

IMPORTANCE OF CHARLESTON IN SOUTHERN
HISTORY 1670-1860

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HISTORY 1670-1860

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This thesis was written in an attempt to portray the growth and history of Charleston, South Carolina, from 1670 to 1860. The story begins with the founding of the city and the conditions that prevailed at the time the Huguenots landed on the Carolina coast, and closes when much of the glory of the city was lost in the shadows that fell over the South with the coming of the Civil War. On account of its splendid location and natural advantages, Charleston developed into one of the greatest commercial, social, and cultural centers of the entire South.

The original interest of the author in this subject was inspired by a visit to Charleston in 1938. At that time an indelible impression was made on his mind of the importance of that city in the history of the South. The research material used in this study was made available by the library of the North Texas State Teacher's College.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Charleston, South Carolina, is one of the oldest cities in America. It is located on a peninsula between the Ashley and the Cooper Rivers at the head of a landlocked bay, and thus has a water front on three sides. The harbor, six miles long and three miles wide, is now considered one of the finest anchorages in the United States. The port is defended by Fort Moultrie at its entrance, and by Fort Sumter on an island in the middle of the bay.

The history of the territory that is now the state of South Carolina dates back to the year 1520 when it was explored by some Spaniards from Cuba. In 1562, forty-five years before the English colonization of Virginia, fifty-two years before the Dutch settlement of New York, and fifty-eight years before the Puritans landed at Massachusetts Bay, Captain Jean Ribault of Dieppe, commanding the first Huguenot emigration to North America, on the first day of May, entered the beautiful harbor of what is now Fort Royal, South Carolina. Internal dissension weakened the infant Huguenot colony and it was soon destroyed by the Spanish. The life of this settlement was short and it was not until

about one hundred years later that a permanent settlement was made. In 1629, Charles II granted the Carolina region in America to Sir Robert Heath, but he did not attempt to make any kind of settlement and allowed the claim to lapse.

The settlers from Jamestown, Virginia, began to explore the upper water of several streams flowing into the Albemarle and Currituck Sounds and finally established a settlement at Albemarle. This settlement at Albemarle Sound did not grow very rapidly and the proprietors commenced to send out expeditions seeking more settlers. One of these expeditions under the leadership of Captain Robert Sanford landed at Port Royal and claimed the territory in the name of England. Three years later in April, 1670, Captain William Sayle and a small group of one hundred fifty colonists landed at the mouth of the Ashley River.

There they founded the first English settlement in South Carolina, which they named "Old Charles Towne" in honor of England's King, Charles II. The early site of Charlestown was simply a marsh and very unhealthy, consequently in 1671 a decision was made to move the town to a more convenient and more healthful spot. The site selected was between the Ashley and the Cooper Rivers.

The city of Charleston was laid out in such a way that it would be easy to have protection from the Indians. The plans were sent from England, and the very wide streets were laid out so that most of them went down to the water-front.

These same streets today seem very narrow, but for that day they were wide and conveniently arranged. Soon after the new site was located building commenced, which was carried forward very rapidly. Lumber was plentiful and of a very fine variety. A fort or wall was constructed around the city for its protection from the savage red man. The trees and underbrush all around the peninsula were cut away in order that the colonists might be able to see the Indians from a distance, and prepare themselves for any raids.

The soil in and around Charleston is of a variety that will produce almost every thing grown in a temperate climate. The early settlers raised most of the products that they needed. The climate is quite delightful and has often been compared to that of sunny Italy. Although some of the surrounding country is marsh-land and unhealthful, the city of Charleston is cooled by a breeze from the Atlantic ocean. From the date of the establishment of the first settlement, Charleston has grown rapidly as a social, economic, and cultural center. It is called the metropolis of the State of South Carolina.

Charleston's location on the water-front assured the inhabitants of a constant and steady stream of settlers emigrating from the native land of England. These English settlers were not the only ones, however, that poured in from the sea. The population of Charleston has always been

of varied nationalities. Shipping to and from the foreign countries started almost immediately, and with this opening the traders and planters from other lands began to drift to Charleston's shores. With the settlers came the customs and trades of other nations, and for this reason its history is one of the most interesting of all the cities in our country.

From the establishment of the first settlement, by Captain William Sayle in 1670, to the year 1860, development was rapid and exciting from every angle. The social and economic influence of Charleston upon the South has been far-reaching and wide-spread. Through its development and progress it is possible to follow the development of the entire South, beginning with the first cotton shipped from the City of Charleston to England's shores. Many of the first settlers arriving in Charleston pushed inland, making new settlements, and into each of these new settlements was carried the atmosphere of 'Old Charles Towne.' Its value to the South is shown from the very beginning of its history. The ancient vintage of its culture and progress is noticeably evident throughout the history of the South.

CHAPTER II

UNDER THE PROPRIETORY FROM 1670 TO 1719

The history of Charleston, South Carolina, from the establishment of its present location, in November 1680, to the period ending in 1860, portrays a vivid and colorful picture of life and development in the old South. Although the English had been interested in the Virginia and Carolina coast for more than a hundred years, and an earlier settlement had been made at "Old Charles Towne" in 1670, the history of the present day Charleston has its beginning in the year 1680.

In the year 1629, Charles I of England, made an attempt to pay off a debt of gratitude to one of his faithful and loyal subjects. The payment of the debt to Sir Robert Heath was in the form of a donation of land in America. The grant included all the land south of Virginia, thence west to the Pacific ocean. Sir Robert made no effort to take possession of his newly acquired, large, wild, and almost uninhabited territory, and in consequence the claim was allowed to lapse.

Again in 1663, King Charles II paid some of his political debts, by granting to certain English lords and noblemen, the very same territory that his father had donated to Sir Robert

Heath. Originally the territory of Carolina was granted to Lord Clarendon, the Duke of Albemarle, Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Ashley, Lord Craven, Lord Berkley, Sir George Carteret, Sir John Colleton and Sir William Berkeley. These Englishmen became the Lords Proprietors of the vast estate, and for a period of forty-nine years Charleston was governed by these Lords Proprietors. Soon after this grant was made by Charles II trouble arose over the original grant of his father to Sir Robert Heath. Charles II simply cancelled the old grant, issued a new one and called the new owners the "Second Lords Proprietors."¹ This territory, somewhat larger than the first grant, was renamed Carolina, and was to be governed in the English manner, the territory becoming a Palatinate.

The territory already settled and established as Virginia influenced the growth of Carolina. Many of the early Virginians were dissatisfied with the conditions in that colony and began to drift to other regions. Their first settlement was located at Albemarle Sound. The settlers were slow in drifting down from Virginia, and the colony was not growing with any noticeable rapidity. In April 1670, Captain William Sayle set out from the Barbadoes with about one hundred fifty colonists for the shores of Carolina and the first settlement was made at the mouth of the Ashley River.²

¹ Harriette Kershaw Leiding, Charleston Historic and Romantic, p. 19.

² E. C. Hawk, Economic History of the South, p. 47.

This first location was in the marsh land, and very unhealthful; it was far from civilization and in constant danger of raids by the Indians and Spaniards. Hardships were innumerable, and sickness and hunger took the lives of many of the colonists. These unfavorable conditions led the colonists to search for a more suitable location, in which they would feel better protected from the savage onslaughts, and also have more convenient and healthful houses. Up the peninsula a short way from "Old Charles Towne," an ideal place for the new town was selected. Here the Ashley and Cooper Rivers, less than a mile apart, supplied the town with an abundance of landing space sufficient to accommodate as many ships as desired to come into its harbor. This location gave Charleston one of the largest and most valuable harbors in America. The founders of the town probably foresaw what was later written about it:

The town was situated at the narrow apex of a triangle and would eventually drain the trade of the whole hinterland through its streets and ship timber, rice, indigo, naval stores, thousands of skins of wild animals, and other Carolina products over her wharves. ³

In honor of their donor, and their King, the Lords Proprietors called the city "Old Charles Towne," this name later being shortened and changed to Charleston. The plans for the city were sent over from England, the specifications calling for main streets to be not less than one hundred feet

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Harriette Kershaw Leiding, Charleston Historic and Romantic, p. 25.

broad, other streets to be at least sixty-feet wide, and the narrowest alley ways to be not less than eight feet. The streets were named for many of the prominent early settlers, some of them bearing the same names today. Tradd, one of the oldest streets of Charleston, was named for the first male child born within its bounds. These streets, that were considered unusually wide during that time, are now rather narrow and crowded, and are not at all suitable for our modern-day traffic.

The growth of the colony was assured from the beginning, since the cost of transportation of a passenger from London was only five pounds. The head of each family was given fifty acres of land for himself, fifty for each male servant, and fifty acres for each marriageable daughter or woman servant. The rent on this property was only a penny an acre, and this quitrent was not to commence until after the land had been occupied for two years. If settlers desired, they could purchase the land outright for the small sum of fifty pounds for one thousand acres. As further inducement, a bounty of fourteen pounds was given to each person bringing a healthy male servant, from twelve to thirty years of age, with the proviso that this servant had no criminal record.

The climate and soil of the new settlement afforded the colonists a variety of products. They were able to raise wheat, rye, oats, peas, turnips, parsnips, potatoes and twenty varieties of beans. However, the early inhabitants did not

seem to take to the idea of farming and raising their own living. Most of them had secured live stock and could have plenty of meat, so they did not bother to plant anything. The proprietors continued to spend large sums of money for the support of the people. The cattle and hogs were allowed to roam over the country, feeding themselves from the native grasses, acorns and berries. Very soon the cattle and hogs were to be found on the streets, and one of the first ordinances of Charleston was to regulate the practice of permitting the stock free range of the entire city.

William Sayle was the first governor of the colony, and from the very beginning, the city of Charleston was the center for all government activity. The first popular election was held in 1672, and a Parliament was created. Governor Sayle died, and was replaced by Joseph West, who was elected by the Council. His term was very short, and in 1672, Sir John Yeamans was made governor by the appointment of the Palatine. During Yeamans' term as governor, a new Parliament was elected.

Yeamans had been living for some time in the Barbadoes, and when he was appointed governor he came to Charleston bringing with him many Negroes from the plantations. His experience in the Barbadoes gave him an insight into the necessities and problems of establishing a new colony, and in many ways the country was benefited by his administration. The proprietors were quite exasperated because of his extravagance in building walls and fortifications, but he understood

the situation and felt the need of protection from the invaders. Through his efforts many rich planters from the West Indian Islands and the Barbadoes, came to Carolina and established their permanent homes in Charleston. Yeamans also realized the value of the forests, and worked to create a demand for the great cedar logs in England, as well as in other foreign countries.

The planters from the Barbadoes transported their Negroes to the lands of Carolina and agricultural ventures were on a very large scale from the first. These planters were, as a rule, wealthy and of a rather high class, and most of them were members of the Church of England. This landed gentry made up the social background of Charleston and made it one of the most prominent social centers of the entire South.

The proprietors were unable to tolerate Yeamans and his expenditures, so he very quietly withdrew and returned to the Barbadoes. He was replaced by Governor West.

The Lords Proprietors continued to complain about the unusually large expenditures for the support of some of the colonists, who were seemingly unable to take care of themselves. It is claimed that they numbered around six hundred in the year 1675. The colonists seemed deaf to the complaints, however, and went on living and doing as they had before. "Charleston, like the true Episcopal community that she was, continued as she was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, and did what she wanted." ⁴

⁴
Ibid., p. 32.

The Lords Proprietors, however, made an attempt to dissuade some of the colonists from cattle raising, and interest them in agriculture. In 1680, the vessel Richmond, was sent out from England by the proprietors, with a colony of French Huguenots, who were under the protection of Charles II. Their arrival merely evoked the displeasure of the colonists. Charles II had hoped to establish the culture of silk worms in the colony, but all the silk worms died on the way over. The venture was not a complete failure, since the French were not only efficient in the silk industry, but were quite adept at making wine and raising olives. The first wine made in the colony and shipped to England was equally as good as that secured in France and Italy. They also made "corn cordial" by roasting maize or corn and mixing it with boiled milk. This drink was used for home consumption.

Tradesmen and shop-keepers invested their earnings in cargoes and sent them out to the trade centers of the world. In this way they secured sufficient money to buy tracts of land and join the ranks of the land-holders, and thereby lose the stigma attached to those in trade. As lands near to Charleston were taken up these people secured grants for tracts in outlying districts. Charleston, was, thus, continuously supplying settlers who pushed further and further afield. . . . The trade of Charleston was a prize worth having, and while politics engrossed the gentlemen and crops absorbed the farmer class, the subject of Carolina commerce completely engrossed the Proprietors. 5

One of the most unusual items in the history of the city of Charleston was the fact that the colony had been established for fourteen years before a church was built. All the planters who came from the Barbadoes were members of the Church of

England, but evidently there were no very staunch members in the first group of colonists. Some historians say that the delay in building the first church might have been on account of the uncertainty of the final location of the city. However that may be, it was the year 1682, before Charleston and her citizens were provided with a church. The original St. Philip's church was erected where St. Michael's now stands. It was constructed of black cypress and considered a very substantial and fine structure for that day. Leiding describes Charleston's first church in the following lines:

St. Philip's was said to be 'large and stately' and to have a neat palisade around it. . . . The foundation was of brick, and this mode of building, namely a cypress house on a brick foundation, was long esteemed and continued in the colony. For lime they burnt the old Indian heaps of oyster shells. This lime makes the strongest possible mortar. . . . A large old fashioned brick house on the east side of Glebe street, was until a comparatively recent period, the Rectory of St. Philip's, and was always known as the "Glebe House." ⁶

Buildings for other denominations were soon constructed. The Presbyterians built their "White Meeting House" on Meeting street, and on Church street were located the Baptist and the French Huguenot Churches, all constructed in 1687. Charleston points with pride to the fact, that, even today, more than one hundred and fifty-five years later, churches are still standing on each of these sites, although none of the original buildings

⁶ Mrs. St. Julien Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and The People, pp. 19-20.

remains.

The constant arrival of the French Huguenots, who were settling in and around Charleston, greatly displeased the English colonists, but in 1683 they were more deeply offended by news that arrived from Europe. It was reported that the Lords Proprietors were planning to send ten thousand Scotch-Irish dissenters to form a new and separate colony at Fort Royal near Charleston. The governor of the new colony was to be Lord Cardross, a staunch Presbyterian. His idea was to secure an asylum in the Carolina country for his persecuted people. The Lords Proprietors, being anxious for more settlers, were greatly pleased with the plan and offered all kinds of inducements in order to acquire such a large and permanent settlement. When this colony actually arrived, it included many political prisoners and other undesirables, but the total number was far short of the reported ten thousand. Dissension between the two governors started immediately, and the arrangement was never satisfactory.

The first dissension arose between Cardross and the Governor of Carolina when Cardross claimed that the Lords Proprietors had bestowed the same power upon him as that of the governor. Charges were filed against Cardross and feeling was so bitter that when aid was asked by the Scotch for protection against Spanish invasions, the governor and the Council ignored the request; consequently, in 1686, the Spanish descended upon the Scotch settlement at Fort Royal, killing

many of the inhabitants, taking others prisoners, and completely destroying the settlement.

This uprising and insurrection probably saved Charleston from being a victim of the same fate later. As soon as the Council heard of the destruction of the Scotch settlement, they immediately issued orders and made provisions to arm Charleston. Governor Morton provided and fitted out two vessels, and was preparing to go out and take over the Spanish colony when James Colleton arrived in Charleston as the new governor of Carolina. This put a stop to the invasion, although the colonists made preparations several times later to wipe out the Spanish. The proprietors on the other side of the sea were struggling eternally to keep peace with Spain, and they backed Colleton in his attempt to prevent any trouble.

Colleton's term as governor was marked by struggle and dissension from the day of his arrival. The colonists felt that he used discrimination against them on several occasions, and gave him little or no cooperation. Having failed in his attempts to collect the quitrent for the Proprietors, he called out the militia, which act of course incensed the colonists even more. Finally, after four years, he was relieved of his duties and banished from Carolina.

In the short space of four years, from 1682 to 1686, there were no less than five governors in South Carolina; Joseph Morton, Joseph West, Richard Kiole, Robert Quarry, and James Colleton.

The Governors were either ill-qualified for their office, or the instructions given them were injudicious. The inhabitants, far from living in friendship and harmony among themselves, had also been turbulent and ungovernable. The proprietary government was weak, unstable, and little respected. It did not excite a sufficient interest for its own support. ⁷

The quitrent was slow and difficult to collect, the sale of land brought in little or no money, and the Lords Proprietors, looking upon the colony as a financial venture, were bitterly disappointed. Because of their scheming to make more money from their foreign property in Carolina, the government of the colony was poorly supported. The funds to operate the government were insufficient for the needs of this period. Much of the poor management was blamed on the governors, and this of course caused a great deal of dissension and unkindly feelings between the colonists and the governors. It lessened the spirit of cooperation, and this in turn decreased the strength of the settlement.

It seems that the episode with Colleton did not put an end to the unsatisfactory situation at Charleston. The next governor was Seth Sothell, a refugee from North Carolina. Political feeling ran high during his term as governor; he was accused of treason and generally disliked. Regardless of this feeling toward him, he endeavored in his way, to make a few improvements. Probably his most important achievement was that of giving the population some political power. Heretofore, the citizens had never been allowed any particular

⁷ David Ramsay, History of South Carolina, p. 23.

voice in the affairs of state, and Carolina is indebted to Sothell for his help along this line.

Although the struggle had been a rather difficult one from the time of the first settlement in 1680, development was taking place with a more or less rapid stride. Trade was increasing every year and the bitter struggle with the Spanish for the Indian trade was bringing results. The Barbadoes planters had seen the commercial benefits of Charleston from the start, and they pushed foreign trade to the limit. The small landholders and planters had commenced trade with their neighbors on land, as well as with incoming and outgoing ships in the Charleston Bay. Again Leiding in her picturesque style gives a glimpse of the Charleston of this day:

A picture of Charleston in these stirring days would show her wharves piled high with goods, her harbor alive with picturesque vessels, her streets thronged with prosperous citizens, Indian traders, and sailors from off the boats, all passing in and out of the shops that lined Tradd and Elliott streets and fronted the blue waters of the Bay. On the streets "victualers, vinters, cord-wainers, waggoners, higglers, and writing fellows or scrivenors" cried their wares as they had been wont to do in the streets of London town and vied with the hawkers, peddlers and petty chapmen who sold goods to passers-by. ⁸

This decided increase in trade made it necessary for the government to take some measures for the protection of the city. In 1685, just fifteen years after the establishment of the first settlement, a Collector of Customs was established in Charleston.

⁸ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 36.

One of the most deciding factors in the social and economic development of Charleston was a seemingly small matter in its beginning, but eventually became a mighty force in shaping the destiny of an already fast growing commercial center. In 1696, the captain of one of the incoming ships from Madagascar presented the Governor of Carolina with a bag of rice. He planted this bag of rice, and harvested a large crop in his garden. From that day forward rice became one of the most important products in that section of the country. Immediately the colonists centered their attention and energies on the production of this new crop. It made the farmer a commercial factor, and raised agricultural problems that were previously unknown in the western world.

The cultivation of rice caused the planters to demand more land, and fortunately there was plenty of it. At first by the headright system and later by the purchase of the land, small farms grew piece by piece into great plantations. The plantation system called for increased labor; the answer to this problem was slavery. "Permanency, and not skill was the quality that was most needed in a labor supply for the South, and the only possible solution was slavery." ⁹

The profits from rice were sufficient to bring a rapid growth in population, and to enable the planters to enjoy luxuries that were impossible in Virginia. This was partly

⁹ E. Q. Hawk, Economic History of the South, p. 85.

due to the system of slave management and partly a consequence of the development of Charleston as a center of colonial life. The existence of large plantations in South Carolina made the system of slave control different from that in the other colonies. The planters of South Carolina did not live on their plantations, but left them to the management of overseers, as had been their custom in the Barbadoes. This deprived the Negroes of any opportunity for personal service and the affection of their masters. This situation is reflected in the harsh slave code of the rice country.

The South Carolina slave code came from the West Indies, the West Indies code was based on the Spanish law. The Spanish system came from the old Roman law, which made the slave absolute property of his master. Treatment by overseers, themselves more interested in the commissions which they were to receive from the crop than in the slaves, was likely to be unduly severe.¹⁰

The Carolina planters did not live on the plantations, due to the malarial conditions that existed in the rice swamp lands. The wealthier planters remained in Charleston the entire year, while the smaller planters spent their summers in the city, where a cooling sea breeze blows the year round. Charleston was not only the political and commercial center of the South, but soon became the social and

¹⁰ W. B. Hesseltine, A History of the South, pp. 80-81.

cultural center as well. Charleston dictated the customs of the South and controlled the gateway for the foreign markets.

Governor Smith had been insisting, for some time, that the Lords Proprietors send one of their number to Carolina to see the conditions and to offer suggestions of a remedy for the unrest and disquietude that had arisen in the colony. John Archdale was the representative sent by the proprietors in 1693, and shortly after his arrival he was made governor.

Archdale, a Quaker, was reputed to be a man of knowledge and capable of handling the affairs of state. He was a strict prohibitionist and enforced the laws of England in the taverns and drinking houses of Charleston. During his term as governor, peace reigned. Among other things, he improved the militia, negotiated friendly agreements with the Indians and Spaniards, and diminished their inhuman practice of pillaging ships and murdering the crews. One historian has pictured the work of Archdale in the following lines:

Archdale was a Quaker, and a man of tact and ability. He patiently strove to establish harmony between discordant elements, to materially advance the welfare of the province and to improve the conditions of the Indians. He succeeded to a marked degree in almost all of his endeavors. Having accomplished the object of his mission to South Carolina, he returned to England in 1696, leaving Joseph Blake at the head of the government. ¹¹

¹¹ Alexander S. Salley, Narratives of Early Carolina, p. 280.

Joseph Blake endeavored to follow Archdale's plan and keep peace and harmony in the colonies, but he fell heir to many situations of dispute and disharmony. Since he was however a man of wisdom and prudence his administration will be remembered with a certain degree of satisfaction. He died in 1700, leaving the governorship to James Moore, the son of the noted Roger Moore.

The close of the century found Charleston in a more or less precarious state, although her growth had been rapid and she was fast becoming the center of the South. Despite many hindrances and set-backs from one cause or another, Charleston was taking an important place in the economic and social world. A sudden scourge of smallpox in 1697 and 1698 caused the deaths of many citizens. In 1699, a terrible plague, that was later found to be yellow fever, swept the city causing death in almost every family. In the midst of the plague a terrible hurricane descended on Charleston from the south, destroying much of the town proper and wrecking wharves as well as many of the vessels in the harbor. This was followed by a great fire which nearly destroyed the town.

These disasters and calamities might have daunted the spirits of many settlements, but not Charleston. Her history to the present time has proved that she is able to meet such occurrences undaunted. The proprietors sent architects from England and rebuilding started immediately. Twenty years of

experience in America brought forth many improvements, and in 1700, Charleston was rebuilt in accordance with the needs of the new century.

The next few years in the annals of the history of Charleston are filled with exciting events, partly caused by the economic and political conflicts of England with the French and Spanish, and partly by the existing conditions in the colony proper. Trouble with the Indians was beginning to brew, political factions were forming, and religious problems were arising.

While the War of the Spanish Succession was in progress the colonists decided to take the opportunity to attack the Spanish settlement at St. Augustine. In Charleston, the war was called "Queen Anne's War," and about all the colonists got out of it was a debt of around six thousand pounds. This debt displeased many of the members of the Assembly, quarrels arose, and some of the members withdrew. This matter was not entirely settled when the religious and political strife commenced because of the passing of the Church Act. This act was an attempt to make all the religious sects conform to the Church of England. The affair was finally settled and the act was repealed at the General Assembly in 1706.

In August, 1706, during the epidemic of yellow fever, the French made an attempt to take Charleston. Many of the principal inhabitants had gone to their plantations on account

of the epidemic and the remaining citizens were left at a decided disadvantage. William Rhett was placed in command of a small fleet and all the inhabitants were immediately armed. Governor Johnson, returning from his plantation, declared martial law throughout the colony. When the French sent a messenger to the governor demanding surrender of Charleston, he replied, "I hold this country for the Queen of England. I am ready to die, but not to deliver up my trust. My men will shed the last drop of their blood to defend the country from the invaders."¹²

The French forces failed to attack and, after a few minor skirmishes, were chased out to sea, ending the expedition with a complete victory for the Carolinians and a signal failure on the part of the French. It was also the end of the first naval attack on Charleston.

Charleston's trouble with the Indians continued and from time to time there were slight skirmishes, which amounted to enough to keep the inhabitants alarmed. The city was of necessity forced to fortify and remain in preparedness for sudden battles and sieges. Aided and abetted by the Spanish, in 1712, the Indians of the northern province, combined with the Tuscaroras made an attack on the northern portion of Carolina. The northern colony sent to Charleston for aid and under the direction of Colonel John

¹² William Gilmore Simms, History of South Carolina, p. 82.

Barnwell, troops were dispatched to the north. Barnwell succeeded in subduing the Indian tribes, slaying several hundred, and taking a large number as captives. The Indians asked for peace, but just as soon as Colonel Barnwell departed, they prepared for another attack. This insurrection was instigated by the Spanish, who had succeeded in uniting the Cherokees, the Muskogees, and the Yemassees. They were united and armed from Florida to Cape Fear. The territory surrounding Charleston was marauded, many of the inhabitants were killed and for a time it appeared that they might annihilate the inhabitants of Charleston. However, Governor Craven, proving himself equal to the occasion, proclaimed martial law, seized all arms and ammunition wherever they were to be found, and armed a force of Negroes to aid the white militia. He laid an embargo on all the ships and thus prevented any men or provisions from being carried from the harbor. The Carolinians had had many years of experience with the Indians and their methods of warfare, and in 1716, with the aid of troops from Virginia and North Carolina, they defeated the Indians. Driven from the country, the red men eventually found refuge in the everglades of Florida with the Seminoles. Carolina lost fewer than four hundred men and gained a great deal of valuable territory.

This final war with the Indians in 1715, was the beginning of the break between the colonists and the

proprietors. There had been a growing feeling of dissatisfaction and in several instances the colonies failed to obey the rule of the proprietors and put in a governor of their own choosing. These difficulties had previously been settled with no undue alarm, but after the Indian war the matter became more serious, finally coming to a head in 1719. David Ramsay in his History of South Carolina, explains the influence of this war in the following paragraph:

The war of 1715, between the Charleston colony and the Yemassee Indians had a decided influence in the revolt of the colony under proprietary control to royal crown control. While the war was going on the legislature made application to the Proprietors for their paternal help, but being doubtful whether they would be inclined to involve their English estates in debt for supporting their property in Carolina, they instructed their agent, in case of failure with them, to apply to the King, and procure for the inhabitants peace and security. The people in general were dissatisfied with living under a government unable to protect them. They therefore were very unanimous in the proposed application to the crown for royal protection. ¹³

The final rift between the proprietors and the colonists was caused by the pirate attacks. Charleston had been troubled with the pirates for some time, but the pirates had never before made direct attacks. The inhabitants were again called to arms, the ships were rigged out and the fight commenced. Finally, the pirates, Blackbeard and Bonnett, were captured and brought to trial. Several of the other leaders

¹³ David Ramsay, History of South Carolina, p. 32.

escaped, but those captured were hanged. Charleston had asked the proprietors for assistance in combating the Indians and pirates, but the proprietors refused to help them in any way in either war. On several occasions they had given aid to Virginia, and Charleston bitterly resented this act. The proprietors now demanded four times as much for the land as heretofore, and also tried to force the colonists to pay for the Yemassee Indian lands. In a final blow, they declared that henceforth all the laws would be made by the proprietors.

In 1719, the Carolinians wrote to the King, informing him that they were placing themselves under the direct jurisdiction and protection of the Crown, and requested that he buy the interests of the proprietors. The King did not wish to antagonize the proprietors, and in order to handle the matter in the most tactful manner, he delayed communicating with the provinces. Spurred on by impatience and dissatisfaction, the citizens of Carolina met on December 21, 1719, and proclaimed themselves subjects of the King of England. George I sanctioned their procedure and Carolina became a royal province. It was not until 1729, however, when George II ascended the throne of England that the territory was really purchased from the Lords Proprietors. Simms, in his History of South Carolina, gives the following explanation for much of the trouble between the citizens and the

proprietors:

The causes were that the interests of the two parties, not, perhaps, well understood by either, were never found to assimilate. It would be a miracle, indeed, if a colony, governed from a distance, should be well governed, and the natural evils, incident to such a state of things, were necessarily increased by those peculiar troubles which had harassed the fortunes of the Carolinians. Repeated wars, frequent invasions, robberies by pirates, and the heavy debts which accrued from these events, had made them ready to ascribe — either to political influence abroad, and to the operation of laws in which neither their wishes nor their interests had been consulted by the Proprietors, the oppressive circumstances against which they had so long struggled. Briefly, the contest was for popular rights, and republican principles for freedom of opinion in society, church, and state; all of which had been virtually denied by the government, which had usurped wholly the attributes of the representative assembly. These being the fruitful topics of quarrel, the conflict between the lords and the actual possessors of the soil, grew daily more serious; and availing themselves of the presence of the provincial assembly, then in session in Charleston, the leaders of the people prepared, in secret, the scheme of a revolution, which proved perfectly successful. ¹⁴

Despite the many hindrances encountered by Charleston, she continued to advance both socially and economically during the first fifty years of her history. Her commerce and trade had taken a very important place, new industries were introduced each year, and the foreign countries were beginning to look upon Charleston as the center of the southern colonies. The large forests in the surrounding country furnished the lumber necessary for building and at an early stage in Charleston's development, shipbuilding was

¹⁴ William Gilmore Simms, History of South Carolina, p. 91.

an important industry. The wealthy planters and traders of Charleston constructed wharves in front of their homes and conducted a regular export and import business right from their front door. The regulations and laws passed by the Assembly in Charleston governed the entire colony. The Virginians and other Southern traders had to come to Charleston to obtain their licenses. The following paragraph gives an idea as to the scope of trade during this period:

Wherever the merchants congregated a discussion of what was being raised in the colony, the prices they would bring, and the things which were exported were discussed. Sugar, rum, molasses, chocolate, coconuts, slaves and money were imported from the West Indies, in exchange for meats, candles, soap, rice and tar. . . . Seventeen vessels loaded here in 1706 for the foreign trade, besides several stragglers and other coastwise vessels. In 1710, regular sailings included twenty-two ships bound for England and sixty for other countries. Carolina imports amounted to 120,000 pounds in sterling, by the year 1723. One hundred thousand of this was credited to England. ¹⁵

Around fifty thousand deerskins were exported each year from Charleston and the rice industry was fast becoming one of the most important in the South.

Charleston, from the very earliest period in her development, stressed education. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, provided the colonists with missionaries who conducted schools for both whites and Negroes. In 1703, the nucleus of a public library was founded in

¹⁵ Harriette Kershaw Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 44.

Charleston by Doctor Bray. Grammar schools were scattered over the colony, and the public treasury set aside twelve pounds a year from each parish for the building of a school house. Religious education was conducted for the slaves and very early in her history, Charleston had a free Negro school for the education of the slaves.

The population of white inhabitants numbered fourteen thousand, in 1724, and the importation of negro slaves in this one year, is reported at more than four hundred. The imports, the same year, into Charleston, including the slaves and foreign goods, were estimated to amount to between fifty and sixty thousand pounds, in return for which, the exports were eighteen thousand barrels of rice, fifty-two thousand of pitch, tar, and turpentine, untold quantities of deer, bear and beaver skins and furs, together with a considerable quantity of raw silk, lumber and other articles. ¹⁶

The southern colonies, producing only export staples, and lacking adequate domestic manufactures, were dependent upon foreign markets throughout the colonial period. This made Charleston a necessity to the Southern colonies. Due to geographical reasons, that have previously been pointed out, it became the mecca of the export and import trade of practically all the region below Baltimore.

The colony was now (1720) sixty years old and could no longer be called "an infant," however much its growth may have been stunted by the events already related. Charles Town was a thriving little place, sole port, sole law-giver, and seat of government for the whole Province. Her worst troubles -- for fifty years--over; safe behind the royal shield she was free to enter the race for wealth and prosperity with small fear from outward foes. ¹⁷

¹⁶ William Gilmore Simms, History of South Carolina, p. 96.

¹⁷ Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 84.

CHAPTER III

UNDER THE ROYAL CROWN FROM 1719 TO 1774

The history of Charleston during the period of the royal crown control has often been referred to as the Golden Age of Charleston. The first object, after the transfer of the colony from the Lords Proprietors to the Crown, was to re-establish peace and harmony upon the most equitable foundation. Laws were passed, relieving the people from many of the evils of which they had complained.

The new form of government for Carolina, after she became a royal province proved to be very satisfactory. Harmony and peace reigned with few exceptions during the entire period of royal control. The form of government was based on that of the British constitution. The governor, appointed by the King, was assisted by a Council and Assembly. They were granted the power to make all the laws. The Council, also appointed by the King, was to advise the governor and assist with the legislation, as well as to represent the House of Lords. The Assembly, similiar to the House of Commons in Great Britain, was elected by the people and consisted of their representatives, who were "to be the guardians

of their lives, liberties and property." ¹⁸ The governor had the power and authority to convene and dissolve the Assembly, holding a negative on the bills of both Houses as well as the execution of all laws. The power of Chancery, admiralty, appointment of magistrates and militia officers was also vested in the governor. All bills approved by the governor then had to be sent to Great Britain for royal approval and approbation.

Nicholson was appointed the first Governor of Carolina in 1720, but he did not arrive until 1721, and James Moore acted as governor until Nicholson's arrival. During Governor Nicholson's term of office, Charleston developed rapidly. He attempted to control the Indian trade and passed several laws revising the slave code. Nicholson gave with much generosity, to both the cause of education and religion and he influenced many of the wealthy planters and landowners in the colony to contribute to schools and endowments. Governor Nicholson was also instructed by the Royal Crown to strengthen the fortifications and the militia as a precaution against future Indian insurrections. The military situation was in a rather deplorable condition as is shown by Simms in the following paragraph:

In 1720, Charleston relied upon very doubtful securities. The fortifications did not include all

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David Ramsay, History of South Carolina, p. 53.

the settled portions. They simply compassed that portion of the town, which lay between the central market and Water street, in one direction, the bay and Meeting street in the opposite direction. The town had outgrown these limits without any corresponding growth of its securities, and a considerable, though somewhat scattered suburb west and north of the old walls, was left wholly unfortified. Pirates and Spaniards, French and Indians, were ever on the watch to assail; yet the military organization was wretchedly imperfect, the frontier police feeble and inefficient; and the means for bringing the militia together so tardy and ineffective, that a fleet and vigorous foe might make his swoop like a hawk, upon the quarry, and be gone before the alarm could arouse the settlement. The royal government set out with prompt wisdom and energy to the work of curing all these disabilities and deficiencies. ¹⁹

Governor Nicholson was replaced in 1724, by Arthur Middleton, President of the Council. Middleton was governor until 1729. His term was marked by a great deal of political strife and disagreement. Many of the problems were results of the war with the Indians and the Revolution of 1719. Within a period of four years he dissolved the Assembly six times, and ordered the election of new members. The Assembly itself had presented a money bill and sent it to the Council, who rejected it eight times.

Although trade was increasing each year and the entire colony seemed to be prospering, the financial status was deplorable. Many debts had been contracted during the war with the Indians, and these debts were liquidated by the issuance of paper currency. This paper money was easily

¹⁹ William Gilmore Simms, History of South Carolina, p. 97.

simulated, and consequently the country was soon full of counterfeit bills. The merchants of London commenced to complain about the increase of this paper money, contending that it was injurious to trade. The government then took the matter in hand, recalling all the old bills and issued new ones in the amount of 40,000 pounds. A law was passed at this same time, which carried the penalty of death for counterfeiting. A flood in the same year had destroyed nearly all of the crops, and the Charleston merchants probably would have been financially ruined, if some of the London merchants had not stepped in and secured financial aid from the other merchants whose trade was centered at Charleston. The Crown also directed the governor to reduce the output of paper money.

The last year of Middleton's term was almost disastrous for Charleston. A terrible drought in the summer of 1728 brought great losses to the cattlemen, the farmers lost their crops, and many of the wild beasts, whose fur was valuable, perished. In the fall of the year a hurricane swept in, wrecking the forts, houses, wharves, and boats, as well as drowning many of the inhabitants. Immediately following the drought and hurricane there was a seige of the plague or yellow fever. "Planters were afraid to carry their produce into the city, where deaths were so numerous that it was hard to find a sufficient number of persons to attend to

the bodies." 20

In the year 1727, George II ascended the throne of England, and two years later he purchased the political and property rights of the Lords Proprietors, thus making Charleston the capital of a Royal Province. "Men conversant in the history of past ages, particularly in that of the rise and progress of different States, had long foreseen the rapid increase of the American colonies; and wisely judged that it would be for the interest of the kingdom to purchase them for the crown as soon as possible." 21

The King paid the proprietors 17, 500 pounds sterling and also bought seven-eighths of the arrears in quitrents. At this time, the colony was divided into North and South Carolina, the King appointing the governors for both provinces. South Carolina lost thirty miles of seacoast in this division. The period from 1727 to 1760, is rightly called the Golden Age of Carolina.

In 1731, Robert Johnson was appointed governor of the Province. He was the son of the former Governor Nathaniel Johnson. One of the most important events during his term of office was a series of peace treaties made with the Cherokee Indians.

In 1733, General Oglethorpe arrived in Charleston Harbor

²⁰ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 88.

²¹ Ramsay, History of South Carolina, p. 33.

with a ship load of colonists from England. He was received with great pomp and ceremony, and escorted down the river by rangers from Charleston. He founded the colony of Georgia along the Savannah River. The Charleston Assembly voted to give Oglethorpe ten thousand pounds for the new settlement, as well as some territory lying west of the Savannah River. After the founding and settlement of Georgia the citizens of Charleston felt much safer from the Indian attacks, since the territory of Georgia was between Carolina and the wild western country inhabited by the Indian tribes.

Governor Johnson was well liked by the Carolinians and his term was one of prosperity. He was capable and efficient and knew the needs and wants of the colony. The character of the people and the resources of the country around were all familiar to him. He granted new privileges to the colonists in order to encourage agriculture and stimulate trade. Some of the taxes were removed from rice and a discount was given on exported rice and hemp. Credit was reestablished and Governor Johnson invited new settlers to come and locate in the outlying districts. The colony was set off into twelve townships and to each new settler was given fifty acres of land.

Charleston was now recognized as an important factor by the trading and manufacturing towns of England. "Bristol, London, and Liverpool, looked lovingly on the brisk and

flourishing settlement between the Ashley and Cooper." ²² Many African slaves to cultivate the rice fields and cargoes of supplies needed for the plantations were sent to Charleston. Exports and imports increased in proportion, and the price of land began to mount, consequently the produce of the province was more than doubled. Forty thousand barrels of rice were exported in 1731, as well as great quantities of furs, skins, and naval stores. The city of Charleston had six hundred dwellings, besides the many business establishments that were increasing in number each year. "The accession of population and prosperity from abroad were such as very soon to distinguish the Charleston settlement as one of the most flourishing of all the English colonies in America." ²³

This progress and growth was not confined solely to the city of Charleston, but spread to the outlying country, where new lands were being cultivated and new fields of industry were being opened each year. Simms in his History of South Carolina, gives a rather concise picture of the growth and development of the surrounding territory:

Under the new impulse given to trade, agriculture, and emigration, lands, which had hitherto lain everywhere derelict, were now eagerly sought, and soon became the subject of grievous strife and heart-yearnings. Everybody vied with his neighbor in the struggle for the acquisition of territory. . . . this evil has its benefits. Gradually, the roads were opened into the interior, choice spots were planted; hamlets grew as plantations

²² Simms, History of South Carolina, p. 101.

²³ Ibid.

spread, and religion soon began to rear her temples in the remote thickets which hitherto had heard no sweeter music than the long howl of the wolf and the more terrific yell of the savage. The wilderness, in a thousand places, was beginning to blossom with the rose; but it was the wild rose still. ²⁴

Upon the death of Governor Johnson in 1735, the Crown appointed Colonel Broughton as the new governor. Broughton however, only lived two years, and Colonel Bull held the office until the Crown could make another appointment in 1743.

Thus far, Charleston's history seems to have been marked at certain intervals with some sort of disaster and destruction. Famines, droughts, hurricanes, plagues, and fires have all taken their toll in lives and delayed the progress to a certain extent. Each time Charleston has arisen, repaired the damage and continued with her development, as if nothing had happened. In November, 1740, disaster struck again, this time in the form of a fire. It started early in the afternoon and by night fall almost one-half of the city had been destroyed. The houses were for the most part wooden structures and the flames were aggravated by a high wind from the north, which blew them straight into the stores of rum, gunpowder, turpentine, pitch and tar. Over three hundred of the best buildings were consumed along with the supplies and produce that had been stored. Few lives were lost, but the financial loss was around a quarter of a

²⁴
Ibid., p. 103.

million pounds. There was much distress among the rich and poor alike.

. . . the lamentations of ruined families were heard in every quarter. From a flourishing condition, the town was reduced in the space of six hours to a most deplorable state. ²⁵

The Assembly immediately made application to the British government for relief and the Crown granted twenty thousand pounds to be distributed among the sufferers and to help rebuild the city. Soon, "Charleston rose, phoenix-like from her ashes." ²⁶

Perhaps the fire was a blessing in disguise, the wooden buildings were replaced by brick structures, and very soon after the fire, Charleston's citizens came together and formed an insurance company for future protection against another such disaster. A previous attempt had been made in London, but it was not successful, this time a local company was formed, and also a volunteer fire company was organized. For many years the location of a fire was indicated from the steeple of St. Michael's, by the use of a long pole and a lantern which pointed to the direction of the fire.

In 1743, James Glenn, a Scotchman, was sent from England to govern the province. He was received with great rejoicing and celebration in Charleston. He began his term with an air of friendliness and cheerfulness which lasted to the end of

²⁵ Ramsay, History of South Carolina, p. 64.

²⁶ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 94.

his governorship. In writing to his secretary he expressed the following wish: "To have found Charles Town in ashes and to leave it fair, flourishing and fortified, is my earnest wish and expectation." ²⁷

It was during this period of Charleston's development that another important crop was introduced, namely, indigo. This new industry was started in the colonies in 1741. Colonel George Lucas, after having served England in the West Indies for many years, moved to South Carolina for the health of his invalid wife. He located his family on a plantation near Charleston, calling the place "Wappoo." At the outbreak of the war with Spain, the Colonel was called back to his post and he left his daughter Eliza in charge of the plantation. Eliza Lucas had been interested in botany and to encourage her study, Colonel Lucas sent her some indigo seed from the West Indies. She planted it, and the following year Lucas sent a West Indian, who was experienced in extracting the dye from the plant, to assist Eliza in her new enterprise. "Though the grade was low, the result was deemed a success and was perhaps in part responsible for an act of the Provincial Assembly in 1774, offering bounties to encourage the production of indigo." ²⁸ The Assembly was forced to discontinue this bounty two years later, due to the fact that indigo was grown so widely

²⁷ Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 119.

²⁸ Ulrich B. Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South, p. 51.

throughout the colonies, but the British Parliament, in answer to petitions from Charleston planters and English dyers, placed a bounty on indigo throughout the entire British Empire. The returns from this crop were so large that most of the planters doubled their capital every few years. This British bounty continued up to the period of the American Independence. Long before the close of the colonial period the indigo crop rivaled the rice crop as a source of prosperity. One historian quotes Governor Glenn as saying, "that in 1754, ten years after the first little crop was gathered, 26,000 pounds sterling worth was exported. In thirty years this amount was trebled." ²⁸

Prosperous though Charleston was in 1761, she again had to 'reckon with the elements'; on this occasion it was a typhoon. It destroyed the new fortifications, many houses collapsed and the wharves were again swept away. The water rose and the citizens were forced to flee and find shelter on higher land. Many persons were drowned, and if the water had risen another foot, the entire population would have been swept away. The work of reconstruction was begun immediately, and this time changes were made in the arrangement of some of the streets, and many of the water holes were permanently filled in order to avert a second disaster of this same nature. A few bricks were purposely left out

²⁸ Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 127.

of the Governor's mansion when it was repaired as a 'memento of the great gale'. "The Battery, the pride of Charleston, owes its origin to the great gale." 29

William Lyttleton, the next governor of Carolina, arrived to find another Indian War in progress. The French who were in constant fear of losing all their American possessions, aroused the Indians against the English colonists. The Cherokees were located in the back lands to the West from Charleston, and as the colony spread and new settlements were located the colonists were continually attacked by the Indians. Governor Lyttleton armed a group of the inhabitants and set out to quiet the Indians and to put a stop to the incessant raids. The Indians asked for peace and their request was granted. Lyttleton was applauded and praised for his wonderful work in settling the trouble, which of course lasted just about the length of time it took him to get out of sight. Finally, after Lyttleton had returned to Jamaica, Lieutenant-Governor Bull sent troops, under the command of Colonels Montgomery and Grant, to settle with the Indians. The Indians put up a good fight but in the end surrendered and their Chief Attakullakulla signed a peace treaty with Lieutenant-Governor Bull that lasted until the time of the Revolution.

Despite the fact that within a few years Charleston's

²⁹ Ibid., p. 136.

growth was to be retarded by the episode of the American Revolution, her development up to this time had been remarkable. Economically and socially, Charleston was recognized as the most important and profitable of the southern colonies. Many of the New England colonies had been hampered by the Navigation Acts, while some of the southern colonies were forced to pay a tax on the importation of slaves. None of these acts had affected Charleston. "Between 1719 and 1776, no colony was ever better governed than the province of Carolina." 30

The great rice and indigo plantations were worked for the most part by Negro labor, and the products were shipped to all of the important ports of the world. As early as 1740, legislation existed in regard to labor and wages. The wages of the master workmen, carpenters, bricklayers and plasterers were fixed by law during that year. Many complaints were received by the white laborers for some sort of regulation of the slave labor that had drifted away from the plantations. Eventually, slave importation had to be discontinued, in order to keep the entire colony from being overrun.

Charleston had been operating shipyards for a good many years, building most of the vessels for their own use. In 1740, they were building plantation boats and rice

³⁰ Ramsay, History of South Carolina, p. 69.

schooners, and by 1769, the output was about a dozen large vessels a year. The British Crown had always encouraged manufacturing in the colonies and endeavored to locate several factories in Charleston. Although they were never very successful in this attempt, in 1722, Mellichamp invented a machine for making salt to be used in the fisheries. A hemp machine was also invented during this period. As early as 1770, "patches of cotton" were scattered throughout the Carolina country, and the first American cotton was shipped from Charleston to Liverpool. The following paragraph was an interesting bit from one of the historians in regard to this first cargo of cotton:

John Teasdale, a merchant of Charleston, shipped from the city to J & J Teasdale, Liverpool, eight bags of cotton. When the vessel arrived, the laughable incident occurred, of the cotton being seized on the ground that it could not be grown in America. Upon satisfactory proof, which had to be furnished, it was released. This cotton shipment was the first ever made from the United States to a European port. ³¹

The introduction of the cotton industry took care of some of the slave labor problems, since this crop could not be produced without the aid of mass labor. "The extension of cotton cultivation into this region is marked by a rapid increase of the slave population." ³²

There is every evidence of a program of economic control in Charleston's early colonial period. The enactment

³¹ Lyman Powell, Historic Towns of Southern States, p. 277.

³² John Spencer Bassett, The Federalist System, p. 193.

and enforcement of a poor-law policy for the protection of those citizens unable to provide for themselves. One of the most important requirements of this law provided that children of persons unable to support themselves, be taught some manner of trade and be put to work. All able bodied vagrants or unemployed or idle persons were compelled to work at something or suffer the punishment of law. Workhouses were also established for the indigent, and able-bodied unemployed. One post-war grand jury declared that "idleness was a great cause of many becoming, not only useless to themselves, but a nuisance to society." ³³

In 1763, the Commission of Markets set commodity prices for the protection of the poorer class of citizens.

In 1744, a group of Charleston shipwrights petitioned the legislature for the regulation of that industry. Slave labor had been employed in the shipyards and the competition had reduced the white laborers to poverty in some instances. A bill was passed for the regulation of the wages of the white laborers as well as the Negroes, placing a limitation on the employment of slave labor. The employers, anxious to get labor as cheaply as possible, over-rode the bill, and it was not until 1751, that satisfactory legislation was enacted. This bill provided that no citizen of Charleston could keep more than two male slaves to work out

³³ Richard B. Morris, The Era of the American Revolution, p. 92.

for hire as fishermen, potters, or handcraftsmen. ³⁴

It was found, due to the lack of sufficient manufactures, to be more profitable to export raw materials and import the finished products. Many manufactured products, such as shoes, boots, and other leather goods, could be shipped from England and sold much cheaper in Charleston than those that had been made there. In many other instances it was to the advantage of both the colonists and England to import the manufactured goods.

Due to the fire of 1740, and the typhoon of 1761, Charleston's early buildings were replaced by newer and more up-to-date structures. The rich planters induced architects and master artisans to come to America to assist with the building. Many beautiful colonial homes were constructed and a few of them are standing today. The churches were growing rapidly and many new buildings were erected. During previous years the religion of Charleston had centered around the churches of St. Philip's and St. Michael, but during the Golden Age, it began to expand and branch out into other parts of the city. A cornerstone for the new St. Michael's Church was laid in 1751, however, the structure was not completed until some ten years later. The bells of St. Michael are famous throughout Carolina and the church

³⁴Ibid., p. 80.

tower has been used as an observation post in every war since its construction. ³⁵

Leiding gives a brief description of Charleston and its continental origin and atmosphere in the following lines:

Charleston betrays her origin in subtle touches. Bristol gave her narrow streets and red brick buildings. St. Michael's place is a copy of the Cathedral closes of Gloucester, Derby and Shrewsbury. Leeds gave open air markets -- Norwich gave the idea of a library, museum, and botanical garden. It is easy to analyze the social life of Charleston of today and trace the places from which they were transferred. London gave ideas of pomp and ceremony, as well as patterns for many buildings. ³⁶

Education was not neglected in the colonial days of Charleston. Many of the rich planters sent their sons and daughters back to England to be educated. South Carolina sent more students to the universities of England than any of the other colonies. Prior to the Revolution, many of Charleston's leading citizens had been educated at the English universities. Naturally, upon their return to Charleston they brought back the customs, ideas, and tastes of educated English society. There was a great demand for individual instructors at this time, as the wealthier planters not wishing to send their children abroad, provided tutors for their education. Besides a number of paid schools, many free public schools had been established

³⁵ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 111.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 101.

for children whose parents were unable to afford tutors. Societies and organizations also donated funds for the education of the Negroes. Charleston most certainly kept abreast of the times, and was far in advance of many of the other cities. ³⁷

Charleston was the cultural and social center of the South. "Charleston was well fed, well bred, and well read and was the bright particular star in the English crown." ³⁸ She established a library, and in many of the homes were to be found the best selections in literature of that time. As early as 1730, theatrical performances were given in the council rooms of the Assembly; then in 1736, a regular theater was built, where plays were performed at least once a week. An early issue of The Gazette, carried a notice of plays to be performed, "The Recruiting Officer," "The London Merchant," "The Orphan," "A Woman Keeps a Secret," and "School for Lovers." Charleston also boasted a musical society and several literary clubs, where the educated and cultured of the city met to discuss their reading and to be entertained by "musicales," which sometimes were offered by local talent. Although it is said that Charleston did not have a 'native artist,' yet the walls of the finest homes were adorned with famous paintings and portraits brought over from the homeland. The ladies dressed in the finest London

³⁷ Powell, Historic Towns of Southern States, p. 270.

³⁸ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 117.

styles, setting the fashion for the other southern colonies. Many of the wealthy merchants and planters owned several coaches and fine horses, even though there was a tax on horses purchased in the north. Horse racing has always been a favored sport in Charleston, and some of the Jockey Clubs date back to the early eighteenth century.

Charleston has long been renowned for her botanical gardens. The wealthy planters able to afford summer homes in the city, never failed to include a beautiful garden spot in the plans, and the homes were usually surrounded by fragrant and lovely blossoms.

All the niceties of court life, were observed at social functions. The people led easy, gay, showy and hospitable existences, luxuries were easily obtained . . . all the accessories demanded by London social life. ³⁹

Charleston did not spend all of her time at festivals and social functions however, for in 1749, a hospital for sick sailors and transients was erected near the vestry of St. Philip's. In 1767, an act was passed by the Assembly and an appropriation of three thousand pounds was made, which was to be spent for the care of invalid soldiers, their widows, and orphans.⁴⁰ This with the enactment of poor-laws earlier in the history was a decided step towards our present day organization for assistance and relief for the unfortunate.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 116.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Charleston, resplendant in its social and cultural background, its decided economic progress and growth, its place as the center of the south, was not exactly prepared for the oncoming Revolution. Shadows of the future hostilities had already begun to cross the otherwise bright horizon. Little difficulties had arisen from time to time with the Crown, but for the most part had been settled in an amicable way. Many of these restrictions by the Crown had not touched Charleston, having their center in the New England colonies. The Stamp Act, however, did affect Charleston and its enactment was a blow to this prosperous and flourishing city of sixty thousand white people and eighty thousand Negroes.

The Stamp Act was proposed in the British Parliament in 1764. All business documents, according to the provisions, were illegal unless they were written on the stamped paper. Stamps also had to be placed on all books and newspapers. Any violators of the act were to be tried without a jury. The stamps, made in England and sent to the colonies, were to be distributed by representatives appointed by the Crown. Charleston citizens were very bitterly opposed to the act and immediately resolved to rebel, after having seized a ship coming into the harbor to deliver the stamps to Lieutenant-Governor Bull for distribution. Bull fearing further violence and rebellion, had the stamps stored at Fort Johnson. However,

one hundred and fifty citizens went to St. James Island, took over the fort, and hauled down the British flag. They also constructed a twenty-foot gallows in the center of the city, hanging in effigy a dummy figure representing the distributor of the stamps. A large placard was nailed over the gallows with the inscription "Liberty and no Stamp Act." Several houses were entered and searched in an attempt to find the concealed stamps.

The other colonies were as incensed as Charleston, and in October 1765, the Stamp Act Congress met in New York. Some have wondered why Charleston received the act as a blow and caused such commotion over the affair. Many things worse had happened to them in their short history, but it was to Charleston, as it was to the other colonies, an infringement upon their rights. Throughout the history of the colonies they had fought and struggled for protection against taxation without their consent. Now the cry became, "No taxation without representation." The Charleston Assembly, backed by Lieutenant-Governor Bull, sent Thomas Lynch, Christopher Gadsden and John Rutledge to the Stamp Congress. Gadsden had been one of the leaders in the riot held at Fort James when the act was passed. The Assembly agreed with the action of the Congress in its protests to the Crown. Gadsden, however, did not approve and refused

to vote for the petition in the Assembly. Soon the courts were unable to transact any further business, due to the fact that the colonists refused to buy the stamps. King George, sensed that it was an inopportune time to overtax the colonies, so in May 1766, he repealed the Stamp Act.⁴¹

Charleston rejoiced once again, and the bell on St. Michael's tolled all day. King George's birthday was celebrated with much ceremony. A statue of William Pitt was ordered to be placed in front of the Town Hall. This statue arrived and was placed on its pedestal in May 1770, where it stood until the outbreak of the Revolution.

Although the Stamp Act had been repealed, a certain group of Charleston's citizens continued to meet under "The Liberty Tree," and were spurred on by Gadsden. He contended that the King was not through with the taxation question, that he would impose another kind of tax. Soon thereafter, in 1767, Parliament passed the Townshend Acts, which levied a duty on glass, paints, colors and tea.

In an attempt to thwart Gadsden and his revolutionary plans, Governor Montague dissolved the Assembly. Then in 1771, he ordered that British troops be sent to reinforce the troops left there after the Indian War. This incensed the citizens and they demanded arms for protection, they said, against the Indians and Negroes. In reply, Montague

⁴¹ Ravenal, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 161.

dissolved the legislature, gave up his governorship in 1775, and returned to England. This was the last Assembly elected in South Carolina before the Revolution. Charleston prepared for war.

CHAPTER IV

CHARLESTON DURING THE REVOLUTION AND AFTER FROM 1774 TO 1815

Charleston, at the close of the year 1773, was in a turmoil, and more or less divided in regard to the revolutionary state of affairs. Although, the entire colony had been incensed over Great Britain's attempt to levy taxes, many of the citizens were on the conservative side, and desired to avert trouble if possible. The forces under the leadership of Christopher Gadsden were of the liberal and rebellious type, and his fiery and revolutionary plans were enthusiastically received by a certain class.

The attitude of the entire colony changed after it was learned that the tax on tea was retained, although the other Townshend Acts had been repealed. A British vessel, the London, arrived in Charleston harbor with nearly three hundred chests of tea. The conservative leaders were able to avoid an immediate clash by keeping the extremists away until the Collector of the Port could seize the cargo and store it safely in vaults, where it was left to rot. Soon after this event in 1774, the ship Brittania, came into the

harbor, and in its cargo were seven or eight chests of tea. A group of Charleston merchants to whom the tea had been shipped, went on board the Brittania and threw the tea overboard.

Following this act, several hundred citizens came together at a general mass meeting, which ended by their taking over the government under the name of the Provincial or Colonial Congress. W. H. Drayton, Arthur Middleton, C. C. Pinckney, William Gibbes, and Edward Mays, were appointed as members of a secret committee to enter the arsenals and storehouses and seize all of Britain's ammunition and arms.¹

Previous to this meeting on October 26, 1774, the first Continental Congress met in Philadelphia. This Congress prepared a petition to the King, in which the colonists stated their grievances and asked for the repeal of some thirteen acts of Parliament, which imposed taxes on them. Until such times as these acts should be repealed all importations from the British and exportations from the colonies to the British, should cease.

Following this meeting of the Continental Congress, the citizens of Charleston commenced to have regular meetings of the Colonial Congress. The general committee drew up resolutions and decided to elect delegates from every parish and district in South Carolina. These

¹ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 128.

representatives met with the Colonial Congress and took under consideration the actions of the Continental Congress at Philadelphia.

February 17, 1775, was set aside as a day for fasting and prayer "before Almighty God, to inspire the King with true wisdom to defend the people of North America in their just title to freedom, and to avert them from the calamities of civil war."²

These recommendations were accepted by the entire colony and arms and ammunition were distributed to the volunteer companies, who devoted a part of each day to drilling and practice. In a very short time the entire city of Charleston was veiled in a military atmosphere and bore semblance to a regular military garrison.

Many of the inhabitants felt that there would be no actual war, that the King would reconsider, and that the entire affair would end in the same manner as the Stamp Act revolt, but preparations were carried on, nevertheless. When ships came into the Charleston Harbor, no taxed article was allowed to be unloaded. The instructions of the Continental Congress were carried out to the letter. In many cases, it was found that families were divided, some for the rights of the newly formed government, and others still loyal and faithful to the Crown.

At the first meeting of the Continental Congress in

² Ramsay, History of South Carolina, p. 131.

1774, the delegates from South Carolina were not instructed to join in any move for independence. The Boston tea party caused some alarm in Charleston, however, and many of the colonists desired at least a redress from Britain for this imposition. After the news of Lexington, South Carolina was ready and willing to fight for independence.

Carolina and Georgia confiscated seven thousand pounds of powder from a British vessel, and sent a part of it to Washington, who was then near Boston. Charleston's forces under the leadership of Colonel Motte, captured the remainder of the British troops left at Fort Johnson after the Cherokee wars. Governor Campbell, after having dissolved the Assembly, fled to the British ship Tamar, which was stationed in the harbor. Then on November 12, 1775, the Tamar and the Cherokee, British sloops, opened fire on the Defense, an American vessel, but troops stationed at Fort Johnson were successful in sinking both British ships.

After the Royal Governor fled, Carolina was under a semi-state government. There were few, if any, changes made, except that the governors were elected by popular vote, instead of appointed by the King. The Council was replaced by the Legislature, and the word "state" was used in a documentary way, to replace the former word "colony." "One word was to be erased by tears, the other written in blood." ³

³ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 132.

One of the most remarkable features in the history of Charleston and South Carolina, was the obdurate tenacity of some of the inhabitants in regard to breaking the tie with Britain. Even as late as the year 1775, a final petition was sent to the King. It was of no avail and when the Declaration of Independence was put to vote, four out of five of the Carolina delegates, voted its adoption.

Doubtful of the strength of the new national army, Charleston organized a regular force of her own, planned after the standing armies of Europe. Gadsden and Mountrie were chosen to command two regiments stationed on the coast, the third regiment was under the command of William Thomson.⁴

At the meeting of the first Provincial Congress in January 1775, a Committee of Safety was appointed, and a million dollars was raised.

Realizing that the importance of their harbor would soon bring on an attack from the British, the Charlestonians hastily made plans for enlarging and improving their fortifications. Work was begun on Fort Sullivan, and other defense measures were planned. In a short time Charleston was one of the most important of the sea coast defenses. It had been converted almost overnight into a garrison town.

The next step in the independence of South Carolina,

⁴Ibid., p. 133.

took place in February, 1773. At this time the Provincial Congress submitted a constitution, which was adopted, and South Carolina became an independent state. Under this form of government, the governor was called president, and he was also commander-in-chief of the State army. John Rutledge was elected President, Henry Laurens, Vice-President, and William Henry Drayton, Chief Justice.

Charleston was fortunate in learning in advance, of one attack, and was in a way able to prepare herself. Through an intercepted letter from the English Secretary of War, it was learned that Sir Henry Clinton was bringing forces down from Boston to make an attack upon the southern colonies, and Admiral Parker was to be in charge of a portion of the navy that was to sail south and wipe out the towns on the coast. The letter did not state which of the colonies were marked for the first attack. General Washington sent warnings to the southern colonies and dispatched General Charles Lee to augment their troops, with the instruction to "watch Sir Henry Clinton." ⁵

Charleston, having been warned, made hurried preparations for the attack, knowing that enemy forces must be met on both the sea and the land. All available vessels were converted into warships, lead was gathered from every possible source and made into bullets, and the Negroes were called in

⁵ Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 282.

from the plantations to help with the work of building forts, batteries, and other means of defense. There was cooperation on every hand, the inhabitants seemed suddenly to forget that there had been any differences and lack of desire to unite against the King. The King was completely forgotten. "The approach of the fleet had done more in one week to unite the people than the acts of the ministers or the eloquence of Gadsden had effected in months." ⁶

When the news came that the fleet was within twenty miles of Charleston, the fort had not been completed; the original plan called for ten feet in height, and only six feet had been erected. It was fortified with sixty-two guns. The two regiments, commanded by Thomson and Moultrie, had been supplied with ten thousand pounds of powder. When the British fleet arrived in the harbor, Charleston was waiting. The battle commenced with the British firing into the side of the fort. Colonel Moultrie, in an endeavor to save ammunition, fired only at intervals, and the British supposed he was ready to give up. By early nightfall of the same day, however, Moultrie had defeated the British, who had suffered the loss of more than two hundred men.

Clinton, in the meantime, had arrived at the other end of the island. With a force of about 750 men and two cannons, Thomson defeated Clinton, whose forces numbered two thousand

⁶ Ibid., p. 233.

men. For three years after the defeat of Clinton and Parker, the Carolina and Georgia territory was not bothered much, the fighting having been transferred to the northern colonies. Several uprisings among the Indians and Loyalists occurred, but they were put down without any very serious losses.

During the three years that the war was centered in other parts of the country, Charleston went about much as before. She had the advantage of being one of the few ports that remained open. Her harbor was visited by neutral ships from the other countries, and supplies for the inland districts came through her port. During this time Charleston had her usual fires, one of which destroyed much property, including the library.

The Assembly that met in 1778 decided to adopt a permanent constitution. The governmental machinery set up by this Assembly is practically the same as that of a state government today. The President was changed to Governor, the Council became the Senate, the Commons became the House of Representatives, and combined they formed the State Legislature, just as it is at the present time.⁷

For a period of three years all was quiet in the Carolinas, but the struggle was slowly moving toward the South, and in December of 1778, General Prevost captured

⁷ Ibid., p. 255.

Savannah, Georgia, and immediately re-established royal government. Benjamin Lincoln, with the assistance of a French fleet, attempted to recapture the city, but the battle was lost. Prevost then advanced towards Charleston, devastating the country along his route. His first attack was made on Port Royal. He was soon reinforced by troops under the command of Clinton, and the attack on Charleston was begun. The battle continued for several days and on April 21st, General Lincoln sent word to Clinton that he was ready to make terms and surrender. The terms prepared were not satisfactory to Clinton, and the fight was renewed. Charleston was at a terrible disadvantage, she was short on supplies, having shipped everything to the North, expecting to get replenishments from the West Indies. She was now cut off from supplies from that direction and was unable to get help from the inland colonies. Sickness was breaking out everywhere, smallpox and yellow fever having come with the warm weather. On May 12, 1780, Charleston surrendered and was taken over by the enemy, but the victory was not the prize for which Clinton had hoped. Fire, war, and disease had practically ruined the city. ⁸

For the next thirteen months, Charleston was in the hands of the enemy, and after August 15th, when Cornwallis defeated Gates at Camden, the entire sea coast was under the control

⁸ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 139.

of the British. The Patriots, using their experience from former Indian fights, began to organize and make attacks. By the later part of 1781, they had recaptured almost the entire State. Most of the British had retreated to Charleston in the South, while the French had Cornwallis hemmed in at Chesapeake Bay. On October 19th, he was compelled to surrender and the war was practically ended. ⁹

Soon after the surrender of Cornwallis, the British sailed out of Charleston harbor. The once prosperous city was in ruins. Debris from pillaged homes filled the streets, and poverty, sickness, despair, suffering, and hunger were everywhere. The city was free, but it faced a desperate situation. All the work of a century was practically destroyed. The country was full of orphans and widows, whose property had been pillaged and ransacked, leaving them with little more than the bare soil.

The government was disrupted, agriculture was ruined, and of course, all commerce was at a standstill. The people were penniless, many of them bereft of homes and possessions. The Volunteer Patriot troops were free to return to their homes, where they endeavored to salvage the little that had been left by the British. One historian gives an idea as to the way the British had seized the possessions of the colonists, in the following lines:

The British departed with 5,333 slaves, the bells

⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

and the books of St. Michael's, thousands of dollars worth of gold and the possession of many Tory families. . . . in addition to the soldiers, 3,794 whites moved under the British flag.¹⁰

Reorganization was commenced immediately. The city was incorporated in 1783, and during the next year Richard Hudson was made the first Mayor or Intendant. The officials went about restoring order. Because the debt was great and money had to be raised, a new levy of taxes was necessary. The State gave the creditors "indents," and by this method several hundred thousand dollars was put into circulation. The money was loaned at seven per cent interest, the security being mortgages or deposits of plate. The merchants agreed to take the bills at face value and for this reason it was not necessary to make a second issue. "A gentleman repaired his house on the security of his wife's earrings, or bought a horse and plough with the proceeds of his silver candelabra."¹¹ Charleston was beginning to look like an inhabited place, the people were cheerful, trade was picking up again, and the general outlook was one of prosperity.

Soon after the federal government was formed the United States agreed to pay the individual states for the money they had advanced and spent during the Revolution. South Carolina had made very large contributions from the start, and the amount due her was \$1,447,173. The Bank of South

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 148.

¹¹ Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 342.

Carolina was formed and immediately commenced to redeem the paper on deposit, making the payments in specie.

In Charleston there were several violent outbursts between the Patriots and the Tories. The Intendant, Hutson, took the situation in hand, and the inhabitants were finally quieted down, but not until after there had been much rioting, tarring and feathering, and even murdering. ¹²

After the adoption and ratification of the Constitution, South Carolina decided that her capital should be nearer the center of the State. Charleston fought bitterly, but lost, and in 1790, the Capital of South Carolina was moved to Columbia. From the time of its establishment, over one hundred years before, Charleston had been the center of the State of Carolina. Everything had its beginning there, governmental affairs had always been handled in Charleston, it was the political, social, religious, and economic center of the State. It was, therefore, a terrible blow to the city when this status was changed. "Charleston's reign of one hundred and twenty years was over." ¹³

Charleston was no longer the political center of the State and from this date forward the most important events center around the social, economic, and religious life of this city. Leiding, in her history of Charleston, makes the following rather interesting comment upon the removal of the

¹² Allen Nevins, The American States During and After the Revolution, p. 389.

¹³ Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 344. L

capital:

When the scepter departed this city three visible links of the past went with it -- the Seal of State, the Mace and the Chippendale chair, said by William P. Preston, the donor, to be the quasi throne on which the later colonial governors sat when presiding in Charleston in the old State House. The Mace, a handsome symbol of authority costing ninety guineas, has often been called Cromwell's bauble. It was used in the Provincial House of Assembly to open legislative meetings. It was carried off by the British, offered for sale in the Bahama Islands, made its devious way to the vaults of the Bank of the United States in Philadelphia, where it was located by Honorable Langdon Cheves, then President of the Institution. He secured the relic, returned it to the State. It now rests in front of the desk of the Speaker in the Legislature of South Carolina at Columbia. ¹⁴

The close of the Revolution and the organization of a new and independent nation brought many changes in the social and economic life of the entire United States. Many connections with different European nations were severed for the time being, and taken up under an entirely new and different status. In Charleston, the majority of the leaders during the colonial period, were from the upper class of England. The most prominent colonial officials, ministers, lawyers, doctors, financiers and educators, all came from England. The new leaders were now of the colonies, pioneers and sons of pioneers, educating themselves by experience to lead in every walk of life. Many inequalities disappeared. The native sons of Charleston, and the great planters, of course, took part in all of the reorganization and rebuilding. For the most part, they were

¹⁴ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 161.

intelligent, many of them educated and experienced and prepared for leadership.¹⁵

The majority of these planters had been members of the Church of England, but everything English was detested in the United States, and consequently these gentlemen broke the old ties and became leaders in the new Americanized churches.¹⁶ Many of the members, however, remained loyal to the old form of worship and in 1785, Reverend Robert Smith, Rector of St. Philip's, called a meeting and the church was reorganized as the "Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States." Many of the churches had been destroyed by fire and the ravages of war and those left standing had been rifled of everything of value, but in a short time they were rebuilt and repaired. A few denominations had never been represented in Charleston, but with the end of the Revolution, and with the coming of new settlers, practically every church was represented in the city.

Charleston was slowly beginning to take on the appearance of pre-war days, trade was flourishing, agriculture was again in a prosperous state, religious, educational, and commercial life was moving briskly within her bounds. In 1796, the Duke La Rochefoucault-Leiancourt of France visited in the United States and wrote the following comment on Charleston:

¹⁵ John Spencer Bassett, The Federalist System, p. 175.

¹⁶ Lyman P. Powell, Historic Towns of the Southern States, p. 154.

I cannot close this long article on the South without mentioning with deserved praise the kind reception I experienced in Charleston. This is a duty which I owe to the inhabitants of all the parts of America which I have traversed, but especially to this place. In no town of the United States does a foreigner experience more benevolence or find more entertaining society than in Charleston. They keep a greater number of servants than those of Philadelphia. From the hour of four in the afternoon, they rarely think of aught but pleasure and amusement. Many of the inhabitants of Charleston having been in Europe, have in consequence acquired a greater knowledge of our manners and a stronger partiality to them than the people of the Northern States. Consequently, the European modes of life are here more prevalent. ¹⁷

The leaders were bending every effort to rebuild the town and open up new and better trade routes. The Cherokee Indian lands were opened and rapidly occupied. New roads were opened and built from the new capital at Columbia into the surrounding territory. Due to the fact that the outlet for the foreign trade was the harbor located in Charleston, all roads finally ended there. Ferrys were making scheduled trips and engineers were put to work figuring new routes to shorten the distance by opening canals. The Santee River was surveyed and a canal to connect it with the Cooper was proposed, and later dug. The plan to connect the Ashley and Edisto fell through and was never accomplished. Stage-coaches were making trips to Georgetown. Shops were reopened and the Courier carried advertisements in each issue of a great variety of articles being sold in that day.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 267.

In April of 1789, a meeting was called to elect the members of the State Convention. The work of this Convention is a celebrated event in the history of Charleston.¹⁸ The citizens commenced the celebration with a gigantic parade with a representative number from every trade and profession known in that day. There were seventy-nine different groups besides the State officials and the soldiers. It was truly a "living presentation of the resources and artisans of the city."¹⁹

The culture of cotton had already been introduced into this section of the country and immediately following the Revolution its development was very rapid. As previously mentioned, the first cotton exported from the colonies was shipped from the Charleston Harbor to Liverpool. The seed used in both the states of Georgia and Carolina had been introduced by the Board of Trade and was sent from the Bahama Islands. This was always known as sea-island cotton. The market for indigo had been practically cut off by the Revolution, and with the severance of the bonds with Britain, the bounty ceased. Many complaints had been received about the unhealthful conditions caused by the indigo steeping vats, and many of them had rotted and ruined during the war. The profits from the new cotton crop were much greater than those from any previous crop produced in the tidewater region.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 268.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 167.

The spread of sea-island cotton planting was largely hastened by the excellent prices which the long-staple brought. The English market welcomed the new staple. In 1799, the cotton seed sold readily in Liverpool at five shillings a pound. In South Carolina, the price ranged from nine pence to one shilling during the early days of production.²⁰

Many producers bought large tracts of land on credit and paid for them with the cotton crop in two years. A Mrs. Ramage had already started a cotton factory on James Island and the large scale production and manufacture of cotton products was well on the road to being one of the most important industries of the South. With Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin the large crops were seeded in much less time, and it was a great innovation for the South.

During this same year a new method of producing rice was introduced, the cultivation of tide-water rice. By this method of flooding the rice fields with water taken in through flood-gates from the rivers, it was possible to utilize the great deltas of the rivers. With these wonderful crops of cotton and rice to be produced, trade had almost trebled itself, slaves were in demand and work was plentiful. ". . . public affairs were so much altered for the better, that the fable of the Golden Age seemed to be realized."²¹

With the improvement of business conditions and the country in a more settled state, the minds of the people

²⁰ Guion Griffis Johnson, Social History of the Sea Islands, p. 25.

²¹ Ramsay, History of South Carolina, p. 240.

gradually turned to education. During the war and the re-organization afterwards, education had been sadly neglected. Since most of the higher education had been obtained in England, the question now arose as to the education of the youth in their own American schools. The College of Charleston was a result of this desire for American institutions. Many of the citizens sent their sons to Princeton. There were numerous new public schools opened while some of the planters still retained tutors for their children.

In 1791, Charleston made ready for a great event. President Washington was planning to tour the South. Charleston made great preparations, and it is today one of the most memorable highlights in her history. President Washington remained in the city several days, where he was entertained at balls, concerts, dinners of state and receptions galore. "Every relic of his presence has been cherished by an adoring people. The plates from which he ate, the tree which he saved, are sacred to their owners." ²²

With the beginning of the new century in 1800, the population of South Carolina was 345,591, almost equally divided between whites and blacks. William Henry Drayton was the governor. Everything was flourishing, business was good, crops were increasing each year and the commercial interests of Charleston were widespread. A State Bank was organized. An endowment fund was raised for the establishment of South

²² Raven 1, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 358.

Carolina College, and another endowment provided for the establishment of additional free public schools throughout the country. Charleston participated in all of this, and in addition erected a beautiful County Court House and the State House with stone which had been bought in Virginia.²³

The increase in the cotton industry had made Charleston of more value and importance to the South than in the previous years. The cotton trade alone was gigantic and it all crossed Charleston Harbor before starting across the sea. Many large firms were established in Charleston to handle the business of imports and exports for the South. Among them were many important auction and brokerage firms as well as wholesale firms with trade connections in the Bahamas and the West Indies. Many of the merchants of Charleston owned and operated ships of their own, carrying goods for the other Southern States. King street was usually lined with white-topped wagons, drawn by from four to six mules, the wagons piled high with cotton. When this cotton had been sold the wagons were reloaded with merchandise and supplies of all kinds for the homeward journey. Most of the inland planters traded in this manner, letting one caravan a year suffice. The shops, as a general rule, carried every article that a person would want from the ladies household articles to machinery and harness.

²³ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 183.

In September 1805, Charleston suffered the loss of one of her distinguished sons. General William Moultrie, of Revolutionary fame had died, and the governor asked "all officers of the State to unite with him in a token of respect to the memory of this meritorious veteran and Revolutionary hero." ²⁴ He was indeed a distinguished patriot and soldier.

The French and English trouble was beginning to affect America and in 1807, foreign trade of Charleston was practically destroyed. Lack of foreign trade was ruinous to agriculture, the planters were in a terrible plight, there was no circulation of money, and business was at a standstill. To alleviate the situation, the Legislature chartered the Bank of the State. Within a short time war seemed inevitable. President Jefferson did everything he could to avoid it and Madison also desired peace, but so long as Napoleon was at war it seemed impossible to keep out of the struggle. "America asked nothing better than to be allowed to cultivate her fields, build up her industries, and sail her ships unmolested." ²⁵ Neither France nor England would permit such quiet neutrality, each hoping for the aid of America. At the opening of the Thirteenth Congress it was evident and inevitable that America

²⁴ Ibid., p. 183.

²⁵ Bavenal, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 416.

should have to enter the struggle against England.

Charleston was not really affected by the War of 1812, in the military sense. The coast had been prepared from North Carolina to Florida, but there were only two small battles which were easy victories for America. The fortifications at Charleston were not molested. Although she was never assailed during the war, the commercial and economic effects were felt for many months to come. Her trade was completely ruined, imports were stopped, and exports were a risk. The rice and cotton crops were stored until a time when the market would open. Every vessel that sailed out into the water beyond the coast was attacked by a British ship; the losses were very heavy. One vessel loaded with about seven thousand dollars worth of rice, all from one plantation, was reported captured within sixty miles of Charleston.²⁶

Peace was finally declared in January 1815, after the victory of New Orleans. Even though the losses were great, and it was several years before America recovered from the affects of the war, she had made herself a place among the nations of the world. "Her flag was respected, her rights acknowledged, and all material losses were soon forgotten in the prosperity that set in and continued . . . down to 1861."²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., p. 416.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 419.

For the two years duration of the war several changes took place in Charleston, the European trade having been cut off, she became more dependent on the North for her supplies. Another important event was the dissolution of the Federalist party in this section of the country. Many times in the past, the divided political beliefs of the south were the cause of unpleasant events, but during the war the inhabitants threw away their differences and stuck together in their common cause. While Governor Alston was in office the boundary line between North and South Carolina was settled and determined by a survey.

One of the first benevolent societies in the country was established in Charleston immediately following the War of 1812. It was called the Ladies Benevolent Society, whose purpose was the care of the sick. Donations of cotton were accepted and the women were taught to spin and weave yarn for the poor. The society also provided linen, medicine, food and nurses for the sick. It received donations and legacies and prospered up until the time of the Civil War. In 1850, when Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale, appeared in concert in Charleston, she was so impressed by this benevolent movement that she contributed generously to the society. No monument is more prized than this gracious gesture made by Jenny Lind. During times of epidemic this organization was invaluable to the sick and indigent.

In recent years a nurse of the Johns Hopkins Hospital at Baltimore, made the following comment on this first benevolent society:

I have been struck with the wise spirit in which it was founded. The cautious distribution of alms; the effort to study and understand the needs of the sick and the helpless, and to give the right kind of relief, are characteristic of the most modern 'scientific' methods. It is a little curious to find them suggested anywhere, nearly a hundred years ago,²⁸

At the close of this period in the growth and development of the city of Charleston, there have been many changes. The far reaching effects of the Revolution left a lasting imprint on her history. From a dependent colony of the Royal Crown of Great Britain she integrated and became a vital and important part of that great union of colonies, the United States.

With the introduction of sea island cotton into the South and the production of this great crop, Charleston's economic and social importance to the South increased with each year. From the end of the Revolution to the War of 1812, the population and size of the city increased almost three-fold. With the opening of the inland territory and the lands left by the Cherokee Indian wars, the trade of the harbor towns grew with decided rapidity. All of the inland population looked to Charleston for supplies and for a market for their products. These demands opened new fields to the city.

²⁸
Ibid., p. 418.

Extensive markets, handling everything imaginable, cotton brokers, and auction firms sprang up in every space. Merchants commenced to expand their businesses and to buy and build their own vessels in order to share in the lucrative foreign trade.

The city proper, was of necessity, enlarged to meet these demands of incoming population. The planters continued to retain homes in Charleston and with business flourishing these homes were enlarged and many of them rebuilt.

Charleston had always been the most progressive of the southern states in the number and character of her schools. As early as the year 1712, the old colonial Assembly had passed an act founding a grammar school located in Charleston.²⁹ During this period following the Revolution, Charleston College was founded and located there, where many of America's illustrious sons received their education. Many new free public schools were opened and new buildings were erected.

An American church replaced the old Church of England and many new denominations and sects were introduced to Charleston. Old buildings were replaced by more modern structures and the gospel was carried into the inland country and parishes.

²⁹ M. W. Jernegan, "Factors Influencing the Development of American Education Before the Revolution," Proceedings of The Mississippi Valley Historical Association, V (1911-1912). pp. 204-205.

The old "White Meeting House" was rebuilt in 1806, and in its place was a beautiful building that was called the 'Circular Church'. At this time the Church of Rome was introduced to Charleston and the St. Mary's was built, making the nineteenth church in the town. The Presbyterians and Huguenots also put up new and finer churches.

The social life of Charleston was perhaps the gayest and most notable in the South. Her location brought many distinguished visitors within her limits and visitors in the South always prolonged their stay in Charleston. The wealthy planters and merchants, most of whom were refined and educated gentlemen, made the social and cultural life very lively.

Charleston, the economic and social center of the South had passed through another period in her development and had made rapid progress towards filling her rightful place as the metropolis of the South

CHAPTER V

CHARLESTON LEADS THE WAY TO SECESSION

FROM 1815 TO 1860

The final echoes of the War of 1812 had not been heard in Charleston before new developments began to take place. James Monroe had been elected President, to succeed Jefferson, and one of his first official acts was to visit the southern states. He desired to meet the people of the South and become better acquainted with them, as well as to familiarize himself with the land and inspect the coast defenses. He remained in Charleston for one week and was entertained in the same royal and hospitable manner as was President Washington only a few years previously.

This period in Charleston's history was one of very positive sectional rivalry. This political rivalry was evidenced in every movement. The Missouri Compromise, the annexation of Texas, the Mexican War, the acquisition of California, the Compromise of 1850, the struggle for possession of Cuba, the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and the Dred Scott Decision, were a few of the many phases of this political rivalry.

The introduction of the cotton culture in the South several years earlier, led to the demand for large plantations, more territory, and more slave labor to cultivate this increased farming area. "It finally culminated in the election of a President whose platform of non-extension of slavery, precipitated the Civil War. Side by side with this political rivalry was an economic contest which, in point of importance, is scarcely inferior to the political contest." ¹

Charleston in 1819 was suffering from the drastic effects of the War of 1812 upon her trade and commerce. It was almost impossible to obtain a loan, as the banks were forced to close and many of the leading firms failed. All of the cities along the coast were striving to gain the trade and push the other sea coast cities into the background. Charleston, whose import and export trade had rivaled that of New York for many years, was now crippled from the effects of the war. Not only had the city suffered terrible trade losses, but now it faced new competitors. Within a short distance of her own harbor, Savannah was a prosperous rival, with increasing trade and industry. Philadelphia and Boston, at greater distance, were gradually taking larger shares of ocean commerce. "Charleston's position as a commercial and trading center for the South was in danger, and other towns with less natural advantages were gradually sapping her trade." ²

¹ John G. Van Deusen, The Ante-Bellum Southern Commercial Conventions, p. 7.

² Robert Mills, Statistics of South Carolina, p. 169.

At the opening of the Revolutionary War, Charleston was one of the three leading sea coast towns of the entire group of British colonies. She was the leading town south of New York. This supremacy in the South, held by Charleston was being endangered by the rapid growth of other enterprising towns along the coast. The farsighted citizens of Charleston, realizing the gravity of the situation, felt that something would have to be done if their city were to maintain this commercial leadership.

The westward movement had increased both imports and exports to the foreign trade centers of the world. Heretofore, a very large part of this commerce had moved over the wharves of Charleston. The western settlements could still make Charleston their headquarters, if there were some speedy means of getting into the city. The one solution to Charleston's problem was to facilitate easier and more convenient means of transportation to the west.

One of the first steps in this attempt to improve the means of transportation was to connect some of the waterways. The Santee Canal, a great work for the time, was put into operation.³ This canal extended for twenty-two miles between the Santee River in South Carolina and the city of Charleston. It was thirty-two feet wide at the top, twenty feet wide at the bottom, and four feet deep. This canal

³Theodore D. Jervey, Robert Y. Hayne and His Times, p. 20.

connected the Santee and the Cooper Rivers and was a great benefit for the trade of Charleston.

Charleston's next step to maintain her position as the greatest commercial center of the South, was to incorporate a railroad. If it were possible to build railroads into the interior and connect with the western settlements a great portion of this trade would return to Charleston. "Charleston at the beginning of her 'twenties' found her wagon trade severely diminished by the rise of river towns, while her lack of waterways to the interior prevented the growth of wholesale business to compensate." ⁴

Alexander Black of Charleston presented a bill to the South Carolina legislature in 1827 for a charter to permit organization of a railroad company. This charter was granted and The South Carolina Canal and Railroad Company was organized at Charleston City Hall. The objective of the company was to construct a railroad from Charleston across the state to Hamburg. The surveyors and promoters found the country between the termini an easy one on which to construct the road, and their only difficulty was one of finances. Charleston investors purchased most of the stock, the city government invested \$20,000 and later the State was induced to make a loan of \$100,000. Many private corporations, bankers, insurance

⁴Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South, p. 147.

companies, wealthy planters and capitalists subscribed liberally to the stock.⁵ The completed road was 136 miles in length and was opened for travel in its entirety in 1833. Upon its completion this was the longest stretch of railroad in the world. Charleston hoped to divert some of the traffic from Savannah through the construction of this line.

Three years before the line was completed a little steam locomotive "The Best Friend of Charleston," had been put in operation and was a decided success. Its first trip, of course, was one of Charleston's most exciting and memorable events.

When the engine, the "Best Friend," the first locomotive used in America, was put upon the track, and drew a car which could carry twenty-five passengers at the daring and dangerous pace of twelve miles an hour, and was even entrusted to transport the mail, the world stood amazed! "⁶

Charleston had not been disturbed by any insurrections by the Negro slaves since the trouble with Spain at St. Augustine, at which time the Spanish and French aroused the Negroes to join in the rebellion. However, in 1822, Charleston and the surrounding country was greatly alarmed upon hearing of a Negro insurrection. According to the census of 1820, the white population of Charleston had actually decreased, while that of the Negroes had increased. Importation of slaves from other states had been increasing rapidly and the exact proportion was not known in 1822. At one time

⁵ Edward C. Kirkland, A History of American Economic Life, p. 290.

⁶ Ravanel, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 458.

the importation of slaves into Charleston was stopped, but with the increase of trade and cotton production the practice had been resumed. Among the many Negroes brought in from the West Indies was Denmark Vesey, a free mulatto. Vesey, whose home was in Charleston, became the leader of the insurrection. His plan was for one large group of Negroes to cross from the island into the town where they were to be joined by another group from the inland country. The united party was then to seize all arms and ammunition, kill the Governor or Intendant, set fire to the city, and massacre all of the white men. The women and booty were to have been kept by the Negroes. The whites learned of the plot through household servants, who took no part in it. The plan was thwarted in its beginning, but not before the entire citizenship had been alarmed. Vesey and one or two other leaders were taken to trial and later hanged. A few of those implicated were too ignorant to know what they had been attempting to accomplish. Of the guilty, twenty-nine were transported, and thirty-five were executed.⁷

As a result of this conspiracy the laws for the control and regulation of the Negroes were made much more rigid than before. Laws of this kind, both old and new, were strictly enforced and the Negroes, generally, were watched closely. The Negroes desiring to migrate toward

⁷ Jervey, Robert Y. Hayne and His Time, p. 130.

the North were not allowed to return, and those employed on coasting vessels were not allowed to land.

After the dastardly scheme to massacre the whites and burn the city, Charleston realized the danger of the growing colored population. Her ministers and officials considered plans to educate the Negroes. Many years before this, a Benevolent Missionary Organization had given religious instruction to a few of the slaves, but the movement had not been widespread. In 1828, C. C. Pinckney, called a meeting of the Agricultural Society, informing them that the Negro population had increased so greatly that individual teaching and training was out of the question. He asked that they join him in a move to establish educational facilities for the Negroes. He also asked the assistance of the churches. The plan was carried forward and in 1829, two missions were established on the Cooper and Santee Rivers, for the plantation slaves of that locality. At first, some of the planters objected on the grounds that it might cause disturbances, but soon they were giving their unlimited cooperation to the movement. Between this time and the first year of the Civil War, "fifty chapels were built by the planters along the seaboard for the religious instruction of their slaves, fifty thousand Negroes were members of Christian churches in South Carolina." ⁸

⁸ Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 443.

In 1825, Lafayette made a tour of the United States and visited Charleston. He had many old friends from the Revolutionary days and was received with great rejoicing and celebration. Meeting street was lined with citizens and soldiers, when he drove into the city. "No such procession had ever been seen; in it was every man in town and hundreds who had come from the country. Windows and doors were thronged with ladies."⁹ General Binckney's last public service was his part in this reception for his old friend.

In the years following the War of 1812, South Carolina experienced a great deal of economic unrest and political controversy. Some of the leaders were blaming the economic and social slump on the war, while others felt that the tariff was the cause of all the trouble. As early as 1820, articles by prominent Charleston leaders appeared in the Courier under fictitious names. These articles marked the beginning of the great nullification movement. In most previous cases of trouble between the States and the Federal government, Charleston had favored the Union, but the tariff question was beginning to cause much serious discussion among the planters of this section. The North was a manufacturing center, and the South was an agricultural region, consequently, a high tariff to assist and stimulate manufacturing could be of no possible benefit

⁹ Ibid., p. 443.

to Charleston and the South. Since manufacturing had never been very successful in the South, Carolina inhabitants were forced to buy many manufactured products from the North and the high tariff was detrimental to their business interests.

In the meeting of the South Carolina Legislature in 1825, it was decided that a protective tariff was "an unconstitutional exercise of power."¹⁰ In the same way it was decided that federal aid for internal improvements, which was chiefly beneficial to northern markets to broaden their domestic markets was likewise "unconstitutional."

The majority of the southern states agreed with Carolina up to this point, but in 1827, after having come to the conclusion that the Constitution was a compact of the states, "as separate, independent sovereignties," the legislature adopted the famous "Exposition," by John C. Calhoun.¹¹ This document announced, very boldly, the right of the state to nullify federal laws that the individual state regarded as unconstitutional.

In its original form the tariff law carried an average rate of thirty-five per cent, which was meant to be prohibitory, on one group of goods. The second group carried a rate of twenty-five per cent, which rate was supposed to be competitive. The third group carried a rate of twenty-five per cent, and was considered a protective tariff, as

¹⁰ Arthur Meier Schlesinger, New Viewpoints in American History, p. 228.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 228.

most of these items were produced in this country. The protective features of the act did not seem to work and business continued to grow worse.¹²

This moderate protective tariff had been enacted by a combination of the central and western States, but the opposition from the South was so strong that in 1828, a new tariff bill was passed. This bill again favored the New England States and was still higher. Several articles to help the other sections of the country were included in this bill, consequently, it received the support of every section of the Union but the South. The average rate of this last bill amounted to more than forty-three per cent.

To the South there was no benefit in any part of this bill, no more revenue was needed and it was simply a protective tariff for the northern manufacturers. All of the cotton and tobacco and rice from the South were shipped to Europe and this tariff would bring no higher prices to the Southern producers.

After the Tariff Act of 1828 had been passed the nullification movement in Charleston grew stronger and stronger, but in 1832, Congress finally passed another tariff law. This bill removed some of the revenue taxes and reduced some of the protective duties, "but the principle of protection

¹² Harry Judson Pratt, The Growth of the American Nation, p. 194.

was fully retained." ¹³ Its immediate affect on Charleston is shown in the following paragraph:

The merchants of Charleston were obliged to pay a tariff on all coarse woolens and cotton cloth (which went by the name of honisburg or plantation cloth), on iron, salt and much that was needed to sustain her immense population of slaves and their families, including medicines, tools and crude looms used in home-spun weaving. Thus, when the manufacturing interests began to govern the country, the politicians of Charleston led her merchants and planters into their protest during the great Nullification period.¹⁴

In the midst of all this turmoil and trouble, Robert Y. Hayne was elected governor. The citizens of Charleston were divided into two parties, the one known as "Free Trade and State's Rights," under the leadership of Colonel Preston, Rhett, William Smith and Elliott; the other known as the "Union State's Rights," party, headed by Poinsett, Middleton, Richardson, Fringle, Dayton, Petigru and Legare. These terms were eventually shortened to Nullifiers and Unionists. The political situation was uppermost in the minds of the entire population; even the women were taking a part. Pamphlets and newspapers headlined the fight, clubs debated the subject, and the general topic of conversation was tariff and nullification.¹⁵

A Nullification Convention was held in South Carolina in December, 1832. This Convention lasted only a week, and

¹³ Ibid., p. 232.

¹⁴ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 199.

¹⁵ Jervey, Robert Y. Hayne and His Times, p. 318.

an ordinance was passed nullifying the recent Tariff Bill passed by the United States Congress. The ordinance was to go into effect February 1, 1833. Declaring that no further duties would be paid after that date, they defied the government to collect such duties as were named in the ordinance. Immediately, following this meeting, the State commenced to raise money for arms and ammunition, and even went so far as to start drilling the militia. There were several minor riots, and the Federal Government sent armed vessels to Charleston to enforce the laws. Finally, through the efforts of Henry Clay, Joel R. Poinsett, and others the affair was settled by the Compromise Tariff Bill, which provided for a reduction of the tariff rates on a sliding scale, until the rate of twenty per cent would be reached in 1842. At the same time the Force Bill was passed, in which the President was granted the right and the power to use the militia to enforce the laws of the United States. From that day hence, the threat of secession was a powerful weapon to be used by first one State and then another.

Joel R. Poinsett had just returned from Mexico when the tariff question was reaching its height in Charleston. He had long been a leader in the affairs of Charleston and felt that it was to the advantage of all parties concerned to make a peaceable settlement. Although he was on the

Union side, his intervention helped bring about the settlement and the compromise. The following excerpt is from his speech, soon after his return to Charleston, and it very well explains the situation:

I dread the danger which threatens our republican and federal institutions, for I have enjoyed more than ordinary opportunities of estimating their true value, and have witnessed the dreadful consequences of revolution, and the wily and insidious steps by which it advances. I have contrasted in every country and under every clime the privations and sufferings of the people of other nations with the blessings and enjoyments of our own. I know from what I have witnessed elsewhere, that this government, tyrannical and oppressive as it is represented to be by the nullifiers, dispenses more human happiness to those that live under it than any other in the world. I know that it commands respect of foreign nations and that it is the admiration of all who love freedom. . . . Wherever I have been, I have felt proud of being a citizen of this great republic, and in the remotest corners of the earth have walked secure and erect under the banner which our opponents would tear down and trample under foot. . . . We have the unquestionable, inalienable right of revolution, . . . But this right ought not to be lightly exercised. We ought to weigh well the evils we suffer with those which will result from revolution and separation. 16

Although, as yet, there had been no general recognition of it, William Gregg had instigated a move to establish cotton mills in Charleston. He campaigned to "bring the mills to the cotton." 17 Gregg had been considered a pioneer in the building of the cotton mills, and in his own mills in Horse Creek Valley, he started the welfare-work movement for cotton mill workers.

Following the settlement of the tariff question, Charleston again became prosperous and flourishing. The long planned and

¹⁶ J. Fred Rippy, Joel R.oinsett, Versatile American, pp. 140-142.

¹⁷ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 190.

hoped for railroad had been completed and was now the longest railroad in the world. It had stimulated business in Charleston and gave the merchants a means of getting products to the inland towns, as well as to get the products to their wharves from the outlying country. "In the first year of its operation, 26,649 passengers were transported over the line, 26,576 bales of cotton brought to the city, and total receipts of the company amounted to \$166,559." ¹⁸ Trade continued to develop and within a short time Charleston was building more roads to accommodate the increasing traffic. "Each succeeding year saw a decided rise in their figures. These figures clearly indicating that Charleston was once again the heart of the commercial South." ¹⁹

During the year 1837, there was a slight uprising among the Seminole Indians, in which a few of Charleston's men were killed. This trouble arose over an attempt to move the Indians to western reservations and to recover some of the slaves that had fled to Florida and taken refuge with the Seminoles. Osceola, the leader of the Seminoles, was captured and brought to Fort Moultrie, where he died. After that, there were no further insurrections.

In this same year a call was issued for a trade or commercial convention to be held in Augusta, Georgia. When

¹⁸ William Stanley Hoole, The Literary and Cultural Background of Charleston, 1830-1860, p. 25.

¹⁹ Siles Register, April 19, 1834, p. 18.

the convention opened in October 1837, only two states were represented, South Carolina and Georgia. This was one of four conventions that met between the years 1837 and 1839, their chief purpose was to establish direct trade with Europe, although at one of the meetings, Charleston brought up the subject of internal improvements. The convention formulated a series of resolutions in order to stimulate direct trade with European countries and make it possible that the South "might throw off the degrading shackles of their commercial independence."²⁰

The commerce of Charleston was prospering and she had regained her place as the commercial center of the South. "Never since the years immediately preceding the Revolution was Charleston so prosperous, so cheerful, so full of advance of every sort, as in those years between 1840 and 1860."²¹ Prices were at levels that had not been reached since the years before the panic of 1819. Several hundred thousand dollars worth of merchandise was sold in Charleston each year, several hundred barrels of flour were imported annually, and it took 1,500,000 yards of cotton bagging to supply the demand.²² The State of Carolina was producing

²⁰ J. G. Van Duesen, The Ante-Bellum Southern Commercial Conventions, p. 15.

²¹ Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 464.

²² Niles Register, I (Sept. 17, 1836) 46-47.

more rice than any other State in the Union and it was of a superior quality.²³ The price of cotton had risen from nine and nine tenths cents per pound to twelve and two tenths cents, and the following year it had advanced to sixteen and eight tenths cents. "During this period it was estimated that cotton was bringing about thirteen million dollars into the city annually."²⁴ At the same time these advances in the prices of products and goods made the prices of slaves higher than ever before. The price paid for produce was estimated to be higher in Charleston than in any other city in the South, or on the continent for that matter.²⁵ The banks were more than able to meet the demands, money was plentiful and credits were liberal.²⁶

Social institutions,-- now passed away-- unfavorable to manufacturers, checked their growth in Charleston during the decade immediately anterior to the war, notwithstanding it was otherwise a period of great material prosperity in Carolina, as was elsewhere in the country.²⁷

During these prosperous and flourishing times the social life of Charleston had gone on much as before. The

²³ De Bow's Review, I (April, 1846), 325-332.

²⁴ Niles Register, LI (Sept. 17, 1836), 46.

²⁵ W. S. Hoole, The Literary and Cultural Background of Charleston, 1830-1860, p. 30.

²⁶ Niles Register, LI (Sept. 17, 1836), 47.

²⁷ C. Sovet, Resources and Population and Industry, p. 577.

many meetings and gatherings brought about by the nullification movement affected some change in the trend of society. These meetings had been congregations of the educated and cultured citizens who were eager to discuss the political situation and other important problems of the day. One historian has given the following account of the social life of this period:

The social life of these landed gentry centered in Charleston, a city of architectural refinement and cultural distinction, of wistful charm and romantic loveliness. For those who belonged to or were personae gratae to its ruling class, Charleston during the antebellum period was the most engaging spot in the South, if not in America. Less cosmopolitan than New Orleans, less easy-going than Richmond, Charleston possessed an atmosphere of gayety tempered with dignity which was unique. During the 'season' which lasted for several weeks each winter, the city was festive with balls, dinners and races. In the spring, winter and autumn the gentry engaged one another in conversation on their spacious verandahs; strolled along the battery, with Fort Sumter looming ominously in the distance across the miles of shimmering water; or sat in their gardens in the languorous Southern air, amid the perfume of roses, jessamines, and azaleas.²⁸

Charleston was not only the social center of the South at this time, but she was looked to for the theories of politics and government by all of the southern states. After her leadership in the nullification controversy, the aristocratic leaders of Charleston were sought after and favored more widely each year. With a population never exceeding forty three thousand, less than half of whom were

²⁸Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South, p. 102.

white, "Charleston played a larger part and more significant role in shaping the national destiny during the period from 1850 to 1860 than any other city in America." ²⁹

Charleston was known as the city of aristocrats for many years, yet these same aristocrats had the fighting spirit bred into them, they were capable of taking hold of any situation and handling it with efficiency and integrity. From the earliest days of the settlement of Charleston, her citizens not only desired but maintained supremacy among the southern states. The cause of this aristocracy in Charleston is threefold:

First, their immense possessions; second, they owned at least one half, if not more of the two great articles of Southern property, slaves and land; third, their lineage and their superior culture, social and intellectual. ³⁰

Charleston produced several literary men of ability during this period. William Gilmore Simms, second only to Poe, was a native of Carolina. Another person of note in the literary field was William Grayson. "Charleston was the birthplace and also the graveyard for a number of ventures in the periodical field." ³¹ The Southern

²⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

³⁰ "South Carolina Society," Atlantic Monthly, Vol XXXIV., (January 1929), p. 672.

³¹ Dabney, Liberalism in the South, p. 133.

Quarterly Review and the Courier outlasted any of the others. Robert J. Turnbull, who was a political writer of much power, and several others of lesser note, appeared during this time. The first magazine ever to appear in the southern states was the South Carolina Weekly Museum, published in Charleston. The Mercury and the Courier were the great daily newspapers of Charleston.

As a result of better business, new churches, new schools, and college buildings commenced to spring up in Charleston. A medical school had been founded in 1822, and since that time it had been improved and was called the College of Medicine. Charleston had always been an exponent of education and her public schools were fairly adequate for this period of her development. There were fourteen academies and grammar schools with an average attendance of 861 pupils. Throughout the city there were thirteen primary and common schools with an enrollment of 574 pupils.³² At a very early date in the history of Charleston more than fifty per cent of the one hundred Americans who were admitted to the Inns of Court in London were from Carolina.³³ The old Charleston Library had been rebuilt and another literary society was founded in conjunction with it. This society

³² Hoole, Charleston, Literary and Cultural Background, 1830-1860, p. 41.

³³ Dabney, Liberalism in the South, p. 42.

was called the Apprentices Library and the books collected were especially adapted to the needs of young mechanics and tradesmen. It erected a hall on Meeting street where it held meetings and maintained a library and a reading room. There were 276 professional men in Charleston and "no city in the Union could boast of so many talented painters as Charleston."³⁴ Samuel Morse resided in Charleston for many years. At that time he was an artist and painted many portraits while living there. Many believed that he perfected his great invention, the telegraph, in an old house on Chalmers Street, however, this belief has since been discredited.³⁵

Upon the completion of the Charleston-Hamburg Railroad the enterprising citizens of Charleston began to make plans for another line that would connect with the West. Governor Hayne was greatly interested in this venture and did much to organize a company for its construction. Charleston felt that the railroad would bring traffic from the cereal and livestock area to the cotton belt, the cotton belt in turn would send its traffic into Charleston, thereby making it the center of all commercial interests. At a meeting the citizens resolved that the "period had now

³⁴ William Stanley Hoole, The Literary and Cultural Background of Charleston, 1830-1860, p. 10.

³⁵ Ravanel, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 432.

arrived when the work can no longer be neglected without a criminal supineness and fatal disregard of our own best interests, as well as the duties which we owe to ourselves, and to posterity." ³⁶ Charleston invested liberally and organized a banking enterprise to finance the road, but the plan finally had to be abandoned until later.

For several years trouble had been brewing with Mexico, and in May, 1846, the United States declared war against that country. When President Polk called for fifty thousand volunteers, South Carolina organized a regiment. This regiment was known for the duration of the war as the Palmetto Regiment. Charleston raised one of the first companies for this regiment, and "it covered itself with glory from the landing at Vera Cruz, in March, 1847, until the fall of Mexico in September, 1847." ³⁷ Out of the ninety-six original members, there were only forty left, and the first American flag to float over the walls of Mexico was that of the Palmetto Regiment. This flag had been presented to the regiment by the city of Charleston. ³⁸ The war with Mexico was a series of victories for the United States. Mexico was poverty stricken and devastated by revolutions and the forces

³⁶ Kirkland, A History of Modern American Economic Life, p. 290.

³⁷ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 205.

³⁸ Ibid.

of the United States were too much for her. The United States gained the vast territory of California, and again the question of slavery was up for debate.

Immediately following the Mexican War and the celebration of the return of the Palmetto Regiment, Charleston was saddened by the death of Calhoun. "When his remains were brought home, every house was hung with mourning, every sleeve wore a band of black, . . . their Prince had fallen." ³⁹ Charleston asked that he might be laid to rest within her walls. His tomb is in the center of St. Philip's western churchyard.

From the year 1793, when the cotton gin was invented to the year 1835, slavery had strengthened its hold in the South. "Slavery constructed the Constitution and measured the Union for them, as it determined all things, whether they were conscious or unconscious of its controlling agency." ⁴⁰ By 1850, the plantation ideal was dominant in the South and had attained its highest stage of development. Charleston, as the center of all this, stands out as the progressive leader in the next ten years of the history of the United States. Charleston, the aristocrat of the Southland, from the year of the nullification movement to the year 1860, dictated the policies of the South. Slavery, introduced

³⁹ Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and The People, p. 485.

⁴⁰ Walter Allen, Governor Chamberlain's Administration in South Carolina, p. 4.

into Charleston during the first few years of its existence had grown until it reached its peak in the ten years preceding the Civil War. Its growth and development is an integral part of the history of Charleston. Walter Allen in his history of this State, declared:

Slavery is a powerful ingredient in any community; it was in ancient times; it always must be. . . . Almost absolute dominion over the person, even the life, of another, -- so far as legal right goes,-- cannot fail, in any age or among any people, to deeply affect the character of individuals and society. . . . Slavery promotes in the master class the spirit of command, pride of blood, of race, of character. Personal courage and daring patriotism, generosity, hospitality--the great patrician qualities-- seem to a large extent to accompany and grow out of slavery. Certainly these cognate qualities have marked the people of South Carolina in all periods. The brutalizing influences of slavery need less notice, because, ordinarily, they are the only ones observed by those who look from the outside; but probably these influences were never more sadly exhibited than among the people of Charleston. ⁴¹

Slavery was the underlying cause of the rise of Charleston in the South, and it was the immediate and direct cause of her subsequent decline.

The seven year period, beginning with 1850, was an era of prosperity for Charleston. The approach of this era was noticeable in the late forties. Before 1850, travel had been mainly by short rail lines, scattered canals, and very poor roads, but since the time of Hayne and Calhoun, projects had gone forward to connect the great new west with Charleston.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 4.

Many of these lines had been completed by 1850, and Charleston's dream to "penetrate the interior of the State and to bring to Charleston for export the products of the up-country, and an outlet for Charleston imports,"⁴² was now realized.

William Gregg had succeeded in building his cotton mill and in 1854, was advocating the construction of similar mills over the entire state. Essentially, it was his hope that the mill should be a native product, ". . . in inspiration, in capital, in work-people, and in actual building material as well."⁴³ Gregg had studied the economic structure of the South, and he believed that more versatility was necessary in the industrial world, in order that the natural resources of this section of the country should be preserved and utilized, rather than wasted. He was a frequent speaker at the meetings of the Southern Commercial Conventions, and took part in all of Charleston's enterprises. All of the directors of his mill lived in Charleston. Although his chief interest was in manufacturing in Charleston, he advocated the modern theory of the 'erosion of the soil' from over-production of cotton:

Cotton culture in the black belt was rewarded by an average price for the decade between ten and eleven cents in spite of a drop to eight cents in 1851-1852. Good prices for cotton and other staples proved to be

⁴² Frances Butler Simkins, and Robert Hilliard Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction, p. 186.

⁴³ Broadus Mitchell, William Gregg, Factory Master of the Old South, p. 44.

the opiate that dulled the wits of the planter of the black belt. Though planter's conventions, such as those of the South Central Agricultural Association, were held at intervals, they aroused scant thought in regard to agriculture. Not only was little done to replenish the fertility of the seaboard lands, but there was little understanding in and about Charleston of the serious affects of the competition of the more fertile cotton areas of the Lower South. Eleven and twelve cent cotton which served to allay the discontent and disunion sentiment of the Gulf States in 1850, furnished South Carolina no such relief. Yet the fire eaters of the Palmetto State failed to grasp the argument of Edmund Ruffin, that replenishment of fertility would restore the South to national leadership or prepare it for a prosperous independent national existence. ⁴⁴

He contended that diversification would greatly benefit the South and pointed out many advantages for manufacturing, since there was plenty of raw material and water power as well as the cheap labor supply from the slave and poor-white population.

The agricultural regime had been firmly established, however, and the planters were content to continue, as in the past, with their production of cotton and rice. Although the merchants often contributed and owned stock in the manufacturing concerns of Charleston, their primary interest was in the export and import trade. They believed that their future lay in the agricultural dominion. The following paragraph will give some idea as to the extent of this trade:

The exports from Charleston to foreign countries, during the year 1850, amounted to \$12,394,497, being an increase of nearly \$1,500,000 over the exports of

⁴⁴ Arthur Charles Cole, The Irrepressible Conflict, 1850-1865, p. 61.

1849, This increase of exports was attended with a corresponding increase of imports. If the goods in the public warehouses had been taken into consumption, the aggregate amount for the past year would have been considerably over \$600,000. ⁴⁵

This increase in trade from Charleston encouraged the planters to seek more land, buy more slaves, and expand in every possible way. The rice industry alone was an inducement to expansion, as is shown by the following article from a periodical of that day:

In no part of the world is the culture of rice more successful or the produce so excellent as upon the Southern Atlantic and the Gulf coasts of the United States, and especially that portion thereof comprised within the area of Carolina and Georgia. Here are the rice fields of the South, from whence come not only nineteen-twentieths of all the product of the Republic, but the chief portion of that which is distributed through the great channels of European commerce. ⁴⁶

The Northern States were opposed to slavery in the South and with each new State that was admitted to the Union the question of "free or slave state," inevitably arose. In Charleston, the question never subsided, the newspapers saw to that, and they were abetted by the pamphleteers, politicians and statesmen as well as a few of the women who were beginning to take a part in the questions of the day.

In its beginning, slavery might have been called a

⁴⁵ Freeman Hunt, "Foreign Commerce of Charleston, South Carolina," Merchant's Magazine and Commercial Review, 24 (1851), 229.

⁴⁶ T. A. Richards, "Rice Lands of the South," Harper's Magazine, XIX (1859), p. 723.

misfortune and possibly excused as a necessity, but the journalists and literary men of Charleston, had come now to defend it upon every occasion. The Church and State defended it "as a relation sanctioned by the Bible, advantageous on all grounds to the master race and largely a blessing even to the slaves." ⁴⁷ The debate between Webster and Hayne in the 1830's was based on the difference in social conditions.

The controversy over slavery was made more bitter because of an accompanying quarrel over the tariff. In 1857 a new tariff measure was passed, which reduced the rates for the most part, but there were still some features of protection, and in the ensuing months there was a new financial panic. This panic of 1857, was largely the result of over-speculation, such as, too many railroads, too much speculation on the new lands in the West and too many debts piled up drawing large interest. Banks and corporations crashed, land values dropped and building operations came to an end. All of the South Carolina Banks suspended specie payment. The rural districts were compelled to set up a form of barter due to the scarcity of money, but it caused little real hardship. The panic was not as serious in the agricultural South, as it was in other sections of the country. After a brief

⁴⁷ Allen, Governor Chamberlain's Administration in South Carolina, p. 5.

flurry, good prices returned. Unusually large crops were raised, exports seemed to increase again, and the prices of slaves continued to rise. This was very different from the conditions that prevailed in the industrial areas.

J. B. D. DeBow, the proud spokesman of the South, boldly announced, "That the wealth of the South is permanent and real, that of the North fugitive and fictitious." ⁴⁸

There was no noticeable trace of the panic in the census, of 1860, which showed that the average area of plantations in South Carolina was sixteen hundred acres. Some of the planters owned four thousand slaves, and very few members of the aristocracy owned less than two hundred. "The planters employed their time in the chase, in dissipations, in study, in visiting, in the duties of hospitality, or, as was usual, became public men." ⁴⁹ An article appearing in De Bow's Review, drew several important conclusions in relation to the conditions and the present and future prospects of Charleston and South Carolina. Among them were:

One: that the condition of our agriculture and other industrial pursuits, whether viewed simply in themselves, or in comparison with the same in together States of the Union, are not only discouraging, but exhibit generally a regular decline. Two: that as a natural consequence of this decline, the advance in our population for the last ten years had little exceeded one-third the average increase of the population of the United States in the same time. Three: that the fertility of our lands, as deduced from the amount of the crops produced in the most

⁴⁸ Cole, The Irrepressible Conflict, p. 33.

⁴⁹ "South Carolina Society," Atlantic Monthly, 39 (1877) p. 671.

fertile districts, is undergoing generally a regular process of exhaustion, and that the market value of lands in most of the districts had not advanced in an equal rating with that of the population. Four: that the employment of slave labor in agricultural, or other industrial pursuits is not as profitable as is generally supposed.⁵⁰

Charleston, regardless of panics, politics, slave questions, tariffs, and other vital issues, continued to live much as before. The religious, educational, and social institutions were growing and developing and Charleston remained the social and economic center of the South.

In the Presidential campaign of 1860, there were four candidates. The Democratic Convention at Charleston failed to agree on a platform. The southern people felt that their constitutional rights and essential social institutions were in dire peril. The division of the Democratic party was the final blow and Lincoln was elected. Carolina and Charleston were in a state of dread and alarm. In December the delegates from South Carolina met in Charleston and passed an Ordinance of Secession. One by one the other southern states followed the example of Charleston and joined in the move for secession. South Carolina's secession and declaration of independence was typical of her spirit for the past 180 years. Their secession was the first act in the "great drama" of the Civil War. It was the beginning of the end, the fall of slavery, the destruction of southern prosperity, the dark before the dawn of a new era.

⁵⁰ "South Carolina - Her Agricultural," DeFow's Review, XIX (1855), 532.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPIRIT OF CHARLESTON

The history of Charleston, from its establishment in 1680, to the firing of the first cannon of the Civil War in 1860, is the history of a people whose fiery, indomitable pioneer spirit made them the leading factor in the development of the South. The story of the development of Charleston, through this period of one hundred eighty years, is also a brief resume of the social and economic development of the South.

The geographical and physical location of Charleston gave her the key that opened the door to a vast domain. In the early colonial period, Charleston was the pioneer in the foreign trade movement. She had aristocracy and wealth within her bounds from the earliest day of her settlement.

Charleston's inhabitants, for some time, supported themselves by farming, Indian trade, and the sale of lumber. The settlement was not very prosperous during its first few years, but at the close of the first decade, rice had been introduced into the colony, and it

soon became a leading industry. Rice was one of the main factors in furthering the development of Charleston in the South.

The expansion of trade brought about conflicts with the Indians and the Indian traders. Very shortly after that the proprietary rule was ended and the colonies became a Royal Province under the protection of the King of England. Following the appointment of a Royal Governor, Charleston had a period of comparative prosperity and development.

In 1741, Charleston found another industry and a second staple for her market, through Eliza Lucas and her indigo experiment. Indigo could bear a long haul to market and an active traffic of local barges from plantation landings to Charleston was started. Charleston became the main center for the rice and indigo market. It was not only the center for shipping and commerce, but all of the activities of the government were centered there. In one sense Charleston was a "city-state."

At the close of the Revolution, Charleston was free from the Royal Crown, but she faced serious economic problems. With the coming of the Revolution the British withdrew the bounty on indigo and its culture ceased to be profitable. The rice area was limited by nature to a comparatively small area along the coast. The prosperity of Charleston

demanded another staple crop, rice alone would not suffice. Eli Whitney's cotton gin supplied that crop. Cotton soon became the leading American export and Charleston, the leading cotton shipping city, not only of the South but of the world.

Not only was Charleston the cultural, social and economic center of the South, but in the city or its vicinity lived some of the most able political leaders of the nation. No city south of the Mason and Dixon line had more influence upon southern political thought and action than did Charleston. During the controversy over the tariff, the Hayne-Webster debate, nullification, slavery and secession, the sons of Charleston and of South Carolina, George McDuffie, J. H. Hammond, James Hamilton, Jr., Robert Y. Hayne, John C. Calhoun, and Robert Barnwell Rhett, were the spokesmen of the southern movement, not only of their own region, but of the entire South.

The center of culture and of society for all the surrounding country was in Charleston. The wealthy planters maintained homes there, some of them the year round, and others during the summer months and the malaria season. The winters in Charleston were gay and festive, some of the social functions being balls, races, and the theater. At their social gatherings the Charleston ladies dressed

in the latest London and Paris fashions. Charleston set the fashions and the styles for the South.

When Charleston was located between the Ashley and the Cooper Rivers with a waterfront of nine miles, she established herself as the gateway to the South. She held this place in the economic and social world of the South until the Civil War. The Charleston of pre-war days had changed very little and many of the buildings are standing today and "show only the mellowness of time and weather."¹ The history of Charleston is the history of the aristocratic gentry of the old South. "Charleston reached its apex of importance long ago in 1860, and has changed so little since that its flavor today is mainly that of the eighteenth century."²

It is a far cry, adown the years, from the first settlement at Albemarle Point to the Charleston of today. No fictitious narrative, but vital, glowing history fill the years from 1670 to 1860, and the city and her surroundings are saturated with authentic story that springs like grass from her soil, and drips like dew from the eaves of her quaint beautiful buildings and runs through her roadways and streets, weaving a golden thread of romance through the years of her existence. Time and times have moved, just as the people moved from the ancient spot where the first settlers trod; and as they moved down the river to settle on Oyster Point so the river of time has come to the modern city and brought activity to this peninsula where Charleston stands, her own best memorial of the past.³

¹ Wallen, "Heart of the Historic South," National Republic, XXI (January 1934), p. 16.

² Phillips, Life and Labor in The Old South, p. 53.

³ Leiding, Charleston, Historic and Romantic, p. 285.

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