

**“How far will they go God knows”: Slave Policing and the Rise of the  
South Carolina Association in Charleston, S.C., 1790s-1820s**

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## **Abstract**

In 1820 a South Carolinian judge noted that, “the Patrol Law ought to be considered as one of the safe guards of the people of South Carolina...as a security against insurrection; a danger of such a nature that it never can or ought to be lost sight of in the southern states.” Just two years later, another judge ruled on a patrol behaving badly. The issue of a militia captain “acting under the colour of authority” arose, and Judge Abraham Nott lamented that if the problem persisted “we are subject to a state of things even worse than that against which they [patrols] were intended to afford us protection.” This essay explores slave policing regimes in Charleston, South Carolina, and their relation to political and social changes within the city between the 1790s and 1820s. The project describes problems that arose with slave policing in the years before the 1822 Denmark Vesey rebellion, and then identifies a major shift that followed, in which the South Carolina Association—an elite vigilante group—assumed control of this fundamental dimension of governance within a slave society.

En 1820, un juge de la Caroline du Sud a souligné que «la loi de patrouille devrait être considéré comme une mesure de protection pour le peuple de la Caroline du Sud... comme sécurité contre l’insurrection: un danger d’une telle nature qu’il ne doit et ne devrait jamais être perdu de vu dans les états du sud. « Seulement deux ans plus tard, un autre juge a statué sur une patrouille se conduisant mal. Lorsqu’un problème est survenu avec un capitaine de milice qui « agissait sous la bannière de l’autorité », le juge Abraham Nott a déploré que si le problème persiste «nous sommes assujettis à un état des choses encore pire que celui duquel ils (patrouilles) sont destiné à nous protéger. » Cet essaie examine les régimes de patrouille d’esclaves à Charleston en Caroline du Sud

et leurs liens avec les changements politiques et sociaux de cette ville entre les années 1790 et 1820. Le projet décrit des problèmes survenus lors de patrouilles d'esclaves dans les années avant la rébellion de Denmark Vesey en 1822 et ensuite identifie un changement majeur qui a suivi, dans lequel la South Carolina Association—un group élite de justicier—a prit la direction de cette dimension fondamentale de la gouvernance dans une société d'esclavage.

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## **Introduction**

Early in the morning on January 12, 1821 Captain William Cattell, asleep in his Charleston-area plantation, woke to the sound of gunfire. Cattell, a captain in South Carolina's militia, was soon summoned by one of his slaves to inspect a disturbance in the nearby slave quarters. There Cattell encountered Joseph Cole, a militia beat captain who had recently been given land nearby. Standing next to Cole was one of Cattell's slaves, who alleged that Cole had been beating her. What, Cattell likely asked, had his slave done to deserve such a beating? Cole replied that he was "patrolling" and that the slave was being "insolent." Cattell acknowledged that as a slave "patrol," Cole could enter his plantation and inspect the slave quarters. But Cattell had a right to know exactly why *his* slave was being physically abused by another white man. While South Carolinian slave patrols had considerable power to punish not only slaves, but also the free black population, they were not supposed to beat another man's slave without just reason—to do so compromised slaveowners' sense of sovereignty, a necessary component of a slaveholding society.

Just then another slave appeared who attested that Cole had also beaten him—this time with the butt of his gun. As Cattell later learned, Cole's "patrolling" had also led him to shoot Cattell's dogs to death, and to chop them up into little pieces. From high atop his horse, Cole then started shouting at Cattell, claiming that he was "a damned mean fellow," and his slaves were "a nuisance to the parish." A witness to the affair said he had "never heard any man so outrageously abused as Cole abused Cattell." The confrontation left William Cattell so anxious that he later moved his family to "relieve

them from the constant alarm in which they were kept by the turbulent conduct of the patrols.”<sup>1</sup>

What happened between Joseph Cole and William Cattell was neither unusual nor unpredictable. Rather, the incident was indicative of larger problems surrounding slave policing regimes in Charleston, South Carolina. Indeed, the experience of Cattell—a prominent member of Charleston’s “slaveowning aristocracy”—was a manifestation of a much deeper problem for both prominent planters and non-slaveholders alike.

Charleston’s slave policing system was complex and convoluted—a mixture of both state and city run mechanisms that sought to keep Charleston’s slaves enslaved. As a militia captain, Cole assumed that he had the right to *also* be captain of his local slave patrol. But Cattell—and many other prominent planters—resented the role of men who they considered of “questionable character” policing *their* slaves. As the notorious 1822 Denmark Vesey revolt in Charleston suggested, the slave policing regime had serious flaws. And to Charleston’s slaveowning aristocracy, the revolt—and incidents like what happened between Cole and Cattell—suggested that the *official* slave policing system needed the guidance of an *unofficial* association made up of Charleston’s “finest” gentlemen.<sup>2</sup>

While the confrontation between Cole and Cattell highlights decades of problems concerning slave policing, it was also emblematic of a definitive shift that occurred in the wake of the 1822 revolt. Frustrated with the complexities and “questionable” representatives of the official system, the South Carolina Association, a vigilante group made up of Charleston’s elite, stepped onto the scene and took over Charleston and South Carolina’s official slave policing systems. In so doing, the S.C.A. reasserted the role of

Charleston's slaveowning aristocracy in how slaves and free blacks would be policed throughout the entire state, and in the process, reaffirmed the notion that the *state*—in the broadest sense of the word—would not overpower a prominent slaveowner's sovereignty. Despite the intricate policing mechanisms entrenched, the S.C.A. reminded state and city authorities that independent slaveowners had the ultimate authority over how slaves would be policed.

This essay, then, seeks to illuminate the complexities and problems with slave policing in Charleston, South Carolina and identifies a major shift in late 1822, whereby the official slave policing regime fell under the control of an extra-legal, vigilante group. While this is my major argument, the project also highlights a variety of other issues including class tensions between Charleston's slaveowning aristocracy and small-scale slaveowners serving the official slave policing system. A major point I want to stress argues that the S.C.A. was predominantly concerned with ensuring that the "right" men—read, men like them—controlled the official policing system and not smaller-scale slaveowners, like Joseph Cole. The essay also highlights the underlying fear and paranoia of slave unrest that dominated South Carolina from its inception as a slaveholding society. A consistent theme throughout illustrates that white Charlestonians were *always* afraid for the future of both their slaveholding society and their lives.

In stressing the role—and rejection—of the state in a slaveholding society, this essay also seeks to uncover the complexities of exactly *how* state and city level authorities tried to instill intricate systems dedicated to the governance of slavery. While the S.C.A. rejected such efforts, I do not mean to suggest that slaveholding South Carolina was a society whereby a master was indeed the ultimate master over his



“domain.” Rather, as historian Seth Rockman reminds us, “the plantation was in fact public space,” and so much of my project has been dedicated to understanding exactly *how* government-run slave policing regimes in Charleston were supposed to work. Too often historians assume the terms of “militias” and “patrols” are self-evident. Likewise, when studying slave revolts, we tend to use vague terms to describe exactly who or what put down the revolt. Other than Sally Hadden’s 2001 *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas*, there has been no serious effort to understand how slaves were patrolled in the U.S. South. This essay, then, is an attempt to help fill that gap.<sup>3</sup>

My work also fits in with a new strain of history that focuses on the relationship between the state and slavery. Here, I draw predominantly from Robin Einhorn’s 2006 *American Taxation, American Slavery* and hope to add to the discussion Einhorn has fostered. In understanding the emergence of vigilantism and slavery, this essay adds to new research done by Lisa Arellano, which sees vigilantism not simply in its regional context, but rather as a wider feature of nineteenth century America. This essay is also linked to recent studies on the Denmark Vesey revolt, predominantly Douglas Egerton’s 1999 *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey*. In response to skepticisms espoused by Richard C. Wade and more recently, Michael Johnson, Egerton and Robert Paquette have dedicated considerable attention to the extent to which the revolt was real or imagined. While the debate has been of great interest to me, my essay is not concerned with proving one side or the other. Readers should consult one of the many articles written by these historians if they are interested in that particular issue.<sup>4</sup>

Readers will recognize the themes of vigilantism, power, class, and governance weaved throughout the five subsequent chapters. In Chapter 1 I seek to lay out the

establishment of lowcountry slavery in the colonial period and stress that as the slave population began to outnumber the white, a deep-seated paranoia took root in white South Carolinian society. As this paranoia seeped into white society, white South Carolinians increasingly found themselves searching for in the impossible: a slave policing system that made them feel safe in an inherently unsafe environment. Chapter 2 assesses this fear and adjacent slave policing regimes in the Atlantic world during the revolutionary era. The chapter explores the role the American, French, and especially Haitian Revolutions had on white slaveowners' attempts to govern slavery and their sense of safety.

While Chapters 1 and 2 drawn predominantly from secondary material, Chapter 3 attempts to reconstruct and understand the diversities of urban slavery in Charleston and how Charleston's slave policing systems worked. Consequently, the chapter is built on archival and primary source material, as do the final two chapters. Chapter 4 highlights the manifestation of the problems associated with slave policing in Charleston and South Carolina, as experienced during the 1822 Vesey revolt. Here I also explore the question of exactly who or what was in control during the revolt, and argue that extra-legal associations increasingly held the power. This discussion culminates in Chapter 5, which describes the rise of the vigilante South Carolina Association and their hijacking of official, government-sanctioned slave policing systems. This chapter posits that the S.C.A. represented a definite shift in the role vigilante actors played in state-run slave policing systems, and sees this theme in relation to not only increasingly radical South Carolinian antebellum politics, but also a wider turn to vigilantism in nineteenth century America.

## **Chapter 1**

### **“Great Numbers of Negroes”: Evolutions in South Carolinian Lowcountry Slavery**

In 1756 a South Carolinian Grand Jury complained about the failure of slave patrollers to live up to their responsibility. The jury reported that “In several parts of the country the people have not been mustered these two years, and few will take trouble to ride patrol in any part of the country.” Charles Town’s Grand Jury also routinely complained of “an almost total neglect of patrol duty” and presented “as a general grievance through the province the want of patrol duty being duly done and submit to the legislature whether a provincial or parochial tax to support the expense of a standing patrol to be on constant duty would not better answer the purpose of apprehending slaves.” Throughout the colonial period, questions surrounding the slave policing system’s effectiveness in Charles Town, North America’s largest slave port, routinely emerged, much to the dismay of white South Carolinians who depended on the problematic system to keep them and their “peculiar” institution safe.<sup>5</sup>

However, few whites likely felt safe when it was revealed in 1745—just five years after the notorious Stono slave rebellion—that a town watch officer regularly entertained “seamen and Negroes at unseasonable Hours.” The relationship between watchmen and the city’s black population continued to cause a stir when residents later protested against “the number of Licenses which are annually granted to Watchmen, or their Wives, to keep Dram-Shops, whereby it becomes their Interest to encourage Negroes, and others to frequent their Houses.” When a tavern keeper on Elliot Street was asked in 1745 at what time the watch passed his doorway, he said that “ever since he

lived there, he never remembered to have seen the Guard pass thro' that street." To many anxious whites, it seemed as if their town watch was too busy entertaining the city's black population to adequately police them.<sup>6</sup>

Complaints persisted up until South Carolina's break with Britain—and thereafter as a part of the United States. Echoing the grievances of the state Grand Jury less than twenty years earlier, in 1773 Charles Town's Grand Jury lamented that "it is well known that not one Half of the Number of Men required by Law do attend their Duty on Sunday, and at Night; that in the Afternoon on Sundays the Watch House is frequently Shut up and not a Man on Duty." When juries were not criticizing the laxity of the slave patrols, they often pointed to the many instances of misconduct by various other units involved in the slave policing system. In 1772 the Grand Jury reprimanded Charles Town's town watch men for their frequent "disorderly behaviour." In one instance the jury pointed to a unit of watchmen who, likely during their patrol, were "beating and abusing Negroes sent on Errands by their Masters with Tickets."<sup>7</sup>

As slavery in South Carolina went through profound changes in the eighteenth century, one of the colony's most consistent features after what has been referred to as the "rice revolution" was the simmering fear of slave revolt and concerns that whites were not adequately protected—or rather, that the slave policing system was failing them. Different historians have interpreted such eighteenth-century complaints in different ways. In his landmark work *Many Thousands Gone*, Ira Berlin suggests that the complaints came from the collective planter community—however, on an individual level it was more convenient for slaveowners to skip patrol duty and allow their slaves to travel without a pass. Convenience and profit made slaveowners reluctant to police the black

population as stringent as legislature and popular opinion required. Historian Philip D. Morgan posits that such complaints were rare and that the quality of patrol duty reflected either the long periods of laxity or the short bursts of paranoia that reached “near-hysterical proportions.”<sup>8</sup>

While there is much truth to these interpretations, they de-emphasize the role of terror, a force that Morgan refers to as the “fury of slaveowners” that “lay just below the surface like a smoldering volcano, always about to erupt.” It would be wrong to think that such a force did not affect the day-to-day activities, interactions, and ideology of the white community situated tenuously above the surface of the volcano. Though there were many slaveowners who trusted their slaves and believed them to be a part of their family—and sometimes they biologically were—the way in which slavery’s intrinsically violent nature impacted South Carolina should not be an aside. More specifically, how South Carolinians perceived their slaves and the institutions that were *supposed* to protect them from their “property” in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries illustrates that the fear which plagued Charleston and South Carolina in 1822 was almost 150 years in the making.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Before “Carolina Gold”***

Slavery was always a part of Charles Town and South Carolina but when rice became the colony’s main export after 1700, the institution took on a new precedence. Still, the major implications of the “rice revolution” should not blind us to the importance of understanding the colony’s earlier slave populations. Charles Town’s establishment in 1670 meant the establishment of South Carolina’s burgeoning slave population, and a

town watch to help control the influx of African and Caribbean slaves. As the town watch exemplifies, slavery was never far from the minds of the Barbadian men who assisted in the colonization of Charles Town, particularly the English baron Sir John Yeamans. In 1666, a memorial drafted by Yeamans set a precedence for the role slavery would play in the new colony: “least wee should presume too farr wee shall only say that thes Settlements have beene made and upheld by Negroes and without constant supplies of them cannot subsist...” As Yeamans predicted, the colony would be “upheld” by slave labour.<sup>10</sup>

Though Barbadian migrants were never the majority in South Carolina, those who did make the journey constituted an extremely influential social component—and greatly informed how slavery would develop. Barbadian influence ensured that the colony was groomed to be a major slaveholding society. Though initially only referring to the labour of “men-servants” and “women-servants,” Yeaman was successful in establishing a new headright system that was extremely generous to slaveowners. By establishing equality between the labour of whites *and* enslaved blacks, the system rewarded those who brought slaves into the colony by providing them with generous landholdings. This directly favored Barbadians—like Yeaman—whose largest holdings were in slaves, and provided an incentive for future migrants to add to the slave population, particularly after rice eclipsed deerskin as the colony’s main export.<sup>11</sup>

Relying on the knowledge of local Native American tribes, particularly the Yamasee, the earliest settlers were not overwhelmingly concerned with slave labour because access to deerskin did not render it necessary. However, it is still important to note that slaves did play considerable roles in securing the 1,700 settlers access to the

trade and establishing settlements along the vulnerable borderlands region. Whether serving as domestic servants or “black cowboys,” the term given to frontier slaves who rounded up their owners’ cattle, South Carolina was from its inception a slaveholding society.<sup>12</sup>

Though it is difficult to calculate the exact percentage of the population that was enslaved, the best estimates suggest that between one fourth and one third of the colony’s earliest settlers were enslaved. The majority of slaves were men—at least three out of every four—and most made the journey from the West Indies, including Yackae and Grace, imported in February 1671 by Captain John Robinson. By the time of his death in 1674, Yeamans owned approximately twenty-six slaves and Simon Berringer, another Barbadian, brought dozens of slaves with him, primarily as a way to benefit from the headright system. Because whites were still the majority, South Carolina’s earliest slaves were granted limited liberties—which directly benefited slaveowners—that lasted only as long as the black population remained relatively small. For example, to generate profit from the deerskin trade, well before 1720 some owners allowed their armed slaves to roam the borders between white settlements and local Indian tribes. An official noted in 1687 that since the “Chief subsistence of the first Settlers being by Hoggs & Cattle they sell to the New-Comers,” many masters exploited their West African slaves’ familiarity with herding and put them to work. Some of South Carolina’s earliest absentee slaveowners were so confident in their slaves’ herding skills that they left them to care for and develop herds without any white supervision. Though notable, these liberties were fleeting, as South Carolinian slaves would be denied such “freedoms.”<sup>13</sup>

While such “liberties” might suggest that early settlers were not greatly concerned with the possibility of slave revolt, others knew that black behavior had to be reigned in for their slaveholding society to subsist. Complaints arose as early as 1693 when the governor reprimanded the presence of “very disorderly houses” that served “strong liquors” to “Great numbers of Negroes” who knew they could “have drinck...for mony or what else they bring.” Warnings from South Carolinian officials continued into the eighteenth century and in 1712 legislatures rejected planters who allowed their “slaves to do what and go wither they will and work where they please.” Such cries only got louder as the eighteenth century progressed and rice took over.<sup>14</sup>

***From a Society with Slaves to a Slave Society: South Carolina’s Rice Revolution***<sup>15</sup>

Only with the knowledge, expertise and labour of West African slave imports did rice transform the South Carolina lowcountry. For the wealth generated from rice cultivation, South Carolina’s burgeoning oligarchy had their slaves’ to thank. While South Carolina’s proprietors had been looking to produce a staple export since 1673, rice did not become the main export until the early 1700s. By 1761 it was noted that, “The only Commodity of Consequence produce in South Carolina is Rice, and they reckon it as much their staple Commodity, as Sugar is to Barbados and Jamaica, or Tobacco to Virginia and Maryland.” Rice had taken over.<sup>16</sup>

While the “rice revolution” had profound financial benefits for South Carolina’s largest planters, the crop also changed everything about lowcountry culture and society. The landscape changed as large-scale plantations popped up along intricate river systems, while the area’s demographics shifted as black slaves began to greatly outnumber their



white owners. Rice transformed slaves' lives as legislators placed draconian restrictions on enslaved *and* free blacks. Even the gender dynamics of rice production changed—whereas Western African women played a significant role in food preparation, rice cultivation by lowcountry slaves “de-gendered rice processing” as the production focused less and less on women specifically. As Ira Berlin famously noted, rice changed the lowcountry from a society with slaves into a slave society. And with that change, the terror of slave revolt for white South Carolinians became even more poignant.<sup>17</sup>

For whites, the rice revolution's most jarring change related to demographics. When planters turned their attentions to rice they soon found themselves outnumbered by blacks—a trend that dominated well into the nineteenth century and had a profound impact on white South Carolinians' sense of safety. As early as the 1710s one official noted that, “Ye Number of blacks in that time [1715-1719] have very much increased.” It is important to remember, however, that once settlers began settling the backcountry after 1740, slaves there never outnumbered whites to the same degree. For many years South Carolina's slave population was concentrated in the lowcountry where the colony's rice and indigo plantations—owned by an ever-powerful “slaveowning aristocracy”—flourished. But from as early as 1708, blacks outnumbered whites *overall* and the colony was home to approximately 4,100 slaves. Lowcountry slave populations grew exponentially as planters sought to keep up with agricultural development and after 1730, a boom in the value of rice. By 1730 South Carolina had a population of 20,000 blacks to 10,000 whites—ten years later this figure grew to 36,000 blacks to 15,000 whites. While the slave population grew partly because of natural reproduction, overall the increase occurred because of the mass importation of slaves into Charles Town's port.<sup>18</sup>

The influx of African and Caribbean slaves that dramatically changed South Carolina was more than *any* of the other thirteen colonies. Though South Carolina's slave importations were significantly less than the Caribbean colonies, more slaves were imported into South Carolina than any of the other mainland North American colonies. Between 1750 and 1775, South Carolina imported 40,000 *more* African slaves than Virginia, its closest competitor. For the later colonial period, South Carolina welcomed approximately 57.3 percent of those slaves coming into the entire North American mainland. Only eight percent of those slaves that entered Charles Town during the colonial period were transported elsewhere—a point that exemplifies just how concentrated slavery was along South Carolina's lowcountry and highlights the extent to which blacks were rapidly outnumbering whites.<sup>19</sup>

For much of the eighteenth century, Charles Town was North America's largest slave port. The rise in Charles Town's slave importations from 1720 to 1730—a period of drastic plantation growth—is quite remarkable. In 1720 Charles Town merchants imported approximately 275 slaves per year, but in ten years this number grew to well over 2,000 slaves per year. By 1738, South Carolinian planters bought approximately 2,500 slaves annually from Charles Town merchants. This rise was particularly felt during the months of March to October, the prime selling period. Charles Town's harbor was particularly busy during March, April, and May—after a brief respite during winter, ships brought most importations during these three months. The frenzy to acquire as many slaves as possible was noted by the *South Carolina Gazette* when it wrote that, “Negroes may be said to be the Bait proper for catching a *Carolina* planter, as certain as Beef to catch a Shark.”<sup>20</sup>

These population figures did not escape the attention of colonial officials who became increasingly concerned with the colony's burgeoning black population—even if it made them exorbitantly wealthy. As the slave population rose, so did the absolute necessity for slaveowners to enforce legislation on slave demographics and behavior if they wanted slaves to remain enslaved. Early efforts by legislatures sought to require one white servant for every six male slaves on a plantation—if enforced, it did little to curb planter's enthusiasm for black slave over white indentured labour. In 1714 officials tried to limit slave purchases by increasing the duty on slaves enacted earlier in 1703, however the financial profits planters extracted from the slave far outweighed the taxes paid. When these efforts failed to bring change, English officials tried to encourage more white immigration and sent a note to the governor in 1730 instructing him “to incourage the Importation of White People, the Blacks bearing at present too great a Proportion to the Number of Whites.” In many ways these efforts were futile. Nothing could satiate the planter's desire for African and Caribbean slaves.<sup>21</sup>

As the desire to reap rice cultivation's profits spread throughout South Carolina's planter elite, so did the restrictions on the increasing black population. With rare exceptions, after 1715 South Carolinian slaves were no longer armed servicemen of the militia. While slaves continued to serve in state militias—mostly as fifers and drummers—and laws maintained they could be drafted during emergencies, in very few circumstances were slaves ever armed militiamen after 1715. Likewise, it was made illegal in 1722 for a slave to carry arms. Only on the farthest stretches of the frontiers for purposes of hunting or following his owner home after a muster, could a slave be armed—though such instances were rare and still illegal. In addition, after 1687 South

Carolinian slaves could no longer leave their master's plantation without a pass.

Restrictions on the possession of arms and mobility are just two such examples of the increasingly draconian legislature that emerged as slaves made up the colony's largest demographic group.<sup>22</sup>

***“Go A Patrolling”: Slave Patrolling Systems in Colonial Barbados, South Carolina and Charles Town***

At the localized level, the limiting of slaves' ability to travel sought to control one of the most basic forms of slave revolt: running away. With the ability to procure weapons, these “liberties” *some* slaves previously had made up the two most important factors in planning and successfully implementing large-scale slave revolts. Such restrictions worked to block both every-day slave revolts and wide-spread rebellions. While enforcement was always a question that plagued South Carolinians, these legislative restrictions indicate a shift in how settlers perceived their slaves. The ever-increasing restrictions also highlight how whites increasingly felt that they were not safe in their slaveholding society.

In this way, the rice revolution also helped generate the kind of paranoia surrounding slave revolt that existed in the Caribbean. To Barbadian slaveowners, this was nothing new. Though most Caribbean slave revolts occurred in Jamaica, Barbadian slaveowners were consistently concerned with slave conspiracies. Whether or not these conspiracies were the product of slave planning or white Barbadian fear, wide scale panics occurred in 1675, 1683, 1686, 1692, and 1702. The response to the 1675 revolt was especially violent, as thirty-five blacks were executed, including one man named

Tony who taunted authorities by saying, “If you Roast me today, you cannot Roast me tomorrow.”<sup>23</sup>

As many of South Carolina’s earliest settlers came from Barbados, the Barbadian slave codes greatly influenced those enacted in South Carolina. Before analyzing Charles Town and South Carolina’s earliest slave patrolling laws, it is useful to consider those of Barbados to see just how much the South Carolinian slave policing system had its roots in laws made by one of the British Empire’s most brutal slaveholding societies. Barbados’s first comprehensive code, the “Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes,” was established in 1661. The act served as a criminal code for slave behavior and placed responsibility for slave policing on *all* whites. After 1661, individual slaveowners and constables were a part of the policing system and seven years later the code referred to the role “all Masters, Overseers, and other Persons Whatsoever” played in apprehending runaways. For slaves, the code stipulated that if found guilty of crimes that did not jeopardize white safety, the accused faced punishments ranging from lashings to having noses slit or limbs removed. Any such crimes considered public in nature—most notably insurrection—resulted in execution. The 1661 code, however, was only a starting point—as was often the case concerning legislation that had to respond to the ever-changing nature of slavery. As Barbadian slaveowners adjusted to the dynamics of living in their specific slaveowning society, Barbados’s minority white population amended the code several times in an attempt to keep slavery entrenched.<sup>24</sup>

The 1661 act paid particular attention to slaves’ mobility and enacted legislation restricting such. While most slaves did not have to work on Sundays, if one left their owner’s plantation he or she had to have a written pass stipulating how much time they

had been away. Those found without a pass were punished with a “moderate whipping” but the definition of “moderate” was left to interpretation—on one occasion in 1654, it meant fifty lashes. The responsibility to check passes fell on almost any white male who might encounter a slave, but increasingly imperial troops and militias were entrusted with routine slave patrolling.<sup>25</sup>

Since the 1640s, a formal military structure dedicated to slavery was entrenched in the island. In the 1650s the colony reorganized its militias and after a failed insurrection in 1649, sought to implement “[i]ncreased slave policing and the expansion of militia forces.” As in South Carolina, enforcement was always an issue. We do not know how many men actually turned up to “petrol” every Saturday, Sunday, and holiday—the most vulnerable days for revolt, according to slaveowners. On these days, and when called upon by the governor to “ride more frequently and diligently,” patrols searched slave quarters and attended local gatherings to ensure that the colony’s enslaved population “behaved.” After another revolt in 1686, Barbados’s slave patrols were altered and by 1702 over two thousand British troops were stationed on Barbadian plantations with the exclusive purpose of serving as “militia tenants” and keep slaves in line. As the wave of Barbadians arrived and settled in Charles Town after 1670, this was the slave policing system they knew and subsequently imported to the new colony.<sup>26</sup>

One of the first significant steps in policing South Carolina’s slave population was a stipulation inserted at the end of a 1687 law concerning slave trading. In just one sentence, the law greatly restricted slaves’ freedom to move around, stipulating that, “It shall not be lawful for any negroe or negroes, or other slave, upon any pretence whatsoever, to travel or goe abroad, from his or their master or mistresses house in the

night time, between the sunsetting and the sunrising, or in the day time without a note from his or her master or mistresse or overseer.” By 1690 the colony had its first comprehensive law on slave behavior, “An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves,” which was adapted in 1696 and renamed to include all “negroes.” Laws concerning black behavior only multiplied as time went on but the question still remained as to who would police the slave population. While the 1690 law maintained that it was the responsibility of everyone—even slaves—to apprehend and report runaways, it also placed particular emphasis on the colony’s militia to patrol slaves. South Carolina’s militia was established just one year after settlement but like Barbadian laws, was required by 1690 to provide specific protection from slaves and when a slave ran away, “raise a convenient party of men” to capture the fugitive.<sup>27</sup>

In many ways the colony’s first slave patrols were made up of Native Americans who were used to capture runaways, though the white population was increasingly cautious of this system and soon established a method made up of armed, white men. Demographics made authorities increasingly anxious. A correspondent wrote near the turn of the century that the militia was “not about 1500... White men” whereas “through the province generally 4 Negroes to one white man.” The chance that 1,500 men even showed up routinely to militia musters was highly unlikely. Even if the militia could miraculously manage to operate at full capacity, slaveowners feared they did not stand a chance in the event of a slave uprising.<sup>28</sup>

In response to these concerns, official slave patrols were introduced in 1704. The colony believed that the militia should be concerned with foreign enemies—the job of slave policing would be first and foremost slave patrols’ responsibility. The 1704

legislation stipulated that militias and patrols would be separate. The only overlap concerned militia captains who were required to choose ten men in their militia to serve in patrols, and thus made exempt from militia duty. But as threats from local native tribes plagued the colony over the next several years, and the militia was increasingly on the move, authorities worried that men saw patrols as a way out of militia duty. Rather than leaving his plantation in the hands of white overseers or a wife, patrol duty meant that in the event of an emergency, a patroller could stay close to home. Wealthy planters used their influence to ensure that they attained patrol positions for these reasons. It was soon noted that, “the best patrols in this Province generally consist of the choicest and best men, who screen themselves from doing such services in alarms as are required and ought to be done by men of their ability.” While South Carolina’s elite often used various methods to avoid patrol duty—including paying fines—a 1721 law merged the militia and slave patrols and closed that particular loophole.<sup>29</sup>

With the 1721 law, “every person belonging to each foot company and troops of dragoons” was required to “go a patrolling.” Militia officers were required to mark off their districts, so that each patrol covered fifteen miles. From 1734 to 1737 the colony even experimented with paying its patrols, as North Carolina later did. However the policy was soon abandoned—possibly because, in the words of one historian, it led to men patrolling “for the purpose of wreaking vengeance” on others’ slaves. During the colonial period, patrols were continually strengthened and rearranged—likely in response to complaints that few were fulfilling their duties. In addition, legislatures found that, “Many irregularities have been committed by former patrols arising chiefly from their drinking too much liquor before or during the time of their riding on duty.” In essence,



this was South Carolina's slave policing system in the lead-up to its most notorious slave rebellion.<sup>30</sup>

While Charles Town worked in tandem with state-run patrols, in 1671 it established an official town watch to protect the compounded settlement from “Mischiefs and Insults both from ye Inhabitants and Searfaring people.” The watch was initially made up of regular constables and upwards of six patrollers, and every night six men with one constable patrolled the streets from ten o'clock to sunrise. Similar to South Carolina's militia, the town watch was initially concerned with various threats including “searfaring people” and the Spanish. But as time progressed and slave populations increased, the watch's primary concern became “the Quelling and Defeating of any Disorders Insurrections or Tumultuous Design's formed and carried on by any Negroes or other Slaves.”<sup>31</sup>

By the turn of the century, the town watch was predominantly responsible for the policing of slaves *within* Charles Town's boundaries—outlying regions were still patrolled by state militias. Made up of “Twenty one able Watchmen of Twenty one years and one Drummer,” the guard now included a commander and two subordinate officers. Interestingly, women were not exempt from their town watch duties, as those who headed a household were required to find a man to serve for them. While the constant adjustments to Charles Town's town watch illustrate the town's lack of confidence in the earliest slave policing system, so too does the fact that by 1709 it was acknowledged by the Assembly that “for a long time past no regular watch kept in Charles Town, which, if not duly taken care of and in time prevented” in times of imminent “danger, may be of fatal consequences, and the ruin of this flourishing and thriving town.”<sup>32</sup>

As war with the Yamasees approached and fear of the colony's burgeoning slave population intensified, officials were appointed to enforce Charles Town's laws on slave patrols and the town watch. By 1713 the city increased the number of guards patrolling each night to eight and on their patrols guardsmen were ordered to shoot anyone who refused to comply with their demands. In addition, the watch was expected to meet monthly to practice their shooting—whether or not this condition was enforced is unknown. Yet as Grand Juries routinely argued, the extent to which city and state laws concerning slave patrolling and the town watch were actually *enforced* was always an issue. In many ways, the town watch was an inherently flawed institution from its inception. In the words of one historian, “Nowhere does the absence of effective local authority to superintend the municipal affairs of Charles Town appear so unfortunate as in the case of the watch.”<sup>33</sup>

***“A new way of sending our slaves against us, to Rob and Plunder us”***

It is important to recognize that Charles Town's town watch was also established to protect against foreign enemies. Primarily nearby Indian tribes and the Spanish presence in Florida, these foreign enemies also contributed greatly to the settler's fear that their slaves would rebel. An ideology, or rhetoric, developed soon after Charles Town's founding that maintained that Indians—primarily the Yamasee and Tuscarora—and the Spanish attacked South Carolina to incite slave revolt. This claim was made most often against the Spanish, since South Carolina at times used Indian allies to capture fugitive slaves. In many ways, every attack against Charles Town and South Carolina was seen as a direct threat to the institution of slavery. Writing home to England in 1720 one

government official noted that the “whole Province was...in danger of being Massacred by their Own Slaves.”<sup>34</sup>

While South Carolina’s frontiers were vulnerable to attack by various neighboring native tribes, war broke out with the Yamasees in April 1715 following the death of Thomas Naire, a prominent resident. The Yamasees were frustrated with the ecological destruction done by settlers’ cattle—the area sustained the region’s deer population, and the Yamasees depended on the trade to help pay their burgeoning debt and attain the tools and goods necessary to survive in an increasingly European world. The Yamasees also alleged that settlers were guilty of trading abuses, particularly the enslavement of Yamasees by British trader-creditors. In the weeks following Naire’s death, the Yamasees were joined by members of the Piedmont, Creek, and Catawaba tribes, and the war’s conclusion in 1717 occurred when some Catawabas made a formal peace with settlers, though the Yamasees never officially established peace with South Carolina. The war left over one hundred settlers and slaves dead, but perhaps most destructive was how the war highlighted to South Carolinians their vulnerable position as a racial minority in a sea of slaves and hostile native tribes.<sup>35</sup>

The Yamasee war tells us much about colonial South Carolinian slavery and the development of an ideology that often saw Indian war in tandem with slave revolt. While South Carolinian creditors enslaved Yamasees debtors, settlers seemingly saw a difference between their black and Indian slaves. Some Indians were suspected of planning an insurrection in 1700, but most enslaved Indians were women and children and thereby considered less “menacing” than black slaves. Reverend Francis Le Jau extolled the innocence of Indians, while noting that, “the Negroes [were] generally very

bad men...” The relative ease with which settlers viewed Indian slaves might have been because of numbers—there simply were not that many Indians enslaved when compared to the lowcountry’s black population. From 1722 to 1727 the total population of Indian slaves ranged from 1,100 to 1,280, of which sixty-nine percent were women and children. With the outbreak of war, however, the idea that the Indians were “honest, loving and assistant, kind and obedient in all reasonable Demands to the white Men living and trading among them” began to change.<sup>36</sup>

Following the experience of Indian war, settlers’ fears of “Secret Poisonings and bloody Insurrections” were widespread, and few were willing to trust their slaves. According to one historian this paranoia stemmed from the experience of the Yamasee War, noting that, “If the South Carolinians’ supposedly trustworthy Indian allies could turn against them in the blink of an eye, who could pretend to know what further atrocities lay in store?” In May 1720 a group of slaves ran away from their plantation along the Ashley River and killed a nearby white family. Rumors quickly spread, and in June a Mr. Boone in London received a letter from South Carolina describing the settlers’ fear of a full-scale slave uprising. “We have had a very wicked and barbarous plott of the designe of the negroes rising with a designe to destroy all the white people in the country and then to take the town...but it pleased God it was discovered and many of them taken prisoners and some burnt and some hang’d and some banish’d.” As the fugitive slaves were captured, a small group of Waccamaw Indians confirmed the fears that Indians and slaves would revolt together, and took up arms against locals.<sup>37</sup>

While the brief Waccamaw revolt was quickly put down with the help of Winyah Indians, the fact that South Carolina had an Indian ally did little to assuage earlier fears of

a slave-Indian conspiracy. In 1719 one Bermuda official noted that Charles Town inhabitants, “were very apprehensive that the Cherikees Indians in conjunction with the negroes (many haveing already run away from their masters into the woods) would invade them.” Likewise, a report released by the Board of Trade in 1721 called the 1720 revolt a “revolution” that could have led to the “utter Extirpation of all your Majestys subjects in this Province.”<sup>38</sup>

While fears of an Indian-slave alliance plagued South Carolinians, the colony also believed Spain fostered slave insurrections. These fears were particularly poignant after 1739—with Britain at war with Spain, word spread that the Spanish in Florida were promising South Carolinian slaves their freedom. Following the arrival of a boatload of fugitive slaves—who came upon the Spanish by mistake—Spain’s imperial government adopted an official policy of harboring runaway slaves. The boatload of approximately twelve slaves escaped from St. George, South Carolina, and arrived in Florida in October 1687, where they were soon employed, married, and converted to Catholicism. The next year, an English sergeant major arrived demanding the fugitive slaves be returned, however, because they were successfully employed—and Catholic—Governor Diego de Quiroga y Lossada refused. Influenced by the first boatload of fugitives, Spain recognized the political and martial ramifications of a fugitive slave policy that would bolster their position on the continent—and hurt Britain’s. On November 1, 1693 King Charles II announced Spain’s first official fugitive slave policy which gave “liberty to all...the men as well as the women...so that by their example and by my liberality others will do the same.” Though the 1693 policy was by no means concrete, the specifics of the

changing Spanish policy mattered little to slaveholders in South Carolina who accused the Spanish of inciting slave revolt and Indian attack in British colonies.<sup>39</sup>

In 1728 acting South Carolina governor Arthur Middleton told London that the Spanish were not only “receiving and harboring all our runaway Negroes,” but had also “found out a new way of sending our slaves against us, to Rob and Plunder us;...they are continually fitting out Partys of Indians from St. Augustine to Murder our White people, Rob our plantations, and carry off our slaves.” Middleton’s accusations were not just rhetoric. While it appears as if there never was any such official policy, evidence suggests that in the early eighteenth century the Spanish were indeed guilty of such charges. In addition, when a raid dispatched by Colonel John Palmer of the South Carolina Assembly attacked St. Augustine in 1728, one Spanish official suggested that the slaves who defended the colony be freed so that they could go north to incite revolt—and paid for every English scalp they brought back. Though General Andrew Jackson solved the threat of Spanish Florida for the lowcountry in 1818, these mid eighteenth century experiences were rooted in Charles Town’s culture and contributed to the almost hysterical fear of slave revolt that penetrated South Carolinian society.<sup>40</sup>

### ***The Stono Slave Rebellion and Changes to the Slave Policing System***

By 1739 the broader lowcountry’s slave population greatly outnumbered its white and the fear of slave revolt—whether homegrown or encouraged by Spain—was widespread. In South Carolina, the ratio of black to white in 1740 stood at 2.6 slaves to 1 free person—and still growing. Aware of the extent to which these population figures put their lives in danger, Charles Town and South Carolina had already established public

patrolling forces. But rumors throughout the 1730s that there was a “thickening” of slave conspiracies led the state to adjust its patrolling system. Perhaps aware of the increasing complexity, legislatures passed an act in 1721 that merged separate slave patrols with the militia, effectively making slave policing throughout the colony the responsibility of South Carolina’s military. The 1721 legislature also made policing slavery the militia’s number one priority, which went “from a vital defensive agency to one whose principal duty was the police supervision of slaves.” This portion of the legislation is particularly significant because it illustrates the inherent understanding in South Carolina that the white community’s *greatest* threats were the black, enslaved people living amongst them.<sup>41</sup>

Subsequently, a series of acts were passed in the 1720s that required planters to supply white patrollers with arms in relation to the planter’s holdings in land or slaves. Such an act tried to ensure planters’ input into the slave patrols would be in relation to their subsequent use of its services. From each militia beat captain, patrol captains were appointed and in 1728 the Committee to Revise the Patrol Act reported to the assembly that all patrol captains needed to be adequately informed of their responsibilities. In addition, captains were to be provided with a list of all slaves on every plantation in their district. Again, however, it seemed such adjustments to the system failed to bring significant change and the extent to which these suggestions were implemented is difficult to know. What we know for sure is that such legislation failed to make white South Carolinians feel safer. In a December 1732 address, Governor Robert Johnson noted that the colony’s slaves had “become very insolent and ungovernable, for many of proper Amendments to the Law for their Governance, and for settling Patroles.” South

Carolínians again turned to legislation that they hoped would strengthen the patrols. Few pointed out that the problem might have rested with adequate enforcement of the slave, free black, and patrol laws *already* on the books.<sup>42</sup>

The next ten years marked many changes in the legality of South Carolina's slave patrols and Charles Town's town watch. This suggests that in the lead-up to the notorious 1739 Stono Rebellion, the patrols were being adjusted. In 1721, the city passed an act for "maintaining a Watch and keeping Good Orders with Charles Town" which authorized guards to stop any black they encountered out at night. If the slave failed to provide authorities with a sufficient excuse, they were to be "Confined in the Cage of Charles Town till the next morning." Likewise, in 1734 St. Philip's Parish located on Charles Town's peninsula, established two mounted squads to serve as slave patrols. Acting on the series of acts legislated in the 1720s, the new patrols included a captain—selected by the local militia captain—and eight men to ride alternately on "Saturday nights, Sundays, Sunday nights and holidays." A 1737 act further strengthened the guard's role. While slaves always had to have a pass if off their plantation, slaves out after curfew were now required to hold a lit lantern—making it difficult for them to slip off into the dark woods. As punishment, the Guard was again ordered to arrest and detain the accused slave in the guard house until the following morning, when the commanding officer would "order every such Negro to be whipped at the publick whipping-post." The city did only punish the slave—the failure to properly monitor one's slave, or provide them with a pass, cost a slaveowner five shillings.<sup>43</sup>

Despite these adjustments, in September 1739 slaveowners realized their worst fears when slaves led British North America's largest slave revolt. Starting in St. Paul's



Parish, just twenty miles southwest of Charles Town, the Stono rebellion began on Sunday September 9 when conspirators convened at the Stono River. Armed with stolen guns, the group began pillaging the area and along their march, killed nearby whites, often by decapitation, and burned at least five houses. Nearby slaves joined the revolt as the group travelled and soon upwards of one hundred slaves participated in the killing of approximately twenty-one whites. At this point, the group was spotted by Lt. Gov. William Bull. Bull informed the militia of the revolt while the slaves rested in a field near Edisto River, having already covered ten miles. It is difficult to know why the slaves stopped, but they were soon met at the field by the state militia, who easily suppressed the rebellion. Those deemed willing conspirators were immediately decapitated—their heads set on posts throughout the region—while others were arrested. During the battle with the militia, roughly thirty slaves escaped, though most were later recovered the following week by militiamen.<sup>44</sup>

While the earlier experience of the Yamasee War led some to suspect their slaves' loyalty, others were shocked by the Stono revolt. Looking to shift the blame away from their own role in enslaving human beings, many suspected that Spain helped instigate the revolt. In retaliation, South Carolinians supported an unsuccessful attack on Florida by General James Ogelthorpe in early 1740. But some in Charles Town's slaveowning aristocracy knew slavery's threat came not from foreign but "Domestic Enemies." Many legislatures knew that being a slaveowner meant owning property that put white lives in danger. While some blamed Spain, the General Assembly's goal was to consider "the most effectual Means for Prevention of such Dangers throughout the Province." Most

significantly, following the Stono rebellion these efforts concerned revamping the state's slave codes and patrol acts.<sup>45</sup>

In November 1739 a committee appointed by the Assembly decided to attempt to rectify the problem of policing South Carolina's burgeoning slave population by strengthening the militia, revamping the patrol act, and severely restricting the behaviour of blacks. The question of enforcing the 1737 Patrol Act was pressing—the Stono rebellion had revealed just how difficult it was to ensure that patrols adequately patrolled the countryside every night. In debating the 1740 “Act for the better establishment and regulating of Patrols,” some proposed that slaveowners submit a list of the names of all their male slaves to the militia captain, to then distribute it to patrol captains. Proponents hoped the list would allow patrollers to call every slave by name, but the idea was rejected—likely interfering with the owner's sense of sovereignty over his slaves. The most influential revision in the 1740 act gave control of the slave patrols from the local counties to the state militia. In many ways, this was an effort to centralize the slave policing system, but it created complexities and inconsistencies that made the patrol system convoluted and difficult to adapt to the specifics of urban versus rural slavery.<sup>46</sup>

While officials could enact new laws and overhaul the patrolling system, this did not necessarily mean that laws would be routinely *enforced*. Enforcement concerned the Commons House, and consequently Lieutenant Governor William Bull ensured that parts of the patrol act pertaining to the responsibility of militia captains and their subordinates were published in a December 1739 edition of the *South Carolina Gazette* so that, “it may [be] known by all Persons how far they are liable to perform that Service by the said Act.” Once the revised 1740 Patrol Act received the governor's approval in May, the

Assembly made sure that similar sections were also published in local newspapers so that all white men knew what their slaveowning society expected of them.<sup>47</sup>

As the General Assembly tried to reign in black behavior, a fire broke out in Charles Town that caused significant panic. In November 1740 about a third of Charles Town was destroyed by a fire that caused up to 250,000 pounds sterling in damages. Throughout the night of November 18, as the fire burned, a unit of twenty men, likely from the City Guard, patrolled the streets while guards stood stationed throughout the city. Historian Kenneth Scott maintains that these guards were stationed to help the injured and prevent against looters, but Scott fails to note the most significant concern to these patrollers: slaves. Memories of fugitive slaves travelling along country roads and killing white families still loomed large in the minds of Charles Town residents, and rumors quickly spread that the fire had been the work of slaves attempting to overthrow white order.<sup>48</sup>

Seeking to affirm their establishment in the British Empire, Charles Town's elite recognized the link between material possessions and power—and the symbolism behind the threat of arson. To own the best consumer goods imported from Britain, and to live in magnificent houses suggested that you were indeed a part of the “cosmopolitan membership in a transatlantic empire.” Arson, allegedly committed by slaves, was not only about damages done to material possessions—rather, it suggested an attack upon the owner of the house and an attempt to “purge a city of a disease.” Overall, as historian Benjamin L. Carp has noted in relation to revolutionary crowds, “the house was a symbol of a person's political and social authority.” For a slave to set fire to the houses of Charles Town's aristocracy was an explicit attack on the slaveowner's authority.<sup>49</sup>

While it was never proven that slaves—rather than the high winds—were behind the fire, to ease slaveowners’ and send a message to the black community, a black man was executed the following year, who allegedly “looked upon every White Man he should meet as his declared Enemy.” Occurring only months after the Stono rebellion and in the wake of Indian war, the fire assured many that South Carolina was “greatly reduced and weakened, by a Series of Calamities and Misfortunes which have attended it for some time past.” The last two decades affirmed in the minds of any skeptics that slaves had to be policed more efficiently.<sup>50</sup>

Seven years after the nightmare of Stono, some slave patrollers seemed intent on making sure that the legislature recently enacted was enforced—by whatever means necessary. In 1748, Edmund Atkin’s slaves were “peaceably and quietly in...[his] plantation,” when a roaming slave patrol appeared and whipped one of the slaves. According to Atkin, the patrollers “also broke open a box, and took away several things belonging to the said Negro.” While it is difficult to know exactly what the patrollers’ intentions were, Atkin did recognize that his slaves had broken the law by simply owning property. Nevertheless, Atkin wanted to charge the patrollers with a breaking patrol laws. There was a discrepancy between how the patrollers understood the law regulating slave property and how Atkin saw it. Atkin argued that, “Slaves have undoubtedly a right to their master’s protection from abuse when they do not offend against the laws.” Here state protection of the white community, as exemplified by the slave patrol, came head to head with a slaveowner’s sense of sovereignty over his slaves. While we do not know the outcome of the dispute between Atkin and his local patrollers, the conduct of slave patrols in South Carolina was an issue that continued as South Carolina entered the

revolutionary era—particularly as the idea of “liberty” spread throughout the thirteen colonies.<sup>51</sup>

After 1740 there were no real adjustments to the slave policing system until 1819. While the nightmare of Stono continued to plague lowcountry slaveowners, the slave patrolling system did not improve. Complaints submitted by Grand Juries and newspapers from 1740 onwards illustrate that even the experience of full-blown slave revolt did not rectify the slave policing system’s problems. The white population still did not feel safe—and they attributed much of this to the fact that the patrols and Charles Town’s town watch were allegedly not doing their jobs. It is unlikely that whites would have felt safe if patrolling units followed laws to a tee—in many ways, nothing could quell the a slaveowner’s fear that one day his or her slave might violently revolt. But collectively, white residents seemed to be blaming those guardsmen and patrollers who failed to show up for duty—even a drunk patroller was better than none.

As time went on, such complaints persisted and what would become Charleston had a unique position with relation to slave patrolling. Efforts to police the black population in Charleston and Charles Town—where slaves could interact with drunks, sailors, and worst of all, free blacks—were routinely criticized. Yet, the fact that Charleston was caught between two systems, one state run and one city run, seemed to escape most critics. It did not, however, escape much of the city’s black community who took advantage of the relative “freedoms” offered in rarely-patrolled regions of the city, particularly the Charleston Neck. Nor did the complexity and uncoordinated nature of the slave policing system escape the attention of white slaveowners, who increasingly

realized that there were ways in which they could adapt the slave policing system to their own liking—to the detriment of fellow slaveowners and slaves alike.

## **Chapter 2**

### **“Liberty!” in Revolutionary-era South Carolina**

On October 19, 1765, in response to Britain’s taxation on stamps, Charles Town residents hung an effigy of the city’s stamp distributor, complete with a placard reading “Liberty and no Stamp Act.” It did not take long for slaves in the city to adopt the word “liberty,” albeit for a more literal use. According to the Grand Jury, soon after the effigy appeared slaves, “at all times in the night,” rioted in the streets. The jury maintained—again—that “slaves in Charles-Town are not under a good regulation,” and reprimanded the watchmen for failing to stop the riots. In December, a wealthy merchant’s wife allegedly heard two slaves planning an uprising throughout all of South Carolina, planned for Christmas Eve. Yet, the holiday season came and went with little excitement, except the activity of slave patrols and militias planning for the alleged insurrection.<sup>52</sup>

But in January representative Henry Laurens reported that “a peculiar incident, revealing in what dread the citizens lived among the black savages with whom they were surrounding themselves” occurred. According to Laurens, a group of slaves began chanting “liberty” in Charles Town’s streets. The city was soon “thrown under arms for a week and for 10 or 14 days messengers were sent posting through the province in the most bitterly cold weather in 19 years.” At the same time, approximately 107 slaves ran away from their Charles Town-area plantations and “joined a larger number of runaways in Colleton County, which increase[d] to a formidable Body.” Laurens concluded that such “domestic broils” were “more awful & distressing than Fire, Pestilence, or Foreign Wars.” Aware that the colony’s black majority put them in danger—even more so during

such a politically charged time—the assembly voted to stop slave imports for three years, beginning January 1, 1766.<sup>53</sup>

Though war broke out between the thirteen colonies and Britain in the spring of 1775, according to Laurens the vulnerability of Charles Town's white population to slave revolt was more terrifying than anything the British might do—particularly as few were confident in the city's slave policing system. Rumors spread that the British were going to unleash slaves onto their masters, and on May 3 a ship arrived in Charles Town with a report stating that the British were considering granting “freedom to such Slaves as should desert their Masters and join the King's troops.” There was still no validity to the rumor but when news came of the battle at Lexington and Concord, validity went to the wayside. A British observer confirmed that, “the fears of the people...that his Majesty's ministers and other servants instigated their slaves to rebel against their masters and to cut their throats.” With still no word from the colony's new—albeit absent—governor, Lord William Campbell, rumors persisted. At the end of May, the *City Gazette* published a letter allegedly received from London that confirmed “there is gone down to Sheerness, seventy-eight thousand guns and bayonets, to be sent in America, to put into the hands of N\*\*\*\*\*s...” By “N\*\*\*\*\*s,” the newspaper of course meant “Negroes” but thought it wise to keep this information from any slave who might come across the paper and illegally read it.<sup>54</sup>

Still, word spread throughout the slave population that once Campbell arrived he would free them. According to planters, slaves “believe they will all be sett free on the arrival of our new governor.” “Reports were daily circulated,” an observer wrote, “that the Negroes of this plantation had refused to work, that in another they had obtained arms



and were gone into the woods, that others had actually murdered their masters and their families.” Charles Town’s slave court sat in June to hear the “Trials of Several Negroes Suspected & charged of plotting an Insurrection,” particularly Thomas Jeremiah, a freedman. Not unlike the situation Governor Thomas Bennett Jr. found himself in during the 1822 slave unrest, Campbell expressed skepticism about the trial. He wished to pardon Jeremiah and save him from execution, but stated that South Carolinians “openly and loudly declared [that] if I granted the man a pardon they would hand him at my door.” The colony’s superior was clearly intimidated by the paranoid white population, and in a time of increasing hostilities between white colonists and white colonizers, let public opinion determine how he would punish its black population. It is no surprise that Jeremiah was executed, much to the delight of white South Carolinians.<sup>55</sup>

Responding to the chaos in the Revolution’s lead-up, South Carolina’s General Committee reminded residents that the colony’s “Inhabitants...do Patrole Duty and to Mount Guard every night.” While the colony still had men to patrol the slave population, they intended to use them. Rather than combating their British enemy, Josiah Smith plainly stated in May 18 that the militia’s duty was “principally to guard against any hostile attempts that might be made by our domesticks.” As the British moved in to occupy Charles Town’s harbour—particularly Sullivan’s Island, the first stop for slave importations—militias followed orders, and attempted to keep their slaves enslaved. Sullivan’s Island had become a kind of refuge for fugitive slaves—any slave who made it to the island sought refuge by the British. Consequently, in December 1775 a group of fifty-four South Carolinians led by Lieutenant William Withers crossed in darkness and crept onto the island. Once there, the group destroyed a house lodging fugitive slaves,

killed upwards of four slaves, seized four more, and destroyed everything in their path. Before the South Carolina revolutionary militia was engaged with fighting the British, they were employed in slave policing.<sup>56</sup>

In South Carolina rumors that the British were unleashing slaves onto their masters were usually just that—rumors. But by November, they were a reality in Virginia. On November 7, 1775 Virginian Governor Lord Dunmore released a proclamation that greatly changed the meaning of the war for Virginians and South Carolinians alike. The proclamation boldly declared that, “all indentured Servants, Negroes, or others” who “are able and willing to bear Arms, they joining his Majesty’s troops” would become “free...as soon as may be for the more speedily reducing this Colony to a proper Sense of their Duty, to his Majesty’s Crown and Dignity.” While at first the policy did not extend to South Carolinian slaveowners, it nevertheless infuriated South Carolinians who felt that the British were attempting to unleash slave insurrection on their subjects.<sup>57</sup>

Though there were many factors that led South Carolinian slaveowners to the revolutionary cause, Dunmore’s Proclamation and the subsequent British policy on Loyalist slaves made many slaveowners into Patriots. In retaliation, South Carolina’s first state constitution of 1776 maintained that the British had “excited domestic insurrections—proclaimed freedom to servants and slaves, enticed or stolen them from, and armed them against their masters.” South Carolinians felt as if the violent British policies threatened to “loosen the bands of government and create anarchy and confusion.” Still, South Carolina’s entry into the revolution on March 26, 1776 was a matter of “necessity rather than choice.” Hoping to reconcile their differences with

Britain soon, some like Henry Laurens felt independence was a “dutiful son thrust by the hand of violence out of a father’s house into a cruel world.” With Britain allegedly instigating slave revolt upon its “sons” rather than protecting them from it, most of the violence Laurens spoke of concerned slavery.<sup>58</sup>

But just how much of a threat was the British policy to South Carolinian slavery? In terms of numbers, it is difficult to determine how many slaves South Carolinians lost during the Revolution. Historian Robert Weir maintains that despite the policy, “wholesale desertions did not ensue,” however, he also notes that just before Charles Town’s 1782 evacuation, a British commander counted 4,000 blacks among the refugees. In addition, furious South Carolinian slaveowners later claimed they lost approximately 20,000 to 25,000 during the war—a number that might have been easily inflated. One thing is for sure, South Carolinians showed their slave patrolling power during the Revolution, as a means of reminding slaves that their masters intended they *remain* slaves—whether under the British crown or an independent republic. In addition, South Carolinians feared what their slaves would do to them, more than their British enemy. The period was marked by multiple slave insurrections and conspiracies throughout the U.S. South that wreaked havoc on South Carolinians’ sense of safety.<sup>59</sup>

### ***“Domestic Broils” and the American Revolution in South Carolina***

The claim that the British were launching “domestic insurrection” against slaveowners likely contributed to the war’s ferocity in the South, particularly in the lowcountry region. British Colonel Robert Gray maintained that as soon as Patriots were released on parole from prison they “made constant inroads in small parties & murdered

every loyalist they found whether in arms or at home.” “The cruelty exercised by the rebels on our Militia,” Gray continued, “exceed all belief.” As the war dragged on, South Carolina figured out how to bring more men to the Patriot cause by offering them what most white men wanted: slaves.<sup>60</sup>

Since South Carolinians had been complaining for years that British officers had “carried off all [the] Negroes,” General Thomas Sumter easily rationalized in May 1781 that slaves seized from Loyalists should be used as bounty to encourage enlistments. Sumter established that each private would receive a bounty of one “prime”—meaning healthy, adult—for a ten month enlistment. The plan was soon approved and launched into action. While it is difficult to determine exactly how many benefitted, it seems as if the plan was successful in recruiting men to the revolutionary cause. As historian Sylvia Frey has pointed out, the policy contributed to “a wider distribution of slaveholding in South Carolina.” The plan’s success can also be traced to the fact that the policy also attracted men from Virginia. While some slaveowners were losing slaves, others were gaining them. In light of such policies, slaves’ hopes that Britain would bring them freedom receded. Increasingly, both the British seizure of slaves and South Carolina’s bounty policy emphasized that in the revolutionary chaos there was not only a widespread exchange of slave bodies, but also a preoccupation of who would control the labour of those slaves.<sup>61</sup>

After a brief battle in 1776, for several years South Carolinians experienced relative peace—until February 1780, when Charles Town residents learned that the British were fast approaching. Hidden within the steeple of St. Michael’s Church—the spot where patrollers sat on lookout for slave disturbances—the *Gazette* editor Peter

Timothy watched smoke rise from nearby campsites of British troops making their way up to the coast to surround and capture Charles Town. With the arrival of British General Henry Clinton and his ten thousand soldiers, the six week siege for Charles Town began and ended in May with the British occupation. Captured within the city limits were U.S. General Benjamin Lincoln and 5,500 troops who made up the southern army, and so the capture was a monumental victory for the British and a huge defeat for South Carolinian rebels.<sup>62</sup>

In terms of slave policing, Charles Town slaveowners were perhaps pleasantly surprised with British efforts. Slaves who fled to Charles Town to find freedom with Britain were soon rounded up and arrested. They were sent to the workhouse and in many ways treated like captured rebels. When not held in chains in the workhouse, slaves' physical labour was exploited to tend to fortifications and clean the city's streets. Though it meant harsh physical work, slaves likely looked forward to some respite from the workhouse—once inside, slaves were held in “long and close confinement,” and as a result many died because of the conditions. In an attempt to dispose of the bodies quickly, the British opened up different lots throughout the city, including one on Church Street that became “extremely noxious” to its neighbours. Though the exception rather than the rule, some female slaves found themselves “dressed up in the richest silks” and dancing with British officers at a ball held in February 1782. But these women remained just as they were before the Revolution began: enslaved.<sup>63</sup>

By the winter of 1782, General Nathanael Greene was only fifteen miles away and a recapture of Charles Town was imminent. In preparation, attempts to reorganize South Carolina's government were led by John Rutledge. While some whites had pleaded

allegiance to the British, not all did willingly. After the execution of rebel Colonel Isaac Hayne the previous year, many South Carolinians wanted to seek vengeance for the occupation—and for Britain’s alleged attempts to launch slave insurrections. “The very females talk as familiarly of shedding blood & destroying the [Tories] as the men do,” a member of the assembly noted. Most were concerned “not so much what he [the Tory] has done, as what Estate he has.” The desire to recapture property—especially slaves—dominated the interests of many, and so a list was published that listed 425 Loyalist families to be banished from the state, ninety percent of whom resided in Charles Town and the lowcountry.<sup>64</sup>

When word came that the British had lost at Yorktown, the British began to wrap up their occupation, and in the summer of 1782 evacuated the city. By December 14 Charles Town returned to South Carolinian control. The Treaty of Paris soon secured peace and independence and as the thirteen colonies struggled to form a union, South Carolinian slaveowners began rebuilding their slave policing system and seeking the restoration of their slave property. Thousands of slaveowners petitioned the new United States government to ensure Britain compensated them for their losses. Though neither lived up to their promise, South Carolinians promised the British that they would not confiscate any more Loyalist property—so long as the British promised to return fugitive slaves. But few owners could provide adequate evidence as to exactly how many slaves they lost and the diplomatic issue between the U.S. and Great Britain was never truly reconciled, much to the chagrin of South Carolinian planters.

Most features of slavery in post-revolutionary South Carolina remained unchanged from the colonial period—however most worrisome to the white community

was the alleged intensification of slave rebelliousness in the early republic period. Witnessing the military organization and “spectacle” of the British army—with whom slaves had had a common enemy—greatly influenced the state’s black population. Much of this influence came from the experience of witnessing their master’s control obliterated with the appearance of British troops. Many slaves at the Silk Hope plantation in April 1780 probably found it particularly captivating to watch their overseer bound and whipped “most unmercifully” by British troops. Just one year earlier at another plantation, “the overseer concealed himself in the swamp” while the British “burnt the dwelling house & books...and drank all the liquors.” When the overseer returned to the plantation, he found that “the Negroes [would] pay no attention to his orders.” Though the British by no means planted the idea of rebellion in lowcountry slaves, such experiences likely gave some the courage to try to overthrow their owner’s rule.<sup>65</sup>

If slaves in recently renamed Charleston had latched onto the egalitarian ideas espoused during the Revolution, so too had some of the city’s lower-class whites who sought to diminish the elite’s iron-clad power. In the wake of the Revolution, the Maine Anti-Brittanian Society was formed, which sought to combat Charleston’s oligarchy, and soon confrontations broke out. Early in 1784 fires erupted throughout the city as Captain William Thompson—a staunch advocate of social equality—confronted the extremely influential planter, John Rutledge. On July 8 a demonstration in the name of social equality took place, which led many of Charleston’s elite to note that after the Revolution many refused to “fall back in ranks.” While Charleston’s slaveowning aristocracy grew to support the Revolution over time, they did *not* subscribe to any kind of broad, social revolution. Rather, many wished that those who had shouted “liberty” during the protests

against the Stamp and Intolerable Acts, would not compromise Charleston's social order and accept their place within it.<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps even more influential was the greater concentration of blacks in urban settings, the spread of egalitarian ideas during the Revolution, and the rise of a black Christian community. In most southern regions these forces combined in the post-war era to create "inchoate forms of violent resistance"—but in the lowcountry, the level of violence bordered warfare. Along the Savannah River, a group of armed maroon slaves self-appointed themselves "the King of England's Soldiers" and led by "Captain Cudjoe" and "Captain Lewis," launched a campaign of guerilla warfare on plantations along the river. As Georgia officials retaliated, fugitive slaves fled into South Carolina where they continued to disturb the racial and social order. Though Georgian officials eventually hanged Captain Lewis—his head positioned on a pole on an island in the Savannah River—other armed slaves continued to fight white authority, this time closer to Charleston. In August 1787, a group "too numerous to be quelled by the usual parties of patrol" attacked plantations near Stono—a grim reminder of what happened in 1740. Combined, these episodes indicated to lowcountry slaveowners that it might be more difficult to police the region's black population in the new republic.<sup>67</sup>

In the post-war years some efforts were made to reinforce the colonial policing system that had already existed—but for the most part, little changed. In 1783 the 1740 "Negro Act" was renewed and "made perpetual." Such efforts reflected the dismay southerners throughout the new Union felt after, in the words of one historian, "social conflict and disorder endemic to the Revolutionary War and its aftermath weakened stratified systems of caste." But no matter what the new state governments did, nothing



could prepare them for what happened in August 1791, when the world witnessed the first successful slave uprising in St. Domingue. While the rebellion did not happen on American soil, it had a profound impact on the psyche of South Carolinian slaveowners who could easily imagine themselves as French planters being butchered by their rebellious slaves.<sup>68</sup>

### ***The “Fatal Consequences” of the Haitian Revolution***

As news came of the rebellion in St. Domingue, South Carolina Governor Charles Pinckney wrote a sympathetic letter to the Saint Domingue Colonial Assembly. “When we recollect,” Pinckney wrote, “how nearly similar the situation of the Southern States and St. Domingo are in the profusion of slaves—that a day may arrive when they may be exposed to the same insurrections—we cannot but sensibly feel for your situation.” The public echoed Pinckney’s sentiments. “The account of the intended designs of the French negroes have given us a great deal of concern,” one South Carolinian wrote to a friend, “we dread the future, and are fearful that our feelings for the unfortunate inhabitants of the wretched island of St. Domingo may be our own destruction.”<sup>69</sup>

In response, South Carolina closed its door to foreign slave importations in 1792, as most believed that the way to avoid slave insurrection was to limit the slave population as a whole. South Carolina also attempted to take the slave policing system a step further by increasing control on the behavior of slaves already in the state through limitations on opportunities for interaction with free blacks. Officials regulated that, “all free negroes and persons of color who arrived within twelve months from any other place to depart from this place within ten days,” and in 1803 a state law blocked any black men, free or

enslaved, from entering “who heretofore hath been, or now is, or hereafter shall be resident in any of the French West India islands.” Two years later legislatures went a step further and made it a crime punishable by death for any person—black or white—to “aid in an insurrection.”<sup>70</sup>

In June 1793 thousands of whites from St. Domingue—complete with plenty of stories—arrived in the lower south seeking refuge. Six hundred settled in Charleston and soon South Carolinians read about how “A passage boat...with 44 souls on board, was taken by one of those [Negro] barges, and every soul murdered. The women they put to the ignominious torture of boring out their eyes with a corkscrew, in ripping up the bellies of those with child, and exposing the unborn infants to the eyes of their expiring mothers.” It was not much of a stretch for South Carolinian planters to imagine *their* own wives as the French “expiring mothers.”<sup>71</sup>

Some of the earliest refugees arrived with their slaves, which southern authorities soon feared would spread similar stories to American slaves. On July 6, 1793 the *South Carolina Gazette and Daily Advertiser* noted that of some ninety-nine recently arrived refugees, two-thirds were coloured, and alleged uprisings in the early 1790s in Virginia were supposedly linked to St. Domingue. When one slave was questioned about a plot to kill Richmond’s white population, he responded that, “you see how the blacks has killed the whites in the French island and took it a little while ago.” Others blamed a 1797 fire in Charleston on black refugees, although there were very few black refugees living in Charleston at the time, as the 1794 law had made it illegal. The fire was immediately blamed on local and “French Negroes” who “intended to make a St. Domingo business of it.” Not unlike the Vesey conspiracy, Arnoldus Vanderhost, an elite Charlestonian,

believed that, “these suspicions arose rather from the affrighted imaginations of the people...than from any real grounds of suspicion.” Still, two slaves were sentenced with transportation and three others were hanged.<sup>72</sup>

Soon some of the black refugees allegedly began distributing literature on the events in St. Domingue. John James Negrin was arrested and imprisoned in 1803 for publishing a pamphlet in Charleston called *A Declaration of Independence of the French Colony of St. Domingo by Dessalines*. Though Negrin had earlier published another pamphlet, *The Life of Toussaint*, to great success, by 1803 Charlestonians were not taking any chances. By that time, the South had experienced a wave of slave revolts and conspiracies that led many to believe that the Haitian Revolution would be repeated in South Carolina.<sup>73</sup>

South Carolinians did not only fear the presence of “French Negroes”—the revolutionary ideology Frenchmen brought into the state was also of concern. Reaffirming their role as *the* slaveowning aristocracy, elite Charlestonians were concerned with what they deemed “the lower order of Frenchmen.” They worried that these men “would fraternize with our Democratic Clubs and introduce the same horrid tragedies among our negroes, which has been so fatally exhibited in the French islands.” Likewise, Alexander Garden Jr., a prominent soldier and planter, warned South Carolinians that a local abolitionist society had formed in the state that had links to Les Amis des Noirs, a French abolitionist group. Garden urged South Carolinians to keep “French ideas” out of South Carolina—the failure to do so, Garden argued, would result in “fatal” consequences.”<sup>74</sup>

The threat of slave insurrection was the elite's primary concern—but the idea that “the lower order of Frenchmen” might spread revolutionary rhetoric could have dire repercussions for Charleston's oligarchy. Staunchly Federalist, the majority of Charleston's planter elite had few positive things to say about the French Revolution. Many took the presence of “lower order” Frenchmen who were steeped in revolutionary ideas as dangerous to South Carolina's racial *and* social order. The social turmoil of the late 1790s saw South Carolina's planter elite fearful of its place as the slaveholding race—and ruling white class.

In response to the turmoil in St. Domingue, a new law was enacted in 1801 that aimed to strictly regulate which slaves could come into South Carolina. The law maintained that only slaves for personal use were allowed to be imported—albeit domestically—and restricted the number of slaves imported to two. Anyone who exceeded this was to be fined one hundred dollars for each slave, and have their purchase confiscated. In 1802 the ban on how many slaves one could import for personal use was lifted and the next year, the personal use ban was also lifted, however, several restrictions still remained in place. Any slaves brought in from another state had to come with a statement signed by two magistrates that affirmed that the slaves were “persons of good character and have not been concerned in any insurrection or rebellion.”<sup>75</sup>

Changes were also made in 1800 to control South Carolina's slave population more broadly. Fears that slaves were not “in due subordination,” meant that slave codes were always being modified. In 1800 South Carolina enacted a new and more complex code because “the laws heretofore enacted for the government of slaves, free negroes, mulattos, mestizos, have been found insufficient for the keeping them in due

subordination.” Amongst other stipulations, restrictions on slave meetings were tightened. Even though it was still illegal for slaves to gather without a white present, all meetings were to be public. In addition, it was made illegal for any meetings to be conducted for the purposes of religious or intellectual education. Manumission was also of concern—primarily because “it hath been a practice for many years past in this state, for persons to emancipate or set free their slaves, in cases where such slaves have been of bad or depraved characters...” In order to manumit one’s slave, the move had to be approved by a magistrate *and* five freeholders.<sup>76</sup>

South Carolina responded to the revolutionary ferment—a product of the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions—and the repercussions on its slave population by closing the Atlantic slave trade. Whether or not this solved any of the state’s problems is debatable. While it blocked—for a short time—foreign slaves from entering the state, it did not address the problem of revolt amongst the slave population *already* in South Carolina, nor their interaction with free blacks. In many ways, through witnessing the subjugation of their masters at the hands of British soldiers and hearing of the success in St. Domingue, the “damage” to South Carolina’s slaves was already done. Still, few slave owners considered how the war—what one historian has referred to as a “political education conducted by military means” for blacks and whites—influenced their slaves. Slaves no longer chanted “liberty” in the streets. But the chaos and social tension of the war had a long-lasting influence. At the end of the eighteenth century, South Carolinians watched from afar as slaves took over St. Domingue, but by 1800 large scale slave revolts and conspiracies were closer to home.<sup>77</sup>

***“The breath of liberty is as free for us as for themselves”***

In the spring of 1800, a slave named Gabriel Prosser planned to take over Richmond, Virginia with the help of both slaves and poor whites. Prosser acquired a reserve of arms and bullets throughout the spring, and every Sunday went to Richmond to familiarize himself with the city—particularly where the city’s arms were stored. The group planned to march into Richmond on the night of Saturday August 30—since it was typical to see slaves travelling on Saturday after work—carrying a “Death or Liberty” banner, a testament to the influence of recent revolutionary rhetoric. From there, a free black man who worked as a doorkeeper for the capitol would provide them with guns. Believing that poorer whites in the countryside would do little to help Richmond’s elite leaders—indeed some had already agreed to join Prosser—the plan was to kill as many whites as possible to force these leaders to give into the slaves’ demands for freedom. The rebels were to be mounted and armed, and Prosser maintained that the “friends of liberty”—by which he meant Quakers, Methodists, and the French—be spared during the killings.<sup>78</sup>

Though there were whisperings about a possible slave revolt from as early as April 22, little action was taken until August 9, when Governor James Monroe and the militia learned about the plan. Events moved quickly from there. On Saturday August 30, two slaves named Tom and Pharaoh Sheppard, informed their owner, Mosby Shepperd, about Prosser’s plot. Shepperd, in turn, informed Gov. Monroe, who stretched the slave policing system to its full capacity, including the use of a nearby federal armory, and summoning six hundred and fifty men to put down the revolt. He also gave notice to every militia commander in the state, so that they might muster their men. Slave patrols

began a massive campaign throughout Richmond's outskirts, interrogating and arresting any slave suspected to be a part of the conspiracy.<sup>79</sup>

That night Virginia experienced what one referred to as "the most terrible thunder accompanied with an enormous rain, that I ever witnessed in this State." The storm broke communication between Prosser's group in Richmond, which was made up of approximately 150 slaves, "mulattos," and "some [lower class] whites." Despite this rupture in communication, some had begun their trek towards the planned meeting spot at Brook Bridge. But when the group reached the bridge, a crossing necessary to reach Richmond, they found the conditions impossible on account of the weather and separated.<sup>80</sup>

Over the next few days, authorities comprised of the state militia and slave patrols rounded up slaves allegedly a part of the plot. Though Prosser initially escaped, he was later captured on September 25 and interviewed by Gov. Monroe, who claimed that, "From what he [Prosser] said to me, he seemed to have made up his mind to die, and to have resolved to say but little on the subject of the conspiracy." Prosser and fifteen others were hanged on October 7. In total, approximately twenty-seven died at the hands of the state, one of whom appealed to the American revolutionary tradition when asked in court what he had to say in his defense. "I have nothing more to offer," he said, "than what General Washington would have had to offer, had he been taken by the British and put to trial by them."<sup>81</sup>

The affects of Gabriel's Rebellion on the entire slaveholding south were profound. In the wake of the Haitian Revolution, Gabriel's Rebellion was a firm reminder

of what could happen in the U.S. South. The fact that the rebellion was suppressed—as all slave revolts in the U.S. were—did little to calm the nerves of Virginians and South Carolinians alike. If anything, the experience increased the paranoia. John Randolph, speaking six days after Prosser’s execution, noted the consequences of the plot on the slaveholding south. “The accused have exhibited a spirit, which, if it becomes general, must deluge the Southern country in blood. They manifested a sense of their rights, and contempt of danger, and a thirst for revenge which portend the most unhappy consequences.” The question was how to stop the “spirit” of Gabriel’s Rebellion—and the Haitian, French, and American Revolutions—from becoming “general.” In the meantime, however, events suggested that rather than keeping that “spirit” contained with the closure of the Atlantic slave trade and the prohibition of St. Domingue black refugees, it was manifesting in other states.<sup>82</sup>

A wave of slave revolt scares in both North and South Carolina in 1802 suggested that the kind of violence that supposedly happened in St. Domingue and Virginia might be in their future—and few in South Carolina were confident that they had the proper slave policing system to combat it. That year slave revolt rumors spread throughout no less than nine counties in North Carolina. The panic began in February when a letter was obtained allegedly written by a black man helping to organize a revolt that was to stretch from Virginia into North Carolina. The letter stated that as soon as the “conflagration” began, the whites would “acknowledge liberty & equality,” and “be glad to purchase their lives at any price.” Whites, the writer continued, had to recognize that “the breath of liberty is as free for us as for themselves.”<sup>83</sup>



If the letter was a sign of things to come, more evidence was soon found in Bertie County, which stood out in the wave of slave revolt scares. During their routine inspection, patrollers came across a piece of paper with the names of fourteen black men listed, including the statement, “*Captain Frank Sumner is to command...you are to get as many men as you can—To Capt. King, Brown, &c.*” The men mentioned were soon rounded up, and after a brief trial, eleven were executed, six deported and over twenty four were whipped in what seemed to be “lynch law,” despite the fact that the court ordered the executions. As Bertie County executed eleven, other counties killed a total of fourteen others accused of participating in similar revolts. As a result, North Carolina showed its slave policing strength that spring. Over one hundred blacks were imprisoned during the panic and militias kept “nearly every negro man...under guard.” While the plot in Bertie County definitely existed, historian Jeffrey Crow maintains that, “It is clear, however, that an insurrection mania possessed whites.” While historians can rarely know for sure the extent to which revolts were real or imagined, the impact of this “mania” on North and South Carolina was significant. In the summer of 1802 South Carolinians watched as neighboring slaveowners combated the “spirit” of rebellion that proliferated throughout the South in the early eighteenth century. It was a tense summer that led to an even tenser autumn.<sup>84</sup>

Amongst this paranoia, South Carolina experienced what would be the first of many major slave “conspiracies,” or uprisings, in October. The extent to which the events in North Carolina and Virginia resulted in profound social anxiety in South Carolina was best exemplified in Georgetown, 1802. While most lowcountry areas experienced great discrepancies between the black and white populations, Georgetown—located just north

of Charleston—was the most extreme case. By the nineteenth century, Georgetown was ninety percent black. Even more disturbing to whites, were rumors that the French had arrived in New York City’s harbor with black prisoners from St. Domingue, and soon Georgetown residents spoke of suspicious ships appearing just off its coastline.<sup>85</sup>

On the night of Saturday October 9, Peter Nicholson, commander of the local All Saints Parish slave patrol, found a “black French Creole” near his house. Nicholson asked to see the man’s pass, but he allegedly could not offer Nicholson a satisfactory answer as to what he was doing—so Nicholson assumed that the man was a part of a group of French blacks who intended to ignite slave revolt in Georgetown. Nicholson quickly informed his captain, Joshua Ward. Despite the fact that Nicholson never explicitly told Ward that French Creoles *had* landed in Georgetown—because they simply had not—he warned Ward that they should be “prepared for the worst.”<sup>86</sup>

In response, Ward sent two sergeants to inspect the area, one of whom, Sergeant John Brown, was the first to officially confirm that, “those people of colour are now landing at the long Bay.” From Brown, the reports travelled to Brigadier General Peter Horry, head of the Sixth Brigade of the South Carolina Militia. Whereas Brown and Nicholson had acted with the upmost urgency, Horry was much more cautious—not out of experience or wisdom, but suspicion of the word of lower class whites. Horry believed that the accounts could not be verified because lower class men—particularly Brown—might use the threat of slave revolt as a way to disturb the white community’s social order. Before sending out for South Carolina’s militia, he demanded more information on Brown. Horry was told that Brown was not a “loose insignificant worthless fellow”—

such a specific term might suggest what Horry's initial impressions were. Once Horry had been assured that Brown was a significant, worthy fellow he sounded the alarm.<sup>87</sup>

The next day Horry arrived in All Saints Parish and was informed by Benjamin Allston, Senior that there were no such black Creoles in the county—because Allston was a man of considerable wealth, it seems as if Horry trusted him immediately, without any character reference. After initially blaming Captain Ward and placing him under arrest, Horry turned his attentions to Brown, who acknowledged that he held no authority to proclaim that French Creoles had landed. In turn, Brown turned attentions towards Sergeant Pawley. While Horry initially imprisoned Joshua Ward, he later called for a full investigation into the rumor's origins, that Horry likely suspected had more to do with disturbing relations between Federalists and Republicans—or lower and upper class whites—than overthrowing slavery. We do not know if such an investigation occurred. But the events certainly revealed the complex social tensions that existed in a slaveholding society like Georgetown, where blacks outnumbered whites, and where white social order was controlled by a militant elite, not unlike that of Charleston. The scare revealed the depth of issues surrounding “the façade of stability imposed through the military organization of society”—something Charlestonians would soon experience for themselves.<sup>88</sup>

### ***South Carolina's Re-opening of the Slave Trade***

Despite the fact that South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia had all experienced substantial slave revolt scares during the last two years, in 1803 South Carolina's state legislature voted to reopen the Atlantic slave trade. In many ways, this

was a remarkable reversal—just one year earlier support for the trade’s continual closure stood at eight to one in the state’s House of Representatives and was even stronger in the Senate. Yet, other issues played on the minds of South Carolina’s legislature, which constituted the lowcountry’s most powerful planters.<sup>89</sup>

Historians have attributed the reversal to a variety of reason. Some attribute it to a rapid increase in the prices of rice and cotton, while others emphasize the role of the cotton gin and its opportunities for cotton production. Most recently, historian Jed Handelsman Shugerman argues that the slave trade—opened just one month after the Louisiana Purchase—signified a sacrifice on the part of South Carolina’s legislatures. Shugerman states that contrary to what one might believe, South Carolina’s most powerful planters “profited little from the slave trade, and in many ways the reopening actually sacrificed financial and political interests of the low country leadership.” Rather, reopening the trade benefitted the extension of slavery into the southwest. “By choosing the expansion of slavery in the distant West over the immediate interests of security, wealth, and their constituents,” Shugerman writes, “the reopening demonstrates the rise of what William Freehling calls “aggressive slavery imperialism.”<sup>90</sup>

Whether or not one agrees with Shugerman’s portrayal of South Carolina’s legislatures, the reopening of the slave trade had drastic consequences for Charleston and South Carolina. Under the Constitution, the slave trade was to be closed permanently on January 1, 1808, so South Carolinians acted quickly. After a close vote on December 6, 1803, the trade resumed early the next year. For the next four years, approximately 39,075 slaves entered Charleston’s ports, although according to Senator William Smith, a proponent of reopening, most of the slaves “were sold to the people of the Western

States, Georgia, New Orleans, and a considerable quantity were sent to the West Indies, especially when the market became dull in Carolina.” It seems that few remained in South Carolina to further add to the state’s already dangerous demographical makeup.<sup>91</sup>

While the extent to which the re-importation benefited Charleston’s elite is debatable, some residents resented the danger they were put in so that some merchants and planters could make money. Such were the views of Ebenezer S. Thomas, a local bookseller, who believed that because of the trade’s reopening, planters had neither time nor money for anything else. While Thomas might have resented these financial benefits, he was likely also referring to slave revolt—but was cautious of the effects of simply talking openly about it. As was the *Charleston Courier* when in late December 1803 it refused to print the views of a man named Robert Barnwell, who warned that reopening the slave trade would lead to slave revolt. Rather, on December 26 a piece ran stating that, “The Hon. Member adduced in support of his opinion various other arguments, still more cogent and impressive, which from reasons very obvious we decline making public.” Slave revolt was not mentioned in most criticisms of the trade’s reopening. But because fear of slave revolt closed the trade, fear of slave revolt likely also fuelled those who rejected its reopening.<sup>92</sup>

Despite the fact that relatively few of those slaves imported from 1804 to 1808 stayed in South Carolina, the divide between blacks and whites grew. In 1790, the black population outnumbered the white in Charleston, as it had done for some time. The city was home to approximately 8,250 blacks and roughly 8,100 whites. However, it is important to note that the wealthiest slaveowners who resided in Charleston had *more* slaves on their plantations than in their Charleston residences. As one historian has noted,

for Charleston's censuses, "the planters reported only the slaves they had with them in the city. Of course, most of their slaves were on plantations in the country...making it extremely difficult to compile the total number of slaves owned by each planter." Consequently, if we consider *all* of the slaves owned by Charleston's white population, the degree to which whites were routinely outnumbered by blacks was likely much higher. And as time progressed, blacks would outnumber whites by even more—particularly as the "dangerous" free black population rose, despite restrictions on free black immigration. By 1820, the city housed 11,000 whites, 12,500 slaves, and 1,500 free blacks, ensuring that in antebellum Charleston, whites would never be the majority.<sup>93</sup>

### ***The 1816 Camden Slave Revolt***

With an increased black population, in the summer of 1816 news reached authorities that slaves in Camden, Kershaw County, were planning a revolt to occur during the county's July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations. The plan—in the works since December 1815—was to seize arms from the undefended powder magazine and launch an insurrection, appropriately on Independence Day. Though little is known about the origins of the revolt, it appears as if the plan also included free blacks, particularly local religious leaders and professionals. Word of the revolt arose in mid-June when Scipio, a slave owned by Colonel James Chestnut, told his master about the plan. Upon Scipio's request, Col. Chestnut ensured he remain anonymous throughout the proceedings. In turn, Chestnut ordered Scipio to continue to attend planning sessions and accumulate information on the revolt. Col. Chestnut also immediately alerted Governor David R. Williams.<sup>94</sup>

There are still many questions concerning the conspiracy that remain unanswered. Particularly problematic is the fact that much of the information that exists comes from accounts made by Camden's white community—the slave voice is, unfortunately, largely absent. What we do know comes predominantly from Francis G. Dellesseline, who recorded details of the conspiracy. According to him, the slaves were planning, “the massacre of all the white male inhabitants and the more brutal sacrifice of the female.” While the “brutal sacrifice of the female” may or may not have been a part of the plan, Dellesseline clearly spoke to the widespread fear that rebellious black men would harm southern society's vulnerable—and racially pure—white women.<sup>95</sup>

“They confidently relied, also,” Dellesseline continued, “upon the casual indulgences among us on a day celebrated as a great national jubilee and it was finally determined that the night of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July should be appointed as the time for the reenactment of the horrors of the Sicilian Vespers.” Referring to the slaying of rebels in Sicily in 1282, Dellesseline's account reaffirmed the fears of terrified slaveowners that had the revolt been successful, it would have been unprecedented in its violence and destruction. Yet, at the same time Dellesseline hints at a lack of leadership, which may or may not have put its success in jeopardy. It was noted that there was no leader chosen—Camden's slave revolt did not have its own Gabriel Prosser. Rather, the position of leader was allegedly “reserved for him who should first force the gates of the arsenal,” suggesting that in this case leadership was tied to achievement.<sup>96</sup>

On the morning of July 1, all those named as conspirators were arrested by authorities in complete secrecy—a feature that marked how all the proceedings concerning the Camden revolt would be conducted. The court established to charge the

accused was made up of two justices and five freeholders, and ensured that no members of the public—save for owners whose slaves were being tried—were allowed into the courtroom. Authorities hoped to keep the trials secret, so as to avoid widespread public panic, on account of what Delinssene referred to as “exaggerated information of testimony.” They were so successful in this endeavor that the local *Camden Gazette* did not mention the revolt until July 11—six days after approximately five slaves, including March, Ned, Cameron, and Jack, were hanged.<sup>97</sup>

In the wake of the panic, which left seven dead, local analysis reverberated throughout the county. The *Camden Gazette* stressed that the lesson to learn from the event was that slaves could not handle Christianity. “From 150 years,” the author wrote, “I say we have attempted to introduce them to an acquaintance with the gospel and its dispensations, without operating the smallest reformation. Chicanery, debauchery, incest, and theft are generally the concomitants of their profession. Receive them no longer into fellowship.” A letter written by a Camden resident published in the Richmond *Enquirer* acknowledged that arrested slaves were “stretched on their backs on the bare floor.” But, the author maintained that South Carolina’s slaveowners were the true victims. “This is really a dreadful situation to be in—I think it is time for us to leave a country where we cannot go to bed in safety.”<sup>98</sup>

The Camden revolt and its emphasis on secrecy had a significant impact on the entire Charleston’s slaveowning aristocracy. As one historian has noted, during the Denmark Vesey trial, authorities followed the example laid out by Camden and held trials in complete secrecy. Secrecy was important in Camden—and later in Charleston—because it not only quashed public excitement but also supposedly killed any inspiration



slaves had to rebel. Across the state few wanted to openly discuss, write about, or even publicly acknowledge the very real threat of slave revolt. This often fed the disillusion of many paternalist slaveowners who increasingly told themselves that *their* slaves were loyal—keeping talk of slave revolts under wraps perpetuated the idea that South Carolina's slaves were indeed content in their subordinate position. Despite the growth of such paternalist ideology, in the wake of the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions, it would not be long until Charlestonians realized just how wrong they were.<sup>99</sup>

### **Chapter 3**

#### **“Slavery Disliked a Dense Population”: Urban Slavery in Charleston**

The nineteenth century marked a period of relative change in Charleston. In 1800 the city was a Federalist stronghold and the largest and most influential city in the U.S. South. By 1820, the Federalists were obsolete but the sentiments of their elite slaveowning supporters remained relatively undisturbed—they continually fancied themselves to be *the* gentlemen of the U.S. South and were militant in protecting their slaveholding interests. While Charleston was still influential, its role as the South’s dominant port city was eclipsed by New Orleans’s proximity to the Mississippi River and the ever-expanding proliferation of slavery into recently attained southwestern regions. Charleston did not hold the position of southern power it held during the colonial and early republic period—but what it lacked in economic growth, it made up for in militancy concerning the rights of states—and later individuals—to police their slaves.

One thing that did not change was Charleston’s significant slave holdings. Whereas the slave populations of other southeastern cities, like Richmond, declined, Charleston continued to have the highest percentage of slaves in the southeast. According to the 1820 census, of the 2,100 “heads of families” listed, over three fourths owned at least one slave. By 1840 when other cities’ slave populations were in substantial decline, Charleston’s remained strong. Again, these numbers represent only those slaves situated exactly *within* Charleston’s city limits and often do not represent the holdings of Charleston residents who also owned significant numbers of slaves on their plantations. One notable change in Charleston’s demographics was the drastic increase in the city’s free black population. Though it was becoming increasingly difficult to manumit slaves

and free blacks were consistently discouraged from settling in the state, between 1790 and 1810 the free black population rose by 151 percent, a staggering amount when compared with the enslaved and white population growth, which rose by 52 and 43 percent.<sup>100</sup>

Though overtaken by New Orleans, Charleston in 1820 was incredibly diverse. On any given day, one could encounter free, educated black men in Charleston's new Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, foreign sailors patronizing the Neck's grog shops, working class whites laboring on the city's docks, elite gentlemen lounging in the parlors of white mansions, enslaved women selling their vegetables in Cabbage Row, and even wealthy white men strolling down the street with mulatto women on their arms. The wide array of interests in Charleston ensured that criticism and scorn was always present, though most often aimed at the failure to follow or enforce the city's ordinances on black behaviour. Groups of concerned citizens lamented the City Guard's inefficiency and most prominent Charleston men called for greater enforcement of the state and city's slave laws, while others spoke despairingly of the city's moral panic that emerged with the very whispering of a slave revolt.

Increasingly, whites—including both working class and elite slaveowners—criticized what they deemed some slaveholder's "misguided benevolence." In a pamphlet produced by Charleston intendant (or mayor), James Hamilton Junior, soon after the Denmark Vesey panic, Hamilton blamed the conspiracy partly on "the extreme indulgence and kindness, which characterizes the domestick treatment of our slaves." Excusing himself from such "extreme indulgence," Hamilton argued that, "many slaveowners among us...with a misguided benevolence have not only permitted their

[slaves] instruction, but lent to such efforts their approbation and applause.” In the eyes of Hamilton and many other whites, an educated slave was the most dangerous.<sup>101</sup>

While popular memory of the antebellum South emphasizes Charleston’s gentility, it should not be forgotten that Charleston was a disorderly urban setting, made even more threatening to Charleston’s white population by the slave presence. Referring to the “largely overlooked” reality of late eighteenth century Charleston, one historian has stressed that Charleston was “the city of brutal murders, public flogging and hanging, of drunken staggering brawls, of gambling, paupers, runaways, and criminals.” Seen in this way, the tenuous balance of maintaining social—and racial—order amongst the rampant crime in Charleston, as in most coastal cities, becomes more problematic. Perhaps it was no wonder then that, as one Louisiana planter noted, “Slavery is from its very nature eminently patriarchal and altogether agricultural. It does not thrive with master or slave when transplanted to cities.”<sup>102</sup>

### ***The Diversities of Urban Slavery***

Though the iron-clad grip on Charleston’s black population was continually tightened in retaliation to revolts, abolitionists, and the federal government’s alleged opposition to slavery—as highlighted in the 1820 Missouri Compromise—Charleston’s slaves likely recognized, as Frederick Douglass noted, that, “slavery disliked a dense population.” Rather than the isolated plantations that tend to dominate modern historical memory, Douglass referred to the increased autonomy and black interaction that came with enslavement in an urban setting. Charleston’s slaves had the opportunity to rent out their own rooms—away from the watchful eye of masters—and they could also

sometimes hire-out and profit from their own labour. The concentration of a black population—including free men and women—fostered African-American churches and a community that might encourage a slave to learn to read or write, or plan for their freedom.<sup>103</sup>

While rural slavery remained relatively static throughout much of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, urban slavery was consistently changing. As a result, there were considerable efforts in most major southern cities to extrapolate as much from their black work force as possible, in the most convenient and profitable ways. While Charleston was unique in that there never seemed to be any shortage of black labour, in the early nineteenth century its experience with booms and busts—particularly the economic Panic of 1819—meant that it was often profitable for slave owners to hire out their slaves' labour. The hiring out system was well entrenched in most southern cities and allowed slave owners to maximize the profitability of their slaves, white employers to use slave labour without having to take on the expenses of ownership, and for slaves it *sometimes* meant a small degree of independence and at times, an income, however marginal.

There were several instances where labour exchange was organized and orchestrated by slaves, however more often than not owners did the hiring out. Slaves who hired themselves out were often required to submit a significant portion of their profits to their owner—this left only a small portion which typically amounted to a couple dollars. Over time, these profits were used to purchase goods, rent out rooms, or save up to purchase either theirs or a relative's freedom. Contracts ranged from one task to one year's work and were enacted by a wide variety of Charleston's white

population—so much so that the system ensured almost everyone benefitted from slave labour, either through ownership or the hiring out system. In the words of one historian, the slave-hire system was essentially “an attempt to adjust slavery to the economic demands of urban life.”<sup>104</sup>

On account of their work and/or owners, urban slaves were more likely to acquire skills than slaves working on rural plantations. Charleston’s slaves worked a wide variety of jobs, depending on the demands of their masters, who ranged from planters and merchants, to doctors and attorneys. While a planter directly required the use of slave labour, Charlestonian professionals were equally likely to own slaves. For example, Dr. John M. Righton, the Charleston workhouse doctor in the early 1820s, owned four slaves. Though at least one slave was likely allocated for domestic work, it is possible others assisted Dr. Righton in the workhouse. This might have led some to learn about the medical profession in the same way that accountant’s slaves might learn some arithmetic. Charleston’s slaves’ skills were so diverse that they ended up working in a wide variety of settings from “domestic drudgery” to shops and factories, accountant’s offices, and shoe repair stores. Slave labour also often built city streets, bridges, and municipal installations.<sup>105</sup>

In thinking about slavery in Charleston we have to abandon notions of plantation slavery—the role of the slave in Charleston was *much* more diverse on account of skills that were often commodities slaves or their owners could trade for profit. To be sure, rural slaves hired out their labour too—often enslaved river and boatmen were part of a larger network that transported stolen goods to and from stations along South Carolina’s intricate river systems. When given a small plot of land to farm, slaves also often bartered

and traded the goods they cultivated. But because of the diversity of skills, the varying demands for specific labours, and Charleston's concentrated but fluid slavery, the slave hiring system was typically more a characteristic of urban regions than rural.<sup>106</sup>

For white Charlestonians, the hiring out system was common and allowed many opportunities to exploit slave labour. While it is unlikely that the City Council directly owned slaves, most slaves employed by the city were likely hired out from owners throughout the city. According to city ordinances, from as early as 1806 the City of Charleston "took on" three slaves for use by the city's scavengers. By 1837 slaves were used by the city to fight fires—despite the fact that slaves were usually the ones allegedly responsible for setting fires in the first place.<sup>107</sup>

It is difficult to determine how slaves viewed the hiring out system. Negatively speaking, it might have meant an increase in work and few were probably able to choose the conditions of their hiring out. Yet, if allowed to keep even a portion of their wages, this often meant an income, something few slaves had, which could be used in a variety of ways. In 1820 a slave named Robert secured the purchase of his son by using "the profits of his Trade as a Bricklayer." Others used their profits to purchase necessities their owner failed to adequately provide. Some also used their profits to rent out rooms—predominantly in the northern Neck region—so that they could live independently from their owner. As one enslaved blacksmith noted, being hired out sometimes made slaves feel as if they were their own master—a sentiment white Charlestonians found very unsettling.<sup>108</sup>

The slave-hire system sometimes offered unique opportunities to female slaves. While it ensured some could hire out their domestic skills, it gave others a relative degree of authority over the work done in their owner's house. When a repair was needed, female domestic slaves sometimes participated in the slave-hire system by hiring black artisans to do the repairs. In the 1820s it was noted by a group of concerned whites that, "[M]any of the most opulent Inhabitants of Charleston, when they have work to be done, do not send it themselves, but leave it to their Domestics to employ what workmen they please." Anticipating an alleged racial solidarity with the labour female slaves employed, the group complained that "it universally happens that those Domestics prefer men of their own color and condition, and, as to a greatness of business thus continually passing through their hands, the Black Mechanics enjoy a complete monopoly, as if it were secured to them by Law." This passage is notable for several reasons—it illustrates that though confined in the household, hiring-out gave black women a small degree of authority they could then use to favor the work of black artisans they knew. The passage also explicitly lays blame on Charleston's "most opulent" for allowing skilled black workers to "enjoy a complete monopoly." This suggests that increasingly many questioned the "misguided benevolence" of some slaveowners who seemed to compromise the white community's safety by allowing their slaves such marginal "liberties."<sup>109</sup>

Despite the frequency with which Charleston's slaves were hired out, all whites were not comfortable with the slave-hire system—to be sure, the practice was always illegal. From as early as 1733, Charlestown's Grand Jury discussed the common practice of allowing slaves "to work out by the Week" and "bring in a certain Hire." The practice



was, the jury continued, “Contrary to a Law now subsisting.” After the Stono rebellion, laws against hiring out were strengthened, and by 1806 the City Council was supposed to fine masters \$20 every time their slave was caught being hired out. In 1822 the General Assembly further strengthened the law by reminding Charlestonians that it was “altogether unlawful for any person or persons to hire any male slave or slaves, his or their time.” On top of a fine, slaves caught were now subject to forfeiture, to be later sold by Charleston’s sheriff. The drastic increase in the penalty was possibly influenced by William Garner, a slave accused of participation in the Vesey conspiracy, who declared that since he was hired out he was “master of his own time, as good as free, as happy as the day is long.” These were terrifying words to a city trying to keep its black population enslaved and its white population safe.<sup>110</sup>

Many of these criticisms came from skilled white workers who argued that the slave-hire system generated competition. But by no means were black workers considered on par with white workers. Across Charleston, white workers were paid more for the same job. Though information on the discrepancy in wages for Charleston is difficult to come by, historian Richard C. Wade notes that across the urban South whites were paid significantly more than hired blacks—sometimes more than double for the same job. Only on the rare occasion would a slave leave their employer because of these low wages. One slave named Mary left her employer because he paid her only six dollars a month for her labour. Mary maintained that “all Nurses in Charleston got 8 dollars per month” and that was how much she wanted.<sup>111</sup>

But—as always—there was a significant disconnect between the letter of the law and the realities of urban life and slavery in Charleston. The laws were typically seen as

“dead letters” and despite the complaints the slave-hire system only persisted. This was likely because of the profits it generated for Charleston’s white population and the failure of any orchestrated enforcement. Often slaveowners, Charleston area’s slave patrols and militias, were just as eager to make extra from their slave’s labour. In an attempt to regulate the relative “freedoms” slaves obtained through the hiring system the city issued badges to identify which slaves were and were not a part of the hire system for any given year. Unlike passes, badges were intended for everyday use and contained an identification number, the slave’s occupation, and the year issued.<sup>112</sup>

The badge, an iron circle, diamond or square, guaranteed slaves the ability to participate in the hiring out system but the system opened up avenues for counterfeit. In addition, there were concerns that slaves could obtain badges intended for free blacks. The 1783 city statute, which is the first legal reference to badges, stipulated that “any negro, or other slave, who shall presume to wear any badge in the similitude or likeness of those to be issued as above to free negroes” was to be publicly whipped and put into the stocks. By violating the slave policing system in this way, badges opened up new opportunities for the small kinds of resistance available to slaves on an everyday basis. Regardless, the badges still severely regulated and restricted the mobility of Charleston’s black community.<sup>113</sup>

The first legal reference to badges declared that within one month of publication no owner should permit “any such slave, to be employed on hire, out of their respective houses or families without a ticket or badge first had and obtained from the Corporation of this City.” Anyone who employed a badge-less slave was fined twenty shillings each day. The law also required badges be renewed every year—while this was a means of

generating municipal income, it also theoretically helped Charleston's white community keep its slave population in check. Charlestonians were either slow to renew badges, or reluctant to do so. Two years after the law was issued the City Clerk issued an advertisement in the *South Carolina State Gazette and Daily Advertiser* that stipulated, "WHEREAS many persons in this City have neglected to renew their BADGES FOR NEGROES," white Charlestonians had a month grace period to renew badges before "the law will be strictly put in force against them." The next year yet another provision was added to the law on account of the fact that, "many persons have neglected to take out the annual Badge, or permission to hire out their Negroes to work."<sup>114</sup>

Once they had a badge, the slave was still required to adhere to strict rules regarding its visibility and presence. The badge had to be visible, and most tied it around their neck or wrists with a piece of thread. In accordance with the idea that *every* white man was effectively a part of the slave patrol, any white could ask to see a badge. For whites, this was financially beneficial—anyone who apprehended a slave or free black without a badge was entitled to a ten shilling reward. If the badge was not produced, the slave or free person would be taken to the workhouse. It is remarkable to note that the workhouse master was forbidden to release a slave who did not produce a badge. Rather, in an extraordinary effort to severely punish those without badges, the slave was to be kept at "hard labour for the space of one year and one day" and then sold by the city.<sup>115</sup>

Though Frederick Douglass wrote about Baltimore—a city drastically different in its relation to slavery—Charleston's slaves likely shared some of the sentiments espoused by Douglass concerning the relative "freedom" of an urban slave. Urban slaves had a greater opportunity to hire out their labour, generate profits, live away from their masters,

and engage with the free black population—though all still technically illegal. Charleston’s slaves, like those in Baltimore, enjoyed, in the words of Douglass, “privileges altogether unknown to the whip-driven slave on the plantation.” While these small liberties were at times noted by urban slaves, at the end of the day slavery was slavery. And while a slave in Douglass’ Baltimore was “almost a free citizen” predominantly because of the stigma against slaveowning held by the majority of non-slaveholding citizens in Baltimore, this was *not* the case in Charleston, as only a quarter of Charlestonians did not own slaves.<sup>116</sup>

Charleston’s slave owners also had the workhouse to help them police their “property.” Since some, particularly those of Charleston’s self-identified “cavalry,” allegedly felt public pressure to act “benevolently” towards their slaves, they could send their slaves to the workhouse. The workhouse was a place where slaves could be given hundreds of lashes without the need for a slaveholder to “shock the humanity of his non-slaveholding neighbors, by the cries of the lacerated slaves.” There, “those outbreaks of atrocious cruelty, and those dark crimes without a name almost openly perpetuated on the plantation” could be replicated on an almost industrialized scale, outside the earshot of Charleston’s ladies and gentlemen.<sup>117</sup>

### ***“Gettin’ a Little Sugar”: Charleston’s Workhouse***

Built in 1768, the workhouse was another major feature of Charleston’s urban slavery and indicative of the larger systemic approaches to policing black communities in urban slaveholding societies. Located next to the state-regulated city jail on Magazine Street, the workhouse was a place for the incarceration and punishment of not only

slaves, but the wider free black community. If you were black in eighteenth and nineteenth century Charleston and committed a “crime”—which ranged from anything from singing in the streets to carrying a cane—you were sent to the workhouse for punishment and confinement. There is no evidence that any whites were imprisoned in the workhouse—the workhouse was an intrinsically racialized building.<sup>118</sup>

The workhouse not only held blacks accused of committing a crime—slaveowners also sent their slaves there to be punished by the workhouse master, instead of administering the lashes themselves. Following an 1807 City Ordinance, it became legal for slaveowners to send their slaves—for twenty five cents a lash—to be punished. The workhouse was, in essence, an institution established so that the *state* could punish slaves, rather than the sovereign slaveowner. In the 1820s a visitor to Charleston claimed that it was actually black men administering the lashes, noting that in the workhouse “black overseers go about everywhere armed with cowhides.” With such violent images in mind, local slaveowners softened the image of the workhouse in their slang. The workhouse became the “Sugar House,” and rather than going there for a flogging, residents said they were sending their slaves to “get a little sugar.” The workhouse was also a workhouse in a more traditional sense—once inside, blacks were expected to engage in physical labour, especially stonecutting. However, it is important to remember that the building was first and foremost an institution for confining and punishing Charleston’s black community.<sup>119</sup>

Charleston, 186

Mr E M Whaley  
Guardian of

TO CHARLESTON WORKHOUSE, Dr.

To ~~3~~ days' confinement of 15 ~~Negroes~~ — from } 6 75.  
to date, inclusive, at 18¢.

To.....	Blanket,		
".....	Correction, with 25¢	2 25	
".....	Box of Sails, or Castor Oil, each 12¢	1 50	
".....	Receiving and Discharging,	4 87	
".....	Magistrate Fees, \$14¢; Constable Fees, \$2 14,		
".....	Miles, at 7 cents per mile,	2 00	
".....	Doctor's Bill,		

Received Payment.

\$ 17 37  
M. W. H.

(Figure 1: Workhouse Receipt. This receipt shows Mr. E.M. Whaley's bill for three days confinement of 15 slaves in the Charleston workhouse, May 1, 1862, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.)

It is difficult to discern if this kind of workhouse was unique to Charleston, as the badge system was, or if other southern cities also established such. In *Slavery in the Cities*, historian Richard C. Wade attests that “many” southern cities had workhouses. However, the only evidence he provides both in the text and footnotes concerns Charleston’s workhouse. Likewise, to date there has been no serious historical scholarship on the institution and such scholarship is made further difficult by the fact that while Charleston’s orphan and alms houses kept detailed books, no such record exists for the workhouse. Because of these gaps in the historical record, the best way to understand the workhouse and its role in Charleston’s slave policing system is through contemporary accounts written by slaves, abolitionists, and visitors to Charleston.<sup>120</sup>

There is some evidence that slaves were confined in other southern workhouses. In her narrative *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Ann Jacobs, gives us a brief look into the inside of a workhouse that she does not place. Jacobs was born in North Carolina and in her narrative Dr. Flint, the slave master, takes a slave to the workhouse where he is “tied up to the joist, so that his feet would just escape the ground. In that situation he was to wait till the doctor had taken his tea.” “Linda,” Jacobs’ penname, goes into the workhouse the next morning and sees “the cowhide still wet with blood, and the boards all covered with gore.” While Jacobs’ does not explicitly place the workhouse in North Carolina, it is possible that she is referring to a similar kind of institution outside of Charleston.<sup>121</sup>

*Slavery as it is*, published by the American Anti-Slavery Society includes testimonies from the Reverend William T. Allan and Sarah Grimké on the Charleston workhouse. While historians must always be cautious of abolitionist texts’ highly sentimental language, the pieces provide some insight into the workhouse. In his testimony, Allan notes how as a child he took a trip to Charleston and could “never forget” Charleston’s cruelty to their slaves. In discussion with a female slave “sewing in the piazza” the woman told Allan “how cruelly she was whipped when they sent her to the work house,” or what Allan referred to as “that house of blood.” Though he noted that most southern women whipped their slaves, Allan recounted in horror how one woman who “moved in the most fashionable circle in Charleston,” sent her slave children to the workhouse for not bringing in regular wages.<sup>122</sup>

According to historian Gerda Lerner, notable abolitionists Sarah and Angelina Grimké were particularly influenced by the Charleston workhouse. Angelina was likely

forced to go inside the workhouse on occasion, since a childhood friend was the daughter of the workhouse master. Walking down Magazine Street, Angelina wrote, “It seemed as though I was walking on the very confines of hell.” In recounting the workhouse for *Slavery as it is*, Sarah noted that upon admittance into the workhouse, the master whipped a “handsome mulatto woman...with such inhuman severity, as to lacerate her back in a most shocking manner.” While Allan and the Grimké sisters’ accounts must be viewed with suspicion, the accounts are by no means unrealistic. The workhouse *was* an institution for the physical punishment of Charleston’s slaves. More broadly, the incorporation of the workhouse into abolitionist tracts further illustrates how much the institution was part of the entire slave policing method in southern cities, and thus should be at the forefront of such studies.<sup>123</sup>

While abolitionists viewed the workhouse with disgust, one visitor to Charleston left a less incriminating account. When the Duke of Saxe-Weimar visited Charleston in 1825 to 1826, there were “about forty individuals of both sexes” who had been sent there by their masters for punishment, or were rounded by city guardsmen during the night. “The house,” the Duke noted, “displays throughout a remarkable neatness; black overseers go about every where armed with cowhide. In the basement there is an apparatus upon which the negroes...are flogged.” In this room, the walls were doubled and filled with sand to drown out the sound of black men and women being whipped. To make their bodies accessible for flogging, the whipping-room held a crane “on which a cord with two nooses runs over pullies; the nooses are made fast to the hands of the slave and drawn up, while the feet are bound tight to a plank.”<sup>124</sup>



Another English visitor in 1827, C.P. Hall, recorded in his journal the logistics of the workhouse. As the “disagreeable nature of this [whipping] discipline prevents the master from administering it at home,” Hall wrote, “the offending slave is sent to the Workhouse with a note and piece of money, on delivering which he receives so many stripes, and is sent back again.” Though Hall pointed out to his British readers that laws are different for the black population in slaveholding states, he did not seem to take issue with the workhouse. Hall maintained that he was “assured by sensible men” that any change in the legality of slavery, or how slaves were punished, “would speedily bring about anarchy, insurrection, bloodshed, and all the horrors of a servile war.” This seemed enough to assure Hall that the workhouse was an intrinsic part of Charleston’s slave policing system—without such, whites believed that their worst nightmares would come true.<sup>125</sup>

### ***Charleston’s Slave Policing System***

While the workhouse provided Charleston with an institution to imprison and punish the city’s black population, the characteristics of urban slavery and the relative “freedoms” associated with black life in Charleston made urban slave policing a complex, intricate matter. Efforts to police Charleston-area’s black population were divided between several organizations that seemed to have little collaboration. The following were all a part of the *official* slave policing system: Charleston’s City Guard; Charleston-area slave patrols; South Carolina militias; the workhouse master; city constables; city marshals; and city sheriffs. While a detailed account of every position could be written, the most significant policing agents in Charleston were those associated with the City Guard and local slave patrols.<sup>126</sup>

In the city's jurisdiction Charleston's city guard was charged with enforcing the laws surrounding black behavior. Though the guard was also required to apprehend any white resident disobeying the law, more often their attentions revolved around the behavior of the black population. After 1807 the guard consisted of one captain, two lieutenants, thirteen sergeants, fifty-five privates, two fifers and two drummers. The City Council annually elected the captain and lieutenants, who were then required by law to "collect names of all able bodied men who may offer to serve in guard for 12 months." From this list, the guard compiled its thirteen sergeants and fifty-five privates.<sup>127</sup>

Unlike slave patrols, the City Guard was employed by the city and, consequently received annual salaries from the city. For the 1819 year, City Guard expenses totaled \$26, 792.26, making the guard Charleston's largest expense. Salaries ranged from the captain's annual \$720 pay to privates' \$276, and fifer and drummers \$216. Despite such expenses, guardsmen were required to outfit themselves in the guard's official uniform. Slaves who came in contact with the City Guard likely encountered men dressed in "blue cloth, having red facing and buttons of yellow metal, white underclothes...a cocked hat and a sword or hanger." At the city's expense, it did provide men with a short-lapelled jacket with the initials "C.G." stitched.<sup>128</sup>

Despite the fact that official patrolling only occurred at night, the captain of the City Guard was a full time job. Theoretically the captain woke up for his day's work in the guardhouse, where he was required to live. Only if the captain's sergeant took up residence in the guardhouse could the captain live elsewhere. The guard was armed with a wide array of weapons, including muskets, sabers, and rattles, in the event that they required back-up from another unit. Every night at six-thirty p.m., from the city's main

guard house, the captain organized his privates into separate units. From there, the sergeant took approximately twenty-five privates to a guardhouse in the northern part of the city. From these two guard houses, the captain and sergeant were to divide the guardsmen up into groups of five. Starting at nine p.m. in the summer and eight p.m. in the winter—the time when the bell atop St. Michael’s church rang to indicate the black curfew—each group of five would patrol their specific districts for three hours at a time. The patrol units were required to patrol every alleyway, street, and often private building in Charleston and apprehend any blacks they found out after curfew.<sup>129</sup>

In the event that they came across someone deemed “suspicious,” the patrol unit was required to apprehend the “offender” and bring him or her back to the guardhouse from which they had been dispersed. By six a.m., all guardsmen returned to the main guardhouse and a report of the night’s proceedings was *supposed* to be submitted to the captain. Anyone who had been detained throughout the night was also transported to the main guardhouse. From there, what happened to the accused often depended on his or her condition. If enslaved, the master was promptly informed and required to go the guardhouse, pay a fine, and reclaim their slave. If a slave was not reclaimed within the day, they were sent to the workhouse and detained until their master paid the workhouse fees. In the event that the slave was never reclaimed after several days, he or she became the property of the city and was sold off by Charleston’s sheriff. Free blacks were also required to pay a fine, or faced the workhouse until they could pay it off. In theory, this was how the City Guard was supposed to work.<sup>130</sup>

South Carolina’s state militias, particularly those of St. Philip’s Parish in the surrounding Charleston area, were also a key component of the slave policing system. On

paper, South Carolina's militia was clearly outlined. The governor was commander in chief and the state was carved into five distinct military districts. From each major general of every district, an annual report was *supposed* to be submitted to the governor outlining the militia's effectiveness—if these reports were ever submitted, there is no evidence of them today. Likewise, although there is little evidence suggesting he did, the governor was supposed to make an annual tour of the state to assess the militia. However, one has to approach these laws with considerable skepticism. Just because there were specific militia laws on the books did not mean they were enforced. Every able-bodied white man, aged eighteen to forty-five was enrolled in the militia, which in theory meant South Carolina's militia totaled 50,000—if every man showed up to duty.<sup>131</sup>

The job of forming slave patrols was left to the state's militias—this meant a significant portion of the areas surrounding Charleston proper were to be policed by state—not city—run patrols. The patrols were expected to patrol every two weeks and inspect each and every slave quarter and interrogate free blacks and slaves found traveling. Slave patrol historians have tried to wrestle with the question of how much the duty of slave patrolling was left to lower class whites. For the colonial period, historian Sally Hadden argues class was not an issue—in fact, many wealthier slaveowners preferred slave patrolling to serving in the militia because it meant they could stay closer to home. However, once the loophole allowing men to serve in *either* the slave patrol or the militia closed, the class argument becomes much more poignant, particularly by the turn of the century. In fact, Hadden states that for the post-revolutionary period, the “poor white” patrol complaint was most common in South Carolina.” A petition filed in 1798 highlights the extent to which slave patrolling might have been determined by class.<sup>132</sup>

The petition suggested the implementation of an additional fine to those who evaded their patrol duty. In addition to the normal twenty pound fine, this fine, the petitioners argued, should be equal to two percent of the sum the charged paid in taxes. The additional fine would ensure that the wealthiest—who it seemed were evading their duty more often—would have to pay the most for failing to patrol. While wealthy men often preferred to pay a fine rather than patrol, the petitioners hoped that the added penalty would discourage some from evading their duty, as William Johnson did in June 1822 when he paid a total of fifteen dollars to one John Welch for “Acting as substitute, patrol duty” for six days in 1821 and nine days in 1822. However, as South Carolina’s legislature was typically made up of the lowcountry’s wealthiest men, it is no surprise that the extra fine was never implemented.<sup>133</sup>

In arguing for the additional fine, the petitioners tried to persuade legislatures that patrolling fell on the backs of poorer whites. The main point presented concerned the tendency of wealthy whites to have two residences—one in Charleston and a plantation outside the city. Not only did these two residences make it extremely difficult for fines to be collected, but it also made it easy for men to skip between one district and another—thereby avoiding their duty to patrol in either one. Wealthier whites who were a part of a slave patrol were supposed to inform the militia officer for the district they were leaving and going to of their whereabouts. But perhaps unsurprisingly, this rarely happened.<sup>134</sup>

In addition to slave patrols, militias, and the City Guard, Charleston also employed two city constables for each ward and one sheriff. Appointed by the City Council, constables were expected to discover and prevent “any unlawful or riotous assemblages of any persons...in the streets or elsewhere.” Sheriffs were also appointed

and expected to uphold the city's ordinances. Paid \$250 a year—considerably less than the City Marshall who made \$700—sheriffs vowed to “not take any fee, gift or gratuity,” as it was common throughout the nineteenth century for sheriffs to accept bribes—a trend that likely existed in Charleston as well. The city also appointed a marshal, whose duties included passing through the streets, seizing “any good offered or carried for sale by a slave or Negro” every Sunday—clearly to monitor the behavior of Charleston's black population while the majority of whites were away in church. It also appears as if the City Guard was supposed to report to the marshal concerning white citizens to be charged, as an 1806 ordinance stipulated that the guard “so patrolling shall inform the city-marshal of all white offenders to be prosecuted in Inferior City Court” thus suggesting that city authorities tried to have *some* collaboration between city-run slave policing agents.<sup>135</sup>

While these ordinances were on the books, we should by no means taken it as a given that Charleston's slave policing system fulfilled all these requirements. None of these records exist today and there is little contemporary evidence that proves such statements were indeed submitted. We do know, however, that there were often problems with the competence, behavior, and organization of the City Guard—in this way, it appeared to be quite like a militia, of which most in the late seventh and early nineteenth century was anything but “well-regulated.” Concerning the behavior of southern militias, older historiography maintains that southern militias were “fairly efficient” on account of the need to protect against slave revolt. But increasingly, these accounts seem less accurate. The necessity of protecting the white community from its slaves generated a much more militaristic society than existed in the north, but this did not always correlate into well-organized militias. Under a 1792 federal act, each state was supposed to submit

annual reports on the state of its militia to the Secretary of Defense—but in fifty-seven years, South Carolina submitted only seventeen reports. While this might have been a product of resentment against the federal government for monitoring state militias, the number also suggests administrative methods for monitoring militias and city guards was not popular in nineteenth century South Carolina and Charleston. Such laxity contributed to increased criticisms of what many white South Carolinians deemed an ineffective slave policing system.<sup>136</sup>

Just because the legislation was on the books, does not mean it resulted in any sense of satisfaction on the part of white southerners. In essence, some owners wanted the impossible: to feel safe in an inherently violent system. We know that Charlestonians charged guardsmen in the late eighteenth century with showing up to patrol drunk. While it is difficult to determine how common the problem was, contemporary accounts note that like militias, it was enough of a problem for a 1806 ordinance on the city guard to directly address the problem of absence and alcohol. Following the night's patrolling, city wardens were supposed to visit the main guard house from between six and nine a.m. to get a list of those who failed to show up to duty, were drunk on the job, or engaged in some sort of misconduct. Again, there is little evidence to suggest this requirement was fulfilled every night as the problems never seemed to be rectified.<sup>137</sup>

Despite its proximity to the vulnerable urban setting, Charleston's surrounding areas—particularly the northern Neck region—were policed by slave patrols with little collaboration with the City Guard. In the early antebellum period, Charleston's boundaries ran up to what was Division Street (present day Calhoun Street.) This meant that the city's increasingly "troublesome" Neck region was technically outside the

jurisdiction of the city's official slave patrol. Rather, as a part of St. Andrew's Parish, it was to be patrolled by slave patrols carved out of that parish's militia. This system of patrolling an area notorious for slave and free black interaction clashed with white ideas that the black community was seen as of the utmost importance to make certain "anarchy, insurrection, bloodshed, and all the horrors of a servile war" did not ensue. Though an ongoing theme suggests that laws were not always enforced and issues surrounding the patrol's competence never went away, Charleston still developed a multilayered legal and complex police system to monitor its black population that targeted black behavior—whether the individual was free or enslaved.<sup>138</sup>

### ***Policing Charleston's Free Black and Neck region Communities***

One of the most significant factors of urban slavery was the interaction between slaves and free blacks. Though plantation slaves often formed their own communities, urban slaves had consistent contact with slaves and free blacks. The impact was often monumental, as many historians attest in reference to the Vesey conspiracy. However, free blacks were by no means *free*. By the 1820s there were draconian restrictions on the free black community in Charleston. One city ordinance made it illegal for blacks to smoke, drink, sing, or dance in public without the local warden's permission. They also could not walk with a cane—unless blind—and the City Council even tried to impose legislature on clothing restrictions, stipulating that slaves wear "coarse woollens or worsted stuffs for winter and coarse cotton stuffs for summer."<sup>139</sup>

As a space where free blacks and slaves lived independently from their owners, the region had the reputation of being "a place of refuge for runaway negroes."



Advertisements for runaway slaves often referred to the Neck as the possible whereabouts of fugitives. In 1790, one John Stewart placed an advertisement in the *City Gazette* for the return of his slave Mercury, “a negro boy...of the Gullah country...suspected to be lurking about Charleston Neck.” While there were efforts immediately after Vesey to properly patrol the Neck, problems persisted, particularly on account of an alleged increase in grog shops. “[D]isorderly houses, unruly negroes, and wicked and depraved persons of every class have resorted to the Neck,” white petitioners wrote, “and endanger the security and comfort of the inhabitants.” As late as September 1848, the *Charleston Courier* protested that the Neck was “infested with...grog shops...and becoming...the receptacle of stolen and ill-gotten goods.”<sup>140</sup>

The Neck was worrisome to white Charlestonians because it housed a significant black—and free—population who allegedly corrupted slaves, “tempting them to theft and robbery, and promoting a general state of insubordination and depravity.” The concentration of free and enslaved blacks in the loosely patrolled Neck region gave the black population ample opportunity to interact—and according to whites, conspire to overthrow the racial and social order. According to the 1820 census, Charleston was home to 10,653 whites, 12,652 slaves, and 1,475 free blacks—as always, black Charlestonians outnumbered whites. In the Neck region, the discrepancy between whites and slaves was relatively similar to Charleston. There were roughly 2,000 more slaves than whites in Charleston and in Charleston Neck the census recorded 4,305 whites and 6,799 slaves. While the entire city of Charleston was home to roughly 1,400 free blacks overall, the free blacks of the Neck region, who totaled 1,587, was a much sizable portion of the entire Neck population. In addition, it is likely that many free blacks, and most

definitely the fugitive slaves who allegedly found refuge in the Neck region, were not recorded by official census takers. While we must allow for some discrepancy in the census figures for the white population as well, there was likely a greater incongruity concerning the black population.<sup>141</sup>

Despite the large presence of free and enslaved men and women, the Neck was very poorly patrolled. At first this appears to be the fault of the city. Historian Edward Pearson maintains that the Neck was seen as away from the City Guard and “technically outside the jurisdiction of onerous municipal ordinances.” But this was because the Neck *was* outside the city. It was not a part of Charleston proper, and as such the City Council likely felt it was not its duty to ensure the Neck—perhaps the most volatile area in the greater Charleston area—was adequately patrolled. Because it was a part of the state militia system, and not the City Guard, it appears that the city deemed the Neck the state’s problem. The area was technically a part of St. Philip’s Parish and slave patrols that were supposed to patrol this region were part of the state militia system—and not under Charleston’s city jurisdiction. The western Neck area that ran along the east bank of the Ashley River was inhabited by wealthy white Charlestonians. Other than the Charleston Neck Rangers—the slave patrol carved out of the St. Philip’s Parish militia—there is little evidence that any other slave patrol was stationed to patrol the Neck. This is surprising considering that the majority of the Neck’s eastern residents were either slaves living away from their masters, or free blacks.<sup>142</sup>

Nevertheless, that did not stop residents from trying to secure further patrolling for the area. In the summer of 1812, perhaps concerned about the looming war with Great Britain, Charlestonians pushed for “the raising of a Company or Companies of Alarm

Men on Charleston Neck.” Soon the *City Gazette* published an advertisement concerning the creation of companies to patrol the Neck that was outside the official slave patrolling system. “THE ALARM MEN AND EXEMPTS On Charleston Neck, who wish to form themselves into COMPANIES, are informed, that Subscription lists for their signatures will be lodged at the Cross Keys, on the Neck during the term of the Election for Ensign of the Charleston Neck Rangers.” By August 8, those who signed up to form a company for the Charleston Neck area were requested to show up to a meeting and soon Benjamin Harvey and William Logan were made captain and lieutenant of Charleston Neck’s Officers of the Alarm and Exempt men.<sup>143</sup>

While white citizens constantly complained about their weak slave patrol power—particularly in reference to the Neck and the problematic City Guard—slaves and free blacks saw the system as anything but weak. The accounts of ex-slaves recorded by the New Deal’s Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) program are a testament to how slaves felt the state’s extensive slave power on a daily basis. The W.P.A. accounts present difficulties for historians and it is important to consider that they were perhaps characteristics of lifelong habits of ex-slaves speaking to a white questioner—mainly, that the slaves might have been telling the interviewer what he or she believed they wanted to hear. Still, the W.P.A. interviews are a valuable source for capturing the experience of enslavement in South Carolina, and the fact that many of the slave testimonies make reference to patrols illustrates that patrols were a defining feature of the slave experience.<sup>144</sup>

Jake McLeod explicitly noted how the patrols were a resource of the white community. “The community,” he said, “have man then called patroller...and they

business was to catch them that run away. Say like you be authorized to look after my place, you catch them that slipped off to another man place.” Adeline Jackson, a former slave of John Mobley, focused on the cynicism of the patrollers, stating, “Patrollers often come to search for stray slaves, wouldn’t take your word for it. They would search the house. If they catch one without a pass, they whipped him.” Two other ex-slaves, Isiah Jeffries and J.T. Tims, simplified the role of the patrols, and placed them with other groups considered threatening. Tims proclaimed that, “There wasn’t no difference between the patrols and the Ku Klux that I knows of. If th’d ketch you, they all would whip you.” “I remember the patrollers,” Jeffries said, “the Ku Klux and the Yankees. Niggers dreaded all three. There was no jail for us: The patrollers kept us straight.” The W.P.A. accounts highlight something few South Carolinian slaveowners recognized—that even if their slave policing system was flawed, despite numerous tries, no slave revolt was ever successful in the U.S. South. This meant little to Charleston’s slaveowning elite—who increasingly turned to more militant methods of slave policing—and instead of recognizing that their policing system did protect them when their worst fears were realized, Charleston’s aristocracy focused on what they deemed the ineffectiveness of a layered and un-collaborated system.<sup>145</sup>

The several years preceding the Vesey conspiracy were marked by substantial conflict. In 1817 a mass departure of eighty percent of black worshipers in Charleston left the white-run churches to form their own church. The move was—unsurprisingly—met with a wave of criticism from the white community, alarmed by the relative autonomy exercised by the city’s black population. Consequently, in December approximately 500 of those departed worshipers were arrested for disorderly conduct and according to the

*City Gazette*, accused of “having bought a lot, erected a building and engaged herein in a species of worship which the neighborhood found a nuisance.” Six months later another 150 blacks were arrested “and committed to the Guard House for violation of one of the City Ordinances. The principal characters were yesterday morning sentenced to one month imprisonment and others a fine of \$5 or receive 10 lashes.” In an effort to reign in what seemed like increasingly disorderly black behavior, state-wide manumission laws were tightened in 1820. Under the new laws, slaveowners could only free their slaves with permission of South Carolina’s General Assembly, and free blacks were prohibited from moving to the state.<sup>146</sup>

Slaveowners could put an endless amount of laws on the books restricting the behavior and conduct of Charleston and South Carolina’s enslaved and free black populations. But no matter what, not *every* law could be enforced perfectly. Likewise, Charleston’s increasingly militant slaveowners failed to recognize that they were essentially asking for the impossible: a slave policing system to make them feel safe in the inherently violent system of slavery. As slaveowners felt slavery coming under attack from all sides—domestically, federally, and internationally—historians tend to emphasize the turn towards a clear-cut defense of slavery, manifesting in the paternalist ideology first, and the radicalism of “fire-eaters” later. But in Charleston, the experience of the Vesey revolt—what slaveowners deemed their worst nightmare—led the majority of the city’s slaveowning aristocracy to seek a different track revolving around a broad social acceptance of vigilantism that linked up to future developments in Jacksonian America.

## **Chapter 4**

### **“Demons of St. Domingo!!!”: The Denmark Vesey Revolt and Charleston’s Slave Policing System**

When Judge Abraham Nott ruled in mid-1821 on Captain Joseph Cole’s abusive behaviour against William Cattell in January, his statements suggested that elite South Carolinian gentlemen were by no means comfortable with the “kind” of men employed to police their slaves. To Nott, Cole’s actions were little short of vigilantism since Cole, a militia beat captain for the 31<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the South Carolina militia, was captain *only* of a small contingent of the 31<sup>st</sup> regiment—and not a slave patrol captain. Cole’s duties—as outlined by South Carolina’s slave patrolling laws—were to create a roll for his district, from which the names of local white men could be chosen to serve on the region’s slave patrol. But as Cattell knew well, Cole clearly took it upon himself to becoming a slave policing agent. For Judge Nott, Cole “performing the duties of a captain of patrol” meant that he assumed “a character not authorized by the act.” Nott maintained that even if Cole was indeed a patrol captain his conduct, particularly the abuse of Cattell within earshot of his sleeping wife, was by no means authorized.<sup>147</sup>

Ruling over an 1820 trial concerning the failure to show up for patrol duty—also featuring Cole—another South Carolina judge noted the importance of slave patrols. Justice Bay stated that patrol laws “ought to be considered as one of the safe guards of the people of South Carolina...as a security against insurrection; a danger of such a nature, that it never can or ought to be lost sight of in the southern states.” While Bay saw slave patrols as the protectors of white society, Nott was greatly concerned with what would happen if men like Cole continued to overstep their authority. Noting that patrols were, “many times composed of men not very competent to form correct opinions of the extent

of their powers,” Justice Nott lamented that if men continued to act “under the colour of authority...we are subject to a state of things even worse than that against which they [slave patrols] were intended to afford us protection.” Put simply, Justice Nott suggested that the kind of vigilantism slave *patrols* influenced might be more dangerous to South Carolinians than slave *insurrection*.<sup>148</sup>

The slave policing system in Charleston that both Cattell and Cole were a part of was marked by little collaboration between its various authorizing departments. In essence, it was a mixture of state, city, and independent actors. While city ordinances technically required the captain of Charleston’s City Guard to submit a daily report to the mayor, considering South Carolina’s record for reporting militia conduct, it is likely that these reports were rarely submitted. In addition, we have no evidence that there ever was any orchestrated effort between state, city, and federal officials concerning slave patrolling on a regular basis. Rather, only during suspected slave revolts was such haphazard collaboration attempted. White Charleston, then, ultimately depended on a convoluted and divided slave policing system made up of both public and independent units to protect them from their greatest fear: slave revolt.

The complexity and lack of collaboration that defined Charleston’s slave policing system opened up opportunities for independent actors to police Charleston’s slaves in a manner *they* deemed necessary. For decades, white Charlestonians criticized the effectiveness of their city guard and slave policing system. In many ways, Charleston’s white community had unattainable expectations: they wanted a slave policing system that made them feel safe in a slave system that was inherently violent. But increasing limitations on the black population, or writing to the state legislature about guardsmen

selling slaves alcohol could not—and did not—change the very real fact that until Charlestonians gave up slavery, they would never feel safe. How could they when their “property” might rebel—often violently—at any given moment? But in an age of increasing ideas about southern paternalism, few owners—particularly Charleston’s elite gentleman who fancied themselves benevolent—were willing to admit that their slaves might want to kill them. Rather, with an un-collaborated and complicated slave policing system, more and more men *outside* the official slave policing system took it upon themselves to police Charleston’s slaves. This was exactly what happened early in the morning on January 12, 1821 on Cattell’s plantation—and what would happen after one of the most notorious slave conspiracies in the summer of 1822.

***“The Demons of St. Domingo!!!”***

Late on the night of Saturday June 16, 1822 all hell was supposed to break loose. That night, upwards of one hundred and fifty enslaved and free black men would allegedly make use of the weapons they stockpiled over the months and take over Charleston. The scheme, supposedly purported by a freeman named Denmark Vesey, was to ensure the freedom of Charleston’s upwards of 12,000 slaves, and supposedly repeat the events of St. Domingue in the southern U.S.’s most established slaveholding city. Because it was often assumed that every black man desired southern white women, many claimed that once black rule was established, Denmark Vesey would choose one of Gov. Thomas Bennett Jr.’s daughters, either Mary or Anna, to be his queen to rule over the slaves’ “black kingdom.”<sup>149</sup>



That was how things were *supposed* to have gone—at least according to official reports released by Charleston’s City Council. Instead, once authorities were tipped off to the alleged plan, Charleston’s slave policing system went into action. In relative secrecy—as much as was possible—patrols adjacent to Charleston’s City Guard and state-run civilian slave patrols planned to combat the revolt. Two men stationed in the steeple of St. Michael’s Church kept watch and at nine p.m. sharp, St. Michael’s bell rang, signalling the black population’s curfew. At that time, upwards of 2,500 armed patrollers hit Charleston’s streets, marching up and down each and every street, inspecting most slave quarters. William Hasell Wilson, a young man at the time, later wrote, “I can never forget the feeling of alarm and anxiety that pervaded the whole community...the passing of the patrols on the streets and every slight noise excited attention.”<sup>150</sup>

The commotion of June 15 left white Charlestonians suspicious. However, it would be awhile before their fears were addressed by any official word from city or state authorities. Anxious Charlestonians scouring the pages of the *Charleston Courier* or the *Charleston Mercury* found nothing. The city was successful in establishing an almost complete censorship of the proceeding events for fear that the very *mention* of a slave revolt might inspire slaves to carry out Vesey’s plans. Not until June 29 was the plot first referenced in Charleston’s press, which did not escape the attention of anxious slaveowners in neighbouring North Carolina where one journal noted, “not a whisper of all this was echoed...”<sup>151</sup>

This secrecy only led Charlestonians to create their own ideas about what Vesey and Charleston’s slaves were planning. John Potter, a local banker, caught the sentiments

of whites during June and early July, noting that there was “much agitation and extreme feeling in the public mind...The plot was deeply laid, and a plan of insurrection (which a member of the court told me yesterday) was organized with an address & cunning, as he said would much surprise the community.” The result of Vesey’s revolt would have been, Potter continued, “unparallel’d, even exceeding if possible, the *Demons*, of St. Domingo!!!” Echoing the fear that black men would ravish white women, Potter claimed that Vesey planned to kill all the white men so that “the females were to be reserved *for worse than death*.”<sup>152</sup>

The supposed consequences of a slave revolt on female bodies did not escape the attention of southern women either. Anna Hayes Johnson, Gov. Bennett’s niece, wrote to a cousin in Raleigh that the white women “were to have been reserved to fill their Hamas [sic]—horrible...” In July, Johnson wrote again, stating that the conspirators had planned to take all the white women to St. Domingue, “there to be sold as slaves.” Apparently Vesey had already travelled to St. Domingue to make such arrangements. Frustrated with her limited mobility as a woman, Johnson continued, “I wish I could act for myself. I would not stay in this city another day for my feelings have been so lacerated of late that I can hardly think speak or act.”<sup>153</sup>

Such arguments persisted while the Court of Magistrates and Freeholders heard the testimonies of slaves who allegedly conspired to revolt against Charleston’s white authority. Initial reports reached authorities by way of Peter, a slave owned by Colonel John Prioleau. From there, city authorities launched a continual roundup of enslaved and free black Charlestonians for several weeks thereafter. The “ad-hoc” court was made up of several of Charleston’s most politically prominent men, including Robert J. Turnbull,

J. Robert Pringle, and Colonel William Drayton, and was created within a week of the scare. In an attempt to keep the affairs secret, the court met and heard testimonies in the Charleston workhouse. This was convenient for many reasons, as it made incarcerated slaves readily available for both hearings, and in the event that they would not speak, torture.<sup>154</sup>

After experiencing such torture, “one of the convicts” identified Vesey as the plot’s organizer and within days Vesey was found and thrown into the workhouse, along with many others named. The round-up seemed to have a domino effect—as one historian has noted, “With the passing of each day, coerced confessions and fresh testimony brought more arrests.” Formed by the Charleston City Council, the Court of Magistrates and Freeholders that forced the confessions had little collaboration with state authorities. Astoundingly, the court seemed to take power from the state’s executive—Thomas Bennett—and decided, despite Bennett’s suspicions, which slaves would live and die.<sup>155</sup>

### ***Who polices the slaves?***

Scholarship on the Vesey revolt typically uses vague terms to describe exactly who or what put down the slave revolt. More recent analyses, including Egerton’s *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey*, name some of the actors in Charleston’s slave policing system yet, the majority claims “authorities,” “militias,” “patrols,” and “guards” quelled the rebellion—these terms are used interchangeably without any hesitation as to what is meant by them. But who were the “authorities” exactly? What “patrols” are we talking about? State-run patrols linked to the militia or the patrols of

Charleston city guardsmen? Alternatively, were patrols the mysterious unnamed men who seemed to become a part of the slave policing system when an emergency made it necessary? Put simply, the question of who or what made up Charleston's 1822 slave policing system remains to be answered. While we cannot account for every actor, historians can and should do their best to pinpoint some key players and ask themselves: exactly who were the men who led the roundups that summer? And perhaps more tellingly, to what extent did the participation of individual actors in Charleston's slave policing system change the nature of the relationship between city and state governments and slave policing?<sup>156</sup>

In many ways, the answer to *who* led the roundups is simple: in one word, everyone. At any given time, white Charlestonians—slaveowners or not—were expected to participate in monitoring the pass system, hence the reference to “persons” in the state law, and not necessarily just men. Though, it is difficult to imagine a prominent white woman interrogating a slave who crossed her path, theoretically *every* white Charlestonian was seen as a part of the slave policing system. Likewise, “in case of necessity or urgency” the City Ordinance on the City Guard proclaimed that “it shall be lawful for any of the guard to demand the aid of any man or men, who may be met with on such an occasion.” This stipulation essentially made any male a city guardsman when necessary and thus a part of Charleston's slave policing system. It is notable that the ordinance does not require the aid of solely white men. Here it is important to keep in mind that the City Guard was seen as an organization to protect Charlestonians against *all* threats. In theory, a free black man might be required to help the City Guard apprehend a

white offender. But considering Charleston's greatest threat was always slavery, this was likely a rare occurrence.<sup>157</sup>

While specifics are hard to come by, it is safe to assume that men independent of the official slave policing system participated in the Vesey revolt's suppression, as legislation such as the City Guard Ordinance permitted. But for many reasons, these men are difficult to trace. Unless a particularly courageous act was mentioned in the newspaper, or someone noted their participation in a letter these men become hidden additions to Charleston's slave policing system. Luckily, however, those who played a regular or even occasional role in the system are easier to trace through militia records and city directories. In an attempt to glean some information on who policed Charleston's slave, we can look at the particular cases of Aenus Reeves, James C. Martindale, Moses Belknap, and Captain William P. Dove.

A less powerful member of Charleston's slave policing system—and one who had a significant role in punishing slaves—was the workhouse master, Aenus S. Reeves. Little is known about Reeves, as he is not listed in the 1820 federal census—there is reference only to an Elizabeth Reeves, who may have been the same Elizabeth Reeves married to Aenus. Reeves began work as the workhouse master as early as 1819 and maintained the position during the panic of the summer of 1822. He lived at 1 Lynch Street which put him in the roughly north-west area of the city—not far from the workhouse on Magazine Street. Reeves seemed to be a man of little means, as much of his will relates to paying off debts. Only after Reeves' debts had been paid, “all the residue and remainder of my real and personal property” was to be given to three men in trust. The rest went to Elizabeth, provided she did not marry again. It seems, then, that

while Aenus Reeves was employed to police slaves, he owned none of his own. Reeves died on December 1, 1822 at thirty six years of age and historians are left to wonder whether or not the experience of the summer played a role in his death by “consumption,” or tuberculosis.<sup>158</sup>

While Reeves reflected the non-slaveholding role in the official slave policing system, a more wealthy—and thus powerful—man working in the system was James C. Martindale. As captain of the Charleston Neck Rangers militia division, Martindale was under the direction of the state rather than city officials, whom Reeves answered to. The Neck Rangers was a volunteer militia unit, which was an “alternative mode of service” for South Carolina’s wealthier residents. These were semi-independent units that functioned under their own terms. They could have their own charter and guide themselves, unlike the typical militia unit. Because of the wealth attached to volunteer units, they typically specialized in artillery, rifle or cavalry and were expected to maintain their own cannons, horses, and rifles. Ultimately, this meant, in the words of one historian, “recruitment centered on those who could afford it.” Furthermore, because of the highly independent nature of volunteer units, the lines between state/city run slave policing agencies and autonomous units was more complex than we might think. To be sure, cavalry units had almost total independence from the chain of command and could very frequently do as they pleased.<sup>159</sup>

Other than prestige and autonomy, why might men want to be a part of a volunteer unit? Volunteer units were likely attractive to some because serving in a volunteer company meant you did not have to perform patrol duty as a cohesive unit. Rather than carving out slave patrols from *each* militia, volunteer companies were broken

up and sprinkled throughout various beats and placed on another militia's roster for patrol. In many ways, this might have made it easier for wealthy men to acquire substitutes for their duty. If volunteer units created their own unit of slave patrols, all the men selected to be patrollers could theoretically hire routine substitutes, but there still had to be a superior to monitor such patrolling. While it may have happened on occasion, there was no legal precedent for hiring a substitute slave patrol captain. In essence, by splitting up volunteer units and incorporating them into other militia slave patrols, the responsibility of running slave patrols would remain with the captains of non-volunteer militia, or "beat," units—and leave ample opportunity for volunteer militia men to hire substitutes.<sup>160</sup>

While Martindale likely exempted himself from routine patrol duty in the Neck region, he was still technically a part of the slave policing system and acted as such in 1822. Martindale was a planter in the upper Neck region and owned a plantation, the Brick House, and a house in Charleston which remained in the family until 1844 when it was sold to a free black woman. The house still stands today, as a part of the College of Charleston. Martindale was one of those typical Charlestonian planters who owned his plantation outside the city limits and an impressive house in the city. Likewise, his slave holdings in the 1820 federal census totalled twenty-six, which places Martindale as the largest slaveholder of all four slave policing agents analyzed here.<sup>161</sup>

In the summer of 1822 Martindale purchased a plethora of weapons for his Charleston Neck Rangers to combat what they anticipated would be an all-out race war. On his own discretion, Martindale bought 119 muskets and bayonets out of his own pocket, a move that revealed the unique kind of independence those working in volunteer

units had. In some ways, the Neck Rangers were used to supplying themselves, and Martindale deemed that during an insurrection his militia unit would need to be better armed than normal. However, the vast quantity of arms purchased by Martindale, and the fact that he bought them all himself, rather than requiring each Neck Ranger to go out and purchase three muskets a piece, hints at the increasing acceptance of vigilante action in Charleston. In addition, immediately following the revolt, the Neck Rangers—led by Martindale—pushed the city to create a slave census, albeit to no avail. The personal financial costs and vigorous lobbying Martindale took on to protect white Charlestonians were considerable, so much so that the next year Martindale’s recently widowed wife, Louisa, presented a petition to the state legislature asking to be reimbursed for the costs of the muskets and bayonets. It is unknown whether or not her request was granted but Martindale’s vastly different role from that held by Aenus Reeves highlights the diversities of policing Charleston’s slaves.<sup>162</sup>

While Martindale likely fancied himself a gentleman committed to protecting Charleston’s white population, Captain William P. Dove was a *very* different kind of slave policing agent. From as early as 1819 and throughout the summer of 1822, Dove served as captain of the City Guard. Before being elected captain, Dove was a ship joiner with Prichard & Knox’s wharf, and possibly an earlier private or lieutenant of the City Guard. His residence was listed at 44 State Street, just one block east of East Bay Street, close to the stretch of docks on Charleston’s east side. As City Guard Captain Dove’s primary residence was technically the guardhouse, though it is unknown whether or not Dove actually took up residence there. In terms of wealth, Dove depended on his job with



the city. At the same time, Dove, as most white men in Charleston, was a slaveowner. In 1820 Dove owned four slaves—two males and two females.<sup>163</sup>

While Dove's role as captain almost certainly meant he mustered and dispersed the City Guard throughout the summer's panic, one historian also places Dove as an early interrogator of accused slaves. In late May, William Paul, a slave and one of Vesey's "minor recruiters," mentioned the plan to Peter Prioleau, who later revealed the plan to his master. When this reached authorities, Paul was soon arrested and held in the guardhouse. Rather than being sent to the workhouse, Dove interrogated Paul at the guardhouse and eventually coerced him to release the names of two additional accomplices, Mingo Hart and Peter Poyas.<sup>164</sup>

Dove also served as a last-minute executioner. When Charleston hung twenty-two of the accused conspirators on Friday July 26—what one historian refers to as "an orgy of violence"—not all died immediately. As Mary Lamboll Beach noted, the whole execution "business was managed very badly." The city attempted to hang all twenty-two at the same time but the bodies did not fall as far as needed and most remained alive for some time. Consequently, Dove stepped in and shot a round of bullets to ensure that each and every man was killed immediately. This suggests that many of the twenty-two might have really died from Dove's gunfire, rather than from hanging.<sup>165</sup>

If Dove was indeed the *real* executioner on the morning of July 26, that did not stop Moses Belknap, the city's *official* executioner, from complaining to the state that Charleston failed to fully pay him for his services. Aside from working as the city's executioner, Belknap was a saddler in the Neck region. But in the summer of 1822

Belknap was responsible for the transportation of some of the accused, including Jack Pritchard and John Horry, to the execution site at “the Line,” an area in the Neck beyond the city’s boundaries. He also prepared the men for execution by tying their hands behind their backs, fixing the noose around each neck and putting on “the cap” that shielded the slaves’ faces from the spectators. The fiasco of July 26 was initially blamed on Belknap, rather than the logistics of executing twenty-two men simultaneously on the same gallows. Belknap soon responded to the criticism, arguing that the consecutive executions caused him considerable “personal inconvenience [and] deranged [his] private business.” For several weeks in July, Belknap claimed to have spent “night and day, in assisting at the preparation of the Gallows, [and] the digging of the graves.” Though the official executioner, Belknap viewed his involvement not as a successful fulfilment of his duty to the protection of white Charlestonians—as others might have argued—but a great inconvenience.<sup>166</sup>

In the months immediately before and after the panic, William Dove appears in the city records in relation to personal disputes with prominent Charleston gentlemen. Dove appears as a man who acted beyond his authority, particularly when he, as a man of modest means, confronted members of Charleston’s slaveowning aristocracy. In the immediate wake of the panic—when tensions were still high—Charleston’s City Council sought to rectify a dispute between Dove and a Mr. Simons, a member of the City Council, and possibly of the prestigious Simons or Simmons family of Charleston. Simons “presented sundry charges” against Dove immediately following the Vesey conspiracy. On August 17 the Council investigated the “sundry charges,” and “After hearing evidence came to the following conclusion” that Dove “is not guilty of saying

that he would offer Mr. Simons personal violence, or of challenging him.” For this threat, it was ruled that Mr. Simons could reprimand Dove in private. But there was a larger charge found by the committee too.<sup>167</sup>

The committee also found Dove “guilty of an impropriety in conversing with his Officers.” Unfortunately the minutes do not go on to suggest exactly what the impropriety was. It may have referred to Simons’ personality, or been in reference to the response to Vesey’s plot. In addition, during the panic someone submitted a “gross error in the Pay Roll.” It is difficult to know for sure exactly when this “gross error” occurred, but it is certainly plausible that guardsmen working overtime during the summer felt justified to inflate their wages. Though the committee reprimanded Dove for allowing the error to go through, the fact that the Council acquitted him “of all implication of Fraud” suggests that they suspected it was someone in a lower rank than Dove who tried to get more money out of the city for their services as a guardsman.<sup>168</sup>

Perhaps the most telling example of how Dove conducted himself as captain occurred in mid June, right after the initial alarm of June 16. With little information from officials, Charlestonians were left to speculate on the extent of Vesey’s slave revolt. The hysteria formed an environment where, according to the *Charleston Courier*, the city was “full of counterfeit rumors” that were “the source of alarm—the prelude of danger.” In this atmosphere, a bystander alleged that he or she saw the captain of the city guard “shoot down dead a colored man, who did not give him the slightest offence, in Bull Street, Charleston opposite the residence of Major Hamilton, sen[ior.]” Though Dove was not explicitly mentioned, he was the captain of the city guard at the time, making it safe to assume he was the guardsman who shot down the innocent man.<sup>169</sup>

In these examples we can see how during the Vesey revolt, white Charlestonians depended on a system that mixed state and city authorized agents to keep them safe. However, the various layers also made it difficult to determine—then and now—who was giving what orders, particularly concerning the thirty-five executions. The city’s response was orchestrated secretly—for fear of alerting white citizens and supposedly inspiring free blacks and slaves—and there is no existing official governor correspondence for the period. Rather, we have to piece together what accounts of Gov. Bennett remain to assess exactly what he did—or did not do—in an attempt to determine how executive Bennett’s role in the Vesey panic really was.

***A “Counterfeit Rumor” and Gov. Thomas Bennett Jr.’s “Anxiety”***

When rumours began to swirl in late May 1822, Gov. Bennett’s trusted slave, Rolla was immediately named. Rolla and Ned, also belonging to Bennett, were confidants of Vesey and met him regularly—a point Bennett, a staunch paternalist, denied. From early on, Bennett assured Charleston’s intendant James Hamilton Jr. that he worked his slaves “day & night [so] *they* had not *time* for *one* even of them to be engaged in it.” When a slave named George Wilson relayed the plan to Bennett and Hamilton the governor again could not believe it—Bennett wholeheartedly subscribed to the incredulous belief that his slaves truly loved him. This fantasy was supported later in June when Rolla, under interrogation by city authorities, played dumb against the charges against him. Bennett again maintained that it was absurd to believe “that his own Negroes were implicated.”<sup>170</sup>

When the plan that Bennett could not believe manifested, the governor was forced to take some kind of action, and perhaps reluctantly come to the revelation that he might have been wrong. While militias and patrollers marched through Charleston's streets, Bennett was hesitant to cause panic with increased militia presence—or did not yet think the threat warranted such actions. Despite the wishes of other Charlestonians, Bennett hesitated to push for the permanent establishment of a Charleston militia, which allegedly would have made the militia response more efficient for future emergencies. Only in July did Bennett finally implement the order—though he immediately regretted it, claiming that, “some of the consequences deprecated,” which leaves us to wonder how authentic Bennett's decision truly was. While Bennett initially hesitated, he was still commander of the state militia. Accordingly, on June 15 he called up militia forces from Colonel Croft's 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment, including the Washington Light Infantry and Charleston Neck Rangers, to assist the city guardsmen in patrolling. In July Bennett also wrote to fellow South Carolinian—and a sympathetic ear—Secretary of War John C. Calhoun and asked for federal assistance, which Calhoun later approved.<sup>171</sup>

The governor continued to hold hesitations concerning the appropriate response to the plot. How much Bennett did (or did not) believe in the conspiracy has ignited a debate in modern historiography. While historians Douglas Egerton and Robert Paquette maintain that the idea that Bennett questioned the conspiracy is “utterly false,” others such as Michael Johnson and Richard C. Wade suggest otherwise. We do know that Bennett at one point declared that, “a successful Rebellion cannot occur in this State.” Likewise, in a letter that the *Niles Register* obtained, Bennett lamented that, “Certainty gave place to exaggeration and the general impression sustained the rumor of a very

extensive conspiracy.” It was the secrecy and seclusion of the trials that Bennett believed was at fault—this was where Bennett’s greatest hesitations may have originated. In a November state legislature session, Bennett attacked the City Council for its handling of the Vesey conspiracy and particularly for the creation of the Court of Magistrates and Freeholders. The court, Bennett argued, was a “usurpation of authority and a violation of the law.” But considering these criticisms, why did Bennett not intervene more aggressively? He was, after all, the only politician who could determine which accused slaves would live and which would die.<sup>172</sup>

This is a point historian Alan F. January briefly addresses. He posits that Bennett “refused on numerous occasions to obey the court’s mandate” and used “his constitutional power of pardon to save several of the condemned,” a point that is more complicated when one looks closer. To January, Bennett’s actions suggested he was in charge and acted on his criticisms—that he acted as aggressively as he could. Douglas Egerton adds to this discussion by pointing out that southern governors were severely limited by what they could do without the support of their assemblies. Bennett did pardon some slaves, but his hesitations suggest that Bennett might have wanted to do a lot more.<sup>173</sup>

Despite the fact that Bennett requested the assistance federal troops, his letter to Calhoun was dated July 15—nearly a full month after the initial alarm. Interestingly, it seems as if what Bennett might have feared *more* than slave revolt, was the turn to vigilantism he anticipated would occur if citizens did not trust the slave policing system. In his initial letter, Bennett wrote that, “The peculiar character of a Large proportion of our population,” and the hostility generated that summer “will continue for some time to

excite vigilance and excite anxiety.” Bennett wanted the presence of federal troops to allay the fears of white Charlestonians and convince them that the government could adequately protect them. Consequently, when Bennett wrote to thank Calhoun for sending troops, he noted that the troops “proved highly gratifying to the Citizens of this place, and the arrival of the forces will no doubt contribute greatly, to allay the public excitement.” Bennett’s response seemed to be more about strengthening the public’s confidence in its slave policing system than suppressing a slave revolt—a point that reflected Calhoun’s fear that Bennett could not handle the “disturbances at Charleston.”<sup>174</sup>

Bennett seemed willing to do anything *but* intervene in the Court of Magistrates and Freeholders. Instead, Bennett—likely influenced by his brother-in-law Supreme Court Justice William Johnson’s very public criticism of the trials—wrote to the State Attorney General Robert Y. Hayne in early July about the court’s secrecy. Bennett sought Hayne’s advice on the court’s proceedings, noting that, “I feel a weight of responsibility arising from the course of proceedings which has been adopted.” But Bennett still considered himself essentially powerless, remarking, “Whatever your opinion may be, it can produce no effect on the decisions of the court recently adjourned...” Still, Bennett asked Haynes, “Can a Court of Justice particularly in criminal cases, be held with closed doors? Can a prisoner be legally tried and convicted without being confronted by his witnesses and everyone of them? Can a Corporation legally organize a court for the trial of Felons?” With little patience, Haynes shut Bennett down. “[N]othing can be clearer,” Haynes wrote, “than that *slaves* are not entitled to *these rights*.” Bennett’s letter—

however cautious it may have been—seemed to be his last attempt at possibly intervening in the conduct of the Court of Magistrates and Freeholders.<sup>175</sup>

Rather than intervening in the court's proceedings, Bennett stood to the side as thirty-five slaves, including three of his "beloved," died. When Rolla faced the court, Bennett seemed to be an ordinary slaveowner—he stood aside, and watched as his hired attorney, Jacob Axsom, did his best against the inevitable. The only pardons Bennett granted were in response to a magistrates' request—the pardons were not Bennett's own initiative. Rather, he did so because court magistrates hoped the slaves' transportation—rather than execution—would reveal to Charleston's slaves "that even their principal advisers and ringleaders cannot be confided in and that under the temptations of exemption from capital punishment they will betray the common cause." After intendant James Hamilton requested a week of final show trials that resulted in the death of five more slaves, the court convened on their own whim. With little interaction with the governor, the court sent Bennett a letter to tell him that they were finally finished with their executions.<sup>176</sup>

The experience left Bennett shocked. His paternalist approach to slavery was shattered and Bennett joined the group of petitioners requesting that the state government reimburse them for some of the loss of their "property." But by November Bennett did not seem content to forget what had happened that summer. In the state legislature his lack of confidence in the slave policing system was fully revealed and Bennett went public with his criticisms of the secretive Court of Magistrates and Freeholders, which adopted guidelines that surpassed South Carolina's slave laws of both 1740 *and* 1805.<sup>177</sup>



A blame game between Bennett and Charleston-area legislators marked the November sitting of the state legislature. While Bennett did not explicitly recognize the problems of a joint, yet un-collaborated, state and city slave policing system, he argued that the “haphazard enforcement” of the laws by citizens employed by the city was to blame for the conspiracy. In an attempt to consolidate the slave policing system, Bennett wanted the enforcement of laws relating to the city’s black population to be the duty of state—not city—officers. Under Bennett’s plan, boards would be created to monitor each parish and hold the power to “inspect generally, the conduct and dwellings” of all blacks, as well as the “economy of the plantation,” to ensure that at least one white person was on every plantation at any given time.<sup>178</sup>

Not surprisingly, Charlestonians serving in the state legislature vehemently rejected the plan—and Bennett. They not only accused him of lying about the court but maintained he also did not accurately represent what had truly happened in Charleston. Bennett’s recommendations were eventually rejected as the House postponed the committal of his message and the Senate symbolically threw it out indefinitely. Likewise, Bennett’s proposal to amend the Negro Act so that black defenders would have adequate protection under the law—which took explicit exception to the court’s proceedings—was never printed by the “furious” state assembly. While the “humiliated” governor likely felt powerless when it came to the state legislature, Bennett’s failure to take action as state executive also reflected a loss of control over South Carolina and Charleston’s slave policing system as a whole.<sup>179</sup>

It is easy to argue that if Bennett had wanted to act more decisively, it would have been political suicide in antebellum Charleston. But this belies the larger point of what

Bennett's actions—or lack thereof—reveals: mainly that when it came to policing slavery, Bennett was *not* the executive in charge. This likely did not escape President James Monroe, who as Virginia's governor had been in Bennett's position in 1800 during Gabriel Prosser's notorious rebellion. Where Bennett allowed Charleston city authorities to orchestrate the establishment of the Court of Magistrates and Freeholders and control both the court's proceedings *and* findings, Monroe took decisive action. As executive, Monroe established a special board of inquiry and entrenched firm orders regarding the treatment of Prosser. Rather than allowing Richmond city authorities to determine the terms of imprisonment, Monroe laid out a clear plan of isolation for Prosser and ordered that the prison guard hold "no conversation with him on any subject or permit any other person to do so." Monroe also ordered that no whites be allowed to speak to Prosser "without order from the Governor."<sup>180</sup>

There is also evidence to suggest that Monroe played a role in keeping the number of executed slaves to twenty-seven, when the number might have easily skyrocketed. The governor was partly concerned with the increased costs related to reimbursing owners—Virginia held an annual budget of just \$377, 703 and was already required to pay \$8,899.91 in reimbursements. But Monroe "had long since lost all stomach for more executions" to begin with and suggested instead that, "those less criminal in comparison" to Prosser "sho[ul]d be reprieved [so] that their case[s] might be submitted to legislative consideration." Monroe—like Bennett—was concerned with the unjust legal proceedings that went hand in hand with trials ruling on suspected slaves. Though Monroe held no vote in the ruling council, he successfully convinced authorities to hold no more executions until "the opinion of the Legislature can be had on the subject." The decision

was soon made to transport—rather than kill—those slaves still be to charged. Bennett’s accusations that the Court of Magistrates and Freeholders was unjust—and that their findings were unwarranted—might have found a sympathetic ear in President Monroe. But in Monroe’s presidential papers, there is no such record of a letter from Bennett. Rather, Bennett seemingly wrote only to Calhoun and dared not voice his hesitations about the court to Calhoun.<sup>181</sup>

Charleston’s Court of Magistrates and Freeholders executed thirty five slaves—more than were executed in any other southern slave conspiracy—without the involvement of the South Carolinian governor, the state executive. While the dearth in official governor papers makes it difficult to provide concrete evidence on Bennett’s actions, we know he was not involved with the Court of Magistrates and Freeholders. We also know that from the depths of the workhouse it was the independent court that dictated the terms of imprisonment and that when slaves were pardoned, they were done so upon the request of magistrates involved in the trial and not on Bennett’s own initiative. But Monroe’s involvement in the response to Gabriel’s Rebellion reveals that Bennett might have had options. Monroe’s actions made clear that as executive, the state governor was supposed to be the one to kill (or pardon) accused slaves. Executions were a moment when the executive was supposed to be in charge—only he could pardon one condemned to death by the state. It is possible to debate the extent to which Bennett *tried* to intervene—while he did have options, it is also possible that such attempts were routinely overruled by an increasingly powerful slaveholding elite in the state assembly. But the larger point here is that in the rejection of the state’s executive power, Charleston’s slaveholding elite took control of post-Vesey Charleston, a move that

demonstrated the extent to which they saw themselves as sovereign individuals with “peculiar” interests, which no politician could represent.

### ***The Emergence of the South Carolina Association and the Turn to Vigilantism***

When the panic of the summer of 1822 subsided, it was soon replaced with more controversy. Rather than feeling confident in the ability of their slave policing system Charlestonians sought to impose even more restrictions on its black community. The response was in many ways typical of any southern society following slave unrest. The anxiety was also a result of the lingering effects of the 1820 Missouri Compromise and its subsequent debates. Several events throughout the lowcountry immediately after the Vesey conspiracy also did little to soothe the fears of white Charlestonians. In July and August, groups of runaway slaves attacked several points southwest of Charleston. The problem of “marauding” bands of runaway slaves seemed to plague South Carolina in July, August, and early autumn. Another incident occurred between approximately twelve armed slaves and a mail carrier before Bennett finally responded by offering a reward for the capture of twenty fugitive slaves from that region. Soon afterwards, John’s Island was infiltrated by a group of “armed fugitive slaves” who were supposedly “destroying the cattle, breaking into and robbing the dwellings, and threatening the lives” of local slaves. In the end two local militia companies were called in to put down the small rebellion. However, local residents likely wondered why it took so long in the first place—particularly when a group of vigilantes were able to apprehend an accused slave who had escaped during his “transportation” to Georgia.<sup>182</sup>

It is difficult to know whether or not such examples of slave rebellion were actually increasing or if the press and public's attention to it was simply more vigilant. Either way, such events, combined with the revelation that four white men, including two sailors and one German peddler, helped "excite" Vesey and his conspirators, reaffirmed in the minds of Charlestonians that they had to take matters into their own hands. Much of the panic related to the drastic rise in Charleston's free black population in the years preceding the Vesey conspiracy. Between 1790 and 1810 the free black population rose by a staggering one hundred and fifty one percent, compared to fifty-two percent for the enslaved population and forty-three percent for the white. The influx in freedmen and women allowed white Charlestonians to lay the blame of rebellious slaves on these "strangers" or "newcomers," rather than the brutality of slavery itself or the very real desire of a person to be free. Instead, the white community continued to wonder why their "loyal" slaves wanted to rebel.<sup>183</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the unrest, adjustments were attempted to the city's slave policing system. A register of all free people of colour in Charleston, compiled by each city marshal, was to be given to Charleston's intendant. The register was also to include the number of slaves held by each family and the marshal was required to check all boarding houses "and note all strangers, watch all places of ill-repute and arrest all idle people." A fear of those unknown to white Charlestonians and the effects that they may have on the city's enslaved population permeated for years after Vesey. In an attempt to make the workhouse a greater part of the slave policing system, adjustments were made in 1825 to the modes of punishment. The city installed a "treadmill" which forced slaves to walk along it for eight hours every day with three minutes on and three

minutes off. The treadmill was a solution to the continual complaint that too many owners—particularly women—were too lenient with their slaves. Applauding the treadmill's installation, one editorialist noted that female owners “whose humanity too often stands between the Negro and the well-merited visit to the Workhouse” would appreciate the treadmill as an alternative method of punishment.<sup>184</sup>

In the fall of 1822, a petition from concerned whites was sent to the state legislature. “After the most attentive investigation into the origin, design, and extent of the late projected insurrection” and “a careful inquiry into the exiting evils of our slave system, and after the mature reflection on the remedies to be adopted,” the petitioners offered the state legislature ideas on how to enhance the slave system that had ultimately worked in crushing the rebellion. But that was never the goal of white Charlestonians—in their minds, to crush rebellions was not enough. Rather, the petitioners unrealistically sought assurance that the system would work to ensure no slave *ever* attempted to rebel.<sup>185</sup>

The petitioners suggested that all free blacks living in South Carolina be banished from the state—“never again to return.” For the enslaved black population that would be left, the petitioners recommended that the state limit the number of slaves who could work outside, thus restricting their ability to interact with travellers or other slaves. In addition, free black males were required to take up a white guardian to “watch” over them. The petitioners even went so far as to limit slaves’ clothing which had allegedly “become so expensive as to tempt the slaves to dishonesty; to give them ideas not consistent with their conditions; to render them insolent to the whites, and so fond of parade and show as to cause it extremely difficult to keep them at home.” Broadly

speaking, the petitioners' ultimate goal was to reinforce the differences between black and white citizens in South Carolina—although these differences likely escaped few living in antebellum America. “Every distinction,” the petition continued, “should be created between the whites and the negroes, calculated to make the latter feel the superiority of the former.”<sup>186</sup>

Similar to South Carolinas' response to other slave revolts, near and far, white citizens sought more draconian laws on the black population first, and modifications to the slave policing system second. Consequently, changes to the supposed ineffective City Guard appeared in the petition only after further restrictions on the black population were recommended. The petition called for the establishment of a regular military force to be implemented in Charleston to protect whites from their slaves. Echoing the criticisms espoused by Bennett in the state legislature, the petitioners believed that, “the City Guard, as now organized, is of little benefit to the city.” The petition even went so far as to claim that the majority of guardsmen “are shopkeepers or retailers of spirituous liquors to the negroes. It is...notorious that this interest induces them to permit such of the negroes as are their customers to pass unmolested through our streets after the bell has run and the watch has set” and in so doing, harkened back to the concerns of eighteenth century Charleston citizens.<sup>187</sup>

State legislatures considered these concerns but acted in a less drastic manner—at least for the time being. But what the state did enact reflected the economic desires of the elite slaveholding lawmakers. Rather than banishing all free blacks, the state established an annual tax on free black men at fifty dollars—an astronomical amount for men who typically lived in poverty to begin with—and free black men were also required to have

white guardians. In addition, while some had called for a ban on bringing in slaves from outside the state, the proposition was not accepted by planters eager to compete with the increasing cotton production of the new southwest. While the House proposed an additional duty on slaves from out of state, even the duty was struck down by the Senate.<sup>188</sup>

One law, which did pass on December 21 1822, concerned the presence of black seamen in Charleston's ports. Eager to restrict the "corrupting" influence of free and foreign blacks on Charleston's slave population, the Negro Seamen Act mandated that any ship that came into Charleston's harbour was required to put its free black sailors into the workhouse for the duration of the ship's stay in Charleston. The captain of the ship was required to pay for their sailors' stay in the workhouse, but if he failed to do so the free black seamen—regardless of their citizenship—would be deemed "absolute slaves" and sold by the state. Not surprisingly, it did not take long for the law to cause controversy between municipal, state, federal, and international authorities.<sup>189</sup>

Only several weeks after the law passed, several free black sailors on a ship from Nassau were imprisoned. After grudgingly paying for their stay in the workhouse, the issue was relayed by the ship's captain to the British minister in Washington, Stratford Canning, and finally to Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, hardly a friend to draconian slave laws. The law had earlier come under fire by an American captain who protested that it violated the U.S. Constitution, but the incident with the sailors from Nassau was the first time that criticisms involved the federal government *and* an international power. When Adams replied to the British minister four months later, he had spoken to two South Carolinian Congressmen and seemed relatively assured that the



law would not be enforced and for some time, it was not. Up until early spring 1823 Charleston's harbour master, Thomas Paine, stopped reporting the arrival of black sailors to Charleston's sheriff because he "did not feel it incumbent on him[self] to proceed any further."<sup>190</sup>

Robert J. Turnbull, one of the lawyers who prosecuted Vesey, took issue with the lack of enforcement. He claimed that Paine refused to enforce the *state* law because as a municipal employee, Paine did not receive additional financial compensation. Turnbull later added that the law "did go to sleep, and it slept for the same reasons, that many other laws upon the same subject sleep. They sleep, because the officers...whose duty it is to enforce them, neglect so to do." According to Turnbull and the future independent South Carolina Association (S.C.A.)—of which Turnbull was an officer—it was the S.C.A.'s job to resuscitate the state *and* city's laws governing the black population. The S.C.A. had to do this, they believed, because the official slave policing system had not only failed to do so, but was made up of "questionable" men, whom the elite S.C.A. members did not trust to keep slavery safe and their families safe from slavery. Concerned that South Carolinian slavery was under attack—from all sides—Charleston's slaveholding aristocracy responded to the city's slave policing system with vigour and turned to vigilantism.<sup>191</sup>

## **Chapter 5**

### **The South Carolina Association: “The Most Important Association, that ever Has been”**

In 1824, S.C.A. member John S. Cogdell noted that, “The times are changing daily with us... Estates are broken up... [T]he great fabric vanishes.” By the 1820s Charleston’s slaveowning aristocracy was in a period of adjustment. After surviving the egalitarian impulses of the revolutionary period, Charleston’s elite quickly realized that challenges to the city’s delicate racial *and* social order would not waiver. As Cogdell’s statement echoes, there was a sense that maybe the leading role of Charleston’s gentlemen was not as entrenched as it once was. If the times were indeed “changing daily,” June and July 1822 were watershed moments for the role of slaveowning aristocracy in the city’s slave policing system. No longer willing to let men of “questionable character” represent their interests policing slaves, Charleston’s elite organized the South Carolina Association, and by taking control of slave policing assured themselves that while things might be changing, they were still in charge of what was most important to antebellum South Carolina: slavery.<sup>192</sup>

The South Carolina Association and its role in reviving the Negro Seamen Act highlight what the association deemed the complete failure of the state—in its various forms—to contain slavery and its adjacent legislation. In the words of historian Robert Pierce Forbes, one of only three moderns historians who have noted the importance of the S.C.A., “The executive branch, the Congress, the Supreme Court, and even the state of South Carolina itself, all failed to impose their authority effectively in this matter, suspended by a private organization, the South Carolina Association, without any official standing whatsoever.” If the convoluted and poorly collaborated slave policing system in

Charleston earlier illustrated that exactly *who* or *what* was in control of policing the area's slaves was unclear, the South Carolina Association stepped in and decisively settled the question for post-Vesey Charleston.<sup>193</sup>

Despite the fact that the S.C.A. was made up of nearly every prominent family in antebellum Charleston, there is a surprising lack of scholarship on the association. The few examples that exist emphasize the Association in relation to the nullification crisis and the evolution of states' rights ideology in South Carolina, rather than in relation to a flawed slave policing system—or a wider turn to vigilantism in the nineteenth century United States. This absence might be because the S.C.A. left behind few traces. Aside from information published in various newspapers and several petitions to the state legislature, no record books or minutes exist for any of the S.C.A. meetings. In addition, the association does not feature prominently in some of the officers' personal papers. Consequently, uncovering the S.C.A. and its leading role in post-Vesey Charleston requires some creativity on the historian's part.<sup>194</sup>

The association clandestinely stepped onto the public stage on July 14, 1823, although it is easy to imagine that it was formed some time earlier in the parlours of Charleston's slaveowning aristocracy, who saw their favoured institution as increasingly under threat. On July 14 in the *City Gazette* an advertisement appeared for a meeting of "The Association." Similar messages appeared over the next few days until finally on July 24, the S.C.A. published a piece that appeared to be a kind of publicity campaign. Though the S.C.A. remained relatively private during its long existence, this first letter from "A Member" highlighted the association's major aims in post-Vesey Charleston.<sup>195</sup>

Taking explicit exception to the lax slave policing system, the author asked, “Who is there, whether he be a native or an adopted son of Carolina, that can view with complacency, the daily regulation or evasion of the laws, made to regulate the conduct of our colored population?” “Who, that has in his bosom,” the author continued, “one spark of that proud and lofty feeling that has hitherto characterized us as sons of the South, that can look upon the laxity of the whole of our system, and not be solicitous to know the causes, and to apply the remedy, to the utmost of his power?” Thankfully, there was the S.C.A, “perhaps the most important Association, that ever has been, or even can be formed, in the Southern States.” The association, the member continued, was dedicated to “promote the particular interests of the State...and will contribute more to the security of property [mainly, slaves]...”<sup>196</sup>

Gone unchecked, the S.C.A believed that the slave policing system would lead “so inevitably to their country’s ruin.” And so, the S.C.A recommended itself to South Carolinian citizens. Vowing to be nonpartisan, the S.C.A was an extra-legal, self-appointed law enforcement mechanism that considered its main priority “to aid the execution of the laws founded upon the *local and peculiar policy of South Carolina*, by giving to the Civil Magistrate, through its agents, the earliest possible information of their information of their infringement.” Singling out the “petty officers of justice,” the S.C.A saw itself as a policing agency—though it had absolutely no official or government sanctioned authority whatsoever.<sup>197</sup>

The next day the *Charleston Courier* wrote in support of the association. Noting that often “laws are sometimes enacted by legislators for the purpose of correcting abuses which still continue as numerous as before the passing of such laws,” the *Courier* stated

that, “Associations, therefore, formed to assist the execution of the laws, are to be regarded as being very useful to society.” The S.C.A also found support with the militant *Charleston Mercury*, which published a lengthy piece on the S.C.A. on July 29, partly because, “the Society may have to encounter for a while certain crude suspicions and unfounded prejudices, which however must necessarily disappear before the great developments which will be made of its patriotic and admirable views, it may not be improper to advert briefly to some of its leading and characteristic features.” On this point, the *Mercury* was correct. In future, the S.C.A. garnered considerable criticism from the highest political offices in the U.S.<sup>198</sup>

The *Mercury* described the S.C.A as “a public and patriotic body composed of a number of individuals of the most respectable standing in our community” whose core principle was to “facilitate the due enforcement of our laws in all cases connected with our colored population.” The paper anticipated a major criticism that the S.C.A would face—mainly that the Association would attempt to “supersede” power and “invade” the rights of authorities. However, the *Mercury* assured its readers that this should not be of concern. Emphasizing that the society would supposedly *help* law enforcement by informing them of violations, the paper asked its readers “Will not the public mind be more effectually tranquillized by the consciousness of the constant vigilance and activity of a body thus devoted to its service?” The *Mercury*, however, failed to acknowledge the other “bodies” that already existed to protect the white community, or recognize why the S.C.A would be any more vigilante.<sup>199</sup>

Perhaps it was because the S.C.A would supposedly also “contribute greatly to the real happiness of our slaves” by keeping them firmly disciplined—this was something the

City Guard and state militias, by allegedly serving slaves alcohol, could not. In introducing “a general system of temperance, regularity, and subordination,” the S.C.A. “will render them [slaves] at once more contented in themselves and increase their usefulness and value to their owners.” Because the association would not only make slaves happier, but make families and the state safer, the *Mercury* said it deserved the applause of the city and the establishment of various chapters throughout the rest of the state. The paper put its full support behind the S.C.A—and encouraged its readers to do so too—while still noticing the relative secrecy of the association, noting in the conclusion, “of the nature of its particular rules, or bye laws, we are entirely ignorant. The observations which we have ventured are founded upon a mere general knowledge of its principles and intentions.”<sup>200</sup>

While the S.C.A acted secretly, after the first meeting it did publish a list of officers which reaffirmed the fact that the S.C.A was made up of Charleston’s slaveholding aristocracy. Keating Simons, the revolutionary veteran, prominent planter, and successful factor, was made president. Likewise, the list of vice-presidents read like a who’s who in Charleston. Colonel John Cordes Prioleau, General Thomas Pinckney, Henry Deas, Stephen Elliott, and Joseph Maginault were all vice presidents for 1823, while Robert J. Turnbull and John Cogdell served as secretaries. The association also included several solicitors, including Isaac Holmes, and a standing committee that contained the likes of John Middleton, Sedgwick L. Simons, R.W. Vanderhorst, and Captain William Cattell.<sup>201</sup>

The S.C.A’s officers came to the association already holding considerable power in Charleston and South Carolina more broadly. Pinckney was former governor of South

Carolina and the Federalist vice presidential candidate in 1796, while his brother, Charles Coteworth Pinckney, signer of the U.S. Constitution, was a later S.C.A. officer. Both Elliott and Cogdell served as president of the South Carolina bank and Cogdell was also an assistant warden in 1822. The prominent planters Turnbull and Deas, who also served as state senator, sat on the Court of Magistrates and Freeholders during the Vesey trials, while Col. Prioleau's slave Peter was credited with unveiling the Vesey plot just one year earlier. Cattell, a target of Joseph Cole's patrol rage, also owned Jack, a slave convicted with transportation for allegedly participating in the Vesey plot. R.W. Vanderhorst and John Middleton were both planters in prominent Charleston families, while Sedgwick Simons worked as an influential factor in the city and was a member of an equally prominent Charleston family. Over time, the association only increased its prominent membership. Within five years the S.C.A. boasted over three hundred members, including Dr. Philip G. Prioleau, Elias Vanderhroast, Arthur Middleton, ,and Jacob Axson, the attorney who defended Rolla Bennett.<sup>202</sup>

While it is undeniable that these men made up Charleston's "finest gentlemen," how much did enforcement of the slave policing system matter to them both personally and financially? Put simply, a lot. In 1835 Keating Simons' plantation book recorded over \$52,785 in the value of slaves, including many families and children, worth upwards of \$600, as the slaves Adam and Betty were each valued at. In his 1843 will, Joseph Maginault owned at least 176 slaves on his White Oak and Ogilvie Plantations, while Elias Vanderhorst likely owned a considerable number of slaves on his 1,350 acre Kiwah Plantation. Nathaniel Heyward, who was also involved in the Vesey trials, owned upwards of 1,000 slaves and by the 1840s, William Cattell owned over seventy slaves.

While it is unknown exactly how many slaves Henry Deas owned, according to the Reverend William Wightman, “the cruelty of Col. Deas to his slaves [was] proverbial in South Carolina.”<sup>203</sup>

Slightly more is known about Robert J. Turnbull, primarily because of his “The Crisis” pamphlet series written in support of nullification during the 1830s controversy. By 1810 Turnbull had amassed a significant fortune and was an extremely successful planter. In Turnbull’s eulogy, he was reported to have spent 1810 to 1824 in “domestic life” when “he came back because of government intervention in the state,” on account of the S.C.A’s role in enforcing the Negro Seamen Act. While it is difficult to determine exactly how many slaves Turnbull owned in 1823, we know that before the nullification crisis Turnbull owned sixty one in the Charleston area and 107 on his Mississippi plantation, putting his total approximate holdings at 168 slaves. The eulogy, saturated in sentimentality, claimed that concerning his slaves, Turnbull overflowed with “the milk of human kindness.” The eulogy, of course, failed to recognize that he helped sentence over thirty slaves to death in 1822.<sup>204</sup>

A similar description was written of Gen. Thomas Pinckney by his grandson. The second president of the Cincinnati Society of South Carolina, Pinckney—like many other Charleston planters—wanted to give off an air of benevolent aristocracy. A part of this aristocracy was the idea that slaveowner’s gentlemanly qualities came through in their alleged benevolence towards their slaves. The language with which Pinckney’s grandson chose to describe his grandfather’s slaves explicitly tried to convey the idea that Pinckney was akin to the English aristocracy and had “labourers”—not slaves. So while Pinckney owned between two to three hundred “labourers,” his grandson made sure to add that,



“He regarded them much as an English gentleman did the tenants of his ancestral estates, not as chattels but as labourers...He carried out fully the idea of the patriarchal relationship which the Southern planter felt towards his slaves; and the slaves gloried in their masters, and looked up to them as the Scottish clansmen did to their ancestral chief.”<sup>205</sup>

Before the S.C.A.’s formation, Pinckney was also active in campaigning for even more control over South Carolina’s black population. Tapping into the idea of “misguided benevolence,” Pinckney blamed the Vesey conspiracy on the “improper indulgencies permitted among all classes of the Negroes in Charleston, and particularly among the domestics.” Echoing complaints that went as far back as 1740, Pinckney pointed to the practice of hiring out slave labour and allowing slaves to learn to read and write as particularly threatening “indulgencies.”<sup>206</sup>

While such statements reflected the kind of slavery defense that began to permeate in the South during the antebellum era, what are notable about this particular passage are the references to ancestry. Charleston in the 1820s consisted of a tenuous racial and social order. While supposedly “loyal” slaves turned to the influence of foreign and educated free blacks, Charleston’s elite planters were also increasingly concerned with the slave policing system and what *kinds* of men were running it—to be sure, William Dove and Capt. Joseph Cole would *not* have been considered Pinckney’s equals. Consequently, Pinckney’s grandson reinforced the notion that Charleston was run by an elite that was not only powerful because they were wealthy. Rather, they were also powerful because they came from a slaveholding aristocracy.<sup>207</sup>

It is important to note that masters spread their slaves throughout their properties, and thus the majority likely lived on plantations, rather than Charleston city proper. Keating Simons' slaves, for example, were likely spread throughout his three Charleston-area properties. Likewise the exact numbers of slaves an owner possessed was always a fluid number—in the constant buying and selling that occurred, slaves were transported throughout the United States, which routinely tore slave families apart. Nevertheless, such statistics clearly indicate that the S.C.A.'s founding members undoubtedly had a lot vested in ensuring that South Carolina was a “safe” slave state—and that it was governed the way they, Charleston's slaveholding aristocracy, wanted.

#### **“Genuine Republicans” and “Sub-Associations”**

Soon after the S.C.A. appeared on Charleston's public stage, white Charlestonians began to voice their opinions on the association and its place in post-Vesey Charleston. On August 14, without explicitly mentioning the S.C.A., “Q” criticized the association in the *Charleston Courier* for being un-republican. “It seems to follow, from all this,” “Q” concluded, “that, when *genuine republicans* have deputed their political power to regularly organized representatives bodies, re-eligible at short intervals, the fewer *sub-associations* they form, of a political nature, the better.” According to “Q,” “genuine republicans” recognized when they relinquished political power—and would do well to not meddle in the politics of those to whom they elected to represent their interests.<sup>208</sup>

The next day “Vindex” responded. Applauding the “but *one* object in view” of the S.C.A, mainly, “carrying into effect the many wholesome statutes in force relative to our colored population and *nothing else*,” “Vindex” reaffirmed that the S.C.A. was only

interested in the enforcement of laws pertaining to the state's black population. "Vindex" then cleverly called for "Q"—and all others who criticized the S.C.A.—to reveal themselves. "This is *not* the *first* time that hints have been thrown out, evidently intended to apply to this body," "Vindex" noted. Responding to calls that the S.C.A. was too secretive, "Vindex" reminded readers that there was nothing "*clandestine or* disavowed" about the association, before proclaiming "that such persons as are hostile to this Association...will adopt a course of warfare as once open, unreserved, and honorable." But few in 1823 Charleston were willing to speak out against an association that purported to enforce slave laws. To do so, was social suicide.<sup>209</sup>

While the S.C.A grew in numbers, it also fostered off-shoot associations throughout the lowcountry, a testament to not only the S.C.A.'s success, but the larger turn to vigilantism. On September 19, 1823 the *Mercury* introduced readers to the Edisto Island Auxiliary Association. While additional auxiliaries were also formed in Walterborough and Pineville in the lowcountry, and Cheraw in the upcountry, we know much more about the Edisto Island chapter. Formed on September 4, with William Seabrook as chair, the association resolved unanimously "That it is expedient forthwith to institute a Society, upon the plan, and having for its object, the laudable views of the "South Carolina Association." The Edisto Island Association also placed enforcement of "our *colored population*" as its primary objective and self-appointed themselves to a position of assisting official slave policing authorities. Like the S.C.A., the Edisto Island chapter believed that if their association did not help law enforcement "the safety of our property, and the peace of prosperity of the State of South Carolina" was in jeopardy.<sup>210</sup>

By October 1823—just three months after its founding—the S.C.A. was seen as not only a necessary organization, but in its vigilance, supposedly acted on the state's previous mistakes when it came to policing its black population. Reaffirming—yet again—the importance of the S.C.A., Henry Pinckney's *Charleston Mercury* published an editorial in late October 1823 calling for the universal promotion of the Association. To stir the emotions of their readers, the *Mercury* asked, "Is there an individual among us who is not sensibly alive to the necessity of discipline in our slave population, and to the vital importance of prohibiting intercourse with the free colored persons of the North? Have we forgotten the instruction which successive portions of our domestic history have taught us?" With the S.C.A.'s only criticisms so far coming from only anonymous sources, and with the support of most Charlestonians, the S.C.A. was poised for success. Success, to the S.C.A., could be measured in November 1823 by the number of African American men arrested for violating the Negro Seamen Act.<sup>211</sup>

The S.C.A. was active in all areas of law enforcement pertaining to Charleston's black population. When, in late August and early September 1823, Scipio Simms, a slave punished during the Vesey conspiracy with transportation to Texas, escaped, the S.C.A. aggressively took it upon themselves to step in and intervene. The standing committee, which in 1823 included William Cattell, likely used their personal and public power to ensure that the story stayed out of the press for fear that the incident would not only cause considerable excitement, but incite other slaves to act on Simms's example. With this, they were successful. As historian Alan January has noted, it is not a stretch to presume that S.C.A. members included the "public spirited citizens" who apprehended Simms. Across the board, Charleston took a turn towards vigilantism.<sup>212</sup>

While their involvement in Scipio Simms's recapture likely affirmed the S.C.A.'s prominence, the association was most visible in its enforcement of a "sleeping" law. Emphasizing the need to quarantine their slaves from interaction with free, northern, and foreign people of colour, the S.C.A. devoted the utmost attention to first resuscitating, and then ensuring the enforcement of the 1822 Negro Seamen Act. For this, men like Robert J. Turnbull and Isaac E. Holmes would again face off with William Johnston.

***"It is empathetically their law"***

The S.C.A.'s involvement with the Negro Seamen Act began immediately after the association's formation. One S.C.A member alluded to the importance of the act, noting that, "There is scarcely a vessel which arrives in our port from the North which has not two or three, or more black persons employed as stewards, cooks, or mariners..." If these employees mingled with Charleston's enslaved population, the S.C.A. warned such interaction would "invite new attempts at insurrection." Nevertheless, by November 1823 it bragged that it had "caused the Act...to be executed against *one hundred and fifty-four* colored persons..." The most prominent of those "colored persons" was Henry Elkinson, a Jamaican half-black man working aboard the *Homer*, which, with Elkinson, shipped out of Liverpool for many years.<sup>213</sup>

Coinciding nearly side by side, as soon as the S.C.A. announced itself to Charleston, the Negro Seamen Act was again enforced by Elkinson's arrest and subsequent placement in the workhouse. Immediately, the British consul in Charleston appealed to Justice William Johnson and referred back to a June 17 letter by John Quincy Adams that assured the British the law would not be enforced. Johnson subsequently

arranged for the case to be brought to the Sixth Circuit Court. Appealing to Justice Johnson in his courtroom, Mitchell King represented Elkinson and argued for the unconstitutionality of the law, proclaiming that it clearly violated the Anglo-American Commercial Convention of 1815. For all these reasons, and more, King demanded that Elkinson be released immediately and the law be discontinued.<sup>214</sup>

Rather than enlisting the services of the state Attorney General, the defense council was led by S.C.A. officer Isaac E. Holmes. If there was any doubt in just how much the extralegal association would infiltrate South Carolinians politics and legislature, the selection of Holmes over the Attorney General cast them aside. Justice Johnston explicitly noted the role a vigilante group was playing in state politics and law enforcement, stating “that pressing the execution of the law at this time is rather a private than a state act...” Along with the notable Charleston attorney Benjamin F. Hunt, also a future S.C.A. officer, Holmes defended the actions of Charleston’s sheriff, Francis G. Deliesseline, in enforcing the law.<sup>215</sup>

Arguing for the right of the state to control who comes into its borders, Hunt maintained that the act was first and foremost about policing and the safety of South Carolina’s citizens, particularly considering its unique demography. South Carolina, “having a large slave population, conceives it prudent to guard against the moral contagion which the intercourse with foreign Negroes produces, and therefore she prohibits them from remaining in any other part of the state, than the place designated by this Act,” Hunt argued. Emphasizing South Carolina’s sovereignty, he proclaimed that it was the responsibility of each state—and each state alone—to judge “of its own dangers.”

The right of self-preservation and protection was “perfect and inalienable, and the means, therefore, from necessity, can always be lawfully employed.”<sup>216</sup>

When Holmes took the floor, he took the argument a step further. He echoed the arguments made by Hunt, but presented the enforcement of the Negro Seamen Act as a do or die situation for both white South Carolinians and the state’s presence in the United States. Appealing to the white “trauma” slave owners experienced just one year ago, the S.C.A. officer said that if South Carolina could not regulate the presence of black men in its borders—be they American or British—“it required not the spirit of prophecy to foretell the result, and that, rather than submit to the destruction of the state, I would prefer the dissolution of the Union.” To Holmes and the S.C.A., if the Negro Seamen Act could not be enforced, white South Carolinian slave owners had only two options: face “imminent” destruction or leave the union.<sup>217</sup>

It was up to the slaveowner Justice Johnson, no stranger to criticism from those who believed enough was not being done to protect slavery, to determine the act’s future. Johnson regrettably informed King that because of a technicality he could not immediately free Elkinson and the case could have ended then and there. Instead, Johnson took the opportunity to launch into a tirade against the act and the specific arguments put forth by S.C.A. officer Holmes and Benjamin Hunt. Proclaiming the act’s unconstitutionality, Johnson further asked where the Negro Seamen Act would “land us? Is it not asserting the right in each state to throw off the federal constitution at its will and pleasure? If it can be done as to any particular article it may be done as to all; and, like the old confederation, the Union becomes a mere rope of sand.”<sup>218</sup>

The trial was only the beginning of Johnson's battle with the S.C.A. over the Negro Seamen Act. Soon after Johnson released his ruling, the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* asked him if he would publish his decision, to which Johnson agreed. Just one year after his controversial piece concerning the Vesey conspiracy, Johnson again disturbed Charleston's delicate social order. It is perhaps not surprising that the first response to Johnson's piece came on August 15 by "Caroliniensis," better known as Robert J. Turnbull and Isaac E. Holmes. The August 15 piece was just the beginning, as Holmes and Turnbull published a series of critiques that persisted until late October. The criticisms spanned various issues ranging from the law's constitutionality to Johnson's personality. Appealing to the threat of "domestic violence," Turnbull in one article, asked, "But how I ask, is a State, to guard against domestic violence, if she is not to be the sole and sovereign judge, as to the means which are best adapted to that end. If the exclusion of a free colored population of other States, or Countries, be not one of the acknowledged means of warding off this species of danger, then there is no occasion to think, or talk, or write more on the subject."<sup>219</sup>

Turnbull carried on the theme of domestic violence in "No. 9," which sought to justify the act—and perhaps the S.C.A., more broadly—on account of the evil perpetuated by slavery. Of course, Turnbull failed to acknowledge that slaveowners brought that "evil" upon themselves by simply owning slaves. "This is not an imaginary evil," Turnbull began, "but an actual evil. It is moreover an evil, which from its very nature requires more precaution to avert, than any other. It is a moral contagion. It is not an open, but a *secret enemy*, deeply concealed in the thoughts, where no laws or police can reach him, and only appears as occasion requires."<sup>220</sup>



After one particularly spirited critic charged Johnson with being both anti-southern and anti-slavery, the war that had played out in the newspapers since late August died down. Johnson, however, felt the effects. He wondered if he could stay in South Carolina and was seemingly angered enough by the S.C.A. and its influence to inform former President Thomas Jefferson, who had initially appointed Johnson to the bench. Positioning the S.C.A. as Federalists and fearing their limits, Johnson wrote that, “The very men who not long since made such an outcry against self-created societies are now heading a most formidable one in this place. How far will they go God knows.”<sup>221</sup>

As if responding to Johnson’s question, in November the S.C.A. sent a petition to the Senate calling for yet another adjustment to South Carolina’s already draconian slave and free black laws. After assuring the Senate that the S.C.A. had “reverence for the civil magistrate” and “increased in numbers and respectability, beyond their most sanguine expectations,” the S.C.A. painted itself as an expert on the failure to enforce laws. The Standing Committee “had ample opportunities” from their “personal experience” of “perceiving the defects in some of these laws: and they have thought it their duty...to petition for redress.” Reaffirming the danger in Charleston of free northern blacks “introducing among our slaves, the moral contagion of their pernicious principles and opinions,” the S.C.A. presented flaws in the 1822 Negro Seamen Act. Predicting a future where captains of vessels were free northern blacks, often placed in the position by abolitionist societies, the S.C.A. based its hypothesis on the idea that “the agents which they [S.C.A.] employ, have the best knowledge of the proceedings of the blacks at the North, and of the projects of their adherents and friends there.” While we cannot know for sure if the S.C.A. did indeed employ “agents” to gather information on northern

abolitionist sentiments, the association was certainly willing to tell the Senate that they did.<sup>222</sup>

The petition went on to argue that the abolitionist threat—as manifested in Charleston’s port by the presence of black seamen—came from Great Britain as well, particularly the West Indies. In Jamaica, St. Christophers, Antigua, and Granada, free blacks petitioned for “the rights and privileges to which every Englishman is entitled.” All this unrest led the S.C.A. to conclude that, “at no period of history of the West-Indies, has there been such uneasiness and excitement, and angry feeling on the part of the whites, and such insubordination among the slaves.” In an effort to keep such “uneasiness, “excitement,” “anger,” and worst of all, “insubordination” out of South Carolina, the S.C.A. called for the prohibition of “ANY FREE COLOURED PERSON FROM ANY PART OF THE WORLD *ever entering again into the limits of the State of South-Carolina*, by LAND OR BY WATER.”<sup>223</sup>

Noting that South Carolina’s current Negro Seamen Act was “defective...by reason of the mildness of their penalties,” the S.C.A. essentially claimed that because of their association, the law had succeeded somewhat—and would continue to do so as enforced by the S.C.A. The S.C.A., the petition continued, had “greatly succeeded,” in stopping interaction between free foreign blacks and Charleston’s slaves. With just “a little aid from the Legislature,” the S.C.A. promised it could continue to block such interaction. Positioning themselves as a policing force for Charleston’s harbour, the S.C.A. assured the Senate, “your Memorialists are confident, that by the excellence of their organization, and by means of their incessant informations, and prosecutions, it would be in their power, to bring to justice all violators of these laws, and to suppress the

intercourse *for ever hereafter*.” The S.C.A., the petition read, had in just two short months, executed the Negro Seamen Act against one hundred and fifty-four men. It seemed as if the S.C.A. kept detailed records, as they presented to the Senate a breakdown of the 154 charged, illustrating that 118 came from northern ports, fifteen from the West-Indies, and twenty-one from Europe.<sup>224</sup>

The S.C.A. then went *even* further in its recommended changes to the Negro Seamen Act. Believing that free black seamen “cheerfully submit” to being imprisoned in the workhouse during their time in Charleston, “rather than forego the irresistible temptation which these people have to come to a Southern country,” the S.C.A. argued imprisonment was not enough. Rather, captains should be fined for even bringing a free black sailor into Charleston’s port and for his first offence, that seaman should be explicitly told by a magistrate not to ever come back to South Carolina. If he did, the S.C.A. maintained that the free black man should not only be corporally punished, but also stripped of his freedom and sold into slavery. As if these provisions were not enough, the S.C.A. also argued that these provisions should apply to “all the descendants of negroes, whether on the father’s or mother’s side.” It is notable that the S.C.A. did not define exactly what made one a “descendent of negroes,” and the complexities of employing such a law seemed to escape them.<sup>225</sup>

But the S.C.A. was not only concerned with adjustments pertaining to the Negro Seamen Act. The petition also called for the state to prohibit any free South Carolinian black from visiting northern and eastern states. More broadly, the S.C.A. called for a complete overhaul of the state’s free black and slave laws. Arguing that most of the laws were enacted when the state was a colony, the S.C.A. believed that South Carolina

needed to adapt its laws. “Your Memorialists cannot but hope,” the petition read, “that the dangers which menace our prosperity as a Slave-holding-State, will be met by a corresponding energy in the laws.” Make a “CONSOLIDATED NEGRO ACT,” the S.C.A. argued, and consequently give “security to the master, without taking away from the protection of the slave.”<sup>226</sup>

The S.C.A.’s power in South Carolinian politics was affirmed by the Senate’s adoption of the majority of the petition’s amendments, particularly those pertaining to free black seamen. Consequently, the 1822 act was replaced by the 1823 Negro Seamen Act, a testament to the S.C.A.’s power, though the association was only two months old. The passing of the law also suggested, more subtly, that the government recognized the S.C.A.’s vigilante role in enforcing the state’s free black and slave laws—in time, the S.C.A. would be even further recognized by the government. But for the time being, an independent vigilante group had successfully persuaded the government to not only let them play a major role in running Charleston’s slave policing system, but also *change* the state’s laws. On this last point, William Johnson again recognized the S.C.A.’s proliferating power, lamenting that the 1823 Negro Seamen Act was “empathetically their law.”<sup>227</sup>

The petition’s success clearly illustrates not only the extent to which the S.C.A. wanted to go in policing Charleston and South Carolina’s slaves, but more specifically, their purported role *within* that slave policing system. How, a state Senator might have asked, does the S.C.A. propose that the state enforce such sweeping laws? Particularly when it, as the S.C.A. already noted, already had a problem with law enforcement? As outlined in the petition, the S.C.A. clearly saw itself as the association that would ensure

such laws were enforced—an entirely self-appointed, though tremendously powerful role. By presenting their recent success in enforcing what they deemed a toothless law, the S.C.A. positioned itself to be the replacement to South Carolina’s weak and disjointed slave policing system. In so doing, the association redefined not only the entire slave policing system but also the free black and slave laws to be enforced.

### **“A Police Society”**

For the next several years, the S.C.A. was busy enforcing and often prosecuting individuals on behalf of South Carolina’s slave and free black laws. But the association faced another critic. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Gov. Thomas Bennett saw the S.C.A. as a slippery slope. While it is extremely difficult to locate Gov. Bennett’s exact words on the subject, a response published by the editors of the *Charleston Mercury* on November 5, 1823 illustrates not only what the governor thought of the increasingly powerful association, but also the unwavering support it seemed to garner from the press, particularly the *Mercury*.<sup>228</sup>

“We are sorry to be obliged,” the article began, “to differ from his Excellency [Gov. Bennett] in the view which he has taken of the character and object of the Association.” Bennett had allegedly suggested that the S.C.A. was—or might become—a “political engine” and, according to the *Mercury*, seemed to suggest that the S.C.A. might be more interested in usurping the constituted authorities, rather than assisting them. The article thus argued that the S.C.A. “was established as an *auxiliary*, and not as an opponent of the legitimate authorities of the Country...to assist, not to usurp—to inform, not to execute—to strengthen, not to destroy.” While the editorial flagged attention to the

danger, as earlier perceived by George Washington, of “*political combinations*,” such a case did not apply to the S.C.A., which the paper proclaimed, “may be emphatically called a *Police Society*.” Providing the *Mercury* was correct in its presentation of Bennett’s criticisms, the governor feared what the association might do in future—and the effects such vigilantism would have on South Carolina in future.<sup>229</sup>

If Bennett questioned the S.C.A., the *Mercury* saw the association as the white slaveowner’s saviour—and even claimed that had the S.C.A. existed in 1822, Charleston would not have experienced the Vesey revolt. A now familiar argument, the editorial continued to stress that without the S.C.A., Charleston might very well face more slave unrest. “Should they be abandoned or discountenanced now,” the paper asked, “who can ensure us against still more frequent and tragical representations of the scene?”<sup>230</sup>

The perceived importance of the S.C.A. for white Charlestonians did not wane in the following years—and neither did Johnson’s frustration. In a letter to John Quincy Adams in 1824, Johnson reluctantly told the Secretary of State that he was completely incapable of stopping enforcement of the Negro Seamen Act. Part of this powerlessness lay in the S.C.A.’s ever-expanding influence into the most important areas of South Carolinian politics. Johnson wrote that he was completely barred from issuing writs to prisoners held under the state law. “If I could issue them,” he continued, “I [would] have nobody to call upon, since the [United States] District Attorney is himself a member of the Association; and they have further, the countenance of five other officers of the United States in their measures.”<sup>231</sup>

In 1825 the association celebrated several achievements. If there was ever any confusion about what the S.C.A.'s unique brand of vigilantism was, the *Mercury* honed in on the issue. When the list of the S.C.A.'s officers for 1825 was published by the *Mercury* on July 30, it ran beside a scathing criticism of Charleston's City Guard. While the guard in 1825 consisted of 100 men, the *Mercury* believed that "we hazard nothing in saying that they are notoriously defective in military discipline and science." Of those 100 men, the paper guessed that only twenty-five patrolled the city at once—a major problem when those twenty-five were known for their bad behaviour. While the paper called for a massive increase in the guard, it maintained that guardsmen had to view their position as "an honor" and be "men of high character, for integrity, courage and military zeal," as many—including the S.C.A.—believed that the position should not be held by just any common man.<sup>232</sup>

If the guard was not increased, the *Mercury* explicitly suggested that vigilantism was better than the current City Guard, the core of Charleston's slave policing system. "It would be infinitely better to have no guard at all," the article read, "than one in which no confidence can be placed. If we had none, our citizens would be compelled to perform patrol themselves, would guard the City properly, and in addition, would always be prepared in case of necessity." The current guard was supposedly lulling white Charlestonians "into apathy, from an unwarrantable ignorance of its lamentable weakness." In supporting vigilantism and a civilian patrol, the *Mercury* failed to acknowledge that such a patrol would undoubtedly include the very men of "low" character that they were trying to keep out of the City Guard in the first place. But more broadly, the piece highlighted that there was a growing consensus in Charleston that the

City Guard was not working and that the right kind of vigilantism—comprised of “men of high character,” like those in the S.C.A.—would.<sup>233</sup>

In 1825 those S.C.A. “men of high character” applauded their victories in ensuring the enforcement of Charleston’s slave and free black laws. The brief piece on the S.C.A.’s 1825 summer meeting published alongside the *Mercury*’s criticism of the guard suggests that the association’s greatest “success” came in the enforcement of the 1823 Negro Seamen Act—“their law.” The S.C.A.’s Standing Committee applauded “Col. CLEARY, the Sheriff of the District, for the promptitude and zeal with which he has uniformly discharged his duty, by arresting colored persons entering this port contrary to law, thus relieving the Association from the necessity and expense of many prosecutions of that nature.” This line highlighted the continuation of the S.C.A. as an independent policing agency—as if, had Sheriff Clearly not done his job, the S.C.A. would have had to step in and serve as Charleston’s sheriff.<sup>234</sup>

The article also suggests that despite its popularity and the wealth of its members, the S.C.A. was low on funds. In fact, the lack of funding made it so that the S.C.A.’s Standing Committee found “their usefulness limited” and required a drastic increase in the association’s permanent income. It seems that the S.C.A. was without considerable funding because for the first three years, funding was only available to members. Why members as wealthy as Keating Simons and Thomas Pinckney could not sufficiently fund the S.C.A. is another question. Perhaps few members were willing to pump money into the association, or the S.C.A. might have been busy using up funds to lead prosecutions and simply needed more money to ensure that each and every law governing the conduct of Charleston’s black population was adequately enforced. At the same time, the article—



perhaps to generate popular confidence in the S.C.A.—maintained that as soon as subscriptions for the permanent fund were “opened in the room. It commenced with considerable spirit, the member subscribing liberally, and we trust a sum will be raised sufficient for all their purposes.”<sup>235</sup>

If the S.C.A was never clear on exactly what its “purposes” were it seems as if enough of the general public knew about the S.C.A to request that they extend their funding opportunities to non-members. Specifically, the S.C.A noted how “many Ladies” had shown particular interest which the S.C.A agreed to, ruling that “the subscription list, we understand, will be handed generally to our citizens, and we hope not without effect.” Once the meeting adjourned, the S.C.A “partook of an excellent dinner” and drank various toasts to, “The Day—May every Anniversary bring with it, an increase of zeal, on the part of our members,” and slavery, thinly masked as, “The policy of the South—The source of our wealth and prosperity—We would not change it, if we had the power.”<sup>236</sup>

### ***The South Carolina Association’s Incorporation***

While the S.C.A. was undoubtedly successful in its enforcement of the Negro Seamen Act, two petitions suggested that the S.C.A. greatest successes were yet to come. A petition sent to the state legislature by the Charleston Chamber of Commerce highlights one of the S.C.A.’s great successes in its creation of an alternative slave policing system—a move which simultaneously rejected the official system. In 1826 and again in 1830, the Chamber of Commerce delicately informed South Carolinian legislatures that while they supported the S.C.A., the act was undoubtedly bad for business. The S.C.A., the Chamber claimed, was *itself* enough to prevent insurrection

without enforcement of the damaging law. “This Association,” the petition read, “distinguished by its vigilance and by the excellency of the system it has organized, (so much so indeed that it is morally impossible for a seditious movement to remain a moment undiscovered,) almost of itself supersedes the necessity of the law.” In acknowledging the “excellency of the system it has organized”—so much so that the Negro Seamen Act was allegedly rendered unnecessary—the petition clearly outlined the extent to which the S.C.A. created their *own* system to enforce Charleston and South Carolina’s free black and slave laws.<sup>237</sup>

If the Chamber of Commerce’s petition illustrated the S.C.A.’s role in overhauling Charleston’s slave policing system, the association’s greatest success came in 1828. That year the S.C.A. decided to petition the state legislature for incorporation, a move which would effectively recognize the association as completely legitimate and ensure its continuation, as recognized by the state. The petition is one of the rare examples of a piece written about the S.C.A., by the S.C.A. Consequently, it offers us a glimpse into not only what the S.C.A. wanted to do, but also how it thought of itself—and their sense of what was at stake should the S.C.A. not be incorporated.

The S.C.A. began by asking state legislatures for “the passage of an act incorporating us under the style and same of the South Carolina Association.” While most state legislators—themselves men of wealth and power—likely knew about the S.C.A., and knew some of its officers personally, the S.C.A. positioned itself as “an association of gentlemen not for private endowment or individual advancements” but rather, an association who sought the “humble” goal of “enforcing the Law and aiding the constituted authorities in executing those peculiar legislations, deemed as essential for the

protection of our property and the safety of our families.” While the S.C.A. tried to position itself as a benevolent group—uninterested with personal interests—the petition also clearly stated that one of the association’s primary goals was the protection of slaves *owned* by S.C.A. officers.<sup>238</sup>

In recognizing their inception on account of the Vesey revolt, the petition signalled the S.C.A.’s link to the sense that Charleston, and South Carolina more broadly, had a flawed slave policing system—hence the need for “assistance” from the S.C.A. The S.C.A., the petition read, was “induced by the event of the summer of 1822 to form themselves,” and had henceforth acquired funding and considerable subscriptions from like-minded South Carolinians. S.C.A. members—with little confidence in the official system—considered it their responsibility or duty “To keep a vigilant eye directed to that quarter where danger is to be affected to defeat the machinations of our enemies abroad” and to “paralyze...our enemies at home.”<sup>239</sup>

In an attempt to achieve incorporation, the S.C.A. alluded to its success in ensuring the enforcement of the Negro Seamen Act, but also hinted at its larger role in crushing alleged slave revolts. “We have discovered,” the petition read, “the first openings of insurrectionary schemes and without creating an alarm among the citizens have been entitled to crush those schemes before they had fully developed themselves and poured out all their horrors over our unsuspecting community.” This statement is remarkable in that it highlights the extent to which the S.C.A.—an extralegal, vigilante group—was policing Charleston’s slaves *more* than the official policing system. Rather than the captain of the Charleston City Guard or state-run slave patrollers uncovering these “schemes,” the petition asserted that it was the S.C.A. who protected Charleston’s

white citizens from their “property.” The statement suggests that had the S.C.A. not been in existence, these “schemes,” which seemed to escape the attention of official slave policing agents, would have been successful in pouring “out all their horrors over our unsuspecting community.” South Carolina, the petition hinted, had the S.C.A. to thank.<sup>240</sup>

The S.C.A., of course, could not explicitly state that it was the primary protector of white South Carolinians. To do so would unequivocally reject the power of the state—something the S.C.A., as a vigilante group, was in theory doing, but to say so in a petition to the state legislature would have been disastrous. While the petition credited the S.C.A. with saving South Carolina from various “insurrectionary schemes,” it also continually attempted to affirm the association was not impeding the power of the state. The S.C.A. was allegedly “aiding the constituted authorities,” and its interests were first and foremost “connected under the true policy of the State.” Soon after, the petition again noted that the S.C.A. assisted “the Officers constitutionally appointed to carry those laws into effect,” rather than rejecting the power of those officers. Before concluding, the S.C.A. yet again reminded state legislators that their “object therefore is consonant with the policy of the State.” These continual “reassurances” suggest that the S.C.A. was still cognizant of earlier criticisms of its illegality. Consequently, the association again and again tried to assure the state it did not reject its power—in so many words, the S.C.A. just wanted to police slaves *their* way.<sup>241</sup>

Few could argue that the protection of white citizens against their slaves was in the interests of all South Carolinians. The state legislature accepted the S.C.A. petition and included the association in its December 1828 incorporation bill and while it is difficult to determine exactly what sealed the deal, some possibilities come to mind.

Despite its critics, the S.C.A. was popular—most South Carolinians wanted stricter enforcement of the state’s free and enslaved populations. The state legislature, then, would likely find little sympathy in its rejection of the S.C.A. Even more persuasive, however, were the men who made up the S.C.A. The petition, signed by the likes of Joseph Maginault, Robert J. Turnbull, Stephen Elliott, Henry Deas, and R.W. Vanderhorst, represented Charleston’s slaveholding aristocracy. These were not only powerful men—they were men who typically *made up* state legislatures and were thus speaking to men with whom they could greatly relate. Minor changes to the South Carolinian electorate did allow for an increase in upcountry representatives, but wealthy lowcountry planters still held a considerable balance of power.<sup>242</sup>

The S.C.A.’s success—culminated in its incorporation—signalled a victory for the idea of the sovereign slaveholder. The S.C.A.’s hijacking of the official slave policing system indicated that Charleston’s slaveholding aristocracy were not willing to let the official slave policing system—made up of men of “questionable” character—represent them. Rather than having an aggressive slave patroller or City Guard captain, who may or may not be serving their slaves liquor, the S.C.A. inserted itself into the slave policing system. The association infiltrated Charleston’s slave policing system, so much so that the S.C.A.—rather than a Captain Dove or Cole—allegedly crushed slave insurrectionary schemes in post-Vesey Charleston. Because they felt official slave policing actors could not adequately protect their significant interests in South Carolina slavery, the S.C.A. ensured that slaves owned by Charleston’s slaveholding aristocracy were policed in the way men like Keating Simons and Joseph Maginault wanted—and not how Capt. William Dove or Joseph Cole had. By blatantly rejecting state representatives to represent

their slaveholding interests, the S.C.A. ensured its members sovereignty to taking slave policing into *their* hands.

## Conclusion

At a local and state level, the S.C.A. revealed the shift in how slaves were policed in 1820s Charleston and South Carolina—and the proliferation of South Carolinian slaveowners’ fears that unless they routinely aggrandized their policing regimes, slavery and the lives of white southerners were at risk. Rejecting official slave policing methods, the S.C.A. overtook the slave policing system’s traditional methods and inserted itself—and its opinions—into the system. Though the association routinely asserted it was simply “aiding” official agents, the S.C.A.’s role in reviving, enforcing, and significantly altering the Negro Seamen Acts of 1822 and 1823, as well as their clandestine role in discovering and crushing alleged insurrectionary schemes, reveals the extent to which the S.C.A. began to see its association as *the* method for slave policing in Charleston. The Charleston Chamber of Commerce was not far off the mark when it applauded the S.C.A. for “the excellency of the system it has organized,” suggesting that in organizing “the” system, the S.C.A. created a new one. If we define vigilantism as “illegal in defiance of state control over criminal proceedings and extralegal in their extension of the state’s interests in community regulation,” as one scholar has, then the S.C.A. fits the definition to a tee.<sup>243</sup>

When we think about vigilantism in the U.S. South, it is typically a phenomenon that occurred *after* the Emancipation Proclamation. Images of southern vigilantes are usually depicted as those associated with mass lynchings against free African-Americans in the Reconstruction-era—indeed, no two images better encapsulate how the post-Civil War South is remembered than that of the lifeless African-American man hanging from a tree, and a mounted Klansman, burning cross in hand. While the S.C.A. may not have

been the kind of vigilantes we remember in southern historical memory, I fear that by restricting our notion of who and what southern vigilantes were, we are forgetting the kind of vehement—yet affected as respectable—vigilantism that occurred *during* slavery, in reaction to what elite slaveowners deemed a failure of the state to adequately represent their interests. Perhaps we have failed to see such race-based vigilantism in the antebellum South because historians have only just begun to even recognize the role of the *state* in slavery—an inherent feature if we are to then understand vigilantism reaction. Put simply, you cannot see vigilantism in a slaveholding society without recognizing the considerable role of the state in that society.<sup>244</sup>

The features of American vigilante associations have been recently recognized by scholar Lisa Arellano, who argues that vigilante groups consciously engaged in narrative construction as a way to justify their illegitimate conduct. In her study, *Vigilantes and Lynch Mobs*, Arellano's analysis fuses the two "kinds" of vigilante groups most commonly considered separately: mainly, groups along the western fringes of the frontier in the 1830s-1850s, and in the Reconstruction South. Arellano also notes major characteristics in these vigilante groups, including a sense of state failure, the legitimization of group actions, popularity, and the need to portray the vigilante group as "valorous vigilantes." Arellano recognizes the proliferation of vigilante groups across *all* of the United States, which Arellano attributes to the American sense of "the right to revolutionize," but when we think about vigilantism, we must also include groups like the S.C.A. that used vigilantism as a way to respond to the often uncontrollable elements of state-regulated slavery.<sup>245</sup>



With this in mind, was the S.C.A., as historian William Freehling has written, “a fertile source of southern radicalism?” How much do we view the S.C.A. in its specific time and place? Is the S.C.A. simply further evidence of South Carolina’s slaveowning militancy and the beginnings of the states’ rights movement? It would be erroneous to argue that the S.C.A. and its role in the Negro Seamen Acts was not explicitly linked to the rising “southern radicalism” that culminated in the 1830s Nullification Crisis and South Carolina’s 1860 secession. The act—as Justice William Johnson frustratingly noted—was the S.C.A.’s law and launched a battle that saw South Carolina combat state, federal, constitutional, and international law. In Robert J. Turnbull’s response to Johnson, we see the developing ideology of statesmen who clearly believed in a state’s constitutional right to protect itself from dangerous elements—even if the state’s citizens brought such dangers upon themselves.<sup>246</sup>

The S.C.A.’s story is very much a part of the story of South Carolinian antebellum politics that historians have recorded in considerable detail. But our analysis of the S.C.A. and the role of independent actors in policing slavery should not end there. Rather than seeing the S.C.A. as *only* a manifestation of South Carolina’s turbulent political environment, the S.C.A. must also reflect the larger national turn towards vigilantism that occurred in the nineteenth century. In considering slave policing systems in the U.S. South, we need to reassess when and where this unique brand of nineteenth century American vigilantism emerged.

While I maintain that the S.C.A. needs to be included in the larger story of American vigilantism, there are still many issues to be explored. Vigilantes and lynching mobs have typically been portrayed as groups who hyperbolically presented their

“enemy”—indeed, their criminal element is often seen as greatly exaggerated. Can we safely say the same, however, for vigilantes living in a slaveholding society? Such an analysis requires the problematic but necessary consideration of the extent to which white southerners literally put their lives in danger—albeit willingly—on an everyday basis to benefit from slave labor.

Likewise, the fact that the S.C.A. and its similar chapters throughout South Carolina were all made up of South Carolina’s most elite “gentlemen” cannot be ignored. This fact requires us to reinvigorate the decades old debate about class issues in the slaveholding South and question how such issues affected slave policing regimes. Was the S.C.A. a product of a slave policing system that placed lower-class men in charge of the elite’s most valuable holdings? If so, would *any* slave policing system that did not adhere to the constant demands of the slaveholding aristocracy have been accepted? And to what extent did the S.C.A.’s concerns originate with the fact that patrollers—even if they were indeed wealthy slaveowners—were simply not a part of Charleston’s “gentile” slaveowning aristocracy?

In reassessing vigilantism and the slaveholding South we must also consider how much the S.C.A. was about maintaining slaveholder sovereignty. As Robin L. Einhorn has most recently analyzed in relation to southern taxations systems, the American slaveholder was ever conscious about the need to maintain sovereignty over his slaveholdings. Was the S.C.A.’s emergence after the Vesey conspiracy, then, an indication that Charleston’s slaveowning elites—who increasingly felt the vulnerability of their social and racial standing—rejected official slave policing because it stood as a stark violation to their idea of slaveowner sovereignty?

Lastly, while this has been an attempt to fill in some of the gaps on slave policing systems, there is still much work to be done if we are to assess the extent to which the state or independent actors policed slaves in rural *and* urban settings. Such complexities will help reveal the nature of the relationship between slavery and the state by further unmasking official slave policing systems and the lengths to which white South Carolinians—and southerners more broadly—went to try to keep their slaves enslaved. There are still many avenues to explore if we are to truly understand the nature of urban slavery, slave policing regimes, white class relations, and vigilantism in the slaveholding south. But in the process, historians must recognize that at the end of the day, whether or not it was an “official” patrol or a vigilante group patrolling mattered little to some slaves. As J.T. Tims remembered, “There wasn’t no difference between the patrols and the Ku Klux that I knows of. If th’d ketch you, they all would whip you.”<sup>247</sup>

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> A condensed version of the Cole/Cattell case is in Helen Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, vol. 2, (New York: Octagon Books, 1968), 320-321. For a more detailed account of the incident, see “Constitutional Court of Appeals of South Carolina. THE STATE v. JOSEPH COLE, TURNER V. DAUNER, and WM. GASKINS. May Term, 1822,” in 2 McCord 117, 13 S.C.L. 117 (S.C.Const.App.), 1822 WL 637 (S.C.Const.App.) For information on the landholdings of Cattell and Cole, see Henry A.M. Smith, *Rivers and Regions of Early South Carolina*, vol. III (Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Co., 1988), 182-183, 186-191, 246.

<sup>2</sup> I use the terms “system” and “regime” interchangeably throughout to describe the various methods, institutions, laws, and people involved in policing slaves and the free black population. There was a definite difference between the wealth of Cole versus that of Cattell. Cole is listed in the 1820 Federal U.S. Census as owning twenty-four slaves, *U.S. Federal Census*, Charleston County, South Carolina, reel 119; Catell is listed as owning upwards of seventy slaves by the 1840s, see “Inventory & Appraisement of slaves, goods, chattels the property of the Estate of Col. William Cattell deceased at the Retreat Plantation in St. Andrew’s Parish, So. Carolina,” in William Cattell Trimble, *The Cattell Family of South Carolina*, (Brooklandville, Md.: W.C. Trimble, 1988), 13-18.

<sup>3</sup> Seth Rockman, “Jacksonian America,” in *American History Now*, eds. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011); Sally Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001. For an older account of slave patrolling in South Carolina that truly reflects its time, see H.M. Henry, *The Police Control of the Slave in South Carolina*, PhD diss., 1914.

<sup>4</sup> Robin L. Einhorn, *American Taxation, American Slavery*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Lisa Arellano, *Vigilantes and Lynch Mobs*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012); Douglas Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey*, (Madison, Wisc.: Madison House, 1999). While there is a considerable amount of scholarship on vigilantism in the U.S. south, almost all focuses on the Reconstruction South because of the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, lynchings, and later Ida B. Wells’ campaign against lynching. See Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1890*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.) Because my research focuses on vigilantism in the slaveholding society—a relatively new idea—I have not significantly drawn from work on Reconstruction vigilantism. For the debate on the Vesey revolt, see Robert L. Paquette, “From Rebellion to Revisionism: The Continuing Debate about the Denmark Vesey Affair,” *Journal of the Historical Society*, 4, (2004); Michael P. Johnson, “Denmark Vesey and his Co-Conspirators,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Oct. 2001), pp. 915-976; Robert L. Paquette and Douglas Egerton, “Of Facts and Fables: New Light on the Denmark Vesey Affair,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 105, No. 1, (Jan. 2004), pp. 8-48; Richard C. Wade, “The Vesey Plot: A Reconsideration,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 30, No. 2, (May 1964), pp. 143-161.

<sup>5</sup> Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 389; Henry, *Police Control*, 35.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Morgan, “Black Life in Eighteenth Century Charleston,” *Perspectives in American History*, I (1984), 37-38.

<sup>7</sup> Morgan, “Black Life,” 37-38, and *Slave Counterpoint*, 204. For a good analysis of slaveowner sovereignty, see Einhorn, *American Taxation, American Slavery*.

<sup>8</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998); Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 386.

<sup>9</sup> Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 386.

<sup>10</sup> Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*, (New York: Knopf, 1974), 17. Henry, *Police Control*, 13; M. Alston Read, “Notes on Some Colonial Governor of South Carolina and their Families,” *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Apr. 1910), 107-122.

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<sup>11</sup> Wood, *Black Majority*, 9, 20. In contrast, Sally Hadden states that half of South Carolina's earliest settlers were from Barbados, see Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 68.

<sup>13</sup> While more men were imported into early South Carolina than woman, recently Jennifer L. Morgan has argued this was not the case for the West Indies, contrary to what has been traditionally depicted. For an excellent analysis on gender differences in slave importation in the Caribbean and colonial America, see Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Wood, *Black Majority*, 23-25, 29-30.

<sup>14</sup> Morgan, "Black Life," 22; Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 69.

<sup>15</sup> The idea of a "society with slaves" versus a "slave society" is espoused by in Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 10.

<sup>16</sup> Wood, *Black Majority*, 27, 35.

<sup>17</sup> Judith Carney, "Rice Milling, Gender and Slave Labour in Colonial South Carolina." *Past & Present*, No. 153 (Nov., 1996), 111; Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001); Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 142.

<sup>18</sup> Darold D. Wax, "The Great Risk We Run": The Aftermath of Slave Rebellion at Stono, South Carolina, 1739-1745," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (Summer, 1982), 136; Steven J. Oatis, *A Colonial Complex: South Carolina's Frontiers in the Era of the Yamasee War, 1680-1730*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 294-295; Henry, *Police Control*, 13. Historian Rachel Klein charts the rise of plantations in the backcountry, see Rachel N. Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Morgan, "Slave Sales in Colonial Charleston." *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 453 (Sep. 1998), 904-911.

<sup>20</sup> Oatis, *A Colonial Complex*, 294; Wax, "The Great Risk We Run," 137-140; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 915-917.

<sup>21</sup> Wax, "The Great Risk We Run," 137.

<sup>22</sup> Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 389-391. For the 1687 law, see Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 15-16.

<sup>23</sup> Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 256-262.

<sup>24</sup> Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 14; Hilary Beckles, *Black Rebellion in Barbados: The Struggle Against Slavery, 1627-1838*, (Bridgetown, Barbados: Antilles Publications, 1984), 21. The code was amended in 1676, 1682, and 1688. See Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 11-12; Beckles, *Black Rebellion*, 21. Barbados' "Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes" was established in 1661 but the majority of the southern U.S. colonies enacted laws with almost the exact same title, including South Carolina in 1696.

<sup>25</sup> Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 240-241.

<sup>26</sup> Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 10-14.

<sup>27</sup> Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 15-18.

<sup>28</sup> Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 19. Hadden is not specific about which tribes of Native Americans were used by the South Carolinian authorities to patrol slaves. It is possible that they might have been Yamasees, who were at one point held as slaves by South Carolinian settlers.

<sup>29</sup> Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Henry, *Police Control*, 34; Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 21-22.

<sup>31</sup> Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 15; Carl Brindenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: Urban Life in America, 1625-1742*, (New York: Capricorn Books, 1964), 66, 337. Adjustments might have been made to the official town watch soon thereafter, as Brindenbaugh notes the creation of a "Constable's Watch" in April 1685. The town watch's establishment in 1671 might render it the first official slave policing agent in colonial South Carolina. While it was not established to police just slaves, monitoring enslaved and free black behavior in Charles Town was one of the watch's earliest concerns.

<sup>32</sup> Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 16-17; Brindenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness*, 218.

<sup>33</sup> Wood, *Black Majority*, 273; Brindenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness*, 219.

<sup>34</sup> Oatis, *A Colonial Complex*, 147.

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<sup>35</sup>Gregory Evans Dowd "Yamasee War," *The Oxford Companion to United States History*, Paul S. Boyer, ed. Oxford University Press 2001. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. 12 December 2011 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t119.e1698>; Oatis, *A Colonial Complex*, 1; Richard L. Haan, "The Trade Do's Not Flourish as Formerly': The Ecological Origins of the Yamasee War of 1715," *Ethnohistory*, 38 (1981), pp.341–58. As the Yamasee War highlights, it is important to note that South Carolinians were also engaged in the enslavement of Native Americans. Allan Galloway shows that the amount of Indian slaves exported from the colony surpassed the amount of African slaves imported before 1715. See Allan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>36</sup>Oatis, *A Colonial Complex*, 107-111; William L. Ramsay, *The Yamasee War: A Study of Culture, Economy, and Conflict in the Colonial South*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 175.

<sup>37</sup>Oatis, *A Colonial Complex*, 174; Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 175.

<sup>38</sup>Oatis, *A Colonial Complex*, 173-174; Ramsay, *The Yamasee War*, 164; Wax, "The Great Risque We Run," 137.

<sup>39</sup>Jane Landers, "Spanish Sanctuary: Fugitives in Florida, 1687-1790," *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (Jan., 1984), 297-298. As Landers has pointed out, it should be noted that, "The Spanish policy regarding fugitive slaves in Florida developed in an ad hoc fashion and changed over time to suit the shifting military, economic, and diplomatic interests of the colony."

<sup>40</sup>Landers, "Spanish Sanctuary," 296-299; Patrick Riordan, "Finding Freedom in Florida: Native Peoples, African Americans, and Colonists, 1670-1816," *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (Summer, 1996), pp. 24-43; Jane Landers, "Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose: A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (Feb., 1990), pp. 9-30.

<sup>41</sup>Peter Charles Hoffer, *Cry Liberty: The Great Stono Slave Rebellion of 1739*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 41; Oatis, *A Colonial Complex*, 295; Wood, *Black Majority*, 274.

<sup>42</sup>Wood, *Black Majority*, 274-275.

<sup>43</sup>Brindenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness* 378; Wood, *Black Majority*, 273.

<sup>44</sup>Mark Smith, ed. *Stono: Documenting and Interpreting a Southern Slave Revolt*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005, xi-xiii.

<sup>45</sup>Smith, *Stono*, xiii; Wax, "The Great Risque We Run," 139.

<sup>46</sup>Wax, "The Great Risque We Run," 139. In yet another attempt to reign in the behavior of free and enslaved blacks, the colony amended its slave code and created the "Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and Other Slaves in this Province," in 1740. The details of this code—and how it changed from earlier legislation—will not be discussed in full, but the code can be found in McCord, ed., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, vol. 7. Few historians have written about the 1740 and 1819 slave patrol laws. For historical analysis, see Sally Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 24-25 and Henry, *Police Control*, 34-37. Legislation also ruled that maps were to be posted on church and tavern doors outlining the area covered by the local patrol, and recorded in the militia's books. Officers who failed to appoint patrol captains were fined £100, and circumstances for substitute service—something many patrollers later claimed wealthy South Carolinians took advantage of—were enacted. Militia captains were also supposed to "prick off" men to patrol at every muster. However, the South Carolina grand jury complained in 1756 that the militia had not mustered for over two years which suggests that for over two years, significant portions of the colony were not patrolled. If any sort of slave policing system was to work during this time, it was done outside of the official system established by the government, likely by local men who felt they had to take matters into their own hands. The militia's slave patrols were likely providing little protection during this period.

<sup>47</sup>Wax, "The Great Risque We Run," 139.

<sup>48</sup>Kenneth Scott, "Suffers in the Charleston Fire of 1740," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 64, No. 4, (Oct. 1963), pp. 203-211; Matthew Mulcahy, "The 'Great Fire' of 1740 and the Politics of Disaster Relief in Colonial Charleston," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 99, No. 2, (Apr. 1998), pp. 135-157.

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- <sup>49</sup> Benjamin L. Carp, *Rebels Rising: Cities in the American Revolution*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 149-153.
- <sup>50</sup> Wax, "The Great Risque We Run," 138; M. Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663-1763*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 212-213; Robert Weir, *Colonial South Carolina: A History*, (Millwood, N.Y.: KTO Press, 1983), 118.
- <sup>51</sup> Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 148.
- <sup>52</sup> Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America*, (New York: Penguin, 2006) 60-61.
- <sup>53</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 60-61; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 224-228.
- <sup>54</sup> Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 228-229.
- <sup>55</sup> Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 230-236. Campbell always maintained that "the man was murdered."
- <sup>56</sup> Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 238-241.
- <sup>57</sup> "Lord Dunmore's Proclamation," *Virginia Memory*, University of Virginia, [http://www.virginiamemory.com/online\\_classroom/shaping\\_the\\_constitution/doc/dunmores\\_proclamation](http://www.virginiamemory.com/online_classroom/shaping_the_constitution/doc/dunmores_proclamation) (Last accessed : June 7, 2012.)
- <sup>58</sup> Douglas Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 150; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 243.
- <sup>59</sup> Robert M. Weir, "A Most Important Epoch": *The Coming of the Revolution in South Carolina*, (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 190.
- <sup>60</sup> Robert Gray, "Colonel Robert Gray's Observations on the War in Carolina," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Jul. 1910), 145, 152.
- <sup>61</sup> The plan followed in the footsteps of similar legislation outlined in North Carolina and later Georgia. However, it was not accepted across the southern colonies. James Madison wondered if it was not better to "liberate and make soldiers at once of the blacks themselves as to make them instruments for enlisting white soldiers? It would certainly be more consonant to the principles of liberty which ought never to be lost sight of in a contest for liberty..." His suggestion fell on deaf ears—to liberate and arm the south's slaves was incomprehensible to most slaveowners. See Jeffrey C. Crow, *The Black Experience in Revolutionary North Carolina*, (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1977), 69; Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 270.
- <sup>62</sup> Alexander R. Stoesen, "The British Occupation of Charleston, 1780-1782," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Apr. 1962), pp. 71-82; Walter J. Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!: The History of a Southern City*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 159.
- <sup>63</sup> Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*, 164-165.
- <sup>64</sup> Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*, 166-167.
- <sup>65</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 225; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 248.
- <sup>66</sup> Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*, 171-173. Another example of lower-class whites refusing to go back into their "place" concerns the Marine Anti-Britannic Society. The group was established Sept. 24, 1783 which dedicated itself to "the purpose of conserving, pure & unmutated, privileges which, being obtained through the dint of a long, arduous & bloody conflict," "Rules of the Marine Anti-Britannic Society: established at Charleston, South-Carolina, September 24, 1783," (Charleston: Printed for the Society by A. Timothy, 1784), South Carolina Department of Archives and History (hereafter known as the SCDAH.)
- <sup>67</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 226-227; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 278-288.
- <sup>68</sup> Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 282; Jeffrey C. Crow, "Slave Rebelliousness and Social Conflict in North Carolina, 1775 to 1802," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Jan. 1980), 82.
- <sup>69</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 232; Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988) 110.
- <sup>70</sup> Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 108-110.
- <sup>71</sup> Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 39, 107.

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- <sup>72</sup> Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 40-41; Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 230; Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*, 185.
- <sup>73</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 228.
- <sup>74</sup> Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 110-111.
- <sup>75</sup> Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, (New York: International Publishers, 1963) 73-74; Joseph Brevard, *An Alphabetical Digest of the Public Statute Law of South Carolina*, Vol. II, available online from *American Libraries*, (J.Hoff, 1814), pp. 256-261.
- <sup>76</sup> Brevard, *Statute Law of SC*, 105, 253-255; Aptheker, *Negro Slave Revolts*, 75-76. Rules on the responsibility of South Carolina's white male population were also tightened—those who failed to show up to patrol duty were to be fined two dollars for every absence.
- <sup>77</sup> Aptheker, *Negro Slave Revolts*, 219. Aptheker notes that 1800 was not only the year of Gabriel's Rebellion—it was also when Denmark Vesey purchased his freedom.
- <sup>78</sup> Douglas Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993) 63-65; Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 221; Douglas Egerton, "Gabriel's Conspiracy and the Election of 1800," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (May. 1990), 202.
- <sup>79</sup> Egerton, "Gabriel's Conspiracy," 208.
- <sup>80</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 221-222; Egerton, "Gabriel's Conspiracy," 207.
- <sup>81</sup> Egerton places the number of dead at twenty-seven in his article "Gabriel's Conspiracy" whereas Aptheker is less clear; Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 223-224.
- <sup>82</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 223.
- <sup>83</sup> Crow, "Slave Rebelliousness and Social Conflict," 96.
- <sup>84</sup> Crow, "Slave Rebelliousness and Social Conflict," 98-100.
- <sup>85</sup> Sherman L. Ricards and George M. Blackburn, "A Demographic History of Slavery: Georgetown County, South Carolina, 1850," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (Oct., 1975), pp. 215-224.
- <sup>86</sup> Howard A. Ohline, "Georgetown, South Carolina: Racial Anxieties and Militant Behavior, 1802," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 73, No. 3 (Jul. 1972), 132.
- <sup>87</sup> Ohline, "Georgetown, S.C.: Racial Anxieties," 133-134.
- <sup>88</sup> Ohline, "Georgetown, S.C.: Racial Anxieties," 132, 135.
- <sup>89</sup> Jed Handelsmen Shugerman, "The Louisiana Purchase and South Carolina's Reopening of the Slave Trade in 1803," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Summer, 2002), 263-264.
- <sup>90</sup> Shugerman, "Reopening of the Slave Trade," 266.
- <sup>91</sup> George C. Rogers Jr. *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969) 142; Shugerman, "Reopening of the Slave Trade," 280-281.
- <sup>92</sup> Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*, 188; Shugerman, "Reopening of the Slave Trade," 278.
- <sup>93</sup> Rogers, *Age of the Pinckneys*, 141; Michael Johnson, "Planters and Patriarchy: Charleston, 1800-1860," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Feb., 1980), 53-54.
- <sup>94</sup> L. Glen Inabinet, "The July Fourth Incident' of 1816: An Insurrection Plotted by Slaves in Camden, South Carolina," <http://slaverebellion.org/index.php?page=an-insurrection-plotted-by-slaves-in-camden-south-carolina>; Francis G. Deliesseline, "FRANCIS G. DELIESSLINE., ESQ. SUMMARY OF CAMDEN REVOLT" <http://slaverebellion.org/index.php?page=camden-revolt>.
- <sup>95</sup> Deliesseline, "SUMMARY." This idea ran alongside the rumour that often surfaced during talk of slave conspiracy that the ringleaders would take the most beautiful white woman in town to be their queen.
- <sup>96</sup> Deliesseline, "SUMMARY."
- <sup>97</sup> Inabinet, "The July Fourth Incident' of 1816"; Deliesseline, "SUMMARY."
- <sup>98</sup> *The Camden Gazette*, July 11, 1816 (hereafter C.Gazette); Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 258.
- <sup>99</sup> Inabinet, "The July Fourth Incident' of 1816."
- <sup>100</sup> Michael Johnson, "Planters and Patriarchy," 45-72; Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 19-21; Edward A. Pearson ed., *Designs Against Charleston: The Trial Record of the Denmark Vesey Slave Conspiracy of 1822*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). 40. An interesting group of minority slaveholders not discussed are black slaveowners. These slaveowners were invested in the slave policing system, but as free blacks, also



severely restricted. Exhaustive research done by Larry Koger suggests that by 1820, there were approximately 206 black slave owners in Charleston. While Koger dedicates a lengthy discussion to different factors influencing the statistic, the number is a starting point nevertheless. Edwin C. Holland, a prominent literary figure in Charleston noted most mulattoes in Charleston owned “slaves themselves and are, therefore, so far interested in this species of property, as to keep them on watch and induce them to disclose any plans that may be injurious to our peace.” In this way, black slave owners benefitted from the policing system. However, at the same time, there is contemporary evidence that suggests some black slave owners were concerned with emancipation, not possession. For example, in the 1790s Peter B. Mathews, a butcher, bought a slave named Hercules, only to emancipate him. See Larry Koger, *Black Slaveowners : Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina, 1790-1860*, (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 7, 20, 19.

<sup>101</sup> James Hamilton Jr. *Negro Plot. An Account of the Late Intended Insurrection among a Portion of the Blacks of the City of Charleston, South Carolina*, published online by the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/hamilton/hamilton.html>. It should be noted that the position of city intendant was different from that of a mayor—it was a part-time, unpaid position that ensured only those who could work without pay could serve as city intendant. Because the City Council was essentially made up of elite volunteers who worked part-time, the city government was relatively weak. Only in 1836 did a state act empower the City Council to hire a salaried mayor—likely in the hopes that it would make for a stronger city government.

<sup>102</sup> John A. Hall "Nefarious Wretches, Insidious Villains, and Evil-Minded Persons": Urban Crime Reported in Charleston's "City Gazette" in 1788," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 88, No. 3 (Jul., 1987), 151; Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 4.

<sup>103</sup> Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 4; see Chapter 5 of Douglas Egerton's *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey* (Madison, Wisc.: Madison House, 1999) and "Why They Did Not Preach up This Thing": Denmark Vesey and Revolutionary Theology," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 100, No. 4 (Oct., 1999), pp. 298-318 for a good analysis of the role African-American led churches in Charleston played in the Vesey revolt. One of the last adjustments to the state's laws governing slaves was ratified in July 1819. The "Ordinance for the Government of Negroes" encompassed many of the typical restrictions placed on black populations throughout the U.S. south. Slaves were—as always—required to carry a pass when leaving their master's plantation, needed permission from their warden for "dancing and merriment," were not allowed to "account, buy, sell, barter, trade, traffic, or deal in any goods" or sing, "whoop," smoke, or walk with a cane, club or stick, unless blind. The section also made it illegal for any black porter or day labourer to ask for higher wages. Those who did were sent to the warden immediately, and if a slave, were to receive any number of lashes on the bare back not less than twelve or more than twenty. If the labourer was free, he or she could pay a hefty five dollar fine—more likely, most found violating section 15 were sent to the workhouse until they, or someone else, could pay the fine. See "Ordinance" in Lois A. Walker and Susan R. Silverman, eds. *A Documented History of Gullah Jack Pritchard and the Denmark Vesey Slave Insurrection of 1822*, (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 2000), 81-88.

<sup>104</sup> Loren Schweninger, "Slave Independence and Enterprise in South Carolina, 1780-1865," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 93, No. 2, (Apr., 1992), 111-112; Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 54.

<sup>105</sup> Dr. John Righton, *1820 Federal U.S. Census*, Charleston County, South Carolina, roll 119; James E. Newton and Ronald L. Lewis eds., *The Other Slaves: Mechanics, Artisans and Craftsmen*, (Boston: G.K. & Co., 1978.)

<sup>106</sup> Schweninger, "Slave Independence and Enterprise," 103-107.

<sup>107</sup> Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 45-46.

<sup>108</sup> Schweninger, "Slave Independence and Enterprise," 111-112, 124.

<sup>109</sup> Schweninger, "Slave Independence and Enterprise," 108.

<sup>110</sup> Schweninger, "Slave Independence and Enterprise," 102, 113; Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 51; *Charleston Courier*, "1806 Ordinance for the Government of Negroes," November 4, 1806 (hereafter known as C.C.); Harlan Greene, Harry S. Hutchins Jr. and Brian E. Hutchins, *Slave Badges and the Slave-Hire System in Charleston, South Carolina, 1783-1865*, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company Inc., 2004), 7.

<sup>111</sup> Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 46-47.

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<sup>112</sup> Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 51; Schweninger, "Slave Independence and Enterprise," 113; Claudia Dale Goldin, *Urban Slavery in the American South 1820-1860*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 38. When the badge was out of use, it was typically bent in half so the slave could not keep using it, or pass it off to another.

<sup>113</sup> Greene et. al., *Slave Badges*, 23-25. Free people of color were also branded by badges. While "every free negro, mulatto, or [mestizo]" living in the City was already required to "register" with the City Clerk, and inform the clerk if they leave the city or move residence, those above the age of fifteen were also required to wear badges. Again, the badge was purchased from the city, for five shillings, and was to be worn "suspended by a string or ribband, and exposed to view on his breast." As for slaves, punishments for not producing badges upon request (or even registering one's address, for that matter) resulted in a fine of up to three pounds. If the charged was unable to pay, he/she was placed in the workhouse and forced to do hard labour for no more than thirty days. It should be noted that unlike slave-hire badges, one did not have to renew their "free" badge. This must have been a saving grace to most free blacks, to whom the expense of five shillings a year for badges would have been considerable.

<sup>114</sup> Greene et. al., *Slave Badges*, 22-24; Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 32; It appears as if residents had to be routinely reminded of the law, as reminders published constantly in the newspaper. See *The City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston), January 8, 1812 (hereafter known as C.G.)

<sup>115</sup> Greene et. al., *Slave Badges*, 24-25.

<sup>116</sup> Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1970), 148.

<sup>117</sup> Douglass, *My Bondage*, 148.

<sup>118</sup> Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 33. In his book, Egerton states that after 1802, slaves were flogged at the Charleston District jail, however, evidence remains of slaves being whipped in the workhouse after 1802. Furthermore, if this is the case it raises an interesting discrepancy. The workhouse was the property and under the management of the city—the jail was under state jurisdiction. If slaves were flogged at the city jail, this means there is even more overlap between city/state jurisdiction concerning policing Charleston's black community. Also see, "Presentment of the Grand Jury, March 1733/1734," in *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 25, 1924 where on page 194 the Jury members ask for a Work House—albeit, not specifically for black Charlestonians. This suggests that the institution took on a racial status sometime later in the eighteenth century; Walter J. Fraser Jr., "The City Elite, "Disorder," and the Poor Children of Pre-Revolutionary Charleston," in *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 167-171.

<sup>119</sup> Rogers, *Age of the Pinckneys*, 203.

<sup>120</sup> Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 95-96.

<sup>121</sup> Harriet Jacobs, "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl," (Boston, 1861).

<sup>122</sup> "Testimony of the Rev. William T. Allan, of Late Alabama," in Theodore Weld, *Slavery As It Is*, (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839).

<sup>123</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 55, 77-78; "Personal Narratives," in *Slavery As It Is*.

<sup>124</sup> Rogers, *Age of Pinckney*, 147-149; Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 32-33.

<sup>125</sup> Henry, *Police Control*, 168.

<sup>126</sup> It is also important to see the use of slave informants as a part of slave policing systems. Entrenched in the institution of slavery, was the reliance of slaves to relay any information on supposed uprisings to their owners' or other white officials in exchange for some kind of benefit. While this allowed white southerners to collect information on rebellious slaves, it sometimes also allowed some slaves to maneuver slavery in such a way that it directly benefitted them. For example, slaves who were rewarded for their loyalty were often given better clothing, food, sleeping quarters and jobs.

<sup>127</sup> "An Ordinance, regulating the City-Guard in Charleston" (1807) in Alexander Edwards, *Ordinances of the City Council of Charleston*, (W.P. & Young, 1802-1807), p. 378-391.

<sup>128</sup> *Charleston Courier*, August 4, 1820 (hereafter known as C.C.); "Ordinance, regulating the City-Guard in Charleston."

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<sup>129</sup> Pearson, *Designs Against Charleston*, 57; “Ordinance, regulating the City-Guard in Charleston.”

<sup>130</sup> “Ordinance, regulating the City-Guard in Charleston”; For an example of a sheriff’s slave sales, see C.G., January 1, 1812.

<sup>131</sup> Jean Martin Flynn, *The Militia in Antebellum South Carolina Society*, (Spartanburg, S.C.: Reprint Co., 1991), 111; Michael E. Stauffer, *South Carolina’s Antebellum Militia*, (Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Department of Archives, 1991); Walker and Silverman, *Gullah Jack Pritchard*, 193.

<sup>132</sup> Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 65.

<sup>133</sup> Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 64; See “William Johnson to John Welch, June 12, 1822,” in William Johnson Papers, Box 5, Folder 9, USC.

<sup>134</sup> Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 65.

<sup>135</sup> “An Ordinance to Define the City Marshals’ Appointment, Duties and Powers,” in Edwards, *Ordinances of the City Council of Charleston*, 157-163; Edward P. Cantwell, *A History of Charleston Police Force by Edward P. Cantwell, lieutenant of Charleston Police Force*, (Charleston: J.J. Furlong, 1908); For examples of sheriff corruption in the southern U.S., see Einhorn, *American Slavery, American Taxation*.

<sup>136</sup> Apetheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 67; Martin Flynn, *Militia in Antebellum South Carolina Society*, 111.

<sup>137</sup> “Ordinance, regulating the City-Guard in Charleston.”

<sup>138</sup> In an attempt to closely look at the Charleston Neck Rangers, I’ve collected several names of officers, militiamen involved in the volunteer unit. For some examples, see C.C., “Captain William Sims, Esq.,” December 29, 1809; C.G., March 6, 1816, September 22, 1820; *The Times* (Charleston), April 17, 1817. We also know that there was a magazine on Charleston Neck, as in 1820 a Michael Gruber, Esq. was appointed to replace Captain Charles Gruber as Captain of the Magazine Guard, C.G., November 24, 1820.

<sup>139</sup> Henry, *Police Control*, 48; Pearson, *Designs Against Charleston*, 151; “Ordinance for the Government of Negroes for Charleston,” in Walker and Silverman, *Gullah Jack Pritchard*, 81-88.

<sup>140</sup> Pearson, *Designs Against Charleston*, 48; C.G., July 1, 1790; Schweninger, “Slave Independence,” 110.

<sup>141</sup> Schweninger, “Slave Independence,” 110; C.G., February 7, 1821.

<sup>142</sup> Pearson, *Designs Against Charleston*, 48.

<sup>143</sup> C.G., July 16, 1812 and August 8, 1812. On August 19, 1812 the *City Gazette* announced that Captain Benjamin Harvey and Lieutenant William Logan were made in charge of the new Officers of the Alarm.

<sup>144</sup> Belinda Hurmence, ed., *Before Freedom, when I can Just Remember: Twenty-Seven Oral Histories of Former South Carolina Slaves*, (Winston-Salem, N.C.: J.F. Blair, 1989), x, xiv.

<sup>145</sup> Hurmence, *Before Freedom*, 14, 33, 36, 39, 44, 85, 115; Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 212-213; Also see Susanna Ashton, *I Belong to South Carolina: South Carolina Slave Narratives*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>146</sup> Silverman and Walker, *Gullah Jack Pritchard*, 95-97; There were also efforts to increase patrolling in the Neck region, as a bill calling for the regulation of slave patrols in the Neck region was passed to a second reading by state legislatures, however from there it is difficult to follow, C.C., December 5, 1820.

<sup>147</sup> “Constitutional Court of Appeals of South Carolina. THE STATE v. JOSEPH COLE, TURNER V. DAUNER, and WM. GASKINS. May Term, 1822,”; 1822 WL 637.

<sup>148</sup> Bay in Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning Slavery*, 316; Nott in “Constitutional Court of Appeals,” 2 McCord 117.

<sup>149</sup> It was commonplace for whites to suspect that the leader of a slave revolt would take the most beautiful white woman for his “queen.” This was an idea that persisted throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was perhaps best encapsulated in the closing scenes of D.W. Griffith’s notorious film, *Birth of a Nation*, in which Silas Lynch, the mixed-race villain, forces himself on the beautiful, innocent Elsie and promises her she can be his queen when he successfully takes over the town. The reference to the Vesey revolt and Bennett’s daughter can be found in “John Potter to Langdon Cheves, June 29, 1822,” from Douglas Egerton and Robert Paquette’s upcoming book on Vesey revolt documents, used by permission from the author. Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 167-169.

<sup>150</sup> Hamilton, *An Account of the Late Intended Insurrection*; Walker and Silverman, *Gullah Jack Pritchard*, 188-189.

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<sup>151</sup> Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 163; C.C., June 29, 1822.

<sup>152</sup> “John Potter to Langdon Cheves, June 29, 1822,”; Alan F. January, “The First Nullification: The Negro Seamen Acts Controversy in South Carolina, 1822-1860,” Ph.D. diss. (University of Iowa, 1976), 34.

<sup>153</sup> January, “The First Nullification,” 23-34.

<sup>154</sup> Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 172-173.

<sup>155</sup> It is important to note here that part of the anxiety in Charleston might have been related to the aftermath of the 1820 Missouri Compromise debate, which led *many* southern slaveowners to feel as if slavery was increasingly being threatened by the federal government. Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 174.

<sup>156</sup> There are few monographs dedicated to the Denmark Vesey affair and Egerton’s is one of the few to at least name some of the slave policing agents. The use of vague terms is often most often in studies that touch on the Vesey revolt. See, for example, Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*; Apetheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*.

<sup>157</sup> “An Ordinance, regulating the City-Guard in Charleston.”

<sup>158</sup> *Federal 1820 U.S. Census*, Charleston County, South Carolina roll 119; James W. Hagy, *Charleston, South Carolina City Directories for the Years 1816, 1819, 1822, 1825 and 1829*, (Baltimore: Clearfield Comp Inc., 1996), 96; “Aenus Reeves” *Charleston County South Carolina, Record of Wills*, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina. (hereafter known as CCPL); “Aenus Reeves,” *City of Charleston, SC, “Returns of deaths,” 1819 to 1873*, CCPL.

<sup>159</sup> Stauffer, *South Carolina’s Antebellum Militia*, 9-11. An earlier captain of the Neck Rangers was William Sims in 1810, C.C., December 29, 1809; Flynn, *Militia in Antebellum South Carolina Society*. It is perhaps worthwhile here to remind readers that militias were *not* a part of the U.S. military. The divisive debate during the Constitutional Convention concerning a standing army ensured that in America, civilian militias were favored over federal armies by many Americans.

<sup>160</sup> Stauffer, *South Carolina’s Antebellum Militia*, 11.

<sup>161</sup> Jonathan H. Hoston, *The Buildings of Charleston: A Guide to the City’s Architecture*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 514; *1820 U.S. Federal Census*, Charleston County, South Carolina, roll 119.

<sup>162</sup> Michael James Heitzler, *Goose Creek, A Definitive History: Volume Two, Rebellion, Reconstruction and Beyond*, (Charleston: The History Press, 2006), 39; Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 150.

<sup>163</sup> Hagy, *City Directory*, 77; *Federal 1820 U.S. Census*, Charleston County, South Carolina, roll 119.

<sup>164</sup> Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 156-157.

<sup>165</sup> Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 197.

<sup>166</sup> For a description of the executions, see Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 196-198. Moses Belknap’s petition can be found in Walker and Silverman, *Gullah Jack*, 235-238.

<sup>167</sup> *City Council Minutes 1821-1822*, CCPL, used with permission of Dr. Nic Butler. Another incident concerning Dove occurred before Vesey in January 1822. The City Council Minutes noted that Dove alarmed a David Bell and his family on the night of January 1. Little information is offered in the minutes, and there was almost no mention of the incident in the newspapers. Thus we are left to wonder exactly what the City Council was investigating when it created a committee to “enquire into the conduct of the Guard towards Mr. David Bell.

<sup>168</sup> *City Council Minutes 1821-1822*.

<sup>169</sup> January, “The First Nullification Crisis,” 22.

<sup>170</sup> Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 159, 162.

<sup>171</sup> January, “The First Nullification Crisis,” 21; Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 171-172. The correspondence between Bennett and Calhoun can be found in Part III of Egerton and Paquette’s collection, see “Thomas Governor Thomas Bennett Jr. to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, July 15, 1822”; “John C. Calhoun to Thomas Bennett Jr., July 22, 1822”; “Governor Thomas Bennett Jr. to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, July 30, 1822,” used by permission of the authors.

<sup>172</sup> Paquette and Egerton, “Of Facts and Fables,” 16. Bennett quoted in January, “The First Nullification Crisis,” 51-52; Bennett’s letter is in the *Niles’ Weekly Register* (Baltimore), September 7, 1822, No. 1, Vol. XI (hereafter known as NWR.)

<sup>173</sup> January, “The First Nullification Crisis,” 29; Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*.

<sup>174</sup> “Thomas Governor Thomas Bennett Jr. to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, July 15, 1822”; “Governor Thomas Bennett Jr. to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, July 30, 1822.” Bennett’s letters are

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also quoted in January, "The First Nullification Crisis," 66-67. Calhoun's hesitations about Bennett are quoted in Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 172.

<sup>175</sup> "Governor Thomas Bennett Jr. to Attorney General Robert Young Hayne, July 1, 1822." William Johnson caused a scandal when he publicly condemned the panic produced by the 1822 conspiracy. For his letter, see "Justice William Johnson Doubts the Extensiveness of the Plot, Warns Against Mass Hysteria, and Is Rebuked by the Court," in *Denmark Vesey The Slave Conspiracy of 1822*, ed. Robert S. Starobin, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1970), 67-70. For Haynes' response, see Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 178-79.

<sup>176</sup> Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 182, 199. The slaves pardoned Monday Gell, Charles Drayton and possibly Henry Haig. Bennett switched their sentence from execution to transportation, Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 194. Egerton only refers to the pardoning of Gell and Drayton, whereas Wade, in "The Vesey Plot: A Reconsideration," 147, includes Henry Haig.

<sup>177</sup> Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 177, 198.

<sup>178</sup> January, "The First Nullification Crisis," 52.

<sup>179</sup> January, "The First Nullification Crisis," 54; Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 201-202.

<sup>180</sup> Egerton, "Gabriel's Conspiracy and the Election of 1800," 208-211; Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion*.

<sup>181</sup> Egerton, "Gabriel's Conspiracy," 514; Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion*, 111-113.

<sup>182</sup> For the effects of the Missouri Compromise on South Carolina, see Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); January, "The First Nullification," 32-33.

<sup>183</sup> January, "The First Nullification Crisis," 34; Pearson, *Designs Against Charleston*, 40.

<sup>184</sup> Cantwell, *History of Charleston Police Force*; Maurie D. McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) 82-83; Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*, 203; Rogers, *Age of the Pinckneys*, 147-149 provides a description of how the treadmill worked

<sup>185</sup> See "Charleston Citizens Petition the State Legislature," in Starobin, *Denmark Vesey*, 141-148. The petition is also quoted in R.L. Schreadley, *Valor and Virtue: The Washington Light Infantry in War and Peace*, (Spartanburg, S.C.: Reprint Company, 1997), 27.

<sup>186</sup> "Charleston Citizens," in Starobin, *Denmark Vesey* and Schreadley, *Valor and Virtue*, 27.

<sup>187</sup> Schreadley, *Valor and Virtue*, 28; There were also calls for a Guard in the Charleston Neck region, *C.G.*, November 9, 1822.

<sup>188</sup> January, "The First Nullification Crisis." I have been unable to find any information on the logistics of the white guardian law or how or if it was actually implemented. Nevertheless, it is a unique law that deserves significant attention in future.

<sup>189</sup> Philip M. Hamer, "Great Britain, the United States, and the Negro Seamen Acts, 1822-1848," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Feb. 1935), 3-4.

<sup>190</sup> Hamer, "Negro Seamen Acts," 4-5; January, "The First Nullification Crisis."

<sup>191</sup> January, "The First Nullification Crisis," 142.

<sup>192</sup> McInnis, *The Politics of Taste*, 90. The S.C.A.'s takeover of Charleston's slave policing system should also be seen in relation to a slaveowner's sense of sovereignty—mainly, that rarely were slaveowners willing to compromise their sense of sovereignty to the state. This is a point historian Robin Einhorn makes in *American Taxation, American Slavery*.

<sup>193</sup> Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise*, 156. The other historians are William Freehling in *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina 1816-1836*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us From Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and January, "The First Nullification," and "The South Carolina Association." The S.C.A. is referenced in Fraser's, *Charleston! Charleston!*; W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>194</sup> For states' rights and nullification links to the S.C.A., see Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War* and Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise*. Freehling refers to the S.C.A. as "a permanent ante bellum institution, serving as an eternal watchdog over the slaves and as a fertile source of southern radicalism," 113. Whereas Ford sees the S.C.A. as a challenge to the burgeoning ideology of southern paternalism in *Deliver Us From Evil*.

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The SCA is absent in many personal papers including those of Keating Simons, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, John S. Cogdell and Elias Vanderhorst.

<sup>195</sup> January, "The South Carolina Association," 192.

<sup>196</sup> C.G., July 24, 1823.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, see January, "The Nullification Crisis," for analysis.

<sup>198</sup> C.C., July 25, 1823; *Charleston Mercury*, July 29, 1823 (hereafter known as C.M.)

<sup>199</sup> C.M., July 29, 1823.

<sup>200</sup> C.M., July 29, 1823.

<sup>201</sup> C.C., July 28, 1823.

<sup>202</sup> For a concise list of the founding officers of the S.C.A. with biographical notes, see January, "The South Carolina Association," 193. It is important to note that nowhere in the following biographies does the individual's involvement with the S.C.A. appear. For a history of the Pinckney family, see Mabel L. Webber, "The Thomas Pinckney Family of South Carolina," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Jan., 1938), pp. 15-35. For a short biography of Thomas Pinckney, see "Pinckney, Thomas," *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=P000357> and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, *Life of General Thomas Pinckney, by his grandson Rev. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney*, (New York: Moughton, Mifflin and Company, 1895). For Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, see Marvin R. Zahniser, *Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Founding Father*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967); For Elliott, see "Stephen Elliott Papers," *Harvard University Herbaria*, <http://www.huh.harvard.edu/libraries/archives/ELLIOT.htm>; Turnbull, see Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 126-127; James Hamilton, *An eulogium on the public services and character of Robert J. Turnbull, Esq., delivered in St. Philip's Church, Charleston, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of November, 1833 after the laying of the cornerstone of the monument erected by the States' Rights Party to his memory*, (Charleston: A.E. Miller, 1834), South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina (hereafter known as the SCHS.) For Cogdell, see Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 205. For a list of future S.C.A. members, see January, "The South Carolina Association." For information on Jacob Axsom, see Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey*, 199.

<sup>203</sup> For Keating Simons, a sheet of Simons' plantation book has been digitized by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, "Slaves at the Lewisfield Plantation of Keating Simons, Berkeley, SC, 1835," [http://www.fold3.com/page/283365239\\_slaves\\_at\\_the\\_lewisfield\\_plantation\\_of/](http://www.fold3.com/page/283365239_slaves_at_the_lewisfield_plantation_of/); *Keating Simons Personal Papers*, SCHS; Michael Johnson, "Reading Evidence," 194; For a good assessment of Thomas Pinckney's wealth, see McInnis, *The Politics of Taste*, 313-315 where McInnis provides a room-by-room inventory of Pinckney's grand Broad Street home. In addition, McInnis notes on page 52 that John S. Cogdell owned at least three slaves who resides in the outbuilding behind his house in the downtown Charleston area. Rev. Wightman quoted in Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 195. For Cattell, see "Inventory & Appraisement of slaves, good, chattels the property of the Estate of Col. William Cattell deceased at the Retreat Plantation in St. Andrew's Parish, So. Carolina," in William Cattell Trimble, *The Cattell Family of South Carolina*, (Brooklandville, Md.: W.C. Trimble, 1988), 13-18.

<sup>204</sup> See Raymond James Krohn, "Antebellum South Carolina Reconsidered: The Libertarian World of Robert J. Turnbull," *Journal of the Historical Society*, Vol.9, Issue 1, pages 129-154, March 2009.

<sup>205</sup> Pinckney, *Life of General Thomas Pinckney*.

<sup>206</sup> See Thomas Pinckney, "Thomas Pinckney Favors Excluding Black Workers from Charleston," in Starobin, 172-173; McInnis, *The Politics of Taste*, 75.

<sup>207</sup> The point of Charleston aristocracy is reinforced in McInnis, *The Politics of Taste*.

<sup>208</sup> C.C., August 14, 1823.

<sup>209</sup> C.C., August 15, 1823.

<sup>210</sup> C.M., September 19, 1823; January, "The South Carolina Association,"; Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us From Evil*, 284;

<sup>211</sup> C.M., October 20, 1823.

<sup>212</sup> January, "The South Carolina Association," 194.

<sup>213</sup> January, "The Nullification Crisis," 157, 158; "The South Carolina Association," 195.

<sup>214</sup> January, "The First Nullification,"; Hamer, "Great Britain, the United States, and the Negro Seamen Acts, 1822-1848." *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Feb. 1935), pp. 3-28.

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- <sup>215</sup> January, "The First Nullification," 159.
- <sup>216</sup> January, "The First Nullification," 159-160.
- <sup>217</sup> January, "The First Nullification," 161.
- <sup>218</sup> The technicality Johnson mentions is explained in January, "The First Nullification," 161-162. Johnson's quote can be found in the same source, page 164.
- <sup>219</sup> In one of his letters, Johnson seemingly exposed Isaac Holmes' relations to the South Carolina Association, in reference to the Negro Seamen Act. In response, Holmes published a piece in the *Niles Weekly Register* on September 20, 1825 that took on Johnson's alleged charges of secrecy. "In connecting my name with the South Carolina Association," Holmes wrote, "an honor rather than an injury has been done to me. So ardent is my admiration of its objects, such my respect for the gentlemen composing it, so thoroughly am I convinced of the purity, correctness and extent of its views, that I feel proud in being united with an institution which I sincerely believe calculated to confer upon the state the most important benefits," "South Carolina Law," *NWR*, September 20, 1825; Robert J. Turnbull, *The Crisis, or Essays on the Usurpation of the Federal Government by Brutus*, (Charleston: A.E. Miller, 1827) USC.
- <sup>220</sup> Turnbull, *The Crisis*, USC.
- <sup>221</sup> January, "The First Nullification," 178.
- <sup>222</sup> "South Carolina Association to Senate, ca. 1823," in Loren Schweninger ed., *The Southern Debate Over Slavery, Vol. 2: Petitions to Southern Courts, 1775-1867*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 78-82.
- <sup>223</sup> "SCA to Senate," 79.
- <sup>224</sup> "SCA to Senate," 80-81.
- <sup>225</sup> "SCA to Senate," 81-82. The last provision the S.C.A. called for was the prohibition of any free South Carolinian blacks from visiting northern and eastern states.
- <sup>226</sup> "SCA to Senate," 82.
- <sup>227</sup> January, "The South Carolina Association," 196-197.
- <sup>228</sup> *C.M.*, November 5, 1823.
- <sup>229</sup> *C.M.*, November 5, 1823.
- <sup>230</sup> *C.M.*, November 5, 1823.
- <sup>231</sup> January, "The South Carolina Association," 197.
- <sup>232</sup> *C.M.*, July 30, 1825.
- <sup>233</sup> *C.M.*, July 30, 1825.
- <sup>234</sup> *C.M.*, July 30, 1825.
- <sup>235</sup> *C.M.*, July 30, 1825.
- <sup>236</sup> *C.M.*, July 30, 1825.
- <sup>237</sup> January, "The South Carolina Association," 197-98.
- <sup>238</sup> "Petition of the South Carolina Association for an Act of Incorporation," November 1828, Legislative Papers, 1800-1830, Societies: Petitions, SCDHA.
- <sup>239</sup> "Petition of the SCA," SCDHA.
- <sup>240</sup> "Petition of the SCA," SCDHA.
- <sup>241</sup> "Petition of the SCA," SCDHA.
- <sup>242</sup> "Petition of the SCA," SCDHA; The Edisto Island Auxiliary Chapter was also incorporated. See January, "The South Carolina Association," 194.
- <sup>243</sup> Arellano, *Vigilantes and Lynch Mobs*, 23.
- <sup>244</sup> Einhorn, *American Taxation, American Slavery*; Hadden, *Slave Patrols*.
- <sup>245</sup> Arellano, *Vigilantes and Lynch Mobs*, 94.
- <sup>246</sup> Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 113.
- <sup>247</sup> Quoted in Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 212-213.

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