Trading lives: Mapping the pathways and peoples of the southeastern deerskin trade, 1732-1775

Robert Edward Paulett
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TRADING LIVES

Mapping the Pathways and Peoples of the Southeastern Deerskin Trade, 1732–1775

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Robert Edward Paulett

2007
APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Robert Edward Paulett

Approved by the Committee, March 2007

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To my mother, Millie Paulett, who bravely got me out of bed all those years
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ABSTRACT

Deerskins formed an important trade in the southern half of British North America. From the last decades of the seventeenth century until the American Revolution, European traders and Indian hunters crossed the Southeast, exchanging European manufactures for American leather. During the same time period, the Indian trade intersected with the rising plantation culture of the southern colonies of South Carolina and Georgia.

Throughout its existence, the traffic in deerskins brought together peoples from Europe, America, and Africa. Although “impermanent” in the centuries-long history of post-contact America, the trade remained a fixture of southeastern life throughout periods of Indian-white hostility and European imperial warfare. Throughout these contests, traders from South Carolina and Georgia served as translators, diplomats, and informants.

Beginning with the establishment of Georgia and the trading town of Augusta in the 1730s, the trade followed the same route until the American Revolution in the 1770s. Enslaved African-American boatmen rowed European imports up the river and deerskin leather down. The town of Augusta stood as a monument to the power, influence, and ideology of the leading trading firms. The horse caravans that linked Augustans to their Indian clients followed a prescribed set of paths that remained open to all travelers and rendered all property personal and changeable. European stores in Indian villages conducted the bulk of the trade and allowed both sides to believe that they alone commanded the direction of cultural contact.

The elaborate process of moving skins and goods required a similarly elaborate code of behavior. The fluid relationships between Indians, Europeans, and Africans provided a remarkable amount of physical and cultural space for these three groups to find opportunities in the southeastern interior. The world they created ran as a powerful countercurrent to the general direction of southeastern history—a course that ran from Indian possession to white settlement to plantation slavery and the eventual rise of the cotton kingdom. Before the last could take hold, however, it had to consciously unmake the geography of the deerskin trade.
INTRODUCTION

In March 1733, James Oglethorpe looked at the Savannah River and came up with an idea for a new town. Around him the original English settlers of Georgia had barely begun implementing his grand scheme for the town of Savannah, but Oglethorpe wanted Georgia to reach further into the American interior. Watching the river traffic from atop Savannah’s bluff, Oglethorpe counted “12 Trading Boats” that had “passed by” in the first few weeks of Georgia’s settlement.¹ These boats were not small craft; they were forty feet long, rowed by four-man crews, and filled with thousands of deerskins bound for the port of Charleston. Seeking both an economic footing for Georgia and a diplomatic edge in the imperial contest with France, Oglethorpe eventually devised a plan to redirect the trading boats to Savannah. He would build a town at the falls of the river, encouraging Indian traders from Carolina to cross the Savannah and do business with the colony of Georgia. This new town, to be named Augusta, would dominate the Anglo-Creek trade and play a major role in southeastern Indian-white relations until the American Revolution. This story has been told before.²

But there is another story that begins at the bluff—the story of the men on board the Savannah trading boats. The boatmen’s journey brought them into contact with

merchants, traders, packhorsemen, Indians and slaves. These people were responsible for
the actual conduct of the deerskin trade, and their story has mostly gone untold. This
study is fundamentally a social history of the deerskin trade. Between the end of the
Yamasee War in 1716 and the beginning of the American Revolution in 1775, the trade’s
participants followed the same basic paths and conducted the trade in the same basic
manner. During these years, Europeans, Indians, and Africans all met within the confines
of the deerskin trade. Their everyday interactions and improvisations combined to form a
complex series of social, cultural, and economic rules that had few parallels in colonial
North America.

Oglethorpe’s planned intervention was first in a series of events that brought
greater scrutiny to the southeastern Anglo-Indian deerskin trade between 1735 and 1776.
The Georgia Trustees’ efforts to create an ideal colony cast light on the workings of the
deerskin trade and how its participants failed to live up to the Trustees’ standards. The
events of the War of Austrian Succession between 1744 and 1748 and the Seven Years’
War between 1754 and 1763 brought forth flurries of backwoods diplomacy that required
careful supervision of the deerskin traders, Britain’s chief diplomats. The years between
1763 and 1776 brought even more attention as Britain’s royal and colonial governments
sought to reform a trade they blamed for the previous two wars’ evils.

During this period of increasing scrutiny, travelers, government agents, and
traders wrote down their observations and opinions of the deerskin trade. Every
observation on the trade’s conditions brought some small glimpse into the lives of those
who conducted the movement of deerskins and goods through the Southeast. Oglethorpe
and his fellow observers thus introduced another story in the history of the colonial
Southeast. The men who rowed beneath the bluff remained silent in Oglethorpe's account. They barely rated a mention in colonial records and have thus rated little mention in history books. They neither built cities nor negotiated treaties. All they did was ensure that the deerskins made it to Charleston and that the tools, cloth, and sundries of the Indian trade made it back to the falls of the Savannah. Once there, the boatmen transferred their burdens to an assemblage of merchants, traders, packhorses, storekeepers, Indian hunters and Indian housekeepers.

Such an array of players required a variety of settings. The Anglo-Indian deerskin trade required more than just a remote village store. Every item passed through Charleston wharves, Savannah riverboats, Augusta trading houses, and packhorse trains before arriving at their final destination in Indian villages. Each leg of the journey was distinct in both its social makeup and its governing protocols. Each leg played an important role in both the deerskin trade itself and the development of southeastern North America. Trading routes covered hundreds of miles and moved through European colonies and Indian confederacies alike. This enormous and varied region both shaped and was shaped by the deerskin trade. This is the region that historians have named, simply, "the southern frontier."

The subject is easily named; telling the actual story of this "southern frontier" is far more complex. Peter Wood has neatly summed up the challenge for historians of the Southeast in two "toasts" he proposed in 1989.3 Wood first saluted the long duration of the southern frontier's Euro-Indian contacts, which lasted from the time of Hernando de Soto until the early decades of the nineteenth century. He next toasted the extensive

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geographic scope of the southern frontier, which stretched from the Ohio River to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi. Even within the “limited” scope of the eighteenth century, the region was home to five major Indian confederacies and numerous smaller native groups speaking Mississippian, Iroquoian, and Siouan languages. These each interacted with six European colonies that were themselves divided between English, French, and Spanish speakers. Historians of the southern frontier clearly have a lot of ground to cover.

Wood’s “toasts,” however, point up the limitations of using the “southern frontier” as a framing device. The region was simply too large, too diverse, and too enduring to be completely contained in a chronological narrative. Even a narrower scope, such as the history of an individual colony or confederacy, requires the author to describe the relationships between dozens of regions or segments of society. Therefore, scholars have understandably had to simplify the Southeast’s geographic complexity in order to provide their subjects some sense of order and coherence. Unfortunately, this simplicity has required these authors to keep telling an old and familiar tale.

Whether the focus has been on an individual Indian confederacy, on a colony’s development, or on the deerskin trade itself, these historians have relied heavily on the standard “frontier” or “backcountry” narrative. Both names imply the same story. Two different cultures or economies meet in a region. Early on, the land’s resources allow for friendly interaction and accommodation between natives and newcomers. However, accommodation quickly changes into competition as the land becomes increasingly unable to accommodate both groups. The whole story ends when the invaders triumph and supplant the original. This story has been told for whites invading Indian lands and
for market economies invading subsistence economies. Whatever the subject, the outcome is certain and all events are little more than a prelude to the winners’ final triumph.

Verner Crane first introduced this basic narrative into southeastern historiography when he coined the term “the southern frontier” in 1928. Crane’s *The Southern Frontier* told the story of early English expansion into the southeastern interior. Between 1670 and 1732, Carolinians pushed the government in London towards a policy of aggressive expansion as a means of checking Spanish and French ambitions in the interior. Indian traders and slave raiders cleared Spanish missions and Indian villages from the region south of the Savannah River. The course of Crane’s history ended with the establishment of Georgia in 1732 and the beginning of British territorial expansion in the Southeast. A student of Frederick Jackson Turner, Crane replicated his teacher’s emphases on successive frontiers preparing the way for the triumph of Anglo-American imperialism.4 Crane’s phrase “the southern frontier” has remained popular among twentieth-century historians of the Southeast.5 Historians’ reliance on Turnerian concepts is perhaps understandable, given the social and geographic complexity of the Southeast. The familiar outlines of the story give shape and meaning to an otherwise bewildering variety of names, dates, and personal motivations.

David Corkran’s two landmark studies, *The Creek Frontier* and *The Cherokee*

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**Frontier**, prove the difficulty of trying to capture the entirety of Anglo-Indian relations in a single narrative. Corkran managed to form a remarkably coherent narrative, given the multiple centers of power and decision-making involved in Anglo-Creek and Anglo-Cherokee relations. But simply forming the sequence of events required so much of the story that Corkran could devote almost no space for investigation or explanation of either English or Indian societies, much less any mention of African-Americans' roles within southeastern history. It is small wonder that historians have relied on the simplifying tropes of "frontier" and "backcountry" to explain southeastern history. This reliance, however, has meant that decades of research have only managed to produce two versions of the same story for the Southeast.⁶

The first version of the narrative, related to Anglo-Indian relations, might be termed the "dispossession" narrative. In this tale, Indians encounter European invaders. Contact forces Indians to improvise new strategies to cope with the invaders, and the two groups enjoy a brief period of accommodation or perhaps even reciprocity. Contact, however, brings disease, war, and disruption to native life. Eventually, white settlement begins to eat away at Indian lands and eventually to force Indian cessions. The story ends with Indians moved off their former lands and into some new form of dependency on white government.

Examples of this narrative can be found in the key works of southeastern ethnohistory. James Merrell's *The Indians' New World* describes the meeting between

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Europeans and Catawbas in the Piedmont region of the Carolinas. The Piedmont tribes created a new identity and the Catawba "nation" to establish negotiating power within the increasingly crowded region. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Catawbas found themselves on a small square of reservation land, surrounded by a sea of white farmers. Tom Hatley's *The Dividing Paths* traces a similar decline in Cherokees-British relations, as political accommodation eventually dissolved into armed conflict and unfortunate treaties. The Cherokees' story ended on a much larger square of land in the middle of Oklahoma, but the general course of events mirrored those of Merrell's study.

The Creeks have their own version of this story, which is closely tied with the deerskin trade. Historians of the deerskin trade have focused on its role in undermining Indian independence and allowing the European invaders to ultimately triumph. Kathryn Holland Braund's *Deerskins and Duffels* describes how the trade subtly insinuated itself into native lifestyles, undermining Indians' economic independence and ultimately their political independence. Others have developed her basic narrative without fundamentally altering it. Braund's book concludes with a neat summary of her narrative of transformation. Ending with the United States' victory in the Creek War of 1813, Braund leaves her readers with the image of "the confident military rifle" of the U.S. soldier replacing "the overworked smooth-bore trade gun" of the Creeks as the "harbinger of

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9 Kathryn Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

Creek destiny." Through the medium of trade, whites accomplished their ultimate aim of establishing Crane’s triumphant European expansion across the southern frontier.

A second version of the southern frontier narrative might be labeled the “developmental” narrative. Robert Mitchell provided the earliest outline of this narrative in his *Commercialism and Frontier*. This is the story of English, Germans, and Scots-Irish moving from Pennsylvania south through the Shenandoah Valley into the Piedmont region of the two Carolinas and Georgia. Mitchell identified a process of agricultural expansion that defined the economic, social, and political structures of the southern backcountry. In Mitchell’s narrative, these migrants brought with them Pennsylvania’s system of small, family-based farms devoted to a mixed agriculture of grains and cattle. Although initially quite distinct from settled regions in the East, the interior settlements’ pursuit and development of more complex economic enterprises required increasing connection with and assimilation into eastern commercial networks. By the end of the colonial period, the backcountry had developed the hierarchy of towns and social strata that marked eastern regions.

Kenneth Lewis has applied Mitchell’s ideas to the Carolina Piedmont. Lewis, an archaeologist, has adopted Mitchell’s basic developmental narrative and used it to interpret the development of eighteenth-century settlements around Camden, South Carolina, and throughout the southernmost Piedmont. In Lewis’s model, settlers encountered a region dotted with small trading sites located near the heads of Carolina’s

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11 Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, p. 188.
major navigable rivers. As the settlers began farming and seeking market access, enterprising men used Charleston money to establish town centers devoted to processing and shipping farmers' grain to the coastal port. Lewis's access to archaeological evidence has provided insight into the similarity between backcountry farmers' and lowcountry planters' attitudes towards status and commercial advancement. Lewis has included Augusta in his models and his analyses, despite that town's much earlier settlement and links to the very different economy of the deerskin trade.14

Lewis's historical counterparts have described similar phenomena in backcountry politics. Rachel Klein's *Unification of a Slave State* identifies the mentality of the South Carolina's backcountry political leaders as one that sought assimilation into rather than separation from Carolina's commercial networks. The violence of the Regulator movement was a conservative attempt to "order" the backcountry so that European agriculture could produce wealth for independent white farmers.15 Albert Tillson and Richard Beeman have similarly demonstrated that backcountry Virginians shared the political beliefs of eastern elites, but lacked the economic development to materially express the ideals of a landed gentry.16

Mitchell has argued that the developmental narrative has provided historians and historical geographers with their first step beyond Turner's original thesis. In a 1998 essay, Mitchell argued that focusing on staple crops' influence on social and political

14 See, for example, Kenneth E. Lewis, "The Metropolis and the Backcountry: The Making of a Colonial Landscape on the South Carolina Frontier," *Historical Archaeology* 33, no. 3 (1999): 3-13, 5, 6, 8, figs. on 5, 7.
developments in South Carolina provided "a powerful strategy which supersedes Turnerian thinking about colonial frontiers." Mitchell was specifically praising the work of Carville Earle and Ronald Hoffman on urban development in the context of Carolina rice production, but Lewis's work can also be considered part of this refocusing of historians and historical geographers' energies.

While the work being done on South Carolina's development has been productive of some very good scholarship, there is no evidence to suggest that the work has transcended Turnerian overtones. Southern backcountry scholarship has focused on one particular facet of backcountry history—the creation, maturation, and commercial integration of the region's multiethnic farming communities during the second half of the eighteenth century. While studies such as Mitchell's and Lewis's have greatly complicated and nuanced the narrative of European agricultural expansion, their stories remain within Turner's framework of successive frontiers—theirs is just a focused study of the "farming frontier" that Turner identified. Even after a lengthy review of the various approaches and movements involved in southern backcountry studies, Mitchell asserted that the "ultimate issue in backcountry studies is to define the changing relationships between the interior and the larger settled East." The two-part narrative is indeed hard to shake.

The two-part narrative requires a two-part geography. Frontiers need to lie between two regions or two societies. Backcountries need "front-countries" or longer-

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settled regions to provide historians with the necessary benchmarks to gauge their subjects' progress. The story thus begins as a tale of two regions: the place to be transformed and the place whose invaders will do the transforming. The transformation might be from a zone of Indian-white contact and reciprocity into a white-dominated region. The shift might be from subsistence agriculture to commercial agriculture, or from yeoman independence to market dependence. Whatever the subject, the geographic dimension remains the same. The story begins in a zone of impermanence set against a zone of innovation and aggressive domination that will triumph at the story's end.

Defining the story by its ending, though, imposes a certainty that was not present in eighteenth-century human relationships. Those who lived in the colonial Southeast were obviously less certain of history's outcomes than are modern historians. Given the large variety of peoples and places that directed the course of southeastern history, it seemed that the region could dissolve into chaos quite quickly. The French might unite the Indians and drive the British from North America. The British might unite and do the same thing to the Indians. Slaves might rise up and throw everyone out. All of these seemed real possibilities between 1735 and 1776.

The deerskin trade itself was in large part defined by these uncertainties. There were few guarantees that peace would subsist and that trade would continue. Even when Anglo-Indian relations were peaceful, traders had to contend with difficult rivers, unpredictable weather, competing traders, and the near-constant presence of hostile Indians from outside the Southeast. To help reduce the uncertainty involved, the trade's participants directed the whole system through a set series of places. Threats to any of these places threatened the stability of the whole. The trade allowed freedom to negotiate
the terms of the trade within these spaces, but could not bear any threats from outside.

Studying the deerskin trade requires that some account be made of this central tension between uncertainty and the desire for stability. These tensions require a different geography that replaces the assured progress of white settlement with a more complicated and uncertain future. Braund suggested a more proper perspective in her remark that armed bands of whites and Indians attracted each other “like magnets” and “frequented the same trails and paths, the same rich game fields, watering holes, and salt licks, and the same hastily constructed tippling joints that dotted the boundary lines.”

Although her observation related to the mounting conflicts that marked the end of the Augusta-Creek deerskin trade, they were appropriate for southeastern history more generally.

D.W. Meinig has proposed a way of mapping the Atlantic World’s geographic and social spaces that echoes Braund’s statement. In the first volume of his The Shaping of America series, Meinig noted the traditional divisions of colonial American studies into the familiar oppositions of “homeland and colonies,” “metropolis and frontier,” and “center and periphery.” Meinig believed such “crude bipartite structures provide no real basis for geographical analysis.” In their place, Meinig offered an elaborate diagram, in which a “transect” from London to the Creek village of Coweta, for example, passed through ten distinct zones, each marked by variations in social, political, and economic make-up. To fully understand the geography of the eighteenth-century British Atlantic empire, one had to allow for the great variety of power relationships that lay along Meinig’s “transect.”

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20 Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 157.
22 Meinig, The Shaping of America, 260-61, fig. 46.
The closer one comes to the ground, the less uniform and the less certain the geography of the colonial Southeast becomes. The assured progress of white settlement into the interior seems suddenly less so, and the frontier narrative becomes less applicable to the experiences of everyday life in the deerskin trade. Even on eighteenth-century maps, the documents that most clearly celebrated the British fantasy of continental control, the future of the Southeast seems wholly dependent on the social relationships within a set of defined and distinct spaces.

Chapter One therefore begins at the broadest geographic perspective available in the eighteenth century—British maps of North America. If British maps sought to “discipline” the southeastern landscape, as J.B. Harley and Gregory Nobles have suggested, the deerskin trade created a stubborn imprint that Enlightenment science could not fully erase. The trade influenced the production of geographical knowledge and traders’ reports provided the key source of information on the arrangement of North America’s interior spaces. Traders found their way by path rather than by compass. Their verbal description of the southeast as a chain of points therefore echoed in British maps and tended to portray the Southeast as a chain of place names connected more or less in a linear east-west line. It was not until the eve of the American Revolution that scientific cartography began to redraw the Southeast and supplant the old trader geography.

Colonial planners had no greater luck than did cartographers in imposing a vision...
of orderly British society over the established routes and places of the deerskin trade. No image demonstrates this more clearly than that of James Oglethorpe standing on the bluff at Savannah. From high above the river, the ambitious Oglethorpe conceived of his plan to remake the whole Southeast into an orderly agricultural settlement and to draw the deerskin trade into his enlightened orbit. To fulfill these goals, Oglethorpe and the Georgia Trustees insisted that the Southeast be free of the evils of slavery and rum. Meanwhile, on the river below, enslaved Africans rowed dozens of trading boats loaded with kegs of rum bound for the Indian traders at New Windsor.

Starting with that image, this study follows the deerskin trade geographically through its most significant points. Chapters Two through Five focus on the most significant spaces in the deerskin trade between 1735 and 1776. The deerskin trade remained essentially the same in its basic outlines between the years 1735, when Oglethorpe and the Georgia Trustees first attempted to reform the Indian trade, and 1776, when the American Revolution finally severed the crucial Augusta-Creek link in the trade system. Despite the numerous instances of violence and treaty-making that occurred during these years, the trade’s basic apparatus remained stable. Boats continued to ferry goods between Charleston and Augusta. The trading companies at Augusta continued to dominate the trade. Packhorse trains and resident storekeepers still carried on the bulk of Indian-white exchanges. Even the challenges the trade faced after 1763 did not completely undo this system.

This study is therefore a geographically based narrative rather than a chronological one. The narrative begins with the trading boats that moved between Charleston and Augusta and carried the bulk of the deerskin trade throughout the colonial
period. Next is the town of Augusta and its environs, focusing on the relationship of the whole town to the deerskin economy. After spending some time in town, the story continues down the paths alongside the slow-moving packhorse trains that connected the Augusta warehouses with the trading houses in Indian towns.

The division into geographic parts reveals the internal divisions within the trade that helped shaped the larger history of the Southeast. Trading boats moved closest to colonial centers of power, but remained almost invisible to them. Georgia and South Carolina's dispute over the Savannah River involved the continental ambitions of the Trustees and the assertion of colonial power in the trade, but relatively little effect on the lives of the Savannah boatmen. Likewise, trading boats ran close to Carolina's lowcountry plantations and within the confines of Carolina's race-based slave regime, but managed to stay largely outside this system. Even in the heart of white dominance, these boats provided their African-American crews with their own social space largely outside the purview of whites.

The town of Augusta itself was founded and settled by whites, but lacked most of the institutions that governed white settlement elsewhere in North America. Formal government did not exist throughout much of the Trustee period. Neither did that other bedrock of English society, the nuclear family. Instead, the traders at Augusta formed close-knit business partnerships that governed the town's layout and society. The white population of Augusta shared the Carolina lowcountry's fondness for gentility, sociability, and chattel slavery. But it was the trading company and not the plantation home that fulfilled these desires in colonial Augusta.

Along the paths that led from Augusta to native villages, the trading company's
authority gave way to Indians' political preference for neutral paths and by the constant demands of packhorses. The companies could somewhat limit access between Augusta and the paths, but outside of town it was nearly impossible to know who one might meet on the trail. Much of this was due to the Creeks' insistence on open and neutral pathways to and from their towns. But traders' control of the paths was also limited by the needs of their horses; far from being masters of their animals, traders were beholden to them. Whites and blacks alike worked on the paths and lived under these same basic rules. The key difference, however, was that the uncertain status of private property meant very different things to African-Americans. While beneficial to whites economically, the uncertain nature of property provided African-Americans with the chance to radically alter their status from slave to free.

The journey from Charleston ended at the trading stores in Indian villages. These houses were spaces where Indian preference held the greatest sway. As key points in southeastern Anglo-Indian cultural interaction, traders had to shape their homes and their households to suit their Indian clients. Perhaps in response to their dependence on Indian preferences, traders idealized their houses as the strong markers of independence and authority. They believed that their houses provided them the ability to direct the trade and set it on a course that benefited themselves, the Indians, and all of North America. Some even believed that these houses were remaking Indian "savagery" into Indian "civilization." The trading house, the most significant point of Anglo-Indian relations, became the central symbol for the traders' authority in the Southeast. When the trading house faced its greatest challenge, the Southeast entered its greatest period of uncertainty. When royal officials and colonial governors began searching for a new system after 1763,
the trade entered a period of “crisis.” But very little actually changed after 1763; the
“crisis” was that a new system might begin operating outside the places that had served
the trade for decades. The real shift in the trade came during the American Revolution
when Augusta came under new leadership. No friends of Indians, Georgia’s
revolutionary government effectively severed the link that had bound Augusta to Indian
towns for almost four decades. After the war, Augusta’s leading citizens proved far more
willing to set Indian-white relations on their more “natural” course: land swindles, wars,
and (eventually) removal.

That it took a revolution to undo the Augusta-Creek trade should serve as
testament to the trade’s remarkable reliability. It had taken the combined efforts of
hundreds of people from three different continents to create the southeastern deerskin
trade. The spaces and social behaviors that these people developed managed to create a
relatively stable society in colonial North America. No single person defined the trade,
and therefore no single person could properly describe it. For most of those who
participated in it, the trade was more than a prelude to conquest. It was their way of life,
offering opportunities unknown in the rest of the Atlantic World. There is no time like the
present to begin telling their stories.
Maps created empires. The language of cartography, a European invention, allowed imperial planners to paint their hopes and dreams on the blank canvas of America, imposing an alien worldview to separate Indians from their lands, at first conceptually and later physically. Such is the narrative of maps which has emerged in recent work on the history of cartography, a narrative in which future dreams became reality through a long history of war, trade, disease, and death. Geography was an imperial exercise, imprinting a future of coercion and expansion in North America.¹

Augusta, Georgia, certainly has occupied a place in this narrative. Long the center of the Anglo-Indian deerskin trade, Augusta also occupied a mapped frontier—an invisible division between English settlement and French Louisiana, as well as an historic division between an Indian landscape and an Anglo-American one. In that divide, trade between Europeans and Indians, at first mutual, gradually became one-sided as Indian dependence on British trade increased and the traders’ fellow travelers of disease and war prompted a series of land cessions and eventual removal.

Reading eighteenth-century maps of the Southeast, though, reveals a more complex contest over the region than that of competing European and Indian claims on the land. Certainly Great Britain would have preferred an empty continent to remake as it saw fit, allowing plantations to grow inland without fear of European rivals or aboriginal occupants. Yet no such conditions existed in the Southeast, for France and Spain had their own claims to the territory and thousands of Indians made it their home. No formal boundaries separated European settlements from one another, and none recognized the others’ claims as legitimate. Britain, would-be possessor of the interior, could not fall back on treaty lines and political boundaries to secure its claims against its French rivals. Security and legitimacy could only come through Indian allies, whose hearts were to be won or lost on the everyday exchanges of the Anglo-Indian deerskin trade. If the contest of maps was to be won, it would be through the successful negotiation of a complicated Indian geography.

The contests over geography in the colonial Southeast, then, centered not on control of broad swaths of territory, but on maintenance of numerous and ongoing personal relationships. The maps of southeastern North America presented not an easy chronological progression from Indian to British dominion over the region, but a persistent human geography of ambiguity and uncertainty that owed more to Indian conceptions of space than to European ones. Born of necessity, the Anglo-Indian deerskin trade would prove frustrating and undesirable to British imperial planners in the eighteenth century, who sought a more familiar line of authority over the Indian interior. Before the imperial project of expansion and dispossession could proceed, a new geography had to assert itself in the Southeast and replace the relict Indian geography.
The history of Augusta began, perhaps appropriately, in the Charles Town jail. There in July 1708, Thomas Nairne, South Carolina's recently-appointed Indian agent, sat imprisoned on a charge fabricated by his political rivals. Having recently returned from a journey through the Southeast, Nairne composed a letter and drew a map (Fig. 1) that would have profound influence upon southeastern history. Nairne's main objective was to persuade English officials of the very real threat posed to South Carolina by the aggrandizing intentions of the French, who sought to link their settlements from Canada to Louisiana and to drive the English out of North America. Written in the middle of the War of Spanish Succession, Nairne laid out a plan for the future defense of South Carolina and to secure a future for English expansion in the Southeast.²

Nairne's 1708 memorial emphasized the potential threat of French encroachment and offered southeastern Indians as a catch-all solution. He included the map so that English leaders might "at one view perceive what part of the Continent we are now persest [possessed] off, and what not, and procure the Articles of peace, to be formed in such a mannr. that the English American Empire may not be unreasonably Crampt up." Nairne feared that the French, though few in number, might avail themselves of a loose claim to the Carolina coast and use Indian allies to drive English settlers out of America. To frustrate these efforts, Nairne proposed securing Indian allies, in particular the Cherokees, through the "trade for Cloath [which] always atracts and maintains the

obedience and friendship of the Indians." The loyalty of the Indians would give the English a check on potential French attacks and protection for future English settlements. Nairne's memorial first united the two relationships that would govern life for much of the eighteenth-century Southeast: the imperial rivalries of Britain, France, and Spain and the trade relationships between Englishmen and Indians. The former would lead ultimately to the founding of Georgia, and the latter would persuade James Oglethorpe to settle a town at the headwaters of the Savannah River in order to annex the Indian trade to the young colony. From 1708 on, the lines of empire would follow the winding trading paths of the Southeast, laying claim to the continent.

Nairne's plan did not become official policy, but his memorial and map found a receptive audience in the British mapmaker Herman Moll. The Treaty of Utrecht, which ended the War of Spanish Succession in 1713, failed to specify any boundaries between French and English colonies in the Southeast. Moll, England's most prolific cartographer in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, expressed outrage over the treaty's failures in his 1715 "A New and Exact Map of the Dominions of the King of Great Britain on ye Continent of North America." Legends on the map expressed frustration over Britain's failure to conquer Quebec, and an inset in the map's lower right showed a small sliver of coastal British settlements dominated by a vast French interior, which threatened to swallow them up. Much of Moll's information for the Southeast, particularly the names of Indian towns and the direction of the trading path from Carolina to the Mississippi,

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came from the copy of the Nairne map published in Edward Crisp’s 1711 map of Carolina.\(^4\)

If Moll was disposed as early as 1715 to proclaim French designs on Carolina, Guillaume Delisle’s 1718 “Map of Louisiana and the Course of the Mississippi” confirmed his fears. Delisle earned a reputation as one of the first “modern” cartographers, basing his charts on careful survey, astronomical observation, and thorough scrutiny of all written accounts.\(^5\) However, his 1718 map was a bold assertion of French claims on the Southeast. French territories included all of North America west of the Appalachians and south of Virginia, including Carolina, except for Spanish Florida, (the boundary of which Delisle based on his attempted tracing of Soto’s 1540 route through the Southeast). Delisle claimed the Carolina coast for France, noting that the colony had originally been “named in honor of Charles IX by the French who discovered it in taking possession and establishing themselves in 15... [Delisle did not include the last two digits of the year.]”\(^6\)

Moll, champion of British territorial claims, took exception to Delisle’s presumption. In 1720 he published “A New Map of the North Parts of America claimed by France” (Fig. 3). Moll mostly reprinted Delisle’s map, though adding information from the Nairne map, as well as a map provided by “the Ingenious Mr. Berisford,” a reference to Richard Beresford, Nairne’s former correspondent and South Carolina’s agent in

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\(^4\) Herman Moll, “A New and Exact Map of the Dominions of the King of Great Britain on ye Continent of North America,” [1715]. The above information comes from a ca. 1731 copy of the map held at the Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.

London. Moll traced Delisle’s offending boundary claims against Carolina so that “those Noblemen, Gentlemen, Merchants &c. who are interested in our Plantations in those Parts, may observe whether they... do not justly deserve ye Name of Incroachments.” As outrageous as Delisle’s paper claims against Charles Town were, Moll pointed to a more immediate threat from the French claiming the allegiance of “ye Cherakeys and Iroquois, by much ye most powerfull of all ye Neighbouring Indian Nations, the old Friends and Allies of the English.”

The potential dangers inherent in a French-led Indian attack resonated in particular due to the recent Yamassee War of 1715-1716. Beresford had journeyed to London in the aftermath of the Yamassee War and amid rumors of a joint French and Spanish attack to promote Carolina’s security and to secure a fortified frontier to protect the emerging rice colony of Carolina. Beresford and his friend John Barnwell had come from a Carolina that had recently experienced a real-life demonstration of how threatened it was. The Yamassee War devastated the colony and had awakened Carolinians to the dangers of a united Indian war and the need for a stable Indian policy. Abuses in the trade and Indian anger over English encroachments had sparked a war that united costal and Piedmont Indians of Carolina with the Creek Indians of the interior. The aftermath of the war would dramatically reshape the southeastern interior as the Yamasseses and other small bands of coastal Indians left for the protection of Spanish Florida and the Creek Indians living south of the Savannah River moved westward and resettled along the

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6 Guillame Delisle, “Map of Louisiana and the Course of the Mississippi,” [1730], copy held in Newberry Library; Cumming, Southeast in Early Maps, 20-21
7 Cumming calls the Beresford map the best backcountry map until the 1721 Barnwell-Hammerton map, Cumming, Southeast in Early Maps, 23-24.
Chattahoochee River. Indians recently allied against Carolina were moving farther away from English influence, politically and physically. Worse still, the war had allowed the French to situate the small garrison of Fort Toulouse among the Alabama Creeks, giving them a secure foothold and influence among the Indians. Suddenly, the fear of a French-led Indian invasion of South Carolina seemed all too real and posed a threat to British settlement in southeastern North America.

“Tuscarora Jack” Barnwell, commander of a Carolina expedition against another Indian uprising during the Tuscarora War of 1711-1712, went to London in 1720 to help draw imperial attention south. The need for a barrier colony between Carolina and the French had already been recognized, but Sir Robert Montgomery’s dream of Azilia had more or less evaporated by 1720. Like Nairne, Barnwell had drawn a manuscript map (Fig. 2) to illustrate his plans for the future of the British Southeast. Along with South Carolina’s other agent in London, Joseph Boone, Barnwell met with the Board of Trade in August 1720. The two men again proclaimed the French threat to the Southeast and proposed a program similar to Nairne’s, but with an emphasis on fortifications among the Indians, essentially adopting the strategy the French had employed with Fort Toulouse.9

Barnwell’s forts would strengthen the Indian trade and provide defense against attack as well as nodes for future English settlement. Indian alliances would secure British claims in the Southeast and provide a defense against the French. British trade would secure that alliance, but imperial oversight of the trade would be necessary. A series of six or seven British forts, located at strategic points throughout the Southeast

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8 Herman Moll, “A New Map of the North Parts of North America claimed by France,” [London, 1720], Newberry Library.
9 Crane, Southern Frontier, 213-14, 228-31.
would be necessary to provide protection for the traders and give distant Indians easy recourse to British redress should the French attack or try to persuade them to turn against their British allies.

Barnwell’s plan was never fully realized. One of his proposed forts was approved, Fort King George at the mouth of the Altamaha River, though none of the others were built. The Board of Trade had heartily approved of his plan, but the Privy Council rejected it due to the enormous expense required to build and maintain forts at such great distances from British settlements. However, Barnwell did succeed in turning the British government’s attention southward, and his emphasis on securing the Atlantic coast south of Carolina persisted in imperial minds. Ten years later, when the Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia sought a charter in America, it was to this region that they looked and it was Barnwell’s fortified frontier barrier that provided the foundation for the new venture.10

While Barnwell composed his frontier plans and the outlines of British North America were being drawn in London offices, the Anglo-Indian deerskin trade was quietly sorting itself out in the wake of the Yamassee War. The Carolina legislature, fearing another Indian War and wanting its own oversight of the trade, at first experimented with a public trade monopoly in 1716. Based in frontier forts along the Carolina Piedmont, the public trade operated at fixed prices and discouraged potentially-threatening Indians from traveling among the settlements. The trade quickly failed, undermined by private traders, its own cost to the public, and the official veto of the Privy Council. By 1718, the public trade had been abandoned, but a somewhat unofficial trade

10 Crane, Southern Frontier, 234.
system had emerged. Private traders, recognizing their need to ingratiate themselves with their Indian clients, began taking up residence in Indian towns, marrying into local families, and trading from their own storehouses. The Carolina government claimed nominal oversight over the trade and appointed a single Agent for Indian Affairs, whose commission required traveling to Indian towns and redressing any abuses, thus stemming any potential French influence. The agent also oversaw the granting of licenses, which restricted traders to a single town and required them to travel to Charles Town every year for renewal. By the 1720s, this basic system governed the trade, and would continue to do so until the American Revolution. Britain would rely on this trade network for its Indian diplomacy throughout the eighteenth century, using private traders living in Indian towns to spread British influence throughout the Southeast and to secure Indian dependence, and thus “friendship.” James Oglethorpe, seeking a role for Georgia in southeastern politics, likewise hoped this trade network would secure Georgia’s claims to the interior.11

Oglethorpe was himself a man preoccupied with geography, and the colony of Georgia was largely founded for the service of maps. In July 1732, Oglethorpe, out of his personal effects, donated items to the Trustees’ office in London. In addition to twelve cushioned chairs, Oglethorpe donated maps of the world, of England and Wales, two maps of North America, one of South America, a map of Pennsylvania, as well as “Two Globes mounted on Frames with Covers.”12 Something of an amateur surveyor and cartographer himself, Oglethorpe also made significant contributions to one of the major

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British imperial maps of the eighteenth century, Henry Popple's 1733 "A Map of the British Empire in America." Oglethorpe has been credited as the major source for Sheet 10 of that large, multipart map, showing the colony of South Carolina and the coast between the Savannah River and Spanish Florida, possibly even exaggerating certain features to Georgia's advantage. Thus when Oglethorpe made his plans for the security and future of Georgia, he kept in mind the large-scale perspective of one who commanded the information of maps.

The founding of Augusta was part of Oglethorpe's plan for the future of the young colony. In 1736, Oglethorpe designated two locations for Georgia's frontier defense: Fort Frederica along the southern coast of Georgia to guard against any invasion from Spanish Florida, and Fort Augusta at the headwaters of the Savannah River to protect against any incursions of the French, but with the added benefit of diverting the lucrative Indian trade and control of its allegiances to Savannah. As South Carolina already had established the frontier township of New Windsor and Fort Moore at the same location (albeit on the northern side of the river), Oglethorpe believed that stealing control of the Indian trade would, at once, bring trade to Savannah and also take the trade away from self-serving Carolina traders who had, after all, brought on the Yamassee War. Oglethorpe succeeded to a degree, and for the next forty years the Anglo-Indian deerskin trade would pass through the town of Augusta, albeit on its way to the old trade port of Charles Town.

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Through two major European wars, Augusta traders and merchants would pass English trade goods to Indian towns in exchange for deerskin leather and would act as intermediaries between British imperial officials and headmen of the Creek, Chickasaw, Cherokee, and Choctaw Indian towns.15

From the pinpoint of Augusta, Oglethorpe hoped to remake the map of the Southeast by extending Georgia’s influence well into the interior and securing its claims against French interlopers and Carolina traders. Georgia’s colonial charter included all territory between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River, between the heads of the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers. Oglethorpe recognized that this jurisdiction included the powerful Creek and Choctaw Indian confederacies, as well as the smaller but influential Chickasaw confederacy. Oglethorpe refused to let Carolina traders hold sway over such a powerful collection of neighbors and used his influence in Parliament to pass the 1735 “Act for Maintaining the Peace with the Indians,” which forbade any trader not licensed in Georgia to trade with any Indians within the bounds of the colony. Augusta’s role was partly to help enforce this law by monitoring the river crossing from Carolina into Georgia. Commissioners from Georgia would likewise enforce the act in Indian towns, breaking open Carolina traders’ stores, seizing their goods, and even searching trade boats along the Savannah River. As might be expected, Georgia’s actions won few friends in Carolina, but they underscored how important Augusta was for Oglethorpe and the Trustees, who sought to improve on Carolina’s shaky history of Indian relations.

15 Cashin, “Contest,” 105-106. For a fuller history of the Augusta-based Indian trade, see Kathryn Holland Braund, Deerskins and Duffels: Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).
The history of Augusta has thus emphasized its physical location within the "southern frontier." Commanding the headwaters of the Savannah River, Augusta provided a useful entrepot between river transport up the Savannah and the overland routes that connected to Indian towns throughout the Southeast. Two of the Southeast’s most prolific twentieth-century scholars, historian Edward J. Cashin and historical geographer Louis De Vorsey, Jr., have emphasized Augusta’s strategic location in explaining the town’s origins. De Vorsey began with the geological division between the rocky soils of the southeastern Piedmont and the sandy Coastal Plain zones, which created the falls in the first place and marked the dividing line between “lowcountry” and “backcountry.” The intersection of a major waterway with older indigenous communication networks allowed Georgia to divert those paths of commerce and influence towards Savannah.\(^\text{16}\) Cashin has noted that the placement of Augusta served two roles: one, as a military guardian against French encroachments among the Indians or military attacks upon the British lowlands and, two, as a way of enriching the young colony by drawing South Carolina Indian traders to Georgia and reaping the profits from Indian deerskins.\(^\text{17}\) Certainly the strategic and physical location of Augusta played a large role in the town’s history.

But to define Augusta from the perspective of maps alone, as a place occupying a supposed borderline between Britain and France or between English and Indian, is to place too much emphasis on the continental perspective, a perspective shared by very few colonial Americans. Although imperial planners such as Oglethorpe thought in such

broad terms, the Indians and even the traders of the Southeast conceived of their place in the world in a very different way. Theirs was a geography of the path, of points and people connected to each other along lines of trade and communication, rather than interactions across a divide. And even the mapmakers of the colonial Southeast recorded this geography, since Nairne and Barnwell were both reliant on trader guides and informants, and British cartographers were reliant on Nairne and Barnwell for their information on the Southeast.

Recently, historians have turned their attention to the power relationships and ideologies expressed in colonial maps. Following the work of the late J. B. Harley, these historians have begun recasting maps as active agents in the creation and promotion of imperial designs upon foreign lands and indigenous peoples. Walter Mignolo has argued that the discovery of the Americas required a new European language of maps, based not on older Judeo-Christian notions but on a new language of scientific detachment. The removal of one form of ethnocentrism and replacing it with a more “hidden” ethnocentrism privileging Western notions of space and geography created a new means of dispossessing Indians and securing a future for colonial expansion. Gregory Nobles has emphasized the ideal of discipline and order that colonial planners in the Southeast such as Oglethorpe and the Trustees imposed on the Indian interior and how those notions of “straight lines and stability” encouraged a myth of empty lands awaiting European cultivation.18 For these historians, British imperialism engaged in more than the cartographic sleight-of-hand that Oglethorpe employed in the Popple map: the emergence

of maps as the only valid form of geographic representation formed a first step in the
dispossession of Indian peoples. However, these studies presumed a monolithic British or
European geography contesting an indigenous American concept of land and space,
which was not necessarily the case for all Americans.

The majority of the people who lived and moved through the Southeast lacked the
"overhead" perspective afforded by maps. Maps were elite documents, the possession of
wealthy men in London and Charles Town. The traders who sojourned among Indians
had little recourse to such maps and probably less use for them. And it was their
geography that shaped social relations in southeastern North America and even dictated
the form of the overarching perspective of imperial maps. A persistent and obvious
geography of the trading path characterized even the most large-scale colonial maps and it
necessarily owed more to Indian conceptions of space than European ones. Relational and
processional, the traders' geography provided the information for the large-scale maps
that shaped colonial policy. This geography was not one of exclusion or dispossession,
but of interconnected points, whose importance lay not in their position along axes of
latitude and longitude, but in their placement along the communication networks that
crossed the Southeast.

The persistence of the trade geography owed much to the persistent techniques of
British cartography throughout the eighteenth century. As Harley has noted, the methods
of map production greatly affected the forms that maps took and the features they
emphasized. In the colonial Southeast and the British Empire in general, survey work
and mapmaking were largely the province of nominally trained private individuals. There

was no centralized, state-sponsored cartographic enterprise such as existed in France from the end of the seventeenth century. Likewise, the map trade was an adjunct of the print trade that also sold engravings, pamphlets and books, though print shops sold maps to an elite audience, not the population at large.

The conditions that governed the production of geographic knowledge extended to Georgia and South Carolina, in which maps were valued as private wealth rather than public use. Georgia’s Surveyor General, for example, could complain that his map, “the Product of the Memorialist’s own Industry and Labour,” had been lost by the colonial Assembly, “to the great Detriment of the Memorialist, who is deprived of those Benefits he expected to reap from the Publication of that his industrious Performance.”20 A colonial governor could hesitate to turn over his maps of the Indian nations to his British superiors because “these Draughts were made at my private expense, and are my property as much as my books.”21 Even a surveyor’s widow, recognizing the potential value of her late husband’s charts, could defy colonial authorities for fear of losing “any Benefit of printing it.”22 Maps were valued possessions, not commonplace objects, a way of negotiating with people of higher rank. The overhead view of the world was an alien concept, useful more for its monetary value than for understanding one’s place in the world.

When colonial mapmakers did send maps back to London, they retained a sense of the way they were made. No trained surveyors ventured into the southeastern interior

21 James Glen to the Board of Trade, Dec. 1751, in Great Britain, Public Record Office, Documents of the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina, 1663-1782 (Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1973), 12 reels, Microfilm. 24: 406. Hereafter cited as SCPRO.
22 Proceedings of the Georgia President and Assistants, Nov. 16, 1744. CRG vol. 6, p. 119.
until well after the Seven Years’ War. Maps constructed before then were the product of
travelers’ accounts—letters and rough sketches provided by traders and Indian agents,
reflecting less a planimetric certainty than a remembered procession along trails. These
mapmakers gathered their information not from transits and chains, but from their travels
along the paths and the verbal accounts of geography gained from Indian knowledge. The
maps of Thomas Nairne and John Barnwell, the two most important English “base maps”
for the eighteenth-century Southeast, were compiled in this manner—verbal descriptions
made for the purpose of furthering British claims, but at the same time almost entirely
dependent upon Indian notions of geography.

Some sense of Indian mapmaking must precede any understanding of the trade
geography. Most important, Indian notions of geography were oriented not to latitude and
longitude but to relationships along paths. An Indian’s worldview was thus a series of
places connected by trails and trade relationships; some paths were friendly and some
were hostile, but all fit into a processional geography that moved from place to place.
Indigenous mapping made no distinction between rivers and overland trails, but rather
conceived of the whole as one large path of communication, an indication that topography
was less a concern than knowing who one’s friends and enemies were and what peoples
lay between oneself and them.  

A Chickasaw deerskin map created in the same year as Augusta’s founding
demonstrated this relational Indian geography. In 1737, Mingo Ouma, a Chickasaw
headman, presented a map of the Southeast to French officials at New Orleans. The map
(Fig. 4) depicts Indian nations as well as English and French colonies as a series of circles
connected by lines either of trade or of war. At the center was the Chickasaw nation, fortified and threatened by a band of circles representing the entirety of Indian North America from the Choctaws in the south to the Indian of Canada. Paths of trade and friendship connected the Chickasaws separately to the Upper Creeks and Cherokees, and from them onward through the Lower Creeks to Carolina. The map made no effort to record precise distances or directions between these peoples, but one could easily read the complex relationships of trade and war that a Chickasaw Indian had to navigate in the eighteenth century. Likewise, the traveler was not free to traverse the countryside at random, but had to follow the well-worn paths that connected Indians and Europeans physically, economically, and politically.

The Creek Indians likewise described their relationship to their neighbors in this language of relationships between connected points. Though no map exists detailing Creek notions of geography, their methods of representing the southeastern landscape closely resembled that of their Chickasaw neighbors. For Creeks, the visual symbol of trade relationships was the string of beads. In the midst of continental renegotiation after the Seven Years' War, for example, an Upper Creek headman, the Mortar of Okchai, traveled to Charleston to reaffirm the longstanding friendship between the Upper Creeks and the British. He presented the governor of South Carolina with a string of white beads, symbolizing at once the linear shape of the friends' trading path and the peace and harmony that existed between them. He also sent another string south to Pensacola,

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composed of white and red beads, questioning whether the newer southern trading path was to be friendly or hostile. In verbal descriptions of the path, another Creek headman presented a verbal string of places: “the Old White Path... Comes from Charleston to the Couaties, from thence to ye Taukabatchees, from thence to the Abicouches and from thence to the Chickasaws.” To travel the Southeast was to travel between places in a set order. The fact that this headman changed the traditional route to favor his more southern towns very much upset his northern Upper Creek counterparts, emphasizing the importance of proper channels for communication and trade in Indian eyes.

It was this landscape that most directly influenced the traders at Augusta. Their world was not composed so much of grand imperial ambitions but of individual Indian towns, linked together not by region but by a series of well-known and respected paths. (Fig. 11) To move westward from Augusta required taking the necessary twists and turns to follow the paths from place to place, in an ordered succession of towns. Beginning in Augusta, the trader moved westerly towards the river crossing on the Ogeechee River. From there, travelers to the Lower Creeks turned southwest towards the Creek town of Coweta at the falls of the Chattachoochee River. Travelers to the Upper Creeks, Chickasaws, and Choctaws stayed a westerly course to the Upper Creek town of Oakfuskee, and from thence northwestern to the Creek town of Coosa, and from thence to the Chickasaw towns near the Mississippi River, and from the Chickasaws southward to the Choctaw towns. For almost a century, traders followed these routes, rarely varying

course, for to do so risked getting lost in the vast interior of southeastern North America.\textsuperscript{28}

This was not travel that conveyed a sense of mastery of the landscape. For most of the journey, the path kept a narrow course through high woods on all sides. Each point of the journey brought its own challenges—horses running away from a campsite, the chance encounter with a friend or relation, the more harrowing encounter with an enemy. A town that had been friendly on the outward trek could very easily cease to be on the trip home. At each stop, the trader could receive word of a burgled home or of dead relatives and servants. Each turn in the path could bring about a new direction in one’s own life. And yet these ambiguities were in a sense constant, for the travel and events along the paths formed a community and a mindset that governed the geography of the Southeast.

The imprint of this geography on the mental world of Indian traders was apparent in the basic narrative forms that their letters and journals took. Disruption along the trail was unknowable ahead of time and could mean the loss of one’s property, one’s family, or one’s own life. Numerous letters and accounts follow the trail, but the following is a striking example:

I left Savana Town October 16, and arrived at the Oakfuskees the 29th where I heard that one of my Hirelings had been killed by one of the Chickasaw Indians at the Breed Camp at my House... Upon hearing this I made what Heast I could to get Home while Mr. Bosomworth [the Indian agent] ws there, and left my Horses and Things at the Oakfuskees. When I arrived at the Abukutchees I saw Mr. Bosomworth and understood that the Checkesaws mostly had gone to the Woods, and most of them who stayed behind slept in the Woods for Fear of the Creeks coming to cut them off... When I arrived here [the Breed Camp?] I had Accounts by Way of the

\textsuperscript{28} For a description of the basic trade route, see Crane, \textit{The Southern Frontier}, 132-136; also see maps in Braund, \textit{Deerskin and Duffels}, 90, and Piker, “Contested,” 316.
Albama Fort that the Chickesaws had cut off several Boats in the Mississippi.29

This trader followed the same route in 1752 that Nairne had in 1708, but the path could change roles without the traveler’s control. Traders, after all, traveled between Indian towns and confederacies that were often at war with each other, or even divided within themselves. But one should not confuse unpredictability with chaos. The patterns of behavior and rhythms of life along the paths and in the towns remained remarkably coherent and consistent from the founding of Augusta until the American Revolution.30 Though any individual might find something quite surprising at any given moment, the overall shape and cycle of the Indian trade remained intact.

Unpredictability was part of the traders’ worldview, and their ability to successfully navigate these channels formed a key component of their identity. Augusta traders assumed a mastery of the complexities of the paths that convinced them of their superiority over other Europeans who might trespass. As Thomas Bosomworth, an Indian agent from South Carolina, complained, “the powerful Company at Augusta seem to look upon the whole Trade of the Creek Nation as their undoubted Right and whatever Part they are deprived of they are apt to imagine an Encroachment upon their Property.”31 The traders themselves defended their influence in Indian affairs, saying it was they “who have risqued our all in the Colony, & have been no Small Benefactors to it, for we must say (& without Vanity) that our House is the best Acquainted with Indian Affairs of any


in this Colony, & that it is us who by our Endeavours, have in great Measure kept the Indians on good Terms... for some Years past." It was not against Indians that the traders defined themselves so much as against other Europeans who sought to control Indians from the distance of imperial capitals. Their jealously guarded position as intermediaries between Europeans and Indians also meant that Indian territories could be seen only through the traders’ eyes.

The persistence of the Indian trade geography marked eighteenth-century maps of the Southeast. In large part the product of Indian agents and travelers along the path, the place-to-place relations along the trail emerged in print as a distinctive set of features and messages in eighteenth-century British mapmaking, echoing the intra-imperial tensions between traders and British officials. The traders’ dual role as both promoters and competitors of British imperial aims created an uncertain geography, one that would remain the basis for mapmaking until a new language of scientific cartography began replacing it after the Seven Years’ War. This new language, and its attendant message of dispossession, would eventually lead to the myth of empty lands that would characterize United States-Indian relation in the nineteenth-century Southeast.

The maps of Thomas Nairne and John Barnwell, though made with the intent of promoting British mastery of the interior, reflect more of this relational geography than one might at first suppose. Made not from formal survey but from memories of the trail, these eighteenth-century maps reflected the method by which they were produced. And the tension within these maps—claiming mastery while at the same time depicting an Anglo-Indian geography in which neither side held complete authority—would

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reverberate in the large-scale eighteenth-century maps produced by Henry Popple and John Mitchell.

Nairne’s 1708 map reflected the travels that produced it. In October 1707, rumors reached Charles Town that the French at Mobile were planning to raise an Indian army to attack the city. In January 1708, Nairne accompanied the Chickasaw trader Thomas Welch on a six-month diplomatic mission to preserve Chickasaw allegiance to the English and to try and disrupt the Franco-Choctaw alliance. Nairne succeeded in his mission, but returned to imprisonment in Charles Town at the instigation of his political rival, proprietary governor Nathaniel Johnson. It was here that Nairne composed his 1708 memorial and drafted his manuscript map. The map would first appear as an inset on Edward Crisp’s 1711 map of South Carolina, and would also act as the model for Herman Moll’s 1715 map. It was also upon Nairne’s map that the Georgia Trustees first outlined their designs for America.

The trading path formed the centerpiece of Nairne’s map, which introduced a wealth of detail about the Southeast. Indian towns suddenly appeared and the trading path south of the Appalachian Mountains appeared for the first time, connecting Carolina to the Mississippi and promoting the ease of trade. The map and Nairne’s accompanying letters revealed clearly the way Nairne experienced the landscape. Nairne’s account of his trip followed the typical travel narrative: “Designing for the Chicasaws I set out from the Ochesses... crossed over Cusa or the main branch of Mobile river... we went the

33 Crane, Southern Frontier, pp. 93-94, Cumming, Early Maps, 22
34 The Trustees’ promotional literature for Georgia included maps of the Southeast that were essentially Nairne’s 1708 map with the bounds of Georgia marked upon them. See De Vorsey, “Oglethorpe and the Earliest Maps,” 30-33.
The trail on Nairne’s map ran in an almost perfect east-west course from Charleston all the way to the Mississippi. The various twists and turns that the path followed in reality were not recorded. The Appalachian Mountains were safely brushed to the top of the map, giving Charles Town traders a straight and easy path of influence throughout the Southeast. Nairne apparently did not pay particular attention to the directions in which he traveled, and his account of the journey likewise revealed a memory less of space than of points and distance between them.

Nairne believed that English control of the path that linked them to the Indians would secure the interior for English expansion. Part of his 1708 mission was “to Invite by fair means all that wold accept of our friendship, upon the Terms of Subjecting them selves, to our govermnt. and removeing into our territory, and quite to ruine such as wold not.” Because Nairne was an ardent colonizer, his map skewed the path heavily toward the east, so much so that the English could pull Indians towards them through trade and physical relocation. That his plan was not realized revealed how little Nairne understood the true nature of the path he traveled.

The path on the Barnwell-Hammerton map was similar to Nairne’s—a chain that bound the Indians to the English and checked their ability to help the French. The manuscript map, produced around 1721, filled in many details that the small Nairne map lacked. Numerous legends dotted the Southeast, recording British victories over Indians and noting useful places for English forts and potentially valuable agricultural and timber

35 Nairne, Muskogean Journals, 51.
36 For a comparison with a modern reconstruction of the path’s actual course through the Southeast, compare the Nairne map with the one found in Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 90.
37 Nairne’s 1708 Memorial, 196.
38 Crane, Southern Frontier, 228-34.
lands. Echoing Nairne, the Barnwell map reflected a more linear geography. Though the trading path took a more winding route, Barnwell’s rivers (rather than running in their real-life northwest to southeast courses), ran almost due east-west, echoing the linearity of Nairne’s trading path. And like Nairne’s path, the rivers ran to Indian towns, which were situated quite accurately in terms of their placement along waterways.

However, the Indian interior as portrayed by Barnwell was not particularly orderly. The Southeast was a jumble of Indian towns, legends, annotations, and suggestions. At the time Barnwell composed the map, the southeastern interior was still in the process of recovering from the Yamassee War. The large Indian confederacies that would form the basis of eighteenth-century Anglo-Indian relations did not appear on the Barnwell map save as a number of towns scattered along river systems and trading paths, interspersed with mountains and notations of violence.

As a strategy for empire, however, the measures proposed by Barnwell and later adopted by the Lords of Trade would prove difficult to implement at best. Though Barnwell himself held great hope for the ease with which trade would reduce the Indians to alliance and dependence on the English, his map in many ways foreshadowed the numerous conflicts and difficulties that the Anglo-Indian trade alliance would bring about. While English trade goods secured Indian alliances (and dependence) for much of the eighteenth century and prevented any number of wars between Englishmen and Indians, the traders themselves were likewise dependent on the good will of Indians. This “mutual obligation, mutual dependence” characterized trade relationships for the
eighteenth century. The traders themselves opposed threats to their presumed independence from British authorities, ensuring the persistence of the tradeways.

Thus, from even the highest perspective, in the form of large-scale imperial maps, the lines between peoples in the Southeast could be seen. Not simply a matter of British versus Indian or British versus French, the realities of life in the Southeast involved conflicts between trader and official, between trader and Indian, between Indian and official, between trader and trader. The closer one moves to the ground, the more complicated the rules and worlds of the Indian trade became. The Barnwell map, made in the spirit of the greatest optimism, revealed a central tension of the Indian trade: the trade was both agent for and obstacle to imperial aims.

The confusing message of the Barnwell map led to two very different images of the Southeast. The complexity and ambiguity of Barnwell’s jumbled landscape reverberated in Henry Popple’s 1733 glorious mess of a large-scale imperial map (Fig. 5). Popple copied mostly Barnwell’s difficult interior topography and removed the triumphant legends. Taking the opposite route, John Mitchell’s 1755 map selected those elements of the Barnwell map that supported British pretensions to mastery in the Southeast. Thus the legends and victories of Barnwell took center stage. The Popple map has been criticized by historians for its flawed execution and inattention to the valuable legends of the Barnwell map. However, the Popple map far more elegantly expresses

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40 Crane has said that Popple used the Barnwell map, but “not very intelligently.” Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 351; Cumming described the Popple map as “impressive in conception and elaborate in detail, if at times faulty in execution.” Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*, 233.
the Indian trader geography of the Southeast, with subtlety and nuance, than the stridently political Mitchell map.

Popple based almost all of his interior topography on the Barnwell-Hammerton map.41 The east-west rivers of the Barnwell map reappeared in Popple. The Appalachian Mountains ran south all the way to Florida and spread out in numerous small ranges running south to the Gulf of Mexico and west all the way to the Mississippi. Nestled throughout these numerous mountain fortresses were Indian peoples and place names, none apparently connected with any other. Rather than the familiar separation into the Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw confederacies, Popple chose to label these peoples “Westos,” “Oakmulgo,” “Coueta,” and “Echete,” to name but a few.42

However, if Popple’s map displayed little “accuracy” in its depiction of southeastern topography, Popple perhaps far more accurately captured the realities of the Southeast that awaited British expansion into the region. As British administrators would learn over and over again, Indian towns remained independent, even if they did form part of larger confederacies.43 Popple’s map revealed this sensibility that negotiations with Indians would prove difficult, unpredictable, almost impenetrable. This frustration would echo in the complaints of British governors, even those such as James Glen who prided themselves on their knowledge of Indian affairs.

The distance betwixt the Indian Countreys and England is great and the conveyance is uncertain, but above all the Politicks of these People if I may use that expression, is different from all other Nations under the Sun,

43 The emphasis on individual autonomy in Indian social order has been emphasized in most recent accounts of Anglo-Indian relations, on Creek notions of autonomy, see Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 20-22 and Piker, “Contested,” 318-20; for the Cherokees, see Reid, *Hatchet*, 2-5.
Among civilized Nations where the dictates of reason are closely pursued
the same humane prudence that aids some Men to form Schemes, will
assist others to disappoint them, but reason cannot so well Counteract
what reason does not direct; among these Savages, Passion, Prejudice,
Caprice usurp the place of reason, and Revenge is sometimes exercised in
so wild a manner, that one who has made their manners his study for seven
years is often at a stand, I truely think they are not to be learned by
reading, nor in any other way, but by an attentive and intimate observation,
by occular inspection.  

The stubborn refusal of Indians to organize themselves into a more European system of
governance frustrated those who hoped to treat Indians as nations rather than as people.
Popple’s map certainly offered nothing to those seeking a simplistic Indian landscape.
Numerous Indian groups appeared barricaded in a series of mountains that did not
actually exist, and to reach any of these mountain villages the traveler would have to ford
numerous streams and travel through any number of independent Indian towns.

The confusion and ambiguity of Popple’s geography was readily apparent in the
message of his cartouche (Fig. 7). In a familiar trope of New World maps, Indians in
feathered headdresses and carrying bows flanked the map title. In the background Popple
placed a bustling scene of English waterside commerce: men hoeing fields, others loading
hogsheads onto a vessel waiting at anchor, and a group of well-dressed gentlemen
discussing business as a white servant poured them wine.

Yet the comfort of this familiar scene stood in marked contrast to the potential
danger of the Indians resting in the foreground. To the right of the map’s title a young
warrior stared off into the distance, his bow ready at his side. Above the title, a female
rested with a quiver full of arrows slung across her shoulder. Her left foot rested
comfortably on a grinning alligator. In her right hand, an arrow pointed to the trophy

resting under her right foot: the severed head of a bearded European, pierced with an arrow. Popple’s prediction for the future of the Southeast was thus unclear. On the one hand, Popple celebrated the success and harmony of British commerce. On the other, he warned all who would spread that commerce into southeastern North America that numerous and unpredictable Indian foes could either help (by killing European rivals) or hinder (by killing the English themselves) the expansion of British America.

Popple’s map proved unacceptable to British imperial planners, who wanted more certainty. This was made clear in 1755, when British diplomats negotiated with their French counterparts over a border. When the French delegation noted that Popple’s map had been composed with the approbation of the British Board of Trade, the British negotiators responded that only Popple’s undertaking had been approved; the final map had not received official recognition. The British diplomats’ disavowal of Popple apparently stemmed from features on Popple’s map which told against their claims. A more favorable map was needed, and one was provided in that same year.

In 1755, John Mitchell published a map that more stridently asserted British claims in the Southeast, taking the most optimistic elements of the Barnwell map and using them to promote British dominion across North America (Fig. 6). Mitchell’s map bore the seal of imperial approval. Whereas Popple’s 1733 map had carried the endorsement of Edmund Halley, famed astronomer and cartographer, John Pownall, Secretary for the British Board of Trade, endorsed the Mitchell map as being “Undertaken

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45 Henry Popple, “A Map of the British Empire in North America.”
46 Cumming, Southeast in Early Maps, 233.
with the Approbation and at the request of the Lords Commissioners.47 A simple glance at the Mitchell map reveals why it would hang proudly in Whitehall.

Mitchell used the same source as Popple, yet to radically different effect. Though engraved two decades after Popple, the 1755 map drew its information on the southeastern interior from the same 1721 Barnwell map. The difference between Mitchell and Popple was one of emphasis rather than source. Mitchell borrowed heavily from the Barnwell map, but more as a document of imperial triumph than as an accurate representation of southeastern geography. The confusing jumble of mountains was reduced to thin chains of single ridges. The numerous Indian towns were grouped into more manageable confederacies. And, most prominently, Mitchell made British imperial claims the dominant feature of his map, extending English colonial borders all the way across the continent in bold swaths of color with English names in large typeface dominating the smaller script of Indian villages.

Over and above British domination of their French rivals, Mitchell’s map broadcast a triumphant victory over Indians. In stark contrast to the ambiguous pose of the Indians in Popple’s cartouche, those that flanked Mitchell’s map title knew who the true masters of North America were (Fig. 8). Mitchell’s Indians bowed before English authority in a pose of submission and fear. Mitchell seemingly based his cartouche as a response to Popple’s. He featured Indians dressed in the same feathered headdresses and skirts as Popple, but their pose was far less defiant and far more pliant. Their bows and arrows lay at their sides, harmless. An Indian man knelt on the ground, his hands clasped before him in submission. His female companion clasped her hand to her breast and


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joined his skyward gaze. Above their heads flew a Union Jack and the British royal coat of arms, both held aloft by white cherubs. To emphasize how docile and harmless his Indians were, Mitchell allowed two small, white children to play right next to them, perfectly oblivious to the supposedly “fearsome” Indians that had stared defiantly out from Popple’s cartouche.

The roots of Mitchell’s dominant Britannia lay in the presumption of royal charter, but Mitchell, like Barnwell, also emphasized that British claims were secured by right of trade. Mitchell boasted that “The English have Factories and Settlements in all the Towns of the Creek Indians of any note except the Albama.” Traders’ houses thus became “settlements” and could be used to justify English claims. It was by this logic that Mitchell proclaimed the Chickasaws “In Alliance and Subjection to the English” because the trade stores among them acted as “the Extent of English Settlemts.” Thus, despite Mitchell’s triumphalist geography, his claims could only be made in reference to the trade geography. The emphasis had shifted between Popple and Mitchell as to which group, Indians or Britons, held the greatest sway over the interior, but the essential geography remained the same.

In the face of aggressive British colonization, Mitchell also painted a portrait of Indians vanishing before European expansion into the interior. The history of Anglo-Indian relations portrayed on the Mitchell map was at once more benign and more successful than that written into Popple’s. In Georgia, between the Ocmulgee and Ogeechee Rivers, the “Creek Indians formerly dwelt, before the War with Carolina in 1715, when they removed to the Chatahochee River.” Likewise in southern Georgia, “The

held in the Ayer Collection, Newberry Library.
Country of the Apalachees,” had been “Conquered and Surrendered to the Carolinians, after two memorable Victories obtain’d over them & the Spaniards in 1702 1703.” The promise of these vacated lands was also emphasized, for instance, in the intersection of the legends “Deserted Cherokee Settlements” and “A fine Fertile Country by all Accounts.”

Mitchell also asserted the moral superiority of British Indian relations over their French rivals. While the Indians had “removed” or “deserted” their settlements in British territory, the French had actively persecuted their Indian neighbors. Indians along the Yazoo River had been “in Alliance with the English, for which they have been destroyed by the French.” Likewise the “Nauchee” Indians along the Mississippi had been “Extirpated by the French in 1730.” Mitchell emphasized the triumphs that Anglo-Indian relations had created for the future security of British North America and promised a reward for this harmony.

Thus did the deerskin trade’s role as forerunner of imperial expansion become manifest, even as Mitchell downplayed the dependence of the British Empire on Indian goodwill. Mitchell’s geography certainly proved much more popular than Popple’s, not only with British imperial planners but also with the general public. His map was reprinted many times and sold throughout Europe. The attachment to Mitchell’s geography was so great that at the end of the American Revolution, the new United States plotted its borders with British North America on a copy of the Mitchell map.  

But events after 1755 proved that the Indians were not nearly as tractable as Mitchell hoped.

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48 Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*, 274.
In particular, the Cherokee War of 1760-61 devastated the South Carolina countryside and proved that Indians were still willing to deal harshly with their British neighbors.

The Mitchell map thus proved inadequate to those who sought to reshape the Southeast in the years after the Seven Years’ War. Following the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Britain knew no imperial rivals in the region. The war had gained them East and West Florida from the Spanish, and the French had ceded all claims to lands east of the Mississippi River. In essence, the war had settled the cartographic rivalries that had marked most of the eighteenth century. The Mitchell map’s conceit of a purely British Southeast had been made reality, yet the map showed a decades-old Indian interior and failed to depict Florida at all.

The need for more accurate maps and greater imperial regulation of the interior created the Stuart-Purcell manuscript map of 1775. This unpublished map introduced a new cartographic language into the southeastern interior, one composed simultaneously of Enlightenment ideals of mapmaking and British ideals of effective regulation. John Stuart, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Southern District, was himself something of an amateur cartographer, having made a map of the Cherokee territories in 1760 following his capture and escape to Virginia during the Cherokee War. Joseph Purcell was Surveyor General of Georgia, a trained cartographer and a deputy of the Southeast’s first modern mapmaker, John Gerar William De Brahm.49

The career of De Brahm revealed the importance that Britain placed on mapping its new possessions in the wake of the Seven Years’ War. De Brahm had come to Georgia in 1751, leading a group of German Protestants to the Salzburger settlements of

49 Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*, 323
Ebenezer. He quickly established himself as a mapmaker and engineer and in 1757 published “A Map of South Carolina and a Part of Georgia” (Fig. 9). The map’s accurate depiction of the complicated coastlines of the two colonies, as well as its attention to planimetric certainty, has earned it the designation of the first modern map in the Southeast: “for the first time a large area in the southern colonies was mapped accurately making use of scientific surveys.”

In 1764, De Brahm’s reputation earned him a commission as Surveyor General for the Southern District of North America. The “official map” of the British Empire after the Treaty of Paris, Emanuel Bowen’s 1763 “An Accurate Map of North America,” was mostly cobbled together from Mitchell and Delisle and repeated the confusing course of the Appalachians and the erroneous depiction of Florida as an archipelago of small islands. De Brahm’s instructions were, broadly, to oversee the surveying and mapping of all North America south of the Potomac River, though to concentrate first and foremost on producing an accurate map of the Florida peninsula.

De Brahm’s appointment signaled a new emphasis in southeastern cartography, one that tied effective imperial administration to accurate mapping of the Southeast. Beginning in late seventeenth-century France with the work of Giovani Domenico Cassini, cartographers began to abandon their old reliance on verbal accounts and seaborne “dead reckoning” and to insist on precise astronomical observation as the only true basis for latitudinal and longitudinal placement. All conjectural information would,

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50 Cumming, Southeast in Early Maps, 2, 29.
ideally, be abandoned. Unlike France, which had early established a royal survey office, Britain lacked any royally commissioned cartographers until the end of the eighteenth-century, but the royal appointment of two surveyors general for North America can perhaps be viewed as a step towards a national map office.52

De Brahm’s mapmaking reflected this sensibility that a map was best left blank in places where no formal survey had been conducted. His 1757 map, for all its detail of the coastline, remained mostly blank. Rivers and roads vanished only a few miles into the interior, and the remarkable soil map that appeared along the South Carolina/North Carolina boundary was only “discovered by a N.W. Line run 40 Miles from the Mouth of Little River.”53 His great map of Florida, composed in the 1770s, mapped the peninsula’s coast in painstaking detail, but left most the interior virtually blank, which De Brahm himself attributed to his “exact representation of what I personally and faithfully examined on the spot of what is surveyed by my deputies and that I shall never attempt to make any return or insertion in General Maps of any other characteristick.”54 The new language of Enlightenment mapmaking boded ill for the Indians of the Southeast, for the preference for blank spaces over a “relict Indian geography” led to the mapping of a vacuum domicilium in the Southeast, “a blank space which is easily divided and ruled.”55 The new maps’ foreshadowing of dispossession should not be overstated, however. De Brahm himself would later disavow the corruptions that empire had brought into Indian societies. Even the great imperialist John Stuart’s introduction of Enlightenment

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52 Thrower, Maps & Civilization, 105-113.
53 De Brahm, “Map of South Carolina and Part of Georgia,” [1757].
54 De Vorsey’s introduction to De Brahm, Reports, p. 45; De Brahm quoted in De Vorsey, Report, 45.
cartography into the interior was aimed not at dispossessing Indians of their lands, but at dispossessing Indian traders of their influence in southeastern affairs.

Following the Seven Years’ War, management of the southeastern Indian trade became a principal concern of royal officials. The Cherokee War, though brief, had devastated the Carolina countryside. Indian as well as English settlements lay ruined and many had died in a series of Indian attacks and British retributions. Royal officials blamed unscrupulous traders for instigating Indian violence and sought better oversight of their affairs. Gov. Thomas Boone of South Carolina in 1764 offered his “Rough Sketch of a Plan” for conducting the Indian trade, blaming the Cherokee War on an unregulated trade and fearing the “villainies that have expelled the traders from civilized society.”

Echoing Carolina leaders in the wake of the Yamassee War, Boone proposed a factory system, with the trade conducted from British frontier forts. His immediate successor, Lt. Gov. William Bull, in that same year noted that “the trade is generally carried on... by men who can scarce live by any other means or conform to the order of civil society.”

Traders were suspect characters, and after the Seven Years’ War there seemed to be more of them than ever.

The royal Proclamation of 1763 exacerbated these fears by increasing the number of Indian traders. The proclamation abandoned the old system of particular trader licenses for individual towns in favor of general licenses to trade with any Indians so long as the trader posted a bond. Probably no other act by the king could have managed to unite Stuart, the Augusta traders, and colonial governors in the same opinion—these new traders would lead to the ruin of the trade and more Indian wars. As Gov. James Wright

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56 Thomas Boone to the Board of Trade, Jan. 20, 1764, SPRO, 29: 397-403, quote from p. 397.
of Georgia would write of the trade in the wake of the Proclamation of 1763, "The Traders who go Amongst them [the Indians] are not the honestest or Soberest People.... I am beyond a doubt, that almost every disturbance & injury that has happened from the Indians has in a great Measure, if not totally Proceeded from the great Misconduct & abuses Committed Amongst them by Traders & Packhorsmen Employed there." Rather than leading to a Mitchelllesque Indian submission, the trade had created a Popple-like hoard of angry Indians, and more traders would only lead to more destruction. Reform was needed, and Stuart’s major policy was to remove control of Indian affairs from private traders.

John Stuart, though in many ways a rival of imperial governors, echoed Wright’s fear of an unregulated trade and blamed Anglo-Indian conflicts on white traders. Stuart characterized the traders as men who “dread the introduction of order, regularity and laws, by which their enormities may be punished and restrained.” For him, only a reduction of private influence in Indian affairs could preserve order in the Southeast. Appointing deputies to live among the Indians, Stuart would make his office the one to which Indians addressed their grievances, thereby increasing imperial oversight of the traders’ conduct.

Stuart also regretted the lack of imperial control over the trade networks of the Southeast. He wanted to oversee the licensing of traders himself, removing governors’

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57 William Bull to the Board of Trade, Sept. 3, 1764, SPRO, 30: 195.
58 James Wright to the Board of Trade, Aug. 27, 1764, CRG, 28, pt. 2: 51-52.
60 On Stuart’s plan for regulating the deerskin trade, see J. Russell Snapp, John Stuart and the Struggle for Empire on the Southern Frontier (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 55-61.
decades-old privilege, and increasing his personal oversight over those who sought access to Indian towns.61 Stuart fretted that the traders licensed separately by Virginia, South Carolina, and North Carolina were not “subjected to any general jurisdiction the consequences of which are the greatest disorder and confusions.”62 Without formal jurisdiction, the traders were free to “wander where they please to every nation and through every village.”63 Even a flood of new traders had to follow the paths through Indian towns. Stuart himself did not wish to abandon the old trader geography, but he did believe that imperial surveillance of the paths and restriction on traders’ movement was necessary to the continuance of the trade. Stuart wanted to make certain that he and his deputies controlled access to Indian villages. Indeed, he hoped to reorient the trade south to Pensacola and thus to subvert Augusta’s influence over the older eastern trading path.64

The Stuart-Purcell map was in many ways the fulfillment of John Stuart’s commission as superintendent, symbolically as well as practically. The Proclamation of 1763 had forbidden British settlements west of a line running along the Appalachian Mountains. However, the line, based as it was on numerous treaties and talks between various British governors and Indian leaders, was fragmentary and difficult to trace. Stuart was thus ordered to have a skilled surveyor piece together the precise boundaries of the Proclamation line so that imperial administrators could better enforce the regulation. As a temporary measure to satisfy his superiors, Stuart forwarded a copy of Mitchell’s 1755 printed map with a rough line inked on it. However, Stuart believed that the printed maps of the Southeast were wholly unreliable for his purposes. He complained in 1771 of

61 Snapp, John Stuart, p. 61.
62 Letter from John Stuart, August 8, 1766, CO-WE, 67: 590.
63 Letter from John Stuart, August 8, 1766, CO-WE, 67: 591.
“the impossibility” of mapping the Proclamation Line “with such a degree of accuracy as to convey a just idea of our boundaries upon any of the printed maps that I have seen, in all of which the natural boundaries specified in the different treaties are either erroneously laid down or entirely left out.” Mitchell’s map, reliant upon the old trade geography that Stuart hoped to supplant, was unsuitable.

Stuart’s efforts to craft a better map were aided by new travelers along the paths. Following the Seven Years’ War, packhorse trains began carrying more than the goods of the Indian trade. Now appearing alongside the traders were professional surveyors, men whose job it was to accurately map both the boundaries of various Indian land cessions as well as the trails and placement of Indian towns. William Bartram described one such survey party who journeyed from Augusta in 1773. The caravan consisted of “surveyors, astronomers, artisans, chain-carriers, markers, guides and hunters.” The 1773 survey party’s goal was to map the boundaries of an enormous cession of land, dubbed the “New Purchase,” by the Cherokees to the colony of Georgia in exchange for absolution of their standing debts.

Stuart, a party to the conference, was undoubtedly a part of this packhorse train, as were Joseph Purcell and Philip Yonge. All three names were listed in the map resulting of the survey, Philip Yonge’s 1773 “A Map of the Lands Ceded to His Majesty by the Creek and Cherokee Indians.” However, Stuart was a fervent opponent of the New Purchase, which had been brokered by private traders at Augusta and threatened Anglo-Creek

relations. The Creek Indians claimed part of the ceded lands and were angry that the Cherokees had given it away. Stuart opposed any private dealings for Indian land, since they reinforced the influence of traders amongst the Indians and threatened stability in the Southeast. In this way, Stuart was an opponent of dispossession, and his efforts to craft a precise map were in some ways a means to protect Indian lands.  

However, Stuart’s own mapmaking projects were aimed at securing Indian land cessions. The survey works of Stuart’s deputy, David Taitt, a contributor to the Stuart-Purcell map, were part of Taitt’s 1772 commission to. In 1772, Stuart appointed Taitt as a delegate to journey among the Creek towns, to dissuade Creeks from negotiating with private traders and to seek the Indians’ approval for a British land purchase along the Scambia River. Stuart appointed Taitt because he was both “a good surveyor and a man of prudence.” Stuart instructed Taitt, while on this diplomatic mission, to “Ride thro’ all the Indian Villages of the Upper Creek as well as the Lower Creek Nation, and take particular Notice of their Situation and make such observations as may enable you to draw a Plan of the Country and of the Rivers etca.” Taitt set out along the Indian trading paths with his transit, a timepiece, and measuring chain. The level of precision in his verbal account is remarkable:

Febry 2d. We set out this morning fourteen minutes after Eight and Continued our Course NW b[y] W about Eight miles, and then NNE Nine Miles and Sixty Eight Chains further.... Febry 3d. This morning... we set out Seven minutes after Eight and Arrived at the little Scambia or Weoka Twenty minutes past ten being six miles an sixty Chains NE from last

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67 Philip Yonge, “A Map of the Lands Ceded to His Majesty by the Creek and Cherokee Indians at a Congress held in Augusta the 1st June 1773,” photocopy in the Newberry Library.
68 On Stuart’s opposition to the New Purchase, see Snapp, John Stuart, 121-27.
70 Instructions to David Taitt, in Mereness, Travels, 493.
Camp... Febry 4th... we went along the path NNE one mile and a Quarter... here we Stopped at the side of a run (being the same where we were Encamped last night) to Dry the venison and wait for an Observation which I took at twelve Oclock and found to be in Latitude 31° 14 minutes North; being 43 miles to the Northward of Pensacola Answering to 49 3/4 English Statue miles.\(^7\)

The meaning of place along the trail had changed. No longer paths between peoples, trails were merely one more feature to be plotted onto Stuart's intended large-scale map of the Southeast. Geography was now an assistant to imperial administration, a way of guiding the future rather than a description of present social relations.

Relying on De Brahm’s former deputy Joseph Purcell, Stuart produced an ambitious and remarkably complete map of the Southeast, entitled “A Map of the Southern Indian District of North America” (Fig. 10).\(^7\) Though never published, this 1775 manuscript map presented greater detail and planimetric certainty than any map that preceded it. For the first time, Indian towns were recorded not as places along a trail, but as points on a grid of latitude and longitude. The trails linking towns twisted and turned in ways that no previous map had captured. The Appalachian Mountains, so long the bane of southeastern mapmakers, now appeared in relief through a careful hachuring.\(^7\) Stuart even attempted to define the boundaries of Indian hunting lands, a goal that presumed that Indians recognized some invisible and arbitrary division between their hunting grounds. Purcell painstakingly inked in the Proclamation Line, which in less than two years would

\(^7\) Journal of David Taitt, in Mereness, *Travels*, 497-98.
\(^7\) Hachuring involved the use of straight lines whose thickness indicated the steepness of a slope. See Thrower, *Maps and Civilization*, 113.
become irrelevant as the American Revolution tore asunder the imperial framework that Stuart sought to build.

Although the map’s “accuracy” was striking, the map also served Stuart’s political purposes. The colonies that had stretched across the entirety of the Mitchell map now kept themselves confined east of the Proclamation Line. Georgia, in particular, suffered the greatest diminution. The colony that had dominated Mitchell’s Indian interior now appeared as a thin strip of land on the south side of the Savannah River (to be fair, the actual bounds of the colony as determined by Indian treaty). However, Stuart, who had so strenuously asserted his preeminence over the Indian territories, must have felt some satisfaction in constraining Georgia’s jurisdiction solely to its official boundaries. Likewise, Stuart emphasized the southern trading paths from each of these Indian nations. While numerous paths intersected each other and reached southward to Pensacola and West Florida, only a single road, stretched across a vast expanse of empty area, represented the “Great Old Path” from the Cowetas and Oakfuskees to Augusta.

Despite his best efforts, though, Stuart could not free himself from that great old path of the Indian trade geography, either politically or cartographically. Stuart did not succeed in removing the influence of Indian traders in the Southeast; on the contrary he met near-constant resistance from those whose power and influence rested on the continuation of the old trade networks: colonial governors, the Indian traders at Augusta, and Indian headmen whose towns’ placement along the old path had accorded them greater influence and prestige.74 His map likewise revealed the stubborn persistence of the

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74 On the contests Stuart faced from British governors and traders, see Snapp, John Stuart, 63-77, 93-107.
old routes. For all of his surveyors' attention to detail, Stuart's map remained entirely blank except for the immediate area surrounding the Indian trading paths.

Despite the removal of the French and Spanish, the increase of traders resulting from the Proclamation of 1763, the increasing number of land purchases from Indians, and John Stuart's best efforts, the Indian trade did not completely fall apart in the wake of the Seven Years' War. Historians, citing the impassioned pleas of Indian traders as well as the complaints of men such as Taitt and Stuart, have characterized the post-1763 trade as one of "decline and conflict." However, a table included in Bernard Romans's *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* shows deerskin exports from Georgia increasing in the years after 1763. Though stopping at 1772, the table showed no marked decrease in the volume of trade, and a comparison with a chart Stuart made of deerskin exports from Charles Town reveals that the trade in the supposed period of decline compared favorably with any nine-year period during the supposed "golden age" of the deerskin trade.

Clearly, the years 1763-1775 represented new challenges to the old trade geography: increasing imperial oversight, movement of trade south to West Florida, and increasing white settlement in the Piedmont. But not even Stuart, in his redrawing of the Southeast, could deny the traders' persistence, explaining why the store of James Germany, an old Augusta hand, appeared nestled safely among the Upper Creek Towns. Rather than a period of decline and conflict, it is perhaps better to characterize the years between 1763 and 1775 as one of renegotiation in the Southeast. The removal of the

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75 The quote actually serves as a heading in Cashin, "Gentlemen of Augusta," 48; Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 100-02, also employs 1763 as the date which brought the Indian trade into decline due to increased competition among traders following the Proclamation of 1763.
French likewise removed the trade’s “official” justification, but the culture and society of the trade did not disappear as quickly. Though a plantation economy and white settlements would eventually emerge victorious in Georgia, that ending was but one of many possible outcomes envisioned during the interwar years.

As British colonization adjusted to the post-1763 period, numerous attempts to define and plan for the future of the region appeared. A number of remarkable and crucial sources for southeastern history come from this time of renegotiation. In direct response to Stuart came the traders’ mouthpiece, James Adair, and his History of the American Indians. William Bartram made his landmark journey only with the assistance of traders’ letters and recommendations. The Surveyor General William De Brahm prepared his “Report on the General Survey” and introduced a language far less modern than his mapmaking as he attempted to make sense of the Southeast. And De Brahm’s former deputy, Bernard Romans, began his own career as an author with a passionate defense of slavery and a vision of an Indian-free plantation South. All four of these key sources arose directly from the imperial renegotiation of southeastern geography. To these may be added the writings of Charles Woodmason, who made himself the voice of those white settlers who began entering the former domain of the Indian trade and sought to define it according to their own interests. As will appear in a later chapter, these writings represented numerous possibilities for the Southeast after the Seven Years’ War, and not all of them required dispossession of the Indians or the triumph of white settlement.

The numerous possibilities that still existed after the Seven Years’ War became polarized during the American Revolution. It was this event that suddenly and forcefully

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76 Both tables reproduced in De Vorsey, “Colonial Georgia Backcountry,” 11.
unmade the great old path and turned the numerous small-scale battles for influence in the Southeast into a cataclysmic winner-take-all proposition. The Revolutionary movement in Georgia owed part of its origin to a series of small skirmishes between Lower Creek Indians angered over the 1773 New Purchase and the increasing number of white settlers pushing against the eastern edges of the Creeks' hunting grounds. As events in New England and elsewhere grew more heated during 1775-1776, Georgia became increasingly divided. On one side stood Governor Wright, John Stuart, and the Indians of the Southeast; on the other stood coastal merchants and an emerging backcountry planter elite with their agrarian base of support. This new elite's victory would result in the dispossession of the Augusta traders, the removal of the British from North America, and the sad history of Indian removal in the southeastern United States.

Few of those involved in the deerskin trade foresaw such an outcome. From the perspective of the pre-Revolutionary Southeast, the trade seemed a durable and stable system of commercial and human relationships. Certainly the trade involved uncertainty and sometimes violence. But it endured for almost sixty years between the Yamasee War and the American Revolution. It survived the numerous Anglo-French contests for North America and even on occasion helped maintain peace when war broke out elsewhere. The British in particular attempted to use the trade to further imperial aims in the Southeast, laying grand plans for Indian alliances and united military actions. As the frustrated

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77 On the specifics of the American Revolution's origins in Georgia, see Snapp, John Stuart, 147-88; Edward J. Cashin, "'But Brothers, It is Our Land We are Talking About': Winners and Losers in the Georgia Backcountry," in Ronald Hoffman, Thad Tate, and Peter Albert, eds., An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution, Published for the United States Capitol Historical Society (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1985), 240-75; on the emergence of the backcountry political leadership, see Harvey H. Jackson, "The Rise of the Western Members: Revolutionary Politics and the Georgia Backcountry," in Hoffman et al, Uncivil War, 276-320.
letters of men like Glen and Stuart attested, the deerskin trade proved only partly reliable as a handmaiden to the British empire.

As Britain’s maps showed, the trade had a stubborn tendency to follow its own course. The trade’s participants engaged in a volatile and unpredictable business. Boatmen faced the tricky currents of southeastern waterways and the fickle administration of colonial governments. Traders journeyed through a knotty series of paths and trails inhabited by friend and enemy alike. The political circumstances surrounding any given journey could change very quickly. Yet southeasterners mitigated potential hazards by directing the trade through a series of relatively stable points such as the trading companies of Augusta or the village stores in Indian country. Alternating between uncertainty and stability, the deerskin trade created a series of unique places, each requiring its own set of rules and behaviors. The trade’s position between unpredictability and dependability was clear from the moment one set out from Charleston for Augusta. The boatmen could have told anyone how much the trade relied on unsteady vehicles to create a stable system.

78 As Cashin has noted, the debate over the Indian trade served more to define Whig and Tory allegiance in Georgia than any debate over taxation or representation. Cashin, “Brothers,” 245-53.
CHAPTER TWO

THE SAVANNAH RIVER BOATMEN AND THE INDIAN TRADE

In May 1740, John Rae pushed off from the Charleston docks. His cargo of Indian trade goods secured, Rae directed his slim canoe across the Charleston bar. He would steer the boat around the sea islands of South Carolina and Georgia, and then make the two-week trip up the Savannah River to Augusta. His was an important charge. The goods fastened in the boat’s bottom would supply entire villages of Indians and at the same time help maintain the continued friendship of the powerful Creek, Chickasaw, and Cherokee nations. Standing at the stern he kept an eye on the winds and currents that might easily tip the slim craft or drive it onto any of a number of sandbars or oyster rakes that lay just beneath the coastal waters. Rae would stop at Savannah and deliver the packet of letters from the Georgia Trustees, perhaps stay a couple of days and enjoy the company at the small town’s taverns.

From Savannah, his four-man crew (most likely enslaved African-Americans) would bend to the oars, forcing the boat upstream along the Savannah River’s banks. Their only rest would come at nighttime camps in the woods or perhaps a stay at the occasional plantation home. At Augusta the trade goods would be turned into deerskins for the return trip downriver; Rae and his crew knew the traders were then coming into town, their packhorses straining under the weight of the previous winter’s hunts. The
trading boat would be back in Charleston in just a few months, this trip just one of several Rae made between 1739 and 1742.¹

By 1750, Rae had given up the boatman’s life. Most boatmen vanished into obscurity, but Rae managed to become one of Augusta’s wealthiest and most influential citizens. A partner in the powerful “Augusta Company” that dominated the Anglo-Creek deerskin trade, Rae also became a justice of the peace and a member of the Georgia assembly. His career would earn him wealth and prestige as one of the leading “gentlemen of Augusta” and would eventually secure him a large plantation on the river near Savannah. A slaveholder, a man of property, and one of the biggest beneficiaries of the deerskin trade, Rae’s life began as “patroon” of one of the numerous trading boats that made hundreds of trips between Charleston and Augusta in the years between 1737 and 1775.² It is fitting to begin the story of Augusta with him, since his life paralleled the rise of the town itself.

Augusta began when James Oglethorpe first spotted Indian trading boats coming down the Savannah in 1735 and earned its importance from its position at the head of navigation on the Savannah River. Colonists at Augusta supposed their mastery of the river and the Indian trade had made them wealthy. However, the Savannah boatmen steered a powerful countercurrent in southeastern history, for those four enslaved oarsmen played an important part in African-American resistance to the emerging slave regime in

¹ Rae’s comings and goings were recorded most meticulously by William Stephens, the Georgia Trustees’ Secretary in Savannah. See Journal of William Stephens in Allen D. Candler, Kenneth Coleman, and Milton Ready, eds. The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, 30 vols. (Atlanta: C.P. Byrd, 1904-1916; Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974-1976), vols. 4 and 4(supplement). Hereafter cited as CRG.
² “Patroon” was the most common term for the boats’ masters. For a biography of Rae, see George Fenwick Jones, “Portrait of an Irish Entrepreneur in Colonial Augusta: John Rae, 1708-1772,” Georgia Historical Quarterly 83 (Fall 1999): 427-47.
Carolina and Georgia. Rather than simply following the Savannah's course and its presumed path to white dominance, slaves charted their own path and used the river to find family and freedom in an area that tried to deny them both.

The Savannah River has assumed a prominent place in every account of Augusta, be it eighteenth- or twentieth-century. The river allowed relatively easy navigation from the Atlantic coast to the rocky uplands of the southern Piedmont, and Europeans seeking a link to the resources of a vast Indian interior sent their boats up to the falls to facilitate this trade. Seeking easy transportation for goods and capital into the interior, colonization naturally followed the ready-made river courses. Only when the white population and agricultural production increased did European expansion move from its small riverside footholds into the rest of the southern backcountry. Augusta was in many ways but one example of this basic process of settlement, which included such early interior towns as Albany, New York, Richmond, Virginia, and Camden, South Carolina. Certainly such a view was commonplace by the eighteenth century, and goes far in explaining why white settlers chose the places they did for their new homes in a New World.3 While the advantages of water routes between markets were obvious, to simply consider this a

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commonsense use of natural features masks the people and labor that made such commerce possible. Slave labor made the Savannah River productive, and to ignore the black boatmen’s labor is to share in the fantasy that whites fully commanded the landscapes they altered.

Rivers made colonies. In the discourse of colonization in colonial Georgia and the Southeast, success ran along river courses. Early southeastern promotional literature by Sir Robert Montgomery, Jean-Pierre Purry and the Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia emphasized the utility and fertility that rivers provided new settlements. The future colony was “well water’d, with noble Rivers.” Colonial promoters emphasized that southeastern soil was “very rich... that it abounds in game, deer, and wild bulls.” The “numerous beautiful rivers teeming everywhere with excellent fishes” offered sustenance for a new colony. The woods along river banks, “where the enlivening influence of the Sun prepares the Trees,” would provide early trade through pot-ash production. From the beginning, Georgia’s planners believed that the colony would grow along the banks of the Savannah and Altamaha rivers, drawing from their fluid fertility and using them to increase its trade. The rivers’ long inland courses also provided Georgia with easy access to interior Indians, as John Barnwell himself wrote to Montgomery: “this Trade must, of

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7 Benjamin Martyn, “Reasons for Establishing the Colony of Georgia,” in Reese, Most Delightful Country, 177-81.
Necessity, center with you, as not only being nearer to the Indians, who deal most, but also having Water-Carriage to within a little of their Towns. 8

The correlation between rivers and productive human endeavor continued as Georgia grew older. In the 1760s, as southeasteners began to turn their gaze westward for expansion, the numerous rivers of the Southeast offered the same advantages for profit and productivity. John Gerar William De Brahm emphasized in his “Report on the General Survey” that Georgia yet had future riches to reveal, “altho’ only equal with South carolina as to Planting, yet being watered preferably to South carolina, cannot but have the Preference in the Capacity and Conveniences for Trade and Navigation... in respect to the great Number of Streams, and Rivers, which are navigable.” 9 The valleys of the Appalachian country were “of the richest Soil equal to Manure itself... (besides being well watered with Rivulets).” 10 James Adair, changing careers from Indian trader to colonial promoter, advertised the potential of the Southeast’s hilly interior, abounding as it was “with inexhaustible mines of iron ore” and lying “convenient to navigable rivers.” 11 But it was not the Savannah River itself which inspired the founding of Augusta as much as a steady stream of small trading boats that caught Oglethorpe’s eye.

Augusta’s founding depended on the dugout canoes that ferried deerskins from traders’ stores in the interior to the seaport at Charleston. Securing an outpost at the head of the Savannah’s navigation became a key part in Oglethorpe’s plans for Georgia. He

8 Barnwell’s letter printed in “A Description of the Golden Islands,” 43.
believed that the falls of the river were militarily important, but also hoped the lucrative Indian trade would underwrite the fledgling colony’s economic viability. Augusta was to become “the Key of all the Indian Countrey.”¹² The idea first occurred to him in March 1733, only a few weeks after his first landing at Savannah. Oglethorpe noticed the frequent traffic of boats from New Windsor, a small Carolina trading town at the falls of the Savannah. He reported back to the Trustees that the Savannah River “has a very long course and a great Trade is carried on by it to the Indians, there having [been] above 12 Trading Boats passed by since I have been here.”¹³ Augusta’s location was as dependent on technology as anything since the town sat at the furthest inland reach of the trading boats. Georgia’s founders recognized this relationship when they noted that the Savannah River “is navigable for large Boats, as far as the Town of Augusta... small Boats can go 300 miles further, to the Cherokees.”¹⁴ It was Oglethorpe’s hope that these craft could be diverted from Charleston to Savannah, and this hope led to the founding of Augusta.

Charleston did not willingly cede its deerskins to Oglethorpe, and the resulting conflict set South Carolina and Georgia on an uneasy footing for decades. The inter-colonial squabble centered on who could claim jurisdiction over a river. During the debate, the two sides articulated an ideal of what rivers represented in the colonial mindset. The ideal river was empty and passive, nothing more than a way of spreading commerce and increasing wealth. The founding of Georgia and Oglethorpe’s attempts to gain a share of the Indian trade quickly transformed the Savannah River from an open

¹³ James Oglethorpe to the Georgia Trustees, March 12, 1733, CRG 20: 13-14.
highway into contested ground. For decades, South Carolina traders had enjoyed an unfettered river communication between Charleston and the falls of the Savannah. There Carolina had planted a township, first known as Savannah Town but renamed New Windsor in 1730, that served as an entrepot for Carolina traders moving goods back and forth between the coast and interior Indian villages. Oglethorpe’s planned town of Augusta threatened a trade route that Carolinians had come to regard as a birthright. Unsurprisingly, his project received a chilly reception in Charleston merchant houses.

One of Oglethorpe’s first actions against the Carolina trade was to attack their trading boats. To do this, Oglethorpe took advantage of the legalistic language of Georgia’s charter which granted the colony all the land lying between the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers. Likewise the colony was to include the entirety of both rivers, its jurisdiction extending “from the most Northern Stream of a River there commonly called the Savannah all along the Sea Coast to the Southward unto the most Southern Stream of a certain other great water or River called the Altamaha and Westward from the heads of the said Rivers respectively in Direct Lines to the South Seas.” Oglethorpe and the Trustees interpreted this language to mean that Georgia had jurisdiction over the entire Savannah River, including the right of navigation. South Carolina, however, interpreted the charter to mean only the solid land between these two bounds, and open

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15 Georgia Charter, 1732, quoted in Louis De Vorsey, Jr., The Georgia-South Carolina Boundary: A Problem in Historical Geography (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), 23.
communication along the river itself. From this language, Georgia and South Carolina would continue to dispute their shared boundary for the next two and a half centuries.\textsuperscript{16}

The uncertainty over river navigation had profound implications for the deerskin trade because the colony of Georgia had passed three laws that were anathema to any New Windsor trader. On January 9, 1734, the Georgia Trustees had simultaneously banned rum and slavery in the colony, as well as prohibiting any Indian traders not licensed in Georgia from trading with any Indians living within Georgia’s chartered boundaries. The possession of rum or slaves in any part of Georgia was forbidden, and should Georgia authorities find any person in possession of either, the rum kegs would be staved and the slaves would be seized. If one included the Savannah River as a part of Georgia, as Oglethorpe and his deputies did, then Georgia authorities had the right to stop any trading boat and seize any contraband rum or slaves onboard. And in May 1736 the constable in Savannah, Thomas Causton, exercised that right and stopped two trading boats bound for New Windsor. He “ordered the Boats ashore, opened their Packs, took out the rum and stav’d the heads of 3 hhds. and 10 Caggs, and confin’d the Patrons under a Pretence of a Fine of 5 l. sterl.”\textsuperscript{17}

Causton’s actions provoked an uproar in Charleston. The newspaper account of the staving reported that all of Charleston was “allarmed with the unexpected Proceedings of our Neighbours the Georgians, in respect to our Trade.”\textsuperscript{18} The Council and Assembly of South Carolina were shocked that “a People so lately Settled in America and so little

\textsuperscript{16} De Vorsey, \textit{Georgia-South Carolina Boundary}, 23-31.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{South Carolina Gazette}, May 1, 1736. See also Edward J. Cashin, \textit{The Story of Augusta}, 10. Cashin notes that the boats belonged to Kennedy O’Brien, a New Windsor trader who would soon become one of Augusta’s first residents.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{South Carolina Gazette}, May 1, 1736.
acquainted with the Customs and manners of the Indians” would be so bold as to commit
“such Violence” on boats that carried rum from one Carolina town to another.19 The
staved rum, they argued, was not intended for Georgia, “but was bound up the said River
with other Goods and Merchandizes to the said Savannah Old Town and Fort Moore.”20
The Council and Assembly also recognized that cutting Charleston commerce off from
inland townships would destroy the lifeline to interior settlements. The Savannah was
“the only Water Passage to the said Savannah Garrison and the Town of Purrysburgh.”21
They argued that “the Navigation of that River is so absolutely necessary to the well
being of all the Southern parts of this Your [Majesty’s] Province.”22 South Carolina’s
governor Thomas Broughton feared what Georgia’s actions would mean for the recently-
settled townships. “A Commerce with these Settlements cannot be conveniently carried
on, without the use and Navigation of the Savanna River.”23

Carolinians were outraged that they should have to seek permission from another
colony for traffic between towns within their own province. The Council and Assembly
begged the king whether his intention in granting the Georgia charter was “that the River
Savannah should be the Natural Boundary between the Two Provinces without ever
intending to debar our Majesty’s Subjects of this Your Ancient Colony from the free and
open Navigation thereof into all Ports and Places within this Province.”24 Governor
Broughton noted that “the Subjects of this Province whilst they are passing from One part

19 Petition and Representation of the Council and Assembly of South Carolina, 1736, Great Britain, Public
Record Office, Documents of the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina, 1663-1782
(Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1973), 12 reels, Microfilm. 18: 90, 97.
Hereafter cited as SCPRO.
20 Ibid. 18: 97.
21 Ibid. 18: 98.
22 Ibid. 18: 95-96.
23 Thomas Broughton to the Board of Trade, Aug. 6, 1736, SCPRO 18: 60.
of the Province to another think they have no need of a Particular Permission."\(^{25}\) He also asked the Lords of Trade "whether there is not a known distinction between the Property and Passage of a Navigable River and whether all Navigable Rivers within His Majesty’s Dominions are not free and open to the Passage of all His Subjects in the same manner as are the King’s Highways altho’ the soil may be the Property of a Private Person?"\(^{26}\) In the colonial mind, the river was an empty space, an avenue for trade; it was not a landscape that could be possessed or transferred. Georgia had overstepped its bounds.

Though they contested Carolinians’ use of the Savannah, the Trustees’ efforts were based on a similar ideal of the river as a free and easy passage. They believed, though, that the river was too open and was allowing the infections of rum and slavery to spread from the West Indies and Carolina into Georgia. In particular, the Trustees were worried about the ill health and immorality that prevailed in the British West Indies. The prohibition on rum had been enacted because Georgia’s founders had noticed that rum had been “particularly hurtfull and pernicious to Man’s Body and... attended with dangerous Maladies and fatal distempers and if not timely prevented will in all likelyhood ruin the said Colony."\(^{27}\) Slavery likewise harmed white men’s bodies and colonies as a whole by obstructing “the Increase of English and Christian Inhabitants therein who alone can in case of War be relyed on for the Defence and Security of the same."\(^{28}\) Slavery was also bad for the individual because “the white man, by having a Negro Slave, would be

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\(^{24}\) Petition and Representation of the Council and Assembly of South Carolina, \textit{SCPRA} 18: 95.  
\(^{25}\) Broughton to Board of Trade, Aug. 6, 1736, \textit{SCPRA} 18: 63.  
\(^{26}\) \textit{Ibid.} 18: 63.  
\(^{27}\) An Act to Prevent the Importation and Use of Rum and Brandies in the Province of Georgia, January 9, 1745, \textit{CRG} 1: 44.  
\(^{28}\) An Act for Rendering the Colony of Georgia more Defencible by Prohibiting the Importation and Use of Black Slaves or Negroes into the Same, January 9, 1734, \textit{CRG} 1: 50.
less disposed to labour himself; and that his whole time must by employed in keeping the Negro to Work."²⁹ Slaves also threatened white family life; "the Planter's Wife and Children would by the Death, or even the Absence of the Planter, be in a manner at the mercy of the Negro."³⁰

The Trustees considered the combination of rum and slavery a kind of disease that threatened the health of the fledgling colony. These were the plagues that ruined the health of Carolina and West Indian plantations. Oglethorpe reported happily in 1739 that "Georgia has been very healthy this year, the fatal Rum Fever of Charles Town hath not extended to us."³¹ But the colony did not remain immune for long. In 1740, responding to recent clamors among Georgia's Malcontents for rum and slaves, Thomas Jones, the Trustees' storekeeper, bewailed "That so much Ingratitude, (as well as other Vices) prevails in Georgia, whether besides the common Depravedness of human Nature; The Latitude 32, or the Evil Example of our Carolina Neighbours, may be infectious, I will not determine."³² Another Georgian, in conversation with the Earl of Egmont, blamed the infections of rum and slavery on the West Indies, saying "tis a mistake to think the Inhabitants of Savannah have rum, what they have is a poisonous spirit from the Islands."³³ Where the Trustees saw a river poisoned by rum and slavery, the traders at New Windsor and Augusta saw an economic lifeline that ensured their place in society.

The traders at Augusta and New Windsor gladly accepted the "poisonous spirit" of rum and slavery that the boats carried upriver. They flaunted the Trustees' prohibitions

³⁰ Ibid. 3: 377.
because they considered rum and slavery essential to their livelihoods. Rum was a crucial trade good in the Southeast, much to the regret of British officials and Indian headmen alike. Slavery, too, was already firmly established at the falls of the Savannah by the 1730s. For the traders, the small boats were vessels to wealth and status. When in Augusta, they were a connection to European culture and society, and allowed the traders to maintain their identity as Europeans even at their remote location. When traders visited lowcountry towns, the boats kept them connected to the Indian trade and the information that offered them access to the elite ranks of lowcountry society. Colonial administrators and planners tended to speak abstractly of rivers, but for the traders, the Savannah River was a very real place and their personalized watercraft and crews sustained them wherever they happened to be.

Indian trade boats, like all of the other canoes in the Southeast, were personal objects, associated with their owners. Colonial newspapers continually printed advertisements for canoes “stolen or gone adrift” and these boats varied with each owner—the color of paint, small decorations, or perhaps initials carved into the hull. Indian traders recognized each other’s boats and associated them with their owners. Indeed so connected were these boats with their owners’ status in the Indian trade that John Rae could announce in 1767 that “having left off the Indian Trade,” he “WILL SELL A LARGE BOAT.” Rae, in effect, announced his retirement from the trade with the sale of his trading boat.

35 Georgia Gazette, May 13, 1767.
The downriver voyage was a legal requirement for the gentlemen of Augusta, but it also served to maintain social links with their lowcountry patrons. Law required that every trader renew his license annually during the summer months, but Charleston was also a bustling social scene for the Indian traders. Charleston was the Southeast’s main port throughout the colonial era, and its merchants exported the traders’ deerskins to Britain and imported the numerous trade goods that the traders carried back to Indian villages. The summertime journey from Augusta to Charleston was a time to settle debts, visit with colonial governors and Indian commissioners, and partake of the amusements of European society. The small trade boats, having wound their way down the Savannah River, and up the coast along the inland waterway, made for the wharves and warehouses first.

The Charleston waterfront hummed with activity. In the harbor, ocean-going vessels rested at anchor while small skiffs carried cargo back and forth from dock to ship. Along the waterfront stood “the largest and most usefull buildings, and the much greater part of the Shops, Stores and Warehouses.”36 It was a place of business and of sociability, where boats conducted business with the shore and with each other. As James Glen described the port in 1751, the Cooper River “appears sometimes a kind of Floating Market, and we have Numbers of Canoes Boats and Pettyaguas that Ply incessantly, Bringing down the Country Produce to Town, and returning with such Necessarys as are wanted by the Planters.”37 Although the Indian traders were usually bound to individual merchants for their goods, they could sometimes take advantage of the waterfront market to secure a better price. In 1756, George Galphin had promised a parcel of beaver skins to
James McQueen, a partner of Henry Laurens who supplied "most of our Indian traders with Goods." Galphin bypassed his creditor and "came down in the boat himself & meeting with Mr. Manigault on the Wharf at landing sells it to him before he saw Mr. McQueen."38

Business contacts in lowcountry towns could prove hazardous to Indian traders, though, and the smallness of the world made the trip downriver a potential hazard. Charleston was home to most of the traders' creditors, and it was also home to the courts. Frequently in debt, Indian traders often preferred to remain upriver, where they could not be imprisoned, rather than risk an unwanted encounter with a creditor and a stint in Charleston jail. One could not risk imprisonment for debts, as the trader Robert Vaughan discovered in 1741. Vaughan had contracted a debt with the Charleston merchant Henry Bedon. Vaughan failed to repay and a constable was "dispatched with a Warrant of Attachmt to Augusta, who bro't Vaughan in Custody to Savannah and Committed there to Goal."39 He waited there for months until a Savannah court was called to hear his case, and at least one Georgian was appalled at the "injurious and unjust Treatment Vaughan has Since rec[eive]d."40 Likewise, Samuel Brown, an early Cherokee trader living at New Windsor, found that he could not go to Charleston due to the "danger of being there Confined, for Sundry Sums of Money due from him to the Merchants there."41

36 Petition of the Council and Assembly of South Carolina, Nov. 22, 1740, SCPRO 20: 327.
37 James Glen to Board of Trade, March, 1751, SCPRO 24: 313.
40 Ibid. 23: 501.
More typical in the 1730s and 1740s were the contentious court sessions that took place as part of the summertime voyage downriver. Augusta lacked its own courts, so traders had to resort to Savannah in order to settle disputes. The Indian traders developed a reputation among the magistrates of Savannah for bringing "many litigious suits." The early residents of Augusta had a "Propensity... to over-reach one another" in a court proceeding. A summary of court cases from 1740 certainly underscores this opinion. In the Savannah Court’s July session, no fewer than four traders sued each other over debt claims arising from the deerskin trade; in October the court tried cases for six other traders on charges of misdemeanor and riotous behavior. In 1741, the Trustees agreed to allow Richard Kent, commander of the fort at Augusta, to try small claims, and over the next few years a regular court was established at Augusta, with the town’s wealthier storekeepers serving as justices of the peace. After this, fewer Savannah court days were spent settling trader debts and the time spent in the lowcountry became more of a social occasion.

Augusta traders felt a need to look presentable in lowcountry settings, and often it was river communication that allowed a respectable appearance in Savannah parlors. Rather than the contentious court days of the 1740s, the trader’s life in Savannah by the 1770s was one of sociability and hobnobbing with lowcountry merchants. In 1775 the Augusta storekeepers Robert Mackay and Andrew MacLean journeyed downriver to settle their accounts with the General Assembly and Savannah merchants. Rather than suing each other, they enjoyed an evening of "claret and Punch." MacLean, in particular,

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42 Letter from Thomas Jones, October 23, 1741, CRG 23: 122.
44 See John Pye to the Board of Trustees, May 22, 1741, CRG 22(1): 434.
hoped to make a good show with the Savannah merchant Thomas Netherclift, and indulged his vanity in town. “A French barber attends him twice a day,” wrote the bemused Mackay, “and makes him the most complete Macaroni in Town.” The reason for MacLean’s meticulous grooming was his engagement “to dance with Mrs. Netherclift at the Assembly, but unless the Boat appears he’ll not make the formidable show that’s expected.” MacLean was awaiting his trading boat from Augusta to bring him proper gentleman’s attire, evidence that, in addition to bringing finery up to Augusta, the boats also kept traders connected to the sources of their authority when traveling downriver.

For those living in Augusta who rarely had personal contact with the coast, the boats connected them to coastal family and culture. The return of the trading boats was eagerly anticipated both by those who lived in traders’ households and those who did not. Mary Malbone Mackay, wife of the trader Robert Mackay, depended on the boatmen for news from her family in Rhode Island. “I was so disappointed last week,” she confessed in a letter to her brother John Malbone of Newport, “in not receiving letters by the return of the Gentn. that I sent my last packet to Charlestown by, that I cou’d hardly contain my tears.” William Mylne, a bankrupt engineer from Scotland and friend of the Mackays’ relied on the friendship and credit his sister Anne provided from home: “My plan of life must be regulate[d] by your letters.” While traders had the privilege of frequent travels to Charleston and Savannah, few others in Augusta shared in that privilege, making the small trading boats their only connection to the larger world.

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45 Robert Mackay to Mary Chilcott Mackay, Jan. 4, 1775, Mackay-Stiles Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
46 Mary Malbone Mackay to John Malbone, May 14, 1770, Mackay-Stiles Family Papers.
For the first twenty years of Augusta’s existence, the passage down the Savannah River was an odd tour through an unevenly settled continent. After leaving the Augusta riverfront, boats passed farms and plantations that quickly gave way to woods. Downriver, a sojourn through the Yuchi habitations above Mount Pleasant preceded a tour of the small farms of Purrysburg and Ebenezer and the town of Savannah. Taking a turn up the coast, the boats finally passed the lowcountry plantations of South Carolina before emerging in the metropolis of Charleston. Spaced throughout these varying landscapes were the remnants of an Indian past: earthen mounds built by pre-contact peoples and the abandoned villages of post-Yamassee dislocations. By the time of the Revolution, these had all been usurped by a growing European plantation economy along Savannah River. But for much of the colonial period, the Savannah boatmen set a course that was hardly the simplistic “wilderness to civilization” one might suspect. For all their variety, the boatmen called none of these places home and experienced them all as visitors staying for the night and then pushing off in the morning.

The boats traveled a landscape marked by decline and disappearance. The years following the Yamassee War had seen a profound rearrangement of the Indian interior. Coastal Indians had either perished or fled to Florida. Creek Indians living in Georgia’s coastal plains had retreated westward. Small bands of Indians such as the Yuchis had remained below Georgia’s fall line, but the banks of the Savannah were littered with abandoned Indian fields and towns. The erosion of river bluffs revealed deposits of prehistoric oyster shells. The countryside provoked in the Savannah’s travelers a profound sense of ancient history and the romance of forgotten times. William Bartram, the great romantic, noted along the river near Augusta “very magnificent monuments of
the power and industry of the ancient inhabitants of these lands... traces of a large Indian
town, the work of a powerful nation, whose period of grandeur perhaps long preceded the
discovery of this continent." The river’s waters had revealed at the high banks of Silver
Bluff petrified wood, sharks’ teeth, “as well as remains or traces of European military
architects, and are supposed to be ancient camps of the Spaniards who formerly fixed
themselves at this place in hopes of finding silver.” The river proved a mighty force in
carving the landscape and had eaten human history, as at Fort Moore Bluff, where “the
river hath so much encroached upon the Carolina shore, that its bed now lies where the
site of the fort then was; indeed some told me that the opposite Georgia shore, where
there is now a fine house and corn field, occupies the place.” The Savannah still evoked
ruminations on ancient mysteries in the nineteenth century, as Harry Hammond
rhapsodized about rivers as “the oldest features of all countries. Older are they than the
everlasting hill, for their floods have given to mountain, hill and plain their shape and
bounds, and while hourly molding these anew, bear in their currents the life of the
region.”

The Savannah River, despite all the flattery, proved a difficult highway. The river
was hazardous “because of the stumps and floating trees in the river and because of the
danger of overturning the canoe, and sometimes because of the ebb and flood, which can

49 Bartram, _Travels, Naturalist’s_, 199.
50 Bartram, _Travels, Naturalist’s_, 200.
51 Hammond quoted in Charles C. Jones and Salem Dutcher, _Memorial History of Augusta, Georgia_ (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co, 1890; Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, 1966), 441.
be detected as far as Purrysburg.”52 William De Brahm painted an even more violent river: “great Currents yearly wheeling down a Distance of 290 miles, especially at the time of great Freshes, by which great Trees with their Roots, and many Shrubs are grubbed up, which, and along with them great Quantity of Ground, Sand and Gravel is hurried down.”53 Henry Laurens lost one boat “upon a sunken stump,” which “drove a hole through & sunk her.”54 And the river was also home to the fearsome and mysterious alligator, which “from far away, you might think you see a fallen tree. It will not very likely attack a person unless it is in the river, a few cases of which we have had.”55

The Savannah punished inexperienced travelers. On even the best day, boatmen had to contend with snags, bars, and alligators. There were also frequent thunderstorms, as Philip Von Reck experienced firsthand. “A strong wind and cloudburst with thunder and lightning overtook us before we could reach land and safety, and the wind drove us into a rushing current where there were many cypress trees and where we were put in a very great danger of our lives... Yet God saved us by means of a boat that met us in this desolate and deserted region.”56 In 1742 a woman named Langford and her son likewise experienced the caprices of Savannah River travel, “being on their Passage to Augusta [they] were Oversett, whereby they Remained many Hours in the River & were taken up by a Boat passing by.”57 The widow later died, but in both cases, novice travelers owed

55 Von Reck, *Voyage*, 37.
56 Von Reck, *Voyage*, 50.
their escape from the river to more experienced hands, whose timely appearances testified to the frequency of Savannah River traffic.

Exposed to the whims of fast currents and fierce storms, it is small wonder that Europeans felt themselves helpless on the river. Unused to sleeping in open air on damp riverbanks, unprotected travelers quickly turned to contemplation of the Almighty. Rev. Benjamin Ingham, while on a trip from Carolina south along the Atlantic coast, found it remarkable that his party “laid down to Sleep on the cold ground, without either bed or board, having no other covering besides our cloathes, but a Single blanket each, and the Canopy of Heaven.” Ingham was not alone in his sentiments. Boat travelers frequently moved from complaints about the uncomfortable conditions to sermons on the goodness of God. Boat travel inspired in Europeans a sense of powerlessness in “this wild land,” as Von Reck testified, yet he assured his readers that one “can nevertheless rest safely under the protection of the Highest and under the shadow of the Almighty.... He preseveth them and hath commanded His angels to guard them on all their ways.”

William Bartram, traveling almost forty years after Von Reck, expressed a remarkably similar sentiment. On a canoe trip up the Altamaha River, Bartram became tired of fighting “the impetuous current” and thus “I resigned my bark to the friendly current, reserving to myself the control of the helm.” Grasping for some sense of mastery over the river, Bartram held the rudder while the course of the river directed him to his campsite. His small accomplishment in river navigation was quickly overshadowed

59 Von Reck, Voyage, 36.
60 Bartram, Travels, 31.
by a sudden thunderstorm. The storm threw Bartram into speculation on the ultimate power of God:

> a gloomy cloud pervades the understanding, and when we see our progress retarded, and our best intentions frustrated, we are apt to deviate from the admonitions and convictions of virtue, to shut out eyes upon our guide and protector, doubt of his power, and despair of his assistance. But let us wait and rely on our God, who in due time will shine forth in brightness, dissipate the envious cloud, and reveal to us how finite and circumscribed is human power, when assuming to itself independent wisdom.⁶¹

Mastery of the land was a well-established colonial ideal, yet river travel frustrated such fantasies, reliant as voyagers were upon the whims of currents and tides, floods and ebbs, and the exposed nature of waterside campgrounds. Small wonder that the pious traveler would seek solace in divine grace.

The difficulties of river travel did not attract many whites to the life of a boatman. Even the Indian traders, who relied on the boats for their livelihood, only occasionally made the trip downriver. They left the work of transporting skins to Charleston in the hands of a few whites and many enslaved African-Americans. Despite the Trustees’ early efforts, the Savannah River was Georgia’s earliest slave landscape, and slavery would remain a central feature of life as Africans negotiated a space for themselves in an emerging plantation economy.

The basic venue for life on the Savannah River was the Indian trading boat. Truly creole watercraft, these narrow, fast, and delicate boats carried commerce from Charleston to Augusta throughout the colonial period. These were dugout canoes, typically carved out of a single large cypress tree, taking advantage of old-growth cypress

swamps in the Southeast. The wood, easily worked only with European-made iron tools, made the boats light and rot-resistant. Upwards of thirty feet in length, the canoes would only average two-to-three feet in breadth. A flattened bottom would allow for greater maneuverability and easier passage over the numerous bars and banks of the Savannah River and the coastal waterways between the Savannah and Charleston. The narrow boats, pointed at the ends, also allowed for easier rowing upstream on the return trip. The slim boats, though, could easily tip and spill crew and cargo into the water. Boatmen traveling between Augusta and Charleston thus required an extreme level of skill and mastery to avoid losses of an entire town’s hunt or a trader’s future prospects.

It took three continents to create the Savannah River trade boats. The dugout canoe had both American and African ancestry. Indians, though, preferred pine or poplar for canoe construction. Pine was more easily carved by fire, while poplar was a much lighter wood, facilitating overland carriage. Europeans, possessing the iron tools necessary for felling and working cypress trees, preferred the wood more readily available in the coastal swamps and marshes they first encountered. Africans had their own long-standing tradition of dugout vessels, and the “periagos” of West African coastal trade made possible European commerce on that continent. However, by the eighteenth century, Anglo-Americans in the Southeast had learned and adapted the techniques of dugout construction to the point that the President and Assistants of Georgia in Savannah

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62 Rusty Fleetwood provides the best overviews of southeastern craft types in his *Tidetcraft: An Introductory Look at the Boats of Lower South Carolina, Georgia, and Northeastern Florida: 1650-1950*, principal research by Antionette Goodrich. (Savannah: Coastal Heritage Society, 1982), 4-6, 33-35.
could complain of “several People at Work upon the River in cutting down Cypress trees and making Canoes of the Same without Leave or Licence for so doing.” The cultural intersection of three continents at the edge of the Savannah River produced Augusta, and likewise furnished the Indian trading boats that made Augusta possible.

Despite the cultural connections that provided them canoes and employment, white patroons had good reason to maintain the white-over-black society of the southeastern lowcountry. Ferrying furs and skins down the Savannah, these slim craft relied heavily on black hands to set their course. The typical trading-boat crew, at least in Augusta’s early years, consisted of four African-American oarsmen overseen by a white patroon at the rudder. The slave labor that moved Augusta’s commerce was widely acknowledged, even by Georgia’s original antislavery governors. William Stephens himself acknowledged that “their trading boats... commonly go with only 4 Negroes to row.” When Philip Von Reck sketched an Indian trading boat in the 1730s, he clearly placed four African American men at the boat’s oars, with a white man at the rudder. (Fig. 12) Indeed, so closely were boatmen and Africans associated that in July 1740, as a boat rowed from Frederica to Savannah, the two-man crew was immediately assumed “not to be natural-born subjects, being of black and swarthy Complexion, somewhat of the Mulatto Kind.”

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65 Proceedings of the President and Assistants, June 7, 1745, CRG 6: 135; Hugh Ross, a freeholder of Savannah was found guilty of pilfering the Trustees’ timber, which prompted the further complaint of the “frequent Spoil...made in the Woods by sundry People in cutting the choicest of Timber,” Proceedings of the President and Assistants, June 15, 1745, CRG 6: 136-37.

66 McPherson, Egmont, 195.

though with faces dirtied from rowing, were “taken to the Mulatto’s landing not many
Miles off.”

Although crucial to the successful navigation of the Indian trading boat, enslaved
oarsmen were not credited with much of that success. Colonists more typically believed
the watercraft to be merely the extension of the patroon’s will, and it was his ability that
led to the success or failure of every voyage. This attitude was perhaps best expressed in a
trip made along the Atlantic coast in 1736. James Oglethorpe commanded a canoe voyage
southward from Savannah to Frederica. At the mouth of the Ogeechee River, the wind
rose and the water became “rough, almost every wave drove over the Side of the boat... if
Mr. Oglethorpe had not roused himself, and Struck life into the Rowers,” the lives of all
on board might have been lost. In 1739 William Stephens reported that another
pettiagua, bound for Augusta with supplies and settlers, overturned in Delfuska Sound, at
the mouth of the Savannah River. The boat’s crew “found themselves at a Loss for Want
of a Patroon to govern the Vessel, who understood it better than him they had... the two
Negroes who belonged to the Pettyagua were also lost.” Had the crew only had a proper
master, Stephens believed, then sixteen souls might have been saved.

The presence of enslaved oarsmen would certainly have lent itself well to the
patroon’s assumed identity as master of the vessel. One of the crucial underpinnings of
slavery as a legal and formal institution in the South was the definition of the slave’s
body as an extension of the master’s will. The arrangement of the crew in the Indian

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68 Ibid. 4: 620.
69 McPherson, Egmont, 133.
25-37.
trading boat certainly would have underscored this division between the “mind” of the patroon and the “body” of the slave rowers. As depicted in Von Reek’s illustration, the patroon stood at the back of the boat, his gaze fixed forward and his hand on the rudder. His was the only pair of eyes able to scan ahead, looking for snags, bars, and rapids; determination of the boat’s course was his alone. The rowers, by contrast, bent their backs to the labor, their gaze fixed backwards, with the patroon standing in the foreground of whatever view may have presented itself. Should an oarsman try to subvert this system, punishment could be swift and brutal, as Peter Shepherd proved in 1741. Shepherd, patroon of an Indian trading boat bound for New Windsor, “having catch’d one of his Negroes in a Piece of Thievery on board... tied him up, and lashed him very severely, secundum usum Carolinœ.”72

The white patroons, however, earned little respect from their fellow colonists. Despite the importance of their services to the functioning of Georgia, contemporaries regarded them with a mixture of contempt and indifference. William Stephens considered them to be “Idle Fellows.”73 Stephens deplored idleness and those who found “one Day’s Pay sufficient to maintain him two or three” and who would “work no more.”74 Such was the case of Peter Emery, a patroon based in Savannah who was “always fully employed, and might have saved Money; but it was squandered away as fast as got.”75 So low was the status of boatmen in the colony that a description of Oglethorpe’s campaign to Saint Augustine listed the company in the following order: Oglethorpe’s regiment, the Carolina

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troops, Indians, volunteers, as well as “several Stragglers and Boatmen from other parts of the Province and elsewhere.”\(^7\) Given their lack of status and the strain of the work, white patroons slowly vanished from the historical record. Only John Rae went on to attain the rank of gentleman; the rest disappeared.

The boatmen were not masters of land, only of rivers. Whites trafficking the Savannah River had to accept whatever they were given in terms of weather, housing, and trade. The abandoned villages and small farms dotting the Savannah riverbanks became temporary homes, but the only space that a white boatman could claim as his own was his craft. While the trip downriver could take only four or five days from Augusta to Savannah, the return trip could take four or five weeks. If a boat crew made five or six trips in any given year, this amounted to almost half the year spent either on the river or sheltered in its banks. While Georgia’s settlement quickly snaked up the Savannah River as far as Mount Pleasant, long stretches remained unsettled, by either Indian or Europeans. The profound sense of isolation echoed even in mundane accounts such as William Stephens’s journal of a trip to New Windsor: “Proceeded early and saw nothing all the day, but high close woods, with here and there a little opening where Some Indians had formerly lived.... at night lodged in Some old Indian hutts which had been forsaken Some time.”\(^7\) De Brahm’s 1757 map of Georgia recorded these places along the Savannah, noting the locations of an “Indian Camp” or “Indian Cornhouse.”\(^7\)

\(^7\) McPherson, *Egmont*, 193.
\(^7\) John Gerar William De Brahm, “A Map of Carolina and Part of Georgia,” [1757].
Between these convenient abodes, the boatmen camped in the woods along the river banks. References to boatmen carrying kettles indicate that the trading boats certainly carried some provision with them, probably cornmeal from Augusta or perhaps rice from lowcountry South Carolina. The river itself provided much in the way of sustenance, where one could catch “sturgeon, eels and cat fish, a most delicious fish without scales, bream, &c., terrapins, crocodiles, which some of the Indians also eat.”79 Hunting land-borne game was almost certainly part of the boatman’s diet, as deer, bear and perhaps even buffalo still roamed the woods along the Savannah’s banks. If provisions ran short or took an unfortunate spill into the water, sustenance was indeed dependant on nature’s providence. As one canoe party had to make due in 1734: “We made shift to shoot some crows and woodpeckers, which we lived on that day.... [The next day] met with a wolf in full chase after a deer, and had the good fortune to kill them both; so that we then had provisions sufficient for two days longer.”80 Indeed, hunting probably eased some of the monotony of the long river voyage. A canoe-based William Bartram described a hunter in south Georgia who stalked and killed an on-shore bear without ever leaving the boat.81

Once on land and out of sight, though, white patroons found it difficult to maintain strict oversight of their oarsmen. In 1743, William Stephens received a report of “a foul Murder... committed by a Negroe belonging to a trading Boat, Stabbing his Comrade with a Knife,” while camping in an abandoned Indian village along the Savannah. Before turning in for the night, the two men had come to blows, the victim

79 Von Reck, Voyage, 34.
having initiated the conflict by beating the accused. He then “followed him into his Hutt [and] renewed his Blows, when he received the wound of which he died.” However, the Savannah court ruled the case manslaughter, “no proof was made of the Prisoner stabbing him, nor was any White man with them in the Hutt.”82 The patroon, apparently sleeping in another hut, lost a crewman when two of his oarsmen came to blows during the night. Despite being a man short, they finished the trip to Augusta, where the murderer was apprehended.

By the eve of the American Revolution, however, much of the Savannah River was the province of African-Americans, with little white supervision. The river trade had become so well established that Augusta traders felt perfectly comfortable in leaving it entirely in black hands. The white patroons of the Trustee period had mostly retired or relocated. By the late 1750s, black patroons had apparently become common and were still the norm at the time of Mackay and MacLean’s 1775 Savannah jaunt. In 1759 the commander at Fort Augusta wrote to Gov. William Henry Lyttelton of South Carolina by way of “Mr. [Martin] Campbles negro.”83 A year later, Edmond Atkin, British superintendent of Indian Affairs, awaited “the Return of Mr [Francis] Macartan’s Peter every Moment from Charlestown.”84 A man named Caesar controlled Mackay’s boat and MacLean’s found its way upriver under the guidance of a man named Pompey.85

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84 Edmon Atkin to William Henry Lyttelton, Jan. 31, 1760, WHL.
85 Robert Mackay to Mary Chilcott Mackay, undated; Robert Mackay to Mary Chilcott Mackay, Jan. 10, 1775, Mackay-Stiles MS, UNC-Chapel Hill.
Given the difficulties of navigating the Savannah, it is all the more remarkable that very few of the Indian trading boats capsized, a testament both to the skills of the patroons and their boatmen. Colonists, for their part, recognized the skills of their enslaved boat crews. A Charleston woman in 1749 advertised for sale a slave who was “a very good boatman, having been used to go in Indian trading Boats.” A 1764 advertisement in the Georgia Gazette included boatmen among “a large Parcel of Valuable Negroes.” Owners easily converted the skill of slave watermen into currency, as expressed in a runaway notice posted in 1748, when a planter in St. Thomas Parish, South Carolina, offered ten pounds reward for the return of his boatmen, but only forty shillings for their non-skilled companion. And while no slaveowner ever accorded his boatmen much social prestige, some evidence indicates that white Carolinians did recognize and take advantage of West Africans’ boating experience and ability in choosing who to place in a boat.

However, most white southeasteners believed that slave boatmen were made, not born. Boatmen may have had a particular set of skills, they believed, but they could be learned by just about anyone. A 1769 advertisement in Georgia listed thirty slaves for sale, “17 of them are fit for field or boat work.” In this planter’s mind, at least, skills on land and water were more or less equal and they could be taught. The idea of “raising” African-Americans to labor on boats was expressed perhaps most chillingly by Henry

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86 South Carolina Gazette, Sept. 15, 1749.
87 Georgia Gazette, March 22, 1764.
88 South Carolina Gazette, Dec. 19, 1748.
89 Philip D. Morgan, Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry, Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 243-44.
90 Georgia Gazette, March 22, 1769.
Laurens in 1767 when he commented that a Mister Oswald "will have a fine stock in a few Years from his Nursery of Negroes at Muskitio... & I should think if half a dozen were distributed to learn to row in Canoes & to manage small Boats for two or three Years it would be further improvement." Given the usual methods of transferring boating skill, whether it be from Africa to America or from Indians to blacks, it is perhaps not surprising that white owners preferred to think that skilled watermen came from their own tutelage and oversight.

African-American boatmen in the Southeast may have had their own contrasting notions of the importance of their skills on the river. Certainly rivers and water occupied important places in West African cosmography. The Bambaras of Senegambia credited the water spirit Faro with purifying souls after death so that they might be reborn into the family. Ibos from the Bight of Benin held similar beliefs. For Kongolesse Africans, the watery barrier of Kalunga separated the realm of the living from the realm of spirits. Archaeological evidence from South Carolina has suggested a continuing association between rivers and communication with the spirits of ancestors. Colonoware bowls, incised with African cosmograms, have been recovered mostly from river contexts, indicating that enslaved Africans in the lower South translated African spiritual beliefs to American waterways. In the context of slavery, beliefs in the power of waterways also translated into freedom from bondage, either in the next life or in this.

91 Laurens, Papers of Henry Laurens, 5: 475.
Southeastern slaves, regardless of their origins or spiritual beliefs, recognized water as a passage from bondage to freedom. The Savannah River, in particular, early marked an important boundary between slavery and freedom. In times of Anglo-Spanish war, the Spanish at St. Augustine offered freedom to those slaves who escaped from Carolina masters and made their way to Florida. This offer was a major reason for establishing Georgia, since it was understood “that the Spaniards at St. Augustine, would be continually inticing away the Negroes, or encouraging them to Insurrection.” Likewise, slave flight to Florida “might easily be accomplished, since a single Negro could run away thither without Companions, and would have only a River or two to swim over.”

Coastal waters also connected Carolina slaves to freedom at St. Augustine, where a number of runaways “fled in Perriaguas and little Boats to the Spaniards, and [had] been protected.” The magistrates of Charleston recognized this potential route of escape and sent a chilling warning. They executed a captured runaway named Caesar and then had him “hung in Chains at Hang-Man’s Point opposite to this Town, in sight of all the Negroes passing and repassing by Water.”

The Savannah River boatmen connected to a much larger world of African and African-American maritime culture. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these waterborne men, slave and free, acted as crucial links between blacks in all parts of the Atlantic world. From the earliest days of the slave trade in Western Africa, black canoemen acted as middlemen between European slavers and the interior of the continent, and the information they gleaned about New World slavery they passed to fellow

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95 Ibid. 3: 377.
96 South Carolina Gazette, April 12, 1739.
Africans awaiting the Middle Passage. This exchange of news between black sailors, black canoemen, and black captives formed what one historian has dubbed a “constantly humming human telegraph” between the Americas and Africa. Many of these canoemen were themselves seized and shipped to the Southeast, where plantation Carolina valued their boating skills to ferry goods from plantation to Charleston and back. Manning small canoes and larger pettiaguas, fishing and ferrying, these lowcountry slaves enjoyed a greater freedom of movement and autonomy than most American slaves could claim. Often working without white supervision, they made possible the plantation trade. Black watermen also carried information from country to town, extending African-American communication networks throughout the region, between field slaves and urban slaves. In Charleston, they also received seaborne information brought from the West Indies, northern colonies, and Africa.

Enslaved watermen played central roles in resistance to slavery. Beginning in the eighteenth century, Carolina slaves found boats handy for removing themselves from the colony. The links between slaves along waterways also provided a means of channeling goods stolen from owners in a hidden exchange among African-Americans. By the end of the eighteenth century, black watermen were providing southern African-Americans with news of the Haitian Revolution. In the nineteenth century black sailors on northern ships were carrying abolitionist tracts and sentiments to southern ports and spreading them

97 Bolster, Black Jacks, 52.
98 Bolster, Black Jacks, 52-53; Peter Wood, Black Majority, 202-05, first recognized the importance of black boatmen in South Carolina, noting that they “literally provided the backbone of the lowland transportation system during most of the colonial era.” Philip Morgan has further elaborated and explored the lives of Carolina’s slave watermen in his Slave Counterpoint, 236-44, 337-42.
from there into the interior. As David Cecelski has noted, it is small wonder that black boatmen could be found at the center of some of the most famous slave conspiracies, such as Gabriel’s Rebellion in 1800 and the Denmark Vesey conspiracy in 1822.

The Savannah River boatmen were not revolutionaries, but they did act in small ways against the southeastern slave regime. Some engaged in the most common form of slave resistance—running away. In May 1748, a slave named Sambo, who “was used to row in one of the Indian-trading Boats,” ran away from John Lloyd. In 1737, Kennedy O’Brien, an Indian trader at New Windsor, advertised the loss of a slave named Peter, “born in Mrs. Kerr’s Family, did afterwards belong to Mr. John Coleman the Indian Trader, and after that to Mr. Jordan Roche. He is well known in Charlestown, and has been lately seen with the fishing Negroes, at the Markett place.” While Peter was not necessarily a boatman, he was certainly connected with black watermen. Such notices were few and far between, however, indicating that these boatmen did not frequently challenge their lot in life.

If few Savannah River boatmen directly challenged the institution of slavery, they did assist others in so doing. As frequent travelers between Augusta, Savannah, and Charleston, these men would have been able to pass word of loved ones between these towns, especially given the communication links of lowcountry South Carolina. The

99 On slave boatmen as agents of refuge, see Morgan, Slave Counterpoint, 339-41. A quantitative breakdown of slave boatmen as a percentage of runaways can be found in Morgan, “Colonial South Carolina Runaways: Their significance for Slave Culture,” Slavery & Abolition 6 (Dec. 1985): 57-78, 63-65; their role in an intraslave economy has been documented in Wood, Black Majority, 217. On watermen’s roles in spreading abolitionism and rebellion against slaveowners, Bolster offers a broad study of the subject in Black Jacks, 190-214; David Cecelski offers a much more in-depth study of watermen’s lives within a region in his The Waterman’s Song.
100 Cecelski, Waterman’s Song, xv-xvii.
101 South Carolina Gazette, July 25, 1748.
102 South Carolina Gazette, Nov. 5, 1737.
Savannah River watermen thus provided an important connection between Augusta’s and Charleston’s slave populations. The close supervision of trading boat slaves certainly hindered Savannah River watermen’s independence and ability to take flight. But they formed part of a more pervasive and perhaps important form of slave resistance—the simple ability to maintain kinship ties throughout the region. The majority of runaways in Carolina did not flee to Saint Augustine or sign on with ocean-going vessels in an attempt to quit the colony. Running away in the Southeast most often took the form of visiting friends and family members on other plantations, more possible in the dense slave communities of lowcountry Carolina than in, say, the Chesapeake.103 Slaves removed themselves to visit friends and family, asserting their status as human beings in the face of a slaveowning regime that tried to deny them such simple markers of their humanity.104

Beginning in the 1740s, African-American boatmen on the Savannah River had made a home for themselves along the river banks. The town of Savannah provided the most convenient space for boatmen beyond their masters’ eyesight. The town, perched high on a bluff above Savannah River, included a small sandy strip of land on the riverbank. By the 1760s the bank had been overrun with wharves and warehouses, but in the 1740s and 1750s, slave boatmen used the land below the Savannah bluff as their own temporary home, assisted by lax oversight from the formerly vigilant Savannah constables. After the initial controversy with South Carolina over the Savannah River, the Trustees decided that to preserve the Indian trade, enforcement of the bans on slavery and rum should be laxly enforced. Such was implied when the Trustees commanded William

Stephens in 1742 “that he should wink at the Importion of Rum, and discourage seizures thereof.”\textsuperscript{105} This “winking” also applied to the slave boatmen who rowed the rum upstream.

By 1742, Georgia’s constables had improvised an “out of sight, out of mind” attitude towards the enslaved boatmen who stopped in Savannah. So long as the rowers remained below the bluff and did not enter the town of Savannah, they would be ignored and unmolested. Stephens interpreted the Trustees’ “winking” rule to be that “whenever any Vessel arrives here with Negroes, during their Stay, the Slaves are permitted to come ashore on the Strand by the Water-Side, to boil their Kettle; but in case they come up into Town, they are liable to be seized.”\textsuperscript{106} Of all the numerous times that Indian trading boats stopped in Savannah during his tenure, Stephens recorded but one instance of a slave seizure. Peter Shepherd violated the code when he brought one of his slaves into his lodgings and whipped the man for stealing, “which occasioned a great uproar among the Neighbourhood.”\textsuperscript{107} As many as four or five boats might be in Savannah at a time, providing their crews a small community in which to swap stories, compare experiences, and connect with each other outside of the patroons’ eyesight. Even after the 1760s, when the Savannah waterfront was built into wharves and warehouses, an important African-American community remained below the bluffs near Savannah, comprised of as many as two to three hundred free blacks and slaves by 1770.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{104} James Oakes has argued that the erasure of Africans’ legal ability to maintain kinship ties, or a slaves’ “kinlessness” underpinned the brutality and idea of slavery, Oakes, Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990), 4.
\textsuperscript{105} Journal of the Earl of Egmont, Jan. 6, 1742, CRG 5: 583.
\textsuperscript{106} Journal of William Stephens [supplement], March 10, 1741, CRG 4(sup): 102.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid. 4(sup): 102.
While many runaway slaves stayed near the coast, a number made their way up the Savannah River towards Augusta. As early as 1738, runaway notices in the *South Carolina Gazette* advertised slaves heading that way. Samuel Montagut, a planter in Purrysburg, South Carolina, about twelve miles upriver from Savannah, lost three slaves. Robin, Tony, and "Rogue" or Miller. "Tony was taken last Year about Savannah-Town [New Windsor's original name], and is supposed to be travelling that Way again with his Companions."\(^{109}\) In October of that year, William Walter, another planter on the Savannah River, advertised “two Gambia Negroes, about 5 feet 6 inches high, the one his Name is Walley, the other's Bocarrey, they were some time ago seen near New Windsor.”\(^{110}\) Placing advertisements in a Charlestown paper likewise indicated that these men hoped that the trading boats would either carry the notices upriver, or that some trader on the way down would have seen them.

In some cases, these men were making their way to a former home. Despite Georgia’s ban between 1735 and 1750, slavery was early established and recognized at New Windsor and Augusta. Sold to coastal owners, many of these slaves escaped to upriver plantations where they had left friends and family. Joseph Gibbons, a planter near Savannah, lost two slaves in 1768, and supposed both of them headed towards Augusta. The first, Limus, had “some relations who may harbour him” at John Rae’s plantation. He also “belonged formerly to the estate of the late John Fitch at Augusta, where he may probably attempt to go.”\(^{111}\) Gibbons’s other lost servant, “a mulatto slave named John,” had formerly “belonged to the Rev. Mr. Frink and formerly to Edward Barnard, Esq. of

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\(^{109}\) *South Carolina Gazette*, April 6, 1738.  
\(^{110}\) *South Carolina Gazette*, Oct. 19, 1738.  
\(^{111}\) *Georgia Gazette*, Feb. 24, 1768.
Augusta.” John’s relations spanned across Georgia, for he had “a wife living with Mr. Douglass”—presumably David Douglass, a former resident of Augusta then living in the Savannah area, but Gibbons also feared that he might “attempt to make his escape to Augusta and the Indian nation, where he formerly lived.” These slaves’ connections to life in Augusta and along the trading paths were strong enough to pull them hundreds of miles upriver, in an attempt to maintain their former personal connections.

Other slaves saw the trip upriver as a more immediate means of preserving their lowcountry families. In 1769 William Coachman of South Carolina lost two slaves, a man named “York, or Yorkshire” and a Guinea woman named Sarah, who had been “lately seen in Georgia, taken up by the Creek Indians.” That same year, a slave family made its way from “the salt water” all the way to Augusta. Edward Barnard of Augusta advertised that he had taken up “A Negro Fellow, and A Wench, with A Child about two months old. The fellow... says his name is Sampson, and his wife’s name Molly... says his master lives near the salt water... and his name is Jacob Middow.” Whether fear of sale or some other separation sent these families upriver, clearly they hoped that the voyage to Augusta would in some way allow them to remain together.

As agents of resistance, the Savannah boatmen managed to hide in plain sight. After the Trustees’ efforts to police the river ended in the 1740s, very little attention was paid to the Savannah River traffic. So long as the boats carried skins to Charleston and goods to Augusta with their crews and cargoes intact, there was little reason for whites to concern themselves with their enslaved watermen. Dozens of trading boats passed

112 *Georgia Gazette*, May 25, 1768.
113 *Georgia Gazette*, May 3, 1769.
114 *Georgia Gazette*, June 2, 1769.
Georgia's riverfront plantations each year without either comment or incident. Yet each of these vessels carried news and information that helped slaves in some small way shape the Southeast to suit their own needs.

John Rae's boat reached Augusta in 1740, and his crew unloaded its cargo. A few years later, Rae got off the boat for the last time, giving up the waterman's life and, presumably, leaving his boat in the capable hands of his enslaved crew. These men and their fellow slave boatmen would continue to navigate the Savannah and enjoy its small liberties of community and communication. Rae, however, would begin a new life at Augusta governed by forces other than tides and currents. Entering into company with some of the town's leading Indian traders, Rae would become one of Augusta's most prominent men. He and his partners would also become the town's leading slaveowners. While the crews of Rae's boats continued to challenge the slave regime of the Southeast, Rae and his colleagues created a slave culture remarkably similar to Carolina's. Augusta had fewer plantations, but its white inhabitants believed just as strongly that their future was inextricably linked with slaveholding.
The packhorse train was ready. In September 1759, John Ross prepared to return along the well-traveled Upper Creek path to the town of the Oakfuskees. The trip was routine for Ross, a regular part of his trade, but recent tensions between Creeks and British settlers presented new hazards on the old path. The Seven Years' War had given the French new impetus in winning over parties of Creek warriors in the town, and South Carolina and the Cherokees were on the brink of war. Ross had made some enemies in his town, partly due to his refusal to lower his prices and partly due to his reputation as "surly and ill-natured." In a prescient move, Ross drew up his last will and testament as he prepared to leave Augusta. "I am in a short time to depart from this place for the Upper Creek Country," Ross wrote, and "considering the dangers I am daily exposed to," he granted Lachlan McGillivray all power to administer his estate in case of his death. In

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May 1760, Ross died at the hands of angry Oakfuskee warriors, along with William Rae, John Rae’s son.

For Ross, leaving Augusta meant more than just leaving a town. Though he may have earned few friends among Indians or traders, Ross recognized Augusta as a place of sanctuary under the protection of the powerful company of traders and storekeepers who controlled the town socially, politically, and economically. Never noted for a cohesive, nucleated settlement, Augusta was little more than a loose collection of large traders’ stores for most of the colonial period. These stores, part plantation and part mercantile house, dominated the local landscape and watched over the comings and goings of the town’s residents. Augusta’s denizens—the great storekeepers, itinerant traders, African-Americans, women, and an ever-growing number of planters and farmers—all participated, in some way, in the larger ebb and flow of the Indian trade.

Envisioned originally as an orderly Georgia town, Augusta was modeled on the spacious grid pattern of Savannah. Augustans, however, refused to settle according to this plan, much to the irritation and concern of Georgia’s early governors. The town itself did not expand much beyond the original forty town lots ordered by James Oglethorpe, and the surrounding countryside instead provided for spacious plantation settlements and a dispersed population. Historians have noted Augustans’ unwillingness to accommodate the Georgia Trustees’ utopian and communal planning at every step and their particular disregard for the bans on rum and slavery. Augusta has thus emerged in historiography as the exception to early Georgia’s development. Its early history has been described as

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“more ‘natural’ than that of much of the rest of Georgia.” Its dispersed population resulted from an animating “independent spirit” common to the American frontier where there were “lands to be settled, dangers to be faced, adventures to be had, goods to be traded, soil to be tilled, and fortunes to be made.” The history of colonial Augusta as written, has been the story of its transformation from unsettled frontier to a “true town,” with churches, schools, and a developed social hierarchy. However, Augusta’s development and social life depended more on its particular circumstances as a central location in the southeastern deerskin trade than any “natural” inclination of its residents.

In colonial Augusta, the primary institution was the trading company, whose influence affected Augusta’s settlement patterns and daily interactions in ways that distinguished it from other southern backcountry towns. Stretching southward from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, a line of small settlements followed the migration of English, Scots-Irish, and German settlers from Pennsylvania along the southern Piedmont. These settlements developed first as small centers for local exchange and then grew into market towns with close connections to eastern ports. The history of these towns followed a familiar pattern, one well developed by historians. The newcomers spread across the land, developing only a household-based subsistence economy of small

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4 Kenneth Coleman, Colonial Georgia: A History, A History of the American Colonies in Thirteen Volumes, ed. Milton M. Klein and Jacob E. Cooke (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1976), 51. Coleman’s work tended to criticize the Trustees’ “interference” in the natural course of southeastern development and he saw Augusta’s early success as proof that the carefully-managed settlements near Savannah could not thrive until slavery was introduced after 1750.

farms. As population grew, enterprising men from wealthier eastern settlements set up shops and mills to facilitate local exchange and develop a commercial export link with large ports such as Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Charleston. The little villages provided planters in the neighborhood with available credit to expand their production and to purchase more luxuries, thereby inspiring a rise in commercial agriculture, which in turn created more wealth in the town and allowed for the diversification and elaboration of local hierarchies and services within the towns. From these forces grew such places as Winchester, Virginia; Salisbury, North Carolina; and Camden, South Carolina.⁶

Augusta did not fit this pattern. Its situation allowed it to bypass the agricultural base that informed the settlement of these other towns. Its connections to the Indian trade insured that Augustans would have early access to lowcountry shipping and credit, and its settlers amassed small fortunes long before the wave of subsistence farmers ever reached the southern Piedmont. Moreover, its economic base was dependent not upon the slow accumulation of wealth through generations of settled farmers, but on the constant personal interactions between whites and Indians hundreds of miles away. Any threat to the deerskin trade threatened the local economy of the town and the great traders’ place atop the neighborhood hierarchy. Augusta’s need for open communication with Indians

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explained why the town’s primary institution was not a fort, church, or courthouse. Rather, the social and economic institution of the trading company shaped the town and its residents and provided the structures that dominated the town in the colonial period, the Indian traders’ stores. These stores and companies served as more than ways to enrich a lucky few Augustans; they provided the town’s residents and neighbors with necessary goods and services and acted as a way to bind the community as a whole to the deerskins that came down from Indian towns.

One of Augusta’s primary features was that no two people could agree on the colonial town’s appearance. Descriptions of early Augusta varied according to each author’s political intentions. In the early 1740s, both the Trustees’ agents and the political faction known as the Malcontents described a thriving town, though each disagreed on the number of African-Americans who underwrote that prosperity. A third portrait emerged of a struggling town that could barely survive without support from the Carolina town of New Windsor that lay across the river. It is therefore difficult to separate the actual town of Augusta from the idea that the town represented in early Georgia.

Two portraits of Augusta emerged shortly after the town’s founding, each emphasizing the prosperity of the town. William Stephens, the Trustees’ secretary in Georgia, described a town succeeding on the industry of its Indian trader inhabitants and the fertility of its soil. The town was proof that the Trustees’ plan for Georgia could provide comfort and prosperity to its inhabitants. Augusta, he proclaimed, “has thriven prodigiously; there are several large Warehouses thoroughly well furnished with Goods for the Indian Trade.” The residents of Augusta, including those who lived part of the

Lewis in his “The Metropolis and the Backcountry: The Making of a Colonial Landscape on the South
year in Indian towns and all others “depending upon that Business, are moderately computed to be six Hundred white Men,” and “live by their Trade.” The Malcontents, frustrated at Georgia’s bans on slavery and rum, saw Augusta’s prosperity as proof of their arguments. The town, they argued, succeeded because its inhabitants were “indulged and connived at in the Use of Negroes, by whom they execute all the laborious Parts of Culture.” The town’s “considerable Quantity of Corn” had been raised not by the thirty white men computed to live in the town, but by the “upwards of eighty Negroes... now in the Settlements belonging to that Place.” That Augusta alone succeeded in Trustee Georgia proved to the Malcontents that Augusta alone enjoyed the labor of slaves, a labor “so necessary for their Well-being.”

However, not all shared this vision of Augusta as a thriving town on the Georgia frontier. Soon after Stephens and the Malcontents painted their respective portraits of a successful Augusta, Stephens’ son Thomas went to London to argue that the town actually struggled a great deal. The younger Stephens noted that, for a town of six hundred souls, Augusta lacked any civil government. “If they [the Trustees’ agents in Savannah] really believed this Town to be so populous, why was it without even one civil Magistrate?” Stephens referred his readers to the damning accounts he had appended to his treatise—affidavits from two Augusta residents, Kennedy O’Brien and John Gardner.

Gardner's affidavit challenged William Stephens's numbers for Augusta inhabitants. O'Brien's Augusta barely clung to life: a place with barely forty white inhabitants, whose corn was primarily raised by slaves in South Carolina and imported across the river. Even the Indian trade, a supposed boon to Augusta's early settlement, had provided the town with "but three trading Houses, and those in a State of Decay and languishing Condition; and that through the ill Regulation of the Indian Trade."\(^{11}\)

Even twenty years of development in Augusta could not settle the question of its quality. In 1763, the governors of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia convened a congress at Augusta to meet with headmen from the Catawba, Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, and Choctaw confederacies. Though they eventually settled on Augusta as the meeting-place, the governors from Virginia and the Carolinas were reluctant to meet "in so straggling and ill-settled a place as Augusta."\(^{12}\) Governor James Wright of Georgia disagreed with the gentlemen's assessment, assuring them that "the place affords sufficient houses, plenty of provisions, and accommodations of every kind" even if they were "not so elegant as in Charles Town."\(^{13}\) By the date of Wright's letter, the wealthiest Indian traders had amassed small fortunes and established commodious homes in the town, but Augusta still carried the stigmas of roughness and incivility.

Part of this confusion stemmed from differences over who, exactly, counted as a resident of Augusta. William Stephens's account, either to inflate the numbers or because...

\(^{10}\) Thomas Stephens, "A Brief Account of the Causes that have Retarded the Progress of the Colony of Georgia, 1743," in Reese, *Malcontents*, 282.

\(^{11}\) Deposition of Kennedy O'Brien, July 9, 1741, in Reese, *Malcontents*, 311.


\(^{13}\) Wright to Boone, Dobbs, and Fauquier, Oct. 8, 1763, *SCPRO* 30: 37.
traders in Indian towns counted as part of the town’s economy, counted both those living in Augusta and traders residing primarily in Indian towns as residents. Those numbers struck some as fantasy. Thomas Stephens quoted Sir Richard Everard’s conversation with Samuel Mercer on the subject. Everard had visited Augusta and knew the elder Stephens’s population numbers to be too high. Mercer told Everard that he had been mistaken in counting “only the exact Number of Men and Horses said to be there, which would not amount to near the Numbers mentioned in the Representation.” Had Everard “counted every Man and Horse, as often as ever they went from, or came to Augusta,” Mercer continued, he would have arrived at “the Numbers mentioned in the Representation.” Everard scoffed at such methods, and replied that Savannah magistrates “might have taken a shorter Method of counting, and not wait the Trouble of the Traders coming down from the Nation; that they had nothing more to do, but to make Capt. Kent, Commander of the Fort at Augusta, to march his Men in and out, as often as they pleased to count them, and they might make what Numbers they thought necessary for the Service of their Cause at any Time.”\(^\text{14}\) Though Everard scoffed at the phantom Augustans, the method underscored a deeper understanding of Augusta that made its definition as a town hard to specify; Augustans, or at least those who carried on the principal business of the town, moved constantly from place to place. Even those who resided in Augusta rarely settled within the town’s limits.

Settlement at Augusta followed an irregular pattern due to the size of lots granted to storekeepers for the Indian trade. Oglethorpe lured traders to the town through the generous grant of a one-acre town lot in Augusta as well as with a 500-acre plantation in

the surrounding countryside. In Trustee Georgia, where most settlers enjoyed only a modest 50-acre tract for their families, the 500-acre “gentleman’s lot” was a rarity, except among those storekeepers who Oglethorpe lured from New Windsor to Augusta.\(^\text{15}\) The large plantations would become the storekeepers’ main residences and businesses, and their lots in town remained largely unused. The immediate neighborhood surrounding the town was divided into large estates, making expansion of the town center difficult even if the motivation existed. Thus, during Augusta’s forty-year existence before the American Revolution, only four new one-acre lots were added to the original forty, and it was not until after the Revolution that landowners began dividing up the large plantations and creating new urban landscapes such as Harrisburg.\(^\text{16}\) In contrast to Oglethorpe’s elaborate town planning, Augustans developed a neighborhood of plantations, each serving a number of economic, social, and military functions. If Augusta was not a particularly dense settlement, it was nonetheless a community.

The Trustees, of course, did not see it that way. Their ideal town, as expressed in the design of Savannah, combined the moralistic zeal of an age of reform with the spacious and orderly squares of post-Restoration London. Originating in the anti-Walpole factions of Parliament, Oglethorpe and the Georgia Trustees envisioned what one historian has termed an “American Zion” where the sins of materialism and the dissipation of alcoholism would be purged from London’s laboring classes. Given equal shares of land and freed from stockjobbing and the corrupting influence of slavery, the

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\(^{15}\) Heard Robertson and Thomas H. Robertson, “The Town and Fort of Augusta,” in Cashin, Key of the Indian Countrey, 60; see also Cashin, “Gentlemen,” in Cashin, Key of the Indian Countrey, 30-31.

\(^{16}\) See maps in Martha F. Norwood, A History of the White House Tract, Richmond County, Georgia, 1756-1975, Produced for the Department of Natural Resources, Office of Planning and Research, Historical
Trustees’ model colony would shine as an example to the rest of the British empire and effect in America what the reformers could not accomplish in London.\textsuperscript{17} Form followed function in the Savannah town plan, in which uniform individual lots opened onto a healthful square that provided both proper air circulation and an exercise ground for Savannah’s inhabitants.\textsuperscript{18}

It was clear from the start that Augusta would not follow Oglethorpe’s orderly grid plan. The Trustees ordered the town laid out similarly to Savannah—a central square composed of forty one-acre lots, surrounded by larger farm lots of fifty acres each.\textsuperscript{19} However, less than a year after the town’s founding, William Stephens received a report that “the Inhabitants were settling in a very irregular Manner, by building Stores on five hundred Acre Lotts some Miles distant from each other up the Path toward the Creeks.”\textsuperscript{20} The dispersed nature of Augusta’s settlement became something of a defining characteristic of the town. Robert Mackay, son and namesake of the Augusta storekeeper Robert Mackay, remembered his birthplace as a town where “the houses stood far apart from each other.”\textsuperscript{21} The only surviving map of the colonial town, Archibald Campbell’s “Sketch of the Northern Frontiers of Georgia,” printed in 1780, reflected this settlement pattern: a small nucleated collection of buildings around Augusta’s central crossroads was

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\item[\textsuperscript{19}] See Robertson and Robertson, “The Town and Fort of Augusta,” 60-63, map on 64.
\item[\textsuperscript{21}] Mackay quoted in Callahan, “Colonial Life in Augusta,” 97.
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surrounded by numerous and named plantations standing apart from each other and
separated by woods.22 (Fig. 13) As Campbell himself described the town in 1779,
"Augusta consisted of a Number of straggling houses, arranged in a long Street lying
parallel to the River."23

In Trustee Georgia, distance equaled degeneracy. As Stephens reported, the
distance between trading houses at Augusta had resulted from an individualistic and
competitive spirit. The reason they settled so far apart was that "the Out-parts have the
Advantage and Chance of intercepting the Customers of those who live in or near the
Town of Augusta."24 The traders' desire to cheat their fellows out of their rightful
business would foster danger and violence if left unchecked. The dispersed settlements
"lie under greater Danger of being cut off by Enemies of any sort," Stephens worried.
Likewise, dishonesty would breed more dishonesty, because it would "be in the power of
such Indian Traders as run in debt with the settled Storekeepers, to go to one of those
outlying Stores, and be supplied, and then to return to the Indian nation, thereby
defrauding their former Creditors, who cannot bring them to regular Justice."25

In Stephens's worldview, where health was dependent on hard work and strict
morality, Augusta's scheming ways led to the decline in the physical bodies of its
residents. Despite the good face he put on Augusta in his reports to the Trustees, Stephens
believed that the town was suffering from its "irregular" settlement. In his journal,

22 Archibald Campbell, "Sketch of the Northern Frontiers of Georgia" [London, 1780], William L.
Clements Library, University of Michigan—Ann Arbor.
23 Archibald Campbell, Journal of an Expedition against the Rebels of Georgia in North America Under
the Orders of Archibald Campbell Esquire, Lieut. Colol. of His Majesty's 71st Regimt. 1778, ed. Colin
Campbell, Printed for the Richmond County Historical Society, Augusta, Georgia, (Darien, GA: The
25 Ibid. 4: 203.
accounts of disease, violence, and wickedness usually followed descriptions of the town's dispersed settlement pattern. In the entry that contained John Miller's description of Indian traders settling along the paths, Stephens included the account from Samuel Brown, an Indian trader and "a Settler also at that Place," who reported that "they were grown extream sickly thereabouts; that it came through Carolina by Degrees to their Settlement at New-Windsor, and thence on crossed to Augusta." Brown was almost certainly reporting on the common diseases and poxes that swept through eighteenth-century North America. However, Stephens's description of a "Carolina" infection that had ruined the health of Augusta carried a deeper meaning. The town had also been infected with the "Carolina" diseases of rum and slavery and suffered greatly for it. The weak town body, spread out along the trails, was particularly susceptible to these fevers, since no supervision existed to halt these infections' spread.

Augustans' lifestyle ruined their health, Stephens concluded. The rapid deterioration of his clerk, Joseph Harrison, confirmed Stephens in this belief. Harrison had clerked in an Augusta store and in 1740 hired himself to Stephens to write copies of the latter's correspondence and his lengthy journal. Almost as soon as the man started work, though, he proved unreliable. Soon after hiring Harrison, Stephens was frustrated "by Means of my Clerk being taken ill for two or three Days past, whom I had taken a little While since, upon the Recommendation of one who keeps Stores at Augusta, from whence he came." By June of the next year, Harrison had again fallen sick, an illness which Stephens ascribed to "his dealing too free... when he lived up in the Nations,

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26 Ibid. 4: 203.
employ'd by some of our Keepers of Stores there." 28 A few days later the man died at the Bethesda orphanage, his "Nature was so far spent, that it was not to be restored." 29 A little more than a week after witnessing his clerk's failing health, Stephens again condemned Augustans as "a lawless, wild Crew of People," among whom "no Man's Property, or even personal Safety would be secure." 30

The town's inability to conform to Stephens's ideal of an orderly Savannah-like grid would continue to bring it ill fortune and wicked ways in Stephens's accounts. Within the four months following his clerk's death, Stephens would report two disasters at Augusta. On September 9, 1741, he received a letter from Richard Kent reporting "such a Prodigious Flood, that has almost ruined all the Corn, and other Provisions, in this and the Places adjoining, which will cause a very great Scarcity... There has not been such a high Flood known for many Years past." 31 Instead of the expected four or five thousand bushels, Stephens fears that Augusta would harvest but four or five hundred. As was typical with Stephens, natural disasters inspired moral judgment: "It is allowed by all, that those Lands are richer, and more productive far, than any near the Sea-Coast: But the Land in these Parts... will yield a reasonable Increase... and out of all Danger of such terrible Inundations." 32 Settlement at Augusta was a high-risk venture that could easily reward or ruin its inhabitants, whereas the settlements near Savannah provided a stable and suitable income for all hardworking men.

29 William Stephens's Journal [supplement], June 29, 1741, CRG 4(sup): 179.
32 Ibid. 237.
An incident the following October proved how far Augustans had allowed themselves to fall from civil, orderly English society. Here was proof positive that a straggling settlement such as Augusta was inherently depraved. Two African-Americans had been held in the Savannah jail for several months during 1741, but escaped in October of that year. Stephens took this occasion to report their crimes and to indict their masters upriver. The story as Stephens told it was a nightmare scenario in which white servants had been placed at the merciless hands of black slaves, and had suffered greatly as a result:

The Cause of their Commitment was, for that they had been guilty of many foul Crimes, under the Connivance (or rather Approbation) of their Master at Augusta, who once had a good Character; but of late the Reverse, and had been allowed the Use of a Boy and a Girl, Dutch Servants... but they were cruelly treated by him, not allowed competent Food and Cloathing, and sent far off to a Plantation of his, where they were tasked at the Discretion of these Negroes... one of which attempted to commit a Rape upon the Girl, had he not been prevented by some Person, who hearing her Shrieks, came to her Relief; of which when she made Complaint to her Master, he first beat her with his Cane, an then ordered her to be stript stark naked, haul’d up to a Beam by her Arms tied, in the Presence of these two Negroes, and afterwards to be terribly whipped.33

The depths to which formerly honorable men had sunk appalled Stephens. Georgia, based on an ideal of industry and reform, could not tolerate such corruption among its populace.

For Stephens, the incident was a direct result of Augusta’s dispersed settlement. The slaves’ mere presence was due to Augustans “having Plantations on the Carolina Side of the river, as well as in Georgia, where they find it more advantageous to settle, and carry on the Trade with the Indians.” Such a situation allowed them “an Opportunity of sliding two or three Negroes now and then at a Pinch into their Plantations, where during their skulking a while (which is not hard to conceive, considering the great Extent
of the Township of Augusta, by reason of large Tracts of Land) they are not presently to be discovered.” The distance between Augusta plantations allowed them to easily hide their slaves, and the corruption of the moral order went unnoticed, to the point where one planter allowed enslaved African-Americans to hold power over a white European girl, an outrage that Stephens could hardly bear. However, the violence and moral degeneracy that Stephens reported may have resulted more from the Trustees’ own actions, in particular those of their Indian agent Patrick Mackay, than to any “natural” inclination towards fisticuffs among Augusta’s early residents.

Augusta’s formation was a violent affair, as Georgia’s Indian agents asserted their authority over Carolina’s licensed traders. In the early spring of 1735, Patrick Mackay traveled through Creek villages to carry out his commission as the Trustees’ agent for Indian affairs. In late March, Mackay called a meeting of all the traders in the Lower Creek towns. From the assembled traders, he selected eleven men, “discharging whom he thought fit” to form a new company of eleven traders licensed out of Georgia. Mackay’s selection was apparently arbitrary, and all those who were excluded from his company had to “depart the Nation with... Goods and Horses with all convenient Diligence.”

Mackay threatened others who continued to trade with a Carolina license that “he would seize their Horses and Effects.” Understandably surprised and upset at Mackay’s new power over them, Carolina traders quickly argued their case. A dispute soon arose between the trader William Edwards and Patrick Mackay’s “Doctor.” Edwards was

34 Ibid. 272.
36 Deposition of Thomas Johns, July 4, 1735, SCPRO 17: 436.
“brought to the Chunco or May Pole in the middle of the Square [at the Great Oakfuskess] there stripped bare backed and tyed to the said Post or Pole by Order of the said Patrick Mackay and Thirty five Hickory Switches were cut and brought to the said Place.”38 The One handed King of the Oakfuekees spared Edwards his whipping by shielding him with his own body and admonishing Mackay that “he had never seen such doings from the white People before.”39 While all eleven names of Mackay’s company are unknown, one of them, Thomas Goodale, would go on to become “One of the first Settlers” at Augusta.40

An early list of Augusta’s residents explained perhaps why there was so much ill will in the early town. While the exact membership of Patrick Mackay’s company is unknown, the few members named by their contemporaries appeared on a list of early traders and inhabitants of Augusta.41 Thomas Goodale, James Cossons, and John Facey all appeared as Mackay’s accomplices or favorites in a lengthy petition from the leading merchants and traders of Charleston.42 Of those who made complaints of the Georgia agent’s interference were many belonging to Archibald McGillivray & Company, the leading firm in the Creek trade in the 1730s and 1740s.43 McGillivray’s partners, Jeremiah Knott and George Cussings, both made depositions against Mackay, and William Edwards was a servant to Alexander Wood, who joined the firm in 1741. All three of these men appeared on Thomas Stephens’s early census of Augusta, along with

37 Deposition of Jeremiah Knott, July 4, 1735, SCPRO 17: 433.
38 Deposition of W. Williams, July 4, 1735, SCPRO 17: 425.
39 Deposition of W. Williams, July 4, 1735, SCPRO 17: 425.
42 Memorial of Benjamin Hill et al, July 4, 1735, SCPRO, 17: 412-41.
their partners Daniel Clark, Patrick Brown, Archibald McGillivray, and William Sludders. None of McGillivray’s partners were listed as residents of Augusta, only as “Traders... as come from other Parts, and only pass through or by Augusta in their Way.” However, these men would shortly come to dominate Augusta, while Mackay and his associates rapidly lost any real influence in town life or the Indian trade in general.

Old grudges from Mackay’s brief but violent sojourn among Creek towns probably spilled over into later Augusta interactions. In March 1738, less than a year after the town’s founding, the Cherokee trader Samuel Brown came to Savannah “principally to take some Advice about a Wound which he got in his Head among his Fellow Traders.” Lieutenant Richard Kent, commander at Fort Augusta, complained in 1740 that the uncertain nature of his civil authority had caused him “frequent Embarrassment how to put it in Execution.” The uncertainty had caused much “Jangling among the Traders, and often Attempts of Violence with one another, to decide Controversies by Force, rather than submit to any Judicature.” This violence carried over into Indian towns, where in July of the same year “A Riot lately happened in the Lower Creek Nation, by several unlicensed Traders insulting some of those legally appointed, wounded, assaulting, and binding up two or three, and threatening immediate Death to them.”

Within a decade, however, accounts of violence at Augusta had subsided, replaced with new complaints about a monopolizing company. It was perhaps as a way of

44 Stephens’s Journal, March 24, 1738, CRG 4: 111.
45 Stephens’s Journal, June 30, 1740, CRG 4: 608.
46 Ibid. 4: 608.
correcting the Georgia interlopers that Charleston-connected traders such as McGillivray and Company or the partnership of Francis Macartan & Martin Campbell began moving their business from New Windsor to Augusta, and trying to cut off whatever business the original Augusta traders might have developed. It was this development that most likely led Goodale to try his luck with a “publck Victualling House” in 1745. By 1754, Goodale had moved to the Little Ogeechee River after selling his Augusta plantation and town lot to Macartan & Campbell for four hundred pounds currency.

The basic unit of social, political, and economic arrangements in Augusta was the company. Unlike in most of British North America, where one might look to the family or household as the bedrock of society, the formal relationships between the gentlemen of Augusta mediated personal conflicts, forecast future economic prospects, and generally knit the inhabitants together. Partnerships were fluid, but they created friendships and personal loyalties that stretched across lifetimes and generations. The most famous and most formidable of the Augusta co-partnerships was the firm of Brown, Rae, and Company. Formed in the 1740s out of the dissolution of Archibald McGillivray and Company, the Augusta firm boasted an unmatched influence in the Anglo-Creek deerskin trade, and its partners would emerge as very influential men in the southeastern backcountry. Patrick Brown, John Rae, George Galphin, Lachlan McGillivray, Daniel Clark, and William Sludders formed the company by merging their own smaller partnerships. Their names would continue to appear in colonial documents as interpreters, correspondents, monopolizers, justices of the peace, and members of the Georgia

47 Stephens’s Journal, June 3, 1740, CRG 4: 585.
48 CRG 6: 129.
49 Abstract of ColonialBook C-1, pp. 126-27.
assembly as well as in virtually any other record relating to life in Augusta or southeastern Indian diplomacy in the eighteenth century.\footnote{On the formation of Brown, Rae, and Company, see Kathryn Holland Braund, \textit{Deerskins and Duffels: Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 44-49; also Cashin, \textit{Lachlan McGillivray}, 34-36.}

Partnerships were formal and public associations, analogous to marriage in terms of their involvement in property and inheritance. The formation and dissolution of trade partnerships required public announcement, since partners could draw on each other’s accounts and credit. The large firm of Archibald McGillivray and Company, for example went through some form of internal dispute in the summer of 1741. An advertisement placed in the \textit{South Carolina Gazette} that year warned “any Person or Persons whatever not to trust or credit any of the said Company on the Company Accounts, except \textit{Archibald McGillivray}, who is appointed sole Manager and Director.”\footnote{\textit{South Carolina Gazette}, September 26, 1741.} McGillivray, the head of the trading house, had to assert his authority. The public form of this admonishment echoed advertisements that occasionally appeared from estranged husbands in southeastern newspapers. Take, for example, the following notice that appeared in the \textit{Georgia Gazette} in 1768: “Whereas Susannah the wife of John Gotier staymaker has absented herself from him, this is therefore to caution all persons from crediting her on his account, as he will not pay any debts of her contracting.”\footnote{\textit{Georgia Gazette}, April 20, 1768.}

Involving the division of property and the maintenance of reputation, the dissolution of partnerships resembled a bitter divorce. The properties involved were often extensive and varied, as suggested by the end of the partnership between John Francis Williams and Robert Mackay. When they parted ways, joint property included “Their
Trading House in Augusta... Plantation, Negroes, Boats, Stock in Trade, Pack Horses, Indian Debts, &c.”

The two men’s disputes and separation were particularly bitter. Even four years later, as Williams lay on his death bed, Mackay spat “When [I] am sure the Wretch is dying I will call and see him” but still felt compelled to have him “decently put in the Ground and his papers secured, for I suppose there is some of them not fit to appear in the world.” Williams apparently engaged in some dishonorable business practices, and Mackay feared that his public association with Williams would taint his own reputation. “Several glaring Frauds were intended” in Williams’s account books and Mackay regretted that his name “should be joined with his in any claim or matter whatever.”

Mackay’s anger at his former partner demonstrated that partnerships were much deeper than business relations. They were frequently family relationships as well.

When the Augusta traders handed down property, it often went to their partners or their partners’ children. Isaac Barksdale, who left no children, remembered his partner John Rae’s progeny in his will, leaving 1000 pounds South Carolina currency and a slave named Tom to Rae’s daughter Jane, 250 acres of his property and a slave named Ned to John Rae, Jr., and a slave named Sambo to William Rae. William Sludders divided his estate between his siblings and his business partners, giving his brother and sister one-third each and the remaining third to his partners Patrick Brown, Lachlan McGillivray, and Daniel Clark. Even more frequently, the traders served as executors for each others’ estates—John Rae was Barksdale’s executor; Patrick Brown, Lachlan McGillivray, and Daniel Clark were Sludders’s; McGillivray oversaw Daniel Clark’s bequests. Perhaps

53 Georgia Gazette, February 28, 1770.
54 Robert Mackay to Mary Chilcott Mackay, January 8, 1775, Mackay-Stiles MS, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
more significantly, members of different firms also shared responsibility for their fellow traders’ property. John Rae shared his executor duties with both Francis Macartan and Martin Campbell when John Pettygrew died in 1761.56

The terms that these men used to describe each other revealed a connection that went deeper than a mere business relationship. John Ross, as noted, considered Lachlan McGillivray to be his only friend. McGillivray and Galphin referred to each other as “sworn brothers.”57 In a letter posted in the Georgia Gazette, McGillivray twice in the same sentence referred to Galphin as “my friend” and painted them as fellow travelers—“neither would my friend or myself chuse to throw away money lavishly; we have suffered many hardships to acquire a small competency, but have not, and never will find out the method of preaching people out of their money.”58 Partnerships supported a sense of family and friendship among the traders, exemplified in Brown, Rae, and Company’s decision to refer to themselves as a household composed of smaller households: “there are Seven of us in Company... we were formerly three Separate Houses in this place [Augusta] but for the more effectual carrying on the Trade and Supplying the Indians with goods, we thought it proper to join in one Company... our House is the best Acquainted with Indian Affairs of any in this Colony.”59 The image of the house, more than a formal term for a trading establishment, likewise reverberated in the close personal bonds which these men formed.

55 Robert Mackay to Mary Chilcott Mackay, January 24, 1775, Mackay-Stiles MS, SHC.  
57 Georgia Gazette, April 6, 1768.  
58 Georgia Gazette, June 24, 1767.  
59 Brown, Rae, & Company to the Georgia Trustees, Feb. 13, 1751, CRG, 26: 152-53.
Regulation of the Indian trade depended on the cooperation of this community of traders. Outsiders were continually stymied by the clandestine nature of negotiations between Augusta’s traders. Edmund Atkin, South Carolina’s Indian agent in the 1750s, found himself often on the outside looking in. At his first arrival in Augusta in 1758, he called the traders together and announced his intentions for his mission to the Creeks. “They put a good Face upon it,” he muttered, “& declared a Readiness to accompany me; tho nothing was further from the Inclinations of most.... there is nothing they dread so much as the looking into the true State of the Trade.”⁶⁰ When John Spencer defied Atkin’s authority, he called down the wrath of Patrick Brown’s heir, a merchant in Charlestown. Brown’s heir “in the Hearing of many publickly in Augusta” declared “That he would ruin Spencer, and would stop him from going into the Nation... would expose him & make him knuckle to the Agent.”⁶¹ If Spencer would defy colonial authority, then Brown would correct him. The man was calmed, though: “thro’ McGillivray’s means, the Difference was made up by Spencer’s asking Pardon of Brown.”⁶² The need to protect each others’ businesses and reputations provided future historians with Robert Mackay’s tantalizing, yet frustrating, admission that “The papers of J.F.W. [John Francis Williams] relative to the differences with his wife and us were committed to the flames unread the evening he was put in the ground.”⁶³ More to protect his own reputation than his former partner’s, Mackay quietly concealed the business of a fellow trader and prevented any outsiders from learning about his possibly illicit activities.

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⁶¹ Edmund Atkin to William Henry Lyttelton, January 25, 1760, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL
⁶² Atkin to Lyttelton, Jan. 25, 1760, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
⁶³ Robert Mackay to Mary Mackay, Jan. 24, 1775, Mackay-Stiles MS, SHC.
No dispute in Augusta could find formal settlement without the consultation of the local storekeepers. While the Trustees initially appointed Lt. Richard Kent, commander of Fort Augusta, to serve as justice of the peace in the town, he was soon joined by a committee of three "assistants" to help the community settle its small claims. By 1751 it had proven beneficial to have such a system, with the justice "desiding little Controversies among his Neighbours... with the Assistance of three creditable neighbour Freeholders, as is now practised at Augusta." 64 It was no accident that the men chosen to settle local disputes should come from the leading trading houses, since they were the men who held the most influence over the town and its traders. The first three "assistants" were James Fraser, John Rae, and James Campbell. The President and Assistants of Georgia, either in ignorance or in resignation, nominated the latter two men in the same letter in which they voiced their complaints about the "monopolizing Company" at Augusta and "Cabals and Quarrels of the Traders in different Interests" that would arise from the firm's tactics. 65

Indeed, Georgia's governors may have even deliberately created this system whereby the justices were from different firms, a pattern which, either by luck or design, would persist throughout the colonial period and which may have helped ensure the decline in reports of violence and discord coming from Augusta. While trading partners could be found acing jointly as commissioners for the peace, no one firm dominated the ranks of local justices. John Rae and David Douglass served nearly continuously from 1750 until 1770, but other traders rotated in and out. In 1760, Augusta's jurisprudence was divided among Rae, Douglass, Martin Campbell, Edward Barnard, Lachlan

64 President and Assistants to Benjamin Martyn, Feb. 25, 1751, CRG 26: 161.
McGillivray, John Francis Williams, and Francis Macartan. Four years later, the task belonged to Rae, Barnard, Edmund Cartlidge, James Jackson, and William Truin. In 1768, Rae, Barnard, and Williams had resumed their posts along with newcomers Leonard Claiborne, Edward Keaton, and John Walton. Slowly, non-traders began to find a role in town governance, mostly owing to older traders’ tendency to move downriver, as did Rae and McGillivray, or simply to die. But for most of Augusta’s colonial life, the influence of the companies proved frustrating to those agents who sought to assert their authority over the town. Its influence also extended to those who simply wished to live in the neighborhood.

For those outsiders who traveled to Augusta, the company of traders proved difficult to enter, which colored their experiences of the town. Two such outsiders came to Augusta in the 1770s, one man and one woman. Both fell in love with the area quickly and almost as quickly tired of the place. Mary Chilcott of Newport, Rhode Island, found company only through her marriage to the Augusta merchant Robert Mackay. From then on, Augusta became her home. For William Mylne, entrance into Augusta society proved formidable, despite his education. He simply could not keep up with the endless series of dinners and entertainments that could easily bankrupt any pretenders to Augusta’s social elite.

Both Mylne and Chilcott quickly became enchanted with the Georgia upcountry’s people and climate. Chilcott, a widow, was from Newport, Rhode Island, and had accompanied her daughter Catherine to Augusta after the latter married the Indian trader John Francis Williams. In May 1770 Chilcott sang the town’s praises: “Here in Augusta

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65 President and Assistants to Benjamin Martyn, Feb. 28, 1751, CRG 26: 169-71.
we are all Health & serenity, such a succession of fine weather never did I before experience, so moderate, so pleasant, & so charming 'tis almost impossible to be dull or low spirited."\(^{66}\) Though she missed her family dearly, Chilcott found much to praise about the locality. As she wrote her brother back in Rhode Island, “I wish you had some of the green pease that we wallow in every day—or the fine strawberrys, ten times better than ours, they seem to be of the wild kind, but quite as big as the largest hautboys.”\(^{67}\)

Mylne likewise found Augusta to be agreeable enough at first. Mylne had been an architect in Edinburgh, Scotland, and had built the North Bridge there, but questions over the bridge’s soundness and delays in its construction had bankrupted him. He found his way to Charleston and from there to Augusta to try to start anew and rebuild his ruined fortunes. Mylne began to feel better almost immediately: “My health thank God is perfectly reestablished, I do not think I was ever so well. Although it now begins to be hot yet I have felt it as hot as in Scotland, they tell me it will be warmer still but the mornings and evenings are cool and it lasts but for three months.”\(^{68}\) After a few months’ stay at his “Hermitage” on Stephens’s Creek in South Carolina, Mylne felt himself renewed and energized. “God Almighty has planted in our breasts an active principal for wise purposes... I want again to be in action now the machine is repaired.”\(^{69}\) Mylne saw his future as that of an agrarian: “The life of a planter is that I should like, in it I could lay by money; I have learnt the methods to cultivate the different articles of produce in this

\(^{66}\) Mary Malbone Chilcott to John Malbone, May 14, 1770, Mackay-Stiles MS, SHC.
\(^{67}\) Chilcott to Malbone, May 14, 1770, Mackay-Stile MS, SHC.
\(^{69}\) William Mylne to Robert Mylne, June 26, 1774, in Ruddock, Travels, 31.
country." He estimated that three or four hundred pounds would be enough to set himself up in planting and that every year would return enough for him to lay by money and answer his creditors, particularly his brother Robert.

Both Chilcott and Mylne, however, quickly found that life in Augusta proved frustrating for those disconnected with the Indian trade. Only a few months after her flattering portrait of the town, Chilcott complained that she was done “boasting of the climate, for it seems the fine moderate summer, & delightful showers we had every hot afternoon, occasions this mighty sickly Fall... for I don’t know a person in Augusta, except Mr. Williams, that hasn’t been sick.” She herself had been “seiz’d with a fever & ague” and could not tell “the quantity of bark I’ve swallowed at 6s sterling an ounce... the tho’ts of the expence didn’t contribute at all to my cure I can tell you.” Mylne suffered his own bout of sickness, at the exact time of year that Chilcott did. In October of his first year, he had fallen into “a very severe fit of sickness, the fever and ague... I was twice reduced to skin and bone and so weak that I could scarce walk across the room.” However, by the time that Mylne wrote these words, Mary Chilcott had become Mary Mackay and was a fixture of Augusta society. As he wrote in the same letter, Mary Mackay and her husband, Robert, “are extremely well bred and very civil and polite to strangers, their house is the great resort of the best people.” Mylne could not hope to enter this society, and within a year had left Carolina to find his fortunes in more northern colonies.

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70 Ibid. 31.
71 Mary Malbone Chilcott to John Malbone, Oct. 24, 1770, Mackay-Stile MS, SHC.
72 Chilcott to Malbone, Oct. 24, 1770, Mackay-Stiles MS, SHC.
73 William Mylne to Anne Mylne, Oct. 13, 1774, in Ruddock, Travels, 50.
Predictably, a woman in Augusta did not have the same freedom of association as a man. Traders’ stores protected more than material goods; they also protected women from unwanted entreaties, be they polite or otherwise. Augusta’s ranks swelled every spring with the arrival of packhorse caravans from Indian towns. As Mary Chilcott wrote to her brother in May 1770, “the Indian Country People will be coming down, and the Gent[leme]n think as we are not used to them, it will be rather disagreeable to us to have them about the House.”75 Shortly after the death of Chilcott’s son-in-law, John Francis Williams, in January 1775, his young widow Catherine became an object of affection to the single gentlemen in Augusta. Her marriage had been the subject of local gossip for quite some time, as even William Mylne wrote to Scotland that Williams was “a rascal of this country... he used her extremely ill which has ruined her health and she was forced to leave him.”76 She moved in with her mother and stepfather, Williams’s former partner Robert Mackay. When Williams finally died and the marriage officially ended, “Katy” as her mother called her, found willing beaus at the front door. None of these gentlemen could see her, though, as Catherine sat “up-stairs which disturbs Peter mightily as he cant get an opportunity to pop the question.”77 Catherine’s mother Mary knew that sequestering the widow was necessary for the protection of her reputation; she would not allow the local ladies to say “that Mrs. W[illiams] stayed home till she heard of her Husband’s death, then went gadding abroad as soon as the news came.”78 For the traders at Augusta, at least those who had lived in Indian towns and had been the ones protected,

75 Mary Chilcott to John Malbone, May 14, 1770, Mackay-Stiles MS, SHC.
76 William Mylne to Anne Mylne, Oct. 13, 1774, in Ruddock, Travels, 50.
77 Mary Mackay to Robert Mackay, Jan. 19, 1775, Mackay-Stile MS, SHC.
78 Mary Mackay to Robert Mackay, Jan. 19, 1775, Mackay-Stile MS, SHC.
often by Indian women from Indian men, this was something of a role reversal from their earlier lives, one more suitable, perhaps, to European gender roles.

What drove Mylne away from Augusta and bound Mary Chilcott Mackay to the town was the cost of sociability among the town’s leading families. Mackay’s letters to her husband revealed how closely knit Augusta society was, and were filled with community news that Robert Mackay had missed while on business in Savannah. The size and frequency of social visits in Augusta cost plenty, particularly on the Mackays’ dishes. The loss of plates could prove embarrassing for the mistress of the household. “I hardly know how to ask you Mr. Mackay to bring some more plates, but I assure you the old ones have disappeared so all at once, that I find it difficult to make them go round for the present family.”79 Maintaining a respectful and deferential attitude towards her husband, she assured Robert that the loss was “not from my carelessness.” Nonetheless, an Augusta household had to be well-supplied with plates, for “two dozen and a half will by no means do when we have company.”80

Mylne could not hope to maintain an equality with the people of Augusta. The architect who had traveled Europe, Mylne was good company in Augusta, having “several friends... at whose houses and tables I am always welcome.”81 But the cost of that welcome was prohibitive. Mylne could not make a proper visit without “a blue or black corderoe silk waistcoat” to wear “among the gentles, for they dress gayly both men and women.”82 Eventually, though he much adored his neighbors and his situation, Mylne simply could not afford the lifestyle at Augusta. As he conceded only a few months after

79 Mary Chilcott Mackay to Robert Mackay, Jan. 19, 1775, Mackay-Stiles MS, SHC.
80 Mary Mackay to Robert Mackay, Jan. 19, 1775, Mackay-Stile MS, SHC.
81 William Mylne to Robert Mylne, June 26, 1774, in Ruddock, Travels, 30.
arriving at Augusta, the “money required to settle a plantation so as to be comfortable is considerable and one must live on an equality with one’s friends, this would be expensive” for “the principal people lives handsomely, these would visit me in their turn.” Nor could he find camaraderie among his poorer neighbors, for they were “very ignorant of the world and know little more than raising their crops and carrying it to the store.” They also thought Mylne “a strange man, to live as I do by myself.” So Mylne decided to try the northern towns, “where money is a thousand times plentier than here and where I stand little chance of competitors.”

The intimidating influence of the trading companies was made concrete in their formidable trading stores, the 500-acre plantations that served as home, market, and village for Augusta traders. Beginning in the 1750s, these private homes developed a new layer of meaning for the local populace: they were fortified centers of defense and refuge in case of Indian alarms in the neighborhood. John Rae, Edward Barnard, Francis Macartan, and George Galphin all presided over fortified plantation homes that grew out of a new threat to their business. These forts served as guards against the encroachments of new competitors—whites migrating to Georgia’s outlying districts in hopes of establishing their own links with Indians. When the interlopers caused trouble, these private forts helped traders reassert their authority.

In the 1750s, the Indian trade became more democratized, as white newcomers and Indian emigrants began seeking new connections outside of traditional trade centers. The lands north and west of Augusta became home to more frequent and casual interaction

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82 Mylne to Anne Mylne, May 29, 1774, in Ruddock, Travels, 30.
83 Mylne to Anne Mylne, Oct. 13, 1774, in Ruddock, Travels, 47-48.
84 Mylne to Robert Mylne, June 26, 1774, in Ruddock, Travels, 32.
between whites and Creeks, and thus became home to more frequent conflicts and violence. Creek hunters in the 1750s began moving eastward from older towns such as Oakfuskee in search of game and increased opportunities for a cheaper trade in Georgia’s white settlements, where prices were lower than back home. Whites, too, had begun seeking out lands in this region, partly for agriculture, but also for the economic advantages of opening a direct trade with Indians and siphoning off a few Creek deerskins for their private profit, creating a more open “frontier exchange economy” in the British Southeast.86 One of these exchanges in particular, on Ogeechee River in 1756, spurred the fortification of Augusta homes as the town’s traders exerted their still-powerful influence over both the trade and the local landscape.

By the late summer of 1756, a party of settlers had taken up residence along the Ogeechee River, near the Augusta-Creek trading path. They had come from the north and settled in small family groups: Andrew Lambert and his son, James, as well as the Clement brothers, Andrew and Joseph. As early as July of that year, the Creeks had noticed the settlement “at Hogatechy” which seemed to appear overnight. The Indians reported that “they are in such a haste in coming that they travel in the Night with Wagons” and the trader James Germany feared that “if there is not a Stop put to the settling of Ogatechy it will prove the Ruin of the whole Country without any Dispute.”87

The Creeks, already alarmed at the British building forts among the Cherokee towns, saw

85 Mylne to Anne Mylne, Oct. 13, 1774, in Ruddock, Travels, 48.
87 James Germany to Rae & Barksdale, undated, incl. in White Outerbridge to William Henry Lyttelton, July 17, 1756, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
the rush to settle Ogeechee as another step toward British military aggression. These “Virginia Men,” as the Creeks termed them, were but the advance guard of a massive British assault on their towns, a rumor that the French at Fort Toulouse were only too happy to encourage.

In September 1756, word reached Augusta of an altercation between Creek warriors and the Ogeechee settlers. Seven of the settlers, led by Andrew and James Lambert, believed that an Indian hunting party had stolen some of their horses. They set out after the alleged thieves the next day and caught up with the hunting party. An exchange of fire left two Indians dead and wounded some of the whites. The sudden threat of an Indian war chased the Ogeechee settlers to Augusta and threatened a full-scale Indian war, one which the “Virginia Men” would have been all too familiar with, having just left a colony in the early, brutal stages of the Seven Years’ War. But the conflict came to a surprisingly quick resolution, because neither the Creeks nor the British had any interest in going to war with each other.

Though the story of the conflict fits into a broad and deep history of Indian-white relations in British North America, the details provide some clue to the threat posed by settlements such as Lambert’s. Lambert apparently had invited the Indians into his house and “entertained them in a friendly manner, but they got up very early in the morning, and stole off with several Blanketts & Horses.”88 The Creeks’ complaints about the Ogeechee settlement likewise included both the familiar complaint that “their living so high up spoils out hunting Ground and frightens away the Deer” but also the revealing addition that “there is two Men who trade away back in the Woods, One is Ephraim Alexander,

88 John Reynolds to William Henry Lyttelton, Sept. 14, 1756, Lyttelton Papers, W/LCL.
and the other is a Dutch Man, name unknown." The real complaint against the Ogeechee settlers became clear the year after the attack, when Gov. Henry Ellis reported that those most likely to carry on a clandestine trade with Indians "have lately come from the northward, and are settled between Augusta and the River Ogeechee, precisely where the difference with the Indians happened, the last year." These people had "furnished themselves with dry Goods, and Rum, [and] carry on a Trade with the Creeks."

Some Creeks, for their part, enjoyed the advantages of having a secondary source of trade. Unlike the established traders in Indian towns, settlement traders could offer fairer prices for deerskins. Traders in the nations typically weighed skins one at a time, and did not credit Indians for fractions of a pound. Settlement traders such as John Smith, on the other hand, had "an unusual manner in which he takes their Leather, by putting a considerable number of Skins in the scale at once, and allowing for the broken weight which often makes a difference of 50 pr. ct." The Indians were "quick enough in discovering what is most for their benefit, hence they must be a good deal surprized and offended at the practice of the Traders in the Nation, so different from that of those in the Settlements." Though laws forbid trading in the settlement, Ellis recognized that enforcement was almost impossible, "from the difficulty of proving who are, or are not of that [Creek] Nation." For the settler-traders near Augusta, the inability of their neighbors to identify different Indian ethnicities was a profitable advantage.

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89 Talk of Lower Creek Headmen to John Reynold, incl. in James Reynolds to William Henry Lyttelton, Oct. 6, 1756, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
90 Henry Ellis to William Henry Lyttelton, March 17, 1758, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
91 Ellis to Lyttelton, March 17, 1758, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
92 Henry Ellis to William Henry Lyttelton, April 13, 1758, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
93 Ellis to Lyttelton, April 13, 1758, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
94 Henry Ellis to William Henry Lyttelton, May 3, 1758, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
The Ogeechee settlement had caused concern in Augusta even before the situation led to blows. Less than two weeks before the Ogeechee attack, the leading traders had signed their names to a petition, asking Gov. John Reynolds for funds to improve the defenses at Fort Augusta. Britain had recently declared war against France, and the old fears of a French-led Indian attack had been renewed. The traders in particular feared that disaffected Creeks might listen to French warnings of British encroachment and lamented their sincere “wish there had been no Settlement made on Ogechee [sic] as yet for if ever the Creek Indians should break out a War with us... we are Assured they will make that Settlement one Pretence” for the attack.\(^5\) Should war come, the traders feared for their storehouses, “for in all Probability they would for the sake of those Stores... be Attacked.”\(^6\) The Ogeechee attacks nearly realized these, and Augustans felt the immediate need for fortification. John Rae, David Douglass, and Martin Campbell, Augusta’s three trader-justices of the peace, informed the governor that “the Fort cannot contain all the Inhabitants so that we will be obliged to Fortify some other Places.”\(^7\) It was this need that introduced a new feature to the Augusta landscape, one that would remain until the American Revolution—the fortified traders’ house.

Augusta’s Indian traders were more familiar than most with Indian practices and customs. Nonetheless, they shared a sense of fear as to what might befall them should anything sour Anglo-Indian relations. Elizabeth Perkins identified the sense of being “forted” among the first generation of settlers in the Ohio Country, in which whites drew


\(^6\) Petition of Inhabitants of Augusta, Aug. 30, 1756, \textit{CRG} 7: 398

\(^7\) David Douglass, John Rae, and Martin Campbell to John Reynolds, Sept. 12, 1756, Minutes of Governor and Council, Sept. 15, 1756, \textit{CRG} 7: 393.
sharp lines between where they were in control (inside fortified houses) and where the Indians were in control (everywhere else). A similar sense pervaded residents of Augusta. Rev. Jonathan Copp, Augusta’s first Anglican minister, defined the sensibility: “The merciless Savages the Indians (whose tender mercies are Cruelty) have threatened us much of late... we have been under Continual Fears and apprehensions of being murdered and destroyed by Them, there being no one within 140 miles capable of lending any Assistance in Time of Danger, so far are we situated in the wild uncultivated Wilderness.”

The traders, acting as guardians of the town, expressed similar sentiments. Rae, along with two other Augusta storekeepers, James Fraser and David Douglass, in their petition for a church at Augusta, noted that “Indian Friendship is sometimes precarious.” In 1756, only a few weeks before the Ogeechee incident, Rae, Douglass, Isaac Barksdale and Lachlan McGillivray all signed a petition to Gov. John Reynolds pleading the case for improved defenses in Augusta. They feared that Augusta and its environs, “being not only frontiers but places where the Stores and Trading Goods for all the Chickesaws Creek and Part of the Cherokees are kept, are of the greatest Consequence.... That in our Present defenceless Condition those Places and Stores we are Morally certain wou’d fall too Easy a Prey to ‘em.” They feared that Fort Augusta, then in

99 Memorial in behalf of the Inhabitants of the Town and Township of Augusta, April 12, 1750, Fleming, Autobiography, 35.
a "ruinous and untenantable Condition," no longer offered the town "an Asylum for their Women and Children and a Place of Security for their Effects in Case of Danger."100

The Augusta traders may have had more personal reasons for seeing the fort improved, independent of the welfare of the community or the safety of their possessions. In a town where cash and coin were scarce, a military outpost provided a much-needed source of ready money. In the early 1750s, the Savannah firm of Harris and Habersham, trying to establish an export firm and to attach themselves to the deerskin trade, provided much insight into the business of the trade and its infrastructure. Along with frequent laments that Georgians could not provide enough agricultural surplus to regularly fill outgoing vessels, they noted that Savannah had no soldiers nearby. "The Detachments at Augusta," they noted, "are stationed so remotely from this Place, that they have no opportunity of laying out any of their Pay here, and consequently no other Benefit can accrue to us."101

The benefits of having the fort nearby were obvious to Edward Barnard. After the Seven Years' War, British Capt. Lewis Fuser assessed Fort Augusta's utility. Fuser's report, sent to Gen. Thomas Gage, painted a miserable picture of life in Fort Augusta, where "the soldiers complain'd that they was fed on Indian Corn & salt Cow." He complained to Barnard, the fort's supplier and "the principal Man at Augusta, & one of those that makes the Govr. believe that the Garrison at Augusta is necessitated."102 Barnard's reward for provisioning the troops was the seemingly paltry allowance of four

100 Petition of the Inhabitants of Augusta, Aug. 30, 1756, CRG 7: 398 Signatories to the letter included David Douglass, Martin Campbell, Lachlan McGillivray, John Williams, John Spencer, Daniel Clark, Edward Barnard, John Pettycrow, George Galphin, Moses Nunes, Patrick Clark, John Rae, and Isaac Barksdale, all of them involved in the Indian trade.
101 Harris and Habersham to the Trustees, July 20, 1750, CRG 26: 29-30.
pence sterling per day, but, as Barnard himself noted "cash is very scarce in this place." Provisions paid for in cash provided a key source of capital for Barnard, and his allowance probably made a nice bonus. In 1768, however, Gage ordered the Georgia regiments removed to northern colonies, and Fort Augusta was unofficially yet effectively abandoned. Barnard made the best of the situation, appropriating the empty fort for his own personal use. Of course Barnard, like the other gentlemen of Augusta, already had a fort for his own personal use.

The Ogeechee incident, with the Cherokee War following close behind, necessitated only a slight modification in Augusta’s landscape. Augusta was a remarkably open place, owing to its dispersed population. American cities were largely devoid of the military embankments and fortified walls of Europe. However, it is striking how many of the few American walled cities were either familiar to Augustans or occupied similar places in the Anglo-Indian fur trade. Charleston and Savannah both developed walled defenses surrounding the town core, mostly as a response to a naval invasion from the nearby Spanish colonies. Two of Augusta’s northern counterparts, the Indian-trading town of Albany and the frontier outpost of Schenectady, both had walls surrounding them. Augusta’s nearest neighbors, the frontier settlements of Camden and Ninety-Six, resting so close to the Cherokee Indians, both had centralized settlement and palisades.

102 Captain Lewis Fuser to General Thomas Gage, Sept. 29, 1767, Thomas Gage Papers, American Series, WLCL.
103 Edward Barnard to Fenwicke Bull, Aug. 20, 1767, incl. in Fuser to Gage, Sept. 29, 1767, Gage Papers.
104 For the history of the fort’s removal, see Cashin, McGillivray, 248-50.
105 Despite other Augustans’ desires that the abandoned fort might be used as a courthouse and jail for the town, which had neither, the Governor and Council granted Barnard “use of the officer’s House and the Buildings in the said Fort,” provided he “would keep the Fort and other Buildings in as good repair as the same were when the Troops were withdrawn.” Minutes of Governor and Council, Aug. 1, 1769, CRG 10: 851.
surrounding the early towns. Augusta did not develop such elaborate defenses, due no doubt to the difficulty of erecting a palisade around a settlement that spread out for miles. When the threat of attack seemed imminent, Augustans fortified the property most valuable to them—their individual plantations and trading stores.

The trading houses of Augusta formed the centerpiece of the town’s landscape. As centers of the town’s economic and political life, this was understandable, but they were also central to the town’s military defenses. When Gavin Cochrane described Augusta in 1764, he accorded traders’ houses a certain prominence:

The Situation of Fort Augusta is rather odd; that part of the country is most thickly inhabited beyond the Fort. Their Church is half a Mile or more beyond it; half a Mile beyond the Church is Mr Macartan’s house, fortified, wth a ditch, &c, & ten pieces of canon: a mile & half beyond this is Lt Barnard of the Ranges his house, well fortified with a plank wall 12 feet high, & 8 or 9 pieces of cannon; & a Garrison consisting of the Lt, the QuarterMr, and thirty Rangers. Both Mr Macartan’s & this Fort are very well provided with great plenty of small arms. Two Miles farther up is Mr Raes house, stockaded.

When Cochrane arrived at Augusta, the most noticeable public buildings were the run-down fort, the church, and three private forts belonging to Indian traders. The private forts had been a feature of Augusta life since at least the Cherokee War of 1759-1760, and Edmund Atkin described the town in almost identical terms to Cochrane: “The Fort, Church, Mr Macartan’s & every other House of Security in Augusta crammed with People flying for Shelter.” Atkin further complained that “the Multitude of Little private Forts in this Neighbourhood & of Augusta distract real service, the strength within

109 Gavin Cochrane to Thomas Gage, November 27, 1764, Gage Papers, WLCL.
108 Edmund Atkin to William Henry Lyttelton, February 5, 1760, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
them being barely sufficient for their own Defence, but not to spare any Men for Scouting. Consequently the Indians range at large uncontrolled."^{110}

Sheltering inside the private homes of Augusta’s leading traders, the residents of Augusta and its environs felt firsthand the power and influence of these men, and fear at an uncontrolled landscape outside the walls. However, even when Anglo-Indian relations were peaceful, the forts remained a primary fixture of the neighborhood. And a certain military formality persisted to underwrite the traders’ role at the top of Augusta society.

The proprietors of these forts accorded each other great respect, as was the case when Francis Macartan died in 1768. He passed away at Galphin’s plantation in Silver Bluff and was interred on his own plantation near Augusta. The funeral procession upriver received the honors of a military affair, provided by the neighborhood’s private garrisons. As Macartan’s body made its way from Silver Bluff to Augusta, “minute guns were fired during the funeral procession and interment from his own and Mr. Barnard’s forts, and his own flag was hoisted half mast.”^{111}

While wars and funerals provided the most dramatic evidence of the traders’ influence, their real power lay in their stores’ centrality to more mundane affairs. Even without palisades or cannons, the residences of Augusta’s leading traders were substantial, particularly in comparison to the more modest dwellings of their neighbors. While the town center failed to develop, the large plantations surrounding Augusta presented an almost urban landscape. George Galphin’s plantation at Silver Bluff made

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^{110} Edmund Atkin to William Henry Lyttelton, January 31, 1760, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.

^{111} South Carolina Gazette, November 9, 1768.
for “a pleasant villa.” James Fraser built a “Brickhouse” on his five hundred acres in Augusta. Robert Mackay’s house had to be at least two stories high for the young widow to sit upstairs while she avoided suitors. Though none may have earned favorable comparisons with lowcountry mansions, they towered above humbler cabins such as William Mylne’s, which was “built of pine trees laid a top of one the other... covered with what they call clap boards... the contents inside sixteen feet by twelve.” Mylne’s cabin lacked the luxury of floorboard, so his single chair and mattress rested on the “clay floor.” The traders’ substantial homes set them far above their neighbors, and provided Augusta’s storekeepers with their social and economic authority in the community.

The most detailed description of an Augusta plantation came in the form of an advertisement in the Georgia Gazette in the spring of 1769. The plantation was almost a town unto itself. The unknown planter advertised a 500-acre plantation “As Compleat and Well found... as any in this province.” The main house, “newly glazed and painted,” contained two chambers, a dining room, hall, and “four very good shed rooms, and three fire places.” Flanking the dwelling were two identical 30’ X 20’ buildings: a “very good Store” and a kitchen building. The plantation also boasted a smokehouse, a dairy, a large barn, three corncribs capable of holding 1000 bushels each, a poultry house with a livery attached, as well as a “strong and well framed Stable for six or eight horses.” There were also a house for an overseer, a garden, and an orchard containing peach, apple, mulberry, and plum trees, “from which a great quantity of peach brandy, cyder, and silk, may be made” as well as a “lagoon” and convenient indigo works. The plantation came complete

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113 Abstracts of Colonial Book C-1, p. 203.
with a work force of thirty slaves, which included "a very good Bricklayer, a Driver, and two Sawyers." If the ideal plantation was a little village of its own, then this one Augustan, at least, had gone far.  

Artifacts of the deerskin trade, these little villages also mediated local exchanges between whites and made them dependents on deerskins, as well. While the trade flowed back and forth primarily from Indian towns to British merchants, it created small local exchanges that tied storekeepers' neighbors to the Indian trade. Galphin's Silver Bluff trading house took in shirts and shoes made locally, some of which found their way up the trails to Indian villages. For example, a widow named Stewart made "ruffled shirts" which she then sold to Galphin for seven shillings, six pence each. She also sewed "Tra[de] Shirts" which earned her five shillings credit each and "C[ambric] Stock[ings]" which fetched forty shillings a pair. In exchange, the Widow Stewart bought from Galphin the materials she needed—cambric (at fifty shillings a yard) and gartering (at twenty-four shillings, six pence a yard) for stockings and possibly shirt ruffles, as well as osnaburg (at seven shillings, six pence a yard) for the trading shirts. She also received other small necessaries—flowered ribbon, sleeve buttons, and needles as well as saltpetre and salt. She also sold her goods to local men, earning 2 pounds credit on Richard Brown's account for making him a pair of stockings. All in all, Stewart did not get rich through her handiwork. From the surviving entries dating between December 1767 and

114 Mylne to Robert Mylne, June 26, 1774, in Ruddock, Travels, 30, 33.
115 Georgia Gazette, March 22, 1769. Although no name appeared on the advertisement, the presence of the store as well the directive to contact either John Gordon of Charleston or Thomas Netherclift of Savannah indicated that this was the home of someone connected with the Indian trade. Gordon and Netherclift were both lowcountry merchants closely tied to the Augusta storekeepers.
116 Cambric was a very fine (and expensive) linen, osnaburg was a cheaper and much coarser linen, used primarily for work clothes.
January 1768, Stewart did not appear to fare too well at Galphin’s—her total debts amounted to £44.16s, while her labor earned her only £23.17.6 in credit.\textsuperscript{117}

Stewart’s cottage industry, though, helped supply the Indian trade and earned Galphin some extraordinary profits. Some of her shirts probably formed part of a shipment sent up the trails with Timothy Barnard. In the same period that Galphin took in Stewart’s sewing, he credited Barnard for “4 White Rufled Shirts” and “6 Doz. Tra\[de\] Shirts” along with vermilion, trading knives, gun flints, and other traditional Indian trade goods. While Galphin apparently exercised some charity towards the widow, selling the trade shirts at loss for only 4s. 7d. apiece, the ruffled shirts now carried a value of forty shillings each (a more than 400 percent markup). By the rates going at Galphin’s store, a trader would have to bring in three dressed deerskins (worth fourteen shillings each) or four raw skins (at ten shillings each) to repay Galphin for one ruffled shirt. The Indian who bought that shirt paid more dearly still, as the trader almost certainly charged his Indian clients one or two skins more for the same shirt.\textsuperscript{118}

Augusta’s economy rose and fell with the deerskin trade. The traders’ stores remained the primary centers for trade and credit in Augusta until the end of the colonial period. These stores, with their profitable export of deerskins, provided needed capital and credit for Augusta’s local planters in the absence of a well-developed export economy. They relied on them for tools and goods, as well as for food in more difficult times. Galphin’s complex at Silver Bluff provided the neighborhood with metal goods such as pots, kettles, hoes, and nails. It provided livery in the form of saddles, bridles, and

\textsuperscript{117} Compiled from Silver Bluff Trading Post Account Book, December 3, 1767 - January 18, 1768, George Galphin Papers, MS #269, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.

\textsuperscript{118} Silver Bluff Account Book, Georgia Historical Society.
bells for livestock. Cloth, shoes, furniture, paper and ink all found their way to Silver Bluff before making their way into upcountry homes. Foodstuffs also made up part of planters' debts: staples such as wheat and corn from Galphin's mills, as well as dried beef, peas, and bacon were sold alongside luxury items such as coffee, tea, sugar, and "English Chester Cheese." To make up these debts, Galphin traded extensively in local produce, as well as animal skins. His store accounts list hogs and horses, rice and tobacco—everything from heavy chests to candle wicks crossed Galphin's counter.

As the case of Mrs. Stewart suggested, however, locals' balances often ran into the red. According to Mylne, new planters in the region were "generally in debt to the storekeeper who gives them his own price for their produce and that in goods not money." Their indebtedness caused resentment towards the local storekeepers, and they complained of "the extravagant rates they are obliged to give for goods." The cost of this indebtedness could be great: in 1758 William Irvin sold seven horses, eight head of cattle, twenty six hogs and "all his household furniture and utensils" to Macartan & Campbell for seventy-one pounds currency. Macartan and Campbell likewise received human property for debts, as when Dugald Campbell, a "victualler," sold them his slave Philis for 136 pounds currency. Nehemiah Wade, Jr. mortgaged his only two slaves, a "woman named Hegg and her child named Sam" to Lachlan McGillivray for 203 pounds

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119 Galphin Papers, GHS
120 Mylne to Anne Mylne, May 29, 1774, in Ruddock, Travels, p. 26.
121 Mylne to Robert Mylne, June 26, 1774, in Ruddock, Travels, p. 32.
currency. Augusta stores provided more than the necessaries of life, they also provided upcountry Georgia with a darker legacy of human bondage.

Black faces were a common sight in Augusta from the earliest days of its settlement, but their lives have largely been forgotten in the historic record. Slaveholding was fairly widespread in the area, in the town itself, in the neighboring community of Halifax some twenty miles downriver, and along the Little River some twenty miles farther north. Based on petitions for headright land grants, where each inhabitant testified to the number of people in his household, one can gain a rough sense of how prevalent slavery was in early Augusta. By 1760, the governor and council had heard petitions from 103 heads of household, 34 of which (33 percent) had at least one slave. By 1770, the numbers had grown: 323 heads of household, with 116 (36 percent) claiming at least one slave. While Augusta probably did not have a black majority, the local population was nonetheless early involved in the institution, such that one could only dream of wealth if one dreamed of slaves.

\[124\] My reasoning for including such a large range of territory was based on a quote from William Mylne that “Their [sic] are few stores in this part, people comes twenty mile.” Mylne to Anne Mylne, May 29, 1774, in Ruddock, Travels, 26. I also took into account the fact that, while few of the Augusta traders owned land upriver from Augusta, many owned land in Halifax, and their slaves might be expected to live and work in both districts.
\[125\] Compiled from petitions recorded in the Minutes of the Governor and Council, Colonial Records of Georgia, from 1754-1769, vols. 7-10. For persons making multiple petitions, I counted only the last in each of two time frames: 1754-1759, and 1760-1769. I included in the Augusta count the settlements nearest Savannah River (Augusta, Kioka Creek, Little River) but not those for Briar Creek, as there was no easy way to determine where along Briar Creek the claims were made, and many or most of those could have been too far south to count as part of the Augusta neighborhood. I included the district of Halifax because it was closely tied to Augusta, and it bordered George Galphin’s trading store across the river at Silver Bluff, and many of Augusta’s inhabitants held land in Halifax. For those with grants in both districts, I counted only the largest number of slaves on the latest petition in each of my two time windows. The count also includes petitions for the Town and Township of Augusta, where petitioners were not required to give account of their household, which I counted as zero slaves. Thus, these numbers almost certainly underestimate the actual numbers of slaves in and around Augusta.
While Augusta’s slaveholders did not rival their lowcountry counterparts for the size of their estates, many did hold large numbers of slaves from a very early period. The wealthiest storekeepers held many men, women, and children in bondage. By 1760, the surviving members of Brown, Rae, and Company claimed ownership of dozens of African-Americans: John Rae claimed thirty-six, George Galphin claimed upwards of forty, and Lachlan McGillivray fifty slaves. McGillivray and his partner Daniel Clark as co-partners claimed another forty-two. A decade later, their holdings had increased. Rae, Galphin, and McGillivray each claimed more than eighty slaves in their households. Edward Barnard, the son-in-law and heir of the Augusta storekeeper James Fraser, owned eight slaves in 1760, but more than sixty ten years later. While it was certain that many, or even most, of these bondsmen and women worked on Augustans’ lowcountry plantations, many provided the labor for the neighborhood as well.

The gentlemen of Augusta depended on the credit and wealth supplied by deerskins, but their economic endeavors presented a microcosm of British North American enterprise. Patrick Brown raised indigo; Galphin and McGillivray both owned mills; Rae and Galphin held large stocks of cattle, and a number of their cowpens dotted the landscape and served as landmarks on Georgia maps and in headright petitions. Other local planters raised tobacco and rice, though not to the extent one would expect in other colonies such as Virginia and South Carolina. All of these industries relied on slave labor, and black boatmen, field hands, mill workers, cowboys, and sawyers made the business of Augusta possible. They even served in the defense of Augusta during the Cherokee War. In 1760 Edmond Atkin counted twenty African-Americans in one fortified house,
“of whom 14 are able to use [arms] but they have none, nor even Axes or Hatchets.”

Unsurprisingly, African-Americans in and around Augusta played the same roles in that developing settlement that an earlier generation of “black pioneers” had played in the formation of the South Carolina lowcountry.

Slaves also played a vital role in the deerskin trade itself. They acted as packhorsemen and servants in Indian towns, as well as serving as a supplement to Indian labor in the processing of deerskins themselves. By the 1760s, the trade in “raw” or undressed skins had increased due to decreased regulation in the trade and increased hunting among Indian men. The burden of drying and stretching the raw skins had traditionally fallen on Indian women. After the Seven Years’ War, Indians began seeking a larger trade in undressed skins because it saved time and labor. While some European leather dressers had also begun demanding raw skins, undressed leather rotted easily and could prove an unstable source of income. Unsurprisingly, traders’ slaves began learning the techniques of dressing deerskins. Some, like David George, “mended deer skins” while living in Indian towns. Quite likely, numerous raw skins coming into stores such as Macartan and Campbell’s or George Galphin’s Silver Bluff store were processed by enslaved labor before being shipped down to Charleston.

Involvement in the deerskin trade led to closer forms of association between whites and Africans. Indian trader John Spencer’s gift to the young Thomas Millen hinted

126 Edmond Atkin to William Henry Lyttelton, February 16, 1760, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
129 On the increased trade in raw skins at Macartan and Campbell’s, see Piker, *Oakfuskee*, 150, on Indian women’s roles in Creek hunting and the change to raw skins, see Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 68-69.
at the trade's more intimate contacts. The young man received from Spencer "a mulatto fellow named Catoe, his wife Emelia, and her son Dick; a Negro woman named Memba and her daughter, a mulatto named Sapphoe" as well as "a Negro fellow named Jamie and his wife, Penda." It was quite possible that Spencer had in fact fathered Memba's mulatto daughter. Racial boundaries were not as rigid among Indian traders as in the post-Stono Carolina lowcountry. In Indian towns, relations between white and black men and Indian women were common and miscegenation could very easily have been the reason behind the bachelor Isaac Barksdale's freeing "Nancey and her two mulatto children, named Johney and Salley" in his will.

Galphin allowed his slaves more freedoms than was usual in the colonial Southeast, particularly in matters of religion. David George, who had mended deerskins in Indian towns while bonded to one of Galphin's traders, went to live at Silver Bluff, where Galphin used him as a house servant "to wait upon him." While in Galphin's employ, George attended Baptist sermons at Galphin's mill and was eventually baptized in the mill's stream. Baptism gave George a calling, and he began preaching himself. He helped found Old Springfield Baptist Church, one of the earliest black churches in Georgia. Not everyone was as comfortable with George's preaching as Galphin seemingly was, particularly as the Revolution neared. George remembered that as a period "when the Ministers were not allowed to come amongst us [slaves] lest they should furnish us with too much knowledge." During the war, George escaped to Canada, where he turned missionary, and eventually led a body of over 1,000 souls to settle in Sierra

Leone. While George’s story indicated that Galphin was “one of the least racially conscious persons in the vicinity,” the Silver Bluff store, like other trading stores helped institutionalize slavery in Augusta more than it did to break down racial barriers in the Southeast.

If Galphin was willing to allow his slaves more freedom than many of his colonial peers, his store account book revealed the extent to which racial distinctions had worked their way into everyday life. The ledger listed numerous categories of fabric, and these were divided between their prospective wearers. Entries listed the sale of “Whitemans Shirts” or “fine White Mans Check Shirts” alongside such items as “Negro Cloth” and “Negro Shoes.” Even at the level of dress, Galphin was willing to delineate between the proper attire for a free man and that for a slave. Galphin extended this distinction to his own children as well, dividing up his estate among his numerous children from various liaisons with Indian, African-American, and mulatto women. He granted freedom to his “mulatto girls, daughters of a mulatto woman named Sapha” as well as his “mulatto girl named Barbara (Daughter of Rose, deceased).”

Even if Galphin was more benign than most, his slaves did not accept their status at Silver Bluff. During the Revolution, when many slaves attempted to find their way to freedom by crossing over to British lines, the enslaved residents of Silver Bluff joined this short but important migration. As Archibald Campbell’s British regiment marched

132 "Life of David George," Black Loyalists.
134 Cashin, Old Springfield, 7.
135 Silver Bluff Trading Post Account Book, George Galphin Papers, MS #269, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.
towards Augusta in January 1779, his force met “90 of Golphin’s Negroes” which had “deserted his Plantation, and joined the Troops under my Command.”\textsuperscript{137} Hoping for their freedom, these refugees found no friendship behind British lines. Campbell used the slaves as a bargaining chip with Galphin to dissuade him from influencing the Creeks to remain neutral in the war. The threat of his slaves’ emancipation convinced Galphin and three days later Campbell received “a penitential Letter from Golphin.” Campbell sent the slaves downriver “to be preserved for Mr. Golphin, in Case he continued to act in the same friendly part towards us, during the rest of the Campaign.”\textsuperscript{138} It was almost certainly for this reason that Galphin amended his will to read, “None of the negroes may have any mourning or anything else (on account of their ingratitude).”\textsuperscript{139} Even David George preferred freedom to bondage to his “kind” master, since he fled to Canada at the first opportunity.

As important, if not more so, than their economic worth, the enslaved population in Augusta presented its residents with a dream of wealth based on slaveholding. A crucial component of the development and entrenchment of slaveholding in North America was the system’s ingraining in its participants, be they actual slaveholders or merely would-be masters, the belief that holding their fellow humans in bondage granted them the possibility of future wealth and comfort.\textsuperscript{140} The Malcontents of Georgia used

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\item \textsuperscript{136} Galphin’s will quoted in John Shaw Billings, “Analysis of the Will of George Galphin” Richmond County History 13, no. 1-2 (1981): 29-38 at 31.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Campbell, Journal, 53.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Campbell, Journal, 56.
\item \textsuperscript{139} quoted in Billings, “Analysis,” 33.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Joyce Chaplin has identified this myth’s appeals in lowcountry South Carolina during the eighteenth century in her An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815, Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). Walter Johnson has perhaps most ably demonstrated the power slavery held
\end{itemize}
Augusta's prosperity to demonstrate the necessity of slaveholding to whites' future prospects, and articulated the earliest slaveholding fantasies in Georgia. By the 1770s, it had become common wisdom that Trustee Georgia's inability to develop was a "Backwardness," stemming from "the Prohibition of introducing African Servants." When the broken and bankrupt William Mylne came to the Augusta area, his future prosperity came only in a vision of himself as a planter, "to buy three negroes, to bring Willie and a white maid servant over, with these I could live easily and contented, [and] lay by some money yearly." Slaves allowed for dreams of individual achievement, but white Augustans also used them to cement social ties with their fellow slaveowners. James Fraser helped his son-in-law Edward Barnard get started in life by selling him nine slaves, in addition to all Fraser's household furniture. In December 1757, Thomas Bassett expressed his affection for his "beloved Son" Thomas and his daughter Louissa through the gift of fifteen and eleven slaves respectively. The gift was formalized "by the delivery of the lad named Dick" for Thomas and "by the delivery of Charles in the name of all the slaves mentioned" for Louissa. In 1758 John Spencer became the benefactor of Thomas Millen when he gave the young man a stock of cattle and horses, as well as ten slaves. The trader Daniel Douglass followed suit in 1760 with his own gift of a slave named June.

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143 *Colonial Book J*, 17.


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to Sarah Clark’s son John. In addition to their patronage of their neighbors’ and friends’ children, Augusta slaveholder used their slaves to cement bonds with lowcountry gentlemen as well. Hence, Lachlan McGillivray gave the Savannah planter Matthew Roche’s daughter Bellamy a “Negro woman named Cassandra” in 1761.

The coming of the American Revolution and the rapid disappearance of Indian traders from the Augusta landscape demonstrated the limitations of the trading company’s power. By 1780, the men who had dominated town life for forty years had largely disappeared. Death claimed many: Macartan died in 1768, John Rae in 1772, Edward Barnard and Robert Mackay in 1775, and George Galphin in 1780. Others left Augusta, such as Lachlan McGillivray who moved to a plantation near Savannah in the 1760s and retired to his native Scotland in 1782. However, unlike the powerful families of Virginia or Massachusetts, the leaders of Augusta did not manage to transfer their legacies or social positions to a younger generation. By 1783, a new generation of men had taken over the government of Augusta and begun to remake the town into a market center for tobacco and later cotton. The lack of continuity resulted from the dislocations of war, but also from Augustans’ seeming inability to transfer their wealth influence to a younger generation.

The traders at Augusta, while amassing sizable estates, often did not keep that wealth within the community. Many traders kept close ties with relatives in Scotland and Ireland and transferred their property to those living across the Atlantic. William Sludders

145 *Colonial Book J*, 176.
146 *Colonial Book J*, 189-90; Clark was the son of the Indian trader Patrick Clark.
148 Edward J. Cashin, “But Brothers, It Is Our Land We Are Talking About,” in Ronald Hoffman, Thad Tate, and Peter Albert, eds. *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution*,
left two-thirds of his property to his siblings living in Scotland. Daniel Clark divided
2,500 pounds sterling, the bulk of his estate, between his brother and brother-in-law
living in Inverness, Scotland. John Francis Williams remembered the family he left in
Barbados much more generously than he did his own wife, Catherine. He left over 2000
pounds sterling to Barbadians, and only 50 pounds sterling to his widow, much to the
chagrin of his former partner Mackay.149 Lachlan McGillivray and George Galphin
likewise remembered their overseas relatives.150 These latter two men, though, also
provided generously for their children by Indian wives, some of whom chose to remain in
their respective towns for the duration of their lives. That each of these wills was divided
among many in part might explain why the traders’ wealth did not remain concentrated in
Augusta from one generation to the next.

Another key factor in the disappearance of the Augusta traders was their heavy
burden of debt. The Revolution’s origins in Georgia began in part with a series of Indian
attacks in response to the “New Purchase” of 1773. George Galphin and other Augusta
traders had convinced the Cherokees to grant the British a large territory north and west
of Augusta as a means of repayment of longstanding debts accrued through the deerskin
trade. The traders would then use the land sales to pay off their lowcountry and British
creditors. Gov. James Wright of Georgia approved the measure, but the Creek Indians did
not. They also claimed the lands so generously given by the Cherokees, and unhappy
Creek warriors took out their frustrations on whites moving into the territory. These

Published for the United States Capitol Historical Society (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press,
1985), 240-75 at 274-75.
149 Abstracts of Colonial Wills, 28, 125-26, 145-46. Mackay was outraged that Williams “has left upwards
of a dozen legacies to people in Barbadoes—A thousand Pounds to his daughter and only fifty Pounds to
events joined with Georgia Whigs' complaints against the British and formed the Revolutionary impulse in Georgia. However, the traders' debts were a direct result of the demands of keeping company in Georgia.

Robert Mackay’s dozens of plates and expensive furniture were part of the huge debt owed to the Savannah merchant Thomas Netherclift, and they tied Mackay directly to the politics of the New Purchase. The cost of keeping company in Augusta was certainly astronomical, as evidenced by Netherclift informing Mackay of a bill for “£1538.14.1 Stlg. a very heavy sum to add to the old Ballance.” Only the credit afforded by the Indian trade could have allowed these Augustans to maintain their lifestyle, though even that was in danger. At that time, Netherclift hoped that the sales of lands from the proposed New Purchase would help settle the accounts, and that the free trade following the Proclamation of 1763 would be ended, allowing the large store at Augusta to claim a proper share of the trade and make up their old debts. As Netherclift fumed, any one who thought the trade should remain open “shoud go to the Devil.” Netherclift feared, though, that “the people of England have such a notion of Monopoly... that I am affraid Mr Wright’s sollicitations will be in vain.” In the end, Mackay and Netherclift got what they wanted, and the New Purchase was approved. It also eventually cost Augusta the heaviest price by severing the town from its old connections with both southeastern Indians and the British Empire.

Mrs W when she chooses to cal for it.” Robert Mackay to Mary Mackay, Jan. 10, 1775, Mack-Stiles MS, SHC.


151 Thomas Netherclift to Robert Mackay, May 29, 1772, House Family Papers, MS 1196, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.

152 Netherclift to Mackay, May 29, 1772, House Family Papers, MS 1196, Georgia Historical Society.
After the Revolution, the estates of Indian traders became valuable property as Augusta became the new state capital of Georgia. The case of Robert Mackay’s “White House” tract exemplified the ways in which the Augusta companies quickly collapsed in the face of the American Revolution. Mackay’s son Robert went on to a successful career as a Savannah merchant and never again lived in Augusta. The house in and land on which young Robert had grown up became the property of Mackay’s old friend, Andrew McLean, during the war. After McLean’s death in 1784, the White House tract was sold to pay his outstanding debts to Mackay’s old creditor, Thomas Netherclift. William Greenwood of Charleston purchased the property. Greenwood quickly divided the 500 acres and sold them at a profit to Peter Carnes, Dr. John Hartford Montgomery, and Ezekial Harris. Harris further divided his share of the property to establish the town of Harrisburg around 1800, with himself as the hamlet’s largest proprietor, building a large two-story house and tobacco warehouse to take advantage of the changing economy of the Augusta neighborhood. The little village’s grid pattern eventually allowed its easy incorporation into the town of Augusta in the 1770s, but by 1800 the stone house owned by Mackay and whatever traces of his former residence that survived the war had been erased from the Augusta landscape.153

The rapidity with which the great traders vanished from Augusta was remarkable considering the central role they had played in shaping the colonial town. Once the vital connection between whites and Indians had been severed, their authority vanished along with their properties. They survived only in a few place names such as Rae’s Creek (now running through Augusta’s most famous landmark, the Augusta National golf course).

The severing of ties also spelled disaster for the Indians of the Southeast. The “Virginia men” who came to dominate the town devised land speculation schemes such as the Yazoo Fraud as a means of forming new wealth in Augusta. The greatest continuity lay in these new men’s attitudes towards African-Americans. They expanded upon the slaveholding of eighteenth-century Augusta and entrenched enslaved labor as the basis for the new town, which would be a center for the cotton boom of the early-nineteenth-century Southeast.

Augustans depended on the trading path. It was the key to their fortunes and their place atop Georgia’s upcountry society. It took a revolution to undo the connection, but once the trade moved south to Pensacola and Mobile, the great trading companies vanished from the Augusta landscape. Dependent as they were on the path, Augustans did their best to maintain control over it. But as John Ross noted in his will, the companies’ dominion did not extend much beyond Augusta itself. In Augusta, the company provided certainty and directed social relations. On the path, the outcome of any individual journey remained in doubt, as traders had very little control over who might join them on their travels. The companies tried to limit access to the paths as best they could, but they had no real power to do so. Instead, Indian preferences, natural forces, and horses ruled the paths. Traders left Augusta knowing that they could only react to the challenges of the trails. They could in no way predict them.
CHAPTER FOUR

TO MAKE THE PATH WHITE AND CLEAR:
POSSIBILITIES AND PROBLEMS IN SOUTHEASTERN TRAVEL

It was an uncommon sight, the hatchet in the path. Thomas Bosomworth and his wife Mary had recently been commissioned to travel to the Creeks and resolve a dispute with the Cherokees that threatened the fresh peace between those Indian nations. The traders feared that the Bosomworths' unprecedented goal of extracting Creek concessions for a recently murdered Cherokee warrior would upset the Anglo-Creek peace. Such a development threatened the traders' profits, if not their very lives. The day after setting out from Augusta for the Creek town of Cowetas, the Bosomworths came across a "bloody Hatchett sticking right in the Path with some light coloured white Person's Hair about the Head of it." The hatchet's handle, "finely adorned with fresh Peacock's Feathers and Wood painted all over fresh with Vermilion," presented an exotic and singular appearance in southeastern history, since fresh peacock's feathers were "seldom found in the Woods." Thomas Bosomworth recognized the ploy immediately as "Mean Artifice indeed," planted by the Augusta traders who "set to work all the Engines of their policy to bugbear and frighten us from executing the Commands of the Government."1

1 Journal of Thomas Bosomworth, July 13-14, 1752, in William L. McDowell, ed. Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, The Colonial Records of South Carolina, series 2: The Indian Books, Published for the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 2 vols. (Columbia: The University of South Carolina 156

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The traders (or whoever planted the hatchet) played upon the uncertainties of path-based travel in the Southeast. What the traders probably hoped to demonstrate to the Bosomworths was their personal influence along the trails, an influence that could cause troubles for unwanted interlopers. The tactic was somewhat effective for the hatchet "a little intimidated Mrs. Bosomworth," although Thomas Bosomworth "was still determined to proceed, and that Nothing but Death itself should prevent my endeavouring to discharge the Trust reposed in me."\(^2\) The traders' ploy revealed their powerlessness to prevent anyone from traveling the path between Augusta and the Creeks, or any of the other trading routes that crossed southeastern North America. The paths were neutral spaces, made so by Indian preferences and Indian politics. The Bosomworths' journey, an effort to improve their standing in colonial society and lend credibility to their ambitious land claims, was but one of many such new beginnings that the paths afforded—status was not fixed along the trails. The Bosomworths, Indians, slaves, and the traders themselves all took advantage of the neutrality of paths to remake themselves in southeastern society.

The path was the central metaphor in southeastern relations. A "white, clear, and straight" path in the context of Anglo-Indian talks signified peace and amity, an ideal route free of dangers and open equally to all sides. Materially, southeastern Indians represented friendly paths as strings of white beads. In 1758, Cherokee headmen reminded Gov. William Henry Lyttleton of South Carolina that "The String of white Beads is your own Talk formerly when the Path was white and clear." Recently, however, 

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relations had soured and the Indians gave Lyttleton a “String [of] black Beads” to “shew that the Path is foul and bloody.”

3 Violence “bloodied” the path, making friendly communication more difficult and increasing hostility and mistrust on both sides. The goal of much Indian diplomacy, particularly for Augusta’s leading trade partners, the Creeks, was to maintain a “white” path—friendship without compulsion extended to all Europeans, be they French, British, or Spanish. For the Creeks, the use of the trading path, a passive metaphor, reflected this desire to maintain their neutrality in the face of European conflicts. To ally themselves too closely would risk transforming the neutral path to a binding “covenant chain.”

British governors new to Southeast brought their familiarity with Iroquois diplomacy, referencing the “chain of friendship” when negotiating with southern Indians.

4 Very seldom did Indians echo the phrase, for they had long heard from the French that the English planned to make slaves of them all, preparing literal chains for their women and children. British governors who spoke too much of the “chain of friendship” risked calling these rumors to mind and further entrenching the association between British friendship and Indian enslavement. An effective communicator such as Georgia’s Governor Henry Ellis quickly learned to adapt his speech to suit southern tastes. When Ellis arrived in Georgia in 1757, he greeted numerous Indian emissaries and his talks frequently included references to the “chain of friendship.” Only one Indian that year—

2 Appendix to the Journal of Thomas Bosomworth, DRIA, 1: 330.
3 Headmen of the Cherokee Lower Towns to William Henry Lyttleton, March 4, 1758, in Lachlan McIntosh to Lyttleton, March 4, 1758, DRIA vol. 2, p. 444.
out of dozens who talked with Ellis—employed the phrase. Ellis probably recognized his error, and even used French tactics to his advantage when he warned the Creeks that “[the French] had already begun to make Chains” for Creek hands. By the end of his Georgia tenure in 1760, Ellis had completely abandoned the chain metaphor and referred to Anglo-Indian friendship solely in terms of the path.

Paths had more than symbolic importance, because they directly affected eighteenth-century Indian politics. In the most basic sense, Anglo-Indian trade relations helped some Creek headmen attain considerable influence in the decentralized and town-oriented political world of Creek towns. The rise of Coweta as an early Creek town of influence, its later eclipse by Oakfuskee and Okchai, and the still later rise of Little Tallassee after 1763 all depended partly on these towns’ roles as British gateways to Creek country. The headmen of these towns recognized the political influence that access to British trade goods afforded them and contested among themselves the paths’ courses as a means of defending that influence. Such was the power of paths that a man such as Emistisiguo of Little Tallassee, born an Indian slave, could turn disputed trade routes to his personal advantage and increase his influence within the Creek confederacy. Such

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6 Ellis’s first talks with Indians typically included a reference to the “chain of friendship.” Minutes of Governor and Council, May 18, 1757, September 13, 1757, and November 3, 1757. CRG 7: 567, 630, 663. By the end of his governorship in 1760, Ellis had abandoned the chain metaphor altogether and employed the path metaphor. Minutes and Proceedings of Governor and Council, April 28, 1760, May 20, 1760, June 5, 1760, CRG, 8: 293, 313, 320. For his part, Ellis’s successor James Wright used the path metaphor rather than the chain in his first talk with Indians. Minutes and Proceedings of Governor and Council, Nov. 7, 1760, CRG, 8: 415.

7 Coweta’s rise to prominence in the Apalachicola Indian province began with their close contact to English-supplied Westo Indians in the late seventeenth century. Steven C. Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 29-39. Okfuskee and Okchai enjoyed the prestige and diplomatic influence that geography provided them as the gateway to the Upper Creek towns for British traders and agents, and struggled to maintain that superiority when the British occupied
“new men” in Indian politics had their closest counterparts in the Augusta deerskin traders, whose trade connections gave them a great deal of political influence in Anglo-Indian affairs. For Europeans, the paths similarly represented a form of opportunity, a means of advancing oneself in the supposedly “lawless” Indian interior. Those who ventured to Indians towns frequently sought a better station for themselves than was offered in British settlements. These plans included the grand schemes of Christian Gottlieb Priber’s “Kingdom of Paradise” and Alexander Cuming’s ambition to become viceroy of the Cherokees. Even William De Brahm, who had earned a comfortable living as Surveyor General of Georgia, could hope to “make himself a great Man” among the Cherokees. The opportunities to be found along the paths formed the core of the nineteenth-century rags-to-riches legend of Lachlan McGillivray. McGillivray, it was said, had built his entire fortune on a single trading knife. All of these people owed the fortunes or failures


According to an early historian of Alabama, McGillivray was a sixteen-year-old who ran away from his wealthy Scottish parents to seek adventure in America. He arrived with “no property, except a shilling in his pocket.” He joined a packhorse train from Charleston to the Chattahoochie River, earning a knife for his troubles. He traded the knife for some deerskins, “and the proceeds of his adventure laid the foundation of a
to Indian good-will, but what they saw and hoped to exploit was the path’s ability to transform one’s status. European notions of property (and their attendant degrees of social standing) weakened on the trails. That uncertainty shaped much of southeastern history and acted as an agent in these men’s search for new lives among Indians.

Despite the seeming openness of the paths, numerous forces circumscribed travel in the Southeast. At the most basic level, simply knowing where to go was a precondition of setting off. Numerous paths crossed the region, and a wrong turn could cost a traveler days or even his life. Even when headed in the right direction, a person faced the elements, difficult terrain, and the sometimes-terrifying prospect of fording a river at high flood. Added to that were the limitations of horse travel—one could move neither farther nor faster than one’s mount. Travelers were also bound to human history through the series of Indian and European wars that frequently occasioned hostile encounters. For traders, the debt-based nature of the trade was its own limitation. They were bound by their creditors and their licenses to make the annual journey from Augusta to their Indian store, and the goods they carried were never their own.

While “the path” was a central metaphor in Anglo-Indian diplomacy, no single path led directly from Indian towns to British ones. Even though paths were often marked, the web of trade routes and hunting paths proved daunting to inexperienced travelers. A few main roads did persist through the eighteenth century: the “Lower Creek Path” from Augusta to Coweta, the “Upper Creek Path” from Augusta to Oakfuskee, and the “Dividing Paths” from Charleston to the Cherokees. However, these intersected...
numerous small hunting paths which could lead a traveler far away from the known world of the main roads.

Southeastern travel proved frightening for newcomers such as William Mylne. Even in the long-settled district north of Augusta, Mylne was fearful that “I would loose myself for it is very difficult to travel in the woods, there are so many paths that intersect one another that... one may go God knows where.” Maps were likewise of little help, as Mylne discovered on a trip from Charleston to Georgetown, South Carolina. The rustling of the paper startled Mylne’s horse and he spent an hour retrieving the items lost during the horse’s mad gallop through the woods. Mylne, new to the Southeast, understandably feared the unknown of a vast interior, but even those who spent their lives on the paths knew only small sections of them.

Experienced traders did not always feel comfortable straying from the paths they knew. The most detailed map of the colonial Southeast, the Stuart-Purcell Map of 1775, offered no information other than what lay immediately along trade routes. All else remained something of a mystery. John Pettygrew, a veteran Creek trader, refused a 1759 request to travel from Augusta to the Cherokees, admitting that “he did not know the way.” Pettygrew’s reluctance was understandable, given the recent experience of Thomas Ross, one of Pettygrew’s fellow Creek traders at Augusta. In 1756 Ross had stepped off the Coweta-Augusta path and onto a “Hunting Path,” where he remained lost.

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owed his entry into the trade and the foundation of his fortune to his well-connected family members in colonial Charleston. Cashin, Lachlan McGillivray, 34-37.


13 William Mylne to Anne Mylne, March 1, 1775, in Ruddock, Travels, 61.

"seven Days and seven Nights." Ross’s week-long wandering left him “sickly” and “very much swelled” in his “Body and Legs.” He was spared starvation only by the chance discovery of “an Ear of Corn in the Path upon which I lived the seven Days.”

Even the most worn paths often proved unpredictable. The neutrality of paths created its own set of limitations because one could as easily encounter enemies as friends when traveling. The Creeks preferred such openness and certainly frustrated their British friends by refusing to punish their French ones. When an Englishman was captured near the French Fort Toulouse, the Gun Merchant of Okchai refused to intervene on the prisoner’s behalf, asserting that “the Path was open both to French and English, and he could not do any Thing in it.”

The half-century before the American Revolution combined imperial competition with longstanding Indian rivalries to create an ever-shifting pattern of alliances and animosities. Added to southeastern political turmoil were the frequent war parties from northern Indians such as the Ohio Valley Shawnees and the Iroquois League of Six Nations, both of which entered southeastern correspondence simply as “Northern” or “Northward” Indians.

While most southeasterners traveled only friendly paths, travel between the Upper Creek town of Coosa to the Chickasaws served as a constant reminder of how easily paths turned from white to red. The Chickasaw-Chocotaw wars, ongoing throughout most of the eighteenth century, made the Coosa-Chickasaw route dangerous as early as Thomas Nairne’s 1708 journey to the Mississippi River. Nairne, in company with twenty-six Chickasaw warriors, opted to go “the straightest road,” even though “it lay along close by

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15 Thomas Ross to David Douglass, Oct. 15, 1756, in Outerbridge to Lyttleton, Oct. 22, 1756, DRIA 2: 212. Ross’s ordeal resulted from his fleeing his own execution, discussed below.
the Chacta Country.” Nairne opted to hazard the route rather than go “any of the other roundabout wayes which being safer are therefor more frequented.”\textsuperscript{17} In addition to Choctaw hostility, the Chickasaws faced constant threats from the Choctaw-allied French and French-allied northern Indians, especially in times of Anglo-French war. Further endangering the route were the sometimes anti-British and anti-Chickasaw sentiments of Upper Creek warriors, who in 1756 threatened to destroy the path entirely by making war on the Chickasaws. So bloody was the path that the trader Jérôme Courtonne promised his Chickasaw clients that “in Case some Creeks should make War with us and stop the Path, I would go to the C[h]erokees and open a Path for them there.”\textsuperscript{18} The Chickasaws, for their part, resented such Creek meddling with their trade and bluntly informed the Upper Creeks that “we shall never be obliged to take no round about Path to go and see our Friends, the English.”\textsuperscript{19}

The Chickasaw path, connected to political events hundreds or even thousands of miles away, provided a small arena for continental conflict. The Wolf of Muccolasses, a headman of the Alabama Upper Creeks, explained the reasons for the path’s dangers in 1757. When the French offered scalp bounties for the Chickasaws and their British allies, Choctaw warriors “for a trifling Consideration” took “both red and white scalps... without Distinction which the Chickesaw Path can well confirm by Bones remaining to this Day.”\textsuperscript{20} Even members of a supposedly friendly nation could bloody a path, given the

\textsuperscript{17} Thomas Nairne to Robert Fenwick, April 13, 1708, in Nairne’s Muskogean Journals: The 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi River, ed. and intro. Alexander Moore (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1988), 51.

\textsuperscript{18} Jerome Courtonne to John Brown, Oct. 23, 1756, \textit{DRIA} 2: 292.

\textsuperscript{19} Chickasaw Headmen to the Gun Merchant of Okchai, Nov. 26, 1756, in Courtonne to Brown, Nov. 26, 1756, \textit{DRIA} 2: 294.

\textsuperscript{20} Daniel Pepper to William Henry Lyttleton, April 7, 1757, \textit{DRIA} 2: 364.
decentralized nature of authority among southeastern Indians. Thus in 1755 two Chickasaw traders bore the brunt of an unsuccessful Cherokee war party. The Cherokee warriors had gone against the Choctaws, “which proving fruitless they inclined a little towards our [Upper Creek] Nation with a View to kill some of us (the Creeks) but Meeting with the said two White Men, at the great Hill in the Chekesaw Path killed them.”21 The results of political circumstances, none of these acts were completely random. Taken together, they amounted to a general pattern where enemies were frequently fellow travelers.

Given these circumstances, an encounter on the trail was fraught with possibilities. A trader was more likely to meet a friend or acquaintance on any of his numerous trips, but enemies and friends looked alike at a distance. Traders set out knowing the risk, as evidenced by the will of John Ross, who left Augusta not knowing whether he would return.22 William Bartram, a complete outsider to the Southeast’s peoples and places, best expressed the fear of meeting a stranger on the paths. In the early 1770s, Bartram made a trip southward from Savannah. On the path to East Florida, he met a Seminole Indian traveling in the opposite direction.

I had now passed the utmost frontier of white settlements.... I never before this was afraid of an Indian, but at this time I must own that my spirits were quite agitated: I saw at once, that being unarmed I was in his power, and having now but a few moments to prepare, I resigned myself entirely to the will of the Almighty, trusting to his mercies for my preservation.23

In Anglo-American settlements, roads were part of an ordered, hierarchical landscape, where all travelers knew both each other and their respective roles. The loss of that

22 See above, Chapter 3, 88.
comfort nettled travelers along the paths. 24

Travelers such as Bartram acutely felt their loss of status when they stepped onto Indian paths. Thomas Bosomworth and Edmond Atkin, both commissioned Indian agents, felt their reputations slipping away during their respective sojourns among the Creeks, owing to their unpopularity with Augusta traders and the latter's spreading ill will in Charleston. Bosomworth lamented at the end of his 1752 mission that “the most innocent Man’s reputation may fall a Sacrifice to false Lips and a naught Tongue which like Arrows, that fly in the Dark, no man upon the face of the Earth can possibly guard against.” 25 Atkin, eight years later, felt himself similarly victimized and expressed his situation in strikingly similar terms. Informed that Augusta traders had “made bad Impressions on my best Friends,” Atkin accepted his helplessness to counteract them at a distance. “I have put my Candle under a Bushel,” he moaned to William Henry Lyttleton, “& I now sit in Darkness I never desire to set foot in Charlestown again, till the Sun shines on me, [and] till the Countenances of my Friends clear up.” 26 But Bosomworth and Atkin could at least take cold comfort in knowing who their enemies were, which was not true for most of their contemporaries.

As a matter of survival, southeastern travelers had to recognize the attitude of an approaching party. At first sight, it was frequently difficult to know whether an approaching party was friendly or hostile. A Creek hunting party “Discover’d some strange Indians upon the Path [and] th[e]y could not tele wither they ware Savannas or

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Cherekees,” but they did notice that the strangers “ware in a war Dress.” Adair told the story of a 1749 ride between the Flint and Ocmulgee rivers, which demonstrated the uncertainty of travel. He met a party of Shawnee Indians, whose hostility Adair could not determine until they were close enough for him to notice that “instead of carrying their bow and quiver over their shoulder, as is the traveling custom, they held the former in their left hand, bent.” After convincing the party that he was an “English Chikkasah” at the head of a large war party, Adair managed to escape only to encounter another Indian party on the same path. Ready to flee into a nearby swamp, Adair recognized the approaching Indians as friendly Creek headmen returning from Charleston. Relieved, he greeted his friends and warned them of the Shawnees, advising them to leave the path and “go home through the woods, to prevent a larger body of the lurking enemy from spoiling them.”

To identify others’ intentions, southerners often relied on trade goods and personal property as markers of hostility. Personal property assisted the navigation of southeastern paths, in some cases quite literally, as when two British deserters carried with them “a large tin Pot on the Side of which was laid down the Path to the said Fort.” Indians recognized their own goods and those of their fellows, and finding one’s personal possessions in the hands of another party identified former attackers and targets of revenge. In 1737, several Upper Creeks killed three men from Spanish Florida, when the Creeks “found a Gun belonging to one of their People, who had been killed with his

26 Edmond Atkin to Lyttleton, Jan. 9, 1760, Lyttleton Papers, WLCL.
27 George Galphin to William Henry Lyttleton, June 11, 1759, Lyttleton Papers, WLCL.
29 Daniel Pepper to Lyttleton, May 25, 1757, DRIA 2: 377-78.
Family some time ago, for which reason they killed them all that Night."30 When three Savannah Indians robbed the house of white settlers, James Glen hoped that "an iron Pot, a frying Pan, some Shirts, some Sheets, and a blue Cloth Pettycoat.... may perhaps help to discover them."31 A Cherokee warrior in 1752 explained his killing of a white man by the victim’s association with stolen property. "He saw a horse that the Creeks took away when they killed one of his Relations, and thought then he should have Satisfaction, not knowing there was any white Man in the House."32

Even traveling a peaceful path required a great deal of skill and endurance. A party could travel only twenty to twenty five miles a day on average, making use of the numerous campsites that dotted the trails and all the while exposed to the vagaries of wind and weather. When Daniel Pepper described the route between the Lower and Upper Creeks in 1756, he noted that he was "very much fatigued" by the "very bad stoney and hilly Path which makes it tedious."33 The Cherokee trader Anthony Dean likewise painted a bleak picture of southeastern travel to justify his colleagues’ reliance on rum. He maintained that "there are no People... that a little Spirit is more necessary for than the poor Traders" whose "Journies lie over Hills, and Dales, Rivers and Creeks, subject to Want, Danger, and all the Inclemencies of Weather."34

While traveling, traders were constantly aware of how little control they had over their own lives, their personal comfort and safety dependent on chance meetings with friends or enemies and their economic future dependent upon preserving goods from

30 South Carolina Gazette, March 5, 1737.
32 Talk of Skiagunsta of Keowe and the Good Warrior of Estatoe, [1752], in DRIA 1: 249.
33 Daniel Pepper to Lyttleton, Nov. 18, 1756, DRIA 2: 55-56
34 Anthony Dean to James Glen, April 13, 1752, in DRIA 1: 259-60.
damage in transit. The weeks-long journeys, "the great Fatigue of carrying up Goods," defined the traders' role on the paths. They were little more than vessels for carrying trade items and skins back and forth. Goods had to survive each leg of the journey to ensure the traders' continuation in both Indian esteem and economic standing. These men were often "great Sufferers as their Goods are often damaged; in carrying up, the Guns are often broken, and the Leather they receive in Exchange for Goods sometimes gets wet, and is spoiled in coming down." Their goods were the most valuable property, even more so than the traders' bodies, a fact made evident during a thunderstorm, when "all our skins and bedding were cast over the packs of merchandize to prevent them from being injured by the deluge of rain." Traders also suffered from distant weather patterns; flooded rivers were a constant nuisance, if not a peril, for southeastern travelers.

Unlike the Savannah River boatmen or the merchants of Charleston, for whom rivers were important connectors, traders and packhorsemen regarded rivers primarily as obstacles. The numerous river systems of the Southeast, with their regular flooding, offered the traveler a harrowing and unpredictable experience with each crossing. Adair described the path from Augusta to Fort Toulouse as "a great deal of hilly ground, and bad rivers, very full and rapid in the winter: Insomuch that, in our trading way, we have great hardships in crossing them." Bosomworth at one point had to delay his mission because "the Creeks or rivulets were swelled so high with the late Rains, we could

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36 Ibid. 398-99.
37 Bartram, *Travels*, 244.
38 "Lauglin McGilvery" to William Henry Lyttleton, July 14, 1758, Lyttleton Papers, WLCL. Although signed with McGillivray's name, the author of this letter was almost certainly Adair. See Cashin, *McGillivray*, 170-71.
proceed no farther.”  Moreover, the length of river courses and their origins in the Appalachian Mountains meant that floods could arise in areas where not a raindrop fell. As Adair recounted on one of his trips, three times he was delayed “on account of a very uncommon and sudden flow of the rivers, without any rain.”

The navigation of such capricious rivers relied on small, temporary watercraft built to Indian specifications. Traders rigged a leather skin with a frame of saplings and loaded their cargoes into these “leathorn canoes.” The traders would then swim the river, pushing the skin boats ahead of them—a practice learned from southeastern Indians, who had been crossing the same rivers for centuries. Thomas Nairne had first observed the Chickasaws doing this in 1708, reporting that “to see every man make a Boat of his bed, and therein carry over Cloaths Arms and Ammunition very dry, was a thing I had not seen before.” The crossings were not always smooth, as trader Jeremiah Knott discovered in 1735. “In crossing Coosaw with his Goods, his Canoe was overset, and he lost in Goods to the Value of Two Hundred Weight of Deer Skins.”

The difficulty of travel, however, would have been familiar to the majority of Indian traders, even if they were setting out on their first journey. Many of them came from Ireland and Scotland, where travel was equally difficult. Eighteenth-century England had developed a system of regular roads and stagecoach routes, but many eighteenth-century roads on the “Celtic fringe” remained muddy, rocky, and difficult footpaths. As

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39 Journal of Thomas Bosomworth, Nov. 6, 1752, DRIA 1: 319.
40 Adair, History, 291.
41 McGillvery to Lyttleton, July 14, 1758, Lyttleton Papers, WLCL.
43 Nairne to Fenwick, April 13, 1708, in Nairne, Journals, p. 55.
44 Deposition of Jeremiah Knott, in Memorial Benjamin Goodin et al, July 4, 1735, SCPRO 17: 431
one commissioner of roads described the early highways of Scotland, they were “merely
the tracks of black cattle and horses, intersected by numerous rapid streams, which being
frequently swollen into torrents by heavy rains, rendered them dangerous or
impassable.”45 Eighteenth-century Ireland experienced a similar development, with
regular stagecoach routes in place only by the end of the eighteenth century.46

What would have been new was the company one kept on the trail. The hardships
of travel, combined with political uncertainty, made large horse caravans the vehicle of
choice for southeastern traders. Supplying an entire village with a year’s worth of goods
required anywhere from sixty to a hundred horses, guided by a party of four or more men,
each one armed to the teeth to ward off attacks. As Nairne described his company, “Our
camp was not much unlike a crew of Gipsies, only that we were all armed men.”47 On a
journey through the Lower Creek towns in 1773, with the Creeks and Choctaws at war,
Bartram chose “for the better convenience and security” to join “company with a caravan
of traders.”48 Bartram’s companions, in “humanity and friendship,” refused to let him
travel alone, “saying I must not be left alone to perish in the wilderness.”49 The company
of traders, maintained by a common bond of uncertainty, provided a sense of community
and the presence of arms gave the caravan a paramilitary aspect that was reflected in
traders’ choice of dress.

45 Thomas Telford quoted in Anne Gordon, To Move with the Times: The Story of Transport and Travel in
46 Philip Bagwell and Peter Lyth, Transport in Britain: From Canal Lock to Gridlock (London: Hambledon
and London, 2002), 37-49; Gordon, To Move with the Times, 1-15; J. L. McCracken, “The Age of the Stage
Coach,” in Kevin B. Nowlan, ed. Travel and Transport in Ireland (New York: Barnes & Noble Books,
1973), 47; see also John G. Barry, “Transport and Communication in Medieval and Tudor Ireland,” in
Nowlan, Transport and Travel, 32-46.
47 Nairne to Fenwick, April 13, 1708, in Nairne, Journals, 51-52.
48 Bartram, Travels, 277.
49 Bartram, Travels, 279.
Traders marked themselves as adventurers with their choice in apparel. Though in some sense a practical matter, martial dress came to mark those who traveled the paths. Upon his death in 1757, Daniel Clark distributed horses, money, and property to a multitude of relatives, friends, and charitable societies. For traders John McGillivray and William Sludders, he reserved his “wearing apparel, riding saddle, bridle, furniture, swords, belts, guns, and pistols.” Sludders, for his part, distributed his property to his old partners John Rae, Lachlan McGillivray, and George Galphin, but he singled out one Nicholas Swarts to take his “best riding horse, saddle... my pistols and gun.” The Augusta merchant Isaac Barksdale remembered his partner John Rae’s children according to their professions. Rae’s daughter and eldest son, who remained in Augusta, each received money and property. Rae’s son William, a trader to the Oakfuskees, earned Barksdale’s “gun and pistols.” Each of these heirs undoubtedly had their own weaponry, but there was likely a symbolic importance in passing one’s own arms to another generation of Indian traders.

That packhorsemen wore a certain costume was evident from the unfortunate experience of William Bonar. Bonar, a surveyor and cartographer, had accompanied Daniel Pepper during his 1756-1757 agency among the Creeks. Pepper hoped to use Bonar’s skills to scout and map the French Fort Toulouse, and “privately sent him in Disguise as a Packhorseman to take a View of the Alabama Fort.” Pepper’s idea of a disguise, though, consisted of “the very worst Cloaths he [Bonar] had” and mounted on

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50 *Abstracts of Colonial Wills of the State of Georgia, 1733-1777* (Atlanta: Atlanta Town Committee of the National Society Colonial Dames of America in the State of Georgia for the Department of Archives and History in the Office of Secretary of State, 1962), 28.
52 *Abstract of Colonial Wills*, 10.
“his worst Horse, leaving his favourite one in the Yard at the Oakchoy’s.” Bonar’s dress fooled no one because he was captured by the French. A packhorseman, presumably, would not have presented so shabby an appearance. They had too much pride in themselves and in their horses to let themselves appear foolish before either French competitors or Indian clients.

Despite the presence of arms, there was little doubt that the horses themselves were really in charge of southeastern travel. For as much as the pressure of debt urged on the traders, they could move only as fast as their horses. The packhorse trains themselves lurched forward at an uneven pace, alternating between relentless progress and long periods of rest. William Bartram found their rhythms odd enough to remark on them. The trains “seldom decamp until after the sun is high and hot” and come to camp “frequently in the middle of the afternoon, which is the pleasantest time of day for travelling.” In the few hours they moved, “the chief drives with the crack of his whip, and a whoop or a shriek, which rings through the forests and plains, speaks in Indian, commanding them to proceed… keeping up a brisk and constant trot, which is incessantly urged and continued as long as the miserable creatures are able to move forward.” The pace was too much for Bartram’s horse, which he had to sell for a fresh one in order to keep up.

A constant march through the heat of a Gulf Coast summer quickly wore out packhorses. On the same trek, Bartram, himself tormented by the heat and biting flies, found a great deal of sympathy for the animals. Only a few days into the journey, the horses, “through fatigue of constant traveling, heat of the climate and season, were tired

53 Pepper to Lyttleton, May 7, 1757, DRIA 2: 373.
54 Pepper to Lyttleton, May 25, 1757, DRIA 2: 378.
55 Bartram, Travels, 278.
and dispirited.” They thus “came to camp sooner than usual and started later the next
day.” Even so, the following day they traveled “but a few miles; the heat and the burning
flies tormenting our horses to such a degree, as to excite compassion even in the hearts of
pack-horsemen… the head, neck and shoulders of the leading horses were continually in a
gore of blood” from the fly bites. The day after that, they “halted at noon, being unable
longer to support ourselves under such grievances.”

As Bartram discovered, the needs of horses dictated the pace of southeastern
history. Daniel Pepper, hurriedly dispatched from South Carolina to calm Anglo-Creek
relations in response to the Ogeechee incident in 1756, was delayed by his horses: “a very
tedious journey occasioned by the great Drought which was so excessive upon the Path
that the Pack Horses… straggled away for want of Water, and obliged me to lye too for
two Days till they were hunted up.” In some cases, delays could be extraordinary, both
in duration and in importance. In 1746, James Glen of Carolina charged John Vann with
carrying a large load of presents to win Choctaw affection during their revolt from the
French. Glen hoped for a diplomatic coup, winning over France’s strongest Indian allies,
but the presents never arrived (and whether they would have done much good is
debatable). In the investigation into the matter, Vann tried to exonerate himself by
blaming his horses. Traveling in February proved too difficult, for “the horses grew lean
and tir’d and could not proceed.” Vann was therefore “under the necessity of lying by
with them until the Spring, when by fresh food they might recover flesh, and strength.”

56 Bartran, Travels, 242-243.
57 Daniel Pepper to William Henry Lyttleton, Oct. 10, 1756, Lyttleton Papers, WLCL.
58 Examination of John Vann, included in James Glen to Board of Trade, Dec. 1751, SCPRO 24:425.
The deerskin trade involved more than the Indian consumption of British goods and British consumption of Indian leather. It also consumed a great many horses. Estimates of how many horses varied: in 1735, the leading deerskin merchants in Charleston claimed that “Eight hundred Horses are yearly Employed,” while in 1740 William Stephens of Georgia asserted that “above two thousand Horses” made their way to Augusta each spring. Given forty-five Creek towns, forty-two Cherokee towns, and eleven Chickasaw towns, with even a modest figure of fifty horses for each, one may well assume that nearly five thousand horses walked the Southeast each year.

These yearly numbers needed continual replenishment, for packhorses did not last very long. Traders kept no records of how many horses they used, or for how long, but a packhorse probably lasted no more than three to six years. Stagecoach horses in Britain, similarly used to traveling long distances at a constant speed, could work only three years in the heavier traffic near London, or six years in outlying areas. This was consistent with Bartram’s experience in the Southeast; his horse, he said, “which had served me faithfully almost three years, having carried me on his back at least six thousand miles, was... almost worn out.” In short, traders as a group needed hundreds of new horses every year to transport their goods.

Many traders supplied their trains from their own private stocks. Bartram recorded one visit to a trader’s “horse-stamp” near the Cherokee town of Keowee. In a remote

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60 Town numbers based on the Stuart-Purcell MS Map in the Newberry Library, Chicago. Braund estimated the typical horse caravan to be between sixty and one hundred horses. Braund, Deerskins, 92.
61 Bagwell and Lyth, Transport in Britain, 44-45.
62 Bartram, Travels, 278.
glen, the trader kept “a large squadron of those useful creatures.” Adair claimed that the Creek and Chickasaw traders likewise kept horses near their towns, where the riverbanks “abounded with great brakes of winter-canes.—The foliage of which is always green, and hearty food for horses and cattle. The traders used to raise there flocks of an hundred, and a hundred and fifty excellent horses.” Indeed, Augusta traders used horses as a secondary source of income. In 1763 John Rae advertised the sale of a “Parcel of likely mares and horses of the Chickesaw breed.” The next year, Lachlan McGillivray offered “A Number of Mares, Stallions, and Geldings, of the Chickesaw blood” and was willing to furnish “any gentleman that may chuse to put a stock of that kind upon a plantation or island, and captains of vessels trading to the West-Indies.” Adair cautioned, however, that “a person runs too great a risk to buy any to take them out of the country, because, every spring-season most of them make for their native range.”

In addition to the physical challenges of traveling, there was the primary, though invisible, limitation of the deerskin trade’s organization. The nature of the Indian trade imposed its own limits on those who carried deerskins from Indian towns to Augusta and returned with British manufactures. First was the economics of the trade itself. Traders (before 1763, at least) maintained a store in a particular town and were forbidden from trading with Indians from any other town, under penalty of forfeiture of their goods and licenses. Even the licenses did not belong to them. The storekeepers and trading companies of Augusta held the official licenses, which meant that most traders were employees of Augusta firms rather than independents. The trade itself, conducted largely...

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64 Adair, *History*, 241.
65 *Georgia Gazette*, Sept. 29, 1763.
on debt and credit between Indians, traders, and merchants, ensured that one year’s
deerskins would go towards the purchase of next year’s goods.  

The imperative to move flowed from the debt-based nature of the deerskin trade,
since most Indian traders were not independent, but merely factors employed by the large
Augusta firms. A list of licensees to Creek towns in 1761 revealed few independent
traders among that nation. In that year, the governor and council of Georgia decided that
“the Towns in the Indian Nations should be divided among the several Traders,” and
disproportionately favored the large Augusta houses. Out of thirty-eight Creek towns
named, only William Fraser and James Cussings held individual licenses for their towns.
The rest belonged to former members of the “Augusta Company,” Macartan and
Campbell, Cook and Company and the various associates of William Trewin and
Company (whose membership included former Augusta Company member William
Struthers).  

Most of those who held licenses lived in Augusta; thus reformers such as
Edmond Atkin lamented “that Licences on the present footing may as well be given to
Men living in Cheapside.”  

A person’s continuation in the trade depended on his ability
to satisfy the debts he owed to storekeepers, as well as his ability to get along with his
Indian customers.

Even the handful of independent traders felt the influence of Augusta companies.
When the large firms chose to ignore an official ordinance or regulation of the trade, “the
less Traders must of necessity follow the Way of the greater or they have no Business

66 Georgia Gazette, Oct. 11, 1764
67 Braund, Deerskins, 53-54.
69 Edmond Atkin to Lyttleton, Dec. 10, 1758, Lyttleton Papers, WLCL.

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If one trader sold rum, for example, another must do likewise for fear of losing his town's skins to another trader. John Elliott, a newcomer to the Cherokee trade in the 1750s, discovered the pressures of competition when he found that "he must either follow the Multitude, endanger his own Safety, or find some other Way of living, which at that Time he could not safely do, in respect of his Credit from his Merchants, without hurting both himself and them." A trader had little say in what he traded or for how much.

The chief benefit of binding oneself to a merchant firm, though, was protection. Traders' employers were obliged to protect their employees in case of danger. George Galphin understood this obligation and often used his considerable influence among the Lower Creeks to secure the well-being of his employees. When Emistisiguo broke up the illegal trading house of "Buzzard's Roost" in 1768, "Mr. Duruseau who had the care of Mr Galphin's store at the Buzzard roost was not in the least molested" owing to Galphin's "orders he had given the Indians to the contrary." Galphin again intervened on behalf of an employee at Mucolasses whose affair with a married woman had angered his Indian hosts. The trader faced having his ears cropped "unless Mr. Golphin interposed on his behalf" and he begged Bartram to "solicit that gentleman's most speedy and effectual interference." Galphin probably did intervene on the man's behalf, for Augusta traders were expected, as gentlemen, to protect their dependents.

Those traders who refused to protect their employees earned the scorn of their peers. Adair complained of one unidentified trader who refused to assist an employee on
the point of death. The factor had violently resisted a Creek man who attempted to steal his goods. When the Indian died shortly thereafter, the Indians sought justice by killing the guilty trader. The trader's employer knew of the planned attack, due to his "friendly intercourse" with the Indians. Yet he refused to intercede on the man's behalf, which "the laws of humanity and common honour obliged him" to do. Adair scorned the trader, arguing that, as the Indians' "confederate, he not only concealed their bloody intentions, but went basely to the next town, while the savages painted themselves red and black, and gave them an opportunity of perpetrating the horrid murder. The poor victim could have easily escaped to the English settlements, and got the affair accommodated by the mediation of the government."74

Though dependent on their employers for their security, many traders and packhorsemen preferred to think of themselves as free spirits. The limitations traders faced actually promoted a culture of independence. Facing the uncertainties of southeastern diplomacy, traders cultivated a sense of political independence that bordered on treason. Against the harsh realities of North America's geography, they set themselves as manly adventurers braving wild lands. Reliant entirely upon horses, traders prided themselves upon their mastery of their four-legged burdeners. Taking advantage of the uncertain political jurisdiction and loose definitions of property, traders carved out alternate forms of trade, to the benefit of themselves and the annoyance of their Augusta employers.

The lack of defined political borders fostered an attitude of personal autonomy among traders. One of the traders' most common traits was a stubborn independence in

74 Adair, History, 6.
the face of British authority. Upon the urging of the commander at Fort Loudon, John Elliott refused to move away from Overhill Cherokees, even when his life was threatened by souring Anglo-Cherokee relations. Elliot would “have his own Way,” lamented Captain Raymond Demere, “and does not want to be controlled by no body.”75 John Williams, who illegally traded rum with the Cherokees, reportedly told those Indians that “he values not the Governors either of So. Carolina and Georgia that it is what and how he pleases to trade.”76 Richard Street, a packhorseman among the Creeks, did Williams one better, and boasted that “he was not subject to any King and had nothing to do with any King.” When informed that his words were “treason and more than your Life is worth,” Street replied that “he never paid Tribute to any King, and had not any King at all.”77

While Street may have abandoned his citizenship in the British realm, he and his fellows would have recognized other forces governing their lives. Indeed, their ability to negotiate these larger forces was a key aspect of their personal identity.78 When confronted with danger, traders expected stoicism of each other. As pragmatic men, they knew that a panicked report from the backcountry could raise alarms, increase Anglo-Indian tensions, and threaten the lives of others. But as cultural competitors with Indians, they likely believed that their pride was at stake, given Indians’ widely recognized and admired fearlessness before death. Thomas Ross, a Creek trader, was marked for

75 Raymond Demere to Lyttleton, Aug. 26, 1757, DRIA 2: 406.
76 James Beamer to Glen, Feb. 21, 1756, DRIA 2: 106.
77 Affidavit of Lachlan McIntosh, Nov. 14, 1752, DRIA 1: 343
78 Such second-hand reports of treasonous behavior should be taken with a grain of salt. Indian traders were often the first suspects when Anglo-Indian relations soured, serving as an easy scapegoat for colonial governors. Gregory Evans Dowd offers an excellent case study of such recrimination in “The Panic of 1751: The Significance of Rumors on the South Carolina-Cherokee Frontier,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 53 (July 1996): 527-60 at 542-44.
execution in retaliation for the Ogeechee murders in 1756. Ross accepted his fate, telling
his executioners, “I would not be tyed but would go to my Knees to be shot and
accordingly they made me put off my Jacket and went on my Knees expecting every
Minute to be shot.” The interposition of two men from the Lower Creek town of Cussita
earned Ross a brief reprieve, and when the Indian executioner’s nerve later failed him,
Ross made his escape to Augusta.

Traders earned the highest praise from their fellows when they suffered violence
in the protection of their goods. When Samuel Benn’s caravan came under attack near the
Cherokee town of Natalee, Benn told his assailants that “the Goods that I have... are for
the Upper [Cherokee] Towns” and refused the Indians any part of his packs. Benn acted
in a manner would have pleased Adair in particular. In his History, Adair singled out men
who had “bravely” defended their employers’ property in the face of Indian insults. The
trader whose employer abandoned him to Indian execution had earned his fate because,
“like a brave man,” he “opposed lawless force by force,” thus securing Adair’s lasting
esteem. Adair likewise praised William Rae as “the most stately, comely, and gallant
youth, that ever traded in the Muskohge country” because of his ability “to correct as
many of the swaggering [Indian] heroes, as could stand round him in his house, when
they became impudent and mischievous.” Such bravery earned Indian esteem as well,
because they respected “a man of a martial spirit, and contemn the pusillanimous.”

In contrast to lionized traders such as Rae, those traders who quickly fled hostile
Indians earned the contempt of their colleagues. Lachlan McGillivray recorded in his

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79 Ross to Douglass, Oct. 15, 1756, DRIA 2: 212.
81 Adair, History, 156
journal the flight of Richard Henderson from Oakfuskee. A rumor had flown through
town of an impending English invasion, and Henderson fled rather than suffer at the
hands of frightened and outraged Creeks. McGillivray barely disguised his contempt for
Henderson’s taking flight over a “Narration, silly as it was.” McGillivray made clear
that Henderson’s cowardice only inflamed the situation, proven by an Oakfuskee
headman’s “great Deal of Surprize and Concern” that the white traders were fleeing
Oakfuskee and his conclusion that “there must have been some Letter from the
Governor... [for] he could not imagine what could make the White People take such a
Step without it was by Advice from the Government.” By fleeing, Henderson had
inflamed Indian suspicions of white motives. Daniel Pepper similarly derided John Ross,
whose will had reflected his fears of traveling the paths, for letting his “Fear to get the
better of his Reason without any other Cause than what he knew before he left
Augusta.”

Traders’ expected bravery in the face of danger extended to the forces of nature as
well. For traders, the ability to cross rapid streams was a source of pride, and swimming
skill became a way to measure the characters of other humans. Adair boasted of his
fellow traders that “they are commonly hardy, and also of an amphibious nature, they
usually jump into the river, with their leathern barge a-head of them, and thrust it through
the deep part of the water.” Always quick to rate whites’ abilities against (and usually
above) Indians’, Adair made sure to note that the Choctaws were not particularly good

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82 Adair, History, 279-80.
83 Journal of an Indian Trader, DRIA, 2: 60.
84 Journal of an Indian Trader, DRIA 2: 61.
85 Daniel Pepper to William Henry Lyttleton, Nov. 30, 1756, DRIA 2: 297.
86 Adair, History, 291.
swimmers. “Having no rivers in their country, few of them can swim, like other Indians; which often proves hurtful to them, when... they are out at war.” Bernad Romans likewise considered the Creeks “expert swimmers, and in general a very hardy race.” Romans was more charitable towards the Choctaws, believing them “far from being such cowards as people in general will pretend,” but “their inability to swim” cost them in war with the Creeks. Such sentiment made its way to the pages of the Georgia Gazette when the paper noted that the Creeks’ swimming ability gave them an advantage in war against the Choctaws. The equation of swimming ability and manliness echoed a later generation of southeasterners in their conflation of prowess on the water—their “amphibious nature”—with mastery of their world and manhood.

No contest, however, was more important or more common than the ongoing battle of wills between traders and their packhorses. These men took great pride in their ability to control and manage their animals. Bartram no doubt flattered the Keowee trader when he noted with awe the trader’s command over his horses. On seeing the trader, the horses “assembled together from all quarters... [and] saluted him with the shrill neighings of gratitude... as soon as their lord and master strewed crystalline salty bait on the hard beaten ground.” Horses who refused to show such deference were punished with “threats, the discipline of the whip and other common abuse.” If such tactics failed, a

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87 Adair, History, 303.
89 Romans, History, 130.
90 Georgia Gazette, May 31, 1769.
91 Elliot Gorn, “‘Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch’: The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry,” American Historical Review, 90 (Feb. 1985): 18-43 at 32.
92 Bartram, Travels, 225.
packhorseman would resort to biting an animal on its ear, “when instantly the furious strong creature, trembling, stands perfectly still until he is loaded.”

The driver’s need to project himself as master of his horses extended to human relations. Certainly the Keowee trader expected to earn Bartram’s respect by taking him so far out of his way to simply view his horses. Wounded pride also underlay the explosive anger that traders expressed when they felt cheated in any horse-related business. Cornelius Doharty supposedly had agreed to lend fellow trader Peter Elliot a gang of horses at a reduced rate. Doharty denied ever making such an agreement, even with Governor Glen as witness. For Doharty, calling the governor a liar was less a crime than giving up his horses for too little. He plainly stated, “he would sooner go to Prison... before any such whistling Monky Fellow [Elliot] should have it to say that he had bitt old Docharty.”

Mastery of their horses also bolstered traders’ sense of cultural superiority over Indians. Indians and whites frequently traveled together, and each journey was a minor contest between American and European worldviews. Unsurprisingly, these contests occasionally involved horses. James Adair remembered one particular trip to a Choctaw ball-game. Adair rode with some Choctaw headmen, who themselves had developed their own horse culture in the eighteenth century. The Choctaws had involved horses in much of their day-to-day lives and the mounts became particularly important to their notions of

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94 Ludovick Grant to James Glen, April 30, 1752, *DRIA*, 1: 236.
manhood, involved in both hunting and war. The Indians had been chiding Adair for Europeans' attachment to leather bridles and saddles, when a simple rope around the neck was enough for the Indians, who boasted "highly of the swiftness of their horses, and their skill in riding and guiding them." Adair put the claims to the test of a horse race along the path.

My horse being used to such diversion left them behind, a considerable distance; presently I luckily discovered a swampy thicket, ahead on my right hand.... As the wild coursers chiefly followed one another, according to their general custom, I there flew across, and led two of them off the path, into the thicket covered with high brambles.

Adair claimed both better mastery over his own horse and better familiarity with his competitors'. In his telling of the story, Adair's cunning and skill won him the race and cost the Choctaws their personal dignity. Their "favourite looking glasses were shattered to pieces, the paint mostly rubbed off their faces, their skins of small hawks, and tufts of fine plumes, torn from their heads, and their other ornaments, as well as their clothing and skin, shared also in the misfortune."

Control of their own horses may have been a source of personal pride for traders, but the most common expression of their independence was their ability to claim control of their employers' horses. Traders and packhorsemen did not always accept the proscribed limits of their world. They face the uncertainties of southeastern travel, yet wealth tended to concentrate in the hands of Augusta and Charleston merchants. Horse

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theft, along with other clandestine enterprises, gave traders some power against their employers. Provided with mobile and uncertain forms of property, enterprising and often unscrupulous traders managed to create alternate paths to wealth than those set by headmen and great merchants. Horses provided a crucial link in this largely hidden side of the deerskin trade.

Lacking the independence and wealth of their Augusta employers, traders and packhorsemen carved alternate economies out of southeastern exchange networks. The desire for new sources of wealth beyond the deerskin trade found its most grandiose expression in a supposed silver mine discovered among the Cherokees in the 1740s. In 1744, the trader Cornelius Doharty had made a private deal with the Cherokees to open a silver mine, causing much consternation within the South Carolina government. The idea of a few private men suddenly appearing in Charleston with horse-loads of fresh silver threatened to overturn the colony’s social hierarchy. Allowing such an enterprise would allow “any number of Private persons” to have “so great an advantage over all others concerned in the Trade of this Province That... they would have it in their power to Monopolize the whole into their own hands.” Doharty, an early settler in Augusta but not a company man, probably hoped that silver mining would provide a separate route to monopoly. Indeed, Adair may have referred to this incident when he told of “some desperate vagrants [who] found at sundry times, so much rich ore, as to enable them to counterfeit dollars, to great amount; a horse load of which was detected in passing for the purchase of negroes, at Augusta.” Divining and counterfeiting were two popular enterprises among the debt-ridden and impoverished backcountry population, and
Doharty's mine enticed numerous prospectors, so many that South Carolina's assemblymen feared that "many more will follow their example which will lead greatly to the depopulating" of South Carolina's townships.\textsuperscript{101}

More common than mining schemes were illicit, supplemental exchanges that fed off the deerskin trade. By 1751 it had become customary for traders "to allow their Packhorsemen or Substitutes the Priviledge of carrying a Horse load or two of Goods into the Nation for their private Benefit."\textsuperscript{102} But the hired factors learned to expand their "private benefit" to include the skins they purchased with Augusta goods, as well as the very horses they used to carry those goods into Indian towns. After 1763, when the port of Pensacola offered Indian traders a supply of goods outside Augusta, it became common to "Carry off the Skins which they have purchased with goods and barter them at Pensacola for Rum, with which they purchase more Skins or the Horses which are stolen from Indian Traders, and from the different provinces."\textsuperscript{103} David Taitt accused two of Robert Mackay's hired hands of this practice. If guilty, they were only two of many who sought ways to increase their share of the trade.

Packhorsemen also resorted to absenteeism, abandoning the trade to live somewhere else in the Southeast. Such behavior inspired the legend of "Herbert's Spring," according to Adair. The spring, near the headwaters of the Savannah River, was

\textsuperscript{99} Petition of South Carolina Commons and Council, April 24, 1744, \textit{SCPRO} 21: 259.  
\textsuperscript{100} Adair, \textit{History}, 248.  
\textsuperscript{102} President and Assistants of Georgia to Benjamin Martyn, Feb. 28, 1751, \textit{CRG} 26: 169.  
a natural place “for strangers to drink.” Some Chickasaw packhorsemen took a longer rest than others, and “by some allurement or other, exceeded the time appointed” spending years in the mountains. On their return, they claimed that “the spring had such a natural bewitching quality that whosoever drank of it, could not possibly quit the nation, during the tedious space of seven years.” Adair dismissed such supernatural overtones as a mere “excuse for their bad method of living,” but the legend spread among other packhorsemen to the point that none would ever drink from Herbert’s Spring. To have a drink there, they believed, would be to “basely renew, or confirm the loss of their liberty, which that execrable fountain occasions.”

Runaway packhorsemen also took more direct measures against their Augusta employers, stealing goods and horses from them. In 1765, for example, the Georgia Gazette advertised two runaway packhorsemen, Benjamin Parrot and Jeremiah Holland, who “did feloniously steal and carry away from their said masters [Thomas Grierson and Frederick Myerson of Augusta] four head of horses, one riding saddle, two guns, three blankets, and other articles.”

Parrot and Holland were but part of a larger network of horse “exchanges” involved in the deerskin trade. Lowcountry residents early recognized the connection between packhorse trains and horse thieves when they noted that more horses seemed to leave Charleston than returned there. The South Carolina Gazette in 1739 voiced the “many and daily Complaints of Horse-stealing, occasioned either by Pack-horse-men and others picking up Horses in the Settlements and selling them in the Indian Countries.”

Indians also suffered losses at the hands of traders. Thomas Bosomworth had to address a

104 Adair, History, 243-44.
105 Georgia Gazette, Aug. 8, 1765.
106 South Carolina Gazette, July 14, 1739.
number of Creek complaints regarding stolen horses. Malatchi and Chiggili, two headmen of the Cowetas, pressed Bosomworth on the matter “of the white People stealing of the Indians’ Horses, which made the Indians steal the white People’s in Return.” The Lower Creeks had heard of a number of their horses spotted in Augusta yards and forced Bosomworth to promise “he would take care to see them restored.”

From the 1740s on, Indians, Carolinians, and Georgians continually stole each others’ horses, taking advantage of mobility and distance. Free-ranging horses made easy targets, and the lack of brands, the difficulty of identifying stolen horses, and often the desire for revenge created an on-going black market for horses during most of the eighteenth century. Traders, who needed and knew horses more than almost anybody else, necessarily formed a part of this network. As the trader Anthony Dean wrote in 1751, “it is no Wonder, when every Horse Stealer can screen himself here from Justice... which could not be if the Trade was regulated, and proper Officers kept here to see Justice done.” Horse thefts inspired the South Carolina Regulators to riot because they were unhappy with the loosely defined notions of property existing in the backcountry. Indeed, Regulator Patrick Calhoun’s early introduction to the southeastern economy came in the form of a Cherokee attack on his neighbors, and he went to the Cherokees where he

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108 Historians of Anglo-Creek relations have universally noted horse thefts as important both to Indian-white relations and the development of a Creek notion of personal property differing from their traditional one. See Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 76-77; Piker, *Oakfuskee*, 119-123; and Robbie Etheridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 180-85.
109 Anthony Dean to Cornelius Doharty, May 1, 1751, in *DRIA*, 1: 73.
suspected "thire Head Men by words endivering to clear themselves, of thire young fellows misconduct, both of killing some white People, & stealing of Hoarses."\textsuperscript{111}

The case of John Branham illustrated the difficulty in distinguishing between horse thieves, horse traders, and Indian traders. Branham, though not a trader, had nonetheless taken up residence among the Cherokees and had earned native scorn for theft and other misbehavior. In 1755 the Cherokee trader James May carried a Carolina warrant for Branham’s arrest, but could not seize Branham because of the interposition of the same Indians who had made the complaint. These men explained that they “talked to Branham and he has promised to be good and there should be no more bad Talks of him.”\textsuperscript{112} Tossitee, a Cherokee headman, promised May that “any Whiteman or Indian that misses or has missed their Horses he’l take care to see, if in Branham’s Range” and, if so, “they shall be delivered.”\textsuperscript{113} The same town had also housed John Burn, a deserter from George Washington’s army who had robbed the trader (and Branham’s friend) Aaron Price of his deerskins. In the end, May threw up his hands, despairing that any order could be imposed when the law was “daily circumvented by a Parcel of idle People here.”\textsuperscript{114}

May’s frustration, and the Cherokees’ tolerance of a known thief, resulted from the Europeans’ uncertainty over Indians’ concepts of property. Raymond Demere made explicit the connection between traders’ seeming lawlessness and their loose definition of legal property. “They are a Sett of bad People... a Kind of Bandite, the very refuse of all Provinces, who harbour themselves here from the Laws of the Land. They have no

\textsuperscript{111} Patrick Calhoun to William Henry Lyttleton, Sept. 21, 1759, Lyttleton Papers, WLCL.
\textsuperscript{112} James May to James Glen, Sept. 27, 1755, \textit{DRIA} 2: 81.
\textsuperscript{113} May to Glen, Sept. 27, 1755, \textit{DRIA} 2: 81.
\textsuperscript{114} May to Glen, Sept. 27, 1755, \textit{DRIA} 2: 81.
Principles of Liberty or Property.” It was not lawlessness, however, for traders had to conform to the laws of their Indian hosts. Indians had a well-developed notion of personal property, to the point of identifying relatives’ goods months or years after their loss. But horses did not easily fit easily into Indian notions of personal property, and this ambiguity gave traders and other horse-swappers room to create a black market along the trails.

Indian concepts of property shaped the larger world of interaction on southeastern paths. Indians recognized personal property—their guns, ammunition, and the products of their hunts, which included goods purchased with deerskins. However, Indian notions of property were more fluid and less certain than Britain’s. Indians recognized each other’s property, but paid little regard to the amassing of personal property and wealth. Southeastern Indians, like other native North Americans, frequently “borrowed” from each other on the promise that the favor would be returned. Reciprocity and the welfare of the town took precedence over an individual’s material comfort. By the end of the eighteenth century, Creeks (typically métis children of Indian traders) began amassing private estates and altering their view of “borrowing” to mirror the European concept of “stealing.” But this process was an uneven transition and the ambiguity over the vices and virtues of taking another’s things created many of the patterns of southeastern life. Horses, the lifeline of southeastern commerce, provided a key example of uncertainty over when “borrowing” became “stealing.”

While colonial commentators such as David Taitt invariably attributed horse thieving to the criminal nature of most traders, horses were an uncertain property in the

115 Demere to Lyttleton, Jan. 1, 1757, *DRIA* 2: 328.
116 Creek notions of property have been well studied. See Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 129-30; Saunt, *New Order of Things*, 38-45; Etheridge, *Creek Country*, 180-81.
eighteenth-century Southeast. The large ranges and constant trading de-valued horses moving along the paths. In Britain, a horse "was one of the most expensive pieces of capital equipment," and its theft a tremendous loss to the owner.\textsuperscript{117} The value that new settlers in Carolina attached to their horses prompted the Regulator riots in the 1760s. By the time one traveled as far into the colonies as Augusta, though, the worth of a horse had lessened a great deal. William Mylne complained in 1775 that the large number of horses in and around Augusta lessened the value of his. Mylne feared that if he sold his horse in the Augusta market, he would "not get nigh what he is worth, the market being overstocked at present."\textsuperscript{118}

Traders also took advantage of Indians’ uncertainty over the value of horses or even the animals’ status as property. The Choctaws referred to horses as \textit{isuba}, or "deer-resembler."\textsuperscript{119} The Creeks similarly referred to horses as "Echolucco" or "big deer."\textsuperscript{120} While Creeks recognized any part of a deer they themselves had killed as their own personal property, no individual could claim ownership of an animal found wild in the woods.\textsuperscript{121} The uncertain value of horses also stemmed from the fact that the animals seemingly lived to serve Indians, as Emistisguo claimed in 1764: "the Young people its certain daily have Pilfered and stole horses from the Traders; which horses we regard as our property as they are wholly employed in the service of Trade to this Nation."\textsuperscript{122} While horse stealing was a common complaint and a constant source of irritation, Indians’ major concerns remained the abuse of the rum trade, encroachment of white settlements, and the

\textsuperscript{117} Bagwell and Lyth, \textit{Transport in Britain}, 44-45.
\textsuperscript{118} Mylne to Anne Mylne, Jan. 4, 1775, in Ruddock, \textit{Travels}, 55-56.
\textsuperscript{119} Carson, "Horses and the Economy," 497.
\textsuperscript{120} Braund, \textit{Deerskins and Duffels}, 76.
intrusion of that other proliferating livestock, cattle. Malatchi resolved in 1752 that “as the bad Talk was now made good, a few Horses should never make it crooked again,” implying that horses were too trivial a matter to disturb the general peace between whites and Indians.123

The case of John Pigg illustrated the difficulty in determining when “borrowing” horses became “stealing.” In 1772 David Taitt heard the Wolf of Muccolasses’s complaint against Pigg for stealing two of his horses. Pigg defended himself from the charge by providing a lengthy account of what had happened to one of the Wolf’s two horses. Another trader, James Gray, had the Wolf’s permission to take the horse to Pensacola to carry back presents for Muccolasses. In Pensacola, Gray sold the horse to a British officer for seven guineas, but told the Wolf that the horse had “Cut one of his feet almost off by some broken bottles in the Streets” of Pensacola and was unable to return. Gray gave the Wolf six gallons of rum as compensation. The same horse later returned to Muccolasses as part of another gang, much to the Wolf’s surprise. Only at that point did Pigg seize the horse and send it down to Augusta, apparently believing that the original borrowing and rum payment by Gray had extinguished the Wolf’s claims. At some undetermined point in the story, the “borrowed” horse became stolen property, but, according to Pigg’s logic, it was not when he laid hands on the creature.124

While the Wolf’s horse doubtless paid little heed to its change in ownership, there was a group of southeasterners for whom such a journey had the most profound implications—African-Americans. Traders owned and employed slaves in the deerskin

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122 Talk of Emistisiguo to John Stuart, in John Stuart to Thomas Gage, May 20, 1764, Gage Papers, WLCL.
trade. Their role as traveling companions brought African-Americans face-to-face with
the same dangers as white traders, and their ability to pass the same tests as whites earned
at least some enslaved packhorsemen a measure of respect from whites, though they were
by no means equal. However, for a number of lowcountry slaves, the opportunities of the
deer skin trade afforded an escape from lowcountry servitude. Runaway slaves in
particular took advantage of the trade’s uncertain definition of property, in particular
Indians’ lukewarm reception to the concept of human property, to “steal” themselves.

The hardships of travel and the idea of community in some ways enhanced
African-Americans’ status along the trails. The deerskin trade certainly offered a more
equal relationship between blacks and whites than that available on lowcountry
plantations. For that reason, a number of slaves took advantage of the geography of the
paths much as Indian traders did. As humans, they risked capture and punishment for the
opportunity of leaving their slave status behind and re-making themselves as free men on
the trails, an opportunity enhanced by the fact that, much like horses, it was harder for
them to be identified as one man’s property so far away from the place they had been
purchased. In a society where “property” existed only as far as one’s eyes could reach,
African-Americans could change their status as long as they moved enough.

Despite the worries and declarations of colonial officials, African-Americans
remained a common presence in trader caravans and Indian towns. Traders’ slaves
interacted with Creeks on a daily basis and some even married into Creek clans. A
number of runaways likewise took advantage of Creeks’ differing attitudes towards race
and slavery and married into Creek society in a way that was forbidden on colonial
Despite colonial authorities’ constant fears of such intimate connections between Indians and Africans, runaways continued to find a home in Indian towns throughout the eighteenth century. After 1763, some Indians sold captured slaves back to the British for a bounty, but others did not participate in the activity and Indian villages continued to attract black refugees.

Even after the Treaty of Augusta in 1763 formally required Indians’ assistance in hunting and returning escaped slaves, runaways still cast their lots in Indian towns, perhaps even with Indian connivance. As Joseph Gibbons of Georgia suspected in 1763, a slave named Primus “might have gone away with a gang of Creek Indians.” Others found less sympathetic treatment among the Indians. In 1769 two black men were brought to the Savannah workhouse “from the Creek nation.” The previous year, an unfortunate runaway lost his scalp during a Creek manhunt for nine escaped slaves. As John Stuart commented on the latter incident, “This cannot fail of having a very good Effect, by breaking that Intercourse between the Negroes & Savages which might have been attended with very troublesome Consequences had it continued.” Stuart was overly optimistic, for escaped African-Americans continued to seek new employments in Indian towns. If one man died and eight escaped, the risk must have still seemed worth it.

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126 Southern whites feared the revolutionary implications of a joint African-Indian uprising, knowing that they were outnumbered should such an event take place. For a good overview of whites’ attempts to maintain Indian-African hostility, see Philip Morgan, Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1998), 477-85.
127 Georgia Gazette, June 9, 1763.
128 Georgia Gazette, Dec. 13, 1769; John Stuart to Thomas Gage, July 2, 1768, Gage Papers, WLCL.
129 Stuart to Gage, July 2, 1768, Gage Papers, WLCL.
Death was a risk run by all those employed in the Indian trade, white as well as black. Traders and Indians alike owed their lives to African-Americans. Adair told of one Chickasaw trader and his slave who were attacked on the path by a party of “Canada Indians.” Noticing that the northern war party was about to set upon two Chickasaw boys, the trader and his slave shouted out and drew the attack on themselves. The northern Indians shot the slave’s horse, which carried him off a quarter of a mile before collapsing. While the black man lived, the white man had received two mortal wounds and died the following day. However, the two men did save the lives of two Chickasaw boys targeted by the northern war party.\footnote{Adair, *History*, 441-442.}

A similar story came from the Cherokees in 1751, when the trader Hugh Murphy and his African-American companion “met with a Gang of 7 or 8 Indians one of whom pointed his Gun at Murphey and the Negro seeing it, said to Murphy, take care of yourself, the Indians is going to sute at you.” Murphy wheeled his horse around, but was shot through the arm and disabled. The account made no mention of what happened to the other man.\footnote{Affidavit of Robert Gandy, June 5, 1751, in *DRIA* 1: 71.} Samuel Benn’s slave had likewise “told him to go away as fast as he could... saying, The Indians hearing that you have killed one of them will be here soon with their Arms, and will kill you. Perhaps finding you are gone, they won’t kill us.”\footnote{Paul Demere to WHL, Dec. 30, 1757, *DRIA* 2: 428.} Benn, badly beaten, entrusted the man with care of his goods, and the Natale Indians allowed him to pass unmolested. The African-American apparently returned Benn’s goods to him, for no further mention of him was made.
That some African-Americans earned a certain measure of respect from white traders perhaps explains a remarkable incident in May 1767. Two men, James McCormick and John Bowie, were carrying a "Mulatto or Negro fellow named Jacob Williams" prisoner to Pensacola. On their trip down, they stopped at the camp of a number of traders, including one James Gray and the omnipresent Cornelius Doharty. Doharty and company tried to persuade the two men "to leave the Negro to lie with them at their Camp all night, which Mr Bowie & the Dep[onen]t refused." The traders then followed McCormick and Bowie on foot, seizing McCormick's horse and tearing his coat. Gray "promised to pay the Mulatto's Debt" and another of the traders "swore that if he had been a White man he should not have passed their camp as prisoner."133 Williams, at least, had earned some loyalty from these men, even if he did not share a complete equality with "a White man."

While given a greater share of respect than probably most of their lowcountry counterparts, African-Americans did not enjoy full equality with whites. No evidence suggests that a slave or free black ever earned a trading license or employment as a principle trader to an Indian town. There were other instances of their subordinate standing. In 1756, John Pettygrew rode express through Creek towns carrying a talk from the governor of South Carolina. His charge for making the trip was 100 pounds currency. Lt. White Outerbridge, who hired Pettygrew, could not find a white man to accompany him and so agreed to hire Pettygrew's slave, Tom, "who has been used to the Nation," to accompany his master.134 For his troubles, Tom earned his owner only ten pounds extra.

133 Deposition of James McCormick, May 21, 1767, in John Stuart to Thomas Gage, July 21, 1767, Gage Papers, WLCL.
134 Outerbridge to WHL, Sept. 26, 1756, DRIA 2: 190.
African-Americans did not share equally in the violence of the trade either. In 1756, a party of "Stinking Linguo" Indians from near the French Fort Toulouse made trouble in Cornelius Doharty’s Cherokee trading house. Doharty had left his white factor Isaac Atwood to mind the store along with one of Doharty’s slaves. The Indians, making trouble, “struck the said Doharty’s Negroe Fellow” but only “pushed the said Atwood about.”

Despite these inequalities, blacks, even runaways, received surprisingly lenient treatment in Indian towns. The group of nine slaves who escaped the 1768 Creek manhunt were apparently captives without knowing it; only on “finding that they were to be delivered” back to their owners did they make their escape. A decade earlier, the Cherokee trader James Beamer in a similar manner hosted two runaways without informing them of their impending return to their former enslavement. He warned any who might apply for their return to “acquaint me privately that I may have the Negroes seized, for they are always on their Watch and the least mistrust they have, they will fly directly to the Woods.” Indian traders apparently had no way to physically restrain runaways and had to shield their intentions lest their “captives” simply fled at the first sign of danger. This lack of restraint may have been owing to traders’ good natures, but it was more likely a result of Indian attitudes in the 1750s and 1760s. Amidst numerous rumors that the British sought to enslave Indians and steal their land, traders were perhaps circumspect in their displays of human bondage. The sight of an escaped slave tied in a

136 Stuart to Gage, July 2, 1768, Gage Papers, WLCL.
137 James Beamer to William Henry Lyttleton, May 20, 1758, Lyttleton Papers, WLCL.
trader’s house, or even more insidiously, the mere presence of iron shackles and chains, would have alarmed Indians fearful of their own enslavement.

Traders did not carry iron chains because Indians had no use for them. Moreover, their presence in British traders’ hands would have marked Europeans as slavers rather than friends. In 1756 the French governor of New Orleans encouraged the association between British traders and iron shackles. He informed a body of assembled Cherokee and Shawnee headmen that “already thirty Horses laden with Irons have been sent into your Nation.” To make clear the significance of this, the governor added, “The Uses they are to be put to you may easily guess is to enslaving your Women and Children after having knocked all the Men on the Head.”

Surveyors’ chains were no better, since their use was associated with Indian land cessions and British encroachment; the experiences of Bernard Romans and David Taitt underscored the wisdom of keeping survey equipment hidden from Indian view.

While the presence of iron chains would have alarmed Indians, the natives proved just as unwilling to countenance white acts of coercion in their towns. Indians were deeply suspicious of whites who came to forcibly remove slaves from Indian towns. In 1757, a Cherokee trader named Robert Goudy caused an alarm in Hiwassee when he arrested Doharty’s slaves. Neighboring Indians “about the House, who seeing white Men carrying away the Negroes and taking the Goods, were frightened” and “alarmed the Women and those that were not gone a hunting... that the white People were coming to

138 Abstract of a Talk between the Governor of New Orleans and the Cherokee and Shawanese Indians, Dec. 4, 1756, in Daniel Pepper to WHL, April 25, 1757, DRIA 2: 368.

139 Romans, appointed by John Stuart to survey the Chickasaw and Choctaw nations, reported Chickasaw thefts of his surveying equipment. Taitt, appointed as Romans’s counterpart for the Creek nation, kept his
carry them away, and told them what they had seen." For this reason, probably, black runaways reaped the benefit of Anglo-Indian tensions, even if they themselves did not know the intricacies of southeastern diplomacy. Runaways also benefited from the uncertain definitions of property that traders themselves had helped to create.

In the same way that a Virginia man’s horse could easily become a Georgian’s, slaves used movement along the paths as a way to change ownership. Unlike a horse, slaves used the paths to take ownership of themselves. The story of David George’s flight from Virginia to the Creek nation followed the pattern of other backwoods property exchanges. Born in Essex County, Virginia, George worked as a field slave for a man named Chapel. George’s brother had run away, “but they caught him, and brought him home... and they hung him up to a cherry tree in the yard” and gave him 500 lashes. But David managed to escape beyond his owner’s immediate grasp. He fled southward to the Pee Dee River in South Carolina and then later to a white settlement along the Savannah. In both places, George worked for a new white master and both times had to flee when his Virginia owners came calling. George then fled to the Ocmulgee River, where he was captured in the woods and made a slave of King Blue Salt, a Creek headman. George lived with Blue Salt in his hunting camp and then returned with him to his town. “I was his prize and lived with him... but the people were kind to me,” George recalled. Chapel’s son eventually found George even among the Creeks and paid Blue Salt for George’s return. But George again escaped and made his way to the remnant Natchez village in the Creek nation, where he made the acquaintance of John Miller, an employee

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surveying activities carefully hidden and reported no such thefts. Braund, “Romans’s History as a Source for Understanding the Eighteenth-Century South,” in Romans, History, 65-66, 140 Paul Demere to WHL, Dec. 30, 1757, DRIA 2: 426.
of Galphin’s. The Natchez headman gave George to Miller, and Miller put him to work as a packhorseman for a few years before Galphin honored George’s own request to live and work as a slave at Silver Bluff. George never fully changed his status—he remained a slave to one man or another, but enjoyed a remarkable ability to change owners, and he himself contrasted his early harsh usage in Virginia with his kinder reception in Indian towns and on Galphin’s plantation. Like the Wolf’s horse, George’s status depended on another man’s ability to claim him face-to-face, an ability that diminished the farther that George moved.¹⁴¹

George was not the only one who underwent such transformations in the Southeast, and not all runaways relied on white assistance to the degree that George did. Two runaway slaves, captured in 1768 and brought to Savannah, said “they both belong to one man, but can not tell his name. They also say the Indians gave them the names of Harry and Bear.”¹⁴² Like George, Harry and Bear escaped white dominion for Indian and took new names as a result. How long they maintained their new lives was uncertain, but such sojourns could prove lengthy. A few weeks later, a slave named Sampson joined Harry and Bear in the workhouse, saying “he went to the Indian nation about seven years ago, but cannot tell his master’s name.”¹⁴³

Sampson’s lengthy tenure marked him as a man of experience and such men provided leadership for their new fellows, offering them guides and interpreters not necessarily associated with the Indian traders. For example, three slaves ran away from a

¹⁴² Georgia Gazette, June 22, 1768.
¹⁴³ Georgia Gazette, July 13, 1768.
Pensacola plantation along with “One Stout Seasoned Fellow, called Limerick, speaks good English.... It is imagined he has taken the conduct of the rest, and that they may have found their way through the Creek nation.”  

Robert Rae and George Whitefield of Augusta advertised in 1770 that they held a slave who could “speak no English, but can talk Indian, and says he came from Pensacola near twelve months ago.” The runaway, who had worked on his owner’s schooner, had learned, probably from Creek Indians frequenting Pensacola, enough language to allow him to strike out on his own.

With Pensacola in British hands after 1763, slaves began taking advantage of the overland routes between Georgia and Florida to redefine their place in society. In 1769, Andrew Johnston of Augusta lost two of his slaves, when Harry and his wife Cassandra struck off into the interior, aided by Harry’s being “very artful and plausible... it is supposed they may endeavour to get to the Indian nation, or to Mobille,” where Cassandra’s “parents and other relations live.” Rather than finding the distance between Pensacola and Augusta insurmountable, Cassandra and her husband saw the paths as a way of linking family. The following year, a man named Peter escaped from Thomas Netherclift’s plantations near Savannah. Peter, like Harry, was “extremely artful, and will doubtless attempt to pass as a free man. He formerly belonged to a person at Pensacola, came from thence by land, and ‘tis supposed may be gone toward the Creek nation.”

As it was on the Savannah River, so it was on the trading paths. Mobility, not proximity, was the key to slaves’ maintenance of family ties. Riverboats, however, moved

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144 Georgia Gazette, Aug. 24, 1768.
145 Georgia Gazette, Jan. 31, 1770.
146 Georgia Gazette, Nov. 1, 1769.
among centers of white power. Boats linked Africans with each other, and water culture linked Africans with their home culture. But boats also maintained white status and ensured the continuation of the slaveowning Augusta merchants. While slave boatmen might enjoy the invisibility of their work and use it to their advantage, crews, boats, and cargos were all legal property. Slave watermen carved out small spaces of community and resistance but had no power to remake their status. The uncertainty of relationships along the path, however, had a powerful potential to transform slaves to freemen. But freedom from enslavement meant placing oneself under the same rules that governed all travelers on southeastern trails.

In the end the Bosomworths reached their destination, but not their goals. The Augusta Company’s feeble hatchet job had done nothing to deter the ambitious couple; it only underscored how little power the companies had to restrict access to the paths. Leaving the dominion of the Augusta merchants behind, the Bosomworths enjoyed a relatively uneventful trip among the Creeks before arriving at the trading house at the Creek villages of Coweta. Trying to circumvent the authority of the Augusta Company, the Bosomworths spent a great deal of time in the households of the village traders. The path may have been open, but the traders made sure that their houses stood as symbols of their authority in the Southeast. The path was uncertain and unpredictable but traders believed that their houses could contain and control the potential chaos of the Southeast. Fortunately for the traders’ lives and livelihoods, Indians shared this belief in the power of houses. Of course, the Indians believed it was they who could use the trading house to control the potential chaos of the deerskin trade.

147 Georgia Gazette, March 7, 1770.
CHAPTER FIVE
BREAKING HOUSES: TRADING POSTS AND
POWER IN THE COLONIAL SOUTHEAST

On August 26, 1765, a weary John Stuart reported to Whitehall that the southern Indian trade was in chaos. The Superintendent for Indian Affairs in the Southern District of North America, Stuart had spent two years trying to bring order and regulation to the southern deerskin trade, achieving only mixed results. The spring and summer of 1765 had witnessed a series of trade conferences with Indian headmen from the Creeks at Pensacola and with the Choctaws and Chickasaws at Mobile. The Indians’ “complaints of the disorderly Behaviour of Traders and Packhorse Men were incessant,” Stuart reported, because “although every Town had White People who resided and traded in it, yet there were no more than three regularly licenced Traders in the whole Chactaw Nations.” The confused state of the deerskin trade and the malicious influence of deerskin traders had thrown the Chickasaws into “a State of Civil War,” argued Stuart. The traders, each seeking personal advantage, “availed themselves of the Avidity of the Indians for Rum, and when drunk, set them to rob and insult their competitors, and tear down their Houses.”¹ Struggling to regulate an unregulated trade, Stuart painted a portrait of Indians

besieged by legions of unruly traders, with the peace of southeastern North America similarly under siege.

Stuart’s letter expressed a common consensus that the Southeast was on the verge of chaos, confusion, and war, brought on by the deterioration of the Augusta trade system. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 had left Britain in possession of Pensacola and Mobile on the Gulf Coast. British merchants and some Augustans, finding easier trade routes from the southern ports, relocated their capital and their warehouses to the Gulf. The deerskin trade, for decades tied to imperial contests in North America, had to accommodate a new British hegemony in the region. Most important, the old system of resident traders and semi-permanent licenses for Indian towns had been rendered null by the Proclamation of 1763. The Proclamation had created a new system of licensing traders, essentially allowing any British citizen who could post bond the freedom to trade with any Indians, anywhere, anytime. In issuing the Proclamation, the British king had unmoored the Indian trade from the hidebound customs of Augusta and cleared a path for a new generation of adventurers and swindlers. When Stuart wrote of falling houses, he summarized the situation better than perhaps he recognized. Literally and figuratively, the houses that served as the defining feature of the southern Anglo-Indian trade were under attack. British officials, Augusta traders, and Indian headmen shared fears of an unhoused trade, for the houses had allowed each to feel in control of the deerskin trade. Without that foundation, each group felt powerless to control the future of the Southeast.

Trading houses were powerful buildings in the eighteenth-century Southeast. Not the most physically impressive and certainly not the most durable structures, they nonetheless exerted considerable influence over the history of the region. The trading
house was the central structure in southeastern Indian-white relations, the locus of all the activities that made up the deerskin trade. For royal governors and British agents, the house was both a crucial tool for persuading Indians to remain allies and a constant threat to the peace and security of those alliances. Without having a household in Indian country, no trader could claim legitimacy in either British or Indian eyes. To Indians, the trading house represented the powerful connection between themselves and the British, and the means by which they could keep the trade's excesses in check. In short, the trading houses were the deerskin trade and many of the conflicts over the control and shape of that trade took place over houses.

While the center of the deerskin trade, traders' stores were not the most physically impressive buildings. Certainly they paled in comparison to the great trading compounds that circled Augusta. Physically, they resembled southern Indian houses: simple wood-framed structures, covered with wooden clapboards and daubed with mud. One of these, opened on one side, provided the trader a summer residence. Two or three others would act as corn-cribs or chicken houses and one or two more would serve as the trader's storehouses. A round winter hot-house would complete the compound. Here lived the resident trader, usually an employee of one of the large Augusta firms. He would share his home with his wife (usually an Indian woman) and several of his employees—a storekeeper, three or four packhorsemen, and other servants. The latter provided the household even more ethnic diversity since they could easily be white, African-American, or mestizo. The household would usually stand a mile or two from the Indian town it served, to accommodate the trader's horses and cattle and to keep them from
trampling his customers' gardens.² The Indians enjoyed the convenient distance between their towns and their traders, but for others, the houses were still too close for comfort.

British officials worried about the proximity of such open households to Indian villages and the power they granted to their inhabitants. From their perspective, stores were powerful objects that were as dangerous as they were necessary. Waging a contest for empire on the cheap, the British governments in the South were unwilling to pay for forts, ambassadors, or Indian presents. Instead, they relied on the trade to convey official messages and to return intelligence of interior happenings, giving traders a quasi-official role as backcountry diplomats. The British also feared the power that such reliance gave to men of low breeding and questionable character. The trading house was the vehicle by which indigent men could spread their pernicious influence among Britain's Indian allies. The houses thus required regulation. Fortunately for the British sense of order, the household also allowed British governors and superintendents to maintain the belief that they were in control of the trade.

As a practical matter in imperial politics, the trading houses were Britain's most direct and concrete claim to jurisdiction over southern Indians. The "houses... Gardens and small plantations" that the traders had built in Indian villages served as the stakes for Britain's territorial claims in the Southeast.³ James Glen considered trading houses to be little embassies and a part of British soil. In 1750 an army of lower Creeks attacked the Cherokees, destroying two towns as part of an ongoing war between the two

² For a full description of Indian construction methods, see James Adair, History of the American Indians, ed. Samuel Cole Williams, (Johnson City, TN: Watauga Press, 1930), 448-52. On traders' stores, see Kathryn Holland Braund, Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 85-86.
³ James Glen, "An Account of the Boundaries of South Carolina, and of the Encroachments upon the said Province by Foreign Princes," Feb. 1751, Great Britain, Public Record Office, Documents of the British
confederacies. What worried Glen was that the Creeks showed "very little regard to this Country [Carolina], for they set fire to our Traders house."\textsuperscript{4} The Indians most likely considered the house as part of the targeted village and thus open to attack. That Glen considered it part of the British realm revealed how much weight the houses had for British legitimacy in the Southeast.

From the standpoint of a British governor, the trading houses were his primary source of information on Indian affairs. The frequent (and often conflicting) reports from Indian towns allowed officials to believe that nothing could transpire in Indian villages without their knowledge. In 1756, Daniel Pepper argued that surveillance was one of the traders' primary functions, and that the trade should be structured so that each trader kept "a certain Number of Indians under their Care and Eye."\textsuperscript{5} A year later, Pepper made clear his dependence on trader reports: "I must expect my Intelligence from them," he wrote, "as I cannot possibly be every where."\textsuperscript{6} It was such trade-gathered intelligence that allowed James Glen to boast to the Board of Trade that he could "strictly watch the smallest motions" among the Indian nations.\textsuperscript{7} Their dependence on the traders made men such as Glen and Pepper doubly uneasy with the characters of men who would willingly live among Indians.

Though not frequently spoken, Europeans felt that traders had taken advantage of a system where lowly whites could become men of influence simply by marrying an

\textsuperscript{5} Daniel Pepper, "Some Remarks in the Creek Nation," 1756, William Henry Lyttelton Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Hereafter cited as WLCL.
\textsuperscript{6} Daniel Pepper to William Henry Lyttelton, March 30, 1757, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
\textsuperscript{7} James Glen to Board of Trade, April 14, 1748, \textit{SCPRO}, 23: 108.
Indian woman and taking up residence at a store. William Stephens, tireless guardian of Georgia's moral virtue, expressed most clearly the unease that British officials felt towards traders' elevated status. Based more on social than racial lines, Stephens disapproved of Jacob Matthews's marriage to Mary Musgrove and his assumption of her trading post near Savannah. Matthews was "a hail, lusty young Fellow, an Englishman, and her Servant: Such a Promotion from Obeying to Commanding, had the usual Effect," clucked Stephens. The newly-wed Matthews soon grew "vain, dressing gaily (which ill became him)" and he began "to behave most insolently among all he kept Company with, looking on himself at least equal to the best Man in the Colony." Matthews's presumption, though, came crashing down when he tried to assert his authority over Mary's Creek cousins and he received "a good Thrashing from them, to convince him of his Error: For though they shew some Regard to Mary (as they call his Wife) they shew none to him." What was true of Matthews was true of Indian traders in general—while their marriage to important Indian women secured their influence among their fellow Britons, their status in Indian towns was not necessarily so secure.

The same disapproval of Matthews echoed in a more general concern with "beaver catchers" in the 1750s. Informal member of the traders' households, "beaver catchers" were those whites seeking their fortunes among the Indians, living on the fringes of the deerskin trade as hunters and trappers. Irritated at the catchers' presence, Indians complained that they "not only kill Beaver which is an Infringement of their

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Property, but even kill Deer and so impoverish them in their hunts." While a nuisance to Indians, the catchers particularly rankled older traders and British agents in Indian country. The catchers posed an even greater threat to British notions of order, for they were men without status who openly sought influence among Indians. Poaching animals was one thing, but poaching rank was an altogether more serious matter where the British were concerned.

The beaver catchers elicited more concern for their naked ambition than their denuded quarry. James Beamer, an Indian trader among the Cherokees, referred to the "Beaver Catchers (of whom and such idle Fellows here there are more than ought to be allowed)." These men were not so much prodigious hunters as useless layabouts who frequented traders’ homes in the hopes of finding some station among the Indians. White hunters frequently elicited scorn from genteel Europeans for being indolent and uncivilized, but the focus on beaver catchers had more to do with their seeking a station among the Indians. Daniel Pepper, British agent among the Creeks, defined the Beaver Catchers as nothing more than "A Sett of Idle Vagrants... who frequently raise bad Blood" with their "romancing Stories to ingratiate themselves among the Indians to procure a Livelyhood and gett an Indian Wife, which is all their Desire." Pepper, proposing reforms for the deerskin trade, noted the Indians’ complaints against the white
hunters, but felt the greater danger they posed was “telling Storys to the Indians and Infusing bad Notions in their heads.” It was the catchers’ undue influence that posed a threat to British-Indian friendship, and their search for unearned status in southeastern society that bothered colonial commissioners. The beaver catchers could be banned outright; not so the traders who housed and occasionally employed the catchers. At best, traders could only be regulated.

Houses that could elevate such disreputable men needed careful regulation. The trade’s would-be reformers always expressed concern for the composition of the traders’ households. In his 1751 effort to reform the Indian trade, James Glen paid special attention to the composition of the trading households. “[N]o Trader,” he proclaimed “shall carry with him in the Indian country any Negro, whether he be free or Slave, or any other Person whatever, unless it be the Servants or the Pack Horse Men whose names he shall give in before he sets off for the Nation.” Edmond Atkin paused in his lengthy assessment of Anglo-Indian relations to lament that traders’ long absences during the year left the “worthless Fellows their Servants... at Liberty to deal wholly with the Indians one half the Year.” Being “left to themselves... without Control,” Indian traders were allowed too free a hand to shape Indian affairs from their houses.

A decade after Atkins’s “Report,” regulation of the trading household remained a key component of John Stuart’s proposed reforms of the deerskin trade. During Stuart’s tenure as superintendent, one of his greatest challenges was to assert his authority over a trading population he viewed as licentious, ill-behaved, and dangerously out of control.

15 Daniel Pepper, “Some Remarks in the Creek Nation,” 1756, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
16 Glen, “Scheme for Regulating the Indian Trade,” [August 1751], DRIA, 1: 88.
In 1765, Stuart submitted a lengthy list of regulations he deemed necessary for improving the Indian trade. Significantly, four of the first six involved the composition of Indian trader households. Stuart recommended that no trader be allowed to employ any person as a clerk or factor without their being expressly named in the trader’s license. Stuart demanded that none be hired or dismissed from the house without the approval of one of Stuart’s deputies, especially if that person had been in the employ of another trader. Multiracial stores were also prohibited, as Stuart hoped to bar traders from employing “any Negro or Indian or half breed, who from his Manner of Life shall in the Conscience of a Jury be considered as living under the Indian Government as a Factor or deputy.”

All in all, Stuart hoped that by asserting his authority over traders’ households, he could gain greater power in the regulation and management of the trade.

For traders, the house was the central symbol of the deerskin trade and their role in it. Houses afforded traders shelter and storage—practical necessities for tradesmen living so far from their suppliers. Perhaps born of this physical dependence on their houses, traders typically understood their enterprise in terms of the household and the house in particular. While British officials viewed trading houses as sources of chaos and danger that had to be closely regulated, traders believed that their presence maintained peace between Indians and whites and directed the course of history towards a peaceful and civil union between white and red nations.

The trading house was the symbol of an orderly, public-minded trade that preserved peace and tranquility. The trader “household” extended from the licensed merchants at Augusta, along the trails, and ended in the smaller stores and houses in

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19 John Stuart, “Regulations Settled as Necessary for the better carrying on the Trade with the Indian Nations,” in John Stuart to Lord Halifax, April 16, 1765, CO-WE, 66: 162.
Indian towns. All that took place within this system was legitimate and positive; to allow trade to operate outside those bounds was to risk disruption and disorder. In their letters to Charleston and Savannah, traders tended to depict Indian-white relations as fragile and perpetually on the verge of war. Against the threat of war and chaos, the traders set themselves up as guardians of the peace in their neighborhoods. But some traders believed that a peaceful present was just the beginning of their purpose. For them, their trade with Indians was setting a course for a peaceful future by “civilizing” the American natives.

A trader who maintained peace considered his duties to his country fulfilled. He measured his service to the colonies primarily in terms of whether his Indian clients were friendly or hostile to Britain. When challenged by colonial leaders, provincial assemblies, or fellow traders, the leading Creek and Cherokee traders defended their honor as men who kept the peace. When their trading monopoly among the Creek was threatened by the Georgia Trustees in 1751, the members of Brown, Rae, and Company defended themselves as men “who by our Endeavours, have in great Measure kept the Indians on good Terms with this Colony.”20 McGillivray, a member of that company, repeated this defense in 1754 when he answered the South Carolina Assembly’s censure with his claim that “he gave no Cause of Complaint to the Indians or his fellow Traders and kept the Indians of his Towns in good Order and well affected to this Government.”21 When Robert Goudy carried a South Carolina warrant against Cornelius Doharty, the fiery Cherokee trader replied that he would “be missed by the Government” and that he had been “a safe Guard to the Country and what I have lost and am in debt for, was to keep

20 Brown, Rae, and Company to the Georgia Trustees, Feb. 13, 1751, CRG 26: 153.
21 Petition of Lachlan McGillivray, [1754], DRIA 1: 518.
the Indians in Peace and Unity." There was a significant discrepancy between the aims of royal governments and private traders: governors claimed honors by the numbers of Indian towns pledging Indian fealty, traders insisted that their highest duty was merely to preserve the peace. What may seem a lower standard for the traders was in fact the ultimate achievement in Indian diplomacy—a peaceful neutrality with all European nations.

Houses, the exclusive province of established traders, were naturally the key to stability in the traders' view. At the height of the Augusta trade monopoly in 1751, the merchants of Brown, Rae, and Company drew the clearest portrait of the deerskin trade's ideal architecture. They referred to themselves and their employees as a "House"—a structure that extended from Indian villages to Augusta and on to Charleston and Savannah. The masters of this extended household were those men who "for these many Years have had Licences to Trade among the Indians both from Carolina and Georgia." What appeared from the outside as a dangerous monopoly of the Creek trade, these traders argued, was simply the working of an orderly extended household. Closed off to only the most experienced men, the trade was safe in the hands of those who would not offend Indians or create dangers for Carolina and Georgia. To free the trade from the company's hands, to make it available to the general public, would only ruin the trade. The Augusta traders argued that should they "be deprived of Licences," they would be succeeded by "an Inundation of Raw Unexperienced people among the Indians... these people would soon raise such a Combustion as would not easily be allayed." The best

23 Brown, Rae, and Company to the Georgia Trustees, Feb. 13, 1751, CRG, 26: 153-54.
course of action was to “Lett things run in the old Channel,” or to keep the trade flowing through the conduit of their trading household; that was “the only way to keep the Indians in Friendship with the Colony.”

Another hallmark of a “proper” trade was its proportionality. Like any good household of the eighteenth century, the deerskin trade required a certain symmetry and harmony in its management. From the traders’ perspective, this meant that each trader had his own Indian town without competition. Within this town, he charged a fair rate that covered his debts to eastern merchants and provided enough surplus to offset the hazards of living among and especially traveling between Indian nations. In its simplest terms, the ideal trade provided Indians “a quantity of goods proportioned to what the Indians were able to purchase.” Life in the Southeast was at its most peaceful when the trade stood “on such an equitable footing betwixt the Indian & the Trader that the former may have the just value of his Effects and the latter a moderate profit on his goods as a recompence for the labour he undergoes & the various hardships & difficulties as well as danger of a life led amongst Indians.” Traders perhaps expected too much symmetry and balance in a trade conducted by three separate British colonies and spread among five large Indian confederacies, each with its own internal subdivisions. Regardless of the impossibility of maintaining a perfect trade, the traders sensed the imminent demise of their occupation should the slightest shift occur in the flow of trade—particularly in the number of traders.

24 Ibid. 26: 154-55.
25 Memorial of the Merchants and Traders of the Province of Georgia, in John Stuart to Thomas Gage, July 21, 1767, Thomas Gage Papers, American Series, WLCL.
26 Ibid.
When anything threatened the trade system (i.e. any source of trade outside their own houses), traders believed that the Southeast would experience disaster—usually described in terms of a flood. Complaints of too many traders were frequent and enduring, especially when new competition threatened established traders’ dominance of the deerskin traffic. In 1738, when Georgia and South Carolina competed for preeminence in the Indian trade, the Georgia Trustees attempted to sway royal favor by painting a portrait of a flooded trade. Having been asked to approve any and all South Carolina traders to the Creeks and Cherokees, the Trustees protested that the trade would then “become entirely subject to the pleasure of S. Carolina, which Province may pour into ours such a number of Traders as may ruin the trade of both Provinces, and disgust the Indians.”

The image of chaos and disorder reappeared fourteen years later when James Habersham wrote the Trustees that Georgia and South Carolina traders were everyday attempting “to rival each other in trade, trample on all the good Rules prescribed them” which had occasioned “almost all the Jealousies and Disturbances we have had with the Indians.” Even during the height of the “golden age” of the deerskin trade, it seemed that any alteration in the trade threatened to unleash chaos upon the Southeast.

Houses, the markers of authority in the deerskin trade, understandably became targets for competitors. In the 1730s, Carolina traders warned Georgia interlopers not to meddle in the trade by dispatching Thomas Wright “a transported Convict... to animate

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27 Georgia Trustees' Petition to King George II, in the Journal of the Earl of Egmont, July 17, 1738, CRG, 5: 51.
28 James Habersham to Benjamin Martyn, June 26, 1752, CRG, 26: 402.
the Indians... which occasioned the pulling down of an House within the Bounds of the Province of Georgia.”

When the French at Fort Toulouse wished to reduce British influence in their neighborhood, they insisted that the Alabama Creeks “remove the Trader Jon. Spencer from the Muckalooses and that if he refused to go by fair means to take his Goods by force and level his House, with the Ground, for that some years agoe the Indians had served a house theirs after the same manner.”

When John Stuart wrote John Pownall about falling houses among the Chickasaws, he was merely reporting the latest instance of a pattern in the Southeast: intimidate or eliminate competitors’ advantages by tearing down their houses.

Traders’ beliefs about their households were partly correct, because Indians regarded an occupied trading house as continuing proof of British allegiance and peace. The Cherokees, for example, were extremely cautious about the future and wary of the dangers inherent in sudden and unexpected changes. Should a trader suddenly abandon his post for no apparent reason, concern quickly turned to fear, as was the case in 1751, when rumored Cherokee attacks sent Lower Towns traders fleeing. Whatever the source of this rumor, the traders’ flight greatly concerned the Cherokees, the more mistrustful of whom saw in it the first step toward a British military invasion of their country. As the Overhill Cherokees informed James Glen, it was “a great Trouble... to see the white

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30 Petition of Georgia Trustees, Jan. 19, 1737, SCPRO, 18: 190-91. The house’s unidentified owner was almost certainly an early Augusta trader, as William Stephens noted in his journal that Wright had been arrested at Augusta and accused of “demolishing, by his own Hands, one of the first Huts we had built there.” Journal of William Stephens, July 4, 1738, CRG, 4: 166.
31 Alexander Wylly to Captain [?] Croft, May 10, 1740, SCPRO, 20: 258.
People's Houses empty in this Nation, that used to be full of goods. The traders' abrupt departure quickly lent credibility to a number of other Cherokee suspicions about the British and helped created what one historian has termed “The Panic of 1751” among the Cherokees and South Carolinians. What was true of the Cherokees was also true of the Creeks, as evidenced by the Creeks’ response to Richard Henderson fleeing Oakfuskee in 1755. As with the Cherokee Panic, Henderson’s empty house required explanation, and the Indians quickly gave free rein to their worst suspicions about the British.

Some traders did sense a greater purpose in their employment and appointed themselves as cultural missionaries to the Indians. One evening in 1772, David Taitt dined in the Creek town of Little Tallassee, the guest of one Vanden Velden, a factor for Robert Mackay. Velden, much in liquor, became “Troublesome in his discourse, which was chiefly about the Indians, affirming [sic] that he Could make them as Obedient and Submissive as any Civilized Nation in the world.” Velden asserted he could complete his task without any governmental expense and “only in the space of Six Months.” Taitt, unimpressed, considered Velden’s plan for civilization as nothing more than the ravings of a “Cracked brained dutchman.” However, Velden’s belief in his ability to direct Indians to European arts and culture would have found sympathy from traders whose brains had not “cracked.”

34 Dowd, “Panic of 1751,” 531-36.
35 See above, Chapter 4, p. 164.
James Adair believed that the traders had been a civilizing force among the Indians. With the presumed approval of his patrons McGillivray and Galphin, Adair peppered his *History of the American Indians* with examples of ways in which the traders had taught Indians to renounce their "savage" ways. Adair believed that the Creeks had learned to avoid epidemics because "the traders with them have taught them to prevent the last contagion from spreading among their towns."\(^38\) The Chickasaws, he asserted, had recently "grown fond of the ornaments of life, of raising live stock, and using a greater industry than formerly, to increase wealth."\(^39\) The Cherokees, "by the reiterated persuasion of the traders," had "entirely left off the custom of burying effects with the dead body; the nearest of blood inherits them."\(^40\) Adair believed that these good works had all commenced under the pre-1763 trade system and that if "the destructive program of general licenses was repealed," the British would be offered once again the "opportunity of civilizing and reforming the savages."\(^41\) Adair's *History* had organized Indian-white relations into a program for civilization—a benign commerce between the two peoples that would "tame" the Indians and provide a harmonious future for all. But such could only occur if the household system of Augusta was restored and the Proclamation of 1763 revoked.

The Proclamation of 1763 did not sit well with Indians, for it cost them influence over the deerskin trade. While the increased competition among traders did lower the

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37 David Taitt to John Stuart, March 16, 1772, in Mereness, *Travels*, 522. Taitt also described Velden as "a man that loves to hear himself speak and would wish to be thought of Consequence amongst the Indians." Journal of David Taitt, Feb. 19, 1772, in Mereness, *Travels*, 506.

38 Adair, *History*, 276; Adair also singled out the Creeks' unparalleled gift for politics and their ability to incorporate remnant nations into their own confederacy as the other major reason why the Creek population had increased.


41 Adair, *History*, 393.
price of European goods, it came with higher costs. Trader abuses became more common as rum increasingly made up trade deficits and even formerly honest traders did everything possible to balance the books and claim their share of ever-dwindling profits. As abuse increased, Indian methods of redress decreased. Southern Indians, particularly the Cherokees and Creeks, had pledged in numerous treaties following the Seven Years’ War not to molest even the most abusive trader but instead to make formal complaints to the superintendent or to the governors. More important, trading houses’ diminished role also signified a reduction of Indian control over the traders, for the houses operated primarily according to Indian customs and laws.

By the mid-eighteenth century, trading houses had become a part of almost every southeastern Indian town, and descriptions indicated that the traders built their homes to suit their clients. It was actually quite likely that the Indians themselves built the traders’ houses, given the usual method of building in southern Indian towns. Trading houses were most often described to resemble nothing more than larger versions of Indian habitations. At the Upper Creek town of Muccolasses, William Bartram saw a trader’s house and stores that “formed a compleat square, after the mode of the habitations of the Muscogulges, that is, four oblong buildings of equal dimensions.” James Adair agreed that traders’ and Indians’ houses resembled each other. He described the “clean, neat, dwelling houses” of the Indians, “white-washed within and without,” and noted that “the

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42 Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 101, 105-107. In his attempts to regulate trade prices, Stuart held numerous conferences specifically devoted to issues regarding the trade, so as to redress Indian complaints and prevent them from taking matters in their own hands. Stuart held three such conferences: with the Creeks at Pensacola in 1765, with the Choctaws and Chickasaws the same year at Mobile, and with the Creeks again at Augusta in 1767. Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 112-14.
43 Adair described the building of a house as a town-wide concern, with all the men assisting in the building. See Adair, *History*, 448-49.
Indians, as well as their traders, usually decorate their summer-houses with this favourite white-wash."\textsuperscript{45} Adair did note a subtle distinction between the Indians’ compounds and the traders’—Indian squares contained “a corn-house, fowl-house, and a hot-house” whereas “the traders [have] likewise separate store-houses for their goods, as well as to contain the proper remittances received in exchange.”\textsuperscript{46} Traders adapted the Indian building form for the sake of commerce.

While based on Indian traditions, it seems that not all trading houses were equal. Commentators singled out Creek stores in particular—a focus that might indicate that those traders enjoyed larger houses, but one that also precludes any comparison among traders. The most detailed portrait of a trading house, for example, came from Bartram’s visit to the Boatswain, a Creek Indian who began trading at Apalachicola in the years before the American Revolution. “His villa was beautifully situated and well constructed,” Bartram enthused. The Boatswain’s household, like other Creek and trader households, included four buildings forming a square: a “large and commodious” dwelling, a “cook-house,” a “skin or ware-house” and a “vast open pavilion, supporting a canopy of cedar roof by two rows of columns or pillars.... Between each range of pillars was a platform, or what the traders call cabins, a sort of sofa raised about two feet above the common ground.”\textsuperscript{47} Adair described the house of another “considerable trader” among the Upper Creeks as being at least one-and-a-half stories tall, for that trader had eluded an attacker by escaping “round a large ladder that joined the loft.”\textsuperscript{48} When Adair referred to a third Upper Creek trader’s house as “a gentleman’s dwelling house,” he may

\textsuperscript{45} Adair, \textit{History}, 443.
\textsuperscript{46} Adair, \textit{History}, 443.
\textsuperscript{47} Bartram, \textit{Travels}, 549.
have been remembering yet another substantial structure.\textsuperscript{49} Certainly some traders were better off than others, which might explain variations in house-size. But consideration might also be given to the political circumstances in which traders lived.

The Creeks were fond of political neutrality, and their traders may have reaped the benefit. The Southeast’s Indian traders had realized the benefit of (European) neutrality for commerce. Rumors persisted throughout the colonial period that British traders dealt with the French at Fort Toulouse, even during times of war.\textsuperscript{50} While British governors smelled treason in such commerce, the case of John Spencer proved the benefit of neutrality to traders. Spencer’s store near Muccolasses was an international market among the Alabama Creeks. Spencer had specifically ordered his storekeeper “to buy all the skins that came, (or were brought) let them come from where they might.”\textsuperscript{51} The storekeeper, Thomas Perriman, witnessed French men and women bringing deerskins to Spencer’s store to exchange for blankets, callico, and other sundries, and that “Spencer did sometimes go to the French Fort, and Frenchmen & Women belonging to that Fort came often to Mr Spencer’s House to see him & his Indian woman.”\textsuperscript{52} In this manner, Spencer ensured that the deerskins traded to the French in small-scale local exchange ended up in his own warehouses—personal neutrality allowed Spencer to convert a competitor into a client and to reap the profits.

\textsuperscript{48} Adair, \textit{History}, 281. Adair did not specify the location of this trading house, but did identify it as one of those attacked by the Upper Creeks in 1760. Adair, \textit{History}, 279-81.
\textsuperscript{49} Adair, \textit{History}, 279.
\textsuperscript{51} Deposition of Thomas Perriman, Nov. 23, 1759 in Edmond Atkin to William Henry Lyttelton, Jan. 9, 1760, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
\textsuperscript{52} Deposition of Perriman, Nov. 23, 1759, WLCL.
Perhaps coincidentally, the more elaborate trader dwellings described were those among the Creeks, and the Upper Creeks in particular. It is also worth noting that the majority of house descriptions came during the 1760s, when British hegemony made neutrality an untenable position. But even during times of war, the Upper Creek traders had fewer burdens and higher profits and they faced fewer hostile parties than did the traders among the British-allied Chickasaws.\textsuperscript{53} If true, the Upper Creeks’ decades-long campaign for neutrality in the Southeast would have created benefits for the traders who resided near their towns. If the traders’ clients were at war, the trading houses were “built in the middle of the town... on account of greater security.” But if the Indians made peace, “both the Indians and traders chuse to settle at a very convenient distance, for the sake of their [traders’] live-stock.”\textsuperscript{54} The trader who enjoyed a loft in his storehouse also “stood in the secure affection of his savage brethren.”\textsuperscript{55} For this reason, it was quite likely that a trader’s house grew to fit its environment—larger dwellings and stores in areas that were not at war, and smaller ones in areas beset by constant attack.\textsuperscript{56}

Traders, perhaps recognizing the Indian fondness for neutrality, frequently renounced their status as British subjects. Traders served two peoples and they felt the need to assert their independence in the face of British agents, mostly to save face before


\textsuperscript{54} Adair, \textit{History}, 442-43.

\textsuperscript{55} Adair, \textit{History}, 281.

\textsuperscript{56} Traders, it should be noted, preferred neutrality only between \textit{European} nations. Indians they hoped would continue to war with each other for as long as they could. Indian wars meant increased demand for arms, ammunition, and provisions and consequently higher prices for the traders’ goods. Indians warring with each other also reduced the threat of a pan-Indian alliance that could wipe out the British colonies. William Stephens summarized the basic policy of the traders as early as 1739 when he described a possible Creek-Chocotaw war “which our Traders would rather chuse than not; for whilst these Nations are most at Variance with one another, it prevents any dangerous uniting, to the Detriment of us.” Journal of William Stephens, April 29, 1739, \textit{CRG}, 4: 326. Stephens tended to agree, stating this policy as “a never-failing
Indians. Upon urging of the commander at Fort Loudon, John Elliott refused to move away from Overhill Cherokees, even as his life was threatened by souring Anglo-Cherokee relations. Elliot would “have his own Way,” lamented Captain Raymond Demere, “and does not want to be controlled by no body.” John Williams, who illegally traded rum with the Cherokees, reportedly told those Indians that “he values not the Governors either of So. Carolina and Georgia that it is what and how he pleases to trade.” Richard Street, a packhorseman among the Creeks, did Williams one better, and boasted that “he was not subject to any King and had nothing to do with any King.” When informed that his words were “treason and more than your Life is worth,” Street replied that “he never paid Tribute to any King, and had not any King at all.” While Street may have abandoned his citizenship in the British realm, he and his fellows would have recognized other forces governing their lives. Indeed, their ability to successfully negotiate these larger forces was a key aspect of their personal identity. In the 1770s, traders had no more use for professions of loyalty than did those a generation earlier.

William Simory, a Creek trader, assured his clients that he was “formerly a Soldier to the great King and run away from him and would now live and die amongst them.” Hugh Simpson, trader with the Great Tallassee Creeks, was willing to proclaim “he would not Obey any Governor Nor Superintendent nor any person but his employer.”

Maxim, that the Indians falling out with one another, never forbodes any Ill to us.” Journal of William Stephens, Dec. 18, 1740, CRG, 4(sup): 55.
57 Raymond Demere to WHL, Aug. 26, 1757, DRIA, 2: 406.
58 James Beamer to Glen, Feb. 21, 1756, DRIA, 2: 106.
59 Affidavit of Lachlan McIntosh, Nov. 14, 1752, DRIA, 1: 343.
60 Such second-hand reports of treasonous behavior should be taken with a grain of salt. Indian traders were often the first suspects when Anglo-Indian relations soured, serving as an easy target for colonial governors seeking causes of ill will. Gregory Evans Dowd offers an excellent case study of such scapegoating in his “Panic,” 542-44.
61 Journal of Taitt, Feb. 28, 1772, in Mereness, Travels, 512.
62 Journal of Taitt, April 19, 1772, in Mereness, Travels, 544.
Spencer, neutral and optimistic, proved that such claims were directed at Indian rather than British audiences.

When Spencer insulted Edmond Atkin, he revealed that the traders believed it necessary to defy colonial authority in the presence of Indians. When Atkin made his journey among the Creeks in 1759, he confronted Spencer about the Muccolasses store being too far from town and threatened to revoke his trading license. Spencer, affronted that Atkin would dictate his store’s location, replied that “he might take his Licence from him... and if he did that, he the said Spencer did not value it that, (snapping his fingers).” Spencer then mounted his horse, threw his hat at Atkins’s feet, and rode off claiming that “he would never be baffled by his Majesty’s Superintendent.” Afterwards, Spencer made “Brags to some Indians, that he had talked strong to the Great Beloved Man [Atkin].” While Spencer was perhaps not an ardent patriot, the insults he hurled at Atkin were actually assurances directed toward his Indian neighbors. A trader risked Indian friendship by allying himself too closely with British agents (mistrusted by Creeks even in the best of times). His ability to portray himself as an independent man in front of gender-proud natives was likewise crucial to his standing as a man of influence among the Indians—a man of influence who could better dictate his prices.

Asserting their independence was the means by which traders kept greater control over the sale of their goods. If they acted as dutiful servants of the crown, governors might be allowed to set the prices of trade goods at whatever rate. Therefore the traders took every opportunity to remind their clients that the stores’ goods belonged to the

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63 Memorial of James Germany, Aug. 18, 1759, in Edmond Atkin to William Henry Lyttelton, Jan. 9, 1760, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
64 Memorial of James Germany, in Atkin to Lyttelton, Jan. 9, 1760, WLCL.
65 Memorial of James Germany, WLCL.
traders and no one else. Glen noted in 1751 that traders frequently ignored trade
regulations, telling the Indians “not to mind what was said by the government for their
Goods were their own and they would then sell them how, and in what Manner they
pleased.”66 Four years later, traders used almost the exact same wording, telling the
Creeks “that their Goods were their own” and that they “would dispose of them or give
them away as they thought proper.”67 When the cantankerous Spencer spat his insults at
Atkin, one of them was his oath that “if he never was to sell a bit of goods whilst he
lived, he would not let his goods go into Mocolussah.”68 Spencer’s goods were his, and
he alone would determine their disposal.

The traders’ carefully guarded independence would vanish the instant that Indians
tried to negotiate trade prices, however. At that moment, the trader became very
concerned with proper channels and authority. The Gun Merchant’s 1755 seizure of
Lachlan McGillivray and other leading Upper Creek traders exemplified the Indians’
frustration with British bargaining strategy. Recently returned from a hunting trip among
the Cherokees, the Gun was startled at the good prices Cherokee hunters received for
their skins and returned to his town of Okchai determined to get a Cherokee rate from the
Creek traders. The traders refused to negotiate, telling the Gun Merchant “we were sorry
that we could not gratify him in his Request, that Matters of such publick and great
Consequence as that, ought to be decided before the Governor and Council.” The
headman “in a great Heat replied that he expected such an Answer,” but that he knew “it
was of no Use to apply to the Governor on that Head, that they were told the Traders

66 Glen, “Scheme for Regulating the Indian Trade,” [1751], DRIA, 2: 87-88.
67 Journal of an Indian Trader, April 22, 1755, DRIA, 2: 65.
68 Memorial of James Germany, August 18, 1759, in Atkin to Lyttelton, January 9, 1760, Lyttelton Papers,
WLCL.
might do as they pleased.” Despite the ropes around their wrists, the traders maintained
that the Carolina council chamber “was the proper Place for desiring a Favour of that
Kind” and that it was not within the traders’ “Province” to comply with his demand.69

The tactic worked: while the Gun Merchant refused to see the governor, the traders were
allowed to go to Charleston to negotiate a lower rate. In the end, obviously, nothing was
altered. But Indians were not helpless in the trade. As the Okchais learned,
traders knew they were at Indian mercies and that a little violence could always bring
them to heel.

Traders operated under Indian law and Indian custom, a fact that no trader could
afford to ignore for long. From his first welcome into an Indian town, the trader’s life was
in the hands of Indian clan traditions. A headman would welcome the trader to town,
offering him protection. The formal alliance between headman and trader would be
reinforced and secured by the headman’s female relations, acting as hostesses. One of
them would usually marry the trader, further cementing the trader’s status as an adoptive
member of the headman’s clan.70 Every aspect of the trader’s daily life and household
would continue to function according to Indian tradition: Indians would build the house,
protect it, and destroy it if the trader’s actions warranted.

The stores’ physical form benefited Indians more than whites. Trading houses
were more easily and more frequently invaded than were fortified Augusta homes.

Aggrieved Indians employed the simple and effective tactic of store-breaking to remind
their storekeepers that they were guests in town. While the 1760 attacks were a striking

69 Journal of an Indian Trader, April 22, 1755, DRIA, 2: 64.
70 Joshua A. Piker, Okfuskee: A Creek Indian Town in Colonial America (Cambridge, MA: Harvard
University Press, 2004), 136-40, 165-67, 59-61; Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 84-86; Perdue, Cherokee
(and strikingly violent) example, they were part of a pattern of violence in the deerskin trade. Historians have tended to focus on the most dramatic examples of Indian correction in the deerskin trade, attributing Indian attacks against traders to political or personal motivations. The 1760 attacks themselves have been variously attributed to the political motives of an anti-British Creek faction and to a lovers’ dispute over a Creek woman. In both of these interpretations, however, Indian violence was expressly punitive, a response to trade abuses of one kind or another—a familiar pattern in historians’ accounts of the trade, whereby abusive traders press their Indian hosts too far and spark either a beating, a murder, or a war.

Store-breaking, however, was not always a catastrophic or even punitive event. Sometimes the act was nothing more than kicking open a trader’s door and perhaps strewing his goods about the yard. Storehouse doors were particular targets for store-breakers. Given storehouses’ close resemblance to Indian houses, the locked door stood out in sharp relief—a symbol of competing Indian and European notions of property and propriety. Cherokee trader Matthew Toole complained of the Indians’ getting drunk, so

72 Corkran tended to view attacks on traders as simply local manifestations of larger political issues, whether Creek or Cherokee. In addition to Creek Frontier, see also his account of the Cherokees’ breaking of Bernard Hughs’s store in Corkran, Cherokee Frontier, 26. More recent historians of the southeastern Indian trade have tended to associate Indian violence with a litany of trader abuses. See for example Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 106-108; James Merrell, The Indian’s New World: Catawbas and their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1989; New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), 63-68. Tom Hatley, for his part, has given both motivations equal weight and also tried to understand trader attacks in a specifically Indian context, as attacks were sometimes messages of strength sent to rival Indian groups. Hatley, The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Era of Revolution (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 44-47. Piker’s study, the most recent, still understands violence against traders in a primarily punitive sense. See fn. 15 above.
much so that “they drives us all out of our Houses, and breaking open our Doors.”

Twenty years later, David Taitt recorded an incident in which the Creeks of Tallasseeatche attacked the store of John Bell. The Indians “broke Bells doors and destroyed his household utensils such as pots, bowles etca and Spoiled all his Victuals.”

Though seemingly quite violent, these small-scale attacks were enabled by the unusual fragility of Indian doors. In his lengthy and detailed description of Indian construction methods, Adair noted that the Indians “always make their doors of poplar, because the timber is large, and very light when seasoned, as well as easy to be hewed.” Doors were usually made of a single plank, but could also be made of two planks with cross bars tied with strips of leather. Adair praised the strength of the leather bindings, which were “almost as strong as if it were done with long nails,” but there seemed little evidence that the doors were as sturdy as English oak. Poplar was a favorite of Indian canoe-builders because of its softness. It was probably also a favorite of Indian store-breakers, given the ease with which one “young fellow run against one of the Traders doors and broke it in pieces by a thrust with his foot.”

Store-breaking was frequently nothing more than a bargaining tactic between Indians and their storekeepers, usually in pursuit of a lower rate of exchange. As the Cherokees told Upper Creek headmen in the 1750s, the Cherokees earned their lower trade prices “with all Manner of bad Usage” of the traders. “Tumble their Goods out of their Houses,” they advised the Creeks, “take some of their Goods by Force... that was

73 Matthew Toole to James Glen, Oct. 2, 1752, DRIA, 1: 359.
74 Journal of David Taitt, March 28, 1772, in Mereness, Travels, 533.
75 Adair, History, 450.
77 Journal of David Taitt, May 13, 1772, in Mereness, Travels, 555.
the Method the Cherrockee Warriours fell upon to get a Low Trade." The Upper Creeks took the message to heart, and promptly tied up Lachlan McGillivray and some other Augusta traders. Almost twenty years later, the Creeks still practiced the Cherokees’ advice. The headman of Tallassechatchee, explaining the breaking of John Bell’s store, told David Taitt it had happened because Bell “would not give them such a good Trade as the people of puckantallahassie [sic] did.”

Indian-trader violence was also a part of an ongoing social negotiation between the town and its fictive kinsman, the trader. It was a mark of a respected trader that he would return violence with violence in kind. William Rae died in the 1760 attacks in Oakfuskee, but apparently earned the respect of his fellow traders and even of the Creeks who killed him. According to Adair, a trader such as Rae had earned the respect of the Oakfuskee Creeks because “it was usual for him to correct as many of the swaggering [Indian] heroes, as could stand round him in his house, when they became impudent and mischievous.” Adair asserted that Indians respected “martial spirit, and contemn the pusillanious.” Given Indians’ preoccupation with concepts of manliness and its close association with diplomacy and trade, these small-scale battles between red clients and white traders were attempts to assert or maintain a dominant position in daily transactions. While John Ross, almost universally loathed by European and Indian alike, was “cut to Pieces” in the nearby village of Sugatspoges, William Rae was only

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78 Journal of an Indian Trader, April 1755, DRIA, 2: 66.
80 Adair, History, 280.
81 Adair, History, 280.
killed, with no apparent disrespect paid to his body. Even the other employees of Ross’s trading store were spared Ross’s fate, which Adair took as proof that “the worst people, in their worst actions, make a distinction between the morally virtuous, and vicious.”

Although Indian social mores shaped everyday life at the store, the stores’ presence had the long-term effect of dramatically altering those mores. Indians preferred European manufactures to their own stone tools. The increasing dependence on European goods weakened Indians’ material independence. Greater reliance on commercial hunting to secure basic needs also strained southeastern deer populations and decreased the importance of agriculture. Indians’ increasing dependence on European goods, and their decreasing ability to pay for those goods, increased tensions, sparked wars, and ultimately led to Indian land cessions as confederacies sought to absolve their debts to traders. This story gradually unfolded among the Catawbas, the Cherokees, and the Creeks alike throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Internally, the trade undermined Indians’ traditional village life. Extended contact with traders influenced Indians to adopt some form of private property. This was particularly true of mestizo sons fathered by white traders who remained a part of their mothers’ villages. These men owned land and slaves and introduced European notions of status and ownership into Indian towns. In doing so, they provided a new generation of leadership among Indians, but their accommodationist sentiments clashed with nativists,
dividing Indians and providing opportunities for further wars and loss of land in the first years of the United States government. The trade also undermined traditional gender roles, placing a greater emphasis on hunting as an economic enterprise, and reducing the importance of agriculture. In ways no individual could have witnessed, but obvious to historians, the trade was a precursor to dispossession: Indians eventually began trading land instead of leather, and the trade ran itself out of business. On the level of daily interaction, however, there ran a powerful countercurrent to the creeping changes in Indian social life.

While Indians lived slowly accommodated European invasions, many more Europeans than Indians agreed to trade their way of life altogether. At its peak in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, the deerskin trade convinced more Europeans than Indians to cross cultural boundaries and to adopt a new way of living, emulating northern Indians’ success in converting Englishmen to Indians. As it was in New England, so it was in the Southeast—when it came to a clash of cultures, the Indians tended to be far more persuasive than their missionizing traders. For every Lachlan McGillivray or George Galphin who moved east and built estates, there were probably a dozen traders who stayed among the Indians. For every Adair who tried to undermine Indian mores in the name of improving them, there were others who preferred to leave European codes behind and to “go native.”

87 Perdue, Cherokee Women, 75-77.
Food provided many with their first taste of Indian life, and it proved most enticing. Traders’ homes were provided with the most fashionable repasts of both European and Indian palates. The traders’ servants and employees apparently spent their winters hunting and “every servant that each of them [the traders] fits out for the winter’s hunt, brings home to his master a large heap of fat barbecued briskets, rumps, and tongues of buffalo and deer.”88 The game would be complemented with the finer tastes from eastern seaports that traders brought to their Indian homes. James Adair assured his readers that these items were “laid up and used not for necessity, but for the sake of variety.” Adding to the variety were the “chocolate, coffee, and sugar” obtained in Charleston or Augusta. These products of the West Indies allowed the traders to improve their own “numberless quantity of fowl-eggs, fruit, &c. to have puddings, pyes, fritters, and many other articles of the like kind.”89 Though not a purely English diet, Adair had no regrets, asserting that the traders enjoyed “as great plenty, as in the English settlements.”90

Traveling in the 1770s, William Bartram enjoyed the traders’ hospitality at their well-set tables. While visiting a trader in the Cherokee lower towns, he breakfasted on “excellent coffee, relished with bucanned venison, hot corn cakes, [and] excellent butter and cheese.”91 Later, at the Boatswain’s well-appointed table, Bartram again dined on “excellent coffee served up in china ware, by young negro slaves,” along with “excellent sugar, honey, choice warm corn cakes, venison steaks, and barbecued meat.”92 Bartram’s

88 Adair, History, 447.
89 Adair, History, 447.
90 Adair, History, 447.
91 Bartram, Travels, 221.
92 Bartram, Travels, 549.
enthusiasm was typical of Europeans who ventured to try North American game—an enthusiasm that quickly extended to the native lifestyle that provided the delicious treats.

The shock of the exotic made Europeans hesitant to try such foods, but such prejudices were quickly overcome. Food provided many their first entry into an Indian life. Thomas Nairne’s description of his 1708 journey to the Mississippi extolled the virtues of the hunter’s diet of roast turkey, bear, deer, and buffalo. Nairne considered buffalo tongue to be “extraordinary fine atasting like marrow” and thought that “no Beef exceeds them.”93 Nairne extended his enthusiastic praise to the Indian hunters who made “happiness consist in a few things,” and gave his readers a warm description of happy Indians sitting with “their mistresses, by some pretty Brook under the shady trees... ther bellies were full.”94 Adair claimed to have known “gentlemen of the nicest taste, who on beginning their first trip into the Indian country” refused to eat bear meat, protesting they “would as soon eat part of a barbecued rib of a wolf, or any other beast of prey.”95 The long days of travel brought these gentlemen a healthy appetite, Adair continued, and after they “ventured to taste a little” these gentlemen proceeded to devour all the bear’s meat they could get, “to make up the loss they had sustained by their former squeamishness and neglect.”96

If visitors relished bear ribs as a treat, traders far outdid their countrymen in their zeal for Indian cultural ways. Traders spent the majority of their lives living among Indians. James Adair began trading in the 1730s and did not quit the trade until the 1770s. Cornelius Doharty, who appeared as a trader in the 1741 census of Augusta, was still

95 Adair, *History*, 446.
trading well into the 1760s. James Germany and Thomas Perriman, both acting as storekeepers for John Spencer in the late 1750s, had already spent many (if not most) of their adult years living with Indians. Germany had been “26 years in the [Creek] Nation” as of 1759 and Perriman the same year reckoned he had been “employed in the Indian Trade in the Creek nation 21 Years.”97 If they entered the trade hoping for a quick profit, most of these men found that life among the Indians was either too pleasant or too debt-ridden to give up. In either case, traders tended to adopt a when-in-Rome approach to their lives in Indian towns.

Given their long tenures, most traders clearly felt that their stores were not houses but homes. Spending so much of their lives among Indians, it was small wonder that many traders came to resemble their hosts. Upon his annual return to his store, the seasoned trader immediately changed into something more comfortable than European woolens. Bartram was welcomed to Muccolasses by a trader “entirely naked except for a breech-clout, and encircled by a company of red men in the like habit.”98 Adair told of another trader who was always “nearly in the same light dress, as that of his [Indian] visitants, according to the mode of their domestic living.”99 Robert French must have spent his days in a similar state, since he relied on the Oakfuskee Captain for “a pair of moccossons, and an old Blanket” when the 1760 attacks drove French from his store.100

Adair in particular chided his fellow traders for allowing themselves to become “too Indian” in their beliefs. The old Chickasaw hand recognized the joys of living with Indians in times of peace, when traders were “kindly treated, and watchfully guarded, by

96 Adair, History, 446.
97 Edmond Atkin to John Cleland, Dec. 23, 1759; Deposition of Thomas Perriman, Nov. 23, 1759; both included in Edmond Atkin to William Henry Lyttelton, Jan. 9, 1760, Lyttelton Papers, WLCL.
98 Bartram, Travels, 282.
a society of friendly and sagacious people, and possessed of all the needful things to make a reasonable life easy.” But he could not forgive those traders who became too close to their clients, even going so far as to adopt their beliefs. In his account of the Upper Creeks’ 1760 attacks upon traders, Adair noted that “in a few towns, some of our thoughtless young men, who were too much attached to the Indian life, from an early pursuit in that wild and unlimited country, chose not to run any risk, rather than leave their favourite scenes of pleasure.” At another time, Adair crossed paths with “a fellow-traveller, an old Indian trader, inebriated and naked, except his Indian breeches and maccaseenes” whom Adair offended by killing a rattlesnake and thereby violating an Indian custom. That same man and Adair’s own partner later upbraided Adair for removing a deer’s hoof that each had sewn into their gunshot pouches, which enabled the men “according to Indian creed, to kill deer, bear, buffaloe, beaver and other wild beasts.” His hopes for a trade-based civilization program frustrated by such men, Adair could only lament that “the long-desolate savages of the far extending desarts of America, should entertain the former superstitious notions... as those of an early Christian education, are so soon impress with the like opinions.” As a cultural exchange, the deerskin trade ran in reverse. For those who resided in them, trading houses tended to pull Europeans towards Indians much more frequently than they pulled Indians towards Europeans. Thomas Nairne’s original vision of an overwhelming British influence tended not to hold up.

99 Adair, History, 281-82.
100 Minutes of Governor and Council, May 26, 1760, CRG, 8: 315.
101 Adair, History, 443.
102 Adair, History, 283.
103 Adair, History, 251.
104 Adair, History, 251.
105 Adair, History, 251.
Trading houses did not vanish from the Southeast after 1763. Probably because all parties favored them, resident traders remained a key feature of southern Indian life until after the American Revolution. The Proclamation of 1763 was never rescinded, but the "crisis" that it brought on never fully played out. Trading houses remained a key part of Anglo-Indian relations until the American Revolution forced the British out of the south. Even then, British traders remained as Indian countrymen and shipped their goods through Spanish Florida. When the United States established the southern factory system under Benjamin Hawkins, Indian traders from the new nation stayed on as residents in Indian countries. The trading house, so convenient for all involved, remained the favored mode of conducting business.

The fears of "falling houses" were mostly symbolic. Rarely did houses physically collapse, but the 1760s was a period of major change for the major parties involved. Indians lost their bargaining position as the French retreated west of the Mississippi and the aggressive British colonies began moving onto native hunting lands. Traders faced new rivals and also realized that the old system was beginning to break down. The British, finally relieved of their fears of the French, began to plan for a new future in the Southeast that would provide for all nations. The conditions that had created, shaped, and defined the boundaries of the deerskin trade were no more. Having won this new world, there was little consensus among southern Britons about what to do with it.

Of course different groups had their own answers. At the highest level of politics, the superintendency of John Stuart marked the most significant alteration in the deerskin trade since the attempted public monopoly of 1716-1717. Insistent upon the prerogatives of his office, Stuart spent the years between 1763 and 1775 trying (and largely failing) to
enact a comprehensive plan for management of the deerskin trade. His attempts at oversight brought him into conflict with wealthy Augusta traders unused to such governmental scrutiny, and colonial governors who believed Stuart’s office an unreasonable encroachment upon their traditional roles in the Southeast. Added to the political conflicts were economic ones as the greater number of traders and realignment of the trade routes south created crises of authority in European and Indian settlements alike.  

At the broadest level of demographic and social changes in the southern backcountry, the breakdown in the trade was hastened by the dramatic increase in white settlement and the newcomers’ expectations of property and authority that did not match the standing rules of the deerskin economy. The vigilantes of the South Carolina Regulator movement and their spokesman, Charles Woodmason, likewise used their access to print culture to articulate their own vision of the southeastern future. For them, the multiracial opportunities and uncertain boundaries of southeastern society were fraught with dangers and challenges to white patriarchal rule. The culture of hunting and the loose definitions of property that marked the deerskin economy were incompatible with the slow accumulation of property and influence that supported the Regulators’ brand of social advancement. The Regulation’s actions targeted horse thieves and hunters, tying them up and binding them to agriculture (quite literally) as a means of imprinting the Southeast with a proper character and agrarian future.  

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107 On Woodmason and the Regulators, see Richard J. Hooker, ed. The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of Revolution; also Rachel N. Klein, Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808, 47-78.
The slow breakdown of the trade that began in the 1760s also inspired private attempts to define and describe the Southeast. Four authors writing in the 1760s and 1770s provided the American South with its first literary movement. James Adair, William Bartram, William de Brahm, and Bernard Romans each penned lengthy natural histories of the Southeast in an attempt to understand both where Indians came from and where they should go. Valued today for their rich, if flawed, descriptions of native America, these men were themselves connected to the deerskin trade and their relationship to that commerce influenced the stories they told. They succeeded and failed to varying degrees to influence British and American Indian policy and secure their preferred visions of the region’s future. But their works stand as proof that, even as late as 1776, the Southeast’s future had not yet been determined.

In the end, it took a much bigger disaster than the general license system to finally and fully dislodge Augusta from its position of leadership in southeastern affairs: the American Revolution. In Georgia, the Revolution began as an extension of the old trader landscape, but by the time that it was over, a new generation of leaders had emerged as the central actors in Augusta. From the old outpost on the Savannah, the new leaders crafted a vision of the early republic that would do much to ensure that the deerskin trade was finally set on a course to irrelevance and oblivion.
CONCLUSION

"TO REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS"

The fence was in the way. In September 1783 the Richmond Academy Board of Trustees met for the first time in one of the few houses remaining in post-war Augusta. The Georgia legislature had given the trustees the task of re-making the old trader town into something more orderly, and they convened their first meeting hoping to begin that work. They had set their sights on the old common lands, which the legislature had "lately ordered to be laid out into lots, and to form part of the town of Augusta." (Fig. 14) Standing in their way, however, was one of the last vestiges of Augusta’s old trader elite—Andrew McLean’s fence.¹

McLean was one of the last traders left in Augusta after the American Revolution. Most of his old friends and partners had either died or fled. Loyalist in their sentiments, most traders moved their operations to West Florida to reestablish their business and avoid hostile Augusta Whigs. Others, like McLean, had simply returned to their village stores and households and stayed put. Whatever the reasons for his decision to stay, he suffered accordingly. His property had apparently been subject to seizure and insult from the Revolutionary government. As Mary Mackay wrote in the summer of 1783, “while

¹ Minutes of the Richmond Academy Trustees, September 18, 1783, Special Collections, Reese Library, Augusta State University.
his Estate was in the hands of the public, devastation [and] destruction prevail’d, I never saw such ruin.” 2 Among the slow process of sorting out his affairs, McLean now had to go defend his fence.

It was a small contest, but it pitted Augusta’s old leadership against its new. At their second meeting, the Academy Trustees demanded that McLean attend them and prove his claims. McLean demurred, claiming that he did not have his personal papers handy. But he responded to the Trustees’ order with reference to his former associations and powers within the town. The “Parish of St. Paul having been indebted to the house of James Jackson, & Co.,” McLean claimed, “application was made to the Governor & Council, during the late government, and the same now granted accordingly, and is now his property.” 3 The fence thus stood as a final reminder of the enormous influence the traders had once wielded over the town. McLean’s refusal to attend the board was perhaps intended as one final denial of the authority of outsiders.

The world around Augusta had changed dramatically, however, and history was not on McLean’s side. McLean did attend the Trustees in November of 1783 and laid his claims before them. They referred the matter to the legislature. 4 McLean lost his claim and the survey of the new town began in the spring of 1784. The Trustees, whose numbers included such prominent men as Georgia Governor George Walton and Speaker of the Assembly William Glascock, clearly had the upper hand. The Trustees were not men who took kindly to obstructions. In 1785, they ordered the entire town of Augusta to work “to remove all obstructions out of the Streets of the town.” They commanded “all

2 Mary Chilcott Mackay to [John Malbone?], July 26, 17[8]3, Colonial Dames of America, Georgia Historical Society Collections, MS #965, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah Georgia.
3 Minutes of the Richmond Academy Trustees, September 19, 1783.
4 Minutes of the Richmond Academy Trustees, November 20, 1783.
white male Inhabitants... with their Negroes... to proceed to the removal of all such obstructions." These were men who liked their paths very straight and very clean.

Despite this radical change in leadership, the Revolution in Augusta was not a coup against an entrenched elite. The traders themselves had largely created the conditions for their own removal. By 1773, the Cherokees had lost much of their leather resources as deer herds decreased and white settlements increased. As hunts grew less productive, Cherokee debts increased. Augusta’s traders hit upon a classic solution for this problem – the Cherokees would be forgiven their debts in exchange for a cession of hunting grounds to the north and west of Augusta. Since the Creeks claimed the same grounds, the Augusta traders extended the same exchange of land for absolution. In June 1773, Augusta hosted a second major Indian congress which resulted in a 2.5 million-acre “New Purchase” of 1773.

The treaty, though, did not sit well with younger Creek warriors. Angry at their leadership and angrier at white settlers, Creeks attacked white settlements throughout the winter of 1773-74. Gov. James Wright’s response to these attacks dissatisfied backcountry whites. They believed him too beholden to the Indian traders’ pacifistic policies and not sufficiently ardent in pressing white claims to Indian lands. Their local protests eventually joined them to the larger independence movement and touched off the Revolutionary War in the Georgia upcountry. For the remainder of the war, Augusta and

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5 Minutes of the Richmond County Academy, August 27, 1785.
6 Kathryn Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 150-51.
its environs would serve as a center for Whig sentiment and even as a capital for the Whig government when the British seized Savannah in 1778.\footnote{Cashin, “But Brothers, It Is Our Land We Are Talking About,” in Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate, and Peter J. Albert, eds., \textit{An Uncivil War: the Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution} Published for the United States Capitol Historical Society (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985): 240-75 at 245-47.}

The Revolution signaled the end of Augusta’s influence in the deerskin trade. Some traders, such as Lachlan McGillivray, had already moved to the Georgia lowcountry and had lost their influence in the Indian country, while others fled the colony to Florida. Those who stayed in Augusta lost their homes and property due to the events of the war; and some, such as George Galphin, worked with the rebels to preserve Indian neutrality and to secure some future for the trade. Others, such as John Rae and Robert Mackay, simply died. But, as rebels and British forces alternately besieged and occupied Augusta, the traders found themselves bereft of their former economic and political influence. In fact, the new legislature targeted a law to exclude Scotsmen from entering the state at the largely Scottish former Indian traders.\footnote{Cashin, “Brothers,” 274.} By the end of the war, the British had evacuated the upcountry, and the anti-Indian backcountry leadership had formally taken control of the new state capital at Augusta and made themselves sovereign over all the lands from the Savannah to the Mississippi rivers.

The well-traveled roads between the Creeks and Augusta fell into disuse as Augusta became a stronghold of Whig sentiment and the Indian trade moved exclusively to Pensacola and Mobile. The packhorse trains that had long tied Indian economies to white ones began taking the shorter north-south route from the Gulf Coast. Many younger traders opted to live among their Indian clients during the war, bringing with them their black slaves. The “Indian countrymen” joined their cousins in the Creeks – \textit{métis} children
of trader-Indian marriages. During the war and after, these men set a new model of property-holding among the Creeks that moved them away from their traditional modes of hunting and farming and towards a European understanding of property and production.9

After the trade and the traders left Augusta, the Georgia legislature and Richmond Academy trustees decided to create a more regular and orderly street plan for their new home. The physical layout of Augusta, for decades based more on the contours of the trading path than any natural feature of formal survey, was ordered changed into a more orderly grid-pattern by an act of the provincial legislature in 1780. The trustees took control of Augusta’s former common lands along the river and noted that “there are few buildings and none of them very valuable,” and believed that “a street or a common upon the bay, bounded by a straight and regular line, will be of considerable and general utility.”10 McLean’s fence had delayed this interruption, but could not sway the trustees from their project.

A new geography was taking shape under the trustees’ guidance. As they educated a new generation of Georgia’s leaders, the trustees made sure to train their students in scientific cartography. In the wake of the Revolution, mapping took on a new emphasis. Augusta’s new leadership believed that land was the road to wealth and that mapmaking was the road to claiming lands. As educators, they made certain that the academy’s students would be trained in surveying and familiar with maps. Thus did they

10 Minutes of the Richmond County Academy Trustees, Sept. 18, 1783.
order a “set of globes with large maps... Hadley’s Quadrant... [and a] Set of Surveyors instruments, with azimuth Compass,” for the school, along with the textbooks on history, classics, and rhetoric that would make up the young pupils’ curriculum.\textsuperscript{11}

A remarkable map survives that reveals the geography of the trustees. Edward Telfair, an occasional member of the Richmond Academy Trustees, kept among his papers a rough manuscript map made in 1795, the year that the Yazoo Fraud focused national attention on Augusta. (Fig. 15) The fraud involved the Georgia legislature selling all of Georgia’s western lands, some fifty million acres, to a collection of four private companies, despite the presence of thousands of Indians still living where they had before the American Revolution. They were simply not part of the equation of land and wealth involved in the Yazoo Fraud.

Those involved in the Yazoo companies included academy board members Telfair, George Walton, and Thomas Glascock. Telfair acted as legal counsel for one of the Yazoo companies, and his map traced the outlines of the companies’ claims. No hint of the trading path appeared; Indian groups were named and roughly sketched as a series of small triangles. The message was clear, however: Telfair and his associates were masters of this land, based on little authority other than their ability to map and claim it.\textsuperscript{12} With this simple map, southeastern cartography had finally cast off its role as describing relations between peoples and had learned to treat the land as a neutral, blank space, awaiting the claims of survey and purchase.

By the nineteenth century, professional cartography in the Southeast had emerged as a scientific enterprise, entirely divorced from the human relationships of the Indian

\textsuperscript{11} Minutes of the Richmond County Academy Trustees, April 4, 1785.
\textsuperscript{12} Untitled MS Map contained in Edward Telfair Papers, MS #793 Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.
trade, though it still broadcast its political ambitions. Daniel Sturges, the state of
Georgia’s first surveyor general, produced in 1818 a large-scale map of the state. The
states’ counties, outlined in color, were the dominant feature on a largely featureless map.
A geological assessment of the state’s topography appeared at the map’s right, and a
statistical table appeared in the lower righthand corner to chart the progress of
settlements, listing populations from the 1810 Census and, helpfully, including a blank
column to be filled in with data from the 1820 Census. Indians belonged to administrative
territories, outlined in color the same as any of Georgia’s counties.13

The process of removal was well underway by the time of Sturges’s map. A
number of legends recounted important events from the recent War of 1812, including the
march of the American army against British forts during the conflict and large, empty
stretches of territory in the south and west of the state bore the label “Indian claim
extinguished by the Treaty of Fort Jackson.” One Creek town bore the legend “Destroyed
by the Georgians Sep. 27th 1793.” More subtly, Sturges removed Indians as people
inhabiting the landscape and blended them into the “natural” landscape. In a legend next
to “Chatta-hochee Old Town” on the Chattahoochee River, Sturges helpfully identified
the source of the river’s name: “This Town gives name to the River from Chatto a Stone
and Hachee flowered. There being Stones of that description in the River.” In one stroke,
the provenance of the name, “Chattahoochee River,” the Indian town that stood on its
banks, was transformed into a benign natural feature, removed from human history.14 As
with Chattahoochee Old Town, the old Indian trade geography persisted in certain
elements of Sturges’s map, but its meaning had changed dramatically. The old path that

13 Daniel Sturges, “Map of the State and Province of Georgia Prepared from actual Surveys and other
Documents for Eleazar Early,” [1818], copy held at Newberry Library.
14 Sturges, “Map of the State and Province of Georgia.”
stretched from Augusta to the Cowetas appeared on Sturges's map, but rather than
bearing any indication of the old mutuality of the trade, Sturges labeled the path simply,
"Route which the Army took."\textsuperscript{15}

The path continued as a major transportation route, though nineteenth-century
travelers experienced it in a very different manner. No longer the required route through
the Southeast, the old path from Augusta to the Chattahoochee was but one of many
roads criss-crossing the region. In 1835, Samuel Augustus Mitchell published a "Map of
the States of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia," which showed each state as a
series of colored counties, stretching from border to border. The map's main feature was
an intricate series of "Stage Roads," "Common Roads," "Canals," and "Rail Roads,
which connected the county seats to each other. By the time of the Mitchell map, Augusta
was still a common point for travelers, serving as a transfer point for Georgia's main
stage routes: Savannah-to-Augusta, Augusta-Milledgville, Augusta-Chattahoochee,
Augusta-Columbia, SC. For those entering Georgia from the north on their way west to
Alabama and Mississippi, Augusta was the gateway to the former Indian territories, as
one copy of the 1835 Mitchell map attests. In a copy held in the Newberry Library, an
unknown traveler inked a heavy black line from Raleigh, North Carolina, to Columbia,
Georgia, presumably tracing his intended southern route. The line passed through
Augusta and closely followed the old Indian trading path. In the era of Indian removal,
travelers through Georgia still followed the old geography, even if they were themselves
unaware of it.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Sturges, "Map of the State and Province of Georgia."
\textsuperscript{16} Samuel Augustus Mitchell, "Map of the States of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia,"
[Philadelphia: Published by S. Augustus Mitchell, 1835], copy held at the Newberry Library.
Less than a century after Augusta's founding, and only a little more than fifty years after the Revolution had severed the town from the Indian trade, travel through the Southeast had changed dramatically. White settlements had pushed across the Chattahoochee River, and the "Black Belt" of the cotton south now subsumed the older trading path. Relations between places no longer included the human relationships of the Indian trade. Instead, geography had become a neutral servant of the traveler, masking the human history that had created the antebellum landscape. The lands that such famous travelers as Frederick Law Olmsted experienced were the result of this conscious creation of southeasterners, a product of the decisions that men such as the Richmond Academy trustees made in the decade after the American Revolution.

Movement meant less in this new Southeast. While white travelers poured into the new states of Alabama and Mississippi to claim lands and raise cotton, they were the only ones reaping the benefits of this transformed landscape's opportunities. In the eighteenth century, southeasterners had been drawn to the possibilities of the deerskin trade. As a system and as a business the trade had created a unique and flexible procession of spaces and institutions. The flexibility of traffic between Indian towns and European ones had allowed both groups some power to shape the trade to suit their own ends. So long the Southeast remained within the boundaries of the trade's personal connections, opportunity existed for Europeans, Indians, and Africans to seek each other out and carve out autonomous spaces in the greater Southeast.

Flexible as they were, these spaces and institutions of the deerskin trade were nevertheless concrete and enduring. The winding and scattered town of Augusta stubbornly resisted attempts to "order" and straighten its streets. Its assemblage of large
trading houses and outlying settlements was a testament to the entrenched authority of the
deerskin traders. The well-worn trading paths were an important neutral space that
allowed easy entry into the Southeast but that required the constant reassertion of
identities. The village storehouses were the small arenas in which Indians and Europeans
waged might cultural contests. And in each of these spaces Africans and African-
Americans took advantage of the uncertainties of an improvised system to remake
themselves as people rather than property. As the eighteenth-century maps show, this
supposed transitional space in American history remained a stubborn imprint that
powerfully affected the history that surrounded it.

It took a Revolution and a half-century of warfare and treaty-making to fully
sever the Southeast from the deerskin trade. Men like the Richmond Academy Trustees
sensed no opportunity in the trade. Surveying the Indian interior, these men instead saw
competitors for the valued resource of land. The history that turned towards dispossession
hinged on this shift in attitudes and spelled doom for the old Indian trade geography.
Lacking a competing system of property or opportunity, African-Americans found
themselves increasingly bound to white definitions of slavery and society. For them, the
post-Revolutionary landscape must have looked sadly familiar.

Amidst all the upheaval and grand transformations, one aspect of the southeastern
trade geography remained. The slave boatmen of the Savannah River continued to drift
downstream and row upstream for many years after the American Revolution. The war
drastically remade the Southeast, but did not fundamentally alter the boatmen’s roles.
Augustans raised tobacco and no longer traded for leather, but their goods still required
water passage to the port of Savannah. Plank-sided pole-boats replaced dugout trading
canoes, but the similarly-shaped craft still required skilled hands to navigate Savannah snags. Cotton flats joined the pole-boats, but a fundamental change in river life would not come until the 1830s and the rise of steam power on the Savannah. Given the influence black watermen had in other parts of antebellum America, it would seem natural that the long-practiced Savannah boatmen would continue to fulfill their role as links in the Southeast’s network of slave communication and resistance.17

The story of Augusta began atop Yamacraw Bluff when James Oglethorpe first noticed the slave-rowed Indian trade boats on the river below. It is fitting and also telling that the story should end here as well. The deerskin trade provided opportunity and freedom of movement for red, white, and black southeasterners. It bound people together in complicated ways that challenged the notions of order and hierarchy that prevailed in eighteenth-century Anglo-America. But slave boatmen were the only trade participants whose livelihood continued after the deerskin trade moved to Florida. That is almost certainly because the boatmen occupied the same place in both the pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary Southeast. In both regimes, they acted as nearly invisible agents allowed to practice their skills so long as they did not overtly challenge whites’ presumed mastery of the landscape. If there was commonality between traders like Andrew Mc Lean and Trustees like George Walton, it was their mutual commitment to unfree labor. Along common bond would lay the eventual future and ultimate tragedy of the American South.

FIGURE 1

FIGURE 2

Herman Moll, “A New Map of the North Parts of America Claimed by France,” 1720. Ayer Collection, Newberry Library.

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FIGURE 6

FIGURE 8

Cartouche from Mitchell, "Map of the British and French Dominions." Ayer Collection, Newberry Library.
The Stuart-Purcell manuscript map, 1775. Reprinted in William P. Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*. 

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The main paths of the Anglo-Creek trade. From Kathryn Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: Creek Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815.*

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FIGURE 12


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The 1780 Town Plan of Augusta, as proposed by the Georgia state legislature. Reprinted in Edward Cashin, *The Story of Augusta*.
Edward Telfair's December 1794 manuscript map, showing his company's claims along the Tennessee River (top center). Telfair Family Papers, Georgia Historical Society.
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