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THE LARGEST EXPORTERS OF DEERSKINS FROM CHARLES TOWN, 1735 - 1775

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Charles Town was the entrepôt of the colonial South and one of the the most important items passing through its harbor was deerskins.¹ In fact, until rice became the great staple crop of South Carolina, deerskins were the most valuable commodity exported. Between 1699 and 1715 the average importation by English merchants amounted to 54,000 skins annually. The peak of the trade during this 17 year period was reached in the 12 months after Christmas, 1706, when 121,335 deerskins were shipped to England. By this date Indian traders were ranging as far as 1,000 miles into the interior.²

From 1735 to 1775 most of the exporters relied mainly on other merchants and the government to procure skins. Private traders were used throughout almost all the period under consideration. These frontiersmen were often employed as factors by Charles Town merchants, firms, and planters, though some were just "vagabond persons." They bartered their goods with the various tribes of the southeast at numerous Indian towns, factories, and forts in the backcountry.³ In 1762 South Carolina attempted to impose a government monopoly on the deerskin trade, but shortly after this system was established its restrictive features were disallowed by the Crown. Nevertheless, the five-man commission which controlled the trade continued to operate the "public system" for a three-year period.⁴

Both the river systems of the South and the well-traveled paths in the interior were used to convey the hides to Charles Town. Small boats with a shallow draft, canoes and pettiaguas, and sometimes larger craft, were used to transport the skins down river and along the coast to the

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¹ The organization and format for this article was suggested by W. Robert Higgins' study of the slave trade. See W. Robert Higgins, "Charles Town Merchants and Factors Dealing in the External Negro Trade, 1735-1775," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, LXV (October, 1964), 205-217.

² Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1959), 109, 111-112.

³ *Ibid.*, 118-127, *passim*.

⁴ Robert L. Meriwether, *The Expansion of South Carolina, 1729-1765* (Kingsport, Tennessee, 1940), 244.

were occupying Charleston had taken everything they had in the way of provisions and foodstuffs. If it had not been for Gaillard Thomas' kindness, she did not know what she would have done.

Monday, May 8—The Yankees were giving out rations, rice, bacon, etc., and the best people in Charleston were taking them, for they had nothing to eat. Mrs. Hume Simmons came from opposite to offer anything she could during our stay. Everyone was so very kind, yet had nothing to eat themselves, but when they got a little they were always willing and offering to share what they had.

The great part of Charleston was in ruins, having been burned as a result of the incessant shelling over such a protracted period of months, even years. Has any city suffered so in modern times, and a place of so many hallowed memories to those of us who have lived here!

Life in the city was made up of incessant rumors. Every now and then we would hear that the Yankees were coming to search for arms, to take away rice, and so forth. Everyone would begin hiding things. Though they searched other places they never came to Mrs. Boag's during our stay through the month of May.

The city is in mourning for Lincoln. Calvary Church has some mourning on the outside, and the negro girls walking on the streets of Charleston wear black ribbons, and other mourning signs.

Jefferson Davis was taken while we were in Charleston. Betty said that when the teacher in their school heard the news, she had them singing, "We'll hang Jeff Davis on the sour apple tree."

Wednesday, May 31—We left Charleston for New York, Mother and I. We arrived here five months ago, bringing Sister Cornelia in hopes of regaining her health. She rests at St. Stephen's in Ridgeway, with other members of the family. We have lost her temporarily, and seen our native state devastated by an invading army, all in less than half a year. What does the future hold for us of the Southland?

wharves on the Cooper River. For travel over land, packhorses were the most frequent type of transportation employed. Wagons were also utilized and sometimes Indian men were hired as bearers.⁵ The factors who brought the skins turned them over to their employers who in turn sold them to exporters by private sale or perhaps by auction.⁶ At other times the companies or merchants exported the deerskins themselves rather than retailing them. The skins procured by the factor of the Indian Commission were sold, as required by law, to the highest bidder at public auction.⁷

For the exporter the supply of skins was subject to a number of variables. The trade in deerskins was one of the valued prizes in the contest waged by England, France, and Spain for the "Southern debatable land." Thus international conflicts, Indian wars, and even the number of traders were just some of the factors which affected supply. Except for the four year span between 1721 and 1724 the deerskin trade was in a state of depression from 1716 to 1730. This slump was caused by the effects of the Yemassee War and later by troubled relations with both the Creeks and the Cherokees. However, a 20 year golden period began in 1730. In 1748 over 700 hogsheads, approximately 160,000 skins, were shipped to England and other colonies, but by the 1750's the trade was again depressed. The market soon recovered and by 1763 another highpoint was reached.⁸

After indigo was introduced in the 1740's the dye quickly replaced deerskins in second place as the most valuable Carolina export. In addition South Carolina's position in the trade was being threatened. The establishment of Georgia in 1732 made inroads on the Charles Town monopoly and after the French and Indian War, British West Florida was a major competitor and East Florida a lesser rival. Still, in 1769 deerskins ranked third in value of all exports, and English merchants paid £18,443 sterling for hides that year. On the eve of the American Revolution, however, the deerskin trade of Charles Town was only a fraction of what it had been some 75 years earlier.⁹

⁵ Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 126-129.

⁶ Samuel Eveleigh and John McQueen are examples of merchants who retailed the deerskins. Meriwether, *Expansion of South Carolina*, 193. These same men also were large exporters of deerskins themselves. See numbers 2 and 10, and 7 respectively in the list of exporters.

⁷ Meriwether, *Expansion of South Carolina*, 244.

⁸ Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 111-112.

⁹ Leila Sellars, *Charleston Business on the Eve of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1934), 169-170.

As early as 1703 the South Carolina government found that the fur trade was an excellent source of revenue, and in that year placed a duty on all leather and skins exported from the colony.¹⁰ In 1722 a six-pence duty¹¹ was levied on all "Indian drest" deerskins that weighed a pound or more and a three-pence assessment was levied on all those weighing less than 16 ounces. In 1740 and again in 1751 the tax was continued at the same rate.¹² The duty was levied on the exporter and collected by the public treasurer.

Fortunately, records have survived which list the exporters of deerskins between 1735 and 1775.¹³ In this 41 year period, 664 persons or firms exported deerskins; there are 3,621 separate entries.¹⁴ Some of these people were the great Charles Town merchants and factors and others were transients such as ship captains. These people sent the hides throughout the British Empire and beyond, although most were shipped to the English commercial centers of London, Bristol, and Liverpool. A total of 36 ports or colonies were recorded as destinations.

The following list is a compilation of the chief exporters of deerskins. The list is arranged in descending order according to the tax paid by each person or firm. Column one lists the exporters.¹⁵ Column two gives the inclusive dates in which the individuals or firms paid duties. The third column is the number of shipments made by each exporter. The last column is the amount of duty paid by each firm or person.

This list includes only the largest and most frequent exporters of deerskins, a total of 176 merchants or factors. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to investigate fully each individual listed, it should be noted that some of the people are more important than their place

¹⁰ Thomas Cooper and Daniel McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (10 vols.; Columbia, South Carolina, 1836-1841), II, 201.

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted all figures in the text are cited as current money. The ratio of the South Carolina pound to the pound sterling was seven to one.

¹² Cooper and McCord, eds., *Statutes*, III, 195, 562, 744-745. Most of the deerskins sent to England were heavy Indian-cured buckskins weighing about two pounds. Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 111.

¹³ This compilation is based on the *Records of the Public Treasurers of South Carolina*, 1725-1776, Journal A (1735-1748), Journal B (1748-1765), Journal C (1765-1776), Roll 2 (South Carolina Archives Microcopy Number 3). The duty books are complete except for the period between March 25, 1748 to September 29, 1748.

¹⁴ A complete list of all exporters compiled by this author is deposited in the South Carolina Historical Society library in Charleston.

¹⁵ The names of the exporters are spelled exactly as they appear in the duty books. The complete names of exporters and companies are used in place of abbreviations.

in this table indicates. A good example is Benjamin Stead. He was the largest shipper during this period as an individual but he was also a member of several firms which exported hides: Stead and Evance (number 3); Stead, Evance and Company (number 49); and, Stead, Evance and Selevin (not listed but ranked as number 240). Similar is the case of George Austin. Independently, he exported 35 parcels of deerskins. But during his mercantile career he was also a member of three partnerships: Cattell and Austin (number 20); Austin and Laurens (number 5); and, Austin, Laurens and Appleby (number 15). Therefore he was an extremely important exporter of deerskins.

<i>Exporters</i>	<i>Years in Trade</i>	<i>Number of Entries</i>	<i>Duty Paid in Pounds, Shillings, and Pence (Current Money)</i>
1. Benjamin Stead	1739-59	62	7,149.13.6
2. Samuel and George Eveleigh	1738-52	61	5,287.09.6
3. Stead and Evance	1742-52	43	4,756.06.6
4. John Gordon	1759-73	39	3,613.17
5. Austin and Laurens	1749-59	48	3,545.14.9
6. Macartan and Campbell	1743-63	74	3,375.02
7. John McQueen and Company	1756-61	22	2,888.10.6
8. Ancrum, Lance and Loockock	1756-66	67	2,827.13.6
9. Smith and Cossens	1743-50	45	2,236.13
10. Samuel Eveleigh	1735-55	38	1,908.14.9
11. McKenzie and Roche	1741-45	20	1,691.16
12. Hill and Guerard	1736-46	37	1,576.15
13. John Savage and Company	1741-49	20	1,558.06
14. Simmons, Smith and Company	1739-47	23	1,416.09
15. Austin, Laurens and Appleby	1759-62	12	1,398.19
16. Middleton and Brailsford	1752-60	26	1,384.06.5
17. Binford and Osmond	1735-44	34	1,359.08.3
18. Joseph Wragg and Company	1735-41	37	1,339.10
19. Livie, McQueen and Company	1752-56	21	1,265.06
20. Cattell and Austin	1735-40	36	1,233.15.6
21. George Austin	1735-49	35	1,187.12.3
22. Mathew Roche	1744-47	14	1,128.02.9
23. Henry Laurens	1745-71	15	1,057.00.3
24. James Crockatt	1735-40	31	954.03.3
25. William Yeomans	1735-49	46	940.10.6
26. Benjamin Savage and Company	1735-43	24	919.02.6
27. Yeomans and Escott	1735-41	47	847.10.3
28. Nowell, Davies and Ancrum	1761-66	19	817.06.0
29. John and Edward Neufville	1751-62	38	804.11.0
30. William Ancrum and Aaron Loockock	1766-69	25	780.02.0
31. Alexander Livie and Company	1748-53	26	709.09.9
32. Glen and Cooper	1752-55	16	692.01.6
33. Smith and Brewton	1757-62	14	668.12.0
34. Robert and Nathaniel Stott	1766-72	18	641.07.0
35. William Bampfield	1764-68	21	632.11.9
36. Andrew Lord	1768-73	12	631.10.6
37. Wragg and Lambton	1742-50	21	614.13.6
38. Thomas Corker	1745-63	31	614.11.9
39. Paul Townsend	1757-74	36	600.03.6

<i>Exporters</i>	<i>Years in Trade</i>	<i>Entries</i>	<i>(Current Money) Duty Paid in Pounds, Shillings, and Pence</i>
		<i>Number of</i>	
40. Othniel Beale	1738-62	30	595.19.9
41. Glen, Cooper and Company	1755-58	10	572.15.0
42. Houghton and Webb	1737-44	12	562.17.6
43. Simmons and Smith	1743-46	18	531.14.3
44. William Hopton	1768-72	15	528.17.6
45. Petter Horry	1735-39	26	515.02.0
46. John Wagner	1756-75	19	514.10.6
47. Ward and Leger	1760-70	18	510.17.9
48. John Watstone	1741-52	32	492.09
49. Stead, Evance and Company	1739-42	13	490.10
50. William Woodrope [Wooddrop?]	1735-52	24	477.08
51. Francis Ayrton	1769-75	12	473.11.6
52. Houghton, Webb and Gwyn	1741-43	8	466.14.3
53. John Savage	1736-52	7	456.08.3
54. Thomas Adam	1755-68	21	452.05.6
55. Dewar and Bacot	1761-71	25	446.00.3
56. Stiel and Hume	1739-46	29	445.00.6
57. Jenys and Baker	1735-36	15	440.13
58. William Webb	1744-48	11	431.18
59. Middleton, Liston and Hope	1765-67	7	423.11
60. Nicholson and Bampffield	1761-64	10	407.11
61. Thomas Smith	1743-65	17	403.04
62. Brewton and Smith	1763-66	10	372.15
63. Bampffield and Owen	1769-72	9	371.16
64. Smith and Nutt	1758-63	14	371.09.6
65. Daniel and John Greene	1735-37	14	369.02.1
66. Leger and Greenwood	1771-75	15	367.14.3
67. Smith and Palmer	1747-53	18	357.17.3
68. Macartan, Campbell and Son	1764-73	14	336.02.3
69. Robert Raper	1749-72	11	324.13.6
70. James Laurens and Company	1753-57	10	324.12.9
71. Godfrey and Gadsden	1764-69	16	318.10.6
72. John Neufville	1749-68	16	316.10.9
73. Othniel Beale and Company	1745-57	14	316.02.9
74. DaCosta and Farr	1758-62	14	305.15
75. Robertson and Baillie	1757-64	16	298.10
76. Wagner and Bocquet	1766-72	20	293.11
77. Alexander Rose	1769	4	293.10
78. John McKenzie	1735-49	11	289.03.3
79. Hopton and Smith	1743-47	16	281.12.6
80. Nowell and Lord	1766-68	13	275.12.3
81. Carne and Wilson	1759-63	12	273.10
82. Kenneth and Benjamin Michie	1747-49	7	272.14.6
83. Dewar and Marshall	1752-60	23	270.15.6
84. Crockatt and Seaman	1737-38	5	267.05
85. Ogilvie and Ward	1755-60	14	263.04.6
86. John Dawson	1762-75	16	262.06.6
87. Inglis, Lloyd and Hall	1760-64	7	257.19.6
88. William Stone	1737-53	14	252.12.9
89. Kershaws and Company	1770-74	11	243.05
90. William Glen and Son	1766-75	10	243.02.6
91. Henry Rugeley and Company	1771-73	7	241.13.6
92. John Logan	1760-69	9	238.03
93. Laughlin McGillavray	1759	1	237.10
94. Nicholson and Shubrick	1739-49	14	236.11

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<i>Exporters</i>	<i>Years in Trade</i>	<i>Entries</i>	<i>(Current Money) Duty Paid in Pounds, Shillings, and Pence</i>
		<i>Number of</i>	
95. George Seaman	1739-50	11	236.07
96. Robert Boyd	1756-58	6	230.15
97. Robert Pringle	1735-46	18	230.10.6
98. John Colcock and Company	1741-45	14	226.14
99. Dawson and Walter	1769-74	11	225.03.9
100. William McKenzie	1735-38	6	224.16.5
101. Samuel Carne	1747-59	20	224.06.3
102. John Royer	1736-43	16	221.02.6
103. Morton and Samuel Brailsford	1746-51	9	220.14
104. Crottatt and Michie	1741-44	8	219.06
105. Kenneth Michie	1746-48	2	213.07
106. William Lloyd	1755-61	11	213.03.3
107. Jennett and Wilson	1758-61	6	213.01
108. Peter Leger and Company	1761-72	5	212.06.6
109. Livie and Company	1755	1	208
110. Christopher Gadsden	1754-58	10	203.02
111. John Guerard	1736-53	12	202.15.6
112. Philp and Livie	1741-46	24	202.04
113. John Smith	1755-59	5	196.02.9
114. Robert McKenzie	1756-63	13	195.17.6
115. Francis Holmes	1739-47	8	195.16.3
116. Andrew Marr	1764-73	11	184.13.9
117. Glen and Michie	1761-63	3	183.13.6
118. Solomon Milner	1750-55	12	181.15.6
119. Samuel Peronneau	1747-66	16	180.07.6
120. Watson and McKenzie	1738-50	9	178.00.3
121. George Ancrum and Company	1767-75	9	177.05.6
122. Lennox and Deas	1743-53	9	175.02
123. Irving and Bonar	1750-52	4	173.03.6
124. John Beswicke	1737-45	9	168.03.9
125. John and Edmund Atkin	1735-39	11	167.16.6
126. Michie and Macaulay	1763-68	12	167.06.6
127. Alexander Robertson	1738-39	4	164.19.6
128. Jermyn and Charles Wright	1742-48	18	162.11.9
129. Adam and Milford	1759-62	8	162.08
130. Smith and Scott	1755-61	11	160.12.6
131. George Smith	1753-72	14	159.14
132. James Irvin	1750-53	6	159.06.9
133. John Jamieson	1756-63	11	156.18.6
134. Miles Brewton	1771-74	3	153.12.9
135. Perry and Taylor	1749-50	5	152.02.6
136. Savage and Pickering	1746-49	6	150.06.9
137. Patrick Brown and Company	1749	1	146.17.6
138. Artherton Haugh	1746-55	14	146.05.6
139. John and William Baker	1764-68	3	139
140. William Wilson	1761-63	6	139
141. Harleston and Bonneau	1768-70	5	138.01.6
142. Jermyn Wright and Company	1748-53	11	137.17.6
143. Benjamin and Edward Simons	1767-71	6	134.07.6
144. John Dart	1737-62	12	134.01
145. Joseph and Samuel Wragg	1748-50	4	133.13.6
146. Solomon Isaacs	1744-54	15	133.06
147. William Hulme	1768-73	7	132.15.9
148. Torrains, Greg and Poaug	1762-64	3	132.03
149. Donald Bruce	1766-72	10	132.01

<i>Exporters</i>	<i>Years in Trade</i>	<i>Entries</i>	<i>(Current Money)</i> <i>Duty Paid</i> <i>in Pounds,</i> <i>Shillings,</i> <i>and Pence</i>
		<i>Number of</i>	
150. Logan, Guerin and Vanderhorst . . .	1764-66	4	127.05
151. Atkins and Weston	1762-73	7	123.01
152. George Abbott Hall and Company . . .	1771-72	4	123.00.9
153. William Jolliffe	1736-39	4	121.10.9
154. Samuel Gordon	1771-74	6	119.11.6
155. Richard Lambton	1736-52	5	119.10.6
156. Robertson, Jamieson and Company . .	1761-66	7	119.03
157. John Johnson [Johnston?]	1735-38	5	118.16.6
158. Gabriel Manigault	1747-60	4	117.07.6
159. Robert Stott and Company	1773-75	8	116.02
160. Benjamin Godin	1735-40	3	115.09.6
161. John Owen and Company	1772-73	4	114.09
162. Alexander Rigg	1738	2	112.05.6
163. Benjamin Smith and Company	1753-57	6	112.03.9
164. William Baker	1769	4	111.05
165. Jonathan Scott	1736-46	8	110.13
166. William Lasserre	1736-39	10	110.03.6
167. McKenzie and Moodie	1757-60	10	107.06
168. Ancrums and Chiffelle	1770-73	7	106.16.3
169. Elias Vanderhorst	1766-69	5	106.01.3
170. John Hurd	1765-67	9	103.04.9
171. Kennan and Campbell	1747-50	2	102.01.6
172. William Banbury	1755-56	2	101.03.1
173. James Bolton	1766-75	8	101.01.3
174. Robert Sterling	1761-63	3	100.14.6
175. Cleland and Wallace	1738-39	3	100.11
176. Isaac DaCosta	1755-64	7	100.00.3