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"An unsettled disposition": Social structure and geographic mobility in Amelia County, Virginia, 1768–1794

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"AN UNSETTLED DISPOSITION":
" "
SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY
IN AMELIA COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1768-1794

A Thesis

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
Master of Arts

by

Paula J. Martinac

1979

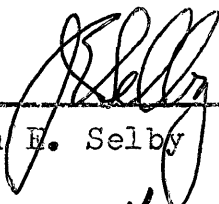
APPROVAL SHEET

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

Master of Arts

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Approved, August 1979


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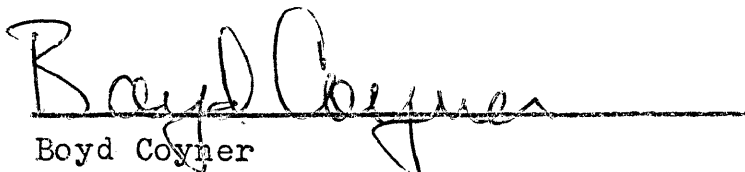

Boyd Coyner

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to document the patterns of population growth, distribution of wealth and geographic mobility in Amelia County, Virginia, between the years 1768 and 1794. This county received its first settlers in the 1730s and, by the period studied in this paper, had entered a time of stagnation and diminishing opportunity.

The study first compares the social structure of five other counties in the same area of Virginia with that of Amelia. These counties were chosen at random from among those in the Southside area of Virginia. Second, it deals with the economic structure of Amelia in greater detail and discusses the important topics of land- and property-ownership, dependency, tenancy and household size. Last, the paper traces migration and persistence (continued habitation) of Amelia residents from 1768 to 1794 in order to draw an even clearer picture of the society of the county.

The investigation makes use primarily of the tithable lists and land and personal property tax books of Amelia County. Two other major sources are a list of delinquent taxpayers in 1788 for Amelia and the British Mercantile Claims of 1775-1803, both of which help pinpoint the destinations of departing Southsiders.

The results of the study show that Amelia was a stratified society, with a poor and middling majority controlled by a thin layer of wealthy men at the top of the economic scale. As time went on, it became harder for unestablished men to be successful in Amelia, and there was a large incidence of out-migration. Apparently, the cause of the diminishing opportunity was not the American Revolution or the events leading to it, but the inevitable stagnation of a maturing frontier society.

"AN UNSETTLED DISPOSITION":
SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY
IN AMELIA COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1768-1794

INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the regions of Virginia were in various stages of growth and development. The Tidewater region, first settled in the early seventeenth century, had, by the eighteenth century, entered a period of decline in population growth. Tidewater emigrants pushed into the Northern Neck, which had expanded steadily from the 1650s until the early 1700s, when population growth there, too, began to fall off. At mid-century, the Southside and Piedmont regions were still being populated by migrants from eastern sections of Virginia and from western Maryland and Pennsylvania. Though still frontier areas at mid-century, the Southside and Piedmont encountered the same slowing of growth and eventual stagnation after the Revolution that the Tidewater and Northern Neck had undergone earlier.¹

¹A number of studies have dealt with the stages of growth in the different regions of Virginia. See, for example, Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York, 1975), 395-432; Jackson Turner Main, "The Distribution of Property in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 41 (1954-1955), 241-258; Karla V. MacKesson, Growth in a Frontier Society: Population Increase in the Northern Neck of Virginia (M.A. Thesis: The College of William and Mary, 1976); Michael Lee Nicholls, Origins of the Virginia Southside: A Social and Economic Study (Ph.D. Dissertation: The College of William and Mary, 1972);

Each region in turn experienced three phases of growth. In the first twenty to twenty-five years after the initial settlement, hundreds of families migrated into the region and the population increased rapidly. The second phase of development, which lasted approximately thirty or forty years, was marked by a slowing of the rate of population growth. Finally, the area entered a period of stagnation and diminishing opportunity, in which nearly as many people emigrated or died as came into the region or were born.²

The object of this paper is to document these patterns in Amelia County, located in Southside Virginia. This county grew rapidly in the 1730s, but heavy out-migration had begun by the 1780s. While this paper will examine the long-term swings of population in Amelia from 1768 to 1794, it will focus on the period of stagnation that occurred in the post-Revolutionary years. This period of stagnation must be seen in the context of both an earlier slowing of population growth and a later move toward stabilization. Also, since the time span of this paper coincides with the American Revolution, questions

Edward Ayres, Migration and Social Structure in Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1782-1792 (Unpublished paper, 1969); Edward Ayres, "Albemarle County, Virginia, 1744-1770: An Economic, Political and Social Analysis," Magazine of Albemarle County History, 25 (1966-1967), 36-72.

²For more about the theory of frontier societies and population growth, see MacKesson, passim.

concerning the economic changes preceding the war and the conflict itself are important to the discussion.

There are several areas of consideration within this study. First, there is the question of the Southside counties as a unit. How did the social structure of Amelia compare with that of five other counties in the Southside area of Virginia? Second, a portion of this study treats more specifically the social and economic structure of Amelia during the period in question and deals with personal property ownership, landownership, dependency, tenancy and household size. Third, the paper examines migration and persistence (continued habitation) of Amelia residents from 1768 to 1794 in order to reveal further patterns of opportunity for county inhabitants.

One way to accomplish these objectives is to examine county tax records. For the pre-Revolutionary period, the Amelia County tithable lists for several years in the late 1760s are nearly intact and furnish valuable information about personal property and landownership.³ By using the personal property and land tax books of the

³The tithable lists for the years 1766 to 1769 record white and black tithes and land acreage for each household. These records are incomplete, but the 1768 list used for this study is missing only one list of about 625 tithes (out of 4,755 for the county) and perhaps a smaller list of 100-odd tithables. The list of 625 tithes taken by Commissioner Wells for one section of Raleigh Parish has not survived; the other list is for a part of Nottoway Parish. See Amelia County Tithable Lists, Box 3, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

Southside counties from 1782 to 1794, one can compute distributions of wealth and determine levels of migration and persistence. In the post-war period, each county in Virginia kept records as provided by an act of 1781, "for ascertaining certain taxes and duties, and for establishing a permanent revenue."⁴ Though not flawless, the records provide one means of uncovering the social and economic life of Virginia in the early national years.

⁴This was the official title of the act, which was passed in November, 1781. For the text, see William W. Hening (ed.), The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia From the First Session of the Legislature in 1619 (Richmond, 1810-1823), X, 501-517. The categories of taxable wealth changed almost every year from 1783 to 1789. For these alterations in and additions to the original act, see Hening, XI, 93-95, 112-129, 368-369; XII, 243-255, 412-432. The lists are in the Virginia State Library, Richmond.

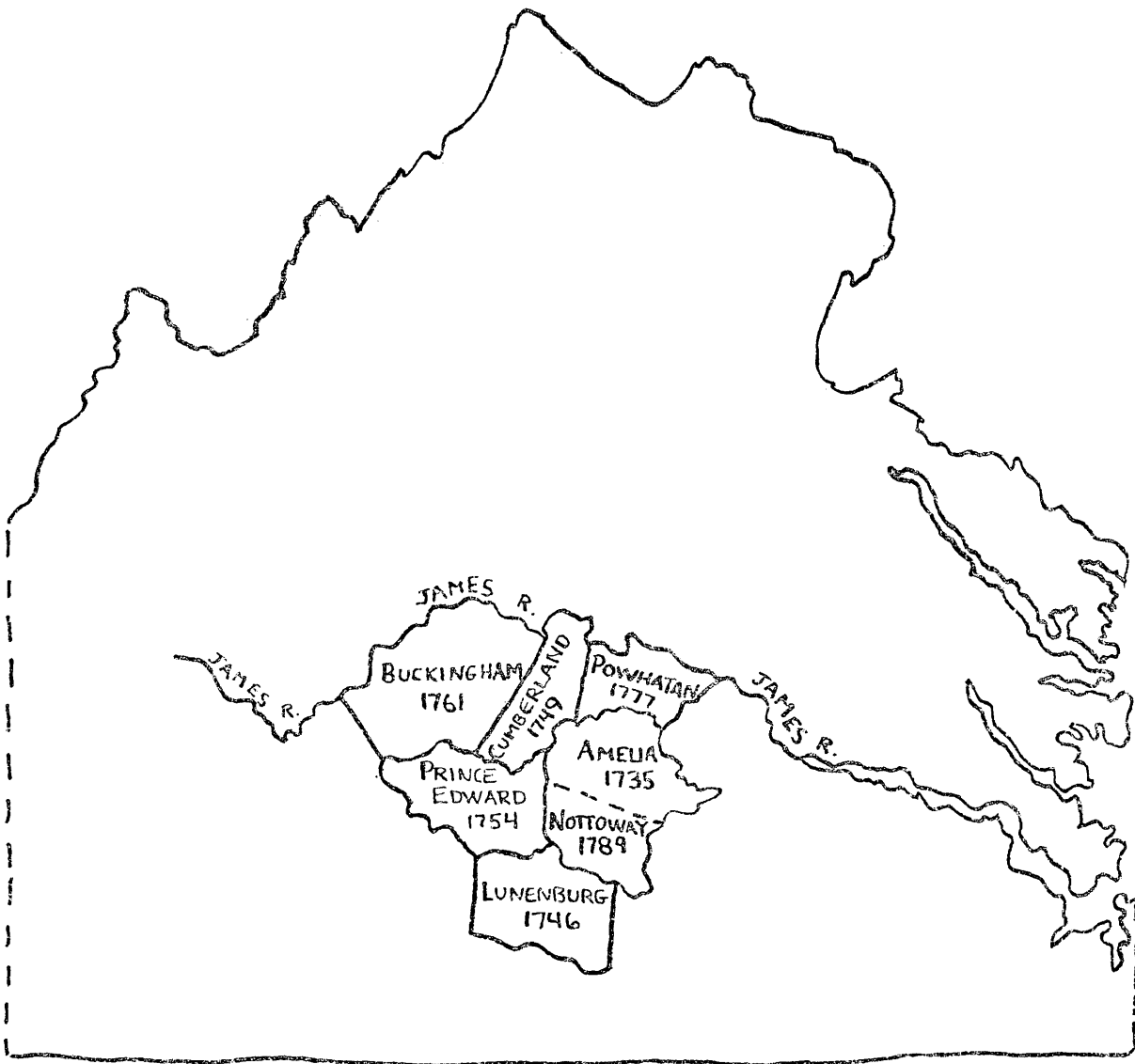
CHAPTER I
AMELIA AND THE SOUTHSIDE

The pattern of growth and decline. === Amelia County, formed in 1735 from Prince George County, was the oldest in the Virginia Southside. Five other counties in that area, chosen for discussion here--Buckingham, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Powhatan, and Prince Edward--were organized within forty-two years after the founding of Amelia (see Figure 1). The overwhelming majority of settlers in this region were of English or African extraction and had moved from the middle counties of Virginia, especially Henrico, Goochland and Hanover. The Tidewater counties of Virginia provided few direct settlers to the Southside. In turn, many Amelia residents migrated to the southwest in the 1740s and helped to form Lunenburg County.⁵

While most of the white Southside settlers were English, a substantial percentage were also Scots-Irish and German; and in Powhatan, French were numerous. Many of the people of Scottish and German descent had migrated south from western Maryland and Pennsylvania,

⁵Michael Lee Nicholls, *Origins of the Virginia Southside: A Social and Economic Study* (Ph.D. Dissertation: The College of William and Mary, 1972), 40-47.

FIGURE 1
SIX SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA COUNTIES



Source: Adapted from Jackson Turner Main, "The One Hundred," William and Mary Quarterly, 11 (1954), 357.

the only other colonies to contribute large numbers to the settlement of the Virginia Southside.⁶

By the first years of the American Revolution, these Southside counties had all been formed and settled, but life in the region was far from stable. The influx of settlers since about 1730 more than balanced the loss of Southside tithables through death and migration and led to a rapid increase in the taxable population of the region. The rapid growth in the number of taxpayers is evident in Amelia County, where, in its first thirty-three years, the number of tithables increased from 588 to 4,755.⁷ The arrival of new settlers permitted older Southside residents to sell their lands to eager buyers and move farther west in search of new opportunities.⁸

The Revolution may have contributed to the slowing of growth of the tithable population of Amelia, for the tax list of 1784 shows an increase of only 328 tithables over the 1768 figure.⁹ During the 1780s, the six Southside

⁶Ibid., 54. For approximate percentages of nationalities among the settlers of these counties, see R. Bennett Bean, The Peopling of Virginia (Boston, 1938), 124, 138, 144, 158, 173.

⁷The 1735 figure was taken from a table in Nicholls, 44. The 1768 figure is from unpublished research by Allan Kulikoff.

⁸Nicholls, 217-222.

⁹The figures for Amelia and the other five counties were drawn from aggregate data entered on the personal property tax books for each county from 1782 to 1794, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

counties grew considerably, though erratically. Table 1 shows the general pattern for these six counties. In the years from 1782 to 1786, these counties experienced either reductions in the white tithable population or small gains. The largest annual increase in these years was of 99 people from 1785 to 1786 in Amelia, although the total number of white tithables in the latter year fell below the 1,215 tithables in 1782. However, in 1787 and 1788, all the counties grew substantially and all finally surpassed their 1782 figures. These erratic year-to-year changes are negligible and may merely denote errors in the tax lists or a switch in taxing practice (see page 20 below). The black tithable population reflected similar fluctuations, resuming growth between 1786 and 1787 but becoming again unsteady after 1790. What the overall picture shows is the slowing of growth and ultimate stagnation typical of all maturing frontier societies.

Not only did these Southside counties lose population in the 1780s, but the region apparently became poorer. The total personal taxable wealth of these Southside residents (their slaves, horses and cattle) did not increase proportionately with the number of tithables but either decreased or rose imperceptibly; and as a result, personal property per white tithe declined during the 1780s and early 1790s. From 1782 to 1787 (the last year cattle were taxed), the number of horses

TABLE 1
 GROWTH OF WHITE TITHABLE POPULATION BY COUNTY
 SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA, 1782-1794

	Amelia	Buckingham	Lunenburg
1782	1215	709	750
1783	1070 ^a	696	767
1784	981	713	678
1785	981	736	705
1786	1080	725	727
1787	1309	846	808
1788	1598	1046	949
1789	1588 ^b	987	983
1790	1632	1055	988
1791	1624	1096	1050
1792	1640	1143	1036
1793	1688	1136	1131
1794	1692	1239	1171

^aEstimate

^bNottoway became a separate county from Amelia in 1789; but for the purposes of this paper, its white tithable count is included with Amelia's.

	Prince Edward	Cumberland	Powhatan
1782	691	548	366
1783	-	545	393
1784	671	542	436
1785	-	563	424
1786	674	540	423
1787	-	614	-
1788	764	776	516
1789	-	823	-
1790	-	816	-
1791	-	831	563
1792	863	824	-
1793	1000	916	-
1794	1059	934	-

Source: Personal Property Tax Books, 1782-1794, Virginia State Library, Richmond (hereafter cited as VSL). Prince Edward figures from Edward Ayres, Migration and Social Structure in Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1782-1792 (Unpublished paper, 1969), Chart I.

and head of cattle per white tithe decreased in each county, and half of the counties witnessed a reduction in slaves per white tithe. The numbers of slaves per white tithe either stagnated or increased unnoticeably in Amelia, Buckingham and Lunenburg (see Table 2).

Powhatan was the wealthiest of the six counties in terms of personal property per taxpayer throughout the 1780s and early 1790s, with Amelia and Cumberland not far behind. In fact, these three counties were among the richest in the state of Virginia.¹⁰ Although the numbers of slaves, horses and cattle per white tithe in Powhatan decreased steadily during the 1780s, the county still remained the wealthiest in the Southside region. In 1787, according to a study by Jackson Turner Main, 45 percent of the slaveholders in the county owned ten or more slaves, and 35 percent of the cattleholders had over twenty head of cattle apiece. Also, the mean number of acres per landowner in Powhatan that year was 340. All of these figures were well above those for the other regions of Virginia.¹¹

However, the Southside in the 1780s and early 1790s was not exclusively a region of large property

¹⁰Main, 253.

¹¹Ibid., 252-253. The averages in 1787 in the eastern part of the state, for example, were 195 acres, 4 slaves, 2.5 horses and 11 head of cattle; in the rest of the Southside region, 260 acres, 6.5 slaves, 4 horses and 14 head of cattle.

TABLE 2
 PERSONAL PROPERTY PER WHITE TITHE,
 SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA, 1782-1794

County	Number of					
	Slaves			Horses		
	1782	1787	1794 ^a	1782	1787	1794
Amelia	8.3	8.3	4.0	4.5	3.8	3.0
Cumberland	7.2	6.9	3.0	3.8	3.4	2.3
Powhatan	9.5	8.7 ^b	-	5.0	4.3 ^b	-
Buckingham	4.2	4.3	2.1	3.3	3.1	2.4
Lunenburg	4.5	4.9	2.4	3.4	3.0	2.3
Prince Edward	5.0	4.7 ^b	2.5	3.7	3.0 ^b	2.5

^aIn 1788, the recording practice for young blacks was changed to include only those between twelve and sixteen years of age, instead of all those younger than sixteen, as before.

^bThe figures for 1787 were not available for Powhatan and Prince Edward Counties; therefore, the figures given are for 1786.

County	Number of Cattle	
	1782	1787
Anelia	16.2	12.5
Cumberland	14.8	11.1
Powhatan	18.4	14.0 ^b
Buckingham	11.3	8.9
Lunenburg	12.8	10.3
Prince Edward	12.7	9.8 ^b

Sources: Personal Property Tax Books, 1782-1794, VSL.
 Prince Edward figures are from Ayres, Migration
 and Social Structure, Chart I.

and land holdings. Southside Virginia was predominantly a middling area, in which almost half (or slightly more in some counties, such as Powhatan and Amelia) of the adult white males owned land, and farms tended to be small- to medium-sized. Tenancy was less common there than in other sections of Virginia, and personal property was more evenly distributed among white taxpayers.

What the figures mean. == What can be inferred from the history of population and wealth in these counties during the decades following the American Revolution? The number of tithes increased or decreased erratically, and the wealth of the white population (as measured by the number of slaves, horses and cattle available to citizens) diminished. Since birth rates remained high, substantial numbers of families must have left in search of new opportunities. These six Southside counties, like the Tidewater and Northern Neck during earlier decades, had entered a period of stagnation and decline.

Not everyone left the Southside, however, and some families migrated there from eastern counties. These new migrants were probably landless and young and came to the Southside with few taxable personal effects, in hope of buying land from departing planters. But they were caught in the economic slump of the mid-1780s and found it difficult to acquire slaves, farms and work

animals of their own. Those who left the area may have been slightly better off and took their slaves, horses and cattle with them to other counties or states. As a result, the total wealth of the region declined during the 1780s and early 1790s.

How well did Amelia fit into the pattern of decline and stagnation? Amelia was one of the wealthiest counties of the Southside. Between 1782 and 1787, Amelia residents owned more slaves, horses and cattle than did those of any other county in the area but neighboring Powhatan.¹² Amelia, along with Cumberland and Powhatan, was substantially wealthier than Buckingham, Lunenburg or Prince Edward. Residents of the poorer counties owned only half as many slaves and three-quarters as many horses and cattle per white tithe as the citizens of Amelia, Cumberland and Powhatan.

Though Amelia was wealthier than the other counties studied here, the county fit the general pattern of social and economic change which characterized the region as a whole in the decade after the Treaty of Paris. Amelia's taxable population fluctuated and the property of her residents declined slowly. The in-migration of landless

¹²Powhatan averaged 8.9 slaves, 4.6 horses and 15.5 head of cattle, while Amelia averaged 8.8 slaves, 4.4 horses and 14 head of cattle. For the other counties, the averages were as follows: Lunenburg--4.9 slaves, 3.4 horses, 11.2 head of cattle; Cumberland--7.2 slaves, 3.7 horses, 12.6 head of cattle; Buckingham--4.4 slaves, 3.4 horses, 10.2 head of cattle; Prince Edward--5 slaves, 3.3 horses, 11.9 head of cattle.

youths probably explains the decline of wealth in the county (as in the entire region), since young migrants owned few slaves, horses or cattle. Long-time residents of Amelia may actually have retained their wealth, despite the overall decline.

CHAPTER II

ECONOMY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN AMELIA COUNTY

Population growth. == During the 1730s and 1740s, Amelia was at the edge of white settlement and hundreds of white families rushed to claim its virgin lands. Amelia County grew at a rapid pace during the first twenty years after its formation in 1735. Its population doubled every eight years during these two decades. When the county was first organized, there were only 588 tithes living within its bounds, but 3,755 taxable whites and blacks resided there by 1755. Population grew at less than half this rate in the 1750s and 1760s, because the frontier moved farther and farther west and south. The taxable population of Amelia dipped drastically in 1756, soon after Prince Edward County was formed from its less-settled parts, and then rose steadily until 1768. From 1756 to 1768, the county's taxable population rose from 3,121 to 4,755--an increase of a little more than one-half.

A period of stagnation had begun. The number of white tithes reached only 5,172 in 1776, a rise of less than one-tenth since 1768. Taxable figures have not survived for the turbulent war years from 1777 to 1781. In 1782,

TABLE 3
 NUMBERS OF AMELIA COUNTY TITHABLES, 1735-1794

Period of Early Settlement		Middle Years		Early National Period	
1735	588	1756	3121	1782	5823
1736	671	1757	3340	1783	6008
1737	759	1758	3317	1784	5083
1738	870	1759	3539	1785	5325
1739	943	1760	3651	1786	5509
1740	1094	1761	3835	1787	6317
1741	1185	1762	3934	1788	6684
1742	1394	1763	4067	1789	6768
1743	1558	1764	4224	1790	6823
1744	1776	XXXX		1791	6867
1745	1886	1766	4360	1792	6958
1746	2056	1767	4472	1793	7199
1747	2250	1768	4755	1794	7316
1748	2402	1769	4903		
1749	2539	1770	5020		
XXXX		1771	5308		
1755	3735	1772	5135		
		1773	5023		
		1774	5172		
		XXXX			
		1776	5172		

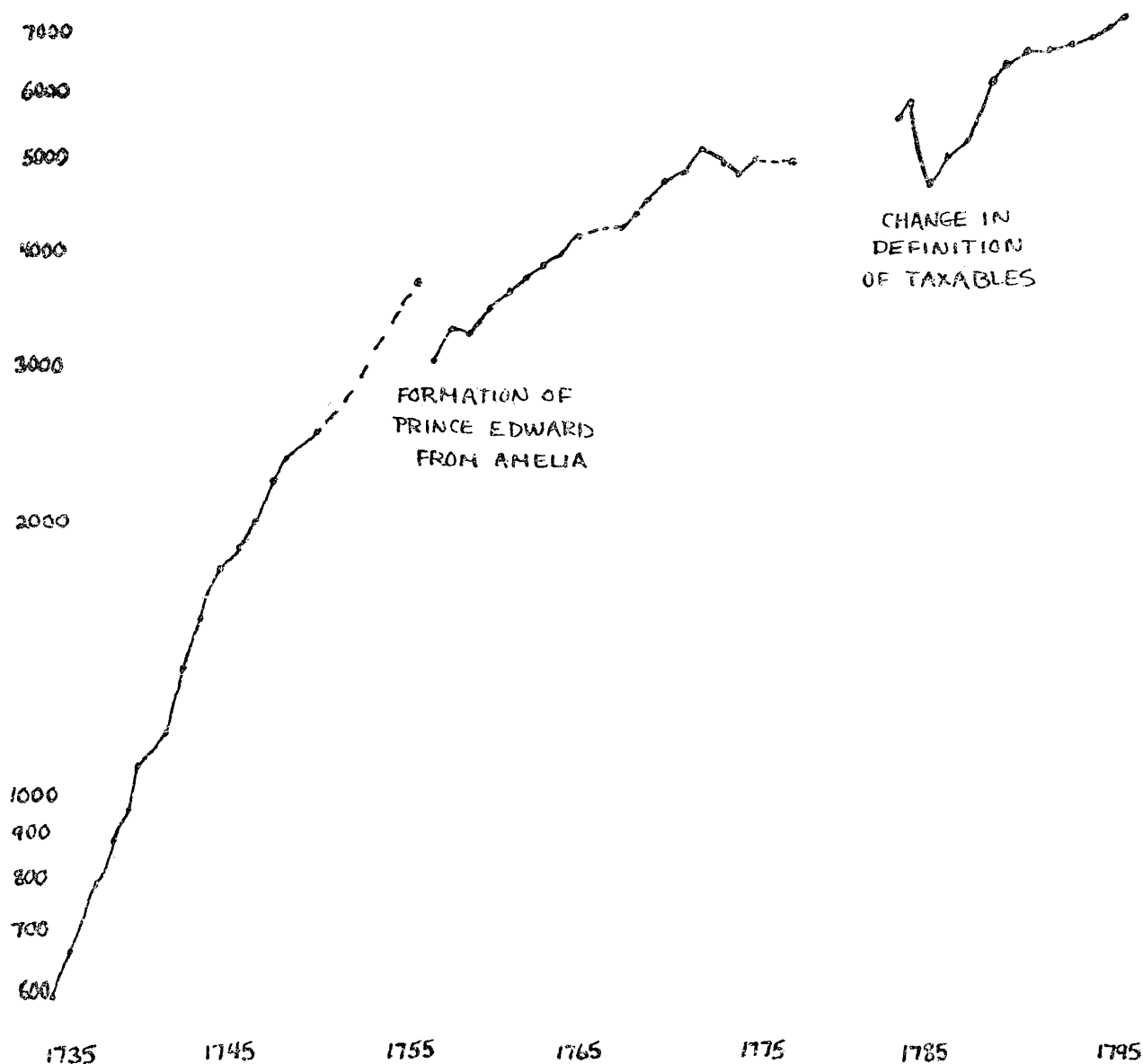
Sources: Amelia County Personal Property Tax Books, VSL; Michael Lee Nicholls, *Origins of the Virginia Southside: A Social and Economic Study* (Ph.D. Dissertation: The College of William and Mary, 1972); and unpublished research by Allan Kulikoff, *Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1977.*

however, we can once again compute the number of tithables, this time by means of the personal property tax books. In that year, the number of tithables was approximately 5,800, an increase in six years of 105 per year. After 1782, the tithable figures began to jump erratically, plummeting to 5,083 in 1784 and not again exceeding the 1782 figure until 1787, when the number of tithables reached 6,395. Here again is evidence of renewed growth in 1787 and 1788 which occurred in all of the six Southside counties studied (see Table 3 and Figure 2).

During the first thirty years of Amelia's existence, population grew rapidly through in-migration. By the 1770s, new counties had formed farther west in Virginia. The loss of tithable persons in the 1770s seems to indicate two things: 1.) Amelia residents were beginning to move out in noticeable numbers; and 2.) not enough newcomers arrived to offset out-migration and deaths within the county. A few new people may have come to Amelia during the Revolutionary period, but not enough to make a significant difference. Finally, the shifts in population in the decade following the peace treaty with Britain may have had a purely administrative explanation: a change in taxing definition may have excluded a number of tithables from the lists between 1782 and 1786. While no such change appears on the tax books, there may have been a silent change in practice, evidenced by the sharp decrease between 1782 and

FIGURE 2

AMELIA COUNTY TITHES, 1735-1794



Sources: Amelia County Personal Property Tax Books, VSL; Michael Lee Nicholls, *Origins of the Virginia Southside: A Social and Economic Study* (Ph.D. Dissertation: The College of William and Mary, 1972); and unpublished research by Allan Kulikoff, *The Institute of Early American History and Culture*, 1977.

1784 of 280 to 15 in the number of non-slaveowners.

In this respect, Amelia may have been typical of other Southside counties. A recent study of Prince Edward County during the same time span reached similar conclusions about population figures. In that county, which bordered Amelia and was formed from it in the mid-1750s, the tithable population increased steadily during the early years of settlement from 1757 to 1773. The population dipped slightly in the 1760s and during the early 1770s but recovered during the Revolution. Then, in the 1780s, it exhibited the same erratic behavior as Amelia and lost and regained tithables until 1787. The population of Prince Edward did not begin to stabilize again until 1790; even then, the rate of increase was much slower than in the earliest years of settlement.¹³ It may be, then, that a change in taxing practice occurred throughout Southside Virginia in the mid-1780s and caused an apparent interruption in an otherwise steady pattern of growth.

Trends in landownership. == The effect of a growing population and accelerated migration on Amelia's social structure is seen through an examination of landownership in the county over a twenty-year period. Although

¹³Ayres, Migration and Social Structure, 5-7.

complete records on landholdings exist only for the years 1782, 1787 and 1789, an incomplete list for 1788 and a partial tithable list for 1768 help to show the trend over a span of two decades.¹⁴

In 1768, over half of the landowners held between 100 and 500 acres of land (small- to medium-sized farms). The largest number of landowners had farms in the 200 to 299 acre category. Those owning fewer than 100 acres constituted only 4.5 percent of all landowners, and most of these had between 50 and 100 acres to cultivate. Altogether, farmers with fewer than 500 acres were in a majority, comprising about 75 percent of all landowners (see Table 4).

Owners of 500 to 1,000 acres made up 18 percent of the landowners, and 8 percent owned more than 1,000 acres. Yet the number of acres they controlled was more than that of the small and middling farmers. The largest landholding belonged to Thomas Tabb, who owned 11,028 acres. Others owning over 1,000 acres may have been speculators rather than large cultivators. Those men with farms of more than 500 acres controlled about 61 percent of all the land in Amelia. Those with more than

¹⁴As noted above (see note 4), the tithable records for 1768 are missing about 700 tithables (and an unknown number of landowners). The complete land tax books for 1794 are not extant. There probably never were any land tax books for 1783-1786; they simply noted alterations in the 1782 book until 1787. Information provided by Boyd Coyner, The College of William and Mary, 1979.

TABLE 4
 LAND DISTRIBUTION IN AMELIA COUNTY, 1768-1788

Acres	Number and Percentage of Landowners					
	1768 ^a		1782		1788	
Fewer than 100	31	4.5%	104	10.1%	118	12.3%
100-299	342	50.2	523	50.9	431	45
300-499	133	19.6	185	18	174	18.2
500-999	121	17.8	156	15.1	168	17.8
1000-2999	49	7.2	57	5.5	59	6.1
3000-4999	4	.6	2	.2	4	.4
5000+	1	.1	2	.2	2	.2

^aBased on approximately four-fifths of the county taxpayers.

Sources: Tithable lists and land tax books, Amelia County, 1768-1788, VSL.

1,000 acres owned a third of the county's land, while small to middling farmers had only a slightly larger share, just under 40 percent. In 1768, moreover, landless taxpayers in Amelia comprised a full fifth of the county's taxpaying population. This fact reveals that land was not as evenly distributed as might be expected in the first stages of settlement (see Table 5).

By the 1780s the size of farms had declined. In 1782, the percentage of landowners owning farms between one hundred and three hundred acres in size had increased from about one-fourth to over one-half of all landowners. The largest percentage owned one hundred to two hundred acres, while a fourth of all landowners occupied two hundred to three hundred acres of land. This fact demonstrates the lower middle-class orientation of the county. The percentage of farmers with fewer than one hundred acres, however, had also grown considerably since 1768.

Most large speculators apparently sold their holdings between 1768 and 1782 to middling farmers. While nearly eight out of ten landowners possessed fewer than 500 acres in 1782, the percentage of landowners who held between 500 and 1,000 acres declined (see Table 4). A Tabb was still the greatest landholder; Thomas' son, John, held 13,151 acres. John Tabb probably divided his land into different tracts throughout the county, but probably none of these would have been smaller than

TABLE 5
 LAND DISTRIBUTION IN AMELIA COUNTY, 1768 AND 1788

Acres	Number and Percentage of Householders			
	1768 ^a		1788	
No land listed	188	21.6 %	308	24.4 %
Fewer than 100	31	3.6	118	9.3
100-299	342	39.4	431	34.1
300-499	133	15.3	174	13.8
500-999	121	13.9	168	13.3
1000+	54	6.2	65	5.1

^aBased on approximately four-fifths of the county taxpayers.

Sources: Tithable lists and land tax books, Amelia County, 1768 and 1788, VSL.

1,000 acres in size.¹⁵ At first glance, then, it appears that most of the land in Amelia was under the control of the lower middle class which was a majority in the county. But, in fact, the total number of acres held by planters owning 500 acres or more was greater than that held by all the small and middling farmers. John Tabb alone controlled more land than the 10 percent of the landowners who owned fewer than 100 acres each.

By the end of the 1780s, there were only minor alterations in the landholding pattern in Amelia. Table 5 shows landholding data for all householders in Amelia in the years 1768 and 1788. While all the changes were not that drastic, they do suggest declining opportunity in Amelia. The numbers of landless men and small landowners increased continuously between 1768 and 1788. The landless may have been either newcomers to the county or sons who came of legal age after 1768. As the population of the county aged, more and more mature men left their holdings to their sons. This practice of partible inheritance would inevitably lead to smaller holdings if most of the sons stayed in the county and could not find open lands near their parents' acres. A medium-sized 250-acre plot, for example, might be portioned out

¹⁵Jackson Turner Main, "The One Hundred," William and Mary Quarterly, XI (1954), 355n. Main refers his readers to Louis Morton's Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, which states that Carter's land was divided into tracts of about 1,000 acres each. This practice cannot be assumed to be the norm, and Main points out the need to examine other planters' records, of which, unfortunately, few exist.

among a man's three sons, thus becoming three 83-acre plots. Partible inheritance, then, might explain the increase in the proportion of small holders.

The numbers of large landowners increased somewhat during the 1780s. They bought small- or medium-sized tracts that had belonged to men who lost their land during the depression of the mid-1780s, died intestate, or decided to try their luck in another county or state. John Tabb, for example, increased his 1782 holdings of 13,151 acres to 14,306 acres in 1787-1788. Since by the 1780s most of Southside Virginia's land was in private hands, plots had to be purchased from their owners or else inherited. Whatever the explanation for these reapportionments of land, the changes were at the expense of the small- and medium-sized farms and to the benefit of the larger farms, especially those in the 500- to 1,000-acre category.

Dependency and tenancy. == As opportunities diminished, one might expect a rise in the number of youths in the county who had no households; but apparently, young men left the county rather than remain as dependents on their parents' or neighbors' farms. The level of dependency of young men declined over time in Amelia County. In 1768, sons living at home, laborers or overseers constituted one-third of all white tithes. By 1782, they constituted only 16 percent of the white taxable population; but a change in taxing practice in

1781 stipulated that only males over twenty-one years of age should be counted as tithable, instead of males over sixteen as before.¹⁶ By 1788, the tax laws had changed once more to define tithables as males over sixteen. Non-householders who were dependent now comprised one-fifth of the taxable population, and that proportion remained stable through 1794.

Non-householders who did not pay their own taxes fell into two categories: those bearing the same family names as those who paid their poll taxes, and those with different names. We will assume that the former were in some way related to the persons who paid their taxes--indeed, many of their names are followed by "Jr."--and that the latter were not. In 1768, relatives and non-relatives each made up 50 percent of the dependent white tithes. In 1782, relatives constituted only about one-third of all taxpayers; the decline is explained partly by the elimination of the sixteen- to twenty-year olds. Those unrelated in name to the persons who paid their taxes comprised a fourth of the total non-taxpaying white tithables. These non-taxpayers were probably laborers or overseers; in some instances, they may have been sons-in-law, stepsons or relatives with different surnames. The number of actual relatives, then, is probably underestimated. The

¹⁶Hening, X, 501.

TABLE 6
DEPENDENCY, AMELIA COUNTY, 1768-1794

	1768	1782 ^a	1788	1794
Number of tithables	1383	1215	1598	1692
Number of householders	869	1016	1264	1327
Number of dependent white males who did not pay own tax	514	199	334	365
White tithes related in name to those who paid tax	255	72	Unable to compute ^b	Unable to compute ^b
White tithes not related in name to those who paid tax	259	52	Unable to compute ^b	Unable to compute ^b
Dependents who paid own tax	Not listed	75	Not listed	Not listed

^aIncludes only white males 21 years of age and older. The figures for 1768, 1788 and 1794 are for white males 16 and older.

^bDependent white tithes for these years were not listed by name.

Sources: Tithable lists and personal property tax books, Amelia County, 1768-1794, VSL.

remaining dependents paid their own taxes. The figures for 1788 and 1794 are not as revealing as those of 1782; dependents for these years were not listed by name, only in numbers, and those paying their own taxes were unlisted. If earlier trends in dependency are reflected in 1788 and 1794, relatives and non-relatives each probably came to comprise over 10 percent of the entire white tithable population¹⁷ (see Table 6).

Most whites paid taxes on one or more youths, usually their sons, who could not yet afford farms of their own, though they might acquire them later in life. These dependents were not necessarily poor, only young. On the other hand, the wealthiest planters paid taxes for numerous whites who probably acted as overseers. John Tabb paid the poll taxes of eight white tithables in 1788 and 1794, none of whom was a Tabb. These men undoubtedly supervised the two hundred adult black slaves who worked Tabb's various plantations.

Apparently, white families did not practice any form of birth control, believing perhaps that their children would eventually find land and slaves of their own. Families were consistently medium-sized or large by the standards of the time. This trend can be seen in the censuses of 1782 and 1785, taken for

¹⁷The lists for 1788 and 1794 give only the names of the dependent white males in Raleigh Parish, which became Amelia County in 1789. For Nottoway Parish (Nottoway County in 1789), the number of taxpayers is recorded, but not their names.

every county by order of the Virginia state legislature. In 1782, the census recorded only the number of white and black "souls"; in 1785, it listed white "souls," "dwellings," and "outbuildings" but omitted black "souls."¹⁸ During both of these years, families of four to nine "souls" predominated among whites, constituting roughly 64 percent of all white families in the county. In 1782, families of seven were more numerous than those of any other size, while in 1785, families of five were most abundant. In the latter year, households of fewer than five persons decreased while those of more than ten increased (see Tables 7 and 8).

The census of 1785 shows that 11 percent of the families in Amelia County did not own even one dwelling and were probably renters, overseers or tenants. Since "dwellings" are clearly distinguished from "outbuildings" in the census, there is a question why some families owned more than one house. In the case of Pauling Anderson, who owned five houses and between two and three thousand acres of land, the dwellings may have been on several different tracts of land. It is also unclear whether slave quarters were considered "dwellings" in this census. In other instances, the additional houses

¹⁸For the text of the act, see Hening, XI, 40. Data in this discussion are drawn from Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: Records of the State Enumerations, 1782 to 1785 (Washington, 1908), 10-13, 81-83. The 1785 enumeration for Amelia is only a partial list.

TABLE 7
 DISTRIBUTION OF WHITE FAMILY SIZE, AMELIA COUNTY, 1782

Number of whites ^a	Number of families	% total number of families
1	24	2.4 %
2	85	8.4
3	83	8.2
4	112	11.0
5	114	11.2
6	114	11.2
7	115	11.3
8	106	10.4
9	96	9.4
10	64	6.3
11	42	4.1
12	26	2.6
13	19	1.9
14	10	1.0
15	3	.3
16	3	.3

N = 1016
 Average size = 6.4

^aIncludes head of household.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: Records of the State Enumerations, 1782 to 1785 (Washington, 1908), 11-13, 81-83.

TABLE 8
DISTRIBUTION OF WHITE FAMILY SIZE, AMELIA COUNTY, 1785^a

Number of whites ^b	Number of families	% total number of families
1	25	3.3 %
2	55	7.3
3	51	6.7
4	76	10.1
5	88	11.7
6	79	10.5
7	78	10.3
8	79	10.5
9	75	10.0
10	53	7.0
11	40	5.3
12	30	4.0
13	11	1.5
14	9	1.2
15	2	.3
16	1	.1
17	1	.1
18	1	.1
N = 754		
Average size = 6.7		

^aThe list for 1785 is incomplete.

^bIncludes head of household.

Source: Ibid.

may have been for adult sons or tenants, who technically lived in the same household if not under the same roof. This latter possibility would be consistent with the idea that some white males found it difficult to secure farms of their own and lived at home longer to help farm relatives' lands (see Table 9).

TABLE 9
DISTRIBUTION OF DWELLINGS, AMELIA COUNTY, 1785^a

Number of dwellings	Number of households	% total number of households
0	86	11.4 %
1	358	47.6
2	172	22.8
3	78	10.3
4	28	3.7
5+	32	4.2
N = 754		

^aThe 1785 list is incomplete, since it records only 754 households.

Source: Ibid.

Although almost half of Amelia's families occupied only one house, 70 percent of the one-dwelling households had two or more outbuildings on their land. Presumably, some of these outbuildings were slave quarters, but we cannot tell from the 1785 census the number of blacks belonging to each household. Other outbuildings may have been barns, stables or stores.¹⁹ A full 82 percent of all households owned at least one outbuilding, which indicates the ownership of some personal property, either slaves, horses or cattle (see Table 10).

Patterns of land, house and outbuilding ownership substantiate the idea that Amelia, like several other counties in the Southside region of Virginia, was an area of small- to medium-sized farms, where most people owned a house and a few outbuildings. Aubrey Land has described these early southern planters as "small fry" whose "lives were drab."

Their houses more nearly resembled shacks than the mansions of tradition, and almost a third of them disappeared. . . . The produce of their small plantations included meat, grain and vegetables for subsistence and tobacco, rice and other staples that could be sold for cash. Even their plantations hardly extended beyond the dimensions of a small farm. . . .²⁰

¹⁹Ransom B. True, "The Censuses of 1782 and 1785: Defective Yet Useful and Fascinating," Louisa County Historical Magazine, 5 (1973), 15.

²⁰Aubrey Land, ed., Bases of the Plantation Society (Columbia, S.C., 1969), 2-3.

TABLE 10
DISTRIBUTION OF OUTBUILDINGS, AMELIA COUNTY, 1785^a

Number of outbuildings	Number of households	% total number of households
0	138	18.3 %
1	88	11.7
2	89	11.8
3	103	13.7
4	75	10.0
5-10	210	27.9
10+	51	6.6
N = 754		

^aThe 1785 list is incomplete, since it records only 754 households.

Source: Ibid.

Property- holding, as we have seen, was fairly widespread in Amelia with each white tithe averaging 8.8 slaves, 4.4 horses and 14 head of cattle. A closer examination of the sources confirms the prevalence of personal property ownership among Amelia householders but establishes that the trend throughout the 1780s and early 1790s was toward holdings of small numbers of slaves and horses, with relatively larger numbers of cattle.

Distribution of personal property. == At the time of Amelia's formation as a county in 1735, 61 percent of the householders had no other sources of labor--white or black--besides themselves.²¹ By 1768, however, over two-thirds of the householders in Amelia owned slaves. Some of the men without taxable slaves may have owned a few blacks under sixteen years of age, but the tithable lists do not permit knowledge of this. A majority of householders in 1768, then, had at least one black tithe. Over half of the householders owned between one and five slaves. Seventeen percent owned between six and fifteen adult slaves; and only fourteen planters in the entire county claimed more than sixteen black tithes.

By 1788,²² the number of slaveless men had risen to 36 percent of the householding population. But at the same time, the tithable population had increased, and those entering the ranks of white householders in Amelia seem to have been largely non-slaveholders. They were perhaps in-coming settlers or else propertyless

²¹Nicholls, 129.

²²The 1782 list underrepresents both tenants and non-slaveholders. The possible change in taxing practice for several years after the Revolution (ca. 1782-1786) would explain this phenomenon. The 1768 list of slaves is more directly comparable to the 1788 and 1794 lists; therefore, 1782 has been eliminated from the discussion of slave-owning in Amelia.

adult sons (see Table 11).

TABLE 11
DISTRIBUTION OF BLACK TITHES AMONG HOUSEHOLDERS
AMELIA COUNTY, 1768-1794

Number of slaves	Number and percentage total number of householders					
	1768		1788		1794	
0	265	30.4%	457	36.2%	476	35.9%
1-5	443	51	540	42.7	570	43
6-15	147	17	224	17.7	221	16.6
16+	14	1.6	43	3.4	60	4.5

Sources: Tithable lists and personal property tax books, Amelia County, 1768-1794; VSL.

The figures for 1794 are almost identical to those of 1788. In the 1790s, as in the preceding decade, the new Amelia tithables were probably largely without slaves. The increase after 1768 in the number of holdings of sixteen or more slaves indicates a rise in the number of large slaveholders, but no real increase or decrease in the proportion of households owning slaves. The rise in the number of these holdings may signify the death of some large slaveholders and the dispersal of their slaves

to sons and relatives who had previously owned fewer than sixteen adult blacks.

Ownership of horses and cattle did not follow the slaveholding pattern in the 1780s and 1790s but remained fairly steady throughout these decades. Jackson Turner Main noted that horses, not slaves, were the most common type of personal property in Virginia at this time, and the fact that throughout the 1780s and 1790s over 80 percent of all householders in Amelia owned at least one horse bears this out. This high rate of horse ownership was characteristic not only of Virginia, but of most frontier regions in the South.²³

In 1782, an overwhelming majority of householders had fewer than five horses. This fact again suggests a county of small- to medium-sized farms and moderate wealth. The next largest percentage of householders owned between six and fifteen horses. Only a minute percentage had more than fifteen. Most horses in the county were under the control of the small and middling farmers (see Table 12).

Although the number of cattle-owners dropped to 76 percent of all householders in 1787 (the last year in which cattle were deemed taxable wealth), the figures show a consistently high rate of cattle ownership. The decline in percentage in 1787 does not

²³Main, "The Distribution of Property in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," 249.

TABLE 12
DISTRIBUTION OF HORSES AMONG HOUSEHOLDERS
AMELIA COUNTY, 1782-1794.

Number of horses	Number and percentage total number of householders					
	1782		1788		1794	
0	26	2.6%	125	9.8%	182	13.7%
1-5	702	69	920	72.8	912	68.7
6-15	265	26.1	201	16	217	16.4
16+	23	2.3	18	1.4	16	1.2

Source: Amelia County Personal Property Tax Books, 1782-1794, VSL.

necessarily denote a deterioration of the relatively equal distribution of wealth among householders in 1782. Instead, it may point to in-migration of propertyless taxpayers or the coming of age of young, unestablished men.

Those householders who owned cattle in Amelia tended to have larger numbers of these animals than householders had horses or slaves. In 1782, over a fifth of all householders had between five and nine

head of cattle and another fifth between ten and fifteen head. As many householders owned more than twenty head as held fewer than five head. The figures for 1787 vary only slightly but show that, while medium-sized herds of cattle still predominated, the total number of cattle (as in the case of horses) was more evenly spread among householders in 1787 than earlier in the decade (see Table 13). The figures suggest some degree of specialization in cattle-owning in Amelia.

TABLE 13
DISTRIBUTION OF CATTLE AMONG HOUSEHOLDERS
AMELIA COUNTY, 1782-1787

Number of head	Number and percentage total number of householders					
	1782		1785		1787	
0	199 ^a		174	17.6%	311	23.7%
1-4	107	10.5	104	10.5	177	13.5
5-9	247	24.3	206	21	246	18.8
10-14	204	20.2	155	15.7	185	14.1
15-19	132	13	117	11.9	124	9.5
20+	326	32	230	23.3	268	20.4

^aSee Note 44 below for explanation.

Source: Amelia County Personal Property Tax Books, 1782-1787, VSL.

A picture emerges. == What, then, had happened to the social structure of Amelia County from its inception in 1735 to the early national years of the 1790s? The earliest settlers had lived in a stratified society. A year after its formation in 1735, Amelia County had a tithable population that consisted mainly of white servants, hired laborers and slaves. The wealthiest tenth of the population controlled most of the land and personal property in the county.²⁴ Most taxpayers were men of very small means. Yet, in these early years, slaveless whites could attempt to eke out a modest living, by farming their plots by themselves. Some who were unsuccessful may have moved on to try their luck in other newly-formed counties, such as Lunenburg and Prince Edward. Still, Amelia, during the first twenty years of its existence, experienced a rapid rise in population, suggesting that heavy in-migration offset losses by death and out-migration.

By the 1760s, only men with slaves or land were able to succeed in the county. Those who had neither apparently left. The social structure of Amelia remained tightly stratified through the following three decades. Newcomers and sons who came of age

²⁴The wealthiest 65 planters in 1788 owned about 28% of the land in Amelia. The same was true of other Southside counties, such as Prince Edward, where in 1787, the wealthiest sixty-three men owned 35% of the land. See Ayres, Migration and Social Structure, Chart V, and 15-16; and Nicholls, 124-136.

after 1768 faced the problem of diminishing opportunity in the county. Taxpaying white adults held on to the property they had and perhaps added to it, by occasionally buying or acquiring through inheritance a few more acres or slaves. Personal property, therefore, increased disproportionately with the tithable population. There was very little available for those seeking even a modest start in Amelia. Since the number of slaves, horses and cattle increased, the distribution of wealth among householders must have become more concentrated.

During the 1780s and early 1790s, Amelia, like most Southside counties, consisted primarily of small and middling farmers and landless and propertyless men. Therefore, the fact that, in the late 1780s, there were higher proportions of land and personal property per taxpayer in Amelia than in most other counties in Virginia is deceptive.²⁵ The aggregate figures of Table 2 (see pages 13 and 14) suggest a solidly middle-class orientation for Amelia County, with the average farmer owning an unusually large amount of personal property. Closer examination of the figures reveals small holdings and large numbers of people without property.

There were, of course, large estates in Amelia and several extremely wealthy men who occupied the highest

²⁵This fact is stated in Main, "The Distribution of Property in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," 252-253.

rungs of the social and economic ladder. Of the one hundred wealthiest planters in Virginia in 1787-1788 listed by Jackson Turner Main, seven owned land in Amelia, and three of those made their homes in Amelia.²⁶ All seven owned farms in at least one other county-- on the average, in four. Those seven men owned 29,133 acres or about 7 percent of all the land in Amelia. Together they held 565 slaves, 188 horses, and 849 head of cattle. John Tabb was by far the wealthiest man in Amelia, with 14,306 acres of land, 326 slaves, 130 horses, and 492 head of cattle. He held land in six other counties, all in the Southside or central Piedmont, and his total acreage was 22,421 acres. Tabb owned a larger number of cattle in a single county than any other member of Main's "one hundred"; and he had one of the two largest herds of horses in the state. The other belonged to George Washington.²⁷

Tabb obviously was exceptional. The above figures show that he alone owned most of the land, slaves, horses and cattle listed as belonging to the seven richest planters in Amelia. Besides his wealth, Tabb also enjoyed political strength and sat for Amelia in many sessions of the General Assembly. Most other political

²⁶The seven were: Theodorick Bland, John Cocke, Francis Eppes, Nathaniel Harrison, Peter Jones, William Lee and John Tabb. Amelia was the home of Eppes, Jones and Tabb.

²⁷Main, "The One Hundred," 361-382.

leaders emerged from the category of planters directly beneath Tabb--those who owned between five hundred and one thousand acres of land.²⁸

For those who had acquired their holdings early on, actual distributions of property and land remained fairly constant in Amelia after 1768; but opportunity diminished for maturing sons and newcomers to the county. Young men may have stayed at home longer or worked as laborers for more established Amelia residents. Those who tired of waiting for a chance to succeed may have found it expedient to leave the region altogether. As for the newcomers, the same was probably true. Coming from the east and north into Amelia, they found by the late 1760s that the county no longer had much to offer unestablished farmers. The county had entered a period of stagnation. When they found their options severely limited, many newcomers did exactly as they had done before--packed their meager possessions and moved on.

²⁸William G. Stanard and Mary N. Stanard (comps.), The Colonial Virginia Register (Baltimore, 1965), 173-209; Early G. Swem and John W. Williams (comps.), A Register of the General Assembly of Virginia, 1776-1918 (Richmond, 1918), 1-39.

CHAPTER III
DESTINATIONS OF SOUTHSIDE MIGRANTS

"An unsettled disposition." == According to one writer in 1787, Americans naturally possessed "an unsettled disposition" because they were all either immigrants or descended from immigrants.²⁹ Geographic mobility has been characteristic of American life and may have been especially so in the decades preceding and following the American Revolution. As we have already seen, certain counties in the Southside region of Virginia experienced great fluctuation of population after the Revolution, fluctuation that did not begin to subside until the 1790s. This instability of population, caused by in- and out-migration, may have been the result of an "unsettled" or wandering disposition, but it also had concrete economic causes. Families migrated when they could obtain neither land nor personal property. Others left the Southside counties to find "fresh lands" in other places, lands whose soil had not yet lost its fertility through continued

²⁹The Pittsburgh Gazette, March 17, 1787. Quoted in Jackson Turner Main, The Social Structure of Revolutionary America (Princeton, N.J., 1965), 164.

planting of tobacco.³⁰

Where, in general, did people migrating from Amelia go? In most modern societies, few migrants travel long distances. Instead, they tend to stop at the first place where an opportunity for employment occurs. If the "intervening opportunity," as one scholar terms it, disappears, the migrants travel to the next nearest place where a job is offered.³¹

The direction of migration from Amelia was probably largely to the south (although perhaps to other Virginia counties first) and to the west. Fragmentary data concerning the destinations of Amelia emigrants exist in a list of delinquent Amelia taxpayers for the year 1788. This list records the names, property and destinations of all "Insolvents" in that year. The data show that a majority of the fifty-three delinquent taxpayers "removed" to western or southern counties of Virginia, especially to Prince Edward County, directly southwest of Amelia. The remaining delinquents left Virginia altogether, most

³⁰ Avery O. Craven, Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia and Maryland, 1606-1860 (Urbana, Ill., 1926), 72-73.

³¹ E.G. Ravenstein, "The Laws of Migration," Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, XLVIII (1885), 167-227; Ravenstein, "The Laws of Migration: Second Paper," ibid., LII (1889), 241-305; Samuel A. Stoffer, "Intervening Opportunities: A Theory Relating Mobility and Distance," American Sociological Review, V (1940), 845-867.

migrating to either North Carolina or Georgia. If the classic theories of migration hold true, it is likely that the western Virginia counties merely provided a stopping-off place on the way to the new territories of Kentucky and Tennessee, while the southern counties were a stop on the road to the deeper south of the Carolinas and Georgia. These data would support the short-distance theories of migration. However, so small a sample, and for only one year, can hardly tell the full story of migration from Amelia³² (see Table 14).

As for the sources of migration into Amelia in the 1780s and 1790s, it is probable that the new taxpayers came from the same counties they had in the first years of the county's settlement--Henrico, Goochland and Hanover, located northeast of Amelia. Migration from Tidewater Virginia was less frequent. A recent study of geographic mobility in Elizabeth City County during the early national period showed that most migrants from that Tidewater county went, not to the south or the Piedmont, but to cities on the peninsula, especially Norfolk and Portsmouth.³³

³²"Some Delinquent Taxpayers, 1787-1790: Amelia County," Virginia Genealogist, 19 (July-Sept., 1975), 193-194.

³³Sarah Shaver Hughes, Elizabeth City County, Virginia, 1782-1810: The Economic and Social Structure of a Tidewater County in the Early National Years (Ph.D. Dissertation: The College of William and Mary, 1975), 106-111.

TABLE 14
 DESTINATIONS OF DELINQUENT TAXPAYERS
 AMELIA COUNTY, 1788

Destination ^a	Number of people	% total number of emigrants
Prince Edward County	9	16.9 %
North Carolina	7	13.2
Georgia	6	11.3
Chesterfield County	4	7.6
Powhatan County	4	7.6
Campbell County	3	5.6
Kentucky	3	5.6
Mecklenburg County	3	5.6
Dinwiddie County	2	3.8
Lunenburg County	2	3.8
South Carolina	2	3.8
Bedford County	1	1.9
Brunswick County	1	1.9
Charlotte County	1	1.9
Cumberland County	1	1.9
Halifax County	1	1.9
Lancaster County	1	1.9
Pittsylvania County	1	1.9
Sussex County	1	1.9
N	53	100.0

^aAll the counties are within Virginia.

Source: "Some Delinquent Taxpayers, 1787-1790: Amelia County," Virginia Genealogist, 19 (July-Sept., 1975), 193-194.

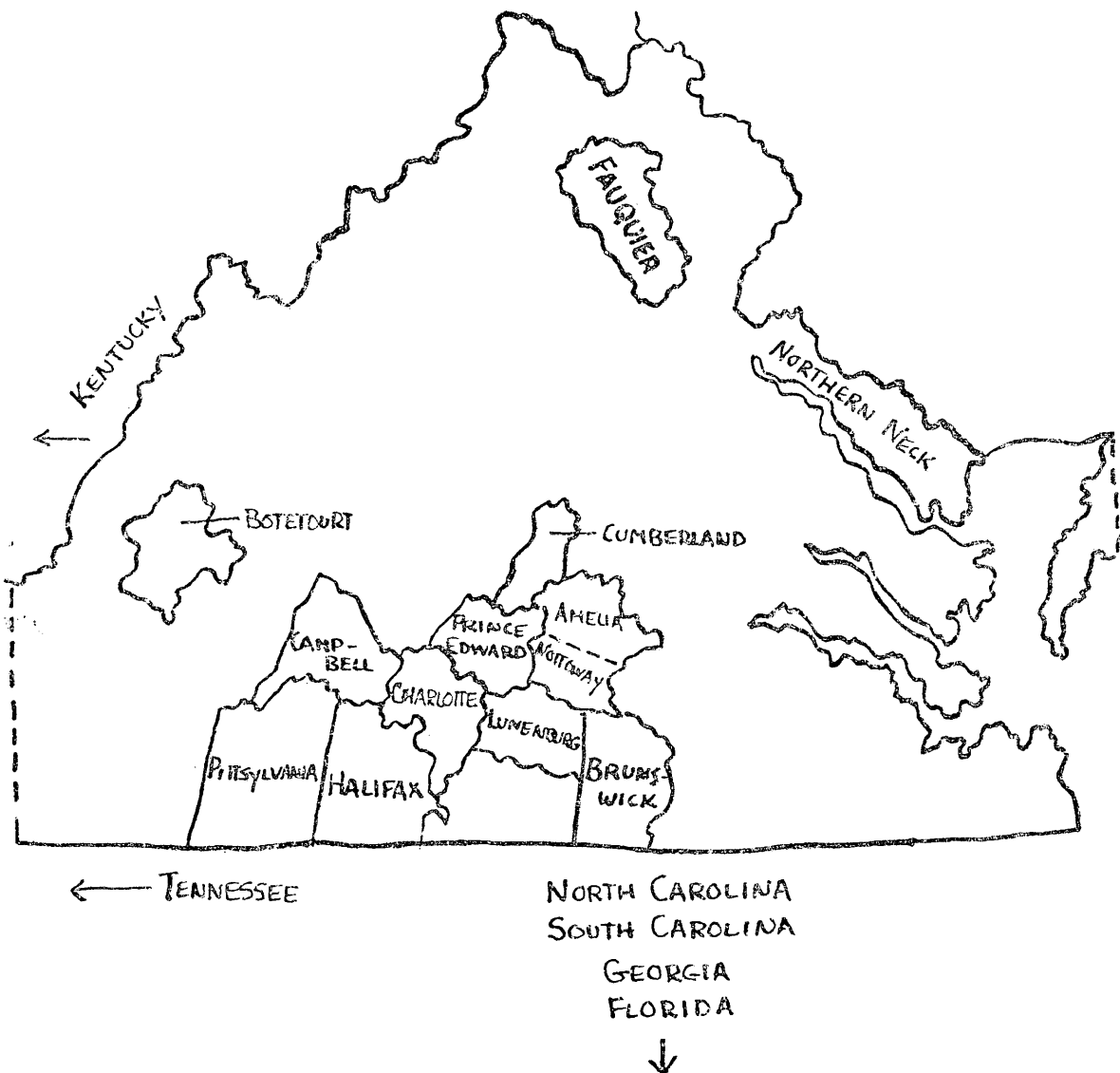
"Removal" to distant lands. == Another helpful source of information about migration to and from the Southside region is a listing of British mercantile claims for 1775 to 1803. These were grievances of loyalist merchants against debtors throughout Virginia.

Debtors' accounts from stores in Lunenburg and Nottoway Counties appear among the British mercantile claims and document the destinations of many Southside migrants. Apparently, no list remains for stores in Amelia County. Though the claims from Lunenburg and Nottoway do not show migration from Amelia, it is possible that Amelia migrants followed mobility patterns similar to those of their Southside neighbors.

Of the 177 people listed as debtors to either Buchanan, Hastie and Co. or A. Spiers, J. Bowman and Co., the largest percentage "removed" to South Carolina; 11 percent went even farther south to Georgia; and 14 percent were listed as simply moving "southward" or "to the southern states." A significant number also went west, either to Kentucky, or to Halifax County within the state of Virginia. In all, approximately one-fifth of the migrants listed "removed" to other places in Virginia, mostly to counties in the western part of the state (see Figure 3). Over half left the state to go southward, while 13 percent traveled to some part of the "western country." People who simply went "from Virginia" to unknown places comprised 5 percent of the sample. Only four people

FIGURE 3

DESTINATIONS OF 177 SOUTHSIDE EMIGRANTS, 1775-1803



Source: Adapted from the Virginia State Library, A Hornbook of Virginia History (Richmond, 1965), 28-29.

went north. A widow went to "Little York Town," presumably distinguished from "big" Yorktown on the peninsula. One man migrated to the "Spanish Government" (Florida) and another went to the "Creek Nation," but these cases were extremely unusual³⁴ (see Table 15).

Almost half of these men and women moved during the 1780s, and the next largest number left during the 1790s. In the 1780s, South Carolina was the most popular destination; in the following decade, Kentucky was most popular. Probably no more than a dozen people left during the Revolutionary War. The other times of departure ("lately," "several years past") are too vague to tell exactly the year, though we can make approximations (see Table 16).

Some of the migrants "removed" more than once before they reached their final destinations. The most mobile of these Southside debtors was Agnes May, who owed Buchanan, Hastie and Co. £.15.9.10 3/4. This woman "removed from Lunenburg about 1782 to Halifax County and from there in 1789 to Botetourt County and about 1794 to Kentucky."³⁵ Some of the Lunenburg and Nottoway debtors may have migrated first to these Southside

³⁴British Mercantile Claims, 1775-1803 (T79/79, Public Record Office, Colonial Virginia Record Project Microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia), 2-54, 59-65, 68-71, 79-85.

³⁵Ibid., 35. Multiple moves are usually not listed in the records.

TABLE 15
 DESTINATIONS OF 177 EMIGRANTS
 FROM LUNENBURG AND NOTTOWAY COUNTIES, 1775-1803

Destination	Number of people	% total number of emigrants
In Virginia	35	19.9%
Halifax County	15	8.4
Pittsylvania County	4	2.2
Campbell County	3	1.7
Charlotte County	3	1.7
Prince Edward County	3	1.7
Botetourt County	1	.6
Brunswick County	1	.6
Cumberland County	1	.6
Fauquier County	1	.6
"Little York Town"	1	.6
Northern Neck	1	.6
Nottoway County	1	.6
South Carolina	42	23.8
"Southward"	24	13.5
Georgia	19	10.7
Kentucky	17	9.6
North Carolina	13	7.3
"From Virginia"	8	4.5
"The Western Country"	4	2.2
"From Lunenburg"	2	1.1
Tennessee	2	1.1

Destination	Number of people	% total number of emigrants
"The Creek Nation"	1	.6 %
"The Spanish Government"	1	.6
Unknown	9	5.1
N	177	100.0

Source: British Mercantile Claims, 1775-1803 (T79/79, Public Records Office, Colonial Virginia Record Project Microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia), 2-54, 59-65, 68-71, 79-85.

TABLE 16
TIMES OF DEPARTURE OF 177 EMIGRANTS
FROM LUNENBURG AND NOTTOWAY COUNTIES, 1775-1803

Time of departure	Number of people	% total number of emigrants
1770s	10	5.6 %
1780s	85	48.0
1790s	49	27.7
1800-1803	5	2.8
"Many years past"	13	7.3
Unknown	15	8.6
N	177	100.0

Source: Ibid.

counties from outside. Many of the surnames are so distinctive that they are undoubtedly those of former Amelia taxpayers. Bartlett Crenshaw, for example, must have moved from Amelia to Lunenburg, from which he went "to Halifax County about fifteen years past"³⁶ (ca. 1775-1778).

Also, an unknown number of people may have left only temporarily. For example, Ambrose Ellis, originally of Amelia, allegedly owed A. Spiers, J. Bowman and Co. £13.11.4 3/4. Ellis denied the debt, claiming to have settled with the factor around 1775:

he [Ellis] being at that time about to sell off and settle in the Spanish Government and actually did set off there and continued a length of time and then returned unexpectedly to the state. Ambrose Ellis states it very improbable that the factor would take a note or bond from a man just about to remove to the Spanish Government with all his property and at that time not to return here again.³⁷

In several instances, people with the same surname "removed" to the same place in the same year or within a few years of each other. Major Thomas Tabb, a relative of John Tabb of Amelia, "removed from Lunenburg in 1780 to Mush Island, North Carolina where he lived many years and died there about twelve years past in affluent circumstances." Edward Tabb, perhaps

³⁶Ibid., 15.

³⁷Ibid., 80-81.

Thomas' son, also went to Mush Island in 1780.³⁸ John Hawkins, Jr., "removed to Kentucky before the peace," along with his father, John Hawkins, Sr.³⁹ Around 1785, Lockley Brown migrated to South Carolina. Valentine Brown and John Brown followed him around 1790. All three were probably relatives because their names appear together in the list of claims.⁴⁰ Perhaps those who traveled with relatives chose to go longer distances to the south and west.

From these mercantile claims, it appears that the heaviest period of migration was from 1780 to 1790 inclusive. Peaks of migration for this sample of debtors were in 1780, 1783, 1788 and 1790. Many of the migrants left during the 1790s, especially around 1793-1794, but relatively few in the second half of the decade.

Reasons for migration. == Many of these people probably left the region to make a fresh start in other places. After many of the names appear the qualifications, "very poor," "no property," "possessed of very inconsiderable property" or "insolvent." Several of the debtors, though, were "in affluent cir-

³⁸Ibid., 6, 33.

³⁹Ibid., 83.

⁴⁰Ibid., 14.

cumstances" like Major Tabb, or were "possessed of sufficient property," "in good circumstances" or simply "able." Thus, while some delinquents may have been unable to meet their debts because of extreme poverty, other more affluent, "able" planters simply decided not to. The case of Nicholas Hobson of Nottoway shows purposeful deceit on the part of one of these "able" debtors. Hobson owed £38.13.9 and removed to Georgia around 1792. An explanatory statement was attached to this claim:

This state lost a very considerable sum of money which he [Hobson] had collected as deputy sheriff in Halifax County in 1785 and 1786; about 1787 he took care to cover all his property and his creditors were by his various tricks defeated ultimately from the recovery of their claims.⁴¹

The mercantile claims for Southside Virginia seem to call the classic theories of short-distance migration into question. Almost one-fourth of these delinquent debtors migrated to South Carolina, whose northern border is approximately 150 to 200 miles from Lunenburg County. In all, 100 debtors out of 177 left Virginia for southern states or territories and 23 for "the western country." Those who left for unknown places may conceivably have gone beyond Virginia's borders.

How can we begin to explain this unusual long-

⁴¹Ibid., 43.

distance migration, which seems to contradict both the classic migration theories and the data taken from the list of delinquent Amelia taxpayers? First, some of those who went to the southern states "many years ago" may have stopped along the way for "intervening opportunities." Possibly, many people migrated only short distances at first, as shown by the Amelia list. By the early nineteenth century, when there was an attempt to collect the British debt, a great number of Southsiders had reached distant places in the west and south. Second, once a single member of a family settled in a distant region and was successful, he might have brought other members of his clan to live near him. The overriding determinant, though, is that, while Southside Virginia had passed through its frontier stage by the 1780s, the states of the deeper south were still relatively new and unsettled. The proportion of landless to landed white men in Virginia was considerably higher in the late 1700s than it was in either North or South Carolina.⁴² And Georgia had not come into existence until the 1730s. Viewed in any one of these three ways, long-distance migration from the Southside is not as unusual as it first appears.

⁴²Main, Social Structure, 60-61.

CHAPTER IV

RATES OF MIGRATION FOR AMELIA COUNTY, 1768-1794

A sample of the population. == How many householders left Amelia in the period from the 1760s to the early 1790s? Were most residents really of "an unsettled disposition"? The calculation of rates of persistence (taking deaths into consideration⁴³) and of migration for Amelia suggests the dimensions of movement into and out of the county. A sample of taxpayers was taken from the Amelia tax books for the years 1768, 1782, 1788 and 1794. Every fourth name on the tax lists for these years was recorded, along with the personal property and land held by each person. These names were then traced to the other tax lists in the sample.⁴⁴

⁴³Based on West Level 6 of the model life tables, where the crude death rate for age 5+ is 17/1000 per year. Ansley J. Coale and Paul Demeny, Regional Model Life Tables and Stable Populations (Princeton, N.J., 1966), 7, 132-133, 180-181.

⁴⁴One major difficulty with this approach is trying to determine if the Thomas Jones or William Harris who appears in the 1768 list is the same person who appears on the later tax lists. In some cases, the man who appears in the later lists may be the son of the man on the 1768 list, but he may also be totally unrelated. The John Scott who, in 1768, claimed eight black tithes, three white laborers and 1,400 acres, for example, may not be the same John Scott who, in 1782 and 1788, had no black or white tithes, no land and only one horse.

These data suggest substantial out-migration in the 1770s, increasing out-migration in the 1780s, but a slackening of movement by the early 1790s (see Table 17). Nearly four in ten of the householders listed in 1768 left by 1782. A more dramatic increase is reflected in the fact that only 57 percent of the householders resident in the county in 1782 remained by 1788, and an additional 16 percent of the men who had lived in the county since 1768 left as well. A greater proportion of men resident in the county in 1788 stayed until 1794; in fact, only about one in three left during these years.

In-migration overlapped with out-migration in the 1780s; that is, there is evidence of considerable circulation migration, of movement in and out over

A second problem is the repetition of certain names in the tax lists. There are so many Peter Joneses, William Johnsons, John Halls and Samuel Morgans, many with similar property holdings, that it is impossible to distinguish among them. Also, in prominent Amelia families such as the Robertsons, names like Christopher and Francis were passed down from generation to generation. These difficulties make exact migration figures impossible to obtain. Yet distinctive names like Bartley Baugh and Hall Hudson appear frequently enough to allow an estimate of migration and persistence to be taken.

Another problem occurs with the 1782 data. The sample taken for that year was originally composed of 173 taxpayers. However, some of these were non-householders. The 1782 census shows 1,016 households and the 1782 tax list records 1,215 tithables. Therefore, there were 199 non-householders among the 1,215 tithables. Since 199 taxpayers did not own cattle (see Table 13), cattle ownership is an unbiased indicator of household status. All those taxpayers in the sample who owned at least one cow, then, were considered householders. They totaled 123 people.

TABLE 17
 OUT-MIGRATION OF HOUSEHOLDERS, AMELIA COUNTY, 1768-1794

	Sample I					
	1768-1782		1768-1788		1768-1794	
Sample size	165		165		165	
Deaths	39		56		73	
Missing at end of period (ex- cluding deaths)	48		52		60	
Crude persistence ^a	78/165	47%	57/165	35%	32/165	19%
Refined persist- ence ^b	78/126	62%	57/109	52%	32/92	35%
	Sample II					
	1782-1788			1782-1794		
Sample size	123			123		
Deaths	13			26		
Missing at end of period (ex- cluding deaths)	47			52		
Crude persistence ^a	63/123	51%		45/123	37%	
Refined persist- ence ^b	63/110	57%		45/97	46%	

Sample III	
1788-1794	
Sample size	171
Deaths	17
Missing at end of period (excluding deaths)	50
Crude persistence ^a	104/171 61%
Refined persistence ^b	104/154 68%

^aDefined as: Number "persisting" from first year to last

Sample size (N)

^bDefined as: Number "persisting" from first year to last

N - Estimated Deaths

Sources: Amelia County tithable and personal property tax lists, 1768-1794, VSL.

short periods of time. Of all the emigrants from the 1782 sample, over one-third had been in-migrants at some point after 1768. The data from the 1788 sample also reveal a high rate of circulation migration, nearly equal to that of the 1782 sample. An extension of the 1788 sample to 1800 might disclose a higher rate of in- and out-migration, more comparable to that of the 1782 sample. These data suggest that the "intervening opportunities" that brought migrants to Amelia had dried up fairly quickly and caused the wanderers to move on.

The 1794 sample can only measure in-migration. Among the householders, less than one-fifth "persisted" from 1768 to 1794. Of the new householders, an estimated 101 were sons who came of age, and the remaining were probably in-migrants. The data presented in Table 18 show a fairly high level of out-migration among those who had joined the ranks of Amelia taxpayers only after 1768.

Two types of migration from Amelia may be assumed: circulation migration and, based on the data from Lunenburg and Nottoway Counties, long-distance migration. Circulation migration, as noted above, involved short distances and short periods of "persistence" in a given area. The fact that so often in-migrants were also out-migrants before 1794 suggests the theory of short-distance migration and the related concept of

TABLE 18
NEW HOUSEHOLDERS, AMELIA COUNTY, 1768-1794

	Sample II 1782	Sample III 1788	Sample IV 1794
Sample size	123	171	198
Total number of new householders	89	134	166
In-migrants	38	58	65
Sons ^a	51	76	101
In-migrants who were later out- migrants ^b	19	17	-
Sons who were later out-migrants ^b	25	22	-

^aTheir surnames appeared on at least one Amelia County tax list after 1768. All lists after that year were checked and not just the sample lists.

^bOnly those who left before 1794.

Sources: Amelia County tithable and personal property tax books, 1768-1794, VSL.

"intervening opportunities." A good example is Agnes May, one of the debtors in the mercantile claims, who moved farther west every five to seven years (see page 53 above).

By putting these data together with those gleaned from the list of delinquent Amelia taxpayers and from the British mercantile claims, we can draw a picture of a mature county caught off balance. There were among Amelia taxpayers a considerable number of short-distance migrants who resided in the area only a brief time. On the other hand were migrants who reached more distant destinations, like the people in the British mercantile claims who journeyed far to the south and west, perhaps after taking advantage of "intervening opportunities." The data support the notion of "an unsettled disposition" for Amelia, with people moving in and out rather frequently and in large numbers.

Economic considerations. == According to these samples from Amelia, over a fifth of those traced were emigrants; therefore, it would help to know their economic status to determine if it was relevant to their "removal" from Amelia. In trying to ascertain economic status, the arbitrary categories of "poor," "moderate," and "wealthy" are defined as follows⁴⁵:

⁴⁵The categories were set up in Ayres, Migration and Social Structure, 23 (n. 22). The stipulation "0-1" slaves for the poor is my addition; Ayres used "0" slaves.

- Poor: 0-1 slaves, 0-3 horses, and/or 5
head of cattle
- Moderate: 2-5 slaves, 3-10 horses
- Wealthy: over 6 slaves, over 10 horses

The use of landownership as a criterion of economic wealth is also possible (except for 1794, when the complete land figures are not available), in which case, the categories are as follows:

- Poor: fewer than 100 acres
- Moderate: 100-500 acres
- Wealthy: over 500 acres

For the people who left, these measures of wealth reveal that the majority had little personal property, but over half had farmed medium-sized holdings of land. It is not surprising that very few wealthy planters left (see Table 19). Gauged by their personal property holdings, nearly half of the in-migrants during this period were poor, with few slaves, horses or cows. Many were unable to obtain even one hundred acres. Newly taxable sons tended to be poor or middle-class and to own small or middling farms. The increasing scarcity of land and property had probably induced many Amelia residents to leave, and it now took its toll on newcomers and sons. It is little wonder that the figures show a fairly high incidence of in- and out-migration over a short period of time.

The "persistent" taxpayers fared much better. In 1788, many had at least moderate property holdings, and

a large number were wealthy men. Over half of those "persisting" had either improved their lot or maintained their balance from 1768 to 1794. A majority owned farms of one to five hundred acres in size. In the category of landholding, wealthy taxpayers composed a significant number of those who had remained in Amelia for the entire period of twenty-six years under study (see Table 19).

TABLE 19
ECONOMIC STATUS OF AMELIA TAXPAYERS, 1768-1794

	Personal Property					
	Poor		Middle-class		Wealthy	
Emigrants (145)	80	25.1%	52	18.3%	13	11.7%
In-migrants ^a (161)	93	29.1	51	17.9	17	15.3
Sons ^b (228)	88	27.6	110	38.5	30	27.0
Those "per- sisting" (181)	58	18.2	72	25.3	51	46.0
Total	319	100.0	285	100.0	111	100.0

^aForty-seven were later emigrants.

^bThirty-six were later emigrants.

	Landholding					
	Under 100 acres		100-500 acres		Over 500 acres	
Emigrants (145)	55	25.2%	80	32.0%	10	12.5%
In-migrants ^c (96)	67	30.8	23	9.2	6	7.5
Sons ^c (127)	53	24.3	64	25.6	10	12.5
Those "per- sisting" (181)	43	19.7	83	33.2	54	67.5
Total	218	100.0	250	100.0	80	100.0

^cLand records for 1794 are incomplete; therefore, in-migrants and sons for that year were not used.

Sources: Amelia County land tax books, 1782-1788; Amelia County tithable and personal property tax books, 1782-1794, VSL.

CONCLUSION

The period from 1768 to 1794 in Amelia County, Virginia, was a time of movement and imbalance. By 1768, Amelia had entered a period of stagnation, when success and a good living were harder for young men to achieve. Between 1768 and 1794, much of the population thought it necessary to emigrate from the county. Many in- and out-migrants were poor, small farmers undoubtedly seeking opportunity wherever they could find it. Also, a number of young men came into legal adulthood and found it difficult to obtain land and property of their own if their fathers were not wealthy enough to provide for them. However, a steady third of the taxpaying population remained in Amelia for the full twenty-six years, and many middling farmers managed to improve their economic situation by adding to their holdings of slaves, horses and cattle. At the top of the economic scale were the great planters who controlled most of the land in Amelia and were wealthy enough to purchase additional land and personal property. From several of these important families--such as the Tabbs, the Harrisons and the Andersons--came also the political leaders of the county.

The American Revolution falls squarely into the

time span of this study, but its role in the lives of these Virginians is difficult to ascertain. On the surface, the events leading up to the American Revolution and the war itself appear to have had little impact on Amelia County in social and economic matters. At most, the war may have caused some alteration in taxing practices and skimmed off for military service a thin layer of poor young men from the population. But by the 1780s, life in Amelia continued as it had in the pre-Revolutionary years. The social and economic structure of Amelia County in these early national years reflects the stagnation and diminishing opportunity of the final stage of growth of a frontier society.

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