

The "Havoc of War" and its Aftermath in Revolutionary South Carolina

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The approach of war between England and America inspired many privileged South Carolinians to announce their willingness to suffer for freedom's sake. They would move, disown America, or fight "rather than submit to tyranny." They did not ignore the possibility of dying, but since their cause was just, death would be noble, "generous", preferable to servitude.¹ That vision was shared by Richard Hutson, who wrote of the "awfully pleasing sight" of the British army and navy "most shamefully repulsed" when they attacked Charleston in 1776. Romantically, perhaps not inaccurately, he spread the tale of one sergeant, "McDougal by name," who "rivals Epaminondas in fame; when breathing his last, 'My brave lads,' he cries, 'I am just expiring, but for heaven's sake let not sweet liberty expire with me.'"²

Few Carolinians expressed an awareness that warfare consisted of more than noble gestures and deeds; few seemed worried that military death could be inglorious. Josiah Smith, who was unwilling to submit "to the will & controul of a haughty and abandoned sett of rulers," might have had such gloomy prospects in mind when he wrote that "horrible consequences" attended bloodshed.³ So might Henry Laurens, whose son returned from England to fight and die in and for South Carolina. Ready "to hazard all ... [his] estate," Laurens worried that the British, encouraging Indian attacks and slave insurrections, would cause the "most horrible butcheries of innocent women & children," and that "civil discord between fellow citizens & neighbour Farmers" would lead to "fraud perjury & assassination."⁴

Probably few people had the knowledge, or even willingness, to imagine the nature of South Carolina's Revolutionary War. Neither could most activists, those Carolinians from in and around Charleston who led the colony first to war and then, however reluctantly, to independence,

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¹ Edward Rutledge to Ralph Izard, 8 Dec. 1775, Anne Izard Deas, *Correspondence of Mr. Ralph Izard, of South Carolina, from the year 1774 to 1804; with a short memoir* (New York, 1844), p. 167; John Laurens to Francis Kinloch, 10 March 1775, *Charleston Yearbook*, 1882, pp. 345-47; William Henry Drayton, Charge to Grand Jury, 1774, in Alexander GREGG, *History of the Old Cheraws* (New York, 1867), p. 211.

² Hutson to Thomas Hutson, 30 June 1776, *Charleston Yearbook*, 1895, pp. 323-25.

³ Smith to James Poyas, 10 Jan. 1776, Smith to George Austin, 22 July 1774, Josiah Smith Letterbook (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina).

⁴ Laurens to James Laurens, 20 Oct. 1775, quoted in David Duncan WALLACE, *The Life of Henry Laurens* (New York, 1915), pp. 217-18; Laurens to John Laurens, 30 July 1775, Henry and John Laurens Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress).

predict that they would not suffer most. They had, after all, most property to lose, and they faced not only the British but a sometimes hostile, and always potentially dangerous, slave population, fear of which prompted ruthless precautions. Tragically, however, the war was most ghastly in sections of the colony which had lacked the political power to seriously influence prewar policies. There the war may have been bloodier and more cruel than anyplace else in America. There it called forth not only the best that people were capable of but the worst. It encouraged vicious behaviour not easily controlled in the years of fighting or abandoned afterwards. As people in those areas suffered so greatly, they could neither quickly restore order to their lives nor forget what they had survived. Though peace came to most of the coastal area, disorder of one kind or another continued inland. The difference was crucial in determining some postwar disagreements.

When the British were defeated at Charleston in 1776, they moved north, not to return until 1779 when they sent an expedition up the Carolina coast from a newly won Georgia stronghold. During this brief British penetration, two British soldiers who had been pressed into service in Dublin divulged their orders not to take prisoners. Their commander, they said, had set a brutal example by murdering thirteen or fourteen of the surrendered enemy.⁵ Though they may have been lying, the deserters were nonetheless acknowledging the horrors of war. Within a year or two, Carolinians from the interior and Georgetown District, the coastal region north of Charleston, had the experience to agree.

The British returned early in 1780, shifting the war south to a supposedly loyalist area because Parliament had become reluctant to commit additional troops to an America war whose end defied the yearly predictions of their military commanders. Their dreams of enlisting the support of "very considerable numbers of the inhabitants" were at first realized.⁶ After Charleston fell in May, garrisons were quickly established in the interior; many, sensing defeat, threw down their arms and accepted British paroles. In Ninety Six District and Orangeburg, both in the interior, and around the Little Pee Dee River in Georgetown District, enough men were raised to maintain local order. Many of the leading citizens of Charleston and the port of Georgetown congratulated the British commanders and pledged "fidelity and loyalty."⁷

England's troubles and the settlers' military education began inland, among people who stood apart from residents of the lowcountry as well

⁵ Exam[inatio]n [of] Deserters, 12 Jan. 1779, *Benjamin Lincoln Papers* (Massachusetts Historical Society, Microfilm Publication: Number 3, Boston, 1967), reel 3, part 1.

⁶ For the quotation see James Simpson to Lord Germain, 28 Aug. 1779, "James Simpson's Reports on the Carolina Loyalists, 1779-1780," ed. Alan S. BROWN, *Journal of Southern History*, 21 (1955), p. 517. Simpson, an Englishman, had been Attorney General of South Carolina.

⁷ Paul H. SMITH, *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill, 1964), p. 139; John ALMON, *The Remembrancer, or Impartial Repository of Public Events*, 10 (1780), p. 83; George C. ROGERS, Jr., *The History of Georgetown Country, South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C., 1970), p. 123.

as from British officers and soldiers. Traditionally, South Carolina has been divided into two geographic areas. The lowcountry consisted of the sea islands and the land along the coast running inland for about sixty miles. After 1760 the coastal area was divided into three circuit court districts: Georgetown, bordering North Carolina, Beaufort, bordering Georgia in the south, and Charleston District in the middle. Much of the lowcountry area, and especially Charleston District, had been settled long before the Revolution by a mixed group of colonists attracted by the proprietors' promotional campaign and the promise of religious toleration. The Church of England, however, became the established church, financially supported by all. Many dissenters converted and families intermarried. The area came to be dominated by plantations, a slave labor force to work the rice and indigo crops, and wealthy individuals who controlled the legislature.⁸

In contrast, settlement in the backcountry had begun late, in the 1730s and 1740s. New settlement came in the 1760s, after the Cherokee War. Most of the 50,000 backcountry settlers of 1775 were German, Swiss, Dutch, Irish, Scots-Irish, or Welsh rather than English. The majority were Presbyterians rather than Anglicans, but there were also several kinds of Baptists, Quakers, and other dissenters. Almost all settled small farms where, without the aid of substantial numbers of blacks, they produced provision crops of corn, wheat, and, in some areas, tobacco and indigo.⁹

Despite the potential for slave rebellions in the lowcountry, settlers in the backcountry lived with violence more frightening and brutalizing. Early in 1760, Cherokee Indians, angered by clashes in Virginia, attacked whites all over the backcountry. Large parties of settlers fleeing to safety were ambushed. When the whites mobilized and resisted, their anger intensified the savagery. After one battle, whites joyfully fed Indian scalps to dogs. Not only were people economically ruined or set back by the war, but many were victimized after it by criminals whose habits were formed by the fighting. As David Ramsay wrote after the Revolution, the criminals discovered during the Cherokee War that "to steal was easier than to work."¹⁰

Georgetown, traditionally considered part of the low-country, had much in common with the interior. Like the backcountry, Georgetown had been settled late. Large numbers of settlers, many of them not English, arrived in the 1740s and 1750s. The Welsh and French were numerous among them. Though parts of Georgetown were like Charleston area parishes, with slaves and plantations, other sections of the large district

⁸ M. Eugene SIRMANS, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663-1763* (Chapel Hill, 1966), pp. 36-37, 61-62, 77, 96-100.

⁹ The best introductions to backcountry settlements are Robert L. MERIWETHER, *The Expansion of South Carolina, 1729-1765* (Kingsport, Tenn., 1940) and Richard Maxwell BROWN, *The South Carolina Regulators* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), chapters 1 and 2.

¹⁰ BROWN, *South Carolina Regulators*, pp. 4-12.

contained small farms. Georgetown too was infested by postwar criminals in the 1760s.¹¹

The backcountry and Georgetown also shared political weakness. The South Carolina government was dominated not by the geographic lowcountry, which included Georgetown, but by Charleston District. In 1771, Charleston District, which about ten years earlier probably contained only about 5,000 adult white males, elected thirty-six of the forty-eight members of the lower house. With roughly the same area and at least half the white population of the Charleston area, Georgetown elected four representatives. The backcountry elected three. Beaufort too was politically weak. With perhaps half Georgetown's white population it elected five representatives. Few politically important people came from non-Charleston areas. During the 1760s, for example, only one of the twelve most important members of the lower house came from a parish outside Charleston District. In the revolutionary Council of Safety, eight of the thirteen members were from the port of Charleston, and the remaining five from parishes close to the city.¹²

The distinct ethnic groups of the interior and Georgetown, and sometimes the individuals within them, had little tradition of cooperation or communication, a result of their lack of political voice and of inadequate institutions of local government. Theirs was a heritage of hostility. Reverend Charles Woodmason, who had lived in Georgetown District before becoming an Anglican minister, wrote about "Itinerant Teachers, Preachers, and Imposters from New England and Pennsylvania — Baptists, New Lights, Presbyterians, Independants, and an hundred other Sects." His own sermons were "greatly interrupted by a Gang of Presbyterians" who told him that "they wanted no D—d Black Gown Sons of Bitches among them."¹³

Some Georgetown and backcountry settlers successfully worked together in 1767 and 1768 to end the chaos caused by rapid expansion and a criminal element which terrorized them after the French and Indian War. These Regulators solved their problems in the violent manner which had become ordinary in the backcountry. Some criminals were killed, others rounded up and viciously flogged, one receiving 500 stripes from a band of about 50 Regulators. They burned the houses of people suspected of aiding the criminals. But, after putting down the criminals, the Regulators, apparently suffering from a labor shortage, turned their attention to the idle and lazy. South Carolina was the only southern colony without a vagrancy law. Regulators adopted their own, whipping vagrants and setting to work idle persons they thought reclaimable. When the Regulators'

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 54-55.

¹² Stella H. SUTHERLAND, *Population Distribution in Colonial America* (New York, 1936), p. 240; William A. Schaper, "Sectionalism and Representation in South Carolina", *American Historical Association, Annual Report*, (1900), vol. I, p. 345.

¹³ Journal entries, 25 Jan., 14 Feb. 1767, *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and Other Writings of Charles Woodmason, Anglican Itinerant*, Richard J. Hooker, ed. (Chapel Hill, 1953), pp. 13, 17.

violence got out of hand a Moderator movement was organized to oppose them. With government aid, a truce was finally worked out.

When the Revolution came, inland settlers were not united. Many could not decide whom to aid, for whom to pray, or how to remain neutral. Rarely consulted about the Revolutionary crises and unsympathetic with the lowcountry elite which had treated the backcountry and, until recently, Georgetown like colonial dependencies, many people supported the British or kept quiet. Others, their allegiances weak, in a way that neither rebel nor British commanders understood, rode with whichever side appeared strongest moment by moment. Some people, perhaps seeing in the war a chance to gain for themselves and their area political power, became rebels. The rebels prevailed first in the state, and since they did not know their opponents well enough to respect them as people, they annoyed, plundered, and oppressed them.

Fortunes turned and the interior became a place of horror when the British army arrived and found loyalists "clamorous for retributive Justice."¹⁴ The British did not restrain them. The Tories' subsequent behaviour and a British attempt to force people to fight against the rebels alienated many settlers. Some were emboldened by reports of an advancing northern army. The British then chose to consider men who left their militia and joined the enemy as deserters, even though many had enrolled only to help maintain order, not committing themselves to engage in continuous warfare with the rebels. The British response was to treat such "Treachery, Perfidy, and Perjury" with "instant Fire and Sword."¹⁵ Even the generally humane Lord Cornwallis ordered every deserting militia man hanged when recaptured.¹⁶

The British turned cruel when they failed to win dedicated support. They tried to convince people "that there was a power superior" to rebel forces "who could likewise reward and punish."¹⁷ In August 1780 the already infamous Colonel Banastre Tarleton visited Georgetown's Black River region to "strike terror into the inhabitants" for their "breach of paroles and perfidious revolt." He would destroy all before him because "nothing ... [would] serve these people but fire and sword." "I have," he wrote, "promised the young men who chuse to assist me in this expedition the plunder of the leaders of the faction. If humanity obliges me to spare their lives; I shall carry them close prisoners to Camden."¹⁸

¹⁴ The description of the loyalists is by James Simpson. Simpson to Lord Germain, 28 Aug. 1779, "Simpson's Reports," BROWN, ed., p. 516.

¹⁵ Col. Banastre Tarleton, quoted in Robert D. BASS, *The Green Dragoon: The Lives of Banastre Tarleton and Mary Robinson* (New York, 1957), pp. 111-12.

¹⁶ Cornwallis to Lt. Col. Cruger, 18 Aug. 1780, and Cornwallis to Sir Henry Clinton, 29 Aug. 1780, *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, Charles Ross, ed. (3 vols., London, 1859), vol. I, pp. 56, 58; on Cornwallis's humane behaviour, see Franklin and Mary WICKWIRE, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure* (Boston, 1970), pp. 171-81.

¹⁷ Cornwallis to Clinton, 3 Dec. 1780, *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, Ross, ed., vol. I, p. 71.

¹⁸ The first Tarleton quotation is taken from Bass, *Green Dragoon*, p. 92, and the others from ROGERS, *Georgetown County*, pp. 129, 131.

Four years earlier the British military by its excesses and by "the licentiousness of the troops, who committed every species of rapine and plunder," had marred an initial success in New Jersey where, within a few weeks, thousands had taken an oath of allegiance to England.¹⁹ Lord Rawdon, who later objected to forcing Carolinians into the British army, in 1776 approved of giving soldiers "free liberty ... to ravage" the country, so that "these infatuated creatures may feel what a calamity war is."²⁰ The British soon lost effective control of the state. In 1778 Britain's Colonel Charles Stuart recognized one of the causes. He found no reason to think that "acts of severity ... [would] cause these people to submit"; rather, in committing "every species of barbarity," the British army had given birth to "an irrecoverable hatred."²¹

Carolinians were shocked. Aedanus Burke, an Irishman who had moved to South Carolina after studying law in Virginia, called the action of the invading army "outrage & cruelty ... beyond description."²² And Francis Kinloch, a wealthy plantation owner and a reluctant rebel, summed up the changed attitude: There have been "such scenes ... perpetrated by Officers whom I could Name," he wrote Thomas Boone, who had directed his English education and once been royal governor of South Carolina, "as would make you and every worthy Englishman blush for the degeneracy of the Nation." The result of British stupidity was the existence of "a hundred enemies" where there had been but one.²³

In South Carolina the British may have lacked workable alternatives. The gruesomeness of the fighting was dictated by the warring Whigs and Tories. Cornwallis was appalled by the "savage barbarity" of the rebels. "I hope you will see the necessity of interposing your authority to stop this bloody scene," he wrote an American officer. Otherwise, "in justice to the suffering loyalists," he would be forced "to retaliate on the unfortunate persons" in his power.²⁴ To fight humanely might have cost the British the state, to leave was to surrender their supporters into the hands of the American rebels. The war escalated on all fronts.

Fighting unrestrained British supporters and an enemy who scorned neutrality, many Carolinians joined partisan bands commanded by Francis Marion, of Georgetown, and by inland leaders Andrew Pickens, of Ninety Six, and Thomas Sumter, of the Camden area. They burned the property of their enemies and murdered prisoners as they and their neighbours had

¹⁹ "Journals of Lieut.-Col. Stephen Kemble," quoted in John SHY, "The Military Conflict Considered as a Revolutionary War," in *Essays on the American Revolution*, Stephen G. KURTZ and James H. HUTSON, eds. (Chapel Hill, 1973), p. 134.

²⁰ Rawdon to the Earl of Hastings, 25 Sept. 1776, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 135.

²¹ Stuart to his father, 16 Sept. 1778, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 146.

²² Burke to Arthur Middleton, 25 Jan. 1782, "Correspondence of Hon. Arthur Middleton, Signer of the Declaration of Independence," Joseph BARNWELL, ed., *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 26 (1925), p. 192.

²³ Kinloch to Boone, 1 Oct. 1782, "Letters of Francis Kinloch to Thomas Boone, 1782-1788," Felix GILBERT, ed., *Journal of Southern History*, 8 (1942), pp. 91-92.

²⁴ Cornwallis to Major General Smallwood, 10 Nov. 1780, *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, Ross, ed., vol. I, p. 67.

been burned out and murdered in turn. The brutality was frightening. The "growing enormities ... among the Whigs" shocked the Continental army's General Nathanael Greene. "The Whigs and Tories," he wrote, "pursue one another with the most relentless fury killing and destroying each other whenever they meet."²⁵

Although a British officer may have exaggerated when he wrote in 1781 that the Americans deliberately murdered "every man (although unarmed) who is know to be a loyalist," no one could deny the viciousness of the war. One incident tells the larger story. "After Genl. Sumter had taken some waggons on the other side of the Santee," Colonel John Watson wrote, "and the escort of them had laid down their arms, a party of his horse who said they had not discharged their pieces came up, fired upon the prisoners and killed seven of them. A few days after we took six of his people." There was hardly need for further comment. "Enquire," Watson said, "how they were treated."²⁶

The reign of terror that prevailed in the backcountry and parts of Georgetown scarcely touched the lowcountry. For a number of reasons Charleston and the aristocratically dominated parishes which surrounded it escaped the worst consequences of the war. The white population was small and relatively united. In 1790 fewer than 3,000 free white males over sixteen lived in the eleven parishes outside the city. Although people might oppose one another over the advantages of independence, they were not driven by hatreds. Accustomed to political power, they had worked together, communicated, compromised, and presented a common front to the overwhelming number of blacks, of whom there were some 43,000 living in the lowcountry in 1790 and perhaps more before the war.²⁷ To the loyalist, the rebels, and the British, the risks of unrestrained violence during the war were too great to be dared. So lowcountry settlers did not prey upon one another. Neither did the British prey upon them, possibly also because the lowcountry settlers were more recognizable and friendlier. Most of them were Anglican and many had been educated in England. They and their families had travelled to England; merchants had business associates there. Alexander Garden, a Carolina officer, described British officers as "all old Westminsters, [who] were faithful to old friendships."²⁸

²⁵ Greene to Andrew Pickens, 5 June 1781, Nathanael Green Papers (Duke University); Greene to Gen. Robert Howe, 29 Dec. 1780, quoted in Ronald HOFFMAN, "The 'Disaffected' in the Revolutionary South," in *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, Alfred F. YOUNG, ed. (Dekalb, Ill., 1976), p. 294.

²⁶ Lord Balfour to Lord Cornwallis, 26 April 1781, quoted in Robert Woodward BARNWELL, Jr., "Loyalism in South Carolina, 1765-1785" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1941), p. 313; Watson is quoted in Russell F. WEIGLEY, *The Partisan War: The South Carolina Campaign of 1780-1782* (Columbia, S.C., 1970), p. 48.

²⁷ On the unity of lowcountry society before the war see Robert M. WEIR, "'The Harmony We Were Famous For': An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Ser. 3, 26 (1969): 473-501.

²⁸ Quoted in George Smith McCOWEN, Jr., *The British Occupation of Charleston, 1780-1782* (Columbia, S.C., 1972), pp. 71-72.

For individuals in the Charleston District, the war was not as harsh as it was for others. When Thomas Pinckney was wounded, an English officer persuaded British surgeons to look after him; his injured leg was saved. Pinckney had been to school with the officer's brother, who, after being captured at sea, had asked to be released into Pinckney's custody. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Thomas's brother, though separated from his own house and family, was paroled at a relative's plantation and allowed a slave to run his errands.²⁹ Many state leaders were seized by the British and sent to St. Augustine. But the exiles could take servants with them, and they could rent houses and live comfortably as long as money arrived from home. Christopher Gadsden, an outspoken foe of the British, suffered most. He refused a parole and was kept in a dungeon for forty-two weeks.³⁰

Lowcountry women, too, were undoubtedly better off than those inland, although they suffered the anguish of separation from husbands, fathers, and sons. When the British came to her home, Eliza Wilkinson was terrified. "The whole world appeared" to her like "a theatre, ... where neither age nor sex escaped the horrors of injustice and violence...." Her house was plundered, she lost some pins and shoe buckles, and apparently she was insulted. No one, however, harmed her or anyone close to her; no one, if her story is told in full, even touched her.³¹

Backcountry women lived in the midst of the Civil War and shared its horrors. Some, like the wife of one Captain McKoy, were tortured for information. Many, like the wife of Colonel Kolb, along with their children, watched as their husbands were summarily executed. When Wemyss hanged Adam Cusack, only the intervention of a young British officer stopped him from trampling Cusack's pleading family as it lay before his horse. Some women, if they were fortunate, watched in terror as their husbands fled to temporary shelter in Carolina's woods.³² When warring parties descended on an area they left families in misery. Reverend Simpson reported not only the loss of his property but also that his "family were turned out all but naked." Joseph Kershaw complained that "hardest of all" for him to bear was Lord Rawdon's "turning my wife & children out of the only Room they possessed on the Inclement first day of January 1781." After viewing Tarleton's work, Francis Marion was ap-

²⁹ Harriet Horry RAVENEL, *Charleston: The Place and the People* (New York, 1906), pp. 294-95; Marvin R. ZAHNISER, *Charles Cotesworth Pinckney: Founding Father* (Chapel Hill, 1967), pp. 64-66.

³⁰ Edward MCCRADY, *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution, 1775-1780* (New York, 1901), pp. 716, 725-26; RAVENEL, *Charleston*, p. 290. The worst time for these prisoners came when they were shipped to Philadelphia, where they met their families who had been hastily sent out of Charleston. The exiles were not allowed to lease their Charleston homes; they had little money to live on and were forced to borrow.

³¹ Eliza WILKINSON, *Letters of Eliza Wilkinson, during the Invasion and Possession of Charleston, S.C. by the British in the Revolutionary War* (New York, 1969 [orig. ed. 1839]), pp. 29-31.

³² Richard Maxwell BROWN, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York, 1975), p. 80; MCCRADY, *SC in the Revol., 1775-1780*, p. 641.

palled "to see women and children sitting in the open air around a fire, without a blanket, or any clothing but what they had on."³³

The recognition, even respect, which the British extended to many Charleston area rebels probably spared property as well as lives. Some property was damaged, destroyed, or stolen. A fire in Charleston which destroyed 250 houses in January 1778 was blamed by a few Carolinians on men from British vessels lying off the harbor and by others on Tories in town.³⁴ The most costly loss, however, the prizes of the wartime booty, were the slaves, 12,000 of whom, Ralph Izard charged, were collected by the British in Charleston. The slaves were stolen to replace those taken from loyalists, as compensation for the more general confiscation of loyalist property which the rebels had enacted, and simply out of greed.³⁵

South Carolina slaveowners may have lost between 20,000 and 25,000 slaves during the war, and the largest share of these certainly came from the Charleston District. But not all were stolen — certainly not all by the British — and not all of them left the state. General Sumter adopted the "disagreeable" plan of using slaves plundered from Tories, ostensibly, to raise troops.³⁶ Many slaves simply ran away, "coveting," James Madison said, "that liberty for which we had paid the price of so much blood, and have proclaimed so often to be the right, & worthy pursuit of every human being."³⁷

The loss of slaves notwithstanding, the damage in the parishes around Charleston, and even in the Beaufort District, the lowcountry region close to Georgia, was of a different kind from that in the rest of the state. It was not as total, not as widespread, nor as cruel. For the most part the war was not fought there. There were 137 battles during the war in South Carolina. Seventy-eight were fought in the backcountry. More than half of the remaining battles were fought in the immediate vicinity of Charleston. The numbers do not include the small hit and run operations or the unrecorded fights that characterized the backcountry civil war. Four important battles took place in the coastal area; more than fourteen were fought in the interior. In the Charleston area war, land did

³³ Simpson is quoted in George HOWE, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina* (2 vols., 1870, 1873), vol. I, p. 514; Kershaw to Henry Laurens, 1 Feb. 1785, Emmett Collection (New York Public Library); BASS, *Green Dragoon*, p. 112.

³⁴ McCrady, *SC in the Revol., 1775-1780*, p. 232.

³⁵ Izard to Mrs. Izard, 7 Oct. 1782, *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, Edmund C. BURNETT, ed. (8 vols., Washington, 1921-1936), vol. VI, p. 497; McCowen, *British Occupation of Charleston*, p. 109; Benjamin QUARLES, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1961), pp. 157, 164.

³⁶ David RAMSAY, *The History of the Revolution of South Carolina* (2 vols., Trenton, N.J., 1785), vol. II, p. 384; Sumter to Francis Marion, 28 March 1782, printed in Robert D. BASS, *Gamecock: The Life and Campaigns of General Thomas Sumter* (New York, 1961), pp. 142-44.

³⁷ Madison is quoted in QUARLES, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, p. 130. Unfortunately large numbers of the blacks died of smallpox and "camp-fever." Ramsay reported cases of babies found "drawing the breasts of their deceased parent." *Revolution of SC*, vol. II, p. 67.

not pass from hand to hand as often, houses were not attacked as frequently. Although there was looting, destruction, and depredation, "the houses of the planters were seldom burnt," David Ramsay reported soon after the war.³⁸

In backcountry South Carolina Nathanael Greene had discovered that the British were "laying waste" the country above their posts at Ninety Six and Camden and that rebels and Tories alike were destroying the countryside. "Indeed," much of the area was in "the utmost danger of becoming a desert."³⁹ Georgetown District was invaded three times by the British and on one occasion Major James Wemyss, faithfully obeying orders to "punish the concealment of Arms and ammunition with a total demolition of the plantation," burned a path seventy miles long and in some places fifteen miles wide, including in the destruction Presbyterian churches, which he called "sedition shops." The British set fire to houses when they left the town of Georgetown.⁴⁰

Camden was destroyed by the British when they withdrew. "They burnt the Court House, Gaol, & the greatest Part of the best Houses. They cut down all the Fruit Trees; & destroyed all the Furniture, which they could not carry away," wrote William Drayton in 1784.⁴¹ Around Fishing Creek, near the North Carolina border, Reverend John Simpson's "property was destroyed, his house burned, not so much as a farthing's worth was left," and his family was "turned out all but naked."⁴² The loyalist William Cunningham devastated part of the Saluda River region. In the Dutch Fork plantations were laid waste. Major James Dunlap terrorized a section of Ninety Six District, and when they pulled out, the British burned the town of Ninety Six.⁴³

Plunder accompanied destruction. Much of what was not destroyed was carried away. Soldiers at Friday's Ferry, near Fort Granby in the center of the state, "combined in committing robberies, the most base

³⁸ BROWN, *Strain of Violence*, pp. 76-77; Ramsay, *Revolution of SC*, vol. II, p. 34.

³⁹ Greene to Gov. William Greene, 22 April 1781, "Revolutionary Correspondence from 1775 to 1782," Rhode Island Historical Society, *Collections*, 6 (1867), pp. 285-86; Greene to Gen. Robert Howe, 29 Dec. 1780, quoted in HOFFMAN, "The 'Disaffected' in the Revolutionary South," p. 294.

⁴⁰ McCRADY, *SC in the Revol., 1780-1783*, p. 318; Johann David SCHOEPP, *Travels in the Confederation*, trans. and ed. Alfred J. MORRISON (Philadelphia, 1911), p. 163; Wemyss's orders, from Cornwallis, are quoted in BASS, *Green Dragoon*, p. 105; Wemyss's reference to the "sedition shops" is quoted in Durward Turrentine Stokes, "The Clergy of the Carolinas and the American Revolution" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1968), p. 180.

⁴¹ William Drayton, Remarks in a Tour through the Backcountry of the State of South Carolina, 1784 (Charleston Museum).

⁴² HOWE, *Presbyterian Church in SC*, vol. I, p. 514, quoting a history of the church at Fishing Creek, which Howe believed Simpson had written.

⁴³ John A. CHAPMAN, *History of Edgefield County from the Earliest Settlements to 1897* (Newberry, S.C., 1897), p. 72; John Belton O'NEALL and John A. CHAPMAN, *The Annals of Newberry in Two Parts* (Newberry, S.C., 1892), p. 163; McCRADY, *SC in the Revol., 1775-1780*, p. 834, and *SC in the Revol., 1780-1783*, pp. 18-20; Drayton, Remarks in a Tour.

and inhuman that ever disgraced mankind.”⁴⁴ Fort Granby itself was a storehouse of plunder. When Britain’s Major Andrew Maxwell surrendered in 1782 the terms allowed him and his men to carry off “private property of every sort, without investigation of title,” which meant that they could keep what they had stolen.⁴⁵ Sumter’s men seemed driven by a “thirst after plunder” which, their temporary commander Colonel William Henderson noted, made “the command almost intolerable.”⁴⁶

Perhaps the contrast between the war in Charleston District and in other parts of the state was best presented by Colonel Henry Lee, who had fought alongside the state’s partisan generals. When he and his troops moved into the lowcountry in November 1781, they found a “scene ... both new and delightful.” A year and a half after the British took Charleston, there were still “spacious edifices, rich and elegant gardens, ... luxuriant and extensive rice plantations.” “Never before,” Lee wrote, “had we been solaced with the prospect of so much comfort.” They were surrounded by “the luxury of opulence.” And even, “to crown our bliss, the fair sex shone in its brightest lustre.”⁴⁷

The war affected sections and people differently and gave birth to attitudes which caused serious conflicts in postwar years, although as the war ended the disagreements were muted. The people of the Charleston area, and to a lesser extent those of Beaufort, had escaped most of the horrors that followed the British invasion.⁴⁸ They could quickly forgive and forget. But many of the settlers in Georgetown and the backcountry bore the scars of a civil war more brutal than anything expected. The heritage of their war, their hostility, and their interest in revenge were more long lasting.

Some disagreements among the rebels emerged as the British were driven back into Charleston. In the summer of 1781 Governor John Rutledge, a Charleston District lawyer and long a political power, offered a pardon to almost all British adherents who served six months in the state militia, a policy General Greene had encouraged even though “vengeance

⁴⁴ Col. Wade Hampton to Nathanael Greene, 27 July 1781, quoted in McCrady, *SC in the Revol., 1780-1783*, p. 425.

⁴⁵ Henry Lee, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States* (New York, 1870), p. 351.

⁴⁶ Henderson to Gov. John Rutledge, 14 Aug. 1781, quoted in George Washington Greene, *The Life of Nathanael Greene, Major-General in the Army of the Revolution* (3 vols., New York, 1871), vol. III, p. 377.

⁴⁷ Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, p. 525.

⁴⁸ Ravenel, *Charleston*, p. 295, points out the often overlooked nature of the war in the lowcountry, where “good feeling [between opposing sides] very much mitigated the barbarity of war.” But Forrest McDonald sets up his analysis of South Carolina’s ratification of the federal constitution in 1788 with the opposite interpretation: “The ravages of war were particularly great in the South Carolina lowcountry... Meantime the middle and up-country, where the lesser planters and farmers dwelled, suffered very little material damage from the war.” *We the People: The Economic Origins of the Constitution* (Chicago, 1958), p. 206.

would dictate one universal slaughter."⁴⁹ Francis Marion approved and in June 1782 worked out a treaty with Major Micajah Gainey, the leader of the loyalists settled between the Great Pee Dee River and North Carolina. Gainey and some of his men joined the militia. Other loyalists served with Thomas Sumter in the Orangeburg area. According to Aedanus Burke, "Out-Lyers" who murdered "our people in Cold blood" feared that they would be "killed in their turn" and put down their arms only "on terms of pardon & reconciliation."⁵⁰

Many inland settlers were unhappy that Tories were becoming "ar-rant Rebels."⁵¹ They opposed conciliation despite its effectiveness in sparing lives and property. Sumter thought that "nothing but the sword will reclaim" the Tories. And the men in Marion's camp, incensed that their general was treating with the Pee Dee region's notorious Jeff Butler, let everyone know their intention of killing Butler no matter what he was promised. "To defend such a wretch is an insult to humanity," they said, forcing Marion to sneak him away during the night. Gainey served six months in the militia and then fled to North Carolina for safety.⁵² Marion's men, and Sumter, too, no doubt shared the outrage of Colonel Lemuel Benton, who was commander of the Cheraw militia. Benton attacked Gainey's followers, men who had plundered, burned, and murdered their prisoners of war, including Colonel Abel Kolb, Benton's predecessor and a former member of the state legislature. Such people, Benton wrote, should not be "received & restored to equal privileges with the men who have suffered every thing by them that was in their power & savage disposition to inflict."⁵³ Like others, he could not accept former enemies as equals, as citizens with power to influence the course of the state's postwar history.

Both Lemuel Benton and Thomas Sumter were members of the General Assembly which began in January 1782. The first such meeting in two years, it was dominated, as it had to be, by army officers, many of them veterans of the Civil War. Only nineteen of the twenty-eight elected senators appeared, and ten of them held ranks of captain or higher. But more significantly, it was the first legislature in South Carolina's history in which a majority of legislators came from outside Charleston District. Twelve of the nineteen senators represented the backcountry, Georgetown District, or Beaufort District. Much the same geographical alignment

⁴⁹ Rutledge to Gen. Francis Marion, 2 Sept. 1781 and 15 Sept. 1781, Marion Papers, Bancroft Transcripts (New York Public Library); Greene is quoted in Bass, *Gamecock*, p. 213.

⁵⁰ Robert D. Bass, *Swamp Fox, The Life and Campaigns of General Francis Marion* (New York, 1959), pp. 236-237; Bass, *Gamecock*, pp. 213-14; McGRADY, *SC in the Revol., 1780-1783*, pp. 626-27, 638-39; Burke to Arthur Middleton, 14 May 1782, "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," BARNWELL, ed., p. 201.

⁵¹ The quotation is from a letter of Aedanus Burke to Arthur Middleton, 25 Jan. 1782, "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," BARNWELL, ed., p. 191.

⁵² Sumter is quoted in Bass, *Gamecock*, p. 213; Marion's men are quoted in Bass, *Swamp Fox*, p. 237.

⁵³ Benton to Gov. John Mathews, 20 Aug. 1782, Marion Papers, Bancroft Transcripts; McCRADY, *SC in the Revol., 1780-1783*, pp. 638-39.

existed in the lower house because the few participating lowcountry voters, perhaps voting by habit, elected representatives unable to attend. Charleston, still in British hands, was entitled to thirty representatives, but the fifteen voters who appeared outside the city could choose only sixteen people who would attend. Henry Laurens, captured by the British in 1780 while on a diplomatic mission, was still in England when Charlestonians elected him. He returned to South Carolina in 1784. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, elected by two parishes, was a prisoner on parole in Philadelphia. Thomas Bee, a delegate in the Confederation Congress, was also chosen by two parishes. All told, Charleston District was short thirty-nine representatives. Only twenty-six from the rest of the state were absent, giving those regions eighty representatives to the Charleston area's fifty-seven.⁵⁴

Edward Rutledge, a member of the Assembly and the governor's brother, thought the legislators were the "Flower of the Country," but he nonetheless feared "damned strange works." The legislators were unpredictable because they were unknown. When John Laurens appeared with another plan to arm and free slaves, Rutledge was alarmed that he himself would "be the only Speaker on the right side of the Question." Rutledge was satisfied that the plan was defeated by a vote he remembered as about 15 to 100, but his fear of a proposal so overwhelmingly unpopular showed his ignorance of his fellow legislators.⁵⁵

Aedanus Burke was more worried by what he knew than by what he did not know. Burke, also a Charleston representative, noted the "inveterate hatred & spirit of Vengeance" which was not even confined to one sex, women talking "as familiarly of shedding blood & destroying the Tories as the men do." Burke knew the sentiment of legislators like Benton and Sumter. He described one member with twenty-five notches on his pistol, his "tally" of victims. Another had "killed his fourteen."⁵⁶ The killings, Burke understood, did not assuage a desire for revenge.

⁵⁴ The military activities of the legislators are described in McCrady, *SC in the Revol., 1780-1783*, pp. 557-60. When McCrady wrote, however, the journals of the legislature had not yet been found. He, and later historians, some of whom could have consulted the journals, failed to detect the shift in power. The names of the legislators appear in the journals, edited by A.S. SALLEY: *Journal of the House of Representatives of South Carolina, January 8, 1782-February 26, 1782* (Columbia, S.C., 1916), and *Journal of the Senate of South Carolina, January 8, 1782-February 26, 1782* (Columbia, S.C., 1941). The Senate Journal records the list of members who attended each day's meeting; the lower house's does not, but it does include the names of committee members, legislators who deliver messages, and those who count votes. Lists of army officers are in *Charleston Yearbook*, 1893, pp. 298-37. The numbers of voters may be found in Election Returns, 1781, Legislative System Papers (South Carolina Department of Archives and History [hereafter, SCA]). In the election for St. Andrew's members, held in St. John Berkeley, four voters chose six representatives and one senator, as did St. Peter's thirteen voters.

⁵⁵ Rutledge to Arthur Middleton, 23 Jan. 1782, for the first quotation, and 12 Dec. 1781, for the second, in "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," BARNWELL, ed., pp. 210, 208; Rutledge's description of the scheme to arm blacks is also in two letters to Middleton, 28 Jan. 1782, and 8 Feb. 1782, "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," BARNWELL, ed., *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 27 (1926), p. 4.

⁵⁶ Burke to Arthur Middleton, 25 Jan. 1782, "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," BARNWELL, ed. (1925), p. 192.

In one attempt to punish their enemies, legislators opened the Courts of Oyer and Terminer. Burke opposed the plan because so many crimes had been committed that fewer than a thousand men in the state, he thought, could "escape the Gallows." Burke was a judge too, and he had no desire to be "a tool to gratify the fierce revenge of the people," whose feelings were so heated that "several members & others of the Back Country" warned him not to allow Tories to have lawyers.⁵⁷

The legislature's severest attack on people who had not been properly committed to the Revolutionary cause was embodied in laws seizing their property. After reminding legislators of scenes of destruction, torture, and cold-blooded murder, Governor Rutledge suggested "the forfeiture and the appropriation" of property as possible punishment.⁵⁸ The legislature responded by confiscating 237 specifically named estates, amercing (fining) 47 other estates 12 percent of their appraised value, confiscating 140 additional unnamed estates, and amercing 47 others. Most of the people listed in the confiscation Act were also banished from the state.

Although the state expected to raise money through the acts, and some people hoped to acquire valuable property, the most compelling motive for the passage of the legislation was revenge.⁵⁹ "We shall certainly go into the matter of Confiscation," wrote Edward Rutledge. "The passions of some People run very high," he thought.⁶⁰ Burke referred to "the rage & violence" of some legislators, and, a few months after the legislative session ended, Christopher Gadsden wrote about "the violent confiscation men" and "private men [who] are thrown frequently into passions and extravagances which ... infect like the plague the mass of people...."⁶¹

The legislation was scarcely opposed. The governor's opening address had made it clear that the heart of the lowcountry would not make a determined and united stand for any act of oblivion. Alexander Garden, "on the spot" when the confiscation bill passed, reported years later that no more than twelve legislators "declared their sentiments, or gave their

⁵⁷ Burke to Arthur Middleton, 14 May 1782, *ibid.*, pp. 200-01; the act for opening the courts may be found in *Acts Passed... at Jacksonburgh* (Philadelphia, 1782). Burke planned to open his court and then resign, but he did not have to. Sessions were called off when his horse was impressed and another judge captured by the British.

⁵⁸ Rutledge's address is printed in both legislative journals and in ALMON, *The Remembrancer*, 14 (1782), pp. 137-40.

⁵⁹ On the need for revenue see Edward Rutledge to Arthur Middleton, 8 Feb. 1782, "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," BARNWELL, ed. (1926), 3; Francis Marion to Col. Peter Horry, 10 Feb. 1782, quoted in McCrady, *SC in the Revol., 1780-1783*, p. 583; on speculation see, for example, Christopher Gadsden to Francis Marion, 17 Nov. 1782, *The Writings of Christopher Gadsden, 1746-1805*, Richard WALSH, ed. (Columbia, S.C., 1966), pp. 195-96.

⁶⁰ Rutledge to Arthur Middleton, 28 Jan. 1782 and 8 Feb. 1782, "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," BARNWELL, ed. (1925), p. 212 (1926), p. 3.

⁶¹ Burke to Arthur Middleton, 14 May 1782, *ibid.* (1925), pp. 199-200; Gadsden to Francis Marion, 17 Nov. 1782, *Writings of Gadsden*, WALSH, ed., pp. 194-195.

votes," against it.⁶² Burke reported only three people in opposition. He, representing Charleston, held most people blameless for submitting to "such a cruel Enemy."⁶³ Christopher Gadsden fought the confiscation of the property of people who had done no more than sign congratulatory addresses. The "cruel, oppressive and tyrannical enemy" had given them no choice.⁶⁴ Gadsden had been elected from one of Georgetown's parishes, but he was in reality a Charlestonian who had represented either the city or a neighboring parish for more than twenty years. Perhaps Edward Rutledge was Burke's other ally. Another Charleston legislator, Rutledge claimed that he tried to "restrain the tempers of the impetuous."⁶⁵

At Jacksonborough, where the legislature was meeting, the only serious disagreements over the seizure of property concerned the victims. The confiscation act identified six classes of people. But the classes only superficially determined the names. Lists two and four, for example, contained the names of the Addressors and Congratulators of British commanders. They had numbered over 350. Yet only fifty-three estates were mentioned. Some fortunate people, like William Blake, "a Man of the first Fortune" who sat out the war quietly in Europe, saved their property because friends in the legislature protected them.⁶⁶ As finally passed, the acts of 1782 affected mostly people from Charleston and the surrounding parishes. The legislature might have been temporarily shying away from any act that might rekindle backcountry fires; and with new areas in political power, it might have been striking out at areas where wartime suffering appeared comparatively mild.

The initial differences of opinion over revenge and reconciliation were limited, but they intensified as the war ended. One conflict was precipitated by Governor John Mathews. In what was probably no more than a simple attempt to speed recovery from the war, Mathews allowed British merchants to remain in Charleston six months to sell their remaining stock and collect debts. Some fifty merchants, who stayed behind when the British troops departed, had on hand goods valued at about £400,000 sterling.⁶⁷ The well-stocked merchants knew that Carolinians anxious to rebuild or reestablish their old patterns would turn to them for supplies.

⁶² Alexander GARDEN, *Anecdotes of the Revolutionary War in America* (Charleston, S.C., 1822), p. 176.

⁶³ Burke to Arthur Middleton, 25 Jan. 1782 and 14 May 1782, "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," BARNWELL, ed. (1925), pp. 193, 200.

⁶⁴ Gadsden to Francis Marion, 17 Nov. 1782, *Writings of Gadsden*, WALSH, ed., p. 195.

⁶⁵ Rutledge to Arthur Middleton, 28 Jan. 1782, "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," BARNWELL, ed. (1925), p. 212.

⁶⁶ The quotation is from a letter from Edward Rutledge to Arthur Middleton, 26 Feb. 1782, *ibid.* (1926), pp. 6-7. Blake's property was amerced.

⁶⁷ ALMON, *The Remembrancer*, 15 (1783), 59-60; the number fifty comes from a Senate committee report of 28 Feb. 1783. For the estimated value of the goods see Gervais & Owen to Leonard de Neufville, 13 April 1786, John de Neufville Papers (Library of Congress).

The fight over the agreement with the merchants began in January 1783. In succession, Governor Mathews laid the agreement before the Assembly, some Charlestonians urged that it be ended at the earliest moment, and the British merchants petitioned for an extension of time. Many of them, also, the merchants said, ardently wished to become Carolina citizens.

At first, native Charleston merchants who complained that their "happiness ... [was] lessened on their arriveal in Charles Town" by the presence of British merchants seemed about to get their way.⁶⁸ On 19 February a five-man Senate committee, consisting of two artisans, two backcountry senators, and one senator from St. Helena, in Beaufort District, refused to recommend that more time be allowed the British merchants for the sale of their goods, although some were to be given extra time to purchase produce and collect debts. The next day, however, the Senate threw out the entire report and granted all merchants until 1 January 1784 to complete their business. The lower house added two more months. The legislature also recommended that most of the merchants should be admitted as citizens.

The legislation which benefitted the British merchants came at the material expense of South Carolina merchants, who had expected less competition in recouping their fortunes or improving their economic status, and at the emotional expense of those who had come to hate the British enemy as a result of wartime atrocities. Although the government could rationally argue that it was aiding consumers and speeding recovery, its policies were a tremendous blow to native merchants. Their position, too, had a rational defence. Like the planters, they had suffered from the war and felt entitled to reap the rewards of peace. They did not, however, think they would be able to if British merchants got a foothold and cornered or shared the postwar trade. Nor did they think the war, not yet officially over, should be forgotten and the British be allowed to participate in and profit from the reconstruction of that which British soldiers had helped destroy.

The conflict over the state's confiscation policy emerged while the legislature was considering the fate of the merchants. Again, petitions led the way as people threatened with the loss of their property flooded the legislature with their requests. Some Carolinians remained steadfastly against leniency. In 1783 inhabitants of the upper part of Prince George Parish in Georgetown District, part of the area Wemyss destroyed, urged the House of Representatives to put the confiscation Act into strict effect, a plea repeated in three days by "sundry inhabitants" of Prince Frederick Parish, just to the west of Prince George.⁶⁹ In Charleston too there were demonstrations, complicated by the British merchants, and the divisions seemed sufficiently clear that some people felt comfortable generalizing about them. Johann David Schoepf, who traveled in South Carolina short-

⁶⁸ Petition of "a Number of Inhabitants," Senate Journal, 30 Jan. 1783.

⁶⁹ Journal of the House of Representatives, 4 Feb. and 7 Feb. 1783.

ly after the war, wrote that those who "breathed nothing but the bitterness of vengeance" were of "the lower and rougher class."⁷⁰ Pierce Butler, a British officer before the war but a rebel during it, pointed not to a class but to a region, the backcountry, as the source of hatred. Butler, however, was more understanding than Schoepf who, ignorant of the conditions of Carolina warfare, thought there were "grounds ... neither sufficient nor seemly" for opposition to the "magnanimous views" of the "worthy men" who favored conciliation.⁷¹

The confiscation and amercement Acts were in fact changed. The General Assembly, no longer controlled by the non-Charleston areas, postponed the banishment of over sixty persons and halted the further sale of seventy-one estates. In 1784 thirty-five estates were restored and ninety-five others transferred from the confiscated to the amerced list.⁷² To Ralph Izard, who had been in England when the war started and then had filled a diplomatic post in Europe, the legislature seemed remarkably moderate. "The confiscation and amercement laws are in great measure done away," he reported in the spring of 1784.⁷³

It was not quite that simple. Izard was satisfied because his primary concern was for the punished residents of the lowcountry. He did not mention another, more sweeping confiscation act, passed in 1783. Since "many of the former citizens of this State, in violation of their allegiance, have withdrawn themselves and joined the enemies thereof," all their estates were vested in the commissioners of confiscated estates for sale. The act contained no lists and no names. When requested by the commissioners, commanders of militia regiments were required to make up returns of those former Carolinians. The only existing returns, for Orangeburg, Camden, and Ninety Six, all backcountry areas, contain 678 names.⁷⁴ There are no returns for the coastal regions. Some may have been lost; or perhaps the people in areas where the war had been relatively mild simply ignored the act.

Carolinians imposed other hardships on the Tories. In 1784 they legalized the wartime plundering of the enemy by which generals Andrew Pickens and Thomas Sumter had raised their troops. Although their actions could not "be justified by the strict forms of law," the legislature declared, it was "exceedingly necessary, and so much for the service of

⁷⁰ SCHOEPF, *Travels in the Confederation*, p. 204.

⁷¹ Butler to James Iredell, 4 Feb. 1784, *Life and Correspondence of James Iredell*, Griffith J. McREE, ed. (2 vols., New York, 1857-1858), vol. II, p. 88; SCHOEPF, *Travels in the Confederation*, p. 204.

⁷² *Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, Thomas COOPER and David J. McCORD, eds. (10 vols., Columbia, S.C., 1836-1841), vol. IV, pp. 553-54; Barnwell, "Loyalism in South Carolina," p. 373.

⁷³ Izard to Thomas Jefferson, 27 April 1784, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Julian P. BOYD, ed. (Princeton, 1950) vol. VII, p. 130.

⁷⁴ *Statutes of South Carolina*, COOPER and McCORD, eds., vol. IV, pp. 568-70; BARNWELL, "Loyalism in South Carolina," pp. 368-69; the names reported by the commanders are printed in Robert W. BARNWELL, JR., "Reports on Loyalist Exiles from South Carolina, 1783," South Carolina Historical Association, *Proceedings* (1937), pp. 43-46.

the state, that ... [it] ought to be justified by Act of Assembly."⁷⁵ While Tories could not use the courts to recover property, they might be called on to defend their own actions. Speaking in backcountry Cheraws in 1783, Judge John Faucheraud Grimké told the area's residents to take their enemies to court, where they could be held accountable for "injuries done to individuals."⁷⁶ Like Aedanus Burke who had been warned by backcountry people not to treat Tories fairly, Grimké must have realized what trials would be like. The foreman of the Georgetown Grand Jury was succinct: Tories were not to be granted impartial treatment.⁷⁷

The geographical split in the fight for some form of revenge, evident in the petitions and hinted at in the committee report on the British merchants, was still clear in 1787, five years after the passage of the Jacksonborough legislation, when representatives from outside Charleston District united and crushed a move in the lower house to repeal the confiscation and amercement Acts. Charleston District favoured repeal by an almost two to one margin, 49 to 25, but it was overwhelmed by the rest of the state which rejected the Act of forgiveness by a vote of 72 to 12, a six to one split.⁷⁸

Settlers in the backcountry and Georgetown District and to a lesser extent those in Beaufort District, could not behave as though "religion and piety, [and] love and charity" had returned to South Carolina.⁷⁹ But it was not only memory of the past which kept their hatreds alive. Again they differed from many in the Charleston area who felt more secure and who quickly and confidently began reestablishing their old life styles. Planters and professional men began to rebuild with credit from prewar contacts and from British merchants who stayed in Charleston. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney was only one of many Carolinians ready to make purchases "at a very extravagant price." He needed several kinds of wine, "the older the better," cheese, and "some negroe cloth & blankets," and he would pay that "extravagant price," because, he said, "it is necessary I should have them."⁸⁰ Told that his house was "in a very ruinous condition," Ralph Izard made plans to import a carpenter and builder from London, to have the bricks of his house, "rubbed from the top ... to the bottom," the "interstices new pointed," and to "have a Piazza in each Front, & an Area sunk; to give light to the offices under the House."⁸¹ It seemed remarkably easy.

⁷⁵ *Acts, Ordinances, and Resolves of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, passed in the year 1784* (Charleston, 1784).

⁷⁶ Grimké's address is printed in GREGG, *History of the Old Cheraws*, pp. 417-29.

⁷⁷ *South Carolina State Gazette and General Advertiser*, 22 May 1784.

⁷⁸ *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 21 Feb. 1787.

⁷⁹ The quoted words, used in a different context, are in a letter from Thomas Smith to Isaac Smith, 19 Aug. 1783, in George C. ROGERS, Jr., *Evolution of a Federalist: William Loughton Smith of Charleston (1758-1812)* (Columbia, S.C., 1962), p. 106.

⁸⁰ Pinckney to Harriott [Pinckney], 23 Oct. 1782, Pinckney Family Papers, Undivided Box A (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress).

⁸¹ Izard to Arthur Middleton, 30 May 1783, "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," BARNWELL, ed. (1926), p. 78.

The problems of many settlers occasioned by war in the backcountry, Georgetown, and Beaufort districts were more difficult and serious. The war had left many interior regions physically desolated and many inhabitants demoralized. The burning of houses, the plundering, the often wanton destruction, "so reduced" some people, wrote Patrick Calhoun, a backcountry legislator and tax collector, that they could not "produce even the necessarys of life."⁸² Others, perhaps also because of the war, lived in deprivation and poverty. William Drayton, travelling near the Little Saluda River in the backcountry, noted in 1784 that "the Huts along the Road in general are miserable dwellings, built of Logs, open to the Wind & Rain, & inhabited by a Parcel of half naked Beings, almost every one with out shoe or stocking, & amongst them great numbers of children."⁸³ The year before, Reverend Archibald Simpson had poignantly contrasted the lowcountry region near Georgia with Charleston, where the people "appear to be more happy." In the country, Simpson wrote, "a dark melancholy gloom appears everywhere," and on "almost every countenance" one could see "poverty, want, and hardship." Indeed, he reported, "all society seems to be at an end."⁸⁴ Certainly many of the people pictured by Calhoun, Drayton, and Simpson, concerned with living from day to day, were unable to plan for the future.

More than physical needs held back some people and areas. When Simpson described the gloom and the end of society, he pointed not only to the distresses caused by the British army but also to the lingering problems caused by a lawless element which "pealed, pillaged, and plundered" the people who had survived the war.⁸⁵ Criminal operations in 1783 and 1784 were serious, similar to those described by the Reverend Charles Woodmason after the French and Indian War. William Bratton, influential in the inland territory near North Carolina, complained in 1784 that thieves were "robbing ... travellers in open daylight upon the highway," and that it was "out of the power of the law to suppress them." Conditions were so bad, he wrote Governor Benjamin Guerard, that "we labour under nearly as much difficulty as when Cornwallis was amongst us."⁸⁶ Close by, in Ninety Six District, settlers were subjected to the same marauding. William Drayton heard enough about horse thieves on his trip to change his route and avoid the fork of the Broad and Saluda Rivers.⁸⁷ In November 1784 Judge Aedanus Burke was horrified to discover "how much the poor people of this district are worried & half ruined by a sett of horse thieves & an outlying Banditti that constantly beset the roads, rob the inhabitants & plunder their dwellings." The effects were such that "the wretched people are precluded from improving their Estates"; if a man set out on the road with a wagon and a good

⁸² Calhoun to the Commissioners of the Public Treasury, 31 Jan. 1784, Legislative System, State Finance (SCA).

⁸³ DRAYTON, *Remarks in a Tour*, 1784.

⁸⁴ Simpson's Journal, quoted in HOWE, *Presbyterian Church in SC*, vol. I, p. 466.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Bratton to Gov. Guerard, 13 Feb. 1784, Penal System (SCA).

⁸⁷ DRAYTON, *Remarks in a Tour*, 1784.

horse he had little chance to reach Charleston; if he made it to the market, he would be intercepted on the way back. There was simply "no sort of security for life or property there," Burke declared, then concluding, painfully, that for the time being he would have no mercy for horse thieves.⁸⁸

Some contemporaries saw the war and the lawlessness not only as successive problems but also as related ones. On his journey through the backcountry in 1784 William Drayton met a landlord who feared his neighbours would hang him because he had killed two people, but "only two," he explained. "He talk'd as coolly tho' as pleasantly of having murder'd these two," noted Drayton, "as if they had been Bucks or wolves." Like Burke, Drayton thought that the war had "inur'd men to the wanton shedding of Blood & dissolved not only the ties of Friendship & Neighbourhood, but even of Humanity!"⁸⁹ Judges Burke and Grimké based their conclusions on the trials they conducted. Burke found that the war had not only inspired men to noble deeds and sentiments but that it had also given birth to "a contempt for laws and civil order, a love of pleasure and dissipation."⁹⁰ Grimké agreed that people were confused by the war, "when moral light & turpitude were indiscriminately blended, when the sentiments of our citizens were corrupted by their very efforts to save our sinking country, ... & when the taking of property from the disaffected to our Cause was not only practised but considered as justifiable & commendable."⁹¹

To illustrate their ideas, the judges told tragic stories. Burke wrote about two criminals. James Booth, sentenced to be hanged for robbery, was "not now twenty one years of age: his father & brother," Burke said, "were both killed in our service by the enemy ... & he himself was an active soldier, behaved well as such & never joined the British." But "about the year 1781 he began to lie out & has since been the terror of the southern parts of this state by his enormities." The jury recommended mercy for him "on condition that he would be banished the continent forever." A week later Burke recommended mercy for Samuel Wiggins who was to hang for horse stealing. He was sixteen, his mother poor, his father dead. Burke believed that "it was chiefly owing to a family connection which some of his female relations ... had with ... [the] Banditti, as well as to the disadvantages which extreme poverty brings along with it, that so young a Boy was so easily debauched into his present unhappy condition."⁹²

Grimké recommended mercy for Robert Lewis, an "unfortunate convict" who had "scarcely attained the age of manhood." Lewis was "a

⁸⁸ Burke to Gov. Guerard, 14 Dec. 1784, Penal System (SCA).

⁸⁹ DRAYTON, *Remarks in a Tour*, 1784.

⁹⁰ Burke's remarks are from a charge to the Charleston Grand Jury, June 1783, in ALMON, *American Remembrancer*, 16 (1783), pp. 286-87.

⁹¹ Grimké to [Gov. Guerard], 12 Nov. 1783, Penal System (SCA).

⁹² Burke to Gov. Guerard, 11 Nov. 1784 and 17 Nov. 1784, *ibid.*

brave & gallant soldier engaged always for the defence of his Country” who was to be executed for stealing Negroes, while his accuser was “a man of that character who did not favour our Cause.”⁹³

The war also made criminals of blacks. Some slaves who had escaped to the British lines and served with them chose not to depart with the British but to stay in what was for many their native land. They had no choice but to live as had earlier fugitives, as maroons, in fixed communities hidden along the Savannah River. From there they plagued people in two states. Other blacks had not only had a similar taste of freedom but also an introduction to warfare and a life of crime like that whites had grown used to. They had ventured out on their own or had been used by the British in raids which scared and angered Carolinians. For years after the war, ex-slaves continued their thieving to maintain an isolated, barren, but free existence.⁹⁴ Little is known about the black fugitives. No Burke sketched their lives to win sympathy or mercy for them. But no one could doubt stories as tragic as those told about Lewis, Booth, and Wiggins.

South Carolina’s partisan war may have affected its survivors another way. Obviously not all those whose lives had been wrecked had turned to crime, not even all those with real needs. But neither did everyone, even those with the opportunity, resume what some people would call productive lives. They may have been disheartened and dispirited, perhaps confused or searching in the ways they thought best for meaning in life. Or perhaps some had decided that work was unrewarded and therefore idleness was best. Whatever their reasons and whoever they were, and many were undoubtedly new immigrants from other states, they seemed to be standing still and retarding the recovery of the countryside. Faced with similar problems after the French and Indian War, Regulators had taken direct action, whipping lower class people whose morals and lack of industry irritated them. They forced the idle to work. In April 1784 Georgetown’s grand jury, fearing those “idle and dissolute” who endangered “the public peace” and by their “pernicious example” corrupted youth, suggested that “the ancient statute laws with respect to idle persons, sturdy beggars, and others of that class” be put in force that they may be whipped publicly, and then sent to their homes “if strangers” or compelled “to labour, if residents.” Seven months later Beaufort’s grand jury complained about “persons who have no visible means of support.”⁹⁵

In 1789, writing about the French Revolution, “the mighty flame” of freedom appearing in France, Pierce Butler summarized much of Carolina’s experience. If the French “felt as much of the miseries of Civil War,” as he had, Butler warned, “they would enter on the business with

⁹³ Grimké to [Gov. Guerard], 12 Nov. 1783, *ibid.*

⁹⁴ QUARLES, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, p. 174; John Donald DUNCAN, “Servitude and Slavery in Colonial South Carolina, 1670-1776” (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1970), p. 600.

⁹⁵ *South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser*, 11 May and 13 Nov. 1784.

caution. When once the Dogs of Civil War are let loose it is no easy matter to call them back."⁹⁶

That "dark melancholy gloom" of the country which Reverend Simpson compared with "more happy" Charleston was a legacy of war not easily anticipated or overcome. But settlers struggled on, and in some places conditions improved. The government tried to deal with the supposed idlers in 1785 by providing for the erection of whipping posts, stocks, and pillories in every county and in 1787 by passing "An act for the promotion of industry, and for the suppression of vagrants and other idle and disorderly persons."⁹⁷ The legislators declared that those undesirables had become "such a grievance... as to require an immediate remedy." The law subjected vagrants without the money to pay court costs and unable to give one year's security for good behaviour to a year's labour, or if no one purchased their services at public auctions, to between ten and thirty-nine lashes on their bare backs and banishment from the county or district. To achieve order and establish a mode of behaviour which suited the government and, probably, the more propertied residents, the legislature defined "vagrant" more broadly than in the past. The act now included not only "all idle, lewd, disorderly men, who have no habitations or settled place of abode, or no visible lawful way or means of maintaining themselves and their families, all sturdy beggars, and all strolling or straggling persons," but also all unlicensed peddlers, all "suspicious persons" who traveled around bartering horses or Negroes without certificates of their good characters, all those who lived by gambling or horse racing, all those who owned land but did not cultivate the quantity officials thought "necessary for the maintenance" of them and their families, all fortune tellers "for fee or reward," all suspicious characters unable to produce certificates of good behaviour from officials in counties they had previously resided in, and all persons who earned money by performing on stages.⁹⁸

The state worked harder to end lawlessness. Several units of specially raised troops hunted criminals in many parts of the state. Troops guarded backcountry jails and at least once were used to prevent trouble when a court was in session.⁹⁹ In one area the state's efforts succeeded. Aedanus Burke wrote in December 1784 that Orangeburg District was "as quiet & secure perhaps as any part of this country," a welcome change

⁹⁶ Butler to [Rev. Weeden Butler], 15 March 1789, Correspondence from Pierce Butler to Rev. Weeden Butler, Additional Manuscripts 16,603 (British Library).

⁹⁷ *Statutes of South Carolina*, COOPER and McCORD, eds., vol. IV, p. 664, vol. V, p. 41.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. V, pp. 41-43; for acts of 1758 and 1778 which defined "vagrants" differently, see *ibid.*, vol. IV, pp. 51-2, 410-13.

⁹⁹ Aedanus Burke to Gov. Guerard, 14 Dec. 1784, Penal System (SCA); entries under "Contingencies," Dec. 1783, in South Carolina Treasury, Ledgers and Journals, 1783-1791, reel 4 (Colonial and State Records of South Carolina, Microcopy Number 5 [hereafter, Treasury Journals]).

from 1778 when Governor Rawlins Lowndes had pictured "a general panick" from the actions of "some very desperate villains."¹⁰⁰

While calm reigned in Orangeburg, however, Ninety Six District was in turmoil, and people demanded that criminals be dealt with harshly. In 1784 the legislature raised the punishment for those convicted the first time of horse stealing from whipping to death. The change coincided with a request of Ninety Six's grand jury in 1780, but it was not what state constitution writers had in mind in 1778 when they suggested reform of the penal laws and punishments "in some cases, less sanguinary, and, in general more proportionate to the Crime."¹⁰¹ Between November 1783 and November 1784 juries in Ninety Six sentenced eight people to hang.

All told, between June 1783 and November 1784 courts outside the Charleston area sentenced at least fifteen men to be hanged. But taking into account the youth of the offenders and the conditions which drove them to crime, judges and juries recommended eight to the governor's mercy, sometimes suggesting banishment as a substitute punishment. Six of the eight condemned prisoners in Ninety Six were executed.¹⁰² In most cases, the governor seems to have spared those for whom mercy was begged, including James Booth, Samuel Wiggins, and Robert Lewis. A few were sent off. John McDonald, for example, sentenced to hang for robbery, was shipped to New Providence.¹⁰³

Although there are few extant complaints about criminal activities after 1784, the problem was probably still serious. In Camden District between November 1786 and November 1789, twelve people were sentenced to hang, seven of them in the last year. Juries, however, recommended seven for the governor's pardon, three of those in the last year.¹⁰⁴ Ninety Six's continuing troubles were indicated in 1785 when the people around the Little River petitioned for bounties on the heads of criminals.¹⁰⁵

Runaway slaves were also attacked. Carolina soldiers, with men from Georgia, found and dispersed some blacks along the Savannah River in 1786. But the next year armed Negroes were still raiding the southern part of the state. The government turned to a party of Catawba Indians,

¹⁰⁰ Burke to Gov. Guerard, 14 Dec. 1784, Penal System (SCA); Lowndes to Henry Laurens, 22 Sept. 1778, South Carolina and Miscellaneous, Bancroft Transcripts (New York Public Library).

¹⁰¹ *Statutes of South Carolina*, COOPER and McCORD, eds., vol. IV, pp. 284, 622; Presentments of the Grand Jury of Ninety-Six District, in *Journals of the General Assembly and House of Representatives, 1776-1780*, William Edwin HEMPHILL et al., eds. (Columbia, S.C., 1970), 29 Jan. 1780, p. 256.

¹⁰² John Faucheraud Grimké to [Gov. Guerard], 12 Nov. 1783, Thomas Heyward, Jr. to Guerard, 11 Nov. 1784, Aedanus Burke to Guerard, 11 Nov. 1784 and 14 Dec. 1784, Docket for Georgetown and Ninety-Six Districts, 1783-1784, all in Penal System (SCA).

¹⁰³ For payments to express riders carrying pardons and for McDonald's banishment, see "Contingencies," Nov. 1783, Nov. 1784, and Dec. 1784, Treasury Journals, reel 4.

¹⁰⁴ Camden District, Journal of the Court of General Sessions (SCA).

¹⁰⁵ The petition is in the Legislative System Papers (SCA).

led by a white officer, and a promise of a £10 sterling reward for each Negro killed or taken, in the fight against the runaways. Apparently no blacks were captured, the reward was for killing or taking, but six were killed, four by the Indians.¹⁰⁶

Wartime violence in parts of South Carolina produced hatreds not quickly dispelled. The need some people felt to keep alive the distinctions of the war was apparent in the failure to repeal the confiscation Acts in 1787. The Acts and the unwillingness to allow Tories fair treatment in court were undoubtedly hard on individuals, but they probably prevented the more serious retaliation that some people anticipated. Aedanus Burke, fearing "that man, by custom, may be so brutalised as to relish human blood the more he shed of it," hoped that the "exceptions" to an act of oblivion would "satisfy the vengeance of those who had suffered."¹⁰⁷ Judge Grimké, too, recognized the irresistible need for revenge; in his address to the Cheraw Grand Jury he first reminded its members of "the havoc of war" and the cruelties "refined barbarians" inflicted on aged and infirm men, on women, and even on the dead. Then he urged residents to use the courts as a substitute for more violent means of gratifying "private resentment."¹⁰⁸

Only a few acts of violence against Tories were reported. In 1784 a Charleston newspaper noted that twelve Tories who moved back to their plantations on Fishing Creek in the northern part of the state were visited by neighbours who ordered them to leave within twenty days. When they did not, the Whigs presumably "killed 8 for an example, and let the other 4 escape to tell the news to their brother Tories."¹⁰⁹ There is no other evidence that those murders occurred, and the newspaper was itself trying to stir up anti-Tory and anti-British sentiment in Charleston. "Sons of Liberty" punished William Rees. They laid on fifty stripes and promised him more if he did not depart the state within three weeks. While an officer in the loyal militia, Rees had captured three rebels, one of whom was hanged when turned over to the British. But Rees remained, and survived.¹¹⁰

In 1787 there was a confrontation at a backcountry election. People "who called themselves... the Whig party" rebelled when "Three persons who distinguished themselves in his Britannic Majesty's Cause in the late

¹⁰⁶ QUARLES, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, p. 174; message from Governor Thomas Pinckney, Senate Journal, 19 March 1787; for the use of Indians and the payment of rewards, see entries under "Expedition against Negroes," in the Treasury Journals, reel 4, between March 1787 and January 1788.

¹⁰⁷ The first quotation is from Burke's charge to the Charleston Grand Jury, June 1783, in ALMON, *American Remembrancer*, 16 (1783), pp. 286-87; the second from Burke to Arthur Middleton, 14 May 1782, "Correspondence of Arthur Middleton," BARNWELL, ed. (1925), pp. 199-200.

¹⁰⁸ Grimké's address is printed in GREGG, *History of the Old Cheraws*, pp. 417-29.

¹⁰⁹ *Gazette of the State of South Carolina*, 6 May 1784.

¹¹⁰ For Rees's treatment, see *ibid.*, 29 April 1784, and Anne King GREGORIE, *History of Sumter County, South Carolina* (Sumter, S.C., 1954), pp. 48-9.

War" sought legislative seats in the lower district between the Broad and Saluda rivers. The election managers thought them the likely winners because of "the great number of disaffected persons" in the area. So the Whigs destroyed the election box. Such confrontations, "Broils and Feuds," the managers reported, were inevitable "while those that have Sheathed their Swords in the Bowels of their Country... set themselves up to make Law, for those whom they could not Subdue."¹¹¹ The conflict showed that the distinction between Whig and Tory was still prevalent in the backcountry. A year later, Justice Richard Champion implored settlers in the interior to "temper justice with mercy," for "we are all citizens of one state."¹¹²

The election controversy revealed not only that hostilities remained, however, but that opponents lived near each other and participated in elections. Backcountry settlers had wanted harsher treatment of loyalists, but apparently they accepted what they got as a substitute for other action.

In contrast, most of the lowcountry remained emotionally calm at the close of the war. Spared most of "the terrible inroads which the disorders of war... created,"¹¹³ many lowcountry people had little to forgive and were gracious and accepting in victory. The British were not abused at all until 1785, when economic depression brought denunciations of British merchants. But attitudes could not be the same in the regions which had done most to sustain a revolution they had done least to bring about. Memories remained fresh. The war became and for some time remained a standard of suffering against which people measured new problems. In 1784, criminals so distressed the inland settlers that they lived "under nearly as much difficulty as when Cornwallis was amongst us." In 1788, some backcountry residents asked for economic aid because their "infant farms" were "just immurging from the ruins & devastations of the late unnatural war," while others argued that their current "almost insupportable distress" was worse than the "Horror of War."¹¹⁴

The lingering and pervasive heritage of war for Carolinians concentrated away from the old seat of power was not only independence and greater political power but also murder, crime, violence, and hatred. Indeed, Ralph Izard said, epitomizing an understanding too little reckoned with in our own time, "the hatred planted" by the war was "the most serious injury" done us.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Thomas Gordon and Robert Rutherford to John Fauchereaud [sic] Grimké, Journal of the House of Representatives, 23 Jan. 1787. Grimké was speaker of the house when the election was conducted.

¹¹² Charge to the Grand Jury of Lancaster County, Jan. 1788, in *State Gazette of South Carolina*, 7 Feb. 1788.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* Champion was noting how bad the backcountry war had been; he was not comparing it with the war in the lowcountry.

¹¹⁴ William Bratton to Gov. Guerard, 13 Feb. 1784, Penal System (SCA); petitions from Winton County and Newberry County, 1788, Legislative System, State Finance, (SCA).

¹¹⁵ Izard to Thomas Jefferson, 27 April 1784, *Jefferson Papers*, BOYD, ed., vol. VII, p. 130.