and in general we shall find the latter at fault.”⁶¹⁵ He later admitted that Indian attacks on the back-country inhabitants were not especially worrisome because perhaps they could “keep a sett of people within bounds whom no law can restrain.”⁶¹⁶ Understanding this viewpoint requires little imagination. On August 29, 1767, East Florida Governor James Grant informed Gage that some backcountry inhabitants had burned an Indian village of fifteen families as satisfaction for livestock theft, though an unconvinced Grant suggested “it is likely that the horses were carried off by some of their brother crackers.”⁶¹⁷ Gage notified Shelburne that “a banditti hovering about the frontier” had burned the village of Oconee in the center of the province and added that Governor Wright was very apprehensive “that this rash step in the people might produce very bad consequences.”⁶¹⁸ Worse yet, for Wright – as well as the Creeks’ – the general rejected the

⁶¹² Delma Presley, “The Crackers of Georgia,” *GHQ*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (Summer, 1976): 105.

⁶¹³ Cashin, “But Brothers, It Is Our Land,” 244.

⁶¹⁴ Wright to the Board of Trade, August 15, 1767, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 2:235-236.

⁶¹⁵ Gage to Fuser, April 30, 1767, in Gage Papers.

⁶¹⁶ Gage to Stuart, September 1, 1768, in Gage Papers.

⁶¹⁷ Grant to Gage, August 29 and Stuart to Gage, September 26, 1767, in Gage Papers.

⁶¹⁸ Gage to Shelburne, October 10, 1767, in TNA CO 5/83. See also, Gage to Fuser, September 19, 1767, in Gage Papers. Gage informed Fuser that Wright “is not well pleased” with the garrisoning of Georgia’s forts.

Creeks request for reparations for their losses, stating: “it is highly unreasonable that the Crown should be put to an expense for the unruly proceedings of every lawless banditti upon the frontiers.”⁶¹⁹ Ultimately, the governor assuaged the Creeks by supplying them with a keg of rum per burnt dwelling.⁶²⁰

In theory, the ministerial decision not to compensate the Indians may have seemed wise; as would often be the case throughout the imperial crisis, British policies were woefully short-sighted – whether they be ill-advised taxation or misguided cost cutting measures. Decisions such as these, Wright believed, “have been extremely mistaken, and [the ministry] will probably be convinced of it when it is too late.”⁶²¹ Gage tried to palliate Wright: “I wish the policy lately adopted for North America had been more agreeable to your own sentiments ... tho I am confident of your endeavours as well as of your abilities to keep every thing quiet in your own province, and to manage the Indian trade to the best advantage.”⁶²²

Many of these “banditti” flooded into the Georgia backcountry from the Virginia and Carolina frontiers. The Indians often simply referred to the immigrants as “Virginia people,” who constantly stirred up a great deal of trouble in the backcountry.⁶²³ Creek leader Captain Alleck lamented that “before these Virginia men came to settle in the back country the white men

⁶¹⁹ For the Creek request see, Stuart to Gage, September 26, 1767, in Gage Papers. For the reply see, Gage to Stuart, November 14, 1767, in Gage Papers. See also, Gage to Hillsborough, November 10, 1770, in TNA CO 5/83.

⁶²⁰ Wright to Gage, December 1, 1767, quoted in John Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier*, 233.

⁶²¹ Wright to Gage, August 27, 1768, in Gage Papers.

⁶²² Gage to Wright, December 25, 1768, in Gage Papers.

⁶²³ Wright to Stuart, July 10, 1766, in TNA CO 5/67; Stuart to Gage, November 27, 1767, in Gage Papers; and Captain Fuser to Gage, May 18, 1768, in Gage Papers.

and red men lived like brothers ... but these Virginians are very bad people, they pay no regard to your laws.”⁶²⁴ Another Creek leader complained to Superintendent Stuart about the “Virginia people” settling on Creek land and who, after being threatened by the Indians, vowed they would retaliate by burning Governor Wright’s home “over his head. If the governor cannot keep these Virginia people under,” he complained, “how can we keep our people under?”⁶²⁵ Consequently, as historian Patrick Griffin unfairly opined, “colonial authorities stood by as the West descended into violence.”⁶²⁶ Although the backcountry devolved into just such a situation, colonial officials such as Wright, Stuart, and James Habersham did not idly stand by, allowing frontiersmen to settle on Indian lands. They each expended great energy in trying to prevent what may have been unavoidable. Gage perfectly encapsulated the problem in a missive to Stuart: “the frontier people of most of our provinces are not to be limited by any bounds.”⁶²⁷

This tension, however, was not solely the purview of the colonists and the Indians. The Indians themselves were incessantly in conflict with one another, be it the Creeks and the Cherokees or the Choctaws and the Creeks. It was just such tensions in 1766 and 1767 that likely distracted the Creeks from expressing their dissatisfaction with the colonists more forcefully. “Our Indian affairs my Lords continue quiet & easy,” Wright informed the Board in February 1767, “but this I attribute to a kind of war, that has for some time subsisted between the Creeks &

⁶²⁴ Quoted in De Vorse, *Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies*, 160-161 and Joshua Piker, “Colonists and Creeks: Rethinking the Pre-Revolutionary Southern Backcountry,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Aug., 2004), 535.

⁶²⁵ “Answer from the headmen of the Lower Creek Nation to John Stuart,” September 19, 1767, in TNA CO 5/59.

⁶²⁶ Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and the Revolutionary Frontier*, 80.

⁶²⁷ Gage to Stuart, January 26, 1768 and Gage to Stuart, May 16, 1767, in Gage Papers. Gage advised Stuart to make an example of traders who refuse to abide by the law.

Chactaws.... And in my opinion it is this favourable & lucky circumstance alone that has saved us from being embroiled with them.”⁶²⁸ Lucky or not, the comparative frontier harmony served Georgia well as Governor Wright reported to the Board at the end of 1768: “the province is in a very flourishing state, & that we are making rapid progress towards becoming opulent and considerable.”⁶²⁹

In July 1769, with provincial affairs “quite tranquil,” Governor Wright sought permission to return to London in order to see his eldest son, James, Jr. The younger James had been in London since the fall of 1760 obtaining “a regular education at Eton and Cambridge, and is now preparing himself for Westminster Hall.” The father ardently desired to “assist him in entering upon the great scene of action and setting out properly in life, [which] is a duty ... to him as well as for my own satisfaction.” The governor wished for a twelve month leave to begin no sooner than June 1770, provided the state of affairs in Georgia then afforded such a transition. In the event that the Board granted his request, Wright nominated James Habersham as the interim governor. Habersham was not only Wright’s closest friend, he was also “a firm friend to government, and a very worthy honest man ... [whose] abilities [are] sufficient to fill up a short vacancy or absence.”⁶³⁰ What Wright did not state at the time, at least Hillsborough, was that he did not intend to return to Georgia. In his lengthy Loyalist claim following the American Revolution, he testified that he did “not mean to go out again” to Georgia following this leave of ab-

⁶²⁸ Wright to the Board of Trade, February 12, 1767, in TNA CO 5/649.

⁶²⁹ Wright to the Board of Trade, November 24, 1768, in *CRG*, 28, pt.2:309.

⁶³⁰ Wright to Hillsborough, July 3, 1769, in *MsCRG*, 37:405-407. Wright submitted his request for leave nearly a year in advance of his desired departure because, in his words, “I have purchased lands of considerable value in this province, and have brought in a great number of slaves and settled several plantations,” which will require months to put “in proper order.”

sence, “but the convenience of government & at the desire of ministry he went out a second time.”⁶³¹

As Governor Wright prepared to return to London, the ongoing dispute between the Creeks and Choctaws finally started to abate. Gage informed the British ministry that Stuart was actively involved in the negotiations, but had been hampered by the Crackers “who have endangered the publick tranquility lately, by a very unwarrantable and licentious conduct towards the Creeks ... [but] Governor Wright is taking steps to punish some of the ringleaders.”⁶³² Wright stated with overconfidence on July 20: “I have put an end to all disputes between Indians and back-settlers [and] have intelligence that Creeks chiefs have gone to Mobile to ratify peace with the Choctaws, which makes it probable they will pick a quarrel with us.”⁶³³ Consequently, Wright decided to delay his return to England until the following spring.

In the meantime, Governor Wright implored the Assembly to pass legislation to better regulate Indian affairs as well as “restraining our back settlers.”⁶³⁴ The Assembly responded that while although they were in perfect accord with the governor’s sentiments, they feared that such a measure would be of limited value if Georgia’s neighboring provinces did not also pass such a bill. In any event, the representatives expressed their deep gratitude for Wright’s “unwearied

⁶³¹ James Wright Loyalist Claim, TNA, AO 12/4

⁶³² Gage to Hillsborough, July 7, 1770, in *Correspondence of General Thomas Gage*, 1:262-264.

⁶³³ Wright to Hillsborough, July 20, 1770, in Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution*, 1:150. Wright later wrote directly to Stuart, warning him that “making peace between the Creeks and the Choctaws in making war between the Indians and us.” See, Wright to Hillsborough, December 8, 1770, in Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution*, 1:225 and Wright to Hillsborough, January 18, 1771, in MsCRG, 37:512-515.

⁶³⁴ Wright to the Assembly, October 24, 1770, in *CRG*, 17:598-600.

endeavours in promoting the welfare of this very thriving province.”⁶³⁵ Unfortunately for Wright, it does not appear the Assembly ever passed such legislation.

The dearth of colonial leadership in such matters coupled with the home government’s frugality or lack of interest proved remarkably frustrating for Wright as he tried to maintain frontier peace, which must have seemed a fool’s errand given these constraints. Most infuriating, though, was the legislature’s “continue[d] disregard [for] the King’s recommendation to enact laws for preventing any improper intercourse between the inhabitants ... and the neighbouring savages. I shall always lament their being attended with fatal accidents, but the blame must fall upon those who neglect to apply the remedy,” Wright stated.⁶³⁶ However, he was again forced into just such a mission after the murder of two white settlers in August. According to Wright, the Creeks “in cool blood, and without any cause or reason whatever, barbarously murdered” these men near Wrightsborough.⁶³⁷ Wright demanded satisfaction from the Cowetas and any other Creek groups which may have been involved. Samuel Thomas, Superintendent Stuart’s Creek interpreter, stated that several Indian dwellings had been burned, though it is unclear which begat which.⁶³⁸ Two months later, in December, an angry Wright expressed doubt that the Creeks would give satisfaction for these murders and that “it is high time those wretches should know that they shall not be suffered to murder His Majesty’s subjects.” However, as both the governor and even the Indians knew, without support from the ministry, Georgia still lacked

⁶³⁵ Assembly to Wright, October 24, 1770, in *CRG*, 17:602-604.

⁶³⁶ Wright to Hillsborough, November 15, 1770, in *MsCRG*, 37:478-479.

⁶³⁷ “Memorial of James Wright to the Earl of Hillsborough,” (hereafter, “Wright Memorial”) December 12, 1771, in *CRG*, 28, pt. 2:350-376 and *MsCRG*, 38, pt.1:15-26.

⁶³⁸ Wright to the Lieutenant of the Cowetas, October 2, 1770 and Samuel Thomas to Stuart, October 5, 1770, in Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution*, 2:225 and 216-218. See also, Wright to Hillsborough, October 8, 1770, in *MsCRG*, 37:483-485.

the strength to demand satisfaction.⁶³⁹ That support – true support – would never come. Although his friend Lord Hillsborough was indeed sympathetic to Wright’s predicament, he only offered advice.⁶⁴⁰ In early 1771, he wrote: “I think that the best security we can have on the part of the savages ... is that of their good will and affection towards us, which ought to be cultivated.”⁶⁴¹

In the meantime an intriguing chain of events transpired along the North and South Carolina boundary. In October 1770 at the Lochaber (South Carolina) Congress, Indian trader and colonial official Edward Wilkinson persuaded the Cherokees in this region to cede nearly two thousand acres of land in exchange for the forgiveness of an £8,000 debt. He then sought Crown approval of this private cession, by which he would either recoup his £8,000 through the proceeds from selling the land or be given free use of the land for a decade. Although Stuart blocked this scheme, other southeastern traders eagerly followed Wilkinson’s lead, endeavoring to acquire Indian land under the same pretenses.⁶⁴² In Georgia, however, such private “purchas-

⁶³⁹ Wright to Hillsborough, December 12, 1771, in *CRG*, 28, pt.2:350-376.

⁶⁴⁰ Wright to Hillsborough, December 8, 1770, in *MsCRG*, 37:489-492 and “Wright Memorial.” See also, Lower Creeks to Wright, *ibid* and Gage to Hillsborough, January 16, 1771, in *Gage Papers*. Gage described the violence as mutually reciprocal. See also, Stuart to Hillsborough, March 5, 1771, in Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution*, 1:278-279. Stuart said: “The murders lately committed near Augusta show there are still madmen among you.” Regarding the friendship between Wright and Hillsborough see, *Public Advertiser* (London), March 5, 1773.

⁶⁴¹ Hillsborough to Wright, February 11, 1771, in *MsCRG*, 37:507-508.

⁶⁴² Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776* (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 2002), 80-81. For the best examination of the treaty, see De Vorse, *Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies*, 161-172; J. R. Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier*, 300-301; Archie V. Huff, *Greenville*, 16-17; J. R. Alden, *The South in the Revolution*, 140-141; William Anderson, *Guide to Cherokee Documents in Foreign Archives*, 141-143; and “Envisaging the West: Thomas Jefferson and the Roots of Lewis and Clark,”

http://jeffersonswest.unl.edu/archive/view_doc.php?id=jef.00091.

es” had been outlawed, but public purchases had not been forbidden.⁶⁴³ Governor Wright viewed Wilkinson’s scheme as a “favourable opportunity” and “a very good precedent” for obtaining a cession for Georgia.⁶⁴⁴

Just two months later, in December, a number of Augusta merchants informed James Habersham, president of the provincial Council, that the Cherokees “were willing to give up a body of land on Savannah River in lieu of all debts contracted by them since ... 1761.”⁶⁴⁵ But this was not the way Cherokee leader Judd’s Friend (Ustenaka) recalled the exchange; he insisted the traders initiated the conversation.⁶⁴⁶ According to Stuart, the backcountry traders and merchants had instigated the talks and were actively deceptive in their dealings with both the Indians as well as Wright.⁶⁴⁷

Governor Wright’s behavior and motives must also be called into question. For years he had incessantly and consistently complained that the Crackers had continually stirred up trouble in the backcountry and, moreover, their conduct and not the Indians’ had been to blame for most trouble in the region. Now, however, he went out of his way to place the blame for frontier dis-

⁶⁴³ “An act to prevent private persons from purchasing lands from the Indians...,” February 15, 1758, in *CRG*, 18:247-249. This act was amended on December 6, 1759 (*ibid.*, 359-361); March 25, 1765 (*ibid.*, 703-705); and April 11, 1768, in Watkins, *A Digest of Laws of the State Of Georgia*, 1:162. [Note: the act was also amended after this date as well]. See also, De Vorsey, *Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies*, 161-162 and Alden, *John Stuart*, 300-301.

⁶⁴⁴ “Wright Memorial.”

⁶⁴⁵ Augusta Merchants to James Habersham, April 16, 1772, in Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, 80.

⁶⁴⁶ Speeches of Judd’s Friend and Oconostota to the Traders, June 8, 1771, in Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, 101-102. He stated that “the first talk came from the traders and we all liked it.”

⁶⁴⁷ Stuart to Hillsborough, June 12, 1772, in Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution*, 5:113-118.

ruptions squarely on the Indians' shoulders. In his extensive memorial to Lord Hillsborough in support of the proposed cession, Wright constantly impugned the Indians' poor behavior. The "lurking" Natives persistently robbed, plundered, and "sometimes murdered" Georgians without provocation. They often acted in "cold blood," causing His Majesty's "good subjects [to] live in constant fear."⁶⁴⁸

Thus, in February 1771, the Cherokees ceded to their traders a tract "upon the Broad River on the Georgia side, beginning at the mouth of the Kayugas extending five measures up Savanna River and running five measures extending towarth the Oconis. Viz. five measures long and five measures broad or sixty miles square."⁶⁴⁹ Superintendent Stuart informed the Cherokees that their cession was not allowed, especially because the Creeks "claimed part of the ceded land in right of conquest" from the Cherokees.⁶⁵⁰ The Cherokees, however, paid no heed to Stuart's protest, maintaining their freedom to sell land to whomever they chose, especially in light of the fact that the British proved themselves incapable of upholding their obligations to keep settlers off Indian lands.⁶⁵¹

In early May, the Cherokees assured Governor Wright that if "any part of this land should be claim'd by the Creek Indians we will use all our endeavours to get them to join with us in consenting to give up their claims." If such efforts were not successful, they promised to "make up the full quantity" of lands elsewhere. Moreover, they solicited Wright's assistance in "laying

⁶⁴⁸ "Wright Memorial."

⁶⁴⁹ "Deed from the Overhill Cherokees to their Traders," February 22, 1771, in Juricek, *Georgia and Florida Treaties, 1763-1776*, 95-96 and "Talk of Cherokees to Governor Wright," May 3, 1771, in "Wright Memorial."

⁶⁵⁰ Stuart to Hillsborough, no date, quoted in De Vorse, *Indian Boundary*, 163.

⁶⁵¹ "Judd's friend's talk," March 7, 1771, in "Wright Memorial."

... our desire before the Great King.”⁶⁵² The governor replied a few weeks later and pledged to personally submit their request – “as I am very soon going to England” – if they were able to convince the Creeks to also surrender their lands in question.⁶⁵³

With his family in tow, Governor Wright departed Georgia on July 10, 1771, en route to London via Charleston with two principal aims – to see to his eldest son’s affairs and to secure royal approval for a massive land cession. Georgians bid Wright a fond adieu with several volleys from Sir Patrick Houstoun’s light infantry as well as a discharge from the cannon.”⁶⁵⁴ The interim governor, President Habersham, informed the Board of Trade that Wright had “acquitted himself with great uprightness and honor in his administration of this government, [and] I have no doubt of his receiving distinguishing marks of the Royal favour.”⁶⁵⁵ One week later, after visiting with friends and family in Charleston, the governor bid farewell to South Carolina after “several affectionate and respectful addresses from the townspeople.”⁶⁵⁶

The voyage aboard the *Governor Wright* lasted only five weeks and apparently came off without a hitch. But this was, however, Wright’s first transatlantic voyage since his wife and daughter were lost at sea. These painful memories coupled with the inherent difficulties of oceanic travel must have caused Wright no small amount of anxiety. James Wright arrived at the

⁶⁵² “Talk of Cherokees to Governor Wright,” May 3, 1771, in “Wright’s Memorial.”

⁶⁵³ “James Wright’s talk to the Cherokees,” May 23, 1771, in “Wright’s Memorial.”

⁶⁵⁴ No extant evidence exists which further discusses Wright’s efforts to help establish his son in London society. *South Carolina Gazette; and Country Journal*, July 23, 1771.

⁶⁵⁵ Habersham to Hillsborough, August 3, 1771, in Habersham Family Papers, MS 1787, Georgia Historical Society. See also a separate letter from Habersham to Hillsborough, August 3, 1771, in MsCRG, 37:548-551.

⁶⁵⁶ *South Carolina Gazette*, July 18, 1771. [Note: there are no extant issues of the *Georgia Gazette* after May 23, 1770, though the *Royal Georgia Gazette* is available from January 4, 1781 to December 27, 1781].

British port city of Portsmouth on the eighteenth of August.⁶⁵⁷ He wasted no time in pursuing his plan for a land cession for the province.⁶⁵⁸ He arrived in London three days later and personally met with the King and his ministers to discuss the advantages that the cession offered both Georgians and the empire.⁶⁵⁹ Wright emphasized a handful of advantages to be gained via the land cession, but they can be boiled down to two primary interests: economics and defense. He argued that although Georgia was a “very flourishing province,” its population was both small and scattered. These new lands would both augment and condense the colony’s population. The enhanced population would in turn solidify Georgia’s frontier’s defenses and Native relations as well as strengthen the colonial economy and, ultimately, that of the empire. The approximately five million acres of land to be ceded promised to be “of the richest and best quality and very fit” for any number of cash crops.⁶⁶⁰ The King and his ministers warmly received Wright’s well-reasoned and thorough petition, no doubt because of its quality. But many Londoners also viewed this cession in a favorable light. In November, Georgia’s London merchants held a “genteel entertainment” at the London Tavern in his honor.⁶⁶¹ This positive reception from both public and private persons endowed Wright with a great sense of confidence. One friend observed

⁶⁵⁷ *Bingley’s Journal* (London), August 17-24, 1771; *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty* (London), August 20, 1771; *London Evening Post*, August 22-24, 1771; and *General Evening Post* (London), August 22, 1771.

⁶⁵⁸ For Wright’s zeal in acquiring royal approbation for the cession see, Laurens to Habersham, December 20, 1771 and Laurens to Lachlan McIntosh, December 24, 1771, in *Papers of Henry Laurens*, 8:105-108 and 114-116.

⁶⁵⁹ *Public Advertiser* (London), August 30, 1771.

⁶⁶⁰ “Wright Memorial.”

⁶⁶¹ *Public Advertiser* (London), November 28, 1771.

that the governor “hinted to me with a very kind smile his hopes of success.”⁶⁶² Georgia’s colonial agent, Benjamin Franklin, also expressed high hopes that the matter would soon “be brought to a favourable conclusion.”⁶⁶³

While in England, the Wrights lived in a fashionable district in northwest London. Their residence on Berners Street, near Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road, was right in the middle of neighborhood dominated by South Carolinian planters, such as the Laurenses, Steads, Middletons, and Izards. As was their custom, the Wright family lived in great comfort as is evidenced by an advertisement James placed in preparation for his return to America.⁶⁶⁴ Writing from Westminster in December, Henry Laurens conveyed to Habersham that the governor “did me the honour to call here yesterday, and John [Laurens’ son] and I are to dine with him to morrow in Berners Street. The Governor is well,” he added, “and as alive as ever I saw him in his junior days. His thoughts seem to be all employed in the service of Georgia.”⁶⁶⁵

Wright delivered his petition to the Board of Trade on Thursday, December 12, and it was ordered to be officially “taken into consideration” the following Wednesday, the eighteenth. An anxious Wright attended that session as well and although he answered questions relevant to Georgia, a discussion of the proposed land cession was inexplicably “put off to another oppor-

⁶⁶² Henry Laurens to Lachlan McIntosh, December 24, 1771, in *Papers of Henry Laurens*, 8:114-116.

⁶⁶³ Benjamin Franklin to Noble Wimberly Jones, April 2, 1772, in [www.founders.archives.gov](http://wwwFOUNDERS.archives.gov).

⁶⁶⁴ *Daily Advertiser* (London), December 15, 1772. The ad announced that Wright now offered at auction “all the rich household furniture, &c. of his Excellency Sir James Wright, Bart., Governor of Georgia, at his late dwelling-house in Berners-Street, Oxford-Road; consisting of crimson Damask, Cotton, Morine, and other furniture in beds and window curtains, goose-feather beds, Girandoles, carpets, &c.”

⁶⁶⁵ Henry Laurens to James Habersham, December 20, 1771, in *Papers of Henry Laurens*, 8:105-108.

tunity.”⁶⁶⁶ The matter sat quietly for several months until several London merchants with Georgia connections submitted a memorial in support of Wright’s proposal at the end of March 1772.⁶⁶⁷

About the same time as the merchants prepared their petition, Wright became gravely ill.

The *South Carolina Gazette; and Country Journal* informed its readers that:

Governor Wright has had a severe attack lately; an inflammation upon his liver was his disease, and we were once in great fear of a mortification. He is now, thank God, in a recovering way, but his earnestness for the good of Georgia, will not allow him to take that respite from business, which the state of his health requires. The first day we thought him out of danger, he dictated a letter to Lord Hillsborough, that there might be no delay in the determination of the Cherokee land business.⁶⁶⁸

The only other accounts of Wright’s illness are found in the papers of James Habersham.

In early June, and several weeks prior to the notice in the Charleston newspaper, the president expressed his concerns for Wright after learning of his “late severe illness.”⁶⁶⁹ Based on the date of Habersham’s letter, Wright could have been sick as late as early May. By the end of June, however, Wright was on the mend. “It gives me great pleasure,” Habersham soon wrote, “that [you are] recovering from [your] late dangerous illness.”⁶⁷⁰ Concomitantly, London’s *General Evening Post* reported that “Governor Wright, of Georgia, we hear, has resigned that employ-

⁶⁶⁶ “Proceedings,” December 12 and 18, 1771, in K. H. Ledward, ed., *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, 13:269-277.

⁶⁶⁷ “Proceedings,” March 25, 1772, in Ledward, ed., *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, 13:287-294.

⁶⁶⁸ *The South Carolina Gazette; and Country Journal*, June 30, 1772.

⁶⁶⁹ Habersham to Wright, June 6, 1772, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 6:184-186.

⁶⁷⁰ Habersham to Wright, July 31, 1772, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 6:196.

ment, and is to be succeeded by Governor Shirley, of the Bahamas.⁶⁷¹ The rumor made its way across the Atlantic as Savannah minister, John Joachim Zubly, mentioned Wright's resignation in his diary. "At supper Revd [Haddon] Smith related that Govr Wright was made one of the Lords of Trade & Govr Shirley to succeed him."⁶⁷² Unfortunately no other sources corroborate this account, but it is logical that Wright would resign his post if he were seriously ill.

Finally in November, nearly one year after formally presenting his proposal, the Lords of Trade officially considered Wright's memorial. One week later they lent their support to his scheme and Lord Dartmouth, Hillsborough's replacement, suggested the King do likewise, which he did.⁶⁷³ Governor Wright's detailed and cogent analysis of Georgia's needs and utility to the empire along with his tireless efforts while in London made a deep impression upon the king. On December 5, 1772, he entertained James at St. James's Palace where he, according to any number of London newspapers, "has been pleased to grant the dignity of a Baronet of Great Britain unto James Wright, Esq., Governor of His Majesty's province of Georgia, in America."⁶⁷⁴ In roughly three-quarters of a century, then, James Wright had redeemed his family's

⁶⁷¹ *General Evening Post* (London), July 30, 1772; *Boston Post Boy*, September 28, 1772; *Virginia Gazette*, October 15, 1772; and *The South Carolina and American General Gazette*, October 5, 1772.

⁶⁷² Lilla Hawes, ed., *Zubly's Journal*, 31. Georgia's Provincial (Rebel) Congress deemed Reverend Smith to be "unfriendly to America" in 1775 and was forced to leave the province. "Proceedings," July 17, 1775, in Force, *American Archives*, 2:1554-1555.

⁶⁷³ "Proceedings," November 2 and 9, 1772, in K. H. Ledward, ed., *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, 13:316-326. See also, B. D. Bargar, *Lord Dartmouth and the American Revolution*, 59.

⁶⁷⁴ *Middlesex Journal or Universal Evening Post* (London), December 5-8, 1772; *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, December 7, 1772; and *The South Carolina Gazette; and Country Journal*, February 9, 1773.

name following his grandfather's imprisonment and death at Newgate prison at the conclusion of the seventeenth-century.

**CHAPTER 6: “THE POWERS OF GOVERNMENT ARE WRESTED OUT OF MY
HANDS”: JAMES WRIGHT AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN COLONIAL
GEORGIA**

A true eighteenth-century conservative, Georgia Governor Sir James Wright believed government to be the purview of the independently wealthy and virtuous citizen.⁶⁷⁵ Moreover, he consistently sought to align himself with the burgeoning planter class in Georgia, which did not exist before his arrival in 1761.⁶⁷⁶ With his substantial salary, he bought, improved and cultivated immense tracts of land, becoming one of the largest slaveholders in Britain’s North American colonies, owning a dozen plantations and 523 slaves.⁶⁷⁷ His obituary portrayed him as

⁶⁷⁵ See Kenneth Coleman, *Colonial Georgia: A History* (Millwood, KY: KTO Press, 1989); Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia, 1763-1789* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958); and Coleman, “James Wright,” in Horace Montgomery, *Georgians in Profile: Essays in Honor of Ellis Merton Coulter* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958); W. W. Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia, 1774-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959); Robert Calhoun, *Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1973); and Edward J. Cashin, “Sowing the Wind, in Harvey Jackson, ed., *Forty Years of Diversity: Essays on Colonial Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984).

⁶⁷⁶ See especially, Kenneth Coleman, “James Wright,” in Horace Montgomery, *Georgians in Profile: Essays in Honor of Ellis Merton Coulter* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958); W. W. Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia, 1774-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959); Edward J. Cashin, “Sowing the Wind, in Harvey Jackson, ed., *Forty Years of Diversity: Essays on Colonial Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984); and Allan Galloway, *Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007).

⁶⁷⁷ On the eve of the Revolution, Wright’s estate was valued at £80,000, making him the wealthiest man in Georgia. See, W. W. Abbot, *The Royal Governors of Georgia, 1754-1775* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 84. For his plantation and slave holdings see, James Wright Loyalist Claim, TNA, American Office, 12/4.

a faithful and obedient “servant of the king,” a description adopted ever since by historians.⁶⁷⁸

This claim, however, is only partially correct as he devoted himself to serving the needs of both his country and his colony. Though he ultimately “sided” with the Crown in its attempt to quell an internal insurrection, he firmly believed that doing so was in the best interest of Georgians.

Amidst the clamorous Tea Party days in 1773, Governor Wright addressed the Georgia Assembly in an attempt to elucidate the precarious nature of his position as both a royal official as well as a citizen of Georgia. “I ever meant to discharge my duty as a Faithful Servant of the Crown,” he insisted, “and can with the greatest truth declare I also meant at the same time to promote to the utmost of my power and abilities the true interest of the people.”⁶⁷⁹ Two years later, as the imperial crisis reached a boiling point, Wright delivered an impassioned speech reminiscing about his nearly fifteen years in the colony and expressing his affection for the people of Georgia.

Believe me, I am at this time actuated by further motives than a show only of discharging my duty as the King’s governor. I have lived amongst and presided over you upwards of fourteen years, and have other feelings. I have a real and affectionate regard for the people, and it grieves me that a province that I have been so long in . . . should, by

⁶⁷⁸ *Columbian Herald*, February 27, 1786. See also, Coleman, “James Wright,” in Horace Montgomery, *Georgians in Profile: Essays in Honor of Ellis Merton Coulter* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 42 and W. W. Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia, 1774-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 86.

⁶⁷⁹ Reply of James Wright to Upper House of Assembly in reply to address of congratulations upon return to Georgia from England, 15 February 1773, in Allen D. Candler, et. al., *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1904-1916 and 1976-1989), 17: 688-690 (hereafter, *CRG*).

imprudence and rashness of some inconsiderate people, be plunged into a state of distress and ruin.⁶⁸⁰

These qualities, and conflicted notions of duty, were on full display as the imperial crisis unfolded. Until the end of his life in 1785, he steadfastly maintained his allegiance to King, country, and colony, persisting in his belief that the majority of the colonists, *his people*, had been led astray by a fractious minority.

By the summer of 1775, the revolutionary fervor in Georgia had placed the continued royal governance of the colony in peril. Discouraged, exasperated, yet painfully lucid and insightful, Governor Wright scrawled a lengthy epistle to Lord Dartmouth, which vividly illustrated the rebellious inclination of

a junto of a very few only.... Every thing my Lord was done that could be thought of, to frustrate their attempt, but this did not totally prevent it.... I am to be reflected upon & abused for opposing the licentiousness of the people.... I apprehend there will be nothing but cabals & combinations and the peace of the province & minds of the people continually heated, disturbed & distracted and the proclamation I issued against [treasonous gatherings] is termed arbitrary & oppressive.... I conceive that the licentious spirit in America has received such countenance & encouragement from many persons, speeches, and declarations ... that neither coercive or lenient measures will settle matters.... America is now become, or indisputably ere long will be, such a vast, powerful & opulent dominion, that I humbly conceive in order to restore & establish real & substantial harmony affection & confidence ... it may be found advisable to settle the line with respect to taxation.... [In short], nothing [exists] but jealousies rancour and ill blood.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁸⁰ Governor Wright's Speech to the General Assembly, January 18, 1775 in Peter Force, *American Archives*, 1:1152-1153.

⁶⁸¹ Wright to Dartmouth, August 24, 1774, in TNA, CO 5/663.

Feeling dejected and hopeless, Wright requested leave to return to England.⁶⁸² In the meantime he made incessant requests for military assistance, without success. “I begin to think,” he wrote in July, that “a King’s governor has little or no business here.”⁶⁸³ South Carolina’s royal Governor Lord William Campbell concurred. In a letter to Thomas Gage, he declared: “All legal government is now at an end.”⁶⁸⁴ He queried which southern governor had suffered the greatest indignations – Governor Wright, Governor Josiah Martin of North Carolina, or himself – adding that many backcountry inhabitants were inclined to support the Crown and wanted only a little military support and encouragement. South Carolinian Henry Laurens, who had taken Wright’s son, Alexander, as an apprentice merchant, noted that Georgia’s Assembly “have made his pillow rough.”⁶⁸⁵ The next six months proved to be increasingly miserable for Wright and Georgia’s Loyalists. The Rebels took control of the provincial militia in July and, by winter, possessed the courts as well.⁶⁸⁶ Loyalists daily faced insults from the Sons of Liberty. For example,

⁶⁸² Wright to Dartmouth, June 17, 1775, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840-1989), 3:183-185. See also, Wright to Dartmouth, November 1, 1775, in *ibid.*, 3:218-220 and Wright to Dartmouth, December 11, 1775, in *ibid.*, 3:226-227. It was in this last letter that Wright learned that King had granted his request.

⁶⁸³ James Wright to Lord Dartmouth, July 10, 1775, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840-1989), 3:195.

⁶⁸⁴ William Campbell to Thomas Gage, July 29, 1775, in Gage Papers, American Series, Clements Library, University of Michigan.

⁶⁸⁵ For Laurens’s work with Alexander Wright see, Henry Laurens to James Wright, August 7, 1768, in *Papers of Henry Laurens*, 6:51-54. For Laurens’s comment regarding Wright and the Assembly see, Henry Laurens to John Laurens, May 3, 1774, in *Papers of Henry Laurens*, 9:422-425.

⁶⁸⁶ See Wright to the Earl of Dartmouth, September 16, 1775, in Peter Force, *American Archives* (Washington, DC: M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force, 1837-1853), 11:114; Wright to Dartmouth, October 14, 1775, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840-1989), 3:215-217; and Wright to Dartmouth, December 9, 1775, in *ibid.*, 3:223-225. For an excellent analysis of Georgia’s final descent into the Rebel camp, see W. W. Abbot, *The Royal Governors of Georgia, 1754-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North

Savannah pilot John Hopkins had been tarred and feathered in July 1775, which Wright described as the “most horrid spectacle I ever saw.”⁶⁸⁷ Even Wright’s minister at Christ Church, the Reverend Haddon Smith, had been forced to “flee from the violence of the people ... [after having] been continually persecuted by the people.”⁶⁸⁸ Later in the fall, Wright grieved that his “government [has been] totally annihilated,” leaving him to face daily “the greatest acts of tyranny, oppression, gross insults.”⁶⁸⁹

Thus, it is important to note that Governor Wright (and the Loyalists in general) believed they, and not the Rebels, were beacons of liberty because they defended constitutional government in the face of violent mobocracy.⁶⁹⁰ “You may be advocates for liberty,” he cried to the Georgia Assembly, “so am I, but in a constitutional and legal way. You, gentlemen, are Legislators, and let me entreat you to take care how you give a sanction to trample on Law and Government; and be assured it is an indisputable truth, that where there is no law there can be no liberty. It is the due course of law and support of Government which only can insure to you the enjoyment of your lives, your liberty, and your estates; and do not catch at the shadow and lose the

Carolina Press, 1959), chapter 8. Concerning the militia see, for example, Thomas Netherclift to James Wright, August 19, 1775, *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840-1989), 10:44-45 and James Robertson to James Wright, August 14, 1775, in *ibid.*, 10:45-46.

⁶⁸⁷ Wright to Dartmouth, 29, 1775, in TNA CO 5/664.

⁶⁸⁸“Proceedings,” July 17, 1775, in Force, *American Archives*, 2:1554-1555 and “Memorial of Hadden Smith,” July 22, 1775, in Cashin, ed., *Setting out to Begin a New World*, 158-159.

⁶⁸⁹ James Wright to Lord Dartmouth, September 23, 1775, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840-1989), 3:212-213.

⁶⁹⁰ Wright to David Taitt, July 6, 1775, in TNA CO 5/76.

substance.”⁶⁹¹ After all, the governor reasoned, how could lovers of liberty excuse the treatment of Augusta’s Thomas Brown? Wright reported in August that the Liberty Boys had “most cruelly treated” and tortured the Augustan.⁶⁹² Three months later, Brown described the horrific episode to his father.

People here are under immense pressure to subscribe to a Rebel oath, including me.... [I explained to them] that my situation was particularly delicate [and] that I did not wish to take up arms against that country which gave me being. On the other hand, it would be equally disagreeable to me to fight against those amongst whom, it was probable, I should spend the remainder of my days. Additionally, I told them I desired to live in peace and tranquility without meddling with politics.

The Rebels had no patience for neutrality and, after a short scuffle, fractured Brown’s skull with the butt of a rifle. The “cowardly miscreant[s]” then carried him off and tortured him “with unparalleled barbarity,” by tying him to a tree and lighting a fire under his feet.⁶⁹³ Later in the year, recent Georgia immigrant Thomas Birkia advised his father to discourage others (from Firth, Orkney) from emigrating to Georgia because the “Americans will kill them like deer in the woods.... I seed the Liberty Boys take between two and three hundred Torrys” and drive them like sheep and put them “in gaile.”⁶⁹⁴

The days of mid-to-late 1775 were often painfully confused and contingent. Oftentimes both Tory and Whig believed themselves to be losing ground in the battle for hearts and minds. As Wright mourned the loss of his authority, certain Rebels bemoaned the lack of revolutionary

⁶⁹¹ Governor Wright’s Speech to the General Assembly, January 18, 1775 in Peter Force, *American Archives*, 1:1152-1153.

⁶⁹² Wright to Dartmouth, August 17, 1775, in TNA CO 5/664.

⁶⁹³ Thomas Brown Loyalist Claim, TNA, American Office, 13/34; Thomas Brown to Jonas Brown, November 10, 1775, in Cashin, ed., *Setting out to Begin a New World*, 160-164; and Cashin, *The King’s Ranger*, 27-29.

⁶⁹⁴ Thomas Birkia to Harvey Birkia, December 30, 1775, in Heard Robertson, Loyalist Research Papers, Augusta State University.

zeal in their own ranks. A full month after he announced the virtual dissolution of his government, Provincial Congress member Peter Taarling confided to John Houstoun, one of Georgia's delegates to the Continental Congress, in Philadelphia: "I wish it was in my power to give you a reciprocal acc't of the warlike spirit of Georgia . . . [instead] I'll therefore leave it and begin to hope, perhaps a few months more, may rouse us and we will be more used to drums & politicks, than what we are at present."⁶⁹⁵

In December, just two months after Taarling penned his frustrated letter to Houstoun, Wright learned that the King had indeed approved his request for leave. The governor informed Lord Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the American Colonies, that "all the King's officers and friends to government write for my continuance amongst them I am well informed and have been told by several of the Liberty people that they [also] express great concern and uneasiness at my intention of leaving the province at present."⁶⁹⁶

During the first week of January 1776, Wright reassured Dartmouth that "if we had proper support and assistance, I think [substantial] numbers would join the King's standard, but no troops, no money, no orders, or instructions [coupled with] a wild magnitude [of Liberty people] gathering fast, what can any man do in such a situation?"⁶⁹⁷ Wright added that it was doubly

⁶⁹⁵ Peter Taarling to John Houstoun, October 24, 1775, in John Houstoun Papers, MS 397, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia. Taarling was a delegate to the Georgia Provincial Congress from St. Andrew's Parish.

⁶⁹⁶ Wright to Dartmouth, December 11, 1775, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840-1989), 3:226-227.

⁶⁹⁷ Wright to Lord Dartmouth, January 3, 1776, in National Archives, Kew, England, Colonial Office Papers 5/665, obtained from the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington's Crossing, Pennsylvania. See also, Wright to Dartmouth, November 16, 1775, in TNA, CO 5/665 and Wright to Dartmouth, December 19, 1775, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3:228.

shameful that “His Majesty’s officers and dutiful & loyal subjects [should] be suffered to remain under such cruel tyranny and oppression.”⁶⁹⁸

A much more tangible and overt oppression awaited Wright. On the evening of January 18, Governor Wright summoned Rebel leaders Joseph Clay and Noble Wimberly Jones to his home to discuss the arrival of a British fleet off the coast of Georgia. He informed them that the ship’s officers had been instructed to treat those in arms “as in a state of rebellion” and, if possible, “destroy their towns & property.”⁶⁹⁹ Wright promised the Rebels that if the ships were allowed safe anchor and were permitted to provision themselves at market value, he would “endeavor to settle” affairs with the British officers in order “to prevent their doing any injury to this town.”⁷⁰⁰ The Rebel Council of Safety met twice that evening. During the final meeting they ordered the arrest of Governor Wright and his Council members because they were now deemed a dangerous threat to the liberty of the people.⁷⁰¹ That night, accompanied by a volunteer body

⁶⁹⁸ Wright to Lord Dartmouth, January 3, 1776, in TNA, CO 5/665.

⁶⁹⁹ Thursday, January 18, 1776, in Mary Bondurant Warren and Jack M. Jones, eds., *Georgia Governor and Council Journals, 1774-1777* (Athens, GA: Heritage Papers, 2006), 153.

⁷⁰⁰ Thursday, January 18, 1776, in Mary Bondurant Warren and Jack M. Jones, eds., *Georgia Governor and Council Journals, 1774-1777* (Athens, GA: Heritage Papers, 2006), 153.

⁷⁰¹ “At a special meeting of the Council of Safety, Jan. 18th, 1776, p.m.,” in Allen D. Candler, et al., *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1904-1916 and 1976-1989), 1:101. For reasonably detailed and similar examinations of the arrest of Wright see, Robert G. Mitchell, “Loyalist Georgia” (PhD diss., Tulane University, 1965), 35, 38, 46, 56, and 64-72; Charles Risher, “Propaganda, Dissension, and Defeat: Loyalist Sentiment in Georgia, 1763-1783” (PhD diss., Mississippi State University, 1976), 110-117; W. W. Abbot, *The Royal Governors of Georgia, 1754-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959); Kenneth Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia, 1763-1789* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958); and Allen D. Candler, ed., *The Revolutionary Records of Georgia* (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner Company, 1908), 1:101-108. See also, James Wright Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, Colonial Office, 5/657; John Graham Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, American Office, 12/4; and Anthony Stokes Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, Colonial Office, 5/657.

of militia, Major Joseph Habersham, whose recently deceased father had been Wright's closest friend, broke into the governor's home and arrested him.⁷⁰² According to nineteenth-century Georgia planter / historian Charles Colcock Jones, the young Habersham grabbed Wright's shoulder and proclaimed, "Sir James you are my prisoner."⁷⁰³ Habersham later reported that several "members of the Council fled precipitously and dispersed in every direction."⁷⁰⁴

Wright's capture proved to be the final motivation for many Loyalists, who quickly fled to East Florida. One such emigrant, Martin Jollie, confided to East Florida's royal Governor Patrick Tonyn that "these deluded people has made every prudent thinking man withdraw from the party."⁷⁰⁵ In May 1785, Wright provided testimony for Jollie's claim, stating: "I conceive him to be a person worthy of the humanity & assistance of Government."⁷⁰⁶

The Council of Safety confined Wright to his home under the watchful eye of an armed guard for a few days prior to granting him parole upon the conditions that he remain in his home and not correspond "with any of the officers or others on board the ships of war now at Tybee

⁷⁰² "At a special meeting of the Council of Safety, Jan. 18th, at 11 o'clock at night, 1776," in Allen D. Candler, ed., *The Revolutionary Records of Georgia* (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner Company, 1908), 1:102.

⁷⁰³ Charles Colcock Jones, *The History of Georgia* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1883), 2:211-212. Interestingly, Jones cites Hugh McCall's *History of Georgia* as the source of the quotation, but that quote is not found in McCall's two-volume history of Georgia. See, Hugh McCall, *the History of Georgia* (Savannah: Seymour & Williams, 1811).

⁷⁰⁴ Allen D. Candler, ed., *The Revolutionary Records of Georgia* (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner Company, 1908), 1:269.

⁷⁰⁵ Martin Jollie to Patrick Tonyn, February 13, 1776, quoted in Robert G. Mitchell, "Loyalist Georgia" (PhD diss., Tulane University, 1964), 65.

⁷⁰⁶ Wright's testimony in Martin Jollie Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, American Office, 13/36.

[Island], without the permission of this Board.”⁷⁰⁷ The denial of Wright’s personal liberty, in the name of liberty, prompted one member of Georgia’s Provincial Congress to renounce his own oath to the Rebels.⁷⁰⁸

The deeply personal nature of the rapidly unfolding civil war that erupted in Georgia made Wright’s parole a precarious and dubious condition. Writing in 1781, Rebel officer William Moultrie opined: “what was called a ‘Georgia parole’ and to be shot down were synonymous.”⁷⁰⁹ Exacerbating Wright’s situation, the Council of Safety issued a resolution requiring all prisoners to be relocated to the backcountry upon the entry of British vessels up the Savannah River.⁷¹⁰ Worse yet, former royal Chief Justice Anthony Stokes later wrote that the Rebels planned to forcibly draft Loyalists into the militia and use them as cannon fodder should the British invade.⁷¹¹ Just days after Wright and his cohorts received their paroles, royal Lieutenant Governor John Graham privately learned that the Rebels “determined to confine [him], upon which Graham was obliged to conceal himself night and day in Swamps for a considerable time, exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather, until he fortunately made his escape on board the

⁷⁰⁷ “At a meeting of the Council of Safety, Jan. 19th, 1776,” in Allen D. Candler, ed., *The Revolutionary Records of Georgia* (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner Company, 1908), 1:103. See also, John Graham Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, American Office Papers, 12/4.

⁷⁰⁸ Basil Cowper Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, American Office Papers 12/4. Cowper claims “he continued with [the Rebels] till the Governor and Council were made prisoners when he quitted them.”

⁷⁰⁹ William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution* (New York: David Longworth, 1802), 2:336.

⁷¹⁰ Allen D. Candler, ed., *The Revolutionary Records of Georgia* (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner Company, 1908), 1:104.

⁷¹¹ Anthony Stokes, *Desultory Observations, on the Situation, Extent, Climate, Population, Manners, Customs, Commerce, Constitution, Government, Religion, &c. of Great Britain* (London: J. Davidson, 1792), 26.

King's ships."⁷¹² Essentially, then, Wright believed the Rebels had broken, or planned to break, the terms of his parole. These combined factors compelled the governor to seek the security and emotional comfort of the *H.M.S. Scarborough*.

Along with his family and, reportedly, with the assistance of Josiah Tatnall and John Mullryne, Wright broke his parole during the pre-dawn hours of February 12.⁷¹³ In his Loyalist claim, he justified his actions, declaring that "in order to avoid the rage and violence of the Rebels, [I] was reduced to the necessity of leaving the town of Savannah in the night."⁷¹⁴ Moreover, Wright believed that his journey to the protection of the British vessel would be short-lived. In a letter to the American Secretary, Lord George Germain, who had replaced Dartmouth, Wright wrote: "When I left Savannah from many accounts I had received my full expectation

⁷¹² John Graham Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, American Office Papers, 13/36C.

⁷¹³ Tatnall's assistance is mentioned in Josiah Tatnall Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, American Office Papers 12/4. Lieutenant Governor John Graham confirms this in his testimony of Tatnall's claim. See also, February 9-16, 1776, *General Gazette*, Charleston, South Carolina. Hugh McCall asserts in his *History of Georgia* that Wright escaped through his back to door and "went down the river about five miles by land to Bonaventure, where Mullryne lived, and where a boat and crew were waiting for him." Though Mullryne was twice banished from Georgia by the Rebels, he did not file a Loyalist claim and this part of the story cannot be verified. His death shortly after the war may be the cause of his failure to file a claim.. See, Hugh McCall, *The History of Georgia* (Atlanta: A. B. Caldwell, 1909), 300. This is a one volume edition of McCall's two volume history published between 1811 and 1816.

⁷¹⁴ James Wright Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, Colonial Office Papers, 5/657. See also, Kenneth Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 68-69; Coleman, "James Wright," in *Georgians in Profile: Essays in honor of Ellis Merton Coulter*, ed. by Horace Montgomery (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 54. Wright made his escape on February 11, 1776. For his explanation of breaking parole see, Wright to His Council, February 18, 1776, in Ronald G. Killian and Charles T. Waller, eds., *Georgia and the Revolution* (Atlanta: Cherokee Publishing Company, 1975), 162-163. Shortly after his arrival, Wright received a fifteen gun salute. See "Captain's Log, *H.M.S. Scarborough*, February 10, 1776, National Archives, Kew, England, Admiralty Office Papers, 51/867, obtained from the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington's Crossing, Pennsylvania.

was that the King's ships & troops . . . were come to our relief and assistance, and that I should have returned to Savannah [within] 48 hours."⁷¹⁵ Josiah Tatnall further defended Wright's actions, stating that the governor's parole stipulated that he could "quit the country if he should be insulted. [Thus when] he & his family being afterwards insulted, [I] assisted him with a boat & men to carry [them] off."⁷¹⁶ The Provincial Congress records proffered no such justification, tersely noting that "Governor Wright observed his parole of honor for a time, but after nearly four weeks of confinement broke it, and, escaping through a back door of his house, fled in the night time and made his way, under cover of darkness, to an armed British ship anchored in the harbor."⁷¹⁷

Just two days later Wright dispatched a letter to the remnants of his Council explaining his course of action. "After using my best endeavours for upward of three weeks to prevail on those in whose hands the present ruling powers are," he wrote, "that commanders of his Majesty's ships here might obtain assurances that they might come to town and have free intercourse with me without receiving any insults from the people assembled in and about town; also that the King's ships might be supplied with provisions on paying the full price or value of them."⁷¹⁸ His efforts, he told his Council, fell on deaf ears as he received no response for five days. Finally he determined he could wait no longer and effected his escape, because "Well knowing that it was

⁷¹⁵ James Wright to George Germain, April 26, 1776, in Mary Bondurant Warren and Jack Moreland Jones, *Governor's Council Journals, 1774-1777* (Athens, GA: Heritage Papers, 2006), 151-152.

⁷¹⁶ Josiah Tatnall Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, American Office Papers 12/4.

⁷¹⁷ Allen D. Candler, ed., *The Revolutionary Records of Georgia* (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner Company, 1908), 1:269.

⁷¹⁸ James Wright to his Council, February 13, 1776, in Keith Read Collection, MS 921, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.

essential to his Majesty's service and the welfare of this province that I should have an interview with the King's officers here."⁷¹⁹ He assured the Council that the ships at anchor "will not commit any hostilities against this province, [even] though [they are] fully sufficient to reduce and overcome every opposition" they might encounter.⁷²⁰ Moreover, Wright importuned, the King's officers had every right to expect a "friendly intercourse" with Savannah. He punctuated this statement with a demand: "I not only solemnly require [adherence to this request] ..., but also, as (probably) the best friend the people of Georgia have, advise them" to concede lest "it may not be in my power to insure ... the continuance of the peace."⁷²¹ He closed his letter informing the Council that the King had granted his leave to England, but his "regard for the province and people is such that I cannot avoid exhorting the people to save themselves and their posterity from that total ruin and destruction."⁷²² The Provincial Congress adjourned without bothering to reply to Wright's letter.

For the next two months he attempted to conduct professional and private business from aboard the *Scarborough*.⁷²³ In March, an exasperated Wright informed Germain that the situa-

⁷¹⁹ James Wright to his Council, February 13, 1776, in Keith Read Collection, MS 921, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.

⁷²⁰ James Wright to his Council, February 13, 1776, in Keith Read Collection, MS 921, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.

⁷²¹ James Wright to his Council, February 13, 1776, in Keith Read Collection, MS 921, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.

⁷²² James Wright to his Council, February 13, 1776, in Keith Read Collection, MS 921, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia. See also, James Wright to Henry Clinton, Clinton Papers, Clements Library.

⁷²³ See, for example, James Wright to Lord Dartmouth, March 10, 1776, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840-1989), 3:233-234; James Wright to George Germain, March 13, 1776, in *ibid.*, 235-236; and James Wright to George Germain, March 14, 1776, in *ibid.*, 236-237 and 238. For information concerning his private business, see James Wright Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, American

tion was “growing worse every hour” as the Loyalists are “in the greatest distress possible.”⁷²⁴ Wright knew personally of which he spoke. That same day the Rebels attempted to recapture him, only to be “much disappointed” in their failure.⁷²⁵ He also complained to General Sir Henry Clinton that although two-thirds to three-quarters of the Georgia militia had been loyal, “many have [recently changed their opinion] lately, some persuaded by others, some [persuaded by a supposed British plan] to raise an insurrection amongst the blacks, and some, say many, intimidated by threats of personal injuries, loss of property.”⁷²⁶

The situation was indeed dire, necessitating the *Scarborough*'s embarkation for northern waters. There is no extant correspondence which reveals Wright's thoughts as he and his family fled Georgia. It is likely, however, that he felt much the same way as Governor Thomas Hutchinson when he made a similar departure from Massachusetts in 1774. Exhausted and forlorn, Hutchinson admitted that “five years constant scene of anxiety would weary a firmer mind than mine.”⁷²⁷ Three weeks later, while en route to Nova Scotia in April, the Rebels engaged the

Office Papers 12/4. From the *Scarborough*, he sent detailed instructions to his plantation managers seeking, among other things, rice for the British ships. The Rebels, however, seized these deliveries.

⁷²⁴ James Wright to George Germain, March 20, 1776, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840-1989), 3:239-241. This letter includes Wright's letters of March 13, 14, and 26.

⁷²⁵ James Wright to George Germain, April 2, 1776, in Mary Bondurant Warren and Jack M. Jones, eds., *Georgia Governor and Council Journals, 1774-1777* (Athens, GA: Heritage Papers, 2006), 152.

⁷²⁶ James Wright to Henry Clinton, February 21, 1776, in Henry Clinton Papers, Clements Library, University of Michigan.

⁷²⁷ Thomas Hutchinson to Francis Bernard, March 9, 1774, in *Diary and Letters of Thomas Hutchinson*, 130-132.

vessel in battle at Goat Island, near Newport, Rhode Island.⁷²⁸ Though physically unscathed, the tense situation had been exacerbated by the fact that Wright's family was also aboard. The *Scarborough* finally concluded its hazardous voyage when it docked at Halifax on April 21.⁷²⁹ From Halifax, Wright sailed to London aboard the *Glasgow*, arriving on June 7, according to Thomas Hutchinson.⁷³⁰

Georgia was the last of the thirteen mainland colonies to officially rebel, in no small part because of the "utmost endeavors" of Wright to, in his own words, "induce the inhabitants . . . to continue in and adhere to their duty and allegiance to his Majesty."⁷³¹ He added that his colony failed to send delegates to the First Continental Congress and, "if we could have had or got any support or assistance we should [have] kept [Georgia] out of the rebellion."⁷³²

The two exiled governors met several times to discuss the situation in America during the next few years.⁷³³ From the outset Wright, along with other exiled officials, bombarded the min-

⁷²⁸ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, April 23, 1776.

⁷²⁹ Wright to Germain, April 26, 1776, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840-1989), 3:243-244.

⁷³⁰ Thomas Hutchinson, *The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson*, ed. by Peter Orlando Hutchinson (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1883-1886), 2:61-62.

⁷³¹ James Wright Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, Colonial Office Papers, 5/657. See also, Kenneth Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia, 1763-1789* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 72-73; W. W. Abbot, *Royal Governors of Georgia, 1774-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 151; and Robert Calhoun, *Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1973), 13-15.

⁷³² James Wright, Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, American Office Papers, 12/4.

⁷³³ Thomas Hutchinson, *The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson*, ed. by Peter Orlando Hutchinson (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1883-1886). See, diary entries of June 17, 1776, June 19, 1776, June 21, 1776, July 19, 1777, September 29,

istry with incessant calls to shift the focus of the war southward, prompting an agitated Germain to complain: “Sir James Wright can be of little use at present, his ideas of military operations are most extraordinary.”⁷³⁴ Wright, who had been Georgia’s commander-in-chief for over a decade, may have lacked a thorough understanding of military strategy. Regardless of his talents as a military strategist, which were limited, Wright keenly understood the situation in Georgia (the colonies) better than any British minister. He also rightly gauged the pulse of a large number of Georgians who were dissatisfied with the Rebel government. These Loyalists, or would-be Loyalists, were significant in number and of great potential usefulness if properly supported.⁷³⁵

1777, December 7, 1777, March 2, 1778, and August 11, 1778, in 2:70, 2:72, 2:72, 2:152, 2:158, 2:170, 2:189, and 2:212-213.

⁷³⁴ Germain to William Knox, October 19, 1776 in Kenneth Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia, 1763-1789* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 116. For the role of exiles in the creation of the Southern Strategy see, for but a few examples, *ibid.*, 116-117; Paul H. Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats: a Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 79-98, especially, 86-87 and 98, and 175-177; John Shy, “British Strategy for Pacifying the Southern Colonies, 1778-1781,” in *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution*, eds. J. J. Crow and L. E. Tise (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), especially 157-159; James Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 2-6, 11, and 127-129; David K. Wilson, *The Southern Strategy: Britain’s Conquest of South Carolina and Georgia, 1775-1780* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 63-64; Ira Gruber, “Britain’s Southern Strategy,” in *The Revolutionary War in the South: Power, Conflict, and Leadership: Essays in Honor of John Richard Alden*, ed. by W. Robert Higgins (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979), 218; Christopher Hibbert, *Redcoats & Rebels: the American Revolution Through British Eyes* (New York: Norton, 1990), 235; and Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton’s Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782*, ed. by William B. Willcox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 27, 109, and 149-156.

⁷³⁵ Robert G. Mitchell, “Sir James Wright Looks at the American Revolution,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 53 (Winter 1969), 509-518. See also, James Piecuch, *Three Peoples One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), especially pages 6 and 11; Leland Bellot, *Henry Knox: The Life & Thought of an Eighteenth-Century Imperialist* (Austin: University of Texas, 1977), 39-40, 143-144, 155-157, and 163-165; Robert S. Davis, “Loyalism and Patriotism at Askance: Community, Conspiracy, and Conflict on the Southern Frontier,” in Robert Calhoon, Timothy Barnes, and

Germain thoroughly underappreciated Wright, often keeping him in the dark and rarely, if ever, seeking his advice.⁷³⁶ But Wright persisted, and proved, according to historian Ira Gruber, “particularly skillful in emphasizing the advantages of campaigning in the South.”⁷³⁷

Just months after the America Secretary’s harsh assessment, Wright penned a dramatic letter to Germain in February, 1777, insisting that his ideas, “flow[ed] from an honest zeal.” Although there is little reason to doubt the genuine nature of Wright’s agenda, it should be noted the Rebels confiscated “523 Negro slaves” and nearly £11,000 of rice from his dozen lowcountry plantations.⁷³⁸ Interestingly many of Wright’s slaves would be utilized by the Rebels in the de-

Robert S. Davis, eds., *Tory Insurgents: The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2010); John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: the American Revolution in the Carolinas* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1997), 26; North Callahan, *Royal Raiders: The Tories of the American Revolution* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 37; and Don Cook, *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760-1785* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), ch. 18. See also, note 49.

⁷³⁶ For example, see James Wright to Thomas Hutchinson, February 27, 1779, quoted in Patrick Furlong, “Civilian-Military Conflict and the Restoration of the Royal Province of Georgia, 1778-1782,” *The Journal of Southern History* 38 (August 1972): 422 and James Wright to John Robinson, March 11, 1779, in National Archives, Kew, England, American Office Papers, 13/37, obtained from the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington’s Crossing, Pennsylvania.

⁷³⁷ Ira Gruber, “Britain’s Southern Strategy,” in Robert W. Higgins, ed., *The Revolutionary War In the South: Power, Conflict, and Leadership: Essays in Honor of John Richard Alden* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979), 218.

⁷³⁸ James Wright Loyalist Claim. National Archives, Kew, England, Colonial Office Papers 5/657. See also, James Wright Loyalist Claim, National Archives, Kew, England, American Office Papers, 12/4. It should be noted that later in his testament, Wright mentions that 522 slaves were confiscated in January 1777. He said he owned 526 slaves, worth £27,787, in February 1776, of which 522 were taken in January 1777. Upon his return to power in 1779, he claimed to have reclaimed only 323 of these slaves. He purchased an additional 37 and witnessed the birth of 48 more between 1779 and the end of the war.

fense of Savannah.⁷³⁹ In this missive, the exiled governor argued that the issue of taxation and taxation alone was the *casus belli*, and he proffered many suggestions in the hopes of ending the crisis. In order to provide for a mutually beneficial and practical relationship between Great Britain and America, Wright suggested, the Crown must grant “a generous plan or constitution for America. . . . [Additionally], all past treasons and offense &c. shall be forgiven and buried in oblivion, and pardon granted to all persons whatsoever as to their lives. . . . In the future all taxes in America,” he recommended, “shall be granted and levied in the respective colonies.”⁷⁴⁰

Six months later, along with South Carolina’s former royal governor Lord William Campbell, Wright submitted to Germain an impressive memorial concerning the practicability of reducing South Carolina and Georgia. The exiled governors warned of the danger of delaying the shift southward because the Loyalists maintained their patriotism at their own peril. Moreover, the petitioners proffered two reasons for this alteration: the strength of southern loyalism and the importance of southern trade to the Empire.⁷⁴¹

Five weeks later, on October 8, writing from his home on Somerset Street in London, Wright conveyed to Germain some interesting news from Georgia. Rebel Brigadier General Lachlan McIntosh had been confined in Georgia for killing Whig politician and signer of the

⁷³⁹ Thomas Brown to Patrick Tonyn, April 6, 1778, in Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on American Manuscripts* (London: Mackie and Company, 1904), 1:224-225. “The [Rebel] gallies are laying manned entirely with Governor Wright’s Negroes.”

⁷⁴⁰ James Wright to George Germain, February 12, 1777, quoted in Robert G. Mitchell, “Sir James Wright Looks at the American Revolution,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 53 (Winter 1969), 511-514.

⁷⁴¹ Memorial, October 8, 1777, in Allen D. Candler, et. al., *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1904-1916 and 1976-1989), 39:4-9. Note: volume 39 is unpublished. The manuscript is housed at the Georgia State Archives, Morrow, Georgia.

Declaration of Independence, Button Gwinnett, in a duel at one of Wright's plantations. More importantly, Wright observed that the divisive nature of political affairs in the colony "seems to present a most favourable opportunity," as many people "may be disposed to return to their allegiance, especially if they had any assistance."⁷⁴² Furthermore, Wright offered "to go out myself and join in the undertaking" of the reconquest of Georgia.⁷⁴³ Two months later, he expressed to Thomas Hutchinson the need for "more vigorous exertion" of British authority in the southern colonies.⁷⁴⁴ In the spring of 1778, Wright met privately with the King, presumably to discuss his ideas concerning the conquest of Georgia.⁷⁴⁵ About this time, and certainly in part because of the repeated entreaties of Loyalists like Governor Wright, Germain fully revived the Southern Strategy.⁷⁴⁶ On March 8 he sent a "Most Secret Letter" to General Clinton. He notified Clinton of the King's desire that, before October, "an attack should be made upon the southern colonies

⁷⁴² James Wright to George Germain, October 8, 1777, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840-1989), 3:245-248. See also, National Archives, Kew, England, Colonial Office, 5/664, obtained from the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington's Crossing, Pennsylvania. Gwinnett and McIntosh had been political rivals since the earliest days of the revolutionary movement. The nature of their rivalry was both personal and professional, culminating with the death of Gwinnett on May 19, 1777. Harvey H. Jackson, *Lachlan McIntosh and the Politics of Revolutionary Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979), 64-66.

⁷⁴³ James Wright to George Germain, October 8, 1777, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840-1989), 3:245-248. See also, National Archives, Kew, England, Colonial Office, 5/664, obtained from the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington's Crossing, Pennsylvania.

⁷⁴⁴ Diary entry, December 7, 1777, in Thomas Hutchinson, *The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson*, ed. by Peter Orlando Hutchinson (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1883-1886), 2:170.

⁷⁴⁵ *Public Advertiser*, March 3, 1778.

⁷⁴⁶ See notes 49 and 50.

with a view to the conquest and possession of Georgia and South Carolina.”⁷⁴⁷ Although skeptical at first, Clinton ultimately agreed in the benefits of the southern strategy, and began such preparations on June 6.⁷⁴⁸

Likely unaware that preparations were underway, Wright again petitioned Germain in July, stating that at the very least Georgia should be subdued, even if it were not yet possible to also subjugate South Carolina.⁷⁴⁹ During the remainder of the year, the governor continued fraternizing with London’s most important players, discussing the dearest issue to him – Georgia. His “calling card” included, among others, William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham, John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute, George Germain, Jeffery Amherst, Thomas Gage, Thomas Hutchinson, William Howe, John James Percival, 3rd Earl of Egmont, and Dr. Anthony Addington. Additionally, Wright maintained consistent contact with John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore and royal governor of Virginia, William Campbell, royal governor of South Carolina, and Josiah Martin, royal governor of

⁷⁴⁷ Germain to Clinton, March 8, 1778, quoted in Paul H. Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats: a Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 83; Ira Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution* (New York: Athenaeum, 1972), 306-307; and William B. Willcox, “British Strategy in America, 1778,” *The Journal of Modern History* 19 (June 1947), 102-106. See also, Germain’s instructions to Clinton on March 21, 1778, in Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton’s Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1971), 87.

⁷⁴⁸ Clinton Memorandum, June 6, 1778, in Paul H. Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats: a Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 92. Concerning his doubts, see, for example, Clinton to Germain, July 27, 1778, Clinton Memorandum, October 11, 1778, in *ibid.*, 91-92 and 93. Clinton finally determined that if he failed to move, the administration would never formulate any “solid plan.” See, Clinton to the Duke of Newcastle, October 22, 1778, in *ibid.*, 93. Regarding his support see, for example, Henry Clinton to John Pownall, May 3, 1776, quoted in *ibid.*, 88.

⁷⁴⁹ Memorial of Wright and John Graham to Germain, July 17, 1778, in Allen D. Candler, et. al., *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1904-1916 and 1976-1989), 39:10-15. Note: volume 39 is unpublished. The manuscript is housed in the Georgia State Archives in Morrow, Georgia.

North Carolina, all exiled in London.⁷⁵⁰ The winter of 1778-1779 proved to be of monumental importance for Wright as Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell, with a minor assist from one of Wright's own slaves, captured Savannah and then, at least temporarily, Augusta.⁷⁵¹

In January 1779 and prior to learning of Campbell's conquests, the exiled governor presented a petition to Germain from Loyalists in Georgia, "praying that their property, especially their Negroes, [will] not be damaged by British forces in Georgia."⁷⁵² Campbell immediately recognized the urgency in restoring the colony's civil government, and urged Germain to send a governor with all speed.⁷⁵³ It is unclear exactly when Wright learned that Georgia had been restored to the Crown, but on February 27, he wrote a lengthy letter to Hutchinson outlining the recent triumph. It is interesting to note that Wright did not mention a possible return to America.

⁷⁵⁰ For example, *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, July 3, 1778; *St. James Chronicle*, July 11, 1778; see Diary entry, August 11, 1778, in Thomas Hutchinson, *The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson*, ed. by Peter Orlando Hutchinson (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1883-1886), 2:212-213; and *London Evening News*, October 13, 1778.

⁷⁵¹ Archibald Campbell to George Germain, January 16, 1779, in K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 17:33-38. For details concerning the restoration of civil government in Georgia, see Archibald Campbell, *Journal of an Expedition against the Rebels of Georgia in North America*, edited by Colin Campbell (Darien, GA: The Ashantilly Press, 1981); K. G. Davies, "The Restoration of Civil Government by the British in the War of Independence," in *Red, White & True Blue: The Loyalists in the Revolution*, edited by Esmond Wright (New York: AMS Press, 1976), 111-133; and Kenneth Coleman, "Restored Colonial Georgia." *Georgia Historical Quarterly* .

⁷⁵² James Wright to George Germain, January 6, 1779, in K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 16:16. See also, Mary Bondurant Warren and Jack M. Jones, eds., *Georgia Governor and Council Journals, 1778-1779: Savannah under Siege* (Athens: Heritage Papers, 2007), 44-45.

⁷⁵³ Archibald Campbell to George Germain, January 16, 1779, in K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 17:39-42. Campbell argued that maintaining military control of the government would be counterproductive to Britain's interests as it would raise the ire of Rebels and perhaps even Loyalists. See also, George Germain to Archibald Campbell, March 13, 1779, in Archibald Campbell, *Journal of an Expedition against the Rebels of Georgia* (Darien: The Ashantilly Press, 1981), 80-81.

The extant evidence indicates that while Germain made preparations to exploit this recent triumph, he had not bothered to consult the man who possessed the most intimate knowledge of Georgia's colonists and who had spent his three years in exile pondering how to settle the imperial dispute. Wright clearly was in the dark and received information from the Secretary on a purely need-to-know basis, which occurred abruptly on March 8 when Germain ordered him to "prepare to return to Georgia" aboard the *HMS Experiment*, commanded by Commodore James Wallace, who would soon marry into Wright's family.⁷⁵⁴ Rather quickly, however, Germain began to question his decision. In a letter to William Knox, he expressed his "doubt whether [Wright] is equal to the undertaking of governing a province under the circumstances of Georgia."⁷⁵⁵ In spite of Germain's nagging concerns about Wright, preparations were made for Wright's return.⁷⁵⁶ Germain painted for Wright a very positive portrait of the situation in Georgia, promising that nothing would be "wanting to complete the public tranquility but the declara-

⁷⁵⁴ James Wright to Thomas Hutchinson, February 27, 1779, in Patrick J. Furlong, "Civilian-Military Conflict and the Restoration of the Royal Province of Georgia, 1778-1782," *Journal of Southern History* 38 (August 1972): 422. See also, Robert G. Mitchell, "Sir James Wright Looks at the American Revolution," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 53 (Winter 1969), 511. George Germain to James Wright, March 8, 1779, in . G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 16:50. For the marriage of Wallace to Anne Wright see, *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, August 21, 1779; and *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 15, 1779.

⁷⁵⁵ George Germain to William Knox, March 12, 1779, in Robert G. Mitchell, "Sir James Wright Looks at the American Revolution," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 53 (Winter 1969), 511.

⁷⁵⁶ George Germain to Augustine Prévost, March 13, 1779, in K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 16:54; George Germain to Commissioners for Quieting Disorders, March 16, 1779, in *ibid.*, 16:55; George Germain to Lords of Admiralty, March 18, 1779, in *ibid.*, 16:57; and George Germain to William Knox, March 22, 1779, in *ibid.*, 16:61.

tion of His Majesty's commissioners putting it at the peace of the King.”⁷⁵⁷ He submitted to Wright a lengthy list of instructions and suggestions, but also advised him that his “knowledge of the temper and disposition of” Georgians would be indispensable in determining the exact course of action.⁷⁵⁸ Most importantly, perhaps, was that Germain’s instructions heeded many of the suggestions Wright had repeatedly given during his exile.⁷⁵⁹

Shortly after departing England, Commodore Wallace encountered a number of French vessels in the choppy Channel waters. He impetuously chased these ships into Cancale Bay, near modern-day Saint Malo, and urged Wright below deck to look after his daughters. Wright refused, insisting he participate in the defense of the ship. In so doing, he soon found himself in the thick of a firefight, with musket and cannon balls flying about. At one point he stated, “That ball must have come very near, for I felt it on my face.” Moments later, Wallace noticed blood running down Wright’s face and onto his clothes. He said, “Sir James, you are hurt, you bleed profusely.” Wright then reluctantly retired below, where his daughters tended to his wounds.⁷⁶⁰

When Wright, along with his family, finally reached the Georgia coast on July 14, they discovered that Germain’s estimation of the state of affairs had been grossly inaccurate.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁵⁷ George Germain to James Wright, March 31, 1779, in K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 17:90-92.

⁷⁵⁸ George Germain to James Wright, March 31, 1779, in K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 17:90-92.

⁷⁵⁹ See, James Wright to George Germain, February 12, 1777, in Robert G. Mitchell, “Sir James Wright Looks at the American Revolution,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 53 (Winter 1969), 512-518.

⁷⁶⁰ *Monthly Magazine* (London), January 1, 1818.

⁷⁶¹ For Wright’s return see, James Wright to George Germain, July 31, 1779, in James Wright Papers, MS 884, Georgia Historical Society. See also, James Marcus Prévost to George Germain, April 14, 1779, in *ibid.*, 16:80, in which Prévost states that the Rebels are in control of the

Wright reinstated civilian control of the government the next week and quickly learned that “things are not as pleasing here as I hoped. I expect Rebel movement against us in October.”⁷⁶² Worse yet, Wright feared that Britain’s foothold in Georgia was tenuous, as the “Rebels are very busy in keeping up the expiring flame of Rebellion.”⁷⁶³ In what would become an incessant cry, he begged for more troops. To that effect, he encouraged Clinton to “make an early movement this way.”⁷⁶⁴ Clinton understood the importance of Wright’s request, informing Germain that he would sail southward in October. It should be noted, though, that Clinton’s aim was Charleston because he believed that if “we do not conquer South Carolina everything is to be apprehended for Georgia.”⁷⁶⁵ That August, Wright’s assessment of the political climate grew gloomier by the day. He became convinced that the colony would soon be “totally lost” because the army had abandoned Georgia by carrying operations into South Carolina, and left the backcountry Loyalists “skulking about to avoid the Rebel parties.”⁷⁶⁶

Wright’s evaluation of the situation proved prescient. In September, the Comte d’Estaing joined forces with General Benjamin Lincoln and laid siege to Savannah. Though the British,

backcountry. Major General Prévost concurred. See, Augustine Prévost to Henry Clinton, July 14, 1779, in *ibid.*, 16:134.

⁷⁶² James Wright to Henry Clinton, July 30, 1779, in K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 16:163.

⁷⁶³ James Wright to George Germain, July 31, 1779, in K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 17:171.

⁷⁶⁴ James Wright to Henry Clinton, August 7, 1779, in K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 16:163.

⁷⁶⁵ Henry Clinton to George Germain, August 21, 1779, in K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 17:189-191.

⁷⁶⁶ James Wright to George Germain, August 9, 1779, in K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 17:185-186. See also James Wright to George Germain, July 31, 1779, in K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1981), 17:171.

with substantial aid from Loyalist forces, repelled the Franco-American assault that fall, Crown authority was never truly and fully restored, in spite of the nearly Herculean efforts of James Wright.⁷⁶⁷ His work on behalf of the King and in the spirit of maintaining a well-ordered society proved fatal, for Sir James died just three years after the war concluded.

Sir James Wright worked tirelessly to prevent the seemingly inexorable revolutionary tide. His efforts doubtless delayed Georgia's entry into the conflict. His letters clearly indicate the confusing and contingent nature of the nascent revolutionary movement in Georgia. During his three-year-long exile in London, Wright peppered the ministry with idea after idea about how to end the crisis in America, despite frequent and intense criticism. In spite of George Germain's maltreatment of Wright, the ministry heeded much of the governor's advice in implementing its southern strategy. Lastly, and no less importantly, an examination of these brief years of James Wright's life reveals the very personal nature of a man who often found himself, and occasional-

⁷⁶⁷ For details of the 1779 Siege of Savannah, see Greg Brooking, "'a Very unexpected alarming and serious scene': James Wright, the Southern Strategy, and the Siege of Savannah," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, forthcoming; Charles C. Jones, ed., *The Siege of Savannah, in 1779, as Described in Two Contemporaneous Journals of French Officers in the Fleet of Count d'Estaing* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1874), Benjamin Kennedy, ed., *Muskets, Cannon Balls & Bombs: Nine Narratives of the Siege of Savannah* (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1974); Augustine Prévost, "Papers Relating to the Allied Attack on Savannah in 1779," *Historical Magazine* 8 (September 1864), 290-297; Kenneth Coleman, *Restored Colonial Georgia, 1779-1782* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958); John Harris Cruger, "The Siege of Savannah 1779, as Related by Col. John Harris Cruger," *Magazine of American History* 2 (August 1878), 206-217; Ronald Freeman, *Savannah Under Siege, the Bloodiest Hour of the Revolution* (Savannah: Freeport Publishing, 2002); Benjamin Franklin Hough, *The Siege of Savannah, by the Combined American and French Forces, under the Command of Gen. Lincoln and the Count d'Estaing, in the Autumn of 1779* (Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Company, 1975); and Alexander Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah: the Story of the Count d'Estaing and the Siege of the Town in 1779* (Savannah: Tara Press, 1979).

ly placed himself, in personal danger during his attempts to maintain royal authority in Georgia amidst, in his words, “a state of distress and ruin.”⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁸ James Wright to the Georgia Assembly, September 2, 1774, in Allen D. Candler, ed., *The Revolutionary Records of Georgia* (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner Company, 1908), 1:34-37.

**CHAPTER 7: “A VERY UNEXPECTED ALARMING SCENE”: JAMES WRIGHT AND
THE SIEGE OF SAVANNAH, 1779**

In early November 1779, a thoroughly exhausted James Wright took a momentary respite from governing a recently besieged city and penned a letter to American Secretary Lord George Germain. “We have met with a very unexpected alarming scene,” Wright wrote, “Especially in this part of the world, for no Man could have thought or believed that a French Fleet of 25 Sail of the Line . . . would have come to the coast of Georgia.”⁷⁶⁹ Amazing as the invasion seemed, it was indeed real. With their American allies, the French laid siege to Savannah in an attempt to regain the only rebellious colony still under royal rule. The month-long siege proved an arduous trial indeed for the sixty-three-year-old governor. He found himself constantly exposed to enemy fire, witnessed the capture of his daughter by the French, endured the uncertainty of having a son, Major James Wright, Jr., within the British lines, and had to deal with the twin prospect of losing both his city and freedom.⁷⁷⁰

The extant evidence indicates that while Germain was making preparations to exploit this recent triumph, he had not bothered to consult the man who possessed the most intimate

⁷⁶⁹ James Wright to George Germain, November 5, 1779, in Kenneth G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783: Colonial Office Series* (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1977), 17: 252-253.

⁷⁷⁰ We are fortunate that Wright chronicled the siege of Savannah. At least two handwritten copies were made, one of which he sent to his London agents, whom he wished to “communicate to my city friends.” Wright to Messrs. Clarke & Milligan, November 4, 1779, in Thomas Addis Emmet Collection, Misc. MS, EM 20300, New York Public Library. See also, Wright’s diary / journal contained in Wright to Germain, November 5, 1779, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3:262-268 (hereafter, “Wright’s Diary”). In this letter, to which the journal was attached, Wright assured Germain that his diary “is as just & true an account of the whole matter as will be transmitted from any hand whatever.”

knowledge of Georgia's colonists and who had spent his three years in exile pondering how to settle the imperial dispute. Wright clearly was in the dark and received information from the Secretary on a purely need-to-know basis, which occurred abruptly on March 8, 1779 when Germain ordered him to "prepare to return to Georgia" aboard the *HMS Experiment*, commanded by Commodore James Wallace who would soon marry into the Wright family.⁷⁷¹ Rather quickly, however, Germain began to question his decision. In a letter to William Knox, he expressed his "doubt whether [Wright] is equal to the undertaking of governing a province under the circumstances of Georgia."⁷⁷² In spite of these concerns, preparations were made for Wright's return.⁷⁷³ Germain painted for Wright a very positive picture of the situation in Georgia, promising that nothing would be "wanting to complete the public tranquility but the declaration of His Majesty's commissioners putting it at the peace of the King."⁷⁷⁴ Germain was either overconfident or optimistic. Benjamin Franklin and James Madison provided a much more accurate assessment of the nature of the war. Writing from Passy in France, Franklin scoffed at Britain's "possession of the capitals of five provinces" because the Americans still maintained "possession

⁷⁷¹ Wright to Hutchinson, February 27, 1779, in Patrick J. Furlong, "Civilian-Military Conflict and the Restoration of the Royal Province of Georgia, 1778-1782," *Journal of Southern History* 38 (August 1972): 422. See also, Mitchell, "James Wright," 511. Germain to Wright, March 8, 1779, in Davies, *Documents*, 16:50. For the marriage of Wallace to Anne Wright see, Mary Bondurant Warren, *Georgia Governor and Council Journals*, 10:19, 32, and 142; James Wright, *American Loyalist Claims*, Series 2, AO 13 / 37, on Film 263, at the DLAR; *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, August 21, 1779; *Rivington's Royal Gazette*, August 18, 1779, and *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 15, 1779.

⁷⁷² Germain to Knox, March 12, 1779, in Mitchell, "James Wright," 511.

⁷⁷³ Germain to Augustine Prévost, March 13, 1779, in Davies, *Documents*, 16:54; Germain to Commissioners for Quieting Disorders, March 16, 1779, in *ibid.*, 16:55; Germain to Lords of Admiralty, March 18, 1779, in *ibid.*, 16:57; and Germain to Knox, March 22, 1779, in *ibid.*, 16:61.

⁷⁷⁴ Germain to Wright, March 31, 1779, in Davies, *Documents*, 17:90-92.

of the provinces themselves.”⁷⁷⁵ Madison confidently surmised that the Georgians “have been sorely infested with [the British Army] for the greatest part of a year, and will no doubt cooperate [with the Rebels], by the most decisive exertions.”⁷⁷⁶

Prior to his departure, Wright received a lengthy list of instructions and suggestions, from the American Secretary. In conclusion, though, Germain had to acknowledge that Wright’s “knowledge of the temper and disposition of” Georgians would be indispensable in determining the exact course of action.⁷⁷⁷ Most importantly, perhaps, is that Germain’s instructions heeded many of the suggestions Wright proffered two years earlier.⁷⁷⁸

Wright would leave Britain one final time, embarking on a figurative and literal sea of difficulties. Shortly after departing the British coast, Commodore Wallace encountered a number of French vessels in the choppy Channel waters. He impetuously chased these ships into Concale Bay and urged Wright to go below deck to look after his daughters. Wright refused, planning to assist Wallace instead. In so doing, he soon found himself in the thick of the fire-fight. At one point he stated, “That ball must have come very near, for I felt it on my face.” Moments later, Wallace noticed blood running down Wright’s face and onto his clothes. He said, “Sir James, you are hurt, you bleed profusely.” Wright then reluctantly retired below where his daughters tended to his wounds.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁵ Franklin to [] Dumas, July 26, 1779, in Franklin Papers, Yale University. Franklin could speak with some confidence as he had recently heard that the British forces in Georgia had been confined to Savannah. [Thomas Digges to Franklin, June 11, 1779, in *ibid.*].

⁷⁷⁶ Madison to William Bradford, from Williamsburg, November 5, 1779, in *Papers of James Madison*, Founders Online, National Archives.

⁷⁷⁷ Germain to Wright, March 31, 1779, in Davies, *Documents*, 17:90-92.

⁷⁷⁸ See, Wright to Germain, February 12, 1777, in Mitchell, “James Wright,” 512-518.

⁷⁷⁹ *London Monthly Magazine*, January 1, 1818.

Wright, along with his family, returned to Savannah on July 14 and discovered that Germain's rosy estimation of the state of affairs had been grossly inaccurate.⁷⁸⁰ In fact, Major General Augustine Prévost informed General Clinton that month that while he lacked sufficient troops, horses, artillery and general supplies, the Rebels had taken a position to "make us jealous for Georgia."⁷⁸¹ Wright reinstated civilian control of the government the next week but quickly learned that "things are not as pleasing here as I hoped. I expect Rebel movement against us in October."⁷⁸² Worse yet, Wright feared that Britain's foothold in Georgia was tenuous as the "Rebels are very busy in keeping up the expiring flame of Rebellion."⁷⁸³ In what would become an incessant cry, Wright argued that more troops were necessary for the defense and maintenance of the colony. To that effect, he encouraged Clinton to "make an early movement this way."⁷⁸⁴ Clinton understood the importance of Wright's request, informing Germain that he would sail southward in October. It should be noted, though, that Clinton's aim was Charleston because he believed that if "we do not conquer South Carolina everything is to be apprehended

⁷⁸⁰ For Wright's return see, Warren, *Georgia Governor and Council Journals*, 142 and Wright to Germain, July 31, 1779, in Davies, *Documents*, 17:171. See, for example, Lieutenant Colonel James Marcus Prévost to Germain, April 14, 1779, in *ibid.*, 16:80, in which Prévost states that the Rebels are in control of the backcountry. Major General Prévost concurred. See, A. Prévost to Clinton, July 14, 1779, in *ibid.*, 16:134.

⁷⁸¹ Brigadier General Augustine Prévost to Sir Henry Clinton, July 30, 1779, in *Reports on American Manuscripts*, 1:483. Prévost also notified Clinton that Wright had arrived. He also complained of his own "ill health" and "wish[ed] the management [of the province] in hands more equal to it" than his own.

⁷⁸² Wright to Clinton, July 30, 1779, in *ibid.*, 16:163. See also, Wright to Clinton, July 30, 1779, in *Report on American Manuscripts*, 1:483.

⁷⁸³ Wright to Germain, July 31, 1779, in *ibid.*, 17:171; Warren, *Georgia Governor and Council Journals*, 47-48; and Killian and Waller, *Georgia in the Revolution*, 192-193.

⁷⁸⁴ Wright to Clinton, August 7, 1779, in Davies, *Documents*, 16:163.

for Georgia.⁷⁸⁵ Wright's assessment of the situation that August grew gloomier by the day. He became convinced that the colony would soon be "totally lost" because the army had abandoned Georgia by carrying operations into South Carolina, and left the backcountry Loyalists "skulking about to avoid the Rebel parties."⁷⁸⁶

But Wright would soon have more pressing concerns than the Georgia backcountry. On August 16, just one week after Wright sought Clinton's prompt assistance, French admiral Charles Hector, Comte d'Estaing embarked from Cape François in the West Indies and set sail for America for what he thought would be a relatively minor engagement on the Georgia coast.⁷⁸⁷ Two weeks later, on September 1, d'Estaing opened discussions with Rebel General Benjamin Lincoln concerning a joint venture in the southern theater.⁷⁸⁸ Wright himself learned on the third that what was believed to be some "Cork Victuallers" on the Georgia coast were actually part of d'Estaing's fleet.⁷⁸⁹ Captain John Henry of the *Fowey* confirmed the identity of the

⁷⁸⁵ Clinton to Germain, August 21, 1779, in *ibid.*, 17:189-191.

⁷⁸⁶ Wright to Germain, August 9, 1779, in *ibid.*, 17:185-186. See also Wright to Germain, July 31, 1779, in *ibid.*, 17:171.

⁷⁸⁷ George P. Clark, "The Role of the Haitian Volunteers at Savannah in 1779: An Attempt at an Objective View," *Phylon* 41 (December 1980): 360.

⁷⁸⁸ Benjamin Lincoln to d'Estaing, September 1, 1779, in Massey, *John Laurens*, 50. Lincoln's journal from September 3 – October 19, is published in Kennedy, *Muskets*, 121-127

⁷⁸⁹ See Wright's diary contained in Wright to Germain, November 5, 1779, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3:262 (hereafter, "Wright's Diary"). See also, Captain John Henry's account of the siege in Killian and Waller, *Georgia in the Revolution*, 209 and *London Gazette*, December 21, 1779. There are many primary accounts of the siege of Savannah, including a variety of French, Loyalist, and Rebel entries in Kennedy, *Muskets, Cannon Balls & Bombs*, "An English Journal of the Siege of Savannah in 1779," *Historical Magazine* 8 (January 1864): 12-16, "Papers Relating to the Allied Attack on Savannah in 1779," *Historical Magazine* 8 (September 1864): 290-297, "The Siege of Savannah 1779, as related by Colonel John Harris Cruger," *Magazine of American History* 2 (August 1878): 489-492, Commager, *Spirit of Seventy-Six*, 1090-1097, and "Account of the Siege of Savannah, from a British Source," *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah: Braid & Hutton, 1901), 5.1, 129-139. These ac-

vessels the next day, but Wright thought they must have simply blown off course.⁷⁹⁰ These were moments of intense anxiety in Savannah. On the fifth, Prévost rushed two messages to Lieutenant Colonel John Maitland, ordering him to remain in Beaufort, South Carolina, but prepared to quickly move towards Savannah if summoned.⁷⁹¹

Word of the French arrival off the coast of Georgia spread through Georgia and South Carolina with incredible celerity and served as a catalyst for both the Loyalists and the Rebels alike, reigniting a terrible, atrocity-filled, internecine civil war in the lowcountry.⁷⁹² “His Majesty’s well-affected subjects,” wrote Royal Chief Justice Alexander Stokes, “rushed to Savannah’s defense. Likewise scores of Rebels, who had recently sworn their allegiance to His Majesty, descended upon Savannah like a swarm of locusts, wreaking havoc all the way.”⁷⁹³

counts are in essential agreement concerning dates and basic facts, although the dates in Cruger’s account are typically a day or two off. Although specific citations from these accounts would be applicable henceforth, the author has decided, for the sake of brevity, against such an application and refers the reader to this citation. In addition to these print collections, see also, “The Siege of Savannah, 1779,” and “The Siege of Savannah – Lincoln Papers,” in the Thomas Addis Emmet Collection, MssCol 927, New York Public Library. The author has consulted microfilm of these records at the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington’s Crossing, PA. Since writing, the NYPL has digitized the entire Emmet Collection. See also, the Benjamin Lincoln Collection, MS 787 and Benjamin Lincoln’s diary of the siege, in the Kenneth Coleman Papers, MS 3478, box 12, at the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia. For the best historical treatment of the siege of Savannah, see Alexander Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah*. See also, Benjamin Franklin Hough, *Siege of Savannah* and Ronald Freeman, *Savannah under Siege*.

⁷⁹⁰ “Wright’s Diary,” 262.

⁷⁹¹ “Prévost’s Journal of the Siege of Savannah,” in Prévost to Germain, November 1, 1779, in Kennedy, ed., *Muskets*, 93 (hereafter, “Prévost’s Journal.”)

⁷⁹² Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, 146-148.

⁷⁹³ Chief Justice Anthony Stokes to his wife, November 9, 1779, in Kennedy, ed., *Muskets, Cannon Balls, and Bombs*, 108-116.

News of d’Estaing’s arrival reverberated throughout the Atlantic and common wisdom indicated that the Franco-American alliance would soon triumph in Georgia and quickly convert that victory into something much greater. A correspondent of Benjamin Franklin expressed optimism in d’Estaing’s ability to render the “most essential services to the common cause” because the prospects of victory in Georgia were “almost certain.”⁷⁹⁴ James Madison wrote that the impending victory at Savannah “will thoroughly cure [the British] of their rapacious zeal for the rich & flourishing metropolis of S. Carolina,” adding that “it will be a great disappointment to me I confess if any of them escape.”⁷⁹⁵ The Continental Congress even resolved that December 9 be made a “day of public and solemn thanksgiving to Almighty God” for returning Georgia to her rightful owners.⁷⁹⁶ Former President of the Continental Congress, Henry Laurens, confidently informed Washington that “every body [was] in full prospect of repossessing Savanna & having the British general[,] his troops & the wrong governor Sir James Wright [his former friend] prisoners of war within a week.”⁷⁹⁷ Not all Rebels basked in expectant glory. Major John Jones, a chaplain, wrote philosophically to his wife just days before the final assault: “If it is my fate to survive this action, I shall; if otherwise, the Lord’s will must be done.”⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁴ William Bingham to Benjamin Franklin, August 28, 1779, in Franklin Papers, Yale University. Bingham assured Franklin of d’Estaing’s readiness to aid the Rebels. In my personal correspondence with him, “he always expressed an eager desire of rendering us” great assistance.

⁷⁹⁵ Madison to William Bradford, November 5, 1779, in *Papers of James Madison*, Founders Online, National Archives.

⁷⁹⁶ Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia*, 129. See also, “Wednesday, October 20, 1779,” in *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 15:1191-1193.

⁷⁹⁷ Henry Laurens to George Washington, from Philadelphia, October 24, 1779, in Philip Hamer, ed., *Papers of Henry Laurens*, 15:195-198.

⁷⁹⁸ Jones to Mary Jones, from Savannah, October 4, 1779, in George White, *Historical Collections of Georgia*, 536 and Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People*, Kindle edition, location 2788.

In spite of appearances, the Americans were not overly confident, or, at least, their expectation of victory was very much in line with that of the British forces. Hessian Chaplain Johann Philipp Franz Elisau Waldeck reported that d’Estaing’s arrival spelled doom for the combined British forces in Georgia. “Everything is going amiss,” he cried, “and this affair will end as it did for Burgoyne’s army.”⁷⁹⁹

On September 6, with d’Estaing seemingly hovering over Savannah like a vulture, Wright ordered that all capable citizens send thirty Negroes apiece, of which “at least two-thirds [must be] male,” to aid the indefatigable Captain James Moncrief and his engineers in fortifying the capital.⁸⁰⁰ It was not the first time, however, that the British employed blacks in His Majesty’s service. They had, and would continue, to utilize blacks as guides and couriers throughout Georgia.⁸⁰¹ Back in July, Governor Wright observed “several thousand” blacks in Savannah, many of whom had fled their masters or “had been captured by the King’s army and brought in.”⁸⁰² The presence of so many restless blacks caused great anxiety to Savannah’s white popu-

⁷⁹⁹ “Chaplain Waldeck’s account,” October 11, 1779, in Bruce Burgoyne, ed., *Enemy Views*, 312. At the time Waldeck was stationed in Pensacola (the capital of British West Florida) with 3rd Waldeck Regiment.

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.* For the official notice see, “Summons,” September 6, 1779, in Hawes, *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 50. See also, Wright to Germain, November 5, 1779, in Davies, *Documents*, 17:252-253 and Wright to Tonym, September 11, 1779, in Clinton Papers, 3, 32-33, Clements Library, University of Michigan. See also, “At a Council held at His Excellency’s House, in Savannah, on Monday, September 6, 1779,” in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 5.1:10. One account, however, states the number to be about one half the number Wright mentioned. See, *Rivington’s Royal Gazette*, December 11, 1779. Historian Peter Voelz noted that the employment of blacks in the raising of military fortifications was quite rare in British North America during the seventeenth-century. [Voelz, *Slave and Soldier*, 66-67].

⁸⁰¹ Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 145-146.

⁸⁰² Wright to Germain, July 31, 1779, in James Wright Letters, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia. Wright also made note of, perhaps as many as, 200 slaves from South Carolina which had been brought to Savannah by the Creeks. See also, Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 94-95.

lation.⁸⁰³ Aware that the situation “was of the utmost importance and consequence,” especially since the “mischief has greatly increased and seems to be a growing evil,” Wright recognized the need for “vigorous exertions [to] be made” to find equitable solutions. Although Wright and his council promptly responded to such concerns, the situation was infinitely complex and required creative and flexible solutions.

“Captured Negroes belonging to loyal subjects,” they determined, should be restored to their masters “at a future and proper time.” Chattel belonging to the Rebels could, “in due time ... be legally confiscated and forfeited to His Majesty to be applied to such uses as he may be graciously pleased to direct.” In the interim, however, a commission would be established to “to take under their care and management,” all such slaves. After the “most mature deliberation,” the governor and council agreed not to “interfere or attempt to meddle with any of the Negroes captured by the army, but leave that matter to be conducted by General Prévost.” Lastly, a decision was made that a “strong and convenient house or prison be provided” as a detention center for “all such Negroes as may prove unruly.”⁸⁰⁴

There were also about two hundred slaves in possession of the Indians now at Savannah, a situation that caused the civil government great consternation. Wright believed that “Indians being thus possest of Negroes [to be] attended with very serious and dangerous consequences.” Accordingly, he attempted to purchase them, even bringing “several head men to his own house ... but could not prevail on them to part” with their new property. The head men insisted that

⁸⁰³ Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, 167-168.

⁸⁰⁴ Proceedings of the Georgia Council, July 26, 1779, in *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 12:443-449.

Prévost assured them “that whatever plunder they got should be their own.” Alas, Wright resolved that “It is not in his power to do anything with respect to those Negroes.”⁸⁰⁵

Hessian Captain Johan Ewald observed that “these three hundred Negroes had to work head-over-heals” in a frantic effort to boost the town’s defenses.⁸⁰⁶ This proved to be no easy task for at least two reasons. First, as one soldier reported: the “extreme heat, the humidity, the unwholesome water ... was so severe” that “malignant fevers” were all-too-common.⁸⁰⁷ Second, the British failed to adequately prepare for an invasion. Prévost “did nothing more for his defense against the Rebels,” Ewald wrote, “than have the four old redoubts repaired and construct several new ones for support.” He added that: “On every occasion during this war one can observe the thoughtlessness, negligence, and contempt of the English toward their foe.”⁸⁰⁸ According to Wright, thirteen redoubts and fifteen gun batteries were soon raised throughout the town.⁸⁰⁹

In addition to the menial chores involved in constructing fortifications, the British employed “some armed negroes” operating as soldiers.⁸¹⁰ One such combatant, Scipio Handley,

⁸⁰⁵ Proceedings of the Georgia Council, July 26, 1779, in *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 12:443-449.

⁸⁰⁶ Johan Ewald, *Diary of the American War*, 183-186. Wright recorded the number as “400 to 500.” See, “Wright’s Diary,” 262.

⁸⁰⁷ Atwood, *Hessians*, 168-169.

⁸⁰⁸ Ewald, *Diary of the American War*, 183-186. Wright’s account of the preparation for an assault is in full accord with Ewald’s. See, “Wright’s Diary,” 262.

⁸⁰⁹ “Wright’s Diary,” 262-263.

⁸¹⁰ Wright to Tonyn, September 11, 1779, in *Clinton Papers*, 3, 32-33, Clements Library, University of Michigan.

escaped from Charleston in 1775, volunteered to serve with the British while in Barbados, and participated in the defense of Savannah, receiving a musket ball to the leg for his service.⁸¹¹

The zealous defender of American liberties and former Continental Congress member-turned Loyalist, the Reverend J. J. Zubly confirmed this. “Few men have suffered more from the Rebels, or more severely felt the distress of siege and army,” he informed Wright, adding “during the siege eight or more of my slaves were constantly in arms, for which I would not expect any pay[,] but wish that something by way of encouragement as they have risk’d their lives might be allowed to themselves.”⁸¹²

This situation provides a clear example of the malleability of race relations in the low-country. According to historian Timothy Lockley, “social encounters between white and black, providing they remained informal and unstructured, could encourage biracial toleration and almost wash away the “lines in the sand.”⁸¹³ More important than merely illustrating the plasticity and ambiguity of racial interactions, these events vividly reflect the essence of agency.

⁸¹¹ Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, 169; Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 96-98; Morgan, “Low-country Georgia and the Early Modern Atlantic World, 1733-1820,” in Morgan, ed., *African American Life in the Georgia Lowcountry*, 36; Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 142; Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 37-38. For a brief character sketch of Handley, see Pybus, *Epic Journeys*, 211-212.

⁸¹² J. J. Zubly to Wright, November 30, 1779, in Lilla Hawes, ed., *Journal of the J. J. Zubly*, 108-109. Zubly also outlined the great loss of his personal property during the siege and noted that “our place of worship which we had but just repaired at considerable expense was made use of during the siege as a magazine which brought it upon heavy fire from the enemy.” Additionally, Zubly mentioned that his brick home, “one of the best in the place, had for near twelve months been made use of an hospital & is almost totally ruined.” In both instances, Zubly filed petitions for their “restoration and repair.”

⁸¹³ Timothy Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia*, 56. See also, Erskine Clarke, *Dwelling Place*. Although his study primarily focuses on the antebellum years, Clarke portrait of intimacy between whites and blacks on lowcountry plantations resonates in the eighteenth-century as well. For a more focused monograph, see Jeff Forret, *Race Relations at*

These slaves refused to merely wait their turn, praying that freedom would be bestowed upon them by their grateful masters or British overlords. They seized liberty! In fact, Sylvia Frey has suggested that as many as thirty percent of Georgia's slaves flocked to the British lines during the siege.⁸¹⁴ Jim Picuch flatly and persuasively argued that African Americans, "driven by their desire for freedom ... refused to remain idle during the struggle."⁸¹⁵ In *Liberty's Exiles*, Maya Jasanoff insisted that "ultimately almost all of the five thousand enslaved blacks in Savannah would leave."⁸¹⁶ Gary Nash declared the American Revolution to be the "largest slave uprising" in American history as blacks discovered the "power of the revolutionary ideology of protest."⁸¹⁷ Although neither the Rebels nor the British offered outright emancipation to slaves for their service, lowcountry blacks had become "accustomed to sorting out degrees of exploitation."⁸¹⁸ According to historian Peter Wood, "black activists sought to capitalize on the white struggle in their plans for freedom."⁸¹⁹

It is impossible to know if any slaves permanently retained their independence, but their very act functioned as a powerful reminder that bondsmen, too, had engaged in a desperate revolution of their own. Moreover, at the very least, their actions doubtless served as a critical factor

the Margins. In certain ways, Eugene Genovese's *magnum opus*, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* finds similar such negotiations between master and servant.

⁸¹⁴ Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 86. She credits Henry Laurens with this estimate. See also, Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* and Quarles, "The Revolutionary War as a Black Declaration of Independence," in Berlin and Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the AR*, 283-304; Philip Morgan, *African American Life in the Georgia Lowcountry*, 5.

⁸¹⁵ Picuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, 9.

⁸¹⁶ Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, Kindle edition, location 1480.

⁸¹⁷ Gary Nash, *Race and Revolution*, 57.

⁸¹⁸ Ellen Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 3.

⁸¹⁹ Peter Wood, "Dream Deferred," in Okihiro, ed., *In Resistance*, 173.

in the ongoing negotiation between owners and the owned – what Ira Berlin termed the master-slave “minuet.” He characterizes this “revolutionary generation” of slavery as remarkably fluid and diverse, in large measure, a response to the republican rhetoric of the age.⁸²⁰ Although the behaviors of such “insolent” slaves unquestionably expanded black liberty during and after the Revolution, they also curtailed it by, according to Berlin, “strengthen[ing] plantation regime.”⁸²¹ Historian Duncan MacLeod only found the latter to be true. Such rhetoric, he argued, only served to tighten the shackles on southern slaves, producing a “consciously racist society.”⁸²² Resting comfortably between these theses is Philip Morgan who opined that although slavery became more racialized, lowcountry slaves gained more independence from their masters as a result of the Revolution.⁸²³

Not all Savannahians, however, were comfortable with arming slaves, at least after the French and Rebels had been defeated. On October 23, nearly two dozen residents petitioned the Governor’s Council, complaining that a “number of slaves appear in arms and behave [wi]th

⁸²⁰ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 4. For slave agency, especially during this era, see *ibid.*, 217-357; Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 97-158; Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock*; Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* and Quarles, “The Revolutionary War as a Black Declaration of Independence,” in Berlin and Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the AR*, 283-304; W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*. Temporally distant from these events, Du Bois’ work is appropriate in this context. For the opposite argument, see Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*. Elkins believed the trauma associated with slavery resulted in a psychological helplessness, rendering slaves unable to rebel.

⁸²¹ Berlin, “Introduction,” in Berlin and Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution*, xv. Berlin also rightly observed that the Revolution “gave rise to a new slave order on the frontier” (xxii).

⁸²² Duncan MacLeod, *Slavery, Race, and the Revolution*, 8 and MacLeod, “Toward Caste,” in Berlin and Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom*, 217-236.

⁸²³ Philip Morgan, “Black Society in the Lowcountry, 1760-1810,” in Berlin and Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom*, 83-142.

great insolence, joined by some white persons who [do no]t appear to act under any legal authority, commit great outrages and plunder in and about the town.”⁸²⁴ Two months later, the “grand jurors” of Savannah presented an additional grievance, upset by the “great numbers of Negroes, that are suffered to stroll about, both in town and country, many with fire-arms and other offensive weapons, committing robberies and other enormities, to the great terror and annoyance of the inhabitants.”⁸²⁵

On the seventh, with the main body of his fleet filtering into Savannah harbor, d’Estaing ordered Count Albert de Rions to trap Maitland’s force at Beaufort.⁸²⁶ Meanwhile, the true danger which confronted Wright and Georgia’s Loyalists shifted from the theoretical to the actual when a Lieutenant Whitworth was dispatched to New York on the seventh in order to inform Clinton of the situation. The French intercepted his vessels and forced him back up the Savannah River.⁸²⁷ The next morning, September 8, brought more bad news. Wright was awakened from a restless slumber at daybreak with news that the French fleet had increased to 42 ships.⁸²⁸ “It is astonishing to me,” he wrote East Florida Governor Patrick Tonyn, “that such a formidable

⁸²⁴ “Petition of sundry inhabitants of Savannah,” October 23, 1779, in Lilla Hawes, ed., *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 10:53-55.

⁸²⁵ “The Presentments of the Grand Jurors for the Province,” December 28, 1779, in Hawes, ed., *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 10:74-75.

⁸²⁶ Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah*, 31.

⁸²⁷ “Journal of the Siege of Savannah,” Francis Rush Clark Papers, Sol Feinstone Collection, David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA, “hereafter “Clark’s Journal.” See also, “An English Journal,” 12 and *Rivington’s Royal Gazette*, December 15, 1779. See also, Franklin B. Hough, *The Siege of Savannah* (Albany, NY: J. Munsell, 1866), 59.

⁸²⁸ “Wright’s Diary,” 262-263.

fleet should come on this coast ... and cannot suppose but they have important objects in view, probably the reduction of this province and yours.”⁸²⁹

On the tenth of October, Prévost sent out dispatches ordering every British post to retire to Savannah immediately.⁸³⁰ The pulse around the city accelerated as the French had made a descent on the ninth and discovered the British fort on Tybee Island at the entrance of the Savannah River had been deserted.⁸³¹ Consequently, d’Estaing began assembling his troops for debarkation.⁸³² The next day brought the arrival of Lieutenant Colonel John Harris Cruger’s command from the port of Sunbury.⁸³³ That same day, the nature of the conflict changed dramatically for Wright. “A flag of truce from a Mr Wireat [John Wereat], styling himself President of the executive Council of the state of Georgia,” Prévost later wrote, arrived, seeking “to treat an exchange of prisoners and to claim Governor Sir James Wright as a prisoner of war on parole.”⁸³⁴

⁸²⁹ Wright to Patrick Tonyn, September 11, 1779, in Clinton Papers, 3, 32-33, Clements Library, University of Michigan. This letter is referenced in K. G. Davies, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783*, []:219 and *Report on American Manuscripts*, 2:31. See also, “Wright’s Diary,” 262.

⁸³⁰ “Prévost’s Journal,” 94.

⁸³¹ “Clark’s Journal.”

⁸³² See also, Comte d’Estaing, “Journal of the Siege of Savannah, with some observations by M. le comte d’Estaing,” in Kennedy, *Muskets, Cannon Balls & Bombs*, 47 (hereafter, “D’Estaing’s Journal”).

⁸³³ “Prévost’s Journal,” 94.

⁸³⁴ A. Prévost to Germain, September 10, 1779, in Davies, *Documents*, 17:242-243. This letter, along with a lengthy daily journal of the siege, is also in Kennedy, *Muskets*, 92-105. See also, Francis Henry Harris to Benjamin Lincoln, from Charleston, November 1, 1779. This letter details Wright’s 1776 parole violation and the hopes that the “British commander will render him up.” [Emmet Collection, Miscellaneous MS, EM. 20130, NYPL]. Most interestingly, there is no extant correspondence in which Wright discussed this event, not even in his Loyalist claim, which amounts to 107 typed pages.

The Polish volunteer General Casimir Pulaski led an advanced Rebel scouting party across the Savannah River near Ebenezer, about two dozen miles west of the capital.⁸³⁵ The remaining Rebel force crossed the river the next day, September 12, and Lincoln paused at Zubly's Ferry to write a letter to d'Estaing.⁸³⁶ Later that day, Maitland set sail for Savannah via an inland waterway and d'Estaing led his troops in a night landing at Wright's Beaulieu plantation on the Vernon River, about fourteen miles south of Savannah.⁸³⁷ "Foul weather," however, delayed this process, according to an anonymous French journal and it was not until the eighteenth that the allies reached the outskirts of Savannah. The journalist dismissed criticisms of d'Estaing's delayed approach to Savannah as having only been raised "after the event."⁸³⁸

Rebel General Lachlan McIntosh joined Lincoln's force the next day, bringing the aggregate American force to 1,500. With the allied pincers rapidly closing, Prévost attempted to resurrect his troops deteriorating morale.⁸³⁹ After learning on the fifteenth that the French forces were on land and moving toward the city, General Lincoln hastened his own march and reached Cherokee Hill, about ten miles distant.⁸⁴⁰

Once at Savannah, and "convinced that ... resistance would be very weak," d'Estaing wasted no time in making his intentions known.⁸⁴¹ He initiated what would become a six-letter

⁸³⁵ "Journal of Major General Lincoln from September 3 to October 19, 1779," in Kennedy, ed., *Muskets*, 122 (hereafter, "Lincoln's Journal").

⁸³⁶ "Wright's Diary," 263. Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah*, 21-22.

⁸³⁷ "Wright's Diary," 263-264.

⁸³⁸ C. C. Jones, *Siege of Savannah*, 58-60; Henry Commager, *Spirit of Seventy-Six*, 1091-1093.

⁸³⁹ "Prévost's Journal," 95. Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah*, 25.

⁸⁴⁰ "Lincoln's Journal," 123.

⁸⁴¹ Count d'Estaing to Prévost, September 16, 1779, in Ronald Killion and Charles Waller, eds., *Georgia and the Revolution*, 194-195. "D'Estaing's Journal," 49.

give-and-take with Prévost, beginning with a summons for surrender, the news of which greatly angered the Rebels when they learned that d'Estaing had demanded that Prévost surrender to the King of France, with no mention of the Americans.⁸⁴² The British general politely replied that he “delayed to answer till I had shown it to the King’s civil governor,” James Wright, adding that he could not in good conscience surrender his post without receiving official terms.⁸⁴³ In Wright’s words, the Frenchman “boasted of his formidable armament by sea and land[,] what he had done with [the British] at Granada [and] mentioned how much [Sir George Staunton, 1st Baronet] Lord McCartney had suffered by not capitulating, and that it was totally in vain to think of opposing or resisting his force.”⁸⁴⁴ Although “sensible” of the need for the British to request terms, d'Estaing complained that the British had continued “intrenching yourself. It is a matter of very little importance,” he continued, “however, for form’s sake, I must desire that you desist during our conferences.” The Frenchman then ordered his since halted column to resume their march, but “without approaching your posts.” In a postscript, he notified Prévost that General Benjamin Lincoln would soon form a junction with his forces, which he did that same day.⁸⁴⁵

Clearly stalling for time in the hopes that Maitland’s 71st Highlanders would be able to force their way to the British lines, Prévost emphasized the enormity of the situation and pro-

⁸⁴² “Lincoln’s Journal,” 123 and “D’Estaing’s Journal,” 50-51.

⁸⁴³ Prévost to d’Estaing, September 16, 1779, in Killion and Waller, eds., *GA and the AR*, 195.

⁸⁴⁴ “Wright’s Diary,” 263. For d’Estaing’s actual summons and the negotiations see, “Papers Relating,” 290-297. Lt. Col. John Harris Cruger added that d’Estaing also placed the blame for any future loss of life and property squarely on Prévost’s shoulders.

⁸⁴⁵ D’Estaing to Prévost, September 16, 1779, in Killion and Waller, eds., *GA and the AR*, 195-196. For the junction between the allied armies see, Lincoln to Major Everard Meade, November 1, 1779, in Emmett Collection, Siege of Savannah – Lincoln Papers, EM. 7459, NYPL.

posed a twenty-four hour “suspension of hostilities” to allow him “just time” to deliberate.⁸⁴⁶

According to Lieutenant Colonel Cruger, d’Estaing “readily granted” the British request.⁸⁴⁷

At noon on the sixteenth, Maitland’s regiment, with the assistance of a number of Gullah fishermen, hazarded, according to contemporary British and Loyalist accounts, “swamps, bogs, and creeks, which had never before been attempted but by bears, wolves, and runaway Negroes” to reach the safety of Prévost’s defenses, augmenting his force by some 689 men.⁸⁴⁸ More importantly than the obstacles Maitland faced is the fact that the French and Rebels failed to obstruct his advance, which d’Estaing lamented, was “an unpardonable [and incalculably important] mistake” because Maitland’s troops “were the ones the enemy always put in the fore, and they evinced the most audacity during the siege.”⁸⁴⁹

A French participant, defending against criticism aimed primarily at d’Estaing for allowing Maitland to reach Savannah, sensibly noted that Prévost had been inclined to surrender, going so far as to announce that he would do so after making a face-saving “apparent defense.”

⁸⁴⁶ Prévost to d’Estaing, September 16, 1779, in Killion and Waller, eds., *GA and the AR*, 196.

⁸⁴⁷ “The Siege of Savannah 1779, as related by Colonel John Harris Cruger,” *Magazine of American History* 2 (August 1878): 2:490.

⁸⁴⁸ *Boston Gazette*, November 15, 1779. Although hyperbolic, the account accurately records that Maitland’s journey was rife with difficulties. Additionally, he had, for some time, suffered with “bilious fever.” [Alexander, *Storm over Savannah*, 20]. See, Wilson, *Southern Strategy*, 180 concerning the size of Maitland’s force. For the invaluable aid provided by the Gullah fisherman, see Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 145.

⁸⁴⁹ “Notes from the Observations of Count d’Estaing on M. O’Conner’s Journal of the Siege of Savannah,” in Stevens, ed., *Facsimiles*, 519-523 (document 2018). O’Connor’s entire journal with d’Estaing’s observations is in Kennedy, ed., *Muskets*, 39-75. Regarding the discord between the Rebels and the French concerning the failure to stop Maitland see, Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah*, 46-53.

The acceptance of just such a truce was quite common in eighteenth-century warfare.⁸⁵⁰ Unfortunately, according to the Frenchman, Maitland's arrival "changed all at once these pacific dispositions."⁸⁵¹ Of this fact there seems little doubt. The *Edinburgh Magazine* published an extract from a letter written by a Scot in Savannah, who declared that Prévost "would have surrendered Savannah had Maitland not prevented him."⁸⁵² Governor Wright confirmed this in his letter to Lord Germain. The decision to defend Savannah, he told the American Secretary, "made me very happy as I had some strong reasons to apprehend & fear the contrary."⁸⁵³

Wright accurately expressed the sentiments from all within the town. Maitland's triumphant arrival, he said, brought "inexpressible joy to the whole army."⁸⁵⁴ Loyalist Elizabeth Lichtenstein Johnston, whose father had been commissioned by Wright to command a scout boat in 1768, concurred. ⁸⁵⁵The arrival of Maitland's troops "raised the spirits of the people very much."⁸⁵⁶ At noon on the seventeenth, with Maitland's forces streaming into Savannah, Prévost held a council of war to determine their course of action. Wright and Lieutenant Governor John Graham were in attendance when, as the governor wrote, "it was unanimously decided to defend

⁸⁵⁰ Jean-Denis G. G. Lepage, *French Fortifications, 1715-1815: An Illustrated History*, 82. The author states that "standard protocol dictated that the attackers demand the surrender . . . , but it was expected that that this would be rejected for reason of honor," if only temporarily. Moreover, the "formalized 'rules' of siege warfare [maintained that] a garrison should be allowed to surrender with honor."

⁸⁵¹ Jones, *Siege of Savannah*, 58-60; Commager, *Spirit of Seventy-Six*, 1091-1093.

⁸⁵² Cole, "Siege of Savannah," 195.

⁸⁵³ Wright to Germain, November 5, 1779, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3:260.

⁸⁵⁴ *Royal Georgia Gazette*, November 18, 1779.

⁸⁵⁵ John Lightenstone Loyalist Claim, AO 12/4, in Warren, *Governor and Council Journals*, 13:895 (forthcoming).

⁸⁵⁶ Elizabeth Lichtenstein Johnston, *Recollections of a Georgia Loyalist*, 16 and 59.

the town.”⁸⁵⁷ According to nineteenth-century historian Lorenzo Sabine, Wright’s friends insisted that it was his determination which swayed the discussion. Moreover, they claimed, Wright had cast the deciding vote when the others were equally divided.⁸⁵⁸ There is no contemporary evidence to support this, although it is clear that Wright exerted himself to the fullest in arguing for a stand. Captain Moncrief recorded his account of the war council in 1783. He stated that:

a member of the Council [suggested that Wright] was prejudiced in favor of the defense of the place as he had great property in the province. Sir James declared that so far from having any prejudice of that kind, if the town surrendered upon terms, he was sure of getting his property, as he was convinced the French would give the garrison any terms to obtain possession of the place and that he had rather see his whole property torn to pieces than so shameful a thing should be done as to surrender the town without fighting.⁸⁵⁹

Thus, on the seventeenth, Prévost notified the Count that after “having laid the whole correspondence before [Governor Wright] and the military officers of rank ..., [it was] the unanimous determination ... that though we cannot look upon our post as absolutely inexpungible, yet that it may and ought to be defended.”⁸⁶⁰

In a letter to his father and brother after the siege, Cruger happily admitted that the British had “nothing else in view but to steal time till we could be reinforced with the Beaufort garri-

⁸⁵⁷ “Wright’s Diary,” 264.

⁸⁵⁸ Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1864), 2:458.

⁸⁵⁹ Colonel James Moncrief’s evidence for James Wright’s Loyalist Claim, in American Loyalist Claims, Series 1, AO 12 / 4, on Film 263, at the David Library of the American Revolution. See also, Moncrief’s evidence for John Graham’s Loyalist Claim, in American Loyalist Claim, Series 2, AO 13 / 35, on Film 263, at the DLAR.

⁸⁶⁰ Prévost to d’Estaing, September 17, 1779, in Killion and Waller, eds., *GA and the AR*, 197. See also, C. C. Jones, *History of GA*, 2:379-383.

son & throw up some works.”⁸⁶¹ D’Estaing later lamented his generosity, realizing he had fallen victim to a painful “trick.”⁸⁶² The Rebels, however, did not need the advantage of hindsight to regret that decision. Coupled with the frustration concerning the French demand for capitulation to the arms of the King of France, this decision further strained the already tenuous relations between the allies, which persisted throughout and beyond the siege.⁸⁶³

With Savannah officially under siege, one Hessian wrote, “there was no hope that [our] troops could be saved in any way.”⁸⁶⁴ During the next few days and nights, the two sides busied themselves making preparations for either an assault or defense. There was scattered and nominally offensive firing from both land and sea. On the twentieth, Prévost ordered the sinking of several vessels in the channel in the vain hopes of preventing French access.⁸⁶⁵ In another example of black loyalty to the British, two black deserters reported on September 21 that General Benjamin Lincoln had formed a junction with d’Estaing.⁸⁶⁶ As Jim Piecuch has so ably demonstrated, African American slaves quickly realized that their best opportunities for freedom rested in British hands.⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶¹ “The Siege of Savannah, 1779, as Related by Colonel John Harris Cruger,” in *The Magazine of American History*, 2:490. It should be noted that Cruger’s account was written on November 8, 1779.

⁸⁶² D’Estaing, “Journal of the Siege,” 50.

⁸⁶³ D’Estaing to Lincoln, September 17, 1779, in Emmet Collection, Siege of Savannah – Lincoln Papers, EM. 7457, NYPL; “Journal of the Siege of Savannah, with some observations by M. le comte d’Estaing,” in Kennedy, ed., *Muskets*, 51; “Lincoln’s Journal,” 123-124. See also, Henry Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown*, 33.

⁸⁶⁴ “Chaplain Waldeck’s account,” October 29, 1779, in Burgoyne, ed., *Enemy Views*, 316.

⁸⁶⁵ See, for example, A. Prévost to Germain, November 1, 1779, in “Papers Relating,” 292.

⁸⁶⁶ “Clark’s Journal.” See also, “An English Journal,” 13.

⁸⁶⁷ Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, 8-12 and *passim*. See also, Gary Nash, “The Forgotten Experience: Indians, Blacks, and the American Revolution,” in Fowler and Coyle, eds., *Ameri-*

By September 22, the allies completed the investment of Savannah as the French moved their camp just east of the Ogeechee Road with the Rebels to their left. In the words of Chief Justice Stokes, the allies “had entrenched themselves up to the chin.”⁸⁶⁸ The first martial encounter occurred that evening between an advanced British post and the French. But an assault was not yet forthcoming as d’Estaing continued making preparations, inching ever closer to Prévost’s forces.⁸⁶⁹ In the morning hours of September 24, Prévost dispatched Major Colin Graham on a sortie to both reconnoiter the enemy and “to draw them exposed to our cannon.”⁸⁷⁰ This scheme exceeded the general’s expectations. Although forced to pull back, Graham inflicted significant casualties on the French. Wright wrote in his journal that the French “were much galled by our cannon and the fire of musquetry & lost we were informed 84 killed & about 100 wounded.”⁸⁷¹

That same day, Wright again experienced the personal nature of the rebellion. At 8:30 that evening, near Hilton Head Island, the French vessel *le Sagitaire* captured the HMS *Experi-*

can Revolution; Nash, *Race and Revolution*; Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*; Wood, “‘The Dream Deferred’: Black Freedom Struggles on the Eve of White Independence,” in Okihiro, ed., *In Resistance*; Quarles, *The Negro in the AR*; Quarles, “The Revolutionary War as a Black Declaration of Independence,” in Berlin and Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom*; Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*; Duncan MacLeod, *Slavery, Race, and Revolution*; Frey, *Water from the Rock*; and Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black*.

⁸⁶⁸ Stokes to his wife, November 9, 1779, in Kennedy, ed., *Muskets*, 108-116.

⁸⁶⁹ “Wright’s Diary,” 264. Although historians have generally lambasted the admiral’s indecision, two of the most-well-versed historians on the subject of the siege, Alexander A. Lawrence and David K. Wilson, stand staunchly in his corner. See, Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah*, 87-93, for example, and Wilson, *The Southern Strategy*, especially 139.

⁸⁷⁰ A. Prévost to Germain, November 1, 1779, in “Papers Relating,” 292.

⁸⁷¹ The French losses were not quite as substantial as Wright had heard. The actual tally included 12 officers and 85 men killed and wounded. “Wright’s Diary,” 264 and *Royal Georgia Gazette*, November 18, 1779.

ment, captained by his son-in-law, James Wallace, and carrying his two daughters, Anne and Isabella. The *Experiment* had been demasted during a hurricane and limped to the coast, proving easy prey for the French.⁸⁷² Wallace's state of mind may also have aided d'Estaing, at least according to Henry Remsem who mocked the captain for being "so drunk that he did not destroy the dispatches, orders, and code of signals."⁸⁷³ The veracity of this statement must be questioned as there is no corroborating account. That said, the French did obtain the payroll for the British forces in Georgia and a bevy of supplies.⁸⁷⁴ Regardless of Wallace's condition, his loss was a severe check to the British cause, as one Hessian bemoaned: "The naval hero, who has captured ships and thereby created such an impressive fortune, Sir James Wallace, is reportedly captured with the ship, [but] surely sold his capture at a high price."⁸⁷⁵

It is unclear when exactly Wright learned of his daughter's capture, but Charleston's *South Carolina Gazette, and General Advertiser* announced the capture on the first of October.⁸⁷⁶ This must have been an immeasurably trying time for the governor. Two of his daughters had endured a naval battle and had been captured by the French and his son, Major James Wright, was stationed inside the town's defenses.

⁸⁷² D'Estaing informed General Lincoln that the capture of the *Experiment* would "prevent assistance from reaching the garrison at Savannah. D'Estaing to Lincoln, September [no exact date] 1779, in Emmet Collection, Siege of Savannah – Lincoln Papers, EM. 7411, New York Public Library.

⁸⁷³ Henry Remsem to Governor [George?], from Morristown, October 28, 1779, in Emmet Collection, Booth's History of New York, EM 10851, NYPL.

⁸⁷⁴ D'Estaing noted that Wallace was captured with "30,000 pounds sterling in piasters." "Journal of the Siege of Savannah, with some observations by M. le comte d'Estaing," in Kennedy, ed., *Muskets*, 60. See also, Anthony Stokes to his wife, November 9, 1779, in *ibid.*, 114-115.

⁸⁷⁵ "Chaplain Waldeck's account," October 29, 1779, in Burgoyne, ed., *Enemy Views*, 316.

⁸⁷⁶ Surely, then, Wright would have known by this date. See, Warren, *Georgia Governor and Council Journals*, 10:144.

While the adversaries busied themselves extending their fortifications on September 25, the allies began their bombardment of the besieged city. Prévost and Moncrief responded on the twenty-seventh by demolishing and then converting the British barracks located in the middle of their line into a sturdy breastwork. That very day the French blundered into a British patrol they mistakenly assumed to be merely an engineering party. The rising casualty toll endured by the French up to this point as well as the various delays in both the landing of d'Estaing's force and subsequent forward actions began causing a stir within the French camp.⁸⁷⁷

The allies increased the frequency and ferocity of their bombardment of Savannah as September rolled into October.⁸⁷⁸ On the twenty-ninth, Rebel General McIntosh requested that his family, along with the other women and children within the city, be allowed safe conduct from Savannah. Although McIntosh's motivations were purely personal, Royal Chief Justice Anthony Stokes later admitted that "there was not a single spot where the women and children could be put in safety."⁸⁷⁹ Even so, General Prévost denied the request.⁸⁸⁰ A few days later, on October 2, the Allies "kept up a continual firing upon the town for a whole day," according to Cruger, "doing no other mischief than breaking some windows and frightening the women and children."⁸⁸¹

⁸⁷⁷ Phillipe Séguier de Terson, "Journal of the events and proceedings, in the campaign of M. le comte d'Estaing, I myself on board the *Robuste*, commanded by M. de Grasse, commodore," in Kennedy, ed., *Muskets*, 17. See also, "Journal of the Siege of Savannah, with some observations by M. le comte d'Estaing," in *ibid.*, 56-57.

⁸⁷⁸ "Wright's Diary," 265; "D'Estaing's Journal," 60-62; and "Prévost's Journal," 98-99.

⁸⁷⁹ Stokes to his wife, November 9, 1779, in Kennedy, ed., *Muskets*, 108-116.

⁸⁸⁰ Harvey Jackson, *Lachlan McIntosh*, 98 and Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah*, 52.

⁸⁸¹ "The Siege of Savannah 1779, as related by Colonel John Harris Cruger," *Magazine of American History* 2 (August 1878): 2:490-491.

Wright reported on October 3 that, from 11:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m., a total of 123 shells “were thrown into every part of the town, but without doing any material damage.”⁸⁸² Justice Stokes provided a much fuller and vivid description of this attack in a letter to his wife. He stated: “while the women and children were asleep, the French opened a battery of nine mortars, and kept up a very heavy bombardment for an hour and a half,” forcing “a number of gentlemen” to the relative safety of Yamacraw Bluff. “In short,” he confided, “Savannah was at one time deplorable.”⁸⁸³

At daylight of the fourth, the French began a twelve-hour salvo, resulting in little damage, according to Prévost, other than “killing a few helpless women and children and some few Negroes and horses in the town and on the common.”⁸⁸⁴ Wright described the assault as “most furious and incessa[nt],” resulting “only” in the deaths of the daughter of Mrs. Thompson and a Mr. Pollard.⁸⁸⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Cruger, a New York Loyalist, stated that during this attack the French began throwing carcasses, or incendiary shells, into the town, which “only burnt 2 houses. Their shells, tho perpetually flying, did little or no damage, but their shott greatly injured the town; scarcely a house has escaped, [and] several are irreparable.”⁸⁸⁶ Another Loyalist defiantly wrote in her memoir nearly sixty years later that though the French “hope was by incessant fire to burn the town and force a surrender, a merciful God protected us.”⁸⁸⁷ Not everyone,

⁸⁸² “Wright’s Diary,” 265.

⁸⁸³ Anthony Stokes to his wife, November 1, 1779, in Kennedy, *Muskets, Cannon Balls & Bombs*, 108-116. This letter is also contained in Frank Moore, ed., *Diary of the American Revolution*, 2:224-228.

⁸⁸⁴ A. Prévost, journal entry, October 4, 1779, in Davies, *Documents*, 17:246.

⁸⁸⁵ “Wright’s Diary,” 265.

⁸⁸⁶ John Harris Cruger, “Siege of Savannah,” 491.

however, had been spared. A total of eleven African Americans were killed this day, four of whom were huddled in Lieutenant Governor Graham's wine cellar.⁸⁸⁸

Seeking to escape the allied bombardment, Wright moved to Prévost's camp, pitching a tent next to Maitland's near Spring Hill.⁸⁸⁹ Wright retreated just in time, or so historians have believed. However, an early nineteenth-century newspaper article tells a different tale.

In the siege of Savanna, by Count D'Estaing, in the year 1779, Sir James Wright was walking along what is called the Bluff, a high sandy bank of the river, during a violent cannonade, when he was struck down insensible by a double-headed shot which passed near him. He soon recovered his senses, nor was the smallest hurt, bruise, or impression of any kind to be perceived on any part of his body. On his becoming sensible, the first object that struck him was a woman standing over the body of her daughter, which the same shot had divided quite in two, about fifty yards before it passed Sir James. The mother and daughter had been standing in the door on the opposite side of their house from the French lines, the mother leaning on the daughter's shoulder, when the daughter dropped from under her arm, divided in two by the fatal shot. This was on the side of the town the most remote from the French lines; the shot must have passed through many objects, and was probably near exhausted when it passed Sir James Wright. Sir James was soon able to get under the Bluff, where he was safe till he could be conveyed home and felt no lasting consequences from the accident.⁸⁹⁰

On October 5, the allies continued their relentless shelling of the town. A Mrs. Lloyd's home, near the church, was burned and "Mrs. Laurie's house, on Broughton Street," was substantially damaged, resulting in the deaths of "two women and two children."⁸⁹¹ All told, ac-

⁸⁸⁷ Johnston, *Recollections of a Georgia Loyalist*, 58-59.

⁸⁸⁸ *Royal Georgia Gazette*, November 18, 1779. John Graham's Loyalist Claim, in American Loyalist Claim, Series 1, AO 12 / 3, on Film 263, at the DLAR.

⁸⁸⁹ "Wright's Diary," 265. Nineteenth-century historian Charles Colcock Jones, Jr. wrote: "In order to avoid the projectiles," Wright and Lieutenant Governor John Graham, "moved out of the town and occupied a tent next to Maitland's." Jones, *Siege of Savannah*, 25.

⁸⁹⁰ *Monthly Magazine* (London), January 1, 1818. No extant Wright correspondence can verify the veracity of this account.

⁸⁹¹ *Royal Georgia Gazette*, November 18, 1779 and "Wright's Diary," 265. Two more men were killed; 9 additional men received wounds of varying degrees.

ording to Chevalier de Tarragon, “forty women or children of various colors,” were killed during the siege.⁸⁹² Broughton Street was one block north of Wright’s residence on East State Street, on the site of the present-day Telfair Museum. The firing became so hot that on the sixth, Prévost sought permission from d’Estaing “to send women and children [including his own wife and children] out of town on board of ships, and down the river ... until the business should be decided.”⁸⁹³ Perhaps remembering the British general’s refusal of General McIntosh’s earlier request, D’Estaing and Lincoln refused, reminding him of his personal and sole responsibility “for the consequences of your obstinacy.”⁸⁹⁴ The incessant cannonade continued throughout the day and evening and much of the sixth as well. One or more shells destroyed the dwelling in which Chief Justice Stokes had stored his belongings, also killing two of his slaves.⁸⁹⁵

Wright wrote that by the seventh, “most of the houses in town were much damaged by the shot” and the “cannonade & bombardment continued” that day, burning another home, though “no body [had been] kill’d.”⁸⁹⁶ The next day, his son escaped a close call when French grapeshot killed Captain John Simpson in James Wright, Jr.’s redoubt in the Trustees Garden. Unfortunately, and typically, the governor’s account of the episode was of a purely professional nature, having failed to mention that Simpson was under his son’s command.⁸⁹⁷ Around midnight that night, d’Estaing began his final pre-attack bombardment.

⁸⁹² Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah*, 51.

⁸⁹³ A. Prévost to Germain, November 1, 1779, in “Papers Relating,” 293 and 296.

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 296.

⁸⁹⁵ Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah*, 51-52.

⁸⁹⁶ “Wright’s Diary,” 265. See also, “Clark’s Journal.”

⁸⁹⁷ “Wright’s Diary,” 265. The December 12, 1779, edition of *Rivington’s Royal Gazette* erroneously reported Captain Simpson’s death as having occurred on October 18, 1779.

After a council of war on the eighth, the allies resolved, after heated debates among the French officer corps, to attack the British lines the next day, focusing their energies primarily on the Spring Hill redoubt and Lieutenant Colonel Maitland's position along the British right flank.⁸⁹⁸ Additionally, the allies planned to make a feint along the center of the British line.

A week earlier, on October 2, General Prévost recorded his *expectation* that the allies' strongest exertions would be made on his left.⁸⁹⁹ His preparations henceforth reflected this belief. The combined Franco-American forces took arms at midnight and began, in Governor Wright's words, "a bombardment which continued till the firing of the morning gun at daybreak."⁹⁰⁰ As the sun rose on October 9, the allies began their march into "the valley of the shadow of death" at daybreak.⁹⁰¹

The battle on the "dark and foggy" morning of October 9 was one of the bloodiest during the entire Revolutionary War, exceeded only by Bunker Hill in sustained casualties.⁹⁰² The invasion began with a pre-dawn feint on the British right, facing the Savannah River, which was

⁸⁹⁸ For d'Estaing's general orders for October 8 and 9, see Emmet Collection, Siege of Savannah – Lincoln Papers, EM. 7422. For the specific plan of operations for the attack, see Benjamin Lincoln and Count d'Estaing, Document, October 1779, in Emmet Collection, Siege of Savannah – Lincoln Papers, EM 7502, NYPL. See also, "D'Estaing's Journal," 65 and "Lincoln's Journal," 127.

⁸⁹⁹ Augustine Prévost to Germain, November 1, 1779, in "Papers Relating," 292. Philip Mazzei later informed Thomas Jefferson that the "villainy of one of our officers from New-England ... deserted and informed the enemy of" d'Estaing's plans. [Mazzei to Jefferson, December 18, 1779, and Mazzei to Jefferson, January 8, 1780, in Boyd, *PTJ*, 3:230-236].

⁹⁰⁰ "Wright's diary," 266. See also, "Clark's Journal."

⁹⁰¹ "Clark's Journal."

⁹⁰² For the weather see, "Wright's Diary," 266. See also, Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah*, 80-81.

repulsed by “Major Wright” in the Trustees Garden.⁹⁰³ D’Estaing’s main assault, however, targeted the Ebenezer and Spring Hill redoubts, near the governor’s tent on the British left (again, facing the Savannah River). The Comte personally led the assault on the Spring Hill redoubt and was in the thick of the melee from beginning to end. Wright wrote that this “attack was made with great spirit on the part of the French ... [and] lasted 1 ½ hour.”⁹⁰⁴

Hessian Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich von Porbeck urged Prévost to order a sortie which helped thwart the allied advance at a critical juncture.⁹⁰⁵ The defenders met the allied force with a merciless hail of musket and artillery fire, which repulsed them, but with great difficulty. Writing a couple of years later, the Frenchman Pierre Charles L’Enfant declared that although military advancement had eluded him, he had the “satisfaction to have been among the troops who among the distresses of that unfortunate day, acquired as much glory as if they had been crowned with success – it is without partiality,” he told General Washington, “I say that never were greater proofs of true valour exhibited than at the assault at Savannah.”⁹⁰⁶

“The attack was made,” Wright later said, “with great spirit on the part of the French,” and lasted ninety minutes before “the enemy were beat back & retreated with great precipita-

⁹⁰³ “Wright’s Diary,” 266.

⁹⁰⁴ “Wright’s Diary,” 266.

⁹⁰⁵ Rodney Atwood, *Hessians*, 243. Wright later expressed doubts about the “foreigner” von Porbeck’s ability command the British soldiers in Savannah. [Lt. Col. Alured Clarke to Charles Cornwallis, 6 April 1781, and Wright to Cornwallis, 2 April 1781, in Ian Saberton, ed., *Cornwallis Papers*, 5:334-335].

⁹⁰⁶ L’Enfant to George Washington, February 18, 1782, in *Papers of George Washington*, Founders Online, National Archives. L’Enfant had been wounded at Savannah. See also, Elizabeth Kite, *Brig. General Louis Duportail*, 250.

tion,” in large part thanks to the “persevering resolution & bravery of the Loyalists.”⁹⁰⁷ Wright also praised the work of Captain Moncrief, “whose eminent services contributed vastly to our defence and safety.”⁹⁰⁸ Before long, deserters, prisoners, and wounded informed the besieged that the French had suffered terrible casualties. According to Wright, d’Estaing “received a musquet shot in his arm & another in his thigh, Count [Casimir] Polaski [Pulaski] a wound in the hip by a grape shot & since dead.”⁹⁰⁹ D’Estaing wrote that “General Pulaski was mortally wounded because he got too close in order to exploit more promptly the pathway we were supposed to open for him. His death is an incalculable loss for the American cause.”⁹¹⁰

Wright tabulated the French losses at nearly 1,000 “of the flower of their army.” The Rebels, he believed, suffered one half that number. “It is astonishing to think,” he wrote, “that in this attack we had only lost Capt. Tawes [actually Lieutenant Thomas Tawse] & 7 privates kill’d and 14 wounded.” Historian Alexander Lawrence determined the French suffered 11 officers killed and 34 wounded with an additional 140 soldiers killed and 335 wounded. He estimated that the total Rebel loss amounted to 21 officers killed and 16 more wounded and a count of 210 soldier casualties (with no differentiation between killed and wounded). The British losses, he

⁹⁰⁷ “Wright’s Diary,” 266. For the laudatory comment regarding the Loyalists, see “Case of Sir James Wright,” Sir James Wright Papers, MS 884, Georgia Historical Society.

⁹⁰⁸ Wright to Germain, November 5, 1779, in “Wright’s Diary,” 261.

⁹⁰⁹ “Wright’s Diary,” 267. See also, “Clark’s Journal.” Pulaski died at sea on October 11, en route to Charleston. Historian Charles Royster believed Pulaski’s desire for battlefield glory compelled him to recklessly pursue an ill-advised attack on that fateful day. Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War*, Kindle edition, location 3513. For more concerning d’Estaing’s wound see, Mazzei to Jefferson, January 9, 1780, in Boyd, *PTJ*, 3:230-236. Mazzei writes that d’Estaing “cannot yet stand without crutches” and has received a “joyous reception” in France.

⁹¹⁰ “Journal of the Siege of Savannah, with some observations by M. le comte d’Estaing,” in Kennedy, ed., *Muskets*, 72.

suggested, were paltry by comparison – 18 killed, of whom 3 were officers, and 39 total wounded.⁹¹¹

The days following the battle witnessed sporadic artillery exchanges interrupted by the occasional flag of truce to collect the wounded and bury the dead, although as Prévost wrote, many of the dead “were self-buried in the mud of the swamp.”⁹¹² A French war council determined on the eleventh that a retreat via Charleston should be their next move. Governor Wright and the British forces, however, remained on high alert “from ye 9th,” Cruger wrote, as “we continually expected a second attack from Monsieur, in hopes of recovering their lost reputation.”⁹¹³ But by the twelfth, it appeared that the French and Rebels were pulling back.⁹¹⁴ Reports had been coming in since the battle that Rebel militia “were daily going off in numbers,” Wright noted, and that the French “seem’d now to fire from two pieces of cannon only.”⁹¹⁵

The situation for the British remained stable and rather uneventful until the sixteenth when there was a brief skirmish on McGillivray’s plantation between a Rebel party and some

⁹¹¹ Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah*, 113. See also, Wilson, *Southern Strategy*, 181-182. These totals reflect the casualties for October 9 alone. For the entire siege, the Allies suffered about 941 compared to 103 for the British and Loyalists. See also, Peckham, *Toll of Independence*, 65. Peckham determines the British lost 40 killed, 62 wounded, and 48 deserted. “The most reliable figures seem to be 183 killed and 454 wounded among the French. There is also great variation in the American count, but a total of 457 killed and wounded seems authentic.”

⁹¹² *Ibid.* See also, “Wright’s Diary,” 267; A. Prévost to Germain, November 1, 1779, in “Papers Relating,” 293; and “Clark’s Journal.”

⁹¹³ John Harris Cruger, “Siege of Savannah,” 491.

⁹¹⁴ For the debate relative to the French and Rebel retreat, see Benjamin Lincoln and Count d’Estaing, Document, from Thunderbolt Bluff, October 13, 1779, in Emmet Collection, Siege of Savannah – Lincoln Papers, EM. 7504, NYPL.

⁹¹⁵ “Wright’s Diary,” 267.

armed blacks.⁹¹⁶ Wright recorded that the Haitian volunteers, a “French black & mullatoe brigade” prepared to embark for the West Indies.⁹¹⁷ Later that day, the manager of Wright’s Ogeechee plantation brought intelligence that both Lincoln’s and d’Estaing’s forces “were preparing for a retreat.”⁹¹⁸ Wright confirmed their retreat on the eighteenth. Two days later he confidently reported the French embarked at Causton’s Bluff and journeyed to Tybee Island.⁹¹⁹

The joyous mood following news of the French retreat, however, soon turned somber with Maitland’s passing on October 26.⁹²⁰ Edinburgh’s *Weekly Magazine* credited the success of the army to “Maitland’s bringing 800 men across the swamps, deemed almost impassable, and forcing his way through the enemy’s troops.” The magazine memorialized his death as akin to that of the “most gallant Wolfe.”⁹²¹

Following the raising of the siege, Wallace and Anne Wright Wallace were taken to France as prisoners of war.⁹²² In a very sincere gesture, though, d’Estaing allowed Isabella to

⁹¹⁶ *Royal Georgia Gazette*, November 18, 1779. This is likely the plantation of Sophia McGillvray Durant, daughter of Scotch trader Lachlan McGillvray. See, J. Norman Heard, ed., *Handbook of the American Frontier: Four Centuries of Indian-White Relationships* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1987-1998), 4:141.

⁹¹⁷ “Wright’s Diary,” 268.

⁹¹⁸ “An English Journal,” 15-16.

⁹¹⁹ “Wright’s Diary,” 268. The Rebel militia evacuated Savannah’s environs on October 15. Both Lincoln’s and d’Estaing’s force began their withdrawal on the eighteenth.

⁹²⁰ Prévost to Clinton, November 6, 1779, in Lawrence, *Storm over Savannah*, 105. See also, *Royal Georgia Gazette*, November 3, 1779 and “Clark’s Journal.”

⁹²¹ *Weekly Magazine* (Edinburgh), December 30, 1779.

⁹²² “List of Passengers on the vessels of Count D’Estaing’s Squadron, bound for France, after the Siege of Savannah,” dated “end of October 1779,” in Stevens, *Facsimiles*, 23, no. 2019.

return to Savannah to be with her father.⁹²³ It seems plausible that the Comte also afforded Anne the same opportunity, but she preferred to stay with her husband.

Even though a few French ships remained on the Savannah River, Wright issued a proclamation for a day of public thanksgiving on October 29. The remnants of d'Estaing's fleet departed on November 2, with the Count reaching Brest on December 5.⁹²⁴ Although Wright could revel in the fact that Savannah had been saved and, perhaps more importantly, that his son escaped injury and even earned military laurels, his personal thanksgiving must have been tempered by the knowledge that his daughter Anne was still in France as a prisoner of war. Neither of these facts, however, interfered with Wright's duty. Before the French had sailed, he began badgering Germain about the situation in Georgia and the need for additional support.

On November 6, Sir James wrote a lengthy tome to Germain, complaining of the tenuous nature of his regime and that the Loyalists were in "very great distress."⁹²⁵ He continued:

I am now, my lord, taking every step in the power of the civil department to check the spirit of Rebellion by compelling all those who I think might or ought to have come in and joined in the defence of the town but did not to give a very circumstantial account of their conduct during the siege, and have directed that those of the lower class who do not appear materially culpable shall be obliged to give security for their good behaviour for 12 months themselves in £100 sterling and 2 sureties in £50 each, also to take the oaths of allegiance etc. and to subscribe the test.⁹²⁶

⁹²³ Wright to Messrs. Clark & Milligan, November 4, 1779, in the Emmett Collection, Misc. MS, EM 20300, NYPL. Wright's exact words: "Sir James Wallace being taken was an unfortunate affair. My daughter Bella [Isabella Wright Wallace] was allowed by Count d'Estaing to come to me & is by me & wishes to join in compliments to the ladies."

⁹²⁴ *Royal Georgia Gazette*, November 18, 1779.

⁹²⁵ Wright to Germain, November 6, 1779, in Davies, *Documents*, 17:253-254.

⁹²⁶ Wright to Germain, November 6, 1779, in Davies, *Documents*, 17:253-254.

Three days later, though, his spirits had revived. He informed Germain that the Rebels were in great disarray and Charleston could be easily conquered.⁹²⁷ It was in no small part comments like this and British success in taking and maintaining Savannah which led to the ministry's full support of the Southern Strategy. The events of 1779 in Savannah would be the cornerstone, the linchpin, the British hoped, to the final phase of the war.

The *Boston Gazette* erroneously reported on November 1 that allied forces led by d'Estaing and Lincoln had been successful in reducing Georgia.⁹²⁸ Such conjecture was rampant. James Madison wrote from Williamsburg, Virginia, that "reports already begin to prevail that the British Army is in part if not wholly captivated."⁹²⁹ Benjamin Franklin received two similar messages from correspondents in France. Writing from Nantes on December 3, John Bondfield notified Franklin of "very pleasing" intelligence which confirmed that d'Estaing "destroyed the British armed vessels on the coast [of Savannah] and made prisoners at Beaufort eight hundred soldiers."⁹³⁰ John Adams also mentioned in a letter to Franklin that he had received word from America confirming d'Estaing's success in Georgia.⁹³¹

It would not be long, however, before official word from Savannah would dominate correspondence on both sides of the Atlantic. In early December, Abigail Adams wrote to her hus-

⁹²⁷ Wright to Germain, November 9, 1779, in *ibid.*, 16:212. See also, Warren, *Georgia Governor and Council Journals*, 58.

⁹²⁸ *Boston Gazette*, November 1, 1779.

⁹²⁹ James Madison to William Bradford, November 5, 1779, in *Papers of James Madison*, Founders Online, National Archives.

⁹³⁰ John Bondfield to Benjamin Franklin, December 3, 1779, in Franklin Papers, Yale University. See also, Jonathan Williams, Jr. to Franklin, December 1, 1779 and Thomas Digges to Franklin, December 4, 1779, in *ibid.*

⁹³¹ Adams to Franklin, from Ferrol, December 8, 1779, in Lint, ed., *Papers of JA*, 8:292-294.

band about the “unfortunate” affairs in Georgia.⁹³² Two weeks later, their son confided to his diary in a late night revelation: d’Estaing has been “repulsed at Savannah” with considerable loss.⁹³³ John Adams himself proclaimed his “mortification” at the recent events in the southern states.⁹³⁴ A correspondent of Franklin’s, though “greatly disappointed” by the affair at Savannah, admitted, “I do not apprehend the effects so dreadful as painted. The English are weakened by their loss of stores[,] ships & men ... and will thereby be prevented from attempting any thing material this winter.”⁹³⁵ Although John Adams found the events in Georgia regrettable, he added that “these small triumphs ... [are] a poor compensation for the blood and the millions [the British] are annually wasting.”⁹³⁶ Colonel John Laurens responded in much the same manner. In a letter to his father, he confided that d’Estaing’s “efforts though not entirely successful had been of some service, and his capture of [James Wallace’s] *Experiment* [as well as the] *Ariel* had lessened the number of infesters of the coast.”⁹³⁷

The Virginia Board of War feared that the British success at Savannah would embolden them to make an attempt on the Old Dominion.⁹³⁸ A week before Christmas, Philip Mazzei

⁹³² Abigail Adams to John Adams, December 10, 1779, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, Founders Online, National Archives.

⁹³³ Diary entry, December 24, 1779, in *Diary of John Quincy Adams*, Founders Online, National Archives.

⁹³⁴ John Adams to Samuel Huntington, from Paris, February 20, 1780, in Gregg Lint, ed., *Papers of John Adams*, 8:345-347.

⁹³⁵ Bondfield to Franklin, December 13, 1779, in Franklin Papers, Yale University

⁹³⁶ Adams to Samuel Huntington, from Paris, February 20, 1780, in Greg Lint, ed., *Papers of John Adams*, 8:345-347.

⁹³⁷ John Laurens to Henry Laurens, Charleston, October 23, 1779, in Emmet Collection, Siege of Savannah – Lincoln Papers, EM. 7519, NYPL.

⁹³⁸ Virginia Board of War to Thomas Jefferson, November 16, 1779, in Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 3:190-191

opined that the “future prospect of things in the southern states disturbs my mind as much as any unfortunate event ever happened since the beginning of the war. I am afraid for Charles Town, to apprehend another descent much worse than the first in our poor unarmed state. By the precipitation with which d’Estaing is come away, he must have left poor Lincoln in a very precarious situation.”⁹³⁹ General Lincoln himself also feared for both his troops and the city of Charleston. In the middle of January 1780, he pleaded with Virginia governor Thomas Jefferson to send reinforcements with all expedition because the security of South Carolina “is an object of so much importance and the loss of it would so effectually wound the peace and happiness” of our union.⁹⁴⁰ Writing from Paris, John Adams resigned himself to the fact that “the blow to d’Estaing at Savanna ... will banish all thoughts of peace from many minds, which would otherwise have entertained hopes of it in England.”⁹⁴¹

After the combined French and Rebel forces had completely extracted themselves from Savannah and its environs, Governor Wright felt comfortable enough to briefly bask in the tri-

⁹³⁹ Mazzei to Jefferson, December 18, 1779, in Boyd, *Papers of TJ*, 3:230-236. Mazzei’s lengthy letter also provides a significant insight into popular opinion concerning d’Estaing’s effort at Savannah.

⁹⁴⁰ Lincoln to Jefferson, January 24, 1780, in Boyd, *PTJ*, 15:585. Several days later Lincoln again wrote to Jefferson, informing him that intelligence has been received that the British “are now in a very great force at Savannah,” and commanded “in person” by General Clinton. “To counteract his designs will require every exertion on our part and call for the speedy arrival of the intended reinforcements,” which I hope you will “facilitate.” Lincoln to Jefferson, January 30, 1780, in *ibid.*, 15:586. For the best modern treatment of the subsequent siege of Charleston see, Carl Borick, *A Gallant Defense: the Siege of Charleston, 1780* (Columbia: University of SC Press, 2012).

⁹⁴¹ Adams to Samuel Cooper, from Paris, February 23, 1780, in Lint, ed., *Papers of JA*, 8:355-356. For a similar comment also see, Adams to Huntington, from Paris, February 20 and March 12, 1780 and Adams to James Warren, from Paris, February 23, 1780, in *ibid.*, 8:345-347.

umph.⁹⁴² Along with his Council, he set aside October 29 as a day of thanksgiving and prayer. Separated by the safety of nearly two hundred miles, Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Fuser proved to be in a much more festive mood. On November 9, he held a celebratory ball in St. Augustine in honor of the victory.⁹⁴³

On November 6, Rivington's *Royal Gazette* in New York became the first pro-British paper outside of Savannah to report the recent events. In that issue the renowned poet Jonathan Odell began each of the twelve stanzas in his poem, "The Congratulation" with the ironical, "Joy to great Congress, joy an hundred fold / The grand cajolers are themselves cajol'd."⁹⁴⁴ General Sir Henry Clinton effusively praised the events in Georgia. He jubilantly penned a letter to the Duke of Newcastle, declaring the lifting of the siege to be the "greatest event since the beginning of the war."⁹⁴⁵ Word from Savannah reached British West Florida on November 15 which, according to Chaplain Waldeck, "suddenly raised the spirits of all the English" and "instilled in the people of Georgia a great confidence in our troops."⁹⁴⁶

News would not reach Britain until December 20 and the response was euphoric. George III ordered the firing of artillery at the Tower of London for the first time since the 1763 Treaty of Paris and playwrights galore appended their works to include laudatory lines of the recent tri-

⁹⁴² "Council Minutes," October 22, 1779, in *Colonial Records of GA*, 12:449-450.

⁹⁴³ *Royal Georgia Gazette*, December 23, 1779.

⁹⁴⁴ *Rivington's Royal Gazette*, November 6, quoted in Cole, "Siege of Savannah," 198.

⁹⁴⁵ Sir Henry Clinton to Duke of Newcastle, November 19, 1779, in Newcastle MS, University of Nottingham.

⁹⁴⁶ "Chaplain Waldeck's account," November 15, 1779, in Burgoyne, ed., *Enemy Views*, 316-317.

umph.⁹⁴⁷ The King also opened the November 1780 session of Parliament by lauding the “signal successes which have attended the progress of my arms in the provinces of Georgia and Carolina, [which have been] gained with so much honour to the conduct and courage of my officers, and to the valour and intrepidity of my troops.” George III also expressed his hope that these victories would bring the rebellion to a precipitous and “happy conclusion.”⁹⁴⁸

The *Caledonian Mercury* reported a “general illumination throughout the city and suburbs of Edinburg to celebrate the victory.”⁹⁴⁹ The London *Evening Post* printed a celebratory poem titled “British Arms Triumphant, on D’Estaing’s Defeat at Savannah.”

Proud the Gallic Cock was grown,
But that pride is now come down,
British valour cuts his comb,
And drives the traitor bleeding home.⁹⁵⁰

London’s *Public Advertiser* also printed a congratulatory poem, “Punchinello to the King,” which reveled in the British triumph.

D’Estaing is again put to sea, Sir, Bibbity bobbety, bo,
Though like a French Dog, not content with his own,
He has carried off two of your Ships-and hid one,
But the Siege, G[od] be praised, Of Savannah is raised.⁹⁵¹

⁹⁴⁷ *London Gazette*, December 20, 1779. See also, Cole, “Siege of Savannah,” 190-198.

⁹⁴⁸ King George III, November 1, 1780, in Cobbett, *Parliamentary History of England*, 21:809. See also, A. Barrister, ed., *The Speeches of Charles James Fox*, 2:65 and *The New Annual Register...for the year 1781*, 112.

⁹⁴⁹ *Caledonian Mercury*, December 25, 1779, quoted in Cole, *Siege of Savannah and the British Press*, 192.

⁹⁵⁰ *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, January 26-28, 1780, quoted in Cole, *Siege of Savannah and the British Press*, 195.

⁹⁵¹ *Public Advertiser*, December 2, 1779. See also, James Gaston, *London Poets and the American Revolution*, 215-216. For additional poems of this nature, see Cole, “Siege of Savannah” and *the British Press*, 191-194.

In spite of these loud proclamations and assertions of British might, historian Richard Cole points out that not all periodicals shared in the joy. London's *St. James's Chronicle* proffered a quite sobering ode.

It is a mortifying reflection,
Amidst the sound of the tower and park guns,
And the peels from our steeples,
That our gain is only that we have not lost.

However, the cheers were far louder than the jeers. In mid-January 1780, Germain notified Wright that "His Majesty commands me to express to you his particular satisfaction in your firm and spirited conduct, and to assure you that he imputes much of the successful resistance made to the enemy to that ardour and resolution of which you have set the example."⁹⁵² So did Prévost, who wrote, "Wright most cheerfully determined to fare as we might in every respect."⁹⁵³

Writing in 1980, George Clark put forth three explanations for the British victory at Savannah – the failure of the allies to prevent Maitland's Scottish Highlanders from reaching Prévost, d'Estaing's "unpardonable" delay in actually assaulting the city, and his "courteous, but ill-advised" truce.⁹⁵⁴ Captain Ewald echoed such sentiments, wondering what might have happened had d'Estaing only granted a two-hour truce rather than a full twenty-four. He concluded, however, that the British "had luck alone to thank they repelled the enemy."⁹⁵⁵ A French participant,

⁹⁵² Germain to Wright, January 19, 1780, in Candler, et al., *MsCRG*, 38:247. See also, Davies, *Documents*, 16:251.

⁹⁵³ A. Prévost, journal entry, October 4, 1779, in Davies, *Documents*, 17:246.

⁹⁵⁴ Clark, "Role of Haitian Volunteers," *Phylon* 41.1 (1980), 361.

⁹⁵⁵ Ewald, *Diary of the American War*, 183-186.

however, defended d'Estaing's decisions as having to be made without the benefit of hindsight.⁹⁵⁶

Although John Adams refrained from directly blaming the French for the defeat, he opined that "it has always been the deliberate intention and object of France, for purposes of their own, to encourage the continuation of the war in America, in hopes of exhausting the strength and resources" of both Britain and the United States.⁹⁵⁷ Across the Atlantic, "a Loyal American" suggested the French performance at the siege "was evidence of their plan to encircle the American colonies."⁹⁵⁸ In a sense Adams and "a Loyal American" may have been correct. A lengthy civil war would certainly bolster France's position both in Europe and globally. However, once committed to a particular contest, anything less than a fully concerted effort would only serve to weaken the French empire. That said, the severe loss in the lowcountry gave France pause concerning future operations.⁹⁵⁹

Although virtually all British and French accounts of the battle hold the Rebels in contempt, it is interesting to note that Wright, too, failed to credit the valor of the Rebel units.⁹⁶⁰ Conversely, according to historian Richard Cole, most American periodicals portrayed the siege

⁹⁵⁶ Jones, *Siege of Savannah*, 58-60; Commager, *Spirit of Seventy-Six*, 1091-1093.

⁹⁵⁷ Adams to Huntington, from Paris, April 18, 1780, in Lint, ed., *Papers of JA*, 9:148-152.

⁹⁵⁸ *Rivington's Royal Gazette*, December 8, 1779.

⁹⁵⁹ Francois Louis Teissedre de Fleury to John Adams, from Brest, May 1, 1780, in Lint, ed., *Papers of JA*, 9:258. De Fleury admitted that the French feared any "rash" endeavors lest "we may find an other Savannah."

⁹⁶⁰ For examples, see Philip Mazzei to Thomas Jefferson, December 18, 1779, in Boyd, *Papers of TJ*, 3:230-236. Mazzei writes: "we hear that it was the militia who did not keep their ground." He also notes, in a letter dated January 9, 1780, that a newspaper in Nantes "takes notice of the great harmony which subsisted between the French and Americans." Dubious, Mazzei adds that he hopes such was the case.

as a British victory over the French, not the Americans.⁹⁶¹ Chief Justice Stokes wrote that the “French behaved with great bravery ... but they all accuse the Rebels of backwardness.”⁹⁶² But there was no unanimity concerning the Rebels’ culpability, or even cowardice, at Savannah. The Chevalier de Karlio declared “there had been [no] betrayal from the U.S.,” adding, “they served us and served well ... [and] all held with equal firmness [as] that of the troops of the King.”⁹⁶³

In the early 1790s, President George Washington toured the United States and spent several days in the Georgia lowcountry. In the early evening hours of May 14, 1791, he visited the Spring Hill redoubt. His diary entry that night indicated that many had solicited his opinion of the allied assault. “To form an opinion of the attack at this distance of time,” he wrote, “and the change which has taken place, in the appearance of the ground by the cutting away of the woods, &c. is hardly to be done with justice to the subject.”⁹⁶⁴

Blame aside, what did the siege of Savannah mean to Sir James? D’Estaing’s fleet was spotted in southern waters just a few months after Germain promised Wright that all was quiet on the Georgia front. Thus, in the first weeks since he arrived in Savannah to reestablish civil authority, Wright had to deal with the possible, nay, expected, capitulation of his government and British arms in Georgia. He witnessed in the later summer and early fall the marriage of a daughter, the active military engagement of a son, bullets and mortar fire whizzing above his head and at his feet, and the capture of his son-in-law and daughter by the French. It is not sur-

⁹⁶¹ Cole, “Siege of Savannah,” *GHQ* 192.

⁹⁶² Stokes to his wife, November 9, 1779, in Kennedy, ed., *Muskets*, 108-116.

⁹⁶³ Chevalier de Karlio to William Temple Franklin, January 8, 1780, in Franklin Papers, Yale University.

⁹⁶⁴ John Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Diaries of George Washington*, 4:177.

prising, therefore, that in early December, Wright humbly requested His Majesty's permission "to return to Great Britain."⁹⁶⁵

And what then did the repulse of the joint Franco-American force mean to the British war effort? Most immediately, it meant that Britain retained possession of its youngest North American colony, which allowed them to, in quite short order, reduce Charleston, South Carolina, their most valuable continental city. The long-term consequences, however, became much more complicated as the geopolitical implications of a long, drawn-out world war, altered the importance of the events of September and October 1779. Perhaps then, Sir James Wright has offered the best analysis of the importance of the siege of Savannah. He expressed in a letter to Lord Germain his belief "that if this province then fell, America was lost and this I declared on every occasion & urged the necessity of every exertion possible to defend this place."⁹⁶⁶

⁹⁶⁵ Wright to Germain, December 21, 1779, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3:329.

⁹⁶⁶ Wright to Germain, November 4, 1779, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3:287-288.

CHAPTER 8: “VICTIMS TO THEIR LOYALTY”: JAMES WRIGHT AND THE EXPULSION OF BRITAIN FROM COLONIAL GEORGIA

From his residence at Craven Street near the Palace of Whitehall in central London, James Wright penned a lengthy letter to British Home Secretary Thomas Townshend in September 1782 describing his experiences during the Revolutionary War. Upon the successful repulse of the combined Franco-American forces in the fall of 1779, Wright stated, “we flattered ourselves with hopes that we should have been able to remain in peace & quietness ... [and safe] from the tyranny & oppression of the rebellion.” Tranquility, however, would not be in store for the governor and the King’s loyal subjects or, for that matter, his rebellious subjects. “But alas!” exclaimed Wright, “before the minds of the people were settled and wholly reconciled to a return to their allegiance & authority of the King’s government, the troops were withdrawn.” Britain’s utter disregard of the province soon resulted in a “very rapid revolt” in the backcountry in which the Rebels “assassinated and otherwise cruelly murdered as many Loyalists as they could come at & upwards of an hundred good men in the space of one month *fell victims to their loyalty.*”⁹⁶⁷ The final two and a half years of the American Revolution in Georgia witnessed a ruthless cycle of internecine strife unmatched during the rebellion. Moreover, it was a period of an equally

⁹⁶⁷ James Wright to Thomas Townshend, September 3, 1782, in Mary Bondurant Warren, ed., *Georgia Governor and Council Journals, 1782*, 14-17 (hereafter *G CJ*). See also, TNA, CO 5/657. Townshend was the 1st Viscount Sydney. Wright opened this letter: “When I last had the honor to wait on your excellency I mentioned that with your leave, I would lay before you a short sketch of the situation of affairs in the province of Georgia.” The Palace of Whitehall is just several blocks to the northeast of Downing Street.

unmatched cycle of frustration and anger for Governor Wright – frustrated and angered by British disregard of the province.

The governor's irritation with the home government's indifference, perceived or otherwise, can be traced to the very beginning of his governorship.⁹⁶⁸ In fact, Wright made similar complaints to the South Carolina Assembly when he served as their colonial agent in London. In this last letter – one of his last extant letters in his capacity as agent – Wright sardonically informed the Assembly that “I know that nothing was omitted that occurred to me as beneficial, nor any pains spared, and possible more might have been done, if there had been a proper correspondence.”⁹⁶⁹ In fact, although Wright departed London for Georgia in the spring of 1779, he still had “not had the honor to receive a line from” Lord George Germain, the American Secretary in nine months.⁹⁷⁰ Perhaps it was this very deep-seated and long-lasting frustration, this sense of truly feeling isolated in a dangerous and distant peripheral land, that led to his request to return home; a complaint often posited by American colonists prior to the Revolution. At the end of November, the Reverend John Joachim Zubly, the passionate Rebel-turned-Loyalist, wrote a lengthy letter to Wright outlining his personal and financial sufferings as a result of the

⁹⁶⁸ For the first such instance of this complaint see, Wright to the Board of Trade, May 13, 1760, in K. H. Ledward, ed., *Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, 11:154-161 and Wright to the Board of Trade, October 23, 1760, in Candler, et al., *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, 28, pt. 1:291.

⁹⁶⁹ For such complaints see, Wright to the South Carolina Assembly, June 13, 1758, March 25, May 15, September 4, November 26, 1759, and January 5, 1760, in “Letterbook of Charles Garth and James Wright,” South Carolina State Archives.

⁹⁷⁰ Wright to George Germain, January 20, 1780, in TNA CO 5/665. Regarding Wright's departure from London see, Germain to Wright, March 8, 1779, in Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution*, 16:50; Germain to Wright, March 31, 1779, in *ibid* and *Lloyd's Evening Post* (London), March 24-26, 1779. “On Tuesday last Sir James Wright, Governor of Georgia, had the honour to kiss his Majesty's hand, on taking leave previous to his return to the government of that province.”

siege. Importantly, he revealed that the governor intended to leave Georgia: “It being reported that your excellency is now to take your departure from this place...”⁹⁷¹

Although hopes were high after the successful defense of Savannah, the reality was not nearly as sanguine. “I wish it were in my power,” Wright remarked to Germain, “to give your Lordship an agreeable or satisfactory account” of the province’s situation. The governor chided the ministry for not adequately fortifying the backcountry, leaving Georgia’s loyal inhabitants to be constantly “harassed and ruined by Rebels from Carolina and villains in the back country here, who joined them for the sake of plunder.” In short, he said, the “province had been suffered to relapse into rebellion again.” Moreover, he opined that if his repeated entreaties to station British regulars in Augusta had been heeded, Georgia would now be in peace and a haven for Loyalists from other colonies.⁹⁷² But serenity was not in order for James Wright because, at least in part, British officials had always considered Wright’s pleas for troops to be excessive.⁹⁷³ In fact, British Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot later excalimed that Wright “ought to be hanged” for his conduct and temper.⁹⁷⁴

Prior to the arrival of the French off the coast of Georgia in August 1779, General Sir Henry Clinton had begun making final preparations for the launch of Britain’s “southern strate-

⁹⁷¹ John Joachim Zubly to James Wright, November 30, 1779, in Lilla Hawes, ed., *Historical Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 21:108-109. For Zubly’s loyalties see, for example, Kenneth Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia*, 58 (delegate to the Continental Congress) and 66 (condemned as a Tory).

⁹⁷² Wright to Germain, November 6, 1779, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3:268-270.

⁹⁷³ Coleman, *American Revolution in Georgia*, *passim*, especially, 131.

⁹⁷⁴ “Journal entry,” April 19, 1781, in William Sabine, ed., *William Smith’s Historical Memoirs*, 3:400-401.

gy.”⁹⁷⁵ This plan had been outlined in Germain’s “most secret” letter to Clinton of March 8, 1778, and had called for Clinton’s shifting his focus to the southern colonies “with a view to the conquest and possession of Georgia and South Carolina.”⁹⁷⁶ In short, this stratagem sought to “Americanize” the war based upon three basic principles: 1) the intense and incessant assurances from southern colonials, especially officials like Governor Wright, that the South was filled with Loyalists who only needed the arrival of some British troops to make their presence felt; 2) the British desire to cut off Rebel trade, in the words of historian John Shy, “through which foreign aid for the rebellion was being purchased;” and 3) the dual fact that the southern colonies were sparsely populated and thus more likely to be subdued and the southern colonies offered a base from which to deal with the impending French threat following the Franco-American alliance. Moreover, the southern frontier offered many pro-British Indian tribes as well as thousands of potential allies then laboring on large plantations in the lowcountry.⁹⁷⁷

Until recently, historians have, virtually without fail, condemned the British for foolishly listening to exiled southerners who, so the story went, grossly exaggerated Loyalist numbers.

⁹⁷⁵ See, Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton’s Narrative of his Campaigns, 1775-1782* and William B. Willcox, *Portrait of a General: Sir Henry Clinton in the War of Independence*.

⁹⁷⁶ Germain to Clinton, March 8, 1778, in *Manuscripts of Stopford-Sackville*, 94-99. For analysis of the strategy see, for example, Paul Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy*, 82-125 and 170-173; Ira Gruber, “Britain’s Southern Strategy,” in W. Robert Higgins, ed., *The Revolutionary War in the South: Power, Conflict, and Leadership*, 205-238; John Shy, “British Strategy for Pacifying the Southern Colonies, 1778-1781,” in J. J. Crow and Larry Tise, eds., *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution*, 155-173; Jim Picuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, chapter 4; and David Wilson, *The Southern Strategy: Britain’s Conquest of South Carolina and Georgia, 1775-1780*, *passim*, especially, 159-164.

⁹⁷⁷ Shy, “British Strategy,” 158-159. For the importance of the potential utility of Native Americans see, Picuch, *Three Peoples, One King*. For a similar view of African-Americans see, *ibid.*, and Frey, *Water from the Rock*.

Historian Jim Piecuch has masterfully disproven this theory as being far too simplistic and patently false. He has asserted that Britain's error was not in relying on southern Loyalists, Indians, and blacks, but on never developing a coherent plan and never convincing its field commanders that such a plan would actually produce the desired results.⁹⁷⁸

Once word reached New York that the siege had been lifted, Clinton resumed the plan to retake the southern colonies. Clinton accurately predicted that without conquering South Carolina, "everything is to be apprehended for Georgia."⁹⁷⁹ In late December, about the same time as Clinton set sail from New York, Wright composed a nervous letter to Clinton. "We are now anxiously looking out for your arrival here and I must request in the most earnest manner you will not lose a single day."⁹⁸⁰ A few weeks later, Wright acknowledged his fear that the South Carolina Rebels, whom he always believed to be the instigators of the rebellion in Georgia, would soon attack the province. "I am no soldier," he noted, "but I don't like many things I hear and see.... [L]et me entreat you, Sir, to make an movement this way."⁹⁸¹

On January 24, Rebel General Benjamin Lincoln notified Thomas Jefferson that he had learned that a fleet of about ninety ships sailed for Georgia from New York with South Carolina as "their object."⁹⁸² The next week he informed Jefferson with absolute certainty that the British

⁹⁷⁸ Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, especially 328-335.

⁹⁷⁹ Clinton to Germain, August 21, 1779, in Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution*, 17:189 and Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 418-419.1.

⁹⁸⁰ Wright to Henry Clinton, December 29, 1779, in *Report on American Manuscripts*, 2:77.

⁹⁸¹ Wright to Clinton, January 20, 1780, in Clinton Papers, American Series, Clements Library, University of Michigan. See also, Wright to Germain, February 10, 1780, in Warren, *GCJ*, 1782:36.

⁹⁸² Benjamin Lincoln to Thomas Jefferson, January 24, 1780, in Julian Boyd, ed., *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 15:585.

fleet was “now in very great force at Savannah.”⁹⁸³ Although the British fleet had been scattered by inclement weather, most of the fleet had reached Georgia by early February 1780. By the eighth of that month Clinton had already advanced in force towards Charleston, leaving none of his troops behind in Savannah, a fact which greatly angered Wright. In fact, the removal of most British regulars from Georgia, Wright lamented, will leave “this province ... exposed to the utmost danger ... [as] almost any trifling force may come up the River, and destroy everything in it.”⁹⁸⁴ None of these British troops ever returned to Georgia and British officials – military and civilian – confirmed Wright’s fears. In mid-February, he expressed concern that although Savannah was in no “immediate” danger, he generally “faces incredible obstacles operating under such dire conditions in Georgia.”⁹⁸⁵

General Prévost’s tune had changed by early March when he complained to Clinton that both Savannah and St. Augustine, East Florida, had been rendered defenseless and were presently in the “greatest danger.”⁹⁸⁶ Clinton promised succor as soon as such assistance could be provided, but maintained his belief that Savannah was in no immediate danger.⁹⁸⁷ He did, however, assure Wright that if he took Charleston, “we shall probably carry on operations upon the Upper Savannah [Augusta].”⁹⁸⁸ Wright viewed such an operation as critical to maintaining peace in

⁹⁸³ Lincoln to Jefferson, January 30, 1780, in Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 15:586.

⁹⁸⁴ Wright to Germain, February 18, 1780, in Warren, *G CJ*, 1780:37. See also, Clinton to General Augustin Prévost, February 18, 1780; Prévost to Clinton, March 2, 1780; and Wright to Clinton, March 18, 1780, in *Report on American Manuscripts*, 2:91-92, 96, and 103-104.

⁹⁸⁵ Prévost to Clinton, February 13 and 17, 1780, in *Report on American Manuscripts*, 2:89 and 91.

⁹⁸⁶ Prévost to Clinton, March 2, 1780, in *Report on American Manuscripts*, 2:96.

⁹⁸⁷ Clinton to Prévost, March 8, 1780, in *Report on American Manuscripts*, 2:99.

⁹⁸⁸ Clinton to Wright, March 25, 1780, in Clinton Papers, Clements Library.

Georgia because “it is the key.”⁹⁸⁹ The governor soon responded that although he fully understood “the great consequence of the object before you,” he queried, “but how far it may not be expedient to take care of what you have got?”⁹⁹⁰

Meanwhile, as he prepared to lay siege to Charleston, Clinton issued a general amnesty to all Rebels for actions taken prior to the third of March.⁹⁹¹ Wright and his Council viewed the proclamation as potentially dangerous for Georgia, fearful that

many persons formerly inhabitants of this province may come in under Your Excellency’s proclamation and claim of you their pardon even [those who] were most active in leading men then in rebellion here and who were not seduced by the acts of faction or hurried away by their loyalty and by the tumults and disorder of the times but men who seduced others and practiced and encouraged the acts of faction themselves, men who seriously and deliberately promote[d] treason and rebellion, men who have had great time and frequent opportunities of returning their allegiance and duty but have not, men who were in arms when this province was reduced in January 1779, men who were then invited by Colonel Campbell to submit themselves but *who then and ever since have obstinately persisted in their treason and rebellion, men who have sat in judgment and men who have exercised and enforced under the rebel powers every act of cruelty, tyranny, and oppression against His Majesty’s truly loyal subjects* who have wantonly proscribed and passed laws or bills of attainder against innocent and loyal subjects. Men who were many of them in the lines during the siege of this place and who joined in the attack here on the 9th of October last and men *who are hard and dangerous and obstinate rebels.*”

He also suggested that instead of rewarding the Rebels with blanket pardons, the British should “encourage and reward Loyalists.”⁹⁹² Loyalist spirits indeed needed lifting as Wright’s predic-

⁹⁸⁹ Wright to Charles Cornwallis, July 3, 1780, in Saberton, ed., *Cornwallis Papers*, 1:344-345.

⁹⁹⁰ Wright to Clinton, April 6, 1780, in TNA, CO 30/15. All letters in this collection obtained from the Southern Revolutionary War Institute, York, South Carolina.

⁹⁹¹ “Sir Henry Clinton’s Manifesto and Proclamation,” March 3, 1778, available online at www.digitalhistory/uh.edu.

⁹⁹² Wright to Clinton, March 28, 1780, in Clinton Papers, Clements Library. See, Wright to Germain, March 24, 1780, in TNA, CO 5/665. In this letter, Wright stated his “fear that every Rebel who has fled this province and committed crimes of the blackest dye may come back and

tions had come true. In early April, the governor grumbled to Lord Germain that Georgia is “truly in a grievous situation, and [the Loyalists are] continually harassed and plundered by parties of Rebels.” This lawlessness in the backcountry could have been prevented, Wright believed, if only Clinton had sent a small force to Augusta.⁹⁹³ In fact, he was so fixated on subduing the backcountry that British Lieutenant Colonel Alured Clarke, who had taken command of the troops at Savannah when Prevost returned to Britain, bemoaned that “Wright seems rather tenacious of the post at Augusta.”⁹⁹⁴ Instead, that important frontier post belonged to the Rebels under the leadership of South Carolina militia General Andrew Williamson.⁹⁹⁵

On a more personal level, given that Wright believed each rebellious action a personal affront. A group of reportedly three hundred Rebels raided Wright’s “plantations at Ogechee [about fifteen miles from Savannah] and burned and destroyed seven of my barns ... and did me other damage to the amount of at least £8,000.... [Moreover], they shot four of my Negroes dead and wounded three more, one of which it’s thought will dye, and how many they have carried off with them, it’s not yet in my power to say with certainty.”⁹⁹⁶

claim pardon and protection.” See also, Wright to Germain, December 20, 1780, in TNA, CO 5/176.

⁹⁹³ Wright to Germain, April 4, 1780, in TNA, CO 5/665.

⁹⁹⁴ Alured Clarke to Charles Cornwallis, July 10, 1780, in Saberton, ed., *Cornwallis Papers*, 1:339-340.

⁹⁹⁵ “Rebel Council Proceedings,” February 1, 1780, in *Revolutionary Records of Georgia*, 2:207-209 and Wright to Germain, June 9, 1780, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3:305-306. As Clinton carefully made his way to the outskirts of Charleston by land, General Lincoln removed all Continental troops from the province. Just as Wright and the Loyalists were angered by Clinton’s like decision, Georgia’s Rebels protested Lincoln’s decision. The Rebels sought South Carolina’s assistance in guarding their shared bordered near Augusta. Consequently, General Andrew Williamson marched his Rebel militia into Augusta in early March.

⁹⁹⁶ Wright to Germain, April 4, 1780, in TNA, CO 5/665. See also, Wright to Clinton, April 6, 1780, in TNA, CO 30/15.

On April 2, just two days prior to Wright's letter, the British began constructing siege works around Charleston. Approximately six weeks later and with great difficulty, Clinton completed his investiture of the city and immediately made plans to extend the British sphere of influence in that colony.⁹⁹⁷ What Clinton did not do was make a movement in force towards Augusta, leaving the region defenseless against Rebel "plundering parties."⁹⁹⁸ In fact, Wright reported that the reconquest of Charleston actually worsened the situation for Georgians, as roaming "parties of Rebels [had come] from Carolina and plunder[ed] kill[ed] and carr[ied] off the inhabitants within 5 or 6 miles" of Savannah.⁹⁹⁹

Such hit-and-run tactics would define the remainder of the war in Georgia and South Carolina, and both Whig and Tory soldiers were culpable. At the end of May, General Williamson and his Rebel militia left Augusta, leaving many backcountry Rebels to ponder, according to a Wright correspondent, "in what manner [they should] apply to [Wright], to solicit peace, or obtain some kind of pardon." The governor had also heard that many South Carolinians were "preparing petitions to Sir Henry Clinton with the same views." If this were true, Wright wrote to Germain, "I am very hopeful my Lord peace will soon be re-established in these provinces and

⁹⁹⁷ For the best modern study of the siege see, Carl Borick, *A Gallant Defense, 1780*. See also, Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion*, edited by William Willcox, chapter 11. For Clinton's surrender see, Clinton to Lincoln, May 12, 1780, in Benjamin Lincoln Papers – Siege of Charleston, in Thomas Addis Emmet Collection, New York Public Library. For the reports of the commanding officers see, Clinton to Germain, May 13, 1780, in Clinton Papers and Lincoln to the Continental Congress, May 24, 1780, in Benjamin Hough, *The Siege of Charleston*, 173-174.

⁹⁹⁸ Wright to Germain, May 17, 1780, in Warren, *G CJ, 1780*, 44-45.

⁹⁹⁹ Wright to Germain, May 20, 1780, in TNA, CO 5/665. See also, Wright to Germain, May 25, 1780, in Warren, *G CJ, 1780*, 52-53. Wright noted another "party of Rebel plunderers," who had "carried off some prisoners and about 20 Negroes" within a few miles of Savannah.

doubt not but (as I have always said) the reduction of them will give a mortal stab to the rebellion.”¹⁰⁰⁰

Clinton would leave the task of securing peace to General Charles, Earl Cornwallis, sailing for New York on June 8 . Before departing Charleston, however, the British commander-in-chief issued a proclamation which revoked the paroles he had given to Rebels in March, stating: “it is fit and proper that all persons should take an active part in settling and securing his Majesty’s Government, and delivering the Country from the Anarchy, which for some time past hath prevailed.” The June 3 proclamation “restored to all [such prisoners and parolees] the Rights and Duties belonging to Citizens and Inhabitants,” but seemingly also obligated them to bear arms against the Rebels, if called upon.¹⁰⁰¹ In fact, however, both Clinton and Cornwallis insisted they did not want anyone of dubious loyalty serving in the royal militia. Loyalist and British commissary under General William Howe, Charles Stedman, argued that those parolees had remained neutral until Clinton’s decree forced them back into the Rebel camp. Moreover, he insisted that Loyalists were extremely embittered by Clinton’s affording traitors the full benefits of citizenship. Ultimately Stedman maintained that the proclamation laid the “foundation of mutual jealousy and distrust ... amongst the inhabitants themselves.”¹⁰⁰² This last statement is erroneous as the region was already embroiled in a civil war, but he correctly observed the proclamation’s effect on both the neutrality of the Rebel parolees and the morale of the Loyalists.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Wright to Germain, June 9, 1780, in Warren, *GCMJ, 1780*, 53-54.

¹⁰⁰¹ Henry Clinton, Proclamation, June 3, 1780, in Hough, *Siege of Charleston*, 182-184.

¹⁰⁰² Charles Stedman, *The History of the Origin, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*, 2:198-200. Clinton unconvincingly rationalized the decision in his account of his service in America. See, Clinton, *The American Rebellion*, 181-182. Clinton’s biographer, William Willcox, declared the decision ill-advised. Willcox, *Portrait of a General*, 321-322.

The extant evidence concerning Wright's sentiments on Clinton's June 3 proclamation is ambiguous. On the one hand, Georgia's Chief Justice Anthony Stokes arrested prominent Georgia Rebels upon their return to Savannah under charges of treason.¹⁰⁰³ Such behavior by Loyalist officials drew Cornwallis's ire. He ordered Lieutenant Colonel Clarke to notify Wright "that detaining a prisoner of war on parole to bring him to trial for treason at Savannah is highly improper and unwarrantable."¹⁰⁰⁴ On the other hand, in response to a number of backcountry petitioners "praying to be received and restored to His Majesty's peace and protection," Wright urged the Council to extend leniency to them, in the Council's words, to "bury in oblivion all past offences."¹⁰⁰⁵

In the meantime, Wright suggested eight hundred troops and one hundred and fifty cavalry would likely ensure that the "rebellion cannot rear its head again in Georgia."¹⁰⁰⁶ But, again, support would not be forthcoming, even though Cornwallis assured Wright that he would "pay the greatest attention to the security and protection of Georgia." Cornwallis reasoned, though, that as long as he possessed South Carolina, "a post at both Savannah and Augusta will provide

¹⁰⁰³ See, for example, John Glen, Memorial, June 12, 1780, in Candler, ed., *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 12:476-477; James Robertson (Attorney General) to Wright, June 10, 1780, in *ibid.*, 475; "Council Proceedings," June 14, 1780, in *ibid.*, 478; James Houston to Clarke, June 21, 1780, in *ibid.*, 479-480; Robertson to Wright, June 22, 1780, in *ibid.*, 480-483.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Cornwallis to Clarke, July 4, 1780, in Saberton, ed., *Cornwallis Papers*, 1:334 and James Simpson to Wright, July 6, 1780, in Candler, ed., *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 12:484-485.

¹⁰⁰⁵ "Council Proceedings," July 10, 1780, in Warren, *GCJ, 1781*, 22-23. It is, however, important to note that Wright's advice for his Council may have come after he received Cornwallis's missive to cease and desist.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Wright to Germain, July 19, 1780, in TNA CO 5/665.

Georgia “the most ample and satisfactory protection”¹⁰⁰⁷ Wright responded dubiously, reminding Cornwallis that the great distance of one hundred and forty miles between the two towns “gives great opportunities to ill disposed people.”¹⁰⁰⁸

Shortly after Williamson evacuated Augusta at the end of May, Loyalist Lt. Colonel Thomas Brown [James Grierson was commander of the local loyal militia and already there] moved in to secure the area for the British interests. In one of his rare optimistic moments, Wright expressed hopes that Whig resistance would end and even lowered the number of troops he requested from Cornwallis.¹⁰⁰⁹ It is clear that Wright occasionally allowed himself to believe that the British had gained the upper hand in the backcountry, but his modified troop request was likely a practical consideration in light of British commanders’ refusal to grant him any additional troops. In reality, the British never truly possessed the Georgia backcountry because the British military deemed Georgia to be somewhat insignificant and because the nature of the conflict on Georgia’s frontier was incredibly personal and dominated by atrocity and reprisal. As Thomas Brown later wrote: “A civil war being one of the greatest evils incident to human society, the history of the every contest presents us with instances of wanton cruelty and barbarity” because “men whose passions are inflamed by mutual injuries, exasperated with personal animosity against each other, and eager to gratify revenge, often violate the laws of war and princi-

¹⁰⁰⁷ Cornwallis to Wright, July 18 and 24, 1780, in Saberton, ed., *Cornwallis Papers*, 1:346-347 and 350-351. See also, Wright to Cornwallis, July 3 and 9, 1780, in *ibid.*, 1:344-345 and 347-350, Cornwallis to Clarke, July 17, 1780, in *ibid.*, 1:275-277.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Wright to Cornwallis, July 28, 1780, Saberton, ed., *Cornwallis Papers*, 1:351-353.

¹⁰⁰⁹ See, for example, Wright to Germain, June 9, 1780, in Warren, *GCI, 1780*, 53-54 and Wright to Germain, July 19, 1780, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3:310-311.

ples of humanity.”¹⁰¹⁰ Moreover, as historian Kenneth Coleman has opined, Georgia’s Rebels “must have had a remarkable intelligence system” because they seemed to always be a step ahead of their Loyalist counterparts.¹⁰¹¹ The Rebel cause was also aided by continued cooperation between South Carolina and Georgia Whigs, who provided reciprocal defensive assistance.

On August 16, Cornwallis scored a complete victory against General Horatio Gates at Camden, South Carolina, seemingly cementing British control of the South Carolina frontier.¹⁰¹² A true silver lining, however, accompanied the catastrophic Rebel defeat. General George Washington’s hand-chosen successor to Gates, General Nathanael Greene, replaced Gates as the commander of the Southern Department.¹⁰¹³ In mid-September Rebel militia Colonel Elijah Clarke made an unexpected assault on and laid siege to Augusta. Clarke nearly forced Colonels Brown and Grierson to surrender, but British Colonel John Harris Cruger marched from Ninety Six in South Carolina with a relief force and chased Clarke’s men from the area.¹⁰¹⁴ Rebel militia Lieutenant Colonel James McCall later charged Brown with the brutal assassination of a doz-

¹⁰¹⁰ Thomas Brown to David Ramsay, December 25, 1786, in White, *Historical Collections of Georgia*, 614-619.

¹⁰¹¹ Coleman, *American Revolution in Georgia*, 133.

¹⁰¹² For example see, Franklin and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis and the War of Independence*, 149-165 and Jim Picuch, *The Battle of Camden: a Documentary History*.

¹⁰¹³ George Washington to the president of Congress, October 22, 1780, in Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington*, 20:244 and Samuel Huntington to Greene, October 31, 1780, in Conrad, ed., *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 6:450-452. For a modern accounting of Greene’s substantial ability as a commander see, Gregory Massey and Jim Picuch, eds., *General Nathanael Greene and the American Revolution in the South*, *passim*. and Terry Golway, *Washington’s General: Nathanael Greene and the Triumph of the American Revolution*.

¹⁰¹⁴ Wright to Germain, September 18 and 25, 1780, in TNA, CO 5/665. See also, Ed Cashin, *The King’s Ranger: Thomas Brown and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier*, 114-120 and Hugh McCall, *History of Georgia*, 2:320-333.

en wounded Rebel prisoners of war.¹⁰¹⁵ Governor Wright's account, likely obtained from Brown himself, merely stated that "thirteen of the prisoners who broke their paroles & came against Augusta have been hang'd which I hope will have very good effect."¹⁰¹⁶ It is worth mentioning that by the end of 1780, Wright's attitude toward the Rebels had become much more harsh, as he eschewed the more paternalistic pretensions he had exhibited throughout his career. According to historian Edward Cashin, the execution was simply a matter of policy which "no one on the British side questioned."¹⁰¹⁷

The Rebel efforts so frustrated Wright that he angrily advised British Colonel Nisbet Balfour, the commandant of Charleston, that "the most effectual and best method of crushing the rebellion in the back parts of the province is for an army to march without loss of time into the ceded lands and to lay waste and destroy the whole territory ... for these people ... have by their late conduct forfeited every claim to any favour or protection." He somewhat humanely added that "if in the execution of this measure any women or children shou'd be left destitute, we shall be ready to subscribe towards their support."¹⁰¹⁸ Wright also met with the Georgia Assembly after the events at Augusta and stated "that vigorous measures are still necessary to crush the rebellion in the back parts of the province."¹⁰¹⁹ Such measures were indeed adopted by Colonel

¹⁰¹⁵ McCall, *History of Georgia*, 2:326-327.

¹⁰¹⁶ Wright to Germain, October 27, 1780, in TNA, CO 5/176. See also, Thomas Brown to David Ramsay, December 25, 1786, in White, *Historical Collections of Georgia*, 614-619.

¹⁰¹⁷ Cashin, *King's Ranger*, 118.

¹⁰¹⁸ Wright to Nisbet Balfour, September 18, 1780, in James Wright Papers, MS 884, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia. See also, Wright to Germain, October 27, 1780, in TNA, CO 5/176.

¹⁰¹⁹ Wright to the Assembly, September 27, 1780, in Candler, *CRG*, 15:625-626.

Cruger who sent “out patrols of horse to pick up the traitourous Rebels in the neighborhood.”¹⁰²⁰ One of Cruger’s officers confided to a friend, “We have now got a method that will put an end to the rebellion in a short time – by hanging every man that has taken protection and is found acting against us.”¹⁰²¹

After being chased from Augusta, Clarke’s men made their way into North Carolina where they assisted in the stunning Rebel victory over British Major Patrick Ferguson and his Loyalist militia at King’s Mountain, South Carolina in October.¹⁰²² Wright busied himself in these months attempting, with little support from the British military, to provide for Georgia’s defense.¹⁰²³ His inability to convince British commanders to provide even nominal aid had convinced him again to ask to return to London. “I am humbly to request that his Majesty will be graciously pleased to grant me his Royal leave of absence,” he wrote Germain, “and that I may be at liberty to return to Great Britain as circumstances may happen or appear in the course of next summer & to remain there for such time as his Majesty in his great wisdom may think proper. Possibly my Lord, I might be useful for a while.”¹⁰²⁴

¹⁰²⁰ Cruger to Balfour, September 19, 1780 and Cruger to Cornwallis, September 28, 1780, in TNA, CO 30/11. Cornwallis ordered his subordinates to send “Loyalists into the countryside to burn the houses of viallains, drive off their cattle and burn and plunder their property.”

¹⁰²¹ Lieutenant William Stevenson to Mrs. Susannah Kennedy, September 25, 1780, quoted in Cashin, *King’s Ranger*, 118.

¹⁰²² See, Lyman Draper, *King’s Mountain and Its Heroes: a History of the Battle of King’s Mountain* and Dave Dameron, *King’s Mountain: the Defeat of Loyalists*.

¹⁰²³ For example see, Wright to Germain, September 22, 1780, in TNA, CO 5/665; Wright to Germain, October 27 and December 1, 1780, in TNA, CO 5/176.

¹⁰²⁴ Wright to Germain, December 21, 1780, in Warren, *G CJ, 1780*, 69.

This situation would soon worsen as General Greene arrived from West Point and took command of the Continentals in the South.¹⁰²⁵ The following month, on January 17, 1781, at the Battle of Cowpens, the Rebels earned an even more dramatic victory over a full British force commanded by the hated British Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton.¹⁰²⁶ Wright wrote that he soon expected a “Rebel army will come in ... & throw us into the utmost confusion & danger, for this province is still left in a defenseless state.”¹⁰²⁷ Within short order, the governor received a disquieting letter from Colonels Grierson and Thomas Waters in Augusta and the Ceded Lands, who reported that the Rebels had, in Wright’s words:

assassinated eleven people, some of them in their beds.... This base conduct of the Rebels, I consider my Lord, as the strongest proof of the rebellious spirit which still continues amongst many of the people and that as they are not strong enough to retake the province they will endeavor to murder & harass & distress his Majesty’s good and loyal subjects.¹⁰²⁸

Just days later, General Greene engaged Cornwallis at Guilford Courthouse in North Carolina. Although Greene relinquished the field, the British victory was clearly of a Pyrrhic

¹⁰²⁵ Greg Brooking, “‘I am an independent spirit, and confide in my own resources,’ Nathanael Greene and His Continental Subordinates, 1780-1781,” in Massey and Piecuch, *General Nathanael Greene*, 85-118

¹⁰²⁶ Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Province of North America*, 215-222; Don Higginbotham, *Daniel Morgan: Revolutionary Rifleman*, 135-155; and Larry Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping: the Battle of Cowpens*.

¹⁰²⁷ Wright to Germain, January 26, 1781, in Warren, *G CJ, 1781*:14-15.

¹⁰²⁸ Wright to Germain, March 5, 1781, in TNA, CO 5/176. See also, Wright to Cornwallis, April 23, 1781, in Saberton, ed., *Cornwallis Papers*, 5:326-328.

nature as Cornwallis suffered substantial casualties.¹⁰²⁹ Georgians were also suffering as Rebel parties continued to plunder the backcountry.¹⁰³⁰

The following month the emboldened Rebels, led by Elijah Clarke, again laid siege to Augusta.¹⁰³¹ Wright complained to Germain that Cornwallis's great distance from Georgia had given "opportunity to the disaffected to collect & murder, plunder, etc. in a most cruel & shocking manner."¹⁰³² The governor referred to news he had just received from Augusta which related that Whig Colonel Isaac Shelby and a few hundred overmountain men had gone into the Ceded Lands and barbarously "assassinated upwards of 40 people ... and the unheard of cruelty of the Rebels was so shocking that the generality of the people took to the swamps for shelter against these worse than savages, who say they will murder every loyal subject in the province." Rumors were now running rampant that Rebels were collecting in force at numerous places in the South Carolina backcountry with the intent "to come over into this province & lay waste the whole lower part of the country." Wright surmised then that Georgia had now been "reduced to a precarious & dangerous situation."¹⁰³³

Throughout May and into June, the Rebels tightened their grip on Augusta while also, according to Wright, "murdering, plundering, laying waste & doing all the mischief they possibly

¹⁰²⁹ Lawrence Babits and Joshua Howard, *Long, Obstinate, and Bloody: The Battle of Guilford Courthouse*.

¹⁰³⁰ Wright to Germain, April 2, 1781, in Warren, *G CJ, 1781*, 22.

¹⁰³¹ Cashin, *The King's Ranger*, chapter 7 and Brooking, "I am an independent spirit," in Massey and Picuch, *General Nathanael Greene*, 101-103.

¹⁰³² Wright to Germain, April 24, 1781, in Warren, *G CJ, 1781*, 23-24.

¹⁰³³ Wright to Cornwallis, April 23, 1781, in Saberton, ed., *Cornwallis Papers*, 5:326-328; Wright to Germain, May 1, 1781, in TNA, CO 5/176; and Wright to Germain, May 25, 1781, in TNA, CO 5/176.

can.” In fact, he argued that Whig atrocities and intimidation had led many Loyalists to flock to the Rebel standard. Once again Wright pleaded that a few well-placed troops could have prevented such barbarity.¹⁰³⁴ No aid would be forthcoming, however, as Colonel Balfour informed Wright on May 21, because the British posts at Wright’s Bluff, Buck Head, and the Congaree had all been taken by the Rebels. Balfour added that Britain’s overall position in the region had reached a critical level and that he lacked the “power to succour the garrisons of Ninety Six [South Carolina] and Augusta.”¹⁰³⁵ Writing that same day from General Greene’s headquarters, Captain Nathaniel Pendleton presciently opined that Augusta would collapse within the week.¹⁰³⁶ The first of Augusta’s two forts fell on May 25, with the second succumbing eleven days later. Growing increasingly frustrated, angry, and isolated, Wright dispatched a diatribe to Balfour, arguing that it might now “be too late to prevent the whole [of Georgia] from being laid waste & totally destroyed & the people ruined, we are now in a most wretched situation.”¹⁰³⁷

Although Savannah remained in British hands, the fall of Augusta meant that Rebels fully controlled the Georgia frontier. Georgia’s prospects grew much bleaker following Cornwallis’s defeat at Yorktown, Virginia, in October 1781. Writing in December, Wright cried that “we are at this moment in the utmost danger & distress & expect every day” the arrival with a “formida-

¹⁰³⁴ Wright to Germain, May 5, 1781, in James Wright Papers, MS 884, Georgia Historical Society.

¹⁰³⁵ Balfour to Wright, May 21, 1781, in General Leslie’s Letterbook, Emmet Collection, EM 15519, New York Public Library.

¹⁰³⁶ Nathaniel Pendleton to Dr. William Read, May 21, 1781, Conrad, ed., *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 8:291.

¹⁰³⁷ Wright to Balfour, June 11, 1781, in Warren, ed., *GCSJ, 1781*, 29. See also, Charles Colcock Jones, *History of Georgia*, 2:477-495 and White, *Historical Collections of Georgia*, 611-614.

ble force” commanded by General Greene.¹⁰³⁸ By early 1782, Continental forces were inching ever closer to Savannah. In January a still seething Wright informed Germain that the Loyalists “ought to have supportd [sic] these southern provinces” because without them, New York would “be of little consequence.” He then again requested permission to leave Georgia.¹⁰³⁹ Historian Kenneth Coleman correctly observed that Wright’s correspondence “took on the note of pessimism of a man who knew that he was doomed.”¹⁰⁴⁰

In early February, Continental General Anthony Wayne forced the British and Loyalist forces to withdraw closer and closer to Savannah proper.¹⁰⁴¹ Wayne suggested that he could take Savannah if Greene would send reinforcements.¹⁰⁴² Wright truly was resigned to his deplorable lot, lamenting to his old friend William Knox: “I am convinced nothing will be attempted any where ... every insult & every depredation the Rebels choose to offer or commit will be suffered with impunity.” Additionally, Wright’s correspondence since the summer of 1781, if not sooner, revealed a man desirous of ensuring that blame for the fall of Georgia would be placed elsewhere.¹⁰⁴³

¹⁰³⁸ Wright to Germain, December 18, 1781, in TNA, CO 5/176.

¹⁰³⁹ Wright to Germain, January 18, 1782, in TNA, CO 5/176.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Coleman, *American Revolution in Georgia*, 142.

¹⁰⁴¹ Anthony Wayne to Greene, January 17 and 26, 1781, in Conrad, ed., *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 10:215 and 267-268 and Wright to Germain, January 18 and 23, 1782, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 3:362-363 and 364. See also, Wayne to Greene, January 25 and February 1, 1782, in Nathanael Greene Papers, Clements Library, University of Michigan. See also, Greene to Washington, March 12, 1782, in Conrad, ed., *PNG*, 10:517-521.

¹⁰⁴² Wayne to Greene, January 23, 1782, in Conrad, ed., *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 10:247. See also, Wayne to Greene, February 28, 1782, in *ibid.* and John Graham to Germain, February 25, 1782, in Warren, ed., *GCI, 1782*, 11-12.

¹⁰⁴³ Wright to William Knox, February 16, 1782.

In late April, Hessian Baron Ludwig von Closen confided in his journal that British headquarters had received intelligence that Savannah would soon be evacuated.¹⁰⁴⁴ A week later General Sir Guy Carleton arrived in New York to replace Clinton. Moreover, his orders called for a quick evacuation of the colonies and he determined to begin by evacuating the southern provinces.¹⁰⁴⁵ All of this, however, was unbeknownst to Governor Wright, who continued his efforts in defending Georgia and trying to procure British troops with which to dislodge General Wayne.¹⁰⁴⁶

Such efforts were doomed to fall on deaf ears as shortly after Wright made this request, General Alexander Leslie, who had assumed command in the South, received notification that peace negotiations had begun.¹⁰⁴⁷ At the same Leslie received this communication, Carleton dispatched a letter to Charleston ordering him to evacuate Savannah.¹⁰⁴⁸ Leslie notified Wright of the British plans to evacuate America in June.¹⁰⁴⁹ Wright responded with utter contempt and amazement.

We his Majesty's most dutiful & loyal subjects, feel ourselves at a loss for language to express the astonishment we experience, at the intelligence received, of an intention to withdraw his Majesty's troops.... We can with the greatest confidence assert that a greater proportion of the inhabitants of Georgia have attached themselves to the royal cause, than in any other British colony in America, and that numbers of them have been inhumanly murdered, and others stript of their

¹⁰⁴⁴ "Journal entry," April 28, 1782, in Evelyn Acomb, ed., *Revolutionary Journal of Baron Ludwig von Closen*, 194-195.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Eldon Lewis Jones, *Guy Carleton and the Close of the American Revolution*, iii.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Wright to Alexander Leslie, May 15, 1782, in General Leslie's Letterbook, Emmet Collection, EM 6682, New York Public Library.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Coleman, *American Revolution in Georgia*, 143.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Guy Carleton to Leslie, May 23, 1783, in Jones, *Guy Carleton*, 178.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Leslie to Wright, June 4, 1782, in General Leslie's Letterbook, Emmet Collection, EM 15591, New York Public Library.

property.... We little expected that the town of Savannah would have been evacuated, to the utter ruin of many Loyalists who have suffer'd the greatest hardships in defending it.¹⁰⁵⁰

In any event, the evacuation fleet reached Charleston by June 20 and proceeded to Savannah without delay, arriving on July 1.¹⁰⁵¹ Just days prior to the evacuation of the province, Wright again lamented that “the distress & misery brought on his Majesty’s loyal subjects ... for the want of 4 to 500 men [who] would have effectually held the country.”¹⁰⁵² The town that Wright had called home since 1760, was evacuated on July 11. From London that September, Wright penned a scathing letter to Thomas Townshend recounting the innumerable Loyalist sufferings. Although they had been encouraged by the crown and given “assurances of protection & support,” they were deserted by our country, to their “very great mortification, grief & astonishment.”¹⁰⁵³

¹⁰⁵⁰ Wright to Leslie, June 16, 1782, in Candler, ed., *CRG*, 15:662-663.

¹⁰⁵¹ Leslie to Wright, June 20, 1782, in General Leslie’s Letterbook, Emmet Collection, EM 15597, New York Public Library. For the arrival of the fleet see, Jonbes, *Guy Carleton*, 166-168.

¹⁰⁵² Wright to Carleton, July 6, 1782, in Warren, ed., *GCI*, 1782, 14.

¹⁰⁵³ Wright to Thomas Townshend, September 3, 1782, in TNA, CO 5/116.

EPILOGUE: THE LOYALIST COMMISSION

At the end of May 1782, Governor James Wright penned an emotional missive to General Sir Guy Carleton, Britain's final commander-in-chief in America. Wright informed the general that Georgia's Loyalists "have been firm in their allegiance throughout ... [and] have suffered every kind of distress for their loyalty," including the confiscation of their property. "Justice and equity," he added, gave them just "claim to the interference and protection of government," especially as it pertains to their possessions. In fact, from a purely financial standpoint, no one had suffered as much as Wright. He recorded his losses that spring to be in excess of £40,000 and expected that number to more than double in the near future.¹⁰⁵⁴ A London newspaper correspondent from New York opined that Wright "is the only capital sufferer for his loyalty in America, but that he has taken care not to be very poor."¹⁰⁵⁵

The next day, on May 31, Georgia's royal Commons House of Assembly dispatched their own memorial to Carleton. "From a very early period," the Assembly stated, "we have taken arms in defense of our happy Constitution, and shewn an unshaken loyalty to the best of kings." In return, they insisted, "we have been persecuted by our enemies, deprived of our possessions, and some hundreds have been most cruelly murdered for no other cause." Moreover, they now advised Carleton that they had been forced inside the confines of the city and "are now doing

¹⁰⁵⁴ James Wright to Guy Carleton, May 30, 1782, in British Headquarters Papers, Film 57, David Library of the American Revolution. For an overview of the Whig confiscation of Loyalist property see, Robert Mitchell, "The Confiscation of Loyalist Property in Georgia, 1782-1786," *William and Mary Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (January 1963): 80-94 and Mitchell, "Loyalist Georgia," Ph.D. dissertation (Tulane University, 1964), chapters 3 and 7.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Parker's General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, September 26, 1782.

duty with [British] lines,” while their “estates are [left alone] and confiscated by the Rebels, and are now advertized [sic] for sale.”¹⁰⁵⁶

The Rebel government passed two confiscation acts during the Revolutionary War. In March 1778, Governor Wright headlined a list of 117 Georgians (including his brothers, Charles and Jermyn) declared guilty of high treason by the Whig government. Four years later, he topped an expanded list of 279 Loyalists charged with disloyalty and “murder, rapine, and devastation,” offenses which justified the confiscation of their estates and their permanent banishment from the state, under penalty of death. Wright’s sons, Alexander, James, Jr., and Charles, and brothers joined him on this second list.¹⁰⁵⁷

After receiving orders to evacuate Georgia on June 14, Wright complained bitterly to Carleton, that “the situation of affairs here was not properly & sufficiently known to your excellency or I trust such steps would not have been taken” to evacuate this province “when a reinforcement of 4 or 500 men would have effectually held the country.”¹⁰⁵⁸ He had worked tirelessly and without success to maintain royal control of the province. In fact, he had fought beyond the bitter end and had become thoroughly bitter, disillusioned and, perhaps a tad, delusional in the waning days of the American Revolution, bemoaning that “the King’s most loyal & faithful

¹⁰⁵⁶ Sam Farley (Speaker of the House) to Guy Carleton, May 31, 1782, in *CRG*, 15:660-661.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Gazette of the State of Georgia*, September 4, 1782; *Gazette of the State of Georgia*, September 11, 1782; Candler, ed., *Revolutionary Records of Georgia*, 1:326-347 and 373-397. See also, James Wright Loyalist Claim, AO 12/4.

¹⁰⁵⁸ James Wright to Guy Carleton, July 6, 1782, in *Report on American Manuscripts*, 3:11. See also, Wright to the Earl of Shelburne, September 1, 1782, in Charles Colcock Jones, *History of Georgia*, 2:526. Wright stated that he was “utter[ly] astonished” to receive the order of evacuation from Lieutenant General Alexander Leslie on the fourteenth. See, James Wright Loyalist Claim, AO 13/37.

subjects” had been abandoned by King and country.¹⁰⁵⁹ The failure to subdue the rebellious colonists signaled for Wright the end of his long tenure at the pinnacle of provincial power, the end of familial redemption, and the end of his American dream.

On July 2, Governor Wright bade a final farewell to Georgia, his home for more than two decades. The British fleet spent made a brief stop in Charleston to procure supplies and additional passengers. Charleston had been Wright’s home for more than three decades prior to his appointment as governor of Georgia. He had been raised, learned the law, met and married his wife, and witnessed the birth of most of his children in the city. One week later, he left America for the final time, arriving in Great Britain five weeks later.¹⁰⁶⁰

“Poor Sir James Wright I hear, is come home,” wrote former South Carolina royal governor William Henry Lyttelton wrote on July 14, “and I hope he has done travelling for the rest of his life, and will have a competent allowance from [the] government to make him live comfortably.”¹⁰⁶¹ Unfortunately, Wright would go to the grave seeking both this peace and a “competent allowance,” spending his final years at the head of the American Loyalist Claims Commission laboring to secure compensation for Britain’s loyal Americans.

On August 29, King George III held a levee at St. James’s Palace where the “great officers of state [and] the foreign ministers, &c. were present.... Sir James Wright, Baronet, Governor of the province of Georgia, was at the levee, it being the first time since his return from America,

¹⁰⁵⁹ Wright to Thomas Townshend, September 3, 1782, in CO 5/657. For a complete transcription of this lengthy letter see, Warren, ed., *GCI*, 1782:14-17.

¹⁰⁶⁰ *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, August 24, 1782. This news appeared in several other London papers as well. See also, Eldon L. Jones, *Guy Carleton and the Close of the American War*, 168-169.

¹⁰⁶¹ William Henry Lyttelton to William Knox, July 14, 1782, in *Manuscripts of Captain H. V. Knox*, 187-188.

when he was most graciously received, and had the honor to kiss His Majesty's hand." Wright utilized this special meeting to deliver a memorial to his sovereign, "stating the distressed condition and sufferings of His Majesty's loyal and faithful subjects of Georgia."¹⁰⁶² Wright's task would prove difficult indeed; one exiled and well-to-do Loyalist lamented that "the state is not to reward the loyalty of every subject.... I cannot foresee what I may hereafter do, but easily that I must suffer hunger and nakedness in the comfortless mansions of the wretched."¹⁰⁶³

In the fall of 1782, Prime Minister William Petty, Lord Shelburne, appointed MP's John Wilmot and Daniel Parker Coke "to enquire into the cases of all American sufferers," a duty which they began in October. Each Loyalist desirous of receiving compensation was required to submit a petition attesting to their fidelity and outlining their property losses. In addition, the petitioners were required to attend a hearing and produce affidavits "to confirm or to explain the merits, the losses, and other circumstances of each case."¹⁰⁶⁴

In mid-February 1783, the *London Chronicle* announced the list of "agents chosen by the loyal American sufferers" to represent each former colony.¹⁰⁶⁵ In his account of the commission, Wilmot wrote:

¹⁰⁶² *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, August 30, 1782. Wright also attended numerous levees. See, *Parker's General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* and *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, September 12, 1782; *London Courant and Daily Advertiser*, September 20, 1782; *Parker's General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, October 16, 1782;

¹⁰⁶³ Samuel Curwen to Judge [Thomas] Sewell, December 31, 1776, in *The Journal and Letters of Samuel Curwen*, 100-102.

¹⁰⁶⁴ John Eardley-Wilmont, *Historical View of the Commission for Enquiring into the Losses, - Services, and Claims of the American Loyalists*, 17-20 and 51-55. In March 1784, Colonel Robert Kingston, Colonel Thomas Dundas, and John Marsh were added to the commission. See, *ibid.*, 44.

¹⁰⁶⁵ *London Chronicle*, February 15, 1783. See also, *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, April 18, 1783 and *General Evening Post*, April 19, 1783.

Sir James Wright was, both from his situation, age, activity, and zeal, as well as abilities and large property, placed at the head of the Board of Agents of American Loyalists.... Being much respected, both in his public and private character, he kept his province, as long as possible, free from the general contagion ... until February 1776.... [B]ut [the] government being determined to support him with energy, encouraged him to return in the spring of 1779.... [During] the siege [of Savannah], the [French] were repulsed in a most gallant manner ... aided by the determined zeal and spirit of Sir James Wright himself, which made the successful defence of Savannah one of the most brilliant events of the War.¹⁰⁶⁶

Writing from Paris during the postwar peace talks, Wright's former friend Henry Laurens inserted a significant block quote from an unnamed acquaintance concerning the peace talks. In addition to denigrating Lord Shelburne as "rotten, deceitful, treacherous, & the very essence of Toryism," the acquaintance commented that "it is egregious in [the Loyalists] to appoint L[o]r[d] Dunmore, Govr Franklin, Sr James Wright, and even Arnold to be their agents."¹⁰⁶⁷

At approximately the same time, the agents, with Wright at their head, published a pamphlet titled, *The Case and Claim of the American Loyalists: Impartially Stated and Considered*. The thirty-eight page pamphlet echoed Wright's persistent complaint throughout the war: "Though destitute of that protection and support which they had a right to expect from the state," the document read, "they were called upon 'to withstand and suppress the rebellion.'" The Loyalists even quoted Thomas Paine's *The Crisis* as evidence that Britain had neglected them. "The British," Paine wrote, "have lost their interest in American with the disaffected."¹⁰⁶⁸

¹⁰⁶⁶ John Eardley-Wilmont, *Historical View of the Commission for Enquiring into the Losses, - Services, and Claims of the American Loyalists*, 46-47.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Henry Laurens to Ralph Izard, April 23, 1783, in Hamer, ed., *Papers of Henry Laurens*, 16:187-190.

¹⁰⁶⁸ *The Case and Claim of the American Loyalists: Impartially Stated and Considered* (London, 1783), 7 and 9.

The second part of the pamphlet set out to justify their claim for remuneration. Their central argument was that the “great aim and end of civil society is protection of the persons and properties of individuals, by an *equal contribution* to whatever is necessary to attain and secure it.” They offered common sense examples of this contract as well as historical references to justify their right to compensation. In short, they maintained “they have lost and sacrificed all that men can possible lose or suffer, *life itself excepted*.”¹⁰⁶⁹

Loyal Georgians also submitted their own petition to the King George III because they deemed their situation, as the only colony in which Britain reestablished civil government, to be unique. Moreso than their particular fidelity, they submitted an extract of a letter from Lord George Germain to Governor Wright in which the King “assure[d] them that his loyal and faithful subjects of Georgia may always rely upon his Majesty’s protection, and constant attention to their prosperity and happiness.” It was just such a promise, which was oft repeated, that instilled in them an even deeper resilience than they had already exhibited.¹⁰⁷⁰

Perhaps the most resilient of these loyal Georgians, James Wright occupied the final three years of his life advocating for the Loyalist cause. This unrelenting task involved attending daily hearings, incessant meetings with officials and other Loyalists, and providing hundreds of affidavits for his fellow Georgians.¹⁰⁷¹

¹⁰⁶⁹ *The Case and Claim of the American Loyalists: Impartially Stated and Considered* (London, 1783), 17 and 38.

¹⁰⁷⁰ “The Particular Case of the Georgia Loyalists: in addition to the General Case and Claim of the American Loyalists,” February 1783. AO 13/85. The letter: Germain to Wright, August 2, 1781. See also, Robert Mitchell, “The Losses and Compensation of Georgia Loyalists,” *GHQ* 68, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 233-243.

¹⁰⁷¹ Warren, *GCI, Loyalist Claims*, unpublished, *passim*. See also, Mitchell, “The Losses and Compensation of Georgia Loyalists,” 235.

Wright also spent a great deal of energy pressing for his own compensation package. Moreover, he procured an impressive list of supporters, including King George III, William Pitt (the Younger), William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield, George Germain, 1st Viscount Sackville, Thomas Townshend, 1st Viscount Sydney, William Legge, 2nd Earl of Dartmouth, Wills Hill, 1st Marquess of Downshire, and Sir Henry Clinton. He submitted the largest claim of any Georgian, claiming to have lost 231 slaves and more than 26,000 acres of land dispersed over eleven plantations and additional tracts.¹⁰⁷² The Loyalist Commission accepted a claim valued at £100,260.11 and awarded him £35,347. A subsequent Parliamentary act provided a reduction of all claims in excess of £10,000 and Wright was ultimately awarded £32,977 plus £1,000 per annum as a pension for his service as governor. According to Robert Mitchell's examination of Georgia Loyalist claims, Wright's individual claim represented eleven percent of all Georgia claims and his award nearly equaled fifteen percent of all compensation.¹⁰⁷³

Wright, however, would not live to hear the committee's final decision. He died at his home on Fludyer Street in southeast London on Sunday, November 20, 1785 and was interred in the North transept at Westminster Abbey one week later. His death was reported on both sides of the Atlantic. The most thorough of these was the *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*:

On Sunday last died Sir James Wright, Baronet, late Governor of Georgia, in the 71st year of his age. As he presided in that province for two and twenty years with distinguished ability and integrity, it seems to be a tribute justly due to his merit as a faithful servant of his king and Country. Before the commotions in America, his example of industry and skill in the cultivation and improvement of Georgia was of eminent advantage; and the faithful discharge of his executive and judicial commission was universally acknowledged, by the people over whom he presided, none of his decrees as Chancellor having ever been reversed. Under all the

¹⁰⁷² James Wright Loyalist Claim, AO 12/4.

¹⁰⁷³ Mitchell, "The Losses and Compensation of Georgia Loyalists," 239-240. See also, Wilmot, *Historical View*, 47.

difficulties which attended the latter period of his government, his spirited conduct in defence of that province was singularly manifested. *His loss is deeply felt and sincerely lamented by his family and friends, as well, as by his unfortunate fellow-sufferers from America, whose cause he most assiduously laboured to support and solicit; and the success which attended his active exertions in their behalf afforded him real comfort under his languishing state of health for some time before his death.*¹⁰⁷⁴

The *Gazette of the State of Georgia* was much less laudatory, simply stating: “Died. Yesterday at his house in Westminster, Sir James Wright, Bart., many years Governor of Georgia.”¹⁰⁷⁵ Thus, after having dedicated more than two decades of his life to the province of Georgia, overseeing rapid economic and growth and geographic expansion, James Wright’s life was reduced to a hollow afterthought.

The inestimable historian of colonial and Revolutionary America, Bernard Bailyn, concluded that Massachusetts governor Thomas Hutchinson “felt no elemental discontent, no romantic aspirations.” The same certainly holds true for the pragmatic James Wright. Governor Wright spent a lifetime relentlessly, yet patiently, accumulating – land, wealth, and power. He thoroughly understood the eighteenth-century world in which he lived and focused his boundless energies on making the most of the opportunities presented him. Like Hutchinson, however, Wright “was never crudely avaricious ... ruthless ... [or] flamboyant.” His lifelong quest for familial redemption, private wealth, and, perhaps most importantly, personal respect, was grounded in a deep conservatism which required, according to Bailyn, “a stable world within which to work, a hierarchy to ascend, and a formal, external calibration by which to measure where he was.”¹⁰⁷⁶ His upbringing left him ill-equipped to understand the moral passions driving the bur-

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, November 24, 1785.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Gazette of the State of Georgia*, February 23, 1786.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 25.

geoning rebellion. Wright was rigid, distant, and aloof and, by the mid-1770s, found himself trapped by the growing crisis and chaos which soon enveloped and ultimately destroyed him.

Insecurity was Governor Wright's most evident character defect and can be witnessed throughout his professional correspondence, from the 1750s until his death. Unbending and industrious, Wright had an almost pathological need to be appreciated, especially by his superiors. This, however, is not to say that he was a sycophant because he was not. He never hesitated to judge the performance of his superiors, although always to couch such criticisms in the proper deferential tone.

He earnestly believed that English and Georgian interests to be entirely compatible and worked assiduously to achieve both. Furthermore, he sincerely believed that he was possessed with a unique insight into the psyche of both Briton and Georgian alike and thus capable of successfully mediating the imperial crisis. He was born in England and spent roughly twenty years in London, usually near the centers of power, yet he spent most of his life on the periphery, building long-lasting relationships with colonists from Charleston to Savannah.

A consummate conservative, Wright empathized with colonists who had become angry with Parliamentary encroachments. Furthermore, he understood the vital importance of the colonies to the British Empire and to the mercantilist system. Importantly, though, Wright believed in the British system of governance and insisted that the system could only be challenged through proper legal channels and not mob action. The very notion of aggressively defying British law was inconceivable to him and such acts threatened to overturn the entire social, economic, and political foundation on which his world was based. Thus, during the sweltering summer of 1775, when Wright wrote that the "powers of government are wrested out of my hands," his personal agony extended well beyond the political arena for he fully comprehended that the Re-

bels were, according to historian Gordon Wood, “indeed trying to destroy the ligaments of the older society and to reknit people together in new ways.”¹⁰⁷⁷

¹⁰⁷⁷ Wright to Dartmouth, July 8, 1775, in *GHS Collections*, 3:191-192 and Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 214.

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