

“THE GREAT RISQUE WE RUN”: THE AFTERMATH OF SLAVE REBELLION AT STONO, SOUTH CAROLINA, 1739-1745

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The most serious slave uprising in colonial America occurred at Stono, near Charles Town, South Carolina, on Sunday, September 9, 1739.¹ After acquiring guns and other weapons and fortifying themselves with liquor, about sixty slaves marched toward St. Augustine, Florida. Their destination was determined by the impending Anglo-Spanish War and news of an edict issued by the Spanish governor at Florida guaranteeing freedom to all English slaves who might escape to St. Augustine. As they proceeded along the main road leading south, the slaves broke into several houses, killing the inhabitants, as a later report put it, in a “most cruel and barbarous Manner.”² Lieutenant Governor William Bull and a group of his companions were the first to encounter the increasingly confident slaves. Taken with their initial successes, their spirits buoyed by drink, the slaves had paused and begun singing and dancing. Outnumbered and surrounded by the militia, the rebels were overpowered by the end of the day. About forty slaves died in the fighting; others fled into the countryside, some hoping to return to their home plantations before their absence was noted.

The Stono uprising represented a significant escalation of black resistance to slavery in South Carolina. A group of slaves acted in concert on a scale requiring advance planning and forceful leadership. And although it was suppressed, the rebellion came close to success. Nearly two dozen whites had been murdered with remarkable ease. Little wonder that South Carolina was panic stricken. The safety of individual citizens was at issue, but more than that, there was the question of the very survival of the community. Whites had every reason to be terrified. They could hardly claim to be surprised, however, at what had happened. Far too many signs for far too long had pointed to trouble among Carolina’s slaves.

Blacks outnumbered whites in South Carolina by the early eighteenth century, a fact that was widely understood and consistently reported by officials. Figures sent by the governor and council to the Board of Trade in 1708 estimated that whites and Negro slaves were equally divided. Twelve years later blacks were said to count 12,000 of a combined population of 21,000. An informant declared that while the number of whites had declined between 1715 and 1720, “Ye Number of blacks in that time have very much increased.”³

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Natural increase accounted for some of the growth of the slave population, but this was augmented, especially after 1720, by a sharp rise in the number of Africans imported. White Carolinians were faced with a dilemma in that additional African immigrants contributed to the minority status of whites, yet the continued prosperity of the colony seemed to hinge on African laborers. Laborers from Africa “Enlarge our Export,” it was said, “by the many more hands sett at work.” Planters were enriched by the expanding productivity of their lands, which in turn permitted them “to Purchase great Numbers of Negro Slaves.” Whites flocked to the slave ships that arrived at Charles Town during the decades of the 1720s and 1730s.⁴

The slavers, originating in England, carried cargoes that averaged well over one hundred slaves per vessel. In the summer of 1724 ships carrying 116, 187, 112, 126, and 193 slaves reached South Carolina, and every indication is that their cargoes sold well. From the end of September, 1725, to the end of September, 1726, 1,751 Negroes were imported. Annual importations nearly doubled over the next decade; by 1738 Carolina planters were purchasing about 2,500 slaves annually. “*Negroes*,” wrote a correspondent to the *South Carolina Gazette* in 1738, “may be said to be the Bait proper for catching a *Carolina* planter, as certain as Beef to catch a Shark.”⁵

Unwilling to curtail the slave trade, white Carolinians tried instead to encourage the growth of the white population, thereby maintaining some balance or sense of proportion between blacks and whites. As early as 1698, as African immigrants began to pour into the colony, a legislative act sought to establish a ratio of one white servant to every six men slaves.⁶ The policy of placing import duties on new Negroes, inaugurated in 1703, took cognizance of the black/white ratio in 1714 by increasing the duty on slaves.⁷ Even English authorities had become alarmed by 1730 and added a new instruction to be sent to the South Carolina governor: “to encourage the Importation of White People, the Blacks bearing at present too great a Proportion to the Number of Whites.”⁸ By 1735 money collected from the duty program was earmarked for support of poor Protestants entering the colony.⁹ Not all Europeans remained in South Carolina after their arrival, however, for many disliked the competing labor force of black slaves. A remonstrance sent to home officials in 1734 declared that

Negroes are now trained up to be Handicraft Tradesmen, to the great discouragement of Your Majestys white Subjects, who came here to settle with a View of Employment in their several Occupations, but must often give way to a People in Slavery which we daily discover to be a great Obstruction to the Settlement of this Frontier with white People.¹⁰

White Carolinians saw themselves as more and more vulnerable to attack and acts of resistance by slaves. Acts perpetrated by individuals, such as murder, poisoning, and arson, were ominous enough, but they paled before organized group responses to slavery. Planned uprisings were discovered in 1714 and 1720. The slave plot of 1720 was described as “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 in full body.”¹¹ In the famous report of the Board of Trade in 1721 this was described as a “revolution” that would have led to the “utter Extirpation of all Your Majestys Subjects in this Province.”¹² Although no insurrections occurred prior to Stono, residents continued to speak of the “intestine Dangers” presented by the large slave population. “Insurrections against us have been often attempted,” the General

Assembly pointed out in 1734, "and would at any time prove very fatal if the French should instigate them by artfully giving them an Expectation of Freedom."¹³

The Stono uprising was threatening in any event — it was shocking confirmation of the potential for violence on the part of South Carolina's black population — but the challenge that it posed to the survival of the white community was heightened by its relationship to other events. The long expected war with Spain was declared in the autumn of 1739, and it may be that news of the war reached Charles Town the very week-end of the insurrection. Indeed, the timing of the uprising may have been determined by the outbreak of formal hostilities.¹⁴ Then, too, Carolina was hit by a major yellow fever epidemic during the late summer that killed dozens of inhabitants. The insurrection at Stono was followed in December, 1739, and in June, 1740, by rumors of other slave conspiracies. Finally, about a third of Charles Town was destroyed by fire in November, 1740, with total losses in warehouses, private dwellings and public buildings estimated at £250,000 sterling.¹⁵ It was at first believed that the fire had been caused by slaves, but this rumor was never proven. A report to the king drawn up by the General Assembly in July, 1740, before the Charles Town fire, declared that South Carolina was "greatly reduced and weakened, by a Series of Calamities and Misfortunes which have attended it for some Time past." Continuing, the General Assembly stated that the colony was "Wrestling with Difficulties at Home" at the same time that it was "exposed to Dangers from abroad." In the circumstance, the report concluded, "we have nothing left but to fly to your Majesty for protection."¹⁶

Still, Carolinians were not without some control over their own affairs. Fire, natural calamity, and invasion by external enemies were not, to be sure, easily checked. But the slave population could be shackled with new restraints, lessening the danger from that particular threat. In the aftermath of Stono white colonists adopted programs aimed at reducing "the great Risque we Run from an Insurrection of our Negroes."¹⁷ Together the new programs looked toward a fundamental alteration in the character of Carolina society, with a less open and compromising slave system. During the fall of 1739 the wheels of reform were set in motion. The white community must be made secure, the slave system tightened, and blacks rendered incapable of future discord.

As first steps, the slaves who had escaped on the day of the fighting had to be apprehended and others prevented from joining the ranks of the insurgents. Fears of continued violence were most pronounced in the area surrounding Stono, where a state of emergency prevailed during the fall of 1739. As a precaution some farmers abandoned their homes, going with their families to places more easily defended, where they lived with other refugees.¹⁸ In early December the militia was called out to pursue a group of runaway slaves committing robberies around Dorchester.¹⁹ With the approach of the Christmas holiday, when slaves traditionally were given time off for relaxation and merriment, rumors of renewed slave violence circulated and whites grew increasingly apprehensive. The militia was ordered to patrol the province and provide surveillance of the black population.²⁰ With the memory of Stono still very much alive, whites took seriously their responsibility to maintain the peace. A resident of Charles Town reported just after Christmas that citizens were "fatigued" from "keeping Guard in Town."²¹ Gradually, however, fears subsided and anxiety over short-range military protection eased. Even so, some of the Stono rebels remained at

large for several years. One alleged leader, discovered late in December, 1742, in a swamp, was brought to Stono and “immediately hang’d.”²²

While moving swiftly to suppress the insurrection and to capture and punish rebels, local officials also addressed the question of future security and prevention of similar outbursts. Major adjustments and the reshaping of policy had to await the convening of the General Assembly, which did not meet until November, 1739. Once a quorum was achieved and the Commons House organized, however, South Carolina’s slave population became a paramount issue.

On November 8 a seven-member committee appointed to consider how best to proceed in relieving the residents of Stono from the dangers posed by “Domestic Enemies” also was charged with considering “the most effectual Means for Prevention of such Dangers throughout the Province.” The committee soon settled upon a military solution, offering a set of detailed recommendations to strengthen the provincial militia and to activate the patrol system, especially in the vicinity of Stono. Further discussion led to the conclusion that the Patrol Act, passed in 1737, should be revised. The patrol laws, requiring whites to contribute time to overseeing and disciplining slaves, had always been difficult to enforce. As examination of the existing patrol system proceeded, the Commons House requested Lieutenant Governor Bull to reproduce in the local newspaper pertinent sections of the Patrol Act so that “it may [be] known by all Persons how far they are liable to perform that Service by the said Act.”²³

A bill “for the better establishing and regulating of Patrols” was read in the Commons House on March 3, 1740, where it was debated and amended. The House considered and rejected, for example, a provision requiring that slave owners prepare a list of all their male slaves to be submitted to the militia captains so that “every Slave might be called by Name, when the Patrols should visit the Plantations.” Two months after it was introduced the patrol bill was ready for the governor’s assent, which was granted on May 10. Still concerned about enforcement and the willingness of citizens to comply with the new act, assemblymen ordered the House clerk to have printed in the *Gazette* relevant sections of the new statute, so that all might know their responsibilities.²⁴

The law strengthening the patrol system and placing enforcement in the hands of the militia was one of several statutes enacted by the General Assembly in the aftermath of Stono. An “Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes and other Slaves,” also passed in May, 1740, was a thorough revision of the South Carolina slave code that survived into the nineteenth century. South Carolina’s laws on slavery had developed in a piecemeal fashion prior to 1740. Defined originally as freehold property, slaves in the new law were held to be personal chattels. Apart from this significant redefinition of slave property, the slave code of 1740 established rules of conduct for both blacks and whites. Many of the old provisions regarding slavery were reenacted, while numerous new ones were added. Special attention was given to preventing assemblies of slaves, to prohibiting slaves from learning to write, and to discouraging their use of strong liquors. On the theory that mistreated and overworked slaves were a menace, the revised slave code stipulated that masters avoid working their slaves on Sundays and provide them with adequate clothing. The law of 1740 was detailed and comprehensive, and created a slave regime that was both more strict and, at least in certain respects, more humane than its predecessor.²⁵

South Carolina's leaders also determined to reduce the number of slaves entering the colony, thereby changing the proportion of whites to blacks. Duties had been charged on imported slaves since 1703.²⁶ The amount of the duty varied, although higher rates were imposed on slaves brought from American ports. Taxing slaves was a means of raising revenue, which in South Carolina went for support of government. But other purposes could be served by a duty on new Negroes, including control of the number of blacks entering. The Negro duty law of 1724 was the first attempt to restrict importations of slaves through levying higher duties. This same motive operated when later duty statutes were passed, even though the flow of incoming slaves was not seriously affected. As noted earlier, slave imports rose during the period 1720-1739.

Approximately 2000 slaves reached the colony in the year of the Stono rebellion.²⁷ Two of the ten large cargoes of slaves imported in 1739 arrived after the Stono incident. Joseph Wragg and Company, a leading Charles Town slave dealer, handled the sale of these cargoes, one of which contained 382 slaves.²⁸ The next year witnessed a sharp decline in the number of slaving vessels coming to Charles Town. The ship *Griffin*, owned by a group of English merchants, came to port in mid-December, 1740, with about 250 Angola slaves. The weather, wrote a local merchant, "has been so extremely Cold ever since & Continues with hard frosts & Snow." As might be expected, such inclement weather hampered sales. Still, the same observer reported that while the weather was "a great Detriment to the Negroes [and] what we have sold of them has been att a very good price."²⁹

By this time the Assembly had passed a new Negro duty bill. After extended discussion, exchange between the two houses, and modification of the original bill through amendment, the bill received final approval on April 5, 1740. Because slaving voyages were planned months ahead of their scheduled arrival at Charles Town, the duty law of 1740 allowed a fifteen-month grace period before becoming effective. Beginning July, 1741, the act taxed incoming slaves at £100 per head, a rate ten times the regular assessment and intended as a prohibition. The higher duty was to be collected for three years, until July, 1744. It was hoped that the arrival of white immigrants would in the meantime change the racial composition of the colony.³⁰

Robert Pringle, who was implicated in the Carolina slave trade, had watched the progress of the duty law in the Assembly. Disturbed by the events at Stono and supportive of the new programs designed to maintain white hegemony, Pringle believed that the higher tax on slaves was "equal to a prohibition" and "will be good for the Province in Generall."³¹ Nevertheless, Pringle underlined significant truths when he reminded his correspondents that South Carolina was a key market where slaves sold at a substantial profit. Reporting on the £100 duty, Pringle informed traders of the long period — fifteen months — before enforcement. A merchant at Antigua was told that

This has been Accounted the best Harkett for Negroes some Years past, but our assembly have pass'd an Act to Impose a high duty on Negroes Imported equal to a prohibition being £100 Currency per head . . . but said Act is not to take place till fifteen Months After it is Ratified, and it was Ratified the 5th Inst. & to Continue for three Years and what Negroes happen to be Imported before the fifteen Months are expired will come to a good Markett as Negroes will be much wanted here before the act is out in Case it is not Repeal'd at home.³²

Halting the Negro import trade, accomplished between July, 1741, and July, 1744, was one edge of a double-edged assault on the racial imbalance in Carolina. The other was a stepped up drive to promote white immigration. The legislative committee created to consider the problem of slave unrest remarked early in its deliberations that “it appears to be absolutely necessary to get a sufficient Number of white Persons into this Province.”³³ Since the 1730s South Carolina had supported a township plan that used public funds in settling European immigrants in new townships. The most important of these settlements was Purrysburg, founded about 1732 and by 1735 the home of several hundred Swiss colonists.³⁴ In the latter year, as noted, the Assembly began applying money collected from the duty on Negroes “to and for the use of purchasing tools, provisions, and other necessaries for poor Protestants lately arrived.”³⁵ The duty law of 1740 continued this support, granting two-thirds of the revenue for transportation and a year’s supplies and tools to “poor Protestants.” Encouraging white immigration would enable the province “to suppress any further insurrection of negroes [sic] and slaves.”³⁶ Officials anticipated that the racial imbalance could be altered by reducing the volume of incoming slaves while simultaneously offering generous assistance to white settlers.

The safeguards erected by white leaders following the Stono uprising demanded the cooperation of the white community if they were to be effectual. Danger lurked everywhere, raising doubts and insecurities that could be allayed only through exercising constant supervision of slaves. Yet in important respects slave society was immune to regulation by the master class. Whites could not readily observe activities within the slave quarters or monitor the social intercourse that was a part of plantation life. The best reporters of the goings-on among blacks were the slaves themselves. Alert to the possibilities of employing blacks as informers, whites did what they could to encourage loyalty among the bondsmen. A divided black community was a goal worth pursuing.

Lieutenant-Governor Bull articulated this view in November, 1739. He had been reflecting on the conduct of some slaves during the late insurrection, he wrote in a message to the Commons House, who

on that Occasion shewed so much Integrity and Fidelity, that it was at that Time a Service to the Province, as well as to their Masters’ Families, and saved them from the Fate of several of their unfortunate Neighbors; and bravely withstood that barbarous Attempt at the Hazard of their own Lives.

Bull noted in particular the contributions of a male slave owned by Thomas Elliott. He then continued:

When Services of this Nature are distinguished, and a suitable Reward bestowed in a public Manner, it may have that good Effect, as to encourage many others to follow such Examples; and would, I am persuaded, contribute much to our Strength and Security.³⁷

After investigation, a legislative committee agreed that Thomas Elliott’s slave July was “chiefly instrumental in saving his Master and his Family from being destroyed by the rebellious Negroes; and had at several Times bravely fought against the Rebels, and killed one of them.” As reward for his “faithful Services,” as well as an example to other slaves, the committee recommended that July should have his freedom and “a Present of a Suit of Clothes, Shirt, Hat, a Pair of Stockings, and a Pair of Shoes.”³⁸

July was the only slave who received his freedom. Freedom, after all, was the ultimate reward and had to be used sparingly, for too many free blacks could raise additional problems for a society dedicated to the perpetuation of slavery. Thirty slaves were cited for their loyalty during the insurrection and rewarded with gifts of clothing and cash payments. Sixteen — fifteen men and a woman — received a full suit of clothes and £20 for behaving well during the crisis and “opposing the rebellious Negroes.” Clothes and £10 went to three men slaves who demonstrated similar, though less, loyalty. A group of ten slaves, all male, who “did assist in the taking and apprehending some of the rebellious Negroes” received rewards of clothes and £5. The Negro man Quash, who “did endeavour to take one of the rebellious Negroes,” was granted £10. The clothes were to be made “with blue Strouds, faced up with Red, and trimmed with brass Buttons.” With anxiety running high, it was agreed that these loyal slaves should have their rewards by the Christmas holiday, thus serving as an incentive to others should there be trouble at that time. The slaves were rounded up, brought to Charles Town, and their gifts bestowed on December 12.³⁹

As an incentive, the policy of rewarding informers held out considerable promise. The uprising planned for June, 1740, in St. John’s Parish, Berkley County, was revealed to whites by a Negro named Peter, owned by Major Cordes, a resident of the area. Between 150 and 200 slaves took part in this plan to seize Charles Town by force. The Assembly arranged for Peter to come to the capital and receive the standard reward of new clothing and £20.⁴⁰ Three years later, in the spring of 1743, a slave named Sabina betrayed a group of slaves planning to desert to St. Augustine; the Commons House recommended that her loyalty be properly compensated.⁴¹

Officials hoped that the reward system would inspire slaves to assist in the capture and punishment of Stono rebels. Many of the insurrectionists were in fact taken or killed by loyal slaves. A black man owned by Mr. Spry was given £10 in August, 1740, for apprehending a rebel. Some slaves became rebel-hunters, actively pursuing participants in the uprising. The services of a slave rewarded in January, 1742, included killing one rebel and later capturing another.⁴²

Whites, of course, had always encouraged slave informers and sometimes rewarded them. After September, 1739, however, it became official policy to foment division among blacks and to grant special privileges to those whose loyalty was exemplary. That policy planted seeds of suspicion and distrust among slaves. Slaves could not serve two masters; the other side of loyalty to whites and the slave regime was disloyalty to blacks. Powerful forces within slave society forged a sense of shared experiences and common destiny that in turn fed group loyalty. But whites imposed pressures on slaves too, some strong enough to lead to betrayal of others. The stakes in this competition for allegiance could be high. One slave was killed and another maimed in 1743 when they attempted to capture a runaway.⁴³

Slave owners had never warmed to the idea of baptizing slaves and instructing them in the rudiments of Christianity. After Stono, whites in Carolina permitted the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G.) to introduce programs for slaves that before were considered inappropriate. The S.P.G. proposed that schools be established for the training or indoctrination of slaves. About 1742 the S.P.G. purchased two “Country born young Negroes” to be trained as teachers. They were “instructed to read the Bible, and in the chief Principles of the Christian Religion.”

Their training complete, the slaves were placed in schools, one of which was located at Charles Town, and Negro and Indian children were offered a Christian education “without any Charge to their Masters or Owners.” When Alexander Garden appealed to the citizens of Charles Town for donations of £400 for use in construction of a black school, four local slave dealers were among the initial sixteen contributors.⁴⁴

Any reconsideration of slavery in South Carolina had to take into account Spanish attempts to undermine the institution. For Carolina’s slaves, St. Augustine had come to symbolize freedom. “As the Protection our deserted Slaves have met with at that Castle,” wrote Bull, “has doubtless encouraged others to make the like Attempts and even to rise in Rebellion, so the Demolition of that Place, would free us from the like Danger for the Future.”⁴⁵ Eventually, after what seemed to some prolonged and unnecessary debate, the General Assembly agreed to assist General James Oglethorpe in an invasion of Florida. South Carolina contributed nearly 500 troops and as many Indians, supplies, and a promise to appropriate over £40,000 currency for use by Oglethorpe.⁴⁶ The English campaign, which lasted from the beginning of May to early July, 1740 has been called a “fiasco from beginning to end” by a modern historian.⁴⁷ A contemporary referred to it as an “Inglorious Expedition” characterized by “Bad conduct & Ill Management.”⁴⁸

The failure of the St. Augustine expedition, which permitted the Spanish to retain their position at Florida until the Peace of Paris in 1763, was part of a broader failure to transform South Carolina after 1739. For despite the energy expended on slavery and the various programs aimed at safeguarding the colony from black subversion, no fundamental reorientation occurred. Indeed, most of the programs launched after 1739 were ineffective. The flurry of citizen involvement and legislative activity did not result in long-lasting or permanent change. Carolina’s course, it appears, had been charted decades before the Stono rebellion. Once the immediate danger had passed and memories were blunted, masters and slaves returned to their former ways.

There was reason to expect that the revised Patrol Act would at best be casually enforced. As before, citizens proved unwilling to engage in close surveillance of the slave population. It was only a short while, therefore, before complaints began to be heard and suggestions made to strengthen the patrol. Even with later changes in the system and amendments of the law, the South Carolina patrol system did not prevent slaves from moving about, traveling from their places of work and endangering the lives of whites. It was asserted in 1742 that “great Bodies of Negroes have assembled together, on Pretence of religious Worship, contrary to Law, and destructive to the Peace and Safety of the Inhabitants of this Province.”⁴⁹

Slaves not only strayed from their home plantations, they engaged in a variety of activities that were either illegal or regarded as threatening to the well-being of the white community. The constables of Charles Town in 1742 thought the behavior of slaves worthy of public notice. Slaves, they said, bought and sold in the public market, contrary to law, and engaged in the “ill Practice” of driving carts in the streets of the town.⁵⁰

More disturbing, perhaps, were whites who in effect collaborated with slaves in violating the law. Often this was in connection with clandestine economic activities as goods were exchanged in the local market. Slaves were allowed to frequent ale-houses and taverns. Joseph Moody, for example, was charged in 1742 with entertaining

Negroes, "to the Disturbance (as we are inform'd) of the Neighbours thereabout."⁵¹ A grand jury presentment in Charles Town in October, 1744, cited several violations of the law by slaves and whites. Negroes were charged with wearing gay and expensive clothing and with openly buying and selling goods. The sale of strong liquors to slaves, a recurring problem, also was cited. The grand jury noted that slaves "do hire themselves to work, without a Ticket from their respective Masters and Mistresses."⁵² The slave code forbade such activity, but enforcement proved difficult because many whites hired slaves without asking questions. A slave owner placed this notice in 1741:

I have formerly advertis'd all Persons not to employ my Negro Man *Lancaster* in white washing or any other kind of Work whatever, but to little purpose; since he constantly earns Money (which he loses either by *Gaming* or spends among the little *Punch-Houses*) altho' he has been *run away* for this Month past: I do therefore once more peremptorily forbid all Persons from employing the said *Lancaster* in any Manner whatever. . .⁵³

Importation of slaves from Africa gradually resumed following expiration of the three year moratorium on the slave trade. The first cargo of African slaves reached Charles Town in early August, 1744. Another slaver arrived a month later and two more African vessels came in during the month of October, as the season drew to a close. The remainder of the decade of the 1740s, however, did not see a burgeoning of the slave trade, probably because of a combination of factors, including renewed warfare between England and France. About 400 slaves reached Charles Town in 1748, and by 1752 more than 1000 slaves per year were being sold in Carolina, a figure that leaped to over 3,600 in 1760.⁵⁴ The South Carolina slave trade flourished during the last quarter of the colonial era, as merchants vigorously prosecuted the trade and Carolina planters eagerly added to their work force. Writing to the Board of Trade in 1754, Governor James Glen reported that "There have been already Imported since the 1st of November [1753] upwards of 2000 Negroes, and there are some Ships that are still expected from Africa with more, they have all been very readily sold and at great Prices, they are now all purchased for ready money or with bonds bearing Interest, which are really as good as ready money, for I know of few or no Planters whose Credit is suspected. As Negroes are sold at higher Prices here than in any part of the Kings Dominions we have them sent from Barbadoes, the leeward Islands, Jamaica, Virginia and New York."⁵⁵

Heavy slave importation led to further growth of the slave population. As Glen observed, "these Importations are not to supply the place of Negroes worn out with hard work or lost by Mortallity which is the case in our Islands where were it not for an annual accretion they could not keep up their stock, but our number increases even without such yearly supply."⁵⁶

The increase among whites did not overtake the increase in the slave population, with the result that blacks sustained their majority through the colonial era. Governor Glen estimated a population in 1751 of 25,000 whites and 40,000 blacks.⁵⁷ Before the end of the decade blacks outnumbered whites almost two to one; estimates for 1770 indicate 49,000 whites and 75,000 blacks.⁵⁸ South Carolina continued to be unattractive to European immigrants, who resented the competing labor force of slaves trained as "useful Mechanicks, as Coopers, Carpenters, Masons, Smiths, Wheelwrights, and other Trades."⁵⁹ Some whites lobbied for "a Law to prevent the hiring out [of] Negro

Tradesmen to the great Discouragement of white Workmen coming into this Province.”⁶⁰

White Carolinians did not transform their society in the years after Stono. They continued to live as a minority among a population dominated by blacks. The attempt to promote white as opposed to black immigration and to subject slaves to regulations further limiting what few freedoms they enjoyed in 1739 failed. Slaves became a class of law-breakers, for they did not accept as legitimate the legislative enactments circumscribing their behavior. Whites were forced by their bondsmen into fashioning their own compromises with the system. Private interests, often economic in nature, took precedence over the demands of the law. The legal dimensions of slavery were easily forgotten as blacks and whites sought ways in which to live with each other.

The post-Stono years did bring new pressures for slaves, as they adjusted to a policy of dividing slave society. White overtures in the form of rewards and special privileges won the allegiance of many slaves. Thus the slave Agrippa played the informer in 1749 and revealed to whites a planned slave uprising.⁶¹

This was the price paid by white Carolinians as they sustained the slave system: the uneasiness of living as a minority among a captive and restless population. Almost thirty years after Stono the governor referred to the “unhappy consequences” that could result from the racial division in South Carolina. He went on:

I have a few days ago reced intimation that some plots are forming & some attempts of insurrection to be made during these Holy days, at which time Slaves are allowed some days of festivity & exemption from labour. I shall therefore take proper measures to prevent the execution of such designs by giving necessary directions to the Militia & Patrols to be alert on their duty on that season which I hope will either discourage or suppress their attempt.⁶²

It mattered little that Governor Bull could later report that his apprehensions regarding a Negro insurrection “happily proved abortive.”⁶³ Residents of Carolina continued to live, as they had before Stono, with the “Great Risque” of a slave rebellion.

¹The best secondary account of the uprising is in Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York, 1974). In the contemporary literature, see Allen D. Candler, et al., eds., *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, XXII, Part 2 (1904-16), 232-36.

²J.H. Easterby, ed., *The Colonial Records of South Carolina. The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, May 18, 1741-July 10, 1742* (Columbia, 1953), p. 83. Hereafter cited as Easterby, ed., *Commons Journal*.

³Governor and Council to the Board of Trade, Sept. 17, 1708, Records in the British Public Record Office (B.P.R.O.) Relating to South Carolina, V, 203, South Carolina Archives (SCA); Queries from the Lords of Trade abt. Carolina, Aug. 19, 1720, Documents Drawn up for the Information of the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, Coe Papers, South Carolina Historical Society (SCHS).

⁴An Answer to the Queries sent by the Honble the Lords Commissioners of trade and plantations. . . , Jan. 29, 1719, *ibid.*, Coe Papers; Governor Johnson to Board of Trade, Jan. 12, 1719/20, Records in the B.P.R.O. Relating to South Carolina, VII, 245.

⁵Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. 4, *The Border Colonies and the Southern Colonies* (Washington, D.C., 1935), 267-68; Records in the B.P.R.O. Relating to South Carolina, XII, 180; W. Robert Higgins, “The Geographical Origins of Negro Slaves in Colonial South Carolina,” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, LXX (1971), 40; *South Carolina Gazette*, Mar. 9, 1738.

⁶Thomas Cooper and David James McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia, S. C., 1836-93), II, 153-56.

⁷*Ibid.* II, 203-6, VII, 365-68. See W. Robert Higgins, "The South Carolina Negro Duty Law, 1703-1775," (Master's thesis, University of South Carolina, 1967).

⁸Board of Trade to His Majesty, June 10, 1730, Records in the B.P.R.O. Relating to South Carolina, XIV, 145.

⁹Cooper and McCord, eds., *Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, III, 409-11.

¹⁰Records in the B.P.R.O. Relating to South Carolina, XVI, 383.

¹¹Letter to Mr. Boone from_____, June 24, 1720, *ibid.*, VIII, 24.

¹²*Ibid.*, IX, 68.

¹³*Ibid.*, XVI, 398-99.

¹⁴See Wood, *Black Majority*, p. 314.

¹⁵M. Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina, A Political History 1663-1763* (Chapel Hill, 1966), pp. 212-13.

¹⁶Easterby, ed., *Commons Journal, September 12, 1739-March 26, 1741*, pp. 364-67.

¹⁷Robert Pringle to Andrew Pringle, Nov. 22, 1740, in Walter B. Edgar, ed., *The Letterbook of Robert Pringle, Volume One: April 2, 1737-September 25, 1742* (Columbia, 1972), p. 273.

¹⁸Easterby, ed., *Commons Journal, September 12, 1739-March 26, 1741*, p. 37.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 69.

²¹Robert Pringle to Andrew Pringle, Dec. 27, 1739, *Letterbook*, p. 163.

²²*South-Carolina Gazette*, Dec. 27, 1742.

²³Easterby, ed., *Commons Journal, September 12 1739-March 26, 1741*, pp. 17, 25-26, 68. Bull compiled and the *Gazette* printed sections of the Patrol Act outlining the responsibility of militia captains and their subordinates and identifying individuals who had to serve. See *South-Carolina Gazette*, Dec. 8, 1739.

²⁴Easterby, ed., *Commons Journal, September 12, 1739-March 26, 1741*, pp. 224, 241, 242, 288-89, 329, 344; *South Carolina Gazette*, May 17, 1740.

²⁵Easterby, ed., *Commons Journal, September 12, 1739-March 26, 1741*, pp. 34, 68, 117, 118, 119, 329, 344; Cooper and McCord, eds., *Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, VII, 397-417; M. Eugene Sirmans, "The Legal Status of the Slave in South Carolina, 1670-1740," *Journal of Southern History*, XXVIII (1962), 462-73.

²⁶Higgins, "The South Carolina Negro Duty Law, 1703-1775."

²⁷Higgins, "Geographical Origins of Negro Slaves in Colonial South Carolina," p. 40.

²⁸*South-Carolina Gazette*, Nov. 24, Dec. 8, 1739; Wood, *Black Majority*, pp. 338-39.

²⁹*South-Carolina Gazette*, Dec. 11, 1740; Robert Pringle to Andrew Pringle, Dec. 29, 1740, *Letterbook*, p. 282.

³⁰Easterby, ed., *Commons Journal, September 12, 1739-March 26, 1741*, pp., 35, 46, 54, 126-27, 131, 137-38, 255, 306; Cooper and McCord, eds., *Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, III, 556-68.

³¹Robert Pringle to John Erving, Aug. 30, 1740, *Letterbook*, p. 242.

³²Robert Pringle to Charles Gore, Apr. 19, 1740, *ibid.*, p. 182.

³³Easterby, ed., *Commons Journal September 12, 1739-March 26, 1741*, p. 25.

³⁴Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, pp. 167-68.

³⁵Cooper and McCord, eds., *Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, III, 409.

³⁶*Ibid.*, III, 556-68; Higgins, "The South Carolina Negro Duty Law, 1703-1775," pp. 62ff.

³⁷Easterby, ed., *Commons Journal September 12, 1739-March 26, 1741*, pp. 50-51.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

³⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 64-65, 82, 85-86, 100-1.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 378.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, *September 14, 1742-January 27, 1744*, pp. 263-64, 265.

⁴²*Ibid.*, *September 12, 1739-March 26, 1741*, pp. 377-78, *May 18, 1741-July 10, 1742*, p. 330.

⁴³*Ibid.*, *September 14, 1742-January 27, 1744*, pp. 387.

⁴⁴*South-Carolina Gazette*, Mar. 14, 1743, Apr. 2, 1744.

⁴⁵Easterby, ed., *Commons Journal, September 12 1739-March 26, 1741*, p. 16.

⁴⁶Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, pp. 210-11.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 211.

⁴⁸ Robert Pringle to Andrew Pringle, July 14, 1740, *Letterbook*, p. 230. A good brief account of the St. Augustine expedition can be found in Phinizy Spalding, *Oglethorpe in America*, (Chicago, 1977).

⁴⁹ Easterby, ed., *Commons Journal, September 14, 1742-January 27, 1744*, p. 73; *South-Carolina Gazette*, Mar. 27, 1742.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Apr. 3, 1742.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, Nov. 5, 1744.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Oct. 24, 1741.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Aug. 6, Sept. 10, Oct. 22, 1744; Higgins, “Geographical origins of Negro Slaves in Colonial South Carolina,” p. 40.

⁵⁵ James Glen to Board of Trade, Aug. 26, 1754, Records in the B.P.R.O. Relating to South Carolina, XXVI, 111-12.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ James Glen to Board of Trade, Mar. 1751, William Henry Lyttelton Papers (microfilm copy, reel 1), SCA.

⁵⁸ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C., 1975), Part 2, p. 1168.

⁵⁹ James Glen to Board of Trade, Mar. 1751, Lyttelton Papers.

⁶⁰ Easterby, ed., *Commons Journal, September 14, 1742-January 27, 1744*, p. 73.

⁶¹ Carolina officials concluded that this affair was a hoax. See Philip Hamer, et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens, Volume One: Sept. 11, 1746-Oct. 31, 1755*, (Columbia, 1968), p. 229, and note 2, p. 229.

⁶² William Bull to Lords of Trade and Plantations, Dec. 17, 1765, Records in the B.P.R.O. Relating to South Carolina, XXX, 300-301.

⁶³ Bull to My Lords, January 25, 1766, *ibid.*, XXXI, 20-21.