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THE GREAT CAROLINA HURRICANE OF 1752

JONATHAN MERCANTINI*

THE SUMMER OF 1752 WAS THE HOTTEST IN LIVING MEMORY for Charlestonians. Temperatures in the shade were consistently in the nineties and the mercury broke one hundred degrees on numerous occasions. That heat wave broke on September 15 when a major hurricane slammed the city. Hurricanes were not unheard of in Charleston. The city had been visited with major storms on three previous occasions, but the hurricane of 1752 was by far the worst to hit the city during the colonial period. The storm caused massive damage, wrecking numerous homes and businesses, severely damaging, if not destroying, every vessel in the harbor, ruining much of the rice crop — the colony's most valuable export—and leveling the defenses which guarded the city.

The Great Hurricane of 1752 was more than just a meteorological disaster for the South Carolina Lowcountry. The powerful storm's devastation and the colony's response allows for a closer inspection of the conflicts between the South Carolina Commons House and the royal governor, James Glen. This catastrophe would reignite a smoldering controversy regarding local authority and a power struggle between the legislature and the executive over control of the colony's finances. The strong rhetoric on both sides reflects the tensions between colonial and imperial elites in South Carolina during the 1750s. Jealousies between the Royal Council and the Commons are also apparent, as neither side completely trusted the other with each desiring greater control over the colony's fiscal appropriations. Many of the larger issues contained in these disputes contributed to South Carolinians' eventual decision to seek their independence from Great Britain. Thus, the Hurricane of 1752 enables us to better understand South Carolina politics and its colonial constitution on the eve of the American Revolution.

In 1752, Charleston, the capital of South Carolina, was the fifth largest city in British North America and the largest south of Baltimore. It was the political, economic and social center of the lowcountry, the richest region in

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North America. A visitor would have been struck by the tall spire of St. Philip's church, the bustling waterfront, and the presence of a considerable number of dark-skinned slaves.[1]

The year 1752 was a tumultuous time in the southern colony. Governor James Glen had succeeded in negotiating a peace between the Cherokee and Creek Indians, South Carolinas two largest and most powerful neighbors. This peace, Carolinians hoped, would secure the colony's western frontier and ensure prosperous trade relations with both tribes. Governor Glen also found himself under fire from imperial officials for failing to uphold the royal prerogative in the colony. The demands from London that Glen resist the encroachments of the Commons House would greatly impact his and the legislature's response to the hurricane.[2]

South Carolina was struck by hurricanes four times during the colonial period.[3] In 1686, a hurricane left "the whole Country to bee one entire map of Destruction." The second major storm in the colony's history struck in 1700, killing about 100 people.[4] The Hurricane of 1728 was second in destructive power only to the great storm in 1752, destroying more than a third of the year's rice crop according to contemporary estimates.[5]

South Carolinians were constantly aware of the threat from these powerful storms during the season. The correspondence of prominent merchant and planter Henry Laurens contains many references to the threat of hurricanes. As a general rule, Laurens said "I never draw conclusions on

[1] George C. Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*(Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), (paperback edition), 56, 58-60.

[2] For an overview of South Carolina politics at this time see Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, IEAHC, 1966), 278-295 and Jonathan Mercantini, "Colony in Conflict: South Carolina, 1748-1766," Ph. D. diss., Emory University, 2000, chap.2. A recent biography of Governor James Glen is W. Stitt Robinson, *James Glen: From Scottish Provost to Royal Governor of South Carolina* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).

[3] Hurricanes in South Carolina's history have received less attention than might be expected. Even the destruction of Hurricane Hugo, which devastated Charleston and the surrounding area in 1989, causing more than $7 billion in damage, apparently failed to generate an interest in examining previous South Carolina hurricanes.

[4] The major damage was to the *Rising Sun*, a ship anchored off the bar at Charleston harbor, unable to cross and seek safety inside the port. The ship was thrown up against the shore and destroyed. Estimates on loss of life vary, but historians believe 97 to be the best estimate. David Ludlam, *Early American Hurricanes, 1492-1870*, The History of American Weather Series, (Boston: American Meteorological Society, 1963), 41-44.

[5] Robert Weir, *Colonial South Carolina: A History* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1983), 36, 108; Ludlam, *Early American Hurricanes*, 41-44.

the quantity of a crop of Rice before Harvest is fairly over. A Hurricane in August or September or even so late as October in a backward Season, will spoil one half or two thirds of the whole quantity in Field. But thank God such disorders do not often happen." Most ominous was Laurens' warning "the Hurricane Season is arriv'd, and the danger of having all your Rice destroy'd in a night not inconsiderable." Writing in July 1763, Laurens commented that "We have had very favourable seasons for our Rice Fields. . . but there is no depending upon our produce before the Hurricane Season and Harvest are fairly over." At other times, Laurens told his correspondents: "Our crops of Rice barring Hurricanes will be large. . . ."[6]

Surprisingly, hurricanes were not considered to be completely terrible events. In fact, many Charlestonians believed that hurricanes produced some positive effects. Alexander Hewatt, who authored a history of South Carolina and Georgia printed in 1779, believed that such storms were "useful and necessary to restore the air to a salutarious state." Hewatt added that although there was some damage, "there is reason to believe that they are wisely ordered, and productive upon the whole of good and salutary effects." He continued, "the want of them for many years may be deemed a great misfortune by the inhabitants especially those exposed by the severities of the climate." In this opinion the terrific heat of the summer had made the air unstable, greatly increasingly the likelihood of a hurricane. The hurricane cleared out the "bad" and replaced the old atmosphere with new, more stable conditions.[7]

The threat of hurricanes during the summer and autumn also impacted colonial warfare. Military campaigns, in which large numbers of ships massed together in a confined area, were particularly vulnerable. It was for this reason that, in 1740, the captains of the naval expedition supporting General James Oglethorpe's siege of the Spanish capital of St. Augustine withdrew their ships, forcing Oglethorpe to retreat.[8] In 1779, a combined French and American effort to capture Savannah was abandoned because the French naval commander would not remain in the region during

[6]*The Papers of Henry Laurens*, ed. George C. Rogers et. al., eds., 15 volumes to date (Columbia: South Carolina Historical Society, University of South Carolina Press, 1974-). Laurens to William Cowles and Co., 23 August 1768 HL, VI, 79; Laurens to Thomas Courtin, 28 July 1763, HL, III, 511; Laurens to Grubb and Watson, 18 August 1764, HL, IV, 373; Laurens to Reynolds and Getty, 21 September 1772, HL, VIII, 466. Laurens' references to hurricanes begin in 1763, when his business interests were turning more towards planting, and thus heightening his concern about the rice crop.

[7]Alexander Hewatt, *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia* in Two Volumes (Printed for Alexander Donaldson, No. 48, St. Paul's Churchyard, London, 1779), 179-180.

[8] Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 118.

hurricane season.[9]

In the late summer of 1752, South Carolinians had no warning that a major storm was fast approaching. James Glen, the colony's governor, recalled that the night of September 14 a strong wind blew, which continued to increase the next morning.[10] The storm may have been particularly ominous for Charlestonians, because it coincided with the British Empire's shift from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. That change eliminated Sept. 3 to Sept. 13 from the calendar for the year 1752. Thus, residents went to sleep on September 2 and awoke on September 14, likely with the high cirrus clouds that precede a hurricane thickening overhead.[11]

The storm reached its peak between eight and eleven in the morning, during which time, Glen wrote to the Board of Trade, "its Fury was irresistible and indeed inexpressible; Words are too weak to give your Lordships a just Idea of it." The city was threatened further by the rising storm surge (the most dangerous and destructive effect of a great tempest), which rose more than 9 feet above the highest spring tide. Echoing the account in *The South Carolina Gazette*, Alexander Hewatt, in his history of South Carolina, wrote "The tremor and consternation which seized the inhabitants may be more easily conceived than expressed. Finding themselves in the midst of a tempestuous sea, and expecting the tide to flow til one o'clock, its usual hour, at eleven they retired to the upper stories of their houses, and there remained despairing of life." *The South Carolina Gazette* added that many of the people, up to their neck in water in their houses, "began now to think of nothing but certain death."[12]

The city and surrounding areas were saved from even greater destruction only because the wind shifted from northeast to southwest in a matter of minutes, three hours before high tide. Without this intervention, Glen proclaimed, Charlestonians would have had no choice but to be "swallowed up by devouring Waves or buried under the ruins of falling Houses." This wind shift quickly pushed the storm surge back to sea, as the water level dropped five feet in just a few minutes. Four hours later the storm was over.[13]

[9] Ibid., 36.

[10] September is statistically the busiest month of the Atlantic Hurricane season. Gordon E. Dunn and Banner I. Miller, *Atlantic Hurricanes*, revised edition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 54.

[11] Mark M. Smith, "Culture, Commerce and Calendar Reform in Colonial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., LV, October 1989, 557-584. See page 565, although the source gives the wrong date for the hurricane.

[12] Hewatt, "An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia," 181. *South Carolina Gazette*, 19 September 1752, reprinted in Ludlam, *Early American Hurricanes*, 44-45.

[13] Glen to Board of Trade, 19 September, 1752, Records in the British Public

The destruction wrought by the storm was considerable. A number of people were killed, including ten of fifteen people who sought shelter in the Pest House. Several were drowned in the city itself, "their dead bodies thrown up at a distant part," of the colony. Property destruction was also considerable. In some parts of the colony every house had been knocked down. Few houses escaped without some damage caused by the storm, although the strongest houses were usually those along the water, and they escaped with less damage. However, in other parts of the capital, "where the Houses were slight, and the Situation low, present[ed] a most surprising and shocking Scene, scarce one Brick being left upon another." The damage extended well inland: "For about forty Miles round Charlestown, there was hardly a Plantation that did not lose every Out-house upon it." Wrecks of boats. Masts, Yards, Barrels, [and] Staves," floated through the streets of Charleston. Every ship in the harbor was severely damaged or destroyed. Governor Glen wrote "All the Ships, Snows, Sloops and Vessels of all Denominations are either entirely lost or found on shore." Several ships were driven deep into the South Carolina swamps and woods, where it would be "extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get them out." Others were grounded upon the capital's streets. David Ramsay recalled, "sloops and schooners were dashing against the houses of Bay Street." The one exception was a Royal Navy ship, the *Hornet*, which was forced to cut away its mast in order to ride out the storm.[14] Glen also noted "The Roads in general are impractible by the infinite number of Trees, which lye across so that there is no such thing as Travelling." George Milligen-Johnston, who recorded weather events in the colony, noted that this problem persisted for several years, as roads continued to be blocked by fallen trees.[15]

Although sources such as *The South Carolina Gazette*, the Commons journals, and Governor Glen's correspondence make no mention of the

Record Office Relating to South Carolina, Vol. 25, 84-85. *The South Carolina Gazette* published its account of the storm the same day. The details are the same, and some quotes, for example "there is hardly a plantation. . ." appear in both accounts. It seems most likely that Glen used the paper's story as the basis for his own letter. *The South Carolina Gazette*'s version was also used by later Carolina historians Alexander Hewatt and David Ramsay, in several places copied word for word. See *SCG*, 19 September 1752. This point is identified by Ludlam, *Early American Hurricanes*, 45.

[14] *South Carolina Gazette*, 27 September 1752. Glen to BoT, 19 September 1752, 85-88. David Ramsay, *History of South Carolina from its First Settlement in 1670 to the Year 1808*, 2 vols. (Charleston: Published by David Longworth for the Author, 1809), volume 2, 318-320.

[15] Glen to BoT, 19 September 1752, 88; George Milligen-Johnston, "A Short Description of the Province of South Carolina," in Chapman J. Milling, ed., *Colonial South Carolina: Two Contemporary Descriptions* (Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1951), 130.

issue, it seems reasonable to conclude that the colony's black majority suffered worst of all. First, slave cabins were much more likely to be damaged, if not destroyed, by the storm then the sturdier homes of white masters. The storm accounts do note that the outbuildings in particular were blown away in the tempest. Moreover, the food shortage that resulted from the combination of drought followed by the hurricane probably left the slaves on even shorter rations. The loss of livestock, especially cattle, sheep, and hogs as well as other provisions was severe. Individual gardens, which contributed an important part of the slaves' diet, were most likely devastated by the storm as well. Matthew Mulcahy also notes that South Carolina's slaves "were driven to work harder and under worse conditions," in the wake of the storm. Slaves had to rebuild and repair the rice paddies, barns and outbuildings, and fortifications of the colony. In the fields, slaves were driven more relentless than normal as planters sought to recoup their losses.[16]

The forts guarding the entry into Charleston's harbor suffered the worst damage, but they had defended the colony well, holding the water back from parts of the city. Glen stated that the fortifications "proved a real Defence against a more merciless Enemy than [they were] built to oppose." He added "It is more proper to say to your Lordships that our Fortifications are destroyed than damaged, and that new works are necessary, since the old in many places can not be repaired." Glen stated that "the Brick Walls, with which many of them were faced [had been] torn to pieces, as if Mines had been sprung, the Earth is washed away... the Cannon dismounted, and the Carriages lost, and some of our Magazines with all the Ordinance Stores in them entirely swept away." The governor concluded "Thus the Labour of many Years has been lost and rendered of little service in one Hour."[17] More than two years after the storm, the report of the Fortifications commission noted that the city's defenses "have suffered great Alterations by the Hurricane" of 1752.[18] Fortifications were a particularly sensitive issue, because the governor had been locked in a dispute with the Commons

[16] Matthew Mulcahy, "Melancholy and Fatal Calamities': Disaster and Society in Eighteenth Century South Carolina," *Money, Trade, and Power: The Evolution of Colonial South Carolina's Plantation Society*, Jack P. Greene, Rosemary Brana-Shute, and Randy J. Sparks, eds., *The Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World* series (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 290; for a discussion of slave gardens and their contribution to slave nutrition and diet see Philip Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*, OIEAHC (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 141-143.

[17] Ibid; Glen to BoT, 19 September 1752, 86.

[18] *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly*, 1754-1755, ed., Terry W. Lipscomb (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 100-103.

House over the commission on Fortifications and improving the colony's defenses.

Based on the surviving evidence, meteorological historians believe that the storm was fairly compact, but powerful. As David Ludlam noted, "The veering of the wind at Charleston would indicate that the center passed inland just south and west of [the city]." This would have put Charleston in the northeast quarter of the storm, which is the fiercest and most dangerous. Because Savannah experienced a northwesterly flow, the storm must have made landfall between the two cities.[19]

In the days after the storm, Governor Glen wrote to his superiors in London, informing them of the storm's devastation and the colony's dire condition. He called the South Carolina Royal Council into session immediately, in order to obtain its advice on how best to deal with the aftermath. The first order of business, it agreed, was to call for the Assembly to meet. Governor Glen issued a Proclamation calling the General Assembly into Emergency Session on September 26.[20] The Council also demanded harsh punishments for any persons caught looting and plundering goods and pieces of homes carried away by the storm. The Council resolved that any "wicked and evil disposed Person" caught in such an act be held until the jurors could be assembled and a session of the court held. Those in possession of such goods without a proper permit were to be sent to the work house "there to be corrected for such Offence."[21]

The Commons met for twelve days in order to deal with the most serious issues facing the colony in the wake of the storm. Despite suffering from a fever, Glen remained in the capital to work with the legislature on the recovery and clean-up efforts. The Commons' first action was to pass a bill "for the prohibiting and preventing the Exportation of Corn, Peas, Potatoes, small Rice, Flour and Biscuit," from the colony. This action was necessary because of fear that the storm had destroyed considerable amounts of food crops, leaving the colony vulnerable to starvation if additional produce was exported. In addition to the storm, the heat and drought that had plagued the colony that summer had further reduced the colony's corn crop.[22]

[19] Ludlam, *Early American Hurricanes*, 46; Roger A. Pielke Jr. and Roger A. Peilke Sr., *Hurricanes: Their Nature and Impact on Society*, (Chicester, UK: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), 120.

[20] *Journal of the South Carolina Royal Council*, Records of the States of the United States, E.1p. (Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, microfilm). 18 September 1752, Reel 5.

[21] *Council Journal*, 18 September 1752, Reel 5.

[22] Robinson, James Glen, 65-66; *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly*, 1751-1752, ed., Robert Olsberg and Terry W. Lipscomb (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1977) 377, 379, 381-382, 419-420.

In the spring of 1753, Glen became concerned that the colony's measure to ban the export of corn and rice had not restrained the explosive increase in the cost of foodstuffs. Here Glen and the Commons found themselves at odds. Glen proposed sending ships to the northern colonies to procure additional provisions through the arrangements of Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia. The Commons preferred to have Charleston merchants, who were also members of the Assembly, arrange for the purchase of corn from the north. Under this arrangement, the Commons believed, the colony would receive a better price; and of course the merchants would get their commission. Glen opposed the plan, because it allowed the Commons to appropriate money without first providing for its repayment. Within Glen's message is evidence of the continuing tensions between the governor and the Assembly. Glen took offense at the Commons' implication that he was less committed to the welfare of the colony. He wrote: "Is it possible, Gentlemen, that You can really think that any of the Members of your House will take more trouble to serve the public than the Governor is willing to do? If you harbour such an Opinion it is highly injurious to me. . . ."[23] In the end, however, the Commons prevailed and arrangements for the corn imports would be made by individual merchants.[24]

Next, the Commons faced a potentially devastating financial crisis. Immediately after the hurricane, Jacob Motte, the province's treasurer since 1743, submitted a memorial to both the Commons and the Council, stating: "the great Loss which he had sustained by the late dreadful Hurricane, and some other unfortunate Incidents which happened before, have greatly reduced and impoverished the Memorialist, in so much that he thinks it absolutely necessary that his Accompts with the Public should be examined and settled, that a true sense of the same may be known." Motte also asked for a "reasonable time for payment of the Balance that shall appear to be due from him." The situation was so serious that the Commons ordered its committee investigating the matter to meet "notwithstanding any adjournment."[25]

The most pressing problem was Motte's inability and refusal to pay for tax certificates. Motte had used the provincial treasury for his own investments, and the devastation to his crop left him without the money to meet short-term government debts. Although tax certificates were not legal tender, they were acceptable for payments into the provincial treasury and they could be exchanged to others, therefore they operated as a form of paper currency in South Carolina. With Motte no longer possessing the cash on hand to redeem these certificates, the colony's finances were in a critical

[23] Ibid., 125-127

[24] Ibid., 133-135, 139-141, 155.

[25] *Commons Journal*, 1751-52, 393, 394, 398, 405.

condition.[26] Governor Glen worried that "This is a Circumstance of such a Nature as calls aloud for immediate Redress. It is a deep Wound to the Public Credit, which if it is suffered to lye Bleeding must expire long before the next Meeting of the General Assembly." Glen asked the Commons to agree upon a stopgap measure in order to bolster public faith in the colony's financial health. The governor's frustration was compounded by the fact that the Commons was eager to adjourn. It noted that few members remained in the capital and that it was unwilling to delay adjourning while the committees from the Council and Commons met to solve the problem. Glen replied snappily "that if the House had thoroughly understood his Excellency's Message with respect to the Treasurer's Affair, they would have found it greatly affected the good People whom this House represent, but that his Excellency had washed his Hands of it."[27]

The credit crisis was the first major business the Commons addressed upon its return in the November 1752 regular session. In order to calm fears about the colony's finances, the Commons passed a resolution that Gabriel Manigault—one of the wealthiest men in South Carolina, who stood as security for Motte—was liable to pay the tax certificates to the full extent of his bond; (7,000 pounds sterling or 49,000 in South Carolina currency.) The Commons also resolved that if Manigault's security was not enough, then the Commons "will make provision for paying such Certificates that none of the possessors of the said Certificates should be Sufferers." Motte's entire estate[28] was transferred into the possession of members of both the Commons and Council and his property and possessions mortgaged to secure the payment of any balance "as shall be found due to the Public."[29] The Council's resolution was worded in such a way as to demonstrate that it wanted control over half of the money and conceded to the Commons the authority to put the money "in such Hands as your House shall think

[26] *Commons Journal*, 1752-54, xi-xii.

[27] *Commons Journal*, 1751-52, 416-418. For a discussion of the colony's provincial treasurers see Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 252-254.

[28] *Commons Journal*, 1752-54, 46-48. A few weeks later a complete inventory of Motte's estate and the outstanding debts of the colony was entered into the Commons Journal. The Public Accounts showed a balance of 29,689 Pounds, 7 shillings and 3 pence due. The treasury had at that time 27,372 pounds, leaving a shortfall of about 2,300 pounds. In addition, more than 7,000 pounds were owed the public for trade dutys, which Motte regularly allowed merchants to delay paying. The committee's work was compounded by Motte's poor record keeping. He apparently had no record of the amount of outstanding tax certificates. Motte estimated that about 70,000 pounds of certificates, potentially more than he was authorized to issue, had been distributed. He further noted that he had redeemed many of them during the year.

[29] Ibid., 6-7.

proper." This clearly appears to be a case of the Council seeking to assert its coequal authority with the Commons.[30]

These actions by the Commons House seem to have reassured South Carolinians that their colony's finances were stable. There is no evidence of a currency crisis in the colony, although most economic transactions were paid with credit and not with cash. Motte himself escaped any punishment —beyond the public humiliation of having all of his property seized—and he remained in office until his death in 1770.

Carolinians worked vigorously to restore the colony's economic vitality. The planters and overseers succeeded in driving their slaves hard, and the rice crop was quickly restored to its full output. Rice exports in the year following the hurricane were halved from the previous year, with only about 35,000 barrels exported. However, the 1753 harvest exceeded that of 1751 by more then 10,000 barrels, as more then 86,000 were exported that year. However, it seems that planters may have focused on their energies on the profitable rice crop, as other staple commodities took longer to recover. In addition to making travel almost impossible, the destruction of a sizeable amount of the colony's timber proved an economic disaster as well. Exports of naval stores such as pitch and tar dropped dramatically after the storm and took much longer to recover then did rice. The exports of foodstuffs such as beef and pork similarly failed to match their pre-storm levels in 1753.[31] Despite these challenges, the colony appeared free from economic turmoil in the storm's wake. Other issues, however, proved to be even more divisive during the emergency session. One area of considerable antagonism was the issue of fortifications.

The hurricane had wiped out nearly all of Charles Town's defenses and brought to the fore a long simmering conflict between the Commons and Governor Glen. The year before, the Commons had asked Glen to fill several vacancies on the fortifications commission. The colony's defenses, the Commons reported, were in terrible disrepair and immediate action was necessary. Glen had deferred making the appointments as part of his campaign to resist what he, and the Board of Trade and Privy Council in London, saw as colonial infringements on the royal prerogative. Imperial authorities in London reminded Glen that, as governor, he possessed "Sole Power and Command over the Fortifications," and the commissioners encroached upon that authority.[32] The Commons avowed that the commissioners were all appointed by the governor and were in no way an effort to reduce his powers within the colony. This was in part a disingenuous statement as the Commons was eager to seek greater authority in areas of

[30] Ibid., 17, 19.

[31] *South Carolina Gazette*, 20, 27 September 1752, 17 October 1754.

[32] BoT to Glen, 15 November 1750, BPRO, XXIII, 263-64.

government expenditure and a defense program would entail considerable spending.

With the colony's defenses ruined by the storm, the Commons hoped the crown would pay for the bulk of the repair and rebuilding costs. The colony's agent in London was requested to seek money because of the "defenceless condition of this Province." The Commons also drafted a petition to the king, noting that although they were willing to provide for their own defense, the devastation caused by the hurricane was simply too great for them to bear. This is consistent with the Commons' conduct in all of the colony's financial affairs. It sought to keep taxes and expenditures as low as possible, asking for money from the crown for any emergency from Indian affairs to fortifications.[33]

When the Commons' members returned in November, having adjourned to take care of their personal affairs during the harvest season and after the storm, they learned that the governor had not sent the petition to London. The Commons demanded to know why Glen had not forwarded its petition. The phrasing of the message most of all indicates an effort to make Glen's inaction part of the official record. The Commons then went further, threatening to inform royal authorities in London if Glen continued to delay the reconstruction of the city's defenses. Glen took more than two weeks to reply. His chief reason for not sending the petition was a disagreement over how to repair the fortifications. Glen wanted to adopt a plan for a comprehensive network of forts and gun emplacements as proposed by Willem Gerard De Brahm, an engineer whose appointment the Commons had rejected during the controversy the previous year. In fact, Glen had already retained De Brahm and asked the Commons to pay him sixty pounds for his expenses in preparing the construction plans. Not surprisingly, the Commons refused, using Glen's admission that the engineer's proposal was too costly and extensive to justify its decision. [34] Glen further antagonized the legislature by once again refusing to appoint additional members to the fortifications board. The Commons desired to have the fortifications commission, made up largely of its own members, in charge of the repairs; Governor Glen wanted his handpicked engineer to guide the construction. The dispute was also about money. The Commons sought to limit expenses to what was then available in the fortifications fund and whatever might be obtained from Britain; Glen proposed an ambitious and costly scheme that would have entailed raising taxes in the colony.[35] In

[33] *Commons Journal*, 1751-52, 411,414; Mercantini, "Colony in Conflict," 137; Upper House Journal, 5 October 1752, CO5/465, 121-122.

[34] *Commons Journal*, 1752-54, 41-42, 60; Mercantini, "Colony in Conflict," 138-139.

[35] *Commons Journal*, 1752-54, 41-42, 60; Mercantini, "Colony in Conflict," 138-139.

this exchange of messages, the rhetoric intensified steadily. Glen criticized the Commons for its use of "unparliamentary language" in threatening to report his actions to the king.

The following week, however, Glen had changed his tune completely. He sent a message informing the Commons that he was appointing four men to fill the vacancies on the fortifications board. Apparently, an informal meeting between leaders of the Commons House and the governor had convinced him to alter his stance. Glen's surrender in the fortifications dispute becomes apparent when the four appointees to the commission are examined. All four, Gabriel Manigault, Thomas Smith, Sr., John Savage, and James Withers, were active and influential members of the Commons House. Manigault and Smith had both sat on the Commons committee that had drafted the report critical of Glen's conduct. Withers, moreover, was a bricklayer by trade, which would have been especially useful in preparing the city's new defenses and, at least in the eyes of the Commons, removed the need for De Brahm to play any role in designing the new defenses.[36]

Publicly, the Commons continued its strong stance against the governor, receiving a report critical of Glen and again demanding that a petition be sent to the king. This report was the most belligerent statement considered to that date by the South Carolina Assembly. The committee reviewed Glen's message paragraph by paragraph, defending its course of action and harshly criticizing the governor. The Commons committee pointed out apparent contradictions in Glen's message, particularly on the effectiveness of the old fortifications. Glen referred to the defenses as "shadows," for which he was harshly criticized by the Commons. It noted that the king had been petitioned for support in rebuilding those very fortifications, and if they were only shadows they had committed a most serious infraction asking the king for money to rebuild them. The Commons also reminded Glen that those "shadows" had "deterred our Enemys, from making any Attempt upon Us." And even if shadows could fool an invader, they would not provide comfort to the inhabitants of Charleston, as these defenses had done.[37]

Debate on the report was postponed one day, seemingly so that the details with the governor could be resolved behind the scenes. Then, on December 13, the report was agreed to by the full house, with one significant change. The paragraph calling for a petition to be sent to the king detailing Glen's conduct was omitted from the second reading. There is no record of a vote occurring over such an amendment. The passage was simply removed from the version reported on the floor of the Commons. As had

[36] *Commons Journal*, 1752-54, xv.
[37] Ibid., 54-56.

happened in another dispute between the governor and the Commons the previous year, Glen was unwilling to allow any criticism of his actions to reach royal ears. Therefore, he caved in to the demands of the South Carolina Assembly.

This tactic of behind-the-scenes negotiating, coupled with threats to report the governor's conduct if he persisted in resisting the Commons, was used successfully on several occasions by South Carolina elites to get their way. The Hurricane of 1752 and the resulting fortifications dispute demonstrate several general trends in South Carolina politics: the relative weakness of the governor, the tense conflicts between colonial and imperial elites, and the development of strategies in the 1750s that would be used in future disputes between crown and colony. These brinksmanship tactics, in which the Carolinians resorted to extreme measures to assert local authority, would become regular elements of the colony's political culture. These actions confirm the increasing authority of the Commons House in South Carolina. Moreover, they demonstrate that it was often royal officials, not colonial authorities, who instigated many of these conflicts.

Satisfied with the outcome, the Commons took the unprecedented step of completely rewriting the copy of the report included in the version of its journal sent to London. This "revised" account was dramatically different in both tone and content. The strongest criticisms of the governor were removed, and although certain aspects of Glen's conduct remained, for example not sending the petition immediately to London, the general criticisms were tempered considerably. In its rewritten report, the Commons concerned itself largely with the issue of the fortifications commission, presenting its argument for why new members were needed. Overall, the version of journal that was sent to London was written so as to put the Commons in the best light possible.[38]

Between 1753 and 1755, some repairs were made to the existing fortifications. An examination by the fortifications commission in January 1755 noted that considerable repairs had been made to Fort Johnson, a new brick wall had been built to replace the one washed away at the northern end of the bay and several of the bastions guarding the city were rebuilt.[39] In 1755, as tensions with the French mounted, heightening fear about the city's vulnerability, the Commons reversed its earlier decision and hired De Brahm to build new defenses. The Commons may also have changed course as part of its effort to generate good will with Governor Glen, as it was then engaged with the Council in a constitutional controversy concerning the control of the colony's appropriations. The German engineer worked in

[38] Ibid., xv, 54-66.

[39] *Commons Journal*, 1754-55, 100-103.

concert with the fortifications commission. De Brahm's ambitious plan was only partly completed and it was quickly apparent that the sandy foundation around the city would not support the new construction. The formal outbreak of war with France and better relations with the new royal governor, William Lyttelton, encouraged the Commons to find additional money for defenses in 1756 and 1757. Two British engineers supervised the construction, although the fortifications commission continued to play a central role in providing laborers and materials. These would be the last defenses built until the Revolutionary War twenty years later. However, the fortifications commission remained active, making necessary repairs to Charles Town's defenses into the 1770s.[40]

The Hurricane of 1752 damaged much more than the forts, homes, fields, ships, and roads of Charleston and the area surrounding the South Carolina capital. It also weakened the relationship between the royal governor and the local political elites in the Commons House of Assembly. The enormous disruption caused by the storm provides a particularly strong lens for viewing the internal workings of colonial government. The rivalries between the three branches of the South Carolina government are particularly apparent, with the tensions between the governor and the Commons House especially visible. The hurricane reignited conflicts between the governor and Commons regarding fortifications, the appointment of commissioners and the constitutionality of appointed boards in colonial affairs. However, these conflicts more generally concern the efforts by Governor Glen, and the urging of royal authorities in London, to restore the royal prerogative in South Carolina. Thus, they reflect a basic disagreement over the powers and privileges of colonial and imperial elites; this fundamental point would continue to provoke conflict and controversy for the next 25 years. Later disputes in which the Carolinians sought to preserve local authority—the South Carolina Quartering Dispute, the Gadsden Election Controversy, the Stamp Act Crisis, and the Wilkes Fund Dispute, all of which helped propel South Carolina toward independence—share many similarities with the conflicts between the Commons and the governor in the wake of the storm.[41] Thus, the Great Carolina Hurricane of

[40] Jack P. Greene, *The Quest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776* (reprint New York: W.W. Norton, 1972; Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1963), 257-259; Robinson, James Glen, 65-67; Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, 58-59.

[41] From 1752 to 1765, the South Carolina elite would engage in many other conflicts with the royal governor on issues such as control of the annual tax bill, the quartering of British troops in the colony, and the Commons' authority to determine its own elections. See Greene, *Quest for Power*, passim; Mercantini, "Colony in Conflict," passim.

1752 highlights the political and constitutional conflicts that were as present as the threat of devastating storms in South Carolina, even in the period before the Stamp Act and the Declaration of Independence.

BOOK REVIEWS

South Carolina and the New Deal. By Jack Irby Hayes, Jr. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001. Pp. xvi, 290; $34.95, cloth.)

South Carolina and the New Deal is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the regions and individual states during the Depression. Jack Irby Hayes, Jr., a professor of history and chair of the Department of History and Political Science at Averett College in Danville, Virginia, has substantially updated and revised his 1972 doctoral dissertation to produce this detailed study of the impact of Franklin Roosevelt's administration on the economy and society of the Palmetto State. Or perhaps that should be *administrations*, as Hayes contends that, at least politically, South Carolinians distinguished sharply between the relief efforts of the so-called "first" New Deal and FDR's more reform-minded second term, particularly where federal policies touched upon issues of race.

The South Carolina that was struck by the Great Depression in 1929-30 was already one of the poorest states in the nation. Its political economy remained a relic of the post-Reconstruction era: fully half of its working population was engaged in agriculture and one-fourth of the remainder (approximately 80 percent of all industrial workers) were employed in textile manufacturing. Both sectors were already in depression when the Wall Street Crash occurred in 1929: for many South Carolinians the crash had been in 1918, following World War I. The state was also post-Reconstruction in its politics too—the most heavily Democratic in the country, it gave FDR pluralities of over 95 percent in the elections of 1932, 1936 and 1940. In a masterful introductory chapter entitled "A South Carolina Primer" Hayes describes the political culture of the Palmetto State as being dominated by its *ABCDs*, variously its ancestors; blacks, booze and Baptists; the Confederacy and cotton; and Depression and Democracy. These are the forces that explain the shape the New Deal took between 1933 and 1937.

In a series of thematically organized chapters, the author examines the impact of federal policies on South Carolina's agriculture (through the Agricultural Adjustment Act), industry (via the National Recovery Administration) and citizenry, especially the transformative effect of government relief for poor whites and blacks alike. Hayes makes the important point that by 1933 the overwhelming majority of South Carolinians were desperate for federal intervention: "States' rights and laissez faire ... practically ruined the Palmetto State in the 1920s"(p. 21), and South Carolina's congressional delegation led by junior Senator James F. Byrnes played an important part in forging New Deal legislation on social and agricultural relief. Most South Carolinians in Washington were Wilsonian Progressives, in favor of a strong role for government; in this respect the senior Senator 'Cotton Ed'