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## THE SOUTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION: AN AGENCY FOR RACE CONTROL IN ANTEBELLUM CHARLESTON

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Throughout South Carolina's history organized vigilance activity has played an important part in race control. This was especially true in the antebellum period, when Carolinians found themselves burdened not only with disciplining a black majority at home but also with countering what they perceived as a serious abolitionist challenge from outside. This activity usually took the form of self-constituted vigilance committees. Many of these were nothing more than spontaneously assembled mobs. Others were more formal organizations, with written rules and regular meetings. Normally these committees limited themselves to supplementing the local patrols or examining itinerant strangers. Sometimes, however, they resorted to violence to intimidate blacks or to punish whites suspected of heterodox views on the "peculiar institution." In moments of extreme tension—such as after the Nat Turner Rebellion in 1831 or during the turbulent decade of the 1850's—blacks and whites alike were occasionally tortured and lynched by these extra-legal groups.<sup>1</sup>

Among the better known of these vigilance organizations were the various parish associations, such as the St. John's (Berkeley) Police Association, and the many agricultural societies, whose purposes, according to Alfred G. Smith, frequently included "the policing of slavery." Less well known in many ways is the South Carolina Association. Formed in 1823 as a result of the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy, this Charleston-based society counted among its members many of the most prominent men in the state. It possessed an elaborate organization, published rules and eventually a legislative charter. For a time it boasted auxiliaries throughout the low country. Unlike many such groups, however, this association worked within the law, cooperating with and ca-

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<sup>1</sup> Clement Eaton, "Mob Violence in the Old South," *Journal of American History*, 29 (Dec. 1942): 351-70; Howell M. Henry, *The Police Control of the Slave in South Carolina* (Emory, Va., 1914), 156-64; Jack Kenny Williams, *Vogues in Villainy: Crime and Retribution in Ante-Bellum South Carolina* (Columbia, 1959), 120-25; Steven A. Channing, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina* (New York, 1970), 24-52, 269-73; Governor James Hamilton, Jr., Message No. 2, Dec. 6, 1831, Legislative Papers, 1831-1859, Governors' Messages, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia (hereafter SCDAH); Governor Robert F. W. Allston, Message No. 1, Nov. 23, 1858, *ibid.*

joling the police into a strict enforcement of the Negro laws. Unusual too was the South Carolina Association's longevity: it remained active until the early 1850's. During this time it served, in the words of William W. Freehling, "as an eternal watchdog over the slaves and as a fertile source of southern radicalism."<sup>2</sup>

The policing of slavery was very much on the minds of Carolinians at the beginning of 1823. A major conspiracy among the blacks had been uncovered in Charleston the previous summer. A trusted servant had revealed the plot to authorities only a few days before the scheduled uprising. City officials moved with dispatch to crush the rebellion. They assembled a massive force to intimidate the conspirators. As soon as the critical moment passed, a court of magistrates and freeholders was impanelled to try the rebels. "I can never forget," one contemporary recalled, "the feeling of alarm and anxiety that pervaded the whole community from the time the danger became known, until all risk appeared to be over."<sup>3</sup> Before the court adjourned, thirty-five blacks had been executed for their part in the conspiracy, among them Denmark Vesey, a free Negro accused of masterminding the plot. Although the extent of the danger was undoubtedly exaggerated, most Charlestonians were sincerely convinced that they had barely escaped a horrible massacre. During the next several months Carolinians speculated at length about ways to avoid a repetition of this harrowing event. In the end most opted in favor of stricter controls over the Negro. The South Carolina Association was an outgrowth of this decision.

The first word of the Association's presence appeared on July 14, 1823, with a cryptic notice in the *Charleston Courier* calling a meeting that day of "The Association." Announcements of similar meetings appeared almost daily thereafter. Finally, on July 24, the mystery ended when "A Member" disclosed that the "South Carolina Association" would be organized that day at St. Andrew's Hall.<sup>4</sup>

This association, the writer explained, was "perhaps the most important association that ever has been, or ever can be formed, in the Southern States." Who was there, he demanded, who could "view with complacency, the daily violation or evasion of the laws, made to regulate

<sup>2</sup> Alfred G. Smith, Jr., *Economic Readjustment of an Old Cotton State: South Carolina, 1820-1860* (Columbia, 1958), 53n; William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836* (New York, 1965), 113.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth B. Pharo, ed., *Reminiscences of William Hasell Wilson (1811-1902)* (Philadelphia, 1937), 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Charleston Courier*, July 14, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 1823.

the conduct of our colored population?" This "laxity in the whole of our system," he warned—obviously recalling the Vesey Conspiracy—was leading to South Carolina's "ruin." It was to all those "who would uphold at every hazard, the policy, upon which is built our security, and our brightest prospects" that the South Carolina Association was especially recommended. This was "not an association of individuals combining for party purposes or political influence," he continued, ". . . but a society of well informed citizens, most of them owners of the soil, and all of them ready to bow with reverence to the supremacy of the laws." Its sole object was "to aid the execution of the laws founded upon the *local and peculiar policy of South Carolina*, by giving to the Civil Magistrate, through its agents, the earliest possible information of their infringement, and by calling to the aid of the petty officers of justice, all the influence and support and respectability . . . which such an association will have it in its power to afford." To this end, the Association was furnished "with ample means and with permanent funds."<sup>5</sup>

A meeting was held two days later to elect officers. The "gentlemen" chosen turned out to be among the most influential members of the tide-water gentry. The president was Keating Simons, Revolutionary veteran and planter. Vice presidents were Colonel John C. Prioleau, General Thomas Pinckney, Stephen Elliott, Henry Deas, and Joseph Manigault. Robert J. Turnbull and John S. Cogdell were the secretaries, John Bay was treasurer, and Isaac E. Holmes the solicitor. Pinckney, who had negotiated the treaty with Spain in 1795, was a former governor and Federalist candidate for Vice-President in 1796. Elliott, a distinguished botanist, was president of the state bank during the 1820's. Turnbull and Deas were both lawyer-planters who had sat together on the first court which tried the Vesey conspirators. Cogdell was a former Comptroller General of South Carolina and a future president of the state bank.<sup>6</sup>

The Association found immediate favor with the public. When it first appeared there were occasional expressions of concern over the

<sup>5</sup> "A Member" in *ibid.*, July 24, 1823.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, July 26, 28, 1823. In later years the Association continued to draw on prominent Carolinians for leadership. Simons' successors as president were Deas and Colonel Jacob Bond T'On. Charles C. Pinckney, Nathaniel Heyward, Dr. Philip G. Prioleau, and Dr. William Read became vice-presidents. Other future officers included Alexander H. Brown, Elias Vanderhorst, Benjamin F. Hunt, Frederick Wesner, Dr. John B. Irving, Henry Gourdin, John S. Ashe, Matthew I. Keith, Henry Peronneau, Arthur Middleton, Frederick W. Ford, Jacob Axson, and John Harleston Read, Jr. The annual volumes of *Miller's Planters' and Merchants' Almanac* (Charleston, 1817-[1878?]) frequently included a list of the officers of the South Carolina Association. See the volumes for 1826-32, 1835, 1837-40.

potential abuses posed by such an extralegal agency.<sup>7</sup> These were promptly countered, however, by numerous letters and newspaper editorials reassuring Carolinians of the Association's singular mission "to assist the lawful authorities of the state and city, in carrying into effect, the many wholesome statutes in force relative to our colored population, and *nothing else*."<sup>8</sup> Auxiliaries were soon formed at Cheraw, Walterborough, Pineville, and Edisto Island.<sup>9</sup> Membership in the Charleston Association grew rapidly during the first months. A total of 334 names appeared on an Association petition to the legislature in November. Nearly every prominent individual or distinguished family in Charleston and the adjacent low country was represented among the signatories.<sup>10</sup>

Immediately after its organization the South Carolina Association began taking an active hand in enforcing the Negro laws. A standing committee was elected to oversee the day-to-day administration of these statutes. This committee reported back to the members each summer at the Association's annual meeting, which became an important social event in Charleston. The committee members, wishing to make their society "the depository of all information" relative to infractions of the Negro laws, circularized persons around the state for examples. When Scipio Simms, a Vesey conspirator awaiting transportation to Texas, escaped from his master, the standing committee interceded to keep the story out of the press until a search could be made for him in the city. Presumably members of the Association were among the "public spirited citizens" who assisted in his recapture.<sup>11</sup>

Of particular concern to the Association was the "constant intercourse" that flourished between local blacks and those from outside the state. In this respect Charleston, as a port city, presented special prob-

<sup>7</sup> See "An Old Man," *Charleston Courier*, Aug. 5, 1823; "Q," *ibid.*, Aug. 14, 1823.

<sup>8</sup> "Vindex," *ibid.*, Aug. 15, 1823. See also "Liberty," in *Charleston Mercury*, Nov. 6, 1823, and editorials in *ibid.*, July 29, Oct. 20, Nov. 5, 1823; in *Charleston City Gazette*, July 29, 1823; in *Charleston Courier*, July 25, 1823.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 13, 17, 1823; *Charleston Mercury*, Sept. 24, Nov. 11, 1823; "Petition of the Officers of the 'Edisto Island Auxiliary Association' praying to be incorporated," Nov. 18, 1823, Legislative Papers, 1800-1830, Societies: Petitions, SCDAH.

<sup>10</sup> *Charleston Mercury*, Aug. 22, Sept. 19, 1823; "Memorial of the South Carolina Association," [Nov.] 1823, Legislative Papers, 1800-1830, Free Persons of Color Under Slavery, SCDAH.

<sup>11</sup> *Charleston Courier*, Aug. 25, 26, 28, Sept. 10, 1823. The members of the first standing committee were Sedgewick L. Simons, Richard W. Vanderhorst, Richard Cunningham, William Cattell, Charles Parker, John Gordon, and John Middleton, chairman.

lems. According to the standing committee, not only were "the greatest facilities afforded, to such as would inveigle away our slaves," but the frequent employment of free blacks on vessels presented abundant opportunities "for introducing among our slaves, the moral contagion of their pernicious principles and opinions." "There is scarcely a vessel which arrives in our port from the North," spokesmen for the Association asserted, "which has not two or three, or more black persons employed as stewards, cooks, or mariners. . . ." To permit such a free communication to continue, they warned, would be "to invite new attempts at insurrection."<sup>12</sup>

To forestall this possibility, the Association quickly began pressing local authorities to revive enforcement of the Negro seamen law. This law, which provided for the arrest and detention of free Negro seamen while their vessels were in South Carolina ports, was one of several new restrictions placed on blacks in December 1822 as a result of the Vesey Conspiracy. It had been enforced for barely two months when a dispute between municipal and state authorities led to a cessation of arrests. Beginning in March 1823, Negro seamen once more had a free run of Charleston. In late July the standing committee, at "considerable expense" to the Association, and "by means of their incessant informations and prosecutions," cajoled law officers into a strict application of this law. By October the Association could claim that it had "caused the Act . . . to be executed against *one hundred and fifty-four* colored persons. . . ."<sup>13</sup>

As a result of this activity the Association soon found itself involved in a celebrated court case, *Elkison v. Deliesseline*. The British Consul in Charleston, objecting to the seizure and imprisonment of his country's black subjects, applied to United States Supreme Court Justice William Johnson for a writ of habeas corpus in the case of Henry Elkison, a Jamaican mulatto seaman being detained under the law. His attorney argued that South Carolina's law violated both the federal power to regulate commerce and the reciprocal liberty of trade guaranteed by the

<sup>12</sup> "Memorial of the South Carolina Association," [Nov.] 1823.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*; [Isaac E. Holmes and Robert J. Turnbull], *Caroliniensis on the Arrest of a British Seaman* . . . (Charleston, 1823), 17-18; "Petition of Thos. Paine, Harbor Master of Charleston," Nov. 19, 1823, Legislative Papers, 1800-1830, Legislative Systems: Port of Charleston, SCDAH. For a general history of the South Carolina Seamen Acts, see Philip M. Hamer, "Great Britain, the United States, and the Negro Seamen Acts, 1822-1848," *Journal of Southern History*, 1(1935): 3-28; and Hamer, "British Consuls and the Negro Seamen Acts, 1850-1860," *ibid.*, 138-68. The Act of 1822 is in Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (10 vols., Columbia, 1838-41), 7: 461-62.

Anglo-American Commercial Convention of 1815. Influential Carolinians were alarmed. These principles implied that the federal government could constitutionally interfere with slavery in the states. To meet this challenge the Association's solicitor, I. E. Holmes, and B. F. Hunt, another prominent Charleston attorney, undertook to defend the law. South Carolina, they argued, was merely exercising her paramount right to enact police laws for her own self-preservation.<sup>14</sup>

On August 7, 1823, Johnson handed down his decision. He denied Elkison's motion on a technicality. But in a trenchant *obiter dictum*, he dismissed South Carolina's seamen law as an unconstitutional attack upon the sovereignty of the United States. His opinion caused a sensation. The Charleston papers were filled for the next two months with columns of invective against the Judge and his decision. The Association took an active part in this barrage. Two of its officers, Holmes and Turnbull, have been identified as the authors of the famous "Caroliniensis" letters in the *Charleston Mercury* defending the seamen law. Several of the other anonymous authors may have written at the Association's behest. The controversial law continued to be enforced in spite of Johnson's opinion.<sup>15</sup>

In November 1823, the Association undertook to strengthen the Act of 1822. An elaborate memorial was presented to the legislature reaffirming the Association's intention "to prevent ANY FREE COLORED PERSON FROM ANY PART OF THE WORLD *ever entering again into the limits of the State of South Carolina, by LAND OR BY WATER.*" The existing laws for this purpose, the memorial complained, were defective, "by reason of the mildness of their penalties." In order to correct this situation, the Association recommended several new provisions aimed at tightening up these laws. The legislators incorporated most of them into the Negro Act of 1823. The essential features of this Act, which included several sections pertaining to Negro seamen, were to remain

<sup>14</sup> [William Johnson], *The Opinion of the Hon. William Johnson . . . in the Case . . . of the British Seaman . . .* (Charleston, 1823); [Benjamin F. Hunt], *The Argument of Benj. Faneuil Hunt, in the Case of the Arrest of . . . a British Seaman . . .* (Charleston, 1823).

<sup>15</sup> See the *Charleston Courier*, *Charleston Mercury*, and *Charleston City Gazette*, Aug 15-Oct. 29, 1823, esp. "Caroliniensis" in the *Mercury*, Aug. 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23, 28, 29, Sept. 3, 6, 8, 10 and 11; "Philo-Caroliniensis" in *ibid.*, Sept. 17, 18 and 30; "Zeno" in the *Courier*, Sept. 3, 4, 5, 11, 16 and 25. On the authorship of the "Caroliniensis" letters, see Donald G. Morgan, "Justice William Johnson on the Treaty-Making Power," *George Washington Law Review*, 22 (Dec. 1953): 193-94 and notes 18 and 20.



unchanged down to the Civil War. Justice Johnson paid a grudging tribute to the Association's role in the passage of this important act when he stated: "It is emphatically their law."<sup>16</sup>

For the next several years the Association enjoyed an extraordinary influence and popularity in Charleston. Writing to John Quincy Adams in 1824, Johnson complained that he was powerless to stop the arrest of Negro seamen, since he was barred from issuing writs to prisoners held under state laws. ". . . And, if I could issue them," he lamented,

I [would] have nobody to call upon, since the [United States] District Attorney is himself a member of the Association; and they have, further, the countenance of five other officers of the United States in their measures.

In 1825 the Association held a successful public subscription to increase the organization's permanent fund. Armed with this fresh infusion of money, the standing committee expanded its activities. In October 1825 it notified "owners of slave mechanics" that it would rigidly enforce the law against slaves hiring their own time.<sup>17</sup>

The laws against Negroes entering the state by sea continued to occupy much of the Association's attention. In 1824, I. E. Holmes successfully represented the Association in an important court test of the Act of 1823. This perseverance produced results: by 1825 the standing committee could congratulate the Sheriff of Charleston District "for the promptitude and zeal with which he has uniformly discharged his duty, by arresting colored persons entering this port contrary to law, thus relieving the Association from the necessity and expense of many prosecutions of that nature." Nevertheless, the Association never let down its guard. In 1826 and again in 1830 the Charleston Chamber of Commerce, anxious to moderate the injurious effects of the seamen laws on the city's commerce, suggested to the legislature that the South Carolina Association offered more than ample security against future "attempts at disturbance" among the slaves: "This Association, distinguished by its vigilance and by the excellence of the system it has organized, (so much so indeed that it is morally impossible for a seditious movement to remain a mo-

<sup>16</sup> "Memorial of the South Carolina Association," [Nov.] 1823; *Charleston Mercury*, Dec. 8, 1823; Cooper and McCord, eds., *Statutes at Large*, 7: 463-66; Johnson to John Quincy Adams, July 3, 1824, in "Free Colored Seamen," *House Committee Reports*, 27 Cong., 3 Sess., No. 80 (Jan. 20, 1843), 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*; *Charleston Mercury*, July 30, Aug. 3, 1825; *Charleston Courier*, Oct. 22, 1825.

ment undiscovered,) almost of itself supersedes the necessity of the laws in question."<sup>18</sup>

In 1828 the Association decided to petition the legislature for an act of incorporation. The members, the petition explained, had been prompted "by the events of the summer of 1822 to form themselves into a temporary association." Since that time their numbers and their funds had greatly increased. Now, the petition continued, "... a thorough conviction of the necessity and utility of their continuing united" induced them to seek a permanent connection and corporate status. The petition boldly proclaimed the Association's accomplishments.

We have been instrumental in obtaining the passage of . . . important laws. We have in a great measure restrained the colored population of other states from mingling with and contaminating our own slaves. We have discovered the first openings of insurrectionary schemes, and without creating any alarm among the citizens, have been enabled to crush those schemes before they had fully developed themselves and poured out all their horrors over an unsuspecting community.

The best interests of both the members and the state would therefore be served, the petition concluded, by incorporation. The lawmakers agreed. The South Carolina Association was declared a corporate body, "for the purpose of aiding in the execution of the laws in relation to Negroes and other persons of color, and of taking all lawful means for the prevention of disturbance or insurrection among them."<sup>19</sup>

During the early years of the 1830's the Nullification Controversy absorbed the energies of most Carolinians. This may have accounted for the demise of at least one of the Association's auxiliaries.<sup>20</sup> But the surviving evidence indicates that the Charleston Association con-

<sup>18</sup> "Law Report: *State of South Carolina v. Daley*," *ibid.*, June 29, 1824; *Charleston Mercury*, July 30, 1825; "Memorial of the Charleston Chamber of Commerce," Nov. 18, 1826, Legislative Papers, 1800-1830, Legislative Systems: Port of Charleston; "Petition of the Charleston Chamber of Commerce," Nov. 19, 1830, Legislative Papers, 1800-1830, Slavery: Petitions, SCDAH.

<sup>19</sup> "Petition of the South Carolina Association for an Act of Incorporation," [Nov.] 1828, Legislative Papers, 1800-1830, Societies: Petitions, SCDAH; Cooper and McCord, eds., *Statutes at Large*, 8: 364.

<sup>20</sup> In 1830 the legislature transferred the script of the Edisto Island Association to the parent Charleston Association. *Ibid.*, 6: 427.

tinued to pursue its original mission. In November 1834, for example, a complaint from the Association regarding unlawful assemblies of Negroes moved the Charleston City Council to order stricter enforcement of the laws governing such gatherings.<sup>21</sup> According to the British Consul in Charleston, the Association remained especially vigilant during the 1830's to violations of the law barring the entry of free blacks. Responding in 1842 to a complaint from the Foreign Office that British free Negro seamen were being shipped to the southern states and sold as slaves, he expressed doubt that such outrages could be perpetrated in Charleston. The laws of this state, he explained,

subject every free person of color who comes within her limits to imprisonment until they can be sent out of the state; and there is a society here, called "The South Carolina Association," whose duty it is to hunt up all such cases, and to cause the legal penalties to be enforced in all instances where the laws have been violated by Negroes or free person of color. . . .<sup>22</sup>

In 1843 the Association once again found itself involved in the continuing controversy over the Negro seamen acts. In November of that year a British seaman, John Jones, was corporally punished while undergoing a routine confinement at the jail in Charleston. According to Jones, the jailor had ordered him "to sweep the yard and lower floors, and upon his refusal to do so, had beaten him severely with a stick." The British Consul seized upon this "great outrage" as an excuse to lobby with the Governor and influential legislators for a repeal of the seamen laws. The Association therefore decided to conduct its own investigation of the incident. After interviewing the principals, the chairman of the standing committee, James Simons, issued a report defending the jailor's conduct. This officer, the report stated, had discovered Jones using "insurrectionary language" in the presence of other black prisoners; he had struck the seaman only after Jones "openly and plainly" resisted his orders to return to his cell. Simons forwarded his report to the state's attorney general with the recommendation that Negro seamen be confined to a separate part of the jail, in order to prevent their associating with the other prisoners. A

<sup>21</sup> *Niles' National Register*, 47 (Nov. 22, 1834): 187.

<sup>22</sup> William Ogilby to Henry S. Fox, April 29, 1842, in Great Britain, Foreign Office, *British and Foreign State Papers* (167 vols. to date, London, 1841- ), 31: 755.

resolution embodying Simons' proposal was adopted by the legislature the next month.<sup>23</sup>

The Negro seamen laws faced a new challenge the next year when the state of Massachusetts sent Judge Samuel Hoar to Charleston for the purpose of testing their constitutionality in the federal courts. The news of Hoar's intentions produced an explosion in South Carolina. At Columbia angry legislators ordered the Governor to expel Hoar from the state. In Charleston the threat of mob violence induced Hoar to embark for home even before the lawmakers' directive could be executed. According to James L. Petigru, the Association had an active hand in these "scandalous" proceedings. Petigru himself had crossed swords with the Association the same year in a court case involving the constitutionality of a section of the Negro Act of 1835. Reflecting on Hoar's fate, he commented: "If the Association was to take it in dudgeon they might have said it was necessary to have me deported, with as much reason. . . ." <sup>24</sup>

The final notice of the South Carolina Association appeared in 1849 when the officers petitioned the legislature for a renewal of the society's charter of incorporation. The previous charter, they disclosed, had expired at the end of 1842. No explanation was offered for the seven year delay in seeking a new charter. The petitioners simply stated that "a recharter . . . is necessary to enable them properly to conduct their business and to manage their affairs." The lawmakers agreed to the request; the Association was rechartered on December 19, "with all the rights, powers, and privileges heretofore granted." <sup>25</sup>

At some point during the 1850's the Association ceased its operations. It was soon missed. In October 1859, after the first news of Harpers Ferry, suggestions began to appear in the Charleston press

<sup>23</sup> [James Simons], "In the Matter of John Jones, a British Colored Seaman, of the 'Higginson.' Statement," Nov. 29, 1843, in Governor James H. Hammond, Message No. 3, Nov. 30, 1843, *Legislative Papers, 1831-1859, Governors' Messages, Reports and Resolutions of the General Assembly of South Carolina . . . 1843* (Columbia, 1844), 161-62.

<sup>24</sup> James Petigru Carson, ed., *Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru: The Union Man of South Carolina* (Washington, 1920), 240. The case Petigru referred to was *State v. Simons* (2 Speers [Law] 761 [S. C. 1844]). The case involved the illegal condemnation of a slave carried temporarily to the North by her owner. The slave had been seized on her return under an information filed by James Simons, acting for the South Carolina Association.

<sup>25</sup> "Petition of the South Carolina Association," [Nov.] 1849, *Legislative Papers, 1831-1859, Societies: Petitions, SCDH; Acts of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina . . . 1849* (Columbia, 1849), 572.

about resurrecting the Association. Within two months anxious citizens had organized its successor, the Charleston Vigilant Association.<sup>26</sup>

For nearly thirty years the South Carolina Association served as the most influential and effectual of the many extralegal vigilance organizations which assisted the police in keeping a tight rein over the Negro in South Carolina. Its formation, as William Freehling suggests, was "one of the most revealing events" in the period of South Carolina's transition from nationalism to sectionalism.<sup>27</sup> Its remarkable vitality underscores once again the ceaseless concern of Carolinians about black resistance to slavery in the antebellum period.

<sup>26</sup> Channing, *Crisis of Fear*, 31-34, 45-52.

<sup>27</sup> Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 113.

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## Memorials

### *In memory of:*

Leon S. Hollingsworth

W. Allan Moore, Jr.

Mrs. Homer M. Pace

Dr. T. S. Buie

### *Contributed by:*

Mrs. Leon S. Hollingsworth

Mr. and Mrs. Harry L. Logan

Miss Mary W. Stewart

Mrs. T. S. Buie

## REFLECTIONS OF "DEMOCRACY" IN REVOLUTIONARY SOUTH CAROLINA?

### THE COMPOSITION OF MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS AND THE ATTITUDES AND RELATIONSHIPS OF THE OFFICERS AND MEN, 1775-1780

WALTER J. FRASER, JR.\*

Since "armies are but projections of the societies from which they spring," historians of the Consensus School and the New Left are essentially agreed that studies of military organizations in Revolutionary America could offer "some broad insights into American life;" and at the same time such studies would reveal more about the Revolutionary Era "from the bottom up."<sup>1</sup>

Prominent members of the Consensus School have already reached conclusions supporting their school of thought. Professor Don Higginbotham has written: "What provocative questions about American society arise when we learn that numerous American officers avoided the customary lash as a form of punishment, and that many officers fraternized with their enlisted men and discussed the issues of the war with them."<sup>2</sup> Within militia organizations, Higginbotham found a "lack of social cleavage between most officers and their men." This "made for a familiarity that more than occasionally bred ill-discipline and disobedience."<sup>3</sup> Professor Daniel Boorstin, also a Consensus School historian, finds a "leveling spirit" within Revolutionary Era military organizations. He too discovers "an unmilitary familiarity between officers and men" which sometimes led to disobedience in the ranks and desertions.<sup>4</sup> Higginbotham and Boorstin would agree that an independence

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<sup>1</sup> Don Higginbotham, "American Historians and the Military History of the American Revolution," *American Historical Review*, LXX (October, 1964), 33-34; Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies and Practice, 1763-1789* (New York, 1971), xv, 7; John Shy, "A New Look at Colonial Militia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XX (April, 1963), 176; John Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution* (Princeton, 1965), viii, 393; Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," in Barton J. Bernstein (ed.), *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History* (New York, 1969), 27.

<sup>2</sup> Higginbotham, "American Historians," 34.

<sup>3</sup> Higginbotham, *The War of Independence*, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (New York, 1958), 365-367.