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CONTENTS

| Articles: | Page |
|--|------|
| Hannah English Williams: America's First Woman Natural History Collector, by Beatrice Scheer Smith | 83 |
| Charleston and Internal Slave Redistribution, by Daniel C. Littlefield | 93 |
| The Case of James Nassau Colleton before the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates, by Kathy Roe Coker..... | 106 |
| The Origins of Cattle-Ranching in Colonial South Carolina, 1670 — 1715, by John S. Otto..... | 117 |
| Book Reviews and Notes: | |
| O'Brien, <i>A Character of Hugh Legare</i> , by George A. Kennedy | 125 |
| Chesnutt, <i>The Papers of Henry Laurens</i> , Volume Ten: <i>December 12, 1774 — January 4, 1776</i> , by Michael E. Stevens | 126 |
| Butler, <i>the Huguenots in America: A Refugee People in New World Society</i> , by Wendell Thomas Guerry | 127 |
| From the Archives: | |
| The Vigilant Fire Company of Charleston, by Michael E. Stevens..... | 130 |
| From the Society: | |
| Recent Manuscript Accessions, by Harlan Greene | 137 |

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Charleston and Internal Slave Redistribution

Daniel C. Littlefield*

Colonial South Carolina was the largest slave trading area in eighteenth-century British North America. Although Virginia had a larger slave population, it had grown over a longer period of time and the need for slaves was not as acute in the relatively mature Chesapeake region as in the bustling plantation economy of its youthful neighbor to the south. The focal point of this forced African immigration was the port of Charleston. Its geographical situation was not essentially different from that of its occasional competitors in Georgetown and Beaufort; and its selection as the locus of Carolina settlement had, as George C. Rogers, Jr., states, "some elements of accident."¹ But once that decision was taken, Charleston became the entrepôt of the overseas trade with Africa and elsewhere as well as the center of government and social life. As the colony's commercial center, Charleston was guaranteed a practical monopoly on the slave trade — a preeminence that extended, indeed, to practically all the region between the Chesapeake and St. Augustine.² In nearly all that area, planters came or sent to Charleston for their slaves.

For one thing, the outports were not usually large enough to handle whole slave cargoes. The norm was 100 or 200, but vessels could contain as many as 300 or 400 captives. A small cargo might go off easily enough, but larger ones and more than one could cause a bad sale. As Henry Laurens, one of the leading slave merchants expressed it "little Markets . . . must be fed sparingly and then they pay the dearer for their meat, but if you put any large quantities in their way, they triumph and will not purchase even what they stand in need of

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¹George C. Rogers, Jr., *History of Georgetown County, South Carolina* (Columbia, 1971), p. 2. See also Lawrence S. Rowland, "Eighteenth Century Beaufort: A Study of South Carolina's Southern Parishes to 1800," (Ph.D. Diss., Univ. of S.C., 1978), p. 8.

²After 1765 Georgians moved to establish their own trans-Atlantic connections and engage in direct Africa trade, but Charleston remained an important, if not preeminent, source nonetheless. See Darold D. Wax, "New Negroes Are Always in Demand: The Slave Trade in Eighteenth-Century Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 68:193-220.

unless at their own prices and terms."³

For another thing, the slave trade was capital intensive, and only larger, more wealthy merchants or, more often than not, combinations of merchants were sufficiently endowed to engage in it. When a slave ship came in and stopped at Sullivan's Island to perform the mandatory ten days quarantine (or longer if the slaves possessed a contagious disease), a merchant or merchant company had to take charge of the cargo and arrange for its sale. In the meantime, the merchant had to have sufficient cash reserves or personal credit to be able to pay out of hand the ship captain's coast commission, the men's half-wages and other requisite charges. He conducted the sale on the best conditions possible — meaning at the best prices and on the shortest terms, ranging, generally, from three months to a year; but he was responsible for all bad debts. Planters who could pay in cash got a discount; the others paid interest ranging as high as 25% at the beginning of the century, but dropping to 10% in 1720 and to 8% in 1748. The merchant shipped cash payments off immediately in specie or bills of exchange, along with available Carolina produce. He shipped the other payments as they became due, often whether he had been paid or not, and, even if everything went well, was out of a portion of his money for as much as a year or more. For his trouble, he earned a commission of eight to ten percent (or greater at the end of the century when trading methods changed). Clearly only substantial merchants could take the risks involved and partnerships helped lessen the risks.⁴

The trade also depended upon an extensive network of relationships and acquaintances. When a merchant arranged a sale, he sent handbills throughout the city and into the interior to advertise. Particular messages were sent to local contacts and the appeal for patronage was made in quite personal terms. Daniel Heyward, who settled in the area of Beaufort County in the 1740s received a letter from Henry Laurens in 1764 asking his presence at a sale. The request was made not for Laurens himself but on behalf of another and the letter illustrates both the intricate relationships involved in the slave trade and the way that slaves arrived in Beaufort County and other districts. "A Cargo of Negroes belonging to a very good friend of mine is offer'd to Sale . . . as per inclosed advertisements," Laurens wrote. "You have often complimented me with enquiries when I should have Negroes & promises of further favours which add to the obligations

³George C. Rogers, Jr. et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, vol. IV; 1763-1765 (Columbia, 1974), p. 352, cited as *Laurens Papers*.

⁴Daniel C. Littlefield, "Planter Preferences: A Study of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina," (Ph.D. Diss., The Johns Hopkins Univ., 1977), pp. 72-79.

that I am under for all past ones. Now, Sir, your aid at this Sale of my friends will oblige me as much as if I made the Sale myself. . . ." He was convinced that Heyward would make a purchase if he but viewed the cargo.⁵

The requirement for substantial wealth and reputation put obstacles in the way of young merchants trying to break into the slaving business even if they operated from Charleston. They always needed the support of established backers. For fledgings who desired to attract direct trade to the outports, both the need and the obstacles were far greater. Thus while Henry Laurens and another merchant were willing to act as sureties for John Hopton who entered the slave trade in Charleston in 1771, Laurens was not so forthcoming with Joseph Brown who proposed to trade from Georgetown in 1763.⁶ Brown had asked Laurens' assistance in procuring a "Small Cargo of Negroes" for the northern port but Laurens demurred, advancing considerations which probably also held true for Beaufort. First, he suggested that Brown would have to guarantee a better market for the slaves in Georgetown than in Charleston, which he thought an unlikely prospect. Second, he thought that the customers there were not so dependable: "the people that you quote being as you say in General poor their honesty allowing [it] to be greater then [that of] other folks will be no inducement to the Affrican Traders who love to go and allways seek for that Market where there is most money stirring & where there are men of Fortune who in Case of a Glutt will take off[f] a Cargo at some rate or other and pay for them. Now, Sir, the two points that you have to establish are assurance that in your new trade better prices than in Charles Town will be obtain'd & also better remittances and to give security for the performance of both for without something better offers you know that no Trade can be diverted from its' old Channel" He did not advise Brown to undertake such an obligation.⁷

As the foregoing suggests, Charleston had attracted more substantial customers as well as more wealthy merchants, and leading planters in the outdistricts, as Daniel Heyward in Beaufort, sent to Charleston for slaves rather than waiting for slaves to come to them. This consideration alone inhibited the dispatch of slaves to the outports without some compelling reason. But even substantial businessmen sometimes defaulted as indicated by Laurens' experience with Beaufort merchant Francis Stuart. Laurens designed to send a cargo of fifty slaves to Georgetown in April 1764, an intention that

⁵Laurens Papers, IV, pp. 305-06.

⁶Leila Sellers, *Charleston Business on the Eve of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1934), p. 52.

⁷Laurens Papers, IV, p. 104.

miscarried when a change in the wind prevented the ship from sailing in that direction. He then considered sending the cargo to Port Royal but could not agree to the terms offered and besides, he said, he did "not so well like the payments in that quarter." Finally, he agreed with Francis Stuart, who had come to Charleston, to take the cargo for £12,135 (currency) due on January 1, 1765. In February, however, he was obliged to send a plaintive letter apologizing for the imposition but reporting: "I am now in advance for every farthing of the proceeds of those Negroes which I sold you some time ago for £12,000 because I promis'd our friends at St. Kitts [on whose account he had sold the cargo] that I would be punctual in remitting. I must therefore request you to order me a reimbursement of the whole if you possibly can but at least send me part of it to keep dunnos from my Door, the fear of which alone makes me call upon you. . . ."⁸ This may be an example of why he disliked Beaufort as an area of trade. Nor was he alone in this regard. Merchant John Guerard expressed the same opinion, with perhaps the same reference, when he commented in 1752 that "I must Confess from what I have experienced I am not fond of Sending much to the Southward since I find thire Backwardness . . . in remittances"⁹

Of course, virtue was not all on one side and people in the outdistricts had to be careful of slaves sent to their quarters because of the often justifiable suspicion that these slaves suffered from some defect of character or physique. The cargo Laurens sold to Stuart had been intended for Georgetown because, as Laurens told his West Indian correspondent, the slaves were "extremely meagre and thin," and "the ordinary course" of events at the market in Charleston would not have contributed to their advantageous sale. In other words, one of the ways in which outports such as Beaufort could offer a better market than Charleston was if the slaves were so emaciated that sophisticated buyers at the entrepôt, or, more accurately, buyers who had or expected greater choice, would not give much for them. Laurens on several occasions sent refractory slaves of his own away for sale in the outdistricts. Most of the others he sent there were slaves received on consignment from the West Indies — a fact which made them almost *ipso facto* objectionable. Slaves resident in the islands for longer than six months had to pay an extra duty of fifty pounds upon their importation in South Carolina because of the assumption that they had been exported for being somehow deficient.¹⁰

⁸Ibid., pp. 255-56, 576.

⁹John Guerard to William Joliff, April 30, 1752, John Guerard Letterbook, S.C. Historical Society.

¹⁰Laurens Papers, IV, pp. 298-300, 658; V, 1765-1768, pp. 170-71; Littlefield, "Planter Preferences," pp. 94-95; W. Robert Higgins, "The Geographical Origins of Negro Slaves in Colonial South Carolina," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 70 (1971): 46-47.

Clearly one effect of the existence of Beaufort and other outports and their hinterlands was to maintain slave prices in Charleston. Laurens emphasized this fact (as well as illustrated why slaves forwarded after a stay in the West Indies were so commonly disparaged) when he reported the status of a cargo shipped by the merchant house of Day and Welch from St. Kitts in 1764. The slaves (he said) "were in general Aged, some quite Grey, others maim'd" and presented overall a "wretched plight." But, he admonished, "you know better than I do what they were when they were Shiped at St. Kitts, & you may imagine how much they were improved by a long Voyage and very short provision . . ." He had managed to sell some of the lot in Charleston but they had proven unsatisfactory. To such an extent, indeed, that one purchaser, after viewing the parcel at home, had tried to bring two of them back. "I declare upon my Honor," Laurens said, that "if I had been dealing for myself I would have received them but I did not think myself at liberty to use the same freedom with your Interest. However it will still occasion me some trouble & perhaps the loss of an acquaintance merely because he has made a bad bargain for I practice no artifice."¹¹ He proposed, therefore, to send the remainder for sale outside of Charleston although one was deaf and dumb and the rest had little to recommend them. Still, the ploy worked. Laurens reported three months later that the slaves sent into the country had sold at least 50% higher than they would have in Charleston. On the other hand, the people who bought them were much more likely to default.¹²

The flocking of buyers to Charleston from the hinterland — sometimes from as far as one hundred or more miles away — also helped to maintain or raise slave prices. This was especially true in the second half of the century when settlement of the backcountry accelerated. Peter Manigault and Henry Laurens both noted that frontiersmen paid the highest prices for slaves and had proven trustworthy in honoring their debts. But it took large cargoes to draw them down. Small parcels were not worth their trouble. Once arrived, though, they were loath to return empty handed and their competitive bidding supported the value of slaves and allowed the factor to be selective about his customers. It also permitted the sale of weak slaves along with strong ones.¹³

But there were numerous determinants of slave prices. The value and prospects of Carolina staple crops, the cost of freight, the charge

¹¹Laurens Papers, IV, p. 412.

¹²Ibid., p. 538.

¹³See, for example, Laurens Papers, I, 1746-1755, pp. 314, 349; II, 1755-1758, pp. 65-66, 270-271, 317-318; and Peter Manigault to William Blake, (no date but between Dec. 16 and 24, 1772) Peter Manigault Letterbook, S.C. Historical Society.

for insurance, the threat or rumor or outbreak of war were all considerations. Tensions between England and France preceding the Seven Years War, for example, caused unstable market conditions in Carolina. Laurens wrote to correspondents in England that, although many slave vessels were expected, the advent of war would deter them, for international conflict would "give a Sudden check to the Rice Planters" and he would expect a call for about half as many slaves as otherwise.¹⁴ He was more descriptive with another, writing "You will not be surpriz'd that the Carolina Planters are intimidated at the appearance of War when we inform you that Rice sold last War so low as 6/7 per Ct. [cwt.]; the price perhaps would open at 20/, very soon be down to 12/6, [and remain] at that stand most of the Year, which would not pay the outgoings of a Plantation."¹⁵ When news of war arrived in 1756, rice dropped immediately from 42/6 to 37/6 per cwt., the cost of insurance had already increased fifteen or sixteen percent and the price of slaves fell correspondingly.¹⁶

Of course, a large and enthusiastic crowd could offset countervailing forces, but no one factor alone was necessarily determinative. Despite the threat of war in 1755, the arrival of desirable slaves in August induced planters to buy. By contrast, a ship that had come in a month earlier nullified the advantage of a large crowd of potential buyers by bringing its human freight in poor health. Laurens lamented, in fact, that numerous planters "had come upwards of Seventy Miles distance, most of which return'd without a Slave and those sort of People are the only ones to raise a Sale, for if they like the Slaves they won't go back empty handed so far for 10 or £20 in the price." Even so unpredictable a thing as inclement weather could dampen slave sales. In August 1756 Laurens reported that "numbers" of planters were in town but "could not be perswaded to Touch a Slave" because of the rain.¹⁷ The apparent fear was that the slaves might catch pneumonia or some other respiratory disease, to which they were particularly prone.

One of the most important criteria of slave worth derived from his provenance — i.e., where he came from in Africa. For the Carolina planter did not want just any slave but rather a particular kind of slave, and among the particulars was the slave's ethnic background. Laurens recognized this fact in his correspondence with Daniel Heyward of Beaufort in 1764. "If I can but win you to come and see them," he said advertising a slave cargo, "I am under no doubt that the

¹⁴*Laurens Papers*, I, pp. 257-58.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, II, p. 242.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, II, 246; Littlefield, "Planter Preferences," p. 81.

¹⁷*Laurens Papers*, I, p. 281; II, p. 284.

Country will tempt you to make a small purchase." In other words, there was a clear hierarchy of slave preferences and knowing to what "country" the slaves belonged would, other things being equal, definitely encourage Heyward to buy.

It is perhaps ironic, though not entirely strange, that his great-great-grandson Duncan Heyward in his *Seed from Madagascar* should have been unaware of this fact, especially since in many other of his comments on slaves and the slave trade he is close to the mark. In speaking of slavers on the African coast he says: "Little did it concern them where the slaves they bought came from or to what tribes they belonged. What concerned them most was whether the slaves looked healthy and fit to work, and also where they could be disposed of most readily."¹⁸ But throughout the New World colonials developed preferences for slaves from particular locales and specified these desires when they requested servile laborers. Thus, for example, it is said of Jamaica that the planters early developed "a liking for particular tribal types, 'choosing their Negroes from whence they come and their look.'" More specifically, Jamaica planters had what was called a "perverse" preference for slaves from what was then called the Gold Coast (modern Ghana), despite the fact that peoples from this region were prominent in slave revolts on the island.¹⁹ In eighteenth century Brazil the remark was common that "without sugar there is no Brazil and without Angola there is no sugar," referring to the dependence of Brazilian sugar planters on labor from that African region.²⁰

In South Carolina a similar situation obtained. Slaves from the Senegambia Region were desired over all others, though they were sometimes equated with peoples from the Gold Coast. After them, South Carolinians asked for peoples from the regions of modern Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, called the Windward Coast. Peoples from Congo-Angola were acceptable but peoples from the Niger Delta, called "Calabars," or "Ibos" or "Bonny" slaves were not favored.²¹

The value of these preferences was reflected in slave prices. So when Laurens advised a correspondent how to pick slaves for the Carolina region in 1768 he advised him to pay £25 sterling for peoples from Angola and £27 sterling for captives from Gambia and the Gold Coast. Obviously he expected that kind of differential when they were sold in North America.²² John Guerard gave the same kind of advice.

¹⁸Duncan Clinch Heyward, *Seed from Madagascar* (Chapel Hill, 1937), p. 53.

¹⁹Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (Rutherford, 1969), pp. 134-44.

²⁰James Duffy, *Portuguese Africa* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), pp. 138-39.

²¹For a more extended treatment of slave preferences in colonial South Carolina see Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge, 1981), pp. 8-32.

²²*Laurens Papers*, V, p. 547.

"I wod chuse all Men of Gambia or Windward Coast, in failure of which Angolas, but no Bite or Callabars, which may be cheaper than the last," but were often practically unsaleable. When they did sell they did not always attract the best customers. Guerard complained that "none but the Lower sort of people will Medle with [Calabars] . . . wth whom is the greatest risque and in the End one may worke for nothing" by being unable to recover the debt.²³

Of course, it goes without saying that if planters could not get what they wanted they had to take what they could get. Consequently, when a smallpox epidemic in the Gambia river affected the supply of slaves there in 1755 Laurens wrote a correspondent in June that "Men Slaves from 18 to 25 Years of age turn to best Account, tall able People of any Country but Callabars," and to another in September he wrote that "stout healthy Fellows sell to most advantage with us, the Country not material if they are not from Callabar."²⁴ To a third he wrote "We have nothing yet reached us from Gambia nor any other part of the Coast." Therefore, the only slaves on the market were from a cargo from Calabar. "These Slaves will now sell well if no other Vessel stops in before the Sale," he said, "but should that happen many that would buy these when none others can be had would forego the purchase for a fortnight to get them of some other Country."²⁵ He had earlier reported that a recent cargo had averaged £33 sterling "which you must allow a most extraordinary affair for Angola Negroes."²⁶ Since the source of slaves could help determine price, slavers in Africa, or more correctly their employers in Europe, were neither unmindful nor uncaring about where they got their slaves or where they sent them.

An indication that Carolinians maintained an interest in the ethnic background of their slaves is suggested by an act passed in 1738 which required masters to supply to the local militia commander a list of all slaves between the ages of sixteen and sixty including "the Names, Ages and Country" — i.e. their origin, and the list was supposed to be renewed each year.²⁷ Obviously this was a matter that concerned the security of the province, the authorities apparently being determined to find out if any one group had a greater propensity for faithfulness or rebellion than any other. As we have indicated,

²³Guerard to William Joliff, June 1, 1752, and to Thomas Rock, Sr., May 27, 1752, John Guerard Letterbook.

²⁴*Laurens Papers*, I, pp. 275, 331.

²⁵*Ibid.* p. 291.

²⁶*Ibid.* p. 268.

²⁷*South Carolina Gazette*, Sept. 21, 1738, cited as *SCG*. The original of this act is not extant but an act superceding it and containing the same language was passed in 1747. See Thomas Cooper and David McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia, 1836-1841), IX, p. 658. None of these lists has been found.

certain peoples did develop such reputations in other plantation regions. Indeed, after the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739 — the largest such incident in eighteenth-century North America — and in which large numbers of Angola slaves were implicated, importation from this region was drastically curtailed.²⁸

The ethnic awareness indicated by the planters' expression of preference was prominently displayed in advertisements for slaves to be sold in Beaufort. Thus readers of the *South Carolina Gazette* in September 1760 were notified that there were "TO BE SOLD at Beaufort, Port Royal, on tuesday the 30th Instant, A CHOICE Cargo of about ONE HUNDRED and SEVENTY GOLD COAST NEGROES."²⁹ Or, at another date: "A LIKELY and healthy Cargo of TWO HUNDRED GUINEY NEGROES, just imported . . . in a short Passage from the Windward Coast of Africa."³⁰ Or "A CARGO of two hundred as healthy and likely Gambia NEGROES as ever was imported into this province."³¹ Or, to be sold, "ONE Hundred prime Angola slaves."³²

These are all examples of slaves advertised for sale in Beaufort during the 1760s, the thirteen years from 1752 being especially busy ones in Carolina.³³ These ads are extraordinary because they indicate a more significant position for Beaufort in the slave trade than has commonly been assumed. If recourse is made to the South Carolina General Duty books, in which are recorded duties paid on official imports into the colony, one discovers that Beaufort was the scene of direct African importation in only three years between 1736 and 1757, amounting in that period to approximately 200 slaves. No imports are recorded for Beaufort after 1757.³⁴ The *Gazette*, however, reveals a far different story. It suggests the importation of around 1,000 slaves between 1760 and 1765. Thus Beaufort played an important part in the demand for servile labor that gripped South Carolina in the period under discussion, an extension of indigo production and an increase in the population around Port Royal in the three decades after 1740 having doubtless expanded its market.³⁵

²⁸Peter H. Wood, " 'More Like A Negro Country': Demographic Patterns in Colonial South Carolina, 1700-1740," in Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene D. Genovese, eds., *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies* (Princeton, 1975), p. 152, 152n.

²⁹SCG, Sept. 6, 1760.

³⁰SCG, July 26, 1760.

³¹SCG, Sept. 17, 1763.

³²SCG, March 30, 1765.

³³Higgins, "Geographical Origins," p. 40.

³⁴Public Treasurer, Journals A, B and C: Duties (1735-1776), S.C. Department of Archives and History, Columbia.

³⁵Rowland, "Eighteenth Century Beaufort," pp. 134-49.

Beaufort Slave Sales Listed in the *South-Carolina Gazette*, 1760 — 1765

| Date | Ship | Captain | Company | Slaves | Source |
|-------------|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 7/26/60 | <i>Marquis of Rockingham</i> | Evans | Middleton & Brailsford | 200 | Windward Coast |
| 9/6/60 | <i>Middleton</i> | John Walker | " | 170 | Gold Coast |
| 9/17/63 | <i>Marquis of Granby</i> | John Kitching | Middleton, Liston & Hope | 200 | Gambia |
| 3/2/65 | <i>Success</i> | Joseph Cookson | " | | Gambia |
| 3/30/65 | <i>Providence</i> | Edward Williams | " | 100 | Angola |
| 4/6/65 | <i>Essex</i> | George Barwick | " | 150 | Angola |
| 4/27/65 | <i>Antelope</i> | Thomas Paly | " | 150 | Gambia |

No one would be more aware of these circumstances than Thomas Middleton. A noted merchant, planter and military commander, he had both landed and commercial interests in the region. Companies in which he was concerned, first Middleton and Brailsford (1751-1760) and then Middleton, Liston and Hope (1763-1766), were responsible for all of Beaufort's extraordinary importation in the six years beginning in 1760. In no period before or afterwards did this southern port make an equal claim on the slave trade. Particularly distinguished was 1765, a banner year for imports, as slavers rushed to beat the effects of a law which prohibited importation for three years after January 1, 1766.³⁶ In a two-months period — March and April 1765 — Beaufort saw advertised more than 400 slaves in four separate cargoes.³⁷ Increased possibilities to the south notwithstanding, these slaves may be partially a reflection of a glutted market in Charleston. They should probably be considered direct Beaufort imports. Although advertised by the Charleston firm of Middleton, Liston and Hope, they apparently paid duties neither in Charleston nor Beaufort; and only one of them, the *Success*, which brought in Gambia slaves obtained in Antigua, was listed as entered in the Charleston Customs House if the *Gazette*, which usually reported such listings, is a true guide.³⁸ Naval Office List information on slaving vessels for South Carolina is incomplete and undependable; the first half of 1765, during the period these vessels entered, is missing.³⁹ Indeed, the only evidence for three of the cargoes is found in the public notices for slave sales at Beaufort.

Middleton, Liston and Hope also sent 200 Gambias by the *Marquis of Granby* for sale in Beaufort in September 1763 for which, again, no evidence exists except the ad.⁴⁰ No apparent duties were paid nor is the vessel found in the Naval Office Lists nor listed under Customs House in the *Gazette*, though evidence for return of the ship with 200 slaves for sale in Charleston in 1764 is found every place except the incomplete Naval Office Lists.⁴¹ Middleton and Brailsford publicized two cargoes for sale in Beaufort in 1760: 200 Windward Coast slaves in the *Marquis of Rockingham* in July; and 170 Gold Coast slaves in the *Middleton* in September. Both vessels were recorded by the *Gazette*, and the *Middleton* in the Naval Office Lists.⁴² The duties paid, however, were not commensurate with the number of slaves advertised. Middleton and Brailsford paid £1,560 currency in duties at

³⁶*Laurens Papers*, IV, pp. 381-382n; Higgins, "Geographical Origins," p. 41.

³⁷*SCG*, March 2, 1765, March 30, 1765, April 6, 1765, April 27, 1765.

³⁸*SCG*, March 2, 1765.

³⁹Naval Office Lists, Charles Town, South Carolina, Colonial Office Papers 5/511, f. 83, Public Record Office, London.

⁴⁰*SCG*, Sept. 17, 1763.

⁴¹*SCG*, Oct. 8, 1764; Public Treasurer, Journal B: Duties (1748-1765), f. 420.

⁴²*SCG*, July 26, 1760; Sept. 6, 1760; Naval Office Lists, CO 5/510, f. 85.

Charleston on the *Middleton's* cargo, suggesting 156 slaves imported (the duty being £10 on full-grown and £5 on underaged blacks), and so was close to the 155 recorded in the Naval Office Lists though less than the 170 advertised. But while Austin, Laurens and Appleby paid £10 on one slave (or two) from the *Marquis'* cargo, there is no record of the rest.⁴³ There is nothing to indicate that these sales did not take place. Nor was Middleton the only person who evidently evaded payment of duties, though he was one of the most prominent and may have done it more often.⁴⁴

On the other hand, especially insofar as concerns Beaufort, the records may simply be lost. The new Naval Officer Joseph (or James) Fox, for example, complained to the Board of Trade in 1734 that his predecessor had not properly returned accounts from Georgetown and that he had "sent to Port Royal for ye Accounts of that Port" as well. He promised regular transmissions for the future. His successors, however, may have been as negligent as his predecessors.⁴⁵ The colonial government may also have been at fault. The governor and Council reported March 26, 1736 that they had "advice that a Negro Ship is shortly expected to arrive at Port Royal" and that there was no official either there or at Winyaw to receive duties, a situation they hastened to remedy.⁴⁶ These data suggest some of the reasons why the number of slaves imported into South Carolina surely exceeded what official documents indicate.

While according to Treasury records, therefore, Georgetown exceeded Beaufort in direct African imports, paying duties to the amount of £3019.4.9 to cover approximately 300 slaves for eight years between 1755 and 1774, the reverse may well have been true.⁴⁷ Importers paid

⁴³Public Treasurer, Journal B, f. 277.

⁴⁴See, for example, *Laurens Papers*, IV, p. 391n, for the case of Isaac Da Costa who apparently also failed to pay duties on a cargo of slaves. Neither Middleton nor Da Costa was breaking new ground. Indeed, Peter Wood suggests that one reason some traders may have been attracted to the outports was that they "sensed the prospect of conspiring with local officials to avoid the colony's Negro duty." In February 1733 the Commons House of Assembly notified the Upper House that the *Molly*, John Caruthers, had landed 100 slaves at Charleston on which the captain paid duties and then proceeded to Georgetown-Winyaw with 62 slaves on which no duty was paid. The Upper House, after investigation, held the Port Controller at fault: "we find John Brown the Controler, has not been only very remiss in his Duty, but indeed guilty of Notorious Falsity (we might almost say Forgery)." They urged his replacement but the Lower House suggested a reprimand instead. See Wood, "More Like a Negro Country," p. 146, 146n. It is not clear, though, that these slaves were publicly advertised for sale as in the Middleton case.

⁴⁵Naval Office Lists, CO 5/509, f. 127.

⁴⁶Quoted in Wood, "More Like a Negro Country," p. 147n. The reference was almost certainly to the *Sussanah* mentioned below.

⁴⁷Public Treasurer, Journals A, B and C: Duties (1735-1776). See also *Laurens Papers*, IV, p. 105n, where, however, the figure £108.2.5 for 1772 should properly be £1082.5.

£2058.15 in duties for slaves in Beaufort for three years between 1736 and 1757. Duties paid in the last year, though, were for nineteen slaves brought in over a decade earlier, by John Gordon in 1743.⁴⁸ No single cargo in Georgetown, insofar as the records reveal, was as large as that of the *Sussanah* (David Mallorie, Captain), which entered Beaufort with 198 slaves from Africa in 1736.⁴⁹ Slave cargoes imported into Georgetown tended to be much smaller. The largest, of 112 imported in 1772, and the second largest, of perhaps eighty in 1774, exceeded considerably any of the other cargoes brought in by Joseph Brown, Port Collector, who was responsible for practically all of the importation. No public notices of slave sales equal to those of Beaufort have been found for Georgetown. Despite Brown's efforts, Beaufort would appear to have been second only to Charleston in direct slave imports.

Sullivan's Island off Charleston Harbor has been styled the black man's Ellis Island since through it flowed more of the forced African immigration that settled the lower south than through any other single location in the eighteenth century. It was gateway to the most expansive plantation economy on the continent in the quarter century before the Revolution, an economy that drew equally from Africa and Europe the human material essential to claim the hinterland for cultivation. Though newspaper evidence suggests that Beaufort had a stronger participation in the slave trade than formerly assumed, far exceeding the trade in Georgetown, these subsidiary ports primarily served an ancillary function. By their existence they helped to distribute slaves throughout the region and to sustain the market at the major port of entry.

⁴⁸Public Treasurer, Journal B, f. 167.

⁴⁹Naval Office Lists, CO 5/509 f.5. The cargo was taken up by Samuel Montiaugut, who paid £1420 duties on 157 slaves and James Delos who paid £400 on 40 slaves. Public Treasurer, Journal A, f. 49. Delos was not entirely successful with his parcel and his experience helps explain Laurens' advice concerning shipments to the outdistricts. The *South Carolina Gazette*, March 17, 1739 reported that he still had 28 left on hand which he now offered for sale with the added advantage that they were "Season'd to this Country."

The Case of James Nassau Colleton before the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates

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Among the records of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History are a number of letters written between 1782 and 1784 by Governors John Mathews and Benjamin Guerard and by numerous individuals to the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates. The letters relate primarily to the state's confiscation of the real and personal property of loyalists as a means of recruiting slaves and raising supplies for the Continental army, the payment of bounties to soldiers in the form of Negroes confiscated from the estates, and the attempt by sundry individuals affected by the state's policy toward loyalists to plead their case before the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates. One such case was pleaded by James Nassau Colleton, great-great-grandson of Sir John Colleton and heir in 1782 to 12,000 acres on the Cooper River known as Wadboo (Watboo) Barony. In an attempt to place the Colleton case in its proper historical perspective, an account of the events surrounding the confiscation of the estate is presented below.

Largely due to the military situation in the state, the South Carolina legislature under the protection of Nathanael Greene's army met from January 8 to February 26, 1782, at Jacksonborough on the Edisto River.¹ Their overall task was the restoration of civil government to the state. Diverse and critical issues were on the minds of the legislators. A governor had to be chosen. Whether or not paper currency or bills of credit should continue as legal tender in payment of debts must be decided. When suits for debts against the state were allowed to begin must be addressed. Governor Rutledge's proclamations of September 7 and November 17 needed adoption by the General Assembly. The state's quota of furnishing supplies to the army must be met. How best to procure recruits and prevent desertion also required attention. And, how to respond to the state's loyalists deserved their immediate consideration and action. While each of these matters was crucial, perhaps none of them evinced the same degree of controversy as the treatment of South Carolina's loyalists.

Governor Rutledge in his speech on January 8, 1782, to both houses of the legislature, addressed the issue of the state's loyalists:

Another important matter for your deliberation, is the conduct of such of our citizens as voluntarily avowing their allegiance, and even glorifying in their professions of loyalty and attachment to his Britannick Majesty, have offered their congrat-

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¹George C. Rogers, *A South Carolina Chronology, 1497-1970*, Tricentennial Book-let Number 11 (Columbia, 1973), pp. 43-44.