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WILLIAM BULL'S FIRST EXILE FROM SOUTH CAROLINA 1777-1781

GERALDINE M. MERONEY °

On the eve of the American Revolution, Lieutenant Governor William Bull was the best known and most highly regarded royal official in South Carolina. He was a native Carolinian who had served his colony in public office continuously since December, 1736, when he first entered the Commons House of Assembly, where he served as Speaker during several sessions. In the spring of 1749 he was appointed to the Royal Council, and on December 6, 1759, he was commissioned lieutenant governor, succeeding his father who had held that office from 1738 until his death in 1755. ¹ Unlike his father, William Bull had not used his office to amass wealth, and until his father's death he lived off the income of Ashley Hall Plantation which his father deeded to him in 1742. ² The vast landed wealth that he held at the time of the Revolution was his share of his father's fortune. ³

When the Provincial Congress took over the government of the colony in the summer of 1775 and the newly arrived royal governor, Lord William Campbell, fled for safety, William Bull retired to Ashley Hall Plantation, enduring none of the restrictions that were imposed on the other royal officials remaining in the colony. ⁴ On his part, he did

° Professor in the Department of History, Agnes Scott College, Decatur, Ga.

¹ Charles M. Andrews, ed., "List of Commissions, Instructions, and Additional Instructions issued to the Royal Governors and Others in America," *Annual Report of The American Historical Association* (1911), 1, 436. Bull's commission was re-issued April 14, 1761, by the new monarch, George III, and remained in effect until royal commissions for officials in America were cancelled in 1782.

² Charleston County Deed Book, W, pp. 430-436, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia.

³ Others sharing the elder William Bull's estate were his daughter Elizabeth, who had married Thomas Drayton; his daughter Mary Henrietta, who would marry Henry Middleton in 1762; the two sons of his deceased older son Stephen: Stephen and William Bull; and the two sons of his deceased daughter Charlotta, who had married John Drayton: William Henry and Thomas Drayton. Henry DeSassure Bull, *The Family of Stephen Bull* (Georgetown, S. C., 1961), pp. 16, 17, 58, 63-64; Will of William Bull, dated April 1750, copy in British Public Record Office, hereafter BPRO, AO 13/97, # 10304.

⁴ Although Bull refused to sign the Association he was not summoned before the Committee of Safety on August 12, 1775, with other royal officials; nor was he required to give up his arms or submit to a military escort. "The Lieutenant Governour without the least Censure but on the Contrary with the applause of

nothing to rally loyalists against the Provincial Congress and seemed disposed to live out his life without further involvement in the political turmoil.

During the critical years preceding the Revolution when Bull was serving as acting governor, he was sympathetic to South Carolina's grievances against parliament and the ministry, but he never gave up hope that they would be redressed by the Crown. He believed that despite a temporarily obdurate ministry the British constitution was the most rational and workable form of government yet devised to protect the rights and freedom of the people. He had no sympathy for the radical demands of the New England colonies, and he considered a republican form of government a dangerous submission to the tyranny of the mob. His experience living under such government in South Carolina had not changed his mind. Although men he knew and trusted were often elected to office, the new government proved unable to protect the rights of the people, to collect taxes, or to enforce the laws it passed. Independence from Great Britain, although advantageous to some northern colonies, was obviously wrecking the once thriving economy of South Carolina. Even among his friends in the new government there was doubt whether independence was feasible or even desirable. With the British capture of New York, the imminent capture of Philadelphia, and the concentration of the British fleet in American waters in 1776 and 1777, the assertion of independence by the colonies appeared to be little more than a futile gesture.

It was February 13, 1777, before the South Carolina Assembly passed an ordinance requiring resident Crown officials, on penalty of banishment or death, to abjure the Crown and take an oath of loyalty to the Congress of the United States.⁵ Those officials who had come out from England just prior to the Revolution, the hated "placemen," were only too glad of the opportunity to refuse the oaths and return home.⁶ But

His Country-Men lived retired at his Plantation enjoying Halcyon Days in the Company of his Loyal Nephews and the Friends to American Liberty." See "Anecdotes" March, 1776, in Sir Henry Clinton Papers, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.

⁵ Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, 10 vols. (Columbia, S. C., 1838-1841), IV, 392.

⁶ These included Chief Justice Thomas Knox Gordon, Assistant Justices Charles Cosslett, John Fewtrell, William Gregory, and Edward Savage, and Customs Officials Robert Dallway Halliday, Robert McCulloh, and John Morgridge. BPRO, AO 12/51, f. 287; AO/13, Bundles 128 and 129; AO 12/99, 274; AO 12/3, f. 53; AO 12/51, f. 35; AO 12/50, f. 409. Other "placemen," such as Receiver General Thomas Irving, had left the colony in 1775 with the Governor or earlier.

for officials who had lived many years in South Carolina and for those who were native born, such as the attorney general James Simpson, the treasurer Henry Peronneau, and William Bull, the penalty for refusal was exile.⁷

Hoping to protect their uncle from the penalties imposed by the ordinance, Bull's nephews Stephen Bull and William Henry Drayton, both leaders in the revolutionary government, urged him to resign his royal commission before the ordinance was passed, giving as his reasons "infirmities of body, advanced age, and calamities of his country which he could neither remedy nor alleviate by continuance in office."⁸ William Bull was almost 67 years old and had suffered poor health for many years. His resignation for these reasons would seem credible, and he might therefore be permitted to continue living undisturbed at Ashley Hall for the rest of his life.

But William Bull was not a man to avoid an issue or to betray the loyalty of a lifetime to serve personal convenience. He considered banishment under the ordinance a temporary condition that would be remedied, probably within a year, when Great Britain recovered the colonies. When he first learned of the proposed ordinance, and before his nephews suggested a way to avoid its penalties, Bull drew up an indenture of trust of one year's duration, placing his wife's property and his own under the care of his close friend Gabriel Manigault, the royal treasurer Henry Peronneau, his attorney Nathaniel Russell, and his nephew Stephen Bull.⁹ He then turned over to his attorney bonds due him from John Rutledge and a number of merchants in Charles Town totalling over £21,000 currency, plus interest, and all American cur-

⁷ Deputy Post Master General George Roupell came to Charles Town in 1748; Probart Howarth, Governor of Fort Johnson, came to Georgia in 1738 with Oglethorpe's regiment and settled in South Carolina in 1749; Thomas Skottowe, Secretary of the Province, came out in 1752 and in 1766 married William Bull's cousin, Mary Lucia Bellinger; John Gerard William DeBrahm, Surveyor General of the Southern District, had been in Georgia and South Carolina since the 1730s; he returned to Charles Town in 1775 to marry William Bull's niece, Mrs. Mary Drayton Fenwicke. BPRO, AO 12/101, f. 83; AO 12/47, f. 282; AO 12/48, f. 291; AO 12/99, 340, and Henry DeSaussure Bull, *The Family of Stephen Bull*, pp. 81, 60. William Rhodes, Custom Waiter at Charles Town, was also a native of the colony. BPRO, AO 12/101, f. 242.

⁸ William Henry Drayton to Stephen Bull, Feb. 8, 1777, in R. W. Gibbes, *Documentary History of the American Revolution* (3 vols., New York, 1857), II, 7. This was an elaborate plan to send the letter unsealed to the President of the State, who would then seal it and send it to the U. S. Congress, presumably with an endorsement.

⁹ Indenture of Trust, Feb. 6, 1777, copy in BPRO, AO 13/97, # 10304.

rency in his possession, which came to about £8,000 currency.¹⁰ In accordance with the requirements of the ordinance he also published notice of his departure in the *American-General Gazette* of April 14 and May 1, 1777:

The Subscriber being obliged to leave this Province shortly, and go to Europe or the West Indies, desires all Persons who have any Demands on him to call on him, or on Mr. Nathaniel Russel for payment.

William Bull

In anticipation of his early return to South Carolina he left his library, his personal effects, and all of his private and official papers at Ashley Hall Plantation. He arranged to take with him only a few barrels of indigo which could be converted into money wherever he might go to provide financial support during his absence from home.¹¹

William Bull's loyalty to South Carolina had always been indistinguishable from his loyalty to the Crown, and it still was. For him there was no equation between his loyalty to his home province and the Congress in Philadelphia, and it is doubtful that such equation existed for many South Carolinians at this stage of the Revolution; for, it was not until after Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga and the French alliance, which gave the first hope of achieving independence, that the government of South Carolina dared require oaths of loyalty from every citizen of the State.

Since the ordinance of 1777 was not a universal test act but was intended only to rid the State of royal officials and a few others whose outspoken support of the Crown made them obnoxious, relatively few people were affected by it. But a sizeable number took this opportunity to leave South Carolina, and the few available ships sailing from Charles Town that spring and summer were crowded.¹² All intercourse with Great Britain was cut off because of the war, and those planning to leave

¹⁰ Statement of Currency and Bonds Due, *Ibid.*

¹¹ Memorial of William Bull to the Loyalist Commission, March 12, 1784, BPRO, AO 12/52, f. 88.

¹² Among the number of refugees were Rev. Robert Cooper of St. Michael's Church, Rev. Alexander Hewat of the Scots Church, Rev. James Stuart of Georgetown, Rev. Angus Macauley, schoolmaster in Charles Town, George Harland Hartley, organist at St. Michael's, William Wragg, planter, Alexander Wright, son of Gov. Wright of Georgia, the wife of Col. John Stuart, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and the merchants John Champneys, James and William Carsan, John Tunno, George Thomson, and Charles Shaw. See notices of departure in the *American General Gazette* and the *South-Carolina Gazette* for spring and summer 1777.

the State had to seek passage on an American ship bound for some destination other than a British port.

On May 4, 1777, William Bull with his wife and her niece, Katherine Beale, and accompanied by Henry Peronneau and Robert Williams, a friend of Bull's whose son was in school in England, sailed from Charles Town on an American ship bound for Amsterdam. After avoiding the British fleet along the American coast, Bull's ship was captured in the North Sea just short of its destination by his Majesty's sloop *Alderney* and brought as a prize of war into Gravesend early in July. The cargo was confiscated and the passengers were required to establish proof of their loyalty to the Crown or be imprisoned. Having convinced the authorities he was a royal official, Bull was permitted to sue in the Court of Admiralty to recover his indigo. Although he was awarded his claim, the loss of the value of the indigo, which had remained "long on Board the Prize," and the court costs came to over £300 sterling.¹³ Such a callous reception by the British government anticipated the humiliation, frustration, and near destitution William Bull and many other loyalists would experience during their exile in England.

William Bull's first official act in England was to join with the governors of South Carolina and Georgia, Lord William Campbell and Sir James Wright, and the lieutenant governor of Georgia, John Graham, in signing a Memorial on August 6, 1777, to Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the colonies, who was directing the war in America.¹⁴ The Memorial urged the commercial and tactical advantage of an immediate military campaign into the southern colonies where a majority of the inhabitants were remaining quiet under republican government only until British forces arrived to relieve them; should such a campaign be delayed too long, the loyal inhabitants would despair, their loyalty would erode, and recovery of the southern colonies would be much more difficult than now. The Memorial had little influence; the southern campaign was delayed until December 1778 in Georgia and the spring of 1780 in South Carolina.

The most common duty that fell to Bull was to provide testimony for South Carolina refugees seeking financial help from the British Treasury. A Pension List had been established early in the year for about

¹³ Memorial of William Bull to the Loyalist Commission, March 12, 1784, BPRO, AO 12/52, f. 93; Memorial of William Bull to Lord George Germain, April 22, 1778, Records of the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina (S. C. Department of Archives and History Microfilm), XXXVI, 88-90.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XXXVI, 76-83.

a hundred refugees from New England, and with the arrival of numerous refugees from South Carolina during the year, the Treasury decided to include them.¹⁵ To receive a Treasury allowance the refugee had to prove his loyalty to the Crown and his former financial situation in the province. Since Lord William Campbell knew but few of the Carolina exiles, William Bull testified to the Treasury in their behalf.¹⁶ When a temporary allowance was approved, the recipient was required to come in person to collect the quarterly allowance, from which were deducted fees for the Treasury clerk and tips for the doorkeeper.¹⁷ Although the British Treasury considered it was being generous, the exiles felt like beggars seeking charity, and the allowances they received were too small to provide more than a bare existence in London.

Because a lieutenant governor received no salary from the Crown except when serving as acting governor, William Bull was not eligible to receive a pension in lieu of salary which other royal officials were granted; and with the losses he sustained in the Admiralty suit and the high costs of living in London his financial resources were running low. His wife resented the ingratitude of the Crown toward those who were enduring hardship only because of their loyalty to the Crown. Both Bull and his wife were suffering from the damp climate, and Bull was seldom free of his severe attacks of stones from which he had suffered for many years. Young Gabriel Manigault, who was studying in England at the time and often came to dinner at the Bull's, wrote to his friend Francis Kinloch that Mrs. Bull was in poor health and bad temper but the Lieutenant Governor "continues as cheerful as ever, notwithstanding his Disorder."¹⁸

Before a year had passed Bull knew he must ask for a temporary allowance from the government, and, on April 22, 1778, he submitted a Memorial to Lord North. He said that up to this time he had not presumed to "sollicit any marks of Royal Favour" because he had hoped soon to return to South Carolina "with honour & Safety;" but since even now the "prospect of returning is still remote and Your Memorialists expences in this Country unavoidably great," he requested "favourable

¹⁵ Treasury Minutes of July 22, 24, 29, and Aug. 16, 19, 1777, cited in Mary Beth Norton, *The British-Americans* (New York, 1972), pp. 54-55.

¹⁶ See BPRO, AO 13/Bundle 125, # 9943 of Nov. 8, 1777, AO 13/Bundle 119, # 568 of Nov. 12, 1777, and AO 12/47, ff. 428-31, of Nov. 12, 1777 among numerous others.

¹⁷ Norton, *The British-Americans*, pp. 59-60.

¹⁸ March 12, 1778, Manigault Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia.

consideration."¹⁹ The Treasury responded by granting Bull a temporary allowance of £500 per annum until he returned to South Carolina.²⁰ Although this allowance was one of the largest granted to refugee loyalists, it was insufficient to meet expenses incurred by living in London; and late in the summer of 1778 Bull moved with his wife and her niece to Bristol, where other Carolina exiles had found living much cheaper and the climate milder.²¹

Before the summer was over more refugees began arriving in England from South Carolina as a result of the Test Act passed by the South Carolina Assembly on March 28, 1778. William Bull learned of the provisions of this Act from a copy of the *South-Carolina Gazette* enclosed in a packet of letters from Nathaniel Russell and delivered by one of the recently arrived refugees. The Act required that every adult male in the State must abjure the Crown and take an oath of loyalty to the United States or be banished within six months; those banished must sell or dispose of their property within eighteen months and remove the proceeds from the sale within twelve months thereafter. The penalty for non-compliance with these requirements was death and confiscation of property.²²

Bull found himself in what he described as an "exquisite dilemma." He could, of course, dispose of his vast landed properties in South Carolina by the simple act of deeding them to his nephews and nieces, but since this property was Bull's only source of income, he and his wife would be left destitute or, at best, dependent on the charity of relatives. Even if he were willing to sell his property, which he had no desire to do, the sale would have brought only a fraction of the value because of the time limitation imposed by the Act. Nor could he remove the proceeds from the sale, because the British Prohibitory Act would not permit importation into England of goods or money from America in excess of bare necessities.²³ If the property were not deeded or sold, it would be confiscated, and the lands he had inherited from his father and grandfather would pass to strangers. Bull could have considered returning to South Carolina and complying with the requirement to abjure the Crown and swear allegiance to the new republic, but this prob-

¹⁹ BPRO, AO 13/Bundle 125, # 690.

²⁰ BPRO, AO 12/99, 267-268.

²¹ Bull to William Knox, July 3, 1779, Lord George Germain Papers, William L. Clements Library.

²² Cooper and McCord, *Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, 1, 147.

²³ Memorial of William Bull to the Loyalist Commission, BPRO, AO 12/52, ff. 93-99, 100.

ably never occurred to him. He was no more disposed now toward a republic than he was in 1777; and there was a good possibility that peace might soon be declared. The British had withdrawn all laws obnoxious to the colonists and a Peace Commission was leaving for New York to seek a reconciliation.

In the same packet with the newspaper was a letter from his nephew Stephen Bull, dated May 29, 1778, informing him that the Act would be rigidly enforced and suggesting that William Bull might be able to preserve his estate by executing a conveyance until such time as he could return to South Carolina:

. . . if you wish to avoid having your Estate ruined by selling it agreeable to the Law, & think you can depend upon me as a Brother's Son, attached to you by natural affection, by Blood & by Friendship, & as a man of Honor [and] . . . if you can look upon me in the above Light & will put confidence in me and approve this plan or Scheme, you may if you think proper to convey your Estate to me for a certain Annuity payable to you in England, & when Fighting are made up & you return here, then you can again take your Estate only releasing me from the Annuity.²⁴

This offer from his favorite nephew seemed to be the solution to Bull's dilemma. He was fully aware that under British law such a conveyance, made with the intent to circumvent the law, was illegal. But British law was not involved, and he had no idea what principles governed the erratic legislation of the new republic. He assumed that his nephew must know if such a plan were permissible in South Carolina. Bull himself had no respect for a law that provided so severe a penalty for a refusal "founded on the honest principle of Fidelity to the King and Attachment to the British Constitution and Mother Country." Nor did he ever doubt that his nephew's offer "proceeded from gratitude and affection," since he had always "uniformly treated . . . Stephen Bull with great partiality;" and he thought that Stephen had an "earnest desire to preserve" the estate of his uncle of which he was "honourably intitled to the Greatest part" under William Bull's will.²⁵

Since there was no other way to protect his property until he returned, he decided to accept Stephen's offer. The only alteration he would make was to require a bond for the full value of the property rather than accept the suggested annuity. He then instructed his friend,

²⁴ BPRO, AO 13/97, # 10304.

²⁵ Supplemental Memorial of William Bull to the Loyalist Commission, Jan. 31, 1788, BPRO, AO 13/97, # 10304, p. 13.

Robert Williams, who was planning to return to South Carolina to save his own property from confiscation, to instruct Bull's attorneys in Charles Town to execute the conveyance to Stephen Bull and to participate in drawing up the instrument.²⁶

Meanwhile, with the death of Lord Campbell in September 1778, William Bull was solely responsible for testifying to the identity, loyalty, and financial condition of the new refugees from South Carolina in their petitions for allowances from the Treasury. Having no secretary he wrote out these testimonials himself. Some exiles had suffered seizure of their ships and cargo as prizes of war; others were small tradesmen from Charles Town who were almost destitute.²⁷ Although Bull was living in Bristol, he was in close touch with the loyalist refugees in London and elsewhere in Britain who needed his help.

Early in 1779 news reached Bull of the recovery of Savannah by British forces the preceding December and of the orders to Governor Wright and other Georgia officials to return to their colony to restore civil government there. He hoped it would not be long before South Carolina was also recovered. But news of the failure of General Prevost's march to Charles Town that spring dimmed his hopes and aroused new concern about his property. He learned that irregular troops and camp followers accompanying Prevost's army had ransacked Ashley Hall Plantation, destroyed the furnishings, consumed the contents of the cellar, and torn up and scattered his official and personal papers.²⁸

In July 1779 Bull received a letter from Under Secretary William Knox informing him that Lord George Germain wished him to prepare to sail for America in August "to take the Exercise of the Government

²⁶ Robert Williams left Charles Town prior to being tendered an oath and hoped to return without risk. He secured a flag from the British Peace Commission in New York and arrived in Charles Town in January, 1779. He was not permitted to land until he could be brought before the Assembly. No charge of treason was brought, but he was required to take the oath of allegiance within forty-eight hours or be banished. Memorial of Robert Williams to the Loyalist Commission, BPRO, AO 12/48, ff. 20-55.

²⁷ For passengers on the *Providence*, purchased by Daniel Manson, see Louisa Susannah (Wells) Aikman, *The Journal of a Voyage from Charleston, S. C. to London . . . in the Year 1778* (New York, 1906; reprint, 1968). For those on board the *Hope*, owned by William Hest and George Kincaid, see individual memorials in BPRO, AO 12/47, ff. 216-24, 391-98, AO 12/51, ff. 72-81, 420-424. See also Bull's testimonies for Mrs. Elizabeth Alexander, June 6, 1778, Samuel Bonsal, Feb. 5, 1779, Robert Brailsford, March 20, 1779, Charles Brown, Aug. 9, 1780, James Askew, Oct. 14, 1780, George Duncan, 1779, and numerous others in BPRO, AO 13/Bundles 125 and 127.

²⁸ Bull to William Knox, July 3, 1779, Lord George Germain Papers, William L. Clements Library.

of South Carolina at the time that Province is restored to the King's Peace. . . ." ²⁹ Bull could not understand why he was expected to leave within a month when the British had not yet recovered South Carolina. Nor did the letter make clear whether Bull was to receive the commission of royal governor or simply continue to serve as acting governor. Since his poor health made it difficult for him to leave immediately, he requested a delay until December, hoping by that time he might also clarify his future responsibilities. ³⁰ The delay was granted.

On August 6 he wrote to Lord Germain, requesting that he be considered for the commission of governor of South Carolina. ³¹ He had never before sought a commission from the Crown, and it is surprising that he did so now when he was sixty-nine years old and suffering from chronic illness and growing deafness. But he was probably convinced by his fellow loyalists that he could still be of service to his colony and the Crown. He learned that there had been an attempt in the South Carolina Senate to permit his return without penalty, an effort which indicated to him the regard and affection in which he was still held at home; he would be the most acceptable governor both to returning loyalists and to former rebels; and he could restore domestic tranquility among his fellow Americans more easily and more mercifully than anyone else. There is no record that Lord Germain replied to Bull's request.

Bull now decided to move his family back to London to await their departure in December. But his wife's illness, his own feeble condition, and the scarcity of decent but inexpensive quarters delayed the move until October. At last he found a small house in Irving Street, but Mrs. Bull complained that,

there is not a room large enough to turn in; at our other house we had at least a fine large parlour. . . . ³²

The plan to send Carolina officials to America in December did not materialize, and it was another year before William Bull left England for South Carolina.

After many delays Bull's attorneys in Charles Town executed the conveyance of his property to Stephen Bull on September 10, 1779. ³³ Had the attempt in the Senate to permit Bull's return been approved,

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Bull to Lord George Germain, Aug. 6, 1779, Records of the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina, XXXVI, 98-99.

³² Quoted from William L. Smith to Gabriel Manigault, Nov. 3, 1779, Manigault Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

³³ South Carolina Miscellaneous Records, Vol. TT, 307-8, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

there would have been no need for the conveyance; but when it failed, his attorneys proceeded to draw up the instrument of conveyance exclusive of a trust deed for Mrs. Bull's portion of the estate.⁸⁴ But Stephen Bull warned that a bill was about to be introduced in the Senate to confiscate marriage settlements of loyalists, and if Mrs. Bull's property were to be protected, it should be included in the conveyance. After Stephen Bull assured the attorneys that he would include the trust deed in his re-conveyance of property when William Bull returned to South Carolina, they included the trust deed in the conveyance. Then, deducting an estimated loss of £6,000 Sterling to Bull's property during General Prevost's raid, they set the bond Stephen Bull was to sign at £32,000.⁸⁵ It seemed prudent to the attorneys, since Stephen Bull had been named in the Indenture of Trust his uncle had drawn up prior to his departure in 1777, to select an intermediate conveyer for the transaction, and Robert Pringle agreed to act in this capacity.⁸⁶ On September 8, 245 slaves from three of Bull's plantations were transferred by name to Robert Pringle for the sum of £15,000. On the same day the indenture of property William Bull held from his father-in-law Othniele Beale was conveyed to Pringle for an additional £1,500; other real property, including Ashley Hall Plantation, was conveyed in a third instrument for £15,500.⁸⁷ Despite the language of these instruments, no money changed hands. Then, on September 10, the identical property was conveyed by Robert Pringle to Stephen Bull, who was to sign a bond to William Bull for the value of the property, £32,000.⁸⁸

When the parties met to execute the final conveyance, there was no bond among the other papers to be signed. Stephen Bull suggested

⁸⁴ According to his testimony in the Memorial of William Bull, BPRO, AO 13/97. # 10304, Robert Williams learned from Elias Horry that Stephen Bull had "uniformly opposed every motion for his Uncles return to his Native country," and when Mr. Horry expressed "his disapprobation of the part he acted, the General called him from the Senate Table and wanted to extort from him a promise of Secrecy. . . ."

⁸⁵ The attorneys had sent a flag to General Prevost in Savannah to try to recover the losses sustained at Ashley Hall Plantation, but the message was not delivered because Savannah was under attack by Count D'Estaing. *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Robert Pringle was a wealthy merchant who had been an Asst. Justice under the Crown but supported the Revolution. In 1751 he had married the widow of William Bull's brother Stephen, Judith Mayrant Bull, the step-mother, of Bull's nephew Stephen and mother of his nephew William. Her son by Robert Pringle, John Julius Pringle, later served William Bull in his attempts to recover his property.

⁸⁷ South Carolina Miscellaneous Records, Vol. TT, 303-5, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. TT, 307-8.

that, in order to avoid having another meeting with the attorneys, the conveyances should be signed at once and he would have the bond prepared and sign it the next day before he was scheduled to leave town. He would send the bond and other papers to Mr. Manigault's house in a locked trunk. Having no reason to question this handling of the matter, the attorneys agreed and all papers except the bond were then executed.³⁹ The promised trunk was delivered to Mr. Manigault in a few days but without any key. On Mr. Williams' insistence, the trunk was pried open, but nothing was inside but "a parcel of old torn Deeds and Conveyces which had been found dispersed over the Govrs pasture at Ashley Hall."⁴⁰ There was no signed bond. But since the attorneys considered the bond a mere legal technicality in this arrangement between William Bull and his trusted nephew, Stephen's failure to deliver it did not seem as ominous then as it came to look in later years. As Bull's attorney, Nathaniel Russell continued to pay the overseers of his plantations, provide food and clothing for his slaves, and collect rents on his houses in Charles Town as if the property were still in the possession of William Bull.⁴¹

On May 12, 1780, the British forces under General Clinton captured Charles Town and soon reduced the entire State to British military control. On July 6, William Bull received orders from Under Secretary Knox to return to South Carolina to "take the Government" of the colony when the King's peace was declared. He was also told to notify all royal officials and South Carolina loyalists in England that they were expected to return with him.⁴² These orders, much like those sent to Governor Wright of Georgia the preceding year, seemed to imply that Bull would be commissioned governor of South Carolina when civil government was restored. It was something of a cruel joke on him that the Ministry had no such intention.⁴³

³⁹ Robert Williams did not approve, but as a suspected loyalist he thought it unwise to express suspicion of a man as important in State government as General Stephen Bull. Nathaniel Russell must also have been surprised by Stephen Bull's conduct, for later when Stephen borrowed seven barrels of William Bull's indigo, worth about £700, Russell required Stephen to sign a bond. Testimony in Memorial of William Bull, BPRO, AO 13/97. # 10304.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Records in the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina, XXXVI, 101. After August 1 all names of South Carolina loyalists would be stricken from the Pension List, and those remaining in England would receive no further allowance. Treasury Minutes, July 12, 1780, BPRO, T 29/49.

⁴³ Sir Egerton Leigh wrote to Lord Germain's office on Feb. 25, 1781, asking to be considered for the governor's commission; on March 7, 1781. William Knox

Despite his feebleness and recurrent illness, Bull busied himself with the task of notifying the loyalists and making preparations for his own return home. He used his last available funds to buy furniture to replace what had been destroyed at Ashley Hall during his absence. Then, on December 1, 1780, he, his wife, and his wife's niece, together with other royal officials and loyalists, sailed with the fleet from Portsmouth. After forty-five months of exile, William Bull arrived at Charles Town on February 14, 1781.⁴⁴

He was cordially received by the inhabitants of Charles Town who were "full of anxious expectation and hopes" that he had come "with power to establish Civil Government."⁴⁵ When he learned that great numbers of citizens formerly loyal to Congress, including such leaders of the revolutionary party as Rawlins Lowndes, former President of the State, had already sought and received "the King's Protection," Bull was persuaded that the people were weary of war and were anxious to live once again under the British constitution that would protect both their lives and their freedom.⁴⁶ It was important, to his mind, that civil government be established as quickly as possible, for two or three years of "Peace and tranquility" could "Restore Plenty and Happiness to the Province."⁴⁷

But until civil government was restored, William Bull had no responsibilities and no income. Ashley Hall was badly damaged and its fields were lying fallow; his slaves on the St. Helena plantation had been appropriated by the South Carolina government to work on fortifications of Charles Town and many of them had died of fever, run away, or been stolen. Only his plantation on the Congarees was in operation, but the indigo it produced could bring no income until trade revived. His three houses in Charles Town, bequeathed him by his father-in-law, one in King Street and two in Broad Street, were renting for about £200 per annum, but this money was needed to feed and clothe Bull's slaves and to repay his debt of £350 to Nathaniel Russell, who had advanced

wrote James Simpson implying that the commission might be given to him. See Records in the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina, XXXVI, 112-113; and Lord George Germain Papers, William L. Clements Library.

⁴⁴ Bull to Hillsborough, Feb. 16, 1781, Records in the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina, XXXVI, 104.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 104-5.

⁴⁶ Proceedings of the Board of Police, BPRO, CO 5/523, ff. 17-61.

⁴⁷ Bull to Hillsborough, March 22, 1781. Records in the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina, XXXVI, 117.

the money to support his slaves during Bull's absence.⁴⁸ It was only to support himself and his wife that Bull accepted the position of Intendent General of the Police Board, a quasi-legal court established by the military government to hear civil suits and administer certain civilian affairs.⁴⁹ He considered the position a "Kind of degradation," but he hoped his presence on this Board would "tend to conciliate the confidence of the People, and flatter their Hopes of seeing Civil Government soon re-established."⁵⁰ So that he would be available for meetings of the Board, Bull took a small house at 57 Meeting Street in Charles Town; but its accommodations were so poor that Mrs. Bull preferred to move with her niece and a few servants to Ashley Hall Plantation, despite its damaged condition.⁵¹

Bull had every reason to assume that the British recovery of Georgia and South Carolina was permanent and the ultimate defeat of the armies of Congress inevitable. Although his personal situation was not quite what he had anticipated, he was now home from his long exile and no longer had any fear he would lose his property. The conveyance, executed under a government that no longer existed in South Carolina, had no validity under British civil law, particularly since without a signed bond the transaction was incomplete. Of course, Bull never expected the matter of the conveyance to come to law. He assumed that his nephew Stephen would re-convey the property, as he had promised to do, as soon as he returned to South Carolina from Maryland, where he had taken his family after he was paroled as a prisoner of war by the British at the capture of Charles Town.⁵²

William Bull could not know that the fortunes of war would determine a far different future for him than he anticipated in 1781. Within two years he would once again be an exile from South Carolina, and all of his property, without protest by the State of South Carolina, would be claimed by his nephew Stephen.

⁴⁸ Testimonies of William Thomson and Nathaniel Russell, Feb. 10, 1784, and John Davies, Dec. 3, 1788, in Memorial of William Bull to the Loyalist Commission, BPRO, AO 13/97, # 10304, ff. 46, 9-11, 185.

⁴⁹ Memorial of William Bull to Lords of the Treasury, May 19, 1783, BPRO, AO 13/Bundle 125, # 9943, 694.

⁵⁰ Bull to Hillsborough, Feb. 16, 1781, Records in the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina, XXXVI, 106.

⁵¹ *Charleston City Directory for 1782* (Charleston Library Society, 1951), p. 14. Memorial of William Bull to the Loyalist Commission, BPRO, AO 12/52, ff. 88-89.

⁵² Memorial of William Bull, BPRO, AO 13/97, # 10304.