

**The Atlantic at Work: Britain and South  
Carolina's Trading Networks, c. 1730 to 1790**

Huw T. David

Lincoln College

Hilary Term 2011

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

**For my parents,  
Rhys and Susan David**

## SHORT ABSTRACT

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This thesis describes the sixty years of transatlantic interaction, connection, dislocation and reconstruction in Anglo-Carolinian trade between 1730 and 1790. Focussing on about two dozen of London's 'Carolina traders', it integrates their personal and collective stories of profit and loss, reputation and notoriety, and political activity and inactivity, with the broader forces they shaped and were in turn shaped by – forces of economic growth, political stability and instability, and imperial harmony and disharmony. Through their conjoined political and commercial agency – a dual role better appreciated by contemporaries than by historians – they profoundly influenced commerce between Britain and South Carolina. Their intermediation served firstly as a stabilising force in the Anglo-Carolinian polity as they procured favourable treatment for the colony's goods and represented its grievances in the imperial metropolis. An important influence on this was their 'absentee' ownership of property in South Carolina and the thesis explores in depth the underappreciated prevalence and significance of this transatlantic absenteeism. From the mid-1760s, however, the traders' political and commercial agency aggravated intra-imperial discord. Disputes between British merchants and their Carolinian correspondents reflected in microcosm the geo-political shifts of the time and reveal at an inter-personal level how resistance to British imperial authority developed among Carolinians. Furthermore, these disputes played a constitutive role in this resistance, as the purported commercial iniquities and political orientations of British merchants led their correspondents to question and reject the commercial and political norms that had once sustained Anglo-Carolinian relations. The thesis thus helps explain how South Carolina moved, often imperceptibly, against British authority during the 1760s and early 1770s by emphasising commercial discord within the growing political-economic friction. It further contributes to the burgeoning historiography of the eighteenth-century 'Atlantic world' by exploring the reconstruction of trading links between Britain and South Carolina after American independence. It reveals how strongly these were influenced by pre-war politics. In so doing, it demonstrates that Carolinians exercised greater commercial discretion after the war than contemporaries and historians have appreciated, and thus challenges contentions of South Carolina's continuing commercial subservience to British trading interests.

## LONG ABSTRACT

This thesis describes the sixty years of transatlantic interaction, connection, dislocation and reconstruction in Anglo-Carolinian trade between 1730 and 1790. Focussing on London's 'Carolina traders', it integrates their personal and collective stories of profit and loss, reputation and notoriety, and political activity and inactivity, with the broader forces they shaped and were in turn shaped by – forces of economic growth, political stability and instability, and imperial harmony and disharmony. Through their conjoined political and commercial agency – a dual role better appreciated by contemporaries than by historians – they profoundly influenced commerce between Britain and South Carolina. Their intermediation served firstly as a stabilising force in the Anglo-Carolinian polity as they procured favourable treatment for the colony's goods and represented its grievances in the imperial metropolis. From the mid-1760s, however, it aggravated intra-imperial discord. Disputes between British merchants and their Carolinian correspondents reflected in microcosm the geo-political shifts of the time and reveal at an inter-personal level how resistance to British imperial authority developed. These disputes had, furthermore, a constitutive role in this resistance, as the purported commercial iniquities and political orientations of British merchants led their correspondents to question and reject the commercial and political norms that had once sustained Anglo-Carolinian relations.

The thesis scrutinises a cadre of about two dozen merchants, using individual and collective biography to reconstruct these individuals' commercial and political orbits. Drawing upon commercial correspondence, maritime, legal and property records, and a wealth of recently digitized newspapers and records of the Atlantic slave trade, it is the first collective study of metropolitan merchants in a specific branch of eighteenth-century overseas trade. The relatively small size of the sample – a product of the concentration of London's Carolina trade in relatively few hands – allows for the reconstruction of a whole trading community in a way that would be impossible in more densely populated branches of London's overseas trade, such as those with the West Indies or the

Chesapeake. The composition and structure of London's Carolina trade made its participants particularly active in their engagement with the state. Besides the trade's relative concentration, most of the merchants at the forefront of London's Carolina trade until the 1760s had personal experience of living and working in South Carolina, while many continued to own land there. All these features contribute to the traders' particular activism; they were also powerful in shaping the political culture of Anglo-Carolinian commerce.

The thesis tempers recent historiography on the eighteenth-century Atlantic by asserting the merchants' political agency. Central to much modern scholarship on the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Atlantic has been an implicit downplaying of the role of state institutions, laws and policies – what might be termed 'structural' forces – in shaping Atlantic interactions and exchanges. Atlantic commerce has come to be portrayed less as the product of institutional fiat than of aggregated individual agency. The thesis shows how merchants in the Carolina trade did not simply negotiate pre-existing political and legal constructions but, through petitioning and personal lobbying, actively shaped them. It thus presents individual agency and imperial structure within the Carolina trade not simply as dichotomous or competing, but also mutually constructive and interdependent. In their interaction with the legal-political institutions which structured the trade, merchants and other individuals signified their understanding of the structural conditions which determined their activities. The thesis also locates the merchants' petitioning and lobbying within the context of political and ideological discourse in Britain, showing how debates on trade and empire impinged on the lobby's approaches and tactics.

Between the 1730s and the 1760s, the attempts by London's Carolina traders to alter the conditions of colonial trade and administration through lobbying, petitioning and legislative initiative conveyed important signals to their Carolinian correspondents. For the most part, it was seen to manifest their commitment to the colony from which their fortunes derived – even if unsuccessful, the intent behind the lobbying was itself significant. The first two chapters trace the practice and

reception of this lobbying, showing its stabilising force and demonstrating how the composition of London's Carolina trade influenced this. Chapter one, "*The Metropolis of South Carolina*": *London Lobbying, Charles Town Commerce and the Emergence of the Capital's Elite Carolina Traders* begins by analysing the genesis of a London Carolina lobby before 1730 and examines how this informed future mercantile interaction with the imperial state. To understand the lobby's later development, it is vital to explore the commercial trajectories of London's leading mid-century Carolina traders. The chapter therefore turns its attention to South Carolina's own 'metropolis', Charles Town. It was here that these traders had begun their careers, before relocating to London, where they dominated the Atlantic Carolina trade and became the colony's principal metropolitan advocates. The chapter examines their routes into trade, such as through mercantile apprenticeships and by captaining Atlantic shipping, and the influence of the time they spent in Charles Town in their early careers. This allowed them to build the capital and connections required to prosper in Atlantic trade, and propelled them to the forefront of London's Carolina trade.

Chapter two, "*Friends at Home*": *London's Mid-Century Carolina Trade* explores how mercantile advocacy was understood and enacted during the 1740s and 1750s, a period of relative political harmony between Britain and South Carolina. Charles Town's merchants looked to their "Friends at Home" – a doubly revealing epithet – to represent their mutual interests in imperial political fora. Structural features within London's mid-century Carolina trade augmented its political-economic significance. Chief among these were the concentration of the trade in a small number of hands, the personal experience that most of its leading figures had of living and trading in Charles Town, and the emergence of dynamic leadership within the trading lobby. These distinguished the Carolina lobby from other North American interest groups and contributed to its notable effectiveness during this period. Building on the prosopographical method used in the first chapter, chapter two tracks the merchants profiled there as they settled into business in London and came to dominate the capital's trade with South Carolina. This method reconnects the commercial activities of individual merchants with their collective lobbying and reveals how a Carolinian 'interest' in

London (and, on occasions, in Britain more widely) interacted with the Board of Trade, the Treasury and with Parliament itself. The chapter interrelates their lobbying with prevailing political-economic discourse and situates the success enjoyed by the Carolina lobby between the late 1740s and early 1760s – principally in securing a bounty on colonial indigo in 1748 as well as stimuli for the production of silk, potash and hemp – within a context of British domestic and imperial decision-making.

The time that London's foremost Carolina traders, up to the 1760s at least, had spent living and working in South Carolina distinguished them from most of their counterparts in other branches of metropolitan North American trade. It followed a practice more common in London's West Indies trade, where many metropolitan merchants had honed their commercial expertise in the Caribbean. Chapter three, "*Cankers to the Riches of a Country*"? *Transatlantic Absenteeism in Colonial South Carolina*, examines one particularly underappreciated consequence of the merchants' experiences in South Carolina – the prevalence of 'absentee' land ownership in South Carolina by British residents. Using land and property records and correspondence between overseas absentees and their Carolina based agents, the chapter shows the ways in which many of London's leading Carolina merchants acquired lands in South Carolina during their time there or, having relocated to London, acquired property in lieu of debts owed to them in the colony. This land ownership informed their particular activism in promoting the colony's interests in Britain: absenteeism helped to amplify South Carolina's voice in the metropolitan corridors of power. By the eve of the Revolution, however, it had assumed more negative political connotations in South Carolina itself. In considering absenteeism – traditionally conceived as a phenomenon of West Indian colonisation – in a North American context, the thesis speaks to two further historical literatures. By showing the political dividends that South Carolina derived from non-resident property ownership, it challenges long held assumptions about absenteeism's supposedly deleterious consequences for Britain's colonies. By underscoring the parallels between South Carolina and the West Indies, it further destabilises any lingering notions of the exceptionality of North American colonial development. It serves to

reintegrate South Carolina into its wider hemispheric context – a British Atlantic empire of some twenty-six colonies, as opposed to the thirteen in which its evolution has typically been situated.

While the first three chapters demonstrate how structural characteristics served as a force for stability in Anglo-Carolinian relations, chapter four, *‘From Humble and Moderate Fortunes to Great Affluence’*: *The Carolina Trade and Imperial Crises*, charts the multifaceted breakdown of trust within the transatlantic Carolina trade during the 1760s and early 1770s. Retrospectively, the mid-century activism of London’s Carolina lobby, described in chapters one, two and three, took on a new dimension as it offered a contrast with the lobby’s apparent inactivity and reluctance to intervene in the political disputes exorcising South Carolinians from the 1760s onwards.

Commercially, the *concentration* of London’s Carolina trade in relatively few hands – once a factor in the lobby’s efficiency – came to be seen as *domination*. The economic implications of how specific trades became concentrated in fewer hands in London over the course of the eighteenth century have been noted by historians; chapter four assesses the political ramifications of this process. Accompanying this concentration were personnel changes within London’s Carolina trade which saw merchants rise to pre-eminence who lacked their forerunners’ experiential connections to the province. Among Carolinians, there was growing suspicion of and frustration with their correspondents’ business practices. London traders were held to be increasingly unsympathetic, or even hostile, to Carolinians’ interests. As imperial tensions mounted, the perceived commercial and political dependence on these uncertain metropolitan ‘friends’ seemed no longer effective nor wise to many Carolinians. Their complaints were not expressed as explicit challenges to the ‘mercantilist’ precepts that governed Carolinian trade. However, critiques of supposed metropolitan malpractice suggested a tacit or at least an incipient rejection of the systemic constraints that had led to this malign concentration of trade in London, furnished the metropolitan traders with great wealth, and allowed them to manipulate the trade in their favour.

Responses to the metropolitan Carolina traders' conjoined business practices and their political (in)activity indicate how notions of commercial and political repression developed in tandem in South Carolina, and were seen as mutually reinforcing. The thesis thus enriches the understanding of how South Carolina moved, often imperceptibly, against British authority during the 1760s and early 1770s by emphasising commercial discord within the growing political-economic friction. Its close analysis of business relations spanning the Atlantic sheds new light on why South Carolina's merchant-planter elite – one of the Atlantic world's wealthiest groups and ostensibly among the chief beneficiaries of the British imperial system – came to reject British authority.

By continuing until 1790, the thesis transcends the more conventional endpoints of 1776 or 1783. Through this, it offers retrospective insights on pre-war trade and illuminates the commercial upheavals and continuities that marked the post-war resumption of Anglo-Carolinian trade. It thus brings a much needed inter-temporal dimension to the study of British North America and in particular the American Revolution. Anglo-American relations in the 1780s have attracted little of the historiographical scrutiny accorded the previous two decades of controversy and conflict. South Carolina's post-war links with Britain are no exception. Study of post-war trade helps redress this neglect. Chapter five, *The Voyage of the Lord North: American Independence, Anglo-Carolinian Trade and Unfinished Business*, explores the post-war reconstruction of trading links between South Carolina and Great Britain by showing how strongly these were influenced by pre-war politics. While Britain remained by far South Carolina's largest overseas market, the chapter reveals that this structural continuity – much bemoaned by many observers in Charleston – masked pronounced discontinuities in the composition of Britain's post-war Carolina trade. London's leading pre-war Carolina traders, whom Patriot commentators had come to consider nearly all hostile to South Carolinian interests on the eve of the war, were spurned in post-war commerce because of their purported pre-war political orientations. Conversely, London merchants who had sympathised with or actively supported the American cause were favoured. Exercising commercial choices in this way, Carolinians confounded contemporary jeremiads that bewailed ongoing subservience to

monolithic British trading interests, complaints with which historians have been too willing to concur. Furthermore, through investigating how London's Carolina traders continued to interact with the British state during and after the war, the chapter demonstrates the centrality of commercial concerns to British policy towards America during the 1780s and, accordingly, to Anglo-American relations in this critical decade.

In its concluding epilogue, the thesis posits the need for renewed scholarly attention to Anglo-American relations in the decade between the Peace of Paris in 1783 and the Jay-Grenville Treaty in 1794–5. This would reassert the significance of the United States' ties to the former 'mother country' in its first decade as an independent nation, notably their role in informing its political discourse and economic orientation. Vice-versa, it would challenge the preoccupation in British historiography with the shift from a 'First' to a 'Second British Empire', which emphasises British imperial expansion in the east to the detriment of the still influential relationship with the United States. The explanatory model advanced in this thesis, of inter-relating commerce and politics, and of integrating individual experiences, collective action and policy formulation, offers a compelling approach to follow.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Rhys and Susan David, for inspiring my love of history and for their constant love and support.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
BFP	Ball Family Papers, SCL
CO	Colonial Office manuscripts, National Archives, London
<i>CRI</i>	Anne Izard Deas (ed.), <i>Correspondence of Mr. Ralph Izard, of South Carolina, from the Year 1774 to 1804; with a Short Memoir</i> , 3 vols. (New York, 1844).
<i>CSP</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>EcHR</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
IKL	Isaac King Letterbook, SCL
<i>JAH</i>	<i>Journal of American History</i>
<i>JCTP</i>	<i>Journal of the Commissioners for Trade and the Plantations, April 1704 – May 1782</i> . 14 vols. (London, 1920–1938).
<i>JHC</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Commons</i>
<i>JSH</i>	<i>Journal of Southern History</i>
LCG	Letterbook of Charles Garth, 1766–1775. SCDAH (microfilm)
LJWCG	Letterbook of James Wright and Charles Garth, 1758–1766. SCDAH (microfilm)
LRP	Walter B. Edgar (ed.), <i>The Letterbook of Robert Pringle, 1737–45</i> , 2 vols. (Columbia, SC, 1972)
LRR	Letterbook of Robert Raper, 1759–1770. Bodleian Library, Oxford, (microfilm)
OFP	Ogilvie–Forbes Papers, SCHS
<i>PBF</i>	<i>Papers of Benjamin Franklin</i>
PFC	Pringle–Freeman Correspondence, SCHS
<i>PHL</i>	<i>Papers of Henry Laurens</i>
<i>PTJ</i>	<i>Papers of Thomas Jefferson</i>
SCDAH	South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, SC
<i>SCG</i>	<i>South Carolina Gazette</i>
<i>SCHM</i>	<i>South Carolina Historical Magazine</i>
SCHS	South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC
SCL	South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC
T	Treasury manuscripts, National Archives, London

## NOTE ON THE TEXT AND TERMINOLOGY

During the eighteenth century, the words *Carolina* and *South Carolina* were used synonymously, particularly in Britain. North and South Carolina were formally made separate colonies in 1712; before and after the separation, ‘Carolina’ generally referred in Britain to South Carolina, the wealthier of the two and, in its interaction with the British state, the more active. ‘Carolina traders’, for example, was used to denote merchants trading specifically to South Carolina.

Following contemporary usage, I therefore use *Carolina* and *South Carolina* and *province* and *colony* interchangeably. After 1783, Charles Town became Charleston. For authenticity, I have followed this change and use *Charles Town* when referring to the town before its incorporation in 1783, and *Charleston* afterwards.

Prices are given in £ sterling unless otherwise stated. Throughout the period between about 1730 and the end of British control in South Carolina, £1 sterling was equivalent to about £7 in South Carolina currency.<sup>1</sup>

To retain authenticity, I have not corrected spellings in quotations from primary sources unless essential to convey meaning. Any words added to quotations appear in parentheses.

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<sup>1</sup> John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600–1775: A Handbook*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1978), 220–26.

## TIMELINE OF DATES AND EVENTS

1660	Navigation Act; further acts in 1663, 1673 and 1696 codify and reinforce the strictures.
1670	Foundation of South Carolina.
1680	Charles Town is relocated to its current site.
1690s	First successful experiments in cultivating rice in South Carolina.
1704	Rice is added to Navigation Acts' list of 'enumerated commodities'.
1714–27	<i>Reign of George I</i>
1719	Overthrow of Lords Proprietors' government in South Carolina.
1727–60	<i>Reign of George II</i>
1727–31	Samuel Wragg is South Carolina's agent in London.
1729	Lords Proprietors surrender ownership of Carolinas to British government; North and South Carolina become crown colonies.
1730	Rice Act permits direct rice exports from South Carolina to European ports south of Cape Finisterre (i.e. Spain and Portugal).
1732	Foundation of Georgia.
1733–49	Peregrine Fury is South Carolina's agent in London.
1735	Rice Act extends permission for direct rice exports to Spain and Portugal to rice from Georgia.
1739–48	<i>War of the Austrian Succession: Britain at war with Spain (1739–48) and France (1744–48)</i>
late-1740s	Large-scale cultivation of indigo begins in South Carolina.
1748	Indigo Bounty Act places bounty on Carolinian indigo.
1749–55	James Crokatt is South Carolina's agent in London.
1750	Growth of Raw Silk Act removes duties on silk imported from American colonies.
1751	Pot Ash and Pearl Ashes Act removes duties on potash and pearl ashes imported from America.
1753	James Crokatt attempts to resign metropolitan agency but is retained in post for a further two years.

- 1756–63 *Seven Years War: Britain at war with France and Spain*
- 1757–60 James Wright is South Carolina’s agent in London.
- 1760–1820 *Reign of George III*
- 1762–75 Charles Garth is South Carolina’s agent in London.
- 1764 Rice Act permits the exportation of rice from South Carolina and Georgia directly to foreign colonies in the West Indies and South America.
- 1764 Hemp Act places bounties on hemp and flax imported from America.
- 1765–6 Garth and London’s Carolina merchants lobby against Stamp and Mutiny Acts.
- 1767 Townshend Duties
- 1770–82 *Lord North administration*
- 1774 Coercive/‘Intolerable’ Acts
- 1775–83 *American Revolutionary War*
- Dec. 1775 Prohibitory Act outlaws British trade with the thirteen colonies and permitted the Royal Navy and British privateers to seize American produce as prizes of war
- May 1780 British forces under Sir Henry Clinton recapture Charles Town from Patriot control
- Feb. 1782 South Carolina Assembly, meeting in Jacksonborough, passes legislation penalising loyalists and owners of Carolinian land living in Britain, including confiscations.
- March–June 1782 *Marquess of Rockingham administration*
- June 1782–Feb. 1783 *Lord Shelburne administration*
- Dec. 1782 British forces evacuate Charles Town
- April–Dec. 1783 *Fox-North coalition*
- July 1783 Order-in-Council limits trade between the United States and the British West Indies to vessels built and owned in Britain or its colonies.
- Dec. 1783–1801 *William Pitt the Younger’s administration*
- 1794 Jay-Grenville Treaty on Anglo-American trade

## INTRODUCTION

In May 1730 London's Carolina 'interest' achieved a long cherished ambition. After two decades of intermittent lobbying by merchants in the capital's 'Carolina trade' and by agents sent from the colony, the British Parliament agreed to loosen the restrictions on South Carolina's rice exports. Rice was the colony's principal export and, in the words of one of its earliest historians, "the staple commodity of Carolina... the chief support of the colony, and its great source of opulence". The new law allowed planters and merchants in the colony and their British correspondents to ship the grain directly to Spain and Portugal from September that year.<sup>1</sup> Passage of the legislation appeared to vindicate the system by which colonial interests were represented in the imperial metropolis; London's Carolina traders duly received the thanks of their correspondents in the province.

By 1790, their successors in metropolitan trade to South Carolina were seen in an altogether different light. For many of Britain's pre-war 'Carolina traders', as they were collectively known, war and American independence had severed their connections with the state that had made them wealthy. Fruitless efforts to reclaim debts and confiscated estates had sapped strength and weakened resolve. Formerly archetypes of Atlantic mobility, many were ready to turn their back on the ocean altogether, leaving others to risk their time and money in Anglo-Carolinian trade. "Patience is a necessary ingredient to pass thro' life with tolerable quiet, but very few [are] imbued with a sufficiency of it to combat Carolina disappointments", one reflected.<sup>2</sup> Having conducted "a considerable Trade as a Merchant to the then Province of South Carolina" before the war, another trader was reduced by debts incurred because of the war, "from a Situation of comparative

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Hewitt, *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia*. 2 vols. (London, 1779). I, 109; 3 Geo. II, c. 28 in Owen Ruffhead, *The Statutes at Large; from Magna Charta, to the end of the last Parliament*. (London, 1769–1800), VI, 35–7.

<sup>2</sup> Isaac King to Joshua Ward, 9<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1790. IKL.

Elevation in which he and his Family enjoyed every comfort that affluence could afford to one of embarrassment and distress”.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis describes the intervening sixty years of transatlantic interaction, connection, dislocation and reconstruction in Anglo-Carolinian trade. It uses London’s Carolina traders as a prism, integrating their personal and collective stories of profit and loss, reputation and notoriety, and political activity and inactivity, with the broader forces they shaped and were in turn shaped by – forces of economic growth, political stability and instability, and imperial harmony and disharmony. Through their conjoined political and commercial agency – a dual role better appreciated by contemporaries than by historians – they profoundly influenced Anglo-Carolinian commerce. Their intermediation served firstly as a stabilising force in the Anglo-Carolinian polity as they procured favourable treatment for the colony’s goods and represented its grievances in the imperial metropolis. From the mid-1760s, however, it aggravated intra-imperial discord. Disputes between British merchants and their Carolinian correspondents reflected in microcosm the geo-political shifts of the time and reveal at an inter-personal level how resistance to British imperial authority developed. These disputes had, furthermore, a constitutive role in this resistance, as the purported commercial iniquities and political orientations of British merchants led their correspondents to question and reject the commercial and political norms that had once sustained Anglo-Carolinian relations.

This collective study is articulated in the context of several dynamic historiographical debates – on the character of the eighteenth-century ‘Atlantic world’, on the political-economic origins of the American Revolution, on South Carolina’s colonial development, on the colony’s parallels with the British West Indies, and on British overseas trade. The thesis contributes to each of these historical literatures; it further reveals the interpretive dividends of an intensive case study approach for understanding Anglo-American relations either side of the Revolutionary War. By taking an inter-

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<sup>3</sup> T79/37/289.

temporal approach, it spans the too-prevalent dichotomies of ‘colonial’ and ‘early Republic’ in American history and the ‘First’ and ‘Second British Empire’ in British history.

In reintegrating political agency into Atlantic commerce, the thesis asserts the politically connective role of merchants in the Anglo-American imperial polity. It highlights the determinative influence of legislation, institutional structures and political-economic thought in their activities, thereby challenging recent postulations of Atlantic interaction. Central to much modern scholarship on the seventeenth and eighteenth-century ‘Atlantic world’ has been an implicit downplaying of the role of state institutions, laws and policies – what might be termed ‘structural’ forces – in shaping interactions and exchanges.<sup>4</sup> Historians have rejected the old certainties of the so-called ‘imperial

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<sup>4</sup> The literature on the nature of pre-modern Atlantic interaction is extensive and growing rapidly. For its taxonomy of the various conceptual models of an ‘Atlantic world’, see in particular David Armitage, ‘Three Concepts of Atlantic History’ in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800*. (Basingstoke, 2002), 16–25. Armstrong suggests ‘circumatlantic history’, treating the Atlantic ocean as a whole unit; ‘transatlantic history’, comprising comparative enquiries; and ‘cisatlantic history’, examining specific places in an Atlantic context. On Armitage’s definitions, see also Alison Games, ‘Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities’, *AHR*, 111.3 (June 2006), 746–7. On the implications of this ‘Atlantic turn’ for studies of the British American colonies, see Nicholas Canny, ‘Writing Atlantic History; or, Reconfiguring the History of Colonial British America’, *JAH*, 86.3 (Dec. 1999), 1093–1114; and Ian K. Steele, ‘Exploding Colonial American History: Amerindian, Atlantic, and Global Perspectives’, *Reviews in American History*, 26.1 (March 1998), 70–95. On its possibilities for the history of the British Isles, see Armitage, ‘Greater Britain: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?’, *AHR*, 104.2 (April 1999), 427–445. Economic historians have similarly strived to schematize how an Atlantic economy was constructed and maintained in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Simon Smith has categorised three different analytical approaches. An “economists’ Atlantic economy” treats transatlantic trade “as a coherent economic system created by the rational responses of profit-seeking individuals to price signals” and assigns formative influence to the staples theory of economic development. A “historians’ Atlantic economy” places greater emphasis on the agency of individuals, positing them as active participants within the Atlantic market, an approach encapsulated in the work of Jacob Price. A “new historical Atlantic economy” extends this analysis of individuals further, arguing for the determinative role of merchants and migrants in constructing and managing the Atlantic economy, which in turn shaped their worldview, and constructed and defined their identities. S. D. Smith, ‘Reckoning with the Atlantic Economy’, *Historical Journal*, 46.3 (Sep. 2003), 749–764. The final approach is exemplified by the works of David Hancock, whose *Citizens of the World* investigated how a network of twenty-three metropolitan ‘associates’ – London merchants with commercial and territorial interests circling the Atlantic rim – “actively and creatively managed” the economic system in which they operated. Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785*. (Cambridge, 1995). More recently, his *Oceans of Wine* explores how, through the agency of thousands of individuals, an Atlantic market for Madeira wine developed: idem., *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Taste and Trade*. (New Haven, CT, 2009). Following Madeira wine through production, distribution and consumption, Hancock uses its example to posit a decentralized and multifocal Atlantic economy and suggests its typicality by noting its dominant market position in North America and its organisational consonance with other European export trades such as those in salt, cloth and hardware. By asserting Madeira’s example as a corrective to traditional commodity-based models of Atlantic trade (such as tobacco, sugar and slaves), Hancock implicitly suggests the limitations of any model for Atlantic trade based on a single commodity. See also Hancock, ‘The British

school’ – interpretations that had colonial administration and governance as their subject – to portray an Atlantic world created less by institutional fiat than by aggregated individual agency.<sup>5</sup> Study of Atlantic commercial exchange, itself looking increasingly beyond the ocean’s shores to assess how it penetrated American, African, European and Asian hinterlands, northern seas and eastern oceans, thus transforming Atlantic into global history, has stressed the permeability of eighteenth-century Atlantic empires and the decentralised and multifocal nature of the Atlantic economy.<sup>6</sup> “Central authorities – states, military and administrative structures, and metropolitan tastes and ideologies,” argues David Hancock, encapsulating this approach, “affected the Atlantic worlds less than is often assumed or evidenced, and their dictates were much more subject to local interpretation”.<sup>7</sup>

Study of the transatlantic ‘Carolina trade’ reinserts these ‘central authorities’ into Anglo-American interaction. It reveals an intricate dialogue between Atlantic commerce, through its traders, and the imperial state. Commerce helped shape political thought and deeds; vice-versa, political action powerfully influenced the terms of trade. The recent historiographical focus on individual and collective experiences in the Atlantic world – an ‘individualist turn’ in history – offers this study a valuable heuristic model, but has too often neglected the structural determinants of these

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Atlantic World: Co-ordination, Complexity, and the Emergence of an Atlantic Market Economy, 1651–1815, *Itinerario*, 23.2 (1999), esp. 113–4.

<sup>5</sup> Exemplars of this ‘imperial school’ approach to Atlantic governance and institutions are classic works such as Charles M. Andrews’s monumental *The Colonial Period of American History*, esp. vol. 4: *England’s Commercial and Colonial Policy*. (New Haven, CT, 1938), and George L. Beer, *The Commercial Policy of England towards the American Colonies*. (New York, 1893).

<sup>6</sup> On the turn from ‘Atlantic’ to ‘global’ in early American economic history, see Peter A. Coclanis, ‘*Esse Est Percipi*: The Strange Case of Early American Economic History’, *JSH*, 73.3 (Aug. 2007), 589–602; idem., ‘Global Perspectives on the Early Economic History of South Carolina’, *SCHM*, 106.2 (April 2005), 130–146.

<sup>7</sup> Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, xviii (quote), xvi–xxv, 423–4n; idem., ‘British Atlantic World’, 107; idem., ‘Commerce and Conversation in the eighteenth-Century Atlantic: The Invention of Madeira Wine’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 29.2 (Autumn 1998), 197–219. Other essays in this vein can be found in Peter A. Coclanis (ed.) *The Atlantic Economy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice and Personnel*. (Columbia, SC, 2005). Chris Evans and Göran Rydén offer a contrasting interpretation to Hancock, however, in their study of the inter-connected Baltic and Atlantic iron trade. Although similar to the Madeira trade in its circumatlantic extension, Evans and Rydén argue that the iron trade attests to the “inescapable presence” of the state in Atlantic trade, with mercantilist regulation prescribing the course of commercial development. Evans and Rydén, *Baltic Iron in the Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century*. (Leiden, 2007), 30.

experiences.<sup>8</sup> Nor have the many studies of specific merchants, for all their value in explicating networks of trade and commercial strategising, sufficiently considered the political facets of their agency.<sup>9</sup> In demonstrating how and why individuals engaged with the imperial state, this thesis bridges two parallel but hitherto disconnected historiographies – the recent biographical or commodity-focussed approach to Atlantic circulation and interactions, and the more traditional emphasis on intra-imperial structures and institutions.

Ostensibly, the economy of colonial South Carolina conforms to a model of Atlantic multivalence. Its principal exports – indigo, deerskins, naval stores and, pre-eminently, rice – connected the colony and its hinterland with diverse markets around Atlantic shores. By the turn of the 1770s, rice was behind only tobacco and grain as British North America's third most valuable commodity export.<sup>10</sup> Trade in deerskins linked South Carolina's Atlantic trade to Indian trading networks stretching hundreds of miles into the American hinterland. Rice, indigo and naval stores all relied for their cultivation on the mass importation and exploitation of enslaved African labourers. In exchange for their commodity exports, Carolinians voraciously consumed textiles and exotic foods from Europe and Asia.<sup>11</sup> So far, so multifocal. Yet, in almost all its forms, South Carolina's overseas trade was powerfully mediated by British legislation and the mercantilist precepts underpinning the political-economy of empire. Each of its exports was governed by the structural constraints

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<sup>8</sup> Notable works in this vein include Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives: Britain and the World, 1550–1800*. (Cambridge, 2008); Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman in World History*. (London, 2007); James Walvin, *The Trader, The Owner, The Slave: Parallel Lives in the Age of Slavery*. (London, 2007). A recent publishing phenomenon, such works use the life-stories of individuals to explicate the fluidity and multivalence of Britain's Atlantic empire and the opportunities it offered.

<sup>9</sup> Inter alia, Richard Pares, 'A London West India Merchant House, 1740–69' in R.A. and Elizabeth Humphreys (eds.), *The Historian's Business and Other Essays*. (Oxford, 1961), 198–226; William I. Roberts III, 'Samuel Storke: An Eighteenth-Century London Merchant Trading to the American Colonies', *Business History Review*, 39.2 (Summer 1965), 147–170; D.W. Thoms, 'The Mills Family: London Sugar Merchants of the Eighteenth Century', *Business History*, 11.1 (Jan. 1969), 3–10; Richard B. Sheridan, 'Planters and Merchants: The Oliver Family of Antigua and London, 1716–1784', *Business History*, 13.2 (July 1971), 104–113; S. D. Smith, 'Merchants and Planters Revisited', *EcHR*, 55.3 (Aug. 2002), 434–465; idem., 'Gedney Clarke of Salem and Barbados: Transatlantic Super-Merchant', *New England Quarterly*, 76.4 (Dec. 2003), 499–549; idem. and T. R. Wheeley, "'Requisites of a Considerable Trade": The Letters of Robert Plumsted, Atlantic Merchant, 1752–8', *EHR*, 124 (June 2009), 545–570.

<sup>10</sup> Nuala Zahedieh, 'Economy' in Armitage and Braddick (eds.), *British Atlantic World*, 58.

<sup>11</sup> On South Carolina's economic orientation, and in particular the role of export markets, see the literature summarised in note 16.

imposed by the empire's Navigation Acts, determining where they could be exported to and what duties must be paid.

The significance that traders accorded the imperial state and its institutions, and the ability these had to shape commerce, was manifested in their sustained interaction with the state apparatus. For London's overseas merchants, petitioning and lobbying the Board of Trade, the Treasury and Parliament were axiomatic corollaries of their core commercial activities. More than any other North American mercantile lobby, London Carolina traders did not simply negotiate pre-existing political and legal constructions but actively campaigned to reshape them. For example, they vigorously and repeatedly lobbied for relaxations to laws limiting Carolinian rice exports; for financial stimuli for indigo and silk cultivation; and for military action to protect South Carolina and its commerce. Drawing on the institutional focus of the 'imperial school', previous studies of sectoral Anglo-American interest groups have exposed the mechanisms through which these groups engaged the imperial state and how they organised their campaigns. These studies have paid insufficient attention, however, to the compositional features of these interest groups – for example, who populated them, how features of their trade itself informed their coherence and efficacy, and how their lobbying was received by their American correspondents. Merchants' political agency has been divorced from their commercial activities, an inversion of the neglect identified above in 'Atlantic world' studies of merchant activity.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Exemplifying this approach were studies during the 1960s of the role of merchant 'interest groups' or 'lobbies' and the London agents appointed by the different colonies who often organised the lobbying efforts: Michael G. Kammen, *A Rope of Sand: The Colonial Agents, British Politics and the American Revolution*. (Ithaca, NY, 1968); Jack M. Sosin, *Agents and Merchants: British Colonial Policy and the Origins of the American Revolution, 1763–1775*. (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1965). The interaction of colonial interest groups and the British state was elaborated most fully in Alison Olson's 1992 book *Making the Empire Work*. Expanding the range of actors and timespan under review, Olson posited that semi-structured interest groups such as merchant lobbies played a vital connective role in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Atlantic polity and argued that mutual interest was a powerful force for stability in Britain's Atlantic empire for much of the century. Thus, "in the heyday of empire substantial numbers of Americans identified with English interest groups and through them had an informal but effective voice in the making of English decisions that affected them; they co-operated with the British government because they were getting what they wanted out of it". Olson, *Making the Empire Work: London and American Interest Groups, 1690–1790*. (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), xi. For sector-specific studies of the

The composition and structure of London's Carolina trade made its participants particularly active in their engagement with the state. Focussing on a cadre of about two dozen merchants, the thesis uses individual and collective biography to reconstruct these individuals' commercial and political orbits. Significantly, their trade was concentrated in relatively few hands; most of the merchants at the forefront of London's Carolina trade until the 1760s had personal experience of living and working in South Carolina; many continued to own land there. All these features contribute to the traders' particular activism; they were also powerful in shaping the political culture of Anglo-Carolinian commerce. While a force for stability through much of the period, compositional features of Anglo-Carolinian trade had, conversely, very different implications as imperial relations deteriorated from the early 1760s.

Between the 1730s and the 1760s, the attempts by London's Carolina traders to alter the conditions of colonial trade and administration through lobbying, petitioning and legislative initiative conveyed important signals to their Carolinian correspondents. For the most part, it was seen to manifest their commitment to the colony from which their fortunes derived – even if unsuccessful, the intent behind the lobbying was itself significant. Chapter one, *“The Metropolis of South Carolina”*: *London Lobbying, Charles Town Commerce and the Emergence of the Capital's Elite Carolina Traders*, and chapter two, *“Friends at Home”*: *London's Mid-Century Carolina Trade*, trace the practice and reception of this lobbying. They reveal its stabilising force and demonstrate how the composition of London's Carolina trade influenced this. Retrospectively, the mid-century activism of London's Carolina lobby took on a new dimension, however, as it offered a contrast with the lobby's

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interaction of colonial interest groups and the British state, see *idem.*, ‘The Virginia Merchants of London: A Study in Eighteenth Century Interest Group Politics’, *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 40.3 (July 1983), 363–388; Andrew O’Shaughnessy, ‘The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: the West Indies Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution’, *Historical Journal*, 40.1 (Feb. 1997), 71–95; *idem.*, ‘The West India Interest and the Crisis of American Independence’ in Roderick A. McDonald, *West Indies Accounts: Essays in the History of the British Caribbean in Honour of Richard Sheridan*. (Kingston, Jamaica, 1996), 126–48; Rebecca Starr, *A School for Politics: Commercial Lobbying and Political Culture in Early South Carolina* (Baltimore, MD, 1998). For an exception, which more fully integrates merchants’ commercial concerns with their political engagement, see William A. Pettigrew, ‘Free to Enslave: Politics and the Escalation of Britain’s Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1688–1714’, *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 64.1 (Jan. 2007), 3–38.

apparent inactivity and reluctance to intervene in the political disputes exorcising South Carolinians from the 1760s onwards. In the Carolina lobby's relative success as a political mechanism were the foundations of its later failure laid.

Besides demonstrating their political impact, scrutiny of the merchants who populated Anglo-Carolinian trade further contributes to the growing historical literature on South Carolina's colonial economic development. For many years, colonial South Carolina was, historiographically speaking, the neglected cousin of the better-studied regions to its north. The current situation is, however, a far cry from thirty years ago, when historians surveying the field could bemoan the relative scholarly inattention to the Lower South as a whole, and particularly its economy. "We simply know less about the economy of the Lower South than about that of any other section of North America", lamented John McCusker and Russell Menard in their influential *Economy of British America, 1607–1789*.<sup>13</sup> Intervening years have seen an outpouring of historical works on the region, casting light on diverse aspects of its social, political and cultural development.<sup>14</sup> Most instructive for this study are Max Edelson's analysis of the expansion of plantation agriculture, Emma Hart's study of Charleston's urban development, and Jonathan Mercantini's assessment of provincial political culture.<sup>15</sup> South Carolina's economic development and its Atlantic commerce have also been intensively scrutinised. This scholarship has long attributed a determinative role to exogenous demand for the province's exports, showing how from its first settlement by British migrants in

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<sup>13</sup> Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, 'Reconstructing British-American Colonial History: An Introduction' in Greene and Pole, *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era*. (Baltimore, MD, 1984), 9; John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607–1789*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1985), 169 (quote).

<sup>14</sup> On South Carolina specifically, see inter alia Peter A. Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Lowcountry, 1670–1920*. (New York, 1989); Joyce E. Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730–1815*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1993); Richard Waterhouse, *A New World Gentry: The Making of a Planter and Merchant Class in South Carolina, 1670–1770*. (New York, 1989); Rachel M. Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760–1808*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1990); Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740–1790*. (Ithaca, NY, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> S. Max Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina*. (Harvard, 2006); Emma Hart, *Building Charleston: Town and Society in the Eighteenth Century British Atlantic World*. (Charlottesville, VA, 2010); Jonathan Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule at Home? The Evolution of South Carolina Political Culture, 1748–1776*. (Columbia, SC, 2007).

1670, export markets drove Carolinian production – of deerskins, naval stores and, from the start of the eighteenth century, rice. It has failed, however, to adequately explore the role of external actors in managing these commodity flows.<sup>16</sup> Surveying the comparative neglect of merchants in South Carolina’s economic history, Peter Coclanis noted how, “the role of merchants is often derided or devalued, when not dismissed altogether or assumed away... the area’s precocious and prepossessing economic experience was due in large part to markets, merchants and merchant capital”. Specifically, as R.C. Nash has observed, “our knowledge of the role of British merchants and capital in the South Carolina trade is very limited”.<sup>17</sup> Britain’s Carolina traders, who sent cargoes of goods and in some cases enslaved Africans to Charles Town, handled remittances of rice, indigo, naval stores and deerskins in exchange, and lobbied the British government for favourable treatment, remain opaque figures to historians of South Carolina, their vital role in the province’s colonial development neglected. With its focus on London merchants in the Carolina trade, this thesis redresses this imbalance.

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<sup>16</sup> On the significance of exogenous demand in South Carolina’s early economic history, see in particular the work of Peter Coclanis: *Shadow of a Dream*; idem., ‘The Hydra Head of Merchant Capital: Market and Merchants in Early South Carolina’ in David R. Chesnutt and Clyde N. Wilson (eds.) *The Meaning of South Carolina History: Essays in Honor of George C. Rogers, Jr.* (Columbia, SC, 1991), 1–12; idem., ‘Global Perspectives on the Early Economic History of South Carolina’ *SCHM* 106.2 (April 2005), 130–146. See also R. C. Nash, ‘Urbanization in the Colonial South: Charleston, South Carolina, as a Case Study’, *Journal of Urban History*, 19.1 (Nov. 1992), 3–29; idem., ‘South Carolina and the Atlantic Economy in the Late 17<sup>th</sup> and Early 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries’, *EcHR*, 45.4 (Nov. 1992), 677–702; Kenneth Morgan, ‘The Organization of the Colonial American Rice Trade’, *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 52.3 (July 1995), 433–452. Influential in this focus has been Jacob Price’s argument for the determinative effect of external markets on colonial economic development, countering what he described as the traditional emphasis in the historiography of the early American economy on supply-side factors. See Price, ‘The Transatlantic Economy’ in Greene and Pole (eds.) *Colonial British America*, 32. On the organisation and structure of the Atlantic Carolina trade, see in particular the writings of R.C. Nash, notably ‘The Organization of Trade and Finance in the Atlantic Economy: Britain and South Carolina, 1670–1775’ in Jack P. Greene, Rosemary Brana-Shute, and Randy J. Sparks, *Money, Trade, and Power: The Evolution of Colonial South Carolina’s Plantation Society*. (Columbia, SC, 2001), 74–107; idem., ‘The Organization of Trade and Finance in the British Atlantic Economy, 1670–1830’ in Peter A. Coclanis (ed.), *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, Personnel*. (Columbia, SC, 2005), 95–151. In the latter, Nash assesses the finance and organisation of the Carolina trade before and after the Revolution against metropolitan trade with the other major trading zones of British America – the West Indies, the Chesapeake, the Middle Colonies and New England, esp. 102–4, 109–11, 114, 124. On the interrelation of Atlantic and frontier Indian trades, see Eirlys M. Barker, ‘Indian Traders, Charles Town and London’s Vital Link to the Interior of North America, 1715–1755’ in Greene et al., *Money, Trade and Power*, 141–165; and Peter C. Mancall, Joshua L. Rosenbloom, and Thomas Weiss, ‘Indians and the Economy of Eighteenth-Century Carolina’ in Coclanis (ed.), *Atlantic Economy*, 297–322.

<sup>17</sup> Coclanis, ‘Hydra Head’, 2; Nash, ‘Organization of Trade and Finance’ [2001], 75. For a partial exception, see George C. Rogers Jr., *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*. (Norman, Oklahoma, 1970), 13–14.

London's leading role in South Carolina's commerce was well known to contemporaries. "There are between Two and Three Hundred sail of shipping yearly Loaded from this port", one Charles Town merchant informed a prospective British entrant into the Carolina trade in 1738, "& the Chief part are Large ships for London & to London especially".<sup>18</sup> The capital's pre-eminence in the transatlantic Carolina trade, and the associated influence of its traders, continued up to and beyond the Revolution. It remained the largest single destination port for most types of South Carolina's exports throughout the eighteenth century, notwithstanding a gradual shift in Britain's rice re-export trade from the capital to the outports during the eighteenth century, and the emergence of Bristol and Liverpool as the principal ports in Britain's Atlantic slave trade. London was the largest single destination for Carolinian rice exports to Britain until 1766 and remained in second place in 1774, and it handled a clear majority of the province's exports of both indigo and deerskins. In the product export trade to South Carolina, London's pre-eminence was still more pronounced, and increased during the colonial period to provide between 85 and 90 per cent of British product exports to the province between 1760 and 1774. Moreover, the capital's commercial influence cannot be measured simply by the quantities of imports and exports passing through its wharves. For example, London was the pre-eminent source of finance for the slave trade, with Charleston slave importers relying predominantly on credit advanced by London merchants.<sup>19</sup>

Study of Anglo-Carolinian trade thus enriches our understanding of eighteenth-century British overseas commerce. Sectoral studies of British Atlantic trade in this period have paid little attention to Anglo-Carolinian commerce, concentrating instead on the more prominent Chesapeake tobacco and West Indies sugar trades.<sup>20</sup> As the first collective study of the individuals and firms in a distinct

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Pringle to Richard Thompson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 1738. *LRP*, I, 30.

<sup>19</sup> Converse D. Clowse, *Measuring Charleston's Overseas Commerce, 1717–1767: Statistics from the Port's Naval Lists*. (Washington D.C., 1981), 54–5, 59, 67, 81; Nash, 'Organization of Trade and Finance' [2001], 74–107; David Richardson, 'The British Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina', *Slavery and Abolition*, 12.3 (Dec. 1991), 125–172.

<sup>20</sup> On the tobacco trade to the Chesapeake, see in particular Jacob M. Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade: The View from the Chesapeake, 1700–1776*. (Cambridge, Mass., 1980); idem., *Perry of London: A Family and a Firm on the Seaborne Frontier, 1615–1753*. (Cambridge, Mass., 1992). On Anglo-Caribbean commerce, see

branch of London's eighteenth-century overseas trade, the thesis enhances an emergent literature that is re-examining and reasserting the capital's primacy in British overseas commerce.<sup>21</sup> In considering scholarship on the capital's colonial merchants in her recent study of London's late-17<sup>th</sup> century overseas trade, Nuala Zahedieh observed how "membership of the group, and the material nature of the interests at stake in the Atlantic, lack clear definition and highlight the need for a detailed study of this important commercial sector".<sup>22</sup> Tracing London's foremost eighteenth-century Carolina traders from their commercial training, mostly in Charles Town, through their establishment as elite metropolitan traders, and to their retirement from active commerce, helps rectify this neglect. The thesis sheds light on these merchants' public roles by showing how mercantile interaction with the Hanoverian state took place. On their private lives, the thesis exposes the fortunes made by the most prominent Carolina traders and shows how they spent their riches. This wealth and its public display placed London's Carolina traders in the highest echelon of

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Richard Pares, *A West-India Fortune*. (London, 1950); Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1972); Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623–1775*. (Baltimore, 1974).

<sup>21</sup> Perry L. Gauci, *The Politics of Trade: The Overseas Merchant in State and Society, 1660–1720*. (Oxford, 2001); idem., *Emporium of the World: The Merchants of London, 1660–1800*. (London, 2007); Nuala Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies: London and the Atlantic Economy, 1660–1700*. (Cambridge, 2010). Recent studies of London's commercial pre-eminence counterbalance a longstanding historiographical emphasis on the overseas trade of Britain's 'outports', notably described in Kenneth Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century*. (Cambridge, 1993); T. M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and their Trading Activities, c. 1740–1790*. (Edinburgh, 1975). Greater focus on the outports has reflected the greater survival of commercial correspondence and administrative data from these locations. In contrast, London's eighteenth-century port books were willfully destroyed (by officials at the Public Record Office, no less) in the 1890s and much other material on Hanoverian London's commerce during the Blitz – on the destruction of the port books, see Jacob M. Price and Paul G. E. Clemens, 'A Revolution in Overseas Trade: British Firms in the Chesapeake Trade, 1675–1775', *Journal of Economic History*, 47.1 (March, 1987), 2.

<sup>22</sup> Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies*, 8. Similarly, Gauci has commented that only a few individual London merchants and trading houses in all the capital's overseas trades have been studied to any extent in either their public or private capacities. While "some excellent research has been completed on various aspects of the mercantile life-cycle," he noted, "rarely has a holistic approach been taken to the career path of a merchant". Gauci, *Politics of Trade*, 63 (quote), 63n. For brief biographical treatments of Britain's South Carolina merchants in secondary sources, see Katherine A. Kellock, 'London Merchants and the Pre-1776 American Debts', *Guildhall Studies*, 1 (Oct. 1974), 116–46; Walter B. Edgar and N. L. Bailey, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives, vol. II: The Commons House of Assembly, 1692–1775*. (Columbia, SC, 1977), passim; Hamer et al. (eds.), *Papers of Henry Laurens*, passim.; Nash, 'Organization of Trade and Finance' [2001], 91–2; James Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers: Transatlantic Literary Community and the Charleston Library Society, 1748–1811*. (Columbia, SC, 2002), 126–7. Some letter collections for Bristol merchants in the Carolina trade have survived, and have been scrutinized in two published works. See Walter E. Minchinton, 'Richard Champion, Nicholas Pocock, and the Carolina Trade', *SCHM*, 65.2 (Apr. 1964), 87–97; Starr, *School for Politics*, 47–60.

metropolitan commerce. It also conveyed important symbolic messages to their correspondents in South Carolina.

The number of London's Carolina merchants, up to the 1760s at least, who had spent their early careers in Charles Town was one of the trade's most notable features. Having gained knowledge, trading connections and often considerable wealth in South Carolina, they relocated to London in search of still greater profits. This connection to South Carolina through living and working there distinguished the traders from most of their counterparts in other branches of metropolitan North American trade and followed a practice more common in the West Indies trade, where many merchants had honed their commercial expertise in the Caribbean. Chapter three, "*Cankers to the Riches of a Country*"? *Transatlantic Absenteeism in Colonial South Carolina*, examines the underappreciated prevalence of 'absentee' land ownership in South Carolina by British residents. Among them were many of London's leading Carolina merchants, who had generally acquired the lands during their time in South Carolina or, having relocated to London, acquired property in lieu of debts owed to them in the province. This land ownership informed their particular activism in promoting the colony's interests in Britain. By the eve of the Revolution, moreover, it had assumed significant political connotations.

In considering absenteeism – traditionally conceived as a phenomenon of West Indian colonisation – in a North American context, the thesis speaks to two further historical literatures. By showing how property ownership in South Carolina by non-residents enhanced the colony's interests in metropolitan corridors of power, it challenges long held assumptions about absenteeism's supposedly deleterious consequences for Britain's colonies.<sup>23</sup> By underscoring the parallels between South Carolina and the West Indies, it further destabilises any lingering notions of the exceptionality of North American colonial development, reintegrating South Carolina into a British

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<sup>23</sup> For an overview of the literature on the character and consequences of absenteeism in the British West Indies, see chapter three, note 5.

Atlantic empire of some twenty-six colonies, as opposed to the thirteen in which its evolution has typically been situated.<sup>24</sup> Before the American Revolution marked the political separation of thirteen colonies from their hemispheric neighbours, there was no obvious disjuncture. Visitors were struck by the parallels between South Carolina and the Caribbean islands. Even government officials apparently had some difficulty in distinguishing Britain's southernmost (until 1732) North American colony from its Caribbean counterparts – Board of Trade correspondence occasionally bore, in a clerk's hand, the inscription "Carolina, in the West Indies". Historians have long observed the influence of the sugar islands and especially that of Barbados on early South Carolina, in particular its plantation system.<sup>25</sup> Twenty years ago, Jack Greene proposed a continuum of social organisation in the British American colonies in 1763. With the Leeward Islands and New England at either extreme, it located the Lower South Carolina equidistant from the Caribbean islands and its northerly continental neighbours, and closer to Barbados than any other colony/region. In identifying the significance of absenteeism in South Carolina, the thesis provides evidentiary ballast for this model.<sup>26</sup>

While the first three chapters demonstrate the structural characteristics which served as a force for stability in the Anglo-Carolinian polity, chapter four, "*From Humble and Moderate Fortunes to Great Affluence*": *The Carolina Trade and Imperial Crises*, charts the multifaceted breakdown of trust within the trade during the 1760s and early 1770s. Commercially, the *concentration* of London's Carolina trade in relatively few hands – once a factor in the lobby's efficiency – came to be seen as

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<sup>24</sup> In so doing, it follows the conceptual approach of studies such as Jack Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of the Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988); Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean*. (Philadelphia, 2000); Menard and McCusker, *Economy of British America*.

<sup>25</sup> On the Caribbean's formative influence on South Carolina's settlement and development, see Converse D. Clowse, *Economic Beginnings in Colonial South Carolina, 1670–1730*. (Columbia, SC, 1971), 69–227; Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through to the Stono Rebellion*. (New York, 1974), 13–34; Richard S. Dunn, 'The English Sugar Islands and the Founding of South Carolina', *SCHM*, 72.2, (April. 1971), 81–93; Jack P. Greene, 'Colonial South Carolina and the Caribbean Connection', *SCHM*, 88.4 (Oct. 1987), 192–210; Richard Waterhouse, 'England, the Caribbean, and the Settlement of South Carolina', *Journal of American Studies*, 9.3 (1975), 259–281.

<sup>26</sup> Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 173.

*domination*. While historians have assessed the economic implications of how specific trades became concentrated in fewer hands in London over the course of the eighteenth century, this chapter assesses the political ramifications of this process.<sup>27</sup> Accompanying this were personnel changes within London's Carolina trade which saw merchants rise to pre-eminence who lacked their forerunners' experiential connections to the province. Suspicion of and frustration with their business practices grew. London traders were held to be increasingly unsympathetic, or even hostile, to their correspondents' interests. Against mounting imperial tensions, commercial and political dependence on these uncertain metropolitan 'friends' seemed no longer effective nor wise to many Carolinians. Their complaints were not expressed as explicit challenges to the 'mercantilist' precepts that governed Carolinian trade. However, critiques of supposed metropolitan malpractice suggested a tacit or at least an incipient rejection of the systemic constraints that had led to this malign concentration of trade in London, furnished the metropolitan traders with great wealth, and allowed them to manipulate the trade in their favour.

Responses to the metropolitan Carolina traders' conjoined business practices and their political (in)activity indicate how notions of commercial and political repression developed in tandem in South Carolina, and were seen as mutually reinforcing. The thesis thus enriches the understanding of how South Carolina moved, often imperceptibly, against British authority during the 1760s and early 1770s by emphasising commercial discord within the growing political-economic friction. Why South Carolina's merchant-planter elite – one of the Atlantic world's wealthiest groups and ostensibly among the chief beneficiaries of the British imperial system – came to reject British authority has long perplexed historians. Dominating the field for forty years, Robert Weir's classic exposition, "The Harmony We Were Famous For", advanced an ideological interpretation, implying how political objections overrode material economic arguments for maintaining the status quo. Conversely, materialist interpretations of Anglo-American discord have attributed a powerfully

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<sup>27</sup> Price and Clemens, 'Revolution in Overseas Trade', esp. 21–4; Jacob M. Price, 'What Did Merchants Do? Reflections on British Overseas Trade, 1660–1790', *Journal of Economic History*, 49.2 (June 1989), 281.

provocative role to trade – and particularly the symbolic ‘meanings’ that goods conveyed – in the crises before 1776. For Timothy Breen, the most ardent proponent of a consumerist interpretation of the Revolution, “British merchants bore as much responsibility as did members of Parliament for the growing unhappiness of American consumers” from the 1760s.<sup>28</sup> In showing how the commercial and lobbying activities of metropolitan Carolina traders intersected and how this dual role was interpreted by their colonial correspondents, this thesis describes how economic and political factors were interrelated in these Carolinians’ growing disenchantment with their metropolitan connections.

By continuing until 1790, thereby transcending the more conventional endpoints of 1776 or 1783, the thesis offers both retrospective insights on pre-war trade and illuminates the commercial upheavals and continuities that marked the post-war resumption of Anglo-Carolinian trade. It thus brings a much needed inter-temporal dimension to the study of British North America and in particular the American Revolution. Anglo-American relations in the 1780s have attracted little of the historiographical scrutiny accorded the previous two decades of controversy and conflict. South Carolina’s post-war links with Britain are no exception. Study of post-war trade helps redress this neglect. Chapter five, *The Voyage of the Lord North: American Independence, Anglo-Carolinian Trade and Unfinished Business*, explores the post-war reconstruction of trading links between South Carolina and Great Britain by showing how strongly these were influenced by pre-war politics. While Britain remained by far South Carolina’s largest overseas market, the chapter reveals that this structural continuity – much bemoaned by many observers in Charleston – masked pronounced discontinuities in the composition of Britain’s post-war Carolina trade. London’s leading pre-war Carolina traders, whom Patriot commentators had come to consider nearly all hostile to South Carolinian interests on the eve of the war, were spurned in post-war commerce because of their

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<sup>28</sup> Robert M. Weir, “‘The Harmony We Were Famous For’: An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics”, *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 26.4 (Oct. 1969), 473–501; Timothy H. Breen, “‘Baubles of Britain’: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century”, *Past and Present*, 119 (May 1988), 88.

purported pre-war political orientations. Exercising commercial choices in this way, Carolinians confounded contemporary jeremiads that bewailed ongoing subservience to monolithic British trading interests, complaints with which historians have been too willing to concur. Furthermore, through investigating how London's Carolina traders continued to interact with the British state during and after the war, the thesis demonstrates the centrality of commercial concerns to British policy towards America during the 1780s and, accordingly, to Anglo-American relations in this critical decade.

Finally, and in its concluding epilogue, the thesis posits the need for renewed scholarly attention to Anglo-American relations in the decade between the Peace of Paris in 1783 and the Jay-Grenville Treaty in 1794–5. This would reassert the significance of the United States' ties to the former 'mother country' in its first decade as an independent nation, notably their role in informing its political discourse and economic orientation. Vice-versa, it would challenge the preoccupation in British historiography with the shift from a 'First' to a 'Second British Empire', which emphasises British imperial expansion in the east to the detriment of the still influential relationship with the United States. It suggests that the explanatory model advanced in this thesis, of inter-relating commerce and politics, and of integrating individual experiences, collective action and policy formulation, offers a compelling approach to follow.

### **Sources and evidence**

An extensive and diverse array of sources facilitate the methodology of the thesis and substantiate its arguments. Some are well known to historians; many more have received little or no historiographical scrutiny. Any study of South Carolina's eighteenth-century Atlantic commerce will necessarily draw upon the published letterbook collections of Charleston merchants Robert Pringle, covering 1737 to 1745, and Henry Laurens, whose sixteen volumes of correspondence span 1747 to 1749 and 1755 to 1792. Each documents the breadth of commercial interests and ties with British,

continental European, Caribbean and North American correspondents.<sup>29</sup> Largely overlooked by historians, but offering great insights is the 1759 to 1771 letterbook of Charles Town's deputy naval officer, Robert Raper. He was managing agent for several British resident owners of Carolinian plantations and urban properties, including several of London's most prominent Carolina merchants.<sup>30</sup> More fragmentary collections in South Carolina and Britain hold a wealth of commercial correspondence documenting multilateral Atlantic trading connections and transatlantic property ownership, while the papers of Charles Garth, South Carolina's colonial agent between 1762 and 1775 vividly reveal the intersection of colonial trade and politics.<sup>31</sup>

Besides epistolary evidence, the thesis draws upon a trove of maritime, legal and property records. Shipping lists detail the movement of vessels to and from Charles Town and their ownership. Lawsuits such as those pursued by London traders against Carolinian debtors unveil the traders' commercial strategies and indicate the organisation of their trade. Land plats, mortgages and deeds reveal how British residents came to own agricultural tracts and urban property in South Carolina. Contemporary newspapers elucidate merchants' trajectories through commercial advertisements and reports of ships' movements: the *South Carolina Gazette* abounds with evidence on the early careers of the merchants who would go on to dominate London's Carolina trade – the location of their premises, their range of goods and their extra-commercial activities. The composition of London's Carolina trade and its merchants' political advocacy are made manifest in the missives and petitions addressed to the Board of Trade and the Treasury; wills, lawsuits and tax

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<sup>29</sup> Philip Hamer et al. (eds.), *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, 16 vols. (Columbia, SC, 1968–2003); Walter B. Edgar (ed.), *The Letterbook of Robert Pringle, 1737–45*, 2 vols. (Columbia, SC, 1972). No correspondence survives in the Laurens papers between April 1749 and 12<sup>th</sup> May 1755. The John Guerard letterbook, at the South Carolina Historical Society, contains correspondence between 7<sup>th</sup> March 1752 and 17<sup>th</sup> June 1754 but has not been published. See R. C. Nash, 'Trade and Business in Eighteenth Century South Carolina: The Career of John Guerard, Merchant and Planter', *SCHM*, 96.1 (Jan. 1995), 6–29. In contrast, more than fifty collections of the correspondence of Philadelphia merchants survive from the colonial period. Nash, 'Trade and Business', 7.

<sup>30</sup> Letterbook of Robert Raper, 1759–1771. (Bodleian Library, Oxford, microfilm).

<sup>31</sup> Inter alia, Ogilvie–Forbes papers, Pringle–Garden family papers, John Martin papers, Alexander Fraser papers (all SCHS); William Ancrum account book, Philip Porcher account book and correspondence, Taylor family papers, Colleton family papers, Margaret Colleton papers, Isaac King letterbook, Ball family papers (all SCL); Charles Garth Letterbook, 1766–1775 (microfilm, SCDAH).

assessments further demonstrate the scale and character of the trade. Finally, newly digitised sources permit the reconstruction of eighteenth-century trade as never before – for example, British newspapers that were once effectively impregnable to historians attempting a study of this type; pamphlets and subscription lists that illustrate the merchants’ extra-commercial pursuits; and records of the transatlantic slave trade which expose individual merchants’ participation in this traffic.<sup>32</sup>

Two decades ago in a pair of articles on the eighteenth-century Anglo-American polity and its commercial superstructure, Jacob Price posed two questions: ‘Who Cared about the Colonies?’ and ‘What did Merchants do?’<sup>33</sup> The intervening two decades have seen many contributions to both these questions – on commercial organisation, on imperial sentiment in Britain and on Atlantic interactions. They have not, however, sufficiently extended their analyses to expose how the answers to both questions are inter-related. Study of Britain’s South Carolina traders reveals how merchants cared about the colonies for reasons that were at once economic and emotional. The ways in which they manifested their concerns had profound implications for the stability of the Anglo-American imperial polity, for its eventual collapse and for its post-Revolution reconstitution.

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<sup>32</sup> For contemporary British newspapers: *Burney Collection Online* (British Library); for contemporary printed material (mostly British): *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. The recently compiled and digitized *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* reveals 403 slave voyages that left British ports to carry enslaved human cargo from Africa to South Carolina between 1710 and 1774 alone (more followed between 1783 and 1787); particularly instructive for this study, it often identifies the ships’ owners: <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces>

<sup>33</sup> Price, ‘What Did Merchants Do?’, 267–284; idem., ‘Who Cared about the Colonies? The Impact of the Thirteen Colonies on British Society and Politics, c. 1714–1775’, in Bernard Bailyn and Philip Morgan (eds.), *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1991), 395–436.

## CHAPTER ONE

### “The Metropolis of South Carolina”: London Lobbying, Charles Town Commerce and the Emergence of the Capital’s Elite Carolina Traders

The partial exemption of rice from the strictures of the Navigation Acts by Parliament in May 1730, permitting its direct export to Spain and Portugal, has long occupied a footnote in histories of early South Carolina.<sup>1</sup> Historians have in particular debated the measure’s economic significance for the colony. For Eugene Sirmans, it “started a boom in the colony’s rice production”, and Kenneth Morgan notes the doubling of rice production and prices in its wake. John McCusker and Russell Menard, however, suggest that its “effect was small”.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the political implications of the lobbying for direct rice exports, coming after twenty years of growing Carolinian commercial advocacy in London, have yet to be fully grasped.<sup>3</sup> The renewed efforts had begun in February 1730. A petition from “several Merchants, Factors and Traders to *Carolina*” was presented to the Commons, recapitulating arguments made over the previous two decades in favour of direct exports to the Iberian peninsular. It identified the potential demand for colonial rice in Iberian markets, but complained that the existing compulsion for the grain be landed in British ports before being re-exported to Spain and Portugal added to shipping costs and delayed its arrival in Iberian

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent summary of the origins and impact of the Navigation Acts, see Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies*, 36–8. The first Navigation Act in 1660 compelled all goods taken to and from the colonies to be carried in English or colonial ships, with the master and three-quarters of the crew to be English or colonial subjects. It ‘enumerated’ or specified a range of a list of colonial-produced commodities that could only be exported to England or to another English colony, including sugar, tobacco, coffee, indigo and cotton. Prohibitive duties were placed on foreign tobacco and sugar to reward colonists with a virtual monopoly of the home market for their produce. Further Navigation Acts in 1663, 1673 and 1696 codified and reinforced the legislation’s ‘mercantilist’ strictures. Rice was added to the enumerated list in 1704 (see below).

<sup>2</sup> M. Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663–1763*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1966), 162; Morgan, ‘Organization of the Colonial American Rice Trade’, 439. McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 179. Providing statistical ballast to McCusker and Menard’s observation, Peter Coclanis’s demonstration of the exponential growth of South Carolina’s rice industry during the 1720s, when exports grew more than three-fold, implicitly downplays the significance of the legislation. Coclanis, ‘Rice Prices in the 1720s and the evolution of the South Carolina Economy’, *JSH*, 48.4 (Nov. 1982), 531–44, esp. 532.

<sup>3</sup> Rebecca Starr considers the 1730 rice lobbying (though she wrongly dates it to 1729) in her *School for Politics*, within a short narrative of the Carolina agents’ and traders’ commercial lobbying in London. The book offers a plausible thesis on how the tactics and style of lobby politics influenced South Carolina’s political culture; however, in concentrating on the implications of lobbying for colonial/state politics, it underplays the significance of the metropolitan Carolina ‘interest’ for the transatlantic, Anglo-Carolinian polity. Starr, *School for Politics*, esp. 24–43.

ports until after the annual lent-time peak in demand. Consequently, the Iberian rice trade was “in the Hands of Foreigners, to the detriment of the *English* Merchants, and Planters”. Importantly, the London Carolina traders strengthened their case by co-opting other mercantile interests: supportive petitions followed from merchants trading to Spain and Portugal and from Bristol merchants, manifesting a lobby that was both cross-sectoral and that combined metropolitan and regional trading interests. Broadening the appellant base in this way followed long-established precedent in eighteenth-century parliamentary petitioning, and signified the Carolina lobby’s tactical astuteness. This was further shown in the choice of the two MPs who introduced the rice bill to Parliament: Peter Burrell was a leading metropolitan Portugal merchant and director of the South Sea Company; Abraham Elton was MP for Bristol and regularly presented petitions from the city’s merchants.<sup>4</sup>

Over the previous decade and a half, the Carolina lobby’s regular petitioning had raised political awareness of South Carolina in Britain. The lobbying coincided with profound economic and political shifts within the colony, affecting its transatlantic trade and its relationship with the British state. In the two decades before 1730, South Carolina’s population had nearly trebled. During the 1720s, rice exports had increased three-fold, deerskins exports had doubled, total shipping clearing Charles Town harbour had grown by more than 100 per cent, and per capita exports to Britain had risen by 37 per cent.<sup>5</sup> Politically, 1729 had seen the British crown take formal control of South Carolina, as the authority of its proprietors – the descendants and inheritors of the original eight Lords Proprietors who had founded the colony in 1670 – was revoked after ten years of impasse. South Carolina was more closely integrated into Britain’s political and trading empire than ever before. As a comparatively young colony, however, and one which lacked the public and political

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<sup>4</sup> *JHC*, XXI, 464, 470; *Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers, 1719–30*, 332. The petitions themselves appear not to have survived. On the MPs’ interests and activities, see Romney Sedgwick (ed.), *The House of Commons, 1715–1754*. 2 vols. (London, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream*, 64–5; idem., ‘Rice Prices in the 1720s and the Evolution of the South Carolina Economy’, *JSH*, 48.4 (Nov. 1982), 533.

profile of its northern neighbours, not to mention the West Indian sugar islands, its advocates in London needed to manoeuvre carefully to make their voices heard. Specifically, this meant collaborating with other interest groups with priorities in common.

Besides co-opting these groups, the Carolina lobby in 1730 carefully situated its claims within mainstream political-economic thinking, couching them in mercantilist orthodoxy to convince the state of the holistic benefits to Britain that would accrue from the proposals. In the petitions and again in committee hearings, where London Carolina traders George Brailsford and Samuel Wragg (since 1727 South Carolina's official agent in London) gave evidence, the proposals stressed the advantages of direct rice exports for both colony and mother country, for planter and merchant alike, and the commensurate disadvantages – reflecting the prevailing conception of trade as a 'zero-sum game' – for foreign rivals. With some modifications, this political-economic rationale would underpin South Carolina's commercial petitioning throughout the colonial era. Along with an endorsement from the South Sea Company, the proposals secured government support, as shown by the MPs who acted as tellers for the bill at its various stages: George Crowle, Giles Earle, John Plumtre, Sir George Saunders and Thomas Winnington were all consistent government supporters, while Robert Austen had no particular alignment. Conversely, the tellers against the bill – Sir John Barnard, John Knight, Sir Roger Meredith, Samuel Sandys, Erasmus Phillips and Edward Vernon – were for the most part vehement opponents of the Walpole administration.<sup>6</sup> With its cross-sectoral backing and ministerial support, the bill passed through Parliament and was given royal assent in May 1730, "granting Liberty to carry Rice from His Majesty's Province of Carolina, in America, directly to any port in Europe Southward of Cape Finisterre".<sup>7</sup>

This chapter sets the later activity and composition of London's Carolina trade in historical context. Firstly, it narrates the trade's early development through the lobbying of its merchants and explains

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<sup>6</sup> *JHC*, XXI, 500–587; Sedgwick (ed.), *House of Commons*, passim.

<sup>7</sup> 3 Geo. II, c. 28 in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, VI, 35–7.

how the transatlantic mechanisms for representing South Carolina's interests in the imperial corridors of power were constructed. It begins by assessing how petitioning activity between 1715 and 1730, which culminated in the Rice Act in 1730, informed future mercantile interaction with the imperial state. This activity was also significant for the way it informed later assumptions and expectations in South Carolina of London's Carolina traders, the principal members of the capital's Carolina 'lobby' for the next five decades. To understand the lobby's later development, it is also vital to explore the commercial trajectories of London's leading mid-century Carolina traders. The chapter therefore turns its attention to South Carolina's own 'metropolis', Charles Town.<sup>8</sup> It was here that the traders who later moved to London, dominated the Atlantic Carolina trade and became the colony's chief metropolitan advocates, and who are also the principal actors in this thesis, had their formative commercial training. The chapter describes their commercial emergence in Charles Town before they relocated to the imperial capital. It examines their routes into trade, such as through mercantile apprenticeships and by captaining Atlantic shipping, and the influence of the time they spent in Charles Town. This allowed them to build the capital and connections required to prosper in Atlantic trade, and propelled them to the forefront of London's Carolina trade.

### **Mercantilism and 'interest'**

South Carolina's value to Britain was, like the other American colonies, predominantly understood and articulated in straightforwardly 'mercantilist' terms. Since the sum of the world's wealth was finite, trade was a zero-sum game: advantages Britain derived from economic growth would

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<sup>8</sup> "The Metropolis of South Carolina": this epithet featured commonly in 18<sup>th</sup> century descriptions of the town. For example, in 1709 the surveyor John Lawson "arriv'd at Charles Town, the Metropolis of South Carolina", while a visiting British officer, Lord Adam Gordon, noted his arrival in Charles Town – "the Metropolis of South Carolina" in 1764. Describing the British campaign in the southern colonies in 1779, James Madison observed Britain's "rapacious zeal for the rich and flourishing Metropolis of South Carolina". John Lawson, *A New Voyage to South Carolina, containing the exact description and natural history of that country: together with the present state thereof*. (London, 1709), 2. [Lord Adam Gordon], 'Journal of an Officer who Travelled in American and the West Indies in 1764 and 1765' in N. D. Mereness, *Travels in the American Colonies*. (New York, 1916), 397; JM to William Bradford, 30<sup>th</sup> Oct. to 5<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1779. William T. Hutchinson et al (eds.), *The Papers of James Madison*. 31 vols. (Charlottesville, VA, 1962–), I, 312.

necessarily lead to the disadvantage of its competitors. In practical terms, since Britain's wealth would be augmented by a favourable balance of trade, the government's economic role was conceived as being to promote the nation's exports and restrict its imports in order to achieve this. In the early and middle decades of the eighteenth century, advocates of the free-trade liberalism most cogently articulated by Adam Smith were in a distinct if occasionally vocal minority.<sup>9</sup> Rationalisations of South Carolina's value within Britain's Atlantic empire were accordingly mainstream. Extolling the province's economic contribution to Britain to the Board of Trade in 1751, Governor James Glen noted how "twenty five thousand [South Carolina's estimated white population] are wholly subsisted and supplied by the produce of the land, without manufactures of any kind... a circumstance that makes us perhaps more valuable to our mother country than any other province on the continent".<sup>10</sup> Glen's conclusion echoed the verdicts of earlier published assessments. One of the colony's official agents in London, Francis Yonge, published his *View of the Trade of South Carolina* in 1722. Its suggestions for boosting the colony's trade reflected the prevailing political-economic climate. Directed at the Board of Trade, the tract's foremost appeal was for permission to be granted for direct rice exports from the province to foreign markets. It made its case in a series of conventionally mercantilist claims. Higher rice exports would redound directly to the benefit of the mother country: rice did not compete with any of Britain's crops and therefore "every Hundred Weight sold to a Foreign market, is as much Money... added to the riches of Great Britain". A surge in risiculture would bring greater prosperity to South Carolina and therefore nourish greater demand for British manufactured goods. Yonge was even willing to concede that the government might reasonably require all ships in the rice trade to be wholly owned in Britain itself, thereby stimulating British shipbuilding and elevating demand for colonial

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<sup>9</sup> On mercantilism and colonial policy, see Kammen, *Empire and Interest*, esp. 40–2, 48–50; Menard and McCusker, *Economy of British America*, 35–8; Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit*, 27–9; Cathy D. Matson and Peter S. Onuf, *A Union of Interests: Political and Economic Thought in Revolutionary America*. (Lawrence, Kansas, 1990), 15–20.

<sup>10</sup> James Glen, 'An Attempt towards an Estimate of the Value of South Carolina, for the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, 1751' in H. Roy Merrens (ed.), *The Colonial South Carolina Scene: Contemporary Views, 1697–1774*. (Columbia, 1977), 183.

timber – a prime example of the presumed mutuality of domestic and colonial economic interest that his audience wanted to hear.<sup>11</sup>

South Carolina's productive potential was not lost on the more widely read economic theorists of the day. It was among the many topics on which the economic theorist Joshua Gee ruminated in his influential 1729 treatise, *The Trade and Navigation of Great Britain Considered*. Consistently stressing the value to Britain of her colonies through their production of staples for which Britain otherwise had to rely on foreign rivals, and in their consumption of British manufactures, Gee highlighted the potential of the Carolinas and Virginia, “the most desirable of any in America for Latitude, Air, Soil, and navigable Rivers, and lye so commodiously for corresponding with Europe”. Specific commodities ripe for cultivation in South Carolina and vital to Britain were naval stores, potash and indigo, whose growth in the province would reduce Britain's dependence on foreign sources, improving its balance of trade with rival European powers, and stimulating its domestic manufacturing sector through increased colonial demand.<sup>12</sup> Gee's was perhaps the best-known elaboration of a mercantilist refrain that was enshrined in law and, broadcast in published tracts and treatises and pervading the rhetoric of ministers and officials of state, was a staple of early eighteenth-century political-economic discourse. It was no coincidence that it would also suffuse the rhetoric and appeals employed with increasing frequency by South Carolina's mercantile advocates in London's corridors of power.

For London's leading eighteenth-century traders, engaging with the state on matters of commercial policy was a normative pursuit. Merchants in the different branches of American trade were no different, as studies by Alison Olson and Andrew O'Shaughnessy have detailed.<sup>13</sup> Merchants recognised state interaction, moreover, as an intrinsic component of their regular business. One

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<sup>11</sup> Francis Yonge, *View of the Trade of South Carolina, with Proposals Humbly Offer'd for improving the same*. (London, c. 1722), 12–4.

<sup>12</sup> Joshua Gee, *The Trade and Navigation of Great Britain Considered*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London, 1731), esp. iv (quote), 22–3, 48–53, 100–106.

<sup>13</sup> Olson, *Making the Empire Work*; O'Shaughnessy, 'Formation of a Commercial Lobby'.

element of this was providing evidence to Board of Trade enquiries or parliamentary committees on issues where they had particular knowledge. To actively shape or propose legislation relating to their trade, merchants turned to petitioning. Since the Restoration, petitioning had been the chief way for interest groups to make requests and express grievances to Parliament. Petitions were a means of either introducing legislation or challenging existing statute. Circulated among and signed by the various interested parties, they were presented to Parliament by a sympathetic member and thereafter received a reading. They were then either discussed in committee and ultimately enacted into law; or lost into legislative oblivion.<sup>14</sup>

The two decades before 1730 were formative years for London's nascent Carolina trade. During these years, metropolitan merchants who traded to South Carolina emerged as an identifiable grouping alongside those in the longer established branches of North American trade – to New England, Virginia or the West Indies. Their interaction with the British state was galvanised by the appointment of South Carolina's first metropolitan agent in 1712. The appointment followed established colonial precedent. The longer established American colonies had long employed formal agents on a temporary and, from the 1680s, a permanent basis to represent their interests in the metropolis – for example, on matters relating to provincial laws, imperial trade regulation and encouraging new settlement.<sup>15</sup> The main task of South Carolina's first agent, Abel Kettleby, was to ensure that a government bounty on naval stores imported from the colonies was maintained; a secondary objective was to secure the freedom to export naval stores and rice to all foreign markets.<sup>16</sup> Permanent agency provided a figure around whom the trading community could coalesce, and the Carolina lobby – mirroring the colony's rapid economic and demographic growth – became progressively more active. Like Kettleby's instructions, the issues raised by London's

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<sup>14</sup> James Bradley, *Popular Politics and the American Revolution in England: Petitions, the Crown, and Public Opinion*. (Macon, GA, 1986), 17; Julian Hoppit, 'Patterns of Parliamentary Legislation, 1600–1800', *Historical Journal*, 39.1 (March 1996), 109–31.

<sup>15</sup> Kammen, *A Rope of Sand*, 3–15; Ella Lonn, *The Colonial Agents of the Southern Colonies*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1945), 53–9.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord (eds.), *The Statutes of Large of South Carolina*. 10 vols. (Columbia, SC, 1836–41), II, 600–2; Lonn, *Colonial Agents*, 66–7.

Carolina interest reflected the exigencies of a young colony on British North America's vulnerable southern frontier. Defending the colony from Indian and rival imperial threats, and establishing a viable, export-based economy were the two most pressing – and mutually supportive – priorities. Assessing the metropolitan 'Carolina interest' at this early juncture serves two purposes. First, it reveals how the interest's interaction with the state fashioned conceptions and expectations of commercial advocacy. It also illuminates the early structure and composition of London's Carolina trade. Both would have important implications for future relations between Carolina traders in the capital and the colony to which they traded.

But who composed London's Carolina 'interest'? Capturing the membership of any sector of overseas trade in eighteenth-century London is an inexact science; even defining the parameters of any given trade poses real difficulties. No statistical records exist to reveal which merchants shipped and received which quantities of goods at what frequency, while study of the transatlantic Carolina trade before the 1730s is hindered by a lack of surviving commercial letters and accounts from either side of the Atlantic. In light of statistical and epistolary limitations, the petitioning activity of the capital's merchants offers the best means to explore the size, composition and organisation of London's early Carolina trade. The thirteen surviving petitions signed by London's Carolina traders between 1715 and 1730 and the two official lists of merchants identified as being involved in the trade reveal how London's Carolina traders began to coalesce into a discernible lobby during the 1710s and 1720s. While an imprecise guide to commercial activity, the frequency with which merchants signed the petitions implies the scale of their participation in the trade. In total, some 113 different names appear on the handwritten petitions and lists.<sup>17</sup> This would seem to point to

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<sup>17</sup> The petitions: CO5/1264/301; CO5/1265/11; CO5/1293/71–4; CO5/1293/75–7; CO5/867/117; CO5/358/50–1; CO5/358/146; CO5/358/244–7; CO5/358/284; CO5/359/233–250; CO323/9/11–13; CO5/361/48; CO5/361/105–6. A handful of names on the petitions are illegible and have been excluded from the subsequent analysis. One of the two lists was compiled by Stephen Godin in 1729, when he was acting as London agent for South Carolina's Council, which was at odds with the provincial assembly over the assembly's advocacy of further paper currency emissions. Samuel Wragg was then acting as agent in London for the South Carolina's assembly's (as Godin termed it, "the Planters' pretended Parliament". Godin presented the Board of Trade with a list of "British Merchants Trading to Carolina who are no Planters".

wide participation in the trade, making it structurally analogous to London's contemporary Chesapeake trade, the only branch of London's American trades for which participation statistics have been assembled.<sup>18</sup> Closer analysis of the petitions suggests, however, that participation in the Carolina trade may have been concentrated in far fewer hands. Among the 113 merchants, some 69 appear only on one petition or list, fifteen on two, eleven on three, eight on four petitions, and just ten appeared five or more times. And among the ten most recurrent signatories, David and Stephen Godin were cousins, and William and Samuel Wragg were uncle and nephew, strongly suggesting that they were in trade together.<sup>19</sup>

The pattern of petitioning suggests that London's Carolina trade was relatively open to new entrants during the early eighteenth century, but that long-term and large-scale participation was confined to a much smaller number of merchants. Other evidence corroborates this. The papers of Charles Town merchant Robert Pringle, which provide the earliest major epistolary source on Anglo-Carolinian commerce, reveal his extensive dealings with specialist London retailers – wigmakers, gunsmiths, pewterers, hatters to name but a few. Specialist textile wholesalers – generically termed 'warehousemen' in Hanoverian London – also supplied independent Charles Town trading houses throughout the colonial era, while aspirant exporters in London resorted to sending out unsolicited cargoes to Charles Town traders in their eagerness to claim a share of the growing Carolinian market. "I have good friends enough in London that would send me more Dry goods than I could possibly Vend here, if was so Inclined without being so particularly Tied down

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CO5/361/9–11. The other list was drawn up retrospectively by South Carolina's assembly in 1737 and identified the "several Merchants and Traders in London" active in 1730. CO5/367/116–139. On the analytical utility of petitions in assessing mercantile organisation, see Gauci, *Politics of Trade*, 129–134.

<sup>18</sup> Jacob Price and Paul Clemens identified some 111 firms which imported tobacco into London in 1719, using the sole surviving London port book from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Price and Clemens, 'Revolution in Overseas Trade', 19–21.

<sup>19</sup> The ten who appeared five or more times, with the number of times their name appeared and the inclusive dates within the period 1715 to 1730 were Samuel Barons (eight, 1715–1723), John Bell (five, 1715–1730), James Crane (five, 1715–1723), David Godin (nine, 1717–1730), Stephen Godin (eleven, 1715–1730), John Hewlett (five, 1719–1730), John Lloyd (seven, 1715–1729), Richard Shubrick (father of the Richard Shubrick discussed below) (five, 1722–1730), Samuel Wragg (five, 1719–1730) and William Wragg (six, 1715–1730). On the Wraggs and Godins, see Henry A. M. Smith, 'Wragg of South Carolina', *SCHM*, 19.3 (July 1918), 121–3; Edgar (ed.), *Biographical Directory*, II, 283–5, 729–31.

in the 'Terms you propose,'" Pringle rebuked one hopeful London warehouseman.<sup>20</sup> Regular and large-scale London import-export merchants in the Carolina trade were scarcer, however. While many in London had the capacity to send out cargoes of goods for sale on commission (and were often accused in return of dumping outmoded, unseasonal or unusable merchandise on the provincial market), fewer had the inclination or skill to receive and market remittances in the province's principal rice, deerskins and naval stores exports.<sup>21</sup>

One of those who did – and who rose to pre-eminence in London's Carolina trade, was Samuel Wragg. In written evidence to the Board of Trade in 1724 against a mercantile petition complaining about the province's issuance of paper currency, South Carolina's Governor, Francis Nicolson, testified to Wragg's pre-eminence in London's Carolina trade. He noted that "Mr. Samuel Wragg merch. in London is more concerned in trade to this H.M. province than all the petitioners and that his brother [Joseph Wragg] here with Messrs. [William] Gibbon and [Andrew] Allen are by farr the greatest traders here [in Charles Town]".<sup>22</sup> Wragg's route to becoming London's leading Carolina trader prefigured the career paths of his principal successors in the trade. After emigrating from Britain with his brother Joseph in the early 1710s, the pair emerged as leading traders in Charles Town, and Samuel Wragg became a member of both the province's assembly and, later, its council. He transferred his business to London in 1718 and, although exact details of the brothers' business relationship are obscure, Samuel Wragg's connections in Charles Town and in particular his fraternal transatlantic trade seem to have underpinned his commercial ascendancy. Besides being the most prominent exporter of goods to the province and recipient of Carolinian produce,

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<sup>20</sup> RP to Thomas Morson, 28<sup>th</sup> December 1738. *LRP*, I, 56–7.

<sup>21</sup> Instances of unsuitable merchandise sent for sale in Charles Town by ill-informed British merchants abound in the Pringle papers. For example, one firm speculatively sent a cargo of buckram – a stiff cloth useful only for corset-makers, of which there were none in Charles Town; a dozen fishing rods were part of another cargo which was "Intirely unsaleable here & not at all proper for this Country" and which was eventually sent back to London; woollens which arrived at the start of the summer and which the Charles Town storekeeper would have to keep in storage for several months were a regular bugbear. RP to James Goodchild, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1739, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1740 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 1741; to Andrew Pringle, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1742; to Cookson & Wellfitt, 10<sup>th</sup> April and 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1742; *LRP*, I, 99, 226–7, 306–7, 356–7, 361–2, 398–9.

<sup>22</sup> Great Britain. *Calendar of State Papers, America and West Indies, 1724–5*, 243–4.

he was also the largest single supplier of slaves to the province during the 1720s and 1730s, with twelve ships that he owned or co-owned disembarking 1,885 enslaved Africans between 1724 and 1739.<sup>23</sup> His heavy participation in the slave trade, however, distinguished him from the next generation of London's leading Carolina traders, nearly all of whom concentrated on the commodity import and export trades, and left human trafficking to specialist slave traders in London, Bristol and Liverpool. Overall, some 20 separate vessels owned by Wragg, with an average displacement of 94 tonnes, cleared from Charles Town between 1717 and 1739. In the absence of quantitative data on the London traders' imports and exports, records of ship ownership offer a proxy measure that corroborates the link between petitioning activity and scale of participation in the trade. Samuel Barons and John Bell, both of whom signed more than five of the petitions, each had a stake in ten vessels which cleared Charles Town between 1717 and 1739; John Lloyd and Thomas Hyam, who signed five and four petitions respectively, had stakes in five vessels.<sup>24</sup>

The regularity of the Carolina traders' petitioning contrasted starkly with the contemporaneous passivity of London's Virginia traders, previously the most active North American lobby. While Virginia merchants had petitioned Parliament fourteen times in the quarter century before 1716, they did so just twice between 1716 and 1732 and not at all between 1733 and 1754. This reflected contrasting structural and 'environmental' conditions in the two trades. London's Virginia traders lacked effective leadership and saw the tobacco trade gradually shift to Britain's outports. Conversely, the period between the 1710s and 1730s was a time when strong (if often conflicting) leaders emerged in London's Carolina trade, when the London controlled the largest and a consistent share of South Carolina's rice, deerskins and naval stores exports to Britain as well as its imports of slaves and goods, and when issues arose which called for effective advocacy in the imperial capital. Moreover, while the declining political engagement of London's Virginia

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<sup>23</sup> CO5/510; Clowse, *Measuring Charleston's Overseas Commerce*, 141 (tab. C-61); *Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*. Wragg was recorded as sole owner of nine of the twelve slave ships, a strikingly high proportion and evidence of the capital at his disposal.

<sup>24</sup> CO5/510; Clowse, *Measuring Charleston's Overseas Commerce*, 141 (tab. C-61).

merchants has been attributed to the trade's consolidation in fewer hands, the apparent concentration of London's Carolina trade in an even smaller number appears to have had the reverse effect.<sup>25</sup>

### **Defence, rice and the emergence of a Carolina lobby**

The substance of London's early Carolina petitioning reflected the colony's relative youth. Petitions were concerned in particular with its trade and defence. Of the thirteen petitions between 1715 and 1730, five concerned British financial support for specific export produce as the colony searched for a cash-crop staple (three on naval stores, one each on rice and potash); four concerned the issuance of paper currency in South Carolina, intermittently the source of friction between planting and merchant interests in Charles Town, and between traders and merchants in South Carolina (usually debtors who benefitted from inflationary currency printing) and Carolina traders in London (usually creditors hurt by inflation); two were on provincial defence; one concerned judicial process in pursuing debts in the province, and one sought to generally "retrieve the desolation of Carolina, to strengthen that frontier of our colonies on the continent & to encrease its Inhabitants & Trade".<sup>26</sup> In their subjects, their style and, for the most part, their tactics, they foreshadowed the Carolina lobby's petitioning until the Revolution.

The grave threat posed to the colony by the Yamasee War in 1715 gave rise to the first demonstration of the London traders' capacity to effectively conduct information on the colony to the Board of Trade and to petition on its behalf. Organised by the colony's London agent, Abel Kettleby, some 21 "Planters and merchants trading to Carolina" appealed to the Board of Trade in

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<sup>25</sup> Olson, 'Virginia Merchants of London', 371, 378–80. Interaction with the Board of Trade fell correspondingly, with no Virginia merchants appearing before it between 1733 and 1751, and although Olson notes continuing interaction between London's Virginia merchants and the Treasury, she observes a net decline in the Virginia merchant community's activity and impact. The capital's Virginia traders had been by far the most active North American commercial lobby before 1725: against the 36 petitions they had submitted to the King, Parliament and other branches of government, New England merchants had petitioned sixteen times and New York merchants six.

<sup>26</sup> CO5/538/50–1 (quote).

July 1715 for immediate military aid for the province: “Unless it is speedily relieved it must inevitably perish & all his Majesty’s Subjects there fall a prey to their barbarous Enemies.” The petition is a significant but underappreciated document in South Carolina’s history, as a powerful evocation of the inadequacies of proprietorial government in the province; as an early exposition of South Carolina’s economic and strategic rationale; and as the first coherent expression of British commercial advocacy on the province’s behalf. The merchants’ concerns in South Carolina anticipated future London-based traders’ financial and territorial commitments in the province, as they reported that “Most of us have great Debts and Effects there, some of us large Plantations; & the Loss of these would be Considerable.” Beyond their personal investment in the province, the merchants were at pains to point out, following mercantilist orthodoxy, its commercial and fiscal contribution to Great Britain. South Carolina had, they asserted, “for many years taken off so much of our English manufactures, & brought such a large Revenue to the Crown, by the Duties upon Rice, Skins, Pitch, Tarr, & other Naval Stores & Commodities imported from thence, & yet from the first Settlement of it has not put the Crown to one Penny Expence”. Besides its economic significance to the mother country, South Carolina occupied a critical strategic location on the imperial frontier and a vital link in the North American chain of defence. If it were to be overrun by Indians, behind whose revolt the guiding hand of France and Spain was discerned, “all the other Colonies would soon be involved in the same Ruine & the whole English Empire, Religion & Name be extirpated in America”. Finally, the petition was an early acknowledgement of the province’s worrying demographic imbalance, with black slaves already outnumbering white inhabitants. It counted some 2,000 white men able to bear arms, plus about 16,000 blacks, “some of which might be armed in our Defence if we had any Arms to supply them withal; But in that too there must be great Caution, least our Slaves when armed might make themselves Masters”.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> CO5/1264/301. The petition was signed by Samuel Barons, John Bell, Joseph Boone, Michael Cole, James Crane, Edward Cripps, Stephen Godin, David Guerard, Richard Higginson, Abel Kettleby, Robert

The lobbyists succeeded in securing a promise of aid from Parliament, although in military terms it was the raising of the local militia, the arrival of men and arms from New England and Virginia, and a diplomatic alliance with the Cherokees that were the critical factors in suppressing the Yamasee revolt.<sup>28</sup> Two petitions to the British government in July and September 1715 against Virginia's trade in guns and ammunition to Indians were also significant for their role in planting South Carolina in the British political consciousness.<sup>29</sup> As the Commons committee which heard the July petition reported, South Carolina's ruin would be "to the great Prejudice of his Majesty's Subjects, and the Trade of this Kingdom". Furthermore, it demonstrated the efficacy of traders' political advocacy and for the first time in recorded British political debate explicitly bemoaned the inadequacy of proprietorial government, given the Indian and concerted French and Spanish threats. In the Commons on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1715, the revocation of the proprietors' charter was subtly mooted: "That the Proprietors not being able, at their own Charges, either to send the necessary Succours for the present Relief of the said Province, or to support it under the like for the future, your Committee submit, in what manner it may be most proper to preserve and maintain this so valuable a Province, which is a Frontier of the British *Plantations* on the Continent."<sup>30</sup>

Besides defence, the dutiable status of colonial naval stores, South Carolina's issuance of paper currency, and the liberalisation of rice exports further stimulated the development of a Carolinian commercial lobby in London. The rice campaigning merits particular scrutiny. Rice would be, as David Ramsay later put it, "the chief support of the colony... of more value than mines of silver and gold". It furnished the province with its wealth, shaped its society and demography through

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Livingston, John Lloyd, John Metcalfe, William Newbury, John Payne, Samuel Pickering, Andre Poon, H. Wigginton, Philo Woodward, Joseph Wragg and William Wragg.

<sup>28</sup> On the Yamasee War, see Robert M. Weir, *Colonial South Carolina: A History*. (New York, 1983), 83–5; Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670–1732*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1956), 62–86.

<sup>29</sup> CO5/1265/11. Fourteen merchants trading to South Carolina signed the petition against Virginia's arms trade with the Indians, along with provincial agent Kettleby: Samuel Barons, Nathaniel Bradley, Michael Cole, Henry Daniels, James Deane, Stephen Godin, Richard Higginson, Robert Johnson, James Kinloch, John Lloyd, Andre Poon, William Rhett Jr. , John Styleman and William Wragg. In total, there were twenty-nine signatories to the two petitions, of whom fifteen signed only the July petition and five only the September petition, with nine signing both.

<sup>30</sup> *JHC*, XVIII, 262.

providing the motive and the means for using slave labour, and connected the province with Atlantic markets.<sup>31</sup> From the first successful risiculture during the 1690s, South Carolina's white settlers had appreciated the grain's agro-economic potential, and from the early eighteenth century had sought favourable legislative and fiscal treatment for it. Merchants in London – who also stood to benefit from enlarged rice exports and the wider economic benefits the province would derive from this – were willing to act as catalysts. The eventual passage of the Rice Act in 1730 represented the culmination of twenty years' campaigning by South Carolina's agents and merchants in Great Britain.<sup>32</sup> Rice had not originally been an enumerated commodity, and as such Carolinian planters had been able to export their produce directly to markets in Portugal and the West Indies. In 1704, however, this direct trade was outlawed. Direct rice exports had been, the prohibiting statute observed, "contrary to the true Intent and Meaning" of the Navigation Acts, and rice was added to the list of enumerated commodities.<sup>33</sup> For Joshua Gee, the ban was due to the machinations of a ship's captain, who "possessed a Member of Parliament... with an Opinion that carrying Rice directly to Portugal was a Prejudice to the Trade of *England*, and privately got a clause into an Act to make it an enumerated Commodity". Gee condemned this rigid extension of the law, exposing the fault lines between mercantilist precept as enshrined in the Navigation Acts and – as he saw it – the true spirit of mercantilism. "This could not have happened," he argued "if that Gentleman who brought in that Clause had understood the Nature and Circulation of Trade, he would have then known, that it is much more the Interest of the English Merchant to sell his Rice in Portugal, and have the money remitted thence, than it is to have it brought to England, and

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<sup>31</sup> David Ramsay, *History of South Carolina from its First Settlement in 1670, to the Year 1808*. (reprinted Spartanburg, SC, 1959 [orig. publ. Charleston, 1809]), II, 114; Coclanis, 'Global Perspectives', 140.

<sup>32</sup> On the legislative framework for South Carolina's commodity exports, including rice, two classic works remain useful starting points: Lewis C. Gray, *A History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*. (Washington, D.C., 1933), esp. 284–6; and Andrews, *Colonial Period of American History*, IV, esp. 96–7.

<sup>33</sup> 4 & 5 Ann, c. 5 in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, IV, 171–5.

afterwards shipp'd to Holland, Hamburg, or Portugal; for the Difference in the freight and Charges is at least 50 per Cent.”<sup>34</sup>

South Carolina's authorities first pressed for the removal of rice from the enumerated list in 1712, employing a special agent to London to simultaneously expound the case for rice and to secure the extension of bounties on colonial naval stores. After these efforts came to naught, attempts continued intermittently during the 1710s and 1720s. In March 1715, for example, three British merchants trading in Oporto informed the Board of Trade that South Carolina might export some 6,000 barrels of rice a year to Portugal if direct exports were allowed. Espousing sound mercantilist logic, they insisted that the direct trade “might be a considerable benefit to Great Britain, and his Majesty no loser in his duties by their being paid in South Carolina”.<sup>35</sup> The Portugal traders' evidence hinted at the incipient sophistication of the campaign, both in the arguments deployed and in how it co-opted wider mercantile interest. Over the next decade, South Carolina's London lobby would harness the agency of Iberian traders against the restrictions. In a striking gesture, South Carolina's assembly – as the Portugal merchants had hinted – even offered to offset the losses in customs duty by rice exports not touching in British ports.

When the provincial government appointed Francis Yonge and John Lloyd as joint agents for South Carolina in 1722, one of their principal duties was to “endeavour to get the enumeration of rice taken off”. To help achieve this, they were instructed that “You may propose that the same duty may be pay'd upon the exportation of rice from hence for a revenue to the King in this Province, as is now reserved to the Crown after allowing the rebate upon the exportation from South Britain [Britain's south coast re-export ports]”.<sup>36</sup> In other words, the liberalisation of rice exports would be revenue-neutral to the British Treasury: a duty would be paid in South Carolina

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<sup>34</sup> Gee, *Trade and Navigation of Great Britain*, 23. The role of the enigmatic ship's captain in the enumeration was later invoked by both G. L. Beer and C. M. Andrews in their influential accounts of Britain's colonial trade. Beer, *Commercial Policy of England*, 53; Andrews, *Colonial Period of American History*, IV, 97.

<sup>35</sup> *JCTP*, II, 617–8.

<sup>36</sup> Great Britain, *Calendar of State Papers: America and West Indies, 1722–23*, 62.

equivalent to that which would have been paid had the rice touched in England before being re-exported. The agents co-ordinated a petition signed by 27 “merchants & traders to Carolina, Spain & Portugal”. It urged that rice be taken off the list of enumerated commodities; however, after being introduced to Parliament in November 1722, it failed to progress through the committee stage.<sup>37</sup> Undeterred, a further attempt in 1725 attests to the lobby’s growing tactical sophistication. While the previous effort had sought permission for direct rice exports to Spain, Portugal and the West Indies, the renewed attempt had more limited ambitions, asking only for direct rice exports to European ports south of Cape Finisterre in Spain. A more powerful coalition of interests was aligned behind the proposal. Samuel Wragg, London’s leading Carolina trader, sought to harness the influence of the South Sea Company – in which Spain and Portugal traders featured prominently – to “get off the Enumeration on Rice”. He paid some £33 to the company’s secretary and a further £150 “to Solicitors, Clerk’s Fees and other Servants of both Houses of Parliament”.<sup>38</sup> Although the effort was once again unsuccessful, the potential efficacy of mercantile advocacy in London was not lost on the authorities in South Carolina. Wragg had been, the assembly observed, “very Serviceable to this Province in endeavouring to get the Enumeration of rice taken off, and the bounty again given on Pitch & Tarr and in several other negotiations tending to the benefit and advantage of this Province”.<sup>39</sup> His endeavours were ultimately rewarded with the partial de-enumeration of rice in 1730.

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<sup>37</sup> CO5/358/146; *JHC*, XX, 62–3.

<sup>38</sup> The bill appears to have had support from both the government and regional trading interests: the identities of the three MPs who introduced it to Parliament is indicative. Martin Bladen was a member of the Board of Trade, spoke frequently for the government on trade matters and owned a large plantation in the West Indies; Sir Abraham Elton was a commercial magnate in and MP for Bristol; and Archibald Hutcheson was a former member of the Board of Trade. The most likely reason for the bill’s failure is that it ran out of parliamentary time. Wragg’s costs are revealed in a retrospective claim for a total of £500 he submitted to the provincial assembly in 1742 for his efforts. However, it found no evidence that he had spent more than the £183 it agreed to reimburse him. *Commons Journals*, XX, 463–5; *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, 1742–1744*, 225–6; Sedgwick, *House of Commons, 1715–1754*.

<sup>39</sup> A.S. Salley (ed.), *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly of South Carolina, February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1724/5 to 1<sup>st</sup> June 1725*. (Columbia, SC, 1945), 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1725, 66.

If the lobbying campaign in 1730 revealed the benefits of aligning with an influential interest group with close parliamentary connections, these were confirmed five years later. Permission for direct rice exports to Iberia had been granted, as was common in trade legislation, on a time limited basis and was due to expire within a year. In spring 1735, Peregrine Fury, who had been appointed as the colony's new metropolitan agent two years earlier, led moves to get Parliament to prolong the act. His efforts were facilitated by the establishment of Georgia on South Carolina's southern flank, and the new colony's prominent supporters in Parliament. Fury attended a meeting of the Georgia Trustees and, in the words of their president, the Earl of Egmont, asked "that we would befriend them in a Bill they are endeavouring to procure... We replied in writing that we should always contribute our endeavours for the advancing the interests of Carolina".<sup>40</sup> With backing from the Georgia interest in Parliament, an act prolonging direct rice exports to southern Europe and extending the privilege to Georgia itself was quickly made law.<sup>41</sup>

Growing in volume and, through its merchants' interaction with the state, in prominence, the Carolina trade was recognised by the 1730s as a distinct branch of overseas trade in London. Contemporaries were able to distinguish it among the various gatherings in London's longer-established overseas trades. A writer to the *Universal Spectator and Westminster Journal* listed the "Meetings of Clubs of Particular Merchants, either fix'd or occasional... the Turkey and Italian Merchants, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the French, the Flanderçan, the German, the Danish, the Swedish, the Muscovite, the Dutch, the Irish, the West India, the Virginia, the Carolina, New York

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<sup>40</sup> Earl John Perceval, *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont: Diary of Viscount Percival, afterwards First Earl of Egmont*, 3 vols. (London, 1920–3), 26<sup>th</sup> March 1735, II, 154. For their part, the Georgia Trustees recognised the reciprocal advantages of good relations with Fury and his employers. Agreeing to the South Carolinian authorities' request that Fury's salary be temporarily paid through a bill drawn on the trustees in London, Egmont recorded that the trustees agreed since "it was a neighbourly action, and would engage Mr. Fury to be affectionate to our colony." *Egmont Diary*, 16<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1735, II, 221. Fury had been appointed as South Carolina's metropolitan agent in 1733.

<sup>41</sup> 8 Geo. II, c. 19 in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, VI, 190–1; *Commons Journals*, XXII, 453, 464–5, 469, 473–5, 493. Some 17 of the 37 MPs named to the committee considering the bill, and which proposed the legislation's extension to Georgia, were members or trustees of the Georgia Society. On the Georgia interest in Parliament, see also Richard Dunn, 'The Trustees of Georgia and the House of Commons, 1732–1752', *W MQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 11.4 (Oct. 1954), 551–65; Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia, 1730–1775*. (Athens, GA, 1984), 2–11, 34–48.

and New England Merchants”.<sup>42</sup> In its composition, tactics and rhetoric, the Carolina lobby’s early petitioning efforts laid the foundations for its activity over the next 50 years. These initial efforts also shaped the metropolitan Carolina traders’ understanding of their interaction with the state. This was not a formal political role: with certain exceptions, they did not become MPs, nor did they even seek political positions within the City of London. Instead, it was intermittent, issue-driven and informal. South Carolina’s ‘interest’ in London was extra-parliamentary, but interacted with the Board of Trade, the Treasury and with Parliament as and when necessary on specific issues, in line with prevailing mercantile custom. In this, it was not unusual, but in its energy during the 1720s, the Carolina lobby stood out. As significantly, these early efforts were also important in informing the expectations in South Carolina of the attentiveness and efficacy of the lobby – the colonists’ informal representatives – in the metropolis.

Surveying a later generation of London’s leading Carolina merchants, those pre-eminent in the early 1760s, historian George Rogers identified the group’s two defining characteristics. These were, he posited, its members’ deep connections with South Carolina, and its small size. Together, he claimed, these merchants had “a monopoly on the know-how for the Carolina trade”.<sup>43</sup> By examining the lobbying efforts of the first generation of largely obscure Carolina traders in the metropolis – figures who, for want of evidence, remain for the most part obscure in both their private and commercial capacities – the first part of this chapter has shown how London’s Carolina trade was from the outset concentrated in the hands of a small number of merchants. Its coherence made it a particularly productive ‘interest’. This structural characteristic would persist throughout the colonial era. A small number of merchants would in later decades similarly dominate the capital’s Carolina trade. Although Rogers’s contention of a “monopoly” by the 1760s is an exaggeration, it has more than a germ of accuracy. To explore the implications of this *concentration* or, more suggestively, *domination*, the second part of this chapter interrogates one of the group’s

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<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Kammen, *Empire and Interest*, 68.

<sup>43</sup> Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, 14.

defining features – the connections with South Carolina that London’s mid-century Carolina traders had gained through living there.

London’s Carolina trade appears to have been exceptional among the branches of the capital’s North American commerce in the mid-eighteenth century in that almost *all* its leading merchants had spent the early part of their careers in South Carolina itself. The commercial mobility permitted by eighteenth-century Atlantic commerce meant it was common for merchants in seaboard ports across Britain’s Atlantic territories to have spent part of their training or early careers elsewhere in the empire. Anecdotal evidence suggests that merchants in London’s North American trades were no different.<sup>44</sup> But in the uniformity of London’s Carolina traders’ experience in Charles Town, and especially in the lengthy duration and independent nature of their of their spells in commerce there, they were distinct. These characteristics places the Carolina trade closer in composition – as in many other respects – to London’s Caribbean commerce. Many, perhaps most, of London’s West Indies merchants had earlier mercantile or planting experience on the islands, building capital and connections on the islands before relocating to Britain.<sup>45</sup> Commercial experiences in Charles Town were similarly formative for the dominant figures of London’s mid-century Carolina trade. To understand the background, motivations and transatlantic connections of these merchants, analysis therefore begins not in the imperial metropolis but in Charles Town, the “metropolis of South Carolina”.

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<sup>44</sup> Three of the nineteen ‘associates’ studied by David Hancock in *Citizens of the World* whose pre-London travels are known, for example, had spent time in North America. Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 41n. See also Roberts, ‘Samuel Storke: An Eighteenth-Century London Merchant’, 149.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Sheridan estimated that, if Antigua were typical of the Caribbean islands as a whole, a majority of London’s West Indies merchants had spent time in planting or trade on the islands. Sheridan, ‘Planters and Merchants’, 113. For other examples of West Indies merchants’ formative spells in the Caribbean see Pares, ‘A London West India Merchant House’, 225; Thomas, ‘The Mills Family’, 3; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 46–51.

### Getting into the Carolina trade

The career of James Crokatt exemplifies the opportunities offered in South Carolina's transatlantic trade. Like many of his trading contemporaries in mid-century Charles Town, he had Scottish origins. Born in Edinburgh in July 1701, the first 25 years of his life remain obscure before his arrival in South Carolina some time before 1728.<sup>46</sup> When Crokatt and his fellow new arrivals settled to trade in Charles Town in the early 1730s, they found an expanding and commercially thriving Atlantic seaport. Perched on a peninsular jutting between the Ashley and Cooper rivers, in the 50 years since it had been established on its current site, Charles Town had seen its population grow to around 4,000 inhabitants, split almost equally between free whites and enslaved blacks. With its regimented grid of streets and mercantile wharfs along 'the Bay', it was the only town of note in South Carolina and comfortably the largest urban centre in the southern colonies. Urban growth was fuelled by dramatic economic expansion, including a trebling of rice exports in the previous decade. With the importation of thousands more enslaved Africans to work the growing rice plantations, South Carolina's population had grown by three-quarters in the 1720s. It almost doubled again during the 1730s, while Charles Town's population grew to just over 6,000 by the end of the decade, making it the fourth largest settlement in British North America, behind only Boston, Philadelphia and New York. Continuing demographic growth was matched by ongoing economic and commercial expansion as South Carolina's risicultural boom continued through the 1730s. As exports flourished, imports similarly reached new heights: by the end of the 1730s, Charles Town received at least 15 per cent of all North American imports from England by value. A growing mercantile community handled the increasing volumes of produce – rice, deerskins and naval stores, flowing out of the port and manufactured goods and slaves landed at its wharves. Between 1732 – when the weekly *South Carolina Gazette* became the province's first newspaper – and 1737, some 122 different merchants advertised their wares. Prospective merchants and tradesmen

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<sup>46</sup> The earliest record of Crokatt in South Carolina is in 1728, when he was executor to the will of David Durham, a Berkeley County planter. *SCG*, 26<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1732; Edgar (ed.), *Biographical Directory*, II, 213.

arrived from Britain and its other American colonies to claim a share of the town's burgeoning commerce.<sup>47</sup>

Crokatt's was perhaps a family migration. One brother, Daniel, owned land in Jamaica; other siblings, John and Elizabeth, were both in Charles Town by the late 1730s. Like James Crokatt, they were drawn to trade: Elizabeth Crokatt married merchant William Woodrop, while John Crokatt also traded, though the two brothers were apparently not formally connected. Another John Crokatt, possibly a cousin, also traded in Charles Town by the 1730s.<sup>48</sup> By 1731, James Crokatt was operating from a grand counting-house and store on Broad Street, Charles Town's foremost commercial thoroughfare, where he built up one of the town's leading trading houses. Like Crokatt, John Beswicke was another Charles Town merchant who would later dominate London's Carolina trade. His entry into Charles Town commerce also indicates the importance of family connections. A native of Yorkshire, he went to South Carolina around the turn of the 1730s, where another John Beswicke – his father or uncle, perhaps – was already established as clerk of the markets. The younger Beswicke opened a store on Broad Street, possibly inheriting the premises from his elder relative, who died in 1735.<sup>49</sup>

Precise details of Crokatt's and Beswicke's entry into trade are obscure. The better documented routes taken by their fellow Charles Town traders – several of whom later relocated like them to London – illustrate the allure of Carolina trading, the opportunities it offered, and the means by which the foundations for future commercial fortunes in London were laid. One path into trade in

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<sup>47</sup> Population statistics from Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream*, 114 (tab. 4–3); Carter et al. (eds.), *Historical Statistics*, V, 651–5; see also appendices G and H. On South Carolina's economic development during the 1720s and 1730s and Charles Town's commercial dynamism, see Coclanis, 'Rice Prices in the 1720s', 532–3; idem., *Shadow of a Dream*, 72–6; R. C. Nash, 'Urbanization in the Colonial South', 3–29; Hart, *Building Charleston*, 17–50; Jeanne A. Calhoun, Martha A. Zierden and Elizabeth Paysinger, 'The Geographic Spread of Charleston's Merchant Community, 1732–67', *SCHM*, 86.3 (July 1985), 186.

<sup>48</sup> Will of James Crokatt, Prob. 11/1029, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1777; Will of John Crokatt, Prob. 11/703, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1740; 'South Carolina Gleanings in England', *SCHM*, 6 (1905), 121–2. William Woodrop married Elizabeth Crokatt (b. 1708, Edinburgh), on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1737. *SCHM*, 27 (1926), 83; *PHL*, I, 46n, 130n; *LRP*, II, 699.

<sup>49</sup> Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, 13; *CSP, America and West Indies, 1734–1735*, 133, 157; *SCG*, 20<sup>th</sup> Sep. and 1<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1735.

Charles Town was through captaining a ship. Mariners gained special insights into market conditions through supervising the handling and exchange of goods at either end of a voyage, and the trustworthiness and skill of ships' captains were vital ingredients in transatlantic commerce. Knowledge of winds and oceanic currents, and the art of 'seamanship' reduced crossing times and ensured cargoes arrived safely, making experienced navigators a valuable commodity. "The good of the Voyage depends [on] having a Clever Brisk Commander that is a good Seaman & well Qualified for his Business", observed Charles Town merchant Robert Pringle.<sup>50</sup> Besides making the Atlantic crossing in a safe and timely fashion, a captain in the Carolina trade was required to make technical decisions about the commodities in his hold. Errors of judgement in loading a ship could damage or even destroy precious cargoes. When his brother's ship *Susannah* arrived poorly stowed in Charles Town, Pringle offered some words of warning: "It certainly requires a great deal of Judgment & Experience in the Stowing of a Ship with dry Goods which is a Main Matter in Regard to the Voyage. The *Susannah* will get a bad name here by haveing Goods Damaged every Voyage & people wont care to Ship on her".<sup>51</sup> Through their exposure to the factors influencing supply and demand, the profitability of different commodities, the appropriate storage and packing of goods, and the seasonality of voyages, able captains could glean valuable insights into the business of Atlantic commerce. Moreover, their role also offered them a foothold in trade itself, even if they did not have the capital to invest in a large cargo, or the connections to whom to convey goods. With some personal space on board ship, a captain could stow goods which he could sell on his own account at the ship's destination. With judgement and good timing, he could accumulate sufficient capital over time to set up as an independent trader or become a resident agent for an overseas trading house. John Watkinson's commercial trajectory typified the latter path. A mariner in the Carolina trade, he settled in Charles Town in the 1720s, where he acted as a factor for the

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Pringle to Cookson & Wellfitt, 20th March 1742. *LRP*, I, 350.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Pringle to Andrew Pringle, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 1740. *LRP*, I, 248–9.

Rotterdam firm of Hope & Hope and bought several properties in the town. He had returned to London by 1730, where he became one of the capital's leading Carolina traders during the 1730s.<sup>52</sup>

A decade after Watkinson, brothers-in-law Richard Shubrick and John Nickleson followed a similar route – from captaining Atlantic shipping, to commerce in Charles Town, to prominence in London's Carolina trade. Both Shubrick and Nickleson began their trading careers as ship captains. Richard Shubrick took over command of the *Loyal Jane* from his father (also Richard) and during the 1730s plied a regular trade between London, Charles Town and the West Indies. Besides supplying goods to Charles Town's resident traders, Shubrick sold merchandise himself during his spells in Charles Town between voyages, and also invested in land in the province.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, Nickleson made regular transatlantic crossings commanding the 100-ton *Pelham*, then the 160-ton *Minerva*. From London, the ships carried textiles and clothing for Charles Town's stores; sometimes their cargoes included more exotic goods such as umbrellas, "Squire's elixir, spirit of lavender, anchovies, olives, walnuts and capers". In 1739, Nickleson and Shubrick went into partnership together in Charles Town, where the firm became one of the town's leading retailers, selling a familiar mix of textiles, plantation tools and consumables, while Shubrick's younger brother Thomas took over the command of the *Minerva*.<sup>54</sup> After several years in Charles Town, Nickleson and Shubrick would relocate to London in 1743 and 1747 respectively, where they too became two of the capital's leading Carolina traders.

If commanding an ocean-going vessel was one common route into Charles Town commerce, a still more prevalent trajectory was through serving a mercantile apprenticeship, as was true in both London and British provincial ports. A clerkship was a sound footing through which to learn a trade, establish a network of contacts and build a reputation. Writing later in the century, Henry

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<sup>52</sup> Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vols. A, 220; B 153; E, 313; F, 153; South Carolina Court of Common Pleas, Judgement Rolls: 19A, 36A. (SCDAH).

<sup>53</sup> *SCG*, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 30<sup>th</sup> September and 16<sup>th</sup> December 1732, 7<sup>th</sup> July and 25<sup>th</sup> August 1733, 29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1737, 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. and 15<sup>th</sup> April 1738; Charles Town Naval Office list, 1738. CO5/510.

<sup>54</sup> *SCG*, 16<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1734, 5<sup>th</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> May 1735, 31<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1736 (quote), 6<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1740; Charles Town Naval Office list, 1736–7. CO5/510.

Laurens set out the advantages of learning the trade at an established merchant's elbow. Having been a clerk to James Crockatt in London's foremost Carolina trading house in the 1740s, his advice was grounded in personal experience. "I would advise a Young Gentleman rather to serve as a Clerk than to dabble as a petty Merchant", he explained to a correspondent in Savannah since, "in the former case he is always loose & open to good offers & very often rises with great experience into considerable trade. In the Latter I have often observed worthy young Men by precipitate engagements in Trade confine themselves within a narrow compass & remain in a state little better than stagnant, for many Years."<sup>55</sup> Working alongside an established trader, an apprentice learned the negotiations and bargain-striking of daily routine, calculations of price and risk, weights and measures, and strategic decisions on the freighting and destinations of vessels. Practical responsibilities supplemented his observational gleanings. Besides making invoices, copying letters and manning retail stores, young clerks were tasked with marking rice barrels or conveying goods to and from the town's wharves.

Apprenticeships, at least with Charles Town's more conscientious merchants, also incorporated a theoretical component. Alongside learning 'on the job', an apprentice would be expected to spend a portion of his leisure time studying manuals on such aspects of trade as accounting and commercial regulation. Didactic literature such as Malachy Postlethwaite's *Universal Directory of Trade and Commerce* or Henry Saxby's *The British Customs* found a place on Charles Town's counting-house shelves as they did in contemporary London. In his commercial training with an established merchant, a young clerk could also expect to make himself known to merchants whose custom he might seek in future. Introductions to fellow Charles Town traders were one part of this; still more beneficial was the chance to accompany his master on trips to other ports, even across the Atlantic, where he might encounter important correspondents. In contrast, small trading on one's own account – though superficially more alluring – carried greater risks with lower personal exposure.

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<sup>55</sup> HL to Thomas Lloyd, 7<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1767. *PHL*, V, 299–300.

As Laurens further counselled the young would-be merchant in Savannah, following this avenue would “seldom intitle you to an acquaintance with Men of consequence & at the same time are generally attended with most trouble”.<sup>56</sup>

To fully grasp the complexities of transatlantic commerce, it was thought particularly advantageous for prospective Carolina merchants to spend part of their training across the Atlantic. Those seeking to trade to South Carolina from Britain would benefit from a grounding in Charles Town’s commercial scene, and vice-versa. After he had relocated from Charles Town to London in 1747, John Beswicke secured a four-year apprenticeship for a nephew at a prominent Charles Town trading house.<sup>57</sup> Another young man, Peter Taylor spent several years as an apprentice to his uncle at the latter’s Charles Town counting house and lowcountry estates. Though admonished by his uncle for his hedonistic lifestyle and “rough, forward and noisy carriage”, he nonetheless became a substantial merchant on his return to his native Whitehaven.<sup>58</sup> Even South Carolina’s minor ports could furnish a good commercial education for British visitors. One young Londoner went into partnership in a small trading house in Georgetown, a minor port some 80 miles north of Charles Town, where it was noted that he “will not spend his time unprofitably by a few Years residence in this part of the World where he will probably gain more knowledge of Men & business than he could have done in twice the time in London”.<sup>59</sup>

In the late 1730s, Robert Pringle had looked across the Atlantic for a bookkeeper. Like many of his fellow merchants in the town, Pringle had been born in Scotland, and had himself served an apprenticeship with a West India merchant in London before travelling to South Carolina in his early twenties. His particular requirements in any new clerk – sobriety and honesty – were perhaps

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<sup>56</sup> HL to Thomas Lloyd, 7<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1767. *PHL*, V, 299–300.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Raper to John Beswicke, 11<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1762. LRR.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Taylor Sr. to Peter Taylor Jr., 21<sup>st</sup> August 1758. Taylor Family Papers. (SCL).

<sup>59</sup> HL to John Mill, 9<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1767. *PHL*, V, 343.

qualities he identified in his younger self. He set out the terms of the engagement to a London correspondent, asking

“if you should happen to hear of a good Sober Young Man that writes a good hand & is a good Accomptant & can be well recommended & inclinable to come over here for his Encouragement, shall be willing to give him at the rate of Forty Pounds Sterling (as the Exchange goes) Sallary per annum & Lodging & board & if he behaves to my liking will encrease his salary & keep him for a term of years”.

As a shrewd trader, Pringle’s generosity towards his new charge had limits, however: the clerk would have to be willing “to come over on the terms above mention’d & pays his own Passage & c.”<sup>60</sup> The last stipulation was perhaps a deterrent to would-be apprentices, since when two young clerks, James Ogilvie and George Inglis, arrived with Pringle three years later, their £21 passage had been paid for them by Pringle’s London-based brother, Andrew, on his brother’s behalf.<sup>61</sup>

Although their experiences of apprenticeship with Pringle contrasted starkly, both trainees persisted along commercial paths, illustrating the magnetism that a career in trade in mid-century Charles Town exerted. Ogilvie’s apprenticeship with Pringle began inauspiciously and went downhill. Having been captured by a Spanish privateer en route to Charles Town, delaying his arrival and adding greatly to the expense of his crossing, he was unprepared for the cut and thrust of the port’s trade. He found his master hard to please and ruthless in his pursuit of profit. “It was not long that he [Pringle] treated me with common Civility”, he complained to his brother in Scotland, “I soon began to experience the Effects of his Temper. It is impossible to do anything to please him, and he is continually finding fault with the smallest Trifles... Mr. Pringle himself has a most villainous temper, and is a Man I have not the least reason to expect anything from, for his own Interest, and a Desire of Scraping up Riches at any Rate is his only aim”. Overwhelmed by loneliness, he advised his brothers – should any of them wish to enter commerce – to seek training nearer to home, perhaps in Amsterdam. Nonetheless, he persevered in trade in Charles Town and entered

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<sup>60</sup> RP to John Richards, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1739. *LRP*, I, 121–2; Walter B. Edgar, ‘Robert Pringle and his World’, *SCHM*, 76.1 (Jan. 1975), 1.

<sup>61</sup> RP to Andrew Pringle, 10<sup>th</sup> July and 7<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1742, and to John Keith, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept. 1742. *LRP*, I, 387–8, 404–5, 406–9.

partnership with Pringle's former business partner in a store 'on the bay'.<sup>62</sup> By contrast, Inglis adapted more easily to his mercantile training with Pringle. Two years after Inglis's arrival, Pringle reported his "Good Behaviour since he has Liv'd with me, so much to my Satisfaction & of the Great Regard & Esteem I have for him." The same year, Inglis began investing his own capital in joint cargoes with Pringle and in 1749 the pair entered formal partnership.<sup>63</sup>

Both Ogilvie and Inglis opted to remain in Charles Town to make their fortunes with established traders. Illustrating the breadth of commercial opportunity around the Atlantic littoral, other apprentices furthered their commercial education elsewhere. After beginning as a clerk to a Charles Town merchant, one trainee, John Brown, received a better offer and decamped to join a firm of traders in New Providence, Bahamas.<sup>64</sup> For many young men entering trade, partnerships were both logical and financially essential. Partnerships reduced the start-up capital required of an individual, allowed the pooling of knowledge, experience and contacts, and spread the financial risks of trade. However, capital and some experience were needed to entice a potential partner into a formal connection. This led some to pursue an alternative strategy – the alluring if risky approach of going it alone, which offered greater flexibility, self-determinacy and the entire share of future profits. To do this required carefully accumulating one's own capital and investing it in a cargo of imported goods. Another young Scottish apprentice in Charles Town, Alexander Cumine, vacillated between the two approaches. Having served two years in his mentor's trading house, living – as was customary – with his employer at his premises, he weighed up his options. He first considered investing his spare cash in a cargo of imported textiles. However, "if you get a substantial partner you will do very well", he mused, and eventually struck upon a strategy which would provide him with the means to effect this. Buying some £200 or £300 in goods on credit from his connections in London would, he believed,

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<sup>62</sup> James Ogilvie to Alexander Ogilvie, 17<sup>th</sup> March 1743. OFP; Calhoun et al., 'Geographic Spread', 200.

<sup>63</sup> RP to Andrew Pringle, 18<sup>th</sup> March and 4<sup>th</sup> April 1745. LRP, II, 827–30, 833–6; Edgar (ed.), *Biographical Directory*, II, 542–4.

<sup>64</sup> Robert Pringle to Thomas Pringle, 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1746 (unpublished). Pringle–Garden papers. (SCHS).

“enable me to enter into partnership with some Merchant here. I might make a perhaps pretty good Fortune for myself in a short time; and this is the way all the Merchants here have begun viz. by Credit & if one be diligent & industrious & make proper Remittances the Merchants at home [Britain] will trust him more; and so enable him to extend his trade further. There is plenty of money to be got here if one was once in the way of making it.”<sup>65</sup>

As Cumine appreciated, access to credit was vital in entering trade. Some young merchants were able to call on family capital, such as the aspirant trader who received a “very pretty foundation” of £2,000 from his father with which to start in trade.<sup>66</sup> Others secured capital through partnership with an established trader or speculative importing ventures in Charles Town, or through exploiting family or social connections in London.

For many would be Charles Town traders, however, raising the money needed to enter trade was no easy feat. With James Ogilvie having eventually established himself in trade in Charles Town, his 20 year-old brother Charles decided to follow in his footsteps and seek his own fortune in the town. Perhaps mindful of his brother’s initial discomfort, the younger Ogilvie opted not to take an apprenticeship but instead to raise capital in London before travelling to South Carolina. He was unsuccessful. He first approached a fellow Scot and significant London merchant with interests in the Carolina trade, George Udney, “believing he would have something for me, therefore was resolved the first offer of any little business I could give him... but I happened to be mistaken, for he absolutely refused me Credit”.<sup>67</sup> Undeterred, Charles Ogilvie travelled to Charles Town anyway, but without an established partner or any capital of note, his first ventures in trade came to nothing. He complained to his brother of “the difficulty of getting a tolerable maintenance in this country... I endeavoured to push a little in Trade myself & sent two or three small Adventures to the West Indies, but without success”.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Alexander Cumine to Alexander Ogilvie, 1<sup>st</sup> April and 22<sup>nd</sup> April (quote) 1763 and 17<sup>th</sup> March 1770. OFP. Cumine’s strategy failed to pay off, however. The barriers to entering trade in Charles Town were greater than he had expected, and after seven years of trying to enter business he instead took a job as a Latin teacher.

<sup>66</sup> HL to Bright & Millward, 12<sup>th</sup> January 1770, to Mayne & Co., 1<sup>st</sup> August 1770. *PHL*, VII, 214–5 (quote), 317.

<sup>67</sup> Charles Ogilvie to Alexander Ogilvie, 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1751. OFP.

<sup>68</sup> Charles Ogilvie to Alexander Ogilvie, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1752. OFP.

Since no branch of Atlantic trade offered greater speculative dividends than the slave trade, it was perhaps natural that, with an entrepreneurial mindset and eye for a profit, Ogilvie should be drawn towards it. He was offered employment as a supercargo – an agent charged with managing transactions on a merchant’s behalf – on a vessel bound from Charles Town for Guinea for a cargo of some 90 slaves. The position offered the possibility of £100 in commission for Ogilvie and for the ship’s captain. For Ogilvie, the notorious morbidity of West Africa and the middle passage were worth the risk, given that the proceeds he would make from the voyage afforded the chance of establishing himself in Charles Town commerce. “Who in my situation”, he asked his brother, “would not run a risk, for the Prospect of getting into Business, which if we meet with Success, in all probability would make our Fortunes in a few years.”<sup>69</sup> When the partnership behind the venture decided not to proceed, Ogilvie and the proposed captain decided to take matters into their own hands. They agreed to fit out a small, 60-ton vessel on their own account, at an estimated cost of £300 sterling, and to go themselves to the Guinea Coast. There they hoped – wildly unrealistically – to secure and bring back a cargo of 600 slaves.<sup>70</sup> Although the outcome of Ogilvie’s first slaving venture is unclear, he eventually succeeded in becoming a prominent Charles Town merchant and, through marriage, a large landowner. Again showing the entrepreneurialism which propelled his rise in Charles Town commerce, he later transferred his business to London in search of the even greater rewards on offer. His early commercial rise is among the best documented and probably the most eventful of all his peers in London’s Carolina trade. In its motivations and trajectory – from relative obscurity in provincial Britain to prominence in Charles Town trade and on to commercial zenith back in London – it was entirely typical.

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<sup>69</sup> Charles Ogilvie to Alexander Ogilvie, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1752. OFP.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Ogilvie to Alexander Ogilvie, 20<sup>th</sup> August 1752 (postscript to 17<sup>th</sup> July letter). OFP.

### Trading in Charles Town

Having established themselves in trade in Charles Town, Crokatt, Beswicke, Nickleson and Shubrick appear characteristic of the port's merchants during the 1730s in the organisation of their trade. Evidence suggests that they all acted as independent merchants in the goods import trade – among the growing number of Charles Town merchants who by the 1730s were importing manufactured goods and consumables on their own account and risk – while acting as factors in the rice export trade. This involved buying rice in Charles Town and shipping it to Europe on behalf of British principals.<sup>71</sup> Independent trading carried greater financial risks, but the higher returns it offered would make possible these merchants' later relocation to London and their successful establishment in trade there. The extensive land and property holdings that Beswicke, Shubrick and particularly Crokatt acquired in South Carolina are shown in chapter three, and are further suggestive of the scale of profits likely to have come through independent trading rather than factorage. Such was the scale of Crokatt's trade that he acquired an eponymous wharf in Charles Town, occupying a prestigious location on the Cooper River, the northernmost of only eight such 'bridges' as they were known locally.<sup>72</sup>

From their stores in the town, the merchants retailed an array of imported goods on credit (typically for a year) to the province's planters and tradesmen. In return, they either took rice directly from planters as payment or, as was increasingly the case, received remittances in cash or notes which they used to buy the rice sold by planters on the open market. By whichever means it was acquired, the merchants then exported the grain to their connections in Britain and continental Europe, or as provisions to the British sugar islands. Although diminishing in relative importance, deerskins also remained a significant export during the 1730s, with nearly all Charles Town's export merchants

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<sup>71</sup> For an overview of the organisation and structure of Charles Town's colonial-era trade, see Nash, 'Organization of Trade and Finance' (2001), 77–85.

<sup>72</sup> Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, 56. Six of the other wharves were named after local merchant-planters: Rhett's Bridge, Elliott's Bridge, Motte's Bridge, Pinckney's Bridge, Lloyd's Bridge and Brewton's Bridge; the largest, containing the city market, was simply Middle Bridge. Calhoun et al., 'Geographic Spread', 185.

involved in this branch of trade. To attract customers in Charles Town's crowded retail market, merchants sought competitive advantage by two principal means. The length of credit a merchant could offer his customers was one important differentiator. Running one of Charles Town's leading trading houses from a grand counting house and store on Broad Street, Crokatt had enough capital reserves to allow particularly generous terms – extending up to two years' credit and accepting produce in receipt of goods sold.<sup>73</sup> Reflecting the scale of his trade, his customers were spread across the South Carolina lowcountry in at least five different parishes, from St. Bartholomew in the south to Prince Frederick in the north.<sup>74</sup> Besides the terms of sale and credit, the range and purported quality of goods for sale served to distinguish different retailers. The diversity of wares advertised for sale in John Beswicke's store was typical. Besides foodstuffs and nondurables such as "Herefordshire Cyder", wine, and coffee and "a choice Parcel of Fans, China Ware, super fine Green Tea, Mens silk Stockings, Shoes and other sundry goods", he sold a range of plantation hardware: one notice publicised his "good assortment of very best hard metal pewter, oznabrigs [coarse cloth] and other thread, British made sail canvas, 4, 6, 8 and 20 penny nails, hinges and locks of most sorts and variety of ironmongery ware..."<sup>75</sup> Customers in Crokatt's store in Broad Street, or in Nickleson & Shubrick's store "on the Bay" – one of Charles Town's most prestigious commercial locations – might encounter a similar assortment. These were prototypical general stores to cater in full for a country visitor's or town dweller's needs. Customers' buying habits are suggested in legal suits filed for the non-payment of debts: one recalcitrant planter had acquired goods including fabric, buttons, knives and forks and a broom; another small debtor had been able to purchase fabrics, rum, wine, sugar, gunpowder, bullets and tea.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Miscellaneous Records, 1749–51, 292–301 (SCDAH); *SCG*, 19<sup>th</sup> October to 9<sup>th</sup> November 1738.

<sup>74</sup> South Carolina Court of Common Pleas, Judgement Rolls: 23A/58A, 24A/1A, 2A, 26A; 24B/2A, 19A. (SCDAH).

<sup>75</sup> *SCG*, 31<sup>st</sup> January and 17<sup>th</sup> April 1736, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1741.

<sup>76</sup> South Carolina Court of Common Pleas, Judgement Rolls: 27B, 19A; 33A/108A. (SCDAH).

Supplying the Indian trade and the provincial government were profitable sidelines to consumer retail. Crockatt was particularly active in the deerskins trade, shipping more cargoes of skins from Charles Town between 1735 and 1739 than any other exporter. In exchange for the skins, he offered his suppliers a conventional range of goods that they could exchange with their Indian connections – “guns, hatchets, caddis, beads & most other kind Indian trading goods” – and provided the provincial government with goods to trade with Creeks and Chicasaws.<sup>77</sup> Beswicke was also regularly contracted by the provincial government to supply goods “for the Use of the Indians” as war between Britain and Spain from 1739 heightened the importance of securing Indian alliances.<sup>78</sup> Nickleson, Shubrick & Co. in particular benefitted from the expansion of government spending during the 1739–48 warfare, becoming one of the provincial government’s leading contractors. In 1743, for example, the firm received £1,851.10s. currency “being for Sundries supplied for the Use of the Indians and for victualling the Spanish Prisoners” – more than three times the amount received by the next largest supplier and nearly four per cent of the provincial government’s total expenditure in 1742–3. The following year, the firm supplied the government with a smaller, but still substantial £557.3s.7d of “sundry Goods for the Use of the Public”.<sup>79</sup> Even more lucratively, the firm was appointed official naval victualler in Charles Town, through which it supplied Royal Navy vessels in the port with provisions and equipment.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> CO5/367/61, 80–1, 87a; CO5/365/37–40. (National Archives, London); W. O. Moore Jr., ‘The Largest Exporters of Deerskins from Charles Town, 1735–1775’, *SCHM*, 74.3 (July 1973), 144–7; *SCG*, 18<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1736; J.H. Easterby and R. Nicholas Olsberg (eds.), *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly of South Carolina*, 14 vols., 1736–1757. (Columbia, SC, 1951–89), 1736–1739, 174. On the public provision of goods to native Indians, see Peter C. Mancall, Joshua L. Rosenbloom, and Thomas Weiss, ‘Indians and the Economy of Eighteenth-Century Carolina’ in Coclanis (ed.), *Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 304–306.

<sup>78</sup> Easterby (ed.), *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly*, 20<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1742, 318.

<sup>79</sup> Easterby (ed.), *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly*, 12<sup>th</sup> Jan., 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. and 28<sup>th</sup> April 1743, 109, 249, 395, 403; 13<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1744, 520. On the broader impact of the 1739–48 warfare for Charles Town’s trade, see Stuart O. Stumpf, ‘Implications of King George’s War for the Charleston Mercantile Community’, *SCHM*, 77.3 (July 1976), 161–188.

<sup>80</sup> Robert Pringle to Andrew Pringle, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1742. *LRP*, I, 371; Easterby (ed.), *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly*, 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1742, 379, 395. On the Shubricks’ naval connections, see also *SCG*, 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1742, 21<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1743, 21<sup>st</sup> Sept. 1748; and Stumpf, ‘Implications of King George’s War’, 165.

A notable feature of the Charles Town merchants who later relocated to Britain was their limited participation in the slave trade. The 1730s saw imports of enslaved Africans into Charles Town reach record levels to meet the labour needs of South Carolina's fast-expanding rice economy – some 21,542 slaves in total between 1731 and 1739. Slave trading was the basis of some of the greatest fortunes made in Charles Town during the period. Merchants such as Joseph Wragg, Benjamin Godin and Benjamin Savage acted as 'slave factors', receiving cargoes of African slaves whose trafficking had been arranged by the merchants' correspondents in Britain.<sup>81</sup> The Charles Town merchants then sold the slaves at auction, keeping a commission. The future London Carolina merchants largely avoided the slave trade, however, for reasons that were more likely commercial than moral. The greater risks involved in the slave trade, although offset by the potential for very high profits, were the likeliest deterrent. Indeed, by the nature of their commerce all Charles Town's traders were implicated in the wider slave economy. Not only did crops cultivated by slaves provide the bulk of their overseas trade and attendant wealth, slaves were a feature of their home and business lives. Slaves formed the labour force at the merchants' lowcountry plantations, as chapter three describes, while Crokatt owned at least two domestic slaves, who were advertised for sale when he left the province in 1739. Slaves were also a mainstay of the workforce on Charles Town's wharves and stores. Evidence that Crokatt used slave labourers at his warehouse comes from a story in the *South Carolina Gazette* in June 1735 which notified readers of a large theft he had suffered. It reported that

“... a discovery was made of a Theft committed by some Negroes belonging to *Mr. James Crokatt*, a *Charlestown* Merchant; they had stolen out of their Master's Store a considerable Quantity of Goods to the Value of above 2000 Pounds, hid and buried several of them under Ground in his own Yard, carried others to such Houses and Persons as they knew would receive and conceal the same, and gave some to other Negroes of their Acquaintance. It is supposed a great many Negroes are concern'd

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<sup>81</sup> In Wragg's and Godin's cases, from their relations Samuel Wragg and David Godin in London. Data and information on slave voyages are compiled from the *Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*: [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org). See also W. Robert Higgins, 'Charles Town Merchants and Factors Dealing in the External Negro Trade, 1735–75', *SCHM*, 65.4 (Oct. 1964), 205–17.

in this robbery, and no doubt but some white Persons that are concealers of such Goods, will be detected at the Trial of these Negroes.”<sup>82</sup>

Rarely were the merchants' regular appearances in the *Gazette* so dramatic. Most notices concerned the arrival of new goods in their stores, or appealed for recalcitrant debtors to come forward. The newspaper also provides a valuable source on the merchants' commercial and congruent social rise in South Carolina, charting how they joined clubs and societies, assumed civic duties and married into the provincial merchant-planter elite. All of these served both to reflect and reinforce their commercial standing. Most young traders arrived in the province from Britain unmarried. With their growing capital and good prospects, they were able to marry into a relatively permeable colonial upper strata, itself composed of comparative arrivistes and aspirant elitists. Marriages to native-born Carolinians could facilitate commercial progress by supplying extra capital and influential family connections. James Crockatt's marriage to Esther Gaillard, scion of an important Huguenot family, linked him to some of the province's most important planters, with extensive landholdings in St. James Santee parish. Her step-father, James Kinloch, was an active merchant, politician and major planter.<sup>83</sup> Richard Shubrick married into the wealthy Ball family, in the process acquiring a large and productive rice plantation on the Cooper River.<sup>84</sup> In 1742, John Beswicke married Mary Hill, daughter of the wealthy merchant and planter Charles Hill and, in the *Gazette's* estimation, “an agreeable young Lady, of great merit and a large Fortune”.<sup>85</sup> In the wake of successful commerce and notable marriages came civic responsibilities. Crockatt's status in the town was reflected by his office holdings and associative ties. Appointment to the Royal Council in 1738

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<sup>82</sup> *SCG*, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1735. The story was newsworthy enough to be reprinted in a Philadelphia newspaper the following month: *American Weekly Mercury* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), 31<sup>st</sup> July 1735. Peter H. Wood also cites this case as an example of “semi-organized crime” by black slaves: Wood, *Black Majority*, 215–6. No records of criminal cases in Charles Town before 1769 have survived.

<sup>83</sup> Edgar (ed.), *Biographical Directory*, II, 265–8, 379–80.

<sup>84</sup> Henry A.M. Smith, ‘The Baronies of South Carolina’, *SCHM*, 18.1 (Jan. 1917), 8–9. On the Ball family, see Edward Ball, *Slaves in the Family*. (London, 1999).

<sup>85</sup> *SCG*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1742; Robert Pringle to Andrew Pringle, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1744. *LRP*, II, 708; Edgar (ed.), *Biographical Directory*, II, 326.

translated his commercial and social standing into political status.<sup>86</sup> Crokatt was also prominent within the Scottish mercantile community in the town – part of an association with Scottish causes that lasted throughout his life – as treasurer of the St. Andrew’s Society, which offered a social forum to formalise ethnic networks and a channel for members’ philanthropy.<sup>87</sup> Further enmeshing his social and commercial connections, and attesting to his status, Crokatt was also the second master of Charles Town’s Masonic lodge. Civic and parochial duties were a more public means of cementing status. In 1735, Crokatt helped establish the Friendly Society, the first fire insurance company in North America, and acted as one of its five joint directors.<sup>88</sup> Yet for Crokatt, Beswicke and Shubrick, wealth and respectability in South Carolina paled in comparison to the attractions of commerce and its dividends in the imperial capital.

### **Relocating to Britain**

The previous two sections of this chapter have surveyed the arrival in Charles Town and the rise to commercial ascendancy in the port of the merchants who were later at the forefront of London’s Carolina trade. This final section examines how and why these men – who were well established, wealthy, and socially and politically connected in South Carolina – came to leave the province. In observing the career paths of Charles Town merchants, R. C. Nash has noted that on withdrawing from trade in the town, most followed one of two paths. The most common route, particularly among native-born merchants, was pursued by traders such as Gabriel Manigault and John Guerard – both contemporaries of Crokatt – and later by Henry Laurens, namely settling as landowners and planters in the province. Another cohort, including Laurens’s partner, George Austin, withdrew

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<sup>86</sup> CO5/366/105–6; CO5/381/262; CO324/37/112. The *Gazette* reported Crokatt’s appointment on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1738.

<sup>87</sup> *SCG*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec. 1732, 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1736; Hennig Cohen, *The South Carolina Gazette, 1732–1775*. (Columbia, SC, 1953), 17–8. For other examples of Crokatt’s links to Scottish causes, see *SCG*, 29<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1738 and 19<sup>th</sup> April 1739; Scots Hospital of King Charles II, *A Short Account of the Institution, Progress, and Present State of the Scottish Corporation in London*. (London, 1777), 39.

<sup>88</sup> *SCG*, 27<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1735, 31<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1736, 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec. 1737.

from trade altogether to retire to country estates in England.<sup>89</sup> These strategies were generally pursued by merchants at the end of their active trading careers. There was also a third path – neglected by historians but profoundly important for South Carolina’s commercial and political connections with Britain, that was pursued by mid-career merchants born in Britain and drawn to Carolina between the 1720s and 1740s. This group returned to Britain with their mercantile profits to re-enter the Carolina trade in London. It included most of London’s principal Carolina traders between the 1740s and early 1760s, notably James Crockatt, John Beswicke, the brothers-in-law John Nickleson and Richard Shubrick, and Charles Ogilvie.

Merchants relocated from Charles Town to London throughout the colonial era. They went for a variety of reasons: some sought to restore their health in Britain’s more temperate climes; others left on family grounds. The merchant and council member John Burn, whose assets in South Carolina included some 2,750 acres of land and at least seven Charles Town properties, left the province in order to recover his health and for his son’s education.<sup>90</sup> Richard Shubrick’s return to London in 1747 was probably influenced by his wife’s death the previous year. Other departures were prompted by inheriting land in Britain. William Middleton was one of South Carolina’s leading landowners and members of its Royal Council the owner of some 15,314 acres in the province.<sup>91</sup> In 1754, he was bequeathed an estate in Suffolk and properties in Chelsea and Mortlake, near London, which together had an annual income of some £1,200 sterling. Informing him of his inheritance, the London merchant George Udney fully expected him to quit South Carolina for landed life in England, writing that “on the receipt of this I presume you will come to England with Mrs. Middleton & your family”.<sup>92</sup> Middleton duly did, the allure of a country seat and London houses

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<sup>89</sup> R. C. Nash, ‘Trade and Business’, 13.

<sup>90</sup> Kathryn Roe Coker, ‘Absentees as Loyalists in Revolutionary War South Carolina’, *SCHM*, 96.2 (Apr. 1995), 125–6; Eugene M. Sirmans, ‘The South Carolina Royal Council, 1720–1763’, *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 18.3 (July 1961), 392.

<sup>91</sup> Sirmans, ‘South Carolina Royal Council’, 392.

<sup>92</sup> George Udney to William Middleton, 13<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1753. HA93: 722/124 (SCDAH microfilm).

outweighing considerations of social and political prestige in South Carolina, though he would retain and expand his landholdings in the Lower South.

Most merchants' relocations to Britain were driven by commercial rationale, however. They left in search of the greater profits to be made in London from exporting goods on credit to South Carolina, receiving remittances in bills or in rice or indigo. The rationale was most fully articulated by Charles Ogilvie. After his early adventures in the slave trade, Ogilvie had managed to establish a partnership in Charles Town, exporting rice and skins to Europe and selling wine and other merchandise from their premises 'on the Bay'. In 1760, he decided to leave the province for Britain. As he explained to his brother, his plan was to "establish matters here [Charles Town] & at home on such a footing as will enable me to live in London & transact the Business there while my partner remains here".<sup>93</sup> He calculated that he could save some 500 guineas a year in commission payments to London merchants if he settled in the capital and sent goods himself to his Charles Town partner – a process known to modern economists as a form of 'reverse' or 'backwards integration'. Through it, Ogilvie hoped to extend his commercial control up the supply chain to secure cost-efficiencies in the supply of goods. This logic paralleled the similar move that many of his merchant counterparts in Charles Town made into planting – a more dramatic step up the supply chain on the other side of the Atlantic. By buying plantations, they acquired a stake in the means of production, reducing costs and increasing the reliability of the inputs into their trading operations.<sup>94</sup> Besides the cost-savings he believed he would achieve, Ogilvie predicted improvements in the quality of goods by being able to select personally the products for export to South Carolina. He noted that he would take "more pains with [the goods] than can be expected from many of our present Correspondents". His only constraints to leaving were financial: his profits in 1759 – some 1,000 guineas after clearing debts – were lower than expected, delaying his

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<sup>93</sup> Charles Ogilvie to Alexander Ogilvie, 20<sup>th</sup> March 1760. OFP.

<sup>94</sup> On 'backwards integration' strategies in Atlantic trade and planting, see Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 81, 143–71; Smith, 'Gedney Clarke of Salem and Barbados', 510.

departure while he accumulated more capital. Moreover, he owed a debt of £4,000 to John Beswicke, who had more than a decade earlier relocated to London and had become, with James Crockatt, the capital's leading Carolina trader. This was the remainder of a much bigger debt that Ogilvie seems to have accrued through importing dry goods from Beswicke for sale in Charles Town. He therefore sought a loan of £500 from his brother to supplement his existing funds and to enable him to ship his first cargo of dry goods from London to Charles Town. His financial shortfall was one of cashflow, not credit. His debtors could not discharge their debts to him immediately and many, he explained, "I have no right to ask for perhaps 6, 9 or 12 months".<sup>95</sup> To reassure his brother of his own creditworthiness, Ogilvie set out how mercantile credit worked and how his business was organised. In a particularly instructive passage, he explained: "You may be surprised that men who have so considerable a Capital should want to borrow Money. The Reason of which is the long credit given & the great Value of Goods always on hand to keep up a proper assortment [of goods]. Ogilvie & Ward and Ogilvie & Forbes [his two partnerships in Charleston] together have been due them by good men upwards of Ten Thousand Guineas and O & F have on hand Merchandise on their own Account at least the amount of £4,000." Whatever the true state of his finances, Ogilvie was for all his cashflow difficulties able to relocate from Charles Town to London in 1761. Before leaving the port, he made arrangements with several importing houses in the town to act as their correspondent in London, as well as maintaining a partnership with a merchant in the port.<sup>96</sup>

As Ogilvie's experience makes clear, relocating from South Carolina was a lengthy process, complicated by the need to run down inventories and to compel customers to clear their debts. Before leaving Charles Town, merchants sold off their remaining stock and household goods that

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<sup>95</sup> Charles Ogilvie to Alexander Ogilvie, 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1761. OFP. Ogilvie had been in partnership with John Ward during the 1750s, which terminated in March 1759. He then went into partnership with John Forbes, with whom he continued after relocating to London. *SCG*, 31<sup>st</sup> March 1759; Calhoun et al., 'Geographic Spread', 203, 209.

<sup>96</sup> Charles Ogilvie to Alexander Ogilvie, 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1761. OFP.

were either no longer required or could not be transported to Britain. Usually this was done at first through their stores, but when departures became imminent, they were willing to accept the lower prices commanded at auction. Shortly before his departure from Charles Town, John Beswicke announced in March 1747 that he would be selling sell “at Vendue [auction], under the New Market, what Shop-Goods he has on Hand, together with his Household Goods”.<sup>97</sup> James Crokatt’s sell-off eight years earlier had been a more extensive affair which illustrated the wealth and grandeur that a successful spell in Charles Town commerce could bring. His remaining dry goods were to be sold “at public Vendue”, together with an assortment of his household fittings. They included, “A New England Chaise never used, Good Vidonia Wine, A Marble Chimney Piece compleat, An Iron Hearth with Brass Facings, and Brass Shovel and Tongs, also several kinds of Household Furniture, not much the Worse for use.” Closer to his departure, Crokatt began to sell his family’s more indispensable possessions. These included household furniture, horses and a chaise, and two domestic slaves who were “used to wash and dress Linnens”. Later still, Crokatt sold more furniture, books and “a Negro man”.<sup>98</sup>

Offloading unsold merchandise and personal goods was simple compared to the difficulties encountered in winding up credit lines that stretched far and wide across the Carolinian lowcountry. Merchants planning their departure placed repeated notices in the *Gazette*, demanding that debtors come forward. None were more frequent, insistent and ultimately threatening than Crokatt’s, typifying a flair for self-promotion which ran throughout his career and in particular the aggressive commercial approach that would propel him to the top of London’s Carolina trade. By the time he left South Carolina in June 1739, notices alerting readers to his departure had been carried in every edition of the *Gazette* for nearly eight months. They stood out from both the other advertisements in the same editions and from other departure notices – located at the top of a page and spanning two column widths, they were among the most striking advertisements the newspaper had ever

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<sup>97</sup> *SCG*, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1747.

<sup>98</sup> *SCG*, 1<sup>st</sup> Feb., 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1739.

carried.<sup>99</sup> Readiness to take legal action against defaulting debtors further marked Crokatt's combative approach. Poor rice harvests limited the ability of many customers to make their remittances to Charles Town retailers, and could leave the latter with extensive debts. While customers' loss of crops was widely reported in traders' notices in the *Gazette*, Crokatt was distinctive in alleging that a number of planters were using this as a cunning ploy, claiming in one advert that "several have made Excuses for not paying me last year, by losing, or pretending to have lost their crops".<sup>100</sup> After months of reminders, his patience finally wore thin. He announced:

"And whereas many who were indebted to me before last January, have not yet paid or settled their Accounts, either by cash, bond or otherways, which it is in every Man's power to do, all such as don't settle their Accounts due to me some time in this Month, may depend they will be sued for the same the 1<sup>st</sup> week in July, having now had *six months* notice in the most publick manner from  
James Crokatt."<sup>101</sup>

Crokatt's actions matched his rhetoric, and he employed Charles Town's leading attorneys, Charles Pinckney and James Wright, to recover his dues in a series of court actions.<sup>102</sup>

The care James Crokatt took in settling his commercial affairs before leaving South Carolina illustrates the complexity of mercantile relocation. Besides taking on attorneys to collect debts, he appointed an agent to manage his property investments in the town.<sup>103</sup> In a shrewd commercial move – and like other departing merchants who retained a commercial presence in Charles Town – Crokatt entered partnership with two local merchants, Ebenezer Simmons and Benjamin Smith. The partners invested equal capital in the firm, and agreed "to be equally concerned in all Profits &

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<sup>99</sup> *SCG*, 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1738 to 16<sup>th</sup> June 1739. Crokatt's gift for advertising apparently rubbed off on his young partner, Benjamin Smith. Smith's three-column spread in the largest type to announce the formation of his new firm, Benjamin Smith & Co. in 1752 is said to have been "the boldest advertisement that had yet appeared in the *Gazette*". George C. Rogers Jr., *Evolution of a Federalist: William Loughton Smith of Charleston, 1758–1812*. (Columbia, SC, 1962), 14.

<sup>100</sup> *SCG*, 5<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> April and 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1735, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1737.

<sup>101</sup> *SCG*, 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1736. For further examples of his assertiveness in reclaiming debts, see *SCG*, 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. and 15<sup>th</sup> April 1738.

<sup>102</sup> *SCG*, 15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1737. See also Judgement Rolls: 23A/58A; 24A/1A, 2A; 26A/78A (SCDAH); *SCG*, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1733, 26<sup>th</sup> May 1746, 21<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1751.

<sup>103</sup> *SCG*, 29<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1739. Crokatt's relationship with his agent, Robert Raper, continued for nearly 30 years. When they settled their account in 1767, Raper expressed his hope that "we may finish our Concerns as amicably as we began which I think was in the year 1739." Robert Raper to James Crokatt, 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1767. LRR.

loss accruing, growing, happening or arising” over the partnership’s seven year duration. Crokatt made a considered choice in his partners, both native-born South Carolinians. Simmons was already a trader of some status; Smith, just 21 in 1738, had worked in Crokatt’s counting-house for at least three years, and would become one of Charles Town’s foremost merchant-bankers and the speaker of the provincial assembly. Terms were agreed in February 1737 and the partnership became effective for seven years from 1<sup>st</sup> September 1738. Having partners in Charles Town would give Crokatt a trusted outlet to which to convey dry goods from Britain and a reliable supplier of Carolinian export produce. Operating from Crokatt’s old premises in Broad Street, where it retailed a conventional range of imported goods and offered the same terms Crokatt had given as a sole trader – produce in receipt of goods sold and up to two years’ credit – the partnership also offered commercial continuity, helping it to retain Crokatt’s existing customers in the province.<sup>104</sup>

With such arrangements in place, Crokatt and his relocating counterparts left the cis-tropical climes and commercial bustle of Charles Town – a booming port on Britain’s imperial frontier – to further their business at the empire’s heart. Turning their backs on the competing allure of active plantation management in South Carolina, trade in London offered opportunities for profits and wealth on an even greater scale. With elite status in the metropolis, moreover, came responsibilities to the colony that had ‘made’ them – responsibilities as conduits of provincial grievances and as political-economic advocates on its behalf. An earlier generation of London–Carolina traders had, between the 1710s and 1730s, understood these responsibilities and provided a model of mercantile activism to emulate. Following the lobbying precedents of London’s other branches of American trade, this first generation of London’s Carolina traders had coalesced into a lobby on issues where their commercial interest and provincial welfare had intersected. Their advocacy formed the basis both for how the later, more prominent and more distinguishable group of London’s Carolina traders

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<sup>104</sup> Miscellaneous Records, 1749–51, 292–301. (SCDAH); *SCG*, 19<sup>th</sup> October to 9<sup>th</sup> November 1738. Smith had been at Crokatt’s trading house as early as June 1735, when he was identified in a newspaper advertisement. *SCG*, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1735.

would petition and lobby the British state. It also conditioned how correspondents in South Carolina conceived the connective political role undertaken by the metropolitan Carolina trade. The following chapter examines how this role was performed during the 1740s and 1750s by Crockatt, Beswicke, Shubrick, Nickleson and their metropolitan colleagues as the North American colonies loomed larger in the British political imagination and Britain's politicians paid closer attention to the colonies' productive potential.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “Friends at Home”: London’s Mid-Century Carolina Trade

In 1744, South Carolina’s assembly revived a statute which placed extra duties on imports of Madeira wine, rum, molasses, flour and sugar. Having failed to persuade the province’s governor, James Glen, to strike it down, Charles Town’s merchants turned instead to the Board of Trade in London, which could advise the Crown to veto provincial laws. To do so, they needed the aid of their counterparts in London. The capital’s Carolina traders were asked to petition for the law to be disallowed, since it was not only harmful to business in Charles Town, but “only a Prelude or Introduction for Our Assembly to Tax and Cramp the Trading Interest for the future more & more”. Many of Charles Town’s traders would therefore write to their “Friends at Home” to ask them to press their case.<sup>1</sup>

These actions, and the assumptions that underlay them, offer a telling glimpse into the political-economy of the transatlantic Carolina trade. Colonial residents and London traders alike understood political agency to be an integral function for a metropolitan merchant in a colonial trade. Representing the colony and its trade in the corridors of power was a corollary of a London merchant’s more straightforwardly commercial activities and a responsibility to his colonial correspondents. Since they lacked direct representation in or access to Britain’s political fora and were otherwise dependent on the activism of the colony’s official agent, merchants in South Carolina relied on the agency of their British counterparts. They were expected to lobby the relevant political institutions – the Board of Trade, the Treasury and Parliament – for commercial preferment for the colony, for legislative action and for military protection. To achieve these goals, they might orchestrate petitioning and, where possible, galvanise cross-sectoral pressure. Underlying this were two fundamental conceptions: that imperial authorities had the ultimate control over the terms of South Carolina’s trade, and that the interests of London Carolina

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<sup>1</sup> RP to AP, 30<sup>th</sup> May (quote) and 20<sup>th</sup> July 1744. *LRP*, II, 699–701, 728–30.

merchants correlated with those of the colony. During the next 30 years, both would be tested, challenged and finally overturned. This chapter explores how this mercantile advocacy was understood and enacted in a period of relative political harmony between Britain and South Carolina. Charles Town's merchants looked to their "Friends at Home" – a doubly revealing epithet – to represent their mutual interests in the imperial corridors of power. However, the theoretical commonality of interests was sometimes belied in reality, as London's traders either proved inattentive to their correspondents' concerns or failed to live up to the standards of lobbying expected of them.<sup>2</sup>

As during the formative years of Carolina lobbying profiled in chapter one, there were compelling reasons for Carolinians to look principally to London traders as their advocates. One was the capital's dominant share of the colony's overseas trade, giving its Carolina merchants particular authority in presenting concerns or conveying information to the British state. The merchants' location in London, close to the institutions of government, enhanced their access to the corridors of power. Structural and compositional features within London's mid-century Carolina trade augmented its political-economic significance. Chief among these were the concentration of the trade in a small number of hands, the personal experience that most of its leading figures had of living and trading in Charles Town, and the emergence of dynamic leadership within the trading lobby. These distinguished the Carolina lobby from other North American interest groups and contributed to its notable effectiveness between the late 1740s and early 1760s; as chapter four will show, they would also have important consequences in a less harmonious political environment from the mid-1760s. Building on the prosopographical method used in chapter one, this chapter tracks the merchants profiled there as they settled into business in London. Here they came to dominate the capital's trade with South Carolina, reaching their commercial apogee in the metropolis during the 1740s and 1750s. This method reconnects the commercial activities of

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<sup>2</sup> Scottish-born Robert Pringle still conceived of Britain as "Home" in the 1740s, an affective and linguistic trait shared by many Carolinians whether born in Britain or in the colony.

individual merchants with their collective lobbying in a manner lacking in previous studies of sectoral interest groups.<sup>3</sup> It reveals how a Carolinian ‘interest’ in London (and, on occasions, in Britain more widely) interacted with the Board of Trade, the Treasury and with Parliament itself. Interrelating their lobbying with prevailing political discourse and economic theory, it describes how political circumstances powerfully influenced the effectiveness of the merchants’ lobbying. The chapter therefore examines the legislative success enjoyed by the Carolina lobby between the late 1740s and early 1760s – principally in securing a bounty on colonial indigo in 1748 as well as stimuli for the production of silk, potash and hemp – and situates them in the context of British domestic and imperial decision-making.

### **Composition and organisation in the mid-century Carolina trade**

As chapter one demonstrated, London’s Carolina trade had been concentrated in relatively few hands from the early years of the eighteenth century. Evidence from petitions, letters and tax assessments reveals how this concentration remained one of the trade’s most conspicuous features throughout the middle decades of the century. In this, its situation paralleled or even prefigured that in other branches of London’s overseas commerce, where the sugar, tobacco and slave trades were all becoming dominated by fewer and larger mercantile houses.<sup>4</sup> Visiting London in 1749, Henry Laurens identified three trading houses in the capital as pre-eminent in the Carolina trade – James Crockatt & Co., John Nickleson and Richard Shubrick.<sup>5</sup> Together with John Beswicke, these three firms dominated the export trade to the province during the 1740s and 1750s and, through the commercial foundations they laid for their successors, their influence would persist even after their retirement or death. Most of the other London partnerships specializing in the Carolina trade had either sprung from these firms, or were closely connected to them. Evidence from mercantile

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<sup>3</sup> See the literature discussed in introduction, n. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Price and Clemens, ‘Revolution in Overseas Trade’, 21–24; Price, ‘What Did Merchants Do?’, 281.

<sup>5</sup> HL to Francis Bremar, 27<sup>th</sup> March 1749. *PHL*, I, 232. Laurens’s omission of John Beswicke from this list, despite the scale of his involvement in the Carolina trade, probably reflects the limited trading connections he had personally with him.

petitioning and from the surviving registers of ships clearing Charles Town supports a picture of a concentrated trade.<sup>6</sup>

Fourteen years after Laurens's observations, the concentration of London's Carolina trade was reasserted in *Mortimer's Directory*, the first London trade directory to classify merchants by their sectoral or geographic focus. Of the 46 merchants listed in 1763 by *Mortimer's* as being in North American trade, just six firms were sub-categorised as 'Carolina merchants'. Listings were probably made on the basis of self-categorisation, with each firm classifying itself according to its primary trading concerns; as such, it provides a fairly reliable guide to specialization in each trade.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the small number of Carolina traders listed, the directory classified 49 firms as West India merchants, 19 as Virginia merchants and nine as New England merchants. The connections between the six Carolina trading houses further emphasise the group's stability and unified character. Three of the six firms listed in *Mortimer's* were James & Charles Crockatt, John Beswicke and Richard Shubrick. The others three were John Nutt, who was Crockatt's son-in law through marriage to his daughter Mary; Sarah Nickleson, the sister of Richard Shubrick and widow of John Nickleson, and whose control of her husband's business after his death in 1754 made her one of just a handful of female overseas traders in an overwhelmingly male business; and the firm of Grubb & Watson, formerly junior partners in Crockatt's trading house.<sup>8</sup> The other leading Carolina

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<sup>6</sup> See for example, *JCTP*, VIII, 273; CO5/65/1–3; Charles Town Naval Office Lists: CO5/509–11.

<sup>7</sup> The concentration of London's Carolina trade in the early 1760s is further confirmed by ships' manifests detailing indigo exports from South Carolina in 1764. Charles Town Naval Office, ships' manifests, Jan.–April 1764. CO5/511/2–63. These are discussed at length in chapter four.

<sup>8</sup> *The Universal Director* [*Mortimer's Directory*], 1763. As the only classified London directory published before 1788, *Mortimer's* is an invaluable source for the study of the City's merchants in the 1760s. The largest group is simply general merchants, who do not denote a specific field of trade. However, the directory has some limitations as a source. Containing around 2,900 names and addresses, including 1,252 individuals and firms listed as merchants, it is less comprehensive than other contemporary directories. The rival but unclassified *Complete Guide* directory, for example, contained around 4,200 entries in its 1760 edition and around 6,000 in 1765. Since no further classified directories were published before 1788, it is difficult to track relative participation in each trade over time. Peter J. Atkins, *The Directories of London, 1677–1977*. (London, 1990), 22. Bristol's first classified directory, *Sketchley's Bristol Directory*, was published in 1775. Among the 168 merchants listed, it categorised just one specialist Carolina trader, Samuel Brailsford. Formerly a prominent merchant in Charles Town, he had relocated to Britain in the late 1760s. James Sketchley, *Sketchley's Bristol Directory; including Clifton, Bedminster, and the out-parishes of St. James and St. Philip*. (Bristol, 1775).

trading house in London during the 1760s and 1770s, Greenwood & Higginson, inherited Beswicke's business on his death in 1764. As in previous decades, trade to South Carolina was not entirely limited to these firms, with warehousemen and other specialist retailers continuing to send their wares to correspondents in Charles Town on credit.<sup>9</sup> Other merchants also relocated from Charles Town to London between the 1750s and early 1770s and continued in trade to the province, such as Charles Ogilvie, Samuel Carne, James Poyas, Benjamin Stead and William Stone; other elite City merchants with pan-colonial trading portfolios also had interests in the Carolina trade.<sup>10</sup> However, the clear majority of London's Carolina trade by volume and – as importantly – the principal voice of the Carolina 'interest' in the imperial metropolis was concentrated in the hands of the leading specialist Carolina merchants.

Relocations to London were motivated by the capital's supremacy in Britain's Carolina trade and reinforced its dominance.<sup>11</sup> In the rice trade, the capital was the largest single destination for South Carolina's exports during the 1740s and 1750s, receiving significantly more than either of the next two most prominent British rice ports, Bristol and Cowes. Most was carried on the account and risk of London 'principals', who employed agents in Charles Town and sometimes South Carolina's minor ports, Beaufort and Georgetown, to buy the grain from local planters or intermediary 'country factors' and to arrange its shipment across the Atlantic. After being landed and taxed in Britain, as required by law, most rice was then re-exported to northern Europe and the remainder

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<sup>9</sup> For example, the linen drapers Pomeroy & Streatfield and the woollen drapers Rogers & Dyson, who traded to South Carolina between the 1740s and 1770s, and the textile wholesaler Nathaniel Newberry. *PHL*, I, 15n, 232; VIII, 261; Kellock, 'London Merchants and the pre-1776 American debts'; City of London Land Tax Assessments, MS.11316/132–4 (Guildhall Library, London); *London Directories*.

<sup>10</sup> Major London overseas traders whose diverse portfolios included some interests in the Carolina trade included Sir William Baker, Richard Oswald and Samuel Touchett.

<sup>11</sup> On London's dominance of British overseas trade, see French, "Crowded with Traders and a Great Commerce", 29–32; Patrick K. O'Brien, 'Inseparable Connections: Trade, Economy, Fiscal State, and the Expansion of Empire, 1688–1815' in Peter J. Marshall (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*. (Oxford, 1998), 61. Notwithstanding the so-called 'rise of the outports' – the growth of English provincial ports such as Bristol, Liverpool and Lancaster – London's share of British overseas trade was never less than double the combined share of all England's outports in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. The dominance was mirrored in trade with Britain's colonies, with London's share of the colonial import trade above 64 per cent of total and the export trade above 70 per cent of total throughout the period.

sold locally to wholesale grocers. Moreover, London merchants appear to have controlled much of the rice that was trans-shipped through England's channel ports.<sup>12</sup> The capital was also the main recipient of South Carolina's deerskins and naval stores, and the destination for an overwhelming share of its indigo after the dyestuff became South Carolina's second largest export from the late 1740s. In the indigo trade, the *commission* system was more common. Through this, Carolinian planters or Charles Town merchants acting for several small producers shipped indigo to merchants – overwhelmingly in London – on their own account and risk, matching the system by which Chesapeake tobacco and West Indian sugar were marketed in the capital. The British merchants sold the dye to specialist dealers or to grocers on their correspondents' behalf and remitted the proceeds in bills of exchange, promissory notes or goods. London also dominated the export trade to South Carolina, principally owing to the more generous credit its merchants offered and its better access to the European and Asian goods, especially fabrics, sought by colonial consumers.<sup>13</sup> Most cargoes were sent on credit (by mid-century typically at five per cent interest from six months after date of invoice) to Charles Town merchants who either traded independently or were involved in a transatlantic partnership.<sup>14</sup> Evidence from other branches of Anglo-American trade suggests

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<sup>12</sup> No data on the destination of Charles Town rice exports survive for the 1740s, but London's average annual share of rice exports to Britain between 1734 and 1738 was 42 per cent and between 1758 and 1760, 30 per cent. Clowse, *Measuring Charleston's Overseas Commerce*, 63, tab. B–26. On London merchants and the Cowes rice trade, see below chap. 4, n. 2. A particularly clear contemporary account of the organisation of the transatlantic rice trade and the principal role of London merchants is provided in the lawsuit brought by Richard Shubrick against a Capt. Salmond, who Shubrick had chartered to collect a cargo of rice in Winyaw [Georgetown] in 1762–3. Salmond was contracted to land a cargo in Madeira and then sail on to Winyaw, where he would stay for forty days, unless loaded and dispatched earlier, where he was to “load his ship with such rice and other goods as the plaintiff's agents & c. should tended to be laden”. If the ship failed to arrive in Winyaw by 1<sup>st</sup> March 1763, Shubrick's “factors or assigns” could chose either to load the ship as specified, or refuse it altogether. The case was brought by Shubrick since Salmond had never sailed from Madeira to Winyaw, and was decided in Shubrick's favour. Thomas Parker, *The laws of shipping and insurance, with a digest of adjudged cases; containing the acts of parliament relative to shipping, insurance and navigation... from Trinity term 1693, to Michaelmas term 1774*. (London, 1775).

<sup>13</sup> As with rice, there is no data on the destinations of Carolinian deerskins or naval stores between 1738 and 1758. However, between 1734 and 1738 London received an annual average of 50 per cent of the province's deerskin exports, 57 per cent of its tar and 53 per cent of its pitch, and between 1758 and 1760 an annual average of 60 per cent of its deerskins, 18 per cent of its tar (second to Poole) and 31 per cent of its pitch. Clowse, *Measuring Charleston's Overseas Commerce*, 54–5, 67, tabs. B–11, B–32; Nash, ‘Organization of Trade and Finance’ [2001], 88–9.

<sup>14</sup> For more detail on the economic organisation of South Carolina's Atlantic trades, see Nash, ‘Organization of Trade and Finance’ [2001], 74–107 and idem., ‘Organization of Trade and Finance’ [2005] which

that this was a particularly profitable line of business, with goods retailing at several multiples of cost price and delivering profits of up to ten per cent on export cargoes for London traders. However, against these potential rewards the colonial export trade also involved substantial risks, particularly of consignees defaulting and the loss or damage of goods in transit.<sup>15</sup>

Following their commercial practice in Charles Town, where most had concentrated on exporting produce and importing British and European goods, London's principal Carolina traders avoided direct involvement in the slave trade. Given their complicity in the province's slave system through the commodity and produce trade – their willingness to export goods used to clothe, equip and restrain slaves, and to import slave-made produce – it is likely this was a consequence of commercial rather than moral reasoning. Timing may also have been a factor. The commercial ascent in London of Crockatt, Beswicke, Shubrick and Nickleson during the 1740s coincided with a decade-long hiatus in the Atlantic slave trade to South Carolina, following the introduction of prohibitively high import duties after the Stono Rebellion in the province in September 1739. Between 1740 and 1748, just nine slave ships, of which only two were registered in London, arrived in Charles Town, disembarking 1,858 enslaved Africans. The previous nine years – 1731 to 1739 – had by contrast seen 89 slave ships arrive in the province, disembarking 21,542 enslaved Africans. Of these, 34 had come from London.<sup>16</sup>

Well established in profitable commodity trading by the time the Atlantic slave trade to South Carolina was effectively reopened in 1749, London's leading Carolina traders were not inclined to diversify into this riskier though highly profitable field. When Henry Laurens proposed a joint

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elaborates on the comparative context of South Carolina's trade, 95–151. Also Nash, 'South Carolina Indigo', 362–92; Morgan, 'Organization of Colonial American Rice Trade', 453–452. The Rawlinson & Davison Account Books are notably underused sources on the marketing of rice and indigo (and a variety of other imported colonial produce) in London. (Guildhall Library, London).

<sup>15</sup> Roberts III, 'Samuel Storke', 155; Smith and Wheeley, "Requisites of a Considerable Trade", 556; Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies*, 69, 252–79.

<sup>16</sup> On London's share of the Atlantic slave trade to South Carolina, see Richardson, 'British Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina', 139; and *Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*: [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org). On the principal London Carolina merchants' low levels of participation in the slave trade while in Charles Town, see Higgins, 'Charles Town Merchants and the External Negro Trade', 205–17.

slaving venture to James Crokatt, for example, Crokatt responded that he was “fully employ’d with Business on Commission & chuses to be confin’d in that way”, although, signifying his lack of moral qualms about the trade, he willingly gave Laurens letters of introduction to slave traders in Bristol and Liverpool.<sup>17</sup> After the likes of Crokatt, Beswicke and John Nickleson retired or died, their commercial successors for the most part maintained the same trading model – the concentration on goods export and commodity imports – and left the traffic in human cargo to specialist slave traders. London’s Carolina commodity traders’ aversion to the slave trade from the 1740s contrasted with an earlier generation of the capital’s Carolina traders, notably Stephen and David Godin and Samuel Wragg, who had combined commodity and slave trading. By comparison, of the six Carolina specialists listed in *Mortimer’s* in 1763, only Nutt, as part of an eight-man consortium of owners of the ship *Cape Coast* in 1758, is recorded as having had a stake in a slaving voyage to South Carolina.<sup>18</sup>

Just as they largely eschewed the slave trade in favour of the commodity import-export trade, London’s Carolina traders seem to have focussed primarily on their geographic specialism. This was probably a function of the difficulty all long-distance overseas merchants encountered in maintaining trust, reputation and accurate market intelligence, considerations which were easier to control by trading predominantly to a single location.<sup>19</sup> Diversifications into different branches of trade appear to have been supplementary or speculative ventures. James Crokatt conducted some trade with the West Indies, for example, and he joined many other London merchants, including

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<sup>17</sup> HL to James Crokatt, 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan. 1749, to Isaac Hobhouse, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1749. *PHL*, I, 200–1, 226–7.

<sup>18</sup> Among the other merchants who specialized in London’s commodity export trade to South Carolina between 1749 and the Revolution, during which time 63 ships departed on slaving voyages from London and completed their journeys in South Carolina, only Benjamin Stead was active in the slave trade. A prominent slave trader in Charles Town before relocating to London in 1759, his participation in the slave trade in London was concentrated in just three years, when he had a stake in five slave voyages between 1763 and 1765. All figures on slave voyages in the paragraph and in this footnote are compiled from the *Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*: [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org); see also Richardson, ‘British Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina’, 125–172.

<sup>19</sup> In this, the Carolina merchants appear to have more closely matched the commercial strategies of London’s largest late 17<sup>th</sup> century colonial merchants, among whom Zahedieh observed “very high levels of regional specialization”, than their super-elite contemporaries profiled by David Hancock, who participated in several different branches of trade. Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies*, 103 (quote), 286; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*.

fellow Carolina traders Andrew Pringle and Charles Ogilvie, in beginning a trade with the Caribbean islands captured from France during the Seven Years War. The three signed a petition to the government in 1762 against the islands' restoration to France on the grounds that debts owed them by planters there would become irrecoverable.<sup>20</sup> The Carolina import-export trade was, however, the traders' principal concern, their specialization generating profits large enough to apparently discourage widespread diversification into other sectors. These profits translated into considerable wealth and City status. Details of this wealth, manifested especially through extensive and lavish property ownership, are explored in depth in chapter four, in particular for its implications for their relationships with Carolinian correspondents. Other aspects of their commercial organisation and civic participation similarly demonstrate the metropolitan Carolina trade's profitability and the prestige that success in the trade conferred. London's Carolina merchants commonly owned the ships plying Atlantic waters laden with rice, indigo or exported British goods. Through this, they might reap extra profits from hiring out space on the vessels, and avoid the costs of chartering vessels themselves. Moreover, buying an ocean-going ship required substantial capital, further attesting to the Carolina traders' wealth, especially where – as was often the case – the merchant was sole-owner.<sup>21</sup> Directorships of London's limited liability insurance companies were another reflection of the traders' wealth and status. John Nickleson, for example, was a director of Royal Exchange Assurance; his brother-in-law, Richard Shubrick, was for fifteen years a director of the London Assurance Corporation, and on account of his maritime expertise also held office as an 'elder brother' of Trinity House corporation.<sup>22</sup>

Philanthropic service and donations further signify the wealth and status that derived from the metropolitan Carolina trade. Sitting on charitable boards, London's Carolina merchants mixed

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<sup>20</sup> South Carolina Court of Common Pleas, Judgement Rolls: 45A/153A. (SCDAH); *Crookatt v. Muilman* [1770], C12/540/24; CO5/65/27–29, 30–34, 37–39, 40–42. (National Archives, London)

<sup>21</sup> Charles Town Naval Office Lists: CO5/509–11.

<sup>22</sup> *Read's Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1750; Complete Guide to... London, 1749–1755, 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> eds; Trinity House, *The royal charter of confirmation granted by His most excellent Majesty King James II. To the Trinity-House of Deptford-Strond; for the government and increase of the navigation of England...* (London, 1763), 180.

among the capital's commercial elite. Like their commercial lobbying, their philanthropic activities also indicate how they conceived the overlapping roles of commerce, private initiative and government. Through membership of charity boards, the Carolina merchants epitomised the widespread understanding in mid-eighteenth century Britain that private initiative could directly stimulate the public good, furthering Britain's 'national interest'. Several of London's Carolina traders thus directed their philanthropy – a by-product of the wealth generated in their transatlantic commerce – towards nautical causes, reflecting the maritime character of their business and the contemporary preoccupation with Britain's naval prowess. Several subscribed to the Marine Society, which funded poor boys to join the Royal Navy; the multitude of sailors' welfare organisations such as the 'Hospital for decay'd Seamen in the Merchants' Service' and the 'Corporation for the Relief and Support of Sick, Maimed and Disabled Seamen, and of the Widows and Children of such as shall be Killed, Slain, or Drowned in the Merchants' Service' were other favoured causes.<sup>23</sup> Most explicitly yoking social concern with patriotic ends, and the expectation of future dividends, James Crockatt invested £1,000 in the Free British Fishery Society, an organisation formed in 1749 to promote herring fishing in the hope of boosting Britain's shipping fleet, training sailors and alleviating poverty.<sup>24</sup> Charity in the 'national interest' complemented the Carolina traders' commercial agency. Both implied the concerned individual's role and responsibility in promoting general economic and social wellbeing. Moreover, the national benefits attending the desired outcomes – whether this was a better manned and more active Royal Navy or more productive colonies – would also redound to the individual donor's or lobbyist's advantage. In the Carolina merchants' case this might be an Atlantic made safer by the empowered navy, or more rice or indigo to trade. Philanthropy, advocacy and self-interest went hand-in-hand.

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<sup>23</sup> Jonas Hanway, *An Account of the Marine Society [List of subscribers to the Marine Society]* (London, 1759), 13; *Court and City Register. For the year 1755...* 19<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1755), 207; *Public Advertiser*, 19<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1754; *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 21<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1764. On the culture of charity in mid-century London, see Donna Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ, 1989).

<sup>24</sup> Add. MS. 15154–5. Minute Books of the Free British Fishery Society (British Library, London); Bob Harris, 'Patriotic Commerce and National Revival: The Free British Fishery Society and British Politics, c.1749–58', *EHR*, 114 (1999), 285–313.

### **Concentration of trade**

The way businesses were organised in the transatlantic Carolina trade strengthened the concentration of trade in relatively few hands. One aspect of this was the way in which partnerships were formed. Making transatlantic partnerships with traders in Charles Town – often before relocating from Charles Town to London themselves, as James Crokatt did with Ebenezer Simmons and Benjamin Smith – offered London’s Carolina merchants assured outlets to which to convey European manufactured goods and reliable supplies of rice, naval stores and skins for British and continental European markets. Moreover, partnerships reduced a trading house’s exposure to the age-old problems of principal–agency: the liability of agents on the ground to mismanage the firm’s affairs, to trade on their own account, or at worst to actively defraud the firm. Retaining a family member as a business partner in Charles Town, as Richard Shubrick arranged with his brother Thomas, was (at least in theory) the most effective form of protection against these problems and, more generally, of offsetting the issues of trust that were so critical to success in a long-distance and precarious business environment. Others turned to longstanding and trusted friends. Having entered transatlantic partnership with Simmons and Smith, James Crokatt confined his export trade to the port almost exclusively to his partners, as the many legal suits through which he pursued debtors in Charles Town show.<sup>25</sup> From London, John Beswicke entered into a series of partnerships with Charles Town traders, again manifesting the value attached to trusted and reliable correspondents ‘on the spot’.<sup>26</sup>

Against the security offered by formal transatlantic partnerships, a trade with a number of different correspondents in South Carolina was capable of providing competing advantages, not least the greater volumes and higher profits which might be achieved as a consequence. James Crokatt’s

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<sup>25</sup> South Carolina Court of Common Pleas, Judgement Rolls: 24B/32A, 26A/72A, 26A/75A, 27B/15A. (SCDAH).

<sup>26</sup> The turnover in personnel in these partnerships indicates the fluidity of Charles Town’s commercial scene, in contrast to the relative stasis of London’s Carolina trade. Beswicke’s partnerships were with, successively, John Crokatt and Alexander Livie (1752–3), then with Livie and John McQueen (1753–4), with McQueen alone (1754–8) and with McQueen and Maurice Harvey (1758–62). South Carolina Court of Common Pleas, Judgement Rolls: 33A/87A; 37A/12A; 45B/20A. (SCDAH).

partnership with Simmons & Smith in Charles Town ended as planned in 1745, when its seven year term expired, and the firm's assets were liquidated and divided among the three men, each receiving just under £7,000. The end of the partnership prompted a shift in Crokatt's trading strategy.<sup>27</sup> From 1745, he shipped goods on credit – ranging from textiles to building materials – directly to a multitude of independent traders and storekeepers in Charles Town, receiving remittances in cash, bills of exchange, or rice in a fleet of vessels either co-owned with Charles Town merchants or which he owned solely.<sup>28</sup> Penetrating interior markets, Crokatt also sent merchandise directly to lowcountry planters in South Carolina and Georgia, for their own use rather than for re-sale.<sup>29</sup> Having gained expertise and reputations, London's principal Carolina trading houses found that new firms in Charles Town lobbied hard to gain commissions from them, thus perpetuating and reinforcing their grip on the capital's Carolina trade. One start-up business asked Robert Raper, long-serving agent in the port for John Beswicke and James Crokatt, to tell Charles Crokatt, who inherited his father's business, that they were setting up in trade and “want much to deal with him”. Crokatt was assured that the traders were “honest industrious young men” who would, moreover, “not live extravagantly as too many of our Merchants here”. Raper provided a similar service to Greenwood & Higginson, when they had taken over Beswicke's firm, informing them of a new partnership in Charles Town who were keen to do business with them. The partnership would “apply to you for Goods & desired I would recommend them”, Raper related. Furthermore, they were creditworthy, solvent and had a reputation for being in good “Circumstances”, essential attributes for would-be Atlantic traders touting for connections in the metropolis.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Miscellaneous Records, 1749–51, 92–4, 292–301. (SCDAH).

<sup>28</sup> Crokatt's business with Charles Town trading houses in this period is recorded in the first volume of the Laurens papers. See HL to Richard Grubb, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1748, to James Crokatt, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1748, to Savage & Pickering, 26<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1748. *PHL*, I, 121–2, 130–1, 191–2. On Crokatt's shipping interests, see Charles Town Naval Office lists, CO5/510; HL to James Crokatt, 13<sup>th</sup> April 1748. *PHL*, I, 126–7; Clowse, *Measuring Charleston's Overseas Commerce*, 151; R. Nicholas Olsberg, ‘Ship Registers in the South Carolina Archives, 1734–1780’, *SCHM*, 74.4 (Oct. 1973), 212, 225.

<sup>29</sup> Judgement Rolls: 32A/65A; 43A/50A, 139A/171A. (SCDAH).

<sup>30</sup> RR to Charles Crokatt, 13<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1764; to Greenwood & Higginson, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1765. LRR.

For aspirant transatlantic traders in Charles Town, selecting the right trading correspondents in Britain required careful deliberation. As the correspondence above suggests, confidence and trust were hard-won commodities, based on reputation and recommendation: having forged a linkage with a particular London trading house, most Charles Town traders directed the majority of their trade to it. Moreover, there were logical economies of scale in, for example, shipping rice, indigo or deerskins in a single consignment to one trading house, rather than in several consignments to many. Doing so reduced transaction costs in shipping charges and insurance and simplified making remittances. Reflecting in 1755 to a London correspondent on the successful campaign for a bounty on Carolinian indigo that James Crockatt had mounted seven years earlier, Henry Laurens described his Charles Town counterparts' partiality to particular trading houses. Because of their established connections, Crockatt's endeavours had not led the town's traders to switch their commercial allegiances to him, as might have been expected. "You may Possible think the Mercantile Men ought to consign all their Indigo to him [Crockatt]," he explained, "but as every one has his Perticular Freind that sends out all his goods it cant be expected that they would send part of their Remittance to a different hand".<sup>31</sup> Long-term and relatively exclusive trading relationships between Charles Town and London were underpinned by the belief that the greatest stability and surest profits came from confining one's trade to a small circle of correspondents. This persisted throughout the colonial era, again helping to perpetuate the relative concentration of London's Carolina trade. As Laurens, again, counselled a young trader, he should not be

"anxious to obtain a numerous Correspondence, it will plague you in the Carolina Trade, sometimes perplex you to discharge all the business consign'd to you, and what is worse than all, it will sometimes draw Censure upon you for Partiality or Neglect, when in fact you have acted with the strictest Candour and the greatest Diligence. And finally the Profits arising from it, will not be so clear as those which result from transactions with a few well chosen Friends".<sup>32</sup>

The process of partnership formation within London's Carolina trading houses was also significant in maintaining the trade's concentration in a small and self-perpetuating circle. Just as commercial

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<sup>31</sup> HL to Rawlinson & Davison, 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1755. *PHL*, I, 344.

<sup>32</sup> HL to John Hopton, 4<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1771. *PHL*, VII, 559.

logic encouraged the formation of partnerships in Charles Town and between merchants on either side of the Atlantic, there were sound business reasons for merchants to go into partnership in London. For established traders, it reduced workload by spreading tasks and lessened personal financial exposure; for aspirant merchants, it reduced the capital barriers to entering trade, and, by offering the prospect of gaining a financial stake in the firm, it served to incentivise clerks and apprentices. In his Cloak Lane counting house in the late 1740s, James Crokatt employed at least four apprentices as clerks and bookkeepers. In 1749, being “desirous of easing himself of some part of the Fatigue of so great a concern”, he brought two of his apprentices, Richard Grubb and Alexander Watson, into a seven-year partnership. Crokatt invested £16,000, or four-fifths, of the firm’s total stock of £20,000, with his junior co-partners each investing £2,000 for one-tenth stakes. The partners drew freely on the firm’s joint stock for their subsistence, with these deductions reckoned in the annual accounts, and, with an eye to the future, the terms of partnership also included a provision for Crokatt’s son Charles to take a share in the firm when ready. He duly did, becoming co-partner in 1755 and taking over the firm in his own right from 1760.<sup>33</sup> Other Carolina traders also ensured the perpetuation of their businesses by bringing sons or other young relatives into the firm. Richard Shubrick’s son, also Richard, inherited his firm, while John Beswicke brought his nephews William Greenwood and William Higginson into his, which they took over on his death in 1764. Beneath this apparent stability, however, was a profound discontinuity of experience, which had equally important consequences for the character of London’s Carolina trade. Unlike their predecessors, each of whom had personally lived and traded for a number of years in Charles Town, this second generation of London’s Carolina traders had spent their formative years in trade in the capital itself.

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<sup>33</sup> Crokatt v. Barclay [1748], C12/2203/55; Watson v. Crokatt [1760], C12/907/77. The terms of the partnership offer further insights into counting house practices: as it operated from his house, Crokatt was allowed to deduct £10 a year from its reserves for coal and £50 “for the entertainment of strangers” – an early corporate hospitality account. Crokatt v. Muilman [1770], C12/540/23.

The Carolina merchants' geographic concentration in the City reflected that of the trade itself. The trade was thus doubly concentrated – in a small number of hands and, with just a handful of exceptions, in a small area within the City of London. Their close proximity reflected a common pattern within the different sectors of London's overseas commerce. Traders in longer established branches of American trade had long congregated in particular City wards – Virginia traders, for example, were mostly located in Tower and Aldgate wards.<sup>34</sup> Propinquity was valued for several commercial reasons, enabling traders to easily relay information about ships' sailings, to exchange intelligence on matters such as anticipated crop yields and prices and the creditworthiness of transatlantic correspondents, and to arrange shared cargoes. Such clustering took place from the 1740s among London's Carolina traders, a process testifying both to the increasing volume of trade between London and South Carolina and the trade's growing prominence in London's overseas commerce.

When James Crockatt transferred from Charles Town to London, he established himself in premises on Coleman Street, north of St. Paul's Cathedral. He probably chose this location because it was near to the trading house of his long-time associate Samuel Wragg, London's foremost Carolina merchant of the 1720s and 1730s. As he supplanted the elderly Wragg as the capital's leading Carolina trader, Crockatt himself triggered a congregation of Carolina merchants. After Crockatt moved in 1747 to premises in Cloak Lane, closer to the Thames, nearby streets straddling Dowgate, Vintry and Walbrook wards became the nexus for London's Carolina traders. The area gave easy access to Thames-side wharves and warehouses, immediately to the south. A short walk north was the Royal Exchange, the hub of London's trading and a vital stop on a merchant's daily rounds, where cargoes could be brokered, insurance agreed and commodity trades arranged. By 1760, in recognition of its growth into a prominent and distinct branch of trade, the Carolina trade occupied a special 'walk' in the Royal Exchange, alongside dedicated sections for Virginia and New England

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<sup>34</sup> On the different sectoral locales within London, see Gauci, *Emporium of the World*, 32, 43, 96.

traders, for specialist commodities, and for other geographic branches.<sup>35</sup> Like other branches of overseas commerce, the Carolina trade also had its own specialist coffee-house, providing a venue for merchants to meet, receive correspondence, read newly arrived copies of provincial newspapers and conduct business. A Carolina Coffee House had existed in London since well before 1749, when it was situated close to the traders' locale on Birchin Lane, providing further evidence of the trade's coherence and distinctiveness. Together the Exchange, coffee house and general propinquity of trading houses also facilitated another key aspect of metropolitan mercantile activity – petitioning. Through these, a petition could be quickly circulated among traders living and working near to one another, and encountering one another daily at the main congregating venues, allowing for the rapid collection of signatures and group mobilisation.<sup>36</sup> This was true of all trades, but the concentration of the Carolina trade in a relatively small number of hands, combined with the traders' physical proximity to one another, appears to have expedited the process and made it particularly responsive. As the following section describes, the inter-imperial warfare of the 1740s and the political-economic climate that developed in its wake would test the Carolina interest's ability to capitalise on its internal coherence and respond to the political opportunities that arose.

### **Metropolitan advocacy in the early 1740s**

In 1715, the exigencies of provincial defence had led to the nascent Carolina lobby's first salvos of mercantile petitioning. Given South Carolina's exposed position on British North America's southern frontier, Spanish and Indian threats had continued to loom large in the minds of colonists and the Carolina interest in Britain alike. These threats were made all the more dangerous during Britain's wars with Spain and France between 1739 and 1748, and provincial defence was again seized upon as an issue on which London's Carolina traders could profitably influence British

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<sup>35</sup> Evidence on the Carolina merchants' locations is derived from *Complete Guide to... London*, 1740–1783, 2<sup>nd</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> eds.; *Kent's Directory*, 1742, 1754 and 1762; *The Universal Director [Mortimer's Directory]*, 1763; *London Evening Post*, 24<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1753; *Public Advertiser*, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1758; *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 31<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1774.

<sup>36</sup> Bryant Lillywhite, *London Coffee Houses: A Reference Book of Coffee Houses of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries*. (London, 1963), 147–9. On coffee-houses as a specific locus for mercantile petitioning, see Alison Olson, 'Coffee House Lobbying', *History Today*, 41.1 (Jan. 1991), 35–41.

policy. Warfare elevated their utility to the British government as a source of information on South Carolina, as it eagerly sought news of latest military dispositions and the province's defensive readiness. This gave the capital's Carolina traders particular access to government, enabling them to lobby for extra protection for the colony. Carolinians identified defence provision as a matter on which metropolitan lobbying could be particularly effective. Charles Town's merchants could exert leverage on the government, Robert Pringle suggested, by galvanising their connections in London. As he wrote to his brother in the capital in 1743, "the Merchants & trading people [of Charles Town] ought to be Inform'd of & their Opinion ask't & advis'd with in all affairs of that nature, & that they may advise their Friends to assist at Home". London merchants had formed a committee the previous year to lobby for three army companies to be organised to defend South Carolina against any Spanish attack.<sup>37</sup> Andrew Pringle, a former ship's captain turned Carolina trader in London, was one of the "Friends at Home" who successfully pressed for greater military and naval protection for the province. His brother thanked him in March 1744 for his "Good Offices to have the Companies and Gallies Granted to us, for which this Province is Greatly Oblig'd to you". And while, according to the irascible Pringle, not all the capital's Carolina traders were as diligent in serving the province, his complaint that "if all the Gentlemen in this Trade has as just Concern for it as you, things would goe better here than they doe" nonetheless emphasises the conception that metropolitan advocacy could be highly effective when done properly.<sup>38</sup>

The impressment of merchant seamen in Charles Town by the Royal Navy particularly vexed the port's traders and, like military protection, was another issue where they felt their London correspondents could profitably intercede with government. "The merchant shipping here sufferr very much by the King's Ships that are from time to time Stationed here, who instead of Encouraging & being a Help & protection to our Navigation are a Nuisance & very much Distress same in a great many Respects...", Robert Pringle told a London correspondent in 1737. The

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<sup>37</sup> RP to Andrew Pringle, 21<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1743. *LRP*, II, 487–8.

<sup>38</sup> RP to Andrew Pringle, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1744. *LRP*, II, 662.

complaint might have come from any one of the many ports in Britain and its empire that were regularly subjected to the incursions of the press gang. But without parliamentary representatives to present Charles Town's grievances, or direct access themselves to the government in London, Charles Town's merchants had looked to their metropolitan counterparts to make special solicitations. Demonstrating the imperfections of the system in practice, however, there had been little assistance from that quarter: "it is a great pity the Merchants of London, who are the most proper persons to Represent [the] same, Did not make immediate Application to Parliament, in order to have so great a Hindrance & grievance to Trade Effectually Remedied", Pringle lamented.<sup>39</sup> Naval impressment was a still greater problem for Charles Town's merchant shipping in wartime. Not only did it deprive the trade of manpower, but it elevated sailors' wages and thereby raised freight costs. However, Britain's Carolina traders again failed to meet the standards of advocacy that Pringle, at least, expected of them. As trading vessels were forced to leave Charles Town shorthanded or were unable to sail at all during the winter of 1742–3, he complained to a London correspondent. "Merchant Ships are Greatly Oppress'd here by the King's Ships Impressing their Hands," he observed, "which makes Sailors Wages Run very high. It is a pity that it is not taken Notice of by the Gentlemen in Trade at Home in order to have it Remedied."<sup>40</sup>

The success of earlier mercantile lobbying had perhaps heightened expectations of the Carolina lobby's efficacy, influence and, indeed, of the willingness of the British state to meet their demands. Pringle's comments are revealing: London's Carolina traders simply had to ask for redress, whether on military reinforcements for the province or on naval impressments, he implied, and the contentions would be "remedied". The same applied to commercial privileges. Permission to export rice directly to the African Islands might have been "Obtain'd by proper Application", he

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<sup>39</sup> RP to James Hunter & Co., 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1737. *LRP*, I, 10.

<sup>40</sup> RP to Richard Partridge, 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1743. *LRP*, II, 491–2. On shortages of manpower caused by naval impressments, see also RP to Andrew Pringle, 31<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1742, and 27<sup>th</sup> Jan. and 5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1743. *LRP*, II, 471, 492, 497. It was probably for this reason that Charles Town's merchants, as reported by Robert Pringle, were not overly concerned about the lack of naval cruising as protection against Spanish vessels off the Carolina coast during the war: "we have had no King's ships on a Cruize for these Ten Months past, so badly is this coast taken care of & yet the Merchants here won't be Unanimous to Complain of Same."

complained to correspondents in Madeira in 1742.<sup>41</sup> In reality, the colony's metropolitan advocates operated in a rather more complex environment. Carolinian demands for commercial privileges would need further changes to the Navigation Acts and had to be balanced against the claims of other colonial lobbies. The permission for direct rice exports to Spain and Portugal, granted to South Carolina in 1730 and extended to Georgia in 1735, had set a precedent for other colonial lobbies to exploit. In March 1739, for example, West Indies merchants and planters petitioned Parliament for freedom to send sugar, coffee, indigo, cocoa and ginger directly to Europe. They cited the fact that South Carolina had "received a Liberty of the same Nature, with regard to Rice" and hoped that this precedent would "be a farther Inducement to this House, to grant this Liberty to our Sugar Islands".<sup>42</sup>

After securing an important concession by gaining direct rice exports to southern Europe in 1730, London's Carolina traders and the province's metropolitan agent, Peregrine Fury, had to settle for more modest legislative accomplishments. Fury himself was a bureaucrat by profession, with strong military ties, and unlike South Carolina's other colonial agents, he does not appear to have had personal ties to the province. His tenure as agent typified the potential for the conflicts of interest that were inherent in the system of provincial agency. His agency for several army regiments on occasion conflicted with his agency for South Carolina and explains the provincial assembly's eagerness to replace him during the 1740s – the role was offered to Crockatt in 1746 and to another London resident, John Sharpe, the following year. Most notably, in 1742–3 Fury was believed to have suppressed the provincial government's highly critical report of James Oglethorpe's 1740 expedition against St. Augustine, which he had been explicitly instructed to publish in London. He

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<sup>41</sup> RP to Pringle & Scott, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1742. *LRP*, I, 374.

<sup>42</sup> *JHC*, XXIII, 284. Permission was granted for direct exports of sugar to European points south of Cape Finisterre, but not for the other commodities. 12 Geo. II, c. 30 in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, VI, 368–9. However, the act had little effect, since unlike rice, sugar exports to southern Europe remained very small. O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 61–2.

was accused acting “too much like a courtier” and was charged by the assembly with being “more a Friend to Generall Oglethorpe than to this Province”.<sup>43</sup>

Despite Fury’s inauspicious leadership, London’s Carolina interest maintained its lobbying efforts during the 1740s with some success. Co-operating with merchants in other branches of American trade, the capital’s Carolina traders campaigned successfully in 1740 and 1742 against government proposals to temporarily embargo the exportation of British and colonial foodstuffs to foreign markets. Their joint petition placed particular emphasis on the benefits South Carolina’s planters and Britain’s shipping alike had derived from direct rice exports to Spain and Portugal. The continuation of the direct rice exports was secured in 1742.<sup>44</sup> Further amendments to the Navigation Acts were sought – a mark of the lobby’s assiduity – but were not forthcoming. Robert Pringle was therefore ill-informed when he complained to his brother in January 1743 that London’s Carolina lobby was not pursuing the province’s interests strenuously enough. He observed that there were “two things that would be much for the advantage of the Trade of this Province, Vizt. Liberty to Send Our Rice from this to Forreign Marketts without being oblig’d to Stop at Cowes, or any other of the Out Ports, also Liberty to Send Rice &c. Directly from this to Madeira, & it is pity our Gentlemen at Home in this Trade did not make application for that Effect, that we may be upon the same footing with our Sugar Islands”.<sup>45</sup> In applying in May 1742 for direct rice exports to Spain and Portugal to continue, Fury had petitioned the Treasury for the laws to be further relaxed, making particular note of South Carolina’s “present Distress”. He asked for liberty for direct rice exports to all European ports, and to bring salt, oranges and lemons back to South Carolina from Portugal. Salt was a particular desideratum, and Fury lamented South Carolina’s

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<sup>43</sup> Robert Pringle to Andrew Pringle, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1743. *LRP*, II, 577–8; Easterby (ed.), *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly*, vol. 1746–7, 251, 336, 380–1; *Parker’s Penny Post*, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1725; *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 20<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1759.

<sup>44</sup> *JHC*, XXIII, 539; XXIV, 284; *Gentleman’s Magazine*, XII (1742), 233–4, cited in Marion B. Smith, ‘South Carolina and the Gentleman’s Magazine’, *SCHM*, 95.2 (Apr. 1994), 119–129; 15 Geo. II, c. 15 in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, VI, 475.

<sup>45</sup> RP to Andrew Pringle, 5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1743. *LRP*, II, 498.

inability to import it directly, noting that “tis an indulgence allowed the Northern colonies”.<sup>46</sup> Unlike the West Indies lobby’s successful juxtaposition of trading privileges in making the case for direct sugar exports, efforts to highlight the discrepancy with other British colonies on salt regulations failed to convince the customs commissioners, and the prohibition remained.

### **‘National interest’ and colonial opportunities**

To understand the surge in activity in the late 1740s which transformed the Carolina lobby into one of the most politically active sectors of British overseas trade, it is necessary to turn to domestic politics. The inconclusive end to the war with Spain and France in 1748 saw British policymakers devote much closer scrutiny to Britain’s American colonies and their trade. British naval dominance in the war had kept French successes on land in check, preserving an approximate balance of power. Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, however, Britain’s politicians had watched the development of French naval power and its overseas trade with growing alarm. The immediate post-war years saw the nation gripped by a conviction that France would heed the lesson of its wartime naval defeats and build up its marine to challenge Britain’s naval hegemony, its overseas empire and trade, and the domestic prosperity that was understood to stem from these. Stimulating Britain’s overseas trade would be essential to a national revival to combat France’s naval and commercial menace. Seizing the initiative, Parliament passed a flurry of legislation between 1748 and 1751 to promote specific trades and manufactures, ranging from prohibitions on the importation and sale of French cambric textiles to bounties to promote the whale and herring fishing industries.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers*, 1742–1745, 38. Charles II had allowed the New England colonies and Newfoundland to import salt directly from continental Europe because it was vital in the curing of fish. Permission had been extended to Pennsylvania and New York in 1726 and 1730 respectively. 13 Geo. I, c. 5 and 3 Geo. II, c.12 in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, V, 613; VI, 5–6.

<sup>47</sup> Recent literature on the empire in mid-century British culture and political debate is extensive. For an understanding of Britain’s conjoined imperial-maritime-commercial policy, two works are essential: Daniel A. Baugh, ‘Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce: The Uses of ‘A Grand Marine Empire’ in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*. (London, 1994), 185–223; and, especially on the

Promoting trade between Britain and its American colonies was a particular priority since it served multiple functions. Firstly, an increase in the volume of colonial trade would enlarge Britain's merchant fleet, training more sailors whose labour could be diverted to the Royal Navy in the event of war. Secondly, greater colonial output would lead to higher demand in the colonies for British made goods, stimulating the domestic economy. Thirdly, colonial economic expansion would encourage new settlement and population growth. This would increase the colonies' ability to defend themselves, and reduce both their susceptibility to foreign attack and the onus on British regulars to step in to their aid (at high cost to the British state). An expansion of Atlantic trade would also satisfy fiscal ends. Fighting the war had raised Britain's national debt to an unprecedented £68 million; the cost of servicing it was widely seen as a millstone around the neck of the national economy, perpetuating high taxes, disrupting credit markets by deterring lending to private traders, and discouraging debt-holders from engaging in productive economic activity.<sup>48</sup> Higher trade volumes would yield greater customs revenues from the taxes paid on imports and re-exports. Already a major slice of the government's income, these indirect taxes were far preferable to increasing the land tax as a means of filling the national coffers. At the end of the 1739–48 war, American colonies were envisioned as being able to make an enlarged *indirect* fiscal contribution to the costs of empire through yielding greater taxable output. The approach contrasted with that taken in the aftermath of the Seven Years War, with its even greater cost to the Exchequer, when

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commercial legislation of the late 1740s and early 1750s, Bob Harris, *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century*. (Oxford, 2002), 240–265. See also, with different emphases on the emergence of an imperial consciousness in Britain, Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge, 1995); idem., 'Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon', *Past and Present*, 212 (1988), 74–109; idem., 'Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture, c. 1720–1785' in Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War*, 128–164; Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000), 53–71; Bob Harris, "'American Idols': Empire, War and the Middling Ranks in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain', *Past and Present*, 150 (1996), 111–141; idem., 'War, Empire and the "National Interest" in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain' in Stephen Conway and Julie Flavell (eds.) *Britain and America Go to War: The Impact of War and Warfare in Anglo-America, 1754–1815*. (Gainesville, FL, 2004), 13–40; Marie Peters, 'Early Hanoverian Consciousness: Empire or Europe?', *EHR*, 122:497 (June 2007), 632–668.

<sup>48</sup> Bob Harris, 'Patriotic Commerce and National Revival', 297; [Sir Matthew Decker] *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline in Foreign Trade, consequently of the Value of the Lands in Britain, and on the Means to Restore both*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London 1750), 65.

the British government turned to its American colonies for a *direct* fiscal contribution for the debts incurred and anticipated future costs of their protection. Nonetheless, the approach to revenue augmentation taken immediately after 1748 was an important but underappreciated precursor to the more direct, publicised and controversial approach adopted a decade and a half later. Leaving aside its long-term portents, in the short-term the approach of stimulating colonial production was one on which South Carolina and its metropolitan advocates were well placed to capitalise.

Despite the end of hostilities in 1748 and the settlement of Georgia on its southern frontier during the previous decade, South Carolina remained perilously exposed to the intrigues of rival imperial powers. Since the colony was a vital link in the chain of colonial defence and, moreover, a producer of staple commodities which both augmented Britain's balance of trade and yielded much needed customs duties, the zeitgeist of national revival provided it and its metropolitan advocates with particular opportunities. Auspiciously, the political climate both coincided with and roused more vigorous leadership within London's Carolina lobby, enhancing its capacity to make the most of these opportunities. Since his relocation to London in 1739, James Crockatt had acted as the capital's *de facto* expert witness on Britain's southern colonies, invariably called to give evidence when Parliament investigated their condition or trade. His status reflected his personal experience in South Carolina, particularly the distinction conferred by being a member of the Royal Council, and the extent of his trade with the region.<sup>49</sup> Through his commercial and political eminence, Crockatt also assumed effective leadership of London's Carolina traders during the late 1740s, supplanting the province's official but largely ineffectual agent, Peregrine Fury, and representing the colony and its trade in the capital's political fora. At the end of hostilities in 1748, the government proposed reducing British forces in the Lower South, despite the continuing latent threat from Spain. Crockatt took a petition from London's "principal Traders" in the Carolina trade to ministers "Praying that the Forces in Georgia & So. Carolina be kept in Pay & continued" – a protest against

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<sup>49</sup> *JHC*, XXIII, 682; XXV, 997–8, 1032–5; XXVI, 239–41, 267; *Egmont Diary*, III, 200.

the disbanding of a regiment of British regulars in the region. Although the protest was unsuccessful, it was nevertheless noted in South Carolina, providing renewed evidence of metropolitan activism on the colony's behalf.<sup>50</sup> Crokatt also had a long track record of promoting agricultural innovation and diversification in South Carolina. Dating back to his days in Charles Town, he had urged planters and traders to take advantage of the imperial stimuli on offer. In February 1737, the *South Carolina Gazette* had devoted its front page to a letter from Crokatt reminding readers of the bounty on Swedish style pitch and tar. Two weeks later, he backed up his advice with a personal pledge to buy any tar made in the Swedish manner for at least 50s. a barrel.<sup>51</sup> With his customary eye for profit, Crokatt saw both the economic benefits for South Carolina of a revitalised naval stores trade and commercial opportunity for himself. From London, he continued to promote a more diverse agricultural base in the province, urging experimentation with cochineal, cotton, hemp and tar. In 1747, he sent a model of a mill for extracting sesame oil, and the next year a model of an all-purpose plough for cultivating grain or indigo. Both were displayed at the public treasurer's office in Charles Town.<sup>52</sup>

### **1748 indigo bounty**

Crokatt's most notable achievement was in leading a successful campaign for a financial bounty to be placed on colonial indigo in 1748. Historians have debated the bounty's long-term economic significance for the province; in the short term, it had important political symbolism, representing the most notable of several displays of parliamentary interest towards South Carolina and its trade during the late 1740s and early 1750s, and reasserting the efficacy of the metropolitan Carolina lobby.<sup>53</sup> Crokatt took a two-pronged approach to promoting indigo cultivation. In economic terms

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<sup>50</sup> HL to George Austin, 17<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1748. *PHL*, I, 185. The petition itself has apparently not survived.

<sup>51</sup> *SCG*, 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1737.

<sup>52</sup> [James Crokatt, ed.], *Further observations intended for improving the culture and curing of indigo, &c. in South-Carolina*. (London, 1747), 10; *SCG*, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1747 and 15<sup>th</sup> August 1748. On proposals for agricultural diversification in the Lower South, see also Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit*, 134–59.

<sup>53</sup> In assessing the short- and long-term *economic* consequences of the indigo bounty, R. C. Nash has pointed out that it had an important immediate effect, giving enough of a price stimulus to sustain South Carolina's

both were supply-side orientated, seeking to facilitate and incentivise the production of the crop to meet robust demand in Britain. In 1746 and 1747 he pseudonymously published, calling himself ‘a Friend to Carolina’, two informational pamphlets on growing, processing and marketing the crop. He sent them to the colony, expressing the hope that they would be “useful in assisting the Planters in Carolina, to excel all others, as much in the Indigo, as they have done in Rice”.<sup>54</sup> The second element of his approach was to seek to capitalise on the imperial state’s evident receptivity towards measures promoting colonial economic development. To further encourage indigo cultivation he set about lobbying Parliament for a bounty on imports of the crop from South Carolina. He wrote a pamphlet, *Reasons for laying a Duty on French and Spanish Indigo, and granting a Bounty on what is made in the British Plantations* and sent it to the Board of Trade; unusually, he went to the lengths of having it printed, a rarity among petitions to the Board and indicative of the sophistication of his lobbying tactics. The petition articulated a familiar rhetoric of economic patriotism, carefully attuned to prevailing political-economic discourse. An indigo bounty would, it claimed, boost Britain’s textile industry by delivering the vital dye more cheaply and reliably; it would alleviate South Carolina’s economic depression and promote population growth in the province; and it would increase British shipping and, consequently, naval power. Bounties were a tested economic stimulus for fledgling industries: colonial naval stores, for example, had long been incentivised in this way. Indigo making was a similarly deserving case, requiring the helping hand of state before it could flourish

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fledgling indigo culture during the early 1750s, when its low price relative to rice led many planters to revert their entire operations to rice cultivation. In the long-term, however, he suggests that the flat rate of the bounty had negative consequences, by encouraging the production of low-quality indigo: at a flat rate, the bounty was proportionately greater on low-grade than it was on higher-grade and more expensive indigo. Nash, ‘South Carolina Indigo’, 375–6.

<sup>54</sup> [James Crokatt], *Observations concerning indigo and cochineal*. (London, 1746); [Crokatt, ed.], *Further Observations*, 25. It is probable that Crokatt was also the anonymous London correspondent whose letter appeared in the *Gazette* in April 1745 informing Carolinians that “When you can in some measure supply the British Demand, we are persuaded, that on proper Application to Parliament, a Duty will be laid on Foreign Growth, for I am informed, that we pay for INDIGO to the French £200,000 per annum.” *SCG*, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1745.

independently. As Crokatt's pamphlet observed, "All new Manufactures should like weak Children be carefully nursed at first, tho they afterwards increase without assistance".<sup>55</sup>

In galvanising the lobby, Crokatt assembled a diverse array of interest groups to support the application. The approach recognised the value of consolidated, cross-sectional advocacy in petitioning Parliament even if, in the political-economic climate that accompanied the peace in 1748, the proposals were effectively pushing at an open door. The ad hoc but highly effective lobby encompassed sectors involved in every stage of indigo's journey from its raw state to useable dyestuff: the planters growing the crop, Atlantic merchants shipping it, commodity dealers, and dyers and clothiers from Somerset to Yorkshire. In all, Parliament heard more than 20 separate petitions in support of the bounty. Their content fused claims for the supply requirements of British industry, benevolent concern for South Carolina's welfare and arguments for competitive advantage over France. Particularly compelling were statistics revealing Britain's heavy dependence on the French West Indies for supplies of indigo, which augmented French marine power while reportedly siphoning some £150,000 from British to French coffers.<sup>56</sup> The range of witnesses who gave evidence to the parliamentary committee considering the matter further denotes the comprehensiveness of Crokatt's campaign. Indigo brokers, captains of transatlantic shipping, three Carolinian planters, including Robert Pringle (on a short visit to Britain from the colony), and representatives of both the linen and woollen industries – two sectors whose interests were more often opposed than united, but which both relied on regular supplies of good quality indigo – all testified. "All the Witnesses agreed", concluded the official report of proceeding, "that there is an

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<sup>55</sup> [James Crokatt], *Reasons for laying a Duty on French and Spanish Indico, and granting a Bounty on what is made in the British Plantations*. (London, 1748). CO5/372/15–18.

<sup>56</sup> As recorded in the *JHC*, petitions were received from London's Carolina traders, Bristol's Carolina traders, "Merchants, Manufacturers and Traders of all Kinds" from Liverpool, South Carolinian planters, London dyers, Southwark dyers and from dyers, clothiers and dealers in the principal textile producing regions of England – Yorkshire, Lancashire and the West Country: Exeter (Devon), Poole (Dorset), Manchester and Rochdale (Lancs.), Norwich (Norfolk), Nottingham (Notts.), Witney (Oxon.), Frome (Somerset), Bradford-on-Avon, Calne, Chippenham and surrounding villages, Heytesbury and Warminster, New Sarum and Trowbridge (Wilts.), Halifax, Leeds and Wakefield (Yorks.). *JHC*, XXV, 632–8, 643. The text of the petitions is summarised in the *JHC*; the petitions themselves do not appear to have survived.

absolute Necessity for the Use of Indico in the Dyeing Trade; and that no good Blue can be dyed without it.”<sup>57</sup> Faced by such a sectionally and geographically broad coalition and given the prevailing receptiveness towards patriotic commercial measures, Parliament quickly approved the proposals and in May 1748 legislated for a 6d. per lb. bounty on imports of indigo from South Carolina.<sup>58</sup>

The introduction of the bounty vindicated Crokatt’s labours. More importantly, it offered Carolinians renewed and compelling evidence of the practical benefits of mercantile advocacy. It signified that the British government was alert to the colony’s interests, and that a metropolitan lobby could effectively represent their claims. Reaction to the bounty in South Carolina was celebratory. An address of thanks to George III was drawn up jointly by the assembly and council and, having received from Crokatt an account of the lobbying and copies of the petitions presented to Parliament, the assembly voted unanimously to pay him the £215 he had spent from his own pocket on orchestrating the campaign.<sup>59</sup> “He is indefatigable in the service of this Province & I think every Inhabitant indebted to him”, reflected his former apprentice Henry Laurens.<sup>60</sup> Alongside his commercial experience and longtime spokesmanship in London for the province’s interests, Crokatt’s orchestration of the indigo campaign was instrumental in his being appointed South Carolina’s official metropolitan agent the next year.

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<sup>57</sup> *JHC*, XXV, 634–5.

<sup>58</sup> In deference to textile interests, the proposed levy on imported French and Spanish indigo was dropped. *JHC*, XXV, 658; 21 Geo. II, c. 30 in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, VII, 119. Interestingly, the sole tract to be published against the proposed indigo bounty condemned it on grounds of patriotic commercialism. By its generosity, it argued, the bounty would incentivize South Carolina’s planters to concentrate exclusively on indigo production, drawing them all away from growing rice. Since rice required “fifty Times the Shipping and... twenty times the People than Indico can maintain”, the consequence of this would be to decimate Britain’s trading fleet with the province, impoverishing merchants and, by implication, weakening the country’s marine defences. [Anon.] *Ill-Judged Bounties tend to Beggary on both Sides or, Observations on a Paper intituled Reasons for laying a Duty on French and Spanish Indico, and granting a Bounty on what is made in the British Plantations*. (London, 1748), 6–7 (quote).

<sup>59</sup> Easterby (ed.), *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly*, vol. 1749–50, 18–20, 52–4.

<sup>60</sup> HL to Richard Grubb, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1748. *PHL*, I, 148. Laurens evidently bore Crokatt no ill will for failing to offer him partnership in his trading house.

Success in securing the indigo bounty was followed by further lobbying campaigns attuned to the prevailing patriotic commercial mood. Permission to send rice directly to Spain and Portugal was extended in 1749 for another seven years.<sup>61</sup> In 1750, Crockatt and his fellow Carolina traders were to the fore in a campaign seeking financial encouragement for colonial silk cultivation – one of several attempts throughout the colonial period to promote sericulture in the Lower South.<sup>62</sup> Their lobbying was strikingly reminiscent of the indigo bounty campaign two years earlier. Parliament was petitioned by weavers, dyers and merchants and heard evidence from expert witnesses including Crockatt and his fellow London Carolina trader John Nickleson. The patriotic political-economic rhetoric deployed also echoed the indigo campaign. It lamented Britain’s reliance on foreign silk (in this case leading to a purported outflow of £400,000 annually), trumpeted the greater population and security silk would bring Britain’s southern colonies, and suggested the virtuous economic feedback that Britain’s manufacturers and exporters would enjoy through elevated colonial demand. Recognising that “to encourage the Growth and Culture of Silk in his Majesty’s Dominions in America... will greatly tend to the Increase and Improvement of the Silk Manufactures of this Kingdom” – a line of reasoning indicative of where Britain’s main priorities lay – Parliament agreed to remove import duties on all silk imported from the American colonies.<sup>63</sup>

Crockatt again took the lead in a campaign the next year to promote colonial pot and pearl ash manufacturing. A petition to Parliament was signed jointly by agents for several of Britain’s North American colonies, “Merchants trading thither, Soapmakers, Dry Salters [dealers in chemicals], Whitsters [bleachers], and others”, asking for encouragement for colonial ash-making. Like the indigo and silk petitions, it presented a coalescence of cross-sectoral and both domestic and

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<sup>61</sup> 22 Geo. II, c. 18 in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, VII, 592.

<sup>62</sup> On the repeated efforts to encourage sericulture, see Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit*, 158–165; Gray, *History of Agriculture*, I, 184–8; and, specifically on silk cultivation in Georgia, Ben Marsh, *Georgia’s Frontier Women: Female Fortunes in a Southern Colony*. (Athens, GA, 2007), 53–61.

<sup>63</sup> JHC, XXV, 933, 996–7, 1024 (quote), 1063, 1114; 23 Geo. II, c. 20 in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, VII, 531–2.

colonial interests.<sup>64</sup> Their arguments reiterated a familiar blend of commercial patriotism and colonial promotion: Britain's reliance on Scandinavian supplies of ash, bought with specie, harmed the nation's balance of trade (a favourite political pre-occupation), while British North America was a source of abundant ashes that would both supply domestic demands and promote colonial development. Only expertise and parliamentary encouragement were needed for a bountiful industry to flourish. The plans were described in the House of Commons as "Mr. Crokatt's proposals", indicating his authorship and guidance of the petitioning and lobbying campaign. Together with Robert Dinwiddie, recently appointed lieutenant-governor of Virginia, and James Abercromby, who was North Carolina's agent and himself a former resident of South Carolina, Crokatt assured Parliament of the southern colonies' productive capacity. The campaign succeeded in getting colonial produce exempted from Britain's 6s.2d. duty on ash imports.<sup>65</sup> Further emphasising to his colonial employers his commitment to South Carolina's agricultural diversification and economic development, Crokatt wrote to the Committee of Correspondence to urge the colony to take advantage of the act, enclosing a pamphlet explaining how to make ashes and expressing hope that "some Planters... would soon turn their Thoughts and Hands that Way".<sup>66</sup>

Although not all the Carolina lobby's efforts in the late 1740s and early 1750, guided by Crokatt, proved as successful, they nonetheless gave further signals of metropolitan commitment to the colony's economic development. The British state might not always be amenable but the efforts to alter imperial laws and regulations suggested an alignment of commercial interests between London's Carolina traders and their transatlantic correspondents. Crokatt's first instructions as agent directed him to secure direct rice exports to additional foreign markets, but he was no more successful than Fury had been in this: South Carolina would have to wait until 1764 for further relaxations in the law. Like his predecessor, he was also asked to press for liberty to import salt

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<sup>64</sup> *JHC*, XXVI, 215–6.

<sup>65</sup> *JHC*, XXVI, 239–41, 267 (quote), 278, 288–92; 24 Geo. II, c. 51 in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, VII, 400–2.

<sup>66</sup> Easterby (ed.), *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly*, vol. 1751–2, 18–20, 52–4.

directly from Portugal to bring South Carolina in line with New England and the middle colonies.<sup>67</sup> He organised petitions from London's North America traders – achieving a rare display of cross-trade coherence among American traders, who seldom acted in concert – and from London merchants and ship owners trading to Carolina, and to Virginia and Nova Scotia, two other colonies seeking direct salt imports. Crockatt was joined by fellow Carolina traders Andrew Pringle and Richard Shubrick in testifying to Parliament in support of the petitions. Their personal testimony of living and trading in Charles Town was central to their appeal, evincing the interplay of imperial and domestic interests. Shubrick told the Commons that he had “lived for some time in Carolina, and had cured great Quantities of Provisions for the Use of his Majesty's Navy”. Referring in his evidence to his firm's service as ‘agents victuallers’ for the Royal Navy in Charles Town, he shrewdly conflated colonial and naval-imperial imperatives.<sup>68</sup> In the face of strong opposition from Britain's salt manufacturers, who stood to lose an important market, the proposals were rejected. Domestic pressure had trumped colonial interests, a telling exposition of balance of lobbying power in the metropolis when domestic and colonial interests were not aligned or were contradictory.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, though the failure of this campaign revealed the limitations of interest group advocacy, through it the capital's Carolina merchants had once again manifested a commitment to the province's development and a willingness to advocate on its behalf. For Crockatt personally, his reputation as a diligent representative of Carolinian commercial interests was reinforced.

It is through Crockatt that the value the South Carolinian authorities attached to effective commercial-political agency in London is shown most clearly. In particular, the controversy sparked when he attempted to resign the position of metropolitan agent in 1753 testified to perceptions of his personal efficacy, and the influence of his role more generally. Crockatt tried to give up the role,

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<sup>67</sup> Easterby (ed.), *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly*, vol. 1749–50, 318–9.

<sup>68</sup> *JHC*, XXV, 1033.

<sup>69</sup> *JHC*, XXV, 942, 1032–5; J. C. Van Horne and G. Reese (eds.), *The Letterbook of James Abercromby, Colonial Agent, 1751–1773*. (Richmond, Virginia, 1991), 234n.

complaining that “the Service and Duty required is more than is Compatible with my Present Plan of Life”. He had never wasted so much time, he told the committee of correspondence – a sub-committee of South Carolina’s assembly charged with communicating with the province’s London agent – as he had in waiting on the Board of Trade.<sup>70</sup> Notwithstanding his endeavours in commercial advocacy, his relations with authorities in South Carolina had not been universally harmonious. He had been accused of prioritizing his own interests above those of the colony when he had opposed the issuance of paper currency; also controversial was his support for rogue Indian trader Charles McNair, whose claims for financial reimbursement from the crown were opposed by the assembly and governor, but which Crokatt – allegedly owed money by McNair’s partner – supported.<sup>71</sup> For the merchant-dominated assembly these blemishes on his record were outweighed, however, by his diligence in commercial matters and it refused to accept his resignation. Several years after securing the indigo bounty, Crokatt’s efforts to promote agricultural diversification and innovation and as an advocate for Carolinian trade were central to the high reputation he continued to enjoy in the province. He was, Henry Laurens noted, “not lightly esteem’d by the People”. When Crokatt eventually retired from the post in 1755, his one-time apprentice judged that “a good deal was due from this Province to Mr. Crokatt for his unwearied Endeavours to serve us in Promoting the Culture of Indigo beside other matters... but its impossible in such a Country as this to get all the People to be of one mind. He has some very

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<sup>70</sup> Easterby (ed.), *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly*, vol. 1752–4, 92.

<sup>71</sup> James Abercromby to James Glen, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1752. Van Horne and Reese (eds.), *Letterbook of James Abercromby*, 32–4; Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 301; Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule at Home?*, 80, 91. For a thorough account of McNair and the so-called ‘Sphinx Company’ controversy, see Edward J. Cashin, *Guardians of the Valleys: Chickasaws in Colonial South Carolina and Georgia*. (Columbia, SC, 2009), 73–7. Glen’s hostility to Crokatt has typically been explained in reference to Crokatt’s stance on currency issuance and his intervention in the McNair case. Crokatt’s intervention in the case of the *Vrouw Dorothea* no doubt compounded Glen’s antipathy. The Dutch ship was impounded in Charles Town in 1748 by the vice-admiralty court on a charge of illegal trading in Jamaica. Crokatt’s pressed the case of the ship’s owners – the Hopes, a leading Amsterdam banking house – at the High Court of the Admiralty in London. It reversed the vice-admiralty court’s decision, as a consequence of which Governor Glen lost the share of the ship’s cargo to which he would have been entitled. See HL to William Hopton and to George Austin, 27<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1748. *PHL*, I, 198–200.

strong Opponents in the Councell who wont allow him that Merit as the Commons House thought his due”.<sup>72</sup>

Historians have identified the dispute unleashed by Crokatt’s resignation and his attempts to reclaim two years’ unpaid salary as a pivotal moment in South Carolina’s political development. Jack Greene and Eugene Sirmans both took the constitutional wrangling between assembly on the one hand and council and governor on the other, which paralyzed government in the province for nearly three years, as evidence of the growing political ambitions of the provincial assembly. More recently, Jonathan Mercantini has posited the assembly’s behaviour as an early example of the ‘brinkmanship’ that would be a hallmark of South Carolina’s politics for the next hundred years.<sup>73</sup> Though persuasive in their analysis of the domestic political implications of the controversy, these studies have, however, underplayed the value that was attached to Crokatt’s personal role as agent and, through this, to effective agent-mercantile representation in the metropolis. The assembly’s determination to keep Crokatt in post between 1753 and 1755 signalled the significance it accorded the London agency – and in particular the benefits that an effective agent could bring.

During the late 1740s and early 1750s, a combination of factors had given the Carolina lobby in London particular energy. The prevailing ideological environment made the institutions of state – Board of Trade, Treasury and Parliament – unusually receptive to the lobbying of colonial interest groups. Governmental acquiescence was not guaranteed: the failed salt lobbying, for example, showed the overriding traction of domestic interest. Inasmuch as it promoted Britain’s own economic, strategic and military priorities, however, colonial economic development assumed a new degree of importance for British politicians. With its production of staple commodities that could not be supplied domestically and its orientation towards export markets, South Carolina was

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<sup>72</sup> HL to Rawlinson & Davison, 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1755. *PHL*, I, 344.

<sup>73</sup> Jack P. Greene, *The Quest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689–1776*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1963), 61–5, 268–71; Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 303–9; Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule at Home?*, 92–117.

particularly well placed to capitalise on this political-economic climate. Proposals such as a bounty for colonial indigo and duty-free status for colonial silk and potash were directed at a sympathetic audience. Strong and effective leadership, which the Carolina interest found in James Crockatt across the same period, gave the proposals direction and authority. Crockatt skilfully marshalled not only the Carolina interest but where possible assembled cross-sectoral coalitions behind the proposals, most broadly and effectively in support of an indigo bounty. Crockatt also exemplified important traits that energised the wider metropolitan South Carolina lobby. Like other leading London Carolina merchants who petitioned and testified before Parliament, Crockatt had lived and traded in South Carolina. This gave their evidence particular credibility; moreover, the deep experiential connections London's Carolina traders had with the colony helps to explain their particular assiduity in lobbying. Further reinforcing their ties with South Carolina, and distinguishing them from London merchants in the other North American trades, were their property holdings in the colony. This gave them both a commercial and economic stake in its development and is explored fully in the next chapter. The concentration of London's Carolina trade in relatively few hands may also have contributed to the traders' industriousness, by permitting rapid mobilisation and imbuing their claims with authority. This concentration was a function of structural and compositional features within the metropolitan Carolina trade – the pattern of mercantile relocation from Charles Town to London, the formation of transatlantic and intra-metropolitan partnerships, and the networks of credit that extended from the metropolis to the colony, for example. While this concentration seems to have assisted the metropolitan Carolina interest's lobbying during a period of relative geo-political harmony between Britain and its American colonies, it would, however, have altogether different consequences as political-economic attachments were tested and challenged from the 1760s onwards. As chapter four will reveal, it was a small step from *concentration* of trade to *domination* of trade.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### “Cankers to the Riches of a Country”? Transatlantic Absenteeism in Colonial South Carolina

“Cankers to the riches of a country”: in his assessment of landholder absentees, made in 1744, British economic theorist Sir Matthew Decker typified contemporary opinion on absenteeism. In his influential *Essay upon the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*, Decker equated absentee landholders to foreign subscribers to Britain’s national debt who leeches money away from Britain in interest payments.<sup>1</sup>

But what did he and his contemporaries understand by ‘absenteeism’? To most, it connoted non-resident ownership of Irish lands.<sup>2</sup> An absentee was thus defined by Samuel Johnson in 1755 as “He that is absent from his station or employment, or country. A word that is used commonly with regard to Irishmen living out of their country”. Half a century earlier, British economist Josiah Child had observed in his *New Discourse on Trade* the prevalence of absentee landowners in Ireland, repatriating the profits from its lands. He similarly attributed the poverty of Cornwall, despite its mines and fisheries, to the fact that “a great part of the Stock employed in the aforesaid great Trade, is taken up at Interest, and consequently owned by Londoners, and other Absentees”.<sup>3</sup> A rare dissenting voice among eighteenth-century economic theorists on the economic consequences of absenteeism was Joshua Gee. In his famous 1729 mercantilist treatise, *The Trade and Navigation of Great-Britain Considered*, he lauded absentee planters in the West Indies for their personal investment in the mother country, besides the broader economic boon their plantations brought to Britain. But

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. (London, 1750, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), 65.

<sup>2</sup> On absenteeism in Ireland, see A. P. W. Malcomson, ‘Absenteeism in Eighteenth Century Ireland’, *Irish Economic and Social History*, (1974), 15–35; articles in T. W. Moody (ed.), *A New History of Ireland: Eighteenth Century Ireland, 1691–1800*. (Oxford, 1986), 172–4, 210–3. These argue that absentee landlordism was less prevalent in Ireland than many contemporaries assumed. Malcomson also identified owners of Irish lands who lived elsewhere in Ireland, either in or around Dublin or other estates elsewhere in the country, as ‘internal absentees’ – an interesting parallel with contemporary South Carolina (see below). As many as half the absentee proprietors of Irish estates were estimated to fall into this group. Malcomson, ‘Absenteeism’, 23–4, 35.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language...* (London, 1755); Sir Josiah Child, *A New Discourse on Trade...* (1693; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., London, 1719), 157.

if Gee's positive spin on absenteeism was unusual, he nonetheless reflected contemporary opinion in his assessment of its prevalence. "If there is enough to support the Family," he noted of colonial planters, "they come here, and only an Overseer is left upon the Plantation to direct, and the whole Produce is remitted Home" or, more succinctly, among plantation owners "nothing but the Want of Means to live at Home, keeps them Abroad."<sup>4</sup> Land ownership by non-residents was similarly seen by most contemporaries and historians as a defining – and malign – feature of the British imperial polity in the West Indies, retarding the islands' social development and, by siphoning money away, hindering their economic progress. Historian Trevor Burnard has noted that the value-laden nature of the term 'absenteeism' itself, which, "signifying abstention, neglect of duty, and indifference to one's native country conveys a strong sense of moral culpability."<sup>5</sup>

This chapter examines absenteeism in eighteenth-century South Carolina to illuminate a neglected element of the transatlantic connection between Britain and the colony. In so doing, it challenges contemporary British and traditional historiographical conceptions of the phenomenon. A product of the collective mobility and the density of commercial exchange within Britain's Atlantic empire, property and land ownership was an important linkage between Britain and South Carolina alongside the more familiar and scrutinised bonds of ethnicity, kinship, culture and governance. The chapter shows how British residents owned plantation land and urban property in the province for the financial returns they offered – in rental yields and agricultural output. Moreover, these lands and property also represented both a symbolic and financial commitment to the province, which supplemented their owners' interest in its trade and commerce. Many of Britain's leading Carolina merchants, the province's most active advocates in Britain, held land and property assets

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<sup>4</sup> Gee, *Trade and Navigation of Great-Britain*, 102.

<sup>5</sup> Trevor Burnard, 'Passengers Only: The Extent and Significance of Absenteeism in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica', *Atlantic Studies*, 1.2 (2004), 178–95. Burnard has challenged this consensus, stressing instead the more limited extent and more variable nature of Jamaican absenteeism than traditionally portrayed and observing the benefits the West Indies derived from the absentees' political agency in Britain; likewise, B. W. Higman has demonstrated the economic efficiency of absentee-owned plantations in Jamaica. Higman, *Plantation Jamaica, 1750–1850: Capital and Control in a Colonial Economy*. (Kingston, Jamaica, 2008). For overviews of the historiography of absenteeism in both its West Indian and Irish guises, see Higman, *Plantation Jamaica*, 22–9; Burnard, 'Passengers Only', 179–180.

in South Carolina. In practical terms, their absenteeism contributed to the particular activism of South Carolina's London lobby during the eighteenth century. Although historians have long connected the concerted and often influential advocacy on behalf of the Caribbean sugar colonies in London in the same period with the prevalence of West Indian absenteeism, no such linkage has been observed for either South Carolina or any other North American province.<sup>6</sup> The one historian to have explored the political implications of transatlantic absenteeism for South Carolina, Jack Greene, linked the lower rate of absenteeism in South Carolina than in the West Indies to the formation of an indigenous political elite in the province and, ultimately, to its rejection of British imperial authority.<sup>7</sup> This analysis overlooks, however, the political agency in the imperial metropolis through which absentees played a connective role in the eighteenth-century imperial Atlantic polity. Studies of North American mercantile lobbying in Britain have similarly neglected the role of absenteeism, instead tending to conceive claimants' interests primarily through their commercial, religious, ethnic and kinship affiliations.<sup>8</sup> Study of the Carolina merchants' landed interests reveals a further dimension to their efficacy in the imperial metropolis on the province's behalf, and points more broadly to the significance of land ownership as a connective and stabilising force in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic world.

Throughout the eighteenth century, non-residents owned tracts of lands in South Carolina. Absenteeism dated to the province's foundation, when several Barbadian merchants and planters bought lots in Charles Town and left them in the care of resident attorneys, while descendants of only one of the proprietors, the Colletons, settled permanently in the province.<sup>9</sup> Petitioning the

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<sup>6</sup> Burnard, 'Passengers only', passim; O'Shaughnessy, 'Formation of a Commercial Lobby', 71–95.

<sup>7</sup> Jack P. Greene, 'Colonial South Carolina and the Caribbean Connection', *SCHM*, 88.4 (Oct. 1987), 209–210.

<sup>8</sup> For example Olson's otherwise excellent *Making the Empire Work*, 94–125; Price, 'Who Cared about the Colonies?', 395–436.

<sup>9</sup> Waterhouse, 'England, the Caribbean, and the Settlement of South Carolina', 276. See also Russell R. Menard, 'Financing the Lowcountry Export Boom: Capital and Growth in Early South Carolina', *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 51.4 (Oct. 1994), 664. The Colletons were one of a number of families to settle in South Carolina from Barbados and who, by owning estates in the Caribbean, brought another dimension of absenteeism to the province. Others included the Middletons and Bulls. On South Carolina's early connections with the West

Board of Trade in 1715 for military aid for the province, 21 “Planters and merchants trading to South Carolina” in London had avowed that “Most of us have great Debts and Effects there, some of us large Plantations”.<sup>10</sup> Absenteeism is, however, a problematic concept in studying eighteenth-century South Carolina, since it had both *domestic* and *overseas* guises. Unlike Virginia’s tobacco planters, who largely resided on their estates, most of South Carolina’s planter elite spent much of the year in Charles Town. A range of factors lay behind the planters’ congregation. The town was the province’s commercial and social hub, while chronically high mortality rates in the rice-growing lowcountry gave a strong epidemiological incentive to seek refuge in the city, particularly as the environmental influences on disease rates were better understood from mid-century.<sup>11</sup> In essence, these planters can be defined as *domestic* or *seasonal* absentees, living in the province, but often physically remote from the cultivation of their land. Much excellent scholarship has considered the implications of this phenomenon for South Carolina’s political, social and cultural development, and how absenteeism affected plantation management.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, South Carolina’s *overseas* or *transatlantic absentee* landholders have largely escaped historiographical scrutiny.<sup>13</sup> These were owners

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Indies, and in particular Barbados, see Dunn, ‘English Sugar Islands’, 81–9; Greene, ‘Colonial South Carolina and the Caribbean Connection’, 192–210. On the absentee ownership of Caribbean estates by South Carolina residents, see O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 17.

<sup>10</sup> CO5/1263/301. See chapter one.

<sup>11</sup> H. Roy Merrens and George D. Terry, ‘Dying in Paradise: Malaria, Mortality and the Perceptual Environment in Colonial South Carolina’, *JSH*, 50.4 (Nov. 1984), 533–550.

<sup>12</sup> Most influentially, Robert Weir identified the congregation of South Carolina’s landowning planters and merchants in Charles Town as a principal factor in their coalescence as a powerful and self-conscious indigenous political elite. Sharing common interests and values, the group’s harmoniousness characterised the province’s pre-Revolutionary politics: Weir, ‘The Harmony We Were Famous For’, 473–501. Inter alia, see also Richard Waterhouse, ‘The Development of Elite Culture in the Colonial American South: A Study of Charles Town, 1670-1770’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 28 (1982), 391–404; idem., ‘Merchants, Planters and Lawyers: Political Culture and Leadership in Colonial South Carolina, 1721–1775’ in Bruce C. Daniels (ed.), *Power and Status: Officeholding in Colonial America*. (Middleton, CT, 1986), 146–172. On the mental and physical relationship between Virginia’s tobacco planters and their land and crops, see T. H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: the Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of the Revolution*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Princeton, NJ, 2001), esp. 21–3, 40–83. For a recent assessment of how non-residency influenced agricultural productivity and shaped plantation labour regimes, see Laura Sandy, ‘Between Planter and Slave: The Social and Economic Role of Plantation Overseers in Colonial Virginia and South Carolina’. (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> For a partial exception, see S. Max Edelson, ‘Carolinians Abroad: Cultivating English Identities from the Colonial Lower South’ in Joseph P. Ward (ed.), *Britain and the American South: From Colonialism to Rock and Roll*. (Jackson, Mississippi, 2003), 81–105. Edelson’s article is principally concerned with the experiences of South Carolinian visitors to Britain, and how these influenced collective elite identity formation in the

of agricultural tracts, urban plots or both who, except perhaps for occasional visits to South Carolina, were permanently absent not just from their lands but from the colony itself. Difficulties of quantifying and categorising them partly account for the lack of attention to them, since it appears that no lists were kept of absentee land and property holders in colonial South Carolina. This is not to say that provincial opinion was wholly ambivalent towards non-residency. Critiques of the practice were certainly more muted than in the British sugar islands, though fear of its consequences for slave management underlay responses to absenteeism in both the West Indies and South Carolina. On the islands, absenteeism was publicly credited with heightening the danger of slave insurrection. Both Jamaica and Antigua imposed extra taxes on absentee-owned estates to deter proprietors from leaving the island and the Jamaica Assembly petitioned George II against absenteeism in 1749 explicitly on the grounds that slave revolts were more common on absentee owned estates.<sup>14</sup> In South Carolina, disdain for absenteeism was expressed more tacitly. It can be detected, for example, in the slave patrolling acts instituted in response to the Stono Rebellion in 1739. With very specific provisions for substitute service in the patrols, detailing how replacements could be hired and who was liable for defaults of service, many of their stipulations were clearly aimed at non-residents, whether they lived in Charles Town or further afield.<sup>15</sup> Critiques of absenteeism are also discernible as a subtext within South Carolina's culture of celebrating the 'active' or 'attentive' planter. The laudatory rhetoric of letters and articles in this vein printed in the *South Carolina Gazette*, the foundation of such clubs as the Winyah Indigo Society with their prizes for high crop yields and technological innovations, and the circulating literature of agricultural

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province. See also Greene, 'Colonial South Carolina and the Caribbean Connection', 209–210; and Roe Coker, 'Absentees as Loyalists', 119–134. Roe Coker offers a limited prosopography of loyalist absentees who had their assets seized by the state of South Carolina after the war.

<sup>14</sup> Frank W. Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies, 1700–1763*. (New Haven, CT, 1917), 35–38; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 34; Higman, *Plantation Jamaica*, 22. If absenteeism did indeed increase the risk of slave revolts in the Caribbean, it is perhaps ironic since many estate-owners left precisely because of this anxiety – B. W. Higman has observed, "fear for their [planters'] own lives was a vital driver of absenteeism" in Jamaica. Conversely, despite constant anxiety of slave rebellion in South Carolina, particularly after the Stono Rebellion in September 1739, this does not seem to have been an important factor in relocations from Carolina to Britain. Higman, *Plantation Jamaica*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> On the slave patrolling regulations, see Sally Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas*. (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 23–4.

'improvement', exemplified in its fullest transatlantic context by James Crockatt, with his self-compiled pamphlets and model machinery, were all emblematic of this culture. For its part, the Assembly adjourned at vital points in the rice cycle so its members could supervise sowing, harvesting and other key tasks on their lands.<sup>16</sup> Hailing activism had as its inverse an implied criticism of the non-attentive, non-resident planter whether in a *domestic* or *transatlantic* guise.

Until the 1770s, however, no distinctions were publicly drawn between absenteeism's different forms. Nor did overseas absenteeism register as a politically deleterious phenomenon. When Henry Laurens complained that when land monopolies "happen to fall into the hands of Non residents they are most pernicious to a Young Colony", he referred not to absenteeism in South Carolina, but to the consequences of his fellow South Carolinians land-banking in Georgia. "I have never been afraid to declare my sentiments freely to my friends in this place who hold idle Lands in our Neighborhood yonder", he declared.<sup>17</sup> Only in the early 1770s, as political fissures between Britain and its American colonies widened, did absenteeism register as a political issue for Carolinians. While British residents' ownership of Carolinian property had earlier suggested the depth of their stake in the province's development and prosperity, and a consonance of interests with its resident merchant-planter elite, in the context of growing political-economic divisions between Charles Town and London it acquired a more sinister dimension. Staying in London in 1771, Laurens was struck by the political quietude of London's Carolina merchants in the face of harsh ministerial policy towards America:

"America has many powerful Enemies here, and not a few among them who triumph in Coaches raised by Spoils drawn from that Quarter. Such think themselves Friends to America, if they encourage Trade from thence, for their own Emoluments, but have no Idea of opposing Ministerial Attempts to deprive her of her most valuable priveleges. Others are Friends, because they wish Success to their Plantations

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<sup>16</sup> Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit*, esp. 134–157; Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, esp. 172–6, 196–9.

<sup>17</sup> HL to Jonathan Bryan, 4<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1767. *PHL*, V, 291. On South Carolinian landownership in Georgia, see David R. Chesnutt, 'South Carolina's Penetration of Georgia in the 1760s: Henry Laurens as a Case Study', *SCHM*, 73.4 (Oct. 1972), 194–208; Marsh, *Georgia's Frontier Women*, 99–102; Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia*, 91–3.

and Estates there, but regard them as being only in a distant County of the Kingdom. Such are Enemies to our truest Interests, without knowing themselves to be so.”<sup>18</sup>

Still, the potentially malign consequences of transatlantic absenteeism were not formally recognised in South Carolina until conflict was imminent. Non-residence, it was then concluded, was a strong guide to geo-political loyalties. Absentee landholders were called to return to South Carolina by the Provincial Congress in June 1775, “for the better defence of our liberties and properties”, linking residence with provincial defence. The call was formalised by a congressional resolution, though those who had left the province on grounds of health, or were above 60 or below 21 years of age were exempted.<sup>19</sup> In neighbouring Georgia, moves in 1777 to strip absentees of uncultivated lands were financially motivated. One part of an act passed by the Georgia Assembly in June 1777 decreed that absentees had six months to settle or cultivate their land, after which it would be declared vacant, a move that would have allowed the state to profit by reselling the confiscated tracts. The confiscations would have hit hardest neighbouring South Carolinian residents, who were the most numerous absentee landowners in Georgia, and the act’s offending section was repealed in September 1777.<sup>20</sup> Conversely, in South Carolina a proposal for a double tax on absentee estates was rejected by the provincial congress in June 1775 and it was only in anticipation of British invasion in 1779 that this fiscal disincentive was finally imposed. Even then it applied only to men over the age of 22 who owned land in the province but were not resident in the thirteen colonies. Noting that “there are divers tracts of land, slaves and monies at interest in this State, held, owned, or claimed by persons not resident here, who pay no taxes or other charges toward the support of the Government of this State”, the tax was a device to bolster the war effort and tease out

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<sup>18</sup> HL to James Laurens, 26<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1771. *PHL*, VIII, 130.

<sup>19</sup> R. W. Gibbes (ed.), *Documentary History of the American Revolution, 1764–1776*. (New York, 1855), 110; William E. Hemphill and Wylma A. Wates, *Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses of South Carolina, 1775–1776*. (Columbia, SC, 1960), 67.

<sup>20</sup> ‘An act for opening a land-office, and for better settling and strengthening this state’ and ‘An act to amend and repeal part of “An act for opening a land-office, and for better settling and strengthening this state”’, 7<sup>th</sup> June and 16<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1777 in Allen D. Candler, *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*. 26 vols. (Atlanta, GA, 1904–16). XIX, pt. II, 53–8, 70–2; Lachlan McIntosh to HL and Joseph Clay to HL, 15<sup>th</sup> July and 16<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1777. *PHL*, XI, 396–7, 557–8.

absentees' true loyalties. Failure to pay within two years incurred confiscation of lands by the state.<sup>21</sup>

Once American independence was effectively secured, South Carolinian authorities moved to quantify the province's non-resident landowners. Meeting in early 1782 in Jacksonborough, 35 miles south of Charles Town, which remained in British hands, the state assembly identified 60 British subjects as owners of land in South Carolina in absentia and confiscated their estates.<sup>22</sup> This gives only a snapshot of absentee landownership in a single year, however. To assess absenteeism cumulatively, research for this chapter has also reviewed the approximately 300 residents of Britain who signed the 29 surviving petitions concerning South Carolina which were addressed to the Board of Trade, the Treasury or Parliament between 1715 and 1770, or who attended these fora on behalf of the province.<sup>23</sup> As noted in previous chapters, the petitions are considered to be the most consistent proxy for British resident interest in South Carolina, and were certainly the most effectual method for absentees to express this interest. For this chapter, the research has cross-referenced the names of those most active in this loosely structured lobby – signatories of two or more petitions – with South Carolina's surviving land records: grants, deeds and mortgages. Other absentees were identified from wills, post-war confiscation and compensation claims, through collections of transatlantic correspondence, and through relocation notices in the *South Carolina Gazette*. Combining these totals with the Jacksonborough Assembly's confiscation list, the research has definitively identified 98 owners of property in South Carolina who resided in Great Britain and

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<sup>21</sup> On the unsuccessful attempt to introduce a double tax on absentees in June 1775, see Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1775 and 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1777, to John Lloyd, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1777. *PHL*, X, 192; XI, 299, 313. On its imposition in 1779, see Cooper and McCord (eds.), *Statutes at Large*, IV, 489; Roe Coker, 'Absentees as Loyalists', 119.

<sup>22</sup> Listed in Category One of the 1782 Confiscation Acts, passed at the Jacksonborough Assembly on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1782: 'Confiscated Estates belonging to British Subjects Lying and being in the State of South Carolina'. The list of names was printed in the *Royal Gazette* on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1782 and was noted by Josiah Smith Jr. in his diary. Mabel L. Webber (ed.), 'Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780–1781', *SCHM*, 34 (1933), 194–5; Cooper and McCord (eds.), *Statutes at Large*, IV, 516–523.

<sup>23</sup> CO5/65/1–3, 221–4; CO5/358/50–1, 146, 244–7, 284; CO5/359/233–250; CO5/361/48, 84–5, 105–6; CO5/362/50–1, 213–6; CO5/363/46–7, 130–40; CO5/384/61; CO5/867/117; CO5/1264/301; CO5/1265/11; CO5/1293/71–7; CO323/9/11; T1/424/298–9; T1/425/215–6; T1/441/303–6; *JCTP*, VIII, 273; *PHL*, II, 378–280.

Ireland between 1715 and 1783. About half of these were merchants of one sort or another – former Charles Town traders, merchants in London, or both. The total does not include temporary visitors to Britain from South Carolina, who for example came to visit family, to establish or reinforce commercial connections in Britain, or those who left the province with the British in 1783 but soon returned. Moreover, this chapter seeks to show that the influence of absenteeism on the British-South Carolinian polity is best measured not quantitatively, but more subtly, through absentees' interaction with the imperial state.

The chapter first explores how Carolinian land and property came to be held in Britain, and identifies four principal ways this occurred: firstly, by its being bought in South Carolina by merchants, imperial officials and military and naval personnel who later relocated to Britain; secondly, received in lieu of debts owed in the province; thirdly, through marriage and inheritance; and fourthly, bought by British residents, either adding to existing landholdings in the province or as new speculative ventures. Its second section examines why absentees retained and often augmented their land and property holdings in the province, suggesting that while the holdings were generally not *commercially* integral to their owners, they were nonetheless *financially* valuable and symbolically significant. Their value to their owners was chiefly in the revenue they delivered (rent and plantation output); other remunerative considerations were in their embodied value as investments (through the hope of appreciations in land and property values) and as collateral (as a means of supporting their owner's credit). In its third section, the chapter considers absenteeism in the context of South Carolinian engagement with the British state, assessing how it contributed to the notable assiduity of the province's London lobby and suggesting how it reinforces parallels between South Carolina and the West Indies colonies.

### **Acquiring lands in South Carolina**

Absentee landholding was closely connected to patterns of mobility within the empire. Commercial mobility, through which merchants relocated from Charles Town to London, predominantly on

commercial grounds, was the strongest force behind transatlantic absenteeism. The largest and most politically active group of British-Carolinian absentees were merchants who had accrued real estate in the province before transferring their businesses from Charles Town to Britain. Settling mostly in London, where they became the city's principal traders to South Carolina in the middle-quarters of the eighteenth century, these included the men profiled in chapters one and two. Merchants such as John Watkinson, Samuel Wragg, James Crokatt, John Beswicke and Richard Shubrick had each spent several years in Charles Town, honing their business acumen and building a network of contacts in South Carolina. Watkinson invested in several residential and commercial plots in Charles Town in the mid-1720s during his spell there as a factor. Having returned to London about 1729, he became one of the most prominent merchants in the Carolina trade and regularly signed memorials and petitions on issues concerning the province. He retained "messuages, lands and tenements... lying and being in Charles Town" until his death in 1742, when Richard and Thomas Shubrick were appointed his attorneys in the town. They were entrusted to claim the rents from his Charles Town properties and then dispose of his estate in South Carolina.<sup>24</sup> Richard Shubrick also held on to his urban landholdings in Charles Town and his plantation lands after returning to London in 1747, where he too became a major trader to South Carolina and active petitioner. He retained the four town lots he had bought in 1746 in Ansonborough, on Charles Town's northern fringe, eventually selling them in December 1759. He also kept Quenby, his plantation on the Cooper River, along with a stake in 500 acres of land on the Port Royal River, southwest of Charles Town.<sup>25</sup> John Beswicke, who had been "Considerably Concern'd in Trade" in

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<sup>24</sup> Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vols. A, 220; B, 153; E, 313; F, 153; Y, 379, 386. (SCDAH); Miscellaneous Records, vol. EE, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1742 (SCDAH).

<sup>25</sup> Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vol. VV, 510, 512. (SCDAH); Memorials of South Carolina Land Titles, 1731–1775, vi, 455. (SCDAH); South Carolina Society, *The Rules of the South Carolina Society: established at Charlestown A.D. 1736, chartered 17<sup>th</sup> May 1751*. (Baltimore, 1937), 36.

Charles Town, also moved to London in 1747, where he became one of the capital's foremost Carolina traders and regular lobbyist. He held on to a house in Charles Town.<sup>26</sup>

Imperial officials and military and naval personnel were another group who acquired land while serving in South Carolina and retained it after returning to Britain. James Glen, for example, South Carolina's governor between 1743 and 1756, invested in land in the province, buying a small plantation and nineteen African slaves. He retained the plantation and slaves after returning to England in 1761. Thomas Boone, governor between 1761 and 1764, retained some 8,815 acres in South Carolina and as many as 184 slaves on his land by the Revolution.<sup>27</sup> The naval careers of British admirals George Anson and Peter Warren took each of them to Charles Town, where they accumulated landholdings in the province. Warren received two grants in 1733 and 1736 of nearly 2,000 acres of undeveloped land to the north and west of Charles Town. Anson, who famously later circumnavigated the world, accrued lands which totalled 12,000 acres by the time he left the province in 1735. These included a Charles Town lot and valuable land to the north of the town that took his name in becoming its first suburb, Ansonborough. A further six British naval or military officers had lands confiscated by the state in 1782.<sup>28</sup>

Not all absentee landholdings in South Carolina were acquired deliberately. With commercial debts often secured through mortgages, defaults led to the security – plantations or urban property – passing to the creditor, as frequently happened in the West Indies.<sup>29</sup> James Crockatt acquired two

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<sup>26</sup> RP to Andrew Pringle, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1744. LRP, II, 708; Robert Raper to John Beswicke, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1759. LRR.

<sup>27</sup> James Glen papers, 1738–1777. (SCL); E. Stanly Godbold Jr., 'James Glen (1701–1777)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept. 2004; Kathryn Roe Coker, 'Absentees as Loyalists', 131–2.

<sup>28</sup> Glyn Williams, *The Prize of all the Oceans: The Triumph and Tragedy of Anson's Round the World Voyage*. (London, 2000), 9; Julian Gwyn, *The Enterprising Admiral: The Personal Fortune of Sir Peter Warren*. (Montreal, 1974), 119–126; Webber, 'Josiah Smith's Diary', 194–5. On land grants across the North American colonies to British military officers, see John Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution*. (Princeton, NJ, 1965), 357–8.

<sup>29</sup> Historians have long been aware of absentee acquisition of estates in the West Indies through mortgage foreclosure. See notably work on the Lascelles family: Richard Pares, 'A London West India Merchant House', 221; S. D. Smith, 'Merchants and Planters Revisited', *EcHR*, 55.3 (Aug. 2002), 441–2, 450; also Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 146. Smith has argued that mortgage-backed credit was more significant in the West Indies trade than Pares allows, in 'Merchants and Planters Revisited', 434–465. For analysis of South

plantations in this way as he settled his affairs in the province before returning to Britain.<sup>30</sup> He then augmented his landholdings by assuming joint ownership of two other plantations in the 1740s with his commercial partners in Charles Town, in both cases apparently through mortgage foreclosures. In January 1742, the partners took ownership of some 400 acres in Berkeley County and in June 1745 came into possession of 100 acres on Wadmalaw Island, Colleton County in 1745.<sup>31</sup> London merchants Joseph and Henry Guinand similarly took control of a Carolina plantation, Walnut Hill, in 1763 following the bankruptcy of Charles Town correspondents. Uninterested in keeping “an old worn out Plantation”, they instructed their attorneys to sell it and its resident slaves within two years.<sup>32</sup> Charles Ogilvie similarly acquired a house in Savannah valued at £552 in payment for debts from a failed merchant partnership in that port.<sup>33</sup>

Marriages and inheritances were other common ways for land to fall into the hands of non-residents. By the Revolution, Ogilvie had a diversified land empire in the Lower South which he reckoned to be worth some £40,000. His first and two most valuable holdings came through his wife, Mary, whom he had married in London in November 1762 after transferring his business from Charles Town the previous year. She had inherited two plantations, Richfield and Mount Alexander, each of around 1,000 acres on the Combahee River, near the border with Georgia, in 1761 from her father, James Michie, formerly chief justice of South Carolina.<sup>34</sup> Another group of

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Carolina’s mortgage market in the first four decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, see Menard, ‘Financing the Lowcountry Export Boom’, 659–676.

<sup>30</sup> Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vol. T, 113, 117. (SCDAH). These were 540 acres on the Stono River, held against a payment of £763.5s. sterling by William Wilkins, a planter of James Island, and 200 acres in Christ Church Parish, held against a payment of £409 sterling by Daniel Crawford, a planter of that parish. After Wilkins’s death in c.1744, without having repaid the debt, Crockatt appointed Simmons and Smith, and George Seaman, George Austin and Robert Raper, all in Charles Town, as his attorneys, “giving unto them or any two of them full power & authority” to foreclose and dispose of the property, including “any lands, houses, tenements & Negroes whatsoever”. The land was sold on in July 1747. Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vol. CC, 507. (SCDAH).

<sup>31</sup> Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vols. BB, 120; X, 314. (SCDAH).

<sup>32</sup> Robert Raper to Joseph & Henry Guinand, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1763 and 15<sup>th</sup> April 1765. LRR.

<sup>33</sup> T79/43/172–8.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Certificate by William Bull, Lt-Gov. of South Carolina of the lands owned by Charles Ogilvie and his losses’, 25<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1782; Charles Ogilvie to Alexander Ogilvie, 17<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1783. OFP. See also <http://south->

absentee landowners, the aforementioned Colleton family, had inherited their lands in South Carolina from the original proprietors and maintained estates in the province throughout the colonial era.

After relocating from South Carolina to Britain, absentee landowners continued to add to their fixed assets in the province. They were attracted by the availability of land, its remunerative potential and the economies of efficiency and scale to be derived from augmenting existing holdings. Familial – often fraternal – ties facilitated such ventures, and made for reassuring supervision of existing land. Having moved to London, Samuel Wragg co-ordinated his acquisitions through his brother Joseph, who remained in Charles Town; Henry Middleton performed the same role for his brother William. For his part, Thomas Shubrick kept an eye on his brother Richard's Quenby plantation, while former governor James Glen entrusted his brother-in-law, John Drayton, with supervising the running of his lowcountry plantation, reciprocating in England by overseeing the education of Drayton's sons. Just as blood connections built trust into transatlantic commercial partnerships, they similarly offered security in buying and owning land three-thousand miles away. They mitigated the risks inherent in long-distance management – particularly of fraud, and of inefficient or incompetent oversight.<sup>35</sup> Surviving records do not reveal British-based absentees buying urban lots in Charles Town, though this is not to say that it did not happen – the making of purchases through intermediaries may account for their invisibility. Certainly, the absentees' retention of their urban properties in Charles Town points to their desirability as secure and

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carolina-plantations.com/beaufort/richfield.html; <http://south-carolina-plantations.com/beaufort/mount-alexander.html>

<sup>35</sup> In some cases, however, the tensions inherent in the devolved management of familial landholdings led to the breakdown of fraternal relations: Samuel Wragg revoked his brother's power-of-attorney in the province in 1742 after a dispute; Drayton's apparent tardiness with remittances from his brother-in-law's plantation led to his falling out with Glen, who charged him with having "ruined my credit both here [London] and Scotland". James Glen to John Drayton, May 1775. James Glen papers (SCL).

rewarding investments, specifically through the good returns to be made by renting property in the town.<sup>36</sup> Long-distance acquisitions of cultivable land are more readily identifiable.

As the zone of rice production expanded north and south through the region's coastal lowcountry and, from mid-century, as grain farming became established further inland, opportunities abounded for buying land and emulating the diversified and integrated 'plantation empires' developed most elaborately and famously by Henry Laurens and Jonathan Bryan.<sup>37</sup> Absentees in Britain joined the rush to seek grants from the governor and council of newly surveyed land on the agricultural frontiers. Samuel Wragg was an early exponent. After returning to London, he augmented his already extensive landholdings in South Carolina during the 1730s, including being granted 3,000 acres in Granville County in 1734 and 5,500 acres in Craven County four years later. The Granville County grant, at least, neighboured lands already owned by his brother, signalling Wragg's understanding of the practical benefits of fraternal oversight. Thirty years later, Thomas Boone, the former governor, and William Middleton, both of whom had relocated permanently to Britain, extended their plantation interests in the region, recognizing the potential returns on offer as the pace of expansionism quickened and risiculture took off across Georgia's coastal plain in the 1760s. Boone acquired new lands which his local agent judged would "make a good plantation for about thirty-five hands" and spent some £5,200 currency on slaves to labour on it. Middleton was able to capitalise on his brother's presence in South Carolina, and his ability to extend and control their landed interests in the region. A local agent was deputed to get a survey made of lands Middleton had recently purchased, and agreed to make once or twice yearly visits to his plantation in Georgia. Eager to join the land bonanza taking place across South Carolina's southern border, the brothers also instructed their agent to make a list of the "taskable Hands at the Euhaws and the River May", two of their South Carolina plantations, so that Henry Middleton – controlling his and his brother's

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<sup>36</sup> On the returns generated by rental property in Charles Town, see Hart, *Building Charleston*, 84–88.

<sup>37</sup> Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 200–54; Alan Galloway, *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier*. (Athens, GA, 1989), 84–108.

landed interests in the region – might “be able to judge how many can be spared from these Plantations in order to make another settlement or two in Georgia”.<sup>38</sup>

No British resident capitalised on the dramatic pace of expansion across South Carolina – and the investment opportunities it provided – more prodigiously than Charles Ogilvie. Making periodic visits from London, where he was settled in trade, he installed his nephew as itinerant manager of his copious land ventures located from one end of the province to the other. His land portfolio had started with the two Combahee River plantations, Richfield and Mount Alexander. To these he added an isolated tidal rice plantation, Myrtle Grove, located on an island in the mouth of the Santee River 50 miles north east of Charles Town. Near Camden in the fast developing backcountry, some 100 miles inland from Charles Town, he bought Belmont, a 813-acre grain-producing plantation, together with an adjoining 7,359 tract, Camden Mead. Unlike the desolate Myrtle Grove, Belmont contained “a good dwelling House and all other necessary Buildings”. Besides these, Ogilvie acquired numerous and mostly undeveloped tracts across South Carolina’s agricultural frontiers, bespeaking a speculative land-buying spree of huge ambition and a clear vote of confidence in the province’s productive capacity. In the western backcountry, he bought a further 360 acres near Belmont and a 100 acre tract near Camden Mead along with “a Tract on Colonel’s Creek, Wateree River”, which he let out for a term of seven years at £70 currency annually, together with “five other Tracts on Wateree River containing 1,435 acres” and a 500-acre grant “on the South Side of Wateree River near Cockey Mount”. Scattered on the frontier northwest of Charles Town were “Two Tracts on Peedee River containing 885 acres... One Valuable Tract on the High Hills of Santee... 697 acres... Half of 800 acres St. Steven’s Parish, Santee” and one tract of unspecified size “in Amelia Township adjoining Santee River near

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Raper to Thomas Boone, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1769. LRR; Henry Middleton to William Middleton, 8<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1770. HA93: 722/121 (SCDAH microfilm). Henry Middleton’s acquisition and development of lands in Georgia south of the Altamaha River – the so-called Altamaha Grants which caused long-running dispute between authorities in South Carolina and Georgia – is discussed in Chesnut, ‘South Carolina’s Penetration of Georgia’, 194–208.

McCords Ferry supposed to contain Mines”. Finally, well to the south on the Savannah River were two tracts “containing 1,890 acres Swamp in St. Peter’s Parish”.<sup>39</sup> That several of these tracts were acquired during the early 1770s suggests that Ogilvie for one did not foresee any imminent threat to the current Anglo-Carolinian polity and his tenure on his lands.

While the potential returns on the frontiers of the rapidly expanding agricultural zone caught some investors’ eyes, acquiring contiguous land was another favoured means for transatlantic absentees to extend their plantation concerns. As a relatively ‘known commodity’, with which the absentee owner might be familiar, or whose ‘fit’ with existing lands their agent in South Carolina could easily assess, it carried a lower risk than remoter acquisitions. Contiguity also promised economies of scale in commodity production, particularly in the tasking and oversight of an enlarged slave workforce on a single site, though this was tempered by the concern that greater congregations of slaves raised for masterly control. A further advantage of adding adjoining lands was their potential for agricultural complementarity. The South Carolina agent for one British absentee, Margaret Colleton, province acquired 50 acres of rice swamp adjoining her Mepshew plantation on her behalf. He exchanged it with a neighbouring planter for 50 acres of “dry land” which the neighbour required since he lacked dry land of his own near his rice swamps on which to build a house. The new land, Colleton was informed, had been divided and was ready to clear and plant for the next crop. It would make Mepshew “a Compleat Plantation in 2 years time”, indicating how it would derive benefits from scale and complementarity and would in turn yield higher revenues.<sup>40</sup> More ambitious – or foolhardy – absentees in Britain were willing to buy entire established plantations, further testament to the returns anticipated from lowcountry South Carolina. Whitehaven merchant Peter Taylor had inherited land in South Carolina from his uncle and was able to rely on trusted

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<sup>39</sup> ‘Certificate by William Bull, Lt-Gov. of South Carolina of the lands owned by Charles Ogilvie and his losses’, 25<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1782. OFP.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Raper to John Colleton, 27<sup>th</sup> April 1761, to Margaret Colleton, 24<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1767. LRR. Henry Laurens also acquired land contiguous to his existing holdings while away from South Carolina. See HL to James Laurens, 27<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1773. *PHL*, IX, 177.

family connections in the province to supervise his plantation affairs. He added to his landholdings by buying a further plantation, Charleywood, on the Wando River, about 20 miles north east of Charles Town. His cousins, who lived in South Carolina, posted a bond of £24,000 in provincial currency (about £3,430 sterling) as security. The plantation contained, his overseer reported, “good Negroe houses, a good Dwelling house... a good corn House, Kitchen & Sick House... [and] two good river Dambs”. The arrangement Taylor struck with his cousins speaks to the mutual advantages that could be derived from absentee land management. In return for their financial brokerage and the four or five annual visits to check on his plantation, Taylor engaged the Charles Town firm run by his cousins’ sons to export his plantation rice.<sup>41</sup>

Land, rather than urban property, was similarly the attraction for more speculative investors in the province. With taxes levied on all land in the province at the same rate, there were no acquisitions in South Carolina on the scale of John Carteret, Earl of Granville, who received some 20 million acres of northern North Carolina, or Lord Fairfax, who received five million acres in Virginia’s Northern Neck in 1745, both on the basis of inherited claims. Instead, most land grants in the backcountry were smaller than 300 acres.<sup>42</sup> Nor was there anything comparable to the land-grab that took place in Florida during the 1760s. After Britain was ceded East and West Florida by Spain in 1763, absentee investors bought hundreds of thousands of acres in the new provinces, though most attempts at settling the land failed.<sup>43</sup> But acquisitions of this type did take place in South Carolina, albeit on a much less dramatic scale, and shared a common motive with the larger and more publicised ventures. Speculative investors bought land in the colony, as elsewhere in North America, in the hope of making huge profits. Most investors of this type had only a limited or no direct connection to South Carolina, and nor did they ever intend to reside on or actively manage

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<sup>41</sup> Thomas Smith to Peter Taylor, 16<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1769 and 14<sup>th</sup> July 1773; Matthias Rast to Taylor, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1773 (quote). Taylor Family Papers. (SCL).

<sup>42</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the American Revolution* (New York, 1986), 356; Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 179.

<sup>43</sup> Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, 430–474; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 153–171. At least two London merchants with interests in the Carolina trade, George Udney and Samuel Touchet, joined this land rush. *PHL*, V, 166n.

their lands. The partnership of three MPs – Sir William Baker, Nicholas Linwood and Brice Fisher – who clubbed together to buy large tracts of land in South Carolina, is illustrative. All three were important London merchants, though only Baker had an interest in trade to South Carolina. Rather than actively manage their 40,000 acres of land themselves or through appointed agents, the partners instead hired two local agents, Paul Trapier and Francis Stuart, to subdivide and sell the land in smaller tracts. In an advertisement for barony lands in April 1767, the three investors noted that “we have received information that several persons have committed trespass on the said Barony, by making Settlements thereon”, further suggesting that the lands were not under management, but were being land-banked for windfall profits on resale.<sup>44</sup>

### **Retaining assets in South Carolina**

Turning specifically to the merchants who relocated from Charles Town to London, their motives for buying town lots while still living and conducting trade in Charles Town were manifest. Owning one’s own town house, which doubled as commercial premises and living space, saved making rent payments, though capital was of course needed to buy the property in the first place. For some, urban properties had greater appeal than agricultural land. In owning neighbouring premises, a merchant could keep a close eye on his urban assets, unlike more distant and inaccessible plantation landholdings. He could more easily bring his commercial judgement to bear in urban property management, observing market conditions first hand and perhaps collecting rent himself or deputing a clerk to do so. For others, the greater financial rewards of plantation ownership – not to mention the status and political authority it brought – compensated for the greater risks involved and the different skills required, as the number of Charles Town merchants who moved from

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<sup>44</sup> *SCG*, 27<sup>th</sup> April 1767. Despite the sale of some lands, Baker and Linwood retained vast landholdings in the province until the Revolution. When the lands were confiscated by the state of South Carolina in 1782, Baker’s son and heir, William Baker Jr., and Linwood’s widow, Jane, in 1782 together owned at least 40,333 acres in South Carolina, including Purrysburgh Barony of 12,600 acres, Black River Barony of 11,528 acres, Saltcatchers Barony of 11,679 acres and Peedee Barony of 12,000 acres. See also Roe Coker, ‘Absentees as Loyalists’, 123.

commerce into planting makes evident. The intrinsic but differing appeals of both urban property and land ownership was also significant to merchants leaving the province.

Merchants who transferred their business to Britain had compelling financial reasons for retaining fixed assets in the province after their departure, with Charles Town lots a particularly popular asset. Part of the lots' appeal was the steady and reliable yield they offered, through property rents that could be regularly collected and remitted by a Charles Town-based agent; in its consistency, this rental income contrasted with the inherently unpredictable returns generated by the transatlantic trading ventures that formed the basis and greatest share of their revenues. Rental returns also contrasted with plantation revenues which, though potentially more remunerative, carried greater risk through being more directly exposed to the vicissitudes of climate, slave welfare, and elastic and exogenous – mostly European – demand for produce. Furthermore, some absentees may have preferred town property assets as they seem to have been more easily liquidated than agricultural lands, sales of which were complicated by hard-to-monetise considerations such as the value of crops growing on the plantation and of the enslaved Africans working on it. In this *financial* basis for their property investments, British merchant absentees differed from the mostly Scottish merchants who owned country stores in the Chesapeake, whose premises were commercially integral to their tobacco trade. In the Chesapeake, Scottish/British firms' provincial representatives bought tobacco directly from producers, stocking European goods in country stores for part- or whole-exchange. In contrast, it was not necessary in purely *commercial* terms for British merchants trading to South Carolina to maintain fixed assets in the province. London merchants who dominated the export trade to South Carolina sold on commission to local merchants or sent goods to formal commercial partners. These Charles Town-based merchants kept the goods in their own stores for sale to consumers. Warehousing for rice, naval stores, deerskins and indigo for shipment in remittance to Europe was similarly locally owned. Urban properties in Charles Town were stand-alone financial investments for British owners, rather than integral to their commercial operations.

Having bought them when in Charles Town, their merchant owners retained them for the predictability of the income they delivered.

By the 1750s, Charles Town had been largely rebuilt following the fire that had devastated much of the town in 1740. With a population of about 9,000, it was the fourth largest settlement in British North America, and visitors were struck by the grandeur of its buildings.<sup>45</sup> “Houses are all neat and fine, handsome and large and built of brick,” observed Swiss immigrant Johannes Tobler in 1753, “but the plots for them, especially on the side of the street toward the sea, are very expensive, since one of them, 50 feet wide and 100 feet long, costs over five thousand Gulden [about £750]”.<sup>46</sup> In extolling South Carolina’s productivity and value in a report to the Board of Trade two years earlier, Governor James Glen had noted the “many houses that have cost a thousand and twelve hundred pounds sterling” besides those ‘on the Bay’ that were closest to the Cooper River and its wharves.<sup>47</sup>

The rental returns on these urban properties made them desirable investments. “The houses are very lucrative, since some bring in up to one thousand Gulden [about £150] annually in rent”, Tobler noted. In his survey of rents on one hundred houses and lots “fronting the River on the Bay of Charlestown”, Glen found that annual rents of £700 currency – about £100 sterling – were common. Located on a prime commercial thoroughfare and within touching distance from the town’s wharves, properties commanding the highest rents in Glen’s sample were most often occupied by merchants.<sup>48</sup> The rental yields that British resident absentees made from their Charles Town properties bear out Tobler’s assertion and support Emma Hart’s recent analysis of the vitality

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<sup>45</sup> Population estimate from Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream*, 113–4 (table 4–3).

<sup>46</sup> Johannes Tobler, trans. and ed. Walter L. Robins, ‘John Tobler’s Description of South Carolina (1753)’, *SCHM*, 71.3 (Jul. 1970), 145. Tobler’s comments feature in his promotional pamphlet *Beschreibung von Carolina* (Description of Carolina). Although designed to encourage others from eastern Switzerland to settle in the province, it avoids the hyperbole and excessive ‘boosting’ often found in the genre.

<sup>47</sup> James Glen, ‘An Attempt towards an Estimate of the Value of South Carolina’, 180.

<sup>48</sup> Robins, ‘John Tobler’s Description of South Carolina’, 145; Glen, ‘An Attempt towards an Estimate of the Value of South Carolina’, 189–91. To set the rents observed by Tobler and Glen in a transatlantic context, wealthy Carolinian Charles Pinckney and his family paid £120 a year for a furnished house in London’s fashionable West End in the early 1750s, a sum another Carolinian visitor to London judged a “Tip-Top Rent”. Peter Manigault to Anne Manigault, 8<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1753. Manigault Family Papers (SCHS).

of Charles Town's property rental market. Hart argues persuasively for the profitability and dynamism of Charles Town's urban rental market and posits that rental returns could outstrip the profits to be made from plantation agriculture during the 1750s and 1760s.<sup>49</sup> Drawing firm conclusions, as she admits, is hindered by the lack of data, but she perhaps underplays the costs associated with property ownership, as identified below. In comparison with investing in plantation lands, it is clear that some Charles Town residents made good profits from renting out their urban property assets. However, arguably the greatest appeal of urban property for the artisans and tradesmen that Hart analyses was not the absolute return to be made from urban property but the lower capital barriers to entry. For example, a Charles Town house bought for £100 sterling could deliver a regular income from within a month of tenants moving in. For every £100 invested in *developed* plantation land, significantly more would have to be spent on buying slaves and equipment to work it; costs associated with improving *undeveloped* land would be far higher. Moreover, no agricultural land could pay a such an immediate return on capital invested.

The two Charles Town properties belonging to London resident John Colleton, for example, illustrate the good yields that urban property could deliver. They were each being let for £75 a year when they were sold for £1,000 each in 1762. The purchaser then raised the rent to £80 a year – eight per cent of the property's sale price.<sup>50</sup> Robert Raper, Charles Town's deputy naval officer and agent in the town for several absentee property owners, was himself a tenant to an absentee who lived in Teddington, Middlesex. His landlord, Joseph Stephenson, was also his boss – Charles Town's naval officer, despite his permanent residence in Britain – who thus profited doubly from South Carolina, drawing a salary for his commission and rent from his *locum tenens*. Raper paid Stephenson an annual rent of £100 for his Charles Town house, prestigiously located next to the governor's residence, remitting the money twice a year through James Crokatt and then William

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<sup>49</sup> Hart, *Building Charleston*, 84–88.

<sup>50</sup> The rent on the properties had risen from £71.8s.9d. in 1758–9 to £75 in 1761–2. Robert Raper to John Colleton, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1759, to James Crokatt, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1762. LRR.

Greenwood in London.<sup>51</sup> Crokatt's own annual rental returns on his several Charles Town properties in 1767 amounted to £1,390 in South Carolina currency, or some £180 sterling.<sup>52</sup>

Rental returns did not translate into pure profit for property owners, however. Fire insurance at around one per cent of the property's value, legal fees at the beginning and end of contracts, maintenance and depreciation costs were all outlays to be reckoned with.<sup>53</sup> An additional cost for absentees was employing a Charles Town-based agent to arrange essential maintenance, find tenants and collect rent, and arrange the sale of properties. A further unpredictable cost was the wear and tear caused by tenants. This was a problem for landlords who lived in Charles Town themselves but non-residents, and particularly those without a reliable agent on the ground, were at greater risk through being less able to monitor disorderly tenants. Such tenants could prove more trouble than they were worth, as another transatlantic absentee, Benjamin Bushnell, discovered to his cost. Having apparently tried to manage his rental property in Charles Town without a local agent altogether, he found his tenants had – ostensibly to his benefit – “paid for many Repairs without Charging and often caused their own Negroes to do something to the House & kept no Account thereof”. On closer inspection, however, the residents' home renovation attempts had done more harm than good. Not having employed an agent had been a false economy. Robert Raper, whom Bushnell had eventually appointed as agent, found the house “in a bad Condition in want of Repair”, on account of which he could rent it out to the next tenant for just £250 South

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<sup>51</sup> Robert Raper to Charles Crokatt, 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan. 1768, to Joseph Stephenson, 11<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1768, to William Greenwood, 12<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1768. LRR. As with other imperial officials who were absentee property owners in South Carolina, it seems likely that Stephenson had bought this property while residing in the province.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Raper to James Crokatt, 17<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1767. LRR; *SCG*, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1767.

<sup>53</sup> Henry Laurens's letters from London to his brother James in Charles Town in 1772–3 offer a valuable insight into the levels and arrangement of insurance premiums on Charles Town properties and, more broadly, on the development of insurance brokerage among the capital's merchants. “Every Man at the Coffee House writes policies now a days”, Laurens reported, but advised “you may think it better to give 25/ per Cent 1¼ at the Royal Exchange than 20/ at the Carolina or Lloyd's Coffee House”. Considering the “precarious state of Commercial Fortunes in this City” – a reference to that year's credit crisis which had brought down many London firms – he was recommending paying the higher premium (one and a quarter per cent) brokered by the specialist insurance companies, rather than the lower one per cent premium commonly offered by individual traders. HL to James Laurens, 19<sup>th</sup> August, 26<sup>th</sup> Sept. and 5<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1772, and 11<sup>th</sup> March 1773. *PHL*, VIII, 422–9, 478–9, 490–6, 605–13.

Carolina currency (about £36 sterling) a year.<sup>54</sup> Landlords also had to pay taxes on their properties. Tax rates fluctuated annually according to the provincial government's overall revenue needs – in the mid-1760s, for example, tax ranged between three shillings and six pence, and twenty shillings, for every hundred pounds of a property's assessed value. In 1762, property tax amounted to £10.9s on each of Colleton's bay houses, some 14 per cent of the rent they produced annually, while Crokatt's tax assessment was a "very large" £204.8s.2d currency (about £29 sterling), about 16 per cent of their rent. Unsurprisingly, Crokatt was keen for his agent in Charles Town to find tenants who would pay his property taxes as well as their rent.<sup>55</sup>

If urban properties were theoretically easier to manage from afar, and through rents could provide regular and predictable income for their absentee owners, South Carolina's plantations offered them a riskier but potentially more lucrative source of revenue. Successful returns depended on a greater number of variables, principally astute management by local agents, the reliability and judgment of resident overseers, technological investment and the productivity of the slave labour force.<sup>56</sup> Plantation profits were also more subject to the vagaries of climate and crop prices, while absentee owners also had to reckon with the expense of paying an agent to make periodic visits to their estates. Margaret Colleton paid Robert Raper £500 currency a year to inspect and to organise provisions and maintenance for her two lowcountry plantations.<sup>57</sup> Compared to urban properties, however, a well managed and productive plantation could yield greater returns in both absolute terms and relative to the capital invested. Resident planters considered an annual return on invested capital (in slaves, land, equipment and provisions) of between ten and fifteen per cent to be a good profit during the 1750s and 1760s. Henry Laurens's 3,100 acre Mepkin plantation was the jewel of

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<sup>54</sup> Robert Raper to Benjamin Bushnell, 28<sup>th</sup> March and 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1760 (quotes), 29<sup>th</sup> April 1761, 30<sup>th</sup> March 1766. LRR.

<sup>55</sup> Cooper and McCord (eds.), *Statutes at Large*, IV, 190, 214, 239; Miscellaneous Records, 1749–51, 92–4 (SCDAH); Robert Raper to James Crokatt, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1762 and 2<sup>nd</sup> March and 18<sup>th</sup> August 1763. LRR.

<sup>56</sup> On the relationship between planter and overseer, and in particular the importance of overseers' managerial and commercial acumen, see Sandy, 'Between Planter and Slave', 65–6. On the recruitment of and responsibility vested in local agents, see also Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 150–2.

<sup>57</sup> Margaret Colleton account, 29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1779. Robert Raper Account Book. (SCL).

his plantation empire. When he bought it from absentee owner John Colleton in 1762, it was a monocultural rice plantation delivering an annual return of about ten per cent; after diversifying into corn, firewood and lumber for Charles Town's expanding urban market, it was realizing annual profits of more than 20 per cent from the mid-1760s.<sup>58</sup> Historian Max Edelson has contended that estates run by absentee planters in Britain were less profitable than those closely attended by their owners, though there is no quantitative evidence to support this claim. It echoes an assessment long made in respect of the British West Indies, though challenged by recent scholarship. In both regions, the extended lines of oversight and decision-making inherent in absenteeism have been assumed to have diminished plantation efficiency. Even those planters who spent most of their time in Charles Town – the domestic or seasonal absentees – were able to attend to plantation affairs at crucial moments in the agricultural cycle, for instance to personally oversee planting or harvesting, making immediate decisions on the marketing of crops or the next season's planting, and thereby enforcing their personal authority.<sup>59</sup>

Contemporaries believed absentee owned estates were less productive. Henry Laurens predicted “great prospect of success” at his newly bought Broughton Island rice plantation in Georgia in 1768, “... if my affairs would admit of residence upon the spot”. Were he in residence, he expected annual returns of at least £2,000, clear of charges, on invested capital of £7,500, “but under the management of Hirelings the Lord knows what I may make”.<sup>60</sup> It was a view shared by his brother, James, one of several agents that Laurens entrusted to keep an eye on his plantations during his sojourn in Europe from 1771 to 1774. “You might easily put that Plantation on better footing were

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<sup>58</sup> Robert Raper to John Colleton, 27<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1762. LRR; Henry Laurens to Richard Oswald, 27<sup>th</sup> October 1768. *PHL*, V, 668; Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 203–4, 240–4.

<sup>59</sup> Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 173–4. On the debate on absenteeism and plantation efficiency in the West Indies, see Burnard, ‘Passengers Only’, 178 – 95; Higman, *Plantation Jamaica*, 22–9.

<sup>60</sup> HL to Richard Oswald, 27<sup>th</sup> April 1768. *PHL*, V, 668.

you on the Spott,” James Laurens told his brother as he reported on his underperforming Wright’s Savannah plantation in Georgia.<sup>61</sup>

However, even if the lower productivity and profits on absentee owned plantations is accepted, they clearly still delivered sufficient profits to make them desirable investments. Laurens relied on the income from his South Carolina and Georgia plantations while in Europe in the early 1770s to oversee his sons’ education.<sup>62</sup> The willingness of absentees to retain lands after leaving the province permanently, and for some to amass further lands, itself testifies to the appeal a diversified landholding portfolio held. This is suggested by the plantation empires that Samuel Wragg and Charles Ogilvie constructed; George Austin was another. After a merchant career in Charles Town, he retired to his native Shropshire in 1763. Despite never showing any intention of returning to the province, he retained his estates in South Carolina, which on his death in 1774 totalled 6,305 acres and 176 slaves.<sup>63</sup>

Evidence from specific plantations owned by British residents confirms their profitability. John Colleton’s two plantations, Watboo and Mepshew, located north of Charles Town in South Carolina’s core planting zone, were well established by the 1760s. Agriculturally diversified, producing rice, indigo and lumber, they also had a navigable river connection to Charles Town, reducing transportation costs. Mepshew had about 30 working slaves and produced about 100 barrels of rice a year in the early 1760s. Though its estimated value then is not known, a decade later, it was reckoned to be worth more than £6,000.<sup>64</sup> Together, Watboo and Mepshew delivered a profit of about £1,000 in 1764–5, a sum which would have been higher but for several unusually large deductions, including a doctor’s bill covering three years of visits and treatments, two years’

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<sup>61</sup> James Laurens to HL, 6<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1773. *PHL*, VIII, 523.

<sup>62</sup> *PHL*, VIII, xiii, 106.

<sup>63</sup> Edgar (ed.), *Biographical Directory*, II, 44–5.

<sup>64</sup> Robert Raper to John Colleton, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1759, 16<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1760, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1761. LRR; Thomas Boone to Margaret Colleton, 29<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1773. Margaret Colleton Papers (SCL). If Mepshew had 30 working slaves, it would also have had a much greater number of enslaved residents who were not able to work – the very young, the infirm and the elderly.

worth of taxes, “several charges for Accidents that may not happen again” and repairs to a boat which took rice and lumber from the plantation for sale in Charles Town. Margaret Colleton later told her Charles Town attorneys that she had been bequeathed these plantations, “together with all the Negroes, Stock &c... for my support and maintenance”. The revenue they produced had persuaded her to disperse her British holdings: “Relying upon the Income of these Estates, which by the Care of my Attorneys for some years I duly received, I have been liberal with my property in this Country to my Relations and Connexions”.<sup>65</sup> Charles Ogilvie reckoned his more remote Myrtle Grove plantation, only settled in 1774, “would have been exceedingly profitable in a few years”. It had broken even just a year after establishment, in 1775 producing “189 Barrels or Tierces of Rice... besides Indico and Corn more than sufficient to pay all charges...”<sup>66</sup> Absentees either sold their plantation rice to Charles Town factors or shipped it to Britain on their own account, according to which they believed would be most profitable.<sup>67</sup>

Besides regular returns on invested capital, two other incentives for British residents to own land and property in South Carolina bear consideration. Both were based on the land’s embedded value. In observing how some of the plantation colonies’ wealthiest residents combined landowning and trade, Jacob Price noted that “undeveloped land held for appreciation might still be valuable enough to support some credit and thus indirectly be productive”.<sup>68</sup> If this were true for South Carolina’s overseas absentees, it would connect their landholdings (particularly in the case of merchant absentees) to their *commercial* concerns. Regardless of whether their tracts were developed and revenue-producing or were undeveloped, they might be used to bolster their owner’s credit. As such, they could increase his ability to raise capital for other ventures and investments. Plantation land and urban properties were also acquired because they were expected to rise in value over time.

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<sup>65</sup> Margaret Colleton to Robert Raper and Francis Kinloch, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1778. Margaret Colleton Papers (SCL).

<sup>66</sup> ‘Certificate by William Bull, Lt-Gov. of South Carolina of the lands owned by Charles Ogilvie and his losses’, 25<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1782. OFP.

<sup>67</sup> HL to William Cowles, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1771; to James Laurens, 5<sup>th</sup> December 1771. *PHL*, VIII, 22, 70.

<sup>68</sup> Price, ‘Transatlantic Economy’, 26.

This was the case in the more explicitly speculative ventures, such as those of Baker, Linwood and Fisher, with these London merchants buying undeveloped land because it had known development and resale value. Windfall gains were also possible on land with potential for urban development. Anticipating Charles Town's expansion, the South Carolina Society, a club in the town, had bought Richard Shubrick's four Ansonborough lots on its northern edge for £500 in 1759. As Charles Town grew as predicted and Ansonborough became one of its most desirable residential quarters, the land rose in value to an estimated £5,000 in 1768.<sup>69</sup> Drawing conclusions from the values of specific properties within Charles Town is harder. On inheriting an established plantation, undeveloped tracts and town lots in Georgetown after the war, British resident John Martin chose to sell the land but retain the lots, since "they might improve [in value] in time".<sup>70</sup> Evidential limitations make it unclear whether Martin's hope was realistic. While deeds of sale and newspapers advertisement often record their sale price, it is almost impossible to know how these lots and buildings were altered over time. For example, John Watkinson bought part of a Charles Town lot in 1726 for £1,500 South Carolina currency. After his death, it was sold in 1743 for £1,800 currency.<sup>71</sup> James Crokatt sold a lot of ground and brick house in Charles Town for £1,260 in 1765, exactly double the price he had paid for it in 1731. Nothing is known of how either property changed between their purchase and sale – whether improvements were made or whether years of tenant-occupation took their toll. Even with this caveat, rises in value of 20 per cent over 17 years in Watkinson's case – just over one per cent annually – and three per cent annually in Crokatt's seem meagre, particularly when set against expected yields from commerce and planting, and when the Charles Town loan market delivered returns at between eight and ten per cent.<sup>72</sup> Given the evidence on rental returns, it seems likely that the annual yields delivered by urban properties were a

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<sup>69</sup> HL to Benjamin Addison, 26<sup>th</sup> May 1768. *PHL*, V, 702.

<sup>70</sup> John Martin to John Bold, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1791. John Martin Papers (SCHS).

<sup>71</sup> Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vols. E, 313; Y, 379, 386. (SCDAH).

<sup>72</sup> South Carolina interest rates were legally set at 10 per cent until 1748, when they were reduced to eight per cent. They remained at this level until 1777, when they were cut to seven per cent. Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream*, 105–6.

stronger motivation for absentees to retain them than the hope of long-term appreciation and windfalls.

How did all these returns – agricultural, rental and appreciative – compare with what absentee owners could realise on investments in Britain? If Henry Laurens’s comments on fellow planter Henry Gray’s relocation to Britain in 1764 are typical, South Carolina’s merchant-planters held the more pedestrian returns to be made in Britain in a certain disdain. Noting Gray’s plan to “fix in some cheap country in the West of England & to do a great many fine things in the farming way & dabble a little now & then in commerce”, Laurens compared Gray’s annual returns of ten to twelve per cent on his South Carolina lands, which he advertised for sale before leaving, with the three to four per cent he expected him to make yearly in England. To Laurens, this equated to “leaving good Wheat Bread to take up with Rye” and he predicted that Gray would “probably return to us after a year or two of vexatious toil”.<sup>73</sup> Annual returns on British securities tally with Laurens’s estimates: during the 1750s, yields on East Indian stock and bonds, and on government stock, hovered around three per cent – well below the profits on staple agriculture that might be expected in the South Carolina lowcountry.<sup>74</sup> The commercial profits of London’s overseas merchants were higher, sometimes reaching the levels associated with plantation returns. Adam Smith considered a return of double the interest rate – between six and ten per cent – as a “good, moderate reasonable profit”; well established merchants counted on a return of ten to fifteen per cent from a successful year’s trading.<sup>75</sup> London’s Carolina merchants also bought estate land in Britain, though social considerations were a stronger motivation than the land’s productive capacity or its long-term investment value. Several of the leading traders acquired a sizeable estate within 20 miles of London: John Beswicke in Hillingdon, John and Sarah Nickleson in Stanmore, Richard Shubrick in

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<sup>73</sup> *PHL*, IV, 343–5; Edgar (ed.), *Biographical Directory*, II, 291–2.

<sup>74</sup> P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England, 1688–1756*. (London, 1967), 471; Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream*, 266n.

<sup>75</sup> John Habakkuk, *Marriage, Debt, and the Estates System: English Landownership 1650–1950*. (Oxford, 1994), 420; Gauci, *Emporium of the World*, 86.

Greenwich and his son, also Richard Shubrick, in Enfield. William Baker bought the Bayfordbury estate in Hertfordshire – which totalled around 3,911 acres – for £21,000 in 1756.<sup>76</sup> Like his mercantile colleagues, James Crockatt similarly diverted commercial capital into land. He bought Luxborough Hall in Essex, a grand country estate about fifteen miles northeast of London, for £19,500 in 1750 and spent a further £10,000 repairing and furnishing the house. “I think he has Grandour enough for his Money”, one visitor from South Carolina drily observed.<sup>77</sup> As well as the neo-classical mansion and 18 acres of garden, the estate included the freehold of six farms, two meadows and lands covering some 520 acres, which together generated an estimated annual return of £870.<sup>78</sup>

### **Absenteeism and agency**

James Crockatt exemplifies the correlation between absentee landholding in South Carolina and political agency on the province’s behalf in London. His commercial trajectory has been outlined in the previous two chapters – his rise as a merchant in Charles Town in the 1730s, his pre-eminence in London’s Carolina trade in the 1740s, and his service as South Carolina’s official metropolitan agent between 1749 and 1756. The land and property acquisitions he made while living in South Carolina – some mentioned above – were an important factor behind both his commercial ascendancy and his diligent service to the province in London. They can be grouped into three categories: purchases for immediate personal use, short-term speculations, and longer-term investments. In February 1731, he paid Joseph Wragg £2,450 currency for part of two Charles Town lots with 41½ foot of frontage on the north side of Broad Street.<sup>79</sup> Here, on Charles Town’s main thoroughfare, Crockatt had his counting house and store. In October 1731, he bought an adjoining “brick message” from Wragg’s London-based brother Samuel for £630.<sup>80</sup> Expanding his

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<sup>76</sup> Habakkuk, *Marriage, Debt and the Estates System*, 422.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Manigault to Anne Manigault, 20<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1751. Manigault Family Papers (SCHS).

<sup>78</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1767.

<sup>79</sup> Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vol. HH, 87. (SCDAH).

<sup>80</sup> Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vol. K, 361. (SCDAH).

facilities as his business grew, these sites were central to Crokatt's commercial operations in the town. Some of his other purchases bear the hallmarks of short- and medium-term speculation. These included commercial property in Charles Town and two tracts of land on Charles Town Neck. In one deal, he bought part of a town lot for £1,535 currency before selling it on two weeks later for £1,750 currency – an almost instant profit of £195 currency.<sup>81</sup> Just north of the town and covering just 70 and 46 acres, the two tracts were relatively small and were more likely country retreats than working plantations: one was advertised as containing a “good Dwelling-House, Kitchen, Garden and Orchard of Fruit Trees”, with no mention made of crops or resident slaves. Both were sold on little over three years after their purchase, the smaller tract having appreciated in value by some 45 per cent.<sup>82</sup> Other acquisitions were longer-term investments. Shortly before his long-planned departure from the province in June 1739, Crokatt bought two tracts of land from colleagues on the province's Royal Council. Both were adjacent to developing townships in the interior of the province, and Crokatt's purchase of them so soon before his departure suggests they were bought in the hope of yielding long-term windfall gains. They consisted of 1,200 acres in Granville County, to the north of Purrysburgh township and 1,000 acres in Craven County, part of the land set aside for Queensborough township.<sup>83</sup> Though South Carolina's townships schemes ultimately failed to attract settlers on the scale their proponents hoped, in the late 1730s they were seen to offer strong economic prospects for investors – the value of whose land would increase as the townships expanded – besides their principal purposes of ameliorating South Carolina's worrying racial imbalance and buffering the lowcountry from Indian and rival imperial threats. The urban property in Charles Town that Crokatt retained after leaving for Britain further suggests a

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<sup>81</sup> Crokatt sold the land on to Governor Robert Johnson, who already owned land abutting it. As such it was presumably more valuable to him than to Crokatt, explaining the price differential. Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vol. M, 163–81. (SCDAH).

<sup>82</sup> Crokatt had bought the forty six acre tract on Charles Town Neck for £1,380 in July 1732 and sold it for £2,000 in September 1735, an annualized increase of just over thirteen per cent. What – if any – improvements he had made to the land or its buildings is unknown, however. Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vols. I, 640; K, 223; Q, 102; Memorial Books, 1731–1778, III, 175. 13<sup>th</sup> March 1733. (SCDAH); *SCG*, 14<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1732 (quote) and 14<sup>th</sup> June 1735.

<sup>83</sup> Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vol. T, 110, 119. (SCDAH).

long-term investment strategy, as well as the appeal of urban rental yields. He retained three houses and a “low water lot” in Unity Alley and five tenement houses ‘on the Bay’ which he had bought for £4,000 currency in 1732. These properties brought in some £1,390 currency (about £180 sterling) a year by 1767, when they were finally sold, and seem to have included both retail and residential space.<sup>84</sup>

Crokatt’s property holdings in South Carolina augmented his commercial connections with the province. In his advocacy for the province during his time in London, before, during and after his formal agency, his contributions were characteristic of broadly-based personal interest in the province. Whether giving evidence on salt imports to South Carolina, on indigo growing or on sericulture, Crokatt’s evidence was informed by an interest based on more than just his trading concerns, extensive though they were. It was the interconnections of his motives – commercial, economic, social, familial and experiential – which made him such an assiduous appellant for the province. His concern for the province’s economic vitality and its inhabitants’ wellbeing were a product both of his commercial interest in the Carolina trade and his deep personal links to the province – more than ten years spent living there, a native-born South Carolinian wife and two children born in Charles Town, and extensive property and landholdings there. Taking the role of provincial agent in 1749 merely formalised the representative role Crokatt had already been playing, while his acceptance of the post cannot have been motivated by its salary – the £200 annual wages were loose change for a man who spent nearly £30,000 on buying and renovating a country estate. This multiplicity of interests in the province, in which landholdings played a significant part, was further embodied in the larger Carolina interest group in which Crokatt played the leading mid-century role but whose advocacy for the province stretched back a quarter of a century before his return to Britain. Between its first sustained activity in 1715 and the early 1770s, British merchants

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<sup>84</sup> See inter alia *SCG*, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1763, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1765, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1766, 8<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1766, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1767; Public Register, South Carolina. Conveyance books [Charleston Deeds], vol. GGG, 178. Collection of rents from these properties was entrusted to Crokatt’s Charles Town attorney, Robert Raper. Miscellaneous Records, 1749–51, 92–4 (SCDAH).

trading to the province were the principal members of this lobby in London – merchants who were also the single largest group of absentee land and property owners in South Carolina. Within Parliament, too, MPs with landholding connections in South Carolina helped usher favourable bills through their legislative stages – James Edward Colleton introducing a bill assisting colonial silk production and Sir Peter Warren, the former admiral with tracts north and west of Charles Town, steering potash legislation through parliamentary waters.<sup>85</sup>

Owners of property and land in South Carolina formed a core group of the province's most regular advocates, including men mentioned above such as John Watkinson, Samuel Wragg, John Beswicke, Richard Shubrick, Sir William Baker and Charles Ogilvie. Some examples from the numerous episodes of lobbying illustrate the intersection of land-owning and political advocacy. In February 1748, the Board of Trade received a delegation of nine merchants trading to South Carolina, appealing against emissions of currency in South Carolina which they feared would both reduce the value of debts owed to them and harm the province's economic vitality. At least six of them owned land or property in the province.<sup>86</sup> In 1756, seven London residents petitioned Edmond Atkin to urge him to accept a nomination as Indian agent for South Carolina, a position in which he would be the province's official diplomat with regional Indian tribes. His prior expertise in Indian negotiations, they argued, was essential, as Anglo-French hostilities in North America threatened to unleash Indian warfare on South Carolina's frontiers and endanger the whole province. On this occasion – a matter of strategic, rather than specifically commercial, significance to South Carolina – all seven petitioners had territorial interests in the province.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, when nine London-based merchants petitioned the Board of Trade in March 1772 to urge that it approve

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<sup>85</sup> *JHC*, XXV, 933–1114; XXVI, 215–292.

<sup>86</sup> *JCTP*, VIII, 273. The nine appellants were James Crokatt, Charles Crokatt, Sir William Baker, John Beswicke, John Nickleson, Richard Shubrick, Andrew Pringle, Nathaniel Newberry and William Stone.

<sup>87</sup> 'Petition from the Agents for the Council & Assembly of South Carolina, other gentlemen & principal merchants to Edmond Atkin asking him to accept the post of Indian Agent'. The petition was signed by James Crokatt, John Beswicke, Richard Shubrick and John Watson, all Carolina merchants who had relocated to London from Charles Town, and by William Middleton, Charles Pinckney and Thomas Drayton, all former residents of the colony, though not directly involved in trade in London. LO 893, Loudon Papers (Huntington Library).

a cession of land made to Georgia by local Indians, they made their ownership of land in the colony central to their appeal. “Your Memorialists are considerably interested in the welfare and prosperity of the Province of Georgia”, they argued, “having large sums of Money and great Property there, not only as Merchants, but also from having purchased valuable Tracts of Land and settled many Plantations.”<sup>88</sup> Land and property holdings reinforced British lobbyists’ interests in the region and strengthened their advocacy on its behalf. The holdings were also deployed to convey a symbolic message, suggesting to their owners’ colonial correspondents a continuing loyalty to the province that was deeper than purely commercial or profit-based.

Land and property ownership in South Carolina found a parallel in philanthropic gestures. These were used by London merchants in various colonial trades to signal ongoing commitment to the regions in which they had once lived, or on whose trade they depended. Historian Peter Marshall has suggested that studying British philanthropy towards American causes helps answer the question of “who cared about the colonies?” in Britain, indicating the breadth of interest in America among mid-century British residents.<sup>89</sup> How philanthropy was deliberately used for demonstrative purposes – in this context as a means of manifesting personal interest in and attachment to colonial causes – awaits systematic scholarly analysis, but some Anglo-Carolinian examples show how charitable giving was employed for these ends. In April 1741, for example, James Crockatt donated £1,000 currency (about £140 sterling) to be distributed among residents of Charles Town who had lost homes and goods in the fire that had devastated the town the previous November. During the 1760s, metropolitan Carolina traders gave to causes in the colony ranging from a subscription to resettle German Protestants in South Carolina to a fundraising effort

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<sup>88</sup> CO5/651/22. Illustrating the overlap between London’s Carolina and Georgia trades, the nine signatories all had interests in, or were primarily involved in, trade to South Carolina.

<sup>89</sup> Peter J. Marshall, ‘Who Cared about the Thirteen Colonies? Some Evidence from Philanthropy’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth Studies*, 27.2, (May 1999), 54.

organised by Crockatt's son, Charles, to pay for a peal of bells for St Michael's church in Charles Town. It achieved a "very Liberal" subscription from the capital's Carolina merchants.<sup>90</sup>

Analysis of North American colonial lobbying in Britain has tended to emphasise claimants' commercial interests as the motive force in their advocacy. In Alison Olson's words, "leading merchants might work disproportionately hard to get bounties for particular colonial exports but then they stood to gain disproportionately by transporting the goods involved".<sup>91</sup> Commercial interests were indeed significant, but among the capital's Carolina merchants interest in the province did not begin and end with its trade. This helps explain the particular activism which distinguished London's Carolina lobby from its North American counterparts during much of the eighteenth century, making it more analogous to the capital's West Indies lobby. Whether deliberately or inadvertently acquired, property and land holdings in Charles Town and across its fertile hinterland entrenched their interest in the province's economic health and enhanced their concern for its interests. Moreover, non-merchant absentees – that is to say, those who did not have explicitly *commercial* links with the province – were also active in signing petitions and lobbying Parliament on the province's behalf. A petition to the Treasury in February 1763, for example, appealing for liberty to export rice directly from South Carolina to foreign colonies in the Americas, and to Madeira and the Canary Isles, specifically distinguished its signatories – all British residents – as "several Merchants in London, Planters of So. Carolina, and owners of Ships trading to his Majesty's said Province in America".<sup>92</sup> When a consequent bill came before a Commons committee, William Middleton – not a merchant, but a major landowner on both sides of the

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<sup>90</sup> SCG, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1741; Committee Appointed for Relieving the Poor Germans, Proceedings of the committee appointed for relieving the poor Germans, who were brought to London and there left destitute in the month of August 1764. (London, 1765), 35; George W. Williams, *St. Michael's, Charleston, 1751–1951*. (Columbia, SC, 1951), 234–48. Simon Smith has similarly observed how Gedney Clarke, a wealthy merchant in Barbados, used conspicuous acts of philanthropy to demonstrate his affiliations to New England, where he had entered trade and with which he maintained an active commerce. These included gifting a peal of bells to a Boston church and raising a fund for the widows and children of New England men killed in action against the French at Louisbourg. Smith, 'Gedney Clarke of Salem and Barbados', 524–5.

<sup>91</sup> Olson, *Making the Empire Work*, 104.

<sup>92</sup> T1/425/215–6.

Atlantic – was one of the principal witnesses to give evidence, telling MPs of his birth and longtime residence in South Carolina, and describing plantation management in the province.<sup>93</sup>

For London's leading Carolina traders, at least until the 1760s, the ownership and remote management of plantations, urban properties or both were central components of the intricate bonds which connected them to South Carolina, entwined with their commercial, personal and familial connections spanning the Atlantic. That British residents came to own lands in South Carolina and Georgia was in many respects a function of the Carolina trade's distinct structural features. Chief among these was the high proportion of London's Carolina traders who had spent the early part of their careers in South Carolina before transferring their business across the Atlantic. In Charles Town, they had acquired land and property, which was often augmented in lieu of debts owed them in the province. As astute merchants, they appreciated the economic logic inherent in a diversified portfolio of investments. Reliable rental returns and the potential for high profits on plantation enterprises encouraged them to retain these holdings in Britain, even if these investments were subsidiary, rather than integral, to their commercial operations. These investments moreover possessed symbolic value, publicly signalling an ongoing commitment to the province which furnished the bulk of their trade, and where friends and family remained.

In British discourse, absentee land and property ownership in South Carolina attracted little of the public attention and none of the abuse that contemporaries heaped on its 'cankerous' guises in Ireland and the West Indies. Partly this was a consequence of scale, partly a result of the absentees' lower profile in British society. Although numbering around a hundred at least during the eighteenth century, there were simply fewer absentee Carolinian than Irish or West Indian landowners living in Britain. Nor did they have their public profile. While a number bought large estates after returning to Britain, none of these matched the size or opulence of a Fonthill or a Harewood House, the lavish country estates of absentee West Indian planter dynasties, and

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<sup>93</sup> *JHC*, XXIX, 605–6.

bywords for nouveau riche ostentation. And for all their significance for Anglo-Carolinian interaction, none of the Carolinian absentees achieved the political influence of prominent West Indian absentees such as William Beckford, Lord Mayor of London, leading supporter of John Wilkes and one of some 70 West Indian merchants who were MPs in the second half of the century alone.<sup>94</sup> Seen from a ‘metropolitan’ perspective, this helps explain the historiographical neglect of the Carolina absentees – non-resident landowners in South Carolina did not make the splash in British society of their West Indian counterparts, and their contribution to metropolitan society was less pronounced.

Superficially, the group’s neglect from a Carolinian perspective is similarly unsurprising. Lack of attention to the British residents who owned land in South Carolina – both historiographical and contemporary – is due partly to scale. Just as Carolinian absentees were few enough in number to slip under the radar of mainstream political, social and satirical attention in Britain, permanent non-resident landowners were small enough in proportion to the total number of landowners and in the size of their landholdings to escape the kind of attention in the province which their counterparts received in the Caribbean. Moreover, the habit of seasonal removal to Charles Town meant that non-residence was an established a cultural and economic norm. Critiques of absenteeism in South Carolina were thus more subtle than in the West Indies (though fear of slave rebellion and economic dereliction were present in both) and, until the 1770s at least, did not distinguish between the practice’s domestic/seasonal and transatlantic/permanent guises. Only through absenteeism’s political connotations, and then not until Anglo-American relations had taken several clear turns for the worse, were distinctions drawn between the different forms it took. It was at this point that British owners of Carolinian lands became, in Henry Laurens’s words, “Enemies to our truest Interests, without knowing themselves to be so”.<sup>95</sup> This was ironic, since it was through political agency that absenteeism exerted its most significant pre-Revolution influence but one which

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<sup>94</sup> Lewis B. Namier and John Brooke (eds.), *The House of Commons, 1754–1790*. 3 vols. (London, 1964), I, 154.

<sup>95</sup> HL to James Laurens, 26<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1771. *PHL*, VIII, 130.

worked largely to South Carolina's benefit, by reinforcing its advocates' commercial, familial and experiential ties to the province. Although perceived in different ways, the existence and political consequences of Carolinian absenteeism accentuates the province's developmental parallels with the West Indies. As in the Caribbean, absenteeism helped construct and maintain an assertive lobby on the province's behalf: far from being 'cankers' to South Carolina's riches, absentees had helped amplify its voice in the metropolitan corridors of power.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### “From Humble and Moderate Fortunes to Great Affluence”: The Carolina Trade and Imperial Crises

“The success of a Crokatt, a Shubrick, or a Beswicke, but a few Years here in the Mercantile Way, or of a Lynch, or Huger, or a Serre, in the Planting Way, with many other such Instances, proves more in Favour of South Carolina, than all the Pamphlets that were ever wrote about.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1749, London’s three principal Carolina traders – James Crokatt, Richard Shubrick and John Beswicke – had been held up in Charles Town as paragons of commercial achievement. All three had begun their careers in South Carolina, where their mercantile training, as the correspondent to the *South Carolina Gazette* implied, had furnished them with the skills and capital that formed the basis for their commercial efflorescence in the imperial metropolis. South Carolina could bask in their reflected glory, their accomplishments testament to the elevatory potential of a place where “but a few Years” could transform a provincial trader into a major metropolitan merchant. Two years, three years and, in Crokatt’s case, ten years after relocating from Charles Town to London, Beswicke, Shubrick and Crokatt were still synonymous with mercantile success. For the anonymous correspondent, it was three merchants who had left the province, rather than their counterparts who continued to prosper in trade in Charles Town, or those who diversified into active plantation management in the Carolina lowcountry alongside their trade, who best epitomised the transformative power of commerce. These three pillars of London’s Carolina trade continued to be held in high regard, even at three thousand miles’ remove. Rather than diminishing their relevance, being at the centre of imperial commerce and politics increased their appeal.

By the mid-1760s, however, attitudes among Charles Town merchants towards their London correspondents had begun to shift. Commercially, the capital’s significance in South Carolina’s overseas trade was as great as it had ever been. It remained a principal market for its exports and a source for its imports. In 1763, for example, London handled 93 per cent of South Carolina’s

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<sup>1</sup> SCG, 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1749, quoted in Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, 14.

indigo exports. In the same year, it received 24 per cent of the province's rice exports to Britain, mostly for re-export to northern Europe. This was second only to the important transshipment port of Cowes, on the Isle of Wight. Cowes's share of the rice re-export trade is somewhat deceptive, however, since evidence suggests that a high proportion of the port's rice trade was controlled by London merchants.<sup>2</sup> London's dominance of the export trade to South Carolina was still more pronounced, accounting for an estimated 85 to 90 per cent of Britain's exports to the province between 1760 and 1775. As noted in chapter two, this was a function of the superior credit the capital's merchants could offer their Charles Town counterparts than merchants in Britain's outports, and London's greater access to textiles from Asia and Europe.<sup>3</sup> In the slave trade, too, London continued to play a significant organisational and financial role. Of the 101 slave ships which arrived in Charles Town during the 1760s, 25 were from London – more than from Bristol and second only to Liverpool.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, the Carolina 'interest' in London reached its zenith. Collectively, the capital's Carolina traders appear to have been wealthier and more prominent in the capital's overseas trade during the 1760s than ever before. Their political lobbying was accordingly energetic, reaching new levels of vigour at a time when other North American lobbies in London were lapsing into inactivity. In the case of the Virginia 'interest', the consolidation of the capital's tobacco trade into

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<sup>2</sup> Evidence for this comes from the small collection of ships' manifests which record the identities of the exporters of rice on board seventeen vessels which cleared Charles Town for Cowes between January and April 1764, and the British merchants to whom it was sent. Nine of these ships contained cargos of rice consigned to London firms, who presumably employed agents in the port: John Beswicke & Co., Sarah Nickleson & Co., Grubb & Watson, Charles Crockatt, Richard & Thomas Shubrick, John Watson and Benjamin Stead. CO5/511/2–63. On London merchants' activity in the re-export trade from south coast ports to northern European destinations, see also HL to John Nutt, 26<sup>th</sup> March and 9<sup>th</sup> April 1756, 15<sup>th</sup> Feb. and 29<sup>th</sup> March 1763; to Grubb & Watson, 24<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March 1763. *PHL*, II, 516–7; III, 259, 379–80, 368–7, 394. Ownership of transatlantic shipping further extended London merchants commercial reach – their ships often carried rice between South Carolina and British outports, then on to continental markets. Details of London Carolina traders' extensive shipping interests are in CO5/509–11: Board of Trade and Secretaries of State: America and West Indies, Original Correspondence, Shipping Returns, South Carolina, 1721–65.

<sup>3</sup> Clowse, *Measuring Charleston's Overseas Commerce*, 63 (table B–26), 70 (table B–41); Nash, 'Organization of Trade and Finance' (2001), 88–9. On London's continued dominance of Britain's colonial trade during the third-quarter of the eighteenth century, see French, "Crowded with Traders and a Great Commerce", 29–32.

<sup>4</sup> Liverpool ships made forty-one slaving voyages to Charles Town during the 1760s and Bristol ships nineteen. Statistics from *Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*; on London's continuing pre-eminence in financing the slave trade, see Richardson, 'British Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina', 161.

fewer hands has been posited as a factor in its diminution; by contrast, London's Carolina trade was – as had long been the case – dominated by a small number of firms and individuals. Far from reducing its vigour, this seems to have made the Carolina lobby more coherent and responsive.<sup>5</sup> Marshalled by an assiduous colonial agent in Charles Garth, London's Carolina merchants were at the forefront of campaigns to liberalise and incentivise colonial exports. Such lobbying continued to be central to their activities and identities as elite metropolitan traders. Carolinians visiting London joined them in signing petitions and attending parliamentary committees considering colonial trade.

Authorities in South Carolina and Charles Town's traders still regarded metropolitan agency as essential. It was especially vital for South Carolina compared to the other American colonies, provincial authorities believed, in light of the legal impediments the province laboured under. While the grain and fish exports of the northern colonies could be exported freely to European markets, South Carolina's two staples – rice and indigo – remained strongly circumscribed by Britain's Navigation Acts. "The laws of trade lay greater restrictions on this province than on many of her sister colonies", the assembly's committee of correspondence complained to Garth in September 1764. "Almost all our commodities are enumerated, whereas few or none of theirs are so, notwithstanding ours are such as tend wholly to improve, and by no means interfere with those of the mother country." Salt imports were singled out as a special concern. As well as the restrictions on exports, the committee related that "our imports [are] much more confined [than other colonies], particularly that of salt – an article of the greater consequence, which most of the other colonies are prepared to import directly from Portugal, but we are not allowed that privilege".<sup>6</sup> In South Carolina at least, public critiques of the mercantilist strictures that governed British trade policy were thus articulated on grounds of competitive disadvantage. The laws were unfair because

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<sup>5</sup> Olson, 'Virginia Merchants of London', 378–80. See also, on the West Indies interest in London during the 1760s and 1770s, O'Shaughnessy, 'Formation of a Commercial Lobby', 71–95.

<sup>6</sup> Committee of Correspondence to Charles Garth, 4<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1764, in R. W. Gibbes (ed.), *Documentary History of the American Revolution, 1774–1776*. (New York, 1855), 4.

they treated other colonies more favourably. The assembly's complaint, however, represented the thin end of the wedge. More systematic, though implicit, condemnations of how British mercantilism rendered the colonies as economic subordinates would come to the fore alongside ideological critiques of British political authority. Within the transatlantic Carolina trade, commercial grievances bred tacit challenges to the system of trade.<sup>7</sup>

In South Carolina in 1764 the intersection of free trade economic theory and republican ideology was yet to be articulated. The existing method of interest group lobbying within the imperial mercantilist system had paid dividends in the past and, if further concessions were to be secured, remained essential. Garth, as formal liaison between metropolitan and provincial government, and Britain's Carolina merchants, as commercial interlocutors with the British state, had as important a role as ever in representing Carolinian grievances and facilitating its trade. After South Carolina's assembly passed a law in August 1764 which would effectively prohibit slave imports for three years from January 1766, Henry Laurens expected his commercial correspondents in London, Liverpool and Bristol – each of whom was among the largest traffickers of slaves to the province – to take up the cudgels on his behalf. He urged a friend in Bristol to co-ordinate merchant lobbying against the law by getting it struck down by the King in Council, remarking that after a recent sale of slaves “this branch of Trade *if you Gentlemen are content* will cease in a few Months & be prohibited for three Years by a Law lately passed in our Assembly... I transmit you a Copy of the Law with a few Notes on the back of it *& leave it to your disposal.*”<sup>8</sup> Laurens's attempts to galvanise opposition to the bill

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<sup>7</sup> For differing interpretations of attitudes towards the Navigation Acts in colonial America, see Matson and Onuf, *Union of Interests*, 3–25; John E. Crowley, *The Privileges of Independence: Neomercantilism and the American Revolution*. (Baltimore, MD, 1993), 29. Free trade and Republican ideology evolved in tandem in late colonial America, Matson and Onuf argue, as Americans challenged the subordinacy and dependence imposed by the imperial mercantile system. Conversely, John Crowley posits that Americans never really challenged mercantilist precepts: “right through to their declaration of independence, American patriots expressed a prevailing, and explicit, desire to maintain commercial dependence on Britain.”

<sup>8</sup> HL to Henry Bright, 12<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1764 (quote), to George Appleby, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1764. *PHL*, IV, 420, 479. [Italics added]; Cooper and McCord (eds.), *Statutes at Large*, IV, 187–8. Passed on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1764, the Negro Duty Act levied a prohibitive duty of £100 currency on each slave imported – one of South Carolina's periodic attempts to halt the lowcountry's growing and threatening racial imbalance. Slave imports had risen rapidly since the end of the war. Moreover, the law was also connected to economic balances in the province: the

were unsuccessful: ironically, he was undermined by the assembly's committee of correspondence, which instructed Charles Garth "that should any application be made, or endeavours used to procure a repeal of it, that you will oppose to the utmost of your power any such attempt".<sup>9</sup> His efforts nonetheless reflect a continuing confidence in – or at least expectation of – British merchant agency. In 1764, Laurens had good reason for his confidence. In the previous two years, London's Carolina merchants had been at the forefront of two highly effective campaigns – concerning rice and hemp – to promote the province's trade.

The expectation that metropolitan advocacy was an effective conduit for provincial grievances rested on a deeper assumption – that the interests of London's Carolina traders and those of the province itself were fundamentally aligned. This chapter shows how as the 1760s progressed, this postulation was increasingly challenged. The growing political controversies between South Carolina and Great Britain were reflected in increasing mistrust between Charles Town's merchants and traders and their London counterparts. London's Carolina traders came under growing criticism in South Carolina for their business practices, conspicuous wealth and, as political tension between Britain and its North American colonies mounted, their purported political orientation. The composition of London's Carolina trading community also changed. While before the mid-1760s, London's principal Carolina traders had each spent time in Charles Town, learning and

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planters who dominated the assembly foresaw that halting slave imports would raise the value of their own slaves, the sale of whom would better enable the planters to pay off their merchant creditors. For this reason, many Charles Town merchants also supported the law. Laurens opposed the act, claiming it was "unnecessary with regard to local circumstances... & at the same time a stroke at the Trade of his Majestys British Subjects". Still heavily involved in the transatlantic slave trade, he also needed more slaves to work his expanding planting operations, and high levels of slave imports to raise the value of land he had bought speculatively: "I am almost certain that if that Law is approved of or not repealed in Britain, Vacant Lands will abound in the year 1767 more than they do in the Current Year." See HL to John Knight, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1764, to Rossel & Gervais, 4<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1764, to George Appleby, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1764. *PHL*, IV, 381–3, 396, 479; also Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, ch. 6; Starr, *School for Politics*, 28; Richardson, 'British Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina', 130–1; Waterhouse, *A New World Gentry*, 120–1. In contrast, legislation in Virginia in 1767 and 1769 to effectively curtail slave imports through prohibitive duty rises was vetoed by the Privy Council in London, prompting considerable disquiet in that colony. Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1999), 66–73. Concern over planter indebtedness was once again a principal force behind the moratorium South Carolina imposed on slave imports in 1787. See next chapter, also Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 127–32; Jerome J. Nadelhaft, *The Disorders of War: The Revolution in South Carolina*. (Maine, 1981), 171–2.

<sup>9</sup> COC to CG, 4<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1764. Gibbes (ed.), *Documentary History of the American Revolution*, 5–6; *PHL*, IV, 382n.

building their trade, accumulating networks of trusted correspondents, participating in the civic life of the province and often investing in land and property in the region, the merchants who took their place at the forefront of London's Carolina trade lacked the same personal experiences in or connections to the province as their forerunners.

Changes in personnel and loss of trust eroded the assumed mutuality of interests between South Carolinians and their correspondents in London. Through this, it challenged structural connections between the colony and the mother country: South Carolina's commercial interests could no longer be adequately served by a system that required distant agents to represent the province by proxy, especially when their actual commitment to the province's interests was increasingly questionable. Inter-personal grievances laid bare deeper systemic inequalities. In this interpretation, the increasing politicisation of Anglo-Carolinian commerce from the mid-1760s stemmed not from the symbolic 'meanings' that colonists attached to certain goods, but from modes of transatlantic exchange.<sup>10</sup> Reliance on far-flung metropolitan advocacy symbolised a commercial system tilted against the colony, highlighting the structural constraints imposed by British law that ensured South Carolina's commercial subordination to the mother country. Grievances about metropolitan commerce were not articulated as direct challenges to the mercantilist orthodoxy underpinning imperial commercial regulation, but represented implicit critiques of it. These fed off the colony's shifting political and ideological climate: political, economic and commercial motivations behind South Carolinians' growing resistance to British government were interrelated.

The chapter thus helps explain why South Carolina's provincial elite, a group that were ostensibly among the British empire's chief beneficiaries, should turn against the system they had so clearly profited from. It shows how the self-confident, even self-congratulatory, mindset that historians have identified among South Carolina's merchant-planter elite by the 1760s shaped attitudes

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<sup>10</sup> For interpretations that stress the symbolism attached by American consumers to certain goods, notably tea, see Breen, "Baubles of Britain"; idem, *Marketplace of Revolution*, esp. 294–331.

towards Atlantic trade and metropolitan mercantile advocacy and, through them, British authority. As Max Edelson has shown, South Carolina's elite planters took increasing pride in their entrepreneurial expertise, transforming barren lands into profitable plantations and building multi-locational, integrated enterprises. At the same time, the colony's politics continued to be defined by the assembly's self-confidence and assertiveness in challenging council and gubernatorial authority. In his classic exposition of South Carolina's colonial politics, Robert Weir made the case that, driven by their republican 'country ideology' and self-conception as independent country gentlemen, elite Carolinians' political opposition to British government overrode material economic arguments for maintaining the imperial status quo. Responses to the metropolitan Carolina traders' conjoined commercial practices and political advocacy suggest instead how conceptions of political and commercial repression were interrelated. They represented two sides of the same coin – entwined and mutually reinforcing. A growing sense of commercial subordination to metropolitan traders mimicked political experiences – for example, the sense of political subordination within the province to British placemen who restricted native Carolinians' access to high office. Commercial experiences – and the system of trade which structured them – thus both drew upon and informed ideological resistance to British control.<sup>11</sup>

This chapter also contributes to an extensive literature that has assessed British reactions to the American crisis of the 1760s and 1770s and the ensuing war, besides those of the political decision-makers. Opinion has been examined according to location – for example, among Londoners, or residents of regional English cities and towns, and in the constituent regions and nations of Great Britain. Similarly, it has been assessed by gender, by social group and by employment, considering the responses of merchants, manufacturers and landowners to name but three. In particular, works by Paul Langford, Alison Olson, Linda Colley, Kathleen Wilson and Michael Kammen have

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<sup>11</sup> Weir, "The Harmony We Were Famous For", esp. 498; idem., 'Who Shall Rule at Home: The American Revolution as a Crisis for Legitimacy for the Colonial Elite', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 6.4 (Spring 1976), 679–80. On the role of agricultural production, improvement and exchange in shaping a confident self-image among South Carolina's late colonial elite, see Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 166–99.

documented the petitioning activity in favour of conciliation and alternatively coercion.<sup>12</sup> These have, however, largely failed to consider how participants in any given branch of Anglo-American trade responded collectively or individually and, more significantly, how this informed their colonial correspondents' own conceptions of Anglo-American trade as both a crucible for and a mirror on broader political controversies. The micro-historical scrutiny of the Anglo-Carolinian traders in this chapter thus illuminates how this process unfolded and suggests the powerful role of inter-personal commercial interactions and, as importantly, of the perceptions of metropolitan activity in shaping colonial responses to imperial crisis.

The chapter first investigates the assiduous lobbying undertaken by South Carolina's official agent in London, Charles Garth, in concert with the capital's Carolina traders. Although not always successful, the Carolina lobby could congratulate itself on significant legislative accomplishments, representing the high-point of its influence – renewing the indigo bounty, securing permission for direct rice exports to new markets, and co-ordinating a campaign for a bounty on colonial hemp exports. It then explores how London's Carolina merchants lobbied on the province's behalf against the Stamp Act. In its second part, the chapter juxtaposes the lobby's legislative achievements with the growing mistrust with which metropolitan Carolina traders were regarded by their colonial counterparts. This had its roots in commercial disagreements during the 1760s, with growing suspicions of fraud and profiteering. By the eve of the Revolution, London's Carolina merchants were viewed by many in South Carolina as being implacably hostile to the province.

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<sup>12</sup> Studies dealing with this include Paul Langford, 'The British Business Community and the Later Nonimportation Movements, 1768–76' in Walter H. Conser, Jr. et al. (eds.), *Resistance, Politics and the American Struggle for Independence*. (Boulder, Colorado, 1986), 278–324; Olson, *Making the Empire Work*; idem., 'The London Mercantile Lobby and the Coming of the American Revolution', *JAH*, 69. 1 (June 1982), 21–41; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*. (New Haven, CT, 1992), 134–45; Wilson, *Sense of the People*; Kammen, *Empire and Interest; Popular Politics and the American Revolution in England*; John Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots: London Supporters of Revolutionary America, 1769–1782*. (Toronto, 1987); Daeryoon Kim, 'Merchants, Politics and the Atlantic Imperial Community, 1763–1783'. (Unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2006).

### **Revitalisation of London's Carolina lobby**

In May 1762, Charles Garth had been appointed South Carolina's agent in London. A cousin of the province's governor, Thomas Boone, he was "fixed upon tho' personally unknown" to his employers "as a Gentleman of Ability, Address, of Assiduity". The Committee of Correspondence further hoped, it told him, that it would "have sufficient cause to be satisfied with your faithful & diligent discharges of the duties of your station."<sup>13</sup> Garth proved an inspired choice at an apposite moment. As with James Crockatt's appointment in 1749, Garth's selection coincided with a revival of government attention towards Atlantic trade. An assiduous and well-connected agent, newly appointed in post, was well placed to galvanise the colony's wider metropolitan interest and exploit a favourable political agenda. The following three years would in many ways prove the apogee of the Carolinian interest in Britain.

As chapter two showed, the end of the War of the Austrian Succession in 1748 heralded close parliamentary scrutiny and a flurry of legislation on Britain's colonial commerce, including three acts directly affecting South Carolina – the 1750 Silk Act, the 1751 Potash Act and, most significantly, the 1748 Indigo Bounty Act. Driven by the same political-economic rationale, Prime Minister George Grenville's administration, in power between April 1763 and July 1765, introduced measures similarly designed to boost colonial prosperity and channel it back towards the mother country, thus augmenting Britain's own economy and its strategic power. Stimulating colonial production of nationally important commodities was one element of this. Those commodities which benefitted Britain's navy and merchant marine – the cornerstones both of the nation's defences and its ability to project power overseas – were especially favoured: naval stores, hemp and flax. South Carolina was well placed to capitalise on this stimulation. Further underpinning the drive to enhance colonial prosperity was the belief that it could translate into greater prosperity for

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<sup>13</sup> Committee of Correspondence (CoC) to Charles Garth, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1762. LJWCG. Garth replaced James Wright, a former attorney general of South Carolina and future Governor of Georgia, who had himself replaced James Crockatt as agent.

Britain itself through increased demand for the mother country's goods. The Carolinian interest would be able to take advantage of this, using the rationale of economic feedback to good effect in campaigning for permission to export rice directly to other parts of the Americas in 1764.<sup>14</sup> These measures designed for economic stimulation have been overshadowed by the British government's attendant efforts to make the American colonies more fiscally remunerative and to clamp down on the highly profitable smuggling of foreign wines and molasses – the stamp and sugar acts – and the resistance these aroused. The government's willingness to incentivise commodity production would, however, have more subtle political ramifications within the Carolina trade, in once again signalling the potential efficacy of the metropolitan Carolina interest.

Charles Garth's first achievement as agent was securing the continuation of the indigo bounty. Finding it would expire in March 1763, he lobbied the Board of Trade with William Knox, agent for Georgia, for it to be extended for another seven years. Discovering that the Customs Commissioners had advised the Treasury to end the bounty on the grounds that it had been fraudulently claimed on French indigo, Garth called on sympathetic connections in Parliament for aid. He asked his two MP cousins, James Colleton and Charles Boone, both of whom inherited land in South Carolina, to attend the Commons committee on expiring laws to make the Carolinian case; with support from the Board of Trade the bounty was duly extended, albeit at a reduced rate of 4d. per lb.<sup>15</sup> Since securing the extension of the bounty was essentially a procedural victory, requiring no fundamental adjustments to government policy, Garth did not need to co-opt wider mercantile interests. In contrast, simultaneous efforts to allow rice to be exported directly to Madeira, the Canaries and other islands off the coast of Africa and to any part of the Americas required a much broader campaign. Direct rice exports to new markets had been an objective for

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<sup>14</sup> On the range of measures introduced in 1763–4 to promote colonial commodity production, see Sosin, *Agents and Merchants*, 20–1. On the political-economy of Grenville's legislative programme, see Crowley, *Privileges of Independence*, 14–20.

<sup>15</sup> CG to CoC, 29<sup>th</sup> Oct. and 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1762 and 19<sup>th</sup> Feb. and 30<sup>th</sup> April 1763. *LJWCC*; CO5/377/161; *JCTP*, XI, 304; *JHC*, XXIX, 537.

Carolina's planters and traders since the 1720s. Appeals to this end in 1745–6 had been rejected by the Customs on the grounds that, while the measure might benefit the colonies themselves, it would have unpredictable consequences for Britain's overall trade; a further attempt in 1758 for direct rice exports to any European port had been similarly rebuffed.<sup>16</sup>

The campaigns mounted by Garth for direct rice exports in 1763 reiterated the potential utility of metropolitan mercantile advocacy. He assembled a broader and more persuasive coalition of merchant support than in the previous two attempts, firstly assembling the collective backing of London's Carolina traders, gathering a petition "signed by every merchant of London in the Carolina trade".<sup>17</sup> The petition, which was heard by the Commons on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1763, itself emphasised the breadth of its support, coming from "several Merchants in London, Planters of So. Carolina, and Owners of Ships, trading to His Majesty's said Province in America". It recapitulated the claims long made in support of freer rice exports – that present laws compelled two voyages, firstly to England and then on to its ultimate destination off Africa or in the Caribbean, raising transport costs and making the rice more vulnerable to pests during the long journey. This made it economically unviable against the rice supplied by Genovese, Leghornese and Levant merchants. Besides the specifics of rice shipping, the petition's patriotic economic rhetoric was calculated to appeal to wider political concerns, reiterating the arguments offered to great effect during the late 1740s and early 1750s. Not only would the de-enumeration promote South Carolina's economy, it would "greatly redound to the Benefit of Great Britain" by increasing the demand for shipping, expanding the merchant marine and strengthening demand for British goods, since the greater

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<sup>16</sup> CO5/371/78–83, 92; Andrews, *Colonial Period of American History*, IV, 97.

<sup>17</sup> CG to CoC, 19<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1763. LJWCG. Garth was not exaggerating – among the 36 signatories were James and Charles Crockatt, John Beswicke, John Nutt, Richard Shubrick and Richard Shubrick Jr., Greenwood & Higginson, Grubb & Watson, Charles Ogilvie, Benjamin Stead, Christopher Rolleston and John Clark. The petition was also signed by several merchants associated with American trade more generally, including David Barclay & Sons, Mildred & Roberts and Bartholomew Pomeroy, all linen drapers who exported principally to the middle colonies. T1/425/215–6.

prosperity of South Carolina would filter back to manufactures and suppliers in the mother country.<sup>18</sup>

“I am supported by the Whole Body of Merchants in London”, Garth told his employers in South Carolina, “& have good reason to hope from Bristol.” Support from traders in Britain’s outports would be vital in demonstrating the commercial consensus behind the proposal. Garth solicited the aid of Robert Nugent and William Meredith, MPs for Bristol and Liverpool respectively, to galvanise the support of their mercantile constituents; he also printed copies of a petition he and Knox had given the Board of Trade on the matter in January and distributed them to merchants in both cities. A week after hearing the London petition, the Commons received a nearly identical petition from merchants of Bristol in support of the proposal, while William Meredith himself chaired a committee examining the proposals.<sup>19</sup> Three of London’s principal Carolina merchants, James Crokatt, John Nutt and William Greenwood, together with former resident and major South Carolina landowner William Middleton, gave supporting evidence. Crokatt explained the centrality of risiculture in the province’s economy; Nutt reported “the great spirit of Planting now arising in that Colony” but cautioned that “the Planters cannot reap the Fruits of their Spirit and Industry, unless new Markets are opened to them”. The committee resolved in favour of the petitions, concluding that direct rice exports to the African Islands and the Americas would “greatly tend to increase the Culture and Commerce of the said Province”. Pressure on parliamentary time, however, meant scrutiny of the proposals was repeatedly adjourned, and the parliamentary session ended in mid-April before any legislation on the matter had been passed.<sup>20</sup> Undeterred, Garth re-

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<sup>18</sup> T1/425/215–6; *JHC*, XXIX, 526–7.

<sup>19</sup> CG to CoC, 19<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1763. LJWCG; *JHC*, XXIX, 541.

<sup>20</sup> CG to CoC, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1763. LJWCG; CO323/17/57; *JHC*, XXIX, 605–6. Garth’s papers list the objections to the proposals as including: insufficient benefit to Great Britain to justify amending the Navigation Acts; that Britain would be bypassed in the re-export trade to valuable northern European markets since the Dutch could use St. Eustacia as an entrepot; that, ironically, the boost given to the rice economy in South Carolina “would interfere with and reduce the cultivation of indigo”. Moreover, another objection was – presciently – that the petition, by allowing trade to bypass Britain, “carried with it strong Symptoms & Wishes in design in a colony to become Independent of the Mother Country”. As noted above,

introduced the proposals to Parliament in March 1764. This time, the proposals explicitly linked South Carolina's rice economy to contemporary geo-political circumstances. They emphasised how trade with the captured French and Spanish Caribbean islands during the Seven Years War had stimulated risiculture in South Carolina and Georgia. Since the return of the islands, however, this profitable market had been lost. Moreover, the proposals seized upon the southern colonies' comparative disadvantage, since exports of rice to foreign colonies in the West Indies were forbidden while northern colonies' lumber, fish and corn could all be sent directly.<sup>21</sup> Evidence from the previous year's efforts was resubmitted, and Nutt and Greenwood again spoke to the committee considering the proposals. In asserting their credentials as expert witnesses, they suggested their dominance of the export trade to the region, avowing that between them they had exported around £200,000 of goods – “chiefly British manufactures” – to South Carolina and Georgia the previous year. If true, this amounted to nearly two-thirds of total British exports to these colonies. Again, their testimony carefully fused Carolinian and domestic political-economic concerns, positing the increased demand for British manufactures that would come from a more prosperous Lower South. Evidence from custom-houses in South Carolina and Georgia, moreover, revealed that the 120,000 barrels of rice exported in 1763 had been carried in 35,000 tonnes of British shipping and yielded £22,000 in revenues to the British treasury.<sup>22</sup> A bill was introduced to Parliament specifically permitting direct rice exports to foreign colonies in the West Indies and South America, but not the African islands, and received royal assent on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1764.<sup>23</sup>

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the proposals nonetheless passed the committee stage, but pressure on parliamentary time was the chief reason why they failed to be taken any further.

<sup>21</sup> *JHC*, XXIX, 958–9.

<sup>22</sup> *JHC*, XXIX, 982. Customs records valued total British exports to South Carolina and Georgia in 1763 at £305,089, somewhat less than the £400,000 estimated by Greenwood and Nutt in their testimony to Parliament. Even if their estimation of their annual exports to the Lower South colonies was exaggerated, it is still indicative of their dominant share of the export trade to the region. Carter et al. (eds.), *Historical Statistics*, V, 710–713, 714–716.

<sup>23</sup> *JHC*, XXIX, 1002, 1014, 1018, 1024, 1039, 1056; 4. Geo. III c. 27 Rice Act in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, IX, 187. The next year, ‘An Act made for more effectually securing and encouraging the Trade of his Majesty’s American Dominions...’ extended the liberty to North Carolina. 5. Geo. III c. 45 in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, IX, 109–113.

Merchant agency was instrumental again in securing a bounty on colonial hemp the same year. Reflecting their particular activism among London's North American lobbies, the capital's Carolina traders were once more to the fore. Hemp was essential for rope-making for the Royal Navy and merchant fleet and government support for its cultivation in the colonies had been a longstanding ambition for American agents and merchants.<sup>24</sup> Taking advantage of the favourable political-economic climate which followed the end of the Seven Years War, colonial agents and London's American traders mounted a concerted campaign for a bounty on North American hemp exports. The petition was unprecedented in the scale and breadth of its mercantile support. Nearly all the American merchants in London backed the petition, Garth explained, "except those who have seats in Parliament, and who are going to be Judges, could not with Decency make themselves Parties to signing it".<sup>25</sup> In total, around 100 merchants and agents, representing all the colonies from Massachusetts to Georgia, signed a petition to Parliament in November 1763, seeking "proper Encouragement for the Importation of Hemp and Flax from His Majesty's Colonies in America". As with the simultaneous petitioning on rice exports, all London's principal Carolina traders were signatories, together with (and further suggesting Garth's influence in the campaign) two Carolinians temporarily resident in London.<sup>26</sup> In March 1764, Parliament approved a bounty on hemp and flax imported from the American colonies, to run for 21 years and worth £8 per ton for the first seven years. American hemp imports, Parliament concluded, would reduce Britain's dependence on Russian sources, encourage settlement of newly acquired lands in North America

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<sup>24</sup> James Abercromby to John Blair, 15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1759. Van Horne and Reese (eds.), *Letterbook of James Abercromby*, 327–9.

<sup>25</sup> CG to CoC, 20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1763. LJWCG.

<sup>26</sup> At least fourteen of the signatories were primarily involved in the Carolina trade. Their signatures feature near the top of the petition, suggesting their early involvement in the campaign, and that the names were collected together, perhaps at the Carolina walk of the Exchange or the Carolina Coffee House. They were James Crokatt, Charles Crokatt, John Beswicke, Richard Shubrick, John Nutt, William Greenwood, Sarah Nickleson & Isaac King, Christopher Rolleston, Alexander Watson, Richard Grubb, Charles Ogilvie, William Thompson; the two visiting Carolinians were Arthur Middleton – a future signatory of the Declaration of Independence – and Alexander Peronneau. CG to CoC, 20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1763. LJWCG; CO323/17/54, 120; *JHC*, XXIX, 995.

which were ideal for its cultivation, and encourage the staple producing colonies of Virginia and South Carolina to diversify into a new commodity for alternative income.<sup>27</sup>

Effective commercial lobbying bred expectations that the metropolitan Carolina merchants would prove similarly assiduous in lobbying on more explicitly political issues. Responses to the Stamp Act and Mutiny Act in 1765 would test these expectations. James Crokatt had achieved an especially strong reputation for promoting American trade. In November 1765, he was informed by his Charles Town agent, Robert Raper, of “the Stagnation of Trade here and all along the Continent occasioned by the Stamp Act which is very disagreeable to this part of America. I dare say you have heard very fully about it & will endeavour to get it repealed”. Personal interest, as Raper understood, would powerfully motivate the advocacy of Crokatt and his fellow merchants. With Charles Town’s courts closed in protest against the act, no commercial debts owed to London merchants could be recovered. Unless the courts reopened, Raper advised another London client, William Greenwood, “many of you will suffer and several be ruined”.<sup>28</sup> Raper’s faith in Crokatt was not misplaced, as he and London’s other Carolina merchants were prominent in lobbying for the act’s repeal. Facing financial losses from Carolinian protests which had dislocated Atlantic trade and closed South Carolina’s courts, Crokatt and Greenwood represented the Carolina trade in a delegation of 28 London merchants to the British government in December 1765. They were joined by Charles Ogilvie and John Clark, both significant traders to South Carolina, but on this occasion representing Georgia.<sup>29</sup> Nor would Raper and his fellow residents of Charles Town have been unaware of the traders’ efforts.

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<sup>27</sup> CO65/201–210; *JHC*, XXIX, 1011, 1025, 1035, 1040–1, 1056.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Raper to James Crokatt, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1765; to Greenwood & Higginson, 8<sup>th</sup> November and 18<sup>th</sup> December 1765. *LRR*. On resistance to the Stamp Act in South Carolina, see Maurice A. Crouse, ‘Cautious Rebellion: South Carolina’s Opposition to the Stamp Act’, *SCHM*, 73.2 (Apr. 1972), 59–71.

<sup>29</sup> London’s Carolina traders also dominated the capital’s trade to Georgia, as was made clear in contemporary petitions and in evidence to Parliament, and in post-war claims for debts in the two states. See, for example, the statement of William Greenwood and John Nutt to Parliament in n. 22 above, or the 1772 petition to the Board of Trade urging its approval of a cession of land to Georgia by local Indians. This was signed by nine “Merchants trading to Georgia”, each of whom had interests in or was primarily involved in the Carolina

North American newspapers named the merchants who took part in the delegation in their extensive coverage of the Stamp Act controversy.<sup>30</sup> Besides reports in the colonial press and in personal correspondence crossing the Atlantic regarding the London merchants' successful lobbying to repeal the Stamp Act and amend the Mutiny Act, Charles Garth also kept South Carolina's political elite informed. He had been elected an MP in 1764, enabling him to report first hand on ministerial policies on American administration and revenue and the opposition to them. Knowing the hostility the Mutiny Bill would arouse in South Carolina, since it included a provision that troops in the colonies might be quartered in private houses if no barracks were available, Garth had alerted interested traders to the bill's introduction into Parliament. "I have sent to the merchants to acquaint them with the purport of it [the bill]", he told South Carolina's committee of correspondence, "leaving it to their discretion what steps they will choose to take but not without a hint what I think their friends in America have a right to expect from them upon this occasion." Suitably alarmed, London's American merchants invited Garth to explain to them the bill's content and likely implications. After the meeting, Garth told the committee of correspondence, the merchants "appointed a Select Committee to meet every evening to consider of the most effectual method to avoid a measure so oppressive in its tendency" and asked him and another MP to press Prime Minister Grenville to alter the bill.<sup>31</sup> The eventual Mutiny Act, which exempted private houses from billeting troops, was testament to the organisation and cooperation of London's American merchants and agents. Garth's letters ensured South Carolinian authorities were well aware of the merchants' role. The advocacy of London's Carolina traders and the capital's wider American trading community against the Stamp Act was transmitted through the same channel. In December 1765, for example, Garth reported that the committee of American merchants had

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trade: John Clark, Basil Cowper, James Graham, William Greenwood, William Higginson, John Nutt, Charles Ogilvie, William Thomson and Alexander Watson. CO5/651/22. On Carolina traders also claiming pre-war debts in Georgia, see ch. 5, tab. 5.3.

<sup>30</sup> For example, *Newport Mercury* (Newport, Rhode Island), 17<sup>th</sup> February 1766; *New-York Gazette*, 18<sup>th</sup> February 1766; *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia), 27<sup>th</sup> February 1766.

<sup>31</sup> CG to CoC, 5<sup>th</sup> April and 25<sup>th</sup> May 1765. LCGJW; Namier, 'Charles Garth', 641–2; Sosin, *Agents and Merchants*, 33–6.

urged manufacturing boroughs to alert their MPs to the dire consequences if the act continued; describing the parliamentary debates for the act's repeal in January 1766, he highlighted the London petitions against the act.<sup>32</sup> London's Carolina traders again made manifest their role in the repeal campaign – and perhaps sought to emphasise to their correspondents their sympathy with American hostility to the Stamp Act – when they “very becomingly chartered a Vessel” to carry the good news to the province.<sup>33</sup>

Like their counterparts in other branches of American trade, who were generally reluctant to intervene in explicitly political matters, London's Carolina traders appear to have been guided by commercial expediency rather than political principle in lobbying against the Stamp Act. Regardless of their motivations, their efforts were commended by authorities in South Carolina. Provincial gratitude was principally directed towards the leading political agitators for repeal: the committee of correspondence asked Garth to pass on the assembly's thanks to the ministry and “such of the members of both Houses of Parliament as have generously distinguished themselves in procuring the repeal”. The assembly prepared an address of thanks to the King; most conspicuously, it commissioned a statue of William Pitt in thanks for his powerful eloquence against the act.<sup>34</sup> The intervention of London's merchants was not ignored, however. “We also think ourselves exceedingly obliged to the London Committee and the several Corporations, Merchants &c. that exerted themselves upon this trying Occasion,” the committee told Garth, “and desire you will make known to them the grateful sense we retain of the important services they have done to America in General.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> CG to CoC, 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec. 1765, 19<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1766. LJWCG.

<sup>33</sup> CG to CoC, 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1766. LCG. The vessel they sent, *Speedwell*, foundered off Charles Town harbour, but its passengers and news arrived safely. *PHL*, V, 50n. London's merchants were the pre-eminent commercial force orchestrating the repeal campaign, as befitted the scale of the capital's trade to America and their physical proximity to Westminster. Bristol's merchants also lobbied hard for repeal, as detailed in Starr, *School for Politics*, 51–7.

<sup>34</sup> CoC to CG, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1766. LCG; *PHL*, IX, 128n; Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule at Home?*, 229–33.

<sup>35</sup> CoC to CG, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1766. LCG. British merchant assistance in the repeal of the Stamp Act was also appreciated by Benjamin Franklin, who would have applauded the committee's expression of gratitude. As

### Suspicion, mistrust and the “profits arising from such Trade”

In campaigning successfully against the Mutiny and Stamp Acts, London’s Carolina traders had seemingly confirmed the efficacy of metropolitan advocacy. Beneath the rhetoric in South Carolina which lauded their intervention, however, lurked a growing undercurrent of suspicion towards their commercial methods. Changing attitudes in South Carolina reflected a shift in commercial mindsets in the province, whose merchants were increasingly reluctant to play the role of junior partners in Atlantic commerce. Despite their multivalent lobbying, London’s Carolina traders came to be regarded with increasing mistrust, as their interests and motives for lobbying were seen to diverge from those of their colonial correspondents. The charge list against them included conspiracy to disparage Carolinian output; to manipulate prices in London and thereby defraud their Charles Town correspondents; and making excessive profits from the trade. The following section investigates how and why these charges emerged.

An incident in 1763–4 exemplifies the growing divide. For Henry Laurens, the attempts by two of London’s principal Carolina houses – John Beswicke & Co. and Sarah Nickleson & Co. – to force their Charles Town correspondents to post bonds as guarantees of payment were both a novelty and a deep affront. The controversy had arisen in late 1763. James Poyas – a Charles Town merchant regarded by Laurens as “an honest punctual dealer” with a good capital foundation – sought to switch his custom from Beswicke & Co. to Nickleson & Co., importing goods on credit from the latter rather than the former.<sup>36</sup> Beswicke’s firm had offended Poyas by asking him to post bond for his debts – a legal guarantee that the firm would rank first among his creditors, above those owed money in the form of promissory notes or book debts. The request reflected the mounting problems metropolitan traders faced in recovering debts in the province. Changes in the

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Pennsylvania’s London agent, Franklin had informed his provincial employers that the “British Merchants trading to America have been extremely zealous and hearty in our cause; I hope they will receive the thanks of the several Assemblies”. BF to Joseph Fox, 24<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1766 (quote), to Pennsylvania Assembly Committee of Correspondence, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1766. *PBF*, XII, 168, 239.

<sup>36</sup> HL to Isaac King, 24<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1763. *PHL*, IV, 107. On the evolution of the bonds controversy, see RR to John Beswicke, 3<sup>rd</sup> June and 18<sup>th</sup> July 1762, 15<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1763, to Charles Crockatt 16<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1763. *LRR*.

composition of London's community of elite Carolina traders, and structural impediments to the collection of debts in the province eroded trust on either side of the Atlantic. The 1760s saw the volume and value of South Carolina's exports reach new heights, and more trading houses in Charles Town than ever before. However, as the evidence of London directories, mercantile petitioning and later claims for pre-war debts reveals, the number of specialist Carolina trading houses in London did not grow accordingly, and the trade continued to be controlled by a handful of specialists. The capital's Carolina traders therefore came to supply increasing numbers of Charles Town merchants and relied on trusted friends, family and attorneys to chase up and secure repayment. At the same time as networks of credit grew and spread, inter-personal connections became less of a feature in Anglo-Carolinian commercial relationships. London's leading Carolina traders between the 1730s and the 1750s – men such as Samuel Wragg, James Crokatt, John Nickleson and John Beswicke – had all spent the early part of their careers in Charles Town, building expertise and, crucially, personal connections in the trade. In contrast, the merchants at the forefront of London's Carolina trade in the 1760s appear to have had no such early commercial training in Charles Town. In the face of ever denser networks of credit and greater reliance on the law to reclaim debts, the legal barriers against London's Carolina traders were an increasing source of frustration. South Carolinian law gave provincial creditors precedence over creditors in Britain or other colonies. As Greenwood & Higginson were reminded by their Charles Town attorney, "if any Merchant breaks here & delivers up, his Debts in this place [Charles Town] will always be paid & the creditors in England will in such cases suffer by taking what is left. Mr. [Isaac] King can inform you well by sad experience in these affairs".<sup>37</sup> It was little wonder, then, that London principals sought to push their Carolinian debtors into creditor-friendly contracts. What was a reasonable commercial realignment to London's Carolina traders had, however, more sinister connotations to their Charles Town correspondents.

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<sup>37</sup> RR to Charles Crokatt, 8<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1765; to Greenwood & Higginson, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1767. LRR.

As Laurens expounded the unjustness of the demand for the bond at length to Isaac King, a partner in Nickleson & Co., he unveiled a litany of Charlestonian grievances against London's merchants. Firstly, the demand to post bond was, to Laurens, intrinsically an "Affront to the Character of a Merchant". By implying doubt about a merchant's ability or willingness to repay a debt, it impugned both his honour and his credit – the two essential prerequisites of any worthy trader. Secondly, that such a demand was made after a debt had been contracted, rather than "at the commencement of their correspondence", represented an abuse of the creditor's power – and a sign of the systemic commercial 'hold' London's principal traders had over their Charles Town correspondents, to whom they exported goods on credit. Thirdly, King's own demand that Poyas post bond – repeating Beswicke's earlier demand, and the reason the Charles Town merchant had moved his account in the first place – savoured, according to Laurens "too much of combination". London's leading Carolina merchants were in effect charged with exploiting structural conditions – the trade's concentration in a small number of hands in London – and their hegemony within this to act as a cabal. This charge hinted at the deeper structural limitations imposed by the Navigation Laws. Moreover, at a time when residents either side of the Atlantic were increasingly alert to the menace of monopoly in trade and clique in politics, 'combination' was a powerful charge.<sup>38</sup> Fourthly, the requirement to post bond represented a fundamental shift in the contract between creditor and debtor, putting "more power into the hands of the Obligor than a Man ought to trust himself or another with & more than is intended to be countenanced by the Laws of the Land". By locating the contract of the debt in London, the bond permitted the creditor to compound interest, a "modern mode of calculations & accumulations of Interest & Interest upon Interest" which Laurens judged "Illegal". Carolinian traders were suffering not simply at the hands of avaricious individuals in London, he believed, but were inherently disadvantaged by their peripheral location

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<sup>38</sup> On contemporary fears in Britain and America of political combination and conspiracy, particularly concerning the influence of Lord Bute in British politics, see Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727–1783*. (Oxford, 1989), 352–7; Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. (Enlarged ed., Cambridge, Mass., 1992), esp. 144–8.

in a legal-commercial system which privileged metropolitan over colonial interests. London's merchants were able to capitalise on the systemic advantages of their location in the imperial capital. Finally, the inequities London merchants were attempting to introduce to the Carolina trade were made even more obnoxious given the great riches they had derived from the trade. The notorious wealth of London's Carolina merchants obviated the need for bonded security. As Laurens observed,

“The Carolina Agents or Factors to a Man have sustained as few Losses by their Trade to this Colony as have been felt or known in any trade whatever to America & also because they have in general & almost to a Man by means of their Commissions & profits arising from such Trade, risen from humble & moderate Fortunes to great affluence, from walking upon foot to the command of Conveniences which render their legs and feet almost useless. These are facts very notorious and on which I need not enlarge.”<sup>39</sup>

How fair were Laurens's criticisms? Easiest to assess, given the evidence on the lifestyles of London's Carolina traders, are his caustic remarks on the Carolina traders' “great affluence”. London's specialist Carolina merchants do indeed appear as a group to have derived grand lifestyles from their trade, profiting handsomely from South Carolina's economic advancement. The trappings of the principal partners in the six firms identified as ‘Carolina Merchants’ in *Mortimer's Directory* in 1763 – James & Charles Crokatt, John Beswicke, Richard Shubrick, John Nutt, Sarah Nickleson and Grubb & Watson – illustrate this. Besides his lordly Luxborough Hall estate, for example, James Crokatt was able to bestow £10,000 sterling on his son Charles at his marriage, a union portrayed by no less an artist than Thomas Gainsborough.<sup>40</sup> As discussed in chapter three, London's principal Carolina traders, like Crokatt, acquired sizeable piles in England's Home Counties. In so doing, they followed a path – from counting-house to landed estate – which was well trodden in South Carolina but more rarely achieved in one generation among London's overseas traders, and then chiefly by the wealthiest West Indies merchants. With the proceeds from

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<sup>39</sup> HL to Isaac King, 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1764. *PHL*, IV, 400–1.

<sup>40</sup> Crokatt v. Hicks, C11/200/23; Will of James Crokatt, Prob. 11/1029, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1777; Maurie D. McInnes (ed.), *In Pursuit of Refinement: Charlestonians Abroad, 1740–1860*. (Columbia, SC, 1999), 91–3. The original painting, ‘Portrait of Peter Darnell Muilman, Charles Crokatt and William Keable in a Landscape’, is on display at the Gainsborough House Museum, Sudbury, Suffolk.

trading careers begun in Charles Town reinvested and augmented in London, traders such as John Beswicke, John and Sarah Nickleson and Richard Shubrick were able to embark on the path to landed gentility. John Nickleson was reckoned at his death to be worth some £20,000, with assets including a country retreat fifteen miles northwest of the City of London at Great Stanmore, Middlesex.<sup>41</sup> A few miles to the south and a similar distance from London, John Beswicke invested his proceeds from the Carolina trade in a large country pile in Hillingdon in 1761. Conveniently placed near the highway from London to the fashionable spa resorts at Bath and Cheltenham, Beswicke styled it his “Country Seat”. It was appropriately named Little London. Besides his estate land and property, Beswicke had at least £20,000 in liquid assets at his death, including the £500 he left “to my Negroe Manservant, Anthony” – perhaps a former household slave brought from Charles Town.<sup>42</sup> When Beswicke died in 1764, Little London passed to his nephew, business partner and successor in the trade, William Greenwood, and after Greenwood’s own death in 1786, the property and adjacent grounds were auctioned at Christie’s, Pall Mall. The sale advertisement gives an impression of the estate’s scale and opulence. Little London was an “Elegant Villa... with roomy Stabling, Coach-house, Offices of every description, attached and detached; excellent walled Garden; Lawn, Shrubbery, containing about 31 Acres, and sundry rich Enclosures, comprising about 64 Acres, two Roods, 16 Perches, forming in the whole a desirable residence”. Also for sale was the associated freehold of “several substantial houses with their gardens, offices and land, in the whole about 200 acres” and currently let to 12 named tenants “and others” with an annual value estimated at about £550. In addition to his Middlesex estates, Greenwood amassed sizeable landholdings in Yorkshire.<sup>43</sup> For his part, Richard Shubrick owned properties east of London at Mile End and Greenwich, and on his death left his widow and children several thousand pounds in

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<sup>41</sup> Peter Manigault to Gabriel Manigault, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1754, to Anne Manigault, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1754. Peter Manigault papers (SCHS); will of John Nickleson, Prob. 11/810; *Gazeteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 13<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1770.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Raper to John Beswicke, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1760 and 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1761. LRR; J.S. Cockburn and T.F.T. Baker, *A History of the County of Middlesex*, IV, 57, 62. Will of John Beswicke, Prob. 11/900, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1764.

<sup>43</sup> *World*, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1792; will of William Greenwood, Prob. 11/1142, 20<sup>th</sup> May 1782.

government stock and cash, along with his coach, chariot and horses – abundant evidence of his elite lifestyle. His son – also Richard – owned a “very pleasant and desirable Villa” with gardens, orchards and 18 acres of land in Enfield, due north of London.<sup>44</sup>

To put the London merchants’ wealth into an Atlantic context, it exceeded even the richest of their Carolinian counterparts. In a sample of 84 residents of Charles Town district who died in 1774, the mean net worth of the ten richest was £11,078 – a figure comprising the value of their land, slaves and non-human portable assets. Take out the richest, Peter Manigault – who had a net worth at death of £32,737 – and the mean drops to £8,672.<sup>45</sup> In the context of London commerce, details of the merchants’ City locations and their counting-houses further denote their elite status in the metropolis. The Cannon Street area, which had been the core locale for London’s Carolina traders during the 1740s and 1750s, was eclipsed by two other locations during the 1760s. Aldgate ward, on the City’s eastern fringe and home to a notable concentration of Virginia traders, became a particular nexus for Carolina merchants, as did Broad Street and Bishopsgate wards, east of St. Paul’s. Still at the heart of the City, a short walk from the Royal Exchange and the Carolina Coffee House, these were even more prestigious commercial locations than Cannon Street. The streets and squares north and east of the Exchange where the Carolina traders congregated, such as Billiter Square and New Broad Street, offered some of London’s top mercantile addresses, suggesting that the trade became increasingly lucrative during the 1760s. Taxation records from the early 1760s confirm this. At his Cloak Lane premises, James Crockatt was the second highest rate-payer in the precinct and employed at least four apprentices as clerks and bookkeepers at one time. By 1763,

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<sup>44</sup> Peter Manigault to Ann Manigault, 20<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1751. *Peter Manigault papers* (SCHS); will of Richard Shubrick, Prob. 11/912, 12<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1765; *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept. 1765; *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 4<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1765; *Public Advertiser*, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1784.

<sup>45</sup> All figures are £ sterling. In a sample of 919 decedents in 1774 across the North American colonies, nine of then ten wealthiest were South Carolinians. Alice Hanson Jones, *Wealth of a Nation to Be: The American Colonies of the Eve of Revolution*. (New York, 1980), 171 (table 6.3), 176 (table 6.6). Jones’s probate data are not a perfect guide to wealth: the small sample size might easily miss the wealthiest individuals, while the data only provide a snapshot from a single given year and cannot reveal the fortunes of the richest living Carolinians; they nonetheless offer valuable indicative comparison. For detailed discussion of the merits of comparative probate data in socio-economic analysis, see Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream*, 83. He concludes that despite its limitations, it is a useful descriptive tool in assessing elite wealth.

Crokatt had effectively retired from the Carolina trade and was only in nominal partnership with his son at premises in Old Bethlem, but still paid a very high £14 in tax on his property, valuing it at £70, and £84 in personal tax. The same year Richard Shubrick paid £16.8s in tax on his Barge Yard premises, valuing them at £82. Also in 1763 – the same year that he tried to make Poyas post bond – John Beswicke paid rates of £20 on his Queen Street premises and £100 in personal tax. These tax returns place both Beswicke and Crokatt easily in the wealthiest hundred London overseas merchants in 1763 for whom City tax records survive; only 43 London merchants across all branches of trade paid £100 or more in personal tax that year.<sup>46</sup>

Physical descriptions of the traders' London residences provide further evidence of the wealth their commerce brought. Counting houses also served as homes, at least during the working week, blurring the boundaries between London merchants' professional and personal lives. They commonly lived above their working quarters and shared living space with their families and with their clerks and apprentices. While London's merchants were generally restrained in their displays of wealth, at least in their London premises, the leading Carolina merchants defied convention. William Greenwood's grand counting house in Budge Row rivalled any City dwelling and denoted him as a merchant of the highest rank. His was "a commodious, substantial brick dwelling house and offices, court yard, counting houses, and cold bath, [with] standing for two carriages and stabling for five horses". Its grand interior included "fourteen bedchambers and dressing rooms; a genteel dressing room; breakfast and dining parlours; noble hall; principle and back stairs; a convenient kitchen, laundry and suitable connected offices and cellarage".<sup>47</sup> Charles Ogilvie's house in Fludyer Street, Westminster, epitomised metropolitan gentility. Situated on a fashionable and recently-built residential street that linked Whitehall with St. James's Park, it was richly decorated with "pea-green silk taboray curtains, sophia chairs and stools, elegant pier glasses and girandoles, a needlework carpet, fashionable sideboard of plate containing 800 ounces, fine household linen,

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<sup>46</sup> *City of London Land Tax Assessments*, MS.11316/132–197. (Guildhall Library, London).

<sup>47</sup> *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 8<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1787.

china, a small library of modern books, wines, a large iron repository, and other valuable effects".<sup>48</sup> While he kept up premises in Billiter Square in the heart of the City, Ogilvie's location on Fludyer Street gave him easy access to the pleasures of the West End and to Parliament. He sat briefly as an MP in the early 1770s, the only specialist Carolina trader so to do in the eighteenth century.<sup>49</sup>

Besides the growing evidence of the extravagant wealth made in London from the Carolina trade, some in the colony began to harbour suspicions about the commercial practices which generated these profits. A particular grievance – and a challenge to the probity of London's merchants – was the purported treatment of Carolinian commodities in London. This accentuated suspicions of metropolitan bias against Carolinian producers and exporters. The capital's indigo traders were widely imagined to be bilking Carolinian producers by caballing to disparage the quality of their product. "To the very great discouragement of the planters," a report claimed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, "the dealers in that commodity have combined to lessen and run down the value of it [Carolina indigo], till they get it at a very low rate, into their hands, and then sell it for French indigo; which they set a much higher value upon".<sup>50</sup> Recent literature has shown that the poor reputation of Carolina indigo – and the lower price it fetched than French and Spanish indigo – was for the most part deserved. As R. C. Nash has demonstrated, it was the 'serviceability' of Carolina indigo as a low-cost dyestuff for Europe's rapidly expanding textile sector which underlay the strong growth of South Carolina's indigo production and exports in the third quarter of the

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<sup>48</sup> *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 1777. For a vivid description of Fludyer Street, where Henry Laurens was also a resident in the early 1770s, see Julie Flavell, *When London was Capital of America*. (New Haven, CT, 2010), 16–7.

<sup>49</sup> The only other MP with interests in the Carolina trade in this period was Sir William Baker, one of London's foremost merchants, with interests across the North American and West Indies trades. As discussed in chapter three, he also possessed sizeable landholdings in South Carolina. He sat as MP for Plympton Erle between 1747 and 1768. Ogilvie's own spell as MP for West Looe in Cornwall between 1774 and 1775 was brief and undistinguished – he is not reported to have taken part in any of the important debates on America in this period. Sedgwick (ed.), *House of Commons, 1715–1754*, I, 429; Lewis B. Namier and John Brooke (eds.), *The House of Commons, 1754–1790*, III, 223–4.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in John J. Winberry, 'Reputation of Carolina Indigo', *SCHM*, 80.3 (July 1979), 247.

eighteenth century.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, the perception of malign practices should not be underestimated. London dealers' 'tricks of the trade' were more than simply economic slights. For South Carolina's indigo producers, used to the high esteem for their rice in overseas markets, the poor reputation of their output represented a powerful challenge to their skills as planters.<sup>52</sup> Conspiracy theories served subconsciously to absolve indigo planters from the imputations of their product's low standing. London traders made an easy but genuinely held target. Moreover, claims of metropolitan sharp practice explicitly contrasted commodity markets in London and those in Britain's outports. Henry Laurens complained of a "most extraordinary loss" of about nine per cent in weight in the indigo he had shipped to Sarah Nickleson & Co. in April 1763. As a "remarkably dry" parcel which he had packed himself, Laurens was convinced that the lost weight could only have been due to fraud in London. "Such a loss", he lamented, "was unknown upon Indigo some Six or Seven years ago & thank God is still unknown (except where it has really been tampered with) in Bristol & Liverpool". Indigo was falling prey, Laurens feared, to the swindles long suspected of metropolitan importers of other colonial products, such as naval stores and deerskins. Again, a distinction was drawn between the markets for pitch and tar in London and in the outports. "It is not to be denied," he told Isaac King, "that if you divide a parcel of pitch weighing in Average 360lbs. Grose per Barrell or thereabouts when Shiped send one half to Bristol and the other half to London the former will hold its weight & produce a full Credit in your Account Sale & the latter will fall short at least 15 per Cent often 20." Similarly, Laurens noted, "purchase the very same barrel & transport it to Poole & it will be there as ponderous as it was in Carolina".<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> On indigo's poor reputation, see Nash, 'South Carolina Indigo', 383–4; Edelson, 'Character of Commodities', 349–55. On indigo's 'serviceability', see Nash, 'South Carolina Indigo', *passim*.

<sup>52</sup> On planters' self-identification with both rice and indigo, see Edelson, 'Character of Commodities', 344–55, *idem*. *Plantation Enterprise*, esp. ch. 6. Edelson's characterization of the reputational connection between South Carolina's planters and their crops echoes T. H. Breen's analysis of Virginia's tobacco planters, whose crops are similarly evoked as being expressions of their character and skills. Breen terms the process "the expression of ego through a crop". Breen, *Tobacco Culture*, 59.

<sup>53</sup> HL to Isaac King, 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1764. *PHL*, IV, 268n, 398–9.

Claims of fraud at the hands of metropolitan dealers were not unique to the 1760s, either for Carolinian or other colonial commodities. As with naval stores, systematic fraud was also held to be commonplace within the London deerskins trade. Laurens had himself been on the receiving end of the machinations of London deerskin traders at the start of his career in the 1740s, a cautionary experience he would remember for the rest of his life.<sup>54</sup> By the 1760s, however, sharp practices in the naval stores and deerskins markets paled in comparison to suspected malfeasance in the indigo trade. Deerskins and naval stores accounted for a decreasing share of South Carolina's exports, and their economic importance to the colony had shrunk proportionately. Indigo, on the other hand, represented a growing and increasingly vital commodity for South Carolina, well established as the colony's second most valuable export.<sup>55</sup> Metropolitan conspiracy against Carolinian indigo therefore represented a far greater affront to South Carolinians. By assailing the character of Carolinian indigo, it simultaneously challenged planters' self-conceived expertise and judgment. Neither planters nor merchants in South Carolina felt an equivalent personal connection to the skins or naval stores exported to Britain. Economically, the greater value of indigo to the province by the 1760s meant that price depreciations were (or at least were perceived to be) of much graver consequence.

Structural differences in how the various commodities were marketed further aggravated the supposedly sharp practices in the indigo trade. Unlike the rice trade, in which Carolinian planters generally sold their grain to commission merchants in Charles Town, the larger indigo growers sent their produce on their own account and risk to London. This reflected the existence of long-standing expertise in indigo dealing in the capital, and its pre-eminence as a centre for the distribution of dyestuffs in Britain and to continental Europe. The first pamphlets to encourage

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<sup>54</sup> As described in HL to Babut, Fils & Labouchère, 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1786. *PHL*, XVI, 636. See chapter five.

<sup>55</sup> Between 1768 and 1772, for example, the average annual values of deerskin and naval stores exports from Charles Town were £15,000 and £5,000 sterling respectively against average annual exports of £284,000 of rice and £119,000 of indigo. Rice and indigo exports thus accounted for 65.3 per cent and 27.4 per cent of South Carolina's total exports by value. Nash, 'Urbanization in the Colonial South', 7, tab. 1. See also appendices C, D and E.

indigo culture in the province had asserted the primacy of the London market, trumpeting London's standing as the "the greatest and best Market for it [indigo] in the World" and advising that "the Buyers are mostly rich men".<sup>56</sup> By sending their indigo to London, planters hoped to achieve the good prices they felt their produce deserved, and the capital became by far the largest destination for Carolinian indigo, receiving around nine-tenths of the province's indigo exports during the 1760s.<sup>57</sup> Opportunities for Carolinian producers to divert their indigo exports to Britain's outports were accordingly limited and, as an enumerated commodity, direct indigo exports to foreign markets were forbidden. Their choice to consign indigo for sale in London may, as Nash notes, have reflected their greater faith in the London than in the Charles Town market.<sup>58</sup> However, this was never a choice between two equals. The comparative advantages London possessed in the marketing of indigo left producers with little choice but to live with the supposed sharp practices of its dealers and traders.

Paralleling London's domination of the British indigo trade, the indigo trade within the capital was itself controlled by a handful of importing merchants. This further curtailed colonial sellers' ability to circumvent unfair practices in the metropolis by diverting their indigo to other buyers. The dominance of a small number of London indigo importers is revealed in the table below, which draws upon the only surviving ships' manifests from Britain's eighteenth-century Carolina trade, collected by Charles Town's naval office between January and March 1764 and sent to the Board of Trade in London. The 41 manifests record the cargo carried by each ship, by whom in South

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<sup>56</sup> [James Crokatt], *Observations concerning indigo and cochineal*; [Crokatt, ed.], *Further observations*, 4, 9.

<sup>57</sup> Statistics revealing the proportionate share of Carolina indigo imports between British ports survive for four years during the 1760s (1760, 1762, 1763 and 1766). These show that 88 per cent of South Carolina's indigo exports went to London in 1760, 96 per cent in 1762, 93 per cent in 1763 and 81 per cent in 1766. Clowse, *Measuring Charleston's Overseas Commerce*, 70–1, tab. B–41 (see appendix I). Some forty per cent of England's imports of British colonial indigo were re-exported in the period 1756–76 with the remainder retained in England. Nash, 'South Carolina Indigo', 373, tab. 4.

<sup>58</sup> On the marketing of indigo, and the organizational contrasts with the rice trade, see Nash, 'Organization of Trade and Finance' (2005), 109–110; idem., 'South Carolina Indigo', 386. For examples of indigo being exported on its producers' account, see Greenwood & Higginson to Alexander Rose, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1768. Alexander Rose Papers. (SCL); Austin & Laurens to John Nutt, 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec. 1755 and to Richard Shubrick, 17<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1756; invoices, 22<sup>nd</sup> March and 30<sup>th</sup> August 1760. *PHL*, II, 52–3, 72; III, 29, 44.

Carolina it was sent and to whom in London it was conveyed; they record eighteen ships embarking for Cowes (almost exclusively carrying rice for re-export to northern Europe), fifteen for London, six for Gosport (another trans-shipment port for rice), three for Bristol and one each for Falmouth, Liverpool and Portsmouth.<sup>59</sup> While the sample is small, the ships carried more than three-quarters of the indigo imported into England from South Carolina that year. Eleven of the London-bound ships carried indigo, in 94 separate consignments from Carolinian planters and merchants containing 293,828lbs. of the dye – 79 per cent of the total 372,900lbs. imported into England from South Carolina in 1764.<sup>60</sup>

Of the total captured in the manifests, some 93 per cent was consigned to just six firms: John Beswicke & Co. (37.5 per cent of total), Sarah Nickleson & Co. (15.6 per cent), Charles Ogilvie (10.8 per cent), John Nutt (10.2 per cent), Grubb & Watson (9.7 per cent) and Charles Crockatt (7.1 per cent). These importers sold it on in London to specialist dyers or to wholesale grocers in exchange for cash and exportable goods.<sup>61</sup> The domination of London's indigo imports by a small number of merchants adds further weight to claims that London's Carolina trade was concentrated in fewer hands than other branches of London's Atlantic trade.

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<sup>59</sup> Charles Town Naval Office, ships' manifests, Jan.–April 1764. CO5/511/2–63.

<sup>60</sup> Annual total from Nash, 'South Carolina Indigo', 371, tab. 3.

<sup>61</sup> The sale and exchange of indigo, rice and other imports by London's Carolina traders is documented in the ledgers of Rawlinson, Davison & Newman, a leading London wholesale grocers. Apparently unexplored by scholars of either American or metropolitan trade, they cover the mid-1750s and contain accounts with, amongst others, the principal London Carolina trading houses: James Crockatt, John Nutt, John Beswicke, Sarah Nickleson and Richard & Thomas Shubrick. They also reveal the firm's direct trade with independent Charles Town houses, including Austin & Laurens. Rawlinson, Davison & Newman account book, esp. 77, 455, 498. (Guildhall Library, London).

**TABLE 4.1: LONDON TRADERS' SHARE OF INDIGO EXPORTS, JANUARY–MARCH 1764**

Ship	Date of clearing Charles Town (1764)	No. of consignments	Trader to whom indigo consigned (lbs.)							TOTAL
			John Beswicke	Sarah Nickleson	Charles Oglvie	John Nutt	Grubb & Watson	Charles Crockatt	Others	
<i>Union</i>	6th Jan.	12	15,902	1,590	-	379	-	1,454	4,144	23,469
<i>Prince of Wales</i>	7th Jan.	3	15,763	-	-	1,698	-	-	-	17,461
<i>Little Carpenter</i>	24th Jan.	12	8,224	-	-	2,631	14,991	676	4,225	30,747
<i>Minerva</i>	31st Jan.	9	-	19,752	-	1,539	-	2,362	-	23,653
<i>Prince George</i>	13th Feb.	3	1,903	-	-	-	-	6,764	-	8,667
<i>Fortune</i>	[undated] Feb.	6	12,495	-	-	892	-	3,238	566	17,191
<i>America</i>	18th Feb.	16	51,630	-	1,232	4,422	-	2,873	1,153	61,310
<i>Nancy</i>	24th Feb.	12	-	-	29,889	12,094	9,115	2,566	2,902	56,566
<i>Little William</i>	10th Mar.	4	1083	-	630	-	-	2,997	1,562	6,272
<i>Heart of Oak</i>	29th Mar.	16	844	24,401	-	6,406	4,272	3,864	6,243	46,030
<i>Black Prince</i>	31st Mar.	1	2,462	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,462
Total consignments		94								
Individual total (lbs.)			110,306	45,743	31,751	30,061	28,378	26,794	20,795	293,828
% of total indigo imported			37.54	15.57	10.8	10.23	9.66	9.12	7.08	100

Source: Charles Town Naval Office, ships' manifests, Jan.–March 1764. CO5/511/2–58.

Assessments of the character traits of London's principal Carolina traders echoed Carolinians' suspicions of metropolitan business practices. John Nutt was regarded by a Charles Town correspondent as "a right down London merchant" who had "as much religion in him as merchants of London in general have".<sup>62</sup> Even trusted correspondents were felt to pose corrupting influences to the many Carolinian youths sent for education in England. Henry Laurens declined asking his London "trading Friends" to receive his seven year-old son Henry Jr. when he went to be schooled in London in 1771: "I dread their Kindness to our Youth, because of the Effects of such Kindness, which are commonly loose manners and morals, waste of Time and very idle

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 60.

Expences”.<sup>63</sup> It was a point he repeated in several letters to friends, associating the “superabundant Kindnesses” of “City Friends and Acquaintances” with laxity and immorality and which had “so often proved pernicious to our Carolina Youth”.<sup>64</sup>

### **Political discord and the role of lobbying**

The London Carolina traders’ ongoing commercial activism during the late 1760s and early 1770s appears to have done little to mitigate the growing scepticism and mistrust of their business practices. With support from a number of London’s Carolina traders, Charles Garth applied successfully to Parliament in 1767 for the duty on rice imported into Britain from North America to be temporarily lifted. A poor harvest the previous year had elevated cereal prices and made rice a useful dietary substitute.<sup>65</sup> Eighteen of the capital’s Carolina traders petitioned Parliament in February 1770 to permanently reduce the rice import duty. Their appeal again carefully fused domestic and colonial, and fiscal, commercial and strategic concerns. The consequent increase in rice imports and consumption in Britain would compensate for the lower duties, they argued, while the grain’s greater availability and lower price would help the poor. The petitioners further emphasised the benefits of an expanded trade to British shipping, the economic benefits for the colonies themselves and, consequently, the greater demand for British manufactures this would bring.<sup>66</sup> The same month, fifteen of London’s Carolina traders joined Charles Garth in successfully lobbying for another seven-year extension to the indigo bounty.<sup>67</sup> In both cases, Garth described

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<sup>63</sup> HL to George Appleby, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1771. *PHL*, VII, 469.

<sup>64</sup> HL to Thomas Corbett, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1771, to John Hopton, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1771. *PHL*, VII, 475, 479.

<sup>65</sup> The suspension was continued until May 1773. *JHC*, XXXI, 337–374, 423–472; HL to James Grant, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1767. *PHL*, V, 233.

<sup>66</sup> The eighteen London merchant petitioners were Edward Bridgen, Samuel Carne, William Davis, William Greenwood, Richard Grubb, Isaac King, James Mill, Joseph Nicholson, John Nutt, Joseph Nutt, Charles Ogilvie, James Poyas, William Roberts & Co., Christopher Rolleston, Gilbert Ross, Richard Shubrick, William Thompson and Alexander Watson. Bristol merchants Basil Cowper and Edward Neufville also added their names. T1/424/298–9; T1/480/354–5.

<sup>67</sup> Besides Garth himself, the petition was signed by London merchants Samuel Carne, John Clark, William Greenwood, Richard Grubb, William Higginson, Isaac King, Joseph Nicholson, John Nutt, Joseph Nutt, Charles Ogilvie, George Ogilvie, James Poyas, Christopher Rolleston, William Thompson and Alexander

the merchant activism to the committee of correspondence, and he similarly informed the committee of the somewhat belated collective efforts of the London North America merchants to have the Townshend Duties repealed.<sup>68</sup>

London's Carolina traders had continued to prove assiduous lobbyists on commercial issues where metropolitan and colonial interests were closely aligned. Higher exports of rice from the province resulting from the liberalisation of the British market, for example, promised financial rewards for planters and traders on either side of the Atlantic, as well as feeding Britain's poor. As Laurens foresaw the suspension of the rice import duty, "the Carolina Planter will get an advanced price of all the saving of Duty, upon his Rice" while the "English Farmer & Labourer... will have the satisfaction of paying to America, what otherwise he would have contributed to the Revenue".<sup>69</sup> However, in their hopes for metropolitan merchant advocacy on more contentious political issues, hopes perhaps elevated by the mercantile response to the Stamp Act, Carolinians would be disappointed. Historians have long identified the tightening of customs administration in Charles Town in the mid-1760s as a potent force in radicalising the town's merchants.<sup>70</sup> Customs officials had previously turned a blind eye to coastal vessels that moved between Charles Town and the plantations without having completed all the necessary paperwork, but from 1767 began prosecuting this technical breach of the Navigation Laws. This represented a direct challenge to the autonomy of the province's planters and traders – a metropolitan intrusion into hitherto routine commercial practice. Although Charles Garth raised the matter with the Treasury, British merchants failed to back up his protests, suggesting a lack of interest in essentially internal Carolinian matters and a growing divergence of interests with their Carolinian counterparts. Efforts by London traders to seek political remediation in London might have demonstrated the ongoing

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Watson, and by two Bristol-based traders, Basil Cowper and Edward Neufville. CO5/379/73; T1/424/298–9.

<sup>68</sup> CG to CoC, 5<sup>th</sup> Feb., 23<sup>rd</sup> March and 11<sup>th</sup> April 1770. LCG.

<sup>69</sup> HL to James Grant, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1767. *PHL*, V, 233.

<sup>70</sup> Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 299–301; Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule at Home?*, 234–6; Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*. (Columbia, SC, 1998), 216–8.

efficacy of mercantile lobbying; conversely, the absence of such efforts compounded their correspondents' grievances.<sup>71</sup>

Amid widespread fury over customs collectors' alleged racketeering and venality, Henry Laurens felt particularly victimised, as three of his coasting vessels were impounded for breaching the Navigation Acts. Besides his strident attacks on British officialdom in the town's courts and press, Laurens tried to galvanize transatlantic mercantile unity behind his cause. He stressed that not only were his personal business concerns at stake, but so too were interdependent and cross-sectional interests in South Carolina and the Carolina trade at large – the merchants whose costs were raised and exchanges interrupted, planters whose goods were hindered from reaching markets, the tradesmen whose services oiled the wheels of commerce and, by implication, Britain's Carolina traders who would suffer from higher costs and inefficiencies in the Charles Town marketplace. His efforts once again reveal how Carolinians understood the role of their metropolitan correspondents – that besides their commercial activity, they had particular access to and influence with government, and that it was their responsibility and in their interest to use it. After the seizure of his vessel *Ann*, Laurens encouraged his correspondents in London to pursue his case through political and legal avenues. Spelling out his aspirations for transatlantic advocacy, he hoped the case would “not be call'd Mr. Laurens's but the Case of the British Merchants trading to America in the Case of the Ship *Ann*”.<sup>72</sup> To galvanise the support of Britain's American traders, Laurens sent copies of the proceedings of the vice-admiralty court to merchants in Bristol and London “& to many great Personages at the West End of that Great City [i.e. Westminster]”. He explained, “We hope that the Merchants in England in general will stir up their Friends in Parliament to reconsider some Measures lately established for the Regulation of the American Trade, which otherwise will in

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<sup>71</sup> For Garth's unsuccessful petitions to the Treasury against the rigid enforcement of the Navigation Laws in respect of South Carolina's coastal trade, see T1/449/379–80, T1/453/127–33.

<sup>72</sup> HL to Ross & Mill, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 1768. *PHL*, VI, 87.

all probability become the Ruin and destruction of that Trade. When I say We, I mean the principal Merchants as well as almost every individual sensible Person in this Town.”<sup>73</sup>

The abuses of Charles Town’s customs officials were the progeny of the overhaul of colonial customs administration, and Laurens devoted considerable time in 1769 to orchestrating a British lobby against both cause and effect. Sending copies of the vice-admiralty court proceedings to London merchant Richard Grubb, he was confident that his correspondent would agree that “such proceedings of Tyrannical, Insidious, Perjured, and Temporizing Officers ought to be made Public. I make no doubt of your consulting with some of your Brother Merchants to make them so; and that you will at least put one of both the papers into the hands of some of Your honest acquaintance at t’other end of the Town [MPs at Westminster]”.<sup>74</sup> The correspondence repeatedly stressed the consonance of Carolinian and British commercial interests in opposing the courts and the corruptions they fostered, and urged co-ordinated transatlantic activism. “Wise and prudent therefore (in my humble opinion) would it be for Merchants on both sides of the Water to exert their utmost abilities to bring some Amendments in, if not a total abolition of, the modern jurisdiction of that Court [vice-admiralty court]”, Laurens suggested to London slave traders Ross & Mill, “before it be so well established as to stare them in the face with *prescription*.”<sup>75</sup> Writing to Liverpool slave trader John Tarleton, he highlighted the danger posed to British traders of over-powerful officialdom in the colonies – “the danger of Vesting any one Man with exorbitant Powers, which danger I think you Gentlemen in Great Britain trading to this part of the World are as much exposed to as we who reside here”. Again, the lobbying of British merchants – not just those in London, but also in the outports – would be pivotal: “We shall feel the dreadful effects of it, if you do not join to quench the growing Evil.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> HL to William Cowles & Co. and William Freeman, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1769. *PHL*, VI, 393–4.

<sup>74</sup> HL to Richard Grubb, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1769. *PHL*, VI, 399.

<sup>75</sup> HL to Ross & Mill, 10<sup>th</sup> March 1769. *PHL*, VI, 404–5. [Italics from source.]

<sup>76</sup> HL to John Tarleton, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1769. *PHL*, VI, 417.

Laurens's calls for a concerted mercantile campaign against the depredations of Charles Town's vice-admiralty court appear to have fallen on deaf ears, however. There is no evidence that Carolina traders either in London or the outports petitioned on the matter, paralleling their relative quietude on the Townshend Duties. Without a pressing economic case for intervention, the British traders were apparently reluctant to jeopardise their relations with government on a matter of colonial rights. Their relations with government had been cultivated over time and facilitated lobbying on economic matters that did matter greatly to them, such as the commercial regulation of the rice and indigo trades. The controversy over Charles Town's vice-admiralty court did not present an immediate or direct threat to their commercial interests; despite Laurens's apocalyptic rhetoric, it was hard to envisage it leading to a total breakdown of Atlantic trade. Instead, runs-ins between Charles Town traders and imperial officialdom must have seemed a parochial matter with little or no impact on the transatlantic Carolina trade as a whole. More importantly, Laurens and his fellow merchants' dispute with the customs and vice-admiralty courts was rooted in political controversy. It had its basis in the British government's attempts to reorganise the vice-admiralty courts in America and more stringently apply the Navigation Acts, which in Charles Town had become suffused with personal intrigue, and charges of corruption, venality and scapegoating. If Britain's merchants had lobbied on the matter, it would have implied a critique of imperial policy and unwarranted interference beyond their commercial interests. They were, it appears, unwilling to risk their role and influence as commercial interlocutors on points of political principle – especially when these points appeared to have little bearing on their own commerce.

Despite their advocacy on commercial matters such as rice import duties and the indigo bounty, Britain's Carolina merchants were consistently reluctant to intervene in the political disputes of the late 1760s and early 1770s. Their resistance to the Stamp Act had been motivated by the direct threat that it, or rather the Carolinian response of boycotts and judicial obstructionism, posed to their trade. Though their opposition was welcomed in Charles Town, it implicitly revealed the causal link between commercial interest and political mobilisation. This connection would be

further demonstrated by the contrast between their willingness to lobby on commercial issues and their hesitancy on political issues as Anglo-American relations deteriorated. British traders' slowness to take up the cudgels on the Townshend Duties and their apparent ambivalence towards the actions of the vice-admiralty courts suggested a divergence of *political* interest with their Charles Town correspondents. Growing suspicion of London business practices, and resentment at the egregious profits that metropolitan merchants were seen to be making from the trade, at the same time that they were exerting ever greater credit-based control of Carolinian correspondents, amounted to a burgeoning sense of inequality within the trade – and suggested a divergence of *commercial* interest between parties on either side of the Atlantic. The escalating political tensions of 1773 and 1774 exposed these fault lines.

By 1774, almost all London's specialist Carolina traders had come to be regarded as politically hostile to South Carolina and unwilling to support the discontented American colonies in their growing estrangement from British government. Living in London as he oversaw his sons' European education, Henry Laurens assessed the traders' political orientation first hand. He reflected to his brother: "I don't know that we have a Zealous friend or Advocate among the Merchants in our Walk [Carolina walk of the Royal Exchange], one or two excepted".<sup>77</sup> Laurens was not alone in his judgment: his words were echoed by other Americans in London. The young Bostonian Josiah Quincy Jr., whose travels took him to both Charles Town and London during the early 1770s, noted just eleven London merchants whom he did not consider "bitter enemies" of America in February 1775. No South Carolina traders figured on his list.<sup>78</sup> The same month, the leading Carolina merchants John Nutt and Christopher Rolleston were identified by the radical

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<sup>77</sup> HL to James Laurens, 5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1774. *PHL*, IX, 266.

<sup>78</sup> Mark A. DeWolfe Howe (ed.), 'Josiah Quincy Jr., London Journal 1774–5', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 50 (1916–7), 466–7; Langford, 'British Business Community', 309–310.

Virginia native William Lee, then living in London, as notable foes to the colonies and men who “should be stigmatized in America”.<sup>79</sup>

The metropolitan Carolina traders identified as being hostile to America did not have the direct personal connections to South Carolina that a previous generation of London’s Carolina traders had had. As noted in previous chapters, each of the largest metropolitan Carolina merchants up to the early 1760s – the likes of James Crokatt, John Beswicke, John Nickleson, Richard Shubrick and Samuel Wragg – had spent formative time in South Carolina, building their businesses and immersing themselves in its commercial and public life. As former residents, they could claim to be naturally sympathetic to the colony, their landholdings in the region serving to reinforce their personal and commercial attachments. By the mid-1760s, all these figures had left the trade: Wragg had died in 1749 and Nickleson in 1754, leaving his commerce to be continued by his wife, Sarah, and her new business partner, Isaac King. John Beswicke had died in 1764 and was succeeded in trade by his nephews, William Greenwood and William Higginson; Richard Shubrick died in 1765 and seems to have left his trade in the hand of his son, also Richard. James Crokatt retired from trade in about 1760. His son Charles and son-in-law John Nutt appear to have taken on much of his trade, and he allowed his son to entitle his firm ‘James & Charles Crokatt’ in order to lend it his personal prestige. Charles Crokatt lacked his father’s commercial acumen, however, and his business foundered; Nutt would be Crokatt’s principal legatee in trade, inheriting many of his father-in-law’s commercial connections in Charles Town.<sup>80</sup> James Crokatt retired largely to his

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<sup>79</sup> William Lee to Richard Henry Lee, 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1775. Worthington C. Ford (ed.), *Letters of William Lee: Sheriff and Alderman of London; Commercial Agent of the Continental Congress in France; and Minister to the Courts of Vienna and Berlin, 1766–1783*, 3 vols. (Brooklyn, NY, 1891), I, 130–1.

<sup>80</sup> *Watson v. Crokatt* [1760], C12/907/77; *Crokatt v. Muilman* [1770], C12/540/24; *Public Advertiser*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan. 1760; *SCG*, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1760.

country estate in Essex and a house in Richmond, Surrey, where he maintained his longstanding interest in agricultural diversification and improvement. He died in 1777.<sup>81</sup>

The leading Carolina merchants in the capital from the mid-1760s for the most part had not cut their commercial teeth in the Lower South in the same way as their commercial forebears. William Greenwood and William Higginson, for example, had done their commercial training in London with their uncle, John Beswicke. John Nutt's early participation had been advanced by his metropolitan connection to James Crockatt, rather than by a colonial-based apprenticeship; the younger Richard Shubrick and Charles Crockatt had both been born in South Carolina, but had spent all their adult lives in and around London. There were exceptions. Benjamin Stead had relocated from Charles Town in 1759 and continued as an export-import merchant in London's Carolina trade until the Revolution. He was noted for his pro-American sympathies and was regarded by Laurens as "without Exception" one of the "best men in our Carolina Trade".<sup>82</sup> Charles Ogilvie's peripatetic trading and plantation-building career saw him in London in the early 1770s. Though he would suffer after 1783 for his wavering political affiliations during the conflict, he was not singled out before the outbreak of war as being notably hostile to America. Instead, and further suggesting a link between commercial experience in South Carolina and pro-American sympathies, Ogilvie was, with Stead, one of only four London merchants with interests in the Carolina trade to sign a petition to the King in October 1775 urging conciliation with the American colonies. The others were Edward Bridgen, well known for his pro-American views, and Joseph Nicholson, a former Charles Town merchant who had relocated to London in 1764.<sup>83</sup> But traders such as Stead and Ogilvie were in a minority. Overall, by the eve of the Revolution, the composition of London's Carolina trade approximated that of other branches of the capital's North

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<sup>81</sup> Royal Society of Arts, *Museum Rusticum et Commerciale: or Select Papers on Agriculture, Commerce, Arts and Manufactures. Drawn from experience, and communicated by gentlemen engaged in these pursuits... Volume the Fifth*. (London, 1765), 133–7; 281–8; *Public Advertiser*, 8th March 1777.

<sup>82</sup> HL to Thomas Savage, 20th April 1772. *PHL*, VIII, 280.

<sup>83</sup> *London Evening Post*, 14<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1775, cited in Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*, 171–193; will of Joseph Nicholson, Prob. 11/1105. 19<sup>th</sup> June 1783; *Complete Guide to... London*, 1768–1777, 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> eds.; *London Directory*, 1776, 9<sup>th</sup> ed.; T79/37/250, 289 [Joseph Nicholson compensation claim].

American traders more closely than ever before – populated largely by merchants who had been trained and spent their whole careers in the metropolis. As such they lacked the personal bonds, experiences and sympathies towards South Carolina which had been a feature of their leading predecessors' careers.

John Nutt was one of this new generation of metropolitan Carolina traders to be identified as both a particular profiteer from the trade and an implacable opponent to America. This was despite his sitting on merchant committees which had drafted pro-American petitions before the Revolution. This is not, however, as paradoxical as it seems.<sup>84</sup> Having proffered the most liberal credit to South Carolina before the war – both a mark of their commercial scale and a means of cementing their share of the market – London's largest Carolina traders were the most over-extended in the province. They were well aware of this fact. Nutt's complaint in January 1774 to a Savannah partnership indebted to him for goods imported on credit that their "two Store accounts are now very large and embarrassing" typified the unease.<sup>85</sup> With extensive monies owed them in the Lower South, Nutt and his fellow traders had good reason to urge conciliation – they rightly saw that a total breakdown of Anglo-American relations would leave them with uncollectable and crippling debts in South Carolina. Among Charlestonians increasingly sensitive to perceived commercial-ministerial intrigue, the merchants' actions had spoken louder than their words, however. Once routine transactions took on new, pernicious dimensions. With Greenwood & Higginson, Nutt was widely censured for providing security for a cargo of tea imported into Charles Town in December 1773, appropriately enough on board a ship called *London*. With tea invoked across the colonies – as in South Carolina, so in New York, Philadelphia and, most momentously, in Boston – as a symbol of British legislative tyranny, provincial authorities had the 257 chests of tea impounded in the

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<sup>84</sup> Olson, 'Virginia Merchants of London', 386; idem., 'London Mercantile Lobby and the Revolution', 26–7, 31, 41n; Langford, 'British Business Community', 309.

<sup>85</sup> John Nutt to John Jones, 8<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1774. T79/5/35.

basement of the Exchange.<sup>86</sup> For Ralph Izard, a lowcountry planter who spent the 1770s in Europe, the consignment of the tea to Charles Town demonstrated how commerce and politics were indivisible in Britain's oppression of her American colonies. "The tea, which has occasioned so much trouble, would never have been sent to America, had not many of these gentlemen [London's American traders] offered themselves as security for it... the merchants, who ought to have been the natural guardians of the interests of America, submitted to the infamy of becoming parties in the attempt against us."<sup>87</sup> The yoking of trade and politics as combined instruments in oppressing America served to legitimate commercial boycotts as a means of political resistance. Izard advocated targeted boycotts of individual merchants to serve as a powerful demonstration of Carolinian grievances – and a means of punishing the particular agents of the province's commercial-political oppression. He explained:

"every friend to America, ought solemnly to engage to have no more dealings with them [the consigners of the tea]. There is no doubt, but our present unhappy situation, is in a great measure owing to them. One of them [Nutt], I know, owes his existence to the gentlemen of Carolina; and when a man repays favors, with such infamous ingratitude, it is not only weak, but criminal to support him. There is a ridiculous notion propagated, that he sells indigo better than other people. This I cannot believe; but were it true, it is a very insufficient reason why he should be placed in a state of princely magnificence, and by that means, be the better enabled to exercise with credit and authority, his enmity against us."<sup>88</sup>

Made in October 1774, Izard's exhortation for a selective boycott of Nutt and Greenwood & Higginson was overtaken by events. Non-importation came into effect within weeks of his call, placing a blanket ban on imports from British merchants, whether friendly or not. Selective retaliation would be deferred – as will be shown in the next chapter – until after American

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<sup>86</sup> George C. Rogers Jr., 'The Charleston Tea Party: The Significance of December 3, 1773', *SCHM*, 75.3 (July 1974), 153–168; Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, 219. The tea was eventually auctioned off three years later to raise funds for the war effort.

<sup>87</sup> Ralph Izard to Thomas Lynch, 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1775. *CRI*, I, 47–8. Izard was also involved in attempts to broker conciliatory talks between leaders in the Continental Congress and the British government in 1774 and 1775. See Julie Flavell, 'American Patriots in London and the Quest for Talks, 1774–1775', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 20.3 (Aug. 1992), 350–9.

<sup>88</sup> Ralph Izard to HL, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1774. *PHL*, IX, 593–4.

independence.<sup>89</sup> Besides his prescience in regard to targeted boycotts, Izard's critique of London's Carolina trade is revealing in its analysis of the terms of trade and the political associations it had assumed. Credit – the lifeblood of Anglo-Carolinian commerce – had come to represent commercial repression and, through it, colonial subservience. According to Izard – hardly a political radical – Nutt's 'princely magnificence', the commercial standing which he owed entirely to Carolinian customers, and his credit were symbiotically linked, allowing him to retain a mercantile 'hold' over the province. By the eve of the Revolution, commercial subservience had come to represent in microcosm the imperial overlordship against which Charlestonians increasingly chafed. London's traders became, consciously or not, associated with hostile ministerial policy and held as the agents of it. Moreover, for the numerous residents – from Atlantic traders to urban artisans – in the province who were tied into the webs of credit emanating from traders in London such as Nutt, it was not a question of abstract governmental philosophy but a daily experience.

There is little evidence that London's Carolina merchants actively took political stances which merited the obloquy directed towards them. Instead, and in marked contrast to their commercial *activity*, viewed by many Carolinian observers as inherently oppressive by the mid-1770s, it was the traders' political *inactivity* until at least late 1774 which heightened Carolinian suspicions.<sup>90</sup> Quietude was interpreted as acquiescence in or tacit approval of ministerial policy, particularly given the stark contrast with the merchants' vigorous Stamp Act repeal campaign in 1765–6. When the British government responded to the Boston Tea Party and other colonial acts of resistance to the Tea Act with the Coercive Bills, it was London's expatriate American community, rather than the capital's American traders, who took the lead in campaigning against the proposals. Henry Laurens attended

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<sup>89</sup> On the pre-war failure of traders in America to selectively retaliate against particularly resented British merchants, see Olson, 'London Mercantile Lobby and the Revolution', 30–1. The article does not consider the post-war reaction, however.

<sup>90</sup> The London Carolina traders' political inactivity was typical of London's American merchants in general. See Kim, 'Merchants, Politics and Imperial Crisis', 192. Only one London merchant with an interest in the Carolina trade, the slave trader John Shoolbred, publicly endorsed a policy of coercion towards America. He signed a pro-government petition to George III in October 1775 which expressed "Disapprobation and Abhorrence" towards the "unjustifiable Proceedings of some of your Majesty's Colonies in America". *London Gazette*, 10<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1775.

a large meeting at London's Thatched House tavern – a regular haunt of the government's opponents – on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1774. Laurens expected it to be “a large Meating of Merchants & other[s]... to petition Parliament to forbear or at least Suspend Such dangerous Severity until the Supposed offenders have been called to answer for their Conduct”. British merchants in the New England trade would support the petition, he believed, since they stood to lose the £100,000-200,000 they had advanced in credit to Bostonians, “for when all the priveledges of Trade that are taken from that Town & Country, there will be no means admitting there is inclination for paying old Debts”.<sup>91</sup>

Laurens was prescient, but in a different way than he imagined. After the war many British merchants would ultimately be forced to write off thousands of pounds of debts in America. In the immediate term, however, the threat of the losses that would be incurred by the closure of Boston's port did not trigger any concerted merchant response against the Coercive Bills. How many merchants attended the Thatched House meeting is unknown, but the petitions to Parliament that emerged from the meeting are indicative. Rather than being drawn up by the merchants whom Laurens had expected to be in the vanguard, they were instead composed by “several Natives of North America”. Reflecting the profound disquiet the Boston Tea Party had caused within London's commercial sector, City merchants conspicuously avoided even signing the petitions.<sup>92</sup> South Carolina was more heavily represented among the signatories to the petitions than any other colony, a fact primarily attributable to the number of young Carolinians then staying in London for education. Eleven of the 29 men who signed the two petitions to Parliament (one to the Commons, one to the Lords) against the Boston Port Bill were from South Carolina, a fact the *South Carolina*

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<sup>91</sup> HL to James Air, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1774. *PHL*, IX, 362.

<sup>92</sup> Those merchants to sign the petition were American natives: the noted radicals Stephen Sayre and William and Arthur Lee, Laurens himself (though he was no longer active in trade), former Boston merchant John Boylston, New England trader Thomas Bromfield and Maryland trader Joshua Johnson. *PHL*, IX, 372n–374n.

*Gazette* reported proudly.<sup>93</sup> A further sixteen of the 31 signatories to a petition to the King protesting against the Coercive Bills, drawn up on 31 March 1774, were from the province.<sup>94</sup> Having failed in their opposition to the Boston Port Act in March, “several Natives of North America” petitioned the Lords on 11<sup>th</sup> May against the Massachusetts Government and Administration of Justice bills then before Parliament. Numbering 15 of the 30 signatories, South Carolinians were once more to the fore in a petition which again conspicuously lacked British merchant support.<sup>95</sup> At the moment when merchant advocacy and interaction with the British state was most desired, it failed to materialise.

Behind the British mercantile ambivalence was an unwillingness to take a stand against the Coercive Acts while American resistance was couched in ideological or constitutional terms. Before the onset of non-importation later in 1774 and in the absence of targeted boycotts against specific merchant houses, there were simply no immediately compelling economic grounds for them to oppose government policy.<sup>96</sup> The quietude of London’s Carolina traders, none of whom signed any of the petitions nor apparently participated in the campaigning in 1774, served to confirm Laurens’s and others’ earlier suspicions about their true loyalties. Ralph Izard typified the views of many when he summed up merchant complaisance or – most sinisterly – their acquiescence in British government policy. “The merchants, notwithstanding the situation of affairs in America, dreadfully alarming as they are”, he complained, “sit perfectly satisfied and contented.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> No original copy of the petition to the House of Commons, which was drawn up at the Thatched House Tavern on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1774, survives. It was, though, reprinted in the *Public Advertiser*, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1774, albeit without the names of the signatories. However, since it is known to have had 29 signatories, as did the petition to the House of Lords that was drawn up at the same venue two days later, and since the texts of the two petitions are virtually identical, it seems highly likely that the same men signed both petitions. *PHL*, IX, 368–75; *JHC*, XXXIV, 595–6; *Lords Journals*, XXXIV, 98.

<sup>94</sup> *PHL*, IX, 375–7.

<sup>95</sup> *PHL*, IX, 445–9; *Lords Journals*, XXXIV, 182.

<sup>96</sup> Merchant quietude in response to the Coercive Acts is discussed in Olson, ‘London Mercantile Lobby’, 35; Langford, ‘British Business Community’, 281–2; Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*, 69–73.

<sup>97</sup> RI to George Dempsey, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1775. *CRI*, I, 79; *PHL*, IX, passim, esp. 435n.

Only in January 1775, with the threat of total dislocation of Anglo-American trade looming, did London's North America traders meet to discuss a collective response to the controversial legislation. By this stage, non-importation in the thirteen colonies had already taken effect (in December 1774) and non-exportation – a far more concerning prospect for metropolitan traders with sizeable debts in America – was due to take effect the following September. The committee selected to prepare a petition alerting Parliament to the “alarming State” of their trade comprised the leading merchants in each branch of London's American trade. Including merchants with what were held to be widely contrasting views on the American crisis, it was, ostensibly a remarkable display of cross-sectional and political unity. South Carolina's representatives appeared to epitomise this – its five members were the reputedly hostile William Greenwood, John Nutt and Christopher Rolleston, the moderate William Baker Jr. and – rather incongruously – the pro-American firebrand William Lee, more associated with the Virginia trade.<sup>98</sup>

To Carolinians, however, the four petitions addressed by London's merchants to Parliament and then to the King between January and March 1775 were a case of too little, too late. The merchant petitioning, Izard believed, was inchoate, “ill-timed and will prove ineffectual”.<sup>99</sup> The merchants' failure to make common cause with the protests of expatriate Americans reflected their divergent interests: while the expatriates saw profound ideological and political issues at stake, most merchants were motivated to protest government policy only on economic grounds.<sup>100</sup> For Izard, the lack of solidarity not only undermined the effectiveness of any petitioning – necessarily weakened when undertaken by separate groups – but once again revealed that merchant criticism of government policy was motivated purely by self-interest. “The truth is”, he told Thomas Lynch, representing South Carolina at the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, “they are, in general,

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<sup>98</sup> *Daily Advertiser*, 5th Jan. 1775.

<sup>99</sup> RI to Thomas Lynch, 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1775. *CRI*, I, 47.

<sup>100</sup> On the caution and commercial emphasis of the merchants' petitions, see Bradley, *Popular Politics*, 27–9; Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*, 75.

puffed up with pride and unmindful of the interest of their employers”.<sup>101</sup> His choice of words betrays a deeper conception of merchant agency and Atlantic political economy – the “employers” were American colonists. It was to this group that London’s Carolina merchants – and by implication their peers across the North American trades – owed their eminence and their fortunes; because of this, they should also owe them their allegiance. However, for Izard and other Carolinian observers, the reverse had been true. London’s Carolina traders had profited unduly from their trade, finagled their correspondents with sharp business practices, lured and oppressed them with credit, and when their agency was most required, treated their “employers” with contempt. As Carolinians took increasing pride in their ability to harness their environment to productive ends, supplying the commodities on which London’s traders relied, their conceptual relationship to their metropolitan counterparts changed. No longer was South Carolina an outpost in the Atlantic wilderness – and no longer were they or should they be the dependent partners in the metropolitan-colonial relationship. Their reliance on metropolitan merchant agency was invalidated. A system of representing colonial interests and grievances that was increasingly inefficient in a time of political tranquillity was exposed by imperial crisis as untenable and counterproductive.

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<sup>101</sup> RI to Thomas Lynch, 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1775. *CRI*, I, 47.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Voyage of the *Lord North*: American Independence, Anglo-Carolinian Trade and Unfinished Business

April 1783. Just four months earlier, the final British troops had been evacuated from Charleston. The evacuation brought to an end the British forces' two-and-a-half year long and increasingly beleaguered hold on the town. With memories of the occupation and the savage fighting which had characterised the war in South Carolina still fresh, the 500-ton ship *Lord North* arrived at the entrance to Charleston harbour. One of the largest vessels in Atlantic trade, its name could almost have been calculated to inflame tension in the port. It duly did. "Any idea of our present Secretary of State was so obnoxious to the Americans," a London newspaper reported, "that they insisted the ship should either change its name or depart without breaking bulk." Commercial priorities won out, and the *Lord North* duly became the *Financier*. Thus renamed, it proceeded to unload its goods and take on a cargo of rice, indigo and tobacco for its return voyage to London.<sup>1</sup>

The *Lord North* incident can be taken to represent the post-war Anglo-American rapprochement in microcosm. Firstly, its arrival in Charleston so soon after American independence highlights the rapid resumption of trade between the newly independent United States and Great Britain. Secondly, for many Charlestonians the ship's unsubtle nomenclature revealed a deeper and more symbolic truth – the persistence of American subservience in Atlantic commerce. For them, the *Lord North* encapsulated British commercial arrogance – its name a symbolic reassertion of commercial hegemony. Thirdly, the forced re-naming of the ship reflects an overlooked aspect of American agency in this branch of post-war Anglo-American commerce. British shipping and merchants continued to dominate South Carolina's overseas trade, but Charlestonians found subtle ways to resist. If through the 1780s the structural conditions of trade could not be overturned, the

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<sup>1</sup> Reflecting the old sailor's superstition that to change the name of a ship courts disaster, the *Financier* was shipwrecked off the Scilly Isles on its way back, losing its entire cargo and three members of its crew – its mate, one sailor and a black servant. *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 19<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1783. On ship naming practices in the pre-war Carolina trade, see Rogers, *Charleston Tea Party*, 157.

individual choices Charlestonians made about whom to trade with reveals that they had greater influence in post-war trade than they appreciated or historians have credited them with. Based as they were on pre-war and wartime interactions, these choices moreover cast light back onto Anglo-Carolinian commerce and politics before the Revolution.

Anglo-American relations in the 1780s have attracted little of the historiographical scrutiny devoted to the preceding two decades of controversy and conflict. Post-war Anglo-American trade is no exception. While some historians have seen the period as one of incipient shifts in the American economy, a nursery for future entrepreneurship and industrialisation, a broad consensus has pointed instead to the structural continuities in the United States' pre- and post-war economies.<sup>2</sup> With Britain dominating its external trade, the American economy thus retained, according to this analysis, a colonial character and the 1780s represent, in John McCusker and Russell Menard's words, a "pregnant pause" in American economic development. "The decade immediately following the end of the war looked," they contend, "economically, much the same as the decade preceding it, in basic structure if not in detail".<sup>3</sup> Structural continuities in the United States' post-war Atlantic trade, coincident with the dramatic and much scrutinised governmental, institutional, territorial and demographic changes within the new nation, help account for the continuing historiographical neglect of Anglo-American commerce in these years. If American historiography of the early republic has tended to turn inwards and westwards, surveying the making of a nation, British historians considering the same period have tended to shift their focus eastwards – towards Britain's imperial conquests in India and the construction of a 'second British empire', and towards Britain's unsteady relations with the continental European powers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of this literature, see "Transatlantic Trade in the Era of the American Revolution" in Fred M. Leventhal and Roland E. Quinault (eds.), *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership*. (Aldershot, 2000), 38–43.

<sup>3</sup> McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 367, 377.

<sup>4</sup> Examples of this introversive turn in the historiography of 1780s America – with their focus on Federalism and Anti-Federalism, the making of the U.S. Constitution and westward expansion – could fill an entire thesis. Instances of a historiographical shift in focus towards the 'second British Empire' in studies of post-

Historians' treatment of Anglo-American trade in the 1780s also contrasts with analyses of the trade in the decade before the Revolution. Few historians would now concur with the emphasis that early twentieth century Progressive historians placed on Americans' indebtedness as the pre-eminent motivating force behind the Revolution.<sup>5</sup> However, a more nuanced understanding of economic factors, in particular their role in informing and reinforcing ideological positions, is a feature of more recent neo-Progressive scholarship.<sup>6</sup> Within this, and as noted in chapter four, the colonies' pre-war trade has been interpreted by historians – as it was by contemporaries – as a crucible for the political controversies besetting Anglo-American relations.<sup>7</sup> In comparison, the reduced political salience attached to trade after the Revolution is striking: the structure of trade, the symbolism of goods, and the inequalities these revealed apparently no longer bore the same weight in an altered geo-political context. Nor has historians' renewed interest in America's loyalists, and in particular the pan-Atlantic dimensions of their diaspora, yet extended to post-war commerce.<sup>8</sup>

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1783 Britain are nearly as numerous. Two of the most influential recent studies in this vein are Colley, *Britons*, and Gould, *Persistence of Empire*, esp. 208–14. Other surveys neglect Britain's post-war relationship with the United States entirely. For example, in Boyd Hilton's recent addition to the New Oxford History of England series, no mention is made of the Jay-Grenville Treaty while the War of 1812 receives a single page: Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England, 1783–1846*. (Oxford, 2006), 230. For an insightful essay which does situate Britain's relations with the United States alongside other imperial and foreign policy priorities, see Peter J. Marshall, 'Britain Without America – A Second Empire?' in Marshall (ed.), *Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*, 576–95.

<sup>5</sup> Most notably, Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution*. (New York, 1939 [orig. publ. 1916]) passim., esp. 359–60; Charles A. Beard, *Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy*. (New York, 1915 and 1927), esp. 270–2.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Marc Egnal, *New World Economies: The Growth of the Thirteen Colonies and Canada*. (Oxford, 1998); Menard and McCusker, *Economy of British America*, 351–77; Holton, *Forced Founders*, 39–129.

<sup>7</sup> Timothy H. Breen, 'An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690–1776', *Journal of British Studies*, 25.4 (Oct. 1986), 467–99; idem., 'Baubles of Britain'; idem., *Marketplace of Revolution*.

<sup>8</sup> For recent scholarship on loyalists in the post-war Atlantic, see Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: How the Loss of America Made the British Empire*. (London, 2011); idem., 'The Other Side of Empire: Loyalists in the British Empire', *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 65.2 (April 2008), 205–232; Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution*. (London, 2005); Keith Mason, 'The American Loyalist Diaspora and the Reconfiguration of the British Atlantic World' in Peter Onuf and Eliga H. Gould (eds.) *Empire and Nation: The American Revolution in the Atlantic World*. (Baltimore, 2005), 239–259. See also Mary Beth Norton, *The British Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774–1789*. (Boston, 1972).

This relative inattention to post-war Anglo-American trade, and specifically its political dimensions, is mirrored in microcosm with South Carolina's Atlantic trade.<sup>9</sup> How the trading networks that linked Britain and South Carolina were reconstructed, the similarities and differences these manifested with their pre-war incarnations, and what these changes reveal about both the resurrected trade and its dimensions before the war have been almost entirely neglected. Britain once again became the largest market for the state's exports and the largest supplier of its imports. British merchants were able to satisfy the post-war surge in demand for consumer durables, and in particular for tools, machinery and enslaved Africans, as Carolinians rushed to restock plantations ravaged by war and to restart agricultural production. South Carolina had seen some of the most vicious fighting in the whole American theatre, destroying estates and resulting in an estimated 30,000 slaves escaping the state between 1775 and 1782. In the four years after 1783, some 8,200 slaves were landed in Charleston, most by British ships. French and Dutch merchants – although theoretically privileged by their countries' wartime support for the United States – were unable to compete with the liberal credit offered by their British rivals, or with the low prices and quality of goods the British were able to offer. The swift resumption of trade with Britain and the volume it reached within half a decade of the end of the war are striking. In London, the Carolina trade remained a specialist field of commerce, and there remained a dedicated Carolina 'walk' at the Royal Exchange until at least the mid-1790s.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the ravages of war and South Carolina's much diminished productive capacity, trade between the new state and Britain soon reached impressive volumes, although throughout the 1780s it remained well short of pre-war *per capita* levels. For example, between 1784 and 1791, the

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<sup>9</sup> The pre- and post-revolution dichotomy in the South Carolina historiography is perpetuated in otherwise excellent recent additions to the literature, for example Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*; Nash, 'South Carolina Indigo'; Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule at Home?*; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves and Subjects*. Hart, *Building Charleston*, considers the 1780s in an epilogue. Treatments which span the Revolution include Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit*; Nash, 'Organization of Trade and Finance' (2005); Starr, *A School for Politics*; Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 87–104, 143–172; Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 97–111, 250–53.

<sup>10</sup> W. Lowndes (ed.), *A London Directory or Alphabetical Arrangement... Embellished with a Plan of the Royal Exchange*. (London, 1795).

value of goods imported into South Carolina from England averaged £328,253 per year, against £363,037 between 1768 and 1774 (excluding the non-importation year of 1770).<sup>11</sup> However, the apparent return of South Carolina's overseas trade to something approaching the *status quo ante bellum* disguises major upheavals within it. Structural continuities, in the types of products exported and the goods imported, in their destinations and in approximate volumes, mask pronounced discontinuities in the personnel who conducted it, casting doubt on Alison Olson's claim that American firms "rushed back to do business with their leading pre-war correspondents". In trade between Charleston and Britain, at least, this was rarely the case. Individual trading relationships were less easy to restore than broader structural connections, with perhaps just a third of pre-war North American traders in London returning to the trade after 1783.<sup>12</sup> The wartime hiatus in trade had led several of London's Carolina merchants to withdraw from Atlantic commerce. Retirements and deaths, terminations of partnerships and the loss of trusted correspondents on the other side of the Atlantic proved powerful deterrents to resuming trade. Huge commercial losses forced others to quit and to concentrate on pursuing their debts in the province. As importantly, but overlooked in existing accounts, politics also determined the restoration of individual trading connections as London trading houses were alternatively spurned or rewarded for their wartime geo-political loyalties. For many traders, pre-war and wartime enmities powerfully determined post-war commerce.

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<sup>11</sup> While South Carolinian imports from England approached absolute pre-war levels, the import and export trade with England lagged well behind in *per capita* terms. This is chiefly attributable to the state's dramatic population growth in the 1780s, principally through massive immigration to the backcountry. South Carolina's population grew from about 124,000 in 1770 to 249,000 in 1790 when the first Federal census was taken, meaning that per capita imports from England approximately halved, from £3.5s.8d in 1771 to £1.8s.8d. in 1790. The decline in exports to England was even more pronounced, from an average £438,379 per year between 1768 and 1774 (again excluding 1770 as anomalous) to £221,319 between 1784 and 1791. In per capita terms, this fall was from £3.7s.6d. in 1771 to £1.0s.4d. in 1790. Import and export statistics for 1771 have been divided by population estimates for 1770, since trade in 1770 was distorted by the non-importation movement. For further detail, see Appendix A. Comparing the periods 1768–72 and 1790–92, Shepherd and Walton also conclude that South Carolina's exports failed to keep pace with its growing population, and thus declined in *per capita* terms. James F. Shepherd and Gary M. Walton, 'Economic Change after the American Revolution: Pre- and Post-War Comparisons of Maritime Shipping and Trade', *Explorations in Economic History*, 13.4 (Oct. 1976), 411–2.

<sup>12</sup> Olson, *Making the Empire Work*, 174 (quote), 179.

### **Restoration of Anglo-American trade**

Establishing the conditions for renewed Anglo-American trade was among the highest priorities as the terms of the combatants' post-war relationship were hammered out in 1783 in Westminster and 300 miles away at the Paris peace talks. Diplomatic and legislative developments merit some scrutiny here in order to situate the restoration of Anglo-Carolinian trade in its geo-political context. Parliament turned its attention to trade with America in early 1783, though initial attempts were scuppered by the vicissitudes of party politics. Prime Minister Shelburne's resignation on 24<sup>th</sup> February precipitated a six-week 'inter-ministerium' before the Fox-North coalition was formed on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Reflecting Shelburne's desire for commercial reciprocity and his philosophy of 'trade over dominion' towards the former colonies, his Chancellor, William Pitt, introduced the American Intercourse Bill to the Commons on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1783. Though strikingly liberal in its trade policy towards America, specifically in its proposal to grant American and British merchants the same status and benefits in both British and West Indian ports, hardened American observers saw ministerial duplicity even in this conciliatory approach. Reporting to Congress from London, Henry Laurens regarded the bill as "speciously conducive to the mutual Interests of Great Britain and America" – hardly a ringing endorsement of a major shift in British commercial policy.<sup>13</sup>

Opposition within Parliament was more concrete. Debating the bill between 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> March, Shelburne's opponents condemned it for its generosity towards America. Charles James Fox feared it would fuel jealousy from Britain's commercial rivals and MPs resisted any significant trade concessions to the United States, particularly in respect of the lucrative West Indies markets. In committee over the following weeks, the American Intercourse Bill was progressively amended and never came to a vote.<sup>14</sup> The bill's next iteration was even less to Laurens's liking. While stipulating that British goods be exported to the United States exactly as before the war, it limited American

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<sup>13</sup> HL to Robert Livingston, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1783. *PHL*, XVI, 163.

<sup>14</sup> *Parliamentary History of England*, XXIII, 602–615, 640–6.

vessels to carrying only American produce to Britain, and directly, so that the produce could not be transhipped through foreign ports. Even this failed to satisfy Parliament's protectionist hawks and like the previous version, it was – as Laurens had foreseen – “torn to pieces”.<sup>15</sup> A third version introduced on 2<sup>nd</sup> April was still more hardline, prohibiting Americans from trading with British colonies, a move aimed principally at excluding them from the West Indies, and containing clauses which sought to hinder the United States from developing commerce with other European powers. MPs had comprehensively rejected Shelburne's vision of an ongoing commercial union between Britain and the independent United States.<sup>16</sup>

The radical overhaul of the bill overtook merchants' lobbying efforts. Pitt had solicited the opinions of London's American merchants, who revived their ad hoc Committee of London Merchants trading to North America and after several meetings apparently presented him with a report on the bill on 28<sup>th</sup> March.<sup>17</sup> A week later, as the draft legislation became progressively more restrictive, London's American traders upped their efforts. On 5<sup>th</sup> April, a group of some 150 London merchants “interested in the Commerce with North America”, presented a petition to the King praying for measures “likely to revive the Commercial Intercourse between this Country and North America”. In particular, they sought “Liberality” in the “Laws which may be made for the Regulation” of the trade, so as to “re-establish and perpetuate perfect Harmony and Friendship between the Two Countries” – effectively a restoration of the pre-war system of trade. Petitioners with interests in the Carolina trade included partners Henry Merrtens Bird and Benjamin Savage, Adam Tunno, John Shoolbred, and James Strachan. Major pre-war Carolina traders such as John Nutt, Greenwood and Higginson, Christopher Rolleston and James Poyas were conspicuously absent.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *PHL*, XVI, 165n. HL to Benjamin Franklin, 17<sup>th</sup> March 1783 (unpubl.) <http://www.franklinpapers.org>.

<sup>16</sup> *PHL*, XVI, 174n.

<sup>17</sup> Kim, ‘Merchants, Politics and the Atlantic Imperial Crisis’, 246.

<sup>18</sup> *London Gazette*, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1783; Crowley, *Privileges of Independence*, 70–2. On the post-war activities of these major pre-war Carolina traders, see below.

For London's American traders, worse was to follow. On 9<sup>th</sup> April Fox successfully moved to adjourn the third version of the bill for a month, arguing that a new bill to repeal the Prohibitory Acts and all other measures banning trade with the United States was needed in the interim. This, he claimed, would expedite the Paris peace talks, and was agreed with little parliamentary opposition. He agreed to an amendment to his bill revoking the Prohibitory Acts on 11<sup>th</sup> April, giving the King temporary power to regulate Anglo-American trade. For the next year trade between Britain and the United States would be regulated by royal proclamation rather than by parliamentary act.<sup>19</sup> Negotiations dragged on in Paris during May and June as British attitudes hardened further against free trade. Mercantilists – “elements of the old Leaven among us, [of the] disposition of monopolizing the Trade and Navigation of the World to ourselves”, leading London trader James Bourdieu complained – argued for a British shipping monopoly with her remaining colonies. In tracts such as the Earl of Sheffield's bestselling *Observations on the Commerce of the American States*, mercantilist dogma maintained that the United States should be treated as a foreign power and should lose its pre-war right to trade with the British West Indies. Crucially, direct commerce with the islands would allow the United States to build up their marine and threaten British sea power, a rationale recognised in South Carolina, where the legislature observed that the object of British trade policy was to “suppress the maritime progress of the United States”.<sup>20</sup> “Reciprocity appears now to mean, Enjoyment on one side, and Restrictions on the other,” Laurens caustically opined, attributing the change in the political climate to the arrival of ships from America in Britain.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> PHL, XVI, 182n, 188n; *Parliamentary History of England*, XXIII, 724–30.

<sup>20</sup> See John Baker Holroyd, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Sheffield, *Observations on the Commerce of the American States with Europe and the West Indies*. (London, 1783). Sheffield's tract was the leading articulation of post-war mercantilism. See also HL to Charles Thomson, 28<sup>th</sup> March 1784 (Bourdieu quote). PHL, XVI, 423; Kim, ‘Merchants, Politics and the Atlantic Imperial Community’, 133–7; Cooper and McCord (eds.), *Statutes at Large*, IV, 596.

<sup>21</sup> HL to Robert Livingston, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1783. PHL, XVI, 211. Evidence from London newspapers in May and June 1783, however, suggests that ships were only arriving sporadically from American ports. They became more frequent from September 1783. PHL, XVI, 211n.

Two Orders in Council represented a further revival of Britain's *ante bellum* mercantilism. On 14<sup>th</sup> May, the Council declared that only unmanufactured American goods could be imported into Britain in either British or American vessels, applying the same restrictions as the Navigation Acts applied to the output of Britain's colonies; on 6<sup>th</sup> June it permitted the importation of Virginian tobacco, but reinstated the 'Old Subsidy', the pre-war import duty of five per cent *ad valorem*. The progressive hardening of British commercial policy towards the United States reached its apogee in a Council order on 2<sup>nd</sup> July limiting trade between the U. S. and the West Indies to British owned and built vessels. By cutting off a lucrative carrying trade for the southern states, South Carolina in particular stood to lose heavily. Laurens considered the restrictions "an Insult upon a free People", and South Carolina was one of the states to seek concerted action. In March 1784, it passed an act authorising Congress to prohibit any British-owned ships carrying West Indian produce from landing in American ports. Requiring inter-state legislation and enforcement, however, the proposed boycott never materialised, stifled by the inability of the United States' confederation government to compel the states to act in concert.<sup>22</sup>

Merchants in the United States were not the only group constrained by the limits placed on Anglo-American trade. The West Indies interest in Britain was stunned by the 2<sup>nd</sup> July restrictions. The Caribbean islands had relied heavily on imported American lumber and food provisions before the war and had exported large quantities of rum to the North American mainland. Free trade with the United States was felt to be vital to the islands' economic survival and numerous petitions arrived from the islands advocating free trade. Summoning up its formidable collective strength, the Society of West India Merchants and Planters objected strenuously to the restrictions at a series of London meetings. Some support came from pre-war North American traders, including the Bristol merchant Richard Champion, who published a pamphlet attacking post-war British mercantilism

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<sup>22</sup> *PHL*, XVI, 233n. The 2<sup>nd</sup> July order was renewed on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1783. HL to John Mathews, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1784. *PHL*, XVI, 412; Thompson and Lumpkin (eds.), *Journals of the House of Representatives, 1783–1784*, 428–9, 594; Cooper and McCord (eds.), *Statutes at Large*, IV, 596.

just before he moved from Britain to South Carolina.<sup>23</sup> The prohibition on U.S.–West Indies trade appears to have met with a more muted response from Britain’s North American traders than their West Indies counterparts, however, reflecting their less direct interest in the islands’ trade and perhaps also the West Indies lobby’s greater organisation. For all their noise, however, the West Indian lobbying failed to shift government policy: the ban on U.S. shipping in Caribbean trade remained in place until the eventual ratification of the Jay-Grenville Treaty in 1795.<sup>24</sup> The West Indies lobby’s inability even to extract concessions reflected its diminished political leverage in Britain. Before the war its traction had been based on the supposed complementarity of the West Indian and British interests. After 1783, the islands’ interest in free trade with the United States diverged from the mercantilist precepts which continued to drive British trade policy, and set the lobby at odds with powerful British interest groups. The British shipping interest wanted a monopoly on the islands’ trade; the Royal Navy supported a British shipping monopoly since it would provide a usable source of manpower in wartime; British merchants wanted to profit from the islands’ trade with America themselves; and the growing East India interest wanted a slice of the British sugar market. Prominent and influential loyalist exiles supported the U.S.–West Indies trade embargo on the grounds that the states were suffering the deserved consequence of their independence.<sup>25</sup>

Exports from South Carolina to Britain were ostensibly treated more favourably, though this was again determined by mercantilist considerations rather than the efficacy of merchant lobbying. The

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<sup>23</sup> On the West Indian response to the 2<sup>nd</sup> July Order in Council, see Menard and McCusker, *Economy of British America*, 368, 376; O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 239–41; HL to Benjamin Franklin, 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1784. *PHL*, XVI, 398; Kim, ‘Merchants, Politics and the Atlantic Imperial Crisis’, 135; Richard Champion, *Considerations on the Present Situation of Great Britain and the United States of America*. (London, 1784).

<sup>24</sup> Under Article XII of the treaty, only American shipping below 70-tons was permitted in the carrying trade to the West Indies. Under a congressional amendment of 24<sup>th</sup> June 1795, Article XII was rescinded and the West Indies trade opened to all American shipping. Text of the Jay-Grenville Treaty appears in William M. Malloy (ed.), *Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols and Agreements between the United States and other powers, 1776–1909*. (Washington D.C., 1910), I, 590–609.

<sup>25</sup> Moreover, from the late 1780s the West Indies lobby found itself in a more fundamental struggle against the increasingly active and well-mobilised anti-slave trade campaign. O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 241–2; Norton, *The British-Americans*, 252–3.

6<sup>th</sup> June order allowed American indigo and naval stores – commodities which could not be adequately supplied from imperial markets and which were vital to Britain’s textile and maritime sectors – to be imported freely. Similarly, the British government granted a drawback in September 1783 on the whole duty on rice imported into the country, provided it was re-exported. With characteristic scepticism of British commercial policy, Laurens regarded the arrangement as one “which appears to be beneficial to the Importer”.<sup>26</sup>

### **Resumption of Anglo-Carolinian trade**

It was, then, in a still highly charged political atmosphere – and one in which political, economic and commercial considerations were closely entwined – that trade between Britain and South Carolina resumed in peacetime. As Britain debated the terms of its post-war Atlantic trade, and negotiations between Great Britain and the United States dragged on in Paris, merchants on either side of the Atlantic wasted little time in resuming trade. Trade between Britain and South Carolina was no exception, though its actual resumption at the war’s end was less dramatic than in, for instance, New England, Pennsylvania or the Chesapeake. Direct trade between those states and Britain had effectively ceased for the duration of the war; in contrast, although direct trade between South Carolina and Britain almost entirely stopped between 1776 and 1780, it had recommenced with the British recapture of Charles Town in May 1780. In 1781, goods worth some £330,847 had been exported from England to South Carolina, a total only ever exceeded in five previous years.<sup>27</sup> Despite extensive damage to the town during the conflict, the harbour, wharves and warehousing in

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<sup>26</sup> *Statutes at Large...*, XIV, 353; HL to Bridgen & Waller, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1786. *PHL*, XVI, 655. For a detailed narrative of post-war British orders and acts of parliament relating to American commerce, see Charles R. Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy towards the United States, 1783–1795*. (Dallas, TX, 1969), 3–21, 126–7.

<sup>27</sup> Statistics on Charleston’s wartime imports and exports are drawn from Carter et al (eds.), *Historical Statistics*, V, 710–713, 714–716. Unknown quantities of British goods entered these ports indirectly, by way of Caribbean entrepôts such as St. Eustacius. See this source also for comparative computations of the value of imports and exports by colony/state throughout the period 1697 to 1791. With scant documentary evidence on wartime overseas commerce in Charleston, the organization of this trade has apparently not received any attention from historians. For anecdotal accounts of the revival of trade links with Britain during the May 1780 to December 1782 occupation, see *Philip Porcher correspondence, 1781–82*; William Ancrum to Greenwood & Higginson, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1780. *William Ancrum letterbook*. (SCL).

Charleston (as it was renamed upon incorporation in 1783) were apparently in good enough repair to support post-war trade.

Merchant ships left London for Charleston as early as February 1783, and regular notices appeared in London newspapers from August 1783 advertising the arrival of ships from Charleston.<sup>28</sup> South Carolinians were among the many Americans who travelled to Britain soon after the peace to establish commercial connections with trading houses, restoring a pattern of commercial visits which had developed in the decade preceding the Revolution. The visitors also commonly called on the manufactories supplying export goods for the American market to personally observe production and select merchandise. Charleston merchant John Edwards Jr. was one such visitor in summer 1783, meeting James Bourdieu and other London merchants as he sought to forge commercial links in the City. A fellow Charleston trader, Thomas Corbett, visited England's manufacturing towns in 1784 to buy "a very large and compleat Assortment of GOODS suitable for the approaching season".<sup>29</sup> For Henry Laurens, one of the United States' peace commissioners, the eagerness of his fellow countrymen to re-enter trade with Britain signified their dependence on the British market and had undermined America's negotiating position in Paris at a critical juncture. Witnessing American desperation, British politicians could more confidently take a harder line, allowing them to pander to domestic sentiment. "The moment the sound of Peace reached her [America]," Laurens observed, "she poured her Ships & Merchandize into British ports and received without ceremony or decent Solemnity the Ships & Merchandize of Britain, the Enemies of our Country & such there are, took advantage of her comingness, clamoured against permitting

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<sup>28</sup> *London Courant and Daily Advertiser*, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1783; on ships' arrivals, see inter alia, *Public Advertiser*, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1783; *General Evening Post*, 11<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1783; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1783. On the arrival of some of the first ships in London from South Carolina after the peace – but before the final peace terms had been settled – see also HL to Mary Laurens, 27<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1783. *PHL*, XVI, 355.

<sup>29</sup> HL to James Bourdieu, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1783. *PHL*, XVI, 275; XVI, 458n. On American merchants' tours to Britain before and after the Revolution, see Kenneth Morgan, 'Business Networks in the British Export Trade to North America, 1750–1800' in John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan (eds.), *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*. (Cambridge, 2000), 41–46.

American Ships to be Carriers of West India produce, [and] the Ministers whose seats were not very firm, took the alarm grew coy.”<sup>30</sup>

In Britain, the press was quick to trumpet post-war preferences in Charleston for British trade. When South Carolina’s governor offered a cordial reception to the first British ship to arrive in Charleston after the war London’s *Public Advertiser* took it as evidence that it “affords the pleasing Prospect of a Trade being once more opened between Great Britain and America”.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, and to press delight, Britain’s continental rivals were being spurned. “A letter from Havre de Grace [Le Havre],” the same newspaper reported in September 1783, “says that a vessel is arrived there from Charles Town in South Carolina; in which they learn, that several French Ships lie there, but cannot get half their Lading, whilst the ships bound to England have all full Cargoes; and the Merchants there seem more inclined to ship their Goods for England, than for any other Parts.”<sup>32</sup> Behind the patriotic bombast, such reports accurately conveyed the post-war orientation of South Carolina’s overseas trade. Nowhere was the upsurge in commercial activity more visible than in Charleston itself. “The genius of our people is entirely turned from war to commerce. Schemes of business & partnerships for extending commerce are daily forming”, reported Charleston resident David Ramsay.<sup>33</sup> Besides local partnerships, merchants in Charleston also forged formal transatlantic connections. Brothers-in-law William Freeman Jr. and Robert Pringle Jr., the son of

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<sup>30</sup> HL to John Owen, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1783. *PHL*, XVI, 261. Legislatures in the new states were confused about how to receive British ships that arrived in American ports before peace was formally declared, as documented in the letters of delegates to Congress throughout 1783. The reopening of trade with Britain by individual states had a snowball effect, as states vied for comparative advantage in renewed Atlantic trade, and was a further sign of the ineffectiveness of the Articles of Confederation in controlling commerce. Pennsylvanian delegate Thomas FitzSimons reported on 12<sup>th</sup> April, “the Commercial people of this City [Philadelphia] are Anxious to Know whether Vessels or Goods Comeing into this state from Great Britain, or any of her ports or Colonys can be admitted to entry at the Custom house”. With no satisfactory answer from congress, Philadelphia merchants turned to the state courts, whose judges permitted the entry of British vessels. Word spread to other states – Virginia delegates asserted on 6<sup>th</sup> May that a “commercial intercourse is under present circumstances carried freely from other States with our late Enemy, and as far as an advantage can be drawn from it, Virginia must certainly be entitled to share in it”. Over the course of 1783, British shipping was readmitted across the United States: as North Carolina delegates complained in September, “other states found other excuses for opening their ports and the disease soon became general”. Paul H. Smith (ed.), *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1775–1789*. (Washington D.C., 1976–2000), XX, 175–6, 235, 713.

<sup>31</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1783.

<sup>32</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1783.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 101.

the earlier Charleston merchant of the same name, made one such partnership. A former doctor who had developed “an inclination for merchandize”, Pringle’s willingness to sell part of his landholdings to release capital to invest in the firm illustrates the widespread expectation of the profits to be made in post-war trade.<sup>34</sup> The pair entered co-partnership in Charleston in June 1783 with each investing £2,000 sterling in joint stock. Under their agreement, Pringle was to remain in Charleston and Freeman was to represent the firm in Bristol, where his uncle, William Freeman Sr., had been a major transatlantic trader before the war. Freeman Sr. had sensibly invested “the greater part” of his trading capital in British real estate “for want of Employ of it during the American war”. Hard to liquidate, his landed assets constrained his ability to invest capital in the new firm, though it was able to draw heavily on his expertise on all aspects of transatlantic commerce: which commodities to trade, to whom to offer credit and for how long, and what their first cargo of merchandise from England should include.<sup>35</sup>

British merchants such as Freeman benefitted from pre-existing personal connections to South Carolina and the networks of credit and knowledge constructed around these. In many cases, familial links persisted or were established. Most important of all was the liberal credit British merchants, unlike their European counterparts, were willing to extend to South Carolina’s traders and planters. British merchants were therefore able to establish a strong – and to many locals, dominant – presence in Charleston. A number had arrived during the British occupation of the town between May 1780 and December 1782 and successfully petitioned for leave to remain while they ran down their inventories. From 1783, many others crossed the Atlantic to set up in trade or to make trading connections in Charleston, paralleling similar movements to Boston, New York

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<sup>34</sup> Robert Pringle to William Freeman Sr., undated (quote). The letter’s contents strongly indicate that it was sent in the first months of 1784. PFC. Bankruptcy notices in the London press are another source revealing the formation (and failure) of transatlantic partnerships between merchants in Charleston and Britain. See for example *London Gazette*, 14<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1786; *General Evening Post*, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1788.

<sup>35</sup> Articles of Agreement, June 1783; William Freeman Sr. to Robert Pringle, 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1783, 20<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1784 (quote). PFC.

and Philadelphia.<sup>36</sup> The right of British traders to enter and establish themselves in the state was assured by the state legislature in August 1783 in accordance with the terms of peace. Large numbers of both groups – those who had remained and the new arrivals – would go on to be granted American citizenship by the state. Particularly galling to resident traders, even loyalist merchants expelled from the province found ways to continue trading. Banished loyalists John Hopton and Robert Powell, for example, continued to trade by simply swapping locations with their partner, Samuel Brailsford: they went to trade in Britain and were replaced in Charleston by Brailsford, who had been based in Britain before the war.<sup>37</sup> Another expelled merchant, John Tunno took up in trade in London, corresponding with his brother Adam, who replaced him in Charleston and took American citizenship in 1784.<sup>38</sup>

New British entrants to the market arrived with large quantities of goods and offered generous credit to South Carolinian consumers, principally to the plantation owners keen to rebuild and restock their estates and who, in a cash-poor economy, required extensive credit until they could market their crops. Merchants in Charleston were themselves offered imported goods at twelve months' credit by their counterparts in Britain: Robert Pringle was proposed such terms by "several merchants of note in London & other cities in Gt. Britain" but declined them because of his existing connection with Freeman Sr. in Bristol.<sup>39</sup> For South Carolina's planters and the British entrants to Charleston commerce, a mutually beneficial arrangement was struck. Competition within mercantile ranks and high volumes of imports suppressed the price of imported goods. At the same time, this competition and the high volume of ships entering Charleston helped raise rice prices, since planters could drive a hard bargain when selling their rice to traders in the port, while these considerations also lowered freight costs. The planter-dominated legislature accordingly made

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<sup>36</sup> Olson, *Making the Empire Work*, 182–3; Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986), 242–5.

<sup>37</sup> Kellock, 'London Merchants and the pre-1776 American debts', 141–3.

<sup>38</sup> Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 103.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Pringle to William Freeman Sr., undated [early 1784]. PFC.

a number of decisions in 1783 and early 1784 that reflected this mutuality of interest by favouring the post-war British merchants. First of all, in February 1783 the merchants were granted leave to remain in Charleston while they sold off their stock. Next, this grace period was extended to cover the months when most rice was exported – January and February. A further act of legislature attempted to prevent legal discrimination against the British merchants by obliging any trials involving foreigners to be heard before a jury in which half the members were themselves foreign. A final series of decisions granted citizenship to most of those who applied. Only those applicants most closely implicated in the British occupation were rejected.<sup>40</sup>

Combined with the merchants' own much observed 'adventuring spirit', the accommodating legal environment allowed the British traders – both those who had operated in occupied Charleston and who had been allowed to remain, and their newly arrived compatriots – to acquire a large share of the port's overseas trade. For cultural, linguistic and economic reasons, European rivals were unable to compete. Specifically, they lacked both the expertise and generous credit which distinguished their British counterparts. Continental merchants were notoriously unwilling to extend credit, preferring cash payment on delivery – cash which South Carolinians did not have. Their competitive disadvantage was compounded by the poorer value of the products they were vending, with American traders in sea ports across the United States complaining about the quality and price of French goods. "Since the Peace, we have never had a single French House, that commanded Respect, or that has been intitled to it," Charleston traders Brailsford & Morris complained as late as 1787. "We have only been troubled by a set of needy Adventurers, without Fortune or Character, who by importing the refuse of the French manufactures, have effectually strengthened our prejudices in favour of the British. There are a few Dutch, and Germans, who are honest, industrious, and enjoy a pretty good Credit, but they are limited in their resources, and are

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<sup>40</sup> Thompson and Lumpkin (eds.), *Journals of the House of Representatives, 1783–1784*, 253–4; Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 92–4, 150–1.

too phlegmatic for adventure.”<sup>41</sup> Charleston’s customs collector concurred. Ships from the Netherlands, Hamburg and Sweden had called in Charleston, but “from their not being acquainted with the Trade have imported such Articles as are not saleable; Time and experience will teach them the proper Goods for this Country”.<sup>42</sup> British merchants already had the benefit of both time and experience.

In their ability to satisfy planter-led consumer demand, and by undercutting European rivals, the British traders upset Charleston’s commercial equilibrium. Goods – often sold at auction for cash and at a loss – flooded the market, undercutting the port’s established merchants. Auctions in particular “very much injured the sales by the regular merchants”, Robert Pringle complained in early 1784. Fortunately, they were decreasing so that “Trade must shortly revert to its former regular channels – much to the benefit of the resident merchants who have constant customers”.<sup>43</sup> Charleston continued to attract new British entrants and returnees throughout the decade. George Ogilvie, a young Scot who had managed his uncle’s extensive estates in South Carolina before the war before fleeing on account of his loyalism, had hoped to return to South Carolina in August 1783. However, having had his property in the state confiscated, he perhaps wisely decided that “the temper of the People is such that it would be madness to attempt going out until the ferment subsides”.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, by 1788 “having met with some losses in trade” in Britain, he was back in Charleston to seek a change of commercial fortune, with his wife and children planning to follow him if his venture succeeded.<sup>45</sup>

Perceptions of British commercial dominance unleashed powerful anti-British feeling in Charleston. The town was shaken by riots in the summers of 1783 and 1784 against the loyalist merchants who had been allowed to remain and the new arrivals from Britain. Governor Benjamin Guerard’s over-

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<sup>41</sup> Brailsford & Morris to Thomas Jefferson, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1787. *PTJ*, XII, 299.

<sup>42</sup> Ralph Izard to Thomas Jefferson, with reports on the trade of South Carolina, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1785. *PTJ*, VIII, 201.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Pringle to William Freeman Sr., undated [early 1784]. PFC.

<sup>44</sup> William Cumine to George Ogilvie, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1786. OFP.

<sup>45</sup> William Nicholson to Alexander Fraser, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1788. Alexander Fraser Papers (SCHS).

optimistic assurance to British merchants that they were “entirely safe both in person and property from any mobs, riots &c. as there will be none”, epitomised the authorities’ lack of control. The *Lord North* incident represented a highly symbolic tip of the iceberg.<sup>46</sup> Twenty years earlier, Charleston’s artisans and mechanics had been in the vanguard of the Stamp Act protests; after the war, the same sections reprised their anti-British activism. The foremost agitators, Alexander Gillon’s Marine Anti-Britannic Society, was the lineal descendent of Charleston’s pre-war Sons of Liberty. The riots saw British merchants physically assaulted and their premises vandalised. A series of lurid reports in the British press attributed them to “republicans... intoxicated with their darling independence”.<sup>47</sup> As Anglo-American relations remained tense throughout the 1780s, over issues such as Britain’s retention of forts on the United States’ northern frontier, the debts owed to pre-war British traders, American planters’ losses on slaves who had left with the British evacuation, and Americans’ right to trade with the West Indies, popular hostility towards British merchants’ privileged position in Charleston persisted. Back in Britain, newspapers painted an apocalyptic scene, in stark contrast to optimistic reports of renewed Anglo-Carolinian trade that had immediately followed the peace. Graphic reports relayed the “anarchy and confusion” in the southern states and in Charleston in particular, “where the appellation of Tory is more fatal to individuals than conviction for the worst of felonies in England”.<sup>48</sup>

Suspicion of British commercial motives in Charleston spanned the broadening divide between pro- and anti-Federalists. The judge and ardent anti-Federalist Aedanus Burke charged in an anonymous 1786 pamphlet that Britain had planted “a standing army of merchants, factors, clerks,

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<sup>46</sup> *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1784.

<sup>47</sup> *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 11<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1783; *London Chronicle*, 9<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1783, (quote). Reports of anti-Tory protests were also carried in the British press the following summer. *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1784; *Whitehall Evening Post*, 4<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1784. See also John Lewis Gervais to HL, 12<sup>th</sup> Feb. and 17<sup>th</sup> April 1784. *PHL*, XVI, 391, 431. On the turbulence and partisanship of Charleston politics during the 1780s, see inter alia John A. Hall, ‘Quieting the Storm: The Establishment of Order in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina’. (Unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1989), esp. 44–49; Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 71–124; Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 97–158; E. Stanley Godbold Jr. and Robert H Woody, *Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution*. (Knoxville, TN, 1982), 225–46.

<sup>48</sup> Inter alia, *London Recorder or Sunday Gazette*, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1785 (quote), *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1785, *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec. 1785.

agents, and emissaries, who out-manoeuvre, undersell and frighten away the French and Dutch who came here, monopolized our trade, speculated on our necessities and... plunged us into a debt". This was evidence, he claimed, of a British plot to recapture America through commerce rather than by arms. Yoking British traders to ministerial policy as explicitly as any pre-war pamphleteer, he asked: "Can you deny, that you are not mere merchants, than [i.e. but] members and heads of a British faction, to sow discontent and promote the views of your ministry?"<sup>49</sup> In the later 1780s, resistance to opening state courts to suits from pre-war British creditors, as compelled by the Federal Constitution, was an influential motor of opposition to the constitution in South Carolina and other major debtor states.<sup>50</sup> Conversely, supporters of the constitution saw Federal union, with the power to regulate commerce vested in the national government, as vital to reducing Britain's dominance of South Carolina's trade. Charleston merchants William Brailsford and Thomas Morris, the latter a future director of the state's branch of the Bank of the United States, summed up this aspiration. Writing to Thomas Jefferson in October 1787, they expressed hope that "the Federal System, as recommended by the Convention, will be acknowledged here and adopted by our Sister States. Our commerce will then experience the fruits of Order and Energy, and those Nations, who now view us with Contempt, who ridicule our Folly and Disunion, and who are enriching themselves on our Spoils, will gladly court our rising Consequence."<sup>51</sup> If they differed from anti-Federalists in their prescription for the problem, they accorded in their diagnosis of its cause. Like Aedanus Burke, Brailsford & Morris saw insidious British policy lurking within

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<sup>49</sup> Aedanus Burke, *A Few Salutary Hints, Pointing out the Policy and Consequences of Admitting British Subjects to Engross our Trade and Become our Citizens*. (Charleston and New York, 1786), quoted in George C. Rogers Jr., 'Aedanus Burke, Nathaniel Greene, Anthony Wayne, and the British Merchants of Charleston', *SCHM* 67.1 (Jan. 1966), 79–80.

<sup>50</sup> Holton, *Forced Founders*, 216.

<sup>51</sup> Brailsford & Morris to Thomas Jefferson, 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1787. *PTJ*, XII, 301. Their comments anticipate the commercial rationale for Federal union expounded just days later in Federalist XI (Hamilton). See also Federalists III and IV (Jay) and VII and XXII (Hamilton) on the necessity the U.S. Constitution to regulate commerce. James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay (ed. Isaac Kramnick), *The Federalist Papers* (London, 1987), 95–6, 98–9, 106–8, 129–33, 177. On the Federalist movement in 1780s South Carolina and its opponents, see inter alia Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 124–158; Carl J. Vipperman, *The Rise of Rawlins Lowndes, 1721–1800*. (Columbia, SC, 1978), 240–57; Mark D. Kaplanoff, 'How Federalist was South Carolina in 1787–88?' in Chesnutt and Wilson (eds.), *Meaning of South Carolina History*, 67–103.

individual British merchants' trading strategies. Resurrecting a language of bondage and subservience, they saw South Carolina's trade as "fettered by British policy" and were "anxious to emancipate our Country from the restraints imposed on her by the policy of England". At the same time, they also attributed British pre-eminence in the state's trade to specific structural factors: the debts due to merchants in Britain, the presence of so many British traders in Charleston (ironically, these included William Brailsford's father, Samuel) and the liberal credit offered by the British. Trading strategies, they believed, were an instrument of British government policy. British policy "shackled" Charleston's overseas trade through its merchants "sending out fresh Goods and of the first quality, which supports those favourable impressions of their superiority".<sup>52</sup>

Nor were local merchants alone in charging British merchants with spinning a cunning web of credit to ensnare South Carolinian consumers. Luigi Castiglioni, a Milanese visitor to the state in 1785, offered a typical jeremiad on the sorry state of Charleston's export trade. It had been, he observed,

"once quite profitable, but now on the contrary the state languishes, inasmuch as at the end of the war a great number of British and Scottish merchants moved to the southern states and offered all kinds of goods at credit to the landholders to be repaid with indigo, rice, or tobacco. The latter, enticed by the ease of providing for their needs without having to deal in cash, not only resupplied themselves with the furniture lost in wartime, but even acquired carriages, horses, and other luxury items. When the harvest season came, they were forced to hand over their crops at the price imposed by their creditors; and they found the yield much smaller than the debts previously contracted... Hence since the landholders are already indebted to the British merchants for large sums, and since they do not have the means for supplying themselves elsewhere, they are obliged to depend upon them for the most common European goods, which, on account of the slowness of payment, are sold at an exorbitant price. By means of this cunning strategy the English and Scottish merchants took the direct trade with the southern United States away from the other nations."<sup>53</sup>

In the decade after independence, the old rules of the game seemed to many to have been firmly re-established. This extended to conceptions of the British end of the trade, with British merchants

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<sup>52</sup> Brailsford & Morris to Nathaniel Barrett, to J. J. Berards & Co., Oct. 1787 (enclosures to letter to Thomas Jefferson, 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1787). Richard Walsh, (ed.). "The Letters of Morris & Brailsford to Thomas Jefferson", *SCHM*, 58 (1957), 138–141. [The letters appear in heavily edited form in *PTJ*, XII, 302–3.]

<sup>53</sup> Antonio Pace (trans. and ed.), *Luigi Castiglioni's Viaggio: Travels in the United States of North America, 1785–1787*. (Syracuse, NY, 1983), 166.

widely held to once more hold the whip hand in transatlantic trade. In a charge-list strikingly reminiscent of the pre-war disputes, London merchants were again accused of conspiring to defraud American correspondents, profiteering from the trade, overstocking American markets and drowning local traders in easy credit. Suspicions of the sharp business practices among London's Carolina traders persisted. Echoing the distrust that continued to pervade diplomatic relations between the two nations and the commercial inferiority complex emerging across the American seaports, Carolinians continued to believe they were being exploited by their London counterparts. Before the war, London merchants and brokers had been widely suspected of conniving against Carolinian indigo, deprecating its quality to reduce its price.<sup>54</sup> London's skimmers – an “adroit Fraternity” according to Henry Laurens – were similarly held to systematically defraud deerskin exporters.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps reinforced by the macro-level inequalities still enshrined in Britain's economic policy towards the United States, this persecution complex persisted at a micro-level after the war. Carolinian merchants still felt unequal partners in Atlantic trade with Britain. Having returned to South Carolina in 1785, Laurens sent London merchants Bridgen & Waller a cargo of deerskins and warned them that “[T]his may be a New Article for you, but I don't know one in which the Brokers practice more fraud”. Purchasers were also apt to find “imaginary faults” in rice.<sup>56</sup> Laurens advised the same correspondents at length on how to judge and market indigo, “as you have not had much Experience in that Branch”, and warned them how the “artful Buyer” and the “tricks of your tradesmen” in London conspired to defraud both producers and importers of deerskins, indigo and rice alike.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> On the pre-war reputation of Carolinian indigo and provincial suspicions of a metropolitan bias against it, see S. Max Edelson, “The Character of Commodities: The Reputations of South Carolina Rice and Indigo in the Atlantic World” in Coclanis (ed.), *Atlantic Economy*, 352–5.

<sup>55</sup> HL to Babut, Fils & Labouchère, 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1786. *PHL*, XVI, 636. Laurens told the Nantes merchants how early in his career a skin broker had disparaged the quality of skins Laurens had offered him in an attempt to lower their asking price: “I objected altho' I was but a Novice in the Sales, upon the whole, he was convicted, and made ashamed, and took in every Skin for Merchantable eleven excepted. I could detain you by relating many similar attempts to defraud by Skimmers...”

<sup>56</sup> HL to Bridgen & Waller, 31<sup>st</sup> March 1785 and 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1786. *PHL*, XVI, 550n, 626.

<sup>57</sup> HL to Bridgen & Waller, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1784, 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. and 1–2 Feb. 1786. *PHL*, XVI, 469–70, 625–8, 628–31.

Systemic indebtedness to British traders was another – and perhaps still more distressing – throwback to the pre-war polity, resurrecting a sense of commercial inequality. David Ramsay recalled popular angst in the 1780s in his *History of South Carolina*, published twenty years later. “The people of Carolina had been but a short time in the possession of peace and independence,” he reflected, “when they were brought under a new species of dependence... so universally were they in debt beyond their ability to pay.”<sup>58</sup> Despite connoting ongoing domination by the former mother country, liberal British credit was an addictive stimulant in the new state, lubricating the rebuilding of plantations and resumption of trade. Overstocking was a feature of the Charleston market as early as 1783. The first British merchantman to arrive in Charleston after the peace – the propitiously named *Friends* – had already found the market “overstocked with European Goods by the French, Dutch &c. from the Island of [St.] Thomas”.<sup>59</sup> South Carolina was not unique: easy credit and consequent overstocking swiftly became common across the United States’ port towns and cities, and surpluses of imported goods were widely reported in the British press.<sup>60</sup> In June 1783 Henry Laurens counselled one British merchant, who had written to Benjamin Franklin for advice on trading to America to “forbear your adventures for a little time until things are settled in America [as] every market there is at present fully supplied with Merchandize of every kind and probably overloaded. The great number of Ships gone with cargoes to America from France, Flanders, Holland, England, Ireland &c. must supply the Country with more goods than can be sold in three Years and more perhaps than will be paid for in ten... I would recommend to you Sir to avoid the Rock which many others are at this moment running their heads against, who will come home by and by with empty Pockets cursing America for their own Folly”.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ramsay, *History of South Carolina*, II, 237.

<sup>59</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1783.

<sup>60</sup> Inter alia, *General Evening Post*, 11<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1784, *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1785.

<sup>61</sup> HL to John Woddrop, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1783. *PHL*, XVI, 220–1. See also John Woddrop to Benjamin Franklin, 17<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1783 (unpublished). <http://www.franklinpapers.org>.

While overstocking of consumer goods was a feature across the United States' port towns after the war, bringing down numerous commercial houses, local factors – and in particular the widespread devastation of its agricultural base – made South Carolina's debt crisis especially severe.<sup>62</sup> Besides acquiring more merchandise than they could profitably sell, planters and merchants racked up debts to British merchants through massive credit-backed importation of enslaved Africans to replace the slaves who had left South Carolina between 1775 and 1782.<sup>63</sup> Timothy Hall, a newcomer to Charleston from New Jersey, observed the planters' rush to rebuild their slave labour forces: "Having been stripped of their stock [plantations] could yield no relief unless they could fall on some more of procuring negroes... when the British merchants threw out the bait they took it as their only resource... it was no wonder their necessities got the better of their judgment."<sup>64</sup>

Robert Pringle Jr. was one of many traders keen to secure a slice of the slave trade: among his first requests to his partner in Bristol in September 1783 was that he should "endeavour if possible to get some consignments of Negroes here".<sup>65</sup> South Carolina's demand for slaves reconnected the state not only to pre-war transatlantic channels of trade, but also to British West Indies markets, despite the prohibition of the carrying trade to the sugar islands. The islands were able to supply surplus or newly arrived slaves to satisfy burgeoning demand in South Carolina; in return they once again provided a market for the state's rice and lumber exports.<sup>66</sup> The resumption of the slave trade further exposed the commercial paradoxes – not to mention the moral hypocrisies – within renewed Anglo-American trade. For all Henry Laurens's concern over indebtedness and the qualms he had recently expressed about the traffic in human cargo, he was happy to advise London merchants on which commercial houses would receive cargoes of African slaves.<sup>67</sup> Between 1783 and 1787, when the state legislature temporarily banned further slave imports in an attempt to

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<sup>62</sup> On Philadelphia's post-war economic crisis, see Doerflinger, *Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 245–50.

<sup>63</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, 244.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph W. Barnwell (ed.), 'Diary of Timothy Ford, 1785–1786', *SCHM*, 13.4 (Oct. 1912), 194–5.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Pringle to William Freeman Jr., 7<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1783. PFC.

<sup>66</sup> See for example William Cumine (Jamaica) to George Ogilvie (Charleston), 29<sup>th</sup> May 1786. OFP.

<sup>67</sup> *PHL*, XVI, 255n. For a thorough discussion of how Laurens's attitude towards slavery evolved, see Joseph P. Kelly, 'Henry Laurens: The Southern Man of Conscience in History', *SCHM* 107.2 (April 2006), 82–123.

reduce planter indebtedness, the volume of slaves brought into Charleston reached record levels. Four slave ships arrived in South Carolina in 1783, followed by seventeen in 1784, nineteen in 1785, a further five in 1786 and three in 1787; most were British. Together, they landed more than 8,200 slaves.<sup>68</sup> Only later did Laurens perceive the systemic flaw, advising a London correspondent that, “Respecting the African Trade I have only to repeat [that] Many Men in this State I apprehend will be ruined by its continuance, let those in your Kingdom beware. My private sentiments of the morality of the traffic entirely aside, this Country already overwhelmed with debt will sink deeper & deeper by excessive importations until the evil shall purge itself off”.<sup>69</sup>

South Carolina’s reduced productive capacity – the reason for the massive slave imports – exacerbated the growing debt crisis by limiting its ability to offset imports through staple exports. Merchants and planters were caught in a classic investor’s paradox. They needed to import slaves, plantation hardware and machinery to restore the state’s productive base. However, their plantations could not in the short term – until rebuilt and restocked – generate the returns to service or repay the debts incurred. A run of three poor rice harvests between 1783 and 1785 exacerbated the problem. A structural deficit that began when Atlantic trade resumed persisted throughout the first decade of independence. In 1784, South Carolina imported English goods to the value of £442,465 sterling and exported just £173,450 in produce to England.<sup>70</sup> Average annual

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<sup>68</sup> Statistics compiled using [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org), searching ‘total slaves disembarked’ for slave voyages between 1783 and 1787 when South Carolina was the ‘principal region of slave landing’. This figure therefore excludes slaves brought overland into South Carolina or returned following the British evacuation of Charleston in December 1782. On the suspension of slave imports in 1787, see Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 127–8, 131–2; Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 171–2.

<sup>69</sup> HL to James Bourdieu, 9<sup>th</sup> June 1785. *PHL*, XVI, 568–9. Laurens also feared the renewal of the slave trade for its social implications. Slave imports had resumed within months of British forces leaving Charleston, leading Laurens to complain that “if continued this will keep them [lowcountry planters] a weak defenceless People, & may one day prove the destruction of the Sea Coast Inhabitants.” He continued to express no remorse for his personal involvement in the slave trade as one of Charleston’s largest pre-war slave importers. HL to Mary Laurens, 27<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1783. *PHL*, XVI, 355.

<sup>70</sup> See Appendix A. As such, exports were 39.4 per cent of the value of imports. South Carolina’s balance of trade with England in 1784 was favourable to that of any other region or state of the United States, except Georgia. In Virginia and Maryland, exports to England in were 32.1 per cent of the value of imports, in Pennsylvania 10.5 per cent, in New York 6.6 per cent, in New England 9.6 per cent. Statistics do not include trade between the United States and Scotland. Carter et al., *Historical Statistics*, V, 710–713.

exports to England between 1784 and 1789 were two-thirds of the value of imports from England, a reversal of the state's pre-war trade bilateral trade surplus, when exports had in most years well exceeded imports.<sup>71</sup> Throughout the 1780s, rice exports from the province lagged well below pre-war levels. An average of 73,310 barrels was exported each year between 1784 and 1789, just 60 per cent of the 122,500 shipped on average between 1772 and 1774.<sup>72</sup> Indigo exports were healthier, at only just below pre-war levels. The loss of the pre-war bounty did not deter production and South Carolina exported on average 781,000lbs of the dye each year between 1784 and 1788, compared with an average 834,200lbs annually between 1772 and 1775.<sup>73</sup> Only from the mid-1790s did indigo production cease to be cost-effective, as Carolinian indigo was supplanted in European markets by plentiful low-cost, high-quality produce from India, and planters turned instead to cotton.<sup>74</sup>

By the mid-1780s, South Carolina's growing debt crisis – and the structural trading imbalances which underlay it – was causing growing alarm in the state. Laurens advised a London correspondent in May 1785 to be “very cautious of giving extensive Credit to any Man in this Country until the State and Individual Arrears of Debt, shall be considerably diminished, and that our Exports shall at least equal the Imports.” For Laurens, blame for the crisis lay at home. He lamented his compatriots' addiction to British credit, from which only drastic measures could wean them: “little short of a total suppression [of credit to South Carolina] will reduce our Trade & correspondence to good order”.<sup>75</sup> Looking back on Carolinians' rush to repair and restock their estates, David Ramsay also identified excessive borrowing as a principal cause of the state's economic hardships during the 1780s: planters “did not always content themselves with moderate supplies for necessary purposes; but in too many cases embarrassed themselves with pecuniary engagements for the discharge of which the most favourable seasons, largest crops, and highest

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<sup>71</sup> See Appendix A. However, South Carolina's direct trade balance with England was consistently more favourable than that of either Maryland and Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York or New England between 1783 and 1790. See Carter et al., *Historical Statistics*, V, 710–713 for comparative data.

<sup>72</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>73</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>74</sup> Nash, ‘South Carolina Indigo’, 379; Winberry, ‘Indigo in South Carolina’, 98–9.

<sup>75</sup> HL to James Bourdieu, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1785. *PHL*, XVI, 560.

prices for the same would have been scarcely sufficient”.<sup>76</sup> The assembly’s moratorium on overseas slave imports in 1787 reflected official concern over the state’s debt burden: originally designed to run for three years, it would be repeatedly renewed until 1803.<sup>77</sup> As the debt crisis extended into 1787, Laurens’s rhetoric increasingly stressed the values of self-reliance and self-denial. “It would be one of the greatest blessings that could light on this Country were it to be for three or four years wholly restrained from Credit. We should get out of debt & then become honest again; in the mean time We should find ready money enough to pay for the common necessaries of Life which are all We need and all We are entitled to, except from our own exertions, in our present circumstances.”<sup>78</sup>

Laurens was rare in his reflective detachment. More radical voices such as Aedanus Burke and Christopher Gadsden, the leading voice of Charleston’s Sons of Liberty before the war, reflected a more prevalent anti-British zeitgeist. Commercial logic and continuing geo-political disputes with Britain seemed to encourage the diversion of trade away from the former mother-country. “All the States may be said to be Shopkeepers,” Gadsden complained to Thomas Jefferson, “and what Folly for any, to give the Preference to that Nation which is the least important to them, that consumes the smallest Quantity of their Produce, which with regard to our chief Staple Rice, is the Case of Gt. Britn. who tho’ they have made Peace, are manifestly far from being cordial Friends with us.” American toleration of British commercial restrictions smacked of continuing subservience. “Besides the Infatuation of giving the British the Preference of our direct Consignments to their Island,” Gadsden thundered, “[we] have as stupidly, or more so, even in our few Essays to other markets suffer’d them to be conducted under their Auspices.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ramsay, *History of South Carolina*, II, 237.

<sup>77</sup> Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 127–8, 131–2; Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, 247.

<sup>78</sup> HL to Mannings & Vaughan, 6<sup>th</sup> January 1787. *PHL*, XVI, 684.

<sup>79</sup> Christopher Gadsden to Thomas Jefferson, 29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1787. *PTJ*, XII, 295–6. On Gadsden’s conflicted political philosophy during the 1780s, identifying with the anti-British rhetoric of Charleston’s mechanics but sympathising with former loyalists and (unlike Burke) advocating Federal union to ensure central control of foreign policy and trade, see Godbold and Woody, *Christopher Gadsden*, 225–46.

Others, however, saw the British as the victims of their own success, the competitiveness of the Charleston market suppressing profits and the unreliability of consumers leaving many out of pocket. One Charlestonian correspondent to a London newspaper was “amazed at the credulity of the English merchants”, who persisted in sending goods to South Carolina long after European competitors had given up, despite the diminishing returns, losses and “the knavery and bad payments they have met with”.<sup>80</sup> Regardless of the motivations behind the predominant British axis of South Carolina’s Atlantic trade, however, and the profitability or otherwise of the British traders’ businesses, data compiled by Britain’s consul in Charleston provide evidence to support contentions of renewed British hegemony. British ships were calculated to represent 72 per cent of the total foreign shipping and 80 per cent of the total foreign tonnage clearing Charleston between November 1785 and November 1787, and 67 per cent of the foreign shipping and 78 per cent of the foreign tonnage entering the port between November 1786 and November 1788.<sup>81</sup> Statistically, at least, Britain’s control of the trade of newly independent South Carolina was nearly as complete as it had been of that of colonial South Carolina.

### **British merchants and the post-war Carolina trade**

The apparent return of South Carolina’s overseas trade to a situation reminiscent of the *status quo ante bellum* disguises major upheavals within it, however. From a focus on the British end of the trade, and the inter-personal rapprochements within it, a more nuanced picture emerges. This challenges contemporary perceptions in Charleston of commercial subservience to a monolithic cadre of British merchants. As noted in the previous chapter, as Anglo-American relations had worsened spasmodically in the decade before the war, merchants in America had by and large continued to trade with their British correspondents, regardless of whether they had signed petitions to the British government on American grievances. Calls by South Carolinians on the eve

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<sup>80</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1787.

<sup>81</sup> See Appendix F.

of the war for selective boycotts of supposedly hostile British merchants had been overtaken by blanket embargoes. However, studies of British merchant responses to the Anglo-American crises of the 1760s and 1770s, such as those of Alison Olson and Paul Langford, have, by their temporal focus on the run-up to the Revolution, missed the longer term implications of these calls for selective boycotts.<sup>82</sup> The real impact of these calls was felt only after 1783.

Resumption of trade with Britain brought commercial dividends for supporters of the American cause. Charleston traders John Hopton and Robert Powell, for example, were expelled from the state in 1783 on account of their loyalism. In their place, their co-partner, Samuel Brailsford, who had been based in Bristol before the war, went to Charleston to re-establish their trade and seek compensation for their losses. Brailsford's pre-war politics suggest why he was more acceptable in politically-charged Charleston (and also how commercial affiliations overrode political differences within pre-war Anglo-American partnerships). He had moved in radical circles in Bristol, where he had associated with the New York-born radical and MP Henry Cruger, welcomed John Wilkes to the city in 1772, corresponded with William Lee and, with Richard Champion, led moves of the city's "American Merchants, Traders, and Well-wishers to American Commerce" to petition the King in September 1775 urging conciliation with America. Still more significant for his introduction to post-war Charleston was the practical assistance he had provided the state of South Carolina during the war, when through his Charles Town lawyer he had lent more than £2,000 to its treasury to support its war effort.<sup>83</sup> Political orientation was just as important for London traders seeking to enter or re-enter the Carolina trade. The partners in Bird, Savage & Bird, London's leading post-war firm in the Carolina rice trade, had all received their training with William Manning, a trader

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<sup>82</sup> Langford, 'British Business Community'; Olson, 'London Mercantile Lobby'.

<sup>83</sup> Oscar J. P. Tapper, 'The Brailsford Debt', *Guildhall Miscellany*, II, (1961), 82–3; *Gazeteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 8<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1772; William Lee to Samuel Brailsford, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1775. Ford (ed.), *Letters of William Lee*, I, 169–171; *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. 1775; Edgar (ed.), *Biographical Directory*, II, 93.

notable for his wartime support for the American cause.<sup>84</sup> When Henry Laurens resumed trading to London after the war, exporting plantation produce for sale on commission, it was chiefly to three firms, Manning & Vaughan, Bourdieu & Chollet and Bridgen & Waller.<sup>85</sup> These connections reflected Laurens's personal friendship with the principals of each firm – William Manning, James Bourdieu and Edward Bridgen – and their assistance to Laurens when he had been imprisoned between October 1780 and December 1781 in the Tower of London, where all had visited him regularly and lobbied for his release.<sup>86</sup>

The campaigning for Laurens by these merchants was, moreover, symptomatic of their advocacy for the American cause before, during and after the war. Manning had sympathised with American grievances during the early 1770s and with fellow West Indies traders had petitioned Parliament in February 1775 against the trade restrictions they held as the cause of the Anglo-American crisis.<sup>87</sup> His partner and son-in-law, Benjamin Vaughan, was a leading figure in pro-American circles before the war, counting Benjamin Franklin, Richard Price and Joseph Priestly among his friends, and publishing an edition of Franklin's writings in London in 1780. His connections to the Earl of Shelburne earned him a place at the Paris peace negotiations in 1782–3.<sup>88</sup> For his part, Bourdieu was regarded as “a great stickler for American independence” and attempted to intercede in

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<sup>84</sup> *PHL*, X, 136n; XVI, 685n; Elias Ball (in Bristol) to his cousin Elias Ball (in South Carolina), 9<sup>th</sup> July 1785. BFP; Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 273–5.

<sup>85</sup> HL to Bridgen & Waller, 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1786. *PHL*, XVI, 625–8.

<sup>86</sup> Manning's connections to Laurens had preceded the war, when he had become Laurens's principal London correspondent after Laurens had returned to South Carolina in late 1774 after a spell in Europe. Laurens shipped his plantation rice to Manning's care before rice exports were banned by the Provincial Congress in June 1775. Links between the two were reinforced by the marriage of Laurens's son John to Manning's daughter Martha in London in October 1776. Manning continued to look after Laurens's interests in Britain during the war, holding the bulk of Laurens's funds in London (effectively acting as his banker) and keeping an eye on his younger son, Henry Jr., who was being educated in Britain. HL to William Manning, 9<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1775, William Manning to HL, 8<sup>th</sup> July and 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1775; 11<sup>th</sup> April 1778. *PHL*, X, 117, 147, 166, 211, 275; XII, 105.

<sup>87</sup> His political sensibilities did not preclude him from continuing to trade with South Carolina during the British wartime occupation of Charleston, however. Philip Porcher to Manning, 12<sup>th</sup> Nov. and 7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1781; Manning to Porcher, 6<sup>th</sup> Feb. and 6<sup>th</sup> March 1782. Philip Porcher correspondence, 1781–82. (SCL); Edgar (ed.), *Biographical Directory*, II, 534–5.

<sup>88</sup> Manning's pre-war sympathy for American grievances is suggested in his correspondence with Laurens in 1775. See Manning to HL, 17<sup>th</sup> Feb. and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1775. *PHL*, X, 68–9, 125–31; ‘Benjamin Vaughan’, *ODNB*.

America's favour at the peace talks.<sup>89</sup> Bridgen too was strongly pro-American before, during and after the war, despite the conflict's dislocation of Anglo-American trade. In October 1775, he had been among the approximately one thousand signatories of the petition to George III which called for a total cessation of hostilities in America and, like Vaughan, he struck up a close friendship with Franklin and mixed with Britain's leading pro-American advocates.<sup>90</sup>

Vaughan and Bridgen had put their sympathy into practice by serving together on the committee managing a subscription for American prisoners-of-war in Britain, established in December 1777. As described in chapter three, British merchants had long used philanthropy to demonstrate their personal commitment to America. With the outbreak of war, however, donations to explicitly American causes assumed far greater political resonance, particularly after news arrived of the British defeat at Saratoga in October 1777 and American independence first appeared a real prospect. Designed to supply the prisoners with clothing and other necessities, the prisoners-of-war fund was the most prominent of these causes and its donors read as a roll-call of opponents to the government's war policies. Like Vaughan and Bridgen, William Manning was another donor to the fund, alongside notable London radicals John Sawbridge and Richard Oliver and more moderate conciliators such as Shelburne and the Marquis of Rockingham.<sup>91</sup> Bridgen maintained his support for the United States after independence. He reflected that, during the war, he had "spent not a small sum in behalf of the right of America and Mankind", partly in a scheme that he proposed to Laurens and Franklin in which he would supply Congress with copper blanks for coins, or arrange for the coins to be minted to any chosen design. Despite failing to make any headway with the

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<sup>89</sup> HL to Benjamin Franklin, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1783. *PHL*, XV, 551.

<sup>90</sup> *London Evening Post*, 17<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1775, cited in Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*, 173–191. Joseph Nicholson, Charles Ogilvie and Benjamin Stead were the only other London merchants with interests in the Carolina trade to sign this petition.

<sup>91</sup> For Bridgen's links with Americans and American sympathisers in Britain, see for example, EB to Benjamin Franklin, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1777, 19<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1779. *PBF*, XII, 422n; XXIV, 200–1; XXXI, 129–30. On the fund for American prisoners-of-war, see *Public Advertiser*, 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1778; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 13<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1778. The prisoners-of-war fund is discussed briefly in Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*, 141–2. On the influence of the defeat at Saratoga on British opinion towards America, see Stephen Conway, 'From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, c. 1739–1783', *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 59.1 (Jan. 2002), 93–4.

coinage scheme and his personal losses, Bridgen looked back with satisfaction that “this great and Important revolution will be of general good to the world”.<sup>92</sup>

Public support for American causes during the war also helped sympathisers recover landholdings in the states that had been seized in blanket confiscations from British residents. On account of Bridgen’s various pro-American gestures, Benjamin Franklin personally persuaded the North Carolina legislature in 1785 to return the lands and slaves on the Cape Fear river in the state that had been confiscated from him in 1779.<sup>93</sup> Bridgen was perplexed by the state’s confiscation of his lands in the first place, which he attributed to certain legislators who coveted them. However, his pro-American sympathies meant he was charitably stoical on the matter. “After a Storm at Sea is over”, he reflected, “it takes some time before the waves subside, and why will you expect that every thing should immediately be smooth, after so great a Conflict?”.<sup>94</sup> Another public subscriber to the prisoners-of-war fund, William Baker Jr., had a confiscation order on his extensive South Carolina landholdings downgraded in 1784 and finally lifted in 1786. In evidence to the state’s senate and assembly, Baker’s lawyer swore that “ever Since the Commencement of the War [he] has been a warm advocate for the Rights of America” and that he had “always been foremost in liberal Contributions for the relief of American prisoners”. The committee deciding his case returned his lands to him on the grounds that he had been “a warm friend to America since the commencement of the war”.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> PHL, XV, 512n; EB to Benjamin Franklin, 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct. 1782. *PBF*, XXXVIII, 243–4. EB to Benjamin Franklin, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> August 1785 (quotes) (unpublished). <http://www.franklinpapers.org>.

<sup>93</sup> EB to Benjamin Franklin, April 1786 (unpublished). <http://www.franklinpapers.org>; *PHL*, XV, 531n.

<sup>94</sup> EB to Benjamin Franklin, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1785 (unpublished). <http://www.franklinpapers.org>. In particular, Bridgen suspected the state’s Chief Justice of coveting and seeking to annex his lands since they were contiguous to the justice’s own tracts.

<sup>95</sup> Cooper and McCord (eds.), *Statutes at Large*, IV, 758; Thompson and Lumpkin (eds.), *Journals of the House of Representatives, 1783–1784*, 82–3; Roe Coker, ‘Absentees as Loyalists’, 123–4. Baker and his father, the major London merchant, Sir William Baker, had been prominent advocates for American rights throughout the 1760s and 1770s; Baker Jr. had led London merchants’ petitioning campaigns for conciliation with America in 1775. Bradley, *Popular Politics*, 54, 148; Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*, 66, 75.

Bourdieu & Chollet, Manning & Vaughan and Bridgen & Waller had all traded to South Carolina before the war. They had done so, however, as part of broader American trading portfolios rather than as South Carolina specialists. Bourdieu and Chollet had been separately listed in London directories before the war as French and St. Eustacia merchants, illustrating the territorial breadth of their concerns. Manning, a former planter-merchant on St. Kitts, had become one of London's largest West Indies merchants after moving to the capital in the late 1760s, besides trading to South Carolina. Bridgen & Waller had principally traded to North Carolina.<sup>96</sup> After the war, in Bridgen's case at least, his sympathy to America and loyalty to Laurens outweighed his inexperience in handling the indigo and deerskins that, along with rice, he was sent. Henry Laurens's personal trade to the firms is apparent from his post-war letterbooks. More important still was his influence in connecting them with newly established Charleston trading houses: although his own post-war trade was much reduced from its 1760s peak, his commercial experience and political eminence gave his recommendations considerable weight. As early as August 1783, he was recommending Charleston trading houses to his London correspondents and as noted above, despite his by then professed aversion to slavery, was advising London merchants which commercial houses in Charleston would receive cargoes of African slaves. He continued to actively promote trade between his (and America's) London friends and Charleston merchants after his return to South Carolina from Europe in 1784.<sup>97</sup>

By contrast, British merchants who had been actually or supposedly hostile to the American cause found that their perceived political orientation returned to haunt them after the peace. As noted in the previous chapter, it seems that none of the leading specialist Carolina traders before the war had been regarded as sympathetic to the American cause, with Greenwood & Higginson, John Nutt and

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<sup>96</sup> *The Universal Director [Mortimer's Directory]*, 1763; *PHL*, II, III, passim; XVI, 104–5n; *Public Advertiser*, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1772; *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1776; Olson, 'London Mercantile Lobby and the Revolution', 26–7; CO5/65/220: 1764. A Samuel Chollet had travelled to St. Eustacia in 1779 from whence he continued to transact business with South Carolina – though it is unclear if the Chollet in question is the partner in Bourdieu & Chollet, or his son. William Ancrum to Samuel Chollet, 27<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1779. William Ancrum letterbook (SCL).

<sup>97</sup> *PHL*, XVI, 255n.

Christopher Rolleston singled out as notable enemies of the colonies. Their wartime commercial strategies perhaps reinforced presumptions of anti-American bias. Many experienced transatlantic traders pursued the course William Freeman Sr. had adopted, uncontroversially investing uncommitted trading capital in British land, as a more secure investment. Others diversified into still open branches of North American trade – a riskier but still politically neutral choice. London’s leading Georgia merchants, Davis & Strachan, were involved during the war in the trade to Quebec; so too was John Shoolbred, one of Britain’s largest slave exporters before the war, as his primary trade contracted markedly between 1778 and 1782.<sup>98</sup> Potentially more controversial was the investment strategy chosen by London’s leading pre-war Carolina merchants, who took advantage of the financial opportunities provided – albeit indirectly – by the war. As government expenditure rocketed, so too did its borrowings as it financed the war effort in large part by expanding the national debt. Loans funded some 40 per cent of total government expenditure during the war and government stock was marketed heavily, with the City of London’s traders and financiers the largest subscribers.<sup>99</sup> Among these, individuals and firms in the Carolina trade, seeking a secure haven for trading capital which could no longer be safely invested in transatlantic cargoes, were sizeable purchasers. Their stakes were announced in the London press, appearing in the published lists of patriotic investors. John Nutt subscribed £15,000 to the total of £12m loaned to the government in 1779–80. Investing the same amount the following year, he was joined by Greenwood & Higginson, who bought £12,000, and by fellow traders to the Lower South, Davis, Strachan & Co. (£6,000) and Clark & Milligan (£3,000).<sup>100</sup> Their subscriptions signal the large amount of money at the firms’ disposal and hint at their overall capitalisation – the amounts subscribed by Nutt and by Greenwood & Higginson, for example, comfortably exceeded the median average.

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<sup>98</sup> *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, 21<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1782.

<sup>99</sup> John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783*. (London, 1989), 114–6.

<sup>100</sup> *London Courant and Westminster Chronicle*, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1780, 17<sup>th</sup> March 1781.

In subscribing to the loans, the merchants were making a rational investment decision: the four per cent interest on government stock represented a safe and reliable return on invested capital at a time when other commercial investments were neither reliable nor secure. More symbolically, the merchants' loans subscriptions also represented a twofold commitment to the government. Firstly, they signalled a confidence in its capacity to raise the taxes and duties needed to fund its debt repayments. Secondly, they represented a public commitment to its war effort, albeit one in which calculations of commercial self-interest were also at play. Their loans were enabling the government's military strategy in America, in effect financing military actions to restore the *status quo ante bellum*. As such, they anticipated returns on the capital invested in the loans and, through the loans, endorsed a return to the pre-war trading conditions in which they had prospered. While it is not certain that these subscriptions were known in South Carolina, as publicly advertised gestures they offered a pointer to the subscriber's political loyalties.

In particular, John Nutt's apparent hostility towards America saw him shunned in post-war commerce. Henry Laurens avoided dealings with him after the war, despite Nutt's pre-war expertise in the Carolina trade, particularly in the marketing of indigo. Personal animosity between the two men and Nutt's political stance made him, Laurens believed, "an Enemy to my Country".<sup>101</sup> Besides the suggestiveness of their loan subscriptions, the traders' anti-American reputations had been reinforced by their wartime conduct. In one particular incident, Nutt – who was purported to have influence with Lord Hillsborough, Lord North's hardline secretary of state – had secured the release from prison and political conversion of his long-time correspondent Gideon Dupont Jr. An advocate of American independence at the start of the war, Dupont was a Charleston trader who had been sent by South Carolina's provisional government as supercargo on board a ship to France in late 1776 "for the purpose of purchasing... necessaries such as stores, ammunition & arms".

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<sup>101</sup> HL to Bridgen & Waller, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1784. *PHL*, XVI, 470. Laurens claimed that, because of a dispute over a pre-war debt, Nutt had used his influence with Lord Hillsborough (according to Laurens, Nutt "had His Lordship's Ear at Command") to prolong his imprisonment in the Tower of London so that "my breath and his debt might be extinguished at the same time". *PHL*, XV, 371.

However, the vessel was seized by a British man-of-war and Dupont taken as a prisoner to Portsmouth where he was freed “in consequence of interest made for him by Mr. John Nutt”. Dupont returned as a loyalist to British-occupied Charleston, and the episode was later presented to the British government’s post-war debt compensation commission as evidence of Nutt’s own staunch loyalism.<sup>102</sup> London merchant James Poyas was spurned by pre-war connections on similar grounds. Formerly a merchant in Charleston, Poyas had transferred to London in 1767 and before the war had maintained a transatlantic partnership with Daniel DeSaussure, who after the war became one of the partners in the new firm of Smiths, DeSaussure and Darrell. Two of the other partners, George Smith and Josiah Smith Jr., had acted as Poyas’s attorneys in the province. Poyas criticised the Patriot cause and his associates’ handling of his funds in Carolina during the war, which led the new firm to terminate their connection after the peace.<sup>103</sup> The ruse of former Charleston loyalists Robert Powell and John Hopton to send their British partner Samuel Brailsford to Charleston in their place when they were banished from the state, though clever in theory was unsuccessful in practice, scuppered by long memories in the port. The firm was shunned despite the fact that the two former loyalists were themselves in London, and went bankrupt in 1786.<sup>104</sup>

For his part, Charles Ogilvie’s wartime strategy of cutting his cloth to reflect changing political realities in the province backfired.<sup>105</sup> For Ogilvie, the lure of profit, and perhaps the desperation to maintain links with South Carolina, had been so persuasive that he had tried to circumvent legal impediments and continue trading with the province before it returned to British hands in May 1780. Illicit trade through the Dutch island colony of St. Eustacius, long a site for contraband inter-

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<sup>102</sup> T79/5/133; Edgar (ed.), *Biographical Directory*, II, 212. Nutt’s assistance to Dupont further exemplifies the interplay of inter-personal commerce and politics during the war. Dupont had been one of Nutt’s principal pre-war correspondents in Charleston and had owed him considerable debts. Nutt therefore had had a strong vested interest in delivering Dupont from jail and seeing him return to productive commerce in South Carolina, to enable him to pay off his debts. Ironically, the plan backfired. Dupont’s renunciation of his former Patriot convictions and his siding with British in occupied Charleston led to the confiscation of his estate after the war, preventing him from repaying his debt to Nutt.

<sup>103</sup> *PHL*, VI, 406n; Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 98–9.

<sup>104</sup> For newspaper reports on the bankruptcy, see *London Chronicle*, 27<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1785; *London Gazette*, 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1786; Kellock, ‘London Merchants and the pre-1776 American debts’, 142–3.

<sup>105</sup> Charles Ogilvie to John Chesnut, 25<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1780. Williams–Chesnut–Manning papers (SCL).

imperial commerce, was one popular channel.<sup>106</sup> Trade through French ports, one of several avenues which Ogilvie tried, was another option. With his extensive landholdings in South Carolina, Ogilvie had even more at stake in the war than most of his London trading counterparts. His wartime manoeuvrings illustrate the political tightrope Atlantic merchants were willing to tread in order to secure their investments. Having signed the pro-American petition to the King in October 1775, he went out to South Carolina in 1777. After a year in the province, he joined several other American traders in the French port of Nantes, the nexus of France's wartime trade with the United States. In Nantes, Ogilvie and several other American traders corresponded with the American Commissioners in Paris between November 1778 and February 1779, seeking support and protection for a convoy they were attempting to send to America. Ogilvie's association with this group – several of the other Nantes traders were Americans who had escaped from British prisons – in their attempt to send war supplies to the rebellious colonies might suggest he was strongly attached to the American cause.<sup>107</sup> More likely, Ogilvie was simply acting from self-interest, capitalising on an opportunity to re-enter trade, restore his finances and manifest an ongoing commitment to South Carolina. A February 1779 letter to his nephew George elucidates these concerns. Preparing to return once again to Charles Town but anxious lest his earlier departure from the province might have led to his estates in the region being confiscated, he sought news of “all my Concerns in South Carolina & Georgia” and “the kind of reception I might expect to meet on my Arrival... my long Detention in England (though unavoidable by me) may have given room for Surmises to my disadvantage on the other side”.<sup>108</sup> In early 1779 Ogilvie did indeed return to South Carolina, sailing from France (as would tell Britain's post-war Loyalist Claims Commission) in a small vessel in the hope it would be seized by the British, since all prisoners of the British were

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<sup>106</sup> On British merchants' use of St. Eustacius as an entrepot for trade with wartime South Carolina, see George Ogilvie to Alexander Ogilvie, 21<sup>st</sup> August 1778; to Peggie Ogilvie, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1778. OFP. William Ancrum to Greenwood & Higginson, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1779, and to Samuel Chollet, 27<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1779. William Ancrum letterbook (SCL). On St. Eustacius during the American Revolution and its capture by the British, see O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 214–227.

<sup>107</sup> *London Evening Post*, 17<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1775; *PBF*, XXVIII, 55–7, 76, 166; XXIX, 108.

<sup>108</sup> Charles Ogilvie to George Ogilvie, 4<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1779. OFP.

exempted from the penalties of South Carolina's confiscation act. His scheme went according to plan – for the time being. The vessel was captured by a British privateer and Ogilvie was held on parole in Bermuda for eight months. Finally, the British recapture of Charles Town in May 1780 prompted Ogilvie to make one last critical switch of allegiances. Permitted to leave Bermuda, he went back to South Carolina, where he became an enthusiastic supporter of British dominion and took office in its wartime administration.<sup>109</sup>

For his prominence in British-controlled Charleston between 1780 and 1782, Ogilvie was categorised by the state of South Carolina as having been one of the most active loyalists: “those who have borne commissions, military or civil, under the British government since the conquest of South Carolina”. All his estates were confiscated and he was forced to return to London, where he lamented that he had been “stripped almost naked of property... there is not one single acre of Land, nor Negro or other Article as yet restored to my Children, or to any body for them”.<sup>110</sup> Even while in Charleston, he had been powerless to prevent the sale of his “two most productive plantations” in early 1782, almost certainly Richfield and Mount Alexander in Prince William Parish. In total, Ogilvie estimated the value of his lost American property at some £40,000 sterling.<sup>111</sup>

### **London merchants and wartime lobbying**

During the war, with their trade to South Carolina curtailed by American blockades and by the Prohibitory Act, passed by Parliament in December 1775, London's Carolina traders had turned once more to the British state for remediation. Throughout the conflict, they kept up the lobbying and political interaction that had been integral to their pre-war business activities. In particular, they were haunted by the spectre of property seizures and the loss of unsecured debts owed to them in South Carolina, and exerted considerable effort in seeking to recover their pre-war debts. Those

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<sup>109</sup> AO12/48/32–47.

<sup>110</sup> *London Chronicle*, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1782.

<sup>111</sup> Charles Ogilvie to Alexander Ogilvie, 17<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1783. OFP.

who had extended the greatest credit to the province before the war – those, as noted above, held by Carolinians as most implacably hostile to America – naturally stood to lose the most and led the way in pressing government for assistance. Anticipating the legislation that would outlaw trade with the rebellious colonies, William Greenwood and John Nutt appeared before the Board of Trade in November 1775 on behalf of “the Merchants of London trading to South Carolina and Georgia”. They tried to persuade the Board that Carolinian and Georgian rice imports should be excluded from forthcoming Prohibitory Act, then making its way through Parliament. The exemption would theoretically have enabled them to recoup debts in the region by importing rice, although the embargos by then adopted in America would have cut off supplies at source even if the Board had recommended an exemption. It did not, however, and the content of the Prohibitory Act, which forbade all trade with the rebellious colonies and made their produce legitimate prizes of war, confirmed their worst fears.

As the traders were beginning to discover, the power of British political institutions to mediate Anglo-American trade was, for the time being at least, much diminished. London’s Carolina traders would confront this new reality time and again during their long campaign to recover their pre-war debts over the next twenty years. In the immediate term, however, the traders concentrated their efforts on ensuring that these debts received due legal recognition in Britain. Greenwood & Higginson, John Nutt, Richard Shubrick and Christopher Rolleston were among eighteen signatories to a petition to Secretary of State Germain in January 1778 urging that American adherence to pre-war debts be a stipulation of any conciliation with the rebellious colonies. The same men, constituting a distinct though informal grouping of metropolitan North America merchants, followed this up with a similar petition to the King, which also highlighted the danger of the continental and provincial congresses’ paper money emissions.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> CO5/79/5–6; CO5/116/49.

Unable to exert any commercial traction in South Carolina while Charles Town remained in Patriot hands, interaction with the British state had assumed a new degree of importance for London's Carolina traders. Government intervention, they recognised, would be vital to help them recover debts and resume in the trade where they had made their fortunes. The capital's Carolina and Georgia merchants sought official permission to circumvent the trading restrictions which prevented them from recovering their capital. Writing to Germain in November 1778, ahead of the British campaign in Georgia, Greenwood & Higginson, Clark & Milligan and John Nutt applauded the plan to "reduce the disaffected people of that Province to a just Sense of their Duty and Allegiance". They appealed that once Georgia was pacified, they should be exempted from the Prohibitory Act and allowed to receive produce – albeit, in deference to political considerations, only from estates owned by British residents or American loyalists – as recompense for pre-war debts in South Carolina and Georgia.<sup>113</sup> Petitioning efforts reflected in their tone the ebb and flow of the war. Success of British arms in Georgia in 1779 prompted congratulations and the expression of hopes that order would be quickly restored as the colony was brought back into the imperial fold. The traders' basic demand – that pre-war debts be made a condition of the re-establishment of civil government in colonies or in any peace settlement – did not vary.<sup>114</sup> The return of Savannah and Charles Town to British hands from December 1779 and May 1780 respectively and the prospect of renewed trade with both Georgia and South Carolina through each port gave further impetus to their petitioning. British authorities generally lent a sympathetic ear. A July 1780 petition to the King from London's Carolina traders complained about the reported seizure of account books, indigo and other property by Sir Henry Clinton's forces in Charles Town,

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<sup>113</sup> CO5/181/65–74.

<sup>114</sup> CO5/181/192–3; CO5/80/134–5. The petitioning efforts also reflected how London's American traders, with their direct trade to the colonies curtailed, soon lost the insights and intelligence into American affairs which had defined and built their Atlantic commerce. For example, seven merchants with interests in the Georgia trade, including Greenwood & Higginson, Richard Shubrick and John Nutt, petitioned the Earl of Carlisle and his peace commissioners in March 1779 for the restoration of civil government in Georgia. The commissioners had just returned from an abortive trip to America, where their peace proposals had been comprehensively rebuffed.

since these items could “be applied to the discharge of British Debts”. Lord Germain forwarded the petition to Clinton in Charles Town.<sup>115</sup>

With the military situation in the southern theatre changing fast and their epistolary and commercial links with South Carolina severed by war, the petitioners were, however, deprived of the reliable and timely information which had built and had been central to their peacetime commerce. As such, much of their petitioning was superseded by events even before the government could consider their demands, let alone transmit them to or enforce them in South Carolina. By the time London’s Carolina and Georgia merchants expressed hope to the Board of Trade in July 1781 that “the usual intercourse of Commerce be again resumed”, British control in the Lower South was confined to Savannah, Charles Town and a few isolated backcountry outposts. Calls for the restoration of civil government in South Carolina and the hope of “bringing back the People of Carolina to a true sense of the blessings of being once again Reunited with the Parent Country” during the summer of 1781 reflected the aspirations of a year before, and bore little resemblance – though the London traders of course did not know this – to the rapidly deteriorating situation for British forces on the ground.<sup>116</sup> Even with Charles Town in British hands and the infrastructure in place for a restoration of trade, plantation output was far below the levels needed to make any dent in the burden of debt, and was not reaching Charles Town in anything like pre-war quantities.

Instead, as the table below indicates, the reopening of direct trade between England and South Carolina and Georgia after a four-year hiatus actually exacerbated British commercial debts in the provinces.<sup>117</sup> Some £637,531 of goods were imported into South Carolina while Charles Town was in British hands between 1780 and 1782. With agricultural output severely reduced by marauding

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<sup>115</sup> CO5/397/357–8. This petition was signed by (in the order that their names appear) John Nutt, Greenwood & Higginson, Richard Shubrick, John Shoolbred, Champion & Dickason, Lane, Son & Fraser and George Bague.

<sup>116</sup> CO5/652/34–8; CO5/397/374–5.

<sup>117</sup> Figures do not include the statistically insignificant trade between South Carolina/Georgia and Scotland.

troops, the loss of slave labour and the disruption of transport links, South Carolina's exports to England in the whole of the war were valued at only £129,966, or just over 20 per cent of the value of the imported goods. The proportion of imports to exports between England and Georgia was similar, though the volumes were much smaller. Since the overwhelming volume of imports would have been on credit, not only did British merchants fail to reduce their debt exposure in the Lower South during the war, the total debts owed to them increased considerably.

**TABLE 5.1: VALUE OF IMPORTS FROM AND EXPORTS TO ENGLAND BY COLONY, 1776–1782 (£ STERLING)**

	South Carolina			Georgia		
	Imports	Exports	Exports as % of imports	Imports	Exports	Exports as % of imports
1782	69,743	14,182	20.3	340	6,804	n/a
1781	330,847	94,368	28.5	14,059	506	3.6
1780	236,941	708	0.02	91,888	2,251	2.4
1779	-	3,732	-	85	607	n/a
1778	-	1,074	-	-	-	-
1777	-	2,234	-	-	-	-
1776	-	13,668	-	-	12,569	-
Total	637,531	129,966	20.4	106,372	22,737	21.4

Source: Carter et al. (eds.), *Historical Statistics*, V, 710–713.

Once news of the British defeat at Yorktown in October 1781 had arrived in Britain, revealing the inevitability of the loss of the American colonies, London's North American merchants turned their efforts to securing full recompense for their pre-war debts in the eventual peace settlement. The capital's Carolina traders were once more at the forefront in this lobbying, their regular wartime interaction with the government standing in marked contrast to the pre-war passivity that had aroused Carolinian ire. A committee of merchants "trading to the Provinces of South Carolina and Georgia previous to the year 1776" was formed and headed by William Greenwood, John Nutt and John Clark. In petitions to Shelburne's administration in summer and autumn 1782, it sought "clear & solid Stipulations... for the complete Security of the legal demands of the British merchants and those they represent previous to the year 1776".<sup>118</sup> Specialist Carolina and Georgia

<sup>118</sup> CO5/397/406–7, 409–10, 436–7.

traders were also prominent in a wider lobbying effort that concerned debts across the former American colonies and which brought together traders from the different geographic branches of London's pre-war American trade. This prominence further reflected the scale of their trade and their losses, and their significance within London's American trade. Of the 20 traders who petitioned Shelburne on North American debts in April 1782, seven would claim a total of £646,857 in debts in South Carolina and Georgia – more than a quarter of the total debts of £2,324,889 that London merchants claimed in 1790 in all the former American colonies.<sup>119</sup>

The merchants' petitioning to the government during 1782 was marked by a self-exculpatory approach, conspicuously absolving themselves of personal responsibility for their commercial losses. Like the committee of Carolina merchants, they identified themselves as having been interested in the American trade "previous to the year 1776". This was a conscious attempt to distinguish the legitimacy of their debts "contracted under the Faith and Sanction of the British Laws before the unhappy Dispute commenced" from the wartime losses run up by 'adventurers' who had attempted to continue trading during the war, in defiance of the Prohibitory Act. Such adventurers – traders such as Charles Ogilvie, though he was not singled out – had thereby placed themselves outside the protection of British law and could have no claim for redress. Further attempting to bolster the legitimacy of their claims, the pre-war traders somewhat spuriously transferred the blame for their losses to the British government. They charged to Shelburne in April 1782 that it was "by the operation of the Prohibitory and other Laws [that] your Memorialists have been prevented by receiving Payments of their just Debts and have thereby been plunged into the

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<sup>119</sup> CO5/8/268–9. The seven Carolina and Georgia trading houses to sign the April 1782 petition to Shelburne (with pre-war losses in South Carolina and Georgia, as self-estimated in 1790 in brackets) were Greenwood & Higginson (£269,760), John Nutt (£103,680), Neufville & Rolleston (£81,600), Clark & Milligan (£60,284), Richard Shubrick (£48,113), Davis, Strachan & Co. (£47,040) and Graham & Simpson (£36,380 claimed by its successor firm, Graham & Johnson).

utmost Difficulty and Distress”, implying that but for the Prohibitory Act trade would have continued as normal. They repeated this claim in August 1782.<sup>120</sup>

Pursuing pre-war debts also impelled a new level of organisational coherence among London’s North America merchants. Pre-war commercial lobbying had only rarely seen cooperation between London merchants in different geographic branches of North American trade. Differences in how various American exports were treated in the Navigation Acts had served more often to divide than to unite the American traders, with rare exceptions such as the Stamp Act lobbying. Paralleling the divergent sectional interests within the American colonies (and post-war states), Carolina merchants had thus sought to influence policy on South Carolina; Chesapeake and New England merchants had for the most part similarly confined their efforts to their spheres of interest. In contrast, the issue of the pre-war debts affected merchants who had traded to each of the American colonies. Securing favourable government policy on these losses accordingly required concerted action. A committee of London’s pre-war American merchants was established in mid-1782. This resurrected an ad hoc grouping convened in 1765 to co-ordinate merchant appeals against the Stamp Act, but which had been active only intermittently in the next ten years, for instance in its rather belated calls for the repeal of the Townshend Duties in 1770 and for reconciliation in 1775.<sup>121</sup> It comprised the leading pre-war traders and – once again signifying the status attained by London’s leading Carolina traders – was led by William Greenwood, John Nutt and the Maryland trader William Molleson.

In six petitions between August and November 1782, the committee pressed Thomas Townshend, Shelburne’s secretary of state, to ensure that full payment of pre-war debts would be enshrined in the peace treaty with the United States. Their efforts did not go unnoticed – Shelburne advised peace commissioner Richard Oswald of the “daily applications” of “some of our most considerable

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<sup>120</sup> CO5/8/268–9, 286–7.

<sup>121</sup> Kim, ‘Merchants, Politics and the Atlantic Imperial Crisis’, 195–6.

merchants”.<sup>122</sup> As details of the proposed treaty emerged – specifically that pre-war debts would be judged in American courts – the committee’s tone became more desperate. From pressing that the debts would not be neglected in the peace treaty, by late November 1782 the American traders were demanding that their claims be heard in British courts. As they saw it, “any System for their Security and Satisfaction would be... of little importance if it is not fixed on a Solid Basis here, for if they are compelled to seek redress from their Debtors in North America by having recourse to the Courts there, it would... be an absolute mockery of their Sufferings”. No courts in America could be impartial, since the debt claims would be determined by “Judges and Jurors composed of those very People many of whom have been the Chief Authors and Instruments of their misfortunes.”<sup>123</sup> To the merchants’ frustration, however, this was exactly the agreement reached in Article IV of the Treaty of Paris.

### **Pursuing the pre-war debts in Britain and South Carolina**

The Treaty of Paris made clear that repayment of *bona fide* pre-war debts in the American colonies was the responsibility of the United States. Unlike its controversial Article V, which ambiguously stipulated that Congress would “earnestly recommend” that the states restore property and rights to loyalists, Article IV demanded there be “no lawful impediments” to the collection of debts contracted on either side before the war. With Article V’s earnest recommendation comprehensively ignored by the states, the British government was compelled by domestic public and political sympathy for the loyalists’ plight to assume responsibility for investigating and covering loyalist losses itself. A Loyalist Claims Commission was established in 1783 and in the next seven years systematically examined some 3,225 claims.<sup>124</sup> By excluding pre-war commercial claims

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<sup>122</sup> CO5/8/363–6, 417–8. Shelburne quoted in Kim, ‘Merchants, Politics and the Atlantic Imperial Crisis’, 244–5.

<sup>123</sup> CO5/8/363–4.

<sup>124</sup> Norton, *The British-Americans*, 178–84, 216.

from the commission's remit – since under Article IV this was the United States' responsibility – the British government effectively decoupled loyalist and merchant interests.

Within the United States, the responsibility for compelling the settlement of pre-war commercial debts was conferred on state courts, a devolution which would have major ramifications for British claimants. Levels of pre-war debts were highest in the plantation south, and it was here that opposition to this section of the treaty was greatest. Courts in South Carolina and Georgia were among the most intractable. According to one Carolinian observer, congressional recommendations, were viewed “like the Pastoral Letters of a Bishop” and treated with about as much reverence.<sup>125</sup> Compensation claims to the British government complained of the “divers lawful impediments” to the collection of commercial book debts in South Carolina, in direct contravention of the peace treaty. Isaac King was one who attributed his debtors' evasions to the legal environment. “If your Assembly possessed any principle of honour”, he complained to his Charleston attorney, “they would be ashamed to act so unjustly & directly contrary to Treaty; while they were considered as in a state of Rebellion such conduct was expected from them, but now their Independence is admitted they should pay some regard to Justice & the Law of Nations”. He considered the assembly members who had passed South Carolina's debt laws, “in a worse light than Highwaymen”, a judgment no doubt reinforced when one of his own debtors was able to avoid making repayments by being elected to the state assembly and claiming legislative privilege from arrest.<sup>126</sup> Agents and attorneys in South Carolina were employed to pursue debtors through the courts and British merchants regularly crossed the Atlantic to press in person for repayment. Among them were John Alexander Ogilvie on behalf of his father Charles during the 1780s, Edward Neufville in the mid-1780s, William Greenwood Jr. on behalf of Greenwood & Higginson

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<sup>125</sup> Malloy (ed.), *Treaties, Conventions, International Acts*, 586–590; Francis Kinloch to Thomas Boone, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1783. Felix Gilbert (ed.), ‘Letters of Francis Kinloch to Thomas Boone, 1782–1788’, *JSH*, 7 (1942), 95. On legal obstructions in the southern states, see Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 63–4; Holton, *Forced Founders*, 216.

<sup>126</sup> Compensation claim of Strachan & Davis, T79/36/237–8; Isaac King to Joshua Ward, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1784, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1789; Joshua Ward to Isaac King, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1785. IKL.

in 1790 and Richard Shubrick, who paid “his native Country a visit in order to settle sum of his oldest concerns” in 1791.<sup>127</sup> John Nutt employed Charleston lawyer William Loughton Smith, an old family connection whose education in London Nutt had supervised during the 1770s, to pursue his debtors in the state.

For Britain’s merchant creditors, the fundamental weakness of the Articles of Confederation underlay the (il)legal impediments to claiming debts. Without a firm central government to compel acquiescence, individual states could confidently disregard international agreements, specifically on the question of debts – precisely the reason for much anti-Federalist feeling in the south. “However much I dislike the British Govt.,” Isaac King reflected, “I detest republican Govt. or no Govt. still more.”<sup>128</sup> Ratification of the Federal Constitution in 1788 therefore prompted high hopes that treaty obligations would finally be honoured and pre-war debts repaid. The “abuse of Power” by South Carolina’s assembly would soon be curtailed, King’s Charleston attorney informed him in January 1789, “as our Federal Government will soon be organised”.<sup>129</sup> One beneficiary was William Higginson who determinedly chased the debts owed to him and his late partner, William Greenwood, through the Federal courts, and won several suits in 1793 against former Charleston correspondents.<sup>130</sup> Samuel Brailsford was less successful when he took the loyalist claims of his former partners, John Hopton and Robert Powell, all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States, which unanimously rejected them in 1794. In a paradoxical twist, by taking American citizenship to pursue the claims, he rendered himself ineligible to make comparable claims in Britain.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Charles Ogilvie to George Ogilvie, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1788. OFF; HL to Edward Neufville, 8<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1787. *PHL*, XVI, 613n, 748; Isaac King to William Greenwood, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1790. IKL; Elias Ball (Bristol) to Elias Ball (South Carolina), 14<sup>th</sup> July 1791. BFP (quote).

<sup>128</sup> Isaac King to Robert Smyth, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1785. IKL.

<sup>129</sup> Joshua Ward to Isaac King, 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan. 1789. IKL.

<sup>130</sup> Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 121–2, 250–2.

<sup>131</sup> Tapper, ‘The Brailsford Debt’, 82–3; Kellock, ‘London Merchants and the pre-1776 American debts’, 142–3.

All too often frustrated in their efforts to reclaim their debts through South Carolina's courts during the 1780s, London's pre-war Carolina traders looked increasingly to the British state for redress. They resurrected the lobbying tactics that had characterised their interaction with the state before and during the war, putting their trust in tried and tested methods despite the profound geo-political shifts that had dislocated their ordinary commercial activities. A specialist Committee of South Carolina Merchants and Traders was operating in the mid-1780s, though the only record of its activities is in a newspaper report on its meeting with Pitt in December 1786 to discuss "matters relating to the American trade".<sup>132</sup> Pre-war debts were presumably on the agenda. A personal meeting with the Prime Minister indicates both the group's influence and the gravity the government attached to the conditions of post-war Anglo-American trade – before and during the war, traders had to be content with making their case before the Board of Trade or in letters and petitions to the secretaries of state. The Committee of London Merchants, with John Nutt at its helm, was more prolific in representing to the British government its members' travails in recovering pre-war debts. It found a sympathetic ear. Again suggesting the renewed efficacy of commercial advocacy, the issue of merchant reparations became one of the major contentions in Anglo-American diplomacy throughout the 1780s as Pitt's administration repeatedly pressed the United States on the matter.

Determined obstructionism in the states themselves and South Carolina specifically – a function of the ineffectiveness of Federal fiat – had starkly illustrated the new geo-political realities, however. Neither the Committee of London Merchants, nor the British government acting on its behalf, were able to compel the states to acquiesce in compensating pre-war claims. Nor, for all its sympathetic noises, was the British government prepared to pay compensation itself. Partly it was a question of funds: grappling with the huge deficit left by the war, government finances could not stretch so far. More significantly, an important diplomatic point was also at stake – one which

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<sup>132</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 11<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1786.

exemplifies the interplay of micro-level individual experiences with macro-level political and diplomatic policy formulation. If it had reimbursed the British merchants itself, the British government would have absolved the United States of one of its formal treaty commitments and surrendered an important bargaining card. Commercial compensation was a critical element in a delicate balance of grievances on either side, alongside navigation rights on the Mississippi, Britain's forts on the northern frontier and American rights of trade in the West Indies. With the British government unwilling to cede the moral high ground it assumed on the matter of pre-war debts, British residents with pre-war commercial debts in America were caught between American intransigence and British resolve to maintain an Atlantic balance of power.<sup>133</sup>

Nor were the pre-war traders – unlike the exiled loyalists – able to capitalise on widespread public sympathy in Britain. The government's perceived neglect of the loyalists in the preliminary peace treaty had helped bring down Shelburne's administration in March 1783, and the loyalists ultimately received some £3 million in compensation for their losses, mostly raised through public lotteries.<sup>134</sup> Compared to the sentiment aroused the exiles' plight, Britain's mercantile creditors were confronted by apparent public and political indifference to their claims: Isaac King attributed the Commons being "so sanguine" on the matter to Britain's own "distressed state".<sup>135</sup> While Carolinian exiles such as Elias Ball could look to public figures like his "particular Friend" Lord Cornwallis to press their case before the claims commission, reimbursement of British traders for

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<sup>133</sup> The success of an appeal by pre-war Indian traders for government compensation further illustrates the significance of the balance of power equation in British policy towards the commercial debtors: where Parliament accepted that responsibility for repayment fell on the British side, it was willing to provide funds. In 1788, a group of former Cherokee traders in South Carolina and Georgia lobbied Parliament for recompense for land in Georgia ceded by the Indians to the crown in 1773 in lieu of debts owed to the traders. In this case, Parliament accepted that compensation to the traders for their losses was rightly its responsibility, and it duly voted in May 1790 to pay them £49,500 in compensation. *JHC*, XLIII, 179–180, 312; XLV, 458; *Parliamentary Register 1780–1796*, 1788, 136–7.

<sup>134</sup> Jasanoff, 'The Other Side of Empire', 215–6.

<sup>135</sup> Isaac King to Nathaniel Russell, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1784. IKL.

pre-war debts was left squarely, and in keeping with the terms of the peace, to the American side.<sup>136</sup> The divergence of loyalist and merchant interest became most apparent in the mid-1780s, when the two groups came into direct opposition. The loyalist lobby had powerful emotive appeal and, with advocates such as Lord Cornwallis – still a figure of considerable bearing in Britain, despite his culpability in the British army’s defeat in America – could wield strong influence in the corridors of power. It made repeated efforts between 1785 and 1787 to persuade the government to block Americans from using British courts to claim pre-war debts from loyalist exiles in Britain. Contravening Article IV of the Treaty of Paris, the bill introduced into Parliament to this effect would have paralleled the legal impediments erected by American states that were preventing British merchants from recouping their pre-war debts. The Committee of London Merchants opposed these attempts on the grounds that such a measure would make its own members’ claims even harder to pursue, and after vigorous debate in the press the bill was withdrawn.<sup>137</sup> The controversy highlighted the fissures between loyalist and merchant factions; the Committee of London Merchant’s successful opposition to the proposals also further signalled its own traction in domestic politics, even if it was unable to translate this into legislative or financial achievement in the United States.

Only with the ratification of the Federal Constitution did the United States government finally assume responsibility for state debts in 1790. The establishment of Federal authority finally offered British traders the prospect of recovering their pre-war debts in American courts, though passage of time and the inevitable deaths, insolvencies and relocations of the intervening years dampened expectations. John Nutt, together with two fellow pre-war traders to the southern colonies, Chesapeake merchants Duncan Campbell and William Molleson, assembled the outstanding claims

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<sup>136</sup> On Lord Cornwallis’s aid to Carolinian loyalists in Britain, see Elias Ball (Bristol) to Elias Ball (South Carolina), 30<sup>th</sup> Jan. and 6<sup>th</sup> June 1785. BFP. The former’s experience as an exile in Britain is discussed in Ball, *Slaves in the Family*, 236–7.

<sup>137</sup> ‘Petition of the Committee of Merchants trading to North America’, 13<sup>th</sup> April 1787. Add MSS 38221, f. 334. (British Library, London); Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 57–8; Norton, *The British-Americans*, 208.

of pre-war British traders. By the time they submitted their report to the British government in February 1791, the estimated £412,000 sterling in pre-war debts owed in South Carolina to British creditors had swelled with interest to £687,953. This represented the second highest in total of any state behind the £2,305,408 owed in Virginia and, calculated per white resident, was the highest of all the states.<sup>138</sup> Paul Langford has attributed the plantation states' overwhelming share of the debts to the unprecedented demand for northern colonies' cereal in 1774–5, when the British harvest failed. Coinciding with the successful boycott of British imports, farmers and merchants in New England, New York and Pennsylvania effectively wrote off their colonies' longstanding trade deficit with Britain and their personal debts to British merchants in a single year.<sup>139</sup> However, non-importation was equally successful in South Carolina, where the value of exports to England in 1775 was a record £579,549 against imports from Britain valued at £6,245. The unprecedented level of exports was partly driven by European demand for rice. Like northern cereals, it served as a replacement carbohydrate, and the 452,822 hundredweight of the grain exported to England that year was more than ten per cent higher than the previous yearly record, set in 1772. A bumper indigo harvest also saw 1,122,000lbs. of the dye exported from the colony in 1775, a third more than the previous yearly record, with nearly all going to England. Unlike the northern colonies, moreover, South Carolina had enjoyed a structural surplus in its bilateral trade with England in the decade before the Revolution, with the value of its exports to England comfortably exceeding that of its imports. The table below shows that between 1768–9 and 1771–4 exports exceeded imports in all but one of these years, and were in total 120.8 per cent of the value of imports. These figures exclude 1770, another non-importation year, when the value of South Carolina's exports to

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<sup>138</sup> Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 89; Kellock, 'London Merchants and American Debts', 113–4; Coclanis, 'Hydra Head', 11–2. Jacob Price has highlighted the limitations of the debt claims as a guide to the relative share of debt by colony and British port, since the different organization of different trades affected creditors' ability to reclaim pre-war debts. The nature of the Glaswegian retail tobacco trade with planters in Virginia, North Carolina and Maryland, he suggests, made these debts harder to collect, therefore inflating the Glaswegian share (and, by implication, tobacco colonies' share) of total debts. If this is correct, it suggests that debts in South Carolina may have been a still higher proportion of the 'real' pre-war total. Price, 'Who Cared about the Colonies?', 410–11.

<sup>139</sup> Langford, 'British Business Community', 299–305. On the role of non-importation and the bumper tobacco exports of 1775 in reducing Virginian planters' debts, see also Holton, *Forced Founders*, 119–129.

England was nearly double that of its imports. Including the non-importation years of 1770 and 1775, the value of South Carolina's exports to England was 149.7 per cent of the value of its imports in the period 1768–1775.<sup>140</sup>

**TABLE 5.2: VALUE OF IMPORTS FROM AND EXPORTS TO ENGLAND, 1776–1782, SOUTH CAROLINA (£ STERLING)**

	Imports	Exports	Exports as % of imports
1775	6,245	579,549	-
1774	378,116	432,302	114.3
1773	344,859	456,513	132.3
1772	449,610	425,923	94.7
1771	409,169	420,311	102.7
1770	146,273	278,907	190.7
1769	306,600	387,114	126.3
1768	289,868	508,108	175.3
Total 1768–9, 1771–4	2,178,222	2,630,271	120.8
Average 1768– 9, 1771–4	363,037	438,379	120.8

Source: Carter et al. (eds.), *Historical Statistics*, V, 710–713.

Why were South Carolinian debts to British merchants not therefore written off in the manner that Langford observed in the northern colonies? He ascribed the high southern debts to losses incurred on alienated property. Individual debt claims in the southern colonies suggests this was not universally true. The organisation of the tobacco trade in the Chesapeake colonies meant that British (mostly Scottish) merchants had significant property assets, in the form of country stores, in Virginia and Maryland. These figure prominently among the debts claimed in these states. In contrast, relatively few British Carolina traders owned premises in South Carolina that were integral to their commercial operations, as discussed in chapter three, notwithstanding the demonstrative significance that absentee-owned plantation land and urban properties possessed. Demands for property-related compensation among the Carolina merchants' debt claims are accordingly lower than in the Chesapeake claims – reflecting their non-commercial basis, they were more likely to have been submitted to the Loyalist Claims Commission. A sample of the claims reveals instead

<sup>140</sup> Carter et al., *Historical Statistics*, V, 710–713.

that book debts, bond debts and outstanding loans were the most common basis of the claims. This again points to commercial overextension by British firms in the province by offering over-generous credit and overstocking the Charleston market, supporting the charges leveled against them in South Carolina before the Revolution.<sup>141</sup> Superficially, the revival of trade between Britain and Charleston during the British occupation might help explain the size of British debts in South Carolina. After all, as shown in table 5.2, the value of imports into Charleston from Britain during this period exceeded the value of imports by a margin of five to one, while in contrast the war almost entirely curtailed British trade to the Chesapeake, to Pennsylvania and to New England. British imports to each of these regions between 1777 and 1782 were negligible. However, debts incurred during the war were excluded from assessment in 1790, with only debts verifiably contracted before the war eligible for redress. Moreover, claimants such as Nutt and Greenwood & Higginson had specifically identified themselves as traders “previous to 1776” in their efforts throughout the 1780s, distinct from the ‘adventurers’ who had engaged in wartime commerce. Renewed bilateral commerce between Britain and South Carolina during the final two years of the war no doubt added, through its structural imbalance, to the overall volume of debts owed to British merchants, and certainly had political ramifications within South Carolina and for its post-war trade with Britain. It did not add, however, to the specific debts that London’s leading pre-war traders claimed throughout the 1780s and beyond.

The vast majority of British debts claimed in South Carolina – some £596,289, or 87 per cent of the total – were by London merchants. Some £562,538 (94 per cent) of these were claimed by just nine firms, a concentration which becomes even more striking when the claims of one of these firms,

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<sup>141</sup> Commercial claims are filed in the T79 American Loyalist Claims Commission records at the National Archives, London. For examples of debts on account, in bond and through loans, see in particular the compensation claims of David & Strachan, T79/36/237–8; Charles Ogilvie, T79/43/177; Thomas Binford, T79/20/285–6.

Powell & Hopton, which were rejected as fraudulent, are discounted.<sup>142</sup> The nature of the claims impels some caution in drawing wider conclusions. The claims were self-estimated and are therefore likely to err on the high side, while individual claimants calculated interest over different periods and at different rates, some compounding, some not.<sup>143</sup> The totals claimed more closely correlate, moreover, to the credit strategies of different firms than to the levels of these firms' overall participation in the trade. Although the two were closely related, some London houses were undoubtedly more cautious in extending credit to colonial customers than others. Overall, however, British export merchants both before and after the war used the length and generosity of their credit as one of their chief calling cards. Long and generous credit was key to competitive advantage and to attracting new correspondents. Higher volume of trade and greater cashflow allowed more extensive credit to be offered, closely linking length of credit to commercial scale. As such, the British traders who had extended the most credit to colonial customers, and were consequently the most exposed when war broke out, were the largest participants in the Carolina trade. These were the trading houses left most out of pocket when war broke out and the largest claimants in 1790.

**TABLE 5.3: LONDON TRADING HOUSES CLAIMING MORE THAN £10,000 IN DEBTS IN SOUTH CAROLINA, 1790**

	Claims in South Carolina	Claims in Georgia	Claims in other states	Total claims	Claim as % of total debt claimed in South Carolina by London merchants (£596,289)
Greenwood & Higginson	£211,533	£58,227	-	£269,760	35.5%
Neufville & Rolleston	£81,600	-	-	£81,600	13.7%
John Nutt	£61,081	£42,599	-	£103,680	10.2%
Powell & Hopton	£59,500	£13,600	-	£73,100	10.0%
Davis, Strahan & Co. <sup>144</sup>	£47,040	-	£1,849	£48,889	7.9%
Robert Smyth <sup>145</sup>	£38,399	-	£1,476	£39,875	6.4%

<sup>142</sup> Powell & Hopton's claim was dismissed on the grounds that they had resided in Charleston rather than Britain before the Revolution and that it was therefore outside the purview of the commission considering the claims. Kellock, 'London Merchants and the pre-1776 American Debts', 141–3.

<sup>143</sup> On methods of calculating interest on the debt claims, see in particular T79/5/142–4: petitions in support of John Nutt's compensation claims, 22<sup>nd</sup> June and 17<sup>th</sup> August 1804.

<sup>144</sup> Firm listed in London directories on Tower Hill in 1769 and Mincing Lane in 1783. William Davis and James Stra[c]han had been partners with James McKenzie in James McKenzie & Co., the major pre-war Cowes re-exporting house for Carolinian rice. *PHL*, V, 313n, VI, 80n.

Richard Shubrick	£30,049	£18,064	-	£48,113	5.0%
Graham, Johnson & Co. <sup>146</sup>	£17,680	£18,700	-	£36,380	3.0%
James Poyas	£15,656	-	-	£15,656	2.6%
Others (9 claimants)	£33,751				5.7%

Source: Kellock, 'London Merchants and the pre-1776 American Debts', 109–149.

Despite the inherent limitations of the post-war debt claims, they therefore offer a good guide to London export merchants' relative exposure in the pre-war Carolina trade. They partly explain why the most prominent pre-war firms did not reassert a dominant market position after 1783. Greenwood & Higginson and John Nutt submitted the largest and fourth largest of all American claims by London merchants, for losses of £269,760 and £103,680 respectively. The firms were the leading London trading houses to South Carolina and were consequently the most financially extended in the state: their personal appeal to the Board of Trade in November 1775 for the exemption of the rice trade from South Carolina and Georgia from the Prohibitory Acts was made with good reason.<sup>147</sup> Both houses' claims were exclusively for debts in South Carolina and Georgia, confirming their geographic trading specialism: Greenwood & Higginson claimed £211,533 in South Carolina and £58,227 in Georgia; Nutt claimed £61,081 in South Carolina and £42,599 in Georgia.

If the extensive debts claimed by London's leading pre-war Carolina traders help explain their withdrawal from the trade after the war, it was not, however, because it reduced them to penury, denying them the capital to invest once more in the Carolina trade. Neither Greenwood & Higginson nor Nutt's massive losses in South Carolina drove any of the partners to destitution, nor diminished their status in the City of London. Despite complaining in 1778 that "the Carolina Gentlemen had got his whole Fortune, to a single Guinea", Nutt was able, as shown above, to

<sup>145</sup> Robert Smith had operated a "Carolina House" in Aldermanbury, London, before the war, but had filed for bankruptcy in November 1774. John Laurens to HL, 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1774. *PHL*, IX, 645.

<sup>146</sup> Details of Graham, Johnson & Co.'s trade are obscure, but the firm appears to have been an offshoot of the major Georgia trading house of Graham, Clark & Co. Kellock, 'London Merchants and the pre-1776 American Debts', 124.

<sup>147</sup> CO391/82/157.

spare £30,000 to invest in government stock during the war and Greenwood £12,000.<sup>148</sup> Greenwood's fortune and diverse portfolio of investments are further evidenced by his will. On his death in April 1786, he was able to leave one son his grand Little London estate in Middlesex, and substantial landholdings in Yorkshire to another. The sons received his "plantations and negroes" in America jointly, while his daughter had to make do with £6,000 and a joint share of the rest of his unspecified estate in Britain.<sup>149</sup> Other major South Carolina claimants similarly continued to prosper despite their losses. Richard Shubrick, who submitted claims in 1790 for debts of £30,049 in South Carolina and £18,064 in Georgia, left an estate of at least £20,000 on his death in 1797.<sup>150</sup> James Poyas, who had claimed losses of £15,656, continued to operate in business from prestigious locations in the heart of the City – Broad Street, Throgmorton Street and Lothbury – though his post-war field of trade is unclear. He left substantial bequests in his will, including a dowry of £5,000 for his daughter, when he died in 1799. Christopher Rolleston, who together with his partner Edward Neufville had claimed £81,600, was a neighbour of Poyas in both Throgmorton Street and Lothbury, though his business activities are also obscure. He eventually retired to a country estate in his native Nottinghamshire, where he became the county's high sheriff.<sup>151</sup> The continuing wealth of these former elite Carolina merchants was matched by consistently high status in the City. Greenwood in particular was one of London's most eminent commercial figures in the 1780s, and served as one of three arbitrators to consider a celebrated dispute between the government and Richard Atkinson, a major London merchant, over the latter's wartime provisioning contracts.<sup>152</sup> Shubrick's omission from London trade directories after 1783 suggests that he withdrew from trade, but he continued as a director of the London Assurance Company

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<sup>148</sup> William Manning to HL, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1778. *PHL*, XII, 128; *London Gazette and Westminster Chronicle*, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1780 and 17<sup>th</sup> March 1781.

<sup>149</sup> Greenwood died "after a lingering illness, at his house in Budge-Row [London], in the 53<sup>rd</sup> year of his age... an eminent merchant". *General Evening Post*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1786; will of William Greenwood, Prob. 11/1142, 20<sup>th</sup> May 1786.

<sup>150</sup> Will of Richard Shubrick, Prob. 11/1289, 29<sup>th</sup> April 1797.

<sup>151</sup> Will of James Poyas, Prob. 11/1326, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1799; will of Christopher Rolleston, Prob. 11/1467, 19<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1807.

<sup>152</sup> *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 30<sup>th</sup> March 1784.

until his death.<sup>153</sup> Nutt's business activities during the 1780s and 1790s are hard to discern but he too remained active in the City, continuing in commerce and sitting on philanthropic committees.<sup>154</sup> Greenwood and Nutt continued as members of the Committee of North American Merchants, the body which Nutt co-chaired and which took the lead in promoting traders' pre-war debt claims.<sup>155</sup>

Even if their losses did not denude them of the capital to re-enter business, the merchants' debts hindered their ability to re-establish themselves in the Carolina trade in two other ways. Efforts to recover debts in South Carolina were time consuming and dispiriting. Isaac King's lament that few possessed sufficient patience "to combat Carolina disappointments" summed up the often fruitless campaigns mounted by pre-war British creditors to secure repayment.<sup>156</sup> Popular ferment in the state against British traders threw up legal impediments such as the notorious Pine Barren Act, so called because it allowed debtors to repay their creditors with nearly worthless tracts of land, rather than in money. By devaluing pre-war commercial debts, it made them nearly impossible to reclaim. As one Charleston attorney informed a British creditor, "the Power of the People having virtually superseded the Law", his chances of recovering his client's debts were sorely limited.<sup>157</sup> Other claimants confirmed their pre-war reputations for avarice by dunning debtors for full and immediate payment and refusing to accept partial settlements, though their efforts bore little fruit.<sup>158</sup> After years of frustration, even the opening of the Federal courts to British claimants was greeted with scepticism. John Nutt explained in a letter to William Grenville, Pitt's foreign

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<sup>153</sup> *General Evening Post*, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1786; *Oracle Bell's New World*, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1789; *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1795.

<sup>154</sup> For example, Nutt sat on a committee in 1794 managing a subscription for the relief of widows and children of the seamen killed during the Anglo-French warfare, and was one of the numerous City merchants who pledged in an advert placed in the press by the Bank of England to accept bank notes in all payments in order to support the public credit. *London Chronicle*, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1794; *Morning Chronicle*, 31<sup>st</sup> July 1794; *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1797.

<sup>155</sup> Campbell and Molleson claimed in 1791 for debts, respectively, of £38,134 in Virginia and Maryland, and £71,038 in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Kellock, 'London Merchants and the pre-1776 American debts'; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 20<sup>th</sup> March 1783; Olson, *Making the Empire Work*, 179–180.

<sup>156</sup> Isaac King to Joshua Ward, 9<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1790. IKL.

<sup>157</sup> Joshua Ward to Isaac King, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1785. IKL.

<sup>158</sup> HL to Christopher Rolleston, 12<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1785, to Edward Neufville, 8<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1787. *PHL*, XVI, 613–22; 748.

secretary, in 1792: “With respect to opening the Law Courts of America at this distant period of time, we have but too much reason to fear it will now avail us but little, such has been the devastation and change of property occasioned by deaths, insolvencies, removals and other attendant circumstances of delay.”<sup>159</sup>

A still more insurmountable obstacle preventing the traders from re-entering the Carolina trade derived from the contracting of the debts themselves. Pre-war and wartime politics (or at least *purported* political orientation) mattered in post-war trade. The liberality of credit offered by pre-war London merchants and their congruent dominance of the export trade to Charleston gave rise to suspicions in South Carolina that they were profiteering from the trade, financing extravagant lifestyles, and dominating their debtors. It was, moreover, conflated with political enmity to the American cause. The debts had been the source of what Ralph Izard had termed the London merchants’ “princely magnificence” and the instrument of their commercial hold on Carolinian correspondents.<sup>160</sup> It is too simplistic to suggest that these debts were a principal factor in American resistance and rebellion, as Progressive historians once contended. They were nevertheless suggestive of systemic British constraints on the colonial economy. After the war, these debts symbolised the London firms’ former dominance and impeded them re-entering the trade. Firms such as Greenwood & Higginson, Nutt, and Rolleston & Neufville – London’s largest pre-war Carolina houses, the biggest creditors to South Carolinians and consequently the most exposed when war broke out – were too closely implicated in the pre-war system. Their pursuit of their debts in South Carolina was a potent reminder of their pre-war dominance and approach to trade, and saw them ostracised and prevented from resuming trade in pre-war channels.

Credit strategies from before the war – in themselves broadly reflective of the relative scale of merchants’ trade – thus came back to haunt London’s Carolina traders. Those which had extended

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<sup>159</sup> Cited in Kellock, ‘London Merchants and the pre-1776 American debts’, 139.

<sup>160</sup> Ralph Izard to Thomas Lynch, 14<sup>th</sup> February 1775. *CRI*, I, 47–8.

credit most liberally to their provincial correspondents – generally the largest London Carolina houses such as Greenwood & Higginson and John Nutt – lost the most. But as suggested, these firms were best able to bear the losses. Individuals and firms which had been in financial trouble even before the war or which had been most reliant on their assets in South Carolina were hit far harder. In Charleston it may have been, as local traders Brailsford & Morris claimed, “those Commercial Houses who enjoyed the first reputation prior to the Revolution” who were most affected by “the Calamities of War, with the baneful effects of the Paper Depreciation”. In London, it was the firms which were already struggling that appear to have suffered most.<sup>161</sup> Both Charles Ogilvie and Isaac King, for example, traders who had run into financial difficulties in the early 1770s and had consequently become more dependent on fixed and liquid assets in South Carolina, found themselves in dire financial straits.

Isaac King’s experiences epitomise the travails of London’s pre-war Carolina traders who relied most heavily on their assets, whether in the form of commercial debt or landholding, in the state. Looking back in 1790 on seven years of fruitlessly pursuing his Carolina debtors, he reflected that “patience is a necessary ingredient to pass thro’ life with tolerable quiet, but very few [are] imbued with a sufficiency of it to combat Carolina disappointments”.<sup>162</sup> Counterparts from the pre-war Carolina trade would surely have concurred. The debts owed to King in South Carolina long predated the war, stretching back to his partnership in the major London Carolina trading house of Nickleson & King during the 1760s. Few businesses had been hit harder by the spectacular collapse of the Charleston house of Middleton, Liston & Hope in 1766. Nickleson and King sued the firm in an attempt to recover some £26,000 sterling and, following a “bootless & disagreeable Voyage” to Charleston in 1767 to pursue the claim, King returned to the province twice during the 1770s to

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<sup>161</sup> Brailsford & Morris to Thomas Jefferson, 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. *PTJ*, XII, 298.

<sup>162</sup> Isaac King to Joshua Ward, 9<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1790. IKL.

the same end.<sup>163</sup> After the war King depended on his capital in South Carolina in order to re-establish himself in trade: “want of [money] prevents me from fixing in any Business”, he informed one of his debtors in Charleston, “& keeps me wandering about in an unsettled state”.<sup>164</sup> Straightened circumstances forced King and some other former London Carolina traders to start afresh in less expensive locations. King found more modest accommodation in Bristol, taking a room in (appropriately) King’s Square, where he paid £35 a year in rent “including Board at a decent Table”. A counterpart went to Lancaster “to see if he can fit in any Business there”.<sup>165</sup> Another option was to leave Britain altogether to take up trade or planting in South Carolina itself: notwithstanding their rough treatment by the state and its debtors, it still held the prospect of economic opportunity. Bristol merchant and manufacturer Richard Champion suffered the second largest losses of any British trader during the war. He calculated his firm’s losses at £182,382, including interest, mostly in Massachusetts. With his trading and industrial concerns in Britain ruined, Champion moved with his family in 1784 to South Carolina, where his brother-in-law was a merchant, and established successful backcountry plantations near Camden.<sup>166</sup> Even Isaac King was tempted. He mused in 1785 that, if he could not recover the South Carolinian debts that would restore him to his former circumstances in England, “I can see nothing else that I can do but go to Carolina in the Winter, purchase a plantation with a few Negroes upon Credit.. & pass the remainder of my life in the Woods of America under a Govt. I most cordially detest”.<sup>167</sup> King never acted on his whim, however, and remained in England, frustrated by the ongoing evasions of his creditors and the debt laws which favoured them.

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<sup>163</sup> South Carolina Court of Common Pleas, Judgement Rolls: 71A, 276A; 72A, 392A. HL to Isaac King, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1767. *PHL*, V, 320; IX, 289n; Maurice A. Crouse (ed.), ‘Papers of Gabriel Manigault, 1771–1784’, *SCHM*, 64.1 (Jan. 1963), 7.

<sup>164</sup> Isaac King to James Fisher, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1783. IKL.

<sup>165</sup> Isaac King to Joshua Ward, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1783; to Nathaniel Russell, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1784, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 1785. IKL.

<sup>166</sup> Walter E. Minchinton, ‘Richard Champion, Nicholas Pocock, and the Carolina Trade’, *SCHM*, 65.2 (Apr. 1964), 89–91; N. L. Bailey and Elizabeth Ivey Cooper, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives, vol. III, 1775–1790*. (Columbia, SC, 1981), 136–8.

<sup>167</sup> Isaac King to Nathaniel Russell, 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb. 1785. IKL.

## Conclusion

The contrasting post-war fortunes of the merchants who had conducted the Atlantic Carolina trade before 1776 may seem self-explanatory. That Charleston's merchants selected their trading partners after the war on the basis of their correspondents' political orientation, with pro-American houses such as Manning & Vaughan, Bourdieu & Chollet and Bridgen & Waller prospering, and those most associated with pre-war hostility – Greenwood & Higginson, John Nutt et al. – finding themselves excluded from their specialist branch of trade, seems at first glance obvious. But it is nonetheless a significant and neglected dimension to the restoration of Anglo-Carolinian trade that pre-war politics influenced post-war commerce. Trade did not simply resume in its former channels. Statistics showing the overall re-orientation of South Carolina's trade by volume and national share disguise the more nuanced scenario which this chapter has sought to expose. Presenting an individuated picture reveals the greater agency available to individual firms and the factors that informed their commercial choices. As such, it destabilises assumptions about Anglo-American interaction in the decade after the war by many contemporaries and historians alike. Jeremiads circulating in post-war Charleston lamented the renewed dominance of British traders. The merchants were variously said to have “monopolized” and “shackled” the state's trade, and to have employed a “cunning strategy” to divert trade away from American's wartime allies, the French and the Dutch. The pervading discourse, voiced both by Federalists and anti-Federalists, told of commercial subservience to a monolithic cadre of British traders, an assessment with which historians have perhaps been rather too willing to concur. Evidence of the commercial choices made in post-war Charleston temper these lamentations. Individual commercial decisions belie the rhetoric of collective impotence in the face of British legal impediments and systemic advantages. Charleston's post-war trade reveals how American commercial agency was greater – and exercised more freely – than contemporaries and historians have recognised.

This chapter has also shown the long-term consequences of the pre-war political and commercial choices Britain's Carolina traders made. Before the war, South Carolinians may have lacked the

collective power to challenge the specific London traders whom they held as agents of ministerial intrigue and hostility: trade embargoes served as blunt instruments of commercial retaliation, cutting off trade to sympathisers and purported antagonists alike rather than targeting the latter. However, after 1783 – and despite the perception that political independence had brought continuing commercial servility or a form of half-independence – merchants in Charleston were belatedly able to exercise the selective discrimination that they had been unable to achieve before the war.

More broadly, evidence presented here points to the benefits of a more ‘inter-temporal’ approach to analysing eighteenth-century Anglo-American commerce and its political subtext and implications, one which spans the years either side of the American Revolution. All too often, these periods are disconnected through preoccupations in American history with ‘colonial’, ‘Revolutionary’, ‘Federal’ and ‘early Republic’ as distinct entities, and in British history with a ‘First’ and ‘Second British Empire’ dichotomy. Historiography which either concludes in 1783, or which begins then, tends by its nature to omit the inter-temporal continuities of the period and their interpretive potential. Looking back, exposing how pre-war commercial strategies and decisions transcended the Revolution offers a coda which buttresses economic/materialist interpretations of the Revolution. The post-war treatment of supposedly anti-American British merchants re-exposes the depth of the opprobrium directed towards them before the war. Condemnations of their acquiescence with or – worse – complicity in hostile ministerial policy were not simply rhetorical devices. They stood accused of conspiring to deprecate Carolinian produce to defraud colonial suppliers, of profiteering from their trade, of ensnaring correspondents in webs of easy credit, and of failing in their duty to represent the colony’s interests to the government. Study of how these political and commercial grievances intersected within the transatlantic Carolina trade casts light on how one set of Anglo-American ties broke down. In so doing, it offers a means of reconciling the neo-Progressive emphasis on social, economic and commercial forces with the neo-Whig preoccupation with ideological determinants.

Contemporary perceptions validate this approach. Historical analysis which bridges American independence more closely reflects notions held at the time that the United States' break from Great Britain was a continuing process, rather than a done deal. For many in South Carolina – and this applies to nascent Federalists and anti-Federalists alike – formal separation from Great Britain had brought but a form of half-independence from the former mother country. Nowhere was this more visible than in Atlantic commerce. South Carolinian responses to the state's post-war trade with Britain suggest how, for many in the 1780s, commerce and American independence were entwined, symbiotic and – both figuratively and literally – 'unfinished business'.

## EPILOGUE

### “Let me have done with American lands”

After moving from London to Bristol in search of cheaper accommodation, Isaac King had briefly considered setting up a plantation on the undeveloped tracts of land he still owned in Craven County, South Carolina. As the 1780s progressed, however, he became so dispirited by the recalcitrance of his debtors and the state courts that he chose not only to stay in Britain, but to sever his landholding ties with the state entirely. “I do not wish to possess Landed property anywhere but England”, he told his attorney. Three years later, with the tracts still unsold, his impatience was clear as he instructed him to “sell them for what you can get & let me have done with American lands”.<sup>1</sup> King’s frustrations were typical of many pre-war Carolina traders and landowners in Britain. Some had escaped having their land confiscated only to encounter new legal obstacles. Their experiences and the institutional constraints they encountered further exemplify four of this thesis’s principal themes: that superficial continuities in the post-war Anglo-Carolinian polity disguised deeper changes; that experiences in pre-war trade powerfully influenced post-war decision-making; South Carolina’s parallels with the West Indies; and how individual experiences were shaped by transatlantic structures – in this case as powerfully after American independence as before.

As with the renewed pre-eminence that Britain enjoyed in South Carolina’s post-war overseas trade, the resurrection of a transatlantic market in South Carolinian land after the Revolution suggested a return to *ante bellum* conditions. American independence and ongoing legal wrangles over loyalist confiscations and pre-war debts did not deter some British residents from buying lands or taking possession of inherited estates in South Carolina. For many, the new state still offered the hope of profits unachievable in Britain. John Martin, a resident of Cumberland in northern England,

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<sup>1</sup> Memorials of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century South Carolina Land Titles, 1731–1775, II, 473. (SCDAH); Isaac King to Joshua Ward, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1783, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1786, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1787, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1788, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1791. IKL.

inherited an estate near Georgetown from his brother. After crossing the Atlantic to settle his new lands in 1788, he was enraptured by his new planter's lifestyle. "I have a very good house to live in", he wrote from his Belvoir plantation to his son in London, "and pretty near 60 negroes small and great about me to do what I order. Almost 30 are employ'd every day amongst the Rice... my Garden & Vineyard afford all sorts of Delicates, such as Peaches, Pomegranates, Figgs, Grapes... and all kinds of Vigatables." Martin made plans to send rice, indigo, skins and cotton to Britain in exchange for imported goods, believing that "most things sell for near one hundred per cent". A neighbouring storekeeper was thought to make such a high margin even though he did not import his goods personally.<sup>2</sup> Martin was not alone in Britain in seeing the potential of South Carolinian land. London merchants James Bourdieu and Samuel Chollet acquired 5,000 acres of prime undeveloped land on the Edisto River in 1785, apparently with a plan to partition it into smaller tracts for resale. Reckoned by a surveyor to be "of the best quality", it was valued at two guineas per acre.<sup>3</sup> Transatlantic landholding, it seemed, continued much as before the Revolution.

With South Carolina in urgent need of capital to rebuild and restock, British investors such as Bourdieu & Chollet were obvious sources of investment. Sales of land recognised Britain's continuing interest in the region and its economic redevelopment. Henry Laurens tried in 1787 to sell his Georgian plantations in Britain. Though both plantations had been ravaged during the war, Laurens hoped that together with two undeveloped tracts and lots in the projected town of Brunswick, they would raise some £8,000 sterling. He advised his friend and correspondent William Manning that the offer price was just half their actual value and persuaded him to advertise the lands in London, Bristol and Liverpool newspapers. Recognising the integration of the Lower South and West Indies plantation economies, the adverts emphasised the tracts' complementarity for a buyer with land in the West Indies. They would make, they stated, "an excellent Addition to an Estate in Jamaica, or other West India islands" on account of the lumber and provisions they

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<sup>2</sup> John Martin Sr. to John Martin Jr., 1st July 1788 (quote) and 26<sup>th</sup> April 1789. John Martin Papers (SCHS).

<sup>3</sup> HL to Bourdieu, Chollet & Bourdieu, 20<sup>th</sup> October 1785. *PHL*, XVI, 566–7n, 603–4.

might supply, abounding with “Cypress, Pine, Oak, Hickory, and Ash trees” and with “Ranges for raising Horned Cattle, Horses, Hogs &c. in the greatest Abundance”.<sup>4</sup> Vast tracts in South Carolina’s fast-populating backcountry were also offered at auction in London, further indicating the hopes that Britain remained a fertile market for Carolinian land. Tracts on the Congaree and Wateree rivers, near the new state capital of Columbia and totalling some 250,000 acres, were put up for auction in London in 1789. Appearing alongside adverts for Jamaican plantations and English country estates, auction notices stressed that the lands were at least partially cultivated, including “several capital rice works, with houses and other buildings” and land “naturally adapted to the culture of indigo and tobacco”, as well as being good cattle country. Potential owners need not fear having to hack a living out of the woods: the plantations were touted as equivalents to more familiar West Indies or domestic investments.<sup>5</sup> The same year, a plantation sixty miles from Charleston and with navigable river access to the port was auctioned at Garraway’s Coffee House, while a Charleston wharf with stores and five town lots was offered in London for private sale.<sup>6</sup>

South Carolina’s post-war land legislation was carefully constructed, however, to prevent an influx of or long-term reliance on foreign investors. New laws designed to encourage settlement in the state tolerated temporary absenteeism while setting time limits on the practice. As such, they represented a marked hardening of South Carolina’s general pre-war ambivalence towards absentee land-ownership. A citizenship law passed in 1784 gave notional sanction to absenteeism, allowing non-residents – unless named in the 1782 confiscation acts – to retain lands in South Carolina. It was on proviso, though, that they became citizens or sold their land to citizens by March 1791.<sup>7</sup> Other legislation similarly balanced incentives for foreigners to invest capital in South Carolina with safeguards to prevent their influence becoming too powerful. Implicit within this was an aversion

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<sup>4</sup> HL to Mannings & Vaughan, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1787. *PHL*, XVI, 718; *Public Advertiser*, 7<sup>th</sup> September 1787. On war damage to New Hope and Broughton, see Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 247.

<sup>5</sup> *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1789; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1789.

<sup>6</sup> *Morning Star and London Chronicle*, 14<sup>th</sup> February 1789; *Public Advertiser*, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1789.

<sup>7</sup> ‘An Act to confer the rights of Citizenship on Aliens’, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1784. Cooper, *Statutes at Large*, IV, 600–1.

to the memory of pre-war indebtedness and ‘domination’ by external powers – i.e. Britain’s leading pre-war Carolina traders. An act passed in 1784 allowed foreigners to lend money to individuals in the state and permitted South Carolinians to mortgage their land as security in these transactions. Georgia followed suit with a similar law the following year. Significantly, while foreigners were allowed to prosecute lawsuits to recover debts, the South Carolina law stopped them from taking possession of property in the state through mortgage foreclosures. Instead they were permitted to sell the property and repatriate the proceeds. An important channel through which British creditors had come to own land in South Carolina before the war was thereby closed.<sup>8</sup> Through the 1784 acts, South Carolina’s young state government sought to prevent the reproduction of the pre-war Anglo-Carolinian polity. British capital might have an influential role to play in post-war development, but it was not to be a harbinger of a renewed metropolitan-provincial relationship.

Legal and political deterrents ultimately outweighed the investment potential of Carolinian properties for would-be British buyers. The likes of John Martin and Chollet & Bourdieu were few and far between. Uncertainty clouded the political backdrop. Continuing diplomatic tensions between Britain and the United States were accompanied in Britain by widespread expectations of the confederation’s imminent demise. In South Carolina, hostility towards exiled loyalists persisted longer than perhaps anywhere else in the United States, reflecting the particular bitterness of the war in the state. Not only did this hinder the recovery of pre-war debts in the state, it further discouraged Carolinian refugees from returning to their estates. Together with the hostility towards British merchants in Charleston, widely reported in the British press, and the impending compulsion for landowners in the state to take American citizenship, many potential British buyers

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<sup>8</sup> ‘An Ordinance to encourage subjects of Foreign States to lend money at interest on real estates within this state’, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1784. Cooper and McCord (eds.), *Statutes at Large*, IV, 642–3; ‘An Act for the Security of Foreigners who May lend Money at Interest, or on real Estates’, 21<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1785. Candler, *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, XIX, pt. II, 471–8; HL to Champion & Dickason, 6<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1785. *PHL*, XVI, 598–9.

were put off.<sup>9</sup> Exiled in Britain, former lowcountry planter Elias Ball discouraged his cousin in South Carolina in October 1788 from trying to sell land on the British market. Because of the impending citizenship requirement British residents were, he advised, reluctant to buy lands in America:

“Your states have taken the most effectual steps to prevent people purchasing estates. No man can hold an Estate in your country for any length of time without he becomes a Citizen & resides among you & no man will chuse to risque himself a property in a country where the legislature interferes in private contracts & bargains made between man & man.”<sup>10</sup>

Agricultural depression and falling land prices in the state further dashed hopes of quick and easy profits. According to his cousin, Richard Shubrick “never Receiv’d a Farthing from his Estates he sold in Carolina”.<sup>11</sup> Nor did John Martin’s high hopes for his Carolinian estates materialise. After he died in 1790, his son discovered that Belvoir plantation was worth just £1,600, against his father’s estimate of £4,000, and that his father had been deeply indebted. Visiting the plantation, his attorney reported “only eight shillings and ten pence found in money”. Martin Jr. duly disposed of the plantation lands, keeping only two Georgetown plots, since “they might improve in time”.<sup>12</sup> Henry Laurens was similarly frustrated in his attempts to sell his Georgian plantations in Britain: no buyers were forthcoming, despite their supposedly bargain price, and Laurens retained the lands until his death in 1792. Likewise, the 107,000 acre tract near Camden that had been advertised in London newspapers in 1789 was put up again for auction the following year, having failed to find a buyer first time around.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> On the experiences of loyalists returning to the post-war United States, see Norton, *The British-Americans*, 242–9.

<sup>10</sup> Elias Ball (Bristol) to Elias Ball (South Carolina), 20<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1788. BFP.

<sup>11</sup> Elias Ball (Bristol) to Elias Ball (South Carolina), 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1784. BFP.

<sup>12</sup> Isaac Darnford to John Martin Jr., 10<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1790; John Martin Jr. to John Bold, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1791; Bold to Martin Jr., 6<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1792. John Martin Papers (SCHS).

<sup>13</sup> *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1790.

The transatlantic marketing of lands in the Lower South and the legislation that governed these land sales epitomise the ambivalence of Anglo-Carolinian relations after the war. Britain was an important source of capital and investment, and Carolinians sought to harness this. At the same time, the influence of the former imperial power was feared, portending a return to pre-war control and restraint – hence the citizenship requirements written into land legislation. This ambivalence was mirrored in post-war Anglo-Carolinian trade. While Britain was once again the principal overseas market for South Carolinian exports and the chief supplier of its imports, for many Carolinians this was a marriage of necessity, not choice. The intertwined concerns of post-war land and trade in South Carolina signal how individuals and the state alike struggled to reconcile divergent economic and political urges.

Transatlantic land and property ownership had been central to the Anglo-Carolinian polity over the previous sixty years. This absenteeism had once served as an important connective force, underpinning the particularly close connections that Britain's mid-century Carolina traders had enjoyed with the colony, and sustaining the particular assiduity with which they advocated the colony's economic development in the imperial corridors of power. Later, as political tensions between colonies and mother country mounted, absentee-owned lands became a symbol of British control. Measures taken after the war to preclude absenteeism reflected how its political-economic significance was appreciated in the new state. Preventing lands from falling into the hands of permanent non-residents allowed the South Carolinian state to exercise the autonomy and control that its residents widely felt it lacked in post-war trade with Britain, despite the exclusion of certain of the most objectionable pre-war and wartime British Carolina traders. British capital and goods were vital to the state's economic prospects: French, Spanish and Dutch traders were unable to compete in either quality of goods or terms of purchase. For all the popular anger in South Carolina at Britain's renewed pre-eminence in its trade, suppressing it was neither practical nor wise. Curtailing British land ownership offered a means of asserting autonomy and signifying a redefined

relationship with the former mother country without endangering either diplomatic relations or economic redevelopment.

The post-war political connotations of trade and land reprised their pre-war significance. Anglo-Carolinian trade had become increasingly politicised in run-up to the Revolution. Given the way in which London's Carolina merchants had interacted with the British state over previous decades, this should come as no surprise. As with merchants in other branches of British overseas trade, but with particular assiduity, these traders understood lobbying as an important and regular adjunct to their ordinary commercial activities. In performing this role, they both acknowledged the institutions and legal structures which mediated Britain's colonial trade and actively shaped them. Identifying this does not downplay their agency as participants in Atlantic commerce; instead it reasserts it. Within the transatlantic Carolina trade, mercantile lobbying was for much of the eighteenth century a force for stability. While the actual economic results of this lobbying can be debated, successes between the 1730s and 1750s in securing bounties and stimuli or in opening new markets for Carolinian produce at the very least signified metropolitan traders' commitment to agricultural diversification and economic development in the colony. However, in the metropolitan Carolina lobby's effectiveness on commercial issues were the seeds of later disharmony laid.

The quietude of London's Carolina merchants on the political controversies of the late 1760s and 1770s contrasted with their earlier activism on more straightforwardly commercial matters. This political passivity also corresponded with changes within the group. Its overall size changed little. London's Carolina trade had been concentrated in relatively few hands throughout the eighteenth century. Between the 1740s and early 1760s, the capital's leading Carolina merchants were men who had spent their early careers building experience and connections in South Carolina. As they retired from trade in the 1760s, the merchants who replaced them as pre-eminent metropolitan Carolina traders were men lacking the same direct, experiential connections to the colony. Against rising imperial tensions, the trade's concentration among – or, to some Carolinians, *domination by* – a small

group of London traders, assumed menacing dimensions. The apparent ambivalence among this group towards the American policies of successive British governments was seen to betray personal hostility towards American grievances. Purported evidence of the traders' profiteering – achieved variously through their dominance of Britain's Carolina trade, the credit they extended to colonial correspondents and their disparagement of Carolinian produce for personal gain, and manifested through their personal effects and grandiose stately piles – had seemed to confirm that Carolinian and British commercial interests were no longer aligned.

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Not only in South Carolina was trade with Britain fundamental to conceptions of independence and identity after the war. Commercial issues were central in the volatile relations between Great Britain and the United States as a whole throughout the decade after American independence. Within the United States, individual states' connectivity to Britain and its imperial markets informed regional perspectives on Federal union. Atlantic re-engagement – and specifically absorption into a British trading orbit – confounded Jeffersonian ideals of agrarianism and self-sufficiency. The interpretive approach taken in the latter part of this thesis to expose South Carolina's reintegration into British Atlantic commerce – of interrelating political and institutional conditions with individual experiences – has wider applicability. How were commercial links in, for example, the Chesapeake, New York or New England trades restored after the Revolution? Were the leading British traders to these regions before the war alternatively spurned or embraced after the war – as in the Carolina trade – on account of their pre-war and wartime activities? How did these regions' reconnections with Great Britain influence their internal politics?

Addressing such questions has explanatory potential for study of the early American republic, contesting a historiographical tendency to turn inwards and westwards in explaining the states' dramatic governmental, territorial and demographic changes. For British history too, further exploration of the restoration and management of Anglo-American relations between the Treaty of

Paris in 1783 and the Jay-Grenville Treaty in 1794 would redress a historiographical imbalance that has downplayed the reconstruction of Atlantic ties and instead focussed attention eastwards towards a 'second British empire'. As a measure of its economic significance to Great Britain, exports to the United States accounted for some 25 to 30 per cent of Britain's total overseas exports at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> In return, the United States remained a vital supplier of commodity imports to Britain, notably the cotton which was central to British industrial growth and which from the 1790s supplanted indigo and then even rice as South Carolina's principal agricultural staple. Studying how individual commercial rapprochements across the different branches of Anglo-American trade were shaped by and in turn influenced the political volatility, economic interdependence and social connections that defined the recast Atlantic polity would also offer a means of testing the typicality of Anglo-Carolina rapprochements. Furthermore, it would expand the analytical scope of an 'Atlantic perspective' both in temporal and conceptual ways. It would extend it beyond the prevalent emphasis on imperial polities to examine the construction and management of transnational Atlantic interaction. Just as this thesis has explored the interconnections of political and commercial agency in imperial-colonial relations, such an approach would assess the central influence of political and institutional forces in post-war Atlantic exchange.

Reaction to the Jay-Grenville Treaty would confirm the persistent ambivalence of restored Anglo-Carolinian trade. Among its various provisions, restrictions on the carrying trade between the United States and the British West Indies were maintained, one of several clauses which, to the treaty's opponents, smacked of America's quasi-colonial subordination to Great Britain. Planters throughout the South further condemned the treaty for its failure to compel Britain to pay compensation for slaves liberated during and after the war. Protests in Charleston in July 1795, following ratification of the treaty, were reminiscent of the anti-British rioting of 1783 and 1784.

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<sup>14</sup> Price, 'What Did Merchants Do?', 274.

For Britain's pre-war Carolina traders – or their inheritors – still pursuing debts owed them in the former colony, there was a modicum of relief. The United States agreed to reimburse some of their claims, though this amounted to far less than the sums claimed. After more than a decade of pursuing the claims, this was a largely pyrrhic victory for the merchants, with further diplomatic and bureaucratic hurdles ahead. On the eve of a new century in which, despite embargoes and war, Britain would continue to be central to South Carolina's commerce, residents on either side of the Atlantic were still coming to terms with the breakdown and reconstitution of commercial ties, and once again trying to make the Atlantic work.

**APPENDIX A: SOUTH CAROLINA: VALUE OF EXPORTS TO AND IMPORTS FROM ENGLAND (£ STERLING), 1768 – 1791**

	Exports	Imports	Exports as % of imports	Value of exports to England per capita (£ st.)	Value of imports from England per capita (£ st.)
1791	230,879	431,880	53.2		
1790	253,022	359,592	70.3	1.02 (£1.0s.4d.)	1.44 (£1.8s.8d.)
1789	215,890	359,214	60.2		
1788	258,029	291,429	88.6		
1787	229,086	281,647	81.2		
1786	198,454	181,410	109.4		
1785	212,229	278,389	76.3		
1784	173,540	442,465	39.4		
<b>Average 1784–91</b>	<b>221,319</b>	<b>328,253</b>	<b>67.4</b>		
1783	74,589	226,737	33.0		
1782	14,182	69,743	20.3		
1781	94,368	330,847	28.5		
1780	708	236,941	0.02		
1779	3,732	-			
1778	1,074	-			
1777	2,234	-			
1776	13,668	-			
1775	579,549	6,245	n/a		
1774	432,302	378,116	114.3		
1773	456,513	344,859	132.3		
1772	425,923	449,610	94.7		
1771	420,311	409,169	102.7	3.38 (£3.7s.6d) <sup>c</sup>	3.29 (£3.5s.8d) <sup>c</sup>
1770	278,907	146,273 <sup>a</sup>	n/a		
1769	387,114	306,600	126.3		
1768	508,108	289,868	175.3		
<b>Total 1768–9, 1771–4</b>	<b>2,630,271</b>	<b>2,178,222</b>	<b>120.8</b>		
<b>Average 1768–9, 1771–4 <sup>b</sup></b>	<b>438,379</b>	<b>363,037</b>	<b>120.8</b>		
<b>Total 1768–75</b>	<b>3,488,727</b>	<b>2,330,740</b>	<b>149.7</b>		
<b>Average 1768–75</b>	<b>436,091</b>	<b>291,343</b>	<b>149.7</b>		
<b>Average 1784–91 as % of average 1768–9, 1771–4</b>	<b>50.5%</b>	<b>90.4%</b>			

Source: Susan B. Carter et al. (eds.), *Historical Statistics of the United States: Millennial Edition. Vol. V: Governance and International Relations*. (Cambridge, 2006), 710–3.

<sup>a</sup> year of non-importation agreement / <sup>b</sup> years of non-importation excluded (average for six years – 1768–9, 1771–4) /

<sup>c</sup> calculated using population figures for 1770

**APPENDIX B: SOUTH CAROLINA & GEORGIA: RICE EXPORTS (BARRELS),  
1747 – 1789**

[Data are for various terminal dates, primarily 24<sup>th</sup> Dec., 4<sup>th</sup> Jan. (of the succeeding year), and 31<sup>st</sup> Oct.]

	South Carolina			Georgia	Total (barrels)	Total (lbs.) <sup>a</sup>	South Carolina rice exports as % of total barrels
	Charleston	Beaufort and Georgetown	Total				
<b>Average 1784–89</b>	<b>73,310</b>		<b>73,310</b>		<b>73,310</b>		
1789	100,000	-	100,000	-	100,000	-	100
1788	82,400	-	82,400	-	82,400	-	100
1787	65,195	-	65,195	-	65,195	-	100
1786	66,557	-	66,557	-	66,557	-	100
1785	63,732	-	63,732	-	63,732	-	100
1784	61,974	-	61,974	-	61,974	-	100
1783	24,255	-	24,255	-	24,255	-	
<b>Average 1772–74</b>	<b>116,748</b>	<b>5,784</b>	<b>122,531</b>	<b>21,571</b>	<b>144,102</b>	<b>75,653,550</b>	<b>85.0</b>
1774	118,482	6,594	125,076	20,192	145,268	76,265,700	86.1
1773	126,940	6,681	133,621	21,572	155,193	81,476,325	86.1
1772	104,821	4,076	108,897	22,948	131,845	69,218,625	82.6
<b>Average 1768– 1771</b>	<b>124,519</b>	<b>6,181</b>	<b>130,700</b>	<b>19,694</b>	<b>150,394</b>	<b>78,956,719</b>	<b>87.0</b>
1771	125,151	5,209	130,360	25,364	155,724	81,755,100	83.7
1770	131,805	5,568	137,373	22,072	159,445	83,708,625	86.2
1769	115,582	6,900	122,482	16,716	139,198	73,078,950	88.0
1768	125,538	7,045	132,583	14,625	147,208	77,284,200	90.1
<b>Average 1763– 1767</b>	<b>96,441</b>	<b>5,076</b>	<b>101,517</b>	<b>11,031</b>	<b>112,548</b>	<b>59,087,805</b>	<b>90.0</b>
1767	104,125	5,480	109,605	11,281	120,886	63,465,150	90.7
1766	74,031	3,896	77,927	14,257	92,184	48,396,600	84.5
1765	107,292	5,647	112,939	12,224	125,163	65,710,575	90.2
1764	91,960	4,840	96,800	9,690	106,490	55,907,250	90.9
1763	104,800	5,516	110,316	7,702	118,018	61,959,450	93.5
<b>Average 1759– 1762</b>	<b>73,392</b>	<b>3,863</b>	<b>77,254</b>	<b>4,515</b>	<b>81,769</b>	<b>42,928,856</b>	<b>94.5</b>
1762	79,652	4,192	83,844	6,509	90,353	47,435,325	92.8

1761	101,389	5,336	106,725	4,666	111,391	58,480,275	95.8
1760	60,807	3,200	64,007	3,283	67,290	35,327,250	95.1
1759	51,718	2,722	54,440	3,603	58,043	30,472,575	93.8
<b>Average 1755– 1758</b>	<b>77,496</b>	<b>4,079</b>	<b>81,575</b>	<b>2,666</b>	<b>84,241</b>	<b>44,266,656</b>	<b>96.8</b>
1758	67,464	3,551	71,015	2,371	73,386	38,527,650	96.8
1757	58,634	3,086	61,720	2,998	64,718	33,976,950	95.3
1756	79,203	4,170	83,373	2,997	86,370	45,344,250	96.5
1755	104,682	5,510	110,192	2,299	112,491	59,057,775	98.0
<b>Average 1751– 1754</b>	<b>65,978</b>	<b>3,473</b>	<b>69,451</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>70,387</b>	<b>35,981,079</b>	<b>98.7</b>
1754	88,570	4,662	93,232	1,344	94,576	49,179,520	98.6
1753	35,523	1,870	37,393	952	38,354	19,747,675	97.5
1752	78,208	4,116	82,324	511	82,835	42,245,850	99.4
1751	61,611	3,243	64,854	-	64,854	32,751,270	100
<b>Average 1747– 1750</b>	<b>50,343</b>	<b>2,650</b>	<b>52,993</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>52,993</b>	<b>26,191,285</b>	<b>-</b>
1750	51,190	2,694	53,884	861	54,745	27,372,500	98.4
1749	41,034	2,160	43,194	-	43,194	21,381,030	100
1748	55,000	2,895	57,895	-	57,895	28,368,550	100
1747	54,146	2,850	57,006	-	57,006	27,643,060	100

Source: Carter et al. (eds.), *Historical Statistics*, V, 764–6.

<sup>a</sup> Number of lbs. per barrel varied from year to year.

**APPENDIX C: SOUTH CAROLINA & GEORGIA: INDIGO EXPORTS (1,000 LBS.),  
1747 – 1788**

	South Carolina	Georgia	Total	South Carolina indigo exports as % of total
<b>Average 1784–88</b>	<b>781,000</b>		<b>781,000</b>	<b>100</b>
1788	833,500 <sup>a</sup>	-	833,500	100
1787	974,100 <sup>a</sup>	-	974,100	100
1786	757,100 <sup>a</sup>	-	757,100	100
1785	626,200 <sup>a</sup>	-	626,200	100
1784	713,900 <sup>a</sup>	-	713,900	100
1783	289,500	-	289,500	100
1782	-	-		
1781	-	-		
1780	-	-		
1779	-	-		
1778	-	-		
1777	-	-		
1776	-	-		
<b>Average 1772–75</b>	<b>877,900</b>	13,100	<b>881,150</b>	<b>n/a</b>
1775	1,122,200	-	1,122,200	100
1774	815,000	-	815,000	100
1773	720,600	-	720,600	100
1772	853,700	13,100	866,800	98.5
<b>Average 1768–1771</b>	<b>488,600</b>	<b>19,000</b>	<b>507,600</b>	<b>96.3</b>
1771	434,200	19,900	454,100	95.6
1770	550,800	22,300	573,100	96.1
1769	402,700	13,900	416,600	96.7
1768	566,600	19,700	586,300	96.6
<b>Average 1765–1767</b>	<b>481,800</b>	<b>14,400</b>	<b>496,200</b>	<b>97.0</b>
1767	570,600	12,900	583,500	97.8
1766	491,800	14,400	506,200	97.2
1765	335,800	16,000	351,900	95.4
1764	529,100	14,200	543,200	97.4
<b>Average 1760– 1763</b>	<b>396,900</b>	<b>7,800</b>	<b>404,300</b>	<b>98.0</b>
1763	438,900	8,700	447,700	98.0
1762	255,300	9,100	264,400	96.6
1761	384,100	1,600	385,600	99.6
1760	507,600	11,700	519,300	97.7
<b>Average 1756–1759</b>	<b>589,500</b>	<b>9,400</b>	<b>598,900</b>	<b>98.1</b>
1759	695,700	600	696,200	99.9
1758	563,000	9,600	572,600	98.3

1757	876,400	18,200	894,500	98.0
1756	222,800	9,300	232,100	96.0
<b>Average 1752–1755</b>	<b>116,350</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>117,475</b>	<b>n/a</b>
1755	303,500	4,500	308,000	98.5
1754	129,600	-	129,600	100
1753	28,500	-	28,500	100
1752	3,800	-	3,800	100
<b>Average 1747–1751</b>	<b>84,400</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>84,400</b>	<b>100</b>
1751	19,900	-	19,900	100
1750	63,100	-	63,100	100
1749	138,300	-	138,300	100
1748	62,200	-	62,200	100
1747	138,300	-	138,300	100

Source: Carter et al. (eds.), *Historical Statistics*, V, 749–50; Nash, ‘South Carolina Indigo’, tab. 3.

Note: terminal dates for the years are 1747–1752, March to March; 1752–3, March to January; 1753–72, January to January; 1773, January to November; 1773–4, November to October; 1774 – 5, September to February.

<sup>a</sup> For Charleston, the only South Carolina port for which data is available; other South Carolina ports averaged 7.8 per cent of the colony’s totals for 1768–1773.

## APPENDIX D: SOUTH CAROLINA NAVAL STORES EXPORTS

	Destinations								
	Great Britain		Northern colonies		West Indies		Total exported (barrels)		
	Tar	Pitch	Tar	Pitch	Tar	Pitch	Tar	Pitch	Combined
<b>Mean yrs. 1768–72</b>							<b>4,363</b>	<b>6,158</b>	<b>10,539</b>
1772	3,022	2,861	592	295	695	332	4,309	3,488	7,797
1771	4,962	4,691	115	464	467	341	5,598	5,496	11,094
1770	2,563	5,936	70	171	383	89	3,015	5,656	8,761
1769	2,940	8,941	237	58	329	73	3,542	9,072	12,614
1768	1,545	6,413		3,229	577	667	5,351	7,080	12,431
<b>Mean yrs. 1762–66</b>							<b>2,894</b>	<b>8,393</b>	<b>11,287</b>
1766	2,736	12,813	829	1,546	659	1,253	4,224	15,612	19,836
1765							2,575	8,751	11,326
1764							3,158	7,459	10,617
1763	2,191	5,126	90	79	180	16	2,461	5,221	7,682
1762	1,354	4,113	90	197	608	614	2,052	4,924	6,976
<b>Mean yrs. 1758–61</b>							<b>1,891</b>	<b>5,696</b>	<b>7,713</b>
1761							1,438	6,626	8,064
1760	1,289	5,704	97	333	260	278	1,646	6,315	7,961
1759	1,671	6,295	86	562	669	393	2,426	7,250	10,179
1758	1,423	1,862	80	314	551	416	2,054	2,592	4,646
<b>Mean yrs. 1755–57</b>							<b>3,141</b>	<b>4,630</b>	<b>7,711</b>
<b>Mean yrs. 1750–54</b>							<b>3,976</b>	<b>13,865</b>	<b>17,841</b>
<b>Mean yrs. 1745–49</b>							<b>2,813</b>	<b>10,779</b>	<b>13,592</b>
<b>Mean yrs. 1740–44</b>							<b>5,424</b>	<b>11,290</b>	<b>16,714</b>

Source: Clowse, *Measuring Charleston's Overseas Commerce*, 65–6, tab. B–31.

## APPENDIX E: SOUTH CAROLINA DEERSKIN EXPORTS

	Destinations									Skins exported
	London		Bristol		Other British		All others		All points	
	Hhds	% total exports	Hhds	% total exports	Hhds	% total exports	Hhds	% total exports	Hhds	
Mean yrs. 1770–75										52,000
Mean yrs. 1765–69										82,000
Mean yrs. 1760–64										112,000
Mean yrs. 1755–59										137,000
Mean yrs. 1750–54										134,000
Mean yrs. 1745–49										147,000
Mean yrs. 1740–44										125,000
Mean yrs. 1735–39										112,000
Mean yrs. 1730–34										84,000
1766	332	73	70	15	17	4	37	8		
Mean yrs. 1762–3		61		36		1		3		
1763	534		266		1		0		801	
1762	224		180		9		25		448	
Mean yrs 1758–60		60		34		4		2		
1760	416		119		8		3		546	
1759	263		307		42		2		614	
1758	313		146		13		31		503	

Source: Clowse, *Measuring Charleston's Overseas Commerce*, 54–5, tab. B–11.

**APPENDIX F: BRITISH SHARE OF FOREIGN SHIPPING IN CHARLESTON**

[Data covers November of previous year to November of year specified.]

<b>Outbound</b>	<b>British ships</b>	<b>Total ships</b>	<b>British ships as % of total</b>	<b>British tonnage</b>	<b>Total tonnage</b>	<b>British tonnage as % of total</b>
1787	150	212	70.7	17,106	20,587	83.1
1786	168	234	71.8	16,855	21,933	76.8
Total	318	446	71.3	33,961	42,530	79.9
<b>Inbound</b>	<b>British ships</b>	<b>Total ships</b>	<b>British ships as % of total</b>	<b>British tonnage</b>	<b>Total tonnage</b>	<b>British tonnage as % of total</b>
1788	158	231	68.4	19,199	25,063	76.6
1787	92	141	65.2	7,080	8,644	81.9
Total	250	371	67.0	26,279	33,707	78.0

Source: British consular reports on foreign shipping in U.S. ports, in Charles R. Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy towards the United States, 1783–1795*. (Dallas, TX, 1969), 369–371.

**APPENDIX G: SOUTH CAROLINA: POPULATION, 1680 – 1790**

	<b>Total population</b>	<b>Black population</b>	<b>Black population as % of total population</b>
1790	249,000	109,000	43.8
1780	180,000	97,000	53.9
1770	124,244	75,178	60.5
1760	94,074	57,334	60.9
1750	64,000	39,000	60.9
1740	45,000	30,000	66.7
1730	30,000	20,000	66.7
1720	17,048	12,000	70.4
1710	10,883	4,100	37.7
1700	5,704	2,444	42.8
1690	3,900	1,500	38.5
1680	1,200	200	20.0

Source: Carter et al. (eds.), *Historical Statistics*, V, 651–5.

**APPENDIX H: GEORGIA: POPULATION, 1740 – 1790**

	<b>Total population</b>	<b>Black population</b>	<b>Black population as % of total population</b>
1790	83,000	30,000	36.1
1780	56,071	20,831	37.2
1770	23,375	10,625	45.4
1760	9,578	3,578	37.4
1750	5,200	1,000	19.2
1740	2,021	-	-

Source: Carter et al. (eds.), *Historical Statistics*, V, 651–5.

## APPENDIX I: INDIGO IMPORTED INTO BRITISH PORTS

	Destinations											All points (lbs.)	Total exported from SC (lbs.)
	London		Bristol		#3 British port		Other British ports		All others				
	lbs.	% of exports	lbs.	% of exports	name	lbs.	% of exports	lbs.	% of exports	lbs.	% of exports		
<b>Mean yrs. 1770–74</b>													<b>639,900</b>
1772												662,700 <sup>a</sup>	
1771												434,800 <sup>a</sup>	
1770												528,400 <sup>a</sup>	
1769												361,600 <sup>a</sup>	
1768												478,000 <sup>a</sup>	
1766	404,400	81	53,400	11	Leith	9,100	2	15,500	3	18.4	4	500,800	
<b>Mean yrs. 1765–69</b>													<b>432,100</b>
1763	426,800	93	25,000	5	Cowes	5,500	1	1,700	*	0	0	459,000	
1762	252,100	96	7,700	3	Dundee	1,700	1	800	*	*	*	262,300	
<b>Mean yrs. 1760–64</b>													<b>423,000</b>
1760	439,700	88	32,100	6	Liv'pool	7,900	2	18,400	4	*	*	498,200	
1759	508,100	73	123,600	18	Chester	43,100	6	19,800	3	*	*	694,700	
1758	397,100	71	56,700	10	Liv'pool	75,100	13	33,900	6	*	*	562,900	
<b>Mean yrs. 1755–59</b>													<b>532,300</b>
<b>Mean yrs. 1750–54</b>													<b>49,000</b>
<b>Mean yrs. 1747–49</b>													<b>112,900</b>

Source: Clowse, *Measuring Charleston's Overseas Commerce*, 70–1, tab. B–41

<sup>a</sup> Over 98% of all poundage shipped between 1768 and 1772 was destined for Great Britain.

## APPENDIX J:

### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

#### **John Beswicke**

(?–1764) Merchant of Charles Town and London. Beswicke was in business in South Carolina from 1735, where he was considered by one contemporary as a man “who bears a Good Character... & is Considerably Concern’d in Trade”. He relocated to London in 1740, where he became one of the capital’s leading Carolina traders and maintained successive partnerships with merchants in Charles Town. Beswicke owned several ocean-going ships and invested his mercantile profits in a country house outside London called Little London. After withdrawing from trade in 1763, he died the following year, leaving his nephews, William Greenwood and William Higginson, to continue his trading house.

#### **James Bourdieu**

(1715–1804) Major London merchant, principally in the French and Caribbean trades before the American war, but involved in trade to South Carolina after American independence. Bourdieu was in trade in London from 1753 and in partnership with Samuel Chollet in the firm of Bourdieu & Chollet by 1763. He was noted for his sympathy for the American cause during the war and regularly visited his longtime friend and business associate Henry Laurens during his imprisonment in London in 1780–1. Bourdieu attempted to intercede in the Paris peace talks in 1782–3 and was a strong advocate for free trade with the United States after the war.

#### **Samuel Brailsford**

(1728–1800) Charles Town and Bristol merchant. Brailsford was born in South Carolina and followed his father into commerce. In three successive partnerships, he was among Charles Town’s largest slave importers during the 1750s and owned several oceangoing vessels. He also invested in plantation land in the colony. Brailsford moved in the late 1760s to Bristol, where he continued in transatlantic trade to South Carolina, and appears to have been politically supportive of the

American colonies in the early 1770s. However, his partnership from 1771 with two Charles Town merchants, Robert Powell and John Hopton, both of whom were loyalists during the war, hampered his ability to reclaim the firm's pre-war debts.

### **Edward Bridgen**

(?–1787) London merchant in the firm of Bridgen & [James] Waller, who were in trade by 1763. The firm specialised in textile exports and had particularly strong connections to North Carolina, though also sent goods to Charles Town. Bridgen was noted for his strong pro-American sympathies before and during the war, cultivating friendships with John Adams and Benjamin Franklin and associating with prominent British radicals. His political orientation gained him trade to America after the war, including recommendations from Henry Laurens, and helped him recover lands he owned in North Carolina that had been confiscated.

### **James Crockatt**

(1701–77) London's leading Carolina trader in the 1740s and 1750s. Born in Scotland, in the late 1720s he went to Charles Town where he prospered in trade, amassed substantial property-holdings, married into an important planting family and was appointed to the Royal Council. He relocated to London in 1739. Besides his extensive trade to South Carolina, he actively promoted agricultural diversification in the colony, notably organising a campaign for a bounty on Carolinian indigo, and was the colony's London agent from 1749 to 1755. Among his apprentices in his counting-house was a young Henry Laurens. Crockatt withdrew from trade in the early 1760s, leaving much of his business to his son, Charles, and his son-in-law, John Nutt, but continued to take an interest in the province and in agricultural improvement from his large country estate in Essex.

### **Charles Crokatt**

(1730–69) The son of James Crokatt, he followed his father into London's Carolina trade. He entered partnership with his father in 1755 and began trading in his own right from 1760, though under the title James & Charles Crokatt, to lend the firm his father's prestige. Despite extensive trade to South Carolina, he lacked his father's commercial nous and ran into financial difficulties. These were compounded by an expensive and unsuccessful attempt to run for Parliament in 1761. His creditors included firms in Charles Town and his own father, and his losses forced him to stop trading in 1766. He was declared bankrupt and committed suicide in 1769.

### **Charles Garth**

(1734–1784) South Carolina's agent between 1762 and 1775. Garth was appointed because of his family connections to the province, particularly the fact that his cousin, Thomas Boone, was its governor. He was arguably the most assiduous colonial agent during the 1760s, representing South Carolina's interests on a range of commercial matters and playing an important role in lobbying against the Stamp Act. Garth was also an MP from 1764, replacing his father for the westcountry seat of Devizes, and served briefly as agent for Maryland and Georgia. His letterbooks offer some of the best evidence on the lobbying by American interest groups in the decade before the Revolution.

### **William Greenwood**

(c.1733–1786) London Carolina merchant who began in business with his uncle, John Beswicke, and his cousin, William Higginson, and remained in partnership with Higginson after Beswicke's death in 1764. Greenwood and Higginson were London's largest Carolina traders in the decade before the Revolution, operating from a grand counting-house in the City and owning several ships; Greenwood also inherited his uncle's Middlesex estate. He was widely judged to be hostile to the American cause before and during the Revolution and found it particularly hard to recover the

firm's extensive debts in South Carolina, efforts that Higginson continued after Greenwood's death in 1786.

### **Ralph Izard**

(1742–1804) Scion of a major Carolinian planting family, with extensive landholdings in the lowcountry. Izard was educated in England before returning to South Carolina in 1764. Back in England with his wife from 1771, Izard remained in London for several years. During this time he observed and reported on political developments in Great Britain, including the political orientations of the capital's Carolina traders. After the outbreak of war, the Izards moved to Paris where they remained until peace was restored. After returning to South Carolina, Izard became the new state's first US Senator.

### **Isaac King**

(?–1797) London Carolina trader from the mid-1750s, in partnership with Sarah Nickleson. Besides his trade to the province, King made several visits to South Carolina during the 1760s and 1770s, principally to recover debts owed the firm, and went to Charles Town while it was under British control in 1780. He also acquired land in the colony which, together with debts owed to him, he struggled fruitlessly to recover after American independence. King's losses compelled him to move from London to Bristol in 1783 in search of a fresh start in more modest accommodation.

### **Henry Laurens**

(1724–1792) South Carolinian merchant, planter, statesman and diplomat. Born in Charles Town, Laurens served a mercantile apprenticeship to James Crokatt in London. He returned in 1747 to Charles Town, where he became one of the port's leading merchants, especially in the slave trade. His letterbooks are the foremost source on colonial and revolutionary-era South Carolina's commerce and politics. After largely withdrawing from trade in the early 1760s, Laurens spent time in Europe supervising his sons' education and witnessed British political debate as the American crisis mounted. His eventful war years included service as a delegate to, and president of, the

Continental Congress, fifteen months' imprisonment in the Tower of London, and participation at the Paris peace talks.

### **William Manning**

(?–1791) One of London's leading merchants during the 1770s and 1780s, he had earlier spent time as a merchant on St. Kitts where he had acquired plantation lands and traded to South Carolina. In London, he was heavily involved in the West Indies trade and continued to trade to South Carolina. His extensive trade with Henry Laurens was cemented by the marriage of his daughter, Martha, to Laurens' son, John, in 1776. Manning was regarded as pro-American in his sympathies and he regularly visited Laurens during his spell in the Tower of London and held money on his account in London. Two of his sons-in-law, Benjamin Vaughan (whom he took into partnership) and Henry Merrtens Bird, benefitted from his reputation and connections in South Carolina and became leading British traders to the state in the 1790s.

### **William Middleton**

(1710–1785) Major landowner in South Carolina and England. Middleton was born into one of South Carolina's leading planter families and owned some 15,000 acres himself. On inheriting large landholdings near London and in Suffolk, England, he left the colony in 1754 and lived in England for the rest of his life. He retained close interests in South Carolina, however, extending his plantation landholdings with the aid of his brother, Henry. He also gave evidence to Parliament on the colony's behalf and joined an appeal as one of "several Natives of America" against the Intolerable Acts in 1774.

### **Edward Neufville**

(fl.1740s–fl.1787) Merchant of Charles Town and Bristol. Neufville was in trade in Charles Town during the 1740s and 1750s, principally in partnership with his brother John. He relocated to Bristol in 1764, apparently maintaining a transatlantic connection with his brother. He also went into

formal partnership with the London merchant Christopher Rolleston, trading to South Carolina. Neufville returned to South Carolina in the 1780s to try to recover pre-war debts.

### **John Nickleson**

(?-1754) Charles Town and London merchant originally from Poole, Dorset. After captaining transatlantic ships, Nickleson began in trade in Charles Town in 1739 in partnership with his brother-in-law Richard Shubrick. Nickleson, Shubrick & Co. was a prominent trading house and secured valuable contracts to supply the provincial government and the Royal Navy. Nickleson relocated with his wife and children to London in 1743 where he continued to trade with the province. On his death in 1754 he left an estate valued at over £20,000; his business was continued by his wife, Sarah (née Shubrick).

### **John Nutt**

(?-c.1814) One of London's most prominent Carolina traders during the 1760s and 1770s, he was James Crokatt's son-in-law through marriage to Crokatt's daughter Mary. He appears to have taken on much of Crokatt's trade after his father-in-law's retirement in the early 1760s. Nutt was particularly known for handling Carolinian indigo and for exporting British and European goods on credit to the colony, through which he amassed considerable wealth. He gained a reputation for hostility towards America during the 1770s and because of this struggled in vain during and after the war to recoup his extensive losses in South Carolina.

### **Charles Ogilvie**

(c.1731-1788) Charles Town and London merchant. Born in Scotland, Ogilvie followed his elder brother James to South Carolina in 1751 in search of commercial fortune. He traded in two partnerships in Charles Town during the 1750s and married the daughter of the province's chief justice, a major heiress. In 1761 Ogilvie relocated to London where he continued in the Carolina trade. He had acquired substantial plantations in the province through his wife and continued to add to his Carolinian landholdings from Britain. He periodically visited his estates, widely dispersed

across South Carolina, and employed a nephew, George, as a resident manager. However, his lands were confiscated during the Revolution.

### **James Poyas**

(?-1799) Charles Town and London merchant. The son of a silk spinner from the Italian Piedmont, Poyas was raised in South Carolina and traded in Charles Town before relocating to London in 1767. He traded to South Carolina in the decade before the Revolution and was owed sizeable debts in the province, which he continued to claim in the 1790s. Despite his losses in South Carolina, Poyas continued in trade in London, though he was shunned by pre-war connections in the province on account of his purported hostility to the American cause.

### **Robert Pringle**

(?-1776) Charles Town merchant whose surviving letterbooks are one of the principal sources on the town's mid-century commerce. Born in Scotland, Pringle served a mercantile apprenticeship in London before setting up shop in South Carolina, predominantly as a sole trader. Much of his commerce with London was with his brother Andrew, a ship's captain turned merchant in the capital. Pringle appears to have been a relatively prosperous merchant, exporting rice and deerskins and importing British and European goods for retail, and served in the provincial assembly during the 1750s.

### **Robert Pringle Jr.**

(1755-1811) Son of Robert Pringle, the prominent Charles Town merchant. Pringle Jr. trained in Britain as a doctor before entering trade in Charles Town in 1783. He went into partnership with his brother-in-law William Freeman, who was married to his younger sister. Under their arrangement, Freeman represented the firm in Bristol, where his uncle, also William Freeman, had been a notable pre-war merchant.

**Robert Raper**

(1709–1779) Charles Town lawyer, deputy naval officer for South Carolina, and agent for several British residents who owned land and property in the province. Raper's surviving letterbook, covering the period 1759 to 1770, is an invaluable source on transatlantic commerce and in particular on the management of 'absentee'-owned properties in South Carolina.

**Christopher Rolleston**

(1739–1807) London merchant. Born in Derbyshire, Rolleston came from an important Midlands family and was active in trade by the early 1760s. He entered partnership with Edward Neufville in 1772, principally in the Carolina trade, and apparently managed the firm's commerce in London while Neufville operated in Bristol. Rolleston was identified by American radicals in London as being particularly opposed to their cause. He and Neufville later claimed for substantial pre-war debts owed to them in South Carolina. His partnership with Neufville seems to have ended in 1785, though he continued in trade in London before retiring to Nottinghamshire.

**Richard Shubrick II**

(1707–1765) Born in London, Shubrick followed his father (also Richard) into the Carolina trade, first captaining an ocean-going ship. From 1739 he traded in Charles Town with his brother-in-law John Nickleson; later Shubrick's younger brother, Thomas, joined the partnership, also after a spell as a ship's captain. Shubrick married a wealthy widow and heiress, Elizabeth Vicaridge (née Ball) and through her and by other investments amassed sizeable landholdings in the province. After her death, Shubrick returned to London in 1747 where he became one of the capital's leading Carolina traders, alongside prominent charitable and company directorships. His substantial wealth financed the purchase of houses outside London at Mile End and in Greenwich.

**Richard Shubrick III**

(1741–1797) Son of Richard Shubrick II, he was born in South Carolina but moved to London as a child. He followed his father into London's Carolina trade and on to the board of the London

Assurance Company. By the Revolution, he was owed substantial debts in South Carolina but despite his difficulties in recovering these after the war remained prosperous, with a large fortune and a sizeable estate in Enfield, north of London.

### **Thomas Shubrick**

(1710–1779) Like his elder brother, Richard, Thomas Shubrick was a ship's captain, plying a route between London and Charles Town before joining his brother and brother-in-law, John Nickleson, in partnership in Charles Town in 1742. Though both Richard Shubrick and Nickleson returned to Britain in the 1740s, Thomas Shubrick remained in Charles Town, handling the Carolinian end of the business. He helped manage his brother's landholdings in the colony and became a major landowner in his own right. By his death he was one of the colony's largest slaveholders, owning 333 slaves; he also held numerous civic positions and served in the provincial assembly.

### **John Watkinson**

(?–1742) Mariner and merchant in the Carolina trade, operating during the 1720s as a merchant in Charles Town, where he acquired several properties. He retained these after returning late in the decade to London, where he was continued to trade to South Carolina and lobby on the colony's behalf.

### **Samuel Wragg**

(?–1750) London's foremost Carolina trader during the 1720s and 1730s, he went from Britain to join his brother Joseph in Charles Town around 1710. During the next ten years, their partnership – Joseph Wragg & Co. – was perhaps the port's most prominent trading house, particularly in the slave trade. Samuel Wragg became a member first of the provincial assembly, then the council, before relocating to trade in London from the early 1720s. Besides being the one of largest exporter of slaves to South Carolina in the next two decades, Wragg served as South Carolina's London agent between 1727 and 1731, and regularly appeared before the Board of Trade during the 1720s

and 1730s. Wragg invested his substantial wealth in South Carolinian land and became one of the colony's largest landowners.

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