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# Economic Growth And Changing Patterns Of Wealth Distribution In Colonial Lowcountry South Carolina

Richard Waterhouse\*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the first thirty or forty years of South Carolina's settlement, most of its colonists were engaged in growing provisions to supply the English plantation colonies in the Caribbean. A small clique of ruthless and determined men had grown rich from the deerskin trade, and the few "handsome" dwellings which graced Charles Town in the early eighteenth century were the fruits of their monopoly of this commerce.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, early accounts of the infant colony stressed the economically egalitarian nature of its society.<sup>2</sup> Even the introduction of rice-growing as a viable commercial enterprise after 1690 did little at first to disturb the status quo. In a promotional tract published in 1710, Thomas Nairne, a local Indian trader, could still write:

for those who affect Solitude, Contemplation, Gardening, Groves, Woods, and the like innocent Delights of plain simple Nature, and who, with a small Fortune would provide some competent fix'd settlement for themselves and Children; there can scarce any place in the British Dominions be found, that will better answer their Expectation.<sup>3</sup>

Yet by the end of the colonial period, Carolina's economic base was dramatically transformed, for large-scale plantation agriculture now characterized the Lowcountry. Moreover, wealth was now very unevenly distributed. At one end of the spectrum were the wealthy planters and merchants, those whose families had possessed sufficient capital, either as producers or exporters, to take advantage of the substantial profits yielded by rice and indigo. At the other end were the slaves, the black majority, who constituted "property" but usually owned none of their own. In between

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<sup>1</sup>J. Oldmixon, *History of the British Empire in America* (London: John Nicholson, 1708), p. 363.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Samuel Wilson, *An Account of the Province of Carolina* (London: Francis Smith, 1682); Thomas Ashe, *Carolina, or a Description of the Present State of that Country* (London: T. A. Gent, 1682). Both these accounts are reprinted in A. S. Salley, ed., *Narratives of Early Carolina* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1911).

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Nairne, *A Letter from South Carolina* (London: Baldwin, 1710), p. 56.

were those whites who had only "a bare subsistence," and others with "some of the Conveniencys of Life."<sup>4</sup>

The important questions which this article addresses concern how and when this transformation in the patterns of wealth distribution occurred, and the extent to which a trend towards wealth becoming more concentrated in the upper elements continued right through until the outbreak of revolution. Because the middle and backcountry areas of the colony were settled later, mostly by immigrants from the more northern colonies who developed a subsistence rather than a plantation economy, I have judged that they constituted separate societies, needing their own examination. They are not included within the scope of this study.

## II

In recent times, historians measuring the patterns of wealth distribution in colonial America have utilized tax records and probate inventories. Most of these studies have focused on a particular town, city, or county, and it is therefore difficult to generalize about overall trends from the findings of these micro-studies.<sup>5</sup> The one study on the nature of wealth distribution in all colonies concentrates on wealth apportionment in America in 1774, an approach which allows a comparison between the New England, middle, and southern colonies, but precludes measurement of changes in wealth

<sup>4</sup> Gov. James Glen, "An Attempt Toward an Estimate of the Value of South Carolina," March 1751, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (hereafter S.C.D.A.H.), Transcripts of Records in the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina (hereafter B.P.R.O), Vol. 24, pp. 318-319.

<sup>5</sup> James Henretta, "Economic Development and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 22 (January 1965), pp. 72-95; Bruce C. Daniels, "Long Range Trends in Wealth Distribution in Eighteenth Century New England," *Explorations in Economic History*, Vol. 11, (Winter 1973/1974), pp. 123-125; Gloria T. Main, "Inequality in Early America: The Evidence from Probate Records," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 7 (Spring 1977), pp. 559-581; Russell Menard, P.M.G. Harris, and Lois Green Carr, "Opportunity and Inequality: The Distribution of Wealth on the Lower Western Shore of Maryland, 1638-1705," *The Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. 69 (1974), pp. 169-183; James T. Lemon and Gary B. Nash, "The Distribution of Wealth in Eighteenth-Century America. A Century of Change in Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1693-1802," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 2 (Fall 1968), pp. 1-24. However, for an important critique of Henretta's argument, see G. B. Warden, "Inequality and Instability in Eighteenth Century Boston: A Reappraisal," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 6 (Spring 1976), pp. 585-620.

allocation patterns.<sup>6</sup>

The findings of these studies are to some extent contradictory — a fact which in part reflects regional variations. In general they suggest that per capita income increased in eighteenth-century America, although in some colonies (in particular, Connecticut) there was no such trend but rather a series of fluctuations resulting in no overall rise in living standards.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, while in some areas of British North America there was little change in wealth concentration in this period, in others the richest inhabitants increased their share of the total wealth. At different times Boston exhibited each of these characteristics, recording little change in wealth concentration between 1687 and 1771, but witnessing a rapid advance into economic inequality during the Revolutionary years.<sup>8</sup> Jackson Turner Main has accounted for these variations by arguing that concentration resulted from the pressure of population upon land, the emergence of an economic elite profiting from a commercial economy, the growth of a dependent labor force both slave and free, and the shift to commercial agriculture. Thus there was a tendency for wealth to be increasingly concentrated in the hands of the richer inhabitants as a community became more economically complex.<sup>9</sup> However, Bruce C. Daniels's findings, which suggest a growing inequality of wealth distribution in subsistence areas of New England in the eighteenth century, challenge the comprehensiveness of Main's arguments.<sup>10</sup>

Into which of these trends do we fit South Carolina? In seeking to answer this question I have made a detailed examination of the extant inventories and parish tax census records. Only two tax returns for colonial South Carolina have survived, one for Edisto Island in St. Paul's Parish for

<sup>6</sup>Alice Hanson Jones, *Wealth of a Nation to Be: The American Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Alice Hanson Jones, "Wealth Estimates for the American Middle Colonies, 1774," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Pt. 2, pp. 109-117; Alice Hanson Jones, "Wealth Estimates for the New England Colonies, about 1770," *The Journal of Economic History*, pp. 98-127.

<sup>7</sup>George Rogers Taylor, "American Economic Growth Before 1840: An Exploratory Essay," *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 24 (December 1964), pp. 427-444; Jackson Turner Main, "The Distribution of Property in Colonial Connecticut," in James Kirby Martin, ed., *The Human Dimensions of Nation Making: Essays on Colonial and Revolutionary America* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976), p. 81.

<sup>8</sup>Warden, "Inequality and Instability;" Allen Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 28 (July 1971), pp. 375-412.

<sup>9</sup>Jackson Turner Main, "Trends in Wealth Concentration Before 1860," *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 31 (June 1971), p. 447.

<sup>10</sup>Daniels, "Long Range Trends," pp. 123-125.

1732 and another partial list for St. James's Parish, Goose Creek, in 1745. In addition, I have utilized the Rev. Thomas Varnod's census of St. George's Parish in 1726.<sup>11</sup> Of course, because these three lists are for different parishes, they cannot be used to measure changes in wealth distribution. Not until 1736, when inventories were kept as a separate series of records, was a systematic attempt made to enforce a 1712 law requiring the making of inventories of all intestate estates. A 1745 act extended this stipulation to include all deceased estates, but in reality it proved hard to enforce comprehensively. Probate records had to be lodged in Charles Town, but as settlements extended further into the hinterland, the inhabitants of the nether regions found this requirement just too troublesome. In addition, the estates of the Charles Town and Lowcountry poor were frequently not inventoried, for their "property" was considered too meagre to be worth recording. In other words, the inventories for the period 1736 to 1775 are, for the most part, records of the estates of those substantial owners who lived within reasonable proximity of Charles Town.

There are other general problems, too, associated with the use of inventories to measure wealth distribution. Because they are records of decedent wealth, some historians have applied statistical weighting formulae to the figures derived from these documents as a method of transferring decedent wealth to the wealth of the living.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, because inflation was a factor in the colonial economy, albeit a more important one in some colonies than in others, historians have adjusted statistics derived from inventories made in periods of high inflation by using equalizing charts.<sup>13</sup>

In examining inventories to measure wealth distribution trends in South Carolina between 1736 and 1775, I have made neither of these adjustments. Because I am measuring relative changes in living standards and wealth distribution over a period of forty years (rather than estimating the wealth of the living at particular times), the use of weighting is unnecessary. Moreover, although the colony witnessed outbreaks of inflation,

<sup>11</sup>S.C.D.A.H., *Inventories*, 20 vols., 1736-1784. Also extant is a series of lists of adult male slaveholdings in St. John's, Berkeley, for the period 1762-1777 (*Records of the Commissioners of the High Roads of St. John's Parish, Berkeley County, 1760-1798*, South Carolina Historical Society). Because these are lists only of adult male slaveholdings and do not include non-slaveholders, any figures derived from them are not comparable with those computed from Edisto, Goose Creek, or St. George's. For that reason, I have not utilized these lists in this study.

<sup>12</sup>Jones, *Wealth of a Nation to Be*; Jones, "Wealth Estimates for the American Middle Colonies, 1774," pp. 109-117; Jones, "Wealth Estimates for the New England Colonies, about 1770," pp. 98-127; Alice Hanson Jones, "Estimating Wealth of the Living from a Probate Sample," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Autumn 1982), pp. 273-300.

<sup>13</sup>Daniels, "Long Range Trends," pp. 125-126.

first in the 1720s and again after 1776, prices remained very stable in the period under discussion.<sup>14</sup> In any case, in my judgement these inventories constitute too incomplete a record to justify their interpretation in terms of sophisticated statistical techniques. Here, I have applied basic statistical methods, drawn tentative conclusions only, and sought to interpret the data drawn from these documents within the context of a range of other evidence. Finally, because the inventories for 1736-1745 are the estates only of those who died intestate, they may primarily be those of the poorer inhabitants, and therefore I have used the figures derived from this period only when they confirm trends reflected in the statistics for the three succeeding decades.

The figures provided by the inventories support the conclusions of contemporaries and later historians both that living standards were rising and that a higher proportion of the white population was "well off" in Carolina than in other mainland colonies.<sup>15</sup> Between 1736-1745 and 1746-1755, most decedents left estates worth £300 sterling or less, but between 1756-1765 and 1766-1775, the majority of estates were valued at £400 sterling or less (Table 1). Moreover, the proportion of estates valued at £1,000 sterling or more doubled between 1736-1745 and 1766-1775, rising from 12.03 percent of the whole to 25.66 percent (Table 1). These figures contrast strongly with Maryland, where only 3.2 percent of estates inventoried between 1750 and 1759 were valued at more than £1,000 sterling, and vindicate Dr. George Milligan-Johnston's contention in 1770 that, "The men and Women who have a Right to the Class of Gentry ... are more numerous here than in any other Colony in North America."<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, these figures suggest that all classes of white Lowcountry property holders were improving their economic position between 1736 and 1775. But was this process also accompanied by a trend towards a concentration of wealth in the upper elements and a relative widening of the gap between small and large propertyholders? The figures in Table 2 suggest that indeed the most prosperous inhabitants improved their comparative economic position relative to the poorer property owners. However, the figures for 1756-1765, which both reflect a "hiccup" against the

<sup>14</sup>George Rogers Taylor, "Wholesale Commodity Prices at Charlestown, South Carolina, 1739-1791," *Journal of Economic and Business History*, Vol. 4 (1931-1932), p. 356.

<sup>15</sup>Glen, "An Attempt Towards an Estimate;" Taylor, "American Economic Growth Before 1840," p. 432.

<sup>16</sup>George Milligan-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), p. 134; Aubrey C. Land, "Economic Base and Social Structure: The Northern Chesapeake in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 25, (December 1965), p. 653.

overall trend and defy simple explanation, make this conclusion extremely tentative.<sup>17</sup>

A detailed analysis of slaveholdings listed in the inventories confirms the findings suggested in Table 2. Studying changes in the patterns of slave ownership may be a more accurate means of assessing variations in wealth distribution than measuring alterations in the proportion of total wealth held by the richest five or ten percent of decedents. Because in each case the valuation of a particular deceased estate was made by the individual executors, inconsistency in assessment was probably widespread. Moreover, there was a tendency for executors to undervalue and then purchase the most valuable items themselves, a practice which a 1745 statute forbidding executors to purchase at its assessed value any part of an estate which they were administering surely failed to eliminate.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, there was no reason for executors to underestimate the number of slaves belonging to any particular estate. Throughout the period 1736-1775, slave wealth made up a relatively high proportion of the total wealth measured in inventories, and therefore estimating changes in the patterns of slave ownership is a relatively accurate means of determining overall trends.<sup>19</sup>

The figures in Tables 3-6 suggest some important conclusions. Throughout the period 1736-1775, a relatively large number of white, propertied, Lowcountry inhabitants, approximately a quarter in each decade studied, owned no slaves at all. In other words, a significant proportion of the Lowcountry population was not engaged in rice or indigo production. Many of those in this category were probably small craftsmen who lived and worked in Charles Town. Others, those who lived in the country

<sup>17</sup>For evidence of a trend towards wealth concentration in St. John's, Berkeley, see George D. Terry, "'Champaign County': Social History of an Eighteenth Century Low Country Parish in South Carolina, St. John's Berkeley County," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1981), pp. 280-282. Because the years 1756-1765 largely coincide with the period of the Seven Years' War it might be tempting to argue that the war was the factor accounting for this "counter-trend." In fact, the war had little, if any, impact on the South Carolina economy. See K.G. Isaac, "South Carolina and the Seven Years' War," (B.A. thesis, University of Sydney, 1977), pp. 14-39.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, 10 Vols., (Columbia, 1836-1841), Vol. 3, pp. 666-668.

<sup>19</sup>William George Bentley, "Wealth Distribution in Colonial South Carolina," (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgia State University, 1977), p. 82, estimates that between 1722 and 1762 slave wealth as a percentage of total wealth varied from 40% to 51%. In most periods it was 48% or more.



parishes, maintained themselves by growing corn, peas, and potatoes, which they sold on the Charles Town market.<sup>20</sup>

Second, although the figures for 1736-1745 stand out against the overall trend, those for the other decades indicate that while the proportion of those owning fewer than ten, twenty, or fifty slaves remained almost unchanged, their percentage of slaves owned decreased markedly (Tables 3-6). In contrast, while there was a very slight decline in the percentage of those owning in excess of fifty slaves, at the same time those in this category sharply increased their share of slaveholdings. In other words, all classes of propertyholders may have improved their economic circumstances in these years, but the bigger slaveholders, those best able to take advantage of the profits yielded from rice and indigo on a large scale, accumulated slave wealth at a faster rate than did Lowcountry propertyholders as a whole.

An examination of slaveholdings in individual parishes for particular years confirms the findings suggested by the figures derived from the inventories, but also indicates that there were variations in slaveholding patterns from parish to parish. In contrast to the inventories, which reveal a high percentage of non-slaveholders, the tax records for Edisto Island (1732) and Goose Creek (1745) list few non-slaveowners (Tables 7 and 8). However, figures drawn from a list of heads of households in St. George's Parish for 1726 provide a similar percentage of non-slaveholders to those listed in the inventories (Table 9). This suggests either that in some parishes there existed a very high level of slave ownership, or that most non-slaveholders in Edisto and Goose Creek owned no taxable property and were therefore not included in the tax lists. The St. George's figures, however, confirm that non-slaveholders were not concentrated only in Charles Town, but were spread through the country parishes as well.

In every decade studied, the majority of propertyholders listed in the inventories owned fewer than ten slaves (Tables 3-6). Such a slaveholding pattern was also common to St. George's in 1726 and Edisto Island in 1732 (Tables 7 and 9). In St. George's and Edisto, too, the largest planters owned a disproportionately large share of the slave wealth. Thirty-one percent of all slaves on Edisto in 1732 were owned by the largest slaveholder while the seven biggest slaveholders in St. George's (six percent of the total number of heads of households), held almost thirty-eight percent of all slaves in the parish (Tables 7 and 9).

The average slaveholdings in St. George's and Edisto were relatively similar — 11.65 and 12.69 respectively. In stark contrast, the average

<sup>20</sup>Rev. Lewis Jones to the Secretary, January 26, 1728; Rev. Thomas Hasell to the Secretary, June 4, 1728; Rev. James Harrison to the Secretary, August 8, 1776, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts Transcripts, Library of Congress.

slaveholdings in Goose Creek in 1745 averaged almost forty-three. Moreover, whereas the majority of heads of households (St. George's) or taxpayers (Edisto) owned ten slaves or less, the greater number of Goose Creek taxpayers owned fifty or fewer slaves. Like the planters in St. George's and Edisto, the large planters owned a disproportionately large share of the slave wealth, but what distinguished Goose Creek from the other two parishes was its greater number of very large slaveholders. Over 27 percent of Goose Creek taxpayers owned more than fifty slaves, whereas in St. George's and Edisto just over 6 percent and under 2 percent of slaveholders respectively held more than fifty slaves (Tables 7, 8, and 9). The rich soil of Goose Creek both attracted and produced some very wealthy planters.

To a very large extent, then, this tax and census data, while suggesting some regional variations, confirms the slaveholding patterns revealed in the inventories. The figures from the 1732 Edisto tax list, in particular, also reinforce the findings derived from the inventories for the decade 1736-1745. That is, by the fourth decade of the eighteenth century, a major share of the colony's wealth was already concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of its inhabitants.

The figures derived from the inventories suggest that there was a slow but continued concentration of wealth in the hands of the colony's wealthiest inhabitants between 1736 and 1775. However, because these inventories were of the estates of those propertied white inhabitants who lived either in Charles Town or the surrounding Lowcountry parishes, they do not reflect an important development which took place in this period — a significant increase, beginning in the 1730s, in the number of Charles Town's impoverished white inhabitants.

Although Gov. James Glen estimated in 1751 that one-fifth of the colony's inhabitants had only "a bare subsistence," in the country parishes, at least, there were few so poor that they had to appeal to the local vestries for relief.<sup>21</sup> The vestrymen and church wardens devoted only a minimum of time to caring for the indigent while the poor tax levies were very small.<sup>22</sup> This was in stark contrast to the situation in St. Philip's, Charles Town. Already, by 1735, there were sufficient poor in Charles Town to prompt the St. Philip's vestry to petition the Assembly to establish a workhouse. It was

<sup>21</sup>Glen, "An Attempt Towards an Estimate."

<sup>22</sup>A. S. Salley, ed., *Minutes of the Vestry of St. Helena's Parish, South Carolina, 1726-1812* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1919); vestry minutes of St. Stephen's 1745-1935, St. Mathew's 1767-1838, St. John's, Colleton 1738-1874, St. John's, Berkeley, 1731-1911, Christ Church 1708-1759, S.C.D.A.H.; vestry minutes of St. David's 1768-1832, vestry minutes of Prince Frederick's 1729-1763, South Carolina Library.

the churchwarden's responsibility to collect the poor tax and then distribute the proceeds, but because of the increasing number of poor people needing relief this task became increasingly onerous, prompting the vestry to claim in 1756 that "it can't be expected any person in future will serve the Office."<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the numbers of the indigent were increasing at a faster rate than the population as a whole. Charles Town's white population rose from between 4,500-5,000 in 1735 to 5,500-6,000 in 1770, but in the same period the poor tax levy in St. Philip's multiplied four-and-a-half times from £2,000 current money to £9,000 current money.<sup>24</sup>

The poor consisted in part of transients. During the course of the Seven Years' War, in particular, the vestry found itself caring for (and often burying at public expense) not only Acadian "refugees," but also the dependents of British soldiers.<sup>25</sup> But indigent transients thrown up by the war made up only a portion of the swelling numbers of the Charles Town poor. In 1770, seven years after the official end of hostilities, the St. Philip's vestry lamented "the great increase of Parish and Transient poor," and throughout the remainder of the colonial period it was continually forced to increase the size of the poor tax.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, the absence of extant colonial tax lists for Charles Town precludes any precise measurement of changes in wealth distribution patterns for that city. Nevertheless, the evidence presented here strongly suggests that in the late colonial period, especially, the number of Charles Town's propertyless poor increased both in absolute and relative terms.

### III. CONCLUSION

In common with a number of American colonies (or at least sections of them), but against the trend in others (for example, Connecticut), South Carolina became an increasingly economically stratified society in the

<sup>23</sup>Vestry minutes of St. Philip's, 1732-1910, October 3, 1756, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>24</sup>Walter L. Robins, ed., "John Tobler's Description of South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 71 (1970), p. 144; St. Philip's vestry minutes, January 14, 1754-1755, April 27, 1771, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>25</sup>Ruth Allison Hudnut and Hayes Baker-Crothers, "Acadian Transients in South Carolina," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 43 (April 1938), pp. 500-513; A.S. Salley, ed., *Register of St. Philip's Parish, Charles Town, South Carolina, 1720-1758* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971); A.S. Salley, Jr., and D. E. Huger Smith, eds., *Register of St. Philip's Parish, Charles Town or Charleston, South Carolina, 1754-1810* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971). Walter J. Fraser, Jr., "The City Elite, 'Disorder' and the Poor Children of Pre-Revolutionary Charleston," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 84 (July 1983), pp. 167-180, provides the most comprehensive account of the composition of the poor in this period.

<sup>26</sup>St. Philip's vestry minutes, April 23, 1770, South Caroliniana Library.

eighteenth century. The figures both from the inventories for the decade 1736-1745 and from the 1732 Edisto Island tax list suggest that the Lowcountry's transformation from a comparatively egalitarian society in 1710 to one marked by a concentration of wealth in the hands of the relative few was already completed by the third decade of the century. A process of continued wealth concentration, albeit one which proceeded at a much slower pace than was surely the case between 1710 and 1730, is detectable in the Lowcountry through the remainder of the colonial period. While the wealthiest merchants and planters improved their relative economic position, at the other end of the scale there was a disparate rise in the number of Charles Town's poor — not all Lowcountry Carolinians were able to take advantage of the colony's prosperity. Nevertheless, the continued improvements in the living standards of the propertied Lowcountry inhabitants, combined with the fact that the relative prosperity gap within this group widened only marginally after 1736, were contributing factors to the remarkable social and political stability which characterized the colony from the mid-1730s through the outbreak of revolution.

The elements which Main suggests account for the concentration of wealth in colonial and revolutionary America may not apply in some colonies, but they serve well for South Carolina. The continued availability of land in the colony meant that pressure of population upon land was not a contributing factor to wealth concentration in Carolina, but the emergence of a planter class practising commercial agriculture, and a merchant class profiting from the staples thereby produced, as well as the growth of a large dependent slave labor force, were critical factors in this process. Finally, the rapid increase in the number of Charles Town's poor in the late colonial period meant that by 1775 Lowcountry society was less economically homogeneous, and wealth more unevenly distributed, than at any previous time in the colony's history.

**TABLE 1**  
**CHANGES IN LIVING STANDARDS, 1736-1775**

Value of Estate (£ Sterling)	1736-1745 %	Cumulative %	1746-1755 %	Cumulative %	1756-1765 %	Cumulative %	1766-1775 %	Cumulative %
£1-100	29.14	-	25.60	-	22.35	-	22.88	-
101-200	15.30	44.44	13.94	39.54	14.51	36.86	12.99	35.87
201-300	10.93	55.37	11.17	50.71	12.91	48.95	10.86	46.73
301-400	8.38	63.75	6.69	57.40	7.67	56.62	6.25	52.98
401-500	8.01	71.76	6.88	64.28	5.59	62.21	6.92	59.90
501-1000	16.21	87.97	17.86	82.14	16.85	79.06	14.44	74.34
1001-3000	10.02	97.99	14.14	96.28	16.10	95.16	18.20	92.54
3001-5000	1.09	99.08	1.91	98.19	3.09	98.25	3.28	95.82
5001-10000	0.92	100.00	1.52	99.71	1.17	99.42	2.66	98.48
10,000+			0.29	100.00	0.58	100.00	1.52	100.00

<b>TABLE 2</b>				
<b>CHANGES IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CAROLINA</b>				
<b>% OF TOTAL INVENTORIED WEALTH OWNED</b>				
	1736-1745	1746-1755	1756-1765	1766-1775
Wealthiest 5%	34.45	38.65	36.28	41.14
Wealthiest 10%	49.11	55.33	52.33	56.30
Poorest 25%	1.82	1.74	1.81	1.23

<b>TABLE 3</b>				
<b>SLAVES IN INVENTORIES, 1736-1745</b>				
Number of Slaves	% of Owners	Cumulative %	% of Slaves Owned	Cumulative %
0	22.04	-	-	-
1-10	40.80	62.84	14.01	-
11-20	15.66	78.50	16.68	30.69
21-50	15.48	93.98	34.95	65.64
51-100	4.74	98.72	22.30	87.94
101+	1.28	100.00	12.06	100.00

**TABLE 4**  
**SLAVES IN INVENTORIES, 1746-1755**

Number of Slaves	% of Owners	Cumulative %	% of Slaves Owned	Cumulative %
0	21.30	-	-	-
1-10	37.44	58.74	10.46	-
11-20	17.10	75.84	14.75	25.21
21-50	16.05	91.89	29.55	54.76
51-100	6.10	97.99	24.09	78.85
101+	2.01	100.00	21.15	100.00

**TABLE 5**  
**SLAVES IN INVENTORIES, 1756-1765**

Number of Slaves	% of Owners	Cumulative %	% of Slaves Owned	Cumulative %
0	27.69	-	-	-
1-10	33.86	61.55	12.08	-
11-20	14.93	76.48	12.94	25.02
21-50	15.43	91.91	28.16	53.18
51-100	6.17	98.08	25.12	78.30
101+	1.92	100.00	21.70	100.00

**TABLE 6**  
**SLAVES IN INVENTORIES, 1766-1775**

Number of Slaves	% of Owners	Cumulative %	% of Slaves Owned	Cumulative %
0	23.06	-	-	-
1-10	41.02	64.08	12.06	-
11-20	14.32	78.40	10.19	22.25
21-50	13.96	92.36	29.26	51.51
51-100	5.28	97.64	22.22	73.73
101+	2.36	100.00	26.27	100.00

**TABLE 7**  
**SLAVEHOLDERS IN EDISTO, 1732**

Number of Slaves	% of Owners	Cumulative %	% of Slaves Owned	Cumulative %
0	3.39	-	-	-
1-10	66.10	69.49	24.83	-
11-20	16.95	86.44	20.16	44.99
21-50	11.86	98.30	24.30	69.29
51-100				
101+	1.70	100.00	30.71	100.00



**TABLE 8**  
**SLAVEHOLDERS IN GOOSE CREEK, 1745**

Number of Slaves	% of Owners	Cumulative %	% of Slaves Owned	Cumulative %
0	3.39	3.39	-	-
1-10	27.12	30.51	3.46	3.46
11-20	13.56	44.07	4.93	8.39
21-50	28.81	72.88	24.00	32.39
51-100	18.64	91.52	30.43	62.82
101+	23.06	100.00	37.18	100.00

**TABLE 9**  
**SLAVEHOLDERS IN ST. GEORGE'S, 1726**

Number of Slaves	% of Owners	Cumulative %	% of Slaves Owned	Cumulative %
0	22.12	-	-	-
1-10	47.49	69.91	16.41	16.41
11-20	14.16	84.07	17.33	33.74
21-50	9.73	93.80	28.72	62.46
51-100	6.20	100.00	37.54	100.00
101+				

## Black-White Relations in an Antebellum Church In the Carolina Upcountry

Allan D. Charles\*

It is well known that independent black churches, a familiar feature of the rural and urban South, were only organized after emancipation. In the antebellum period, slaves were permitted to hold only the most rudimentary and ad hoc religious services on their own, with formal ecclesiastical organization proscribed lest the slaves imbibe messages incompatible with the existence of the peculiar institution. Masters concerned with the immortal souls of their involuntary servants, and hopeful of domesticating rebellious spirits, obliged the blacks to accompany them to the local church which, if a large enough structure, often had a gallery set aside for slaves. The question of the degree of actual black participation in that unseparate and unequal setting requires further investigation, and it is the purpose of this article to present a case study which may assist the effort.

The mid-eighteenth-century pioneer settlers of what would become Union County, South Carolina, were primarily of Scotch-Irish and English background, engaged in subsistence farming, and had very few slaves with them. In the early-nineteenth century, however, cotton culture rapidly became established in the Upcountry, and second and third generation Union Countians busily acquired slaves, using the profits from early cotton crops to purchase more slaves to produce yet more of the staple.

The cultivation of cotton caused a demographic transformation, and by the 1840s the county's black population came to exceed the white. By 1850, there were 10,392 slaves enumerated by the Federal census, while only 9,713 whites were counted.<sup>1</sup>

The free black population was tabulated by the state government probably more accurately than by the Federal government, as the state levied a \$2.00 head tax on "free negroes." Union County (or Union "District," as it was called in the antebellum period) had fifty-three free blacks in 1849,<sup>2</sup> or approximately one-half of one percent of the total black population in 1849-1850. Union was typical of South Carolina's rural areas, as the state as a whole contained fewer than 10,000 free blacks as late as 1860,

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<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Census: *United States Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1850), p. 338.

<sup>2</sup>*Reports and Resolutions of the General Assembly, State of South Carolina, 1849* (Columbia: 1849).