1973

William Allason: merchant in an emerging nation

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WILLIAM ALLASON:
MERCHANT IN AN EMERGING NATION

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 William Spoede
1973
APPROVAL SHEET

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

Doctor of Philosophy

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Approved, May 1973

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the world of William Allason, a Scottish immigrant to the colony of Virginia in the 1750's. Coming out on a two year contract in 1757, Allason remained until his death in 1800. Many things changed within and without William Allason during these years and yet many things remained unchanged. This dissertation examines the changes in the environment of Allason and the effects those changes had in his own life. These effects are most readily seen in the social and economic areas of Allason's life.

The papers of William Allason and his younger brother and co-worker, David, were the main sources for the dissertation. These extensive papers, used by other writers to a lesser degree than here, consist of letter books, memorandum books, account books, day books, and loose papers in the Virginia State Library in Richmond. Corroborative and reinforcing material sought in civic, church, and land records and additional contemporary correspondence and journals were used where pertinent.

In addition to piecing together the life of Allason from his incoming (loose papers) and outgoing (usually letterbooks) correspondence, his account books revealed the profitableness of his mercantile business in the town of Falmouth, Virginia. These account books paint a good profile of Allason's customers—size of accounts, county of origins, goods bought, method of payment, means of collection, and so forth. Thus a good depiction of both the personal and business life of Allason is obtained from the sources.

The life of William Allason supports many of those contentions concerning colonial Virginia life with which we have been familiar but also deepens our understanding of the discontent of the period. A Virginia merchant has left us the record of his mature years in a politically turbulent era, and while he is not of the bottom rung of society, he is neither famous nor an intellectual, and his records tell much of the times.
WILLIAM ALLASON:

MERCHANT IN AN EMERGING NATION
CHAPTER I

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S VIRGINIA --

AND WILLIAM ALLASON'S, TOO

William Allason was born in 1730. George Washington was born in 1732 and died in 1799. Allason died in 1800. There the similarity apparently ends for Washington was born and died in Virginia and, at least in the eyes of posterity, fathered a country. William Allason, although he died in Virginia, was born in Glasgow, Scotland, and fathered only one child who survived infancy -- a girl who could not even carry on the family name. What sixth grader in America has not heard of George Washington -- and what graduate student in early American history has heard of Allason? Yet George Washington and William Allason did share some things. They lived in the same era, and they acquiesced in the same idea of the good life -- a country estate large enough to meet their more than minimal desires. For much of the last fifty years of the century they also shared the air of Virginia. Indeed Allason probably breathed Virginia air more in the last four decades of their lives than did Washington. Certainly no attempt can be made to equate Allason with Washington in historical importance, nevertheless the papers
he left behind him can shed much light on the attitudes in the critical age shared by these two men.

**Colonial Economic Growth**

Economists and historians, and particularly that hybrid group called economic historians, have long since corrected the view of the Whig historical disciples of George Bancroft that the British colonies in North America suffered under the tyrannical trade restrictions of a European despot. Those imperial regulations generally lumped together under the generic title "Navigation Acts" were looked upon as moderate and completely reasonable regulations for the common good by historians such as George L. Beer. Lawrence Harper, on the other hand, reaffirmed a belief that the laws "placed a heavy burden upon the colonies."\(^1\) All agree that the theory most widely accepted at this time was "mercantilism," the belief that a nation or empire was best off when it was self sufficient and when its trade resulted in a net surplus. The ideal situation would have been to have to buy nothing outside the empire and to sell much to many.

At the start of the French and Indian War those English colonies planted on the American continent had their roots down deep and were flourishing. Although Great Britain may have inhibited the "natural growth" of her New

World plantings in order to get the type of development she desired, she also provided extra ingredients to the economic environment that encouraged growth in the desired direction. In the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century Whig historians taught that the great parasite sapping the strength of the American colonies was the Navigation Acts first enacted by the English government in the middle of the seventeenth century and extended periodically thereafter. In their view the only way that the American economy could have reached full maturity to produce its natural and plentiful fruit was to be free of British restrictions.

Oliver M. Dickerson's reply to this charge was that "no case can be made out for the Navigation Acts as a cause of the American Revolution on the grounds that such laws were economically oppressive and were steadily reducing the Americans to a condition of hopeless poverty." Dickerson offered evidence of the fruitfulness and health of the colonial economy:

A country that was a Mecca for immigrants; that was importing slaves in large numbers; that was rapidly expanding its settled area into the back country; that could order from overseas expensive marble statues of its favorite English politicians as did South Carolina and New York; that could squander large sums on the public funeral of a royal governor and bury him in a sepulcher as elaborate as was accorded to royalty in England; that could find the funds to build churches far better than it ever had before in its history; that could sink public debts more rapidly than other countries; and whose population could live on a far better scale

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than similar classes in any other part of the world; was not suffering from economic ills that lead to permanent poverty.3

Assuming that it was true that the American colonies were as prosperous as any other area of the world, the question of how it got that way remained to be answered by economic historians. The rate of growth of the colonial economy has been attributed to several factors by Stuart Bruchey. Land (natural resources) and the knowledge of how to use it, a large measure of self sufficiency on the farms on that land, sale of the surplus production of farms, British loans to American agriculture, the Protestant ethic, "political capitalism" (political and social institutions favorable to the development of commerce), a mobile social structure, and, finally, the role of government are all elements to be considered. Concerning the last mentioned factor Bruchey points out the difficulty of measuring the effect of British policies on such things as the size of ships built in the American colonies and the resultant trade in which those ships could engage -- if larger ships had been permitted they would not have suited the coastal trade as well.

In summary, the total environment including English subsidies (fertilization for economic growth) favored the slow but steady growth of the economies of the British

3Ibid., 56-57.
colonies on the North American continent.⁴

As Joseph Dorfman points out concerning the attitude on both sides of the Atlantic:

All formally conceded that the colonies were "junior branches" of the empire and that their profits should inure to Great Britain. In increasing the stock of the elder branch, the whole empire was strengthened. The colonial thinkers always had to cope with the necessity of proving that the measures they proposed would increase England's profitable trade and commerce. This never proved difficult, though at times it puzzled the English authorities.⁵

For their first one hundred and fifty years, then, the colonies flourished and the English felt they were enjoying the benefits of the fruitful plantation in America. True, the British had to occasionally protect the colonies from predators such as the Indians, Dutch, French, and, to a lesser degree as time passed, the Spanish.

Forsaking a purely nationalistic approach that still clouds most of the studies of the colonial economy and with the growth in interest of economic history more attention has recently been paid to the "Commercial Empire of the Atlantic."⁶ D. A. Farnie maintains that "in a hostile environment the


English plantations solved their basic problem of survival only by the development of staple crops suited to the export market of the Old World." Although tensions developed between the "transatlantic 'Americans' and the government of the 'Mother Country' they were masked and contained by the pressure of external conflict, first with the Dutch and then with the French."\(^7\)

Among the staple commodities that the mainland and West Indian colonists developed were, according to Farnie, cod, fur, tobacco, and sugar. The interplay of these staples with the manufactured goods of the home islands "made the Atlantic basin the sphere of a commercial empire unparalleled in the West in its extent since the fall of Rome. In origin it was united within the common framework of an English nationality and a Protestant faith by the ties of kinship which Prof. Bailyn has traced so clearly."\(^8\)

James F. Shepherd, in an exhaustive study of the value of colonial exports between 1768 and 1772 illuminates this phase of the colonies' role in the Atlantic trading empire. He points out that the exports of the colonies steadily rose but that the rise was most spectacular during the period he examined. His study reinforces the picture of prosperity and steadily rising expectations on the part of

\(^7\)Ibid., 206.

\(^8\)Ibid., 212. Farnie refers to Bernard Bailyn's *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1955), in which Bailyn stresses the importance of connections through kinship in the Atlantic commercial empire.
the colonials that progress was being made — progress that could be measured by their own standard of living.

Shepherd and Gary M. Walton point out that the deficit between imports and exports of the colonies was paid in three ways: first with the surplus of the West Indies trade, second with the value of invisible earnings primarily represented by freight earnings of colonial shipping, and finally, with capital inflows from the Old World either in the form of investments or through immigration. Shepherd and Walton also acknowledge that some historians list a fourth way that the colonists settled their deficits — by increased indebtedness to British merchants — but do not discuss this means at all.9

Although the Navigation Acts have received most historical attention there is another phase of British economic regulation that has also attracted considerable notice — the British-enforced colonial monetary policies. Curtis P. Net-
tels has said that the English prevented the expansion of the money supply in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century in an effort to prevent the industrial development of the colonies so they would produce those products most needed by England. He outlines clearly the attempts of the colonial governments, particularly those in the North faced with a

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currency shortage, to increase their supply of coin through various means. Nettels acknowledged that the currency problem was not as serious in the southern colonies at this time because enumerated articles from there could be traded for the desired British products.¹⁰

E. James Ferguson has expanded on the work of Nettels and studied the problem of colonial currency until the Revolution. Ferguson discounted the findings of earlier historians who had written during the supremacy of "hard money" economic attitudes. He found that, although occasionally problems were caused by currency emissions in some of the southern colonies, in general, the money performed the functions intended for it. "It becomes clear," he claims, "that paper money occupied an important place in colonial affairs not because it embodied the aims of a particular class, but because it rendered important services to the community."¹¹

The general picture presented of the economic situation of the North American colonies of Great Britain in 1760 is that of prosperity. In general, their economies were in a period of steady if not high growth despite restrictions in the form of the Navigation and Currency Acts. This situation had been achieved within the framework of the British


mercantile system. Some colonies had been troubled in the past with shortages of currency with which to conduct commerce, but even that situation altered in the middle of the war with France and Spain. Currency restrictions were waived in order to gain the war-time support of the colonists. Generally, the past, to the colonial of that time, had seen a steady improvement in the fortunes of his ancestors and of himself and he looked forward to continued betterment of his lot in the future. America was a land of opportunity, expansion, growth, and ready credit in the past and he expected it to be in the future.

The British ministry's tolerant attitude to the issue of paper money coming from the colonial governments during the war was radically changed by the Currency Act of 1764. This act prohibited the issuance of additional paper money by the colonial governments south of New England, where the emission of paper money in those colonies had been stopped in 1751. Virginia was the worst offender against hard currency at this time as the House of Burgesses had made extensive issues of paper during the war beginning in 1755. The economic development of that colony had paralleled if not exceeded that of the other colonies during its hundred and fifty years of growth.

**Merchants and the Virginia Economy**

Tobacco is the one word that best encompasses the economy of the Old Dominion beginning with the culture of
that weed by John Rolfe within the first twenty years of the planting of Jamestown until the end of the colonial period. The development of the Virginia tobacco economy is covered in detail by Phillip Alexander Bruce's *Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*. The best general coverage of the planters' efforts, although not restricted to Virginia, is Lewis C. Gray's *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*. Although not easily read and digested, this book is a compendium of facts about southern agriculture.\textsuperscript{12}

The movement of tobacco from the colonial plantation to markets in Europe has been the subject of several students of colonial Virginia. The two clearest accounts of the economic machinery of the colony are those by James H. Soltow\textsuperscript{13} and Arthur P. Middleton.\textsuperscript{14} Soltow discusses business practices prevailing in Virginia during the eighteenth century, stressing the importance of the colonial capital city through the meetings of merchants there during the time of the General Court and hustings (local) court. The General Court was the highest court in the colony and functioned both as a criminal


\textsuperscript{13} James H. Soltow, *The Economic Role of Williamsburg* (Charlottesville, 1965).

court and a court of equity. Middleton covers in detail the facets of the growing and shipping of tobacco, as well as ship construction and shipping.

The early picture of the colonial Virginia planter shipping his tobacco from his own wharf after 1730 has long since been demonstrated as inaccurate. In that year the colonial assembly passed a law requiring that all tobacco be taken to an inspection warehouse for inspection before it was shipped from the colony. All tobacco failing to pass the inspection was destroyed in order to establish the quality of Virginia tobacco in the European market places and so improve the prices paid for it.

Throughout the colonial period the tobacco trade of Virginia was essentially on a direct exchange basis with Great Britain, although there was some trade in other commodities maintained with the West Indies.15

Calvin B. Coulter Jr., has maintained that the Navigation Acts reduced Virginia to hard times in the seventeenth century but that three life-giving developments saved the economy of the colony. First, the quantity of tobacco produced by Virginia finally forced its way onto the world market after it had initially been restricted almost entirely to the British Isles by prevailing mercantile practices. Next, Scottish traders invaded the colony and their competitive

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purchasing forced the price of tobacco up. Finally, the passage of legislation requiring compulsory inspection and warehousing of tobacco eventually succeeded in establishing an improved reputation and a better market for tobacco produced in Virginia.¹⁶

Robert Polk Thomson's more excellent overall coverage of the subject presents a trustworthy general view of the role of the merchants and their practices during that period. Thomson makes one of his most intriguing statements in his preface:

It is not too much to suggest that Virginia on the eve of the Revolution possessed the beginnings of an indigenous commercial class. British factors were showing an increasing tendency toward leaving their parent firms, settling permanently in Virginia and forming their own establishments. What is more, there was a clear tendency on the part of the factors resident in Virginia to invest their own capital in manufacturing enterprises. The factors were businessmen and made financial successes in their endeavors.¹⁷

Thomson made his point even more explicit, by surmising that, had Virginia retained this group of men who possessed both capital and ability, within time, possibly, manufacturing would have flourished in the province. Thomson at that point may have assumed that the majority of these factors, primarily Scottish, did not remain in Virginia and if


they had that they, too, would not have succumbed to an agrarian ethic prevailing in the colony.

In any event, the Chesapeake region -- Maryland and Virginia -- enjoyed a steady period of economic growth in the middle of the eighteenth century according to Jacob Price, who found that tobacco "accounted for better than 90 per cent of the value of Chesapeake exports to Great Britain and for over 50 per cent of total colonial exports thither." Three explanations are given for the development of the Chesapeake area in the first half of the eighteenth century. Price first mentions the expansion of the tobacco culture into new lands in the Piedmont and the area south of the James River in Virginia as increasing the production of tobacco in the Chesapeake colonies. A second potential reason seen by Price was the increased labor supply through extensive slave importation, particularly after 1730. His main emphasis in this article, however, rests on the expansion of the market for the Chesapeake colonies' tobacco. English merchants made their initial break through into the French tobacco market controlled by the French Farmers-General in the 1690's. The French Farmers held a licensed monopoly on the importation of tobacco into France through purchase. The financial situation of the French government caused them to disregard mercantilist considerations or the national balance of trade

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and permit the Farmers to import tobacco freely in return for the price for their monopoly. The expansion of the Chesapeake tobacco into the extensive continental market affected first the size of the crops being produced in the colonies and second the economic institutions set up to handle those increased crops. The institutional changes found by Price were: "(1) the consolidation of the trade into fewer and fewer hands; (2) the shift from commission trading to direct trading; and (3) the shift of the trade geographically in Great Britain from south to north."  

Of particular interest to this study are Price's findings on the role of the Scottish merchants in Virginia. In "The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707-1775" Price traces the rise to supremacy of Scot merchants in the importation of tobacco into Britain from the Chesapeake colonies. He found that by 1769 more tobacco was imported into Scotland, mainly through the Glasgow area, than into all the English ports combined, although it slipped in the next six years to slightly less than half the total imported into Britain. The advantages held by the Scots that permitted them to dominate the tobacco trade varied according to the contemporary observer. Competitors, such as English merchants, said they were better able to avoid the

19 Ibid., 506.

customs duties by their greater distance from the seat of government in London, accusing Scottish customs inspectors of either malfeasance or nonfeasance of their duties. Price, however, points out additional advantages that the Clyde River port had. First, "the route north of Ireland was the shortest and quickest (by two or three weeks) to North America." He then points out a key advantage that extended beyond smaller shipping costs afforded by this shorter passage. "Shorter sailing time meant that commercial intelligence could pass more quickly." Another advantage enjoyed by the Scots was the greater availability of credit in Scotland. A third advantage was the smaller shipping costs that the Scots had to bear beyond the savings on the shorter passage time. Ship procurement, refitting, and labor were cheaper in Scotland than in England. The Scots also saved costs by consolidation of purchasing so that cargos awaited the ships of the Glasgow "tobacco lords" when they arrived in the Chesapeake waters. Price remarks that when ships were on charter and had to wait for their load of tobacco "catastrophic demurrage charges were often accumulated."

The Scots contributed much to the economic growth of Virginia, although later their participation was resented greatly. Price points out that they contributed capital to the development of the Virginia economy through their extension of credit to small planters through the institution of the store. The evolution of the Scottish establishment in Virginia is clearly outlined by Price. The days of the
supercargo that went out with every ship and bartered its cargo for a load of tobacco had faded before the advance of the permanently based factor who usually established a store in the colony. These stores were not, as Price makes clear, simple affairs, but consisted "of a brick residence with attached warehouses, shops, barns, etc. Some had home farms for domestic supplies, with slaves for farm and heavy work." Price defends the role of the Scot merchants in Virginia from their accusers ("from Jefferson onwards") who allege that they operated "to entice the unwary planter into the bottomless pit of debt irredeemable." Price continues: "Yet Jefferson as a lawyer who frequently acted for merchants against reneging planters must have known that most of the smaller and some of the larger planters felt no compunction in flitting from one store to another with their business -- no matter how much they owed anywhere." My study, the reader will discover, supports fully the bulk of Price's findings in regard to the one Scottish merchant it examines -- William Allason.

James H. Soltow's evaluation of the Scottish merchants in late colonial Virginia deals with the whole scope of their operations from the requirements that the large companies placed on their personal lives (marriages were not favored) to the conduct of business. Soltow found that

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the merchants' attempts to fix the price they paid for tobacco were effective only when there was a plentiful supply of that commodity. Weapons held by the planters against the agreements that the merchants entered into included resorting to the consignment system, going to another community to dispose of their tobacco, and the great competition among merchants requiring tobacco. Soltow also found that at times merchants would pay more for tobacco than they could expect to receive in order to market their trade goods, depending on the profit from the goods to more than compensate for the loss on tobacco. The Scots were, Soltow discovered, almost universally disliked because of their position as creditors. They extended book credit in part because of the "need for advances to tide the producer over until the marketing of his commodities." This credit could be paid in a number of ways, but usually was settled through the payment of farm produce -- anything from tobacco to feathers. Should the debt not be paid, the merchants reverted first to a bond against the assets of the debtor and finally to court action. A second reason, and the most important one, for the imposing amount of credit granted by the store keepers was the great shortage of money in the colony.

Samuel M. Rosenblatt, although not dealing with the question of Scottish merchants, makes clear the importance of credit in the economic framework of eighteenth-century Virginia in his article "The Significance of Credit in the Tobacco Consignment Trade: A Study of John Norton & Sons,"
Credit was the life blood of the commercial empire of the Atlantic, and the merchant who suffered a loss of his credit could not participate in the commercial affairs as a free agent.

The Currency Problem in Virginia

The question of the shortage of currency brings this discussion full circle to the situation in Virginia that existed as the French and Indian War drew to a close. Virginia was among the last colonies that had been permitted to issue paper money by the British government. But with what the British merchants saw as the inflationary effects of money issues during the war to finance the martial operations, the Virginia privilege was ended by the Currency Act of 1764. Although emission of paper money by the New England colonies had been prohibited by earlier laws, the Royal government had looked the other way when colonial governments printed their own money during the war. The Currency Act of 1764 placed heavy penalties on any governor that permitted his colony to issue currency after the act was implemented. Jack P. Greene and Richard M. Jellison examined the "impact of the Currency Act upon the Revolutionary movement" in an article published in

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1961. They found it to be a contributing cause for the outbreak of hostilities.

More explicit attention is given the Virginia situation in relation to the Currency Act of 1764 in Joseph Albert Ernst's "Genesis of the Currency Act of 1764: Virginia Paper Money and the Protection of British Investments." Ernst alleges that there were four parties involved in the dispute over the issue of colonial currency as legal tender (the key word is "legal" meaning that the money had to be accepted in payment of debts.) The strongest advocates of paper money were the planters and, through them, the House of Burgesses. Somewhat willing to accept a regulated legal tender of colonial currency were the Glasgow tobacco merchants, for the debts due on the company books were payable in the currency of Virginia. The Scots did want the currency to be tightly regulated. The London merchants, on the other hand, wanted the debts due them, primarily in sterling, to be paid in sterling, or, at their option, in specie and non-legal tender payments at a rate of exchange which suited

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them." Concerning the 1764 Currency Act, Ernst says, "the debate ended in compromise -- the Currency Act of 1764 -- which at first pleased everyone and a year later no one." The significance of the whole question to Ernst was that "the Currency Act of 1764 remained an important cause of the Revolution which was fought after all to give the colonies control over their economic as well as political destinies."27

In a later article,28 Ernst credits John Robinson, who as Treasurer of the colony illegally failed to retire over one hundred thousand pounds of currency taken as taxes, with performing, unknowingly, a service to the colony's economy. In a time of shortage of means of exchange he put this amount back into circulation through his peculation. Later, writing with Marc Egnal, Ernst continued the theme that the economic recession, if not depression, that occurred in Virginia in 1772 and 1773 added to colonial unrest.29

Virginians did not fight the Revolution to escape debts, which were extensive enough, as Emory G. Evans has

26 Ibid., 73.
27 Ibid., 72.

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pointed out. Earlier historians had attributed Virginia's support of the revolutionary effort to the desire of dominant planters of the Old Dominion to escape their debts using as their evidence the statements of British merchants and the refusal of the Virginians to pay those debts after the war.

Late Colonial Virginia

Economics were not the only feature of interest in the Virginia of William Allason. Much has been put in print concerning the social structure of the colony as it passed through the middle part of the eighteenth century, but the consensus seems to be that it featured a large body of small but independent land owners with an upper crust of first families who effectively ruled the colony from their position in the House of Burgesses and the Virginia Council. The small land holder was called "planter" just as much as the large -- there were few called "farmers" in the colony.

Thomas J. Wertenbaker pointed out the presence of a large

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body of small freeholders and Robert E. and B. Katherine Brown demonstrated the widespread property holding in the colony.

While the smaller Virginia planters usually owned sufficient property to qualify them for the vote as freeholders, Charles S. Sydnor has painted a picture of deferring to the wishes of their "betters," the men whose families had been established in the colony for several generations and who owned extensive property. The small planters deferred to these men not only because of their superior wealth, but also because it was the tradition that had been brought over with them from the old country. Many of the small planters were illiterate and they looked to those in the colony who were educated to lead them and therefore elected them to the colonial assembly. The economic interests of the large and small planters were essentially the same because they both depended on selling their tobacco in a good market. In addition, the large planters, the rulers of the colony within the framework of the empire, also appealed to the voters for their support at election time, and considerable financial resources were required to treat the voters with food and drink in order to gain their good will.

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As another student of the period has pointed out there were no firmly fixed class lines between the large and small planters; there were only gradations, not social strata. Land was the base of this society, just as G. E. Mingay has pointed out about the English in the same period. This aspiration after land was, according to Mingay, in England an aftermath of feudalism. It was also, in the mother country, a means to political power. Whatever the reason, the quest for land prevailed both in England and in Virginia.

Virginia was not all Tidewater and Piedmont, for beyond the first chain of mountains, the long but narrow Blue Ridge, was the Valley of Virginia. This area was strongly influenced by a stream of settlers moving down from Pennsylvania -- the "Dutch," or really Germans or German Swiss, and that ethnic strain that has since been referred to as the Scotch-Irish. Recent historiography has emphasized this movement and the great volume of commerce that travelled through the Valley from and to Philadelphia on that trail then called the "Great Wagon Road."

Most of the historical writing done about Virginia in the eighteenth century concerns the colonial period. There is a great need for a comprehensive history of Virginia


from 1763 to the end of the century. An aim of such a study should be to illuminate the real economic situation of Vir­ginia during the period between 1781 and 1789. In the nineteenth century this era was called the Critical Period of the nation's life. Later the Progressive historians, following the lead of Charles Beard, have said that it was not critical at all but a time of economic progress and prosperity for the large part of the population. Merrill Jensen points to the expansion of trade and that the only ones for whom the period was critical were the creditors and those holding government securities.38

It is reasonable to expect the papers of an intelli­gent man living through the latter half of the eighteenth century to shed some light on the questions later generations ask. William Allason, in writing hundreds of letters, should have left some clue as to the attitudes of the com­mercial classes in Virginia during those years that led to the secession of the colonies from the empire. He knew first hand the attitude of the planters toward debts and toward the Scottish merchants. He knew the advantages and difficulties of trade with the Shenandoah Valley beyond the Blue Ridge. As a Scot living in Virginia, Allason experienced animosity toward those of that land trading in Virginia at the beginning of the Revolution. Yet Allason chose to

abandon his native land to continue to live in America. These and the previously discussed issues of interest to the historian of Virginia in the emerging American nation are explicated by the life of William Allason.
CHAPTER II

THE FACTOR, 1757-1760

The estate of North Wales is located in the rolling countryside of Fauquier County, Virginia, about three miles southwest of the county seat, Warrenton, on state highway 802. Large homes and freshly painted white fences mark this area, within fifty miles of the national capital, as horse and hunt country for the privileged on the Eastern seaboard.

During the final quarter of the eighteenth century North Wales was the plantation of William Allason who built the old home now serving as the center of the great mansion. A visitor, looking toward the house across neatly manicured rolling fields, seeing the white fences in beautiful repair, the run, the winding lanes, and the woods, might let his mind look across centuries and consider what Allason would feel if he could return and see what has happened to North Wales since he made it his residence almost exactly two centuries ago. The home finally built in the last five years of his life has been altered and expanded until it is today four or five times again as large as it was originally, giving the appearance of a British manor of some consequence. But almost surely, a vision of the estate would tally with
A broad view of the North Wales mansion as it appeared in 1972.
his eighteenth century idea that the "good life" was the life of the country gentleman.

William Allason, Esquire, of North Wales attained the fulfillment of his aspirations after coming to the colony of Virginia as a factor, then progressing to storekeeper, merchant, planter, and finally country gentleman. Who he was, what he did, and his significance are to be considered in the subsequent pages.

The Tradesman's Training

The results of enterprise and commerce make it difficult to visualize the Hampton Roads scene that William Allason gazed upon on June 18, 1757,1 as he stepped ashore at Norfolk as a representative of British commerce. Allason was a factor for the Glasgow mercantile house of Alexander Walker and Company. That firm consisted of two men: Alexander Walker, whose name it bore, and James Baird, Junior, his partner. The planning for Allason's trip to the colony had begun almost exactly six months earlier when terms

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1Letter from William Allason to William Walker in Antigua, 26 August 1757, in William Allason Letterbook, in the Allason Papers, Virginia State Library. These documents are also on microfilm at the Research Department, Colonial Williamsburg, with the exception of Allason's loose papers. The Allason Papers include three letterbooks covering the chronological periods March 18, 1757 to May 30, 1770; August 1, 1770, to January 29, 1789; and from that date to March 3, 1798. No attempt to cite the exact letterbook will be made, because the letterbooks are sequential. Except for the loose papers, the research for this study was conducted from the microfilm copies of the Allason Papers at Colonial Williamsburg.
agreeable to all parties had been settled upon on December 21, 1756.\textsuperscript{2} The implementation of the plans had already faltered by the time of Allason's arrival in Virginia, for the ship arrived at least one month later than had been hoped for by the partners and after a very trying voyage across the Atlantic.

William Allason was the son of a Glasgow businessman, Zachariah Allason, and his wife, the former Isabel Hall. Little is known of the parents except that Zachariah Allason was probably a widower when he married Isabel Hall and that he had at least one son from that former marriage, Robert Allason.\textsuperscript{3} William, David, Alexander ("Sandy"), Jean, and Mary were children of the second marriage. Another son, John, of whom less is known, may also have been a child of the first wife. The impression -- from the gradations of deference and importance given the Allason males -- is that Robert was the eldest of the sons, followed by John, William, Alexander, and David. The two girls were apparently younger than William. With the possible exception of Robert and John, none of the other Allason children were or had been married at the time that Allason stepped ashore in the early summer of 1757.


\textsuperscript{3}Allason to James Ferrie, February, 1790 (no day), Letter Book. In this letter Allason tells his old acquaintance that his brother Robert's children "are a remove from the descendants of my mother."
Zachariah Allason was prosperous enough to give William a sound education. Attendance at the Glasgow Grammar School gave young Allason an education that would meet his need in life. It also furnished him with those connections that were so important in eighteenth-century commercial life and a lifelong appreciation of education which he attempted to pass on to those whom he could influence. Methods of maintaining accounts and computing business mathematics were also mastered by Allason in his early years as his ledgers, account books, and various testimonials to his bookkeeping accuracy were to show through the years.

Twenty-six and one half years old when he arrived in Virginia in 1757, Allason was already an experienced and widely travelled man, having made a voyage to Virginia in

\[\text{Allason to William Corbett, 9 May 1759. Corbett and Allason were classmates "with William Harvey" in the Grammar School of Glasgow. Schoolmates were James and John Hunter, nephews to Andrew Sprowle of Gosport, Virginia. Allason to Andrew Sprowle, November 21, 1773.}\]

\[\text{Allason to James Ferrie, February 1790. In this letter Allason wrote that he was then "advancing in my 59th year." Memorandum Book entry, February 11, 1781. In this entry Allason wrote "Then made oath before Colo John Blackwell, at Capt. Wm Bronaugh's that I believe to the best of my knowledge that I was fifty years of age last December." Edith E. B. Thomson, "A Scottish Merchant in Falmouth in the Eighteenth Century," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. 39, 1931, 108, has stated that Allason was probably born ten years earlier than is maintained here, stating: "In a letter of February 1790 Allason says he is fifty-nine, but this must be a mistake as he was in Virginia in 1737 as a supercargo. It is probable that he was sixty-nine then." No citation for the statement that Allason was in Virginia in 1737 is given by Thomson, and I have found none in any records available to me. In "The Letters of William Allason, Merchant, of Falmouth, Virginia," Richmond College Historical Papers, Vol. II, 1917, 118, another writer states without citation that Allason "came to America in 1737."}\]

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1748 and having been in that colony from 1750 to 1752 acting as a supercargo or storekeeper on the Potomac River. Little is known of the 1748-1752 period of his life. By 1753 he had returned to Scotland; he remained at Port Glasgow until 1755, when he sailed to the island of St. Christopher's in the West Indies, returning to Scotland the same year. The following year, 1756, as an employee of Alexander Walker and Company, he made another journey to the West Indies, this time to Antigua, and returned to Port Glasgow in September of that year. Subsequently, he was asked to go to Virginia to represent the same Glasgow company. Allason was therefore a veteran trader and had crossed to the Western Hemisphere at least four times when he came ashore in 1757. He would certainly have been surprised had he realized that never again would he cross the Atlantic to Britain.

During his early voyages Allason served as a supercargo at least some of the time and possibly as a ship's officer, since he owned a Hadley's quadrant. As a supercargo Allason remained with the ship, disposing of and procuring cargo for it on the best possible terms. Now, in 1757, he returned to Virginia as a factor — that is, he would remain in Virginia when the ship that he had come on returned to Great Britain and would continue to handle the goods that

6 Allason to Alexander Knox, 10 July, 1763, Letter Book.
7 Allason to James Lindsay, September 5, 1789, Letter Book.
his employers sent to Virginia on subsequent ships as their agent. The friends made by Allason in the prior voyages were to serve him in good stead when he began to conduct business in his own name years later.

In December, 1756, the partners informed Allason that they designed to send out a quantity of goods to Virginia by the Rowand by February 1, 1757. They intended to exchange the goods sent on the Rowand for tobacco, which was to be returned on the Rowand and another vessel that was being made for them in Boston, Massachusetts. They further informed Allason that they intended to remain in the tobacco trade for some time (but failed to fix the exact period) in either the "lumping" method of doing business or any other method that promised the best return. By "lumping" was meant the exchange of pre-packaged bundles of goods on a wholesale basis for cash or, more likely, tobacco. Allason was to be their representative in Virginia, selling the goods sent over from Scotland at the most advantageous terms and supervising the loading and dispatch of the ships back to Scotland, presumably with a profitable cargo of tobacco. The annual salary promised to Allason was to be sixty pounds sterling. In addition, Allason was to have the privilege of selling goods of his own not to exceed the value of £120 the first year and £150 the second and any subsequent years. If Allason was captured by the French or other enemies of the British in transit his wages were to continue until released from captivity. The life of the initial agreement was
to be for only two years. Other than these goods of his own, Allason was not to dispose of "any goods from Britain" for any other person whatsoever. If Allason personally imported any goods into Virginia from the West Indies through his connections there, the company was to receive one half of the profits. In addition, Allason was to give "timeous" warning before leaving the employment of the company. 8

William Allason's actual reason for returning to Virginia was to collect debts that were owed him there when he left in 1752. 9 One of the strongest qualities in the personality of Allason was his view of the sanctity of a just debt. He applied the same strict rules to himself that he did on others, making a determined effort to pay his obligations when the opportunity to evade them was present, as in 1775.

The target date for the departure of the ship, the snow Rowand, was postponed for several reasons. First the goods were not ready and loaded until the end of March, and then storms off the mouth of the River Clyde delayed the ship's sailing. 10 Some of the goods had been delivered to the wrong merchants at Glasgow and thus had not reached Allason and the Rowand for loading on schedule. Although

8 Letter from James Baird, Junior, and Alexander Walker to Allason, December 21, 1756, Loose Papers.


other ships had suffered some heavy damage during the bad weather that had forced the Rowand to remain in sheltered waters, she had ridden the storm out well and suffered little damage.

Alexander Walker began to have some qualms about the venture on which Allason was embarked when he wrote to Allason and informed him that the number of ships going to Virginia and the amount of goods that they were carrying made it doubtful that there would be a good "mercatt" (market) there. Walker's premonitions were correct. Not only was the colony overstocked with trade goods but within one year's time nature herself would strike the company a blow.

The ships that arrived safely within the limits of Chesapeake Bay without incident in passage could count themselves fortunate. England was engaged in a great war for empire with France, and French privateers were active in the waters of the Atlantic and knew the routes of British shipping well. Thus it was that the Rowand fell prey to the French privateer Racule near the completion of the voyage. The French master, Captain Courtier, rather than risk the re-capture of the prize agreed to release the Rowand upon the agreement of Captain John Buchanan, master of the Rowand, for a ransom of 400,000 livres. Just to make sure that the ransom was paid the French crew took the mate of the Rowand, Mr. William Pettigrew, as hostage. Allason made a careful

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11 Alexander Walker to Allason, April 21, 1757, Loose Papers.
notation in his memorandum book that he lent the hostage Pettigrew one half guinea and one volume of the Independent Whig at double the normal cost because its absence broke the set. After the mate was taken aboard the Racule the Rowand continued on to the mouth of the James River without further difficulty.

The Virginia Economy

As noted in the first chapter, Glasgow was in the midst of its rise to hegemony over the tobacco market in Europe. Scottish tobacco houses had established factors and stores throughout the Old Dominion, taking tobacco from the planter in exchange for goods that the Scottish firms had imported and relieving the planter of the fees and risks involved in shipping his crop to Britain. All tobacco exported from Virginia had to pass through Britain before it could be shipped on to the continental markets. Although the majority of tobacco grown in Virginia at this time was bought by a merchant or factor in the colony, some of the larger planters continued to ship tobacco to factor merchants in London on a consignment basis.

The influx of Scottish traders following the Act of

12 Allason's Journal of private transactions, May 27, 1757 and Allason's Memorandum Book, April 1757- September 1757. Allason billed the company -- and apparently collected -- for his advances to Pettigrew.

Union of 1707 combined with the access to the European market that had been achieved in the eighteenth century had resulted in the stabilization of the Virginia economy by 1750. Times soon became more difficult for the Virginia planter as the market for his tobacco began to fluctuate, making it difficult to anticipate what his crop would be worth. The French and Indian War (1755-1763) was one contributor to the unsettled market conditions, and then in 1755 a tobacco crop failure inflated the price of tobacco beyond anything previously experienced and resulted in the passage of the first Two-Penny Act. This was an effort to protect the planters from tobacco obligations by authorizing payment in currency rather than tobacco because of the latter's great increase in price. It was at this same time that the first issue of paper currency was made in Virginia. A short tobacco crop combined with increased availability of money put pressure on the price of the colonial staple. The Two-Penny Bill passed by the colonial assembly met little resistance because it seemed to spread the burden of the short crop evenly throughout the agrarian society of Virginia. In addition, the sacrifice was not great to those being paid in cash at a set price per pound of tobacco, partly because the increased money supply had not yet had an opportunity to be felt in the market place. The price of tobacco during this period stayed below thirty shillings per hundredweight which did not penalize any segment of the Virginia society excessively. The crop of
1756 was of a normal size and the price of tobacco had, as a result, returned to a lower level. It was upon that scene that William Allason again entered the Virginia stage in 1757 with the expectation of being able to return a quick and good profit to his employers in keeping with the experience of Scottish merchants in recent history.

The naval war that was raging in the Atlantic was a constant threat to the conduct of business in several ways. First there was the danger of French ships as Allason had already experienced in his Atlantic crossing. Soon after his arrival in Virginia Allason received a letter from his friend William (Willie) Walker of Antigua, who was also brother to Alexander Walker, telling of the numerous Glasgow ships taken by the French in those waters. Willie Walker asked that the "Lord have mercy on the young underwriters in Glasgow" in the face of those losses.

Commercial ships of Great Britain feared the British men of war second only to the French raiders because of the action of the press gang. Captains were warned to avoid certain ports because of the excessive danger of impressment.

14 The sketch of Virginia economic history in this and the preceding paragraph is based on Rosenblatt, "Significance of Credit in the Tobacco Consignment Trade," passim, and Morton, Colonial Virginia, 751-783.

15 William Walker to Allason, August (n.d.), 1757; Loose Papers; Allason to Robert Young, September 12, 1757, Letter Book. Thomson, "A Scottish Merchant in Falmouth," 110, interprets a remark such as this as a slur on the trustworthiness of their brother Sandy (Alexander) as a ship's mate, but hers is an incorrect interpretation.
of their crews. One of these ports was Norfolk, and Allason advised the masters of the ships sent over by the company to sail directly up the rivers avoiding Norfolk if possible because of the press gangs there.16

War in the back country was also causing traders in Virginia some anxiety. Allason informed his friend Willie Walker of Antigua on November 8, 1757, that the French and Indians were raiding within ten miles of the town of Winchester in the Shenandoah Valley.17 Actual interference to trade by the war was bad, but it was intensified by erroneous reports scattered over the trade routes and by the difficulty in getting accurate information. Although Allason had only been delayed by the French privateer Racule, reports reaching the company in Glasgow were that he had been taken captive and was being held prisoner.18 Another hindrance to trade was the embargo placed on tobacco ships in Virginia19 and the restrictions placed on the carrying trade through the use of the convoy system to protect British shipping.

Throughout his first year, 1757-58, Allason was pessimistic as to the future of the tobacco trade. He

16 Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, September 1, 1757, Letter Book.
18 Alexander Walker and Company to Allason, July 10, 1757, Loose Papers.
19 Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, 1 September, 1757, Letter Book.
warned both the company and his brother that there were too many merchants and consequently too many goods for sale. In the prevailing market conditions Allason was often in doubt as to how to act, although he was under constant exhortation from the partners in Glasgow to send tobacco home. While they urged him to send tobacco, at the same time they cautioned him to use his discretion in the purchase of tobacco. In order to meet the needs of the Glasgow company, which had committed itself to the shipping business, Allason had to find tobacco to ship on the vessels owned or chartered by the company. To sell the goods arriving with him on the Rowand he was forced in several cases to extend credit for almost a year. That is, he would be paid in tobacco almost a year after he turned the trade goods over to customers.

Allason had arrived in a year when the tobacco crop was of normal size, and he continued to dispose of his trade goods into 1758 by granting credit for future delivery of tobacco. Had Allason been able to get delivery of the tobacco due him the following year the company would have been well off. In 1758 the tobacco crop fell far short of its usual size, and for those who had tobacco to sell in 1758 very high prices were obtained but many planters failed to produce even a single hogshead. For them there was no income and debtors were unable to meet their  

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20 Alexander Walker and Company to Allason, September 8 and 11, 1757, Loose Papers.
obligations with merchants. Smaller merchants were consequently unable to pay their creditors, setting off the chain-links of an economic crisis that led all the way to Great Britain.

With the departure of Governor Dinwiddie in early 1758, it fell to his successor, Francis Fauquier, to deal with the economic conditions plaguing Virginia in the midst of a war. Fauquier attempted to give relief to the bulk of the population by approving, contrary to his instructions, the Two-Penny Act of October 12, 1758, without a suspending clause. Most attention has been given to the reaction of the colonial clergy to this act, but the vehemence of the merchants with debts due them was no less strong. Even before the act had received the governor's approval, Allason was voicing his objections in heated terms to his employers in Great Britain, terming the act outrageous.

The cause of the disruption of the Virginia economy was the disastrously low tobacco yield of the Virginia plantations in 1758. Although the exact size of the crop has never been determined, it was enough below normal to inspire the passage of the Two-Penny Act which provided for the payment of legal contracts and church levies calling for tobacco


payment with paper currency. The rate of settlement was to be two pennies for each pound of tobacco due, or sixteen shillings eight pence for a hundredweight of inspected tobacco.

The price of tobacco, however, rose to a very high peak in 1759, resulting from the short crop the year before. In April, 1759, Allason reported that one factor for Speirs and Brown was paying fifty shillings per hundredweight for a great deal of tobacco on the York River and that forty shillings was the standard price on the Rappahannock and Potomac. The crop for 1759, on the other hand, looked as though it would be excellent for it was almost matured to the point where insects could not harm it. The amount planted by the Virginians had been "extraordinary" as they attempted to capitalize on existing high prices.23 Before the 1759 crop reached the warehouses and was inspected, however, tobacco was difficult to obtain.24 The market in Britain proved unable to support the excessively high prices being paid in Virginia.25 By June the price of tobacco had fallen to a little over thirty-three shillings a hundredweight, a price that held into July.26 By the middle of September it

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24 Captain Robert Douglas to Allason, April 4, 1759, Loose Papers.


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appeared that the next crop would exceed the normal one by
ten thousand hogsheads. After the new crop had been in-
spected the price returned to the old level of about twenty
shillings a hundredweight at Bolling's Point on the James
River and to sixteen shillings at the lower warehouses.

As is often the case with agricultural commodities,
the poor tobacco crop in Virginia in 1758 affected most those
closest to its actual production. The great tobacco buyers
in Europe, such as the French Farmers-General, with an in-
ventory of tobacco in their warehouses, could afford to re-
duce their purchasing for one year to see what the next crop
would produce. When early reports stated that it would be
considerably larger than usual, their wisdom was confirmed.
Although the two countries were engaged in a great war, the
French Farmers-General were still represented in Great Bri-
tain and their agents bought openly on the British market.
The prices that the French would pay determined largely the
type of market the middle grade of tobacco reached.

The vicious and unpredictable market — high prices
being offered and paid in Virginia but not supported by the
market in Britain — may have contributed to the collapse of

27 Allason to William Corbett, September 18, 1759,
Letter Book.

28 Allason to Captain James Scott, November 3, 1759,
Letter Book.

29 Alexander Walker and Company to Allason, February
23, 1759, Loose Papers. The best grade of tobacco stayed
home in Great Britain. The worst went to Holland and North
Europe.
several Glasgow firms in the early and middle 1760's, but their undercapitalization was certainly another cause. Although the price paid by the French did rise to three pence a pound, many merchants still sustained losses of up to five pounds sterling for each hogshead imported into Britain.\(^{30}\) When the reports of the large crop of 1759 reached the agents of the French Farmers in early fall they ceased purchasing entirely, waiting for prices to fall with the new crop. The whole economic situation of the Virginia staple was summarized most accurately by Allason's employers, when they wrote that the "Tobo. trade this year seems a lottery."\(^{31}\)

The entire economy of Virginia suffered because of the poor crop of 1758. The corn crop was apparently about as poor as the tobacco crop, and in the spring of 1759 Allason reported that near famine conditions prevailed in the back country. The colonial government had set a price ceiling on corn, the shortage of which had so weakened the draft animals that there was also a shortage of lumber for export.\(^{32}\) Thus the Virginia economy was suffering from a two edged sword that both reduced the amount of goods for sale and a situation that prevented the goods produced to rise to their natural level because of the buyers -- French Farmers'.

\(^{30}\) Baird and Walker to Allason, September 20 and 26, 1759, Loose Papers.

\(^{31}\) Baird and Walker to Allason, October 29, 1759, Loose Papers.

\(^{32}\) Allason to Walker and Weir, May 20, 1759, Letter Book.

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control of the market.

The tobacco prices continued to fall after the crop of 1759 reached the warehouses and went as low as eighteen shillings per hundredweight. The traders expected it to fall lower to sixteen shillings eight pence, but each time it rallied and returned to twenty or twenty-one shillings. In essence the price of tobacco, the staple crop of Virginia, was determined by the agents of the French Farmers — representatives of a nation at war with Britain and Virginia. The economy of Virginia was therefore in the hands of agents of the enemy through economic power applied in the British market place. When rumors were abroad that the French intended offering a lower price for Virginia tobacco the Virginia price for tobacco responded by sinking, although the report of the French intentions eventually proved false.33

The three years that William Allason spent in the employ of the two Glasgow merchants as their factor in Virginia were unprecedented in their tumultuous economic conditions. Although only temporary, the steady growth of the Virginia economy was interrupted by the unfavorable economic conditions contributing to that social unrest that made a hero of Patrick Henry, a young lawyer who in the Parson's Cause acted to protect the interests of the planters against the contrary economic forces.

The Factor's Function

Allason's duties as a factor representing a Glasgow firm were both difficult and complex. His living conditions were terrible, involving almost constant journeys on horseback in all types of weather. Allason was not only expected to exchange the employer's goods for either tobacco or money but also to collect debts, direct and dispatch their ships as well as find cargoes for them, and maintain a constant correspondence with the home company in order to be as well informed as possible of the employers' desires and the market conditions prevailing in Scotland.

The qualities that were requisite for the factor, merchant, or, to use the contemporary generic term, the "trades-man," had been set forth early in the century by Edward Hatton both in terms of self interest to the merchant and for the glory of England. According to Hatton the merchant naturally possessed quick apprehension, solid judgment, and a sound physical constitution. The tradesman needed quick apprehension to understand "all that great Mystery of his Honourable calling," solid judgment to keep him from being "easily deceived and imposed on," and a sound constitution to enable him to "do variety of Business in different places in a short time." Other qualities of the merchant were high moral character, fortitude, prudence, and justice

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in his natural endowments. In his acquired endowments he had to possess a mastery of bookkeeping, geometry ("by which he knows how to measure Board and Timber or other thing, relating to his trade"), and geography ("to know the Situation of the most remarkable[sic] places of Traffick.") William Allason proved to be a possessor of these qualities.

Certainly in the course laid out before him for the next two years, Allason's sound physical constitution was to be tested. In conducting the "lumping" trade upon which he was engaged Allason would have to overcome the trials of war, hundreds of miles on horseback, pilferage of his goods, supervision of the loading of the company's ships, and the inspection and correction of damage to goods that were often packed inadequately. The goods would arrive on ships from Scotland in bales marked with symbols that were in many ways similar to the brands placed on cattle and other livestock in the American west much later. Allason would also receive a bill of lading telling the type and cost of goods in the particular "lump."

The Company certainly had no reason to fault the physical effort that Allason rendered in support of their enterprise. He repeatedly journeyed throughout the

36James Bowie to Allason, December 10, 1757, Loose Papers.
37Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, September 1, 1757, Letter Book.
Tidewater area contacting potential customers for the company's goods. Departing Norfolk on June 19, 1757, the day following his arrival, he found his way up the south bank of the James River through Portsmouth, Suffolk, Smithfield, Surry Courthouse, Brandon, Flowerdew Hundred, Prince George Courthouse, and on to Richmond where he crossed the James River on June 27. From there he worked his way back down the north bank of the James until reaching Charles City County where he re-crossed the James. By July 2, 1757, he had once more crossed the James and was at Charles City Courthouse, and from there he headed north via Newcastle on the Pamunkey River to Richmond County and on to Hobbs-hole, as Allason almost invariably called the village even then legally named Tappahannock. He continued on up the Rappahannock and crossed to King George Courthouse and then turned back to the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg and Falmouth. Once again he headed north to the Potomac, visiting the settlements at Aquia and Quantico before heading south again to the James River with intervening stops. This one trip was typical of the constant movement of Allason for the next three years as he roamed over Virginia conducting business. (See Map 1 for Allason's first circuit seeking buyers.) By September 25, 1757, a little over three months after his arrival in the colony, Allason computed that he had travelled 1,301 miles on horseback in the conduct of
Allason's Travels in Virginia
June 18 - July 21, 1757
as outlined in his Memorandum Book
Map not to scale

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During this time he lived from his saddlebags and had some difficulty in keeping the ledgers and other account books with the neatness and promptness that he felt they deserved. He was meticulous in keeping his expenses in his memorandum book. His breakfasts usually cost something in excess of two shillings, and dinner was most often from three to four shillings. The charges for ferriage would naturally depend on the width of the body of water to be crossed. Replacing a horse shoe meant a charge of five or six shillings.

In spite of his strenuous efforts, Allason met with indifferent success in his efforts to serve his company. By July 25, 1757, he reported back to his employers in Glasgow that he was encountering great difficulty in finding a suitable market for goods. Although he had sold some parcels he was usually required to allow deferred payment until the following spring. The trials of the "lumping" way of doing business caused him to recommend to the Company that they consider establishing a store at the head of navigation of one of the rivers. Stores were being established in many places, according to Allason, and the country was overstocked with goods. The source of capital behind this

38 William Allason's Memorandum Book, April-September, 1757. This is a fascinating and detailed account of Allason's expenditures, including date, place, and for what spent.
extensive commercial activity was a puzzle to him. A week later Allason further explained that setting up a store along the fall line would enable him to reach a better market that would provide good tobacco at a good price. The disadvantages were that he was a stranger both to the prevailing market conditions and to the planters with whom he would do business. He urged the Company to get the advice of its other "correspondents" on the matter.

The buying and selling of goods was not the only business that William Allason was to undertake for the partners during his stay in Virginia. Alexander Walker, one of the two partners in the firm of Alexander Walker and Company, had instructed Allason to collect debts that Walker had left on a previous trip to the colony. In addition, there were debts on goods sent over earlier to Alexander McCoul who had sold the goods and then turned the debt over to James Lyle. The latter had apparently served as Walker's agent for the debts due him personally as well, including those of David Hunter, Mrs. (no first name given) Johnston, and Captain

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41 Alexander Walker to Allason, March 1, 1757, Loose Papers.
Daniel Gaines. Other debtors were Hugh Mitchell and William Byrd III. The latter owed forty-seven and one half pounds current value of Virginia money. The total owed Walker was something slightly over one hundred pounds.\(^3\)

The debt due the Company was much larger, exceeding one thousand pounds sterling. George Noble, William Edloe, John Binford and Company, Charles Crenshaw of Hanover County, and Samuel Kenton of Albemarle County were among the debtors. Some action had been taken to collect these debts prior to Allason's arrival as he noted in his memorandum book that bonds covering the debts were in the hands of John Peter.\(^4\)

Allason soon learned that it was far more difficult to get payment than it was to place goods in the hands of a customer. He quickly adopted the technique, probably not original with him, that he would use in collecting debts for the remainder of his life. After the specified period for which payment was deferred had passed, Allason would ask for payment, furnishing the customer a statement of his account. If the customer could not or would not pay, Allason would have him sign a bond that obligated him to pay either in cash or other goods and was \textit{prima facie} evidence of the validity of the debt in the event of court suit. If the customer either refused to sign the bond or failed to pay it as

\(^3\)Memorandum Book, April-September, 1757, Allason Papers.

\(^4\)Ibid.
specified Allason did not hesitate to institute court action against the debtor. The first case of this nature that Allason instituted involved goods sold before his arrival to John Binford, Jr., a merchant in Charles City County. In this case the jury allowed Alexander Walker and Company not only the initial cost of the goods but also an "advance" of over 179 pounds on goods valued at a little over 205 pounds. By "advance" the merchant of the eighteenth century meant the mark-up of the sale price of the goods over their cost to him. In addition to this advance the jury also allowed a charge of over twenty-two pounds for interest to Walker and Company. Thus on goods costing them 179 pounds, the partners were entitled to receive a total of 406 pounds.

Customers could pay for the goods in several ways. The most common was through payment in tobacco whether by hogsheads delivered directly from the inspection warehouse by the planter to one of the company's ships, by "crop notes," or by "transfer notes" on tobacco in the warehouses. Another method of payment that was less often used was in cash, and that was almost always in Virginia currency. Bills of exchange on British firms were also used. These were essentially checks written against the British firm by the Virginia merchant or planter who felt that the firm "at home" either owed him the amount or would honor his bill as part of

45 Ibid.
their general business activity. The important thing was that the wise merchant and planter maintained his credit by paying in some manner. The merchant was hardly able to do business without the confidence of his fellow merchants.

Debt collection and the extension of credit played an important part in Allason's concept of business, for he did not want to be "easily deceived and imposed upon," as Hatton had phrased it. Thus he would occasionally jot down character sketches of some of the men he contacted. Major Tabb of Amelia County was a "very considerable dealer" and "Mr. Fines near Smithfield a good man." Two southsiders -- residents of the area south of the James River -- were described: "Anselm Baillie a quaker ['sic'] in Surry or Sussex a good man" and "Major Cocke in Surrey a good man." Also described as a "good man" was Mr. Orr of Leedstown on the Rappahannock.

The collection of debts remained a difficult task for Allason, for a great currency shortage still existed in the colony despite the emission of paper money by the colonial government of Virginia. Moreover, the crop failure of 1758 placed most of the planters and smaller merchants in a position where they were unable to pay their debts. Allason


47 Memorandum Book, April-September, 1757, Allason Papers.
resorted to action against several men in the colonial General Court in Williamsburg in 1759. Edmund Pendleton represented Allason in this highest court of the colony. The currency and tobacco shortage caused some of the debtors to pay in other possessions. Allason on at least one occasion received slaves rather than money or tobacco in payment. Whatever the means of payment or methods used to obtain payment Allason was usually successful in collecting debts. In one case of a large debt, however, Allason was unsuccessful.

In 1758 William Dickenson had incurred a debt of over four hundred and fifty pounds to Allason and even greater sums to other merchants in Virginia in what was an apparent effort of one small group of traders to swindle others. Allason alleged that the total of the goods acquired by Dickenson was over twenty thousand pounds and that Dickenson's activities helped create the currency shortage in Virginia. Although many details of the tangled plot were slow in surfacing, it was clear to the merchants by the time the Virginia General Court met in April, 1759, that they had been cheated and that Dickenson had fled the colony. Allason determined to pursue him and to send notices to his friends in all the trading ports that Dickenson had violated

48 Allason's Daybook and Journal of Private Transactions, 1757-1769; Allason's Memorandum Book Number 4. See also judgment against John Serman Gregory and James Bell, November 5, 1759, in Loose Papers, and James H. Soltow, Economic Role of Williamsburg, 1-19.

all the codes of trade. Allason headed north to Philadelphia where he contacted John Galloway for assistance. One of the others involved in the scheme with Dickenson, John Smith, had gone to England about twelve months earlier with 110 hogsheads of tobacco and thirty thousand pounds of indigo. Galloway advised Allason to send out powers of attorney and supporting materials to his connections so that they might act in his behalf if they located Dickenson. Complying with the Philadelphia lawyer's advice, Allason in a very short time had a series of letters out to Boston and Halifax in the north, the Company in Great Britain, and Antigua in the West Indies. His old grammar school mate William Corbett was his correspondent in Boston, Peter Ritchie in Halifax, and William Walker in Antigua. In his letters Allason charged Dickenson not only with absconding with the goods and merchandise of the Virginia traders but also with deserting his wife, "a woman of character." Among Dickenson's creditors were not only Allason but James Mills, David Loudon, James Belches, Andrew Sprowle, and Alexander McCall, for amounts ranging from one hundred to one thousand pounds, each, with McCall being the largest loser at something


52 Allason to William Corbett, May 9, 1759; Alexander Walker and Company, May 12, 1759; and Walker and Weir, May 20, 1759, Letter Book.
over nine hundred pounds. These merchants worked in coordination with Allason in attempting to recover the debts.\textsuperscript{53} By the end of June, Allason had heard from Corbett, who had apparently taken aggressive action in New England to apprehend the fugitive but who feared that the quarry had already cleared to Halifax because of near apprehension in Rhode Island by agents of another Virginia merchant.\textsuperscript{54} Nonetheless, it was indeed Corbett who was responsible for the eventual apprehension of Dickenson. The only trouble was that Dickenson had very little cash in his possession and refused to say where any of the money or goods were located.\textsuperscript{55}

Two other parties had by now entered the story who were to influence Allason's entire life. The first was William Green, a merchant in the three lower counties of Pennsylvania. Green had received some of the goods that

\textsuperscript{53}Allason's Memorandum Book Number 4, entry dated May, 1759.

\textsuperscript{54}William Corbett to Allason, May 21, 1759, Loose Papers.

\textsuperscript{55}William Corbett to Allason, June 18, 1759, Loose Papers. Fate indeed seemed against Dickenson who was travelling under the name "Fooster," and disguised as a "Connecticut Pedlar." He travelled from Connecticut to Boston on the same ship with the sister of Corbett's landlady and appearing to be well behaved, was invited to dinner. Corbett in talking to the other passengers discovered that the fugitive had better clothes than he was wearing and that he intended for England via Halifax. After closer checking because small pox scars were not as evident as the description had led him to believe, Corbett became convinced that this indeed was Dickenson and had him apprehended by the sheriff in Boston. After initially denying his true identity, the fugitive finally confessed that he was the one in flight.
Allason had delivered to Dickenson and then placed them in the hands of a Georgetown, Maryland, merchant, John Schaw. When the network of traders made Schaw aware of what had transpired in Virginia and furnished him with a description of the goods, he recognized that he held those originating with Allason. Nevertheless, Green felt safe outside of Virginia and indeed it proved a difficult task for Allason to get legal and financial satisfaction. His contact with Schaw and Schaw's estate continued until nearly the end of his life and involved some of the famous names of American law and politics, such as John Marshall, John Taylor of Caroline, and George Wythe. One name prominent in American history that came quickly into Allason's attempt to collect some of the money he had lost in his dealings with William Dickenson and his friends was that of John Dickinson of Pennsylvania. The Philadelphian was retained to bring suit against William Green for the recovery of the goods (or their cost) that Allason had sold to William Dickenson. ^56 Meanwhile in Boston, the wily Dickenson escaped by burning a hole in the jail floor, much to the disgust of both Allason and his Scottish friend William Corbett. ^57

These matters were obvious topics of discussion at gatherings of planters and merchants which were inevitably

^56 Allason to John Dickinson, January 1, 1760, Letter Book.

^57 William Corbett to Allason, April 7, 1760, Loose Papers. The Dickenson-Green-Schaw imbroglio is further described in Chapter III, below.
the scene of business transactions whatever the original purpose of the meeting. Creditors sought out their debtors to get payment, and agreements were made on the commodities of the colony. Thus in the meeting of the General Court in April, 1759, Allason dealt with over thirty accounts, collecting from debtors in a majority of them. In those cases where it was necessary that he bring suit to collect, such as was the case with John Binford, Jr., Allason often had to pay the expenses of the witnesses he called. If his suit was successful, which it normally was, this cost was passed on to the debtor as an additional cost. In the Binford case, Allason paid George Barnes 225 pounds of tobacco to appear for him.

Business was also transacted at the fairs and horse races that were conducted periodically around the colony, and those along the Rappahannock were most frequented by Allason. These occasions were not devoted purely to business, obviously, but it appears that much of the merchant's pleasure was in his business, as when Allason joined in a "club" at Wetherburn's Tavern in Williamsburg in October, 1759.

Another responsibility that came with being a

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58 Allason's Memorandum Book Number 4, Entry under April, 1759.
59 Receipt, April, 1759, Loose Papers.
60 Allason's Memorandum Book Number 4, October 23, and 24, 1759. See below for more discussion of "clubs."
factor was the control of the company's ships while they were in American waters. Allason instructed the masters where to take the ships, what to load on them, and when to leave for the home port of Glasgow. The company had contracted for a ship to be built by Alexander Hunt in Boston. Captain William Scott was to represent the company during the construction of the ship -- satisfying himself about the work of the builder -- and was to be her master upon delivery. According to the agreement between the Company and the builder the vessel was to be square sterned, fifty feet in the keel, and twenty-one feet in the beam. It was to be finished by the first of September in order to sail to Virginia in time for the fall tobacco market. The cost of this ship, the snow Katy, was to be four pounds per ton displacement.⁶¹

As the ship neared completion Allason advised Captain Scott what New England goods would find the best market in Virginia when he brought the ship down the coast. The goods suggested were rum, molasses, and loaf sugar. The last was, according to Allason, the "best article on the market." He also advised Scott to bring ten thousand bricks from Boston as ballast for the new vessel and also two or three packets of rope.⁶² The Katy's master followed the instructions


⁶²Allason to Captain William Scott, August 12, 1757, Letter Book. Allason also wrote to another ship captain in Boston at the same time and advised him that the same goods were selling well in Virginia.
of the young factor and brought both the loaf sugar and the
bricks in the amount specified for the Virginia market as he
brought the new craft south from Boston. When the Katy ar-
ried in November, 1757, Allason reported that she seemed a
fine vessel and that he expected to get at least eleven
pounds for each "ton" of freight and perhaps as much as twelve
pounds. He further reported that the new vessel would pro-
bably carry about 210 hogsheads of tobacco.63

As factor Allason was also responsible for dispatching
the ships and giving their masters instructions as to where
to proceed to find a cargo. In fulfilling this responsibil-
ity he told Captain Scott of the Katy to bypass Norfolk
(danger of the press gang) and the James and proceed direct-
ly to the Rappahannock where he had been promised help from
Archibald Ritchie at Hobbshole in finding a cargo for her.64

Allason was, however, hard pressed to find cargoes for
the company ships in Virginia waters in the fall of 1757.
There were three ships that Allason had to fill for the pas-
sage to Britain during his first six months in the New World,
the Rowand, the Katy, and the Boyd, all owned or chartered by
the Company. This was a difficult task because of the large
number of vessels in the rivers of Virginia looking for

64 Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, November 16, 1757, Letter Book.
cargoes.65

When the Rowand left for Britain in October, 1757, she carried 392 hogsheads of tobacco with 140 belonging to Alexander Walker and Company. The remainder were carried for freight charges. Twenty-five hogsheads were shipped at the rate of twelve pounds sterling per ton. Although each hogshead weighed approximately one thousand pounds, each "ton" was traditionally computed to be four hogsheads.66 Allason could find only seventeen hogsheads of the company's tobacco for the Katy later in the season.67

Only having the Company's seventeen hogsheads to load on the Katy, Allason also had to become a freight agent in order to fill the hold of the new ship. In looking for dealers who would ship their tobacco on the Katy Allason hoped to find those who would be willing to consign their cargo to his employers. This would allow them to make their commission on its sale as well as anything they might make from the freight charges. The factor had only limited success in achieving this, for most of the tobacco was consigned to other merchants in Glasgow.68


67 Ibid.

68 Allason to Andrew and Hugh Blackburn, 30 January, 1758; and to Alexander Morson, January 30, 1758, Letter Book.
pay high cash prices for about twenty hogsheads of tobacco in Virginia to enable the Katy to sail on January 30, 1758, with 202 hogsheads of tobacco.\(^6\) Even while Allason was encountering such great difficulty in filling with cargo the bottoms available to him, the partners in Glasgow were compounding his difficulties by chartering from Robert Arthur yet another vessel, the Christian, under very restrictive terms for the next year.\(^7\) Just after the partners were chartering the Christian and preparing her for a voyage to Virginia to pick up the tobacco they hoped their factor would have available for the ship, Allason was writing them and strongly urging them not to send any vessel to Virginia.\(^8\) Because of the shortage of tobacco in Virginia in 1758, freight was cheaper in the rivers there than in Glasgow. Masters and factors were desperately lowering rates in order to avoid sending ships back to Great Britain with no cargo at all or keeping them lying at anchor for a year waiting for the next crop to reach the market. Nevertheless the arrival of the Christian late in the summer of 1758 again presented Allason with the problem of excess shipping capacity.\(^9\) Captain Montgomerie, master of the Christian, was


\(^7\)Agreement between Alexander Walker and Company and Robert Arthur, January, 1758, Loose Papers.


well aware of the restrictive features of the charter agreement and would not go beyond his obligations.

It was seldom indeed that a factor was able to gather sufficient tobacco at one warehouse to completely load an ocean going vessel, although a large permanently based merchant might. Small lots of tobacco were often moved around the rivers to the ship by small coasters and river craft. The judgement of the factor had to be depended on to determine if it would be more feasible to move the larger ship rather than hire smaller craft to bring the tobacco to the ship. In the case of the Christian Captain Montgomerie chose to make Allason's task more difficult by first making excuses (lack of provisions) for not moving his vessel from the Rappahannock to other rivers and then finally refusing to do so on the grounds that the charter did not so require him.\footnote{Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, October 12 and November 22, 1758, Letter Book.} According to his understanding he was apparently only to bring the vessel to an appointed port in Virginia, have a cargo put aboard, and then return to the Clyde. In the vicious tobacco market existing in 1758, Allason, who had to meet the expense of transporting the tobacco to the ship after he purchased it, found this attitude extremely costly and unreasonable to the company. After the failure of the Christian's captain to follow his instructions it may have given Allason some secret pleasure to hear that she had been captured by a French frigate on her homeward voyage even though the capture

was costly to his employers.\textsuperscript{74}

The next year Allason learned that the \textbf{Christian} had indeed been taken and ransomed on her way home. She had carried with her sixty hogsheads and ten thousand staves -- the best cargo that Allason had been able to find for her. The partners in Glasgow became as disgusted as Allason with the behavior of her master. After paying the ransom the captain dawdled while contrary winds prevented his passage up the Clyde to Glasgow and failed to send an express message to the holders of the charter that he had arrived safely albeit ransomed. Fearing that the whole ship and cargo were lost, the partners took out insurance on the cargo at the high charge of two hundred pounds -- a sum greater than the ransom paid for the release of the ship. Insurance brokers were apparently willing to insure even those ships reported as taken on the assumption that some would be ransomed relatively cheaply as was the \textbf{Christian}.\textsuperscript{75}

Even this was not the worst shipping loss suffered by Allason's employers. Almost all of the tobacco that Allason had been able to acquire for the firm in his first year had been shipped on the \textbf{Rowand} in the fall of 1757. Early in 1758 the news reached Allason that the \textbf{Rowand}, the vessel that had brought him over to the colony, had been

\textsuperscript{74}Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, March 23, 1758, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{75}Alexander Walker and Company to Allason, February 5, 1759, Loose Papers.

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lost on the voyage home in heavy seas off the coast of Scotland or Ireland. To compound the loss the cargo on board this chartered vessel was underinsured. Fate was particularly unkind to Alexander Walker and Company in that this year would have found the tobacco coming into an ever more favorable market. Bad news was heightened for Allason for the same letter that informed him of the loss also brought news of the charter of the Christian and a copy of the agreement signed by the partners. The loss of the Rowand was also to cause Allason increased troubles in Virginia for her master, although provided with funds to meet incidental expenses in Virginia, had not settled them but had charged them to the Company. These obligations had to be met by the company's representative on the scene and in order to do this he was forced to use some of the personal goods that Captain Buchanan left with him. This in turn caused trouble with Captain Buchanan's heirs, although Allason attempted to avoid personal involvement.

Communication with his employers in Scotland was a constant problem to Allason. It took almost six months to get a message to Glasgow and to receive the answer. Not only did it take two months on the voyage itself each way (it took nine weeks for Allason to cross coming to Virginia),

76 Alexander Walker to Allason, January 16, 1758, Loose Papers.

77 Andrew Buchanan to Allason, February 16, 1758, Loose Papers.
but it was not always possible to find a ship ready to leave for the desired destination. After leaving Scotland in 1757 Allason was not aware that the price of tobacco had risen on the Scottish market and that he could afford to pay more for tobacco in the colony. Another example where the delayed communications hurt the operations of the company was the chartering of the Christian. Had the partners known the true situation in Virginia they certainly would not have made the mistake they did. Allason did the best that he could for his employers, but neither he nor they could know the altered situations and problems that existed on the opposite sides of the Atlantic.

Although Allason attempted to warn the partners of the short crop that was coming in 1758, he was unable to stop the flow of goods arriving to be sold in an already saturated market. He received another load of goods in the Brothers early in 1758. While Allason was able to dispose of the "lumps" or parcels he was not able to get the terms of trade he desired, for he again had to accept deferral of payment until the following June and August. The continued inflow of goods combined with the inability of the Virginians to pay because of the extremely short crop that Allason predicted caused him a great deal of alarm. Allason saw three

\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{78} Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, November 27, 1757, Letter Book.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{79} Allason to Alexander Walker, December 20, 1757, Letter Book.}\]
separate causes of the short crop of 1758: insects, poor weather, and the planters' infatuation with indigo as an alternative to tobacco. In view of the short corn crop that occurred the same year, it is reasonable to look to the general weather conditions (which may have contributed to the insect problem) as the basic reason. Allason was correct in pointing out that the planters and certain elements in the colonial government were looking to indigo as a means to diversify the economy of the colony.\(^{80}\)

During 1758 Allason continued his arduous journeys over the Tidewater area of Virginia seeking markets for the trade goods arriving by sundry ships and for tobacco to be sent back to Glasgow. The degree of success achieved was a tribute to his tenacity and diligence. In the face of rising tobacco costs and overabundance of trade goods Allason, by the middle of the spring of 1758, could report that the bulk of his goods had been marketed although not at the terms he desired. He made personal decisions that he considered necessary to protect the Company's interests, because he had difficulty maintaining his correspondence with Glasgow due to his extensive travels and the distance across the Atlantic.\(^{81}\)

South of the James River he found some market for his

\(^{80}\)Allason was predicting the shortage as early as September, 1757 and reported the increasing signs of a tobacco shortage in his letters.

goods amongst that group he referred to as the "chintzes." The "chintzes" were probably peddlers or small storekeepers, as they practiced poor mercantile procedures according to Allason. In any event, the only way that Allason found to dispose of the goods was through extremely long credit, some of the "chintzes" demanding two years, some eighteen months, and none less than a year. These demands were a result of the economy's contraction which left no money to pay for the goods the merchants had to sell.

The profit of the firm was dependent on the "advance" the factor made in the price of the goods. In this period Allason accounted an advance, or price mark-up, of seventy-five to ninety per cent as barely acceptable considering that he was forced to give a long delay for payment. This long delay also emphasized the need for sound judgment in regard to the buyer's integrity and occasionally brought unforeseen pressures into play as the value of tobacco changed. In June, 1758, Allason reported that tobacco had risen from a little less than twenty shillings a hundredweight to twenty-one and a half at Nansemond and to twenty-six to twenty-eight at the mouth of the Appomattox River and that the price was still rising. By November, 1758 Allason was again able to report that, despite the poor market, most of his goods on the

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8Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, June 11, 1758, Letter Book. Allason obviously expected his employers to understand the term "chintzes."

83Ibid.
Fortuitously, Allason was in Williamsburg when the colonial government took action to ease the burden of the short tobacco crop and soaring prices by the passage of the Two-Penny Act in 1758. Believing that the act would apply to merchants' debts as well as those levies owed the parsons, Allason set out to collect as many of them due the company as he could before the act actually became law and news of its passage spread through the colony. In his first attempt Allason was successful in collecting his debt at the rate of twenty-three shillings per hundredweight of tobacco which would have been six and one third shillings more than would have applied under the Two-Penny Act. In another debt that he tried to collect for less than its face value, the customer declined to make any agreement, telling Allason that he did not propose to let it happen again! The customer simply refused to do additional business with Allason.\(^8^4\) The passage of time did not immediately alleviate Allason's unhappiness with the law, for later in the fall he learned that it did indeed apply to "all manner of Tobo debts contracts & whatsoever where the Debtor will be Villain enough to take

\(^8^4\)Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, November 6, 1758, Letter Book.
\(^8^5\)Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, October 5, 1758, Letter Book.

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advantage of this shameful law." Nevertheless, he still hoped to collect at least some of the debts in tobacco which had risen in some areas to fifty shillings a hundredweight as opposed to the sixteen shillings eight pence that payment in cash under the law would bring to the merchant.

One other duty of the factor was to recommend to his company in Great Britain what goods to send over to the market. Allason expected two groups of shipments from the partners each year, one each for the fall and spring markets. Almost a year in advance Allason would submit a "scheme" to his employers that consisted of the type goods that Allason thought would sell well in the Virginia market. He also informed his employers what he expected those goods to sell for in Virginia -- and thus what they should reasonably pay for them in Britain and still expect to make a profit in Virginia. Once the goods were assembled in Glasgow, the merchants and their employees would bundle them into the parcels that Allason would sell intact in Virginia. Thus the bundles were not unpacked and inspected until they were in

the hands of the purchaser. In Virginia even the outer wrapping of the bundles, usually a cheap and heavy material such as osnaburg, was sold at retail. Normally Allason expected the customer to be a small merchant who lacked the necessary connection in Britain to establish his credit there and was another link between the manufacturer and the consumer. On occasion, Allason may have sold a bundle to a large plantation owner who could use a large quantity of goods amongst his own "family," a term that was understood to mean his slaves and all others on his plantation. In payment Allason hoped to send tobacco back to Scotland.

It was important to Allason that the goods he ordered arrived in time to be sold at the market for which they were ordered, either spring or fall. The planters supplied themselves for the summer in the spring and for the winter in the fall. The fall market was the larger of the two, for it coincided with the bringing in of the tobacco to the warehouses. In 1759 Allason complained that the goods sent by the Company for the fall arrived late and missed the best market. The competitive market, of interest to numerous merchants, required economically priced goods at the proper season.

During his years as a factor for Alexander Walker and James Baird, Junior, Allason demonstrated those qualities required of a factor. It was a hard life in its

87 Allason to Baird and Walker, December 15, and December 20, 1759, Letter Book.
physical aspect, and it required acumen to adjust to the changing conditions of the colonial economy. It was also an occupation without a real future. Allason saw Virginia as offering him an opportunity to better his economic status, and he was determined to fulfill his rising expectations.

**Allason and the Company**

The relationship that existed between Allason and his two employers differed, although he was never overly close with either during his period of employment by them. Certainly the relationship was affected by the economic pressures prevalent in the period. Hardly had Allason arrived in America than his employers began exhorting him to greater effort on their behalf. While their affection for Allason may have been real, there was little in their letters to show it as they expressed more concern for the fate at the hands of the French privateer of their goods shipped on the *Rowand* than they did for their factor accompanying the goods. 88 Constantly they urged him to be careful for their interest and to make quick deals to keep the inventory of goods in his possession moving. High turnover was certainly good business practice of itself but not always possible to accomplish with a profit. 89 The owners explained

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88 Alexander Walker and Company to Allason, July 10, 1757, Loose Papers. Allason probably understood their attitude. He never complained about it.

89 Alexander Walker and Company to Allason, October 12, 1757, Loose Papers.
that their philosophy was that the first offer was usually the best, so Allason should not wait on the "mercatt." The deep concern of the two partners in Scotland was likely caused by the fact that they had overextended their credit and required a quick profit.

In spite of his strenuous efforts Allason met with indifferent success in his efforts to serve his company. By July 25, 1757, he reported back to his employers that he was encountering great difficulty in finding a suitable market for goods. Although he had sold some parcels, he was usually required to forego quick payment and give credit until the following spring.

Relations between Allason and his employers began to show signs of strain soon after his arrival in Virginia. The ties between Allason and Alexander Walker were stronger than those between Allason and James Baird, Junior. In fact, each time that Allason wrote to the partnership, he also usually wrote a private letter to Walker. Likewise, Walker usually corresponded with Allason outside the official correspondence of the Company. In any event, the unsettled state of commerce in Virginia soon began to tax the relationship between factor and employers.

The two partners in Glasgow had bought their trade goods on credit in a vain expectation of a good market and

90Alexander Walker and Company to Allason, October 13, 1757, Loose Papers.
quick profit in Virginia.\footnote{91} Some of the employer-employee tension may have existed before Allason went to Virginia, for he and Alexander Walker had resorted to an arbitrator in an earlier dispute when Allason had represented the firm in the West Indies,\footnote{92} but other evidence indicates little ill feeling was involved in that incident.

In June, 1758, almost a year to the day after his arrival in Virginia, Allason reported to his employers that he would be leaving their employ at the end of the contracted period.\footnote{93} This action was prompted primarily by his own ambition, but another influence must have been the constant Company criticisms about his performance. The partners in Glasgow complained that he should have sold the goods cheaper, paid one-third cash for tobacco, been more aggressive,\footnote{94} and that his conduct of the business in Virginia was ruining them.\footnote{95} When Alexander Walker wrote in January, 1758,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{91}{Alexander Walker and Company to Allason, September 12, 1757, Loose Papers.}
  \item \footnote{92}{Allason to William Walker, August 26, 1757, Letter Book; Robert Allason to Allason, (n.d.) 1757, Loose Papers; Robert Allason wrote his brother concerning Alexander Walker, "Never was such a trifler seen" after Walker had failed to pay debentures on William Allason's personal goods (see below). Robert Allason stated further that it was not in the partners' power to meet any financial demands upon them; in other words, they were without ready cash.}
  \item \footnote{93}{Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, June 19, 1758, Letter Book.}
  \item \footnote{94}{Alexander Walker and Company to Allason, January 2 and 17, 1758, Loose Papers.}
  \item \footnote{95}{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
privately, however, it was with a more conciliatory tone, stating that both he and Baird trusted a great deal in Allason's integrity but were afraid that their factor was too "timorous." Allason in turn charged that the instructions of the partners were too ambiguous and that whatever he might have done, had it turned out wrong, would have been laid at his feet. It was obvious to Allason also that the house of Walker and Baird was divided against itself, for he began to receive offers from Alexander Walker to enter into a partnership with Walker and Alexander Ritchie.

This offer Allason declined on the grounds that he had insufficient capital to meet his responsibilities in it and that he was too "timourous!" It is much more likely that he lacked faith in the business judgment of Walker, and justly so, as events turned out. Allason did not intend to leave the Company completely in the lurch upon his resignation. In addition to giving them a year's notice, he also agreed to continue handling their affairs until a replacement could arrive. His services, he informed them, would cost them considerably more in the way of a salary after the

96 Alexander Walker to Allason, January 16, 1758, Loose Papers.
expiration of the original contract. He expected one hundred pounds yearly rather than the original sixty.

In Scotland the fading fortunes of the Company must have been even more painful for the partners to face as the price of tobacco gained on the Scottish market. Their desperation and lack of real comprehension can be understood as the supply of Virginia tobacco shrank and left them with large obligations to be met with no means of doing so. Of course, they were not the only mercantile firm with this problem -- ships were regularly sent from Virginia with lumber in order to avoid a cargoless passage.100

By the end of 1758 Allason could report to the Company that over four thousand pounds were due it from its operations in Virginia -- small comfort to a firm in desperate need of immediate cash to meet its obligations in Scotland and England.101 In spite of his talents for collecting debts and his best efforts to do so, Allason could report little success in collecting currency to send home to his employers.

The vacillation of his employers was demonstrated to Allason when, after earlier urging him to dispose of his goods at almost any price in order to get tobacco to send home, in the winter of 1759 they declared that the Scottish

100 Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, September 16, 1758, Letter Book. Prices did not increase as much in Scotland as they did in Virginia.

market would not support the "exorbitant" prices being paid in Virginia after the short crop of 1758. Allason was instructed to pay no more than twenty-three shillings per hundredweight. Further, any tobacco paid him for debts was to be sold and bills of exchange bought for payment either in London or Glasgow. Bills on Liverpool, Bristol, and Whitehaven were to be avoided as they were difficult and expensive to negotiate. 102

The relationship between Allason and his employers continued on a suspicious level into 1759 as they rightly suspected that he would not return to Glasgow but would remain in Virginia doing business for himself. Allason denied this on the first day of 1759, and there is no evidence to indicate that he was not really planning to return to Scotland as soon as a replacement arrived. 103 The investment of the partners in their Virginia operations amounted to almost six thousand pounds through the debts, inventory, and other assets in the colony. Despite their carping letters, they were encouraging Allason in February to remain in their employ. The West Indies trade was just as unprofitable as that of Virginia for them, and they were resolved to remain in the Old Dominion in a business way for several more years. They offered to set Allason up in a store to manage for them, 102

102 Alexander Walker and Company to Allason, February 23, 1759, Loose Papers.

103 Allason to Robert Allason, January 1, 1759, Letter Book.

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even offering a share in the concern with them. Allason, aware of the precarious financial position of the company through the reports of his brother, Robert, viewed this as a dubious adventure. The partners really trusted the integrity of their factor but questioned his judgment. Apparently they were finding some cause to believe that Allason was finding Virginia a more agreeable place (they said he seemed "more ingratiated with the country") than at first. The employers attempted to appeal to Allason's sympathies also by stating that through no fault of his own he had not been able to make any money for them, and they thought that "it wou'd be but justice you endeavoured to do something for us another year or two." The partners' business had suffered in every undertaking, and apparently they recognized that the basic fault did not lie with Allason but, in their opinion, with the distressed times. If Allason insisted on leaving the Company, he was instructed to turn the accounts in his possession over to Archibald Ritchie. Although they complained of the tobacco he had sent home in the Christian in the same letter -- it was not "fit for anything but the Dutch market, as there is a vast deal of it stem and some untyed, which the French will by no means take, & you ought if possible to guard against it" -- they admitted in:

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104 Alexander Walker to Allason, February 5, 1759, Loose Papers.

105 Alexander Walker and Company to Allason, February 5, 1759, Loose Papers.

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September that Allason had acted wisely on their behalf in not purchasing tobacco at the high prices of the Virginia market, thus avoiding for them the great losses some of the Glasgow firms suffered when the French Farmers refused to raise their prices to match those being paid in America.\textsuperscript{106}

The Glasgow partnership of Walker and Baird realized in 1759 that they were financially overcommitted and throughout the year attempted to call in some of the debts due them. They also shipped fewer goods to Virginia and pleaded with Allason to collect any ready money that he could send to them to meet their own commitments. Increasingly they praised Allason for his action in their behalf, although Allason doubted their sincerity. The anxiety of the Glasgow men must have been mounted at the thought of possibly having Allason leave their employ with uncollected debts in Virginia, despite Allason's repeated assurances to them and to his brother Robert that he would not do this.\textsuperscript{107} Allason continued to complain of the indecisiveness of his employers and the lack of definite instructions to guide his actions.\textsuperscript{108} Allason recommended to the partners that they cut their operations to one vessel making only two trips annually to Virginia. This vessel should not exceed 250 hogsheads in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{106} Baird and Walker to Allason, September 20 and 26, 1759, Loose Papers.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Allason to Robert Allason, May 30, 1759, Letter Book.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, April 14, 1759, Letter Book.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
capacity. Allason's plan was for the vessel to come out in the spring with the spring goods, pick up the tobacco the factor had in the warehouses, and immediately return to Scotland with a minimum layover time in Virginia waters. The advantages of this policy would have been to lower the risks that the partners were undertaking, let the factor know exactly how much tobacco he could ship, and fix a relatively firm date when he could expect his goods. On the other hand, it would abandon hope of a potential large and quick profit in hopes of long and steady growth when the partners were obviously looking for immediate assistance from their financial problems. Allason's plan would not meet their need to pay their debts. 109

Allason's greatest frustration as a factor was the arrival of such ships as the Christian and the Bolling without prior notice. Both ships had been in the colony for a length of time before he became aware of their presence. Although Allason never articulated the thought, he apparently realized the principle of shipping that only a ship moving goods from one point to another is making money -- while sitting in harbor it is only an expense. 110 The company at this time was suggesting that they would support Allason in

109 Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, May 30, 1759, Letter Book. For a discussion of turn-around time for tobacco ships in the Chesapeake area see Price, "Rise of Glasgow," 189-190. Allason's advice was in keeping with the advanced procedures of his time.

110 Ibid.
the establishment of a store, but he advised against it. Outweighing the advantage of being able to keep more accurate records was the disadvantage of a permanent investment in the colony, for the debts owed by planters were of a more long-term nature than those owed by merchants. Allason was later to have this advice, accurate as it was, thrown back in his face when he opened a store without the partners. His apparent reason for not wanting to open a store either with or for the Company was that he gravely mistrusted the business acumen of the partners and did not want to be tied to a failing business. Allason wrote the Company that he was "strongly possest of a natural timorousness with respect to trade which I cannot well account for."\textsuperscript{111} It was a good time to be "timorous."

In spite of their own misjudgment in the Christian charter, the partners wanted to place the blame for that misadventure on Allason for not properly handling the ship in Virginia waters. The partners also questioned Allason's judgment as to shipping for the future. They pointed out to him that although the 1758 crop had been poor (from their computations not nearly so low as Allason reported)\textsuperscript{112} and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{112}Alexander Walker and Company to Allason, February 5, 1759, Loose Papers. The partners by adding up the figures arriving in Glasgow computed that the Virginia tobacco crop of 1758 was in the neighborhood of 25,000 hogsheads and that the Maryland crop was good. This would have been about half
\end{itemize}
shipping plentiful in Virginia waters, the same situation would not exist in 1759. All the mercantile houses were aware of the situation and none, according to Walker and Company, were sending out vessels unless they were sure of a return cargo. Therefore they questioned whether Allason would be able to get freight home as cheaply as he thought he could, although they were all for it if he could. Allason's judgment for the first nine months of the year proved the more correct of the two. As late as September, "Guinea" ships in the rivers were taking on cargo for Liverpool at freight rates as low as seven pounds per ton. 113

The Company continued to encourage Allason in the establishment of a store as the "difference twixt the retail and Lumping prices are very great." Increasingly, the partners were looking toward Maryland as a potentially better market than Virginia and encouraging Allason to establish a store there. The minds of the partners appeared to Allason to be fixed on the opening of the store, an enterprise he was in no way interested in joining, particularly when the role of his friend in the company, Alexander Walker, was

the size of the normal crop but far more than the five thousand hogsheads that Allason estimated and far less than the seventy thousand that Thomas Jefferson claimed. Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia (New York, 1964), 159. No contemporary merchant saw the 1758 crop as anything but extremely below the normal production. In 1759, Allason also added the "fly" as a cause of the tobacco crop failure. Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, April 1, 1759, Letter Book.

113 Allason to William Corbett, September 18, 1759, Letter Book.
being played down as the name of the firm changed to Baird and Walker. Allason was instructed to keep new books because the very nature of the firm had changed, although the company's correspondence tried to make it appear that it was only to facilitate the conduct of business in the occasional absence of Alexander Walker. As Allason's "connexion" to the partnership was through Walker, this could not have increased his sense of trust, which was never high, in the Company.

Allason abided by his promise to continue to supervise the affairs of the Company in Virginia even after he did make the decision to commit himself for a long residence by opening a store in the colony. Although John Baird, the son of James Baird who was partner and controlling force in the Company, had arrived in Virginia on the first day of 1760 -- completely to Allason's surprise -- Allason remained the only one prepared to handle the burden of the Company's affairs in the colony. Having removed himself from dependence on Baird and Walker, Allason became more independent in his criticism of them. In January he told them that the winter goods that had only recently arrived were entirely too late and were almost unmarketable because of their cost. When the goods had arrived the planters had completed buying their

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115 Baird and Walker to Allason, September 26, 1759, Loose Papers.
winter goods and did not yet need or want to buy summer goods -- the same criticism that he had offered more politely earlier. He again recommended that the goods arrive early in the spring and fall, well before the beginning of the summer and winter markets. Probably his mood had not been brightened by the surprise presence of John Baird of whose safe arrival he informed the partners in Glasgow. The partners replied to Allason's charges that they were operating under the same handicaps as everyone else and that most of the firms had been late in sending out their goods because they were hard to procure in Great Britain so Allason should have no more difficulty than his "neighbors" (competitors). Besides, they alleged, the goods were so well "sorted" (meaning that the assortment was wisely chosen) that they were suitable for any market. 

While these accusations and counteraccusations shuttled across the Atlantic Allason was trying his utmost to turn the debts and goods in his possession into cash and return bills of exchange to his old employers despite a falling tobacco market caused in large part by the downward pressure put on the market in Great Britain by the French Farmers. Allason enjoyed a measure of success in his effort and was able to send bills amounting to over a thousand.


117 Baird and Walker to Allason, March 7, 1760, Loose Papers.
85 pounds to assist the partners in paying their creditors.\textsuperscript{118}

In addition, Allason asked the two angry Glasgow men to "restrain their passion" upon receiving their response to his own plans to open a store. He explained why he did not choose to enter in the storekeeping business with them rather than with "strangers." Allason told them that he was concerned with his future, and their prior expression of fear at being caught with a large quantity of goods in the colony when peace returned persuaded him that they were not fixed on how long they proposed doing business in the colony. He did not want to be caught without a connection on short notice, and they had carefully evaded answering his questions as to their intentions and to the salary he might expect. He had asked them for one hundred pounds a year, but they had replied only that he would get as much as any factor in Virginia. Allason heartily disliked the travelling and hardship involved in doing business in the "lumping" way. Further, he did not want to enter into a storekeeping concern with them because of the difficulty of keeping accounts in two places. He would have to ship tobacco to them for their sale in Glasgow and thought that a surer profit could be made by selling the tobacco in the colony. The arrival of John Baird, whom Allason attempted to keep at his side in order that Baird might learn the trade, indicated that Allason's days with the Company would last no longer than young John

\textsuperscript{118} Allason to Baird and Walker, March (n.d.), 1759, and March 24, 1760, Letter Book.
took to learn the business.\textsuperscript{119}

The relationship of Allason to the Company was difficult. His close relationship with Alexander Walker was strained by events, and he obviously cared little for James Baird, Junior, the other partner. Alexander Walker condemned Allason for using him poorly during the first months of 1760, but at the same time Allason was receiving reports that Baird was taking great advantage of Walker.\textsuperscript{120} Then suddenly in May, Walker and Baird ended their partnership just as Allason was preparing to set up store for himself in Falmouth, Virginia.\textsuperscript{121} The company at the time of its dissolution had debts of over fifteen hundred pounds due them in Virginia.\textsuperscript{122}

In retrospect it would seem that the failure of Baird and Walker was not due to the lack of effort or ability on William Allason's part. Economic conditions were in a state of change both in Virginia and in Scotland, and the relatively small merchants were having a more difficult time competing with larger firms. Actions of concentrated buyers such as the French Farmers left small tobacco merchants in


\textsuperscript{120}James Dunlop to Allason, December 15, 1759, Loose Papers.

\textsuperscript{121}Alexander Walker to Allason, May 25, 1760, Loose Papers.

\textsuperscript{122}Allason's Memorandum Book Number 4, Entry of March 20, 1760.
Glasgow little room to operate, and only if they happened to enter the market at the right year could they expect success. In addition, the two partners were reputedly poor businessmen, Alexander Walker as a "trifler" and excessively trusting and Baird as somewhat unethical. Their attempts to retain Allason's services discount practically all criticisms they made of him.

The relationship between Allason and the partners reflects in large part the ties between the economy of Virginia and that of Britain during the same period. Events that occurred in Virginia, such as the poor crops of 1758, were invariably felt in Britain where their effect may have been felt as sharply but was probably more prolonged as its reverberations went up and down the credit structure. Both Walker and Baird began a financial descent after the crop failure, and both individually failed during the economic troubles that occurred in Scotland in 1762 and 1763.

**Allason's Trade Connections**

Allason was careful to maintain his connections and his reputation as a reliable business man throughout the trading community of the Atlantic. Not being from a family that provided widespread contacts in various trading centers of the old and new worlds, Allason fell back on old acquaintances when he needed particular help. This facet of trade was to be seen repeatedly throughout Allason's career. Because of his lack of strong "connexions" he was never able to
enter one area of trade that he considered the most profitable -- slaving -- to the degree that he desired.

In order to maintain his friends and acquaintances, Allason was generous in performing favors for them and their wives. An example was the diligence that he displayed in filling some requests for Alexander Walker in Virginia. Walker had apparently developed a taste for Virginia hams during his earlier stay in the colony, for Allason had been asked to send some home. By the end of the first summer, Allason had rounded up the following articles for shipment to Scotland for Walker: six hams, a cask of corn, and a shoat of very good breed. He had failed in obtaining cherries, "basses" to be used "for setting plates upon," and some especially good tobacco.123

Within six months of his arrival in the New World, Allason was receiving offers from old friends to enter into partnerships with them, with Allason to have the management of the undertaking.124 Allason was committed at this time to the remainder of his agreement with Alexander Walker and Company and could not think of going in with another firm. One offer was made by John Hunter for Allason to operate a store in their joint interest. It symbolized the importance

123 Memorandum Book, April-September, 1757, 15. "Basses" were apparently mats woven from tree fibers by the Indians from whom Allason was to obtain them. See also Oxford Universal Dictionary, 3d Ed., (Oxford, 1955), 152.

of connections in trans-Atlantic commerce in the eighteenth century -- as vital in Virginia then as they had been in seventeenth century New England.\footnote{Bernard Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, 1955) \textit{passim}.}

Another mercantile contact who played an important role in the economic life of colonial Virginia was James Mills, described by Allason as a "considerable merchant here."\footnote{Allason to Walker and Weir, November 22, 1758, Letter Book.} Mills had originally established his store at Hobbshole but later moved to Urbanna where his warehouse now serves as the public library. Allason put Mills in touch with his friend William Walker in Antigua after Mills expressed discontent with his own trading partner at the West Indies port. Allason also informed Walker as to the current prices of old corn, rum, and sugar, and reported that there was no pork on the market in Virginia in the fall of 1758.\footnote{Allason's Daybook and Journal of Private Transactions, 1757-1769, entry dated August (n.d.), 1758.}

Allason was conscious of the need for good will among the more influential of the colonial population. It may have been in that light that he gave a saddle to "Boby [sic] Skipwith . . . for the trouble given Sir Wm. Skipwith's family."\footnote{Allason to Walker and Weir, November 22, 1758, Letter Book.} Allason also served some of the officers of the ships trading in Virginia waters by agreeing to handle their goods and collect from their debtors after their departure from Virginia. Normally each ship's officer brought a small amount of goods
on each voyage to trade in his own interest. Allason agreed to handle these goods in order to establish good will among these men who were so important in trade and communications. Allason's practice did build up good will among men that could give good intelligence and perform small favors for him in the future.\(^{128}\)

Allason also recorded in his memorandum book his efforts to collect the debt of a man named Grahame for James Johnstone and increasingly he acted as a messenger, advisor, and central broker among the mercantile community of Virginia. These were valuable connections, and the favors that he then performed would be called in for payment sometime in the future.\(^{129}\)

**Family Connections**

Allason's younger brother David accompanied him to Virginia on the Rowand, apparently under William's sponsorship. William settled David in the store and household of Archibald Ritchie in Hobbshole.\(^{130}\) There he was to work for Ritchie but without pay other than his room and board. David

\(^{128}\)Allason to James Willson, June 19, 1758, Letter Book.

\(^{129}\)Allason Memorandum Book Number 3, passim. The atmosphere of these activities reminds one of the dealings of effective politicians in the American Congress. There was no fixed bargain but a gentlemanly understanding that if a favor had been extended it ought to be returned at some future date.

\(^{130}\)Allason to Robert Allason, September 12, 1757, Letter Book.
was to return one time to Scotland, but he, too, would come back to Virginia and spend the greatest part of his life there, never marrying but working in close cooperation with his older brother William. David had apparently not had the education that William had at the Glasgow grammar school, and part of the purpose of his staying with Archibald Ritchie was to learn the merchant's trade in a modified apprenticeship. He and his brother Alexander may have departed Glasgow under some cloud.  

Alexander Allason, better known as "Sandy" as were most Scots with the given name of Alexander, was the second of the four brothers that figure prominently in the life of William Allason. Sandy had chosen, or had been placed in, a life as a ship's officer, and in 1757 was serving as the second mate of a merchantman engaged in the West Indies trade. Robert and William Allason, the two older brothers, discussed the needs and shortcomings of the two younger men, David and Sandy, in their letters and showed family loyalty in attempting to help the younger men get settled in life. William feared that Sandy was sure to be impressed unless he improved his status to that of first mate, which would entirely "screen him" from that fate.  

\[^{131}\text{Ibid. Allason referred to "that affair of Davys and Sandys" in this letter but gives no further information.}\]  

\[^{132}\text{Ibid.}\]
impressed but managed somehow to get free.\textsuperscript{133} In addition, William reprimanded his younger brother for being neglectful of his duties as a ship's officer. Apparently, Sandy had failed to keep the ship's reckoning as a second mate, leaving that task to the master and first mate.\textsuperscript{134} This failure to sharpen the skills of his trade perturbed William Allason who constantly advocated self improvement through learning new skills and increased education.

David Allason left Virginia and the position he had with Archibald Ritchie because of his "health" in the summer of 1758. Allason could report that he had been diligent in his endeavors at Hobbshole and that Ritchie had given him ten guineas gratuity upon his departure.\textsuperscript{135} The relationship between Allason and Archibald Ritchie, apparently not a close acquaintance until Allason's arrival in Virginia in 1757, was growing stronger during this period and was to last until Ritchie's death following the American Revolution.

The relationship between William and Robert Allason at this time was cordial on the surface, and they worked in close cooperation with one another. The Company was probably

\textsuperscript{133}Allason to Robert Allason, October 29, 1757, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{134}Allason to Robert Allason, November 27, 1757, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{135}Allason to Robert Allason, October 5, 1758, Letter Book. At this time a guinea was valued at twenty-one shillings so this gift amounted to ten and one half pounds. The real reason for David Allason's departure was probably the lack of any opportunity to improve his fortune. Both Allasons continued on friendly terms with Ritchie.
not aware of William's commercial activities with his brother while in Virginia, but there is no evidence that he broke his agreement with the partners. Robert had asked William to investigate the possibilities of building a ship in the Chesapeake, and it was probably for this vessel that Allason asked Captain James Chalmers to bring a figurehead for a ship of about one hundred tons on the same day that he advised the Company's Captain William Scott what cargo to bring from New England to Virginia.\textsuperscript{136} As Chalmers and Scott were both at Boston and Allason chose to ask Chalmers rather than Scott to bring the "vessel's head" down to Virginia it must be inferred that Allason did not want the Company to be aware of his activity on behalf of his brother.

Allason also wanted to use the opportunity of his presence in Virginia to collect some debts owed there to Robert and particularly one incurred by Cathcart Dalrymple that was in 1757 in the hands of James Parker of Norfolk.\textsuperscript{137} Robert was apparently the more affluent of the two brothers and seems to have provided the bulk of the capital used in their joint efforts. The exact source of the capital available to Robert is not certain. The father of the two young

\textsuperscript{136} Allason to Captain James Chalmers, August 12, 1757, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{137} Allason to Robert Allason, October 29, November 27, December 18, and December 20, 1757, Letter Book.
men was still living so it was not the result of inheritance unless it came from Robert's mother. Robert's holdings were to increase substantially in a short time through his marriage and the death of his brother-in-law who left at least part of a large estate to Robert's wife.

Allason thought at first that he could get the ship for Robert built on the eastern shore of Maryland. The ship was to be about 105 tons. Within a month, however, the ship building project for Robert was in doubt because of the difficulty in confirming a builder for the ship. According to Allason, this was a problem also encountered by others. Nevertheless, Allason was still hopeful of having the ship built and advocated that it be engaged in the West Indies trade rather than that with Virginia. The excess of shipping in Virginia waters and the depressed freight rates may have contributed to the eventual abandonment of the ship building enterprise that was symbolized by the selling of the ship's figurehead to Hartwell Cocke on the James River.

The fortunes of Allason's brother Robert seemed to

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139 Allason to Robert Allason, November 27, 1757, Letter Book. For a discussion of shipbuilding in the Chesapeake, see Middleton, Tobacco Coast, Chapter 7.

140 Allason to Robert Allason, October 5, 1758, Letter Book.

141 Allason's Memorandum Book Number 3, December 13, 1758.
be prospering during the period 1757-1760. He had married the sister of an affluent Scottish merchant, Robert Young, who died, childless, in late 1759 or early 1760, leaving his estate to his sisters. Robert Allason's share in this estate through his wife was sufficient to allow him to consider leaving trade and retiring to the country place that he acquired outside Glasgow. Although he did move to his country estate, he continued his interest in trade. Some of the iron produced at the Neabsco Forge of Colonel John Tayloe, proprietor of Mount Airy plantation and member of the Governor's Council, was shipped consigned to Robert Allason during the years 1759 to 1768. The consignment of this iron to Robert was due to the efforts of William Allason.142

In the spring of 1760 both of the younger Allason brothers were on their way to Virginia but in different capacities. David was to join William Allason in his new undertaking as storekeeper and to spend the remaining years of his life there working in close cooperation with William. Sandy was in command of the Beaufort, a vessel acquired by Robert Allason after his marital windfall.143

The clannishness of the Scots has been proverbial, and in the life of William Allason this sense of family was


143Allason to Robert Allason, March 1, 1760, Letter Book.
amply demonstrated. The economic importance of their mutual assistance is readily discerned, but the psychological import of the mental security that they provided is not so easily perceived. Nevertheless it was quite likely there, serving to undergird the resolution of the brothers as they ventured forth with little capital at their disposal to seek their own future in the changing world of the middle eighteenth century. Much of the strength of the brothers lay in their mutual support, knowing that if their enterprise failed there would still be an opportunity for them provided by their kin.

**Private Enterprises**

As mentioned above, Allason had the right to import, freight free, on the company ships £20 pounds sterling worth of goods in his own name the first year and £50 pounds sterling worth the next year. Prior to his departure from Scotland Allason had set about accumulating trade goods for this purpose. He bought goods from ten Scottish mercantile houses, including that of his brother, Robert. The total cost of the goods, including charges and insurance, was over £256 pounds sterling.\(^{144}\) Books comprised a sizable portion of the shipment in Allason's own investment and apparently signified that he felt they were a very marketable quantity in Virginia. One particular sale that he made to John

\(^{144}\)Allason's Daybook and Journal of Private Transactions, 1757-1769.
Binford, Jr. and John Sherman Gregory in Virginia included fifty-seven titles, ranging from texts for arithmetic through Don Quixote and Gil Blas to Voltaire's works and a history of China.\(^{145}\)

Shortly after he arrived a shipment of rum was consigned to him from Antigua. The shipment was made in care of Andrew Sprowle, a leading merchant in the Norfolk-Portsmouth, Virginia, area. Sprowle, who subsequently became the President of the Virginia Merchants' Association in 1770, maintained his own facility adjacent to Portsmouth on the Elizabeth River at a small settlement called Gosport.\(^{146}\)

Having received the rum, Sprowle forwarded it on to Allason at Hobbshole on the Rappahannock in care of Archibald Ritchie. William Walker of Antigua had demonstrated his friendship and gratitude toward Allason for past favors Allason had performed for him by shipping the rum unsolicited to Allason and saying that Allason did not have to accept it if he found it reached a poor market. Ritchie purchased two of the ten hogsheads, and the remaining eight were sold to different individuals including Foxhall Sherman and Lawrence Washington.\(^{147}\) Allason later repeated the undertaking with the same

\(^{145}\)Ibid., 12 and 14 August, 1757. For list of books sold Binford and Gregory see Appendix E.

\(^{146}\)Isaac Samuel Harrell, Loyalism in Virginia: Chapters in the Economic History of the Revolution (New York, 1965), 98. Harrell points out the key role in the economic affairs of Virginia played by Sprowle in the period before the American Revolution.

\(^{147}\)Invoice of Rum, July 1757, Loose Papers.
Allason told William Walker, shipper of the rum and brother to Alexander Walker, one of Allason's employers, that the only reason that he consented to come out to Virginia in 1757 was that he personally had some debts and goods left in Virginia from the time he left in 1752. Even then he stated that he had agreed to come for only two years. Apparently Allason had no desire to remain in Virginia any longer than necessary to settle this unfinished business but those two years were to stretch into the rest of his life. Although he probably continued to think of himself as a Scot during the period 1757-1760, he later came to call himself "Virginian."

William Allason was nearly a total man of business at this point of his life except for his close ties to his family. Little social or political commentary enters into his correspondence. Acknowledging that he made no copies of purely personal letters, Allason made few if any references to things not material. There was no variation in his pattern of life on Sunday at this time. That day was apparently another day for travel and business, and there

148 Allason to Andrew Sprowle, August 30, 1757, Letter Book. Allason had difficulty in keeping the same spelling of Sprowle's name in his letters and spelled it in various ways: Sprouill, Sprowell, Sproulle. I am using that found in current secondary works. Sprowle's handwriting was almost illegible. He apparently wrote almost all his own letters, hence determining the spelling of his name from his signature was and is almost impossible.
is no indication of any attendance at a church service. This was not to continue for the remainder of his life, but only in his early years. William Allason sufficiently appreciated a slightly ribald and suggestive song to copy it. Allason was not so cold a fish, however, that he cut himself off from his fellow merchants and the planters, for he participated in those social affairs among men called "clubs" at the courts, races, fairs, or whenever there were gatherings of men of business. On these occasions it was the custom of the participants to share the bill of the food and drink. These contacts were necessary for the efficient conduct of business, for they provided intelligence about market conditions and the economic integrity of other merchants and planters.

It has been shown earlier that Allason maintained in his memorandum book his own rating of the men he might contact in the course of business. John Binford, Jr. he described as "a young dealer, he is imagined to be pretty good tho the better His Father be Security for him." For another, Allason noted that David Hunter on the James River was to be avoided in dealings "at any rate." Archibald Ritchie was portrayed as a "good safe man to deal with." Allason also determined to ask about other dealers from old and established merchants such as Andrew Sprowle and Archibald

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149 Memorandum Books, passim.
150 Memorandum Book Number 3, no page number.
Ritchie, men whose integrity and judgment he trusted.\textsuperscript{151}

From almost the beginning of his life in Virginia Allason expressed interest in and knowledge of the slave trade. He obviously felt that this was the most profitable trade that he could enter. It was a difficult trade in which to gain admittance, for the connections had to be made through Liverpool, the slave trade center in Great Britain. Allason's connections were mainly in Scotland with a few in London. But as early as January, 1758, he sent two blacks to England because their purchasers would have nothing to do with them as their faces were disfigured on the outward passage.\textsuperscript{152} Allason continued to seek the necessary relationships to enter this trade.

In the spring of 1759, Allason observed the planters "have bought and given extravagant prices for Negroes wholly on the faith of their making a large crop and gett a high price of which many of them may be disappointed."\textsuperscript{153} Allason also complained about two other hindrances to his participation in the sale of blacks: the high amount of security desired by the Liverpool slaving firms and the advantage

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{151} Memorandum Book, April-September, 1757, no page number.
  \item \textsuperscript{152} Allason to Robert Allason, January 30, 1758, Letter Book. This is a puzzling letter for there is no other corroborating information, and it is difficult to imagine faces so disfigured that the blacks were unfit for field service. Nor is there any evidence concerning the source of these slaves -- no mention of a slave ship.
  \item \textsuperscript{153} Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, April 14, 1759, Letter Book.
\end{itemize}
that the dealers in neighboring colonies had over those in Virginia. At the time Virginia imposed a twenty per cent tax on the sale of slaves within her borders by or for non-residents so most of the slaves were imported indirectly through North Carolina or Maryland where they were sold to Virginia planters, avoiding the tax. The seven and one half or eight per cent commission on the sale of slaves made Allason use every endeavor to get a consignment to sell but with little success.

Allason was also personally interested in the sale of one particular black, for in August, 1759, he bought a Negro boy for use as his personal servant, as well as sharing in the purchase of another boy with David Loudon.154

Allason informed his employers that he would not be restricted by the terms of his contract with them beyond its original term of two years in June, 1758. In October, 1759, he told them what his future plans were. He had found an opportunity, and thought it in his own interest, to remain in Virginia "for some years." He informed the partners that he had ordered some goods in his own name and that he planned on opening his own small store. He agreed to continue handling the Company's affairs as long as they wanted him to "in a lumping way." If this was not agreeable to them, he would deliver up the accounts to any person they authorized, although he warned that only he had a knowledge

Allason's Journal of Private Transactions, August 19, 1759.

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of the details of the debts due to the company. Allason said that he was fixed in his determination to open the store, because his "wages were insufficient for one in the prime of his life." He further alleged that it was the practice of the Glasgow firms to employ a factor or supercargo at wages until they had no further use for his services and then drop him with no provision for his future. Many of the factors had neglected to provide an estate for themselves and were then dependent upon supporting themselves in some menial capacity. He further stated that "I have not resolved on this rashly, but have considered it maturely and upon a good foundation." 

Allason had indeed determined to go into business for himself, for in May and June he had placed an order for trade goods to be sent to him. Now that he was under an annual salary of one hundred pounds, he was no longer entitled to do business for himself, according to the practice then current. The goods that he ordered were to be sent to a John Knox at Flowerdew Hundred on any ship not used by the

155 Allason to Alexander Walker and Company, October 9, 1759, Letter Book. Allason's resolve to become an independent merchant must have been strengthened when he received a letter from John Baird, dated January 1, 1760, from Urbana, Virginia, stating that he was in Virginia and was anxious to see Allason and deliver the bill of lading for the goods brought on the same ship. This was the first knowledge that Allason had that the son of one of the partners was coming out to Virginia although Alexander Walker had written telling him of the proposed journey of young Baird on September 29, 1759.

156 Allason to Alexander Walker, October 9, 1759, Letter Book.
Company. Allason was determined to do business on a very small scale and wanted to keep the debts he owed as low as possible. His future plans were not fixed when he informed the partners of his resolve to establish a store in Virginia in his own name. That occurred in November, when he, John Mitchell, and John Gray visited Mann Page's plantation, probably to investigate locating a store at Falmouth, Virginia. Allason and these two companions comprised three-quarters of those first interested in the new store that would be called William Allason and Company.

The entire management of the store would be in Allason's hands, although he did have partners in the enterprise. The plan that Allason had decided to adopt to beat the odds facing the smaller Virginia merchants was to buy tobacco and sell it in the colony to other traders, thus avoiding the risks of the Atlantic crossing and the fluctuating market in Europe. Allason had discovered that it was almost impossible to be aware of the latest fluctuations of the British market, so that a great deal of money could be made or lost in dealing in it from Virginia. The encompassment of the market by the large buyers had made it most likely that large sums would be lost rather than made in the trans-Atlantic tobacco trade. He would settle for the smaller but safer profit of dealing as much as possible in the colony.

157 Allason's Daybook and Journal of Private Transactions, entry dated November 9, 1759, and Memorandum Book Number 4, entry of November 11, 1759.
so that he would know the price he could expect for his tobacco.\textsuperscript{158}

In order to have trusted assistance in the project, Allason proposed that his younger brother David return to Virginia. David would eventually be sent out to the newer back country with some goods to establish another store. Allason, in fact, stated that he entered this business in order to be able to assist David whose reasons for leaving Virginia would "now be removed."\textsuperscript{159} While taking this step with his brother, Allason was at the same time ordering goods for the store from a Glasgow firm, James Dunlop and Company.\textsuperscript{160} In entering business for himself, Allason also proposed to continue handling the lumping trade of Baird and Walker.

The site of the store was leased from Mann Page, one of the trustees of the town of Falmouth. Page owned Lot Six in the town and after a proposal and counter proposal the new partnership and Page agreed on terms. Allason and Company would lease the lot for twenty years; the first four years would be rent free and for the remaining sixteen years the rent would be ten pounds per year. The new partnership, represented by Allason, agreed to build at

\textsuperscript{158}Allason to Robert Allason, October 9, 1759, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{159}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{160}Allason to James Dunlop, October 9, 1759, Letter Book.
their own expense a storehouse, a warehouse, and a stable on the lot and to maintain these buildings in tenantable repair and with no allowance for them if they gave up the lot. The option to renew the lease as often as they liked also belonged to William Allason and Company.¹⁶¹

Thus in the spring of 1760 the center of concentration on the part of William Allason shifted from the affairs of the old Baird and Walker Company, whose interests were still in his care, to the new William Allason and Company in whose prosperity lay his own future advancement.

¹⁶¹Allason's Memorandum Book Number 3, November 11, 1759.
CHAPTER III

THE STORE

Another visitor to Falmouth in 1759 left a clear description of that town as he saw it then. On October 6 of that year Andrew Burnaby looked across the flood swollen Rappahannock River at the small village of about twenty houses. While impressed by the natural beauty of the setting on the falls of the Rappahannock, Burnaby nevertheless had time to note the fundamental nature of Falmouth by stating that its inhabitants were "endeavouring to rival the Fredericksburgers [sic] in their trade." He described the falls of the Rappahannock, the essential cause for the location of the twin towns of Falmouth and Fredericksburg at their sites: the falls' "range scarcely exceeds half a mile, and the breadth not a hundred yards."¹ Ship borne commerce could penetrate no deeper inland on this narrow rocky river.

Falmouth and Fredericksburg were twins not only by location but also by the date and act of their birth. They were established by the same act of the Virginia Assembly in February, 1727. The act first created Fredericksburg then went on to establish for the convenience of the inhabitants

¹William Maxwell, ed., "Burnaby's Travels in Virginia, in 1759," The Virginia Historical Register, V (1852), 145-146.

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of the north side of the Rappahannock the town of Falmouth on fifty acres of land previously belonging to William Todd. Trustees were named to lay out streets, lots, church and church yard, market place, public key, public landings, wharfs, and loading cranes. The lots were not to exceed one half acre in size, and four were grouped in a block. Deprived of his land by the legislation, Todd was recompensed at the rate of forty shillings per acre and granted four lots in the town as well as retaining title to any buildings in the area at the time of the act.\textsuperscript{2}

Thus, in the spring of 1760 Allason made preparations to establish a store in a community conceived for commerce.\textsuperscript{3} A written lease for the lot, dated May 2, 1760, replaced the oral agreement earlier made with Mann Page.\textsuperscript{4} By the terms of the lease Allason and Company was required to build a store house, lumber house, and stable. Allason apparently operated the store out of temporary quarters for the first year, for it was not until the next that Thompson and Ballard,\

\textsuperscript{2}Kenning, Statutes, IV, 2340239. Todd was apparently unhappy with the provision of the act of the Assembly, see Wm and Mary Qtly, Ser.1, XXII (1914), 58.

\textsuperscript{3}Allason may well have chosen Falmouth because of its connections by road to the interior of the colony. The Fry-Jefferson map of Virginia of 1751 shows a road leading from Falmouth through the Piedmont and across the Blue Ridge to Winchester, the main town in the Shenandoah Valley. The Tidewater of Virginia being well supplied with stores, Allason saw that the best future for a new concern lay where it could tap the new lands that had been opened in the west.

\textsuperscript{4}Indenture, Mann Page and William Allason, May 2, 1760, Loose Papers.
carpenters, and Thomas Redon, plasterer, were given credit on the books for their work on the "store". In August Allason was building, or having built, his house so what he used for a store in the summer of 1760 is a mystery. By June he could write his brother in Port Glasgow that he had just opened the store. Goods were on their way and arriving in the summer of 1760 from merchants in England and Scotland.

In addition to getting the store ready, Allason sought ways to protect the interests of the new undertaking through the expansion of the partnership. In order to give the firm the stability of increased capitalization a new partner, John Miller, was taken into the firm. He, too, was a merchant on the Rappahannock, being located at Port Royal. This increased the capital initially available to the company by 750 pounds sterling. Miller's death ended his active participation in the company on August 3, 1761.

By his terms of agreement with the partners, Allason was in sole charge of the operation of the store and there


^Allason to Robert Allason, June, 1760 (no day), Letter Book.


^Allason to James Dunlop, August 8, 1761, Letter Book.

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was no attempt by the Virginia partners to interfere with his decisions. The only area where consultation between the partners occurred was in relation to the partnership as a whole, as in admitting new partners. Thus, when John Mitchell was preparing to leave for Scotland on the Marshal Keith in the summer of 1760, Allason urged that his brother Robert be taken into the firm as a partner with supervision of the purchase and shipment of goods in Glasgow. Allason broached the subject to his brother in referring to Mitchell's trip to Great Britain, "I wish it was convenient for you to be concerned with us -- if you have any inclination you might talk to him about it and we will throw the management of the whole at home into your hands." Allason's announcement with an accompanying proposal was a disappointment to his older brother for in November, 1760, Robert wrote that he regretted that he did not have William to himself. He, as had Baird and Walker, valued the services of William Allason enough to complain when they were not restricted to him alone. He importuned his younger brother to join him in a dual operation; he was concerned that the Allasons would bear all the burden of the existing concern, and the other partners would simply share the profits. William was steadfast in his rejection of these offers,

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12 Robert Allason to Allason, November 6, 1760, Loose Papers.
although he was free to dissolve the current partnership at any time.\textsuperscript{13} Although he felt that his fifth interest in the concern would not be worth his trouble, Robert did enter into partnership in Allason and Company. Thus, the initial capital credited to the company amounted to 3,750 pounds sterling.\textsuperscript{14}

This capitalization was maintained despite the death of Miller a year after William Allason and Company was formed, for the partners proposed to maintain a hold on his investment and pay his estate the necessary interest on it. Thus the role of John Miller and his estate in the company became almost solely that of a creditor whose loan was retired through the profits of the company. Allason said that the continued use of the Miller money would make it easier for the partners "for some time," and in this he was correct.\textsuperscript{15}

In addition to this initial investment, Allason, as the operator of the company's enterprise, also bought heavily on credit from Great Britain, particularly from the Glasgow

\textsuperscript{13}Allason to Robert Allason, May 8, 1760, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{14}Each partner was credited with 750 pounds on the company books by Allason although each may or may not have actually contributed this amount to the operation, for in a letter to his brother on August 19, 1760, Allason stated each partner was to advance 600 \textpounds for the project. It is also possible that the investment was made in the form of goods and not of currency, for there is no indication that Allason paid for any goods in the initial stock with ready cash, but that he bought on credit.

\textsuperscript{15}Allason to Robert Allason, August 24, 1761, Letter Book.
merchant James Dunlop. The goods ordered from Glasgow for the initial stockage amounted to 1415 pounds, while those from London and Bristol were worth 203 and 232, respectively, although the "scheme" from Bristol arrived considerably short of what had been ordered. These goods were bought exclusively on credit and, hence, as loans were also part of the initial capitalization of the new company.

Several commercial maneuvers adopted by Allason to provide impetus to the new concern had reactions that were not favorable to its cause. First, in order to wean customers away from the other stores in Falmouth, Allason felt obliged to exceed the standard price being paid for tobacco by the local merchants by one shilling per hundredweight; that is, rather than paying eighteen shillings per hundredweight, he paid nineteen. This violation of the accepted price structure "incensed" his "good neighbors" against him. Some of his "good neighbors" would have him "at the Divell [sic] if they could get away again themselves."

Later Allason responded to these charges with counter charges against his chief critic, Alexander Cunninghame, "I gave in the kind more than some of the Gent, in this town choose to owne they gave and I need go no further than to Mr.

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16 Invoice of Goods from James Dunlop to Allason, Loose Papers.
17 Allason to Robert Allason, August 19, 1760, Letter Book.

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Cunninghame himself for a President / sic / when he first settled in this town exceeded as I'm informed / the standard price of tobacco by one shilling / in the hund. / hundred / and that in the sterling way, when Tobacco was considerably lower than it has been for some years past."

Another part of Allason's plans for the initial conduct of business was that "tis better I can get the goods sold to good people and to lay out of the money for some time, than to receive and ship tobacco under the present circumstances, by which I am at a loss to make remittances." In addition, Allason was attempting to win the good will of the "good Planters" so as to have some connection with them when the trade grew better.

He hoped that improvement in trade would be soon. Later Allason was to admit that merchants in Virginia had erred in their calculations during this period, implying that his natural "timourousness" had deserted him and that, if he were once free, never again would he be induced to "embark in the manner" he had in business. He continued that "about the time we begun this trade all concerned in it seemed much infatuated, each endeavouring to push it further

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19 Allason to Robert Allason, April 1, 1763, Letter Book. Allason was particularly upset at the accusation that he had undercut the code of the commercial community and that his brother was reprimanding him for causing a reduction of the profits of the British merchants by increasing the price of tobacco in the Falmouth area.

20 Allason to Robert Allason, August 8, 1761, Letter Book.

21 Ibid.

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than another in expectation of greater profitt when in short there was none but considerable loss, and this not adverted to till too late." In spite of these early trials, Allason was eventually able to pay for the goods that he sold in the store.

The initial inventory that he offered in the store was acquired through James Dunlop, Glasgow merchant. The entire order was placed through Dunlop who in turn farmed part of the order out to merchants in London and Bristol. The goods from Bristol, however, failed to arrive as the ship carrying them, the Tiger, was captured by a French frigate and taken to Vigo. In addition, the London merchants failed to fill the entire "scheme" sent them, and Allason was short pewter, chintze, nankeen, women's stays, and several other articles. From the beginning Allason complained that the goods Dunlop sent over were without invoice, over

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22 Allason to Robert Allason, August 8, 1761, Letter Book.


24 James Dunlop to Allason, March 10, 1761, Loose Papers.

25 Allason to Robert Allason, August 9, 1761, Letter Book. Allason also noted that the store needed osnaburgs and cutlery to have the proper "assortment" vital to a store.
priced, and of shoddy construction.  

After the first order through Dunlop, Allason began to order directly through the most appropriate port in Great Britain for the item concerned. This type of ordering required that he have connections, or at least know of dependable merchants, in the various port cities. It had the advantage of giving Allason a greater degree of control over his trade, but in no way did it reduce the complaints that went back to Britain concerning the receipt of goods.

Generally the type of goods ordered from Britain ranged from cloth of various types, with the preponderance being of the cheaper grades, yarn, thread, and buttons, to foot wear and men's and ladies' hats. In addition, Allason ordered hardware items such as pots and frying pans, tools and implements, nails, and guns. Salt and pepper, as well as other spices, were also requested, all but salt primarily from London. Allason also continued to ask for books from Glasgow, confident that they would find a good market in Virginia.  

Not only did he bring goods in from Britain, but Allason also bought from his fellow merchants in Virginia for resale to his customers. This practice can be divided into two general categories; the first was the purchase of the

26 Allason to James Dunlop, June 29, 1760, Letter Book. For a list of goods that Allason came to feel could be obtained best from each of the various ports see Appendix B.

normal British type trade goods, such as cloth, clothing, and hardware, in order to have a complete assortment available for the customers. The second type of purchase was that of the goods produced by other colonies, especially those of the West Indies, such as rum, molasses, and sugar. Imported wine, such as Tenereiffe and Madeira, also would fall into this latter category. Allason complained greatly when his "schemes" failed to arrive in sufficient quantity, and he had to resort to purchasing from his neighboring merchants those goods of the first category, but it seemed to be the accepted practice to buy the second type article from the larger colonial merchants who had firm connections and trade with the West Indies such as Andrew Sprowle and Archibald Ritchie.

In 1766, when he wanted some glass, Allason wrote repeatedly to a Bristol firm asking that it do its utmost to expedite the shipment, otherwise he would be obliged to buy "in the country at an advanced price." A certain cooperation and helpfulness often surrounded these dealings as one merchant helped another out of a temporary difficulty, although, generally, the helping merchant was located some miles away, as was James Bowie of Port Royal when he furnished some cotton checked material for Allason. The pleasant relations

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28 Allason to Sedgley, Hillhouse and Randolph, September 11, 1766, Letter Book.

29 Allason to Robert Allason, February 16, 1763, Letter Book. Some light revealing a basic trust and integrity between certain merchants, in this letter in which Allason denies the validity of a debt for these materials but says that he will pay it if Bowie swore that it was a just debt.
that he had with Bowie did not exist with all other merchants, but Allason was nevertheless occasionally forced to attempt to obtain goods from them to satisfy his regular customers and retain their patronage. After he asked to purchase linen from Edward Dixon in July, 1762, he was informed that no more linen could be spared at present from the latter's Port Royal store. But in addition, Allason's ledgers trace the exchange of items from one Falmouth merchant to another; each merchant obviously wanting to sell more to the other merchants than he bought from them.

Upon two occasions at least, however, Allason voluntarily bought goods imported from Britain after they had arrived in Virginia. Both of these cases involved stores founded by Whitehaven, England, merchants that closed and wanted to dispose of their entire inventory. In each case, Allason split the cost and the goods with his partner in the William Allason and Company undertaking, John Mitchell, who also operated John Mitchell and Company, a store in Fredericksburg. In the early weeks of 1766 they bought the "remains of a considerable store in Fredericksburg" amounting to about fifteen hundred pounds sterling consisting of osnaburgs, checks, striped Holland, worsted, common Bibles,
spelling books, and pewter measures. About six weeks later Mitchell and Allason again cooperated in the purchase of the remaining inventory of another Whitehaven store for seven hundred pounds sterling, one fourth of the purchase price being discounted. The purchase of these goods Allason counted as fortunate. Sometimes Allason found it difficult to purchase a specific article in the colony.

In February, 1768, Allason ordered one to two hundred sacks of salt from the Norfolk firm of Marsden and Hodgson, each sack containing four bushels. Allason asked to exchange hemp, payable by the next October. This offer being refused, Allason, requiring salt to meet the needs of his customers in an "extensive back country", raised the offered buying price a month later. Dickering for salt with the Norfolk firm continued through the summer and was only finally agreed on almost a year after Allason's first offer was made, the terms for delivery being settled in late January, 1769, even then the place of delivery remaining in

32 Allason to Robert Allason, February 9, 1766, Letter Book.
33 Allason to Robert Allason, March 25, 1766, Letter Book. The demise of two Whitehaven stores within such a short period of time probably reflected some of the economic forces at work in Great Britain, as well as in Virginia.
34 Allason to Marsden and Hodgson, February 17, 1768, Letter Book.
35 Allason to Marsden and Hodgson, March 22, 1768, Letter Book.
dispute.\textsuperscript{36}

Other Virginia merchants sold imports from other British colonies, particularly the West Indies, to Allason, Archibald Ritchie, who on at least one occasion furnished Allason with gun powder,\textsuperscript{37} also sold molasses and rum to Allason.\textsuperscript{38} James Dunlop, the Scottish merchant who had shipped the first inventory of goods to the new store, had migrated to Virginia after his business failed in Glasgow and had set up in trade in Nansemond County in the last years of the decade. He, too, became a connection for Allason in the West Indian trade. In 1768 Dunlop wanted to exchange West Indian rum or sugar for "sound clean corn."\textsuperscript{39}

The importance of having a good supply of West Indian goods, particularly rum, in developing the trade was clearly recognized by Allason. Rum was probably the most

\textsuperscript{36}Allason to Marsden and Hodgson, March 22, August 16, and November 23, 1768; and January 29, 1769, Letter Book. Allason also attempted to buy six crates of earthen ware, including five or six dozen butter pots from the Norfolk firm.

\textsuperscript{37}Archibald Ritchie to Allason, November 19, 1762. Loose Papers. This gun powder was taken from the magazine in Williamsburg and loaded on transportation at College Landing near that town, then floated around to the Rappahannock. According to Edward M. Riley, Director of Research, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, public powder stored in the magazine was often sold and replenished with fresh powder. Allason was buying old gunpowder for resale.

\textsuperscript{38}Archibald Ritchie to Allason, December 7, 1768, Loose Papers. Some of the trade between merchants can be traced to the barter system that they were forced to revert to because of the lack of currency with which to equal out their transactions. This will be discussed more fully later as it applied to Allason.

\textsuperscript{39}James Dunlop to Allason, September 7 and 17, 1768, Loose Papers.
common purchase in the store. Customers who found a store without it seldom hesitated to go on to a store that did have it. Thus, when the Quaker iron master of the Shenandoah Valley, Isaac Zane, sent in an order for a hogshead of rum, Allason wanted to be sure to be able to fill it. He resorted to other means than direct importation from the West Indies, however, and on occasion ordered rum from other colonies on the continent.

Other colonial goods that Allason sold were indigo, brought in from either southern Virginia or South Carolina, and iron ware from New England in the form of implements. Allason never hesitated to complain when the quality of the goods that he received failed to satisfy him. After receiving the first shipment of goods, he informed James Dunlop and his brother Robert that the old country merchants seemed often to have shipped their leftover goods to Virginia. Allason also objected to receiving goods — such as the substitution of one weight of nails for another — other


41 Amos Strettle to Allason, August 14, 1769, Loose Papers. Strettle was a Philadelphia merchant.

42 Walter Peter to Allason, February 18, 1768, Loose Papers. Peter was a merchant in Cabin Point, Virginia, on the south side of the James River. "New England axes," a common item in the ledgers of Allason, meant, however, a style of axe rather than its place of manufacture.

than those ordered by his "schemes." Allason complained of the buyers in Britain for the colonial market that "tis seldom they take the trouble to look at them [purchased goods] but gives in their order and takes them from the shopkeepers implicitly."44 This was particularly true, according to Allason, of the merchants who bought in great quantities.45

Overcharging was another practice that he was watchful for as when he ordered trade guns from the London merchant, John Bland. The British merchants often replied by citing their own problems, such as the "shortage of goods" at home, or by lecturing by letter on the intricacies of the British mercantile system and why the colonists had to pay commissions to two or more merchants in Great Britain.46

Inanimate objects were not the only items imported into colonial Virginia for sale, for the market for human labor was also strong and, as previously mentioned, profitable. This trade was actually carried on in two forms — one of white "servants" and the other of black slaves brought in from the "guinea" coast and the West Indies. Archibald

44Allason to Sedgley, Hillhouse and Randolph, August 25, 1764, Letter Book.


46James Dunlop to Allason, September 5, 1760, Loose Papers, and John Bland to Allason, December 4, 1762, Loose Papers. This Bland letter is extremely long and condescending in tone on British mercantile practices. Allason ceased to do business with Bland. He felt that he was being overcharged, despite Bland's anxiety to keep his business.
Ritchie of Hobbs was prominent in the trade of white servants. These servants were desired particularly by those (such as the owners of the forges) who wanted some skill in their labor supply, but sometimes the dealer had difficulty in disposing of the indentured or convict servants because of economic depression, as was the case with Archibald Ritchie in 1764. Ritchie wrote in 1764 that he had "not sold above ten servants since M. Briggs left me ... I cannot help thinking that if I hire James Emerson to take care of the servants & send them under the direction of some Trusty Person to sell toward the Southward but I shall make more of them after paying expenses, than by giving them away here." 47

Allason cooperated with Ritchie in the disposal of servants when the opportunity afforded, and his customers in the back country used him to assist them in finding labor for their enterprises. 48 In 1765 Allason was afforded the opportunity to venture into the trade when one hundred convicts were offered for sale off the Tryal in the Potomack River, 49 but apparently his interest in the sale of white servants was limited to helping out his friends whether they were fellow merchants such as Ritchie or customers such as Isaac

47 Archibald Ritchie to Allason, July 25, 1764, Loose Papers.
48 Isaac Zane to Allason, May 5, 1769, Loose Papers.
49 Thomas Hodge to Allason, April 19, 1765, Loose Papers.
In the early years of the store's management Allason continued to seek connections that would enable him to enter the "guinea" trade but without real success. In late summer, 1760, he wrote to Crosbie and Trafford of Liverpool asking that he be allowed to handle some of their trade, and particularly that involving "Negroes." Allason admitted to his brother Robert that his use to the Liverpool firm was limited to "using my endeavours to procure them tobo. consignments which are very profitable" in return for any slave trade "that they might throw" his way. The Liverpool merchants were all committed to consigning their cargoes to their "friends" in Virginia, and Allason could claim real friendship with none of them. Allason pointed out the conflict that was going on in the assembly of the colony at this time.

50 There are several other references to white servants in the papers of Allason, but generally they concern the servants in the hands of Ritchie, who in a letter to Allason, said they were selling slowly in 1765 although they were the most valuable that he had been concerned with, "being all Males and Young." Archibald Ritchie to Allason, September 29, 1765. Loose Papers. At least sixteen of these servants were sent into the "Backwoods" in October according to a listing dated October, 1765, in Allason's Loose Papers. The list includes names, ages, sizes, price, and to whom sold by Ritchie.


52 Allason to Robert Allason, August 19, 1760, Letter Book.

53 Robert Allason to Allason, July 22, 1761, Loose Papers.
over the limitations to the slave trade. The rich in that political body, he wrote, were attempting to double the duty on slaves to twenty percent while the poor wanted to reduce it.  

Allason's attempts to break into the slave trade showed promise of success in 1761 as he wrote to the company of Crosbies and Trafford in Liverpool, "I am much obliged to you for your promise of connecting me in the sale of any of your Guinea ships that you order into this part of the world may be assured I will do as much as in my power in the disposal of the cargo." According to Allason the planters "have really got rich and there is no end of their buying of slaves even at the high price of 63 L curr. money for those healthy and full grown." The market for slaves would remain good as long as tobacco sold high. After deducting the exchange of forty-five percent in effect at the time, the duty of ten percent, and the commission, Allason thought that the amount due the Liverpool company in sterling for each slave was thirty-six pounds. In order to gain an "in" with this important Liverpool slaving company, Allason had consigned them a cargo of tobacco as a sample of what he could do for them, but all his efforts were relatively fruitless for he was unable to record any substantial transactions

54 Allason to Halliday and Dunbar, August 19, 1761, Letter Book.

55 Allason to Crosbies and Trafford, August 4, 1761, Letter Book.
involving the overseas trade. \(^{56}\)

Slaves were obtained not only through importation but also from their own natural increase and the failure of slave owners in Virginia. Allason was active in purchasing blacks for use on the plantation of Thomas Lord Fairfax, the proprietor of the Northern Neck, with whom he had made a connection. \(^{57}\) Many of the blacks came from the estates of men such as a Captain Wiatt who had an "execution come up against a great number of his slaves." This particular judgment against Captain Wiatt had been in favor of the merchant Alexander Leckie. Allason was asked to intercede for the planter for there was no need to "enumerate the many disadvantages that must attend a Man to have his slaves taken at this time of the year & sold." \(^{58}\)

In addition to the bulk sales already discussed, Allason was also active in the buying of slaves on an individual basis (sometimes for his own use around the store) as was the

\(^{56}\) Robert Allason to Allason, July 22, 1761, Loose Papers and Allason to Halliday and Dunbar, August 19, 1760, Letter Book. Allason baited his quest for a slave trade connection with purchasing from these firms those goods best obtained in Liverpool, listing the goods that he might buy from them in the future if the relationship were established. For a discussion of the Liverpool slave trade from the view of Liverpool see Gomer Williams, History of the Liverpool Privateers with an Account of the Liverpool Slave Trade, (London and Liverpool, 1897), Part II. Chapter II of this part is devoted to the slaver, John Newton, who reformed and wrote *Amazing Grace*, the popular hymn.

\(^{57}\) More about Allason's service to the Fairfax estate will follow.

\(^{58}\) Humphrey Brookes to Allason, July 24, 1769, Loose Papers.
case of the boy that he bought in 1759 while he was serving as a factor. One such personal servant was the Negro "John" sent over by Robert Allason with a warning that he was dangerous. Apparently he caused Allason no trouble and was transferred to the books of the company with a value of eighty-five pounds after Allason had him assessed by disinterested persons. 59

The bulk of payments for trade goods, animate or inanimate, was eventually made through the shipment of tobacco. Allason noted that it took "vast" shipments of tobacco to reciprocate consignments of Negroes, and much time was required to arrange these shipments. 60 When he had first opened the store the future of the tobacco trade appeared to be excellent, coming off the short crop years of 1755 and 1758; for even though the buyers in Europe were able to resist the high prices being paid in Virginia, the net result for the next two years was to raise the price of tobacco. European purchasers, who had restrained their acquisition of tobacco in the short crop years, now not only purchased for current needs but also rebuilt their depleted inventories. Thus, Virginia planters were bullish in their purchase of labor for expanded production. Colonial merchants in turn were unable to hold the price of tobacco down despite efforts

to cooperate in setting a limit on the price they would pay. Allason reported to his brother Robert that "some timourous people who had some ships arrived" had caused the price to rise back to twenty shillings for a hundredweight. Allason continued that "any person with half an eye may see that there is more tobo in the country than will be carried out this year." The merchants in Falmouth had stuck to the price of sixteen shillings eight pence for a hundredweight until recently when the price had risen to eighteen shillings. Allason regretted that the traders could not agree on the price they would pay in Falmouth and stick with it for their mutual benefit.61

The planters could not "be reconciled to the great fall of that article [tobacco] from 50/ [Shillings a hundredweight]." Some of the planters were attempting to hold on to their tobacco until the market again rose and consequently had three crops on hand that they had refused to sell.62 Although it never again returned to the great prices paid during the days that inspired the passage of the Two Penny Act, the price did continue to rise during the early fall of 1760, selling at Falmouth at twenty shillings. Allason continued to attribute this rise to unreasonable bidding on the part

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61 Allason to Robert Allason, July 9, 1760, Letter Book. It was shortly after this that William Allason himself increased the price to nineteen shillings and incensed his neighboring merchants.

62 Allason to Crosbies and Trafford, August 19, 1760, Letter Book.
of the merchants for a supply that he was sure would exceed
the demands of the market in Europe.\textsuperscript{63} Allason proved cor-
rect in his analysis but had been forced to buy tobacco along
with the other Virginia merchants to meet his fixed obliga-
tions in Great Britain.

The importance of tobacco in the economy of colonial
Virginia was a well accepted fact in the eighteenth century.
It was recognized as "the commodity that must pay \$\text{for} \$\text{the}
goods in the end,"\textsuperscript{64} as one customer of Allason's wrote, who
wanted to pay for a large quantity of goods with tobacco. He
continued that tobacco might suit Allason as well as cash in
settlement of a debt, although that was a doubtful premise.
Tobacco was certainly the item that had to meet the expenses
of the Virginia economy, and Allason had to pay his debts
with tobacco regardless of the market situation that existed.

The risks of that market were clearly indicated by
the reports that began to filter back to Allason in Virginia
as the crop of 1760 reached the merchants' warehouses in
Britain. In the spring of 1761 the merchants in Glasgow were
reporting that they had a vast amount of tobacco on hand and
that the French Farmers were attempting to force the price
down by not buying at the prevailing prices. One of Allason's
 correspondents ventured that they would offer no more than

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{63} Allason to Baird and Walker, July 9, 1760, Letter
Book.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{64} Benjamin Grayson to Allason, November 17, 1760,
Loose Papers.}
twenty-one shillings sterling a hundredweight, hardly an enticing price to those firms who had paid twenty shillings Virginia currency in the colony and then had paid the freight, insurance, duties, and charges for its shipment.  

The depressed condition of the market in Britain continued into the summer of 1761 with tobacco being reduced to two pence a pound, or sixteen shillings eight pence sterling a hundred, which Allason realized was prohibitive considering that more than that was being paid for the tobacco in Virginia currency even before the shipping and other charges were added. The situation was such that the firms that shipped tobacco from Virginia had no hope to make a profit, and each had to lose considerably through trade. The merchants in Glasgow were living in dread of what the future, particularly as represented by the French monopoly, had to reveal to them. They hoped against hope that their representatives in Virginia would sell the tobacco there and pass the burden to some other firm. Britain's entire economy

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65 James Dunlop to Allason, March 10, 1760, Loose Papers. The exchange differential kept this from being as bad as it appeared on the surface, but it was a net loss to the importing merchants.

66 Robert Allason to Allason, July 22, 1761, Loose Papers.

67 Allason to Robert Allason, August 24, 1761, Letter Book.

68 Allason to James Dunlop, August 8, 1761, Letter Book.

69 Baird and Walker to Allason, January 7 and 16, 1761, Loose Papers.
continued to suffer during this period according to a report Allason received from Robert.70

The cause of the French action in holding off in the purchase of tobacco was attributed to the expectation that the longed for peace between France and Britain would be arranged soon. Merchants were all in favor of the idea of peace, because it would remove the war time impediments to trade, such as losses to French privateers and the awkwardness of the convoy system. Not knowing for certain whether peace was imminent, the merchants suffered because they did not know "whether to push or retrench."71

The depressed tobacco market continued through 1762 and into 1763. Allason was determined to ship no tobacco home because of the price differential between Virginia and Scotland. He also began to call in debts that were owed to the store and prepared to take those who owed him and paid nothing in 1763 to court in order to collect. The depression of the sale price of tobacco in Scotland was finally being reflected in the Virginia market in 1763, but poorer prices still existed "at home." Allason expected the price to continue to fall to fourteen or fifteen shillings a hundred.72

By the summer of 1764, however, Allason had his trade

70 Robert Allason to Allason, January 24, 1761, Loose Papers.

71 Alexander Walker to Allason, November 1, 1761, Loose Papers.

72 Allason to Robert Allason, August 2, 1763, and Allason to Campbell and Mowbray, August 16, 1763, Letter Book.
operating on a better basis as he was able to obtain tobacco in Virginia at twelve shillings six pence a hundred and sell it "in country" (in Virginia) for fourteen shillings with relatively short delays in payment — that is, less than six months. In addition, trade goods were in short supply and the advance on them had risen to two hundred percent. "Because of the great indulgence given the planters for some years past" payments from them were slow coming in to the merchants. "Their yearly crops not near sufficient to pay of their arrears at the present low prices." Allason was discovering that the surest way in business was to sell the tobacco that he took in to the merchants in Virginia in exchange for needed goods to complete his inventory. At times he did this even though he sold it for less than his purchase price, depending on the advance in the goods that he sold for his margin of profit. Even those merchants in Britain, with whom he had no connection, were beginning to recommend against the shipment of tobacco to the poor market there. At the end of 1764, Allason wrote to Samuel Athawes,

73 Allason to Robert Allason, June 24, 1764, Letter Book.

74 Robert Bogle to Allason, February 28, 1764, and April 22, 1764, Loose Papers. Allason to Alexander Walker, June 24, 1764, Letter Book. Allason wrote "At any time when I am in need of articles to assort I purchase for tobacco [in Virginia] very near on as easy terms as they can be imported without running the risque of the sale of that weed at home. This I look on to be much the safest way these hard times and intend to continue the same method till an absolute alteration in the trade, which am afraid is very farr off."
London merchant, that the "tobacco trade I believe is bad everywhere for my part am so well convinced of it that I don't ship to any Port but prefer a sale in the country."

It was in the middle of the next year, before the new crop was in, that he expressed some concern about the future of the tobacco economy of Virginia. "Planters are exceeding behind and but a very distant prospect of getting clear. In short they seem to have got out of the method of making tobacco by the meaness of its quality this as well as some years past. there quantity is also much short of formerly."75

After 1764 the price of tobacco began to rise once more and by the summer of 1766 was bringing the planter twenty shillings the hundred in the Falmouth area. The increased prices reflected those being paid in Scotland and the number of ships that the Scottish merchants were sending to the Rappahannock and other Virginia rivers. Allason had made some excellent gains in the summer of 1765 when tobacco he had received at fourteen shillings and sixteen shillings eight pence sold at eighteen shillings.76 Within a few weeks, though, the price had once more fallen to sixteen shillings eight pence current.77 The following two years it climbed

75Allason to Samuel Atthawes, December 15, 1764, Letter Book; and Allason to Alexander Walker, May 21, 1765, Letter Book.

76Allason to Robert Allason, September 15, 1765, and June 9, 1766, Letter Book.

back both in the British market and in Virginia. 78

There were increased signs by late summer of 1768 that both the planters in Virginia and some of the merchants in England were looking about for additional commodities. Samuel Aitchawes in London wrote in September, 1768:

I shall be sorry if it is so large a crop due in to the warehouses shortly for such is the Encrease of the Consumption in Europe that notwithstanding the importation since 1764 has not been immoderate & this year will be extremely small there is no appearance of a want & the Buyers discover I think more patience & less anxiety than the Sellers which circumstances are not pleasing to those who think the Prosperity of the Colony in a great Measure depends on the price of its staple commodity. I had flattered myself that the encouragement given by Parliament for the Cultivation of Hemp & the high price Grain has bore for some years past would have diverted many from Tobo. & that a redundance would have been prevented. 79

Allason had been doing some business with flour, or wheat, and hemp almost from the beginning of the store. Most of this was destined for the West Indian and New England trade. With regard to hemp there was the problem that few people were knowledgeable enough about grading it to allow it to become a staple on the market. In addition to these two products, there were several others that played a role in the settlement of accounts on Allason's ledgers, but tobacco remained the commodity that had to pay the overseas debts either directly or through bills of exchange. In any event,


79 Samuel Aitchawes to Allason, September 21, 1768, Loose Papers.
the other items were important in the inter-colonial trade in aiding planters and merchants to balance their accounts.  

Very early in the life of the store Allason expressed interest in developing a trade in "flower." In 1761 he proposed that Henry Heath send him fifty barrels of flour from the Shenandoah Valley, and if the price per barrel were ten shillings, including the cask, Heath might send as much as one hundred barrels. Allason continued, "As the trade is but new and no one has done anything considerable in it as yet, imagine that we might carry it on to our mutual advantage. For my part would willingly supply you with goods on as easy terms as you buy of anyone else and you undoubtedly would let me have a living profit on the flower." Allason had a correspondent in Norfolk at this time who thought an advantageous trade in flour might be undertaken provided that a sufficient quantity was produced to lower the prevailing price.  

Although this new grain trade was delayed by the question of the cost of the barrels and who was to pay it, nevertheless, the trade for wheat and flour from the northern area of Virginia continued.

When Allason sent his younger brother, David, out to the town of Winchester in the Shenandoah Valley with a parcel

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80 Alexander White to Allason, June 4, 1769, Loose Papers.
82 Henry Heath to Allason, May 22, 1761, Loose Papers.

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of goods in the fall of 1761, it was to enable him to tap not only the supply of tobacco being produced there but also flour, butter, cheese, and hemp. Wheat offered the inland planters a second means to meet their debts, and they brought it over seventy miles into Falmouth to exchange it for the finished goods obtained there. In fact, the price remained high because the demand exceeded the supply available to Allason and the other merchants. The production and marketing of wheat continued to grow during the entire decade between 1760 and 1770. Allason pointed out that wheat and flour were being shipped from Fredericksburg as well as Falmouth to the deeper ports down the Rappahannock and on the Chesapeake. In 1767 the prevailing price for flour was twelve shillings six pence for a hundredweight, and then it was expected to be good. One of the chronic problems was to achieve satisfactory milling of the backwoods wheat, and there were repeated complaints that Virginia backcountry flour was poor in quality.

Archibald Ritchie and the other merchants dealing with the West Indies were prominent in the export of wheat

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83 Allason to Robert Allason, September 13, 1761, Letter Book.
84 Allason to John Schaw, September 2, 1763, Letter Book.
85 Archibald Ritchie to Allason, June 7, and November 10, 1767, Loose Papers. See also Lewis C. Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 (Washington, 1933), I, 164–166, pointing out the general increase of wheat production in both Piedmont and Tidewater. My study of the trade of Allason also reflects this increase.
and flour, along with lumber and lumber products (staves, shingles, etc.) to the West Indies for a return cargo of rum, molasses, and sugar. Allason in turn traded the local products he received in trade to Ritchie and others in exchange for the West Indian goods he received from them.  

One of the limitations on the development of back country trade in wheat and flour was the undependability of roads. On at least one occasion Allason was unable to meet a demand for wheat, because the roads were impassable and the planters were unable to get to Falmouth. The increasing number of mills in the Falmouth-Fredericksburg area also tended to keep the price high as they bid for the supply of wheat. Nevertheless, Allason noted that the production of wheat was steadily increasing and that the crop of 1768 promised to be particularly large. As the crops increased in size the demand also increased as merchants, who a short two years before were condescending in their acceptance of the backwoods wheat, now began to ask that it be shipped to them for use in the West Indies and New England trade. Occasionally, trade with the Northern colonies was on a direct

86 Archibald Ritchie to Allason, July 26, 1767, Loose Papers.
87 Allason to Andrew Sprowle, March 20, 1768, Letter Book.
88 Allason to John Gray, July 17, 1768, Letter Book. Wheat was bringing four shillings a bushel to the planter at this time.
89 Archibald Ritchie to Allason, February 20 and 23, and December 7, 1768, Loose Papers.
exchange basis as when Allason shipped twelve barrels of flour to New England to be traded for thirty gallons of cranberries, some "good codfish", and other fish products. 90 Wheat products were also sent to the mainland colonies to the south in exchange for pork and tar. 91

In addition to wheat, Allason dealt fairly extensively with hemp during the life of the company. As mentioned above the British government was attempting to encourage the production of naval stores within the Empire. Its cultivation was certainly feasible in the Shenandoah, and access to it was one of the reasons that Allason gave for sending his brother there to establish a store. 92 Allason spoke of the re-born interest in hemp cultivation eight months after bounties of colonial hemp had been renewed, "The People of this colony talk much of cultivating Hemp instead of tobacco and numbers have already begun upon it, it has the appearance of being a valuable staple, especially as there has been too much tobacco made for some years past not owing neither to great crops but to the increase of inhabitants so that it is

90 Allason to Captain David Loudon, August 9, 1769, Letter Book.

91 Allason to James Dunlop, June 4, 1760, Letter Book.

92 Allason to Robert Allason, September 13, 1761, Letter Book. For detailed studies of the production of hemp in the southern colonies see, G. Melvin Herndon, "Hemp in Colonial Virginia," Agricultural History, XXXVII (1963), 86-93; and Gray, History of Agriculture, 179-182. After allowing the bounty on hemp to lapse for some years, the British government renewed it in 1764. The introduction of the bounty again may have been intended to hinder the construction of rope walks in the American colonies by luring the hemp to Britain.
abundantly necessary that they should try something else." Allason thought hemp promised to give the planters an alter­
nate commodity. 93

Allason's attitude toward hemp changed. He reported eighteen months later that hemp was being abandoned as a widely produced crop, because the price fell sharply as the supply increased and exceeded the demand. The market at that time was not great enough to support it as the staple crop for a large agricultural region. That fact, combined with the general lack of knowledge concerning the cultivation and inspection of hemp, prevented it from reaching the status hoped for it. Nevertheless, Allason continued to buy hemp, or to accept it in payment for goods sold, throughout the life of the store. Hemp trade was extensive enough to cause some to accuse colonial merchants of illegally importing hemp from Russia in order to re-export it to Great Britain that they might benefit from the bounties. This was the interpretation that Allason put on a request for his certifi­cate that hemp shipped by him was really grown in the colony. Allason said that the bounty would not make it economically feasible to use Russian hemp in the way suggested and that no certificates were required at London or Liverpool. 94

Corn was another Virginia agricultural product that


94 Allason to Marsden and Hodgson, July 1, 1767, Letter Book.
was useful both to planter and merchant in meeting trade obligations. Again it was primarily used in trade with the West Indies when exported, but a considerable portion was bought and used within Virginia itself. The merchants themselves had need for it for both food and fodder, and they turned to planters for it. In addition, large slave holders at times did not produce enough to feed their plantation "families" and had to go to smaller planters or merchants for the balance. Allason's records contain many instances where he either accepted or sold corn.

Other plantation products usable in trade channels were legumes of various kinds (with "black-eyed peas" being mentioned as particularly desirable,\(^95\)), butter, cheese, beeswax, myrtle wax, linseed oil, turkeys, and fodder. Few of these items were shipped to the West Indies by Allason himself. The bulk of Allason's dealings in these commodities was made through Archibald Ritchie who operated his own vessels in the West Indian trade. Although New England lumber products were preferred to those of Virginia in the West Indies, there was still a market there for planking, staves, and shingles cut from the Virginia forests. There was one

\(^{95}\)Archibald Ritchie to Allason, November 20, 1767, Loose Papers. Citations for the other products mentioned in this paragraph are too numerous to mention, being found in dozens of ledger entries as well as in the correspondence. Allason's selling of butter is reflected in Jack P. Greene, ed., The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778, (Charlottesville, 1965), I, 529: "Thursday, December 6: Yesterday came three casks of butter from Mr. Alleson /\textit{sic}/ at Falmont /\textit{sic}/ at 8d per Cash and 3 shillings freight."
commodity, however, that Allason dealt with other than tobacco that was shipped in quantity to Britain.

Even before the Falmouth store opened, Allason engaged in the shipment of iron to Britain, iron forged by Colonel John Tayloe and shipped to the Clyde consigned to Robert Allason. After the store began, Allason also shipped iron from the old Tuball iron works, started by Alexander Spotswood in the first quarter of the century. A new venture in iron forging begun by James Hunter on the north bank of the Rappahannock just above Falmouth in the 1760's provided over twenty customers for the store in Falmouth. Later the most important supplier of iron for Allason's trade was Isaac Zane, the proprietor of the "Marlboro" iron works in Frederick County in the Shenandoah Valley. While the bulk of the iron shipped out by Allason was "pig" iron that would be refined in England, he also bought "bar" iron from Colonel Benjamin Grymes and resold it directly to customers for conversion.

96 Charles E. Kemper, ed., "The Early Westward Movement of Virginia, 1722-1734," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XIII (1906), 368. Allason to Robert Allason, February 24, 1763, and November 30, 1764, Letter Book. In the latter letter, Allason noted that Tayloe would sell his iron solely in the colony "the demand for the forges in the country has increased so much that he will find a market for it here preferable to shipping it."

into plows and other agriculture implements.\footnote{Allason's Ledger "A", Barr Iron entry. 151 bars amounted to two tons and thirteen pounds.}

As long as he was dealing with Virginia commodities, Allason seemed well capable of taking care of his own interest, but there were many disappointments that came his way in his relations with British mercantile firms. Allason understood clearly the situation that prevailed on the other side of the Atlantic, for in 1760 his brother wrote that the Scottish merchants worked together to maintain high prices -- one trading off with another. "Goods may be had much cheaper than the shop prices & even very few in Virginia has goods \[on\] even \[torn: these?\] terms for the Gentln that serves orders are all concerned in warehouses from wh[ich] the goods are had, and \[if\] they want anything from another warehouse its on condition \[they\] take one equivalent from them, so that the whole purchase is made not with a \[view of\] buying cheap, but to serve their friends, nor are the goods ever scarce."\footnote{Robert Allason to Allason, November 6, 1760, Loose Papers. It is interesting to note that as this was written Adam Smith was teaching at the University of Glasgow.} Allason, however, understood the rules under which the commercial game, if it may be called that, was being played. Merchants in Virginia were not averse to restraining trade when it was in their own interest. All he expected was equal treatment, and when he thought that he was not receiving it from John Bland but thought that he
was being taken advantage of he objected.  

Allason was not powerless in his struggle with British merchants, for he also possessed economic power and his trade was sought after, in the hopes that he would consign tobacco to Britain to the firm in question. The return on tobacco shipped to Britain was approximately one-fifth or less of the price for which it was sold there. In 1761 two hogsheads of tobacco shipped by Allason to John Bland sold for ninety-nine pounds four shillings and eight pence. Allason's account was credited with a net proceed of fifteen pounds four shillings three pence. Allason did not understand how tobacco could lose nearly two hundred pounds in weight between arrival in England and sale. He also wrote on the statement of account that every conceivable charge had been made. Allason attempted to correct the opinion of Bland in this case by writing to him and letting him know that he was aware that he was being taken advantage of and would not tolerate it. Bland responded that he had dealt honestly with Allason but in order to maintain good will would accept some of the charges on his own account. This action satisfied Allason.

Dissatisfaction with the merchants at home was

100 John Bland to Allason, December 4, 1762, Loose Papers.
101 Account of Sale of Two Hogsheads of Tobacco, John Bland to Allason, April 2, 1762, Loose Papers.
102 John Bland to Allason, December 4, 1762, Loose Papers.
evident in an ironic opinion given of the necessary qualities of merchants in Britain, as he wrote to an old sea captain friend who was retiring from the sea and entering trade on the Clyde. "I do not look upon it to require a great experience in Business if you can but find legs to carry you to the customs house as often as is necessary and confine yourself to writing epistles (which very few shippers are fond of) I make no doubt but that you will do well enough." The important thing was to have "ready money, which is the life of trade."103

Allason was bold enough to propose a new way of conducting business with London merchants when he wrote to Robert Bogle of that city in July, 1762. He proposed paying Bogle a flat ten percent commission on all transactions and get "honest dealings."104 Allason was unhappy with the practices of the London merchants specifically in this case. Bogle turned Allason's offer down and stated that he did not "chuse to be the first to bring any new customs into the trade." Bogle went on to admit collusion among the merchants as to commissions. A reduction in his commission, he continued, would be greeted "by general odium." He would agree to do business on Allason's terms only if Allason could guarantee him sufficient business to free him from dependence


Bogle continued to explain the "Petty Charges" that were included on his account of tobacco sales. They were for primage, pierage, Ramgate Harbour, trade allowances (for taking care of the trading interest of the colony), and some petty dues at the customhouse. Bogle went on to point out one "benefit" the mercantile community had performed for the colony: "Just now we have been at considerable charges in petitioning the Board of Trade about the high exchange & Bad Effects of your Paper Currency, to which we had a very favourable answer which we hope will be of [torn] service."

The pressures that were on the London merchant were also apparent, in his continuation of the letter, as he feared that Allason would consign no more cargoes to him after what had passed between them. Nevertheless, he added, Allason would find no merchant in London who would deal any fairer with him, and he hoped that unless he did find someone to give better terms that Allason would continue to do business with him.

In July, 1762, Allason also wrote to John Bland about the practices of the London merchants. He pointed out that tobacco was losing weight after it had arrived on land and thus the blame could not be put on sailors. He continued that he would send a few more hogsheads of tobacco to see if he

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105 Robert Bogle to Allason, March 1, 1763, Loose Papers.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid.

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would get fair dealing, and, in addition, he had James Mills, a "considerable" merchant on the Rappahannock with a connection with Bland, sign the letter also, to let the London firm know that the Virginia merchants could also cooperate.\(^{108}\)

Later that same summer he again wrote to Bland that he "must be very sensible if \(\text{we}\) can't make a living by our trade, 'tis needless for us to carry it on, and unless our goods can be bought on such terms as we can sell for a profit, and at the same time as cheap as my neighbours, must give it over entirely. For my part, I find it won't do with me to import goods that's attended with so many heavy charges."\(^{109}\)

Sometimes Allason's disputes with British merchants dealt with a specific incident, as was the case with insurance on the Tiger's cargo. Allason wanted the merchant, Dunlop, to collect the insurance and credit his account; the merchant wanted Allason to pay the account before the insurance was collected.\(^{110}\) In addition, Allason accused a financially troubled firm of delaying payment for tobacco shipped them and keeping the money in their hands as long as they could.\(^{111}\)

After hearing from him several times, the merchants

\(^{108}\)Allason to John Bland, July 26, 1762, Letter Book.

\(^{109}\)Allason to John Bland, September 5, 1762, Letter Book.

\(^{110}\)Allason to Robert Allason, August 16, 1764, Letter Book.

\(^{111}\)Allason to Robert Allason, December 15, 1764, Letter Book.
in London, though they were far more substantial than Allason, began to treat him with more deference. Thus when John Bland explained the poor returns on only two hogsheads of tobacco shipped by Allason, he was careful to be explicit as to why they failed to find a better market.\textsuperscript{112} Nevertheless, Allason continued to feel that he was being discriminated against by some of the London firms for he wrote of the firm Robert and Robert Bogle and Scott on an account sent him: "It seems strange they won't allow us an abatement of their commissions as they did to others our sales being equally bad with theirs, and to our misfortune our quantity of tobo happened to be much larger than most for the like abatement our neighbours rec'd."\textsuperscript{113}

After his experiences earlier in the decade, by 1768 Allason had stopped, with few exceptions, consigning tobacco to any merchant in England other than John Backhouse of Liverpool.\textsuperscript{114} He shipped then only in order to pay for goods for which he was unable to get sufficient bills of exchange. He did, however, continue to send an isolated hogshead or two to London to pay for specific items such as the

\textsuperscript{112} John Bland to Allason, February 28, 1765, Loose Papers. The reason given was the unsettled market conditions resulting from the end of the war.

\textsuperscript{113} Account of William Allason and Company with Robert and Robert Bogle and Scott having balance due of fifty-four pounds, eighteen shillings, and five pence, 1766.

\textsuperscript{114} Allason to John Backhouse, July 30, 1768, Letter Book.
smith's anvil that he ordered in June, 1769.  

Meanwhile, the partners who sent Allason to Virginia in 1757 continued to have some of Allason's attention well into the decade, although the partnership had ceased doing business. Its fate was the same as many unwary and undercapitalized companies during the turbulent period of the 1760's. John Baird's arrival in the colony underlined the tenuous connection that Allason had with his former employers, and Baird's offer of partnership in operating a store did not tempt Allason. Allason claimed that he was ready to turn records in his possession over to young Baird, but he may have really wanted to retain them in order to be able to oversee the interests of his friend, Alexander Walker, for that is what happened.

Alexander Walker maintained his relationship with Allason, writing that "I am readie to forgive injuries perhaps after this when you come to think more rationally you'll own you were too precipitate & might have done as well with us as with the folkes you have gone to - time will trye all." According to Walker, John Mitchell was not pleased that Allason had consented to continue handling the "lumping" trade of Baird and Walker as long as they desired his services.

115 Allason to John Stuart and Campbell, June 6, 1769, Letter Book.
Returning to the close personal relationship that had formerly existed with Allason, Walker also asked the colonial merchant to send some cherry rum for his "rib," his wife.\footnote{118}

The new relationship meant that Allason was to be paid by commission rather than salary. Alexander Walker proposed that Allason be given two and one-half percent for goods that he sold for the company and the same for collections that he made and returned to the company, including tobacco he bought or accepted as payment.\footnote{119} Allason did not agree with these terms, and cited the commissions of twice that rate paid to other agents in Virginia. The former employers realized the strongest bargaining position was held by Allason, for he now had outside support and was not dependent on the old company. He also possessed details of the debts to Baird and Walker that were outstanding such as that of Dickinson and Green.\footnote{120}

Young John Baird, who could have helped the firm greatly by learning the accounts in Allason's hands, apparently absented himself on the arduous rounds of a factor in the first years of his arrival and even went to Wilmington, North Carolina, to supervise the construction of a ship. This enterprise took much longer than was expected and

\footnote{118}Alexander Walker to Allason, September 8, 1760, Loose Papers.  
\footnote{119}Alexander Walker to Allason, September 10 and 18, 1760, Loose Papers.  
\footnote{120}Allason to James Baird and Alexander Walker, May 8, 1761, Letter Book.
prevented John Baird from properly overseeing the affairs of his father in Virginia. 121

Meanwhile, back in Scotland, as was earlier mentioned, things took a decisive turn against importers in the fall of 1760 and winter of 1761 and as Baird and Walker had to import to meet their obligations from the partnership, they incurred critical financial losses. Again the partners explained to Allason that the determining force in establishing the price tobacco received in Scotland at this time was the purchasing policy of the French Farmers who would buy only half of the tobacco offered to them. Merchants were also not sure whether the hoped for commercial stability that peace would bring was to be realized immediately. Thus merchants in Britain did not know how to plan for the future, and those who were in debt were the most seriously hurt. 122 Baird and Walker hoped fervently that Allason would have the clairvoyance to sell the tobacco in Virginia and remit bills so that they could have the cash, although they had not instructed him to do this but had previously reprimanded him for sending insufficient tobacco home when the prices were high there. 123

121 John Baird to Allason, September 23, 1760. Loose Papers. Implicit in Allason's comments about the young Baird is an impression that he considered him a foggy brained youth of limited intelligence.

122 Baird and Walker to John Baird and Allason, January 7, 1761, Loose Papers.

123 Baird and Walker to Allason, January 16, 1761, Loose Papers.
John Baird did not return to Scotland but in 1761 returned to the Rappahannock and set about establishing a store in Fredericksburg.\textsuperscript{124} This venture signified another break in the relations between Walker and Baird in Glasgow, for the goods to be stocked in the new store were those of James Baird, Junior, only. Walker asked his old friend to expedite the settlement of the old partnership's affairs as soon as possible so as to prevent the two firms' affairs from becoming intertwined, and to instruct John Baird in how to keep separate accounts for the two different enterprises.\textsuperscript{125} Communications from the partners together were less conciliatory, and were further indications that this commercial house had been divided against itself. Walker joined Baird in reprimanding Allason for his failure to give sufficient attention to the affairs of his old employers and for failing to bring their affairs in Virginia to a close.\textsuperscript{126}

Allason responded strongly to the charges that the partners made against him, stating that he had sold their tobacco at as high prices as he could get when it was sold in Virginia. He further demanded to know the source of their charges against him, suspecting that the origin of the charges was John Baird who had apparently seldom spoken to Allason

\textsuperscript{124} Allason to Robert Douglas, June 30, 1761, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{125} Alexander Walker to Allason, November 1, 1761, and January 26, 1762, Loose Papers.

\textsuperscript{126} Baird and Walker to Allason, November 2, 1761, Loose Papers.
and who would not tell him what he was doing concerning the company's affairs. Allason further accused young Baird of being a poor business man and stated that he was very anxious to turn the company books over to him if he would accept them.127

Alexander Walker was rightfully becoming more and more concerned about the fate of the goods belonging to the old partnership that were in the hands of young Baird. He asked that Allason see either that the goods were sold separately from those belonging to the Bairds alone or that they be sold to the Bairds and the proceeds be remitted as soon as possible to Glasgow.128 Allason responded to this request from his old friend by citing all of his complaints about John Baird's activities in Virginia. Baird would not keep Allason informed of his activities and hence kept Allason from making any decisions on what to do for the best interest of the former partners. He accused Baird of being both trusting and wasteful in the loading of vessels with cargo for Scotland.129 John Baird was "constantly on horseback, but what he does I am a stranger to. He will not inform me of anything. When I ask him he answers me by halves and with uncommon reserve." Allason also accused young Baird of

128 Alexander Walker to Allason, March 15, 1762, Loose Papers.
129 Allason to Alexander Walker, July 1, 1762, Letter Book.
chartering a ship without letting him know, thus preventing him from helping in the conduct of the business.\textsuperscript{130}

Allason was also becoming concerned for the money due him from the old company for wages, and his fears were realized when a bill of exchange he had made to the company was returned protested. He informed John Baird that he would permit himself to be sued and involve the former partners in the suit rather than pay the bill himself.\textsuperscript{131} An explanation of the return was made by Alexander Walker that the elder Baird would not agree to paying the demand because there was no accompanying statement to show Allason with a balance due. Further, Walker said, Allason could collect any balance due from the proceeds of sales in Virginia.\textsuperscript{132}

Alexander Walker was finally pushed into bankruptcy in 1763 by the failure of all his ventures and by being caught in the general malaise of Scottish business that prevailed in 1762. Apparently an honest and compassionate man, when he saw that he was not going to be able to meet all his commitments he opened his books and turned his assets over so that all his creditors might share equally of them.\textsuperscript{133} In

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{130}] Allason to Alexander Walker, August 9, 1762, Letter Book.
  \item[\textsuperscript{131}] Allason to John Baird, December 10 and 23, 1762, Letter Book. For insight into the seriousness of Allason's standing in relation to the bill see Rosenblatt, "Significance of Credit," 386.
  \item[\textsuperscript{132}] Alexander Walker to Allason, January 30, 1763, Loose Papers.
  \item[\textsuperscript{133}] Ibid.
\end{itemize}

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order to get the benefit of his assets in Virginia, he again requested Allason to act on his behalf to see that he was credited with half the goods that the old company still had in the colony. With this bankruptcy the final relations in Glasgow between Walker and Baird, the old partners, were severed. Allason responded sympathetically to Walker personally, but to the combination of his old employers he insisted that his protested bill on them was justified.134

The men appointed as "securities" over the affairs of Alexander Walker called on Allason for immediate payment of all debts and goods of the company, preferably in Spanish dollars.135 Walker was becoming suspicious of the activities of the two Bairds, concluding that much of the activity occurring during the last few years -- the journey to Virginia of John Baird and his uncooperative behaviour with Allason -- had been premeditated. Walker therefore asked Allason to look after his interests in the colony.136 Allason took action in June, 1763, by asking attorney John Mercer of Stafford County for legal advice to protect the interests of Alexander Walker against John Baird who was now controlling all the old firm's assets.137 This advice was passed on to Walker at

135 Robert Christie and James Dennistoune to Allason, March 17, 1763, Loose Papers.
136 Alexander Walker to Allason, March 16, April 10, and April 12, 1763, Loose Papers.
137 Allason to John Mercer, June 12, 1763, Letter Book.
the end of the month. Allason recommended that as he was relieved of all connection with the assets and books of the old firm John Baird should be also and that they be put in the hands of disinterested parties in the colony for settlement. In addition, in order to protect himself, Allason asked John Baird in writing for a chance to examine the books of the company in the possession of Baird in order to render an accounting to the persons acting as security for Walker. The advice of Mercer and Allason was followed by Walker, and John Gray and David Blair were granted power-of-attorney to settle the affairs of the old concern in the summer of 1764.

At another time Allason informed Walker that John Baird had failed to keep the records of the two different interests in his hands separate and therefore could not separate the affairs for the referees in Virginia. Allason also felt that young Baird was suffering from a nervous disorder at this time that incapacitated him for business. Allason's claims against the company were finally honored, and John Baird was freed of any responsibility for paying him. The complete collapse of the affairs of the old

\textsuperscript{138}Allason to Alexander Walker, June 25, 1763, and July 13, Letter Book. Allason had turned the books over to Baird prior to a trip out of the colony.

\textsuperscript{139}Allason to John Baird, July 10, 1763, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{140}Allason to Alexander Walker, August 28, 1764, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{141}Bond of Indemnification to John Baird, September 1, 1764, and David Blair to Allason, September 4, 1764, Loose Papers.
partners was signified by the departure of John Baird and the ensuing cold relationship that existed in Scotland between the Bairds and Walker.\textsuperscript{142}

No such fate overtook the concern called William Allason and Company of Falmouth. Allason realized it was his opportunity to improve his station in life, and he had the acumen to see that the decline of the old partnership that employed him did not recur with his store. He was diligent in maintaining his accounts and followed the prevailing practice of the time. The first commercial record in the sequence of a transaction with a customer was recorded in the "Day Book." Any purchase or payment was immediately entered in this book with the customer's name and the goods purchased, although the cost of the goods was not always indicated. Apparently, Allason made entries in this book almost every day.\textsuperscript{143} When opportunity afforded Allason transferred these transactions to the ledger then in use. This was done by first assigning the customer or account a folio, that is, both sides of the opened ledger.

\textsuperscript{142}Alexander Walker to Allason, February 6, 1765, Loose Papers. Walker was apparently a trusting man who still wanted to assist the young John Baird after his return to Glasgow as an ill man. The younger Baird eventually was appointed a "land waiter" and was restricted from participating in trade. When Allason last heard from him in 1774, the affairs of the old Baird and Walker Company were still unsettled.

\textsuperscript{143}Computing the entries of the Day Book in use in October, 1761, the average number for the days of the week is: Monday, 8 3/4; Tuesday, 9; Wednesday, 14\textsuperscript{2}; Thursday, 11; Friday, 6; Saturday, 12 1/5; and Sunday, 3/4. October was the least busy month of the year.
by number. He then went over the Day Book and put the folio number of the accounts to be credited and debited in the margin, using the index of the ledger to find the appropriate folios. Next, he methodically went down the pages of the Day Book and made the entries noted, being careful to place a large dot or some other symbol beside the Day Book entry to facilitate a check that all entries had been made.

Although Daniel Defoe had recommended keeping a "Cash Book", that article was so scarce in Virginia that Allason used a folio in the ledger for that purpose. Other entries in the ledger were tobacco, flour, hemp, and other means in which goods could be paid, for example, by service such as building or repairing the store or other company property. Entries against the account, on the left, or "Dr" page of the folio, were preceded by the word "to." Entries in favor of the holder of the account were placed on the right hand or "Cr" page of the folio, preceded by the word "by." Room was left on the right margin for three types of payment, by sterling, currency, or by commodity such as tobacco. Across the top of the folio was written the customer's name, his location, and during the life of the company as a partnership, often his trade, if he was other than a planter. If Allason knew a customer well some of this information might be omitted, as for most of those with "Esquire" appended to their name.  

144 Allason's Day Books and Ledgers, passim.
At the end of each operational year, as previously designated by Allason, he closed out the accounts to see who held the balance due, the store or the account. In most cases it was the store, and in this case Allason would put "By balance due" on the right side of the folio and the amount needed to make that page balance with the left page. If the account held the larger figure, the entry "To balance due" was entered with the appropriate figure on the left page. Allason chose to balance out the ledger and make a statement of the account to send to the partners at the end of each September. Thus his "fiscal" year ended on September 30 each year. This date was selected as the most convenient as it involved taking inventory as well. Allason stated that October was "the most leisure month in the year for us." No running inventory was attempted, and so the year end inventory was essential to determine the profitability of the year.

Although the accounts were not generally open to the customers, many of whom could not read in any event as revealed by their marks on legal documents, Allason was open with some in telling the "advance" that he wanted on the goods

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over their cost. When he particularly wanted to keep a figure secret, he reverted to a code that was understood by his brother David. This code was often used in correspondence as well as on the accounts. In addition, Allason often rounded off pence debts in his own favor at the close of the accounts at the end of the year, thus a debt due him of four and one half pence would become five pence in the new ledger. By the same token, however, many customers were given credit for a rise in the price of tobacco after they had paid or sold tobacco to Allason with the entry "By rise of tobacco," or "By advance in the price of tobacco."

In addition to actually providing part of the capital by which colonial commerce operated through the credit granted on the company's books, Allason also served in a sense as a tax collector and banker for the community. He received the levies of various customers and transferred the payment to the account of the appropriate sheriff or collector. In the same way, accounts between two different customers could be settled on Allason's books by payment by one and crediting the other, always being careful that entries were made on the accounts of both parties. James Hunter, for example, assumed the debts of most of the employees at his iron works on his own account. Allason was also called on occasionally to obtain bills of exchange for customers.

Allason also participated in that system of warning and cooperation that the mercantile community maintained in order to avoid losses to persons of "bad character." The
news quickly passed through the commercial channels when either a merchant or planter owed more than he could reasonably expect to pay as in the case of John Binford, Jr.\textsuperscript{146} In addition, the network of merchants spread news concerning market conditions as fast as they could to their friends and connections in other parts of the Atlantic commercial empire.\textsuperscript{147} On occasions Allason also bought and sold rum, molasses, and servants for his friends in other towns such as James Bowie of Port Royal and Archibald Ritchie of Hobbs-Hole.\textsuperscript{148} Allason also collected debts not only for his friends,\textsuperscript{149} but also for himself.

The collection of debts remained one of the most important functions of the colonial Virginia merchant, and many obstacles were put in the way of the creditor. First, there was the out of simply running away and seeking to avoid discovery. In order to combat this tactic, Allason called on the good offices of his merchant friends to be on the lookout and to institute action if the fugitive was discovered.\textsuperscript{150}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[146] Allason to John Hunter, April 24, 1764, Letter Book.
\item[147] William Gregory to Allason, April 10, 1767, Loose Papers.
\item[148] James Bowie to Allason, July 23, 1769, Loose Papers.
\item[149] Robert Woddrop to Allason, December 10, 1763, Loose Papers.
\item[150] Allason to James Aimley, December 3, 1763, and August 30, 1764, Letter Book.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
members of the same family as in the case of William Morgan, Theophilus Morgan, and William Morgan, Jr., migrated together. In the 1760's most of the debtors sought refuge in North Carolina, although they often made an intervening stop in Virginia in one of the counties, such as Augusta County, located closer to the unsettled regions.

Occasionally law enforcers, sheriffs and their assistants, helped debtors evade their debts by permitting them to escape rather than jailing them or sequestering their goods. An example of this was the occasion when the "undersheriff of Spottsylvania County permitted Francis Foushee, a debtor to Allason, to escape. Another evasion was attempted on one occasion by pleading incompetence by reason of age at the time the debt was incurred.

When times were hard there were requests from debtors for postponement of their payments, although Allason was usually hard pressed for money himself at the time and therefore could give no relief.

151 Allason to Felix Gilbert, December 23, 1763, Letter Book.
152 Allason to James Aimley, August 30, 1764, Letter Book; and Allason to James Mercer, January 5, 1767, Letter Book; Gabriel Jones to Allason, March 12, 1764, Letter Book (copied in); Allason to Edmund Pendleton, April 3, 1764, Letter Book.
153 Allason to William Ellsey, August 25, 1763, Letter Book. James Allan had bought a hogshead of rum from Allason but failed to pay. Upon Allason's suit, Allan pled that he had not been of legal age when he had incurred the debt.
154 James Blair to Allason, February 18, 1765, Loose Papers; Allason to John Kirkpatrick, March 1, 1765, Letter Book.
In the event there had been no payment on a debt within a year, Allason began to charge interest at the rate of five percent a year, the figure established by the Assembly. It was a convenient rate for computation purposes for each pound of debt would draw a shilling a year interest, or one twentieth of a pound, and one pence a month, or one twelfth of a shilling. When further delay in paying a debt was asked, Allason usually had the "open account" on his books placed on a bond that the debtor accepted and could be used in a court action as *prima facie* evidence of the claim. Moreover, Allason was consistent in maintaining his accounts, for the colonial government of Virginia had decided that a business man's records could be used as evidence to establish the validity of a debt.  

Of course, the courts were the final weapon that Allason used in collecting those obligations due him that were particularly hard to obtain. During the depressed era that coincided with the end of the French and Indian War from 1762 to 1764, Allason recorded court actions as shown in Table I.

Allason and most of the other merchants preferred to keep differences out of the courts in order to save the expense. Often merchants and some of the larger planters would agree to settle their differences by arbitration, each party agreeing to unbiased referees and then abiding by their

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155 Hening, Statutes, 6, 53-55.
decision. Implicit in the merchants' attitude was the desire to keep the general public from entering into their affairs as well as the desire to save the expense of court action.

**TABLE I**

ALLASON'S SUITS IN COUNTY COURTS, 1762-1764

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Allason's Attorney</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frederick</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Gabriel Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Alexander Rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauquier</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>William Ellsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culpeper</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Joseph Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loudoun</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>William Ellsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. George</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Alexander Rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. William</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>William Ellsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. William</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>John Semple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmoreland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Alexander Rose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In attempting to use the courts Allason was on at least one occasion limited by the privileges granted to a member of the Burgesses. In 1765 he wrote to his brother Robert that he was sending a bill on Richard Henry Lee, a member of the House of Burgesses, "all of which are privileged for ten days before any session also all the..."

156 Allason to Robert Scott, August 16, 1763, Letter Book.

157 List of People Sued in Different Courts, Day Book, 1763-1765.
time they sit and likewise ten after."  Allason proposed
suing Lee in the Borough Court of Williamsburg, but had been
prevented both in October and in April, the Assembly setting,
but hoped it would come to trial in a few months. The reso-
lection of this particular case was further delayed by the
Stamp Act crisis. A year later Allason wrote that "Law is
now beginning to take place again which shall be put to force
against Lee in order to obtain payment of his protested Bill.
To me its amazing Russell & Co. should allow it to be re-
turned to me he ships them a considerable quantity of tobo
yearly and gets good sales from them he must surly be
very largely in debt to them." 159

The principal aim of a court case was to obtain pay-
ment through a writ against the defendant ordering the sher-
iff of the county to gain necessary money from the defendant’s
property to satisfy the claim. This was usually done by at-
tachment and public sale. The attorneys representing Alla-
son on occasion held off execution of the writ in order to
give the debtor an opportunity to raise money in some other
way. Allason or a court often accepted the legal pledge of
another as security for the debt. The man becoming security
then was subject to a subsequent court action if the debt was

158 Allason to Robert Allason, May 21, 1765, Letter
Book. Although not identified by given name, the debtor was
further described as "a man of great fortune & naval officer
for South Potomack." This could only be Richard Henry Lee.
See Lyon G. Tyler, Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, I,
(1915), 276.

159 Allason to Robert Allason, May 20, 1766, Letter
Book.
When times were hard the suits proliferated to such extent that the friends and neighbors banded together with the debtors to protect each other from the operations of the creditors. It was in the commercially depressed time of 1764 that Allason informed a correspondent in Scotland that "I believe there never was so many suits depending in this country as it is at this time. Scarcely a prison is allowed to stand in some counties the people have agreed to defend one another against the officers." The sheriffs were obviously placed under some community pressure by the system, and as mentioned above they were not always diligent in doing their duty. In some cases Allason reverted to the courts to settle his accounts with the sheriffs when they failed to obey the instructions of the court to seize the property of the defendant. Thus Richard Thomas, sheriff of Orange County, was fined five pounds for the use of Allason by the Virginia General Court for "not returning to the Secretary's Office an Execution . . . sued out of this court . . . against Joseph Spencer and Edward Thomas in May last which was delivered to him to Execute." In this case, Edward Thomas had "gone security" for Spencer.

160 Alexander White to Allason, March 9, 1767, July 23, 1767; August 24, 1767; September 3, 1767.

161 Allason to Alexander Walker, June 24, 1764, Letter Book; and Judgments: Allason vs. Spencer, Memo of March 23, 1769, and Allason vs. Thomas, April 22, 1769, Loose Papers. It is not known if the security Thomas was related to the sheriff Thomas.
Sometimes action taken by Allason was not against the rich, such as the Lees, but against the less fortunate such as the judgment against the widow of a debtor when he ordered his attorney in King George County, Alexander Rose, to seize the property of the widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Massey. In this case the claim against the estate was eleven pounds four shillings two pence including the cost of the sale. The list of goods that Allason feared the widow would run away with was two feather beds, two good rugs, two good counter-panes, one pair stillyards, two sheep, one mortar and pestle, and two iron pots, "one of which is large."

The economic suffering that existed in Virginia led Allason, who was initially a firm opponent of paper money, in the last years of the decade to come to view it as a possible remedy for the shortage that so hindered trade. In 1767 he wrote that "we shall in some time be as fond of having our assembly authorized by Parliament to Emitt more paper currency, as we was some time ago of preventing it, in short there is not a near sufficiency in circulation."

Although the bulk of the debts due Allason during

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162 Allason's Ledger "D", folic 125.
164 Allason to Robert Allason, October 29, 1767, Letter Book. This letter substantiates E. James Ferguson's statement that "by 1771 it was reported that the British merchants who had formerly complained of paper money were among its warmest advocates," E. James Ferguson. "Currency Finance: An Interpretation of Colonial Monetary Practices," Wm and Mary Qtly, 3d Ser., X, (1957), 161.
this period could be classified as small (Table II), some of them were owed by men who later gained greater fame. Daniel Morgan enters Allason's books as a customer and wagoner bringing produce from the Shenandoah Valley to the Falmouth store. Although Allason sued him on at least two occasions, the relationship between the two must have remained on somewhat friendly terms for this hero of the Revolution remained

### TABLE II

SIZE OF DEBTS DUE ALLASON BY LEDGER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size in £</td>
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<td>&quot;B&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;C&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;D&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;E&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;F&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;G&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>201</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 to 10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>69</td>
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<td>10 to 25</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>102</td>
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<td>25 to 50</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>50 to 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 100</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owes Nothing</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Balance</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Acc't</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a customer of Allason's after his title had changed to

165 Compiled from Ledger "A" through "G", the last ledger of the firm operated in partnership with the three others is omitted because many of the accounts were closed out as paid by Allason and were apparently transferred to the books of his new personal company as he bought out the partners, hence are not dependable or readily identifiable.
General Morgan. He was first sued in 1764 and then again five years later in 1769. He never stopped doing business with Allason, and for some reason Allason continued to grant him credit after each suit. 166

TABLE III
SIZE OF DEBTS BY LEDGER BY PERCENTAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size in £</th>
<th>&quot;A&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;B&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;C&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;D&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;E&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;F&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;G&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>58.69</td>
<td>46.36</td>
<td>41.05</td>
<td>31.93</td>
<td>32.53</td>
<td>36.19</td>
<td>33.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10</td>
<td>10.33</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>9.93</td>
<td>13.64</td>
<td>13.46</td>
<td>14.57</td>
<td>11.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 25</td>
<td>7.64</td>
<td>12.60</td>
<td>15.89</td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td>15.86</td>
<td>18.86</td>
<td>17.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 50</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>6.51</td>
<td>7.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 100</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 100</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owes 0</td>
<td>15.08</td>
<td>20.08</td>
<td>20.08</td>
<td>28.06</td>
<td>24.93</td>
<td>14.57</td>
<td>21.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Bal.</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>6.84</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99.97</td>
<td>99.94</td>
<td>99.95</td>
<td>99.97</td>
<td>99.97</td>
<td>99.94</td>
<td>99.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables II and III indicate that the debts owed Allason increased in size with the passing of the 1760-1770 decade both in average and in total. The general trend of the small debts expressed as a percentage of all the accounts with Allason, was down while the larger debts carried an

166 Gabriel Jones to Allason, (n.d.) July, 1764, Loose Papers; Folio 219, Ledger "D"; and Folio 104, Ledger "H". Morgan was not a customer during Dunmore's War and the Revolution. During the former he was described as having gone on a "scout."
upward trend. Debts owed by Allason remained relatively stable. The growth in the size of the debts due Allason can be attributed to the tendency of debts to increase as the customer becomes established in the confidence of the creditor. In any event, Allason's records reveal a general increase in the size of debts due to him.

Allason felt that institutions of colonial justice, influenced by self-interest, sometimes hindered the collection of debts. In 1768 he wrote friends in New York that "Frederick [County] court sitts only once in three months & then do very little business, which I believe owing to no other reason but that the justices are mostly sued and take this method to prevent judgments against themselves."167

Some of the most prominent names in Frederick County owed money to Allason such as Major Lewis Stephens of Stephensburg and James Wood (more of him later).

No Virginia debt caused Allason as much concern as two outside the colony. The first involved William Dickinson, William Green, and John Smith; and the second grew out of the first through a connection made with John Schaw, merchant on the eastern shore of Maryland. In the first debt Allason was reduced to trying to obtain judgment against the property of William Green in the three lower counties of Pennsylvania. Green was the only one of the three

167Allason to Glen and Gregory, October 12, 1768, Letter Book. Dr. Edward M. Riley has checked the Frederick County Court Records and they substantiated Allason's comment on the frequency of the meeting of the court, which was June 1767, November 1767, March 1768, May 1768, August 1768, November 1768, and February 1769.
conspirators with assets that might be seized to pay the debts.

Allason felt that he had proof that Green had plotted with Smith and Dickinson to defraud the Virginians. This proof was probably obtained by intercepting mail to or from Green. In order to get at the assets of Green, Allason first turned for assistance to the lawyer and Attorney General of Pennsylvania, Benjamin Chew. The latter brought suit in Newcastle against Green but was stymied by the lack of evidence linking him to Dickinson. The prejudice in the local courts in favor of the local citizen also prompted Chew to attempt to move the case to Maryland where Green also had sufficient property to meet the claim. Green's ability to avoid the snares set for him caused John Schaw, who was working with Allason in this matter, to suggest that their letters were being intercepted and that they use false addresses so the agents of Green would be unable to recognize their correspondence. Green did seem to know when to leave a locality just before Allason could get the proper papers to his lawyers. The differences on the acceptability of business records as evidence required between colonies was another

168 Allason to Baird and Walker, June 29, 1760, Letter Book. Reading of the plans to intercept letters in the mail and means to employ to prevent one's own letters from being intercepted reminds the reader of the release of Governor Thomas Hutchinson's letter by Benjamin Franklin.

obstacle to Allason and caused the suit to be set aside on several occasions.\footnote{John Schaw to Allason, November 20, 1760, Loose Papers.}

Meanwhile, another villain in the case, William Dickinson, who had escaped from the Boston jail by burning a hole in the floor, had been recaptured at Louisburg and returned to Boston. There he had once more escaped, possibly with the collusion of the captain of the ship returning the captive to Boston.\footnote{William Corbett to Allason, August 14, 1760, Loose Papers; Allason to William Corbett, December 20, 1760, Letter Book.}

Back in Delaware, Chew had been blocked from effective action by the prejudice of the local court\footnote{Henry and Robert Ritchie to Allason, December 11, 1760, Loose Papers; and Allason to Henry and Robert Ritchie, January 2, 1761, Letter Book.} and by the battery of lawyers that Green employed ("every lawyer that he could pick up that attended the Court.") Chew was convinced that no payment would ever be gained from Green in the Delaware counties and proposed trying to capture and hold him in Philadelphia for trial. In addition Chew proposed that Allason retain James Tilghman, a local lawyer in Newcastle, to assist in the case.\footnote{Benjamin Chew to Allason, March 19, 1761, Loose Papers.} It was John Schaw, however, who managed to get Green arrested in Maryland and advised Allason to be sure to be at the hearing of the case.
at Annapolis in the middle of April, 1761.\footnote{174}

Allason proceeded to Annapolis and was there on April 19, immediately consulting with Maryland attorney Daniel Dulany who advised him that his case was weak unless he could show a closer trace between Dickinson and Green. The only firm charge that could be made to stick against Green was a bill of exchange issued by Green and returned protested. No definite action could be taken in the case, and it continued on through the remaining years of the decade. On one occasion Green swore out a counter suit against Allason in Delaware and Allason was forced to find "some good person in the county" of Newcastle to be his security.\footnote{175}

Allason did place Green in a position where he had to post security of seven thousand pounds of tobacco. Although Green forfeited the security in 1764,\footnote{176} it was not until 1765 that Allason took possession of the tobacco.\footnote{177}

Allason finally turned to the Philadelphia attorney, John Dickinson, and was able to get three hundred pounds awarded in 1769, but even then there was difficulty in getting

\footnote{174}{John Schaw to Allason, March 31, 1761, Loose Papers.}

\footnote{175}{Allason to Andrew Sprowle, May 30, 1763, Letter Book.}

\footnote{176}{Allason to Robert Swan, February 10, 1764, Letter Book.}

\footnote{177}{Allason to Thomas Johnson, September 17, 1765, Letter Book.}
The eventual success of the suit was possible through Allason's gaining the business records of William Dickinson and using them to prove the connection between him and Green.  

Early in his career as a storekeeper Allason had sold John Schaw, with whom he had become connected through the Green affair, a large amount of goods. The slump in trade in 1761, 1762, and 1763 prevented Schaw from paying for the goods, but Allason continually pressed him for payment, sending David to collect in 1763. In 1763, Allason began to threaten court action against his friend in Maryland, although he termed it "disagreeable to me." By that time Schaw's business had completely failed, and he left for Norfolk. Before continuing on to the West Indies, Schaw gave Allason a bond for three hundred pounds to secure his debt to him. The month after the bond was completed, Allason

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178 Allason to John Dickinson, June 26, 1769, Letter Book. Green eventually fled to North Carolina where Allason lost track of him. Green apparently lost any ill gotten gains, for he was in bankruptcy before he left.

179 John Dickinson to Allason, July 6, 1766, Loose Papers.

180 Allason to John Schaw, January 2, 1761, Letter Book.

181 Allason to John Schaw, August 8, 1762; October 8, 1763, and November 6, 1763, Letter Book; John Schaw to Allason, October 2, 1762, Loose Papers.

182 Allason to John Schaw, April 3, 1764, Letter Book.

183 Bond, May 24, 1764, Loose Papers.
rued his lenient action in accepting the bond, saying "by my extraordinary indulgence will suffer much by him," because Schaw had left the colony. Schaw's property went into the hands of trustees to settle the estate among the creditors, but the final settlement would be a long time in coming insofar as Allason was concerned, due in large part to the American Revolution.

If Allason was disappointed in the actions of John Schaw, he had no reason to be with those of his younger brother, David, who had returned to assist with the new enterprise. After working with David in the Falmouth store a year, Allason wrote to their brother, Robert, in Scotland that he proposed very soon to "send David about 70 miles up the country with a few goods with a view to engage some customers as there is a large quantity of tobacco made up there, likewise Flour, Butter, Cheese, & Hemp." Already Allason had heard from the correspondent in Norfolk concerning the trade in flour. The life of the store in Winchester in the Shenandoah Valley under the direction of David was only two years. Allason's alarm at "the Indians being in the neighborhood of Winchester" was his stated

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184 Allason to Robert Ritchie, June 20, 1764, Letter Book.

185 Allason to James McLauchlin, July 1, 1766, Letter Book.

186 Allason to Robert Allason, September 13, 1761, Letter Book.
reason for his resolution to break up this enterprise. The Shenandoah venture, nevertheless, benefited Allason in bringing new customers to the Falmouth store.

A pleasant development may have been the result of Allason's early interest in the Valley. In July of 1764 Samuel Atchawes, the factor-merchant in London for Thomas Lord Fairfax, proprietor of the entire Northern Neck, wrote Allason that he had been informed to send all goods for Lord Fairfax through Allason, following the death of the previous intermediary, "Mr. Jackson" of Fredericksburg. Certainly this was an excellent connection for Allason, providing him with both influence and prestige. The service rendered by Allason must have been satisfactory because the relationship between those at Greenway Court, Lord Fairfax's manor in the Shenandoah, and Allason, grew stronger over the years.

Most of Allason's customers do not show up in correspondence, however, but are seen only through account books. Because Allason did attempt to describe the location and status of his customers, at least those who on occasions were in debt to him, some profile of them as a group is available.

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187 Allason to Campbell and Mowbray, August 16, 1763, Letter Book. The Shenandoah Store Day Book has entered "Daniel Morgan . . . lost playing at cards . . . ."

188 Tables IV and V, increase in Frederick accounts in number and percentage in Ledger "D."

189 Samuel Atchawes to Allason, July 16, 1764, Loose Papers.
### TABLE IV

CUSTOMER LOCATION BY COUNTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>County</strong></td>
<td>&quot;A&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;B&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;C&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;D&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;E&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;F&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;G&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;H&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culpeper</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauquier</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King George*</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>Stafford</td>
<td>116</td>
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<td>141</td>
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<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*King George County includes Falmouth and the mercantile community of merchants, inspectors at Falmouth and Dixon's Warehouse, warehousemen, etc. living there. Hence, most of these account holders were residents of the western reaches of the county.

Tables IV and V indicate the spread of Allason's trade to the west and the overall orientation of his trade in that direction. Falmouth was in the western part of King George County. Lying immediately to the north and west was Stafford County and to the west and south, Culpeper. West of Falmouth, the road to Winchester, across the Blue Ridge, passed through Fauquier County. Thus the trade area described by these accounts resembled a wedge, or piece of pie, with its
TABLE V
CUSTOMER LOCATION BY COUNTY BY PERCENTAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>&quot;A&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;B&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;C&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;D&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;E&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;F&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;G&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;H&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culpeper</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>11.32</td>
<td>11.47</td>
<td>10.70</td>
<td>12.40</td>
<td>10.29</td>
<td>11.15</td>
<td>12.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>8.61</td>
<td>20.62</td>
<td>19.33</td>
<td>24.70</td>
<td>22.30</td>
<td>23.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King George</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>17.73</td>
<td>16.11</td>
<td>18.76</td>
<td>20.93</td>
<td>18.35</td>
<td>16.39</td>
<td>14.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford</td>
<td>23.96</td>
<td>24.35</td>
<td>22.60</td>
<td>21.86</td>
<td>19.60</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>16.55</td>
<td>18.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>20.66</td>
<td>17.09</td>
<td>15.90</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10.95</td>
<td>9.82</td>
<td>11.92</td>
<td>12.71</td>
<td>13.80</td>
<td>13.55</td>
<td>16.05</td>
<td>14.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>99.96</td>
<td>99.95100.08100.00</td>
<td>99.92100.00100.01</td>
<td>99.99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

narrow point at Falmouth on the Rappahannock and its uneven outer edge in the Shenandoah Valley. Culpeper County was much larger in Allason's time than it is today. Not having a similar breakdown for the trade of other merchants on the Falmouth-Fredericksburg area, we cannot judge whether Allason's pattern of trade was unique in this respect or whether it was a general pattern. The number of customers in Frederick County in the Shenandoah, particularly after the closing of Allason's "Shenandoah store," does indicate a rather large volume of trade crossing the Blue Ridge. It suggests the possibility that trade tended to retrace the steps of the settlers, so that those who entered the Valley through Pennsylvania tended to maintain their commercial ties with Philadelphia, while those who crossed the Blue Ridge...
The number of Germanic names in the Allason ledgers appears to be small, but the rapid Anglization of names makes it difficult to judge the origin of a name. Also the presence of the descendants of the Germanna community obscures the presence of "Dutch" names. Several of these names are present on the accounts: Rector, Otterback, and Kemper, for example. Another means of approaching the question might be through court records searching for the names of known merchants in the fall line towns who are attempting to collect debts. No such study was attempted for this paper, its focus being Allason and his activities only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>&quot;A&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;B&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;C&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;D&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;E&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;F&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;G&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;H&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lord</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esquire</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. or Rev.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mister</td>
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<td>288</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>153</td>
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<tr>
<td>None (Man)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>172</td>
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<tr>
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<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Miss</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None (Woman)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

190 The number of Germanic names in the Allason ledgers appears to be small, but the rapid Anglization of names makes it difficult to judge the origin of a name. Also the presence of the descendants of the Germanna community obscures the presence of "Dutch" names. Several of these names are present on the accounts: Rector, Otterback, and Kemper, for example. Another means of approaching the question might be through court records searching for the names of known merchants in the fall line towns who are attempting to collect debts. No such study was attempted for this paper, its focus being Allason and his activities only.
TABLE VII
CUSTOMER APPELLATION BY PERCENTAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>&quot;A&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;B&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;C&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;D&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;E&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;F&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;G&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;H&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lord</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esquire</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. or Rev.</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mister</td>
<td>65.50</td>
<td>61.54</td>
<td>55.19</td>
<td>43.72</td>
<td>39.92</td>
<td>37.39</td>
<td>42.23</td>
<td>40.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None (Man)</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>19.66</td>
<td>28.92</td>
<td>41.09</td>
<td>45.09</td>
<td>48.88</td>
<td>44.59</td>
<td>45.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs.</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None (Woman)</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>100.04</td>
<td>99.99</td>
<td>100.89</td>
<td>100.02</td>
<td>100.64</td>
<td>99.98</td>
<td>99.98</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most striking aspect of Table VI and Table VII is the declension in the use of "Mister" in Allason's account books as opposed to no title at all. Two possible causes for this come to mind: the first is a change in the type of customer that Allason was serving and the second a change in Allason's own attitude. Of the two, the second appears the more logical and reflects the rising status of Allason in the community. A change in Allason's attitudes may reflect a general change that was occurring in society.
as a whole, but it is more likely that as he rose to that position warranting "Esquire" himself, he became less deferential to his customers.

**TABLE VIII**

**OCCUPATIONS OF "MISTERS" BY LEDGER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>&quot;A&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;B&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;C&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;D&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;E&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;F&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;G&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;H&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;At___&quot;a</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov't Assoc. all</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary/ Tavern Kpr</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseer/ Manager</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prizer/ Jobber</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolmaster</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;___Security&quot;a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Son of___&quot;a</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagoner</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

317  288  250  282  311  225  258  159

*aSee explanation in text.*

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Table VIII reveals the occupations of the male customers who were given the title of Mister in Allason's ledgers. Those who had no occupation given were, it is assumed, predominately planters, although in some cases it may have been due to Allason's lack of information about the customer. Allason never gave an occupation for a "Colonel," "Esquire," or "Major," although he called some sheriffs or tobacco inspectors "captain." The "captain" designation was also applied to the masters of vessels. Thus it is impossible to know whether a captain in Norfolk owes his title to land or sea when no further description is given.

The occupation "artisan" included jobs as shoemaker, carpenter, mill wright, saddle tree maker, smith, baker, tailor, barber, and several others. The group taken as a whole reveals trades necessary to satisfy the needs of Allason's community.191

While the title "Attorney" speaks for itself, the description "At____" reveals only a connection to a plantation or industrial establishment (Hunter's Iron Works, for example). Just what Allason's mind included in this category is uncertain, although some were apparently overseers while others were of lesser community standing. It appears that any indentured or convict servants would be included in the designations "at____" or "____Security". The absence of the

191 Although a statistical study was not attempted for this paper, it appears that Allason granted less generous credit terms to artisans or they were more prompt than the average customer in meeting their obligations.
TABLE IX

OCCUPATION OF "NO-TITLES" BY LEDGER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>&quot;A&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;B&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;C&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;D&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;E&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;F&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;G&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;H&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;At__&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov't Assoc.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary/</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavern Kpr</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseer/Manager</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prizer/Jobber</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolmaster</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;__Security&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Son of__&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagoner</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

designation "servant" is noteworthy.192

192Caution is warranted in this area for in one letter in speaking of an undependable wagoner Isaac Zane, the Quaker iron master in Frederick, stated he had "whipped" his
The term "Farmer" is interesting because of its introduction and because of its brief use, in Table X it is combined with tenant, which in some sense is its meaning. "Gov't Assoc." covers all those government-associated occupations such as sheriff, tobacco inspector, collectors, and their assistants. Prizers or jobbers were the men who packed the tobacco at the warehouses, or, more frequently "reprized" it into the hogshead after inspection. Their work was largely physical. "__ Security" connotes a dependent condition of some sort and definitely indicates a lack of good credit standing in Allason's eyes. While being the "Son of __" can hardly be described as an occupation, it did provide the credit information that Allason needed and often was the only description given. In cases where both an occupation and a relationship were entered in the ledger, only the occupation was used for this study. "Other" includes those categories that can not be placed in any of the others, such as the clerk, sexton, and warden of a church, gardener, and others.

Table VIII gives the raw figures for those customers carrying the title "mister" and Table IX shows those carrying no title before their names in the ledger. Table X furnishes a percentage comparison of the two based on the total of all accounts and suggests that as the years passed, wagoner and replaced him, indicating that the "wagoner" may have been an indentured or convict servant. Isaac Zane to Allason, January 23, 1769, Loose Papers.
### TABLE X

PERCENTAGE COMPARISON OF "MISTER" AND "NO-TITLES"

(Figures represent percentage of total accounts in appropriate ledger)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>&quot;A&quot; Mr.</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>&quot;B&quot; Mr.</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>&quot;C&quot; Mr.</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>&quot;D&quot; Mr.</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>&quot;E&quot; Mr.</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>&quot;F&quot; Mr.</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>&quot;G&quot; Mr.</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>&quot;H&quot; Mr.</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>0:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>2:1:0</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;At ___&quot;</td>
<td>3:1</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>2:2</td>
<td>2:2:0</td>
<td>1:3</td>
<td>1:3</td>
<td>1:3</td>
<td>2:2:0</td>
<td>2:2:0</td>
<td>2:2:0</td>
<td>2:2:0</td>
<td>2:2:0</td>
<td>2:2:0</td>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>8:1:1</td>
<td>7:1:1</td>
<td>9:1:1</td>
<td>11:1:1</td>
<td>8:0</td>
<td>9:0</td>
<td>9:0</td>
<td>6:0</td>
<td>6:0</td>
<td>6:0</td>
<td>6:0</td>
<td>6:0</td>
<td>6:0</td>
<td>6:0</td>
<td>6:0</td>
<td>6:0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary Kpr.</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>0:0</td>
<td>0:0</td>
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<td>1:1</td>
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<td>1:1</td>
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<td>1:1</td>
<td>1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prizer</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>0:1</td>
<td>0:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>0:1</td>
<td>0:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolmaster</td>
<td>0:0</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
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<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;___ Security&quot;</td>
<td>0:0</td>
<td>0:0</td>
<td>0:0</td>
<td>0:2</td>
<td>0:2:0</td>
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<td>0:2:0</td>
<td>0:2:0</td>
<td>0:2:0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Son of ___&quot;</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>2:2</td>
<td>3:2</td>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>4:5</td>
<td>4:5</td>
<td>3:5</td>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>4:5</td>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>4:5</td>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>4:5</td>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>4:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>0:0</td>
<td>0:0</td>
<td>0:0</td>
<td>0:0</td>
<td>0:0</td>
<td>0:0</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagoner</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
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<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
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<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
<td>-:1:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: "-" reflects no accounts of this type, "0" reflects those whose entries constitute less than .5%. 
Allason denied that extra dignity that "Mr" in front of his name implied, more and more to most of his customers. Government associated men, merchants, and attorneys continued to rate "Mister" throughout the decade. Almost certainly this reflects a change in the observer, Allason, and not the observed society. It indicates his rising status and sense of security in the colonial structure.

A concept of the changing composition of Allason's customers is gained from Table XI, which shows old and new accounts on the store records by ledger, the retention rate of old customers, and the rate of increase of new accounts on the ledgers.

**TABLE XI**

<table>
<thead>
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*Retention Rate* 0% 34.30 19.34 23.28 23.12 7.65 5.13 .93

**Change Rate** 100% 64.53 66.45 60.78 55.47 76.50 79.22 94.93

*Retention rate is the quotient, expressed as percentage, of the old accounts in that ledger divided by the cumulative accounts from the column of the previous ledger.

**Change rate is the quotient, expressed as percentage, of the new accounts divided by the total accounts of that ledger.
Table XI may be the most startling of the tables because of the total number of accounts that Allason dealt with during the decade 1760-1769, with ninety-five percent of them either heads of households, potential heads of households, or widows, who may have represented families with dependent children. Also unexpected is the low retention rate and high change rate of the accounts. The change rate reflects the change from year to year, while the retention rate expresses the change over the entire period. Again it must be pointed out that Ledger "H" is a special case in that Allason at this time was preparing to close out the old company by purchasing the shares of the partners.

Several factors may have contributed to the instability of the store's customers. One possible cause of the turnover could have been dissatisfaction with the store itself. This is difficult to measure, but all of Allason's existing correspondence fails to reveal a pattern of complaints against him or his store. Another explanation could be that the customers changed merchants for their convenience, such as having a new store opening nearer to them although this is discounted by the increase of Allason's business in that area where these stores might be most expected to increase; that is, in the western reaches of the colony. A third reason that customers may have deserted Allason is that they periodically changed merchants in order to avoid excessive debts to one and in order to keep buying. It may have been that Allason was more demanding of security after
the customer had been on his books. Another explanation of the high change in clientele may have been a highly mobile society. It would seem that probably a combination of these elements caused instability within the corps of customers.

Certainly Allason was less concerned with the retention of his customers than in the overall success of his store, and in this area the best guide is the "states", or statements, that he prepared at the end of each year. The store was indebted to the amount of 4683 pounds, 5 shillings and 2 pence, sterling, with currency debts converted at an exchange of fifty percent, on October 1, 1761. This statement reflected a sterling profit of 492 pounds, 8 shillings, 2 pence.193 Allason later said "the first year was a most unlucky year. Exchange was then lower and goods also sold on the lowest terms on that acc't and immediately after the exchange rising every year made the firm wear a bad aspect."194 Five years later, in 1765, after the difficult years of 1762 and 1763 had passed, the annual statement reflected a sterling profit of 1147 pounds, 14 shillings, and 8½ pence, with a sterling debt on the company against which this profit could be applied of 5011 pounds, 11 shillings, and 6 pence.195

By the time the store had closed out, and as he prepared his

193Ledger "A", folio 224.
statement in October, 1769, Allason computed by his figures that the store had profitted by 3243 pounds, 14 shillings, and 11 pence sterling\textsuperscript{196} in the years of its existence.

Allason must be classed a successful merchant in averaging over three hundred pounds a year profit during the period of the turbulent sixties. This was nearly a ten percent profit each year on the original investments of the partners. Allason's growing affluence was also marked by his rise in social esteem in the community. The period that had been traversed by the young company had been fraught with perils and stormy shoals, but they had been safely passed as the first charter expired.

The four partners had agreed to a partnership for seven years commencing June 1, 1761,\textsuperscript{197} and as the end of that period approached they were undecided as to whether to continue the operation. John Mitchell and John Gray were both agreeable to continuing on the same basis as in the past,\textsuperscript{198} but William Allason wanted to continue only on the understanding that some alterations in the operations would be made.\textsuperscript{199} After the end of the agreed term of partnership,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{196}Ledger "G," folio 215.
  \item \textsuperscript{197}Contract of partners, signed in Virginia March 4, 1763 between John Mitchell, John Gray, and William Allason, Loose Papers.
  \item \textsuperscript{198}Allason to Robert Allason, January 6, 1768, Letter Book.
  \item \textsuperscript{199}Allason to Robert Allason and John Gray, March 17, 1768, Letter Book.
\end{itemize}
Robert Allason wanted to stop but if continued he wanted tobacco shipped to Scotland for him to sell there as his own financial situation deteriorated. William Allason was adamantly against this and refused to participate in the company if those were to be its policies. Further, he stated that he felt that he could do better by himself.\textsuperscript{200}

Allason had difficulty in determining exactly what the partners in Scotland (John Gray was there at this time as was Robert Allason) wanted to do and in December, 1768, asked Gray and his brother, Robert, to send him a joint letter as to their desires and intentions so that the conflicting reports he received from them would cease.\textsuperscript{201} By the following May he had received word that his scheme of activities for the future was too "extensive" for John Gray, and it was determined to end the partnership arrangement. Allason at this time was looking for capital to expand his base of operations and if he could not find such a partner was determined to go it alone.\textsuperscript{202} By October, 1768, Allason had paid John Mitchell in Virginia for his quarter of the concern and was taking inventory to determine what the other partners should receive. Allason was placed on commission for collecting the debts due the company after the

\textsuperscript{200} Allason to Robert Allason (n.d.) September, 1768, Letter Book.
\textsuperscript{201} Allason to Robert Allason, December 17, 1768, Letter Book.
\textsuperscript{202} Allason to John Gray, May 2, 1769, Letter Book.
partnership was ended, a subject that would prove irritating to the relationship between Robert Allason and himself in the future as relations between the two brothers, like the relations between Britain and America, deteriorated in the 1770's. Thus, Allason became independent in 1769.
Wallace Notestein called the last half of the eighteenth century Scotland's "First Periclean Age" because of its great production of men of letters and thought.¹ Possibly the same energies that produced this intellectually fruitful period in Scottish history also caused the sons of Zechariah Allason to disperse throughout much of the world. The Scots are famous for their clannishness, and separation did not cause the family of Zechariah Allason to cease communicating, although it eventually put severe strains on their relationships. While William, Alexander, and David Allason were crossing and recrossing the Atlantic, Zechariah and his wife remained in Scotland, where Zechariah maintained his business.² For him, and for at least four of his sons, to live was to trade, and he continued "in business" almost to the time of his death, although his sons often encouraged him to quit.

²Robert Allason to Allason, April 12, 1760, Loose Papers.
Both parents were frail when Allason emigrated to Virginia, and he was solicitous of their well being. He hoped to see his parents before their death, but this was not to be realized. Before the decade following 1760 was over Zechariah Allason died. His widow, Isobel — William Allason’s mother — was well provided for by her husband and apparently suffered little material want in future years.

While Allason’s attitude toward his parents was gentle and deferential, that with his brother Robert was more business-like, although it, too, was, at the beginning, good. Robert’s wealth, it has been noted, was increased in 1759 with the death of his brother-in-law, Robert Young, who had named Robert Allason his sole heir. Although Young’s estate was large, Robert Allason had great difficulty in learning its exact condition because of the poor state of Young’s

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3Allason to Robert Allason, June 21, 1760, Letter Book. Allason wrote his brother that his father must be very frail and that he, William, hoped to see his father in his old age. "I will contribute all I have to his ease if necessary and work for him while I live." Again it is to be regretted that not one letter to his parents that William Allason made note of in his letter Book was transcribed there. No idea of Zechariah Allason’s type of business was gained from the correspondence.

4Allason to Robert Allason, February 20, 1767, Letter Book. Allason had become aware of their father’s death and was unhappy with Robert for not writing the news of it. Allason had discovered the news from friends in Glasgow. Throughout the correspondence there exists the impression that Robert Allason was not as close to the parents as William was.

5Allason to Walter Pringle, April 27, 1762, Loose Papers. This letter was written on a trip to the West Indies, and Allason kept a loose copy because he did not take his letter book with him.
accounts. Nevertheless, within a year Robert Allason had purchased a country estate near Glasgow called "Marden Hill."
He still participated in the commerce of the port towns of the Clyde River, however, and apparently had a good reputation within the greater Glasgow mercantile community. Not only did he take part in William Allason and Company, but among his other ventures was the purchase of the brigantine Beaufort. This vessel was sent to Virginia under the command of young Sandy Allason.

Robert Allason's economic interests influenced the life of William Allason in ways not directly connected to William Allason and Company. In 1761, when an excess of shipping in Virginia waters caught the Beaufort without a cargo, William felt obligated by family loyalty to assist his brother. In spite of his and David's best efforts,

6 Robert Allason to Allason, April 12, 1760, Loose Papers.
7 Robert Allason to Allason, January 28, 1761, Loose Papers.
8 Robert Allason to Allason, April 12, 1760, Loose Papers. The port towns along the lower Clyde that comprised greater Glasgow included Port Glasgow and Greenock. All three of these towns figure prominently in Allason's correspondence.
9 Robert Allason to Allason, May 8, 1761, Loose Papers. Freight rates in Virginia sank to five pounds sterling a ton from the previously prevailing ten to twelve pounds.
10 Allason to Robert Allason, March 23, 1761, Letter Book. David was sent to Nansemond County to procure a load of turpentine, pitch, and tar for the Beaufort but was unsuccessful. Even though Allason bought tobacco, the Beaufort still had to sail from Virginia to Liverpool rather than
however, no profitable cargo was found, and he suggested the expedient of purchasing tobacco for cash to complete the cargo.\textsuperscript{11}

William also served his brother, Robert, by going to St. Christophers Island in the West Indies to supervise the Collection of two large debts due to the estate of Robert Young.\textsuperscript{12} Although the journey had been discussed since the previous summer,\textsuperscript{13} it was February, 1762, before William actually left for the island.\textsuperscript{14} Even though he acted expeditiously, Allason was unable to collect the money due to his Glasgow because some cargo had been accepted from paying shippers consigned to the former port. William Allason suggested to his brother that the Beaufort be sold in Liverpool for use in the "Guinea" trade because of her ideal configurations for that trade.

\textsuperscript{11}Allason to Robert Allason, April 6, 1761, Letter Book. Robert Allason to Allason, January 25, 1762, Loose Papers. Robert Allason felt that he lost twenty three hundred pounds during this period on the Beaufort and other enterprises with which William was not connected.

\textsuperscript{12}Allason to Robert Allason, (n.d.) February, 1763, Letter Book. William Allason volunteered to go to the West Indies to assist his brother, although he also visited friends there and may have investigated the commercial situation there at the same time.

\textsuperscript{13}Robert Allason to Allason, October 26, 1761, Loose Papers. William Allason was to receive a power of attorney in order to act for his brother, but the power was not at St. Kitts when he arrived, but arrived after he did, thus delaying action to collect the debts.

\textsuperscript{14}Allason to Robert Allason, February 10, 1762, Letter Book. The store was left in the hands of James Mowbray, a young man who was assisting Allason there. Both Mowbray and David Allason, at the time with the Shenandoah store, were instructed to collect as fast as they could and remit to Robert Allason in Scotland.
brother\textsuperscript{15} and was eventually forced to leave these affairs of Robert's in the hands of an attorney in the island, Walter Pringle.\textsuperscript{16} Allason had to leave the islands in order to return to his store in Falmouth for the active summer season.\textsuperscript{17}

The close harmony and mutual economic assistance that had characterized relations between the two brothers began to deteriorate the next year.\textsuperscript{18} Robert Allason charged William with taking advantage of him as he said that he was "loath to notice these things, shall only say that I have been too much of the Don Quixote all my life & to serve others have made myself unhappy, and after such unhappy experience, of my brothers lately neglecting my

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15}Allason to Robert Allason, April 27, 1762, and Allason to Walter Pringle, April 27, 1762, Loose Papers.
\item \textsuperscript{16}Allason to Walter Pringle, May 15, 1762, Loose Papers. The debts were owed by William Burke, Junior, and John Kennedy, partners in Nevis, and James Warden. The Burke-Kennedy debt was bonded for one month, while the Warden debt was disputed by Warden.
\item \textsuperscript{17}Robert Allason to Allason, September 30, 1762. Loose Papers. William Allason had feared that he would be arrested in the Indies as a result of legal actions against Robert. In this letter Robert wrote William that he had been in no danger, because the latter was only acting as agent for his brother.
\item \textsuperscript{18}Robert Allason to Allason, December 4, 1761, Loose Papers. A degree of uncertainty is thrust into the correspondence between the two brothers and their relations by the presence of two letters in the letter book both dated January 24, 1762. In one letter the relationship appears to be exacerbrated by the lack of payment for the goods shipped by Robert Allason to William Allason and Company. All was harmonious, in the second letter. Possibly the letters were designed for different readers.
\end{itemize}
credit." Robert was complaining about the failure of the brothers in Virginia to send money home during the period of economic troubles prevailing in Glasgow. William Allason assured his brother that he was doing all in his power to remit to him (which was true) so that he might meet his obligations and save his credit. In addition, in what may have been an attempt to maintain the old rapport, he sent gifts to Robert's wife and to his daughter, Nancy.  

William Allason was also worried about the effect of his brother's actions on his own reputation in Virginia's mercantile society. From William's viewpoint, whatever the facts were, Robert had been neglectful in accounting for the pig iron shipped to him by Colonel John Tayloe beginning in 1759. In November, 1764, Allason advised his brother concerning Colonel Tayloe that "I would avoid giving him the least room to complain as his is a gentleman of whose honour I have the greatest oppinion [sic] and for [whom] I have the greatest esteeme." Allason's efforts to mediate his brother and Colonel Tayloe failed due to his brother's obstinacy and slackness in conducting business.

Robert Allason's increasing irascibility may have stemmed from both his declining financial situation and

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19 Robert Allason to Allason, August 4, 1763, Loose Papers.
20 Allason to Robert Allason, April 24, 1764, Letter Book.
21 Allason to Robert Allason, November 30, 1764, Letter Book.

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attacks of gout. Robert had moved his home to his country estate by 1765 and spent most of his time there.\textsuperscript{22} Allason wrote to one correspondent in regard to the situation that he had been put to "a good deal of trouble about it /The Tay­loes matter/ and all owing to my brother's neglect on these matters. About that time he was much engaged in improving a couple of Farms which engrossed his chief attention and I believe was the cause of his not being as exact and particu­lar in his accounts as he ought and used to be."\textsuperscript{23} William Allason also lectured his brother directly about deleterious habits that same year, 1767, but also expressed his gratitude for Robert's improved health.\textsuperscript{24}

William Allason's relations with his brother John was an exception to the rule of the closeness of the Allason family. John apparently caused many of his family and their friends to be concerned about his companions and his habits. John was married in 1765, and Alexander Walker wrote a good report of her character although she was of "no fortune." Before his marriage John had been living with an unidentified sister and had apparently quarrelled with her. With the new wife, however, he "before many witnesses promis's to

\textsuperscript{22}Alexander Walker to Allason, February 6, 1765, Loose Papers. Walker said of Robert in this letter that "the Gout now and then minds him of his mortality."

\textsuperscript{23}Allason to Thomas Lawson, March 26, 1767, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{24}Allason to Robert Allason, October 3, 1767, Letter Book.

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behave properly, & I [Alexander Walker] am told had done so since the marriage. I hope it will be for his good, for he had got into a wrong set of acquaintances.**25

If William Allason’s dealings with his brother John were distant, those with his younger brothers Sandy and David were close. Sandy, or Alexander, as he was christened, came to Virginia as master of Robert Allason’s brigantine Beaufort in 1760. The voyage of the Beaufort out to Virginia took longer than usual because she was caught in the "Trades," unfavorable sailing conditions in the South Atlantic.**26 During the Beaufort’s stay in Virginia waters, William undertook the task of furthering the education of his mariner brother, displaying two facets of his own character. The first was his own analysis of the importance of education in improving one’s position in life — a view that he maintained throughout his life. In this respect William Allason was typical of the age of the Enlightenment, although his interest was more personal than humanistic. The second facet revealed was the strong family loyalty and identification that made the Allason’s willing to aid their kin.

In any event, William Allason supervised Sandy’s study of accounting, reading, and writing during his stay in

**25Alexander Walker to Allason, July 29, 1765, Loose Papers.

In a progress report on the education of the two brothers then in Virginia, William Allason informed Robert that Sandy was sufficiently qualified as a seaman and was acquainted with navigation, but in order to increase his reading ability and general knowledge he had given Sandy copies of *Gil Blas*, a popular picaresque novel of the era, and *Spectator* to read after he left Virginia. Sandy was also told to practice his penmanship on the way back to England in the *Beaufort*. According to William, Sandy possessed the natural attributes of a ship's master, because the sailors of the *Beaufort* gave the latter their respect and obeyed him with no signs of "fear or backwardness."

Later, when Sandy's sea-faring career seemed to be progressing even after the *Beaufort* was conscripted, William continued to assist him by drafting forms for Sandy to follow in accounting for his cargo. From the *Beaufort*, Sandy became a ship's officer in the West Indies trade, and then he succeeded to the command of a Liverpool ship engaged in the African trade. William's hopes for his younger brother seemed on the verge of realization, and he termed Sandy's succession "a very lucky thing for him and I hope that he will be fortunate. A few good trips will make him very easy."

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28 Allason to Robert Allason, August 2, 1763, Letter Book.

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continued interest was further demonstrated by his request of a Liverpool merchant with whom he was conducting business for assistance for his younger brother.  

Thus it was that Allason met the news of Sandy's death three years later, in 1769 with genuine regret. Sandy's death "on the coast of Africa" fulfilled his brothers' knowledge that the rewards of the African trade were matched by its danger. William noted that it "was a trade in which there was many chances against his living, particularly in that part of the coast. Old Calibar to which he traded being reckoned extremely unhealthy." William Allason disclaimed any portion on the estate of Sandy, who had married a girl in Liverpool a few years earlier. William requested that any portion of Sandy's estate that might be due him, and apparently Sandy had included him in his will, should instead go to the young wife who was at odds with her family because of her marriage.  

A longer but somewhat less adventurous life was lived by the other younger brother, David. David's relations with William were even closer than those with either Robert or  

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30 Allason to John Backhouse, July 11, 1766, Letter Book. Allason informed Backhouse that "It seems there is a brother of mine who sails from your port to the coast of Africa. Your showing him civilities would be an obligation conferred on me as well as him. He is young and wants experience in the world -- I know that he is grateful and of a good disposition. Your advice would be of great service to him -- as I know that he would pay all due deference to it."

31 Allason to Robert Allason, June 25, 1769, Letter Book.
Sandy, with the attachment growing constantly stronger.

After the recall of the store in Frederick County by William in 1763, David remained close by his brother's side in Falmouth except for temporary journeys into the back country collecting debts and conducting other business affairs. More and more the interest of David Allason became identified with the interest of William Allason. The relationship of Sandy and David with William is significant because of the attitude they revealed toward him. Both of these young men had respect and apparently affection for their older brother. William more and more assumed the leadership of the family with the passing years, although he had begun with fewer assets than had Robert.

William, Sandy, and David were concerned with the status of their sisters, left behind in Scotland. Thus it was with some joy that in 1763, they learned that their sister, Mary, had married Alexander Knox, a brewer, and that she was expecting her first child. The other sister, Jeanie, was not yet "settled in the world," although Allason wished that she soon would be.

Allason's attitudes toward his family influenced his life in many ways. His relationship with the other members

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32 Allason to Robert Allason, October 25, 1768, Letter Book.
33 Allason to Alexander Knox, July 10, 1763, Letter Book.
34 Allason to Robert Allason, April 1, 1764, Letter Book.

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of his family clearly affected his commercial life through the capital of Robert and the loyal service of David. Without these bonds it would have been more difficult for Allason to prosper the way that he did in the decade following 1760.

Allason's Personal World

In spite of the economic turbulence that prevailed in Virginia and Britain during the early 1760's the economic situation of the Allason family members seemed to be improving. In August of 1760 William Allason was building the house on the lot in Falmouth that would provide him the first permanent residence he had known in years. The building constructed that summer, however, furnished imperfect protection during the subsequent winter. Allason wrote the following summer that his "house was so cold in the Winter that I could not do any manner of writing all that season." It may have been the flawed heating system of his own house that caused Allason to frequent Esdras Edzar's ordinary in Falmouth that winter, but it is more likely that he gathered there with planters and the other merchants to discuss events within the colonies and in the outside world. In addition to his visits to Edzar's ordinary, Allason was also a patron of the theater both in Fredericksburg and, during


36 Allason to Robert Douglas, June 30, 1761, Letter Book. The number of letters copied into the letter book during these months supports this complaint of Allason's.

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his visits to the colonial capital, in Williamsburg.  

Although Allason was now the operator of a store, it did not mean the end of long hours on horseback as he journeyed through the forests of Virginia. Both he and his brother David found the most convenient means of transportation to be horseback as they travelled the rough Virginia roads into the backwoods area where they were expanding their trade. In order to get the best horses available, Allason received and was apparently willing to heed the advice of men of the colony who were familiar with horses such as James Wood of the Shenandoah Valley. As the economic depression set in, however, Allason felt a need for something other than a good horse under him as he and David made their rounds to collect the debts owed the store. In July, 1764, Allason wrote a mercantile firm in England that "as it is sometimes dangerous in Travelling through our wooden country Particularly at this time when the Planters are pressed for old ballances we find it necessary to carry with us some defensive weapons. For that purpose you'll be pleased to send us by some of the first ships for this river a pair of pistols about 30/ Price. Let them be small for the convenience of carrying in a side pockett and as neat as the price will

37Allason's Memorandum Book and Journal of Private Transactions, (n.d.) October, 1760; and Ledger "A", Folio 86, and Ledger "B", folio 151. Edzar died in 1762, and Falmouth was left without a satisfactory ordinary.

38James Wood to Allason, January 19, 1769, Loose Papers.
admit of."39

Although the society in which the Allason brothers lived in Virginia was sometimes violent and horse thieves were particularly prevalent, at least most of the artisan services necessary to make life comfortable were available in Falmouth. For example, James Williamson, a tailor, served Allason, particularly after Allason's first year in Falmouth.40 Allason would have preferred to have ordered his tailoring from Glasgow, but his tailor there had lost his measurements and Allason was forced to rely on the services of Williamson and other members of the colonial society.41

Allason was entitled to a salary of seventy-five pounds sterling a year as operator of the store, although he apparently followed the practice of charging the costs of his private expenses against the store's account. Thus he lived without personal expense and credited himself with seventy-five pounds cash at the end of each operational year.42

39 Allason to Bogle and Scott, July 29, 1764, Letter Book.
42 Allason to Robert Allason, (n.d.) June, 1760, Letter Book. A comparative figure is the salary of the inspectors at Falmouth and Dixon's Warehouses which was fifty pounds a year according to Hening's Statutes at Large.
Relationships and Prestige

While the everyday needs of Allason were being met in the new world environment, certain basic changes were being made in his perspective on life. Probably the most important of these changes involved the friendships that were made and deepened in Virginia, new loyalties that would be tested against the old in the years of crisis that lay beyond 1770. In addition to men such as his partners, John Mitchell and John Gray, many of the old Glasgow connections remained. There were, though, new friendships that flourished in the fertile soil of shared problems of the colony. One such relationship was with Archibald Ritchie.

It will be recalled that Allason had been put in contact with Ritchie on his arrival as a factor and had left young David with the Tappahannock storekeeper to learn the mercantile business. Allason maintained commercial ties with Ritchie after he began keeping store in Falmouth and gradually these ties grew personal as each man realized the dependability and good character of the other. Allason relied greatly on Ritchie, as well as on Andrew Sprowle of the Norfolk area, for his supply of West Indies goods. As the friendship grew favors were exchanged. Allason often acted in Ritchie's behalf in paying debts to others in the Falmouth area and in selling goods for Ritchie, and these favors
were reciprocated by Ritchie at Tappahannock. In addition, the two merchants also exchanged both news of trade and goods when one lacked a particular item and the other had enough to spare.

While Archibald Ritchie was located closer to Chesapeake Bay than was Allason, another friendship developed for Allason in the back country with an old family acquaintance. It was in late 1764 that Allason informed his brother Robert that Alexander White, who may have been related to Robert Allason's wife, had stopped at Falmouth enroute to the

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43 Archibald Ritchie to Allason, November 19, 1762, Loose Papers. There was apparently a constant exchange of letters between Ritchie and Allason as well as verbal messages during this period. Ritchie's courage was manifested in Robert Wormley Carter's Daybook on March 1, 1766, "Just returned from Hobbs Hole where I met a large Company of Gentlemen who assembled to compell Mr. Archd Ritchie to sign a paper wherein he stated remorse at declaring his intention to clear a ship out with stamped paper & forced to swear that he would never use stamped paper -- This he did in the most impudent way I ever saw anything done; altho' surrounded by about 300 men who were justly incensed at his behaviour & who were all most all well armed." Louis Morton, "The Daybook of Robert Wormely Carter of Sabine Hall, 1766," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 68 (1960), 309.

44 Almost every letter exchanged between Ritchie and Allason contained information of this nature. At least thirteen from Ritchie to Allason still exist in the Loose Papers for this period.

45 Allason to Robert Allason, November 30, 1764, Letter Book. For the activities of Alexander White in the Virginia Federal Convention of 1788 see R.A. Brock, ed., Collections of the Virginia Historical Society, II, Hugh Blair Grigsby, The History of the Virginia Federal Convention of 1788, with Some Account of the Eminent Virginians of that Era who were Members of the Body, (Richmond, 1891), 71-214. Brock notes that Alexander White was the youngest of three sons of Robert White of Frederick and had evidently matriculated from the Inner Temple in London on January 22, 1763. It is possible that the young White had visited relations in...
Shenandoah Valley where White's older brother lived. Within three months White had obtained a license to practice law in the courts of the colony, although it did not particularly meet Allason's approval as he said that "there is rather too many of that profession [lawyers] already in this country as well as elsewhere." Nevertheless, Allason befriended the young man in several ways. First, White asked Allason to attempt to get an advance of two hundred pounds on his inheritance through Robert Allason in Glasgow, although his Scottish benefactor was still alive. This proposal of White's was accomplished. White also asked that Allason intercede for him for the post of "Attorneyship" of Fauquier County with the Attorney General of the colony. He suggested that Allason ask the two burgesses from Fauquier to represent his interest in Williamsburg, where White also expected Allason to be when the Assembly met. White, at least, thought that Allason possessed sufficient influence in the Scotland for the following year as he later received an inheritance from a "Mrs. White" of Glasgow. Possibly the exact relations of White to the Allasons could be discovered in Glasgow, but the point is not essential to this study. Later White referred to a "Mrs. Young" in Glasgow who accepted his bill on her for one hundred pounds.

47 Alexander White to Allason, March 7, 1765, Loose Papers.
48 Alexander White to Allason, June 23, 1766, Loose Papers.
49 Alexander White to Allason, (n.d.) October, 1765, Loose Papers.
colonial capital by 1765 to assist him in the achievement of this political position -- a sign of the rising status of Allason in the affairs of the colony. In any event, Allason retained White to represent him in Hampshire and Frederick Courts and in collecting debts on the other side of the Blue Ridge. Years later, White was to continually express his appreciation for the kindesses shown him by Allason as he was getting established in his practice. The friendship between White and Allason was to last Allason's lifetime.

Other friends and acquaintances also sought to use Allason's growing influence in the colony as did Robert Brent when he asked Allason to intercede with Andrew Sprowle. The last had obtained a court order against Brent for a debt and was preparing to order the sale of Brent's property to satisfy the debt. Brent pointed out to Allason both the wealth of his friends and of his father and closed, "I rely on your Friendship to serve me in this disagreeable affair, as far as possible were you to write Mr. Sprowle the state of ye case it wou'd, I am certain, make him easy." 50 Whatever Allason's response to this appeal to use his influence with the most eminent merchant in the colony, the appeal itself is

50 Robert Brent to Allason, December 26, 1768, Loose Papers. Brent reminded Allason that Charles Carroll of Maryland had offered to loan him the money necessary to pay his debts, but he, Brent, would rather not be obligated to Carroll. He also pointed out to Allason that his father's estate would exceed the debt by ten times over. The notable point of the affair, in addition to Allason's influence in the eyes of an outsider, was the ethic by which Brent thought it permissible to owe Sprowle, a Scottish merchant, but did not want to transfer the obligation to Charles Carroll, a colonial and fellow planter.
significant of Allason’s rising status and growing strength with the leading colonial merchants.

Allason did not discontinue relationships when they ceased to have future economic or political advantages. After Alexander Walker failed in business, Allason continued to correspond with him and assisted in the settling of his affairs with the Bairds. In another case, when Robert Douglas, master of the Bolling, quit the sea and went into business in Port Glasgow, Allason offered advice on trade from the viewpoint of a merchant.  

Allason joined the Masonic Lodge in Falmouth in the middle years of the decade and by March, 1767, had increased his status to Master Mason. It seems likely that most of the mercantile community of Falmouth belonged to this lodge. Just as Allason was invited to join the Masons, he was also

51Douglas’s last voyage across the Atlantic apparently contributed, understandably, to his decision to settle on the land in Scotland. After being delayed on Virginia waters in the summer of 1760 Douglas’s ship, the Bolling, was struck by lightning only three leagues east of Cape Henry, Virginia, and the main mast, main top mast, and the top gallant were all torn away. The wind also became contrary and the ship barely made its way back to Hampton Roads. After repairs had been made to the extent possible and the vessel’s guns had been taken off to lighten the load, the Bolling sailed once more. The anxieties of the captain were revealed by the careful instructions he sent to Allason concerning the disposition of his estate should he fail to reach his destination in Britain. Douglas did arrive home with the Bolling intact and a dry cargo after a five weeks voyage but he wrote that “I am now tired of the sea” and announced plans for opening a ship chandlery in Port Glasgow. Robert Douglas to Allason, July 7 and July 23, 1760, and March 20, 1761, Loose Papers.


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elected as a Trustee of Falmouth on May 24, 1764, by the incumbent members of that body. A vacancy had been created in the town government by the death of Robert Jackson, probably the same "Mr. Jackson" Allason had replaced in handling the affairs of Thomas Lord Fairfax in Falmouth. Other Trustees of the town who were elected at about the same time as Allason were Arthur Morson, John Knox, John Neilson, and Alexander Cunninghame. These men were all merchants. Peter Hedgins, John Fitzhugh, Roger Dixon, and James Buchanan had been Trustees before the influx of new members began.53

The merchant-dominated Trustees -- in the fashion of a Chamber of Commerce that would become familiar in American cities in later years -- labored to increase their town's potential for trade by supervising the ferry and buying better equipment for it, improving the wharf, establishing a water supply for the town, and petitioning the assembly for fire and sanitation regulations.54 Growing in stature both in trade and in the eyes of man, Allason well warranted the observation bestowed upon him by a friend, "You are the

53 Proceedings of the Trustees of the Town of Falmouth, May 24, 1764, Photostatic Copy, Virginia State Library. There is a gap in the minutes of the trustees from 1727 until 1764, although new members were elected in that period.

54 Ibid. passim. On April 15, 1769, William Allason was authorized by the Trustees to purchase two "fire engines" and fifty leather buckets for the town. The town also petitioned the Virginia Assembly to prohibit the construction of wooden chimneys and to prohibit loose hogs within Falmouth.
Opinions, Views, and Intentions

As Allason became more deeply entrenched in Virginia business and society his own attitudes toward the colony and the outside world also changed. In addition to selling tobacco — received in payment for goods — in Virginia for the best price available rather than risk its fate on the British market, Allason also came to call himself "Virginian." In 1767 he informed his brother Robert that he meant to "remain here which I expect must be my residence for some years to come, in one way or another." Several factors probably entered into Allason's mental acceptance of becoming a permanent resident of Virginia. First was his increasing affluence and the ties with which the operation of the store bound him. Much of his holding was in the form of debts due him, debts impossible to collect quickly. Second, quite likely his increasing reputation within the structure of Virginia society also discouraged him from abandoning the colony. Finally, when Allason crossed the Blue Ridge with his store and its customers a vision of the possibilities of the new


56 Allason to Robert Bogle, February 25, 1763, Letter Book. In this letter Allason spoke of "We Virginians," but exactly what he meant by this is difficult to determine.

57 Allason to Robert Allason, October 3, 1767, Letter Book.
land may have come to him and caused him to turn back on the sea and what lay beyond it to face the future in the west.

Allason's implicit decision to remain in Virginia probably came some time after his selection as a trustee of Falmouth but certainly by 1767 as he was in that year attempting to increase his holdings in real estate. He spent thirteen pounds for a title search to gain clear title to the land granted John Kemp much earlier in the century by the Northern Neck proprietor. Allason felt that the land had escheated back to Lord Fairfax, and with his connections at Greenway Court he was sure of having the land granted to him if he could show that the title had been vacated. He was successful in gaining title to the land although he had to vie with Colonel Charles Carter over the land. Carter had been cutting timber from the land, and only court action by Allason forced him to desist. In addition, Allason, in July, 1767, bought another lot in Falmouth from the city's trustees. These acquisitions of land connote a long term commitment to remaining in the colony.

Troubled Waters

With the close of the war between the British and the French and their allies in 1763 and the accompanying


59 Allason to Joseph Jones, September 26, 1769, Letter Book.
economic turbulence that ensued in the years from 1760 to 1763, Allason may have expected some years of peaceful trade that would compensate for the past difficulties. This, of course, was not to be, for the Stamp Act crisis in 1765 and 1766 gravely affected trade. But even earlier there were hints of dissatisfaction within the colonies with the enforcement of the British intercolonial commercial policies. In August, 1760, Allason heard of the case of the Gravhound Warner, a Jamaican brig that burned in the absence of her crew while they were before an admiralty court because of information furnished by the mate of the ship, "a worthless fellow." In spite of the burning of vessel the court continued and "condemn'd because they had not a proper Register & Bill of Sale somewhat deficient. This was done tho' security was tendered till proper Papers could be produced. What a discouragement to trade in so young a country."60

Judging from the correspondence of Allason, nothing interfered with trade in Virginia during the decade of the 1760's to the extent that the Stamp Act problem did. Allason expressed his concern about the future in September, 1765. He had hoped to make some good remittances in tobacco that year but feared that the predicted bad effects of the Stamp Tax and the reaction of the Virginians would prohibit it. The most immediate result feared by Allason would be the impossibility of collecting the great number of small debts on

60 John Baird to Allason, August 4, 1760 (date received), 1760, Loose Papers.

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his books. Many times the cost of stamps necessary to prosecute a court case against a small debt would exceed the size of the debt itself. Allason also feared that the Act would drain the colony of all its money in a very few years and make the conduct of trade impossible.\footnote{Allason to Robert Allason, September 8, 1765, Letter Book.}

Within the colony Allason knew that many of the Justices of the Peace of the county courts had pledged not to conduct any more business after November 1, the date the stamps were to become required on all documents. Even though Virginians "seemed to be even more moderate than in most of the other governments," Allason feared that the courts would indeed close and make collection of debts all but impossible. Heated emotions prevailed in Virginia, and a town near Falmouth followed the "example from a Northern Government and burnt the efigy \textit{sic} of the Person appointed for the distribution of the stamps here tho he is not yet arrived from England and a native \textit{of} Virginia."\footnote{Ibid.}

Allason was uncertain in 1765 how the situation would end, but he knew that the immediate effects were detrimental to trade. Those who had money or goods in the hands of others were unable to collect. The merchant's problem was created by Parliament's failure to provide the plaintiff in debt cases the right to add the stamp costs to the suit costs in the event of a favorable judgment. Allason was certain that

\footnotesize
\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Allason to Robert Allason, September 8, 1765, Letter Book.}
\bibitem{Ibid.}
\end{thebibliography}
this feature would "not be added to the costs against the
defendant by the Assembly of the Colony, who seems determined
by their last resolves not to pay any regard to parliament
alleging they have no right to be taxed by them." Many
colonists felt and hoped that William Pitt's entry in the
ministry would soon bring about a repeal of the law. 63

Allason's fears about the collapse of the collection
process through the courts were realized as eight days after
the law went into effect he reported:

We are entirely without all Law, and have been since
the first Nov. The Stamp Officer immediately on his arri-
val was under a necessity of giving a formal resignation
from under his hand. There is none other qualified for
that purpose, nor dare take it upon them from the enraged
Mobb and so it is in all the other governments in this
continent. No judgment can be formed of the consequences.
Its hoped that the Parliament now setting will repeal it,
if they should not its the opinion of many that it never
will take place, by which we should have nothing but
anarchy & confusion in every part of this extensive coun-
try. Ships are in danger in crossing the sea not with-
standing all the clearance that the Governor & Custom
house officers can give them. They are subject to be
seized by the first King's Ship they meet with, and also
in the first port they put into at hime for want of their
clearances being on stamped Paper, which is nowwhat to be
had. The Bogle I apprehend will go without any clearance
at all rather than give a letter of idemnification to the
officers who require it for their own security, which is
thought by many to be a most unreasonable request, yet
some have given it rather than be detained. I suppose of
consequence the Bogle will be seized at home, tho on a
proper representation will be soon acquitted. In short
we are at this time so situated that we cannot take a
bond or other security for a debit, and if any person in
debt was even to come and inform him to whom he owes,
that he was going to move and would not pay, its not even
in the power of the creditor to stop him or his effects,
as formerly. Most of the Planters are well acquainted

63Ibid.

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in this law, and many have already valued themselves upon it.

Allason was informed of the ideas and thoughts of the mercantile community in Britain primarily through Alexander Walker. There, too, the mercantile community was endeavoring to have the Stamp Act repealed. Walker wrote Allason that all the trading towns in Britain sent two representatives to London to lobby legislative repeal, although the attitude in the home countries was ambivalent at this time, some wanting "to carry fire and sword amongst you [the colonists], hanging a dozen colonels, etc." 65

It is well to remember that the constant theme of Allason's correspondence was upon the promotion of the interests of trade. Trade became an end in itself to those engaged in it, developing an identity to its supporters and participants. To the merchants it appeared that trade should be above politics for as Walker explained, it "is a hard struggle twixt the old and new ministry, you'll say its hard Trade should suffer by the contests of parties but go it as it will, Trade will suffer this year, as it will be sometime before matters be brought to goe in ye proper channels after such a pause." 66

64 Allason to Robert Allason, November 8, 1765, Letter Book.
65 Alexander Walker to Allason, January 21, 1766, Loose Papers.
66 Ibid.
The widening split between the British and the colonists was apparent in the letter received by Allason from Walker in March, 1766, carrying the news of the repeal of the Stamp Act. Walker, in all other cases in the correspondence a gentle, understanding man, observed that "no doubt the rejoicings over No. America will be inexpressible, I can well form an idea of their excessive madness on such an occasion, from what I have seen displayed by the Conquerors at a Cockmatch." Walker continued that the colonies had carried the day only because there had been a fight between factions in Parliament and that William Pitt had abused the other party frightfully in a speech in Commons, inferring that the anti-colonial party had gained strength for the future from Pitt's outburst. After summarizing these political developments, Walker informed Allason that the "Virginians should write a letter of thanks to the city of Glasgow, for their pushing a Repeal, but I suppose they'll say 'D we'll gie them thanks, had it not been for their own Interest they would not have been so keen." Walker's predictions of the future were accurate and disclosed what well may have been on the minds of many Britons during the settlement of this prologue to the American War for Independence. "I doubt not," he wrote to Allason, "but it will be, after this, a hard matter to tax No. America, however it may be expected that something will be done by degrees, to hinder their throwing off the Yoak, wch they think Gaules them so
The repeal of the stamp duties, however, did not end the restrictions of trade under the laws of Britain. In the summer of 1768 Archibald Ritchie complained to Allason that the customs officer had troubled him "for want of a certificate of Bond being given for non-Enumerated commodity" and that he had to give bond to abide by the ruling of the Boston Board of Customs and "if they think any fraud was intended they will order a prosecution."  

Allason's Society

Although trade was the center of Allason's life during this period, it was not his whole life. Allason participated in other activities and established at least part of a

67 Alexander Walker to Allason, March 8, 1766, Loose Papers. There are, of course many secondary accounts of this period, but two that seem particularly appropriate are Edmund S. and Helen M. Morgan, The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution, (New York, 1965), passim, and Walter E. Minchinton, "The Stamp Act Crisis: Bristol and Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 73, (1965), 145-155. Minchinton points out that the trading community of Bristol, like Glasgow, supported the repeal of the Stamp Act. In an earlier letter than the one quoted here, Walker had commented about the Stamp Act Resolves of the Virginia House of Burgesses: "By the resolves of the house of Burgesses, it would appear as they were resolved to throwe off the British Yoke altogether, it has greatly surprised everybody here to see them so audacious & must surely bring them into some scrape or other, as such can never be passed over in silence by his majesty or good buye to you Colonys in America," Alexander Walker to Allason, July 29, 1765, Loose Papers.

68 Archibald Ritchie to Allason, June 23, 1768, Loose Papers.
colonial gentleman's library. In addition he attended horse races, fairs, and as mentioned above, the theater. Yet another form of entertainment that he participated in was billiards, although this, too, was the scene of business exchange at times.

Colonial society was not always polite and discreet. The merchants of Falmouth were disturbed by the lawlessness and arson that threatened and sometimes struck their businesses. In 1769 Allason was obliged to join his fellow traders and other citizens of Falmouth after James Buchanan's house and kitchen had been burned by "some malicious person." Allason reported that "this audacious villainy obliges us to keep watch every night and I do suppose will continue through the summer & longer if necessary. It will come each of our turns once in two weeks which will be no great inconvenience."

As the 1760's drew to a close and Allason cut his direct dependence on Britain, his concept of the identity of trade was more and more being threatened by the rising

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69 A Virginia Gentleman's Library as Proposed by Thomas Jefferson to Robert Skipwith in 1771 and Now Assembled in the Brush-Everard House, Williamsburg, Virginia, (Williamsburg, Va., 1959), passim. Jefferson's correspondent was apparently the same "Boby" Skipwith to whom Allason had given a saddle in the late 1750's.


71 Allason to John Gray, February 7, 1769, Letter Book. It was apparently after this incident that the town Trustees authorized Allason to buy the two fire engines (see footnote 52). Allason also wrote to Gray that "we are... getting two fire engines for the use of this town."
animosities between the American colonies and the mother country. The very things that were implied in the letters Allason wrote and received from his fellow Scots of Glasgow concerning the virtue of unrestricted trade were soon to be placed in a more formal setting by another man of Glasgow, Adam Smith. During the next decade many of these same Scots were going to face the problem of how they could best continue their trade in the face of insurrection on the part of the American colonists. William Allason was to avoid the worst of that dilemma by following an older concept of the good life.
CHAPTER V

INDEPENDENT MERCHANT

Personal Life

The years between 1770 and 1775 encompassed deep changes in William Allason's personal life. Although he may have begun his "Americanization" by following his best economic opportunity, he was soon bound to the New World by emotion. In this period he married, became a father, developed ties to the soil as a planter, and, finally, buried loved ones in the churchyard of St. Paul's Parish in Falmouth. The development of these bonds in Virginia were paralleled during the same years by a partial disruption of his links with Britain.

Abandonment of the partnership arrangement may only have been a symptom of deeper problems in the relationship of Allason with his half-brother Robert, but it did coincide with the development of animosity between the two. After the decision was made to dissolve the partnership, William Allason continued to extend overtures of friendship toward Robert. The latter's son and namesake was invited to come out to the colony in the summer of 1770 to be trained as a merchant by William and David, because his father found that his continued
academic training in Glasgow was becoming too great a financial burden to bear.\(^1\)

Although Allason expected the arrival of his nephew in the late summer of 1770 on the ship \textit{Robert},\(^2\) young Robert Allason failed to arrive. Ostensibly the reason was that the boy's mother would not allow his going out to the new world, but the feelings between William Allason and his brother were suffering at this time because of a residual question concerning the partnership -- Allason's commission for the collection of the debts due the old concern.\(^3\)

\(^1\)Robert Allason to Allason, November 15, 1769, Loose Papers. Robert wrote "As to my Son his Inclination is much for going out to you, those his mother does not seem so fond of it, I am keeping him \(\textit{torn}\) & he is learning at Present Musick Drawing Geography Mathematicks Surveying French, he is not fond of Dancing, but seems much Inclined to his Education, & no money is spared upon him, he costs me above £70 a year & must be left to some Business in the spring, I shall do every thing in my power to Qualify him for that Business he Inclines to follow, But as I have no spare money, it must end in his coming your way."

\(^2\)Allason to Captain \(\text{no first name given}\) Smith, August 14, 1770, Letter Book. Allason informed the master of the ship \textit{Robert} that "if my nephew Robert Allason is passenger with you please have \(\textit{him}\) remain on board 'til you come up to Port Royal to which I will send for him on the first notice of your being there."

\(^3\)Allason to Robert Allason, October 16, 1770, Letter Book. This question will be discussed later in dealing with Allason's business affairs. The implication that business relationships influenced the decision not to permit young Robert to go to the colony is in Allason's letter. After stating his case for more compensation than Robert, his brother, thought he should have, Allason continued, "I sincerely wish the Concern had turned out more to our advantage. I observe Mrs. Allason would not permit Her Son to come abroad and that you have found other Employment for him, which I am sorry for. I had promised myself much satisfaction in him, from the opinion \(\textit{sic}\) I had conceived of his abilities and from the great care you had been at to improve him. I was
Sometime during the spring of the next year Allason learned of the death of his mother from Robert Allason the elder. The relationship between the two brothers -- separated by the Atlantic Ocean -- had become so strained at this point that William wrote to an outside party to gain information about the settlement of his mother's estate. Unquestionably, ill feeling had long existed between Isobel Hall Allason and Robert, her stepson. She had instructed William Allason that she would leave the settlement details for her estate with John Parker, a dyer in the Gorbals in Glasgow. Later, Allason expressed openly the previously shielded ill feeling that had developed between himself and Robert in a letter to Alexander Knox, his sister's husband. He expressed thankfulness that his mother was at least removed from the "bitter malevolence with which they [her enemies] pursued her to the grave." William's rancor toward one of those who he felt persecuted his mother was revealed later in the letter, "RA's not attending the Burial [of Isobel Allason] was in character, which properly everyone ought to appear in."

Further, Allason said that he had in his possession "a
determined that no care should have been wanting on my part as well to have made it agreeable & as profitable to him in the end as possible. I was uncertain but that he was in Messrs. Grays's ship the Robert and was extremely uneasy on his account at that Ships very long passage of 13 weeks.

Allason to John Parker, May 1, 1771 and January 26, 1772, Letter Book. Allason's mother had written that "as she had some Bonds for money lent out & other papers of consequence all of which she intended for my use & to dispose of them as I think proper would be put into a small trunk which would be lodged in your hands for me."
Testimony of RA's regard for our Family, it's a paper I dare-say he does not suspect is in my possession, it's wrote with his own hand and was by some means procured by our deceased Mother, when the dispute with our Father was at the Height. Its a memorial I believe called & will be one to me of him. Its not my intention, nor never was, to do him or Family any prejudice, yet a forgiveness ought to take place, though not buried in oblivion."

The relations between Allason and his brother Robert paralleled the economic status of Robert during the next few years -- both declined. By the spring of 1773 Robert Allason's business affairs had completely collapsed, and his estate was in the hands of his creditors. Although all of his transportable property had already been sold by April 30, 1773, he was given six additional months before his real estate that he had rented out was sold to satisfy his debts. At this time he appealed to his brothers in Virginia for all the help they could give him. In particular he wanted them to collect the debts due the old partnership as fast as possible and send his share to him.

Robert Allason charged that he had been treated

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5 Allason to Alexander Knox, July 22, 1771, Letter Book. The mentioned paper by Robert Allason is regretably not preserved. There is no further clarification in the Allason papers on this point.

6 Allason to Robert Allason, November 14, 1771, Letter Book. Robert Allason's health was also troubling him at this time.

7 Robert Allason to Allason, April 30, 1773, Loose Papers.
consistently with ingratitude by those whom he sought to help. The open break between the two brothers was expressed by William in dealing with this accusation. He asked Robert to say more on the issue so that he could reply to the charges. The following year Allason wrote a mutual friend that he had ceased to correspond with his brother in Glasgow, although he received a letter from Robert shortly thereafter and responded to it. Open hostility existed between the two brothers now, and Allason responded that he would not answer some of the invectives contained in Robert Allason's letter -- fearing neither Robert Allason's own presence in Virginia nor his sending a power of attorney over to "Mr. Cunningham" to supervise his interests. William appeared to be operating from a clear conscience when he said that if his brother came, "I wou'd do everything in my power to make your stay here agreeable."

Allason's relations with the others of the family still in Scotland remained good despite one small flare-up. This occurred when he lectured by letter his unmarried sister Jeanie about being absent from their aging mother too much. For this his brother-in-law Alexander Knox corrected him, and Allason said that he had meant no harm to any one

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9 Allason to Alexander White, May 21, 1774, Letter Book.
10 Allason to Robert Allason, August 28, 1774, Letter Book.
but was only concerned for the well being of his mother. The death of Alexander Knox on February 18, 1774 brought from Allason some advice for his newly widowed sister that gives some insight into his own views. First, he advised her to employ "some trusty man that is acquainted with" accounts to bring the books up to date. They had fallen behind during Alexander Knox's extended illness before death. Allason was typical of merchants in his passion for properly maintained accounts. He also advised his sister to depend on James Knox, her brother-in-law and a bookseller in Glasgow, for advice rather than her brothers Robert and John, for he admired neither as a man of business. Mary had written William that she planned to continue the operation of her husband's brewery in order to protect the future of her two sons.

Allason inserted into the letter one of his rare outbursts of philosophy as he continued to advise his sister:

Let me put you in mind not to forget to give your Sons the best Education you can afford, which will be the greatest use to them, as well as Credit to you, even if their Fortunes shou'd in some degree be lessened by it. As the advantages of Learning to youth are perhaps more than you are acquainted with let me again say it ought not to be neglected. If either of them was old enough and wu'd be spared by you I wou'd gladly take him & put him in the best way I cou'd here, to whom, as well as

11 Allason to Alexander Knox, October 12, 1772, Letter Book.  
12 James Knox to Allason, March 20, 1774, Loose Papers.  
yourself every assistance in my power will at all times be given with the greatest goodwill, and tho' my distant situation puts it out of my power to be of the same use as nearer, yet I contribute all I can for your own & Sons advantage.

Allason continued his loving admonition to his sister:

One thing more I must take the liberty of mentioning, and earnestly requesting, that you may never undertake a second marriage, which very probably will be of the greatest prejudice to your Sons, and I cou'd venture to say, the Event wou'd be no additional happiness to yourself. As you are pretty well advanced in years, I hope this caution will be unnecessary.  

Allason's concern for his sisters was genuine, and both he and his brother gave their portion of their mother's estate to their sister Jeanie. They were particularly concerned about her, as she was unmarried. Thus it must have been with some relief that they learned in October, 1772, of her marriage to John Patterson, who was described as a promising young man and understands his Business well, and in a good way. Allason wrote almost immediately to his new brother-in-law and welcomed him into the family.

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\[14\] Ibid.
\[15\] Ibid. In this letter Allason makes it obvious that his father had been married twice when he said, "As our number by the same parents are reduced to Four, William, David, Mary, Jean its on that accoe account a stronger duty incumbent on us to be as usefull to each other as possible, and without reserve to communicate our sentiments to each other in the most affectionate manner."

\[16\] Allason to Alexander Knox, October 12, 1772, Letter Book.
\[17\] Allason to Alexander Knox, January 26, 1772, Letter Book.
\[18\] Allason to John Patterson, October 12, 1772, Letter Book.
Allason's deep regard for his mother's other children extended even to the widow of one of them. Sandy had left a young wife, Elizabeth Allason, in Liverpool, and Allason continued to correspond with her. He followed with interest her move, along with her parents with whom she was reconciled, from Liverpool to Philadelphia in 1772. Elizabeth Allason's father was looking for a place to settle and Allason said that he could offer no advice, not really knowing the conditions that existed in the other colonies.  

David Allason continued working for his brother in the store in Falmouth and on horseback collecting debts. At one time he intended setting up another small store in Frederick County but for some reason failed to do so. No rupture in the relations of the two brothers in Virginia brought this project into consideration, for William attempted to find a location for his younger brother to set up his store.

David Allason's plans may have been connected with William's growing interest in a lady of the area, Anne Hooe.

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19 Allason to Elizabeth Allason, June 2, 1772, Letter Book.

20 Allason to William Groves, January 25, 1772, Letter Book. Allason wrote, "My brother intends to settle in Frederick with a small assortment of Goods and thinks some part of the Carter Burwell, Esq. Land a few miles from the River might answer to build the storehouse on. He would propose to live near some road and not to be of any prejudice to any of the Plantations, nor would he want more land than would answer the purpose of a Pasture & Garden Spott with necessary timber for building, Rails, and Firewood. I expect it will be necessary you consult some of the young Gentlemen on this occasion when they will be pleased to say how long he may possess it, and if such is thought to be worth any annual acknowledgement, how much."
In any event, by the first of June, 1772, Allason's plans to marry were fixed. At this time he was forty-one years old, and the bride-to-be was thirty-two. The marriage took place on June 26, 1772. Anne Hooe was one of six or seven children born to John and Anne Alexander Hooe. Three sons had been born before her; Gerrard, Seymour, and John. Anne was the first born of four daughters, one of whom, Parthenia, apparently died in childhood.

Allason regretted waiting so long to get married, and both he and his wife wished they had married ten years earlier but Allason noted that were not even acquainted at that time.

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21 George H.S. King, ed., Register of St. Paul's Parish, George H.S. King (1960), 66. The register notes that Anne Hooe was born to John and Anne Hooe, December 7, 1739.

22 Ibid. Anne Hooe Allason brought with her a tract of land bequeathed her by her father. This tract of land will be discussed in greater detail below. John Hooe also apparently did not survive childhood.

23 Allason to Mrs. Elizabeth Allason, August 18, 1772, Letter Book. Allason's approach to his marriage in his correspondence varied from appropriately modest to jocular. On October 12, 1772, he described his wife as "worthy of a better Husband than I am able to make her" to his new brother-in-law, John Patterson. To Elizabeth Allason he described her as a "Lady I think every way qualified to make me happy" on June 2, 1772. On another occasion he wrote to John Washington thirteen days before his marriage that: "You as well as other, I find have got the report that I am about to be married, be it so, Its what we must all come to sooner or later. Lord help us!" The most earthy description of his marriage was written to Alexander Knox on October 12, 1772: "Its now time and I take this oppo. to inform you that I have entered into the Matrimonial Estate, which I dare say you are already acquainted with, having been a married man ever since the 26th June last when Miss Anne Hooe a Lady of Virtue good sense Family & middling Fortune allowed me, after Grace, to get to Bed to her, with whom I am as happy as could expect.
Allason’s marriage was, from all evidence, very happy. He went out of his way to get those things that Nancy, as he called his bride, would want to complete her household and satisfy her tastes — seeds for her garden from the estate of Lord Fairfax, and herring from his brother-in-law Alexander Knox in Scotland. The couple’s home was established in Falmouth, although Allason immediately began to prepare to move out of the town to a plantation home that he obviously felt would be more suitable for his wife.

By the end of May, 1773, William and Anne Allason were waiting for the birth of their first child, Allason curtailing his travels to be with his wife. Allason was or wish to be in that state, and I have no reason to think other wise than that it will continue, and in this I am very well assured of from her good disposition. I have also some reason to expect that I shall be a Father within 12 months from the date of our conjugall Tye."

Allason to Andrew Sprowle, November 5, 1772, Letter Book: "You may believe I am much obliged to you for your kind wishes on my entering the conjugal Estate, because I know them to be sincere. I am truly happy in the change & choice I have made, and make no doubt of its continuance." Allason to Alexander White, January 10, 1773, Letter Book. White, in good humor, had informed Allason that he had not heard from him since his wedding, to which the trade minded Scot replied, "I am extremely happy in the conjugall Estate, yet that does not occasion me to neglect my Business, had I had any particular Business that wou'd have required my applying to you, wou'd have broke silence."

Allason to Thomas Bryan Martin, November 3, 1772, Letter Book.

Allason to Alexander Knox, October 12, 1772, Letter Book.

Allason’s plantation operations will be discussed fully below.
solicitous of his wife's well being and insured that the midwife was close at hand as the time drew nearer. When born on May 30, 1773, the baby girl was christened Mary Seymour Hall Allason. The child was healthy and was destined to be the only child of William and Anne that survived, although her birth was followed by that of two other infants.

In his middle years health was becoming a more important subject to Allason. At one point he suffered severely from "tick bites," so severely in fact that he was forced to cease his travelling for a period. In addition he began to write down recipes for cures for various ailments in his

28 Allason to John Berryman, May 18, 1773, Letter Book. Berryman wanted the midwife, Mrs. Douglas, to come to his home for the birth of his own child. Allason was sympathetic, regretting that they lived so far apart that Mrs. Douglas could not care for both wives but insisted that as his wife had specifically requested Mrs. Douglas and he had first claim on the midwife, he would insist on her caring for Anne Allason.

29 Allason to Alexander Knox, November 25, 1773, Letter Book. "Mary" was for Allason's sister -- Alexander Knox's wife, Seymour for Nancy's brother -- Seymour Hooe -- at his request, and Hall for Allason's mother. Seymour Hooe was extremely conscious of his given name and named several of his children "Seymour" at least in part. See King, Registry of St. Paul's Parish. This is the only time in the correspondence that Allason's daughter is referred to as anything other than "Polly."

30 Allason to Andrew Sprowle, September 7, 1774, Letter Book. A boy, born prematurely, lived only twenty-six days following his birth in 1774.

31 Allason to Alexander Rose, August 13, 1770, Letter Book. "I cannot conveniently attend Stafford Court at this time, my legs being hurt so much by seed ticks -- can't get stockings on." Allason was listed as a Justice of the Peace for King George County in 1770; see Bulletin of the Virginia State Library, Henry R. McIlwaine, ed., Vol. XIV (1921), 101.
Letter Book -- one of the most common being various cures for the "gravel." In time of illness he availed himself of the services of Dr. Hugh Mercer of Fredericksburg, and on one occasion recommended a Dr. William McMillan to his sister-in-law for the extraction of a tooth that pained her. 

Medically, however, Allason's greatest fear for his family was of the epidemics that occasionally struck, the two most common being smallpox and the "flu." The latter struck heavily in the Allason household in the summer of 1773 shortly after the birth of Polly and almost caused the death of Allason's wife, Nancy. It did carry away a young man assisting Allason, Bob Washington, son of John Washington. Allason was willing to attempt inoculation for his "family" (including his slaves), although he had little fear personally

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32 Letter Book, passim.
33 Charles Taylor to Allason, September 14, 1774, Loose Papers, and Allason's Ledger "1," folio 268 and Ledger "2," folio 143.
34 Allason to Miss Susannah Hooe, August 14, 1772, Letter Book; and Allason's Ledger "1," folio 139 and Ledger "2," folio 119. These doctors were used to attend slaves as well as the relatives of Allason. Again it should be pointed out that when Allason spoke of his "family" in Virginia, he referred to slaves as well as kin. White midwives were employed to assist in Negro childbirth.
35 Allason to Archibald Ritchie, August 12, 1773, Letter Book. The effects of this epidemic were widespread and at least three deaths can be traced to it among Allason's acquaintances. The epidemic also struck hard the household of Archibald Ritchie although it caused no deaths among his immediate family. Nancy Allason was described as being "exceedingly reduced and was under the necessity of giving out nursing her little Girle" to a "wet" nurse.
of the disease.\(^{36}\)

Allason's increased interest in things medical appeared more of a symbol of his increased responsibilities for others than for any failure in his own health during this period. In November, 1773, he wrote Andrew Sprowle that, "I truly wish you as good health as I enjoy, for I am never sick."\(^{37}\) Thus the recipes for cures for various diseases were probably intended more for the care of his slaves -- whose number were steadily increasing primarily by purchase -- than for himself.

Many of the relationships that had begun as purely business matters in 1757 had, by 1770, developed into warm friendships. Specific cases have been mentioned in earlier chapters such as Archibald Ritchie, Andrew Sprowle, and Alexander White. The flourishing of these friendships with men of achievement -- although Alexander White's main achievement still lay in the future -- should tell us something of Allason's own character. Nevertheless, we cannot know for certain who was Allason's closest friend for all of these men were located some distance away from Allason, and we have his interaction with them preserved on paper but not much has survived about his Falmouth neighbors. Only later in his

\(^{36}\)Allason to Robert Allason, April 1, 1764, Letter Book. From his remark that he had less to fear from smallpox than his neighbors the most logical conclusion must be that Allason had suffered from the disease earlier himself.

\(^{37}\)Allason to Andrew Sprowle, November 21, 1773, Letter Book.
life do we learn of the deep affection for him of such Falmouth men as John Neilson and Gavin Lawson, ostensibly his competitors but also certainly his friends.

Probably no one was closer to Allason, other than his wife Nancy and his brother David, than Archibald Ritchie. Their correspondence was increasingly regular, and their expressions of affection almost certainly genuine. Although the main thrust of the letters exchanged between them continued to be about trade, remarks concerning their personal well wishes and affection increased. Their exchange of favors were acknowledged with such words as "I am perpetually troubling you with something or other," as Ritchie wrote to Allason in March, 1774. Perhaps a better indication of the personal friendship that had developed was the exchange of gifts for each other's family. The two merchants also shared some prejudices toward some of the planters, for when Robert Beverly failed to fulfill an agreement Allason remarked to Ritchie that "So much is the thanks from Great ones for advancing Cash for inspections."

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38 Archibald Ritchie to Allason, March 14, 1774, Loose Papers. On this occasion Ritchie asked Allason to find some one to select a good tract of land in the back country to be claimed by a friend in payment for a land certificate from the colonial government. Allason was becoming known for his knowledge of the inhabitants of the frontier area.

39 Allason to Archibald Ritchie, December 19, 1770, and December 24, 1771, Letter Book.

Allason's association with Andrew Sprowle also became warmer with the progression of years and mutual dealings. What began as a purely business association soon developed into a more permanent relationship as Allason obtained many of his West Indies goods from the Hampton Roads merchant and in turn supplied him with products of the back country. Ultimately, when Sprowle began to complain of the infirmities of old age in 1773, Allason invited him to leave the low lying area of Norfolk and come to Falmouth, which he described as very healthy, and spend a few months in Allason's home until he was restored to health. Some of Allason's nature was revealed when he wrote subsequently to Sprowle that "Had I but a small part of such a Fortune as you are possessed of I wou'd retire from the trouble attending a Life of Business, and give room to others who had youth on their side to undergo its Fatigues." Allason was to prove one of those rare people who accept their own advice when his turn arrived -- although some outside influences may have encouraged him to do so.

Another previously mentioned ally in trade with Allason was Alexander White. Here too the relations grew closer with the passing years as White undertook the supervision of the bulk of Allason's trade on the western side of the Blue

41 Allason to Andrew Sprowle, January 28, 1773, Letter Book. Allason repeated his invitation on April 13, 1773, in another letter.

42 Allason to Andrew Sprowle, November 21, 1773, Letter Book.
Ridge. White had finally come into his inheritance of five hundred pounds sterling from Edinburgh, Scotland, on the death of a Mrs. White in that city. White was also buying sufficient goods to enable him to open a small store in the Shenandoah at this time, although he continued to collect debts for Allason in that area. Allason and White had business differences, but they managed to overcome them without permitting their personal relations to suffer. This fact, along with William Allason's integrity among those who knew him, was revealed by White's request to settle his account in which White said that he would trust Allason to treat him properly in crediting him for his debt collecting activities.

When James Blair, merchant in Westmoreland County, died in 1772, Allason immediately offered his assistance to the widow. Allason had known the Blairs well in his trip to Virginia in the early 1750's. Allason extended his help to the widow by inspecting the account books left by her husband and also by helping her rent out her skilled slaves for the best possible price. Allason's closest friends during this period were men of commerce, and trade still encompassed the center of his interest.

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43 Alexander White to Allason, February 13, 1771, Loose Papers. White's brother John received fifteen hundred pounds through the same bequest.

44 Alexander White to Allason, October 17, 1774, Loose Papers.

Business Practices

One of the first matters that William Allason had to settle was the closing out of debts due the old partnership. When he took over the company Allason purchased the inventory on hand but not the overall assets of the company. Thus there were many accounts receivable due the company. The first questions to be settled was who was to collect the debts and what was to be his commission. Allason was the obvious choice to collect the debts as he was the sole partner on the scene — both John Gray and Robert Allason were in Scotland, and John Mitchell was in Fredericksburg involved in his own business — and he knew the accounts and conditions of the indebtedness. Allason quickly was decided upon as the proper person to bring in the outstanding debts — most of which were very small as we have seen. For his commission Allason proposed ten percent, to which John Gray agreed. Robert Allason, in desperate need of ready money, objected strongly and proposed five percent as the standard for collecting debts. William Allason pointed out to his brother that he was not dealing with debts in a settled area such as Scotland or the Tidewater area of Virginia but with those in which he would have to travel extensively and be at considerable expense to collect. 46

46 Allason to Robert Allason, October 16, 1770, Letter Book. In this letter William Allason quoted the letter of John Gray agreeing that the collection of the debts was worth ten percent of their value. One of the charges Gray said

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In accounting for debts due the company, Allason classified them as bad, doubtful, or good with respect to the possibility of collection. Little progress was made in collecting old debts during the early years of independent operation, but by 1774 considerable progress had been made in calling them in. From the figures contained in Table XII it is easy to see why Allason contended that opening a store in Virginia entailed a long term commitment.

The contents of Table XII bear out what Allason had contended as early as 1758 -- that long term credit was an accepted practice in Virginia and that perpetual debt had become the accepted practice for Virginia planters, large and small. This was no isolated phenomenon occurring immediately prior to the American War for Independence. Particularly in the last two years of the above period Allason was stretching every resource to call in the obligations due him either personally or to the old partnership. 47

The problem of the capital investment tied up in accounts receivable was one that Allason began to attempt to correct early in his career as an independent merchant. In February, 1771, he wrote that what engrossed his attention was mainly the collection of the debts due the old company on October 1, 1769, the day that it officially ceased operation that the collector would have to pay would be "gratuities" to the sheriffs and their assistants, "who may run a risk by doing his duty in securing a debt."

47 This will be discussed in greater detail later in this study.
<table>
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<th>Description</th>
<th>1 Oct. 1770</th>
<th>1 Oct. 1771</th>
<th>1 Oct. 1772</th>
<th>1 Oct. 1774</th>
<th>1 Oct. 1775</th>
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<td>126</td>
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</tr>
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<td>104</td>
<td>74</td>
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<td>275</td>
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<tr>
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<td>857</td>
<td>857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount * Good</td>
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<td>4587</td>
<td>4505**</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1482</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Amount is the amount in pounds current due the partnership of William Allason and Company that dissolved October 1, 1769, to the nearest pound.

**This figure includes £2105 owed by William Allason, who assumed responsibility for this amount of debts, possibly as a move to gain operating capital for his own firm.

Over two years later his goals were still the same, for he wrote Andrew Sprowle in November, 1773, that "My present plan, is to order next to no Goods for some time, until I get out of Debt, which I expect to do nearly before the year goes about, and then to do but little, and

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48 Compiled from Lists of Balances Due, 1770-1775, Allason Papers. Complete figures were unavailable for 1773.

49 Allason to James Blair, February 8, 1771, Letter Book.
that on the best terms."  

The great shortage of currency in the colony often forced trade to be conducted through barter as Allason pointed out in 1773, "it would not suit me to buy either flour and hemp otherwise than in Barter, for money is so exceeding scarce that I find you will find some difficulty in getting it for these articles."  

The merchants also cooperated in more direct ways, mainly to control the price they were willing to pay for tobacco. Each year they agreed locally on the price they would pay for tobacco, and although this agreement was often breached, it was attempted again and again. The merchants of the Fredericksburg, Falmouth, Aquia, and Dumfries area signed an agreement on January 10, 1771, not to exceed the price of eighteen shillings a hundredweight for tobacco, either directly or indirectly. It was this same type

50 Allason to Andrew Sprowle, November 21, 1773, Letter Book.

51 Allason to William Kennedy, May 17, 1773, Letter Book. For other letters confirming the prevalence of barter see Allason to: Andrew Sprowle, June 10, 1772; James Vaughan, June 18, 1772; John Leckie, February 5, 1773; Neil McGoull, February 9, 1773; John Alexander, March 2, 1773; Captain Hatch, May 13, 1773; William Gamble, November 6, 1773; Joseph Holmes, February 10, 1774; and Alexander Campbell, January 11, 1775. There will be further discussion of the currency shortage later as part of the general economic environment.

52 Agreement entered into by the Merchants in Fredericksburg, Falmouth, Aquia, Dumfries etc. . . 10th January 1771. The signatories of this document were, according to Allason, Andrew Shepherd, James Robison, Arthur Morson, William Allason, James Duncanson, John Glassell, William Porter, Haslop and Blair, Neil W. Cosell, George Mitchell, Alexander

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agreement that Allason had violated in 1760 when he was attempting to "engage the trade." Merchants continued to violate these agreements for the same reasons in the 1770's.\textsuperscript{53}

The merchants were provoked into this specific action by an association of the planters on the Potomac River, pledged not to dispose of their tobacco for less than a certain price. This organization of planters agreed that a committee of their number would fix the price at which they would sell. It would be necessary, in order to counter this move of the planters, for the merchants in Glasgow to also agree to withhold their ships from the Potomac until the planters broke, Allason maintained. Any action by the merchants in Virginia was always in danger of being undercut by the arrival of new merchants or factors on ships from Scotland who would be outside the agreement. Thus Allason saw the Atlantic commercial empire as a unit and positive action at one point was impossible without coordination and cooperation throughout the entire trade area.\textsuperscript{54}

Blair, William Reid, Gavin Lawson, Henry Mitchell, Woddrow and Neilson, James Robb, and James Buchanan (in order listed).

\textsuperscript{53} Allason to Andrew Sprowle, February 15, 1771. Letter Book. This letter contains a good and brief temporary discussion of this practice -- Allason pointed out that the agreements tended to collapse when there was a short crop of tobacco -- just when most useful. James Robb violated this specific agreement in the spring of 1772 in order to lure the trade from upper Louisa County from Page's warehouse to Fredericksburg. Allason to John Gray, May 26, 1772, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{54} Allason to John Gray, October 23, 1770, Letter Book. This may be one of the most significant letters that Allason wrote. It certainly indicates dissatisfaction on the part of the planters concerning their relations with the Scot
The merchants along the fall line of the Rappahannock and the neighboring towns on the Potomac had an example in colony-wide cooperation in the Committee of Trade that had been formed in Williamsburg in June, 1770. Allason, however, like many other merchants found attendance at the Williamsburg meetings unprofitable and went only when it met his convenience.

In addition to the formal agreements of cooperation there were many cases of individual cooperation among the merchants. The difficulty of travel and communication made the exchange of favors imperative in order to carry out a lucrative trade. Not only did Allason cooperate with his previously mentioned friends but merchants with no continuing connection with Allason called upon him to collect debts, sell merchants. It also indicates willingness to organize to express that dissatisfaction. Another significant point was Allason's omission of London or any of the English outports in his consideration of the required mercantile cooperation on the other side of the Atlantic. It also points out the weakness of the merchants' attempts at organization -- the arrival of a new trader who would raise the tobacco price in order to build up a large number of customers quickly. Allason to Archibald Ritchie, June 12, 1772, Letter Book, also shows his fear of the competitive methods of new merchants, in this case George Thornton and Company.

Allason to Andrew Sprowle, April 29, 1772, Letter Book. In another letter Allason said he ceased attending the merchants' meetings because "the detention is become so great." The organization of the merchants must have caused delay in getting business accomplished at the colonial capital.

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Soltow, Economic Role of Williamsburg, 11-13. Allason's friend Andrew Sprowle was the chairman of this organization. See Virginia Historical Register, Vol. 3 & 4, p. 80. William Allason attended representing Falmouth at the first meeting.

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goods, exchange goods, and provide bills of exchange.57

Allason's business had reached the point by the spring of 1772 that he felt he needed another young man to assist in the store. This was probably necessitated by the absence of himself and David for extended periods as they contacted debtors and travelled to the various courts attempting to collect. Allason's impending marriage may have been another consideration. In any event, in April, 1772, Allason wrote Andrew Leckie of Port Royal inquiring about the availability of his "young man," John Parlane.58 Another young man Allason considered and finally accepted as an assistant was the son of John Washington, young Robert Washington. By June 13, 1772, Allason had reached an agreement with John Washington to take in his son and "instruct him in the Mercantile Business."59

57 Allason's correspondence is replete with this type letter, for example see Alexander Baine to Allason, September 3, 1771, Loose Papers.

58 Allason to Andrew Leckie, April 27, 1772, Letter Book; and Andrew Leckie to Allason, April 28, 1772, Loose Papers. Leckie's letter to Allason includes the provisions he proposes for the young man. Parlane was to serve as "assistant or apprentice" for four years with room, board, and laundry furnished. His pay would be on a progressive scale of ten pounds for the first year, fifteen the second, twenty the third, and twenty-five pounds the fourth year. Allason did not accept this offer but instead took young Bob Washington.

59 Allason to John Washington, June 13, 1772. Letter Book. Young Washington cost less than did Parlane, starting at five pounds for the first year and increasing five pounds a year each subsequent year by the Memorandum of agreement between William Allason and John Washington attached to Letter from Allason to John Washington, October 23, 1772. Bob Washington died in the influenza epidemic of August,
One natural catastrophe that inflicted considerable loss on Allason was the flood that swept down the Rappahan­nock in the last week of May, 1771. Allason's store suffered extensive damage because of the flood and the whole town was "much disordered." The greatest damage was done to the public warehouses where the merchants' tobacco was stored. The men who had tobacco there -- the majority were merchants -- immediately put in claims against the colonial government for the restitution of their losses, because the tobacco was in the hands of the government when it was lost. Allason expressed his feelings concerning opposition to the claims in this manner: "Would you believe that some of the Gentlemen of the Assembly are unwilling that the sufferers in the Public Warehouses by the late Fresh, should be Reim­bursed by the Publick, its suspected this arises in the breast of some Patriotic Spirits, from a believe that the Tobacco was chiefly the property of the Merchants. Be as it will I make no doubt but that you will hear of its being strongly agitated in this house at their meeting."  

1773. Allason turned down the son of a third person, Samuel Williams of Richmond County. Allason to Samuel Williams, May 3, 1772. Apparently there was no difficulty in finding assistance for the store.


Allason to Thomas Bryan Martin, July 5, 1771, Letter Book. Some of the tobacco carried away by the flood belonged to Thomas Lord Fairfax and Thomas B. Martin, and Allason informed Martin that notes were being obtained from the inspectors at the warehouses for use in making claims against the colonial government.
Allason's suspicions of the final action of the Assembly were misplaced for the government appropriated thirty thousand pounds to settle the claims of those who had tobacco in the public warehouses. Falmouth did lose something else as a result of the flood: its inspection warehouse. There had been two in the immediate area and apparently the colonial government felt that a saving could be made by consolidating into one and the one selected was that referred to as Dixon's Warehouse.

Debts, Payments, and Commercial Relations

No other area of his operations caused Allason to exert as much effort as his attempts to collect debts due him. Many hours were spent on horseback travelling the undependable roads calling on debtors in an attempt to get payment. Additional time was also spent in writing to those who owed him money. Allason insisted upon payment so that he in turn could pay his creditors. In 1770 and 1771, Allason needed the money to pay off the old partners as well as

\[62\] Allason to Archibald Ritchie July 22, 1771. Letter Book. A commission was appointed to travel through the colony to make awards for the tobacco lost, the price given for the tobacco varied according to the area from which it came. Tobacco from the James River area was valued higher than that around Falmouth. The flood was colony wide and great damage was done along the James River as well as along the Rappahannock.

\[63\] Ibid. Allason cared little where the inspection site was located in Falmouth as long as it was convenient to him. See Allason to Archibald Ritchie, July 8, 1771, Letter Book. Later, the merchants united to oppose relocation of the warehouses. Allason to John Dixon, September 3, 1771, Letter Book.

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to pay for the goods he ordered from Britain. Then as the political climate became more heated he wanted money to pay all his debts in England before payment from the colonies was forbidden by the Continental Congress. At one time in 1771 Allason informed a remitter that the money came to hand at an acceptable season & in truth it is seldom otherwise with me. 

Various techniques were used by Allason to get payment of the debt due him during this period. In this area his actions showed increased sophistication over those used when he first came to the colony. Certainly they reflected his rising status in Virginia's mercantile society. What might be called his velvet glove technique involved asking the cooperation of a prestigious merchant in getting the debtor to pay. In 1773 Allason asked Andrew Sprowle to assist in the collection of a debt due from David Boyd. When this indirect approach failed Allason would approach the customer directly either in his own person or by sending David. If the debtor were literate the direct request for

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64 Allason to John Graham, September 10, 1770 and February 2, 1771; William Knox, March 17, 1771; John Smith, July 26, 1771; July 30, 1771, and August 21, 1771; Allason's attitude toward payment of his British creditors will be discussed in great detail later in this study.

65 Allason to Hector Ross, September 3, 1771, Letter Book.

66 Allason to Andrew Sprowle, April 13, 1773; and Allason to David Boyd, September 11, 1770, both in Letter Book.

67 Allason to Alexander White, February 3, 1771, Letter Book.

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payment could be made through a letter. In some cases Allason granted a delay at interest if the debtor agreed to sign a bond acknowledging the debt as binding. When all else failed however, Allason looked to the courts to enforce his claims. As Table XIII shows, in one year alone he caused ninety-one court cases to be prosecuted.

Although the courts almost always ruled in Allason's favor, there were occasions when the verdict was unsatisfactory to him. Those cases might have involved the inability to communicate quickly throughout the wide trading area served by Allason. Thus he attempted to contact his attorney in Frederick County, Alexander White, to correct the terms of a suit being initiated because some payment had been made on a bond unknown to White. The case would be lost and the costs incurred by Allason if it went to trial without the correction being made.68

The profile of debts owed Allason in the new arrangement roughly followed that in the old. (Compare Tables II and III with Table XIV.) A majority of the accounts owed nothing or less than five pounds on Allason's books -- the same situation that had prevailed in the period of the four-man partnership. It must be noted that it was at the end of 1772 that the British merchants began calling their debts in so as to meet the financial collapse of 1772 in England. Allason's attempt to collect his debt at that time would

68Allason to Alexander White, August 5, and September 10, 1771, Letter Book.
TABLE XIII
COURT CASES, 1771-69

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<td>King George</td>
<td>Alexander Rose</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Courta</td>
<td>James Mercer</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aHighest Court in the Colony.

69Compiled from Allason's Memorandum Books, Allason Papers.

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### TABLE XIV

**SIZE OFdebTS DUE ALLASON ON LEDGERS "1" AND "2"**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size in £</th>
<th>Ledger &quot;1&quot;, 1770-71</th>
<th></th>
<th>Ledger &quot;2&quot;, 1771-72</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 1</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 25</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 50</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 100</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 100</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owed 0</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

therefore have affected about eighty percent of his customers.

Another factor to be considered is that the indebtedness tables include all accounts, those of merchants as well as planters and others. Normally it was the merchants who had a zero or credit balance at the end of the accounting year. Therefore the percentage of planters owing Allason money would be increased considerably.

Allason's alarm at the prospect of the courts being closed becomes more understandable in the light of his dependence upon them to collect his debts. Thus, with political feeling running high in the colony in 1774, Allason wrote:

In this part of the Country, our Courts have given out doing Business, some of our Justices say they won't
even grant attachments, however necessary they may appear, if the debt is due to Gent. from Britain. Some Clerks also refuses [sic] to grant writs for the same reason, tho' they wou'd have it appear that this refusal proceeds only from the Expiration of their Fee Bill.

I wou'd seem as if their wou'd be great confusion this summer for want of Law, and that the Trading People at home connected here will suffer greatly by it as well as ourselves."70

Following the practice of most storekeepers, after repeated requests failed to bring payment, Allason cut off further credit to the debtor. Although usually done complete,71 there were occasions when only cash advances were halted.72

The composition of the body of Allason's debtors was similar to those described in a children's rhyme, because it included the rich man, the poor man, the preacher man, and the thief. Some, but not much, liberty might be taken in calling Ralph Wormeley, Nathaniel Burwell, Robert Beverly, and Hugh Nelson rich men. At least, these were part of that group that Allason referred to as the "Great Ones." Allason had little respect for some of these men of

70 Allason to Walter Peter, July 1, 1774, Letter Book. See also Alexander White to Allason, October 3, 1774, Loose Papers.

71 For examples see Allason to Peter Stephens, May 17, 1771, and to Edward Snickers, October 15, 1774, both in Letter Book.

72 Allason to John Crane, June 14, 1773, Letter Book. Crane ordered some goods from Allason and also requested that Allason send him five pounds cash which Allason declined doing on the grounds that Crane had paid him nothing since 1769.

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"great" family, referring to Burwell as a "Trifler." Certainly there was no shortage of poor who owed Allason money for they comprised the bulk of the debtors. The Reverend James Thompson, an Anglican rector, elicited at least two letters from Allason asking payment. Adam Rutter was the thief who was hanged in Williamsburg for stealing horses. He departed this life a financial debtor to Allason. The entire gamut of society comprised the list of Allason's debtors making it difficult to draw any evidence of struggle between the strata of society during this period, although there appeared to be considerable antipathy toward the creditors as a group.

Some attempted -- and some succeeded -- escaping their debts by fleeing beyond Allason's reach. A few attempted to hide in the frontier counties of Virginia, but some moved on to the Carolinas. As Table XV shows, more of the fleeing debtors came from unsettled regions than from

---

73 Allason to Archibald Ritchie, November 21, 1770, Letter Book contains the reference linking Wormeley to the "Great Ones." Allason to Archibald Ritchie, January 7, 1774, Letter Book. In this letter Allason not only calls Nathaniel Burwell a "Trifler" but he also says Wormeley is almost as bad. See Allason to Hugh Nelson, January 18, 1775, for a typical dunning letter to another of the "Great Ones."

74 Allason to Revd. James Thompson, November 2, 1772, and January 28, 1775, Letter Book.

75 Ledger "2," folio 88, in name of Adam Rutter, and Allason to Alexander White, January (n.d.), 1773. Allason noted in his ledger that "This man was hanged at Wmsburg, December 3, 1773, for Horse Stealing. Memo: ½ of the money recovered is to be paid Mr. Lee, from which ½ of the expense of attachment is to be deducted." Rutter was the father of another of Allason's customers.
older counties — as Table XVI shows, so did Allason's customers as a group. Debt size ranged from three shillings to over thirty-one pounds, with the majority definitely in the smaller category. Debt was clearly a problem that plagued a large percentage of the Virginia population whether their holdings were large or small and was one thing that a majority of the planters of Virginia had in common.

From Table XVI we can see the extent of Allason's commitment to the trade beyond the Blue Ridge. Obviously, it was feasible to trade across the mountains and Allason depended on it heavily. A comparison with Table V in Chapter

---

TABLE XV

COUNTY FROM WHICH CAROLINA DEBTORS FLED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County of Origin</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>County of Origin</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frederick</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>King William</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauquier</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Loudoun</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King George</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>King and Queen</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culpeper</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Westmoreland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spotsylvania</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

76 Compiled from "Carolina Debts" preceding List of Balances Due, October 1, 1770. In addition to these, Daniel Morgan delayed facing his debts by being "on the Publick Service" with Governor Dunmore against the Indians. Alexander White to Allason, October 3, 1774, Loose Papers.
II shows that the percentage of Shenandoah Valley accounts had grown from 4.3 percent of the total in 1760-61 to the maximum of 27.0 percent the first year that Allason was in business for himself alone. Allason thus had committed himself to the interior of the continent -- a fact that would make any future break from his enterprise more difficult.

The most startling change in Allason's clientele rests in the drastic favorable change in the retention -- or reacquisition -- rate of his old customers. From Table XI.

### TABLE XVI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Ledger &quot;1,&quot; 1770-71 No.</th>
<th>Ledger &quot;2,&quot; 1771-72 No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1770-71</td>
<td>1771-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culpeper</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauquier</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King George</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* The percentage was computed by dividing the total number of accounts in the ledger into the number from each county and multiplying by one hundred.

*b* The figures from Frederick County include those from Dunmore County which was created from Frederick County. This was done in order to better compare the figures from Chapter II with these.
TABLE XVII
SUMMARY OF BALANCES DUE ALLASON, 1770-1774

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Tobacco</th>
<th>Sterling</th>
<th>Current</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1, 1770</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>894·12·10</td>
<td>3431·0·1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 11, 1771</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>254·2·8½</td>
<td>5036·17·0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 10, 1772</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>271·7·1</td>
<td>8354·14·0½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1, 1773</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>6106</td>
<td>463·17·3</td>
<td>7581·16·3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 10, 1774</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>10,150</td>
<td>93·5·5½</td>
<td>10,137·11·2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aTobacco due Allason expressed in pound weight.

we discovered that under the old firm his retention rate had fallen to about twenty percent in Ledger "G"; that is, in that ledger only twenty percent of the customers had done business with Allason previously. After setting up in business for himself, however, the percentage was almost reversed as shown in Table XVIII, with only twenty-three percent of the names failing to appear in previous accounts. There are several possible explanations for this turn-about. First, Allason may have had more freedom of maneuver to appeal to the old customers and thus win them back. Second, he may also have been more aggressive in seeking out their business now that he was on his own, even to continuing to supply them as they moved west. A third reason may have been that the planters were more willing to do business with a merchant

77Compiled from Lists of Balances Due, 1770-1774.
without fixed connections with Great Britain although there is no evidence to support this hypothesis. A fourth explanation might be that Allason knew where some of the old customers had moved and sought them out across the Blue Ridge.

**TABLE XVIII**

**AGE OF ACCOUNTS ON ALLASON'S LEDGER "2"**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account</th>
<th>Ledger:</th>
<th>Commenced:</th>
<th>Years:</th>
<th>Number:</th>
<th>Percentage:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1760-61</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1761-62</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1762-63</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1763-65</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1765-67</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1767-68</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>1768-69</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>1769-70</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1770-71</td>
<td>137</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (new)</td>
<td>(1771-72)</td>
<td>142</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals 618 100.0

This would be in keeping with the dramatic rise in the number of accounts in the old Frederick County area. Fifth, and possibly the best explanation, is that Allason was willing to re-issue credit in order to re-engage the trade and therefore create an active account from an old inactive one. This would be in accord with the second explanation in that he was now willing to commit himself permanently to Virginia. In
light of his marriage and acquisition of extended real estate it makes sense that he would be less cautious of slow paying customers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Ledger &quot;1&quot;, 1770-71</th>
<th>Ledger &quot;2&quot;, 1771-72</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esquire</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. or Rev.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mister</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None (Woman)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A dramatic shift in either Allason's own attitude or within the customer group he served is revealed by comparing the figures in Table XIX with those in Tables VI and VII of Chapter II. The percentage of his customers that Allason felt free to not call "Mister" rose from slightly over fifteen percent to about sixty percent. Although this may be interpreted as a sign of the entire society becoming more informal.
or "democratic," if one prefers, it is safer to assume that it merely reflected a change in Allason's personal perspective. This in turn could be attributed to two changes. The first would be that Allason came to be more of an "American" and that the society was less deferential than that of Great Britain. The second possibility, already mentioned in Chapter II, is more probable, that this merely reflects Allason's own rise in the social structure (it could be ingloriously termed "pecking-order") of colonial Virginia. This is the more likely interpretation because of the corroborating evidence reflecting Allason's increased importance already mentioned.

The great rise in the percentage of accounts with merchants revealed in Table XX is the most startling change reflected in the occupations of Allason's account holders following his move into the status of completely independent merchant. This reflects, most likely, his independence to seek the best market for the goods he bought and sold. Although there were no complaints by Allason regarding any restrictions on his choice of merchants during life of the partnership, it must be assumed that he was expected, and indeed preferred, to buy through the partners and their connections in Great Britain. This of course was particularly true of his brother Robert. Again it must be noted that there was a continuing decline in the tendency to call the planters "Mister." Allason was as scrupulous in paying his debts as he was in collecting from those who owed him. The
difficult of travel and communication forced him to employ

TABLE XX

OCCUPATION OF "MISTER" AND "NO TITLE" ACCOUNTS, 1770-1772

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Ledger &quot;1&quot;, 1770-71</th>
<th></th>
<th>Ledger &quot;2&quot;, 1771-72</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mister</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Mister</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;At ___&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov't Assoc.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavern Kpr.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prizer/Jobber</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Master</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; ___ Security&quot;</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Son of ___&quot;</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagoner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentage is computed by dividing the total of that appellation into the number of that occupation in each ledger.

various methods to meet his obligations. Several have already

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been demonstrated: bills of exchange, shipment of tobacco, and barter of other goods. When these methods were not feasible he fell on other methods. In some cases he would ask his creditor to collect his debts for him and keep the proceeds -- this was particularly true when the merchants met in Williamsburg twice annually. On occasions a friend would be asked to collect not only for himself but also to collect and pay another creditor, as was the case with Henry Mitchell, who was asked by Allason to pay James Robison in Williamsburg for him in 1773.

Certainly one motivation for Allason in meeting his obligations was to maintain his credit within the commercial circles both in Virginia and in Britain. Generally, he was well able to do this, and he was a valued customer for those selling goods to the colony. John Elam and Sons of Leeds, England, remarked once about the lack of prompt payment from Virginia. When questioned by Allason they immediately replied they did not mean him and were willing to ship to him on credit at any time. Lippincott and Brown of Bristol solicited Allason's trade and were much embarrassed when one of his orders was misfiled by a clerk. In order to recover

79Allason to James Robison, November 1, 1773, Letter Book. For another example see Allason to Daniel Payne, November 7, 1772, Letter Book.
80John Elam and Son to Allason, December 31, 1772, Loose Papers. John Elam, judging from the "thees" and "thous" was a Quaker.
Allason's good will, the firm wrote: "We value your correspondence much from your punctuality in Remitting and there is not a man in Virginia that we would prefer sooner than yourself, whilst you continue so punctual & of it we have no doubt, These professions we assure you are sincere."\textsuperscript{81}

The merchants' appreciation of Allason's prompt remittances was based on the fact that the entire structure of trade was based on credit. The merchants in England were also buying their goods on credit and failure to pay promptly by large numbers brought the whole house tumbling. There were times when excessive credit had been issued. This was to happen in 1772 when the credit structure collapsed, and businesses failed in great numbers. Only about ten years earlier there had been similar failures in Britain -- that time followed by the Stamp Act crisis. Some appreciation can be given the lot of James Knox, book seller in Glasgow, when he wrote that "never was drink more acceptable to the parched and weary traveller than your remittance was to me, and had I not got it at the time it really would have been out of my power to have answered the present order."\textsuperscript{82}

Very early in 1775 Allason began a drive to pay off all of his debts to his "friends" in Britain who Allason conceived to be suffering from the effects of the monetary panic

\textsuperscript{81} Lippincott and Brown to Allason, July 25, 1772, Loose Papers.

\textsuperscript{82} James Knox to Allason, March 20, 1774, Loose Papers.
Money was scarce and tobacco brought little return at the time. In March, 1774, he wrote to the John Elam firm in Leeds, England, that "Our staple article, Tobacco, has got so very low as to go but a little way in discharging accoos. which puts it out of my power to answer my Credit with the same punctuality I am desirous of doing, and many others I can venture to say have difficulties equal to mine, complying with their engagements." By January, 1775, Allason was writing to his own debtors that he had to have money so that he could pay his accounts in Britain before all payments were forbidden as a result of political troubles. The First Continental Congress agreed to stop all trade and payments effective September 10, 1775. The clear fact was that Allason desperately tried to pay his debts before the opportunity to pay his creditors passed.

Why did Allason choose to pay his debts rather than

83 Allason to John Elam and Sons, March 3, 1774, Letter Book.
84 Allason to Revd. James Thomason, January 28, 1775; John Backhouse, January 14, 1775; Richard Clay, January 14, 1775; and Allason to Isaac Zane, January 23, 1775. Letter Book. R.H. Campbell, in his Scotland Since 1707: The Rise of an Industrial Society. (New York, 1965), on page 45 states that Scottish merchants pushed their agents in Virginia to obtain payment of all debts -- making their factors more unpopular. Allason was not a factor and there is no evidence that he was "pressed" to pay his debts completely. Although annual payments were expected on all debts, perpetual indebtedness was an intrinsic part of the system then at operation both in the overseas trade and the domestic trade of Virginia. Thus, just as most of Allason's customers constantly owed him, he in turn was usually obligated to the merchants from whom he obtained his goods. It was only when he became dissatisfied with a merchant in Britain that he paid off his debt and broke the relationship.
using the political climate as an excuse? He may have thought it was in his own self interest in order to protect his future credit and against future interest charges. It is certain that he did not see that the American colonies would soon successfully cut all ties with the British government, and possibly he was looking for the restoration of "normal" commercial relations with England. On the other hand, Allason was more and more turning to the land and developing the plantation he had acquired through his marriage. As he had earlier informed Andrew Sprowle, he wanted to retire from his labors after achieving a modest fortune. He had set about this some time before the troubles arose between the colonies and Parliament. The clearest explanation was that Allason was an ethical man, operating within the ethics of his time and situation. A man of "trade," he abided by the precepts of that profession and specifically in this one that debts were to be paid if at all possible. His act of paying his debts certainly increases the cogency of his own later observations of those who failed to pay their debts.

In any event, between October 16, 1774, and January 31, 1776, Allason bought over thirteen hundred pounds sterling worth of bills of exchange and used all of the bills to pay British debts. 85 In this manner he entered the period of

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the war between the colonies and Great Britain owing no one
in England or Scotland "one shilling, the case being, in
truth, otherwise." 86 This had not been true at any other
time since he had come to the colonies in 1757. Allason
worked solely through Thomas B. Martin, nephew and super­
visor of the aging Fairfax's interests in Virginia. Allason
performed several functions in addition to transshipping goods
between Greenway Court and the piers in Falmouth. First,
there was Allason's role in purchasing Negroes for the Fair­
fax estate. Allason was constantly on the alert for likely
slaves on the markets around Falmouth, and this especially
included Fredericksburg. There is little evidence though
that he purchased many slaves directly from the ship from
Africa; most of those he acquired for Fairfax and Martin
had been owned by planters. 87

A second function of Allason was to receive for
Lord Fairfax rents collected by the collectors of rents in
the area surrounding Falmouth. In this his role was larger
than that of a mere receiver for he was looked to by the re­
sidents of Greenway Court for recommendations for men to
serve as collectors. When one collector was slow turning in
rents, Allason reminded him that "as I was the cause of your

86 Allason to Lippincott & Co., November 20, 1783,
Letter Book.

87 For examples of correspondence dealing with this
role of Allason's see his letters to Thomas B. Martin, No­
vember 7, 1770; December 4, 1770; January 4, 1771; and March
11, 1774; Letter Book.
getting it [the collectorship] would be sorry they [Greenway Court] had any reason to complain." 88

Finally, Allason served as a link with the London merchant Samuel Atthawes, who was Lord Fairfax’s factor in London. Atthawes kept Allason informed of trade conditions in London so that he in turn could keep those at Greenway Court informed. Thus, in the 1772 British financial crisis Atthawes sent an express to Allason informing him of the event and advising how the Fairfax interest could be best protected. The main thing that Allason and the Lord Fairfax interest had to avoid in this crisis was buying bills of exchange on some of the financial houses that had failed. 89

Relations with another, Isaac Zane, were not as mutually satisfactory as those with the proprietor of the Northern Neck. Allason served Zane by receiving and shipping to Great Britain iron produced at Zane’s forge. In turn, many of Zane’s needs were purchased from Allason. The iron produced by Zane was of inferior quality and failed to bring the price that Zane expected in England. Consequently, he fell into debt to Allason. Allason faced a quandary in dealing with Zane -- how to collect the debt due and still

88 Allason to Capt. Triplett, February 26, 1771, Letter Book. A commission for a collector of quit rents is copied in the Letter Book under the date April 28, 1771.

89 Samuel Atthawes to Allason, July 7, 1772, Loose Papers. Other exertions of Allason in the interest of the Fairfax family were of a personal nature, such as acquiring delicacies for the table of Lord Fairfax -- fish, cranberries, and similar items -- and forwarding letters from family members in England to the Court in a secure manner.
maintain the good will of Zane, a large buyer. Allason dealt with the problem as best he could by constantly asking for payment but holding back from that final step that would break the relationship. Zane entered the period of the war still in debt to Allason.90

Another notable customer was added to Allason's accounts in the late summer of 1774 -- "His Excellency Lord Dunmore." Allason's connection with the back country probably was the cause of this relationship which he would come to regret. The debt incurred by Dunmore was to give Allason future difficulty in collecting and was later to cause him to come under the very critical eye of the patriotic party. Dunmore was involved both in his campaign against the Indians and in establishing his own plantation beyond the Blue Ridge and thus was doubly in need of supplies.91

Looking across the Atlantic to his suppliers in Britain, Allason's relations with them were good except when they failed to meet their own commitments to Allason. Thus

90Allason to Isaac Zane, September 22, 1771, Letter Book, furnishes an insight to Allason's quandary in dealing with Zane. The correspondence between Zane and Allason is rather voluminous and reveals much of the character of the uncharacteristic Quaker iron master. Zane was held in reprobation by Quakers because he lived openly with a mistress and swore the oath of office as a Burgess. Zane continued to claim to be a Quaker even after the Quaker assemblies excluded him from fellowship. See: Moss, "Isaac Zane, Jr."

91Allason to Lord Dunmore, August 17, 1774; and January 25, 1775, Letter Book.
when the books he received from James Knox of Glasgow in 1770 did not meet his requirements either in price or quality, Allason did not fail to let his disappointment be known. Allason became so irritated with all the merchants in Whitehaven, England, that in July, 1771, he vowed to do no more business with that port. Later, however, he received solicitation for his business from an acquaintance, Isaac Heslop, who returned from Virginia and established a mercantile house there. Allason subsequently did some, but not extensive, business with Heslop in Whitehaven.

Allason was in a strong position in respect to the merchants of Britain as the war between the American colonies and the mother country drew closer. During the few years that he had been operating as an independent merchant Allason had been able to pay off all his debts so that all he owned in Virginia was free and clear. He, in fact, was a creditor although at the same time his interest was turning more and more toward real estate. There is no doubt that he was an efficient businessman seeing opportunities such as the potential of the western trade as soon as his contemporaries and probably before. The patronage of the Fairfax interests and Lord Dunmore as well as Isaac Zane bear witness of his early importance to the transmontane trade.

92 Allason to James Knox, October 14, 1770, Letter Book.
93 Isaac Heslop to Allason, February 20, 1773, Loose Papers.
The Trade

Allason's main competition for the valley trade came not from his fellow Falmouth merchants but from those closer to Maryland and Pennsylvania. These, he felt, had an unfair advantage "by their proximity to Maryland they often evade paying the duties, which we are sure of paying here." Nevertheless, Allason was able to profit considerably from his trade across the Blue Ridge and into the Appalachian chain beyond. Trade from the other colonies, and particularly those in the West Indies, did affect his trade, and Allason participated in it.

From the West Indies came rum, sugar, coffee, pimento, and other spices. Rice and cotton were obtained from South Carolina. The last named was a small demand item. Wine was also important to Allason's trade; it came from the Portuguese islands in the Atlantic such as Teneriffe and Madeira. Allason did not engage in the colonial trade directly but through other merchants such as Ritchie and Sprowle.

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94 Allason to Alexander White, March 2, 1771, Letter Book.

95 Allason noted that "the back planters generally go themselves down into the Cotton County & purchase their small quantities as they are in want." Apparently the planters from the interior made frequent enough trips south to supply their own needs through purchase. Allason to Hugh Campbell, February 20, 1772, Letter Book.

96 Archibald Ritchie to Allason, December 28, 1772, Loose Papers; Allason to Andrew Sprowle, November 1, 1770, Letter Book. Allason obtained Lisbon white wine from Sprowle.
At times Allason in turn sold these products to merchants deeper in the Virginia back country who lacked his intercolonial connections.  

Allason obtained few goods from the north and these usually were small purchases of fish such as cod from northern waters. On at least one occasion Allason sent pork north, or at least referred an order for pork to his affluent friend, Andrew Sprowle. In order to pay for goods imported from the West Indies, Allason depended on corn, peas, flour, and wood products that he took in as payment for accounts.

The staple of Virginia, even that northern and inland area in which Allason traded, remained tobacco in spite of the West Indies trade. Allason was therefore interested in tobacco culture beginning to end in order that he might foresee the size of the crop and the price that might prevail. His correspondence was full of details about tobacco. Of particular interest to his correspondents throughout the Atlantic trading area were the projected sizes of the crops

97 Allason to Thomas B. Martin, January 12, 1771, Letter Book. Allason's trade was solicited by West Indies merchants. James Blaine and Company to Allason, March 9, 1771, Loose Papers.

98 Fish products were bought primarily for the table of Lord Fairfax who had a standing order for them.


100 Archibald Ritchie, to Allason, December 28, 1772, Loose Papers.
in America. Thus, in October, 1770, Allason reported that
the crop was larger than usual and comparable in size to
that of 1760, apparently one of the largest crops produced
in colonial Virginia. 101

The amount of tobacco available for sale by the
planters was certainly one of the controlling factors of the
price of the staple. The other main factor was the amount of
shipping sent over by the British tobacco houses to bring
the crop back to the home market. Therefore, the price paid
for tobacco in the Falmouth area fell quickly from twenty-
five shillings a hundredweight in early 1770 to only eighteen
shillings after the large crop came into the inspection
warehouses. 102 As mentioned before, the merchants and fac­
tors were not above trying to fix the price they would pay
between themselves, but this attempt was usually unsuccess­
ful when faced with the self-interest of some individual
merchant or buyer.

Although crop size and available shipping played a
large part in the price of tobacco in Virginia, the action
of the French Farmers and the production of tobacco in other
colonies also affected the price in the British markets. In
1772 the tobacco crop from North Carolina forced lower prices

101 Allason to John Gray, October 14, 1770, Letter
Book.

102 Allason to John Gray, January 1, 1770, Letter
Book, and Allason to Andrew Sprowle, November 27, 1770,
Letter Book.
in Great Britain.\(^{103}\) In the years between 1770 and 1775 the price paid for tobacco by the buyers in the Falmouth-Fredericksburg area fell from twenty-five shillings to fourteen and less. This economic pressure, placed primarily on the backs of the Virginia planters through their debts, was closely followed by a rising tide of political discontent in the colony in 1774 and 1775. As long as debts could be satisfied with a relatively stable staple the extended credit given by merchants was of little consequence to the planters, providing in a sense the currency necessary to make the economy function, but in the early 1770's the planters found that their tobacco constantly paid off a smaller amount of their debts. Allason himself said in January, 1774, that the "staple article of this Country has become of so little value that it goes but a very inconsiderable way in discharging accoes\(^{104}\) which occasions credit to be much at a stand amongst us." Thus in some part, the planters were desperate not because of their debts alone but because of their debts combined with an absolute inability to pay them because their "money," tobacco, was no longer of much value. The easiest target for their frustration was the holder of the debt, usually a Scottish merchant.

Another facet in the declining price of tobacco was

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103 Lippincott and Brown to Allason, June 30, 1772, Loose Papers.

104 Allason to John Elam and Son, January 15, 1774, Letter Book.
the reports of its declining quality from merchants in Great Britain. Allason constantly received complaints that the tobacco he sent to England was "very ordinary" or worse. It was up to the inspectors to keep the quality of Virginia tobacco up, but they developed an "understanding" attitude in the later years of the colonial period and passed tobacco of poor quality. Allason believed that the inspectors had slackened their standards to please the planters. Occasion­ally, nevertheless, the care taken in the handling of the tobacco was so poor that the inspectors had to warn the plan­ter that they would no longer tolerate the trash packed in the hogsheads with the tobacco.

Although tobacco remained the staple crop that had to pay the bulk of debts of the Virginia planters and merchants in England throughout the colonial period, it was not the sole product of the colony during this period. Allason, sensing the ultimate inadequacies of tobacco as the sole means of supporting the Virginia economy, attempted to find other products to export to Britain. As mentioned before,

105 Allason to Archibald Ritchie, November 3, 1773, Letter Book. For letters attesting to the poor quality of the tobacco Allason sent to England see those of the follow­ing to Allason, all in the Loose Papers: John Backhouse, March 30, 1770; July 30, 1772; March 31, 1773; April 10, 1774; and August (n.d.), 1774; Clay and Midgley, July 20, 1774; and Lippincott and Brown, August 25, 1774.

106 Allason to Thomas B. Martin, June 7, 1774, Letter Book. Allason reported to the Fairfax household that the "inspectors thinks your overseer must be at very little Pains by his Tobacco being so very full of Trash, they hitherto have not taken any accoe. in asserting it on each Hhd."
one of the first of these products was iron — his chief supplier of this commodity being Isaac Zane's furnace in Frederick County. Here too Allason ran into problems as he received reports of the poor quality of the iron drawn from the Malbro works. Most of the iron sent by Allason to Britain was sent on consignment by Zane, and Allason only received a commission on the sale price that he handled for the valley Quaker. Allason also hoped to make an additional profit through sale of trade goods in large quantities to the Zane establishment. Zane's failure to pay his debt to Allason for all the goods reduced the amount Allason profited from this relationship.

More effort was made by Allason to expand the wheat and flour production of the upper Northern Neck area and its interior than any other agricultural commodity. Again the chronic problem with colonial production, particularly in the back country, was the quality of flour produced. For a cautious man of business such as Allason wheat offered an attractive alternative to the more speculative tobacco market. Flour produced from the northern Virginia wheat was not shipped to the home islands, however, but was used to defray the cost of the West Indies and Atlantic island goods imported,

107 Lippincott and Brown to Allason, June 22, 1771; and John Bell, to Allason, July 26, 1771; Loose Papers.

108 Ledgers "1" and "2," Allason Papers. The Letter Books of Allason contain numerous references to specific orders for goods. Zane's account with Allason was finally settled from the Quaker's estate and is discussed in subsequent chapters.
particularly rum, sugar, and wine. The price paid for colonial wheat also fell in the five year period following 1770, causing additional financial burdens for the Virginia planter. By the fall of 1773 the price had fallen from the 1770 price of five shillings a bushel to less than four shillings. 109

Corn, hemp, and indigo continued to be produced in Virginia during the last years of the colonial period, although the last named was fading from the scene and was in fact being imported into the area of Palsmouth as an item for sale in the store. Corn was needed both for export and for internal consumption by the larger planters. Hemp continued to come down from the mountains in some quantities. 110

Planters' produce, received in payment for goods, used almost exclusively in the domestic market of Virginia included fodder, meat, fish, linseed oil, bees wax, myrtle wax, feathers, and butter. Allason needed a considerable amount of fodder for his own livestock and received much of it in payment of accounts, particularly from the smaller

109 Allason to Archibald Ritchie, January 7, 1772, Letter Book; and Archibald Ritchie to Allason, September 4, 1773, Loose Papers. In the time period covered by this chapter Allason bought from sundry customers and sold over five hundred barrels of flour mainly through the merchants Ritchie and Sprowle who were his main suppliers of rum, molasses, sugar, and wine. Folio 315, Ledger 1; folio 70, Ledger 2; and folio 24, Ledger 3, Allason Papers.

110 Ledger 1, folio 59; Ledger 2, folio 129; and Ledger 3, folio 25. Allason figured that he profited a little over a pound directly on the exchange of hemp passing through his hands -- this does not include the profit made on the goods sold in exchange for hemp.
planters. Meat and fish were used within his own household and sold to the larger planters for their slave population. Linseed oil was needed for mixing paints while both bees and myrtle wax were needed in making candles. Butter was sold by Allason to some of the bigger planters after it had been brought down from the back country.111

While most of the manufactured goods handled by Allason were brought over from Britain, there were a few items that he obtained locally. The increasing need for flour soon made the production of millstones from the native rock profitable to some colonial craftsmen. Part of the reason for the poor quality of the flour milled in the back country was the sub-standard quality of the stones used in milling. Therefore when anyone could produce good stones he was in demand.112 Another item that Allason obtained locally was iron plates from James Hunter's forge on the Rappahannock just above Falmouth. This iron, once obtained, could then be beaten into plowshares and other needed items by blacksmiths in the area.113

The large bulk of goods that Allason sold continued

111 The correspondence of Allason is full of references to these items of produce.

112 William Roane to Allason, October 5, 1772, Loose Papers; Allason to Edward Snickers, September 24, 1773, Letter Book. Snickers was Allason's prime source for millstones.

113 John Strode to Allason, August 10, 1774, Loose Papers. Strode was the overseer of the Hunter works. Wagon building was also done locally in the colony, see Allason to Thomas Jett, September 28, 1773, Letter Book.
to be obtained outside the colony, either in Britain in the case of manufactured goods or the West Indies for coffee and the products of the cane fields there. All of these items continued to be supplied during the period of this chapter just as they had in the previous decade, except that as the troubles increased between Britain and the colonies Allason restricted his British purchases in an attempt to reduce any debts there. Allason continued to seek new commercial terms with British merchants, once proposing to a Bristol firm that he exchange tobacco directly for goods. The firm, Lippincott and Brown, refused to do business in any new way and insisted that the tobacco be consigned to them and any net proceeds for him from their sale of the tobacco be applied to his account. In this manner the English merchant would avoid ever actually owning any Virginia tobacco and hence would not be subject to the risk of that commodity on the British market.114 Allason continued to express dissatisfaction with some of the goods shipped to him and with their prices on occasion.115 More and more, however, Allason was turning to his Virginia surroundings for the fulfillment of his needs.

114 Lippincott and Brown, June 22, 1771, Loose Papers.

115 Allason to Lippincott and Brown, January 15, 1774, John Bell, June 12, 1772; James Knox, September 3, 1770, Letter Book.
The Virginia Environment

Many physical obstacles beset the merchant in the conduct of his trade. Illness was prevalent in areas termed unhealthy by Allason, particularly the low lying regions along the rivers and in Tidewater.\textsuperscript{116} These areas were advantageous for stores because they compensated for their unhealthy sites with the best means of transportation available -- water. It was therefore an item worthy to be noted in the commercial correspondence when, as in the winter of 1771-1772, the Rappahannock froze to the extent that ships could no longer move down the river to the bay.\textsuperscript{117} Although normally only smaller ocean craft could come up the Rappahannock as far as Falmouth, none of any size at all could penetrate beyond. Ships coming up the river often could not get as far as Falmouth fully loaded but by off-loading some of their cargo at one of the ports further down the river the smaller ocean going vessels could navigate up to the fall line towns.\textsuperscript{118} This ability made it convenient for merchants further up the river to cooperate with merchants at Urbanna or Hobbshole in ordering goods and in shipments.

\textsuperscript{116} Allason to Archibald Ritchie, October 28, 1770, Letter Book. The danger of flood was another factor that the merchants living close to the rivers at and above the fall line had to seriously consider.

\textsuperscript{117} Allason to Andrew Sprowle, December 15, 1771; and to Landon Carter, January 10, 1772, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{118} Arthur Morson to Neil Jamieson, May 29, 1770; Neil Jamieson Papers, Library of Congress.
back to Britain. Working together they could conveniently share a ship.

From Falmouth Allason had to depend on the roads and trails to move his goods on into the interior, and they were far less dependable than the river. Trade was occasionally hindered because the roads were impassable for even a horseman. The dependence on wagons and carts from Falmouth inland was an added expense that Allason had to allow for in the conduct of his business and was reflected in Allason's accounts by credits to individuals for "wagonage."

Dependence on horses for transportation made them a valuable asset, and hence gangs of horse thieves became active in the area. These horse thieves were a problem to Allason as well as to other merchants and residents of the area. When a gang of these thieves was apprehended in 1773 Allason applied to see if a mare of his that had earlier disappeared had been recovered or if the thieves knew where she might be.

The physical obstacles to trade were easier to overcome than were the economic ones that often prevailed.

119 Allason to Alexander White, January 28, 1772, Letter Book. Allason informed White in this letter that David Allason would come out to the Valley to collect debts "so soon as the Roads are tolerable for traveling."

120 Allason to Mr. Drinkner, March 30, 1773, Letter Book. Allason said that "to obtain information you might assure them that I shall not send after her until their trial is over." The mare was later found in the possession of Alexander Campbell who had advertised for the owner. Allason to Alexander Campbell, May 18, 1773, Letter Book.
Unquestionably the largest barrier for the colonial merchants was the great shortage of currency with which to conduct business. Repeatedly Allason complained of the constriction of business because of the shortage of cash. Economic troubles in England occasionally contributed to this shortage as during the panic of 1772 mentioned before when the shortage drained the colony of money to meet obligations in Britain. Allason wrote in July, 1773, that he was much "concerned to observe the great difficulties the Trade Labours under in Britain by the Failure of some Great Houses, the consequences have extended to this part of the world to a violent degree, and unless our principal export, Tobo., can be kep't up in value at home, I don't see how we shall be enabled to discharge our debts on your side the water." 121

The failure of the mercantile and credit firms in England a few years prior to the revolt of the colonies contributed to the economic woes of the Virginia planters. The planters' creditors were calling in their debts and restricting further credit at the same time that falling tobacco prices reduced the ability of the planters to pay. Inherent in the troubles of the planters was the requirement to convert the real money of the colonies, tobacco notes, into cash at some point in the system. A London merchant's diagnosis of the economic ills of Great Britain blamed excessive credit -- especially to the colonies -- as the basic cause. "You'll

121 Allason to John Backhouse, July 15, 1773, Letter Book.
hear enough," he wrote, "of the distress & distraction that
prevail in this place & you I suppose can easily guess at
the cause -- namely, credit -- too much credit -- the good
people in your country must not expect so much of it again." 122

Allason had first received word of the great crash
that had occurred in England through Lord Fairfax's London
factor, Samuel Atthawes. 123 The effect of this panic on
Allason was to cause him to retrench on his orders and to
begin to pay off all his debts in England, often at some loss,
through the tobacco that he sent over for this purpose. 124
The reduction of credit by British merchants obliged Allason
also to be strict in his credit terms for his customers, and
they received little indulgence from him. 125

Although there had been a chronic money shortage in
Virginia for some time, the crisis in Britain and its impact
in the colony caused the complaints about the situation to
multiply astoundingly after 1772. Allason sought every means
to gain some operating capital with which to carry on his
business. He spoke of money in terms as "so exceeding

122 John Bell to Allason, May 31, 1773, Loose Pa-
pers.

123 Samuel Atthawes to Allason, July 7, 1772, Loose
Papers.

124 Allason to Johnson Gildart, July 1, 1773, Letter
Book.

125 Allason to Matthew Whiting, Junior, June 11, 1774,
Letter Book.
scarce,"126 "there is no money this way,"127 "we are unable to pay, especially cash,"128 and "the scarcity of money is . . . great."129

Hardly had the economic conditions begun to improve, as far as the traders were concerned, when the political environment in which business was conducted began to be turbulent. Wars -- and rumors of wars -- had always interfered with the trade, just as had the Association in the latter part of the previous decade. The Association, however, from the evidence of Allason's papers, had only a minor influence on his business as he was able to either work around or through its limitations.130 The effect of the Association was, according to Allason, lessened in Virginia because the merchants there were mainly factors for British firms.131 In the main Allason apparently abided by the rules of the Association, not through any personal convictions of his own

126 Allason to Alexander White, January 10, 1773, Letter Book.

127 Allason to Andrew Leckie, February 19, 1773, Letter Book.

128 Allason to Andrew Sprowle, June 1, 1773, Letter Book.

129 Allason to George Watson, September 21, 1773, Letter Book.

130 Allason to James Knox, November 3, 1769, Letter Book. Allason ordered some paper from Knox and cautioned the book seller to list the paper as books rather than paper so that he would not be called to account. The importation of books was permitted while paper over twenty-five shillings in value was forbidden. Allason did order books at the same time.

but rather to keep from incurring the wrath of his neighbors through his violation. In any event, it was with apparent relief that he wrote to John Bell, merchant in London in July 1772, that the Association was over except for tea, and the goods that he had ordered earlier could now be sent.\(^{132}\) In the case of tea, Allason's ledgers indicate that he never quit selling it entirely although the suggestion exists that he was selling tea smuggled into the colony by Archibald Ritchie.\(^{133}\)

Although able to continue operations on an almost normal scale during the time of the Association, Allason had no doubt that the situation was serious as the times grew more turbulent. He continued to collect his debts as fast as he could in order that he might pay his creditors before the deadline established by Congress, September 10, 1775. Thus the motive for collecting debts changed from the need to get money to help his creditors when the economic situation demanded it to the necessity of paying his own debts quickly if at all because of the political situation.\(^{134}\) Allason had followed the dark clouds arising to the north over Boston closely, for he could see their potential impact on

\(^{132}\)Allason to John Bell, July 1, 1771, Letter Book.

\(^{133}\)Allason to Archibald Ritchie, September 12, 1771, Letter Book. The hooded language of this letter leads the author to believe that Archibald Ritchie was engaged in smuggling.

\(^{134}\)Allason to Richard Clay, January 14, 1775, Letter Book.
Allason had been loyal to his calling throughout the years that he had been in Virginia, and at times this involved selling to and working with those who would remain fiercely loyal to the crown during the coming upheaval. For example, Allason supplied Lord Dunmore with arms during the governor's campaign against the Indians and was assisting him in the building of his plantation house on his land grant in the Shenandoah Valley. These associations would prove embarrassing during the coming years, but Allason was able to overcome them and attempt to remain uncommitted in the war that followed that period.

In summary of this period of William Allason's life, the really serious economic plight of the planters and small merchants of Virginia that preceded the extra-legal violence can only lead the observer to suspect some connection. It is difficult to determine what motivates men to act the way they do with any exactitude, and certainly this is true in relation to the population of Virginia on the eve of the American War of Independence. It does not appear to be unreasonable to see frustration and impatience in men -- the planters -- who have found that the unwritten economic

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135 Allason to Thomas B. Martin, June 7, 1774, and June 24, Letter Book; and Allason to Andrew Sprowles, September 16, 1774, Letter Book. Rumors had reached Virginia by September that British ships of war had opened fire on the town of Boston.

136 Allason to Lord Dunmore, August 17, 1774, Letter Book.
rules they thought they had operated under and had always experienced changed so that they could no longer get credit and had no way to meet their obligations. In the past the colonial planters had been extended credit on relatively easy terms as long as each individual planter had demonstrated an inclination to pay his debts. Now, according to Allason's correspondents, this credit was going to be tightened as increasing efforts were made by the British merchants and their representatives to collect the debts.\textsuperscript{137} It certainly appears possible that the general fear of losing all they had worked for turned into a feeling of alienation that was heightened by the political actions of the ministry in England and the controversies to the north.

As the turbulence grew the question facing William Allason was how to best ride it out. Did his best opportunity ride with the red coats of the British soldiers or his neighbors in Virginia? One consideration that he had to remember was his tie to the land -- his large stake in plantation and town property. There was no way that this

\textsuperscript{137}For discussions of the general conditions surrounding the indebtedness of the Virginia planters during the colonial period see Emory G. Evans, "Planter Indebtedness and the Coming of the Revolution in Virginia," \textit{William and Mary Quarterly}, 3rd Ser., XXVIII (1971), 511-533; Joseph Albert Ernst "The Robinson Scandal Redivivus: Money, Debts and Politics in Revolutionary Virginia," \textit{Virginia Magazine of History and Biography}, 77 (1969), 146-173; and Samuel Rosenblatt, "The Significance of Credit in the Tobacco Consignment Trade: A Study of John Norton \& Sons, 1768-1775," \textit{William and Mary Quarterly}, 3rd Ser., XIX (1962), 383-399. Evans states on page 517 that "Indebtedness was such a constant companion of the Virginia planter that it seemed to be almost endemic to the plantation economy."
Plantation Beginnings

The father of Anne Hooe Allason, John Hooe, had devised on her and her two living sisters a tract of land in Fauquier County along with some slaves. In his will he further specified that the land was to be divided equally among the three sisters as soon as possible. At the time of William Allason's marriage to Anne Hooe in 1772 the land had not yet been divided despite John Hooe's death in April, 1766. Immediately after his marriage Allason initiated arrangements to have the land apportioned and retained Thomas Marshall to survey and divide the land into three equal shares.

Marshall reported in December that the tract contained 1595 acres which he had divided in three equal shares of 565 acres. Because the tracts of land were not of equal value although of equal size, Allason, Nathaniel Washington, husband of Sara Hooe, and Gerrard Hooe, representing the third sister, Susannah, agreed to have disinterested neighbors assess the comparative value of the three parts. Following the evaluation lots were drawn for the tracts, Allason receiving the

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138 The Will of Captain John Hooe, Loose Papers.

139 Allason to Nathaniel Washington, July 19, 1772, Letter Book; and Record of Trial, Thomas Roy and Susannah Hooe Roy vs. William Allason in Fauquier Court, March, 1795, Loose Papers. For Allason's correspondence with Thomas Marshall, father of the future chief justice (who may well have assisted in the survey) see Captain Thomas Marshall to Allason, December 17, 1772, Loose Papers, and Allason to Thomas Marshall, February 4, 1773, Letter Book.
most valuable for which he had to pay the others the difference in value, although he had two years in which to do so.\footnote{140}

Even before the land was divided Allason had already planned to put it in cultivation with winter wheat.\footnote{141} He also set about repairing the houses on the land to make them habitable for his family for at least part of the year, feeling that the Fauquier climate was healthier than that of Falmouth.\footnote{142}

The tenant on the land before the division, Reuben Bragg, caused Allason considerable difficulty by harassing the slaves Allason sent to get things in order after the decision had been made as to what portion each heir received. Even after the division Bragg continued to live on that portion belonging to Nathaniel Washington through his wife, the former Sarah Hooe. Bragg threatened to turn his cattle into wheat fields that Allason had planted.\footnote{143} Although Bragg was

\footnote{140}All of this came out in a suit brought by Susannah Hooe Roy and her husband, Thomas, in 1795 in Fauquier court against Allason. Allason won the suit and damages against the Roys -- see note 147, below. Allason paid Susannah ("Sukey"); over sixty-two pounds for the difference in the land.

\footnote{141}Allason to Nathaniel Washington, August 14, 1772, Letter Book. Allason also took over management of the land belonging to Susannah -- an act that was to cause the court suit in 1795.

\footnote{142}Allason to Bailey Washington, January 20, 1773, and March 14, 1773, Letter Book. While Allason deemed the Falmouth climate better than Hobbshole and Norfolk, Fauquier's was better yet.

\footnote{143}Allason to Nathaniel Washington, August 14, 1772, Letter Book. Sarah Hooe Washington was apparently another casualty of the flu epidemic of 1773 as Washington was left a widower. See also Allason to Nathaniel Washington, August
violent in his threats, Allason continued his plans to develop the land.

Immediately after the land was divided Allason obtained an overseer for the portions belonging to his wife and to her unmarried sister, Susannah. The overseer was William Settles who was somewhat fearful of the threats of Bragg despite Allason's reassurances. Allason revealed considerable knowledge of plantation operations in his instructions to Settles -- knowledge that he must have picked up through observation and discussion with planters.

Allason's efforts on the behalf of his unmarried sister-in-law led directly into conflict between the two even before her marriage to Thomas Roy in 1777. Allason was charged by the sister with taking advantage of her by paying too much for a horse he bought for use on her portion. To this charge Allason said that he could sell him back to the same person from whom he had acquired for the same price. He was also charged with deceitfulness, and in reply he asked

12, 1773, Letter Book. The tenants were still squatting on part of the land. Allason to Peter Greenlees, January 3, 1773; Allason to Thomas Mountjoy, January 3, 1773; Allason to William Withers, January 9, Letter Book.


145 Allason to William Settles, July 19, 1772, Letter Book. Allason's instructions concerning the overseer's relations with the slaves are interesting: "Don't neglect being constantly along with the People, for by that you will save your self much other trouble, also severity, which I don't approve of. Never put the Negroe women to any Labour that will prevent their breeding."
in what manner he had deceived her that he might answer the charges. Finally, he was charged with having cheated her on the division of the land. To this charge Allason referred her to her own brother who was present at the division and represented her interests. Although she continued to harbor these suspicions until a court suit in 1795, it appears that Susannah Hooe's chief problem was that she expected to be cared for by Allason as her father had done with no thought on her own part as to expense. Part of her complaint stemmed from the fact that Allason billed her for items that she purchased from his store. Another cause of discontent was the apparent difference in value of the land portions, because Allason developed his portion with the capital available to him.

Even before he acquired the land through marriage Allason was already gaining control of a significant amount of land. As mentioned before he had begun taking the steps that would lead to the granting to him of land that had been granted to Lewis Griffith in 1704 and subsequently sold to

\[146\] Allason to Susannah Hooe, March (n.d.) 1774, Letter Book.

\[147\] The courts found in favor of Allason. The land was divided as equally as possible by a man whose integrity carried a high reputation. The difference in the value of the land was determined by an impartial panel of their neighbors, and lots were drawn to see who would get what lots and who would pay who for the difference in value. All of these steps were taken before disinterested witnesses, and it is difficult to see how Allason could have cheated his sister-in-law during these transactions. See charges of Thomas and Susannah Roy against Allason, February 7, 1795, and Allason's answer, March (n.d.) 1795, Loose Papers.
John Kemp by Griffith's son in 1742.\textsuperscript{148} In addition to this land Allason also obtained 405 acres near Ragged Mountain and another two hundred acres from the estate of Thomas Burk in the same county of Culpeper.\textsuperscript{149} Over nine hundred acres of land came into Allason's possession in Frederick County in two portions. The first consisted of 739\textsuperscript{\frac{1}{2}} acres on Turkey Run and the second of 168 acres near the town of Woodstock.\textsuperscript{150}

In addition to these plantation lands, Allason also owned three lots in Falmouth. Not only had he obtained the partners' interest in the lease of the store lot (lot number six) from Mann Page for a hundred and fifty pounds but he had also bought the title to the lot from Page for two hundred and fifty pounds. He also obtained lots 37 and 71 in the town.\textsuperscript{151}

Thus, by 1774 Allason owned or managed five plantation tracts totaling over 2000 acres and three town lots.

\textsuperscript{148} For Allason's explanation of the developments concerning this piece of land see his letter to Benjamin Waller, October 13, 1770, Letter Book. This land consisted of 414 acres plus an additional 262 acres that had been used as their own by the descendants of the first grantees. Col. John Carter had been using the land without a grant and was loath to give it up. Several lawyers that Allason attempted to retain to represent him refused to do so for fear of alienating Carter.

\textsuperscript{149} Ledger 1, Folio 171, and Ledger 2, folio 238, Allason Papers.

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{151} Ledger 1, folios 52 and 260 and Ledger 2, folio 91. See also Mann Page to Allason, July 2, 1770, Loose Papers; Allason to Robert Allason and John Gray, November 23, 1770, Letter Book; and John Ballard and wife Ann to Allason, February 28, 1774.
Through his marriage and other acquisitions Allason had become tied to the land, an anchor that would hold him to Virginia during the impending political and military stormy weather.
CHAPTER VI
THE WAR YEARS

Political Environment

There is no doubt that William Allason was well aware of the political storm clouds arising not only to the north of Virginia but also within the colony itself. Fifteen days before blood was shed at Lexington in 1775, he wrote that he was "afraid we shall see troublesome times here, and even then, I suspect not to the satisfaction of both parties." His anxiety concerning the future caused Allason to attempt to accelerate the tempo of trade prior to the total cessation of commercial remittances that he knew was imminent. In addition to attempting to pay off all his debts in England, Allason also tried to ship out all the produce, such as tobacco and wheat, in his possession before the ports were closed.

1 Allason to John Elam and Son, April 4, 1775, Letter Book. Allason wrote to the above firm that "It gives me much pleasure, that I am at this very particular time, able to help my friends to what is their own money due them, and truly wish it equally in the power of others to discharge their accoe. to you & others in England."

2 Allason to Edward Snickers, May 8, 1775, Letter Book. Allason informed Snickers that the latter's failure to send an invoice for flour he shipped to Allason forced Allason to weigh it himself so that he might get it on board ship and out before the ports were closed. In addition, he informed Snickers that he could take no more flour unless they arrived the
Little time passed before Allason received word of the feared effect on trade. In late summer, 1775, he was informed by letter that British merchants were not sending their ships back to Virginia. News of "the skirmish at Boston" persuaded Henry Lippincott and Company of Bristol that too much risk was involved. Ironically, they reported to Allason that the Virginia goods received in the last voyage of their ship had found a "Brisk Markett." Thus Allason found himself cut off from trade at both ends as it became impossible to ship goods from Virginia ports because of the stipulation of the Continental Congress while British merchants had stopped the shipment of goods from their side.

Allason's actions in paying off his debts in Britain was in keeping with what has been set forth by one student of the period as the general practice of Scotch merchants in the colonies. M.L. Robertson, in studying the economic effect of the war and American independence on the Scottish economy, states that several factors mitigated the interruption of the American trade. One was the action of the Scottish agents in anticipating the arising situation — exemplified by Allason's push to settle his debts before all trade and payments with Britain was halted. Another was the push

next week so that he could get them on their way quickly. Snickers did indeed send twenty additional barrells the next week upon receipt of which Allason said that he could accept no more, "the risque being too great." Allason to Edward Snickers, May 22, 1775, Letter Book.

3 Henry Lippincott and Company to Allason, July 10, 1775, Loose Papers.
to ship tobacco from Virginia as quickly as possible before
the embargo went into effect on September 10, 1775.4

Allason's reasons for paying off his debts in Bri-
tain, as observed earlier, were a matter of pride and a de-
sire to protect his reputation -- and his credit. In April,
1775, he reprimanded a recalcitrant debtor: "I observe you
think there is no way at present to compell people to pay
their Debts. When I agreed to take your Bond I did not
expect you wou'd require being compelled to discharge it.
For my own reputation's sake I wou'd not offer the same rea-
son to those that I am owing money to."5 Allason continued
that he wanted money in this case in order to support his
credit. He was particularly upset with this debtor, be-
cause the sum involved was not large, and the debtor could
easily raise enough cash to pay it.

Allason's ability to collect his debts had indeed
been reduced by the closing of the courts as a result of the
revolution against Britain,6 but not all of his creditors
availed themselves of that escape from their debts. Those
who did found after the war that Allason was still prepared
to reinstitute the collection proceedings.

4M.L. Robertson, "Scottish Commerce and the American
War of Independence," Economic History Review, 2d Ser., IX,

5Allason to Abraham Brewbaker, April 3, 1775, Letter
Book.

6Allason to John Taylor, September 12, 1783; and to
Andrew Buchanan, September 6, 1784, Letter Book.
Allason was neutral in the political controversy raging about him. He, and apparently most of his commercial correspondents, wanted peace and harmony between the colonies and the mother country in order to carry on their trade in the most secure environment. In May of 1775 after he heard that Governor Dunmore had sent an express to Peyton Randolph in Philadelphia and that the General Assembly had been called, Allason had hopes that "probably a reconciliation may take place, which God in his great goodness grant."^7

The British merchants, in turn, desired only the continuation of trade and the cessation of hostilities. Samuel Atthawes, London factor for Lord Fairfax, probably expressed the opinion of many on the other side of the water: "My Mind is so distracted at the present alarming situation of affairs, for it seems as if the Laws complained of were intended to be enforced & for aught ... I know both countries may be undone."^8 The merchants were discovering that political changes were occurring more rapidly than they could adjust their operations.

The mood of the merchants with whom Allason corresponded is best demonstrated by Archibald Ritchie. Ritchie raised a question in the spring of 1775 concerning possible future relief through repeal by the Virginia Assembly of the

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^7 Allason to Andrew Sprowle, May 16, 1775, Letter Book.
^8 Samuel Atthawes to Allason, March 1, 1775, Letter Book.
trade strictures due to begin September 10 of that year. He pointed out to Allason that people of southern Virginia would probably favor continuation of exports while those in the north would oppose them. Speaking as a Virginian he concluded: "Wish we had taken the Post of Honor as mediators in their [Boston's] dispute wth. Great Britain, rather than acted as we have [I] shall say no more on this head." Ritchie's trepidation in regard to what he committed to paper -- evident in his last line -- was well justified because the zealots for war and for the suppression of any opposition to their policy were active in the area of northern Virginia.

The commercial community of Falmouth, in an apparent attempt to alleviate the economic effects of the political situation, took steps to organize their own Committee of Safety outside that of the county. Fearing that the merchants of the community were seeking a way to ease their situation, the County Committee called the merchants to account in a quasi-legal hearing on Friday, February 3, 1775.¹⁰

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⁹Archibald Ritchie to Allason, March 23, 1775, Loose Papers.

¹⁰Allason to Thomas B. Martin, January 31, 1775, Letter Book. Allason wrote: "I wrote you lately that we were about electing a Committee for this Town, which it seems were disapproved of by the [smeared] County Committee, and for which we are to be called to an accoe, on Friday next the 3d of Febry. What they are to do with us the Lord above knows, however we expect their terms will be very harsh, phaps in so much, as not to be acquiesced in by the sundries cited to appear before them on that day. As the Citation seems to out of the common Rule of things amongst Freemen I send you a Copy thereof for your Perusal."
There was no question that the group operating against the merchants of Falmouth held an animosity toward the merchants. Commenting on the case, Richard Henry Lee, former debtor of Allason's, held that a small village of commercial interests could not form their own committee under Article Eleven of the Association, the basis for the action of the Falmouth merchants.\(^{11}\)

Allason subsequently gave a report in a letter to Thomas B. Martin of what almost developed into the defenestration of the Falmouth merchants. According to Allason the accused citizens of Falmouth were required to appear before about twenty members of the King George committee with another hundred and fifty onlookers. Each merchant of Falmouth was required to appear before the Committee to answer two questions. The first was "were you present at the meeting to choose a Committee \(\text{for Falmouth}\) on January 13?" The second was "did you hear the resolve of the County Committee read before you proceeded on the said election?" Everyone of the merchants called before the County Committee answered both questions affirmatively but refused to expand on their answers. They had agreed to let Andrew Buchanan be their spokesman -- hoping by a united stand to ward off the worst consequences of the accusations against them. Buchanan was

\(^{11}\)Lee, R.H., "His opinion concerning the authority of the committee for King George County," Lee Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, dated erroneously 1766, examined by microfilm at Colonial Williamsburg Research Department.

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selected as group spokesman, because he was "most accustomed
to speak in Publick." Each of the accused group was brought
before the committee twice in hopes that some of the Falmouth
traders would break and accuse their fellows, but this failed
to happen. Allason concluded his description of what ac­
tually happened "At last our Sentence was pronounced, and
afterwards enlarged on by Col. Carter (in the Pathetic strain)
and some others in a different tone, agreeable to the method
of advertising laid down by the Congress. This being done the
meeting broke up, and I suppose for I did not see, every man
took his own way."¹² Allason fails to mention what the sen­
tence was, and no where is there any other indication what
it was. Apparently it was not too severe, although Allason
later heard that some of the bystanders proposed to take the
merchants from the room set aside for their use and throw
them through the windows, one by one, and otherwise treat
them violently.¹³

The refusal of the accused of Falmouth to confess
their guilt aroused animosity in the neighboring town of
Fredericksburg, and violence was threatened to any of the
Falmouth residents who might appear in that town. The con­
tinued hostility of their neighbors persuaded the merchants
to sign a modified confession that they were wrong about

¹² Allason to Thomas B. Martin, February 6, 1775,
Letter Book.

¹³ Ibid.

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their right to form their own committee under the provisions of the Association. Allason averred, however, that only expediency moved them to sign the confession drawn up by his old attorney Joseph Jones. This confession served its purpose and cooled the ire of the patriots. There was, however, one incident of violence that may have resulted from William Allason's stand in this matter.

The incident began at about two o'clock in the morning of Saturday, February 11, 1775, when two men, Robert Dunbar and William Torrence, broke into William Allason's kitchen. David Allason, asleep in the store, his usual place of rest, was awakened by the noise. On his investigation he was assaulted by the two men. They were beating and kicking him when William Allason, who had been aroused by a Negro, arrived, dressed solely in his nightclothes. Allason stopped the beating of his brother and asked the meaning of the two men's presence but at first received only curses for answers. Eventually the two intruders spoke of being revenged against David Allason, although the specific crime they felt he had committed was not mentioned. After considerable shouting and pounding on doors the pair left only to return to Allason's store the next day. They again demanded to see David Allason but were refused because the younger brother was helpless to move without assistance in consequence of the beating that he had taken. Although Allason wanted to take legal action against the two assailants, there is no record of his ever succeeding in bringing the matter to trial --
probably because of the effects of the war on the administration of justice.\footnote{Allason to Alexander Rose, February 13, 1775, Letter Book. Allason wanted Rose to institute legal proceedings against Dunbar and Torrence. Mrs. Allason saw the entire affray although dressed only in her night clothes and pregnant at the time. The upset it caused her increased Allason's understandable ire over the incident.}

If Allason did not have enough trouble being linked with those allegedly loyal to the King, an incident a few days later added to his troubles. Lord Dunmore had shipped some goods up the Rappahannock consigned to Allason for transhipment on to Dunmore's plantation by the warm springs in the Shenandoah. News of the arrival of Dunmore's goods travelled quickly, and Allason was called upon for an explanation. It was thought by the local populace that the packages contained gunpowder -- possibly even that taken from the powder magazine in Williamsburg. Although Allason told the investigators that only tools, cloth, pork, and the like material were in the packages, they insisted on a minute inspection of all of the contents. Allason was vindicated by their inspection, and he showed them a letter from Lord Dunmore dealing with his personal affairs in the Valley. Satisfied that the goods were only involved in a personal transaction, the committee inspecting the packages not only released them but also gave Allason a letter of passage to avoid repeated reopening of the packages en route to their destination.\footnote{Allason to Thomas B. Martin, May 29, 1775, Letter Book.}

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Years later Allason was to explain to his brother Robert the situation facing the Scottish merchants in Virginia during the years of the war.

We, as all Britainers were, particularly from Scotland, were esteemed to be in the interest of the Mother country unless it was such as took a very active part, and were frequently treated with great indifference. If any person particularly Scotchmen refused the Paper money when much depreciated, in payment of debts contracted before the war, they were held in the greatest detestation, and in order to avoid greater Evils, I have rec'd many payments when greatly under the value of good money.

Allason was asked to care for the books of at least one of those merchants who quit Virginia during the conflict. He was requested to take these business records to his country seat where it was felt they would be safe until after the war.

With trade ended and hostility against Scottish merchants in the Falmouth area evident, Allason found it convenient to move his residence to the plantation in Fauquier county sooner than he had planned. His move was based not only on fear of the actions of the patriot elements, however, but also in fear of the cannon and men of the Royal Navy, "as there seems to be some Danger apprehended from the Men of War's tenders to the towns on Wide Rivers." Allason was not the only one who was to find the presence of the

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16 Allason to Robert Allason, May 18, 1785, Letter Book.

17 Thomas Montgomerie to Allason, April 27, 1777, Loose Papers.

18 Allason to Archibald Ritchie, November 13, 1775, Letter Book.
British warships and light boats disconcerting. Years later his brother-in-law, Gerrard Hooe, also found that it was impossible for his "family to live here [on a Tidewater river] in peace or safety." Hooe complained of the constant interruption of the warships on the river and the desertion of slaves to the British forces. Like others, he too planned to move inland away from the wide rivers and the reach of the Royal Navy. In the meantime, he asked if his children could stay for a while with the Allasons in Fauquier County.19

Another inhabitant of a river bank who considered a move to a safer site was Archibald Ritchie who in 1777 asked if his family might stay in the Fauquier home of Allason.20 Thus Allason found safety in the interior during Virginia's period of turmoil from 1775 to 1783.

Another annoyance was the theft of Allason's trade goods left behind in Falmouth. Some of the populace felt they could take the goods with impunity during the war.21 Other goods were sold to the American forces, or impressed by them, early in the war to outfit the local militia units.22 Neutral in sentiment, Allason also was neutral in trade

19 Gerrard Hooe to Allason, April 28, 1781, Letter Book.
20 Allason to Archibald Ritchie, March 16 and March 30, 1777; Charles Nielson, March 16, 1777, Letter Book.
21 Allason to Charles Lee, April 12, 1794, Letter Book.
22 Ledger 3, folio 197, entry dated August 21, 1775. Allason sold guns, a kettle, dutch ovens, etc. to the Caroline militia. Day Book, December 25, 1776. Should be January 25.
during the war, trading with the British when they were in the area of his Fauquier county plantation and then with the Pennsylvania Regiment of General Anthony Wayne when they supplanted the British.23

Two things permitted Allason to stay in Virginia during the war. The first was his family, small as it was, for the government of Virginia had permitted those "foreign" merchants married to Virginia women or with children in Virginia to remain in the state.24 The haven in Fauquier was the second reason Allason was able to continue to live in Virginia during the war. There is no indication that Allason wanted to leave Virginia or that he was actively against her cause. He simply wanted to be left in peace to carry on his commercial activities under sufficient governmental authority to maintain courts to force others to pay their debts. Thus he fits into that large group described in another study of the era as "neither ardent patriots or adamant loyalists."25

23Ledger 3, folio 243, entry of December 19, 1777, and January 19, 1778. Allason lent cash to British soldiers and fixed the watch of a British Captain. See Ledger 3, folio 265, for entries pertaining to the sale of flour by Allason to James McCulloch, Quartermaster of the Fifty Pennsylvania Regiment in General Wayne's Brigade. Allason also had a five year old horse impressed by Col. Francis Triplett, see Ledger 3, folio 239.

24Keith Bennet Berwick, "Loyalties in Crisis: A Study of the Attitudes of Virginians in the Revolution," unpub. Ph. D. diss., U. of Chicago, 1959. Allason's uneasiness at the situation was probably the reason that there are only four letters dated in 1776 in his letter book, indicating an unwillingness to commit himself on paper.

25Ibid., 2:
Allason would have appreciated being able to continue in trade but had the plantation to resort to during the turbulent times.

**Business**

After 1775 and the onset of the American War for Independence Allason was no longer in the mercantile business, so his customers had to find new sources for their goods, or, as with most, do without. Although he had shown signs of planning a transition to country life, the war precipitated a more immediate move to the plantation and a new life for his little family there during the war years. Allason could not totally abstain from business endeavors, however, for he continued to pay debts until the opportunity to remit money to Britain was absolutely cut off. By that time he had paid all of his personal debts. He was, however, still collecting debts due the old partnership into 1775 when the opportunity to remit to the partners in Scotland was stopped in September. One particular debt owed him for some time that he attempted to collect in 1775, was that of John Schaw. Schaw at the initiation of the war was associated with Andrew Sprowle in Norfolk. Allason was unable to get any money from Schaw even though he asked Sprowle's assistance.

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26 Allason to Robert Allason, April 25, 1775, Letter Book.

27 Allason to Andrew Sprowle, May 28, 1775, Letter Book.
Allason continued to attempt to collect debts due him at the beginning of the war but gave up during the middle period of the conflict when money being floated by the government of Virginia was so inflated that it was practically valueless. Therefore he attempted to avoid receiving payment of any debts with the debased currency of wartime Virginia. In May of 1778 when Landon Carter wanted to pay his bond due Allason with the inflated currency, Allason refused to accept his money. By the law of the colony Allason could do this, but interest ceased at the moment he refused to accept Carter's payment. This happened at least four additional times, each time the debtor bringing a witness with him to North Wales to support his claim of offering payment if Allason challenged the debtor at a later time. Thus while Virginia had suffered from a shortage of currency before the war, there was now too much of it as far as the creditors were concerned.

As the war drew to a close, however, Allason once more went to his books and began again the interminable process of bringing in money due him from his old customers. By 1783 things had so returned to normal that Allason had instituted over seventy-five suits in various counties in attempts to get payment. His lawyer in Frederick where he initiated thirty-four suits in 1783 was still Alexander White.

28 Allason's Memorandum Book, entries for the following individuals on the dates noted: Francis Attwell, November 9, 1777; Landon Carter, May 2, 1778; Thomas Holmes, September 8, 1778; and Gabriel Sullivan, April 30, 1779, and May 10, 1779.
Andrew Buchanan, the spokesman for the Falmouth merchants before the King George committee in 1775, was his attorney in another twenty-eight cases, while Colonel John Taylor of Caroline represented him in six cases before the General Court the same year.  

One business activity of Allason's that the war did not halt was that of dealing in real estate. Although in one case in 1775 Allason discovered that surveying errors and late surveyors' reports cost him land that could have been his, generally he was successful in acquiring land. The mistakes that he made in dealing with land showed, however, that he was not as familiar with maintaining his interest in land matters as he was in the mercantile business.

The next year, 1776, Allason acquired an additional 153 acres of land adjacent to his plantation in Fauquier County, North Wales, as he now called it.  

Having temporarily abandoned his store and the life of a merchant, Allason was free to rent his buildings in the town of Falmouth to others. Hugh Walker rented the store building on February 5, 1777, together with a room in Allason's

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30 Allason to William Rigg, February 28 and March 6, 1775, Letter Book; Allason to Thomas B. Martin, March 6, and March 19, 1775, Letter Book. The land was located in Dunmore County, now Shenandoah County.

31 Fauquier County Deed Book 6, page 320, October 28, 1776 Virginia State Library; William Allason's Ledger 3, folio 220, entry dated October 28, 1776; Benjamin Turner to Aaron Fletcher and Thomas Drummond, October 28, 1776, Loose Papers.
bale house and one half of the stable in Falmouth.\textsuperscript{32} Allason later rented the store to William Hewitt in 1779, after Hugh Walker was asked to relinquish it. This property was once more rented to David Galloway, Jr., in 1781.\textsuperscript{33}

Before the initiation of hostilities Allason had been one of a group of Falmouth merchants endeavoring to establish a better tavern or ordinary in the town. This, it was felt by the merchants, would help the commerce of the town. The name applied to this undertaking was to be the "Swan Tavern." Progress in building the tavern was upset by the war, and in 1778 Allason agreed to sell his one-sixth part for two hundred pounds current Virginia money.\textsuperscript{34}

In 1779 Allason continued his acquisition of plantation land in the area of his Fauquier plantation by buying 878\frac{1}{2} acres from Charles Williams, Andrew Anderson, and Richard and George Rosser in different transactions. The land bought of Williams -- who subsequently moved to Kentucky -- was to cause Allason trouble in getting a clear title after

\textsuperscript{32}Agreement between Allason and Hugh Walker, dated February 5, 1777, and extending through 1778, Loose Papers.

\textsuperscript{33}Allason to William Hewitt, October 13, 1778, Loose Papers, and October 28, 1779, and Allason to Hugh Walker, October 13, 1778, and Allason to David Galloway, Junior, March 4, 1781, Letter Book. Allason also leased plantation land in keeping with the custom of the time. Agreement between Allason and James Gaunt, September 4, 1778, Loose Papers.

\textsuperscript{34}Allason's Memorandum Book, May 27, 1778. The buyer was Adam Newall.
the war was over.  

In 1782 Allason finally rid himself of that neighbor who had originally given him so much trouble over the occupation of the land willed to his wife, Anne Hooe. In May, 1782, he leased William Washington's land on which Reuben Bragg was tenant, and Bragg, along with Gaydon and William Settles, were given orders to vacate by the owner.

Allason's connections with Greenway Court, although no longer as rewarding as they had been before the war, were maintained. In the final years of the war, that is, from 1780 on, Thomas B. Martin again began to let his needs be known, apparently in the hope that the Allasons would be able to fill some of them. Allason did indeed get his hands on some of those delicacies particularly desired, such as sugar, (muscavado) and coffee. Allason held these items for Martin and Lord Fairfax and sent them on to Greenway Court in the Valley in June of 1781. Lord Fairfax had become senile by that time and was reported by Martin as spending twenty-two hours of the day in bed, unable to sign his own name to

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35 Allason's Ledger 3, folio 250. This information can be corroborated both in Allason's correspondence and in the appropriate Deed Books in the Virginia State Library.


37 Allason to Thomas B. Martin, June 22, 1781. Letter Book. Archibald Ritchie, still sending vessels to the West Indies, was possibly the source of these items.
land grants, and "frequently out of his senses." Allason in turn asked Martin to collect from Isaac Zane some of the money that Zane owed Allason.

Plantation Operations

Closed off by the war from his first calling as a tradesman, Allason turned his attention to the operation and improvement of the plantation with great energy. His interest focused on the improvement of the livestock, constructing and improving mills on his land, finding suitable overseers for his separate tracts of land, and planning the construction of a manor house at North Wales.

Soon after moving to the plantation Allason leased a whiskey still from Mrs. Charlotte Neilson, a widow, for the rent of one capacity of the still a year. This still was to produce not only for the inhabitants of the plantation but also for sale to the other inhabitants of the area. In addition Allason maintained a slave blacksmith on the plantation and received payment for the work done in his blacksmith shop for his neighbors. So while Allason had left storekeeping he had not altogether left the selling of goods and services.

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38 Thomas B. Martin to Allason, June 26, 1781, Loose Papers.
39 Allason to Isaac Zane, September 24, 1782, Letter Book.
40 Allason's Ledger 3, folio 223.
Allason’s plantation operation encompassed the following in 1778: forty Negro and three mulatto slaves, 778 acres of land at North Wales, thirty head of horses, thirty-nine head of cattle, one carriage of two wheels, over one hundred and fifty pounds cash money, and five pounds value of silver plate. 41 The management of this estate (including mills, with their ponds and races which were not listed but were demanding of his time and attention, as well as the still house) fully occupied Allason’s hours. In addition he was required to supervise the breeding of his stock as well as the cultivation of the field crops. 42 Certainly there was little difference in Allason’s plantation operations from those of other planters except in the aggressiveness and scope of his operations.

Allason probably expended more energy in the establishment and operation of mills on his land than in any other way during the last quarter century of his life. During his very first year of residence at the Fauquier plantation he built a mill there, a "grist mill," probably the simplest of mills to construct and operate. The mill was water

41 Allason’s Memorandum Book, entry dated April 24, 1778.

42 Allason to William Fitzhugh, February 21, 1775, Letter Book. Allason had six mares that he wanted to breed to Fitzhugh’s stallion "Gegulus," and he wanted reduced rates because of the number he wanted to put in with the stallion. One of the mares he had sent over the last year had failed to foal and Allason asked Fitzhugh "is it your custom to allow them to go to your Horse the succeeding year, free of charge?"
powered and the millstones were about three feet in diameter. Allason had examined the market thoroughly before he decided to construct his mill and decided that it was a good investment due to the distance to other mills and the good road to his own. The Scot planned on several peripheral benefits from the mill in addition to the main one of furnishing him income by grinding his neighbors' grain. First, it would enable him to grind the food for his own livestock at a reduced rate. Second, it would permit him to water a meadow of about fifty acres of land from the mill pond.\textsuperscript{43}

Concerning the new way of life he was carving out for himself under the pressure of the war, Allason said: "I used to think that I never shou'd be concerned with Mills in any shape, but so many corroborating circumstances obliges me to change my former sentiments on that head."\textsuperscript{44}

The iron used in the mill's construction was obtained from the forge of Isaac Zane.\textsuperscript{45}

In the fall of 1775 Allason contracted with stone masons Ninian Wyse and Thomas Whitlaw to build the mill at a cost of thirty-one pounds.\textsuperscript{46} Almost a year later he contracted

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43}Allason to Archibald Ritchie, August 15, 1775, Letter Book.
\item \textsuperscript{44}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{45}Allason to Isaac Zane, September 12, 1775, Letter Book.
\item \textsuperscript{46}Agreement between Allason and Ninian Wyse and Thomas Whitlaw, October 9, 1775. See also letter from Allason to Ninian Wyse, August 7, 1775, Letter Book.
\end{itemize}
with Wyse to build a plantation house that was to be fifty-six feet long, thirty-six feet wide, two stories high, with a cellar, and to measure twenty-eight feet from the cellar floor to the ceiling of the upper story. Each floor of the house was to have four fireplaces and the cellar two. Allason did not complete his house at this time, probably because of the interference of the war; it was almost another twenty years before the house was finished.

Allason's scattered holdings in the counties surrounding his plantation required supervision by overseers. Finding men able, willing, and dependable proved difficult. The typical agreement that Allason signed with the overseer provided for the nature of the latter's duties as well as his recompense. In addition to a certain portion of the crop, Allason usually agreed to furnish the overseer and his family with a supply of meat, usually pork, and corn or corn meal sufficient for the man's immediate family. Allason sometimes furnished a milk cow for the overseer's family. The number of slaves -- usually four or five -- to work under the direction of the overseer was also usually specified.

47 Ledger 3, folio 218, entry dated September 5, 1777. This is an excellent description of the center portion of North Wales mansion as it stands today.

48 Agreements with overseers are available in the Loose Papers with the following men on the dates indicated: Charles Ayres, September 28, 1779; Jesse Stone, October 15, 1779; Lawrence Tompkins, November 20, 1779; William Kennon, November 2, 1779; Charles Scoggins, October 26, 1780; William Green, November 26, 1780; William Suddath, December 30, 1780; and Samuel Bridwell, January 6, 1783.
Wartime Virginia

Trade being almost entirely cut off during the early years of the war, Allason resorted to available colonial manufactured goods. Increased manufacturing activity was reflected in his correspondence. As early as the spring of 1775 linseed oil came into short supply because flax seed was being saved to plant for the manufacture of linen within the colony. Some of the greatest beneficiaries of the wartime stimulus to manufacture were Isaac Zane and the other iron makers in the colony, although Zane continued to have difficulty with the quality of iron produced in his mill. Some other Virginia made products also failed to give the satisfaction that had been obtained from British goods. A carriage obtained from and made by Robert Stringfellow in 1775 failed to furnish Allason satisfactory service, and he complained to Stringfellow about it. Allason valued, nevertheless, the manufactured products of Virginia smiths and carpenters during the war.

Allason's sales became more concerned with farm

49 Allason to Archibald Ritchie and to Thomas Hodge, May 16, 1775, Letter Book.
50 Allason to Isaac Zane, September 12, 1775, and January 19, 1780, Letter Book.
52 Allason to Gerrard Hooe, August 27, 1775, and to Andrew Crawford, August 3, 1776, Letter Book.
produce after his move to the plantation. The main crops of his plantations were grain throughout this period, for there was little market for tobacco. The grain provided food for those on the plantation and also reached the West Indies market as well as the military on occasion. The plantation during the war years was required to furnish most necessities to its workers and their families, thus the emphasis of production was on foodstuffs and crops from which cloth could be produced.

The "family" that had to be provided for at North Wales included not only Allason's wife, child, and brother, but also the Negroes who lived and worked there as slaves. Thus in March, 1778, Allason had thirty-five slaves inoculated against smallpox. When the Negro women were ready to deliver children Allason also paid for a white midwife to attend them, probably both from a sense of obligation and for his own financial self interest.

Although Allason was a "good" master to his slaves, he, too, was plagued by runaways. This was particularly true when the British Army was near. Mulatto slaves apparently found it easier to escape because of the presence of free mulattoes, making their appearance on the road less conspicuous. This ability to escape resulted in a lower value being

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53 Allason to Edward Snickers, May 22, 1775, Letter Book; William Neilson to Allason, September 18, 1781, Loose Papers; Memorandum Book, entry dated June 7, 1781, Allason Papers.

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placed on mulattoes during the war. 54

Allason’s association with a free mulatto, resulting from the war atmosphere, indicated something of the depressed situation of free blacks in Virginia at that time. In November, 1780, Allason signed an agreement with William Payne, a “Free Mulatoe man,” whereby the latter, in return for a bay mare, agreed to serve Allason as a common laborer under an overseer from November, 1780, to December, 1781. Payne was to be furnished with the “common Negroe cloathing, that is to say one woolen Jacket, one pair breeches, one pair Leggings or Stockings, one pair Shoes and two brown Linen Shirts, also common provision.” In addition, Payne agreed to substitute for either William or David Allason if either of them were called into militia service during the period of Payne’s service. Payne would have received all rights, pay, and entitlement of the military service. 55

Earlier Allason had hired a substitute to replace him in the colonial militia when an expedition was planned to Maryland in 1777. On that occasion Allason pointed out his lameness due to contraction in the sinews in one foot caused by a burn during his youth. Allason, apparently under

54 Advertisement for Runaway Slaves, July 10, 1780, Letter Book. Gerrard Hooe to Allason, April 28, 1781, Loose Papers. For value differential of mulattoes compare Allason’s tax lists during the war and after, where the value of a mulatto rises over three hundred percent while the others’ value remains constant.

some anxiety that his motives might be misunderstood and that he might be accused of unwillingness to bear arms against the King's forces, went to some lengths justifying his hiring of a substitute. One reason, in addition to his lameness, that he gave was that he was needed to care for his daughter.

**Family and Friends**

In June, 1775, Anne Hooe Allason gave birth to her third child, a girl, who lived only a few hours, being two months premature.\(^56\) Earlier a second child had been born, a son, in July, 1774, who had lived a few weeks although he was never well.\(^57\) When Allason had moved his family to Fauquier County it was not only for safety from hostilities but also for their health. It was therefore a great shock when Allason saw his wife Anne become ill and die suddenly in February, 1777, at their small plantation home. Allason briefly explained the circumstances to his friend Archibald Ritchie:

> She died the 19th Feby. after a short sickness. I cou'd give you a long accoe. was it not painfull to me, suffice it to say that on Sunday when we was walking in our Gar­den she was laying it off, that part for that, and that for the other thing seemingly well. On Monday she walked into the kitchen & on Wednesday morning about 8 o Clock died, when such an event was by no means expected. My loss is exceeding great, & poor Polly's is not less. She poor little Girl is my only Companion in the house & in

\(^{56}\)Allason to Archibald Ritchie, August 15, 1775, Letter Book.

\(^{57}\)Allason to Mary Knox, April 4, 1775, Letter Book. The infant boy was christened William Allason before his death.
The body of Anne Allason was taken from North Wales to St. Paul's churchyard in Falmouth where it was buried, in the words of Allason, "by her two Children who lyes there." Allason was disconsolate about the death of his wife, and in his letters after her death he termed his wife "the most agreeable Companion and best Friend," "my poor good Nancy," and similar complimentary and endearing designations. Her cause of death can only be speculated about, but her three pregnancies in four years and the illnesses that she suffered during these years in the influenza epidemic at other times no doubt gravely weakened her.

Following the death of his wife Allason was perturbed about what to do for the care of his three-year-old daughter. In many ways she became the center of his life. The first thing that he did was to ask the Ritchies to move to his plantation both for their own haven from the war and to assist him with Polly. Help was to come from another quarter -- the household of Charles Neilson.

The Neilson family of Urbanna, Virginia, on the lower

58 Allason to Archibald Ritchie, March 16, 1777, Letter Book.
59 Allason to Thomas B. Martin, March 1, 1777, Letter Book.
60 Ibid. The Ritchies had asked to move there earlier, Ritchie's request arriving about the time of Anne Allason's death.
61 Allason to Charles Neilson, March 16, 1777, Letter Book.

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Rappahannock, upon hearing of the death of Anne Allason immediately made an offer to take Polly into their home and to raise her with their own four daughters. Allason was genuinely moved in his response to their offer. "Your and Mrs. Neilson's kindness on this occasion exceeds what I cou'd have expected from our nearest kindred. Your joint care for my Dear little Girl requires such gratefull acknowledgments, that I have not words sufficient to express my true sense of it."

Nevertheless Allason did not leap at the offer, for he said that he was torn between love and duty. Love constrained him to keep his daughter by his side, for he relished the companionship that he had with the little three year old. Apparently, she also doted on her father.  

Allason's gratitude to the Neilsons was greater because they had not been close friends. Mrs. Neilson's offer, said Allason, "tho it distresses me, is worthy of Herself, and I must say discover the most Noble disposition, to have such an early concern for the Care of a Child of Strangers."

The Ritchies had asked to come stay at North Wales to escape the dangers of war on the rivers before learning of the death of Anne Allason. Allason now hoped that they would come and that Mrs. Ritchie could oversee the rearing of his daughter. Allason asked that his answer to the Neilsons be delayed until he received an answer from the Ritchies. When the Ritchies decided not to come to Fauquier County, Allason sent his

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62 Ibid.
daughter to the Neilsons in 1778, so that she could have "other Companions than Negroes."63

At the Neilsons young Polly began her education under the tutor of the Neilson children, James Bradfutt.64 In 1781 Allason brought the eight year old girl back to North Wales, possibly because of the increased activities of the war in the Virginia Tidewater only a few miles south of Urbanna at Yorktown or because of the death of Charles Neilson. Although no tutor could be found for Polly immediately, Allason was finally able to locate one, Robert Grier, who was to be paid twenty pounds Virginia currency in hard money yearly to teach Polly and the two daughters of Gavin Lawson. One third of this fee was to be paid by Allason.65

Allason spent considerable sums of money on the education of his daughter in the ensuing years. He not only had her taught grammar but also music and dancing.66 To the end of his life Allason did all in his power to ease the way for his only living child, and she apparently reciprocated

63 Ibid.
64 Ledger 3, folio 246. Allason noted in 1780 that Bradfutt had taught Polly for two years in 1780, thus she began her classes at the age of five. In his Memorandum Book the following year Allason again credited Bradfutt teaching his daughter another year.
65 Allason's Memorandum Book, entry dated October 8, 1781; and Allason to Mrs. Charlotte Neilson, August 24, 1781, Letter Book. Mr. Neilson had died in the intervening years. It would appear that Polly also lived with the Lawsons for the homes were separated by twenty miles, but this cannot be substantiated during this time period.
66 Allason to Mrs. Dunlap, March 25, 1782, Letter Book.
his affection in the fullest.

Naturally Allason's connections with the other members of his family who had remained in Scotland were interrupted by the war. Allason's relations with most of his friends, a great many of whom were also native to Scotland, continued unabated during the war. Some, it is true, disappeared from the scene because of the war and some through death. Possibly the most tragic death was that of the aged Andrew Sprowle, who died in Hampton Roads after first turning to the governor, Lord Dunmore, and then seeing all his store buildings and warehouses burned. Sprowle, unlike Allason, Ritchie, and others, was placed in a position where he was forced to make a decision. He chose the forces of the King, because they were in control at that time and place. Later, when patriot forces recaptured Norfolk he saw his life's work burned. Archibald Ritchie, on the other hand, although still occasionally called a "Loyalist" to this day, remained in Virginia throughout the war and died there as did his children. During the war Ritchie was able to continue sending ships out to the West Indies, and, although he certainly was doing it for his own benefit, the supplies he imported helped the cause of Virginia as well.

67 Charles Henry Ambler, Thomas Ritchie: A Study in Virginia Politics, (Richmond, 1913), 9-11, covers the accusations against Archibald Ritchie as a "Scotch Tory." Thomas Ritchie, leading Virginia publisher in the early nineteenth century, was a son of Archibald Ritchie.
During the war Allason began to see the departure of many of those he knew in business, not because they fled the country as Tories, but because their appointed days on this earth ended. In July, 1777, Alexander Woddrow of Falmouth died, followed the next year by the death of James Buchanan and Robert Knox of Maryland. Thus, the old order was beginning to pass with the advent of a new nation. One constant in William Allason's life, however, was his brother David. The two were together throughout the war, and even Allason's marriage seems to have effected no real change in their relationship. David Allason was almost as devoted to Polly as was her father.

Never during the war or after did Allason mention the departure of any merchant from the interior of Virginia because of political views. True, John Schaw and some other Norfolk merchants left, but the names prominent in the agreements between merchants before the war still appear in Allason's letters during the war. Some died and some suffered business losses, but none are mentioned as Loyalists or refugees. Perhaps the location of the Scottish merchant had much

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69 Ledger 3, folio 90.
70 James Bradfutt to Allason, February 3, 1781, Loose Papers.
71 Rose Knox to Allason, August 12, 1782, Loose Papers, and Allason to James Woddrow, August 9, 1783, Letter Book.
to do with his action during the war when he could no longer evade the issue but had to take sides. It appears that the majority of these men were apolitical, wanting only to be let alone to carry on their trade in an ordered society. William Allason fell back on his land during this time of crisis and fulfilled his ambition to be of the "landed" -- an ambition that was not new to the merchant class of Britain. At the end of the war he was a relatively large and wealthy land owner with many debts still outstanding from before the war -- debts that he had not forgotten and he would attempt to collect as soon as the courts were once again established.
The end of hostilities between the former British colonies in North America and the mother country in 1783 was greeted with relief and joy by Allason. The period of turmoil, of suspicion of neighbors, of marching and countermarching of troops was ended, yet things were not to be as they had been before the conflict. Many old things had passed away; some things were new. In the period when the United States were governed under the provisions of the Articles of Confederation William Allason was to reach that station of life to which he had aspired -- country gentleman. As such he found himself accepted by the "best" elements of society, no longer a stranger under suspicion by his neighbors because of his association with the merchants of England. Thus the war that Allason failed to support enthusiastically resulted in the opening of society to receive him.

This acceptance did not occur immediately, and there were overtones of the antipathies of the war after it was over. Allason, nevertheless, overcame these suspicions and also won an accepted if not honored place in Virginia society. Allason's new confidence was most immediately reflected in
his increased correspondence upon the announcement of peace. It must have given this younger son of a Scottish merchant some pleasure to begin receiving letters addressed to William Allason, Esquire, at about the same time that the war ended. Although this address was not usually used on letters addressed to him at the beginning of this period, it came to be used more each year by his correspondents. Certainly it was in keeping with his standing as a land owner, although it no longer was warranted by his status in the law.¹

Allason still was unable to care for Polly by himself and had to call on friends to assist him in his responsibility. Gavin Lawson, a fellow merchant at Falmouth who was also becoming a merchant-planter in post war Virginia, offered to keep Polly with his own children,² and she stayed with the Lawson family for a brief time in 1784. Later she returned to North Wales where she was taught by Robert Grier, whose connections with the Lawsons had been severed.³ Between her schooling and her trips with her father as he went about his business, Polly had ample opportunity to learn a great

¹There is nothing to indicate that Allason was a Justice of the Peace in Fauquier County although he had been one in King George County before the war.

²Allason to David Allason, March 31, 1784, Letter Book.

³Allason to David Allason, May 18, 1784, Letter Book. Referring to Grier, Allason wrote his brother that "I must make him presents of something to wear from time to time."
deal of the world's ways.  

The arrangement with the tutor Grier turned out to be unsatisfactory eventually, and Allason was forced to turn to the Lawsons for a second home for his daughter. Thus a close connection between the former mercantile rivals from Falmouth drew closer through Polly.  

The familiarity of the parent-tutor relationship apparently led tutors to attempt to take advantage of the connection at a later time. James Bradfutt, the tutor employed by the Neilsons of Urbanna and Polly's first teacher, continued to correspond with Allason in an ingratiating manner long after Polly had left Urbanna during the Revolution. Bradfutt thought Allason's fortunes were on the rise while those others he knew were on the decline during this period. This tutor, about two years older than Allason, had spent most of his life, if not all, in Virginia and now in his later years was becoming more and more dependent on the charity of others. At times he seemed frightened that he would lose contact with Allason. Allason did not repel the flattering overtures from the Tidewater tutor but politely kept him at arm's length. The real significance of Bradfutt's

4 Allason to David Allason, August 14, 1784, Letter Book. Allason was planning to take his daughter with him on a trip to Greenway Court to see Thomas B. Martin. Allason himself also taught his daughter when no tutor was available.  

5 Allason to Gavin Lawson, January 18, 1787, Letter Book.  

6 James Bradfutt to Allason, March 25, 1784, Loose Papers.
effort to get close to Allason through a solicitous attitude toward Polly was that he felt Allason's favor was valuable.\(^7\)

Allason's assistance was also sought by others in matters that he would have preferred to avoid, as with the estate of Robert Knox, who before the war had operated stores both in Falmouth and in Maryland. In August, 1782, Allason was informed of the death of Knox and that he had been designated an executor.\(^8\) This was an honor that Allason thought he could do without. Allason wrote Mrs. Rose Townshend Knox, the widow, that he did not really desire to serve as an executor, because the entire estate did not lie wholly in Virginia but was divided between the Old Dominion and Maryland. He did delay renouncing his appointment as executor until he could see Mrs. Knox and learn more of the estate's circumstances, however. Allason was obviously torn between his loyalty to a past relationship and the inherent financial risks in serving as an executor to an estate of questionable financial standing.\(^9\) Eventually Allason did consent to assist the widow of his old friend, because he

\(^7\)James Bradfutt to Allason, March 14, 1783, Loose Papers. Bradfutt's letters give a better insight into the distaff side of Virginia society than into the male or commercial society.

\(^8\)Mrs. Rose Knox to Allason, August 12, 1782, Loose Papers, and Allason to Rose Knox, October 26, 1783, Letter Book, and Copy of Will of Robert Knox.

\(^9\)Allason to Mrs. Rose T. Knox, November 6, 1782, Letter Book.
was already associated with the estate by having agreed to be security for Robert Knox on a bond. His action was to cause him considerable difficulty in later years.  

The deaths that occurred during the war left much legal debris to be cleared away after the Treaty of Paris had been signed in 1783. Allason was also named an executor in the will of William Kirk who was shot to death by Archibald Allen, his overseer, in September, 1780. This designation as executor also caused Allason inconvenience as he dealt with the legatees in Scotland. Some heirs were disappointed, and Allason was surprised to discover the meagerness of estates left by the dead. Allason, as the bearer of bad tidings, was often vicariously held responsible.

Mrs. Rose Knox to Allason, September 5, 1783 and November 6, 1783, Loose Papers. The Knox Plantation in Virginia was called "Summerduck," on which a bond was owed to John Hedgeman.

Copy of William Kirk's Will with Allason's note added dated September 19, 1780, stating that Allen was acquitted by the Fauquier Court. No motive for the slaying was given.

David McNish to Allason, March 14, 1784, and James Gibson to Allason, June 23, 1784, Loose Papers. McNish's letter is one of the first, if not the first, addressed to Allason as "Esquire." Both of these letters attempted to get quick money for the dead Kirk's mother in Scotland. See also Allason to Gavin Lawson, December 16, 1785, for some of the problems involved in settling estates at this period. David McNish was the nephew of William Kirk and had come over after being invited by his uncle who had forebodings of his death.

Allason to Thomas Mutrie, November 15, 1787, Letter Book.
in the mind of the legatee for the report of the estate.\textsuperscript{14}

Allason's relations with Greenway Court continued after the war, although now he was in the position of aiding more than being helped. Lord Fairfax had died, and the records of the estate were being cleared. Thomas B. Martin was transacting business for the estate and called on Allason to come help him set up a bookkeeping system that would enable him to properly account to the heirs.\textsuperscript{15} Allason also attempted to perform such routine favors as finding domestic help for Martin's household.\textsuperscript{16}

Almost as soon as the war was over contact with the remainder of the family in Scotland was once more established. Young Alexander Knox, Allason's nephew, gave a description of what had transpired with each of the family members since all communication had been severed in 1775. Jean Allason Patterson's husband had apparently deserted her and emigrated to the new nation and established himself in New York. Robert Allason, his estate in the hands of trustees, had lost his wife within the last year. John Allason, the black sheep brother, was still alive, much to the surprise of William

\textsuperscript{14}Allason to James Woddrow, August 9, 1783, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{15}Allason to David Allason, August 14, 1784, Letter Book. See also Allason to John Gray, October 20, 1787, Letter Book for another call upon Allason for assistance, in this case by Captain Edward Dixon to protect his property rights.

\textsuperscript{16}Allason to Thomas B. Martin, June 17, 1786, Letter Book.
Allason "from his former course of life."\textsuperscript{17} Sandy's widow had married a man named Dunlap in Philadelphia and ceased to be a concern for Allason after 1782.\textsuperscript{18}

Not only had Robert Allason's wife died and his business failed but he had also lost the use of his legs. Desperate for money he advised his brother William that he could probably cheat Alexander and John White and the other heirs of Mrs. Young out of part of their inheritance. Allason was advised to buy up the rights of Alexander and John White, who had been delayed in receiving their legacy for a long time, for a fraction of the real value of the estate and Robert would go "halfers" with him.\textsuperscript{19} William Allason avoided any ethical consideration of the proposal and simply replied to his brother that both of the Whites were alive and well and capable of receiving their legacy.\textsuperscript{20} Robert Allason was dead before the reply of his brother reached him, leaving one son (Robert, who had not been permitted to go to Virginia before the war) and four daughters. Only one of the daughters was married, the other three living together at Robert Allason's home of Williamwood House, Cathcart, near

\begin{footnotes}
\item[17] Allason to Alexander Knox, September 13, 1784, Letter Book. John Allason died about the date of this letter.
\item[18] Allason to Mrs. Dunlap, March 25, 1782, Letter Book.
\item[19] Robert Allason to Allason, January 18, 1785, Loose Papers.
\end{footnotes}
Allason's nieces pleaded with him for assistance, and to his credit he was ready to do all in his power save returning to Scotland at their request. Upon learning the name of the husband of the one married sister, Allason immediately wrote him, remitting money to the sisters and asking for further details concerning their situation. Mutrie in reply wrote a reasonable explanation of the family situation in Scotland, explaining that the girls were living in part on the charity of some acquaintances and said that Allason's bill to them had arrived in a moment of great need.

The two sons of Mary Allason Knox, Alexander and James, were doing well. More and more Alexander, the older of the two, was taking management of the brewery business into his own hands. Allason advised the younger of the two Knox brothers in November, 1786:

I notice you are returned home to your Mother, after getting your Education at Kilmarnock, of which I wish you to make the best use, and no doubt you will on considering the Expence your Mother has been at in obtaining it for you. I hope what you have learned will enable you to get through life with reputation to your self & Credit to your kindred, Let me recommend it to you

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21 Nancy Allason to Allason, April 30 and August 10, 1785, Loose Papers. Robert Allason's death on April 18, 1785, followed that of his wife's by about thirteen months.

22 Allason to Thomas Mutrie, January 22, 1789, Letter Book. Mutrie was a Port Officer in Port Glasgow.

23 Thomas Mutrie to Allason, July 26, 1787, Loose Papers. John Allason had died about seven months prior to Robert -- thus no male Allason's of this family were left in Scotland. Young Robert Allason had gone to Ireland to set up practices an architect, and nothing had been heard of him in years.

24 Allason to James Knox, November 15, 1787, Letter Bk.
not to neglect improving yourself in the different branches of Education of which you are now possessed, which you may always find time to do in whatever business you may be engaged. Nothing more than application at your leisure hours is needful, by which what you have learned will be impressed on your memory so much, as to be of advantage to you in your more advanced years.

Some of the wisest men have said "Youth is the time to learn, and as we are growing in years, to improve upon it" - the same I would recommend to your brother Sandy.

Allason sent more than this good advice to his nephew. He also sent sufficient money for the youth's passage to Virginia and invited him to come live with him in order to protect the family interest. Allason noted to the young Knox that the current laws of Virginia shut off any inheritance of Virginia property to a foreigner. As there were only three of the family in Virginia, two over fifty and the other a young girl, Allason wanted his sister's son to come over to learn to handle the estate and to be on hand to carry on for the family. Eventually the arrangement was agreed upon, and James Knox joined his kin in Virginia.

While Allason's relations with his kin remaining in Scotland portrayed his ascendant fortune to a degree, his air of confidence and ouspokenness in his correspondence also demonstrated a feeling of security at his status in life. His general character continued to draw respect and admiration from his contemporaries. James Bradfutt wrote to Allason.

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25 Allason to James Knox, November 18, 1786, Letter Book.

26 Ibid. Details of James Knox's stay in Virginia will be discussed in the next chapter.

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after the latter made another land investment, "Expences and
trouble it must have and will necessarily put you to, but
your steady temper is equall to all difficulties." British merchants were anxious to establish once again after
the war those contacts they had had with Allason before it,
satisfied that Allason would be able and willing to meet his
obligations. Allason's security in Virginia was most
clearly demonstrated in his letters to Britain.

Writing to a merchant in Bristol who had owed him
money throughout the war, Allason lectured on the subject
of idle capital. "I proposed it to be in Trade, small as the Sum is, rather than to remain in her Lady Lippincott's, a safe haven or any person's hands. I can only
repeat the same orders formerly given that I wanted it in
Goods and as they are not already come, to my disappointment,
I wish them to be sent as early as possible in some vessell
bound for Norfolk, if none offers for this River, from whence
there is frequent opportunities for this place." Later, in
the same letter Allason continued, "I hoped to have continued
a Correspondence that might have been of advantage to both,
but from the beginning I have nothing to hope for from it."
Even more indicative of Allason's new confidence was the directness with which he approached by correspondence the former Governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore. Dunmore had become indebted to Allason immediately before the "skirmishes" in Massachusetts, and had then refused to accept a bill of exchange on himself made out by Allason after the war, saying that he "knew nothing of the drawer /Allason/ or transactions." Allason took off from that point:

I will own that I was not of your Lordships particular acquaintance, I never sat at your Table, nor did I ever make myself known by apply /sic/ to you for favours. As I never was, I hope never to remain dependent on the Great. My desires never went further than to claim only what is my own and what I have an absolute right to from my own honest industry, nor will I submit to have my property withheld from me while there is Law to do me justice . . . My Lord, I am sorry to find you had so little regard to the reputation & Credit of a person in trade who obliged you by advancing his money & property for your private use. 30

Allason's new attitude also was given vent in his dealings within Virginia as he wrote to Joseph Allen of Fauquier County, "I am inclined to think I am trifled with on this occasion, and that I am disposed to submit to it no longer than until the 1st of next month." 31

30 Allason to The Right Honourable John Earl of Dunmore, November 13, 1784, Letter Book. Allason's attitude and confidence in dealing with Dunmore probably reflected in some way the results of the war for independence and the reigning anti-aristocratic feelings in the former colonies, as well as his personal confidence. In any event, there is no evidence in his papers that he ever received payment.

31 Allason to Joseph Allen, February 18, 1786, Letter Book.
Allason's secure position in the new world moved him to brush aside all invitations from his relatives in Scotland to return there, saying that "I have no intention of now removing from where my property is." \(^{32}\) To one of his nieces in Scotland Allason expanded on the reasons that he would never quit America: for the old country.

I have long given out all thoughts of ever crossing the Sea; a change of Climate might have a bad effect on my constitution, which agrees very well with that I am now in. I well know that the Education either for Males or Females /in regard to Polly's education/ is by far better on your side of the water than here, yet we must be contented with what we can procure, and not to be more deficient than our neighbours; besides what little property I have, is here also; and from long habit we know how to manage it. A removal wou'd also be attended with a loss, as our property in this Country consists chiefly in Land and Negroes which wou'd not sell to their full value, and there is another thing which in your Country you can have no trial of, that is, of selling faithfull Slaves, which perhaps we have raised from their earliest breath, even this, however, some can do, the same as Horses, etc. but I own that is not my disposition, in short a removal wou'd be attended with so many difficulties and losses, that I have not the least idea of it. \(^{33}\)

Property was not the only thing that held Allason in Virginia at this time, however, for in addition there was his community standing, while on the other side of the ocean were only his sister and nephews and nieces whom he had never known.

While Allason's financial and social position in Virginia society was becoming more established, some of the

\(^{32}\)Allason to Alexander Knox, September 13, 1784, Letter Book.

\(^{33}\)Allason to Nancy Allason, January 22, 1787, Letter Book.
first signs of the ill health that would plague him in his last years began to affect him. Although Allason claimed "very few there is that have enjoyed a greater share of health" for himself in December 1784, only five months earlier he had been ailing. In July, of that year, he had informed David that "My Legg is greatly mended, the swelling and inflammation altogether gone, and the sores healing fast, I am now able to walk about, tho' I don't like to attempt too much." Another aspect of Allason's health at this time was his weight problem. In June, 1785, he complained that it was very fatiguing for him to travel "being very clumsy." The complaint of clumsiness was undoubtedly due to Allason's "corpulency," for which he was dieting in 1787. Thus the picture of the hard and wiry Scot trader ends with the picture of a "stout" Virginia planter, living a "very retired" life on his plantation in the rolling Fauquier countryside, enjoying a comfortably substantial life.


35 Allason to David Allason, July 8, 1784, Letter Book. This is not the first time that Allason complained of the open sores on his leg and it will be a growing theme in so far as his health is concerned.


37 Allason to David Allason, January 5, 1787, Letter Book.

38 Allason to John Gray, January 22, 1787, Letter Book.

39 James Bradfutt to Allason, October 29, 1783, Loose Papers, Allason to Walter Peter, June 9, 1784, Letter Book.

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Political and Social Climate

No political issue drew the interest of those engaged in commerce in Virginia quite as much as the question of the payment of debts due to British firms. It would seem that this would be of less interest to Allason because he owed no one in Britain a shilling, but rather was owed by some of the King's subjects. The problem that he experienced, however, was that on occasion the money due him was held hostage for the payment of the debts that other Virginians owed to British merchants. Allason felt that the debts due the British should be paid for; being a man of business he believed in the inviolability of all debts and obligations. Even before the final treaty ending the "late disturbances," as Allason usually referred to the war in writing to friends and family in Britain, was signed Allason was speculating on the provisions of the treaty in reference to debts. At first he was encouraged that the American state governments would require their citizens to meet their obligations. Later when he

40 Alexander White to Allason, May 24, 1783, Loose Papers. White had become an active politician in the western area of Virginia and was a member of the Virginia Assembly. Allason received inside reports from White as to the direction that negotiations and legislation seemed to be going in the state government. Allason's notation on White's letter read "saying the Treaty of Peace is so clear that he thinks there can be nothing done to prevent the payment of British debts." While that reads as though Allason may have opposed the paying of the debts, other correspondence and White's own words in the letter present a different view. White wrote "It is thought likewise /that/ there will be some opposition to the payment of British Debts, but this being so expressly stipulated by the Treaty I should hope it will
saw the provisions of the treaty itself, Allason disappointedly commented "The 4th Article particularly on which so much depended is very vague, and by which the British [sic] Merchants will not readily come at their Debts, as many ways may be found to keep them from payment for a great length of time. I had formed an idea that a large explanation would have been added to it." 41

Allason drew a very realistic picture for his British correspondents as to what they could expect in way of payment under the conditions imposed by the treaty. To one he wrote that "I make no doubt but your Company, as well as the others, who had numerous old debts due them, will lose considerably, for we have not only had a revolution in the Political Government, but also in many people's private circumstances, which will be found when the day of application for old balances comes to pass." 42

Allason felt obliged to explain to his brother the revolutionary effects of the struggle for independence on Virginia society. He pointed out that in many cases, from his own view, that the economic structure had been turned upside down. "As many before it had had no Credit or property, not even be moved in the House." For another report from Richmond to Allason by White, see White to Allason, November 14, 1783, Loose Papers.

41 Allason to David Allason, December 23, 1783, Letter Book.

are now most oppulent, and others who were in good Credit, have lost that as well as their subject; such changes and alterations I say are pretty numerous here." An example that Allason may well have had in mind was General Daniel Morgan, twice sued before the war, a mere wagoner who had never warranted the courtesy of "Mister," now a power to be reckoned with in the state.

Allason could not find it in his heart to sympathize greatly with the plight of the British creditors. He pointed out that the British merchants had not been forced to accept payment in debased currency as he was in order to protect his own standing in the society. In recollecting the days of suspicion of the war Allason said that numbers had their troubles in Virginia, and, "for my own part am satisfied I had my full share of them."

The worst example of the debts being held over Allason in order to get him to use his influence to force payment of the British debts involved the debt due from John Schaw. Neil Jamieson, formerly partner and chief Virginia factor for the John Glassford and Sons network of stores throughout Virginia and Maryland, was executor of the Schaw estate. Both Jamieson and Schaw had moved to New York during the war, and there Schaw had been successful in business but died in the last years of the conflict. Because there

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\(^{43}\) Allason to Robert Allason, May 18, 1785, Letter Book.

\(^{44}\) Allason to Henry Ritchie, December 22, 1784, Letter Book.

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was sufficient money to meet Schaw's old debts -- Allason held Schaw's bond for several hundred pounds -- Allason felt that there was no reason Jamieson should not pay him from the estate. Jamieson was a large creditor in his own right and had considerable money due him from Virginia planters and merchants and although never blatantly saying so, it was clear that he intended paying no one in Virginia anything until the British creditors were protected by the Assembly. Speaking of Schaw's estate, Jamieson wrote in the following fashion, "as yet there is not any law for recovering debts due his Estate in Virginia, therefore I have been advised to defer this till it can be done with propriety." Both Jamieson and Allason knew that Schaw had been in bankruptcy when he fled Virginia and that very few if any debts were due him there, while a great many were due Jamieson.

In 1785 Allason reported that the atmosphere in Virginia toward the payment of debts to the British was still so hostile that those merchants who had fled the state during the war and who had returned were afraid to even mention the subject to their debtors. They were even less  

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45 Neil Jamieson to Allason, March 25, 1785, Loose Papers. Jamieson was in New York when he wrote this letter. No copies of this correspondence were found in the Jamieson Papers in the Library of Congress. Jamieson returned to the same theme in his letter to Allason of August 24, 1785, Loose Papers, saying that he preferred to wait to take action until after "the meeting of your assembly when it is presumed there will be no difficulty in receiving British debts under that denomination."
willing, obviously, to enter court action to recover the debts. Thus, the anti-creditor feeling that had prevailed just before and during the war still ruled Virginia society two years after the signing of the peace treaty, according to Allason. In the same year he was growing more pessimistic concerning the possibility of the Virginia Assembly taking any action that would permit the collection of British debts.

Allason was concerned that continued resentment might lead to even greater difficulty. He wrote to Thomas B. Martin that "As you get the Alexandria Paper I do expect you have seen the Boston Resolves. I hope the flame of resentment with which they seem possessed, will not extend to this Quarter, as heretofore."

Unsettled conditions of the economy and of the political structure began to worry Allason more, and he was prepared to use his influence to stabilize conditions. American merchants were watching closely the events being

\[46\] Allason to Robert Allason (Dear Brother), May 18, 1785, Letter Book. This is the last letter that Allason ever wrote to his older brother, who was dead even before it was written. Coakley, "Virginia Commerce During the Revolution," has speculated on the effect that this anti-creditor feeling had on the development of the Virginia and southern society and economy in later decades.

\[47\] Allason to Thomas McCulloch, May 18, 1785, Letter Book. For another effect of the debt question on trade with Virginia see Clay and Parry to Allason, August 10, 1785. British merchants began placing more pressure on their American counterparts through restricted credit.

\[48\] Allason to Thomas B. Martin, May 23, 1785, Letter Book.

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transacted, particularly those involving Robert Morris, fearing the worst in 1787.\textsuperscript{49} James Bradfutt gave an interpretation of the period that would be standard in America for many years, "for trade and navigation are under such restrictions that equal almost an entire prohibition, goods high, money scarce, cash and credit equally low, everybody grumbling and none can mend the matter."\textsuperscript{50} Thus, as the four year period following the end of the formal war between the former colonies and the mother country drew to an end, that part of the Virginia population Allason knew best was unhappy. Allason, too, yearned for order and tranquility in which to conduct his affairs and particularly in which to collect the money still owed him.

\textbf{The Trade}

Trade did not die during the American War for Independence, it only hibernated. Six months before the pact

\textsuperscript{49}David Allason to Allason, July 5, 1787, Loose Papers. Morris's movements and contacts were reported assiduously by David to Allason.

\textsuperscript{50}James Bradfutt to Allason, May 15, 1787, Loose Papers. Although historians have differed on how "critical" the years 1783-1787 were, this study deals only with the views of one man and his acquaintances, all connected in some way with trade, and they uniformly viewed the times as troubled and bad for trade. In view of their loyalty to trade as an institution, they inevitably viewed the period as a time of crisis. The fact that Bradfutt was not, judging from his letters, a strong character makes his observations more valid for he probably was repeating those conversations he heard within the society he frequented. Although a tutor, he had lived many years in a commercial household and probably reflected the views of men of commerce.
ending the conflict was signed commercial correspondence surged across the ocean as merchants on both sides of the Atlantic tried to gain the advantage by propitious action.\textsuperscript{51} Allason did not hesitate long to re-enter trade, although this time the management of the store would be left in the hands of David Allason, and the firm was known as William and David Allason. Four letters covering orders for goods were dispatched to those merchants in England whom he felt had given him the most satisfaction before the war: John Elam and Son of Leeds, Thomas and John Backhouse of Liverpool, Clay and Parry of Liverpool, and John Hyndman of London.\textsuperscript{52}

Immediate problems appeared as merchants on both sides of the Atlantic sought to restore old channels of trade. Obviously there had to be some changes in the relationships as well as in such charges to be made, as tariffs, fees, and commissions. Clay and Parry said that they could

\textsuperscript{51}Clay and Parry to Allason, May 20, 1783, Loose Papers. This Liverpool firm sent Allason an immediate account of the money due him and invited him to again take up the trade with them. His credit balance from his last sale of tobacco was almost 123 pounds. Also: James Gibson to Allason and Gavin Lawson, May 29, 1783, Loose Papers.

\textsuperscript{52}Allason to John Elam and Son, Thomas and John Backhouse, Clay and Parry, John Hyndman, all dated November 20, 1783, Letter Book. It is interesting to note that Allason waited until after the treaty was officially signed before he risked entering a contact with "enemy" nationals in his Letter Book. He may have written earlier, but if so, he kept no record of it. Everything in the correspondence points up the lack of "liberal" views in Virginia during the Revolution -- Allason felt very insecure in his correspondence. David Allason's relationship to the store will be dealt with specifically later.
no longer buy and ship to Allason for a two and one half percent commission as it did not give them enough to cover their expenses. In addition to being puzzled as to what to expect in the way of duties on their goods entering Virginia, the British merchants knew that duty on Virginia tobacco entering Britain was to be much higher than before the war. This fact, they thought, compelled them to be more restrictive in their credit terms.  

Beyond the new rules governing trade between Britain and Virginia, the factor of direct trade with the continental markets now had to be considered. Thus Allason, a small independent trader, found that the merchants with whom he had been dealing for the continental demand, could no longer afford to buy for that market as the French and Dutch were receiving tobacco directly from Virginia. Allason had no connections on the continent and had little means to gain those connections.

The merchants that Allason wanted to buy from in Britain could not afford to buy his tobacco solely for the inland trade. The problem of Americans establishing connections on the continent was demonstrated in that many shippers had been forced to sell their tobacco at vendue on the wharf at Amsterdam. This had forced the price of tobacco

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Clay and Parry to Allason, May 6, 1784, Loose Papers.

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down and certainly left shippers in Virginia in a precarious position.  

Allason's overall satisfaction with British merchants immediately following the treaty must be judged as less satisfactory than it had been before independence. Neither side knew exactly how to deal with the new relationships that ran counter to the accumulated experience of decades. Each side sought to return trade to something similar to the old channels without compromising the pride and position of the respective nations. Allason was adamant that the longer he "lived the more I am confirmed in the resolution not to Ship Tobacco on consignment as being a ruinous business." The problem of his and David's relationship to the British merchants was not resolved as the American nation entered a new period in 1787.

Just as the pattern of trade with Britain was disrupted during the years of war, the ability to collect debts had also been thwarted. Nevertheless, after the conclusion of hostility Allason pursued with energy those still carried on his books as holding his money. Many of these debts were very small, but they still attracted Allason's interest. A number of debtors had died or moved in the intervening years to Georgia, both of the Carolinas, and to the Kentucky

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54 James Ritchie and Company to Allason, May 10, 1785. The "inland trade or market" was the market in Britain itself.

territory. In those cases where the principal debtor had
died Allason attacked the estate in order to satisfy his
claim.  

Never one to threaten idly, Allason made little
attempt to collect his debts until the courts were once a-
gain established and the laws pertaining to collection had
been fixed. Once the courts were again operative he then
sought the best legal assistance he could get to aid him in
his quest; one of the first attorneys that he turned to was
young John Taylor of Caroline County. The courts some-
times put mercy above the letter of the law in post-war
Virginia. One debtor informed Allason that he had plenty
of money owed him but that the justices would not enforce
his claims because they knew the shortage of grain and the
hard times that were prevailing and refused to take action.

Allason held little brief for those owing him money
because many had owed for ten or more years. Thus when
Edward Snickers complained of the difficulty of the times
and the fact that Allason was charging interest on his debt;

56Letters of this nature are too numerous to list
individually but are found throughout the Letter Book for
this period. For other accounts see Allason's Day Book,
June 20, 1779, to April 7, 1800, which reveals a constant
collection of small debts.

57Allason to Col. John Taylor, August 25, 1783,
Letter Book. This is the first letter from Allason to Tay-
lor in the Allason Papers, and it is apparent from the con-
text that the two men were previously acquainted. No in-
dication is given when the relationship began.

58George Cordell to Allason, May 27, 1784, Loose
Papers.
Allason replied that the debt was no new thing and that Snickers had been in debt to Allason for fourteen years.  

One problem that still faced Allason in the postwar years was the question of paper money and soldiers' certificates resulting from the war. At first Allason had to be cautious that he violated no state government law in refusing currency. After this issue was settled Allason then insisted that he be paid in specie, not trusting the value of Virginia script.

Allason continued to accumulate land in the specie-short economy of Virginia as he sometimes accepted land in payment of debts due him. More land and land certificates were offered to him than he had use for, but he accepted those that could be put to immediate use. With only a daughter to succeed him Allason may have seen little reason to speculate in western lands — an idea that at one time before the war and the death of his wife had intrigued him.

Allason by January 1, 1787, had become an extensive plantation owner. On that date he listed his assets as shown on Table XXI. In addition to real estate Allason also

59 Allason to Edward Snickers, March 1, 1784, Letter Book.

60 John Walden to Allason, July 28, 1784, Loose Papers.

61 Allason to Col. Martin Pickett, August 26, 1783, Letter Book. The land transactions of Allason can also be traced through the county deed books on file at the Virginia State Library. See also Allason's Daybook, 1777-1800, entry dated July 12, 1783, pertaining to Richard and George Rosser.
### TABLE XXI
ALLASON'S STATE OF PRIVATE AFFAIRS, REAL ESTATE, 1787

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Size in Acres</th>
<th>Estimated Value&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lots No. 6, 37, &amp; 71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falmouth</td>
<td></td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Wales Plantation</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>1120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill Thereon</td>
<td></td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenlees Land</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner’s Land</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burk’s Land</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragged Mountain Land</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>202½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey Run Land</td>
<td>739½</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodstock Land</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kemp’s Land&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; (Allason's chance to gain)</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hood’s town on James River</td>
<td>2 lots</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. William’s Land</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. William’s River Land</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson’s Land</td>
<td>117½</td>
<td>117½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Pickett’s Land</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reynold’s Land</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roysburg</td>
<td>4 lots</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosser’s Land</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3833</td>
<td>6140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Estimated value of holding expressed in pounds by Allason

<sup>b</sup>Kemp's land was a tract that Allason was attempting to gain through escheat proceedings.
had a large investment in slaves. On January 1, 1787, he listed sixteen men valued at 905 pounds, twelve women at 1515 pounds, and twenty-nine "young ones" worth 2285 pounds. Thus his investment in slave labor he put at 4705 pounds. Along with his slaves he inventoried twenty-six horses with a total value of 445 pounds.  

Although Allason's attention continued to center on the operation of his plantation after the war, he did also re-enter mercantile affairs. Even before the final peace treaty was signed Allason sent David back to Falmouth to open the store once again. Allason himself described the operation of the store as "doing a little business," primarily to keep David "Employed after seven years of idleness" during the war. The store was conducted on a much smaller scale after the war, and William Allason apparently left the entire management in the hands of his younger brother except for advice. Allason had great confidence in his brother and there were no large conflicts between the two in this period, just as there had apparently been none in their entire adulthood.  

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62 Ledger 0, folio 74. The most valuable horse Allason listed was "Dreadnought" at one hundred pounds.  
64 David Allason to Allason, April 17, 1784, Loose Papers. The relationship of the two brothers is much more evident after the war because they now communicated in notes between North Wales and Falmouth. The letters were not sentimental but were straightforward with both giving and sharing views openly about trade conditions, personalities.
Falmouth had certainly not prospered during the war years when trade stopped. In 1785 there were only thirty tithables in the town, including David Allason.65 Thus the town of eighteen or twenty houses in 1759 had grown little if at all in the intervening quarter century.

While Allason entered storekeeping only at a low level he was still involved in collecting debts through court action in a large way. Allason was intent on collecting debts due to the old partnership of William Allanson and Company and during the four year period following the Treaty of Paris the level of debts was reduced to "Bad" 931 pounds, "Doubtful" 713 pounds, and "Good" 549 pounds.66 Although there was considerable loss in those debts Allason conceded as being "bad" or "doubtful," nevertheless, considering the time and situation involved his record as a collector of debts was admirable.

Plantation Operations

William Allason was not content to be a placid planter. Even before the war was over he had made capital improvements in his North Wales plantation. At the same time Allason's family benefited from William Allason's economic standing, and Polly, David also watched the progress of Allason's daughter closely and reported on her activities in the social life around Falmouth and Fredericksburg with apparent love and pride.

65 Minutes of Falmouth Trustees, September 3, 1785, Virginia State Library.

66 Allason's Memorandum Book, January 1, 1787.
time he saw other opportunities for investment in the streams that flowed through and by his land. In September, 1783, he attempted to obtain an acre of land in Culpeper County across the North Fork of the Rappahannock River (Allason referred to this stream as the Hedgeman River) as a base for one terminal of a dam he proposed on the site. In addition to attempting to use the doctrine of eminent domain Allason was required to furnish the local authorities with a report of the consequences of his proposed project. Thus, he received a report in October of the same year from an experienced constructor of dams and mill races that his dam would raise the level of water at Bramblett's Ford by two feet five and three quarters inches. According to Ball this would allow the continued use of Bramblett's as a ford.

Allason did receive testimonials from the neighbors of the mill site that there was a need for the mill. One

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67 Allason's Day Book, 1777-1800, entry dated September 18, 1783. Allason paid Col. Samuel Clayton twelve and one half shillings to survey off an acre of land in Culpeper "opposite the dam" belonging to Elizabeth Reynolds. He then brought the jury out to survey his proposal, apparently to condemn the Reynold's property for the public good. Allason furnished the jury two dinners for they had to meet twice because of the absence of Col. Clayton the first time. The dinners included on the menu shoats and brandy, for Allason did not overlook the niceties when attempting to influence public servants. Apparently he was unsuccessful in getting his request honored, for he later acquired the entire Reynold's tract and only then set about constructing the dam.

68 John Ball to Allason, October 4, 1783, Loose Papers.
wrote "we in our neighborhood suffer much for the want of a Good Mill, and when yours on the River is done it will be very Convenient to all this neighbourhood."\(^6^9\) Those living near the proposed mill in both Fauquier and Culpeper counties were going to have to wait some years before they would be saved the long journeys to use other mills. Although Allason started work on the dam and races in 1784, it was not until 1787 that the mill was put into operation. In September, 1786, Allason's workers began to lay down the dam itself after the other parts of the mill system had been completed only to have a flood on the river scatter their material five days later.\(^7^0\) Allason also attempted to get a right of way for a new road to the mill. Although court members of the county approved his request, he was stymied by the provisions of an earlier state law of January 1, 1786, that abolished the right of the court to condemn property for this purpose.\(^7^1\)

The River Run mill, as Allason called his new

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\(^6^9\) Jacob Coons to Allason, September 3, 1784, Loose Papers.

\(^7^0\) Allason's Book of Transactions at River Run Mill, 1786-1787, Entries dated September 13, 1786, and September 18, 1786. Another flood struck the dam almost a month later but this did less damage to the progress. On October 13, 1786, Allason recorded: "it rained exceedingly in night, dam overflowed but was little hurt . . . The same fresh was so high in Falmouth as to carry off all the Houses on the Lotts next to the River and was up in my Store floor, by which I judge it to be 18 inches higher there than in May 1771."

\(^7^1\) Ibid. Entry of December 25, 1786. Capt. Williams Jennings was Allason's opponent on the road question.
enterprise, was not the only mill that he had an interest in, for he continued operation of the grist mill on the home plantation. This mill was less than satisfactory because the water supply was not adequate to maintain its operation during dry periods. In addition, Allason wanted a better mill that would produce a better product.

In addition to having to replace parts of the grist mill periodically Allason also continued to have trouble with his overseers. There was an apparent tendency by the overseer to bring in extraneous members of the family when Allason provided flour to the overseer. Thus John Anderson quit as Allason's overseer on the North Wales on August 17, 1786, because Allason cut off his supply of bread for his wife's niece.72

In 1787 Allason embarked on another venture, building the Pine Forest Saw Mill. In January of that year he reported that difficulty was being encountered because of rocks that had to be removed in constructing the mill, although he hoped "to conquer them without being as much expense for Gun Powder."73 For assistance Allason again turned to Captain John Ball for construction of the mill. Iron needed in the mill was obtained from his old customer

72 Allason's Day Book, 1777-1800, entry dated August 17, 1786. Allason also required that Anderson sell his three horses and five cows because they were being fed at his expense.

73 Allason to Gavin Lawson, January 18, 1787, Letter Book.
General Daniel Morgan. By the middle of the year enough progress had been made in construction of the sawmill that Allason hired Jacob Haines to oversee the operation of the grist and sawmill. The sawmill began to saw its first plank on June 26, 1787, and Allason was optimistic toward the future of his new enterprise.

Allason turned back to production of tobacco after the war but also maintained the planting of grains, including corn, wheat, rye, and oats, at a high level. The plantation required much of its own harvest, but the remainder could be taken to the new mills, milled, and sold. To supplement plantation products Allason bought herring caught in the tidal rivers of Virginia for consumption on the plantation by his "family."

The end of the "Critical Period" saw the completion of Allason's transfer from the life of a storekeeper to a developer of the American interior. Animosities toward the Scots that had existed in the war years were fading further into the past. Now almost sixty years old Allason was more and more accepted a member of the new nation that also was

74 Allason to General Daniel Morgan, February 6, 1787, Letter Book.
75 Allason's Agreement with Jacob Haines, May 2, 1787, Loose Papers.
76 Allason to Clement Kennedy, January 3, 1784, Letter Book. Allason desired to be furnished with ten barrels of herring from Kennedy. Allason inferred that he might take many more if the first ten were satisfactory. Kennedy apparently fished the Potomac, because he marketed his fish at Dumfries and Caves.
seeking better means to establish itself in the world.

Allason was becoming American with America.
CHAPTER VIII

AMERICAN, 1788-1800

The Falmouth Store

Although William Allason and David Allason were supposedly partners in the store operated in their joint name, it became mainly the responsibility of David Allason with each passing year after it was opened again following the American Revolution. In March, 1789, David Allason leased Lot Six in Falmouth -- the lot on which the store and its auxiliary buildings were built -- from his brother. The lease was for the lifetime of David and called for a payment of twenty pounds a year rent.\(^1\) By 1792 William Allason was so far removed from the import trade that when expecting some personal goods shipped directly to him, he was forced to ask for advice getting them into the country. He explained "I have for a long time been out of the way of importing Goods, in consequence of which I am a stranger to the forms, etc., that is needfull on this occasion."\(^2\)

\(^1\) Lease Agreement between William and David Allason, dated March 30, 1789, Loose Papers.

\(^2\) Allason to Hudson Muse, June 11, 1792, Letter Book.

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Allason's abandonment of the management of the store did not mean that he no longer had any interest in it or in his brother. David sought his advice, and Allason furnished such admonitions as "W. Richards is not a man to lend to even if you had money to spare."

One indication of Allason's dominance -- even in absentia -- in the relationship with his younger brother was the continuation of his policies. Many times he had reiterated his intention not to ship tobacco to Britain and now this same practice was again put forward as stated by William and David Allason in a letter to Clay and Parry,

"As it by no means suits us to ship Tobacco to a losing market, which from long experience, we have found to make a bad remittance, we rather chose to buy Bills of Exchange here and remit for any Ballances that we may be owing." This continued to be the Falmouth store's policy even in the absence of William Allason. David received payment in tobacco or flour, sold it in Virginia, bought bills of exchange, and sent the bills to Britain in payment for goods sold. In a few cases small quantities of tobacco were shipped to Britain for specific payments. Allason's practice of almost thirty years was thus maintained.

An ever increasing portion of the produce taken in
as payment was flour rather than tobacco, much of this flour coming from beyond the Blue Ridge. The extent of the flour trade became so great that there were at least two barrels of flour for every hogshead of tobacco received in the store.⁵

Both tobacco and flour began to find a cash market as the national economic procedures were stabilized and the money supply became adequate and dependable. Although the Allason store continued to issue credit to its customers, it was able to sell for cash plantation produce received in payment for goods. This permitted Allason's long observed policy not to ship tobacco on consignment to become standard in post-colonial Virginia.⁶

The independence of the former colonies did not mean new ease for the merchants and freedom from government restrictions. On the contrary, there were more restrictions and laws to abide by after the war than there had been before caused in large part by the expenditures of the war -- a direct expense the former colonists had not borne before.

⁵Allason's Memorandum Books, passim. These figures are an approximation and are not based on an actual count of the items mentioned. There is no doubt that there was a relative increase in the production of wheat compared to tobacco in this area after the Revolutionary period.

⁶No attempt was made in this study to measure the impact of the European war during the 1790's, because it was seldom mentioned in the Allason papers and therefore outside the scope of verification. Correspondence from and to British firms ceased shortly after the adoption of the Constitution.
One example of local restrictions placed on the traders was the initiation of licensing taxes in 1788. In that year David Allason paid an annual five pound fee in Stafford County in order to obtain a license to retail goods. William Allason was caused some additional inconvenience by the requirement that he personally appear at the collector of customs office in Urbanna in order to gain some personal goods sent to him by his nephew in Scotland. In October, 1792, Allason wrote the collector:

I am sorry to find my presence so necessary at your office to make an Entry of the few articles sent me by the Commerce [a ship]. My attendance there would be too much fatigue for one of my years to undergo on account of them, that being the case I expect they will be sold for the payment of the duties, if so I wish you to buy them for me and keep them until my Brother sends the money.

One man was unable to operate the store efficiently by himself because of the necessity to travel away to check on goods and collect debts. David Allason was fortunate enough to find a young man who performed satisfactorily as his helper in the store. That was the son of Captain John Ball, the millwright who constructed Allason's mills. Although his handwriting and grammar indicated that young William "Billy" Ball lacked the education of William Allason, 

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7 License for retailing goods issued to David Allason, March 15, 1788, Loose Papers. There is no earlier evidence of such a fee.

8 Allason to Laurence Muse, October 8, 1792, Letter Book. There will be an additional discussion of the effect of the new government below.
he was dependable and his employment with David was continued for several years.\(^9\)

One exception to the break with the British merchants was due to David Allason's continuation of his brother's service and friendship with Thomas B. Martin. David received and sold farm products sent from Greenway Court in Frederick County. He also bought bills of exchange for Martin and relayed letters to and from Martin's brother in Britain, the Reverend Denny Fairfax. The relationship had obviously grown from that of pure business into a genuine friendship. Messages were passed between David and William about the occurrences at Greenway Court, and the three men apparently enjoyed one another's company. Martin usually visited at North Wales if he was required to go to Falmouth, while both David and William Allason were sure to call at the Court if they were in the Shenandoah Valley.\(^10\)

The store in Falmouth was increasingly operated by David Allason rather than with his older brother. Yet most of the inhabitants of the region continued to associate William Allason with the store, realizing that it was his capital and personal force that stood behind the undertaking. David Allason was never as skilled or as accurate in his

\(^9\) David Allason to Allason, May 5, 1789, Loose Papers. Allason to David Allason, November 21, 1789, Letter Book. In 1789 Billy Ball agreed to help for an additional year at thirty pounds a year.

\(^10\) Letter Book passim. For a reference to Martin's brother see David Allason to the Reverend Denny Fairfax, D.D., March 18, 1791. Denny Martin had assumed the name Fairfax under the terms of the will of Lord Fairfax, his uncle.
account keeping, nor was his venture as large or ambitious as his older brother's had been. In an indirect way William Allason continued in the public eye as a merchant although he had turned the main focus of his attention to the management of his mills and plantations.

**Mills and Plantations**

One of Allason's attributes as a planter and mill owner was an alertness for a better -- and more profitable -- way to do things. He did not hesitate either to do things differently or to copy others if he felt the other's way was an improvement. In the spring of 1788 he began looking for ways to improve the operation of his mill by converting it into a tubmill.\footnote{A "tubmill" had "a horizontal water-wheel that was acted on by the percussion of the water altogether; the shaft was vertical carrying the stone on top of it, and served in place of a spindle." Oliver Evans, *The Young Mill-Wright and Miller's Guide* (Philadelphia, 1853), 167. This was the fourteenth edition of this book first published in 1834. The advantage of the tubmill was its relative mechanical simplicity. Its disadvantage was the inherent loss of power in its construction and hence slower grinding action. There was no gravity action on the water wheel that is gained by a water wheel that has the water going over it. Conversely no right angle gears were required to turn the torque force of the wheel into moving the horizontal mill stones. Allason obviously considered that he had sufficient water power from the river.} Considering this improvement on his milling operations Allason first turned to the builder of his previous mills, Captain John Ball. The latter, unfamiliar with the tubmill construction, attempted to learn to construct one by observing one at work. Afterward,
confessing that he did "not understand one well enough to
direct the building of one," he advised Allason to find
some one more acquainted with their construction. Ball did
offer to build a standard type mill for Allason if that
would be satisfactory and stated his terms.12

Allason did indeed get the mill built as a tubmill
but three years later was unhappy with its operation, because
it ground so slow that it could not keep abreast of the busi­ness waiting for it. In June, 1791, after causing Allason
"much personal trouble, labour, & expence,"13 the mill was
running "night and day" and Allason regretted his decision
to construct it.14 In order to get a faster grinding mill
he turned again to Captain Ball and wanted him to convert
the mill into a "single geared" mill that would speed the
action of the stone through gear action and desired to know
what Ball would charge for the work.15 The same day that
Allason sent his note to him, Ball sent back what he would
want in the way of pay for himself and his helpers. Ball
had four men working for him constructing mills, and he
said any two of them could do the job for Allason. The

12 Captain John Ball to Allason, May 23, 1788, Loose
Papers.

13 Allason to James Knox, September 5, 1789, Letter
Book.

14 Allason to David Allason, June 16, 1791, Letter
Book.

15 Allason to Captain John Ball, August 25, 1791,
Letter Book.

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charges for the men ranged from five shillings a day for George Chilton to three shillings for Randolph Grymes.  

Allason felt that the price demanded by Ball, which would have amounted to sixty pounds by the time the work was finished, was excessive. Instead he turned to one of Ball's old apprentices, Nathaniel J. Johnson, to have the mill converted at a price of thirty pounds. Ball seemed concerned, Allason said, "at the loss of the job; he must fall greatly in his prices otherwise his late boys will run away with all the business from him." Allason's participation and supervision of the construction in the cold and damp winter weather worried his brother. David wrote in November, 1791, that "I hope by this time your mill at the River is done and I would do no more with mills this winter." Enough work had been done by the middle of December to put the new works into action. Allason enthused that it was "equal to any other of the same kind as to grinding; it fully answers my expectation, and doubt not her being equal to Gavin Lawsons in a dry season." The Johnson work force had to leave Allason's mill for a period to repair Johnson's own mill but returned to have Allason's 

16 Captain John Ball to Allason, August 25, 1791, Loose Papers.  
17 Allason to David Allason, September 9, 1791, Letter Book.  
18 David Allason to Allason, November 20, 1791, Loose Papers.
completely finished by the middle of April, 1792.\textsuperscript{19} Their work, according to Allason, was "exceedingly well done."\textsuperscript{20}

Dependable labor was constantly a problem in Virginia at this time. The builder of the mill house itself was John West, described at first by Allason as "a very good mason." Allason was quite pleased with the progress of West's work in June 1791, saying that he was laying the stone about as fast as it could be hauled in by wagon.\textsuperscript{21} The following September Allason was not so happy with West, who had left with Allason's plumb line (a weighted line used by masons to determine that bricks or stones are laid straight) and "a line made at the mill for my flax & in the time when he ought to have been laying stone for me."\textsuperscript{22}

Despite this incident Allason hired West on August 1, 1794, to both make and lay the thirty thousand bricks that would be used in the construction of the new house at North Wales. Within three weeks Allason noted that West was drunk much of the time and was getting little accomplished. Then in October West's wife approached Allason with a demand for a loan to purchase a Negro which Allason refused. Mrs. West

\textsuperscript{19}Allason to David Allason, December 18, 1791, Letter Book.
\textsuperscript{20}Allason to David Allason, April 1, 1792, Letter Book.
\textsuperscript{21}Allason to David Allason, June 9, 1791, Letter Book.
\textsuperscript{22}Allason's Day Book, 1777-1800, Entry dated September 15, 1791.
was considerably upset by Allason's refusal. Allason also had problems obtaining millstones. Stones had been ordered from Edward Snickers in 1786, and after two years Allason assumed that Snickers had forgotten about his requisition. On Snickers' inquiry in 1788 to see if they were still desired, Allason wrote that he would take the stones at the previously agreed upon terms. The stones finally were delivered to Allason at North Wales in the second week in October, 1788, and Allason said he would pay Snickers as soon as he could have the stones inspected by a craftsman.

The "Pine Forest Sawmill" was less of a problem to Allason than was the grist mill run by the river. Allason hired Jacob Haines to manage the sawmill and was satisfied with his performance except that Haines had a tendency to do finished cabinet and furniture work for others in addition to his supervision of the mill operations. Allason agreed to provide Haines with a dwelling house, four hundred pounds of fresh pork a year, a cow to furnish milk to the Haines family, meal for bread for Haines and his family, and twenty-five pounds annual salary. In return for these payments Allason maintained that he possessed the full benefit of

23 Allason's Memorandum Book, January 1793-January 1799, entries dated August 1, August 27, and October 10, 1794.
25 Agreement between Allason and Jacob Haines, May 24, 1788, Loose Papers.
Haines's labor. Allason's view was expressed in his Day Book, where he noted that he had agreed with Haines for a year's extension of the first year's agreement. Allason noted that Haines was "not to job or work for any other but myself in making furniture or any thing else I please to employ him about, & to be diligent, not to absent himself from his business without leave, but to be constantly keeping the sawmill at work & doing as much as he can in other joiners work etc while the saw is at work." Allason was therefore provoked to anger when he caught Haines working for Captain William Jennings in June, 1789.

In the first two years of operation the sawmill cut over ninety-one thousand board feet of lumber. Much of the work done at the sawmill was for others, Allason keeping one half of the total boards sawed. For example, when Henry Mauzy, one of Allason's neighbors and a regular customer at the mill, brought in logs to be sawed, Allason kept one half of the planks produced and Mauzy one half. In addition to Mauzy other customers doing business with the Pine Forest Sawmill were John Kemper, John Pickett, Martin Porter, Jess Withers, and others.

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27 Ibid. Entry dated June 9, 1789.
28 Pine Forest Sawmill Day Book, June 1787-September 1798, entries dated between June 7, 1787, and May 4, 1789. Unfortunately no records of sawing done was kept after May 4, 1789.
29 Ibid., entry dated January 26, 1788.
Repairs also had to be made to the sawmill by Allason and his workers. The crude construction of the mechanical parts of the mills insured that they required constant attendance and frequent repair. In the age before tempered steel and precision tooling and when the work was done from crude iron by local smiths the life of machinery without repair and replacement was brief. Allason noted the result of this situation on his correspondence when he spoke of "being much engaged about repairing the Saw Mill Crank and other Irons belonging to it, I cannot at this time write J. Knox." Allason's wisdom in putting his mills on the river where they had a dependable flow of water, even though he had to deal with the violence of the river's flow in rainy seasons, was justified in 1792. The summer of that year was unusually dry and in September he was happy to report to David that his sawmill was still at work when the others on smaller streams had ceased because of the shortage of water.

The demand for lumber was so great that Allason began looking for ways to increase the sawmill's output in the last years of his life. In January of 1796, he wrote to Adiminus Robinson of Madison County wanting to know if that craftsman would come inspect his mill on the "Hedgeman
or North River about two miles above Thompson's ford" to see if its production could be increased.32

Allason's fame as something of an expert on mills had so spread by 1789 that he was asked for advice on matters pertaining to mill construction and maintenance.33

As Allason's physical condition deteriorated through age and illness he found the strain of operating the mills and supervising the millers too great. In March, 1796, he agreed to lease the River Run mill to Thomas Hailey for ninety pounds a year and certain specified improvements that Hailey was to make to the mill. The term of the lease was for six years, and Hailey was to build an addition to the mill house, to furnish two new millstones four feet in diameter, and to build a dwelling place for himself and his family. All improvements were to revert to Allason at the end of the lease, but Hailey was to pay no rent the first year in compensation for the improvements. Allason reserved one additional benefit for himself -- "the liberty and privilege of being Toll free at said Mill for any kind of Grain he or his Family may have occasion to have

32 Allason to Adiminus Robinson, January 28, 1796, Letter Book. Although Allason never specifically says so in his papers, it appears as though the River Run Grist Mill and the Pine Forest Saw Mill shared the same pond and dam on the Rappahannock River above its juncture with the Rapidan River.

33 Robert Beverley to Allason, July 29, 1789, Loose Papers.
ground there during the "term" of the lease. The agreement did not work out as well as Allason had hoped, and in the fall of 1797 he had a mare and two colts belonging to Halley seized in payment of back rent of forty-five pounds. Later he was advised by David to take the mill back from Halley even though it was no longer in an operating condition, but the problem was finally settled when Halley ran off with a mare that was to have been his security after being jailed by another creditor.

Finding dependable people for overseers continued to be a concern. The problem became so severe that by 1791 Allason was determined to let the slave "Polidore, who is very honest and industrious . . . be at the head of plantation affairs at the River, in place of an overseer there."

Lack of trustworthy overseers contributed to Allason's practice of leasing the outlying tracts of land he owned. An example of the typical lease was that granted to

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34 Allason to Colonel Robert Hooe, March 5, 1796, Letter Book. Allason to David Allason, March 27, 1796; Memorandum of Agreement between William Allason and Thomas Halley, dated March 19, 1796, Loose Papers.

35 Allason to David Allason, December 14, 1797, Letter Book.

36 David Allason to Allason, April 25, 1798, Loose Papers.

37 Allason to David Allason, (n.d.) February, 1798, Letter Book. Records do not indicate whether the mares were the same.

38 Allason to David Allason, August 25, 1791, Letter Book.

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Location of Joint Site of Allason's River Run Mill and Pine Forest Saw Mill

*Allason's estimated distances
John Fenning, a stone mason, in 1791. Fenning received 154 acres of land from Allason on November 30, 1791, and was to pay an annual rent of seven pounds and fourteen shillings. Rent payments were to be made on December 25 each year, with the first rent due in December, 1792—giving Fenning the land rent free the first year. In addition to the rent, though, Fenning agreed to build a dwelling house of twenty feet by twenty feet, a kitchen of sixteen by sixteen, a stable of twenty by sixteen, and a barn of twenty by thirty "at least." In addition to this construction—which Fenning was to replace if it was destroyed in any manner—the renter also agreed to plant an orchard of one hundred winter apple trees, none closer than forty feet from another. He was also to plant another orchard of peach trees, separated by twenty-five feet from each other. Fenning had the right to work three able bodied men on the land, but if he employed any more than that he would pay an additional five pounds a year rent. If children were employed over the three adults agreed upon, both Allason and Fenning agreed to let a jury of neighbors decide what the increase in rent should be.39

Allason considered making a large land purchase to provide for the future of his grandchildren. Enquiring about ten thousand acres of land in Hampshire County (in West Virginia today) that belonged to Thomas B. Martin's brother, William Allason's Day Book, 1777-1800, entry dated November 30, 1791.
Colonel Philip Martin, Allason offered to pay the price that Thomas Martin had mentioned, one thousand pounds. Allason's interest was provoked "as Polly seems to be in the way of providing me with Grand-children . . . [and] in order to provide them with a settlement at some future day and prevent their going to the Western Country." Later Allason requested the lowest price the Martins would take for the land when his first offer was refused; Allason informed the Fairfax heir that he had "some spare money, and expect more which I purpose to lay out in Land for the use of my posterity." Although still relatively healthy Allason said that he did not expect to "enjoy it long myself, nor can you or your brother being both arrived at a good age." Allason was unable to purchase this land for his descendants, but they remained in Virginia in any event.

Constantly plaguing those who bought and sold land in Virginia were clouded titles and questionable surveys. Several of the court cases involving Allason were over disputed lands. In one case Allason was in conflict over a piece of land near Falmouth called, because of its original owner, Kemp's land. Allason and members of the Carter family had disputed over the land for twenty years by 1790, by which time Allason was ready either to accept or give a

40 Allason to Thomas B. Martin, April 24, 1791, Letter Book.

41 Allason to Thomas B. Martin, December 24, 1791, Letter Book.
payment in order that one of the parties might have a clear title. Allason wanted one hundred pounds for his quitclaim,\(^4^2\) and earlier had inquired of Landon Carter what he wanted to cease his claim to the property.\(^4^3\)

Four hundred acres of land in the Shenandoah Valley granted to John Bayles in March 1760 created a later surveying problem for Allason in the 1790's. The survey upon the grant of the land used such terms as "Beginning at two red oak saplings and a white oak," "to two Hickory Sapplings and a white oak," and "to a parcell of marked sapplings on the west side of Jacob Hite's Road" to describe the bounds of the survey.\(^4^4\) The temporary nature of these markings could only lead to a questionable title at a later date as the land was not fully developed by the original grantee and with the advent of new settlers the trees either changed in size and appearance or were cut. Another surveying problem was the failure of the surveyors to set out accurate boundaries mathematically. Peter Stephens (for whose family Stephens City, Virginia, is named) was particularly complained of as an inaccurate surveyor.\(^4^5\)

\(^4^2\) Allason to David Allason, February (n.d.), 1798, Letter Book.

\(^4^3\) Allason to Landon Carter, February 27, 1790, Letter Book.

\(^4^4\) John Bayles's Survey, granted March 28, 1760, lodged in Frederick County Deed Book, copy in Loose Papers, attested by William Price.

\(^4^5\) Allason to Major John Williams, January 28, 1789, Letter Book.
One reason Allason was unable to personally manage his far flung properties and leased some out was the detailed attention the management of each tract demanded. Purchase and movement of supplies, supervision of operations, and maintaining records were beyond the ability of one man and trained assistance was hard, if not impossible, to locate. Although the main plantation of North Wales was to a large degree self-supporting there were some items that had to be obtained from outside sources. Allason thus called on the store in Falmouth for most of these outside needs, such as iron and steel for use in making grubbing hoes at the plantation blacksmith shop, cotton for spinning by the women slaves, fish from the wide Virginia rivers to supplement the diet of the slaves, or rum for use at the plantation. The quantity of rum used infers that Allason entertained extensively or that he provided rum for the Negroes -- more than likely the latter. Allason was not prepared administratively to handle from a centralized location purchasing and sales of an extensive network of plantations, and therefore decentralized by leasing out land.

At North Wales Allason was engaged in supervising the normal routine of a sizable plantation, building fences, specifying crops to be planted in various fields, seeing that the harvest was brought in at the right time, insuring

that the "winnowing" — letting the wind blow the chaff from the wheat — of the wheat was properly performed, and planning for the improvement or maintenance of his stock by selective breeding. The performance of these functions for the North Wales plantation claimed all of Allason's time leaving but little time for recreation. Allason was willing to devote the hours but others were not.\footnote{The letters of William and David Allason are full of the details of the plantation management. For example in a letter to his older brother on August 20, 1790, David recommended the selling of some of the horses, predicting there would be a shortage of fodder the following year because of a lack of sufficient rain for the meadows. For an example of a young Virginia who was unwilling to devote the long hours and close attention to the plantation see the discussion of Allason's relations with his son-in-law, Robert Rose.} He was now on the other end of the Virginia trade pattern, sending tobacco and wheat to the merchants for their purchase and brought to the operation of the plantation the same organizational ability that had served him so well in trade. As an example he kept a running daily notation on the bottom of his memorandum book of the tasks that should be done. Having found that a memorandum book and a short pencil was better than no memorandum book and a long memory, Allason maintained a daily running log of the plantation activities and other matters of interest. He displayed the typical farmer's interest in the weather making an almost daily notation of what the skies had provided.

One dispute with a neighbor occurred in the summer of 1797 over the fences of the plantation. Allason alleged...
to himself that John Hudnal had "turned my cattle into my cornfield" and had said that he would turn the cattle into Allason's garden because Allason would not assist him in keeping up his own fence. Allason maintained a strong enclosure keeping Hudnal's stock out of the North Wales meadows. Later Allason found one of his sows killed and dumped over his fence, and Allason also attributed this deed to Hudnal. 48

The North Wales slave population was constantly increasing, primarily through progeny. The growing little village was close to self-sufficiency with its own smith, still, cereal products and mill, vegetable garden, fruit trees, and meat. The stock of the plantation included not only horses, cattle, and swine, but also turkeys, geese, ducks, and chickens. 49

The plantation was not entirely a subsistence operation for the expense of outside needs and any profit had to be made through the sale of crops grown there. Allason therefore had the normal interest in prices that he might expect for his tobacco and cereal grains. Significantly, after 1790 more attention was paid to the current wheat price than to the prevailing tobacco price indicating that the staple of the plantation was now wheat and other cereals.

48 Allason's Memorandum Book, January 1793 - January 1799. For notations concerning the dispute with Hudnal see those on June 17, and July 3, 1797.

49 Ibid., entry following June 17, 1797.
rather than tobacco.

One final project that Allason wanted to accomplish was to build the manor house that he had long desired at North Wales. The work was finally begun in the spring of 1794 and followed the plan that had been abandoned earlier at the beginning of the War for Independence. Construction of the house did not proceed smoothly but after many trials in obtaining both materials and competent, dependable builders, the house was finished on August 6, 1796, and the family of Polly and her husband moved into it during Allason's absence at the warm springs in the Shenandoah Valley.  

Ironically, at his moment of triumph, Allason was absent when the manor house, relatively modest as it was, was completed.

**General Business**

As a planter Allason was not wholly removed from the commercial world. He had been too long in that trade to suddenly absent himself entirely from it. Then, too, he continued to have extensive debts due him from the days he personally managed the store. Both he and David were involved in collecting old debts and were becoming more adamant about payment each year. Early in 1788 David

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50Memorandum Book, entry dated August 6, 1796, This is the house that still stands as the center portion of the mansion now situated on the North Wales Plantation described in Chapter III. The marriage of Polly Allason to Robert Rose is discussed later in this chapter.
Allason wrote two simple dunning letters to Charles Burress of Maryland containing only two sentences: "Your letter mentioning you would be able to pay your Bond off by the first of March is now expired. I can assure you I am much in want of the money and the sooner you can contrive payment the better." Almost a month later he repeated the two sentences but then added a third, "The expence of a suit I don't wish to cause you but that must be the case if you neglect the payment much longer."

These brief epistles were often delivered by the young man who then helped with the store, William "Billy" Ball. When David Allason wrote in October, 1789, that "Billy Ball is gone down to King George a money hunting," he meant that he had sent young Ball out with several notes to deliver to debtors and to collect money from them and also from those who had to be delivered a verbal message.

Usually the collection process was made easier by bonding the debtor as explained earlier. Some of these bonds from before the Revolution were still out after 1790 and in at least one occasion Allason forgot to bond a

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51 David Allason to Charles Burress, April 14, 1788, Letter Book.
53 David Allason to Lawrence Washington, May 18, 1788, Letter Book.
54 David Allason to Allason, October 22, 1789, Loose Papers.

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customer who had permitted his obligation to ride too long. In the case in question Allason checked his ledgers but was surprised to find that there was no indication of a bond being agreed to by the customer.  

Allason had said earlier that fortunes were altered by the war against the mother country, and this was reflected in his debtors. A high percentage of his letters carried some of the most prestigious names in the state -- Landon Carter, Lawrence Washington, Fitzhugh, Taliaferro, Page, Beverley, Wormeley, and Nelson -- and Allason now dealt with them as an equal.

One example of this situation involved Robert Carter Page of Hanover County. In May, 1791, Allason reminded him that he had an account against the estate of his father, Mann Page, Junior, for thirty-one pounds since June, 1775, "concerning of which I have written to you repeatedly without receiving any answer." Allason then continued sarcastically that the lack of response "inclines me to think they must have miscarried." Being sure that they had not miscarried, Allason then said that he had contacted Mann Page of Mannsfield and had received a promise from that gentleman to write his kinsman. Stating that before the war there had been no trouble in getting payment from the Pages, Allason then demonstrated the decline of deference due families such as the Pages, "Should I be reduced to the

55 Allason to David Allason, June 7, 1788, Loose Papers.
disagreeable necessity of bringing a Suit for this debt I will be obliged to summon witnesses, the late former overseer's for a considerable distance; but I cannot allow myself to think this will be required."

Another family for whom the world was atilt -- if not upside down -- was the Nelson family of Yorktown. A Nelson had once served as President of the Governor's Council and as Acting Governor. In November of 1791 Allason wrote Hugh Nelson that "I take the liberty of enclosing a State of the matter betwixt us as it stood at last settle-

ment." Concerning the balance due him of fifty-seven pounds, Allason wrote, "As I have occasion, & very pressing ones too, for every shilling I can command, I will be much ob-
liged to you to forward payment." Later Allason informed his brother David that Hugh Nelson had had to resort to a replevy bond to discharge his balance to Allason.

Because of the dispersion of debtors the Allasons also employed debt collectors in the different counties. One of these collectors was James Jett of Culpeper County

56 Allason to Mann Page, May 9, 1791, Letter Book.
57 Allason to Hugh Nelson, November 9, 1791, Letter Book.
58 Allason to David Allason, July 13, 1792, Loose Papers. "Replevy" bond as defined by the dictionary and by present day lawyers involves the taking back of goods and obviously this was not the case with goods over twenty years old and in all likelihood no longer in existence. In this case the term "replevy bond" meant an agreement that the debt was just and due as the creditor alleged and the debtor promised to pay either in currency or in goods. This meaning is derived by its use in context.
who had served Allason in that capacity in that county since
the war. His service was, according to Allason, "greatly
to my satisfaction, indeed so much, that by his indefatiga­
ble industry and knowledge in business, he procured pay­
ment fm /from/ many and good security from others, that
must have been altogether lost by my own management."59

Allason also attempted to reach into other states
and asked those who were travelling out from Virginia, par­
ticularly to the south and west, to watch for debtors whose
names he furnished.60 Allason requested assistance from
acquaintances in locating the fugitives. In 1790 he
informed George Mutter that "sundry of your neighbours in
the land of Kentucky are indebted to me, and you may believe
I wish for payment from them as my right only." Mutter
had once been an attorney-debt collector in Virginia and if
he was still in that business Allason wanted him to handle
the collection of the debts; if not, he wanted the name of
some one who would act for him.61 By interviewing the
bolter's neighbors Allason could usually get a good idea
where they had gone. In 1790 he knew that one man surnamed
Peyton had moved to Kentucky while one named Lantern had

59 Allason to George Dent, March 3, 1790.

60 Allason to William Jennings, March 27, 1790, Letter
Book. Allason asked Jennings to be watching for Wil­
lian Winn, but in addition he furnished him with a list of
forty-two names including their former Virginia county, the
date of the bond or debt, and the amount of the debt.

61 Allason to George Mutter, April 7, 1790, Letter
Book.

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moved from Caroline County to Rockbridge County and thence to Georgia. At least one runaway family, however, was reported to have fled north rather than south or west in order to escape its past.

Even while Allason found his man his problem was not finished, for sometimes the fugitive was totally incapable of paying anything as was the case with William Suddath who had moved to Hampshire County amongst the Appalachians. Another man, Henry Settle, located at the same time was deemed able to pay by Allason's collector. In another case when Allason located a John Kesteson in Amherst County, Virginia, the man denied that he had ever been a blacksmith, the occupation of the runaway, so a check of his identity had to be made.

The collectors that Allason used in outlying districts were invariably men who were able to use legal proceedings to get possession of payment. In the Valley when Allason lost Alexander White as his debt agent there because of his involvement in politics he turned first to one of White's nephews, John S. Woodcock, then to another of

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62 John Rose to Allason, September 5, 1790, Loose Papers.
63 John S. Woodcock to Allason, January 8, 1792, Loose Papers.
64 Andrew Wodrow to Allason, May 3, 1790, Loose Papers.
65 John Rose to Allason, April 9, 1793, Loose Papers. The records do not show the result of this check.

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White's nephews, Alexander White III. Even if the lawyer was able to get a judgment in Allason's favor, however, there were occasions where the legal officer assumed the role of a mitigating agency. In 1792 one William Bronaugh, a deputy sheriff, attended a militia muster with a debtor for whose arrest for debt he had a warrant. When an observer finally asked him why he made no attempt to take the fugitive, Dawson Burgess, he replied that "he wou'd be dam'd if ever he wou'd go two steps to serve an Escape warrant for the apprehension of an evading debtor, where a man's life was at stake for 15 pounds of tobacco."\(^66\)

In another case threats of violence were used against Allason after lying and subterfuge failed against him. Thomas Degges, the most senior (in service) Justice of the Peace of Fauquier County, first told Allason that he had paid the debt to a friend of Allason's to whom Allason had given a note to collect the debt. After Allason found that this was not true, and so informed Degges, the latter said that he would write a warrant or bond against himself, which Allason asked him to do forthwith. Allason then wrote to his legal counsels:

> When going to a Room where materials for that purpose was to be found, he turned about in a passion and abused me beyond measure afterwards threatened to overturn me as he termed it, held his clinched fist in my face & said that my age only protected me, and continued at the same time making use of such language.

\(^66\) Joshua Withers to Allason, March 25, 1792, Loose Papers.
as might be expected from a Billingsgate Blackguard.67

Thomas Halley, the lessee of the River Run Mill, used forgery to gain time to make his escape from the immediate legal power of Allason. Knowing that Allason would demand security for the money that was owed him, Halley forged the name or mark of Francis Stone to a letter agreeing to go security for Halley. When called upon to pay Halley's bill, Stone denied any knowledge of the transaction and put his mark on a certificate saying so.68

The role of William Allason in the period following the Revolution to his death demonstrates the difficulty of categorizing individual members of Virginia society. Although Allason had moved a long way from his role as a merchant he was still involved in many of the activities of merchants and definitely in those of a creditor. Much of his time was spent in collecting debts that had been owed him for many years. Certainly some of the ties of trade kept him aware of the commercial world through the legal proceedings in which he was involved in the last years of his life. Thus while Allason was a planter and a member of that group that might have once been called "landed gentry," he still had most of the presuppositions and attitudes of the merchant. In that sense William Allason remained a man


68 Certificate of Francis Stone, January 28, 1798, Loose Papers.
of trade until the end. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul, for Allason to live was not to serve Christ, nor was it entertainment, but it was business, whether it be mercantile or agricultural.

**Court Cases**

One thing that William Allason apparently learned from his days as a merchant was to try to avoid a losing court fight if at all possible. Normally when he went to court he had all his points necessary to win clearly outlined and only unforeseen circumstances could cause him to lose. In those cases when the law was clearly on the side of the other party or was in serious doubt he preferred to settle out of court. As mentioned earlier the easiest way of doing this was through the use of binding but not official referees -- men of integrity that both sides would pledge by bond -- to arbitrate the difference. When Robert Knox of Falmouth and Maryland died during the revolution and named Allason his executor, Allason was already tied to the Knox estate by a previous agreement to be security for Knox to John Hedgeman. When Knox’s estate was unable to pay the debt after the war through the income from the tenants on the land called Summerduck Plantation Knox owned near Falmouth, Allason agreed to turn the case over to referees for their arbitration, after he had been appointed
her attorney by Mrs. Rose Knox, widow of Robert Knox.  

The referees decided that Knox's estate owed Hedge-
man a little over five hundred pounds. Allason recognized
immediately that the debt had to be paid by some means and
he hated to part with any of his own property when Knox's
estate was of sufficient value to pay the debt. As a re-
sult of the decision, which Allason knew was the correct
one, he feared that he would be arrested and confined to
prison until the debt was paid. Allason would not agree to
become executor but said that if he should be imprisoned,
"it will probably oblige me to Qualify as an Executor of
the Sole purpose of making Sale of everything belonging to
the Estate in this County, which wou’d give me much pain in
the execution." Allason was trying to raise some money for
the Knox estate in an unusual way -- a rebate on a possible
overpayment of taxes. The overseer of Summerduck, the Knox
plantation, said that he thought the plantation was smaller
than it was listed on the tax records of the county. While
the county officials recognized the undependable nature of
the early surveys they also required that a new survey be
made at the expense of the estate. Early reports of the
surveyor indicated to Allason that there was only about half

69Mrs. Rose T. Knox's Power of Attorney, dated
October 25, 1785.

70Report of Referees, John Hedgeman vs. R.T.
Knox, William Allason and Andrew Baillie, March 13,
1786.
as much land in the plantation as was supposed.\footnote{Allason to Mrs. Rose Knox, March 29, 1786, Letter Book. The Plantation, formerly rated at five thousand acres, eventually surveyed out to be only 2460 acres. William Allason to Mrs. Rose Knox, January 21, 1787. The name of the plantation site has since been altered so that it is presently spelled "Sumerduck."}

Part of the problem facing the Knox estate was that it was being held responsible for the debt of the partnership of Robert Knox and William Knox as a whole. The estate of the brother, Alexander Knox, was not being held responsible for his share of the debt for some undetermined reason.\footnote{Allason to David Allason, April 25, 1786, Loose Papers.} Mrs. Knox was understanding about Allason's position and urged him to become an executor and sell the slaves on the plantation in order to satisfy the debt.\footnote{Mrs. Rose T. Knox to Allason, April 15, 1786, Loose Papers.} In order to protect himself against imprisonment in Culpeper County Allason vowed to direct the construction of his dam on the river from the Fauquier County shore and never to cross to the Culpeper side.\footnote{Allason to David Allason, August 15, 1786, Loose Papers.}

The greatest stumbling block to the settlement of the whole affair was William Knox, brother to and sharer in the will of Robert Knox. Allason became exasperated with the trifling conduct of William Knox who was attempting to evade any payment for his part of the settlement and was
willing to lend him the money to settle. Allason warned that if Knox did not take some definitive action soon he would himself.\textsuperscript{75}

In order to free himself from the tangled web of the whole affair Allason offered to pay the estate of John Hedgeman two hundred pounds if the estate would then look for the remainder of the money -- something over three hundred pounds -- from William Knox, who agreed to the arrangement. The chain of credit in the whole affair extended from debtors to Hedgeman's debtors through the heirs of Hedgeman to his creditors. For example, William Knox, now hiding from the sheriffs, apparently had sufficient capital to pay his share of the settlement but it was not immediately available because it was out on bonds not yet due. He offered to turn these bonds over to the creditors if that would satisfy them.\textsuperscript{76} Allason finally got himself personally clear of the whole entanglement by lending William Knox two hundred pounds to pay Hedgeman's creditors.\textsuperscript{77}

Although cleared of his own personal financial responsibility in the case Allason was not clear of other involvements for both Rose Knox and William Knox continued to pressure him to serve as an executor. The continued

\textsuperscript{75} Allason to William Knox, August 27, 1786, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{76} William Knox to Travis Daniel, October 12, 1786, Loose Papers.

\textsuperscript{77} Allason to Mrs. Rose Knox, January 21, 1787, Letter Book.
pressing of William Knox offended Allason for as he wrote Rose Knox, "for he was exceeding solicitous, that he might have some one near at hand to look to, and had also expectation that I on his request wou'd make sale immediately of as much of your Estate as wou'd discharge the Decree obtained." Allason said that he would sell from the estate only if it appeared that the estate was indebted to William Knox.78

Personally free of involvement in the case, Allason now began to act in the interest of his friend's widow who was now in conflict with William Knox.79 Allason asked her to appoint a friend of his, Arthur Morson, (of whom we will hear more later in another court case) as an attorney for the purpose of joining him before the ten man board of referees that had been selected in Stafford County to settle the affair. His reasoning for the selection of and his opinion of Morson were set forth:

He was one of the former referees that acted, and has made some discoveries in the accounts exhibited against your Estate, that will be of the greatest consequence to you and from his good & friendly disposition I make no doubt will attend at the settlement and point out to the present set, everything he apprehends will be for your benefit. He is generally in Falmouth, and by being so it will be more convenient to him, than it is to me

78Allason to Mrs. Rose Knox, January 21, 1787, Letter Book.
79Allason to Mrs. Rose Knox, June 30, 1787, Loose Papers.
who lives 35 miles from it.\textsuperscript{80}

Allason finally cleared his whole way out of the affair in his role as security for Robert T. Knox (who had died) and lender to William Knox by gaining the right to receive and keep for himself the rents of the tenants of the Knox lands in Stafford County.\textsuperscript{81} Another thing he won from the affair was the respect he henceforth commanded from William Knox. Ten years after the arbitration, when William Knox’s son-in-law was reported to have threatened that he would keep Allason out of some money that William Knox owed Allason, Knox did not even wait to receive Allason’s letter of inquiry about such behaviour. Knox rushed to let Allason know that he was chagrined at his son-in-law’s behaviour and assured Allason that the utmost would be done to see that he received his money, although he reported that hard money was "almost impossible to get."\textsuperscript{82} Almost a year later Knox again manifested some of the respect previously lacking for Allason, "Mr. Allason notwithstanding the long trial I have made of his patience still continues to befriend me so far as to wait for his money untill you can raise it from the

\textsuperscript{80}Allason to Mrs. Rose Knox, March 18, 1787, Loose Papers and Letter Book. Rose Knox lost the decision before the arbitrators.

\textsuperscript{81}Allason to George Dent, March 3, 1790, Letter Book.

\textsuperscript{82}Allason to William Knox, May 6, 1796, Letter Book and Loose Papers; William Knox to Allason, May 6, Loose Papers.
sale of my Flour."\(^{83}\)

While Allason was able to avoid the courts through the use of referees in the Knox case, there was one case that involved some of the most renowned legal minds in the nation's history. In this case involving the bond granted him by John Schaw, Allason had John Taylor of Caroline on his side of the court room while the other side was represented by John Marshall of Fauquier County but residing in Richmond at the time. Judging the case was George Wythe. It will be recalled that Schaw had fled Virginia during the war, had gone to New York where he prospered but died before the war ended. His executor was Neil Jamieson who had been a great Virginia merchant before the war and who refused to pay the bond that Allason had accepted from Schaw.

After letters requesting his money brought forth no results from Jamieson, Allason began to prepare for the legal battles he saw coming. Allason asked Gavin Lawson to collect evidence to support his claim when the latter went to New York for a visit in 1788.\(^{84}\) Allason also soon turned to his old legal advisor Alexander White to see if he should initiate legal proceedings against Jamieson to recover the debt due him.\(^{85}\) White advised that the sooner the case was

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\(^{83}\)William Knox to James Somerville, March 2, 1797, Loose Papers.

\(^{84}\)Allason to David Allason, February 19, 1788, Loose Papers.

\(^{85}\)Allason to David Allason, April 3, 1788, Loose Papers.

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turned over to an attorney the better off Allason would be, and Allason therewith sent the papers concerning the case to John Taylor.  

It was not long after this action that Allason began to get inquiries and proposals from the other side. First, from New York, Colin MacGregor, Jamieson's agent and senior authority in the new nation, wrote to Arthur Morson and his son Alexander Morson desiring that they find out "what claim you [Allason] have against the Est. of the late John Schaw of Norfolk." The Morsons also relayed MacGregor's request that Allason institute court proceedings in New York.  

The Morsons were involved because Arthur Morson had been a storekeeper for the Jamieson interests before the war and renewed some elements of the relationship after the war. Allason was indignant at the effrontery of the message from MacGregor and replied to the Morsons in regard to his claim, "some years ago I furnished Mr. Jamieson with a state thereof which he is possessed of." In regard to initiating court proceedings in New York Allason declared that "he cannot reasonably expect that I should go there to look for payment when it may be obtained here; besides his requisition [request] is already too late having already ordered what is

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86 Allason to David Allason, June 7, 1788, Loose Papers. Most of the time Taylor was already referred to in Allason's letters as John Taylor of Caroline. This description was fixed on the Caroline attorney early in life.

87 Alexander Morson to Allason, June 26, 1788, Loose Papers.
390

needful to be done here." Allason's statement that he had "ordered what is
needful to be done here" was certainly true for a subpoena
had been issued to the sheriff of Stafford County to summon
Neil Jamieson, Arthur Morson, and Alexander Morson before the
High Court of Chancery of Virginia. The subpoena was issued
on June 30, 1788, and signed by Edmund Pendleton as first
Judge of the Court. Allason was suspicious of each move
of the Jamieson faction, except, at first, the Morsons whom
he considered his friends. He was insistent that all legal
pressure that could be brought to bear be maintained against
Schaw's estate, the court orders to the Morsons and to Jamie-
son were one means of keeping this pressure on.

When Colin MacGregor wrote to Allason that he could
find no record of the Bond that Schaw had given Allason in
Schaw's books, Allason became even more certain that Jamie-
son and MacGregor did not intend to pay him, pointing out
that the bond occurred before any of the books in their hands,
which reflected Schaw's activities in New York, were opened
by Schaw. In addition the dudgeon of Allason was evidenced
when he wrote to John Taylor of Caroline, "It wou'd also

88 Allason to Alexander Morson, July 4, 1788, Letter
Book.

89 Subpoena of High Court of Chancery, June 30, 1788,
Loose Papers. The summons was executed on Arthur and Alexan-
der Morson on July 21, 1788, by Stafford County deputy sher-
iff Mason Pilcher according to a notation on the bottom of
the summons order. The High Court of Chancery was the high-
est court of equity in the state at this time.
appear from his proposition of prosecuting a suit at New York, against a woman there, who I suppose was Schaw's whore, that Mr. Jamieson intends every means to get clear of paying." Allason feared that the Jamieson faction would claim that the property belonging to Jamieson really belonged to Neil Jamieson and Company. If so it might not be subject to suits against him personally. Allason also wanted Colonel John Jamieson, clerk of Culpeper and apparently a relation to Neil Jamieson although this is not specified, to be included with Jamieson and the Morsons, father and son, in the suit if it was not too late.90

In the fall of 1789 Allason's resolve was tested by an offer by the Morsons relayed through David Allason. The Morsons said they would pay Allason the face value of the bond if he would relinquish his claim to interest.91 Allason was advised by his attorney, John Taylor, to accept the offer of payment if the dropping of interest was for the war years alone. Virginia courts would not allow interest to British creditors for that period, and he was sure they would extend the same ruling to British debtors. He did feel that Allason could expect interest for the years the bond was

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90 Allason to John Taylor, July 3, 1789, Letter Book. In his reply to Allason on July 11, 1789, Loose Papers, Taylor advised against bringing John Jamieson into the suit at that time.

91 David Allason to Allason, October 2, 1789, Loose Papers.
outstanding both before and after the war.  

William Allason was uncertain in late August, 1790, whether his case against Jamieson and the Morsons came up during the summer term of the High Court of Chancery in 1790 and what the court decision had been. David Allason told him that John Marshall would tell him at the Fauquier Court in August. Allason later informed David that he had seen Marshall at a distance at the Fauquier Court but had not had an opportunity to ask him about the case. Allason had indeed won his case and had been awarded six hundred pounds in settlement and eight pounds for costs by the court presided over by George Wythe. Neil Jamieson failing to appear or file an answer before the court, the court ruled that he confessed his liability. Allason realized that more was involved

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92 John Taylor to Allason, February 5, 1790, Loose Papers. In this letter Taylor also advised Allason that he would not be able to pursue all the cases (six) Allason had with him in the newly created state district courts. The two attorneys he turned the cases over to were Hugh Nelson in the Williamsburg area and John Minor in the Fredericksburg District Court. Although no clear evidence exists, the Jamieson faction apparently did not accept Taylor's proposal.

93 David Allason to Allason, August 22, 1790, Loose Papers.

94 Allason to David Allason, August 30, 1790, Loose Papers.

95 Court Summons, dated November 13, 1789, Loose Papers. Colin MacGregor to Allason, January 20, 1792.

96 Copy of Decision, March 11, 1791, Loose Papers. The Jamieson faction possibly plead "nolo contendere," because Marshall was aware of the court's action and apparently consulted about the case, except this was a civil, not a criminal case.
than simply getting the court to agree that he had been wronged; he knew that a struggle still remained in getting his hands on the money awarded him. There was no mistake about the struggle that he faced.

Up to this time the relations with the Morsons had been amicable for they felt that only the assets belonging to Neil Jamieson were endangered by Allason's suit but when the court decision was published and the execution issued to the county sheriff they were alarmed to discover that their own personal property had been made liable for the judgment in Allason's favor. The Morsons immediately showed the execution order to their attorney, John Marshall, who said that it was wrong and not the intent of the court. Marshall also informed the Morsons that he would have it changed when he arrived once more in Richmond. Allason at first tended to agree with his friends and understood that they might have a hard time collecting the money due Jamieson because of the restraints against the collecting activities of British merchants.

Allason subsequently received a letter from Burwell Starke, who was working with John Taylor for Allason. Starke and John Marshall, who also signed the letter to Allason, agreed that there was a problem in how to word the execution order so that the Morsons would have sufficient legal

97 Allason to John Taylor, May 6, 1791, Letter Book.
authority to dispose of goods belonging to Jamieson and not themselves and give the proceeds to Allason. The lawyers turned the problem of working out the details back to Allason and the Morsons saying "This is a matter which we conceive you & the Mssrs. Morsons can easily adjust between you; and as soon as we have your answer, the decree shall be entered." 99

John Taylor entered a different opinion in the case and made the point that if the Morsons owed Jamieson, or held his property of sufficient amount to pay the judgment in their custody, and Allason held a judgment against Jamieson, then Allason was in essence taking the place of Jamieson and acting on his behalf. 100 Therefore, in order to protect Jamieson the execution had to be against the personal holdings of the Morsons placing the burden on them to pay the debt. The justice of this was subsequently indicated on the sale of Jamieson's property to fulfill the execution. It appeared to be handled in such a manner to permit the cooperation of the buyers to hold down bids at the sale and the proceeds were consequently reduced. Allason commented on the situation, "I am sorry to understand the proceeds of Jamieson's will turn out so little. The conduct of individuals as to the Sales does not concern us, They do to him as I expect he

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99 Burwell Starke to Allason, May 13, 1791, Loose Papers.
100 John Taylor to Allason, June 16, 1791, Loose Papers. The Morsons owed Jamieson; Jamieson owed Allason, ergo the Morsons owed Allason.
would do to them on a like occasion."^{101} John Taylor maintained that it was the responsibility of the Morsons to concern themselves over the results of the sale. Although Taylor dropped out of the case at this point, he clearly indicated an ability to rise above the temporary emotional heat of the day -- in this case the disregard for the interests of the Loyalist merchants -- and uphold equal protection of the law for them. He also saw that the key to the problem was the Morsons, who, it later appeared, were not so eager to pay Allason as they pretended.

When the sale of Jamieson's property at vendue brought forth only 219 pounds and sixteen shillings, Allason began to see more wisdom in the reasoning of Taylor and became more willing to execute against the property of his old friend Arthur Morson. He suspected that Morson was holding out on him and knew more about the affairs of Jamieson than he acknowledged.^{102} As the case grew tougher the relationship between Allason and the Morsons also grew more strained. Allason accused them of concealing the property they held under the name of Neil Jamieson and Company after acknowledging

^{101}Allason to David Allason, September 9, 1791, Loose Papers. The goods sold were old and of limited value. The Jamieson faction would have liked to settle for them.

^{102}Allason to Robert Brooke, September 28, 1791, Letter Book. Allason requested that Brooke join Burwell Starke as his counsel because Brooke lived closer to Allason than did Starke and would find it easier to communicate with Allason than would Starke. In this letter Allason gave a brief resume of the case.
what personal property of Jamieson's they held.\textsuperscript{103}

Allason had indeed acquired evidence through his friend and collector of debts in Culpeper County, James Jett, that the Morsons had concealed assets of Jamieson's that they held in the form of bonds and other fiscal documents that were easy to conceal. Jett had also once worked for the Morsons and was willing to testify that he had turned over to them bonds he had accepted in collecting debts for Neil Jamieson.\textsuperscript{104}

The High Court of Chancery of Virginia again considered the decree of execution and appointed a panel of referees -- Robert Patton, Benjamin Day, and William Harvey -- to investigate all the charges being made by Allason. While the referees were investigating the charges Allason was more certain than ever that those he had looked on as his friends had really been working with the opposition. He said that he now would not deviate from full payment of what the court said was his just recompense "considering every step that could be devised to keep me out of payment had been made use of."\textsuperscript{105}

When Morson claimed that he owed the company in which Jamieson was one fourth partner only three hundred

\begin{footnotes}
\item[103] Allason to Burwell Starke, October 25, 1791, Letter Book.
\item[104] Ibid.
\item[105] Allason to David Allason, December 18, 1791, Loose Papers.
\end{footnotes}
pounds, Allason's lawyer Brooke strongly warned Allason to gather all the information he could on suits brought by the Morsons in favor of Jamieson and the two firms in which he was partner in Culpeper and Fauquier counties.\footnote{106}

Allason was mistaken in his opinion that the Jamieson interests had used every means they could devise in keeping him out of his money. On January 20, 1792, Colin MacGregor, who had arrived in Virginia from New York, wrote what appeared to be a surrender, saying that he would give Allason a bill of exchange for the remainder of the judgment if Allason would give him a receipt that the sum had been paid in full. Allason went to Falmouth to conduct this business but wisely asked that the bill that MacGregor gave him be endorsed by some Virginian of trust at which MacGregor took offense and berated Allason.\footnote{107} MacGregor may have intended to stop payment on the bill once he was out of the state and thus cause the entire case to go through the courts again at the least.

When MacGregor consulted John Marshall about the decree in Allason's hands from the court, the future Chief Justice advised the Briton to pay it.\footnote{108} On March 3, 1792, the court found in favor of Allason based on the evidence of

\footnote{106}{David Allason to Allason, February 26, 1792, Loose Papers.}
\footnote{107}{Allason to Robert Brooke, February 29, 1792, Letter Book.}
\footnote{108}{David Allason to Allason, March 25, 1792, Loose Papers.}
the commissioners but Allason was still to have a long wait to receive his money. The Jamieson party brought in a new young man to supervise the collection of debts -- one who was thus outside the initial court decree and Allason once again had to go into court to have him included in the decree. Once again Jamieson and his advisors had found a way to stave off Allason although the latter was collecting bits and pieces of the debt as time progressed. This constant struggle with the Loyalist Jamieson served to further cut any residual sympathy and affection that may have been in Allason for the merchants of Britain. As late as 1795, however, Allason was still attempting to bring in more of the judgment.

Allason also went to court to collect money due him from Isaac Zane before the war. Allason's attorney against Zane was Charles Marshall, brother of John Marshall. Zane alleged that some of his iron castings in Allason's possession at the start of the war had disappeared or been destroyed and that Allason owed him for them and that they should be deducted from the account. Allason in turn said that they had been destroyed by patriotic searchers of Lord Dunmore's goods which were stored in Allason's warehouse.

109 Alexander Morson to Allason, June 15, 1792, Loose Papers.

110 Allason to Burwell Starke, May 26, 1795, Letter Book. Allason continued his efforts to collect as long as he was physically able, but with his failing health his activities in this line became less aggressive.
through no volition of his own. Allason eventually won the suit against Zane but only after the latter's death and under circumstances benefitting Allason little, for he was dead within two years after it was settled. 111

Allason also became involved in legal controversy with his sister-in-law and her husband, Thomas Roy, in the last ten years of his life. Allason had obtained a bond from Roy on the debt that the two had built up in his books but the two afterwards initiated suit in chancery that he had mistreated and cheated them. 112 The Roys lost the case — their only plea being ignorance and personal incompetence — and they bound themselves to Allason for 513 pounds. 113 In May, 1796, the Roys continued the fight by appealing to the district court at Dumfries. Although not present to plead before the district court, 114 the Roys continued their appeal to the state Appeals Court in Richmond in April, 1796. Whatever Roy's motive for carrying the fight this far, when it got to the state appeals court he again did not appear to

111 Allason to Charles Marshall, September 12, 1789; March 3, 1798; Allason to John S. Woodcock, October 24, 1797; and April 26, 1798, all in Letter Book; and Allason to David Allason, December 25, 1791; and August 31, 1795; David Allason to Allason, March 21, 1795; Dr. Robert Mackey to Allason, September 2, 1796; and May 15, 1797; and Allason v. Zane's Executors, Frederick County Order Book, February 9, 1798.

112 Copy of pleas before the Court of Fauquier County in Chancery Sitting, February 7, 1795, Loose Papers.

113 Bond dated February 18, 1795, Loose Papers.

114 Record of Trial, Dumfries District Court, Allason v. Thomas Roy, May 18, 1795.
carry the case and the decision was in favor of Allason and an execution was issued to the sheriff of Fauquier County against the Roys.\textsuperscript{115}

Allason did not win all his legal battles, and one was lost partly because of poor legal representation. Some of his neighbors attacked him legally at what they conceived to be a weak point in his operations not out of personal animosity but in order to gain hard capital which Allason possessed. Charles Williams had sold some land to John Riley in 1768 for thirty pounds. Later Williams again sold the land to Allason, with the deed also signed by Williams' brother, John Pope Williams. Williams justified his second sale to Allason on the basis that he was not of legal age when he earlier sold the land to Riley and that he did not hold the land in fee simple but held it in common with his two brothers. After the second sale of the land to Allason Williams moved from Fauquier to Bourbon County, Kentucky.\textsuperscript{116} John Riley subsequently entered suit against Williams and Allason for the land and against Allason for the income denied him while the land was in Allason's possession.

Allason had difficulty getting his defense material together because of Williams' absence in Kentucky and for some unexplained reason was not allowed to present the

\textsuperscript{115}Execution against Thomas Roy and Wiley Roy, June 13, 1797, Loose Papers.

\textsuperscript{116}Deposition of Charles Williams, August 26, 1790, Loose Papers.
deposition he had finally acquired from Williams at the final hearing of the Fauquier Court. The resultant finding was against Allason. Allason immediately appealed to the state Court of Appeals where again his case was overset because his attorney, Robert Brooke, failed to appear at the court to represent him. Although Allason worked through Charles Marshall and the considerable influence of Charles's brother, John, in Richmond and gained a second hearing of his appeal, it was again denied. Allason had to turn the land over to Riley who promptly deeded it to his creditors of whom Martin Pickett was one. The creditors may have been the group that used Riley for a front to attack Allason in order to get money from Riley's debt. It appeared that Riley had neither the intelligence nor the resources to prosecute such an effective suit against Allason and Williams. Allason was not the ultimate loser for he could make up his losses through a suit of John Pope Williams who had signed a false deed to Allason in conjunction with his brothers. In any event Allason went immediately to Riley's creditors and bought the land back for no one had better use for the land, situated immediately adjacent to North


118 David Allason to Allason, September 30, 1793, Loose Papers.

119 Allason to Martin Pickett, May 26, 1794, and February 18, 1795, Letter Book.
Wales, than he did.

Although these were not Allason's only court involvements they were the most hotly contested -- especially the Schaw-Jamieson case -- and they tell much of the doggedness and the methodical nature of Allason. They also demonstrate his financial resources that allowed him to retain some of the best legal counsel available and, as in the case with Riley, when the award was against him, he had sufficient ready capital to pay off the judgment and continue operations, even to regaining the land, with hardly a pause.

**New Blood and Auld Acquaintances**

William Allason was battling with weapons other than those of violence to carve out a heritage for his descendants. While Allason was usually winning the legal and economic battles to establish his position in Virginia, he must have realized that preservation of his family line rested on the slender thread of his daughter Polly. Although she would not be able to carry on the Allason family name in the future, Polly was nevertheless prepared to play a role in the higher echelons of the social structure of Virginia. **Allason continued** her education into her eighteenth year, particularly in those subjects that would assist her to fit into the social atmosphere of the South that was


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With Polly's entrance into the social functions in the Falmouth-Fredericksburg area Allason and his brother David became more interested in feasts and balls in their correspondence. While these events had existed previously, suddenly the society revealed in their letters became more festive. Earlier it had appeared more earnest, concerned almost solely with business matters.

David's reports to Allason invariably included the latest reports of Polly who spent a great deal of time at Hampstead Plantation, the home of Gavin Lawson in Stafford County. There can be little doubt that she was a popular girl and completely welcome at any social activity for young people of the area. One day in September, 1788, David reported a phenomenon observed by adults after young people's parties to this present day, "Polly is not up yet being too fatiged with Dancing last night."122

On another occasion he reported that "there was a Ball in town last Friday the Hampstead family which included Polly was down to it."123

121 Receipt from John Stadler to David Allason "for teaching his daughter music," May 26, 1788. It is interesting to observe that at least some members of the society were confused as to the real father of Polly, so close was the relationship between William and David and David and Polly. The receipt was for over twenty three pounds, indicating no short relationship between Polly and her music teacher, who elsewhere is referred to as Colonel Stadler.

122 David Allason to Allason, September 11, 1788, Loose Papers.

123 David Allason to Allason, May 5, 1789, Loose Papers.
In June Gavin Lawson himself wrote to Polly's father to get his permission for an outing for Polly,

I am now to acquaint you that the [Hampstead] family propose being at North Wales on Monday next on their way to the Berkeley Springs which Mrs. Lawson wishes to make a trial of partly on her own account, but chiefly on Nancy's, who has been in an indifferent state of health for a considerable time past, and both Polly and Jeanie are to accompany them. It is earnestly wished & hoped that you will not have any objection to Polly's making this excursion, as she is not only desirous of it, but it may be of benefit in removing some complaints which all of the sex are more or less subject to. WL [William Lawson] is to accompany them & remain at the springs during their stay as well on account of his own situation as to be their conductor and protector, for it is not in my power to attend them nor do I suppose it is in yours. 124

Shortly later Allason received a message from Lawson that gave a clue of what the future held for Polly Allason. "Poor WL's situation both of body and mind has rendered him incapable of undertaking the journey & attending the Family as I had proposed, and in his room I have got Bob Rose who will take equal care & pay utmost attention to them." Lawson requested that Allason would assist the party to find their way from North Wales to the springs because Bob Rose was a stranger to the area, although Lawson had given him detailed directions on how to get there. 125 The outing went off as planned, with Bob Rose overseeing the

124 Gavin Lawson to Allason, June 22, 1789, Loose Papers.
125 Gavin Lawson to Allason, June 29, 1789, Loose Papers. William Lawson was an alcoholic, but his exact relation to Gavin is unclear, although he may have been a brother. The exact location of the springs in this case was not clear although apparently to the west of North Wales. Later Allason himself would visit springs in Culpeper and Frederick Counties.
safety of the group and undoubtedly paying the "utmost attention" to Polly Allason. Within a year the fathers of these two young people were making arrangements for the marriage which occurred sometime in the spring or summer of 1790.²²⁷

Robert Rose was the grandson of the Reverend Robert Rose, born at Wester Alves, Scotland, and subsequently rector of St. Annes Parish, Essex County, Virginia, from 1728 to 1747. His father, Colonel John Rose, was an Amherst County lawyer and member of the House of Delegates for Amherst County in 1780. Thus Allason's family was joining that of one which had been in Virginia one generation longer and was somewhat more established in the social structure. Socially the advantage of the marriage was to Polly Allason although financially the advantage was at least even.

The character of Robert Rose left something to be desired as far as Allason was concerned. Both David and William Allason were concerned — or at least kept remarking about — his extended absences from his new bride although there was no hint that Polly herself was displeased with her new husband. The young couple made their initial

²²⁶ Allason to James Knox, September 5, 1789, Letter Book.

²²⁷ Allason to Gavin Lawson, March 15, 1790, Letter Book. Nancy Lawson was planning to marry "Mr. Nicholas" at the same time. Also Gavin Lawson to William Allason, March 13, 1790, Loose Papers. No exact date could be located for the Allason-Rose marriage.
home near the Hampstead plantation, which Bob Rose's father explained as "natural that Polly should prefer a settlement in the neighbourhood of the intimates with whom a friendship hath so long subsisted." John Rose proposed that the fathers of the couple purchase a plantation called Ludlow for them in Stafford County, but judging from later developments this was not done.\textsuperscript{128}

By April, 1791, the first indications that Polly would soon make Allason a grandfather were apparent as she was reported to have regained her appetite.\textsuperscript{129} Polly's first child was born on October 7, 1791, with a Mrs. Garner attending her as midwife,\textsuperscript{130} and was named Catherine or Katherine.\textsuperscript{131} The birth was apparently not extremely difficult for young Polly, as Allason wrote Thomas B. Martin, "Polly has got one fine little girle, & probably will have many more."\textsuperscript{132} Both Allason and his brother David

\begin{footnotes}
\item[128] John Rose to Allason, September 5, 1790, Loose Papers. Rose volunteered to contribute two bonds of five hundred pounds each toward establishing Robert and Polly on their own plantation.
\item[129] Robert Rose to Allason, April 7, 1791, Loose Papers.
\item[130] Allason's Day Book, 1777-1800, entry dated October 7, 1791.
\item[131] William Allason to David, December 18, 1791. The baby was born in the little old home at North Wales. Allason spelled her name with a "C" but in the Rose family genealogical chart prepared by W.G. Stanard it starts with a "K." Polly was to have a total of six children, four surviving to adulthood.
\item[132] Allason to Thomas B. Martin, December 24, 1791, Letter Book.
\end{footnotes}
reacted to the baby in the accepted manner of grandparents, David saying that "Polly's child is the best naturd I ever saw."  

Robert Rose, without an occupation of his own, was finally put to work as manager of Allason's North Wales plantation. Prior dissatisfaction with his diligence was inferred in a compliment Allason passed about him to David in July, 1792, "The present growing corn is the best in the neighbourhood, which I attribute in some measure to RR's diligence as a Planter, for he's become a new man and very industrious."  

Whatever Allason may have thought of his son-in-law, the community at large seemed more ready to accept Robert Rose, for in February, 1794, Rose was elected a captain in the local militia.  

An apparent difference in values existed between Allason and Rose -- Allason a man of commerce and business who thought industry and attention to the task of the greatest importance, Rose preferred to move about the state, talking and using some of the advantages that the labor of his father and his wife's father gave him. This impression, and it clearly can be called only an impression, was demonstrated in the guarded remarks that William and David Allason made to one another.

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133 David Allason to Allason, April 17, 1792, Loose Papers.
134 Allason to David Allason, July 13, 1792, Loose Papers.
about the actions of Polly's husband.

In 1795 Rose, while assisting Allason with the management of North Wales, wanted Allason to hire an overseer — Allason was spending increasingly more time away at the various springs around Virginia attempting to recover his health — to assist him in managing the plantation. Allason, who felt that overseers were inefficient and tended to abuse the Negroes in any event, may have wondered why a healthy young man would have difficulty in managing an estate that he, Allason, had been doing with his health failing.

Robert Rose and Polly remained at North Wales until June, 1797, when Robert Rose took his young family to his own plantation at "Morgan's old place." Relations were good enough at the time for Allason to send six slaves to assist Robert Rose in preparing the new home, but at the same time he directed that henceforth Rose would pay the same tolls for the use of the mill as everyone else.

Any clash between the personalities of Allason and Rose was not reflected in Allason's relationship with Polly. She named one of her sons William Allason Rose (who later married Sigismunda Alexander and fathered eight children

136 Robert Rose to Allason, July 19, 1795, Loose Papers.
137 Ibid., entry dated June 6, 1797.
138 Ibid., entry dated June 19, 1797.
139 Ibid., entry dated June 22, 1797.
by her) and a daughter Anne Allason Rose. After her family left North Wales Allason continued to send her beef, money, and other provisions to make her life easier. Polly was troubled by the legal battles her aunt, Susannah Roy, and her father were engaged in and when the Roys were dispossessed of their property adjacent to North Wales, she had them living in her home for a while. As David said, "Thomas Roy and the family will soon eat Polly out of house and home." In any event by 1799, with Allason's health continuing to decline, the Roses were back at North Wales in the new house that Allason had built and that must have been lonely to him during the absence of the young family.

Polly's cousins in Scotland had been concerned about her education and they were relieved to find that she had been taught music as well as the practical things of being mistress to a Virginia plantation. One cousin wrote that "my ignorance made me think it would have been very difficult to have found a Forte Piano - or Musick Master in your country." Nancy Allason, daughter to Robert Allason, continued that "I believe the education she would have got here would have been no real advantage to her in domestick

140 Rose Family Geneological Chart, Virginia State Library.

141 David Allason to Allason, March 2, 1798, Loose Papers. The Allasons felt mostly pity for Mrs. Roy, who they felt was being used by her husband. Roy apparently was under the impression that he could sponge off Allason.

142 Robert Rose to David Allason, May 23, 1799, Loose Papers.
life, for French Italian Musick Dress are the only things which are thought worth learning & a young Lady here would be ashamed to have it said that she wrought with her needle."143

Another cousin decided that he would like to learn more of Virginia first hand so in the spring of 1788, James Knox, the younger son of Allason's sister Mary Allason Knox, came out to Virginia to improve his situation.144 By April 12, 1788, the young Scot was in Virginia and on his way to North Wales, having arrived on the Margaret on the second Thursday of the month.145

Seldom did anyone receive the accolades from Allason that he bestowed on his young nephew. Quickly he reported that "James Knox seems to answer my expectation fully, and is agreeable to what you say of him."146 David Allason reported that "James Knox's behaviour here is remarkably good, every day I am better pleased with him than before."147 Allason must have dreaded the thought that he

143 Nancy Allason to Allason, February 1, 1788, Loose Papers.

144 John Likely to Allason, February 12, 1788, and Dr. David Colquhoun, to Allason, February 4, 1788, Loose Papers. There is no indication that Allason may have hoped for a match between Polly and her first cousin James Knox.

145 David Allason to Allason, April 12, 1788, Loose Papers.

146 Allason to John Likely, May 24, 1788, Letter Book.

147 David Allason to Allason, October 23, 1788, Loose Papers.
might lose his young nephew, but the subject kept coming up. First, his mother missed him. She never really wanted him to leave Scotland, and was only persuaded by his lack of opportunity to better himself as a younger son in the old country. Also reports began to filter back to Scotland that James was unhappy because he had not entered business, the profession that he felt he would enter in the new country, but was being used at the plantation. Thus when his older brother Alexander Knox died in February, 1789, there was no question that James Knox would return to Scotland as fast as possible. The older brother had been managing the family brewery in a most successful manner and there was now no one to take over that enterprise at home. In addition his mother was in a state of shock at the sudden death of her eldest son and wanted James home immediately. Allason happened to be in Falmouth with James when the message of his brother's death arrived, and James did not even go out to North Wales to retrieve his belongings but left immediately for Port Royal where the ship Williamson was reported ready to

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148 Allason to Dr. David Colquhoun, May 24, 1788, Letter Book.
149 Dr. David Colquhoun to James Knox, January 19, 1789, Loose Papers.
150 Andrew Donald to James Knox, February 9, 1789, Loose Papers.

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depart for London.\textsuperscript{151}

Allason once more expressed his high opinion of James Knox now that he had left:

James is now gone from hence & I never expect to see him again, therefore I may do him the justice in his absence that he merits. I don't mean to flatter because he is my nephew, when I say I think he is possessed of the first abilities, for never have I seen a youth of his years to compare to him; his genius \textit{sic}\ seems adapted to any employment or profession. Industry he has a full share of, and as to Moral spots? his is unexceptionable. The time he has been here, chiefly with me in the country, I never did discover in him the least tendency to vice nor had I ever the least occasion to reprehend him in any instance.

My particular acquaintance here, of the older & better sort lament the cause for his going from hence, the youth are equally concerned for his going away, in short James was a favourite of all with whom he was acquainted; but his duty commanded his ready obedience and I hope his mother to live long enough to be comforted by such a son.\textsuperscript{152}

This description of his nephew spoke highly of its subject but it also tells much of its author. In order of mention, the qualities that recommended James Knox to him were: ability, through his entire life Allason had little brook for fools and incompetents and avoided business association with them to his utmost; industriousness, Allason, who had come up a hard road himself, personified this quality; morality, a trait to be desired but only after ability and application; and finally sociability. It was good that Knox appealed to the old and young alike, but this was the last trait mentioned and probably the last in

\textsuperscript{151} Allason to Doctor David Colquhoun, April 26, 1789, Letter Book and Loose Papers.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
importance in Allason's eyes. Missing entirely was any reference to reverence or religion, although familial duty to his mother was readily performed and commended.

James Knox arrived in Scotland safely and found his mother still alive. In September, 1790, however, she came to the end of her days and her death was reported to Allason by David. Only those children of Zechariah Hall who had migrated to and remained in Virginia then remained alive. After his mother's death James Knox continued to prosper, became relatively wealthy, and assumed the financial responsibility for his cousins, the daughters of Robert Knox. Allason was proven right in his judgment of character and ability.

Many of Allason's acquaintances were fading from the scene as death took its inexorable toll of the aging group. Archibald Ritchie had died at the end of the Revolution. In 1788, James Miller, a fellow student with Allason in the Glasgow Grammar School in the days of their youth, reported John Gray, another schoolmate, had died. Miller, implying that all of their classmates had come out to the new world, said that he only knew of two still living, himself and William Allason, and he would like to see the

153 Allason to James Knox, September 5, 1789, Letter Book.

154 Walter Colquhoun, to David Allason, October 22, 1802, Loose Papers.
latter before the number was reduced to one.

Two of Allason's old acquaintances were not favored company for he reported that "Last Thursday the Esquires Ralph Wormeley and Robert Beverley, it seems, lost their way from Elkwood and came through this plantation North Wales on their way to the Courthouse, when I very luckily was not at home, I was in court at the time they past & therefore did not see them so as to speak with: they had a considerable retinue of servants and were bound to Mr. Churchills as a stage on their way over the ridge. I shall be sorry if they take the same rout downwards for perchance I may be in the way at that time." Allason's exact reason for desiring to avoid this pair are unclear although they had been suspected of Toryism during the war. In any event he apparently had little use for them.

**The Society**

The twelve years between 1788 and 1800 saw a marked change in Allason's recorded impressions of the social order. Seemingly the society became more secure, or at least more sedate. In January, 1788, David noted to Allason that at one ball in Falmouth pieces were cut from the ladies' heads.

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155 James Miller to Allason, October 26, 1788, Loose Papers.

156 Allason to David Allason, August 31, 1789, Loose Papers. Allason was not in debt or involved in a court dispute to the two. Possibly he simply wanted to avoid having to feed the entire retinue of servants.
silk gowns. Allason replied to his younger brother that "after such treatment the Ladies met with in having Their finery injured they out not to attend any Falmt Balls until the person that was guilty has been discovered and made an example of."  

In addition to occasional balls Fredericksburg also offered the distraction of a theater. Polly, young and gay, was on several occasions reported in attendance at this function. David Allason did not altogether approve of "the play Acters in Fredericksburg who gets money in abundance." He insisted that "they will get none of mine."  

One interesting feature of Allason's observations was his increased interest in things religious. In the first thirty years of his life in Virginia he hardly ever mentioned anything of church or religion. Then in 1794 he began to note the various religious activities in the area. It would be simple to say that this reflected a change in Allason alone, but the timing coincided with the revival that swept the young nation and particularly this region.

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157 David Allason to Allason, January 4, 1788, Loose Papers.
158 Allason to David Allason, January 28, 1788, Loose Papers.
159 David Allason to Allason, October 2, 1789, Loose Papers.
160 David Allason to Allason, August 16, 1797, Loose Papers.
under the influence of the camp meeting movement. His memorandum book contained the following notations concerning religious activities: June 14, 1794, "Preaching at Crossroads, Methodists, J.S. [John Sinsall, one of his helpers at the plantation] there;" July 13, 1794, "Baptising at Thompson's Ford;" August 25, 1795, "Tea party at Oden's, Parson McFarland there;" June 12, 1796, "Methodists preaching at Mrs. Buttons!" and June 19, 1796, "Church Sunday Turkey Run, Parson Thompson."\textsuperscript{161}

Allason may have had interest in religion in the last years of his life, but as late as 1789 he indicated a strong prejudice against Baptists. In that year James Buttler agreed to be Allason's overseer at the plantation by the saw mill, but one of the provisions that Buttler had to agree to was that he was not "of the Baptist persuasion, nor will not become one of that profession, that he will not by day nor by night attend the religious meetings that may happen to be in the neighbourhood."\textsuperscript{162} Allason too saw the impact of the religious fervor that was sweeping the nation at this time, and while he didn't approve its first manifestations he accommodated himself to it and eventually seemed to participate in some of its more sedate activities.

\textsuperscript{161} Allason's Memorandum Book, January 1793, to January 1799 under date indicated.

\textsuperscript{162} Agreement between Allason and James Buttler, August 15, 1789, Loose Papers.
Another aspect of Virginia society also appearing to be accurately observed and reported by Allason was the slaves furnishing labor for the plantations. Allason appeared to trust some of his slaves more than the white hired labor that he was occasionally forced to use. His hands appeared to be tied by the mores of the society on what he could let the blacks do. Mark, one of his slaves, was, for example, a skilled mason. In 1789 he wrote David that "Mark is close engaged raising the Wall √at one of the mills√, and does it as well as any other."\(^163\) Allason also trusted some of his slaves to deliver messages and collect money due him, although this probably rankled some of the white debtors. In 1789 he wrote to one debtor who owed him for lumber "I once more, and for the last time, take the trouble of applying to you for √the debt√: the amount may be sent by the bearer my molatoe man George, with a particular list of the money, and if in gold, its weight, that I may examine it."\(^164\) Another slave gained the following comment from Allason, "The molattoe Boy Billy goes down with the waggon, he seems inclineable to be a labourer here rather than about town, and he works well for one of his years, being remarkably willing. If I mistake

\(^163\)Allason to David Allason, November 8, 1789, Loose Papers.
\(^164\)Allason to Travis Nash, May 8, 1789, Letter Book.

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not he will make another as Molatoe George."  

Allason apparently had the reputation of being a good master among the black population of the region, for when rumors spread that Thomas Roy was going to have to sell some of his Negroes to meet his debts, at least one of them approached Allason and requested that he buy him. Although Allason needed no more slaves he agreed to do it because the youngster wanted to come to him, and he asked Thomas Roy to inform him if the young slave was to be sold.

Allason did have occasional trouble with some of his blacks. In October, 1795, he noted in his book that he had gone "negro hunting" and as he had just written that he had more slaves than he needed, this must be taken to mean that he went on a search for runaway slaves. On Christmas Eve, 1795, the slave Davy "made an attempt on the meat house." Later he must have been disappointed that his judgment of the trustworthiness of Mark, the skilled mason, was cast into doubt when an inspection of the slave's house found beef and the hide of the cow there according to George Arnold and Daniel Greenwood.

165 Allason to David Allason, January 4, 1790, Loose Papers.
166 Allason to Thomas Roy, January 3, 1793, Letter Book.
168 Ibid., entry dated December 24, 1795.
169 Ibid., entry dated July 30, 1797. Before judging
Allason's status in society of the state continued to increase during the last years of his life until his activities were reduced by his failing health. As noted before he had reached the point where the visit of a Beverley and a Wormeley was to be avoided, not sought. Allason's integrity was well enough accepted that in 1790 he was agreed upon as the main arbitrator in settling a dispute between John Parris and Edward Godley. Allason, it was agreed by the two disputants, would select the other members of the arbitration board.\textsuperscript{170}

While Allason withdrew from participation in the activities of the Masonic Lodge at Falmouth in the later years of his life,\textsuperscript{171} he was one of those who underwrote the establishment of an academy or school at Fauquier Court House. Allason's share in this enterprise by the local community was five pounds.\textsuperscript{172} Although the region was maturing culturally Allason was still plagued with suspicions that

\textsuperscript{170}John Fallis to Allason, May 27, 1790; and Decision of Arbitrators, June 1, 1790, Loose Papers. The other members of the board selected by Allason were Francis Whiting, Robert Randolph, James Wright, and John Blackwell, Junior.

\textsuperscript{171}Allason to David Allason, December (n.d.), 1790, Loose Papers.

\textsuperscript{172}Allason's Day Book, 1777-1800, entry dated April 16, 1786.

Mark guilty the modern observer might consider the likelihood that he was "framed." The whites who discovered the beef were hired employees of Allason's and not of the highest order. It may have been a good set-up to get a favorite slave in trouble and at the same time get some beef off the boss.
his mail was being intercepted as late as 1795.173

Allason's Political Observations

In the spring of 1788 William Allason reported to a correspondent in Scotland that "this country, and the Laws made in it since the Peace, are rather calculated to prevent you and all others from having any trade to it, the one encouragement to engage in the [store keeping] business."174 Allason's disgust with the effect that political events were having on trade was soon replaced with enthusiasm as the government was reorganized by the adoption of the Federal Constitution. Alexander White, Allason's old friend and representative to the Virginia convention that ratified the Constitution, confided openly to Allason in the following November that "Anti Federalism is very prevalent in the Assembly. It was with difficulty Madison was continued in Congress, and we almost despair of getting him into the Federal Senate. Col. R.H. [Richard Henry] Lee and Col. [William] Grayson are the other candidates. The election to be on Saturday next."175

173 Allason to David Allason, January 29, 1795, Loose Papers. Allason in this case thought that a letter from David had been lost or stolen at Armstead Blackwell's Store.


175 Alexander White to David Allason to be forwarded to William Allason, November 4, 1788, Loose Papers. Madison lost the Senate race.
Allason followed political developments closely, examining texts of debates at conventions and legislatures and passing them on to others who were aware of occurrences in the political arena of the nation. Allason's own encouragement at the political trend was reflected in a letter to White in January, 1789:

Notwithstanding all & every opposition it would seem as if the New Constitution wd. be in force in some short time when I make no doubt there will be warm application made for the payment of debts due the Subjects of our Mother Country & phaps may bear heavy on some against whom I have a Claim.

Allason's support of the Federalist doctrine was made more manifest by the election of his friend Alexander White to the new Federal Congress in 1789. White assured Allason that "one of the most important articles which will come under consideration in Congress is Commerce. Because the new congressman professed "but little knowledge" about trade, in February 1789, he requested that Allason oblige him "by a communication of your sentiments on that or indeed any other subject, by letter directed at New York."

176 Allason to J.S. Woodcock, January 29, 1789, Letter Book. Allason forwarded a copy of the "Convention debates" to Woodcock by "Mr. Marshall," although he doesn't specify whether this was John or Charles Marshall. It could as readily have been one as the other.

177 Allason to Alexander White, January, 1789, Letter Book.

178 Alexander White to Allason, February 3, 1789. Loose Papers. White continued in Congress until 1794, although the opposition became stronger with each passing year — he had a hard fight to hold his seat in 1792.
Allason was quite optimistic about the new government meeting in New York in the early fall of 1789, reporting to Scotland that:

A number of representatives from each State (N. Carolina & Rhd Island excepted) are now assembled at New York for the purpose of enacting Laws for the General Government, which they appear to have much at heart, and what they have done seem to me to be most excellent, and I doubt not, if they continue as they have begun, which I am not afraid of, we shall certainly have the best System of Government in the World. 179

Allason's opinion of the new executive of the nation was also most complimentary:

General Washington who is President, or in other words King for a few years, is a truly good man, and possessed of great moderation, for had he been otherwise, might have been at this day an Emperor, possessed of the most absolute powers, which it is said was proferred him when at the head of the Army, which he refused, and threatened those that waited on him with exemplary punishment if ever they did so again. The present Gove. being put in motion by him, and continued in that office most probably during his life, bids fair for its being well established, so as to put it, out of the power of a turbulent successor to overturn it. 180

As a sawmill owner Allason was also interested in another question being decided at this time.

A great question is now being agitated in that assembly /Congress/, no less than where the Seat of Government shall be fixed; some members who had leave of absence are recalled on this occasion. At present they are at New York which is said to be far North of the Center; the general opinion seems to be that Annapolis or Baltimore in Maryland will be the place, tho' we of this State wish it to be at Alexandria on Potomac, which is said to be nearest the middle. 181

Allason's enthusiasm for the new government was

179 Allason to Dr. David Colquhoun, September 5, 1789, Letter Book.
180 Ibid.
181 Ibid.
based on its contribution to the stabilization of trade and the collection of debts. Earlier in the same letter he had shown where his real interest lay.

Our acquaintance Walter Colquhoun is much out of humour with the business he is present engaged in, that of being a Collector of old Debts the times are now such, by the establishment of a New Constitution for the American Government, that he can demand payment with greater authority than formerly, which gives some of our Gentry great offence, and some has even threatened to maltreat him in public, which they would not presume in private, however they will soon be brought to know a compliance to be absolutely necessary, and which they must acquiesce in. 182

Allason's hope that the new government would facilitate the collection of debts was soon realized as he learned that "the Federal judges have determin'd that the British Debts are to be paid. Those who paid money into the Treasury Stands good in Payment of their debts Pound for Pound, also that they are to pay no interest during the war." 183

Allason, distinctly a creditor, supported the new central government because it promised to protect the interests of those who had money due them and because it would furnish a favorable climate for trade. He favored social stability and a court system strong enough to protect his equity in outstanding debts.

182 Ibid.
183 David Allason to Allason, June 13, 1793, Loose Papers.
A Closed Account

William Allason continued in relatively good health into his sixty-third year, although his brother David constantly cautioned him to take care of himself; "you ought not to ride in the night, or get wet, you ought to avoid them." By the latter part of 1791 Allason was restricting his activities during the winter and attempting to remain close to his own fireside.

In August, 1793, Allason began to be plagued by an ailment that was to remain with him until his death. Open sores broke out on his legs, which he at first attributed to poison oak infection. In addition to the open sores his legs became swollen and he was completely unable to move about to supervise the activities of the plantation. This outbreak was similar to the earlier outbreak of "tick bites" that Allason had endured for a considerable spell much earlier in his life. Whatever the exact nature of this ailment was, Allason was to suffer from it for the rest of his life.

184 David Allason to Allason, June 12, 1791, Loose Papers. For another example of fraternal exhortation see David Allason to Allason, November 20, 1791, Loose Papers.

185 Allason to Arthur Morson, December 17, 1791, Letter Book.

186 Allason's Memorandum Book, January 1793-January 1799, entry dated August 16, 1793; Allason to David Allason, August 27, 1793, Loose Papers, and Allason to Alexander White, March 21, 1795, Letter Book.
Allason first went to some of the natural warm springs in Culpeper County (the exact location is unknown) in August, 1794, and while these springs seemed to help his legs, they were not convenient to reach as he had to travel several miles daily on foot to reach them. In 1795 still needing the waters and their healing effect on his legs, Allason wrote to his attorney and friend in Frederick County, John S. Woodcock, to see if he could not make better arrangements there. The arrangements were made at the Epsom Spring between Woodcock's house in Winchester and the town of Stephensburg (now Stephens City, Virginia.) Allason described the spring as "much frequented and effects many cures." Allason first shared his room with two other men but they soon left and he had the room alone much to his pleasure. While at the spring he boarded with a widow surnamed Kercheval. Allason reported that there were several other patients at the springs enjoying its medicinal effect, including Mrs. Kercheval who had been living at the spring for some time. Allason returned to North Wales in the middle of October, 1795, but the following summer he again had to return to the spring, remaining about two months and returning to the new home that

189Allason to David Allason, August 31, 1795, Loose Papers.
had been completed and moved into by Polly and her husband, Robert Rose.  

While there were occasions when Allason's legs seemed to be improving, they were never completely well and they became more inflamed each summer. David Allason had to acknowledge that his brother was growing weaker and weaker with the passage of time. The end of Allason's account in this life came in the latter part of January, 1800 -- probably on the 30th or 31st. A Doctor Horner was in attendance at the end, and the coffin was made locally, with the accounts precisely kept as to the cost of each item. Allason's son-in-law, Robert Rose, took the body to Falmouth on February 1, 1800, where Allason was buried beside his wife and two infant children in the Falmouth cemetery. The Masonic Lodges of Falmouth and Fredericksburg joined in the funeral services.

Allason's will, probated April 28, 1800, named his brother David as the sole executor and left all of Allason's possessions except the town lots in Falmouth to Polly Allason Rose and the heirs of her body. The town lots went to David, who lived until 1815 and maintained his connection

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190 Allason's Memorandum Book, January 1793-January 1799, entries dated August 16, 1795; October 8 and 18, 1795; July 29, 1796; and September 17, 1796.

191 Walter Colquhoun to David Allason, June 13, 1799; and December 3, 1799, Loose Papers.

192 Walter Colquhoun to Daniel Grinnan, February 2, 1800, the Grinnan Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.
with Polly and her children. In addition to the large acreage of land that he held -- in excess of fifteen hundred acres -- Allason also left Polly and her children seventy-nine slaves.¹⁹³ Thus William Allason's life account was closed with a considerable credit balance in capital -- far more than he brought with him when he came over as a relatively poor factor in 1757.

¹⁹³Fauquier County Will Book, 1796-1804, pages 249-251. The will was dated May 24, 1793. No inventory of his estate has survived.
The original section of the North Wales mansion, with the wings screened.
CHAPTER IX

RETROSPECT

Supposedly it was Aristotle who first wrote that "one swallow does not make a summer," and for that reason we cannot expect an entire revelation from the business correspondence of one man. It is very enticing to claim too much for the significance of the events of the life of William Allason, to overgeneralize on the basis of the activities and observations of this one man. The evidence left behind by Allason in the form of his business letters and correspondence can be counted only as one piece of evidence for or against some of the opposing historiographical views of the period under consideration. Two major qualifications as to the validity of the evidence must be made at once. First, his records and correspondence must be interpreted correctly and their true meaning understood. It must be assumed that the careful study spent in these papers has resulted in this comprehension. Second, it must be understood that Allason was not an unbiased observer. The fact that he was able to leave written records set him apart in ability and social standing from a large portion of his neighbors. In addition, he was certainly not so superhuman that he readily admitted his mistakes and placed
that admission on paper. Keeping those qualifications well in mind, the discussion of the historical significance of his life can continue.

A comparison of the life of Allason in Virginia following 1757 to the development of the colonies is tempting but will not be stressed. It would be nice to be able to say that there was something symbolic in Allason's cutting his ties with the home country and declaring his independence and turning to face the west just prior to the time that the thirteen colonies did the same. Historic license probably does not permit that comparison. Therefore the first subject for analysis will be that troubled era that preceded the American War for Independence. No attempt will be made to claim a scientific knowledge of this era, but only the insights and questions raised by a careful examination of the life of William Allason.

One outstanding sentiment worthy of comment was the obvious regard and loyalty to commerce as an institution.¹ Most reminiscent of this attitude was the alleged comment of the former Secretary of Defense in the Eisenhower Administration, Charles E. Wilson, that what was good for General Motors was good for the country. Before Adam Smith stressed the importance of untrammelled trade, his fellow Glaswegians were writing essentially the same views. Although

¹See page 215 above.
they supported the idea in theory they, like so many ad­
vocates after them, eschewed following their own preachments
in practice and made agreements among themselves to restrict
the free operation of the market place. In addition they
sought the advantages of the protection and subsidies that
the Royal government offered them, they only chafed at the
resultant restrictions that it placed on them. Exactly what
the influence of the atmosphere of the trading community of
Glasgow was on Smith will be left to the students of his
life. Certainly his observations were more sophisticated
and scholarly than were the random observations and comments
of the merchants of Glasgow.

Another sensing that comes from a careful reading
of Allason papers is the reality of the trading community
of the Atlantic prior to the American Revolution. D. A. Far­
nie made this perfectly clear in his "Commercial Empire
of the Atlantic." The Atlantic, however, was something
more than a British lake during this period. The sinews of
this commercial empire often continued to be reinforced by
the "connections" that Bernard Bailyn found in New England
colonies during their first century. These connections
more and more centered in the Scottish port city of Glasgow,
as Jacob M. Price has noted concerning the tobacco trade.  

2D. A. Farnie, "The Commercial Empire of the Atlan­
tic, 1607-1763," The Economic History Review, 2d Ser., XV,
(1962), 205-218.

3Price, "The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake
Tobacco Trade,"

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Turning from the commercial empire as a whole to that part of it that flourished in Virginia, the twenty year period that preceded the Revolution to be one of change. Professor Price has pointed out that the tobacco trade was more and more centralized into the large commercial houses of Scotland. The records of William Allason indicate the possibility that the export trade in tobacco was also being centralized in the Old Dominion. One indication of this was the policy of Allason to sell his tobacco "in country" to the larger dealers. Thus, at least in his case, one more echelon was added to the chain that carried the tobacco from the producer to the consumer.

Several factors influenced this development. First, and the one implied in Allason's correspondence although not explicitly stated, was the uncertainty of the market in Britain that created an unreasonable risk for the small operator after 1750. The activities of the French Farmers played a large role in creating this market condition. Small firms were virtually helpless before the purchasing power of the French monopoly. The larger firms were necessary to deal with the French on anything near equity and the Farmers preferred it that way, as Professor Price has written.

Another factor that called for the establishment of an additional link in the tobacco commercial chain was the expansion of the tobacco producing area into the interior and away from the navigable rivers with the seagoing vessels
that had existed in the past. If the earlier merchant had difficulty in determining market conditions when he was located on the waterways of the Tidewater, his difficulties were compounded as the planters moved to the interior and his attention was forced to follow them. In a minor way the beginnings of an import-export wholesale business can be dimly discerned in Allason's papers. While Allason early made it a habit to sell his tobacco within Virginia, he was also not excessively reluctant to buy needed storegoods from other merchants, although up to the time of the Revolution he definitely preferred to buy directly from England and keep all the "advance" to himself. Allason himself began to serve in a minor way as an import wholesaler to stores in the Shenandoah Valley.

The complex economic forces at work in the Atlantic commercial empire were only dimly perceived by even the most prescient observers. Suspicion was rife on both sides of the ocean concerning the good faith of the correspondents on the other side. This suspicion was aggravated by the lack of commercial intelligence due to the caterpillar pace of trans-oceanic correspondence. Uncertainty led to anxiety on the part of those who were devoting their lives and risking their fortunes in the conduct of commerce across the Atlantic. Thus Allason's scheme to sell within the colony was an effort to compensate for his lack of knowledge of the market conditions that would prevail if his tobacco was sold in Britain.
Although the Allason records alone would not support the contention that there was a general increase in the indebtedness of the Virginia planters, all evidence in the papers would argue against the contrary. Emory G. Evans has pointed out the possibility that planter indebtedness contributed to the coming of the Revolution in Virginia.\(^4\) Evans himself did not think that this was a conscious motive for the planters' support of the war. He did find, however, that "indebtedness was such a constant companion of the Virginia planter that it seemed to be almost endemic to the plantation economy."\(^5\) Evans also found that after 1740 there was a marked increase both in the size of the debts and in the number of those indebted -- an increase all out of proportion to population growth." Evans also points out that the closing of the courts was feared by the British creditors because of its impact on debt collection during the Stamp Act crisis. In a subsequent article Evans continues his argument that planter indebtedness, although large, was not the conscious cause of the Revolution.

One suggestion that occurs in the reading of Allason's correspondence is that there was a political reaction in Virginia following and connected to the economic panics in Britain in 1763 and 1772. The reaction was possibly two


\(^5\)Ibid., 517. See also Evans's "Private Indebtedness and the Revolution in Virginia, 1776 to 1796," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXIX (1971) 349-374.
fold. First, the economic depression in Britain placed pressure on the British politicians to pass some of the tax load on to the colonists. Second, British mercantile firms were, judging from the Allason papers, less willing during these times to continue the liberal credit policies of the past. The first possibility is beyond the scope of this study, but the second is clearly borne out. In fact, not only were the British merchants not issuing further credit after 1772 but were instructing their factors and friends in Virginia to collect all possible outstanding debts. As noted in previous chapters, William Allason repeatedly wrote to his debtors both in 1764-65 and in 1773-74 that he needed money to aid his friends in Britain, with the slowness of communications accounting for the lag time in Allason's drive to collect and remit.

It seems quite possible from the evidence of the Allason correspondence that the financial pressure exerted by the British merchants made the Virginia planters less amenable to compromise over the political issues involved. For a generation they had benefitted from almost unlimited credit and now, following the French and Indian War, they found the circle of their creditors apparently closing in on their possessions. Violence either was threatened or occurred against the mercantile class both in 1765 and 1774. The posing of this interpretation of some of the background causes of the Revolution in no way discounts the other forces at work at the time, such as political
philosophy and acts that have been examined in detail by others.

The economic issues involved in this period are complex. Stuart Bruchey and others have pointed out the economic growth of the colonies. Growth in Virginia had been particularly marked from 1730 to 1750. Since that time the American people have often sought a change in their governmental leaders when economic difficulty occurred. When the accustomed growth pattern was interrupted is it possible that the Virginia planters were more willing to listen to pleas to "throw the rascals out?"

When viewed in the light of declining economic expectations the efforts of the British governments take on added significance. We have seen how even the attitude of Allason changed in regard to have an adequate money supply with which to do business -- an attitude he conveyed to his connections in Britain. The Virginia planter's perception of this series of activities may well have been that it was prejudicial to his good interest. In the past the planter had been granted liberal credit, and recently he had also been able to use the Virginia currency as legal tender. Then the currency was denied to him as a means to meet his debts and then there appeared to be a move to deny additional credit -- a "given" for most planters for as long as their lifetimes during tobacco's boom years.

Another question raised by the Allason records is the validity of the thesis that the Scot merchants were
heavily Tory. This study has attempted to demonstrate that Allason desired as much as anything to not become involved -- supporting the thesis of Keith Berwick. Many of those merchants who were friends with Allason at least remained in the colony even though some were endangered by mobs both in the era of the Stamp Tax (Alexander Ritchie) and at the beginning of the Revolution (the trial of the Falmouth merchants.) Certainly little more than a hint of the attitude of the Scottish merchants is in the Allason papers, but possibly further study of the individual names of Allason's fellow members of the Falmouth Trustees and his correspondents would permit a more quantitative finding than the impression gathered here.

Allason should, undoubtedly, be placed in that political category called "Federalist" and welcomed the stronger government instituted under the Constitution and President Washington. Nevertheless, Allason was also identified in legal matters and in friendship with some of the men who became some of the staunchest Democrat-Republicans, such as John Taylor of Caroline.

The difference in the vibrancy of Virginia commercial life before and after the Revolution is probably reflective only in the change of Allason's status from merchant to planter. There is, though, the suggestion that after the Revolution Virginia never again recovered

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that robust enterprising spirit that was present when new blood was flowing in from the schools of Scotland. This blood also brought capital, although mostly in the form of credit. There is, therefore, another question posed: How did the migration from Britain, particularly Scotland, compare after the war to before it? Could the severance of the intellectual stimuli and outlook provided in part by the trading channels of the Atlantic commercial community account in some part for the diminishing economic vitality of Virginia?

There is little doubt that Allason shared that desire of other Britons of his era to be a land owner. Of course he wanted more than a small subsistence farm. As he wrote to Andrew Sprowle he wanted a plantation that would provide more than the minimum comforts. This he achieved and settled down to enjoy either through his own choice or by force of the circumstances of the war.

In summary the life of William Allason can be described as a fulfillment of the American dream as it once was. A relatively poor young man, albeit better educated than most others, migrated to America in the employ of others, cut his ties, and achieved a modest fortune and mixed his bloodline with some of the old families of the Old Dominion. He, like many who followed him was a man of enterprise who had little use for "triflers." Although he called himself "timorous," he was willing to risk a great deal in his enterprises and became in many ways the type of
entrepreneur that became famous in America. Born Scottish, William Allason died an American.
APPENDIX A

LIST OF BOOKS SOLD JOHN BINDFORD AND JOHN SHERMAN GREGORY,
AUGUST, 1757

Dyche's Spelling Books 4 Vols.
Testaments 2 "
Song Books 1 "
Cockers Arithmatick 3 "
Fishers Arithmatick 2 "
Gentle Shepherd 1 "
Robine Hoods Songs 1 "
History of China 3 "
Cyrus Expeditions 1 "
Ansons Voyage 2 "
Charles 12th of Sweden 2 "
Constantia T. Phillips 1 "
Divil on Two Sticks 1 "
Bakers Don Quixote 3 "
Horace 2 "
Gebes Tabluture 8 "
Clarrissa 3 "
Free Thinker 1 "
Plays, 8 doz 2 "
Turniforts Voyages gilt 3 "
Boyles Voyages 1 "
Busbeque Travles gilt 2 "
Stonycans Grecian History 3 "
Fable of the Bees 2 "
Bollinbrookes Phil. Works 1 "
Coldens History of 5 Ind Nations 2 "
Montesquies Persian Letters 1 "
Priors Poems 5 "
German Spau 4 "
Gill Blass gilt 2 "
Farquhars Plays 1 "
Popes Homer's Illiad, gilt with cuts 4 "
Cervantes Don Quixote 6 "
Persilles & Sigismunda 2 "
Gordons Humourist 2 "
Cato's Letters 4 "
Pillars of Priest Craft Shaken 2 "
Cordial for Low Spirit 3 "
Addisons Works gilt 4 "

440

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabian Nights Entertainment</td>
<td>6 Vols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winters Evening</td>
<td>3 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voltare's Force of Education</td>
<td>1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ditto's Zadie</td>
<td>1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ditto's Micromigas</td>
<td>1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daciers Plato</td>
<td>2 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gutheries Memoirs</td>
<td>1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakespears Works gilt w Cutts</td>
<td>8 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congraves ditto</td>
<td>3 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucas Adventures</td>
<td>1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eales Art of Cookery</td>
<td>1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor Mead on the Plague guilt</td>
<td>1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ditto on Poisons</td>
<td>1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ditto on Small Pox &amp; Measles</td>
<td>1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ditto on Influence of Sun and Moon</td>
<td>1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ditto's Medica Sacra</td>
<td>1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays</td>
<td>10 dozen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted in William Allason's Daybook and Journal of Private Transactions, 1757-1769, in his own hand and with the original spelling.
APPENDIX B

1770

GOODS THAT COMES FROM LONDON VIZ.

Brown Rolls & Hessians
Hempen Oznabrigs
  \{ Sheeting White & brown
  Russia
    \{ Drill
    Towelling
Callicoes
Chintzes
Muslin . . . Book Ditto
Cambrick
Lawns . .
Gauzes
  \{ Pepper
    Cinnamon
Spiceries
  \{ Cloves
    Mace
    Nutmegs
Tea
  \{ Green
    Bohea
Violins
ditto . . . strings & Bases

442
Silk
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hatts} & \ldots \text{Ribbons, Knee Garters} \\
\text{Bonnets} & \ldots \text{Sewing Silk in small hanks} \\
\text{Capuchins} & \\
\text{Cardinals} & \\
\text{Mather} & \ldots \text{vermilion, Indigo Blue} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Dyers Stuffs
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Logwood} & \ldots \text{Brasill} \\
\text{Pustick} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

Womens Cloth Cloaks & Cardinals
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Anderson's Pills} & \ldots \text{Court Plaster} \\
\text{Batemans drops, Antimoni, Blue Stone} & \\
\text{Tinlingtons do., British oil, Glouster} \\
\text{Salts} & \\
\text{Daffies Elixer, Peruvian Bark in powder} & \\
or\ Lodestone & \\
\end{align*}
\]

Spirit Turpentine

Playing Cards

Ink Powder

Paper
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Broad, Crawleys} & \\
\text{Narrow} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

Hoes
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Broad} & \\
\text{Narrow} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

Axes
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Broad} & \\
\text{Narrow} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

Carpenters Adzes

Joiners Hatchetts
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Axes} & \\
\text{Adzes} & \\
\text{Howells} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

Trace Chain \ldots \text{En}
Frying Pans

Saws

Handsaws common

ditto ... steelplated

X [cross] Cut Saws

Whip saws

Tennon Saws . . Barrell Saws, Sash Saws

Key hole saws . . Compass Saws

Scyths

Grass is long

Briar is short

Reap Hooks

Steel ... English German. Blistered

Gunpowder ... F & H

Lead in Barrs & Shott

Mens fine Hatts

India Persian Tapestries & India Persian about 10½ yds pps

India Persians for ladies Summer Gowns Good Callicoes

Damascus ... 26 yds in a ps checked & striped

Silk handkrs.

Barclona

Bandanes

Spittlefield

Cotton & Linnen stamped Handkrs.

Gilded Trunks in Nests

Florence Oil

Embossed Serge

German Serge

Saggathy

Duroy
Fine Broadcloths
Ruggs
Duffle Blanketting
Guns
Egretts or Artificial Flowers
Necklaces
Allamode
Nankeens . India
Sifters \[\text{type specified unreadable}\]
Watches
Grindstones

\begin{align*}
&\quad \text{Leading Lines} \\
&\quad \text{Trace Rope} \\
&\quad \text{Bedcords} \\
&\quad \text{Rope etc.} \\
&\quad \text{Drum Lines} \\
&\quad \text{Fishing ditto} \\
&\quad \text{Perch Lines} \\
&\quad \text{Twine for saines etc.}
\end{align*}

Fanns
Cap wire, & Skeleton wire, Gympe, Lace, Fringe
Horn moulds
Glue \ldots Fig blue
Brimstone \ldots Salt Petre
Allum
Gunflints
Fish Hooks
Alcamine Spoons, or yellow hard mettle
Looking Glasses
   Painted
   Walnut Frames
   . . ditto . with stands

Joiners Tooles . . . insetts p Invoice FB . compleat in (11)

Westons Snuff

Mops . Broomheads
   Scrubing Clamps

Brushes
   Cloth Brushes
   Shoe Brushes
   Paint . . ditto

Blacking Ball

Shirt Buttons
   Sattin
   Plain
   Paduasoy
   Flowrd
   Liname

Ribbons etc.

Silk Bonnetts etc.

Liverpool

Womens Hatts
   Furred
   Plain

Mens Hatts
   Felts
   Fine Hatts

Tapes . . Pins . Needles

Laces . Bobbing

Gartering . worsted binding & firoads

Scyths

Sickles

Cutlary . . . all sorts

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Stone Ware

- Bottle Jugs from 3 Gallen to 1 quart
- Water ditto
- Butter Potts
- Chamber Potts
- Tea Ware
  - Plates
  - Dishes
  - Mustard
  - Salts
  - Milk Potts

Delph ware

Glass ware

Thicksetts

Frizes

Diaper

Diaper Table Cloths

- Cotton
- Cards, Ramsdon's
  - Wool
  - Tow

Frying Pans ... long & short handles

Cotton Counterpanes

Bed Bunts .. & Bedtike

Kendall Cottons . Check's Baze

Cheese

Salt

Gun Powder

Shott & Barr Lead
Perch Hooks   Pipes
Perch Lines
Bedcords
Leading Lines
Trace Rope

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Irish Linnens} & \quad \begin{cases} 
3/4 \text{ wide} \\
7/8 \\
4/4 
\end{cases} \\
\text{Sheetings} \\
\text{Drogheda Linnen @ 10d} \\
\text{Checks Manchr.} & \quad \begin{cases} 
\text{Cotton} & \text{1 3/5 wide & 6/4 wide} \\
\text{Linnen} 
\end{cases} \\
\text{Saggathy} \\
\text{Duroys} \\
\text{Durants} \\
\text{Calimanco . Tammy} \\
\text{Cambletts . . . plain, striped & flowr'd} \\
\text{Jeans} \\
\text{Pockett Fustian} \\
\text{Apron Check} \\
\text{Mens silk & wosted stockings @ 70/} \\
\text{ditto ditto & cotton @ 90/} \\
\text{Stampd. Handkrs. Cambrick from 20/. to 27/} \\
\text{Black Everlasting @ 2/. Green & Scarlet flannell} \\
\text{Whitehaven} \\
\text{Mill Stakes . . . Cullen}
\end{align*}
\]
Grindstons
   Iron Potts

Cast Iron
   Dutch ovens
   Cart Boxes
   Wrights
   Coffee Potts . . Milk Pans, Canisters
      1D & $\frac{1}{2}$D
   Sugar Boxes . . Sauce Pans of qts.,
      Pints & $\frac{1}{2}$ pints
   Candlesticks . . nutmeg Graters
   Pints Cans . . Cheese Toasters, Bastin
   Quarts Ditto . . Funnells
   Pepper Boxes
   Kettles
   Black Jacks pint & quarts

Tinn Ware
   Dishes deep & Shallow
   Plates . . ditto
   Bassons . . Porringers . Funnells
   Chamber Potts, Candle moulds
      dividing Mustards Potts
   Spoons Soop Salt stands
      Tea
   Pewter
      Gallon
      $\frac{1}{2}$ do.
      wine 1 quart
      measur's Pint
      $\frac{1}{2}$ pint
      1 Gill
1 Gill

Close stool Pans

Stills

Copper

\{ Tea Kettles . . . Sauce Pans. Stew Pans

Coffee Potts . Chocolate Potts

Cocks . . . Spoon Moulds

Candlesticks

Brass

Skillets

Mortars & Pistles

Saddlary . . . is very Good

Candles . . . moulded & dipped

Felt Hatts . . . from 8/. to 36 or 40/. very good

Glasgow

Scotch Oznabrigs from Arbroth etc.

Dowlass . . . Diapar

Checks

\{ Glasgow 3/4 & 7/8

Fife . . . 3/4 & 7/8

Check Hollands

Crossbar'd ditto

Stript Hollands

Brown Holland . . . 3/4 & 4/4 wide

\{ Colourd, black, blue, green, drabs, red,

yellow, cloth colours

Threads

Brown in 1/4 & 1/2 dc.

Stitching divided in ounces

Nuns

Buckram White & brown
Combs & Cases

\[
\begin{aligned}
\{ \\
\text{Ivory} \\
\text{Horn} \\
3/4 & \text{ & } 7/8 \\
\end{aligned}
\]

Twill'd Sacking

Bedticken

Linnen Handkrs. . . . from 4/ upwards

\[
\begin{aligned}
\{ \\
\text{Spotted} \\
\text{Flowr'd} \\
\text{Lawn. . . Paisley} \\
\text{Plain} \\
\text{Handkr.} \\
\end{aligned}
\]

Table Cloaths . do. . . . all kinds

Womens Stays

Glasgow Snuff

Nails . . . 2d 3d 4d 6d 8d 10d 20d

Hoes - broad & Narrow

Frying Pans

Garden Spades

Iron Potts & ovens . . vide (4)

Printed Cotton

ditto . . . Handkrs.

Saddlary . . . all kinds, vide (4)

Plaiden

Plaid Stockings large

Yarn Stockings from Aberdeen

Stationary all kinds

Books . . . ditto . Bibles etc.

Barley . . . Oattmeal
Carpetts for floors etc. all sizes
Shoes . . . all kinds
Cutlery . . . vide (8.9.10).
Pewter . . . vide (4)
Tinnware . . . vide (4)
Glue
Serge Blanketting
Tartan

Leeds in Yorkshire

BroadCloths . . . from 4/6 to 10/ a yard, none higher,
& Trimings
Duffles . . . 3/2 to 3/6
Frizes \{ 6/4 . . . 4/6 to 6/.
\{ 3/4 . . . 1/10. to 2/.
Fearnought
Half Thicks
Bed Blanketts . . . 8/ to 15/ a pair
Striped Blanketting

Bristol vise.

Window Glass . . . all sizes . . . Quart Bottles
Wine Glasses . . . Salts, Mustards, Jelly Glasses
Tumblers . . . from Quart to a Gill
Glass Canns . . . Quart & Pint, Decanters . Cruets
Nails . . . all kinds

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Iron Mongry

- Hoes . . Drawing knives, Hammers, Files
- Axes, adzes, augers, compasses,
- Joiners Hatchets, Shoe Tools, Garden Spades
- Frying Pans . . Scyths . . Reap hooks
- X Garnet Hinges
- H & H ditto

Cast Iron . . . Potts, ovens, Cart Boxes

- Red Lead
- White Lead
- Oaker
- Spanish brown
- Vermilion
- Verdegris
- Prussian Blue
- Linseed Oil

Fine Broad Cloths & Trimmings

- German Serges . Wilton Cloths
- Embossed Serges different Figures
- Flannels spottd . plain, striped, Spotted Ermine

Worsted stockings

- Mens . . yarn stockings
- Womens

Thread . . ditto

- Mens . . Youths
- Womens

Calimancoes . . all colours

Tammies . . . ditto

Shalloons . . . ditto
Saggathies
Duroys
Durants
Fearnought
Half thicks
Derseys
Frizes . . . 3/4 & 6/4 wide
Welch Cottons

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ruggs} & \quad \text{Torrington} \\
& \quad \text{Spotted . 6/4 . . . 7/4 . . . 8/4 wide} \\
& \quad \text{Blue & Green}
\end{align*}
\]

Duffle Blankitting
Bed Blanketts
Pewter . . . vide (4)
Spirit Turpentine
Cuttlery, very good, vide (8..9..10)
Grindstones . . . by the Ton
Irish Linnens & Sheetings very good from thence
Buckskin Breeches
Cuttlary vise
Table knives & forks
Breakfast ditto
Pockett . . . ditto
Clasp or Spring knives
Cutter do.
Pen . . . . . . ditto
Butcher . . . . ditto
Pruning . . . . . ditto
Shoemakers . . . . ditto
Drawing . . . . . ditto
Pincers
Nippers
Shoe tacks
Awl Blades
Awl handles
Pegging Awls
Fife Sticks, Shoulder & long Sticks
Blackballs & brissells
Shoemakers wax & thread
Shoe Hammers, mens & womens
Shoe tooles in complete setts
Razors & Cases
Womens scizors
Taylors Shears
Poling Scizors
Wool . . ditto . . Sheep Shears
Sleave Buttons in brass, pewter, & black Ivory
ditto . . Bristol Stone for Sleaves, Jacketts etc.
Studds

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Glass} \\
\text{Pearle} \\
\text{Lacquered} \\
\text{Coat \& Jacket} \\
\text{Silvered} \\
\text{Buttons} \\
\text{Gilt}
\end{align*}
\]
Files . . . for
Pitt or Whipsaw
Smiths . . flatt & half round & 3 square
Saw mill . . . Raps

Chizels & Goudges
Chizells Socket & turners
Goudges ditto

Plain Irons . . Plain Irons
Handsaws, Pannell Saws, Sash Saws
Tenon Saws
Compass ditto
Whipsaws
X \(\text{cross}\) Cut saws
Keyhole saws
\[
\begin{align*}
\frac{1}{2} \text{ inch} & \\
3/4 \text{ inch} & \\
1 & \text{ ditto}
\end{align*}
\]
Augers \{ bright & black
1$\frac{1}{2}$ ditto
1$\frac{1}{2}$ ditto
2 ditto

Compasses \{ Steel
Iron
Brass

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Bitts
- Wimble
- Taper
- Center
- Dowelling

Tap Borers

Bung ditto

Saw Setts

Stock Lockes
- Chist
- Cupboard
- Clock case
- Drawer

Locks
- Hanging Locks brass & Iron. Drawer Locks
- Closett Locks. ditto. ditto
- Chamber door. ditto. ditto
- Iron... stapples for locks

Padlocks, dblâ single bolts
- Brass

Trowells
- Bricklayers
- Plasterers

Candlesticks
- Brass, long & flatt
- Iron, ditto. ditto

Tobacco Boxes
- Spring
- Draw

Snuff. . . ditto

Saddlers Tacks
- Black
- Tinned

Chair Nails . . . white & yellow
Nails . . . Tuft & stapple for Saddlers
   ditto . for Coffins

Bath
Shoe, Knee, Stock
   Brass
Breech & Girdle
   Steel
   Bath
   Buckles
   Pinchback
   Plated
   Mourning

Screw Nails . . for wood & for Table Buts

Cork Screws

Bellows . . . for Fires

Curry Combs & Brushes

Rings
   Curtain
   Toy
   Desks
Brass Mounting
   Cabinets
   Drawers

Steeliards

Box Iron with Heaters

Flatt smoothing Irons

Pincels

Fountain Pens

Lancetts with Cases

Fleams with ditto

Watch Keys
   Brass
   Steel

Watch Chains . . . ditto . . . Key Rings
Gimblitts {Box handle, double wormed
    common . . . spike
Scullups
Gun Locks {Plain
            Bridled ¼, 3/4, 4/4
Guns, etc. {Screws
            Hammers
            Common Brass
Thimbles {Silver & ditto steel bottoms
            Taylors
Traps . . . for {Ratts
            Mouse
            Common
Needles {White Chappell
            Darning
            square, pointed or Sail
Fish Hooks Perch
Jews Harps {Brass
            Iron
Thumb Latches . . . sundry sorts
Knitting needles {Brass
            Iron
Gunter Scales
Prospect Rules
Gauging Roads
{best Paper
Ink Potts com: ditto
Leather
   Brass
Iron
   Steel spring
   Plated
Hinges
   X / Gross / Garnett . . . Brass Hinges
   Cupboard, Table
   Chest, Desk
   Chest, Table Buts brass & Iron with screws
   Box, Dove tail
Scyths
   Long, 52, 48, & 44 inches. Gross
   Short Briar. 27 inches
Reap Hooks
Brass Cocks
   Claw common & Kentish
Hammers
   Lathing
   Shoe and Cramping
Marking Irons
   Large
   Small
Nutmeg Graters long & round
Candle Snuffers
   Common
   with Springs
Hand Vices
Coffee Mills. Steel etc.
Shoe Brushes
\[\begin{cases} 
\text{Hard} \\
\text{Soft}
\end{cases}\]

Cloth ditto, different kinds

Steel Pad stackes fitted with about 2 doz. bitts assorted

Tongs & Shovells

Bells with Springs, to hang with doors

Looking Glasses, Pockett

Stirrup Irons

Bridle Bitts

Spectakles
\[\begin{cases} 
\text{Common} \\
\text{Temple}
\end{cases}\]

Saddlary vise

with fringed slip covers

Womens Saddles
\[\begin{cases} 
\text{with Laced} \\
\text{Shamey Seats}
\end{cases}\]

Mens Saddles, various sizes

Portmanteau ditto
\[\begin{cases} 
\text{Full Cutt} \\
3/4 ditto \\
1/2 ditto \\
Snaffles
\end{cases}\]

Halters

Housens
\[\begin{cases} 
\text{Laced} \\
\text{Fringed}
\end{cases}\]

Saddle Cloths

Parmanteaus, Male Pillions

Saddle Baggs
Gruppers
Stirrup Leathers
Coat Straps
Leather Hunting Caps
Horse Collars

Girths  
{ double
    single

Sursingles

Twigs
Hunters
Chair
Thongs or long lashes
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William Allason as Agent for Baird and Walker of Glasgow

Day Book for concern belonging to Baird & Walker, 1757-1769

Ledger of Sundry goods belonging to Baird & Walker, 1757-1762

Ledger for Cargo, Baird and Walker, 1759

Ledger, 1751-1752

Falmouth Store:

Day Book, October 1, 1761 - December 20, 1762

Day Book, May 16, 1763 - September 20, 1765

entries after Day Book:
Tobacco at Dixon's Warehouse
Tobacco at Falmouth Warehouse
List of people sued in different courts, 1762-1764

Day Book, December 21, 1766 - July 18, 1767

Day Book, September 20, 1768 - February 11, 1771

Day Book, (1769) - September 29, 1770

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Day Book, November 23, 1770 - December 31, 1771
Day Book, February 4, 1772 - June 10, 1773
Day Book, June 11, 1773 - June 18, 1777
Day Book, June 20, 1777 - April 7, 1800
Ledger 0, February 1757 - September 1769
Ledger 1, October 1769 - September 1772
Ledger 2, October 1772 - September 1774
Ledger 3, September 1774 - January 1791
Ledger 4, January 1791 - November 1801
Ledger A, May 1760 - October 1761
Ledger B, October 1761 - September 1762
Ledger C, September 1762 - October 1763
Ledger D, October 1763 - September 1765
Ledger E, September 1765 - September 1767
Ledger F, October 1767 - September 1768
Ledger G, September 1768 - October 1769
Ledger H, October 1769 - 1801
Cash Sales, 1764-1769
Inverted & reversed: Cash Expenses, 1764-1759
Cash Sales, 1769-1789
Inverted & reversed: Tobacco Book, 1769-1775; 1785-1790
Invoice Book, 1760-1761
Invoice & Inventory Book, 1761-1764
Invoice and Inventory Book, 1764-1766
Invoice and Inventory Book, 1767-1769
Invoice and Inventory Book, 1769-1774
Inverted & reversed: "Goods that comes from

Invoice and Inventory Book, 1770-1796
List of Balances Due, 1766
List of Balances Due, 1767
List of Balances Due, 1770
  Preceded by "Carolina debts"
List of Balances Due, 1770-1775, 1777, 1787, 1791
List of Balances Due, 1770-1777, 1787
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List of Balances Due, 1774
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Memorandum Book No. 4, May 1759 - June 1760
Memorandum Book No. 5, July 1760 - June 1761

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Memorandum Book May 1764 - February 1767
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Memorandum Book November 1788 - October 1792
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