The South Carolina Historical Magazine

JULY 2015 VOLUME 116 • NUMBER 3

Sponsors from the College of Charleston Libraries include:

Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture

Jewish Heritage Collection

Special Collections

© 2015 South Carolina Historical Society

THE SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

JULY 2015 VOLUME 116 • NUMBER 3

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

"A NUMBER OF THE MOST RESPECTABLE GENTLEMEN": CIVILIAN PRISONERS OF WAR AND SOCIAL STATUS IN REVOLUTIONARY SOUTH CAROLINA, 1780–1782

RICHARD H. TOMCZAK*

ON JULY 4, 1780, THE AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR HELD AT Haddrell's Point in British-occupied South Carolina celebrated the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Attended by officers and members of the low-country elite on parole under the terms of the capitulation of Charleston, the celebration consisted of music, illuminations, the firing of pistols into the air, and dancing with women "for two or three hours in one of the rooms in the barracks." Angered by the display of American independence, the British garrison reported the event to their senior officers. South Carolina assemblyman and Continental army general William Moultrie partook in the revelry and defended the prisoners' actions. He stated that the activities represented a typical southern celebration that "was by no means inconsistent with our paroles."[1] Doubtless some of the same civilians who had marked July 4 at Haddrell's Point found themselves in very different circumstances by Christmas. During the second half of 1780, the British army banished scores of South Carolina's leading citizens to Saint Augustine, the capital of British East Florida, for breaking their paroles. In Saint Augustine, the British commandant forced the exiled Carolinians to sign new paroles. Yet on December 25, the prisoners made merry with "a very good dinner" and the singing of carols.[2] The holiday festivities at Haddrell's Point and Saint Augustine are two examples of how upper-class South Carolinians expressed their social status, culture, and political autonomy as civilian prisoners of war on parole.

Civilian South Carolina gentry imprisoned during the southern phase of the American Revolution attempted to recreate prewar societal conditions in an effort to retain their position at the top of the rigid social hierarchy. Before becoming prisoners, these individuals participated in a complex social order. Honor codes, marriage, kinship networks, business relationships, and

* Richard H. Tomczak is a doctoral student in history at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

[1] William Moultrie to James Patterson [*sic*], July 7, 1780, in Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution, So Far as It Related to the States of North and South-Carolina, and Georgia* (New York: Printed by David Longworth for the author, 1802), 2: 133.

[2] Mabel L. Webber, ed., "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780–1781," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 33 (April 1932): 93.

averred: "If you tell Bush to try again, you can bet your boots you're going to get a Hispanic of the same ilk. Otherwise, take your criticism and go to the Marshall nomination. While Marshall argued more cases of a specific nature, no-one would have called him profound."[51]

As a progressive "New South" governor, Fritz Hollings had encouraged acceptance of the Supreme Court's desegregation ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* and smoothed the path for peaceful enrollment of black students at traditionally white universities. Later, though, fearful of the political consequences if his white constituents linked him to liberal northern Democrats, he was one of just eleven U.S. senators to oppose Thurgood Marshall's appointment as the court's first African American justice. South Carolina's other U.S. senator, Republican Strom Thurmond, was eager to appeal to conservative whites who were growing disillusioned with the national Democratic Party. He not only was responsible for one of the ten remaining dissenting votes, but his obstinate interrogation of Marshall also helped to turn Supreme Court confirmation hearings into political dramas that generated substantial public interest.

The historical significance of Marshall's appointment from a civil rights standpoint undoubtedly makes his nomination unique. However, the reasons of South Carolina's senators for disrupting and influencing the judicial nomination process over a lengthy period indicate that viewing Supreme Court nominations—even Marshall's—as stand-alone events has limited historiographical usefulness. The continued scholarly emphasis on nominations that resulted in defeat or near defeat—particularly those of Fortas, Bork and Thomas—has produced a cluster of studies that neglect perspectives of how the Supreme Court nomination process evolved over time. Moreover, the current emphasis on presidential selection has overshadowed the importance of the long-term strategies of senators with particularly strong feelings toward the political impact of the nation's highest court.

[51] Ernest "Fritz" Hollings to Bud Ferillo, September 25, 1991, box 421, Judiciary: Judges, Selection and Appointment: Supreme Court: Clarence Thomas: General, folder 1, 102nd Congress series, Legislative Files and Constituent Correspondence and "Hollings' Files," ibid.

economic standing guided them through a multifaceted colonial environment. Elite males added to their wealth and prestige by exploiting African slave labor and enforcing strict legal regulations that commodified human life. This society, however, did not cease to exist for prisoners following capture. Their beliefs and customs not only influenced their experience as prisoners but also shaped the imprisonment process itself.

Paroled political figures convened secret meetings in Charleston, passed intelligence through the British lines, and encouraged loyalist militia units to desert. Together with conducting covert actions aimed at returning the revolutionaries to power, civilian prisoners of war attempted to preserve both their economic independence and the dominion they held over their dependents. They maintained business connections and looked after their families and slaves by corresponding with those who managed their estates. To exhibit their autonomy, they purchased items that allowed a comfortable lifestyle in confinement, upheld their honor in disputes with their captors, and took part in holiday celebrations.

Despite their ability to continue business negotiations, assemble clandestine meetings, and superficially practice their cultural rituals, the South Carolina gentry imprisoned during the capitulation of Charleston and later sent to Saint Augustine required the aid of the Continental army and the Continental Congress to achieve freedom. At General George Washington's urging, Congress ratified legislation that set forth rules of exchange for civilian prisoners. Washington's efforts at organizing civilian prisoner exchanges met with frustration until his commander in the South, Major General Nathanael Greene, captured sufficient numbers of British soldiers to tip the scale of negotiations in the Americans' favor.

Previous scholarship provides a foundation for studying civilian prisoners of war in the American Revolution. Indeed, existing prisoner-of-war literature has established an understanding of the treatment of non-commissioned soldiers and the difficulties of negotiating exchanges. This body of work can be chronologically organized into two distinct phases. Between 1911 and 1990, several studies appeared that focused primarily on the treatment of non-commissioned officers aboard prison ships in the North.[3] In the last quarter-century, historians such as Betsy Knight and

[3] See, for example, Danske Dandridge, *American Prisoners of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, Va.: Michie Company, Printers, 1911); Larry G. Bowman, *Captive Americans: Prisoners during the American Revolution* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976).

Carl P. Borick have renewed interest in the subject by utilizing previously neglected primary sources and shifting attention to the southern states.[4] Building on their research, this article examines the prisoner-of-war experience of some of the South's wealthiest civilians—the Saint Augustine exiles—while providing further insight on issues related to governance, society, subjecthood, and authority in revolutionary South Carolina.

The Gentry in Eighteenth-Century South Carolina

The social, political, and cultural elite of colonial South Carolina consisted of planters along with merchants and lawyers, who often engaged in planting too. The gentry typically possessed two or three rice or indigo plantations in the low country or on the coastal islands. Planter families mingled at the commercial hub of Charleston. They owned mansions in the city and spent the summer and fall months watching horse races, hosting private parties, and going to the theater. Men from the prominent families had similar perspectives on authority. Through legislation, they constructed a racial hierarchy that subordinated enslaved Africans to the status of property and appropriated their labor for profit in the Atlantic market. Additionally, they emphasized a gendered order of society that culminated in public expressions of masculinity and paternalism.[5]

[4] See Betsy Knight, "Prisoner Exchange and Parole in the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 48 (April 1991): 201–222; Carl P. Borick, *Relieve Us of This Burthen: American Prisoners of War in the Revolutionary South, 1780–1782* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012).

[5] This section is informed by a range of sources. See Richard Barry, *Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942); Robert M. Weir, " 'The Harmony We Were Famous For': An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 26 (October 1969): 474–501; Samuel A. Lilly, "The Culture of Revolutionary Charleston" (Ph.D. diss., Miami University, 1971); Walter J. Fraser Jr., *Patriots, Pistols, and Petticoats: "Poor Sinful Charles Town" during the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1976); Peter A. Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Richard Waterhouse, *A New World Gentry: The Making of a Merchant and Planter Class in South Carolina* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989); James Haw, *John and Edward Rutledge of South Carolina* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997); Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740–1790* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998); Lorri Glover, *All Our Relations: Blood Ties and Emotional Bonds among the Early South Carolina Gentry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); Aaron J. Palmer, *A Rule of Law: Elite Political Authority and the Coming of the Revolution in the South Carolina Lowcountry, 1763–1776* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2014). Several studies concerning the Virginia gentry also are instructive by way of comparison. See Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina

Like their counterparts in Virginia, male members of the Carolina gentry constantly struggled to balance a desire for self-sufficiency and dependence upon social networks. They interpreted personal and business dealings as mutual obligations, where failure resulted in dishonor. Historian Rhys Isaac writes that much of their behavior originated "from the importance of demonstrating before all the world that one was not a socially immobilized, apparently humbled slave."[6] As T. H. Breen asserts, they "spent a good deal of time worrying about the tenuous relation between public appearance and private reality."[7] Hence, founded on the pressure to display wealth and project power, bonds between gentlemen reflected the common achievements and concerns of their class, race, and gender.

The gentry also served as political leaders. Their affluence enabled them to send their sons to England for a legal education, and their clout ensured their election to the colonial legislature, which they controlled by mid-century. The South Carolina assembly met in Charleston to introduce laws, set up courts, form commissions, oversee elections, and levy taxes. Its primary agenda, though, concerned securing commercial policies that benefited the rice and indigo trades. During the Revolution, the authority of the rebellious legislature increased as a result of its disputed independence from Parliament.

Through their social influence, which stemmed from their economic ascendancy and political supremacy, the low-country gentry created a distinctive culture based on shared ideals, practices, and traditions. By ruling the parishes, acting as justices of the peace, organizing the militia, establishing a code of public conduct, holding formal affairs at family estates, and sponsoring communal recreational activities, they reinforced their domination of life in the colony. Most importantly, notions of individual honor directed their actions.

The Capitulation of Charleston

General Sir Henry Clinton, commander in chief of the British army in the American colonies, despaired over Lieutenant General John Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga in 1777 and the several thousand British soldiers subsequently taken prisoner by the Continental army. He reached the conclusion

Press, 1982); T. H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985); Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680–1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[6] Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 119–120.

[7] Breen, *Tobacco Culture*, 91.

that the British war effort could be saved by an aggressive campaign in the southern colonies and the next year began diverting men and supplies to Georgia. Savannah fell to the British in late 1778. After American forces failed to liberate the city in October 1779, they retreated to Charleston and prepared for a siege.

In its opening phases, Clinton's southern gambit paid off. Charleston capitulated on May 12, 1780. With this victory, the British dealt a significant blow to the Continental army, effectively imprisoning the majority of rebel soldiers stationed in South Carolina. In addition to the Continental army's southern divisions, the British took the militia, the French sailors who were in port, and a number of local civilians into custody, providing them with over six thousand captives.[8] Of the captured American officers, 115 came from Virginia, seventy from South Carolina, and sixty-five from North Carolina.[9] Among the prominent South Carolina civilians taken prisoner were Lieutenant Governor Christopher Gadsden, representatives to the Second Continental Congress Arthur Middleton and Edward Rutledge, and Continental army general William Moultrie.[10] John Rutledge, the governor of South Carolina, narrowly missed capture by escaping the city several days before the Continentals surrendered.[11]

The Articles of Capitulation of Charleston clearly defined the terms of imprisonment for the Continental army, the militia, and civilians. Clinton required the Continental soldiers "to remain prisoners of war until they were exchanged," while the militiamen "were to be permitted to return to their respective homes, as prisoners on parole," after swearing not to take up arms again against the Crown. The British also subjected the citizens inhabiting Charleston to the policies governing prisoners of war. In fact, they ordered civilians "of all descriptions, to be considered as prisoners on parole, and to hold their property on the same terms with the militia." The British permitted the Continental officers "to retain their servants, swords, pistols, and their baggage unsearched." They then granted the commissioned officers parole and moved them to a fort at Haddrell's Point, across Charleston Harbor from the city. The officers' parole was lenient, allowing

[8] Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America* (1787; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1968), 24.

[9] Borick, *Relieve Us of This Burthen*, 46.

[10] "Enclosure (3): Persons Transported to St. Augustine: List of Names of the Disaffected Inhabitants of Charleston Who Have Been Sent to St. Augustine," September 3, 1780, in *The Cornwallis Papers: The Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Theatre of the American Revolutionary War*, ed. Ian Saberton (East Sussex, England: Naval and Military Press, Ltd., 2010), 5: 77; "Return of the Rebel Forces, Commanded by Major General Lincoln, at the Surrender of Charlestown, the Twelfth of May 1780, Now Prisoners of War," in Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, 1: 114.

[11] Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, 1: 105.

them to travel between Haddrell's Point and Charleston for appointments and to obtain supplies. Free to move about town, elite civilian prisoners likewise could leave the defined jurisdiction of parole for short periods of time.[12]

The British took several thousand additional military prisoners throughout the ensuing campaigns in the Carolinas and Virginia. American defeats at Camden and Charlotte yielded large number of captives. Lieutenant General Charles Lord Cornwallis's army, which was on the move through North Carolina, paroled the Continental officers and ordered them to remain at Haddrell's Point.[13] Officers of the Virginia militia with significant social connections received parole in their home province.[14]

The prisoner-of-war system in the southern theater differed greatly from the North. During the early years of the Revolution, the British did not implement a policy that delineated the rights and restrictions of prisoners of war. Initially, their series of victories in the northern theater put them in position to dominate exchange negotiations. The situation changed following the Battles of Saratoga, when the Continental army imprisoned over five thousand British soldiers. Known as the Convention army, the British prisoners from Saratoga included several high-ranking officers.[15] Concerned for the well-being of the Convention army, Clinton initiated prisoner negotiations, thinking that he might gain leverage on the Americans from his invasion of the southern colonies.

The British instituted a centralized prisoner-of-war policy in the South that mandated the imprisonment of rebel civilians. Clinton believed that the citizens of Georgia and South Carolina had "wickedly and traitorously engaged" in conspiring "a most desperate and bloody Rebellion." Then again, he recognized that imprisoning the civilian population might encourage them to enlist in the loyalist militia. He specifically sought to recruit members of the gentry. Prior to the war, their property was a symbol of social status and economic independence. The British threatened these foundations of southern society by proclaiming that all "lands and tenements, goods, chattels, and effects and other real and personal estates"

[12] Tarleton, *History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, 22–23.

[13] John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780–1782* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 107, 112.

[14] "Enclosure: A List of the Officers of the Virginia Line Prisoners of War to the British Army, Referred to by Their Memorial, May 24, 1780," in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 3, *18 June 1779 to 30 September 1780*, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951), 388–391.

[15] Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997), 438–439.

were vulnerable for confiscation. Clinton even targeted the gentry's sense of duty and honor in an attempt to recruit them into the British army.[16]

Civilian Prisoners in British-Occupied Charleston and Saint Augustine

Their paroles notwithstanding, a number of elite civilian prisoners began meeting in secret to conspire against the British soon after Charleston capitulated. These clandestine encounters included Lieutenant Governor Gadsden, the top rebel official left in the state; Privy Council members Thomas Ferguson, Dr. David Ramsay, and Richard Hutson; the clerk of the House of Representatives, Peter Timothy; Admiralty Court judge Hugh Rutledge; Assistant Judge Thomas Heyward; and the attorney general, Alexander Moultrie. From mid-May to mid-August 1780, this group "held constant meetings in town." They drafted letters, gathered intelligence, spread false military reports "throughout the whole of the province," and incited soldiers in the loyalist militia to desert.[17]

Correspondence from this shadow assembly traveled to Governor Rutledge in North Carolina, where he had taken refuge following the fall of Charleston, as well as senior officers in the Continental army and the Continental Congress. The courier was Arthur Middleton, one of the wealthiest and most educated members of the colonial gentry. Besides owning hundreds of slaves and a significant amount of land in Saint James Goose Creek Parish, Middleton had served in the South Carolina assembly and the Second Continental Congress, signed the Declaration of Independence, and helped to draft a constitution for the state of South Carolina. When the British occupied Charleston, he became subject to the policies governing prisoners of war, but as one of the local elite, he received travel passes that allowed him to leave the city for brief intervals. Middleton delivered the subversive communications during these furloughs.[18]

[16] "An Act to Attaint of High Treason the Several Persons Hereinafter Named . . . Subject to the Lawful Debts and Claims Thereupon," [July 1780], in Robert S. Davis Jr., *Georgia Citizens and Soldiers of the American Revolution* (1979; repr., Greenville, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 2000), 67–69.

[17] Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, September 1, 1780, in Saberton, *Cornwallis Papers*, 2: 70; Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, September 3, 1780, in ibid., 43; "Enclosure (3): Persons Transported to St. Augustine," September 3, 1780, in ibid., 5: 77; Mabel L. Webber, ed., "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780–1781," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 33 (January 1932): 3–4; Francis Rawdon to Henry Rugeley, July 1, 1780, in *The Writings of George Washington; Being His Correspondence, Addresses, Messages, and Other Papers, Official and Private, Selected and Published from the Original Manuscripts*, vol. 7, ed. Jared Sparks (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Metcalf, and Hilliard, Gray, and Co., 1835), 554.

[18] Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, September 1, 1780, in Saberton, *Cornwallis Papers*, 2: 68; Walter B. Edgar and N. Louise Bailey, eds., *Biographical Directory*

The political prisoners assembling in Charleston also promoted desertion within the British ranks. In July 1780, the British army experienced serious problems with deserters among its loyalist and Irish troops in South Carolina. Colonel Francis Lord Rawdon suspected "the inhabitants to have connived at, if not facilitated their escape." Consequently, the British established checkpoints where "every soldier who passes the pickets, shall submit himself to be examined by any of the militia, who have any suspicion of him." Moreover, Rawdon proclaimed that he would provide "ten guineas for the head of any deserter belonging to the volunteers of Ireland; and five guineas only if they bring him in alive."[19]

In late August 1780, the British caught Middleton breaking the jurisdiction of his parole and intercepted letters from the shadow government to Rutledge, which alerted them to the secret meetings. The documents convinced the British commanders that the prisoners had endeavored to ignite "the flame of rebellion" and "encourage the disaffected and intimidate others" into deserting. The British rounded up the "Conspirators of Charles Town" on August 27 and detained them aboard the HMS *Sandwich*. Moultrie expressed shock upon hearing of the prisoners' treatment. After all, he wrote, these were "a number of the most respectable gentlemen . . . of this state." Several days later, the detainees sailed for Saint Augustine on board the HMS *Fidelity*. In November, the *Sandwich* transferred more civilian prisoners from Charleston to Saint Augustine, including Middleton.[20]

Banishment put an end to the prisoners' active participation in the war effort. However, it did not prevent them from striving to retain their exalted standing in South Carolina society. Although exiled, they found ways to remain a paternalistic presence in the lives of their dependents, mind their business enterprises, stand by their personal commitments, defend their honor, and lead a comfortable lifestyle that resembled the one they were accustomed to before the Revolution.

Prisoners like Charleston merchant and slave trader Josiah Smith Jr. looked after their interests and fulfilled their responsibilities by sending letters home. Smith was the trustee of two rice plantations, one on the Pee

of the South Carolina House of Representatives, vol. 2, *The Commons House of Assembly, 1692–1775* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 456–458.

[19] Francis Rawdon to Henry Rugeley, July 1, 1780, in Sparks, *Writings of George Washington*, 7: 554.

[20] Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, September 1, 1780, in Saberton, *Cornwallis Papers*, 2: 70; Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, September 3, 1780, in ibid., 43; William Moultrie to Balfour, September 1, 1780, in William Johnson, *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene, Major General of the Armies of the United States, in the War of the Revolution* (Charleston, S.C.: Printed for the author by A. E. Miller, 1822), 1: 281; Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary" (January 1932), 2–8; ibid. (April 1932), 86–89.

Dee River and the other on the Ashepoo River.[21] During his imprisonment at Saint Augustine, Smith corresponded with his brother-in-law and attorney Edward Darrell, who was acting as executor of the rice plantations in his absence. In a letter Smith received on October 10, 1780, Darrell wrote that he "had sold the 60 bbls Rice received from . . . [the] Ashepoo Estate," and "45 Barrils more Rice, being [the] remainder of last Years [*sic*] crop," had arrived safely at Charleston to be sold "in a few days at 60/the Barril." However, smallpox had ravaged the slave quarters of the plantation, and Darrell expected "100 Barrils of the New Crop wou'd be lost at harvest time." Darrell relayed that since Smith left Charleston, "he had not heard . . . the least account of the Estate plantation at Pedee." Despite some distressing news about the plantations, as Smith noted in his diary, "I had the great pleasure of hearing that my family were not only in good health but that my Dear Wife, had been safely delivered of a Daughter on Monday morning the 16th September." He also learned "of my Horse being sold to my friend Mr. Thomas for Sixteen Guineas, with which I am content as 'twill furnish my distressed family with some hard money to go to market with." On November 6, Smith sent Darrell three letters, "in which I have communicated all necessary information respecting my family affairs, and matters of business." The knowledge that Darrell was caring for his property and his family reassured Smith.[22]

[21] The plantations were part of the estate of George Austin, a wealthy merchant and member of the Royal Council of South Carolina. John Moultrie Jr. married Austin's daughter Eleanor on January 5, 1762, and inherited the patriarch's estate following his death on June 8, 1765. A native of the South Carolina low country, Moultrie had by this time moved to Saint Augustine, where he became a member of the Royal Council of East Florida and eventually the royal lieutenant governor. While living in Florida, Moultrie named Smith the executor of the considerable Austin estate, "which I have for several Years past," the latter professed, "honestly labour'd to improve." Smith believed at first that his efforts on Moultrie's behalf would guarantee him a warm welcome and short stay in Saint Augustine. When Moultrie invited Smith to his house for a consultation about the Austin properties on September 21, 1780, Smith stated that he "took occasion to represent to him the great damage that might, and in some measure would certainly arise to said Estate" as a result of his imprisonment. Additionally, Smith urged Moultrie "to make use of his influence with the [British] Commandment at Charleston for my return thither." Moultrie politely declined Smith's request. See Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary" (January 1932), 18, 21; Gerard Moultrie, James Moultrie, and A. S. Salley Jr., "The Moultries,"*South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 5 (October 1904): 249; Edgar and Bailey, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives*, 2: 44–45, 484–485.

[22] Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary" (January 1932), 20–21; ibid. (April 1932), 82. The British shipped Darrell, a paroled prisoner of war himself, to Saint Augustine in late November. See ibid., 100.

Christopher Gadsden similarly used correspondence to sustain his plantation. After being transported to Saint Augustine, Gadsden refused to renew his oath of parole, so the British seized him, jailed him in Fort Saint Mark, and limited his interactions with other prisoners.[23] Following his exchange in Philadelphia in 1781, Gadsden wrote to Morton Wilkinson, a planter of Saint Paul's Parish and fellow exile. Gadsden asked Wilkinson, who would be returning to South Carolina ahead of him, to meet with Brigadier General Francis Marion and find out the condition of his plantation. As the leader of a fast-moving guerilla force, Marion had protected rebel property from the British following the capitulation of Charleston. Gadsden made Marion the executor of his plantation on the Black River, which survived the war without damage. Further, Gadsden wanted Wilkinson to "entreat" Marion for his continued assistance in overseeing the daily operations of the plantation.[24] In a later letter to Marion, Gadsden wrote that he was "indebted" to the general for the upkeep of his estate.[25]

Beyond seeing to the management of their financial concerns and the welfare of their families from afar, elite prisoners of war sought to carry on the cultural practices that defined them as southern gentlemen, beginning with their role as slave masters. Under the Articles of Capitulation of Charleston, the British allowed prisoners to retain their body servants. This privilege extended to the accused conspirators shipped to East Florida. A total of twenty-six African slaves accompanied the first thirty-seven prisoners who landed at Saint Augustine. These enslaved servants cleaned, washed clothes, cooked, and went "out for to Catch Fish & Oysters for our use" in a "handy & handsome Cypress built Canoe," wrote Josiah Smith.[26]

Members of the gentry were accustomed not only to being waited on by servants but also to living in fine, commodious houses. While confined at Saint Augustine, the parolees arranged lodging that was comfortable, private, and befitting their station in society. The initial arrivals divided themselves into three "messes," Smith related. The first mess rented "a Stone built House," which consisted of living quarters and "a large Orange Garden" for the "rate of Seventy pounds Sterling per Annum." The second mess moved into "a large wood built house," had for "the heavy Rent of 120 Sterling per annum." Standing an impressive "two Storys [*sic*] high, and about 75 feet in length," this residence was "very pleasantly scituated near

[23] E. Stanly Godbold Jr. and Robert H. Woody, *Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 190–213.

[24] Christopher Gadsden to Morton Wilkinson, September [1781], in *The Writings of Christopher Gadsden, 1746–1805*, ed. Richard Walsh (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1966), 174–175.

[25] Christopher Gadsden to Francis Marion, October 21, 1782, in ibid., 185.

[26] Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary" (January 1932), 7, 9, 22–23. See also Lilly, "Culture of Revolutionary Charleston," 50–70.

the River, on the North East corner of our Parole Limits." Piazzas ran "the whole length on the South Side," overlooking "a large Garden" and "a very roomy Yard." The third mess took up residence in the unfinished statehouse "until they cou'd make out better accommodations." Constructed with a "cement of small Sea Shells" called coquina that was characteristic of the local architecture, the statehouse was "a handsome building, much more so than any other building in the place." Smith's descriptions indicate that while not on a par with the mansions of Charleston or the great plantation houses of the low country, the exiles' temporary housing suited their status.[27]

For the Saint Augustine prisoners, exercising economic independence and self-reliance went hand in hand with maintaining their luxurious prewar lifestyle. Along with receiving an "allowance" of provisions from the British commissary, they purchased an array of food, drink, and merchandise. An experienced merchant who possessed all of the necessary connections, Smith collected funds, drew up accounts, and placed orders with Charleston agents via the cargo vessels that plied the Gulf Stream between the Carolina coast and Saint Augustine. One of the prisoners' orders contained twenty-seven barrels of "clean rice," 210 pounds of bacon, and three kegs of butter. As a source of fresh meat and eggs, they obtained livestock, including seventeen sheep, sixteen hogs, sixteen geese, fifty-four ducks, and seventeen chickens. The prisoners also purchased a dairy cow to afford them "a constant supply of Milk for Breakfast & Coffee in the evening."[28]

Nor did the exiled Carolinians deprive themselves of two traditional southern recreational activities, drinking and gambling. In addition to foodstuffs and utilitarian items such as copper tea kettles, candles, cooking utensils, soap, and snuffers, they bought large quantities of alcohol. Social drinking was one of the most cherished pastimes of the colonial gentry. Gentlemen got together on lazy summer days in Charleston to imbibe, made punch for parties, and shared drink recipes. Smith recorded orders for twelve gallons of Jamaican rum, five gallons of French brandy, and a "Quarter Pipe [of] Port Wine." For gambling, he ordered twelve packs of playing cards.[29]

The southern gentry were passionate about their recreational pursuits, but nothing was more central to their manhood than a deep sense of personal honor. Two incidents involving the Saint Augustine prisoners illustrate their determination to defend their honor as gentleman, even in captivity. First, Lieutenant Governor Gadsden's lengthy incarceration at Fort Saint

[27] Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary" (January 1932), 11–12.

[28] Ibid., 15, 20.

[29] Ibid., 27. See also Barry, *Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina*, 7; T. H. Breen, "Horses and Gentlemen: The Cultural Significance of Gambling among the Gentry of Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 34 (April 1977): 240.

Mark resulted from a question of honor. When the initial shipload of exiles landed in East Florida in mid-September 1780, British authorities presented them with a copy of a new parole. Speaking on behalf of the group, Gadsden requested a small alteration in the terms before signing the document. As Smith recounted, the British governor and commandant interrupted him, saying "that they did not come there to enter into any argument with him, therefore desired to know, if he would, or wou'd not subscribe his name to that Parole &c &c to which Mr. G. with an audible voice reply'd that" since he had not violated the previous parole, "his honour wou'd not permit him to do it." An officer immediately led Gadsden away, and he spent the next forty-two weeks locked in jail at the fort, refusing parole.[30]

Smith, the Reverend John Lewis, and their compatriots grudgingly accepted the second parole, but in early November, they felt the British impinged their honor once again. Smith wrote that Lewis, the rector of Saint Paul's Parish, had been holding Sunday worship services for the prisoners "at our own dwelling." After learning of this "Publick worship," British officials issued a proclamation stating that "the Rebel Prisoners forgetful of their Parole, have very Improperly held private Meetings for the purpose of performing Divine Service agreeable to their Rebellious Principles." The proclamation ordered the Carolinians to attend the town's Anglican church in the future, "where it is expected they will observe the utmost decency." The prisoners interpreted the allegations as an insult to their honor. "We are charged with proceedings of a sedious [*sic*] Tendency, and violation of our Parole and pledge of honour, this we absolutely deny," Smith declared. Although they discontinued their "Sabbath Assemblies," the prisoners refused to go to the parish church. Instead, to satisfy their honor, they stayed in their quarters, "there silently to spend our returning Sabbaths, in the Best manner we can, by reading and meditation."[31]

Along with prohibiting them from worshiping independently, the British threatened to eliminate the prisoners' correspondence with their families, business partners, and plantations. Suspecting them of forwarding American intelligence to South Carolina, "the Commissary, the Commandant, and others of the Military" began inspecting all of the parolees' mail as soon as they arrived in Saint Augustine, confirmed Smith. In January 1781, the British accused the prisoners of having sent and received letters of "a most dangerous Tendency, and inconsistent with the paroles." If the practice was not stopped immediately, they warned, then the letters would be put "before proper Judges" and the garrison would inflict "severe Vengeance" on the guilty parties. The threat of banning correspondence infringed on the prisoners' individual autonomy and cast doubt on their honor. Arthur

[30] Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary" (January 1932), 9–10.
[31] Ibid. (April 1932), 83–85.

Middleton, Morton Wilkinson, and several others responded that while in Saint Augustine, they had behaved as gentlemen and kept their word to cooperate with the British. Smith insisted that any breach of parole in the communications with "our friends in Carolina" was an "inadvertency." The prisoners successfully appealed the British accusation and continued sending and receiving correspondence until their exchange.[32]

Celebrating holidays was another way that prisoners of war retained a measure of autonomy and carried on their cultural traditions. As referenced above, on July 4, 1780, privileged Charlestonians joined the military prisoners at Haddrell's Point in celebrating the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. To the dismay of the British, William Moultrie defended his men's actions, stating in a letter to General James Paterson that "the celebration of particular festivals, even by prisoners, is not uncommon."[33] Later that year, the Saint Augustine captives observed Christmas in traditional southern fashion. The merriment, Smith noted, included not only a feast "of Roasted Turkeys & Pig, Corn'd Beef, Ham, Plumb pudding, and pumpkin Tarts" but also singing "a variety of Songs &c."[34]

It is noteworthy that the prisoners did not participate in holidays associated with the Crown. On the one-year anniversary of the British victory at Savannah, the soldiers in Saint Augustine fired cannons, carried out a twenty-one gun salute, dined in the fort with prominent townspeople, held "a Ball at night for the Ladies," and "much heated by liquor," taunted the prisoners by playing "Yankey [*sic*] Doodle" during a parade the next morning. The prisoners often heard this tune during the changing of the guard at the fort, struck up "doubtless by way of Insult," they concluded, "and in derision to our Company of suffering Americans." Smith and the rest had little choice other than to endure the mockery until the Continental army and the Continental Congress could effect their freedom through a prisoner-of-war exchange.[35]

Exchange

The southern gentry held at Saint Augustine did not emerge from the war in position to reclaim their previous socio-economic status without help. The Continental Congress passed prisoner-of-war legislation and senior officers in the Continental army attempted to organize partial exchanges in support of fellow elites who faced extended captivity. The army's strategic

[32] Ibid., 97–100. Although there is no mention of the result of this incident, Smith sent and received letters until his exchange in September 1781.

[33] William Moultrie to James Patterson [*sic*], July 7, 1780, in Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, 2: 133.

[34] Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary" (April 1932), 93.

[35] Ibid. (January 1932), 20.

victories in the southern theater during the early months of 1780 eventually opened the door to exchanges that liberated prisoners from British dependency, allowing them to return home and resume their leadership roles.

On March 5, 1779, the Continental Congress granted General George Washington, as "commander in chief of the armies of the United States," the authority "to negotiate and establish with the commander in chief of his Britannic majesty's forces, a cartel or agreement for a general exchange of prisoners." Indeed, Congress authorized Washington "to fix and conclude upon the terms and conditions of the said exchange, ascertaining and allowing an equivalent of inferior for superior officers, and an equivalent of privates for officers." In other words, each captured soldier would be assigned a point value based upon his rank to ensure an equitable exchange. Imprisoned civilians did not receive a point value in this system. Instead, Congress expected negotiations for civilians to take place separately and on an individual basis.[36]

The surrender of Charleston, which involved many notable civilians, dramatically altered American prisoner-of-war policy. Immediately upon learning of the first ship of civilian prisoners sent from Charleston to Saint Augustine, Washington expressed concern over their fate. He desired to ensure honorable treatment for them and a swift exchange. The internment of Christopher Gadsden, in particular, concerned him. However, in a September 3, 1780, letter to Philadelphian James Cannon, he stated, "I am at a loss to know what means will be fallen upon to procure the release of the Gentlemen in the Civil line who were made prisoners in South Carolina, as we have few or none of similar Ranks or circumstances in our hands." Still, Washington was hopeful of arranging "partial exchanges," as he would "with great pleasure embrace an opportunity of being serviceable to Govr. Gadsden."[37] In November, Congress passed a series of resolutions establishing terms of exchange for prisoners, including civilians. They defined the requirements for partial exchanges ambiguously so that civilian prisoners of high social standing could be exchanged for British officers. Where "similar rank will not apply," Congress empowered the commissary general of prisoners, Abraham Skinner, "to pursue the exchange on

[36] Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789*, vol. 13, *January 1–April 22, 1779* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), 280.

[37] George Washington to James Cannon, September 3, 1780, in *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799*, vol. 19, *June 12, 1780–September 5, 1780*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1937), 492.

the footing of composition." The resolutions even allowed civilians of elite status with "no regimental rank" to gain one for the purpose of exchange.[38]

Despite Congress's steps to facilitate partial exchanges involving imprisoned civilians, progress toward freeing the South Carolinians held in Saint Augustine was slow. On January 8, 1781, Washington wrote to Skinner regarding the "Citizens . . . not in the military line, who are prisoners." He asked the commissary general "to make a return of the names and former places of abode of such, to the Governors of the States to which they respectively belong, informing them of their circumstances, and of the necessity of affording them relief, and of taking the earliest opportunities of exchanging them, if any of the subjects of G. Britain fall into their hands."[39] Washington was no closer to freeing "the Gentlemen in Captivity at Augustine" on February 26, when he mentioned them in a missive to Continental congressman John Mathews of South Carolina and confessed his "apprehensions that the British Commander in Chief would make some difficulty in the exchange of those Citizens of eminence who were not clearly invested with military Commissions." As Washington explained to Mathews on March 23, "To make propositions for their partial exchanges would I am certain be of no avail."[40]

Following Major General Benjamin Lincoln's capture at Charleston and Major General Horatio Gates's defeat at Camden, Washington had appointed Nathanael Greene as commander of the Continental army's southern divisions. The significant number of British captives that Greene's forces took during the Battles of Cowpens and Guilford Courthouse finally gave the Americans the advantage in prisoner negotiations.[41] In June 1781, the British reluctantly agreed to several exchanges that liberated officers at Haddrell's Point as well as the civilians at Saint Augustine. Word of the

[38] Gaillard Hunt, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789*, vol. 18, *September 7–December 29, 1780* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 1028–1029.

[39] George Washington to Abraham Skinner, January 8, 1781, in *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799*, vol. 21, *December 22, 1780–April 26, 1781*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1937), 72–73.

[40] George Washington to John Mathews, February 26 and March 23, 1781, in ibid., 303, 365.

[41] For more on prisoner negotiations after the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, see Nathanael Greene to Samuel Huntington, March 23, 1781, in *The Papers of Nathanael Greene*, vol. 7, *26 December 1780–29 March 1781*, ed. Richard K. Showman (Chapel Hill: Published for the Rhode Island Historical Society by the University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 465; Greene to Charles Cornwallis, April 9, 1781, in *The Papers of Nathanael Greene*, vol. 8, *30 March–10 July 1781*, ed. Dennis M. Conrad (Chapel Hill: Published for the Rhode Island Historical Society by the University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 73.

exchange reached Josiah Smith and his "Captive Brethren" on July 9. "In the evening," wrote Smith, "Mr. Brown the Commissary informed us that the Commandant (Col. Glazier) had Officially receiv'd directions from Col. Balfour Commandant at Charlestown, to permit the whole of our Company to depart from St. Augustine as Prisoners exchanged either for Virginia or Philadelphia as we shoud chuse [*sic*], but by no means to grant us the liberty of Stopping or even calling at Charles town [*sic*]." Several weeks later, the Saint Augustine prisoners reunited with their families in Philadelphia.[42]

Conclusion

Following the defeat at Yorktown, the British began withdrawing their remaining troops in the South. On December 14, 1782, they evacuated Charleston. William Moultrie described the event as "a grand and pleasing sight," with crowds of people welcoming the return of their military and political leaders. The recapture of Charleston liberated the last civilian prisoners of war being held in the city, "many of whom had been cooped up in one room of their own elegant houses for upwards of two years." The citizens celebrated the departure of the British.[43] The state's newly elected governor, John Mathews, participated in the ceremonies, dined with Greene, and reinstated the civil magistrates. Greene set up headquarters at John Rutledge's manor to aid the assembly in restoring order. From there he wrote Elias Boudinot, the current president of the Continental Congress, stating that "the people are once more free, and I hope will manifest their gratitude by a vigorous exertion in support of the common Cause."[44] On September 3, 1783, American and British delegates signed the Treaty of Paris, ending armed hostilities in the United States.

During the war, the British had imprisoned some of South Carolina's most prominent citizens at Saint Augustine. This group's experience as prisoners of war demonstrates their preoccupation with maintaining their social status during captivity. At every opportunity, the civilian prisoners exerted their autonomy, guarded their honor, and abided by their customs while also relying on interpersonal relationships to preserve their economic

[42] Charles Cornwallis to the Marquis de Lafayette, July 18, 1781, in Saberton, *Cornwallis Papers*, 5: 238; Nisbet Balfour to Cornwallis, June 7, 1781, ibid., 278; Mabel L. Webber, ed., "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780–1781," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 33 (October 1932): 284–288; Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary" (April 1932), 111.

[43] Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, 1: 359–360.

[44] Nathanael Greene to Elias Boudinot, December 19, 1782, in *The Papers of Nathanael Greene*, vol. 12, *1 October 1782–21 May 1783*, ed. Dennis M. Conrad (Chapel Hill: Published for the Rhode Island Historical Society by the University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 302–303; Haw, *John and Edward Rutledge*, 168.

networks. Despite being stripped temporarily of political authority, they came out of confinement with their way of life intact.

After the Continental Congress and the Continental army secured their freedom, the colonial gentry continued their role as South Carolina's cultural, economic, and political elite in the years immediately following the war. At the same time they were restarting their careers as planters, merchants, and lawyers and climbing out of debt, many of the Saint Augustine exiles won reelection to the General Assembly. They took their traditional places on commissions and committees, and Alexander Moultrie resumed his duties as the state's attorney general. Several of the exiles went on to serve as governors, lieutenant governors, and Continental congressmen. Additionally, a number were delegates to the state ratification convention in 1788 and members of the state constitutional convention of 1790. The homecoming of the banished prisoners of war heralded the return of the old order. However, the next threat to the power and influence of the low-country gentry was already beginning to take shape within the borders of their own state—the rise of a planter class in the backcountry.