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Disruptions in the British-Virginia Trade, 1734-1764

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DISRUPTIONS IN THE BRITISH - VIRGINIA TRADE
1734 - 1764

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

Susan I. Gibbons

1971
APPROVAL SHEET

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

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the circumstances affecting the tobacco trade between Great Britain and Virginia during the thirty year period from 1734 to 1764, in order to ascertain to what extent this trade was disrupted and by what means.

Four main categories — piracy, natural hazard, privateering and human failing — emerged from a study of all available evidence as the major factors disturbing the ordinarily smooth flow of trade, and are discussed in ascending order of importance.

It is suggested that during the time span under consideration, piracy had ceased to be a problem, and natural hazard was a danger of minimal importance. Privateering and the human element appear to have been the important causes of trade disruption, the latter by far the more serious of the two, but neither was able to hamper for very long the normal course of trade.

The conclusion is drawn that the British-Virginia trade was generally stable and unmolested.
DISRUPTIONS IN THE BRITISH — VIRGINIA TRADE

1734 — 1764
INTRODUCTION

In eighteenth-century Virginia, it was customary upon the arrival of a new lieutenant-governor for the House of Burgesses to present him a petition professing their loyalty to the Crown and desiring his protection. As the full and more formal title of the men who ruled from the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg was His Majesty's Lieutenant and Commander in Chief, this practice was something of a feudal gesture, a symbolic submission to the Sovereign's authority. The request for defense, however, was not altogether ceremonial. Virginia needed protection.

In 1738, Sir William Keith, Baronet, discussed Virginia's economic structure in a valuable little work he called The History Of The British Plantations In America. "Altho' Tobacco be a Staple Merchandise ever in Demand," he noted, yet the continuously fluctuating price put the planter to the necessity of the most stringent economy, "for when he acts otherwise, and suffers himself, by any Excess of Luxury, to become considerably in Debt to the British Merchant or Factor" he would be quickly reduced to mortgaging the family land and slaves. Excess of luxury not being a rare thing among colonial aristocrats, that was precisely the position "of two Thirds of the Virginia Planters at this time . . . ." They were, he wrote, no better than "Slaves for the Benefit of their Factors in Great-Britain, without so much as a Prospect of being released from
that Bondage."

From this dismal pass Sir William expected no delivery: "There being no Variety or Choice in Virginia, of any Merchandise to deal in but Tobacco, and the needy Planter being so hamper'd and confined in the Disposal of his Crop . . . that the Colony is by no means to be considered as a proper Place for a young Merchant to improve his small Stock in Trade . . . ."2 This insuspicious state was unsatisfactory to both economic prisoners, the planters and the merchants.

The notorious figure of the sort-weed factor has been so besmirched by colonial charges of malefeasance and exploitation, some of which are probably true, that it is difficult to see him clearly. One thing, however, is sure: the tobacco merchant was as anxious as the planter for the safe passage of cargoes between Virginia and Great Britain. Rarely have debtor and creditor agreed so completely as did these twin but disparate interests in believing that the sea lanes must be kept open and that the government should see that they were. It could be argued that to eighteenth-century commercial interests (and most eighteenth-century interests were commercial) the British government existed to secure trade. It certainly acted as if it did.

In Virginia, the government was represented by the lieutenant-governor, assisted by his Council, the customs men (a suspect lot), the naval officers, and such other royal agents as happened to be around. In addition to supervising the work of other royal appointees and

enforcing the law, the lieutenant-governor was responsible for seeing
to the security of the colony.

Threats to Virginia could come from three directions: servile
insurrection, Indian attack, or the sea. The coast line, like the
endless frontier and the color line, was a constant, looming danger,
a known factor always unknown; like them, also, it was a source of
wealth and prestige. Slave revolt never materialized, and while the
Indian remained a real menace, by the mid-eighteenth-century his fearful
presence was a frontier phenomenon. But the sea was the unchanging
threat, and never for very long was anyone in authority in Virginia
allowed to forget it. It is upon the sea, therefore, and its commerce,
that this thesis will focus.

Only the thirty year span from 1734 to 1764 will be considered, the
era of the final Anglo-French struggle for control of the North American
continent. The three decades included two periods of peace and two of
war. The peace which followed divided the last of the eighteenth-century
wars of trade from the first of the wars for political and philosophical
expression. Because Virginia played so forward a role in the coming of
the American Revolution, it will be necessary to stop in the last year
that relations between Colony and Mother Country were uninterruptedly
mercantile.
CHAPTER I

PIRACY AND SHIPPING LOSSES

The eighteenth-century arrived during one period of bitter international strife and left during another. Of one hundred years, scarcely half knew formal peace; of actual peace, there was even less. In this era, the quick ran a poor second to the dead.

Virginia's sea-borne commerce faced four distinct dangers. The first three were those human birds of prey, pirates; natural hazard; and the omnivorous French and Spanish privateers: the enemy without. The fourth was those intangibles of human mischief — greed, fear, and stupidity — whose fearful works defeated the most careful calculations of the Admiralty and the most watchful eyes of the lieutenant-governors: the enemy within.

Virginia's coast line is long, low and pock-marked with rivers, inlets, and bays where the diminutive craft of the eighteenth-century could hide with impunity. The need for a naval guardship had been recognized at least since the mid-seventeenth-century, and Lord Howard of Effringham in 1683 had urged upon the Privy Council the necessity of dispatching a ship to patrol Chesapeake Bay, advancing the argument that revenue from Virginia exceeded that of all other North American plantations combined. This was the type of reasoning most likely to spur the gentlemen around the green baize cloth at Whitehall to action, and a frigate was speedily sent. From 1685 on, Virginia normally enjoyed naval protection.3

Chesapeake guardships had two functions — to patrol as men-of-war and to act as revenue cutters. Therein lay a genuine problem, for the smallest ship able to repulse pirates, a fifth-rate man-of-war, was too large to board merchantmen in the Bay, or to chase suspected smugglers up creeks or over shoal waters. This dilemma was to be a continual, irksome quandary to royal officials. A solution was never found.

The problem of the pirate, however, was eliminated by removing from America the conditions which allowed him to operate. If it is true that every age gets the criminals it deserves, then an eloquent testimonial to the inefficiency and corruption of the British authorities in the early eighteenth-century could be drawn from a study of the age's most unpleasant thugs: the early decades got pirates. Piracy gained a foothold in the Virginia area for three reasons — the excellence of the coast line for their purposes (Lynnhaven Bay seems to have been a favorite hiding place), the laxness of the authorities, and the nearness of suitable prey. It was eradicated by a vigorous effort on the part of the lieutenant-governors of Virginia, beginning with Francis Nicholson, to enforce the laws against it.

At this point it would be well to examine the difference between piracy and privateering. A pirate is a stateless criminal who preys indiscriminately upon commerce; if captured he would be prosecuted and hanged. A privateer is a private person authorized by his government to prey upon enemy commerce in time of war; if captured he would be considered a prisoner of war. Furthermore, a privateer must give the major portion of his plunder to his government, while a pirate keeps anything he can steal. These are the definitions of international law. In actual practice, the line is far more

4. Ibid., p. 315.
vague and a good many privateers were hanged protesting their innocence of piracy.  

And then there is the persistent problem of privateers commissioned in time of formal peace by governors of one colony to harass the shipping of neighboring, enemy colonies. This was the primary problem facing Virginia as the Golden Age of Piracy went out with an inglorious whimper. But, while it lasted, the depredations of those human birds of prey were serious enough.  

Colonel Alexander Spotswood, a dry, humorless, law-and-order man, was the first lieutenant-governor of Virginia to go after pirates with the intention of hanging everyone he could seize, thereby eliminating them permanently. He was not alone in appreciating the enormity of the menace. In a letter to the Admiralty of December 29, 1713, he wrote: "I have lately seen the copy of a petition said to be presented to her Ma'ly by the Merchants in this Trade (tobacco) and some Inhabitants of this Colony, praying that a small man of War may be ordered to Cruise upon the Coast of Virginia to prevent the mischiefs & ill consequences that may come by Pyrate to this Province." Spotswood felt that the guardship then on duty would be sufficient for the time being, "until it appear that ye Pyrates are more formidable then there's yet any reason to apprehend they are."  

On July 3, 1716, he decided that the time for another ship had come. Pirates were operating out of Providence Harbor, in the Bahama Islands, and were cruising the Florida Gulf, where they directly threatened English

trade: "Your Lops (sic) will be pleased to consider the dangerous
Consequences of suffering such a Nest of Rogues to settle in the very
mouth of the Gulph of Florida, where . . . indeed the whole trade of
this Continent may be endangered, if timely measures be not taken to
suppress this growing evil." Spotswood asked the Lords of the Admiralty
that "another Ship of Force be speedily sent hither," but he had more in
mind than patrol duty. He proposed battle. Virginia's shipping was
being plundered by the Providence gang. The Admiralty having ignored his
request, and the attacks mounting, he wrote furiously to the Board of Trade
on May 1, 1717, that "... the Trade of this Colony has already suffered."
The pirates had increased in boldness and number, and Spotswood indignantly
reported "tis now no inconsiderable force that will serve to reduce them . . . ."8

On May 30, 1717, Spotswood informed "Mr Sec'y Methuen," Secretary of
State for the Southern Department, that he had been obliged to arrange
with the one guardship, H. M. S. Shoreham, "for convoying off the Coast
the Trade of this & the Neighbouring Province of Maryland from time to
time as they shall be ready untill the present dangers be over; which I am
afraid it will not be untill a Superior force is sent to Suppress those
Rovers."9

The London authorities had finally been aroused to a realization that
he who controlled the Bahama Archipelago could take a deadly toll of
British commerce. Since these islands were nominally British, the
disgraceful condition of Providence could not continue forever: Spotswood
had pleaded in 1716 that a proper government be settled there, and in 1717

7. Spotswood to Admiralty, 3 July 1716, Spotswood Papers.
8. Spotswood to Board of Trade, 3 July 1716, 1 May 1717, Spotswood Papers.
9. Spotswood to Secretary Methuen, 30 May 1717, Spotswood Papers.
Joseph Addison, then Secretary of State for the Southern Department, began to search for a suitable solution. The loss to shipping was perhaps not as immediate a consideration in Addison's decision as the part played by the Bahamas in various Jacobite plots — evidently, the more determined exiles had employed pirates to ruin English merchants. The superior force Spotswood had recommended arrived in 1718: one man, Captain Woodes Rogers, Lieutenant-Governor of the Bahamas.

The leading spirits among the pirates included Henry Jennings, Charles Vane, and Edward Teach or Teach, alias Blackbeard, who decamped hastily before Rogers arrived. Also at Providence was Benjamin Hornigold, who hungered after respectability and therefore assisted the new royal appointee in exchange for absolution of his commercial sins. By late 1718, the two had cleared out the entire gang. A mass hanging of seven pirates ended this threat to peaceful commerce. Rogers and his turncoat aide had done a creditable job.

To Spotswood must go the credit for snapping up the last great pirate, Blackbeard. On February 14, 1718/9, he wrote to Lord Cartwright, Proprietary Governor of South Carolina, to explain why he had personally boarded the Virginia guardship and fallen upon Teach unannounced in November 1718, while the pirate was anchored in a Virginia backwater. He had not notified anyone of his intentions for fear "least among the many favourers of Pyrates we have in these Parts, some of them might send Intelligence to Tach."

11. Little, Crusoe's Captain, pp. 176-177.
12. Ibid., pp. 184-185, 189, 190.
13. Spotswood to Lord Cartwright, 14 February 1718/9, Spotswood Papers. See also Spotswood to Secretary Craggs, 22 October 1718, 26 May 1719, Spotswood Papers. Middleton, Tobacco Coast, pp. 326-327.
There was some ill feeling against Spotswood in the House of Burgesses and among the people of North Carolina over his precipitous action, most probably the people who had been dealing with the pirate.14

The death of Blackbeard was a spectacular end to piracy off the Virginia Capes, although there are scattered references to pirates after that.15 In May of 1720, acting upon information supplied by a merchant captain, Spotswood hanged six of eight pirates. "I thought it necessary for the greater Terreur to hang up four of them in Chains, two others were executed at the same time . . .," he reported, and two were pardoned and sent aboard the guardship.16 In December of the same year, William Byrd II recorded in his Diary: "Then we had a court of admiralty and condemned a man for piracy."17

On June 16, 1727, three men went a-pirating and took the schooner Anne and Frances off North Carolina. Emboldened by success, they took two more vessels, one the same day, one on June 19th. On August 15, 1727, much repentant, they were brought before Robert Carter, President of the Council, and tried for their crimes. On August 17, 1727, they were hanged.18 Theirs had been an inglorious and a brief career, in a profession no longer profitable.

In this same year, one John Vidal took several vessels off the coast, for which he was apprehended and executed almost immediately.19 Only one more piratical episode exists in the records, one even more sorry and pitiable. On May 12, 1729, five men and one woman seized the John and Elizabeth, riding at anchor in the mouth of the Kiquotan River. They then cruised the Bay,

14. Spotswood to Board of Trade, 26 May 1719, Spotswood Papers.
16. Spotswood to Board of Trade, 20 May 1720.
finding nothing, and decided the wisest course would be to run and hide.
They were speedily found and brought up for trial before Lieutenant-Governor
William Gooch, who pronounced the sentence that lost none of its terror in
centuries of use. They were taken out and given a brief, elevated glimpse
of Virginia's lovely landscape, and with their deaths a dying tradition
breathed its last.20

Strong, vigorous, consistent enforcement of the law had driven the
brethren of the coast to less lucrative and more honest labor. The fair
trader could now venture upon the seas with no fear of the jolly roger.
The most telling testimony on piracy's demise is a letter from Lieutenant-
Governor Francis Fauquier to the Board of Trade of August 29, 1761: "Some-
time since Govr Sharpe of Maryland applied to me to know if there was a
Commission in this Colony to try Pirates, on the Suspicion of there being
a Pirate then in the Bay ... They [the Council] informed me, that they
well remember there was formerly such a Commission directed to the Commander-
in-Chief and the Members of the Council ... and that they remembered to
have tried a Man for Murder upon the Commission ... ." But the commission
was long gone, and while Fauquier applied for a re-issuance in case it
should be needed,21 it was not renewed and was never required. The sure and
certain prospect of being hanged had ended piracy in Virginia. From 1730
to 1764, there simply was no such thing as a pirate.

20. Great Britain, Public Record Office, High Court of Admiralty Proceedings,
1/9-10L, 1/99.
21. H. R. McIlwaine, Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1758-1761;
(Richmond, 1908), p. 296.
CHAPTER II

NATURAL HAZARD AND SHIPPING LOSSES

Piracy had lasted for so long and had been so terrifying a prospect that its existence, like storms and sudden calms, had been reckoned in the calculations of travelers as something of a natural hazard. With its timely demise, the inherent dangers of ocean shipping remained, for the Spirit of God did not always move upon the face of the deep with benevolence. For this reason, many merchants, such as the House of John Norton and Sons, shipped "by the Grace of God in good order."22

When the Privy Council instituted the convoy system for the tobacco fleet in 1707, it was arranged that it should sail to Virginia before the hurricane season and sail back to Britain before the hot months increased the ravages of the Toledo worm.23 Convoys continued to follow this schedule, although the exact sailing date varied somewhat. A glance at the authority on British shipping, Lloyds' List, makes it plain, however, that while the bulk of Virginia shipping went in convoy in war time or traveled in groups generally, departures must have occurred whenever a cargo was loaded. Practically every issue of Lloyds' List (it was published every Tuesday and Friday) notes the arrival of at least one Virginian man.

This heavy volume was carried primarily in British bottoms. Robert Dinwiddie, as Surveyor General of Customs, reported in 1743 that the

23. Middleton, Tobacco Coast, pp. 297, 305.
Chesapeake colonies used 280 ships for an annual crop worth approximately £4,980,000. An additional seventy Virginia owned ships were in the trade.  

The British merchant marine in 1754 consisted of some 4,000 vessels, one half coasters averaging seventy-five tons, the rest in foreign trade, averaging eighty tons. In the tobacco trade, the average ship was one hundred thirty tons, down ten tons from 1716 and down forty tons from 1704, and by 1775 the average was ninety to one hundred tons. The tobacco trade, therefore, employed ships larger than most. This meant the use of better manned carriers and increased the chances of safe passage. 

The avenues of commerce ran from the British Isles to the Old Dominion like spokes in a wheel, and it was therefore possible to maintain, given the circumstances of the time, minimum contact between home ports and ships at sea. It is clear from Lloyds List that these sea lanes were so well traveled that incoming ships were able to report having spoken with or having seen outward bound ships. By this means, the fate of missing vessels usually could be recorded, although often the evidence was necessarily heresay. 

Only one instance has come to light of a ship disappearing unmarked. On November 3, 1741, the Council of Virginia considered the case of Benjamin Anderson, who had shipped "a very considerable Number of Hogsds of Tobacco on Board the Gooch, and the said Ship's being never heard of ... ." As this was war time, the Gooch may have fallen to an enemy privateer and may not therefore have been a victim of natural disaster. 

There can be no doubt, however, of the fate of others. The records of the Scottish Board of Customs contain a minute dated April 19, 1743,

24. Ibid., p. 247.
25. Ibid., pp. 254, 255.
about burning a damaged cargo of tobacco salvaged from the *London*, bound from Virginia and stranded on the Scottish coast. A similar case is noted in the proceedings of July 27, 1747. An earlier, doubtful case occurred in 1735. In this instance an admiral claiming thirteen hogsheads of tobacco as salvage was ordered to pay duty as the crown advocate had ruled that they were "not wreck but rather the contrary." Very probably, this was a smuggling matter.

The correspondence of the customs collector for the port of Whitehaven with the British Board of Customs lists three cases of shipwreck in home waters. On July 6, 1744, the *Hope* from Virginia, being "much shaken on the Rock & proving leaky . . . could not gain this harbour" was declared salvage. On February 23, 1744/5, there were two Virginia salvage cases, the *Lonsdale* and the *Brayton*, the later having limped into port on December 12, 1744.

The American coast had its victims, also. On February 27, 1740/1, the *Adriatick*, London to Virginia, was lost on the Carolina Sound. The *Sea-Nymph* of Waterford was reported sunk off Hogg Island on the Virginia Coast on August 21, 1741. On its homeward passage, the *Amoretta*, bound for Bristol, was lost near Biddeford on September 5, 1744.

From 1741 to 1744, only two foundering at sea were reported: a ship

28. Scottish Board of Customs Records, 22 July 1747.
29. Scottish Board of Customs Records, 20 June 1735.
30. Collector to Board of Customs, 6 July 1744, British Board of Customs Correspondence: Letters to and from the Collector of Whitehaven, 1744-48, p. 8, Virginia Colonial Records Project microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Library, Williamsburg, Virginia. Hereafter cited as Board of Customs Correspondence.
31. Collector to Board of Customs, 7 March 1744, Board of Customs Correspondence, p. 244.
32. Lloyds' *List of Shipping* (London), 27 February 1740/1.
33. Ibid., 21 August 1741.
34. Ibid., 9 October 1744.
of the 1741 Virginia convoy abandoned when it began to break up, and the Portland, Virginia to London, which went under on September 15, 1741. Those sinkings which can be exactly dated are sightings by other ships sailing in the same waters, who rescued survivors.

That the passage from Britain to Virginia and back was relatively safe is a matter of statistical evidence. For the year 1741, for which Lloyds' List is nearly complete, and which, moreover, was a war year, 199 ships arrived in England from Virginia — 199 of 204 which attempted the crossing. Only five ships, two wrecked on the coast, never made it — 2½ percent. In another war year, 1744, for which Lloyds' List is also almost intact, 151 ships completed the passage and two did not, one a coastal casualty — a loss of one percent. Surely then, given reasonable precautions, it was no very dangerous thing to cross the Atlantic, especially as one foundering listed above, that of the 1741 convoy, can almost certainly be put down to human failing — overloading.

Insurance statistics support the contention that transoceanic shipping in peacetime was a reasonably safe venture: normally, underwriters asked between three and four percent of the total value of each voyage. Many businessmen did not insure at all, witness a letter of August 10, 1761, from John G. Glassford of Glasgow to Neil Jamieson in Norfolk, regarding the French capture of a rival firm's ship: "... Neither they (the owners) nor J. G. and Compy had any Insurance done chiefly to the last advices having bore that She would be Loaded in Fatucent by the 5th or 10 July whereas She was loaded in June." Clearly, the whereabouts of enemy

35. Ibid., 6 March 1740/1, 27 October 1741.
36. Middleton, Tobacco Coast, p. 299.
privateers had figured in the calculations of the merchants, but not natural hazard.

Francis Jerdone was another Virginia factor who did not always insure, although he usually did so. On April 20, 1759, he wrote indignantly to Thomas Knox of Glasgow: "The first enclosed invoice of Sundry goods, amounting to £31.3.5 including an article of £3.18.4 charged me for Insurance on Said goods which really Surpriz'd me as I never gave you any orders for making insurance on my acct & which I will by no means agree to pay . . . ." Jerdone wrote to Thomas Flowerdew of Flowerdew and Norton, London, in the same vein on September 10, 1760. "On the present prospect of an approaching peace," Jerdone directed, and as the cargo's value was small, "if your ship Sails under convoy, I incline to stand the resque my Self without insurance if the premium exceeds 4 guineas per Cent but if it does not exceed that Sum in that case insure for me . . . ." Exactly two years later, he wrote to Messers. Thomas, Griffiths, and Thomas, requesting they send his order "without Insurance." That this piecemeal method of insuring was not just a whim of Jerdone is borne out by the post script to a letter from John Norton, in Virginia, to James Withers of Flowerdew and Norton, dated August 22, 1750: "Also send word what ships are come from Virga. or Maryld. If any Orders for Insurse. go to Mr. Deacons Clerk & gett them done give him direct: only for one Person's order at a time, if the Letters mention it you may inform him when the Ship was expected to depart."

40. Jerdone to Thomas, Griffiths and Thomas, 10 September 1762, Jerdone Letterbooks.
Two things are immediately apparent from the above instances. Being in business to get rich, merchants did not usually insure if they thought they could safely avoid it; and their calculations to that end included the likelihood of falling prey to the enemy but did not include the possibility of natural disaster. Obviously, then, the hazards of nature could not have been any formidable menace.
CHAPTER III
PRIVATEERING AND SHIPPING LOSSES

Neither piracy nor the dangers of nature played a very large role in the reckoning of British merchants. The one overwhelming hazard was the enemy, represented in the New World by the Spanish and the French.

Spain had become by the eighteenth-century a diminutive shadow of her former glory, stiff-frozen in her cultural and ideological rigidity. Her vast empire was already demonstrating the weakness which was the result of hollowness in the heart of authority. Where a well-directed, energetic administration should have been, there was only a void.

Into this void stepped the colonial governor of Florida, who took it upon himself to harass Virginia's shipping, by commissioning a series of privateers throughout the 1720s. This, of course, raised the legal question whether anyone who plundered shipping in peacetime could be considered a privateer, or was to be put down as a pirate.

In June 1724 the San Francisco Xavier stopped and boarded two Virginia-bound vessels a scant ten leagues off Cape Charles. On July 6, 1724, four of her captured crew members were brought before Lieutenant-Governor Cadwallader Colden of New York. The fact that their ship had been a frigate makes it certain that they sailed under commission: no pirate, in fact or fancy, ever had a frigate. They were hanged.42 Whether or not this would be considered judicial murder would depend upon

who studied the evidence — a Spaniard or an Englishman.

This appears to have been the only instance of a privateering crew suffering as pirates. It is, at any rate, the only one to come to light, and, moreover, a rarity for the eighteenth-century. Not that there was any lack of privateers to hang, for the shores of Virginia were menaced periodically and not always in wartime.

Robert Carter reported to Micajah and Richard Perry on July 13, 1720: "The privateers have been very bold and roguish upon our coast this year." He made the same complaint to John Pemperton in October of 1720. The governor of Florida was the prime mover in this harassment of Virginia's shipping. Alexander Spotswood wrote to Secretary Craggs on May 20, 1720, to report that he had "expected no further Interruption to our Trade" but that some privateers from St. Augustine were cruising within the Virginia Capes, taking a respectable toll of commerce.

No action was taken by the British Ministry. Accordingly, Spotswood, in a letter besprinkled with fury, wrote to the Board of Trade on May 31, 1721: "About the middle of last September this Coast was greatly infested by the Spanish privatiors (sic) from St. Augustine and while the Guard Ship on this Station was Careening, one of these Privatiors (sic) came within our Capes and made prize sevle Vessels," one of which was retaken and its Spanish crew captured. They promptly produced a copy of their commission "granted in August by the Governor of St Augustine."

This was the contingency Spotswood had been hoping for. He had learned that the Spanish governor had been informed of the Treaty of Utrecht by the

44. Ibid., pp. 56-57. See also Middleton, Tobacco Coast, p. 327.
45. Spotswood to Secretary Craggs, 20 May 1720, Spotswood Papers.
proprietary governor of South Carolina, and was therefore in deliberate violation of the peace. Spotswood determined upon a little demonstration of his own, and sent a "flagg of Truce wth a Letter to the Governor of St Augustine" demanding the return of English captures, and sending Spanish prisoners along as a token of his own good intentions.

Florida's governor promptly disowned having granted any commissions "for Cruising on the Coast of Virginia & made a Show of trying and Condemning the Capt of the Privateers ... Yet he would by no means part wth the (Virginia) Sloop wth the Negroes wch was more Valuable than both the others but alleged that that Sloop was a lawful prize ... ." Spotswood's prompt action put a stop to Spanish privateering, if only temporarily. He had called St. Augustine "rather a resort of Banditti" than a government, and two further evidences of aggressive intention have come to light — that of 1724 noted above, and a case in 1727. In that year Lieutenant-Governor William Gooch wrote to the Duke of Newcastle that two privateers from Havana had taken seven vessels within forty leagues of the Virginia coast.

The Treaty of Seville in 1730 put a stop to these illegal depredations. For the next few years Virginia's commerce had no need to worry about convoys, enemy privateers, or other obstructions to freedom of the seas. Interestingly enough, the volume of Virginia's shipping seems to have decreased noticeably in the 1730s. Taking the statistics for the port of Hampton, sixteen ships totalling 1633 tons cleared for Great Britain in 1731. In 1733, eleven ships of 1110 tons were cleared. By 1739, the number of ships had dropped to six and their total tonnage was only 745. At the same time, incoming British

46. Spotswood to Board of Trade, 31 May 1721, Spotswood Papers.
47. Spotswood to Board of Trade, 31 May 1721, Spotswood Papers.
shipping remained almost the same. In 1731, twenty-one ships of 2525 tons arrived. In 1733, this dropped to nineteen ships of 2285 tons, and in 1739 there were twenty-one ships of 2535 tons.49

Accounting for this discrepancy is an interesting problem, for the amount of tobacco exported varied but slightly (owing to drought or other natural cause affecting the size of the yearly crop). From 1730 to 1739, the import figures (including Maryland) in thousands of pounds are as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Year} & \text{Imports} \\
\hline
1730 & 34,860 \\
1731 & 41,194 \\
1732 & 30,847 \\
1733 & 39,854 \\
1734 & 35,216 \\
1735 & 39,318 \\
1736 & 37,682 \\
1737 & 49,946 \\
1738 & 39,868 \\
1739 & 45,866 \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

The British import-export statistics for this same time period seem to resolve the problem somewhat (again the figures are for both Virginia and Maryland):

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Year} & \text{Imports} & \text{Exports} \\
\hline
1734-1735 & \$1394,995.12.5 & \$220,381.6.9 \\
1735-1736 & \$380,163.9.9 & \$204,794.12.8 \\
1736-1737 & \$492,246.9.10 & \$211,301.12.3 \\
1737-1738 & \$391,814.15.0 & \$258,860.8.0 \\
1738-1739 & \$444,654.10.2 & \$217,200.1.4 \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Clearly, the value and amount of Virginia's exports varied but slightly, the price depending upon the quality as well as the quantity. Imports would necessarily be smaller than tobacco hogsheads and of less value, but would be more extensive, given Virginia's virtually non-existent manufacturing

50. Ibid., Series 2223-229, p. 765.
facilities. This would explain incoming shipping figures. The steady
diminution in outbound ships in this particular location can probably
be best explained by the presence of competing ports in Hampton Roads and
elsewhere, Norfolk most predominantly.

In 1739, eager young Parliamentarians known as the Boy Patriots
secured possession of a certain Captain Jenkin's ear, a casualty of
Spanish colonial policy that well suited the plans of several aggressive
British House leaders. These men, among them William Pitt, combined this
detached piece of the good captain's anatomy with their political oratory,
applying both with right good will on the floor of the House of Commons.
The result was a war whose ostensible purpose was to avenge British honor --
it having been insulted by the removal of Jenkin's ear -- but whose actual
purpose was to make any inroads into Spanish colonial possessions that
might be feasible.

The immediate result in Virginia of this renewal of hostilities was
a revival of privateering activities. Colonel Thomas Lee, President of the
Council, would write to the Board of Trade in 1750: "We have no Communication
with any French or Spanish Settlements on the Continent so that we know
little of them only from their Privateers in time of War . . . ."52 Now
the enemy cruised the coast, but his ability to do damage seemed to have
decreased with time and further loss of Spanish military power.

Francis Jerdone, that flinty man of practical affairs, wrote to
Neil Buchanan on August 8, 1739: "There is no danger of any Spaniards
being on our Coast so many Ships of war being to ye Southward."53 Evidently
his estimation of the minimal menace of this new wave of privateers was

52. Thomas Lee to Board of Trade, 29 September 1750, The Letters of William
correct, if not perhaps for the reasons he supposed. He wrote to Buchanan again on September 8, 1740, in a scornful and contemptuous mood, that "this warr against Spain is more noise than any thing else, I suppose it will soon be at an end."54 But the war expanded, and the Spanish began to take their toll. Jerdone wrote once more to Buchanan on January 7, 1741/2, that two "annoying" Spanish privateers were prowling the Coast.55

The Council of Virginia had also noted the increasing enemy captures, now grown to serious proportions. On June 10, 1741, it was recorded in their Journal that "Trade and Navigation is very much retarted and in Danger of being entirely Stoped by the Depredations and Daily Captures Made by the Spanish Privateers all along the Coast, and Some of them in or near the Mouth of our Bay . . . ."56

1741 seems to have been a particularly active year for the Spanish. While the Council of Virginia debated the hazard to their shipping, Spanish privateers took the America, Glasgow to Virginia, and the Bronsdon, from Whitehaven, between May 6th and May 12, 1741.57 Shortly thereafter, the Ranger, a coaster from Virginia, was seized — the loss was reported by the outraged captain and crew, who had been set ashore near New York.58 The Patuxen, Virginia to London, and the Argyre, bound for Glasgow, were taken near the Capes soon after the Ranger fell prey.59 From the close proximity of the seizures one to another and their nearness in time, it is likely that these losses were all the work of a single privateer, identity unknown.

Spanish good fortune continued throughout this third year of war with Britain. The Caesar, a coaster, was taken off Cape Fear;60 the Robert,

54. Jerdone to Neil Buchanan, 8 September 1740, Jerdone Letterbooks, I.
55. Jerdone to Neil Buchanan, 7 January 1741/2, Jerdone Letterbooks, I.
57. Lloyds' List, 14 July 1741.
58. Ibid., 17 July 1741.
59. Ibid., 21 July 1741.
60. Ibid., 2 October 1741.
Virginia to Whitehaven, and the Mercury, from London, were reported captured on the same day.61 The Lively, bound to Whitehaven,62 the Industry, out from Biddeford,63 and the Martha, destined for Liverpool, were the last casualties of the year, the latter being reported taken off the Virginia Capes and carried into Havana.64 There was one more seizure in 1741, the Mary, home port unknown, bound for Virginia but taken by the Spanish forty leagues west of Scilly, off Land's End.65

These losses were serious, but their most interesting attribute is their rarity. Only 12 ships fell victim to the privateers, two of which were coasting vessels—12 of 203 ships which started for Great Britain and 44 which departed for Virginia.66 On the same day Lloyd's List reported the loss of the Patuwan and the Argyle, it also noted the safe arrival in Virginia of nine vessels.67 Spanish privateers had taken a toll of British-Virginia shipping of exactly 4½ percent.

Lloyd's Lists for the years 1742 and 1743 are missing, but the Letterbooks of Francis Jerdone supply the information that seven vessels were taken off the Virginia Capes in May 1742 by a Havana privateer.68

Beginning in 1744, the luck of the privateers seems to have been singularly poor. Only three prizes fell to the Spanish, the Ann, bound to London,69 the Molly, for Whitehaven,70 and the Edward, meant for London.71

1744 was the year the French entered the war in force. Francis Jerdone wrote to William Bowden on June 12, 1744, that the news of the aggressive

61. Ibid., 27 October 1741.
62. Ibid., 20 November 1741.
63. Ibid., 24 November 1741.
64. Ibid., 15 December 1741.
65. Ibid., 22 September 1741.
66. It should be noted that the low number of departures is due partly to the nature of Lloyd's List. Arrivals are noted with a high degree of accuracy, but destinations of outward bound vessels could not always be obtained.
67. Lloyd's List, 21 July 1741.
68. Jerdone to Neil Buchanan, 20 May 1742, Jerdone Letterbooks, I.
69. Lloyd's List, 17 February 1744.
70. Ibid., 15 May 1744.
71. Ibid., 29 May 1744.
French war drove tobacco down from 18s to 12/6 "and the great danger as well as great charge has made a great many others as well as my self alter our minds in Shipping home tobacco."72 Despite these misgivings, the French seem to have done little better than their allies. Their one great success in 1744 appears to have been the alleged seizure by a St. Malo privateer in February of that year of twenty-one ships, including several Virginiamen, in the English Channel.73

There are several versions of this famous exploit. The most persuasive appears in a letter from Francis Jerdone to Freeman Partridge dated December 28, 1744: "... I have heard that most of the Ships belonging to your port were taken by the Brest Squadron" but were retaken with only a solitary loss -- the mail.74 This is a much more likely probability than a lone privateer capturing an entire fleet in its home waters single-handed -- a swashbuckling feat, indeed.

The reason for the initial loss usually credited in this case also rings hollow. Walter King, a British merchant, wrote to Colonel Thomas Jones, in Virginia, giving his opinion that the whole sorry business was the result of the government's failure to have a naval squadron cruising the Channel.75 This account, while possibly correct in that the Admiralty did not have a full squadron patrolling the Channel, is much too simple an explanation. The home waters were quite well guarded, and there was no lack of men-of-war for convoy duty. Lloyds' List for February and March 1744 reveals that twenty-nine naval vessels, including several ships-of-the-line, were waiting in the Downs for convoy assignment.76 None of them left port before March 16, 1744. The Brest Squadron would have had to pass this

72. Jerdone to William Bowden, 12 June 1744, Jerdone Letterbooks, I.
73. Middleton, Tobacco Coast, p. 298.
74. Jerdone to Freeman Partridge, 28 December 1744, Jerdone Letterbooks, I.
75. Middleton, Tobacco Coast, p. 298.
76. Lloyds' List, 21 Feb., 24 Feb., 28 Feb., 2 March, 6 March, 9 March, 13 March 1744.
formidable array of fire power, and it was probably they who recaptured the outward bound fleet. Significantly, Lloyds' List makes no mention of a St. Malo privateer visiting solitary mayhem on British shipping, something the alert people at Lloyds of London would hardly overlook.

1744 seems, in fact, to have been for French privateers a mediocre year. They took only five ships, the Carter, London to Virginia,77 the Prince of Orange, bound for Virginia,78 two unknown ships reported taken on November 30, 1744,79 and the Francis and Elizabeth, Dumfries to Virginia, which was sunk.80 Considerably less successful were efforts to seize other Virginiansen. On June 12, 1744, Lloyds' List records the safe arrival in London of the Restoration of apt name, having been taken on its homeward passage by French privateers and promptly rescued by the H. M. S. Dreadnought.81 The York, bound from Bristol, was captured, most probably by the same ship that took the Dumfries vessel, and then taken back by an English privateer.82

This last episode occurred on or near August 3, 1744, which may explain the deliberate sinking of the Francis and Elizabeth on or near August 10, 1744. Sinking was an unusual procedure, as prizes were worth a considerable sum to the captor. The privateers may not have wished to risk a second, total loss, not, at any rate, when a partial loss would suffice. Recaptures were becoming far more frequent — beginning with the re-taking of the Hanover, a Bristol ship, by the H. M. S. Kingston on December 8, 1741.83

77. Ibid., 24 April 1744.
78. Ibid., 19 October 1744.
79. Ibid., 30 November 1744.
80. Ibid., 10 August 1744.
81. Ibid., 12 June 1744.
82. Ibid., 3 August 1744.
83. Ibid., 18 December 1744.
Together, the French and the Spanish captured and held eight known prizes in 1744. In this same year 154 ships left for the mother country and 30 left for the colony, a total of 184 vessels. The enemy, then, captured 4½ percent of British-Virginia shipping.

The import statistics for the years 1741-1744, in thousands of pounds, sustain the probability that not much damage was done to the tobacco trade by enemy privateering (again, these figures include Maryland and Virginia):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1740</th>
<th>1741</th>
<th>1742</th>
<th>1743</th>
<th>1744</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35,372</td>
<td>59,007</td>
<td>42,828</td>
<td>55,666</td>
<td>41,119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the variability in exports between years is as erratic as that between the peacetime years of the 1730s, privateering cannot explain the fluctuation, nor be the primary cause of it. Internal conditions in the tobacco colonies must be the explanation.

Another indication of the general stability of the tobacco trade in these years are the Customs and Excise records (again for both Virginia and Maryland):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1739-1740</td>
<td>£341,997.10.11</td>
<td>£281,428.10.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1740-1741</td>
<td>£577,109.1.4</td>
<td>£248,582.17.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1741-1742</td>
<td>£427,769.8.4</td>
<td>£264,186.2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1742-1743</td>
<td>£557,821.0.10</td>
<td>£328,195.0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1743-1744</td>
<td>£402,700.15.0</td>
<td>£234,855.18.485</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If anything, the value and amount of trade in this area increased during the war years, rather than decreasing as would be expected if shipping were being vigorously disrupted.

Further proof that tobacco shipping continued virtually uninterrupted

85. H. M. Customs and Excise Records microfilm.
can be gleaned from the correspondence of the customs collector of the port of Whitehaven with the British Board of Customs. On August 3, 1744, the collector reported that there were seven Virginia ships in the harbor, discharging tobacco. On September 13, 1744, there occurs a telling phrase in the collector’s report: “There are some ships from Virginia belonging to other merchants expected in a short time but the export of tobacco of late has been so large that we do not expect any money by their arrival . . . .” (Emphasis mine.) Very clearly, then, the tobacco trade was little disrupted by this phase of the war.

Just what this small loss meant can best be seen by examining overall losses to British shipping. For the first three years, 1739-1741, when only Spain engaged in maritime war, there was no very noticeable disruption to trade. Nevertheless, British merchants complained vigorously and publicly in January 1742 alleging that better protection ought to be well within the navy's power. Gentleman's Magazine in that year claimed that, up to December of 1741, 301 ships had been captured. Another estimate, prepared by the nation's insurance underwriters, set British losses at 337 ships.

1744 seems to have been the year when the Chesapeake colonies were most seriously menaced by enemy movements, although not in the matter of shipping losses. Virginia normally enjoyed the protection of a guardship, a single twenty-gun ship being deemed adequate by the Lords of the Admiralty for peacetime conditions, and usually for war time also. A rule had been made during Queen Anne's time that most North American guardships must winter

86. Collector of Whitehaven to Board of Customs, 3 August 1744, Board of Customs Correspondence, p. 11.
87. Collector of Whitehaven to Board of Customs, 13 September 1744, Board of Customs Correspondence, p. 16.
in the West Indies, convoying the Tortuga Salt Fleet or patrolling. In 1742, a complicated scheme for sending all the continental ships to cruise in winter along the Spanish Main was proposed, and while the Admiralty did not adopt the entire plan the North American and Leeward Island stations were combined. The continental fleet commander would cruise in the West Indies in winter, and return to his regular duty with the northern colonies in the summer.

This plan was disastrous from the beginning. Wooden ships could not patrol twelve months around, but must be careened, cleaned, and repaired. These operations did not take overly long, but they took long enough, and then there was the time needed to sail a full squadron from one end of British America to the other.

The result of all this was to leave large sections of America open to the assaults of the more daring privateers, a hazard more potential than immediate perhaps, but nevertheless a condition not patiently to be borne by already overworked lieutenant-governors. Virginia was somewhat protected by natural barriers — no one would care to skulk off the Capes during the hurricane season — but this fragile defense was only a periodic happenstance and not one in which to put confidence. Lieutenant-Governor Gooch, therefore, wrote a bitterly indignant letter to the Admiralty on December 1, 1744, in which he decried the whole idea of combination. His reasons were two: the guardships simply failed to return by the beginning of the patrolling season, and when they did appear they were sorely in need of repair and refitting. The combination plan was a thumping failure. It was a stroke of rare good fortune that this singularly bad idea came and went in the early part of the war.

90. Ibid., p. 277.
91. Ibid., p. 278.
1745 was worse for Virginia shipping than 1744 had been. In July, five French privateers, one having thirty-six guns, took several homeward-bound tobacco ships off the Virginia Capes. Later the same month they snatched up more vessels, at least one of which had been within the Capes. At approximately the same time, the Gunliffe, Captain John Pritchard, left the Bay for Liverpool. Nine leagues north of Cape Clear, Pritchard espied a large snow, with some two hundred men and twenty carriage guns, plus swivel guns—a French privateer of formidable proportions. The enemy already had one prize in tow, and Pritchard hoisted British colors in anticipation of being attacked. A running engagement commenced almost immediately and lasted until noon, when the French drew off. They were back around two o'clock and gave chase, battling determinedly all the while, until five o'clock, when they gave up. Pritchard, meanwhile, had run up a red flag to his mainmast—a timeless signal that quarter would be neither offered nor accepted. It is to be assumed that he finished his journey unmolested. An heroic man, this captain, who had commanded a slow, heavily laden vessel in poor condition and had but twenty-eight men and boys with whom to withstand his adversary. A report of his violent crossing appeared in the Maryland Gazette, July 12, 1745, where he dryly commented: "French Superiority in Numbers is in no wise adequate to true English Courage." The size and strength of the Gunliffe's pursuer was not unusual in a privateer. Pritchard's successful escape, however, seemed to be a solitary achievement in this dismal year. In October 1745 the brig Onslow, intended for London, was captured and carried to Quebec. The December 1745 supplement

93. Ibid., p. 332.
94. Ibid., p. 331.
95. Ibid., p. 299.
to Gentleman's Magazine listed sixteen vessels taken while bound either to
or from the Chesapeake area, several of which were set down as the victims
of two particularly notorious St. Malo privateers, the Sultana and the
Hermione.96 This last indicates that these captures were taking place in
home waters, and not off the Virginia coast. Generally speaking, the war
zone around Great Britain was the most dangerous part of the crossing, as
it would be in future wars.

The years 1746 and 1747 seem to have been reasonably secure ones for
the tobacco trade. They were, at any rate, nothing in comparison with
what had happened in 1745 or was going to happen in 1748. The last year
of the war was a humiliating one for Virginia. In June 1748 a sloop riding
at anchor in the mouth of the York River was boarded and carried away by an
enemy privateer.97 Shortly thereafter, nine vessels were taken in Chesapeake
Bay or off the Capes, one Norfolk schooner being seized and plundered within
sight of the fort at Point Comfort.98 By August 10, 1748, however, the
privateers ceased to be effective. On that date, the Maryland Gazette
announced that it considered the surrounding waters safe.99

The war that began for Britain with the announcement that Captain
Jenkin's ear must be avenged, and was supposed to be a brisk and profitable
piece of colony gathering, had quickly swollen into a vast and complex
bloodletting. The real reasons for its shape and substance were as twisted
as the labyrinthine, malodorous warrens that were the ruling chancellories
and palaces of Europe, where hundreds of sharp-clawed moles burrowed in
secret beneath the rotting foundations of the balance of power. It is
perhaps superfluous to state that the Treaty of Aix-la-Chappelle settled
exactly nothing.

96. Ibid., p. 299.
97. Ibid., pp. 299, 332.
98. Ibid., p. 332.
99. Ibid., p. 333.
To determine the effectiveness of privateering in the last four years of war, it is necessary to turn again to the tobacco export statistics for the Chesapeake colonies (in thousands of pounds):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1745</td>
<td>40,897</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1746</td>
<td>39,567</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1747</td>
<td>50,765</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1748</td>
<td>49,646</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1749</td>
<td>44,190</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750</td>
<td>50,785</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two years of peace are included to demonstrate that the privateers had made small, futile inroads in the tobacco trade. Had they been as effective as their sponsors would have liked, the total poundage exported each year before 1749 should be measurably below that for 1749.

The customs statistics for these years reveal a similar pattern:

Again, there was little variation — and certainly not the precipitous fall that would be expected in a viciously successful maritime war — between war and peace in the amount and value of tobacco that made its way safely to Great Britain.

In terms of the absolute loss of ships to enemy action, the Chesapeake trade suffered less heavily than any other branch of British commerce. It is estimated that some 3000 ships were taken in this war, of which but a small number were Virginiamen. Taking Liverpool as an example — the

101. H. M. Customs and Excise Records microfilm.
records for this port have survived in a more complete form than those for any other locale — the merchants of this city lost between 1739 and 1748 a total of 103 ships. Of this number ten destined for Virginia are known to have fallen victim to enemy privateers, only one of which was taken on its outward passage. It is impossible to tell from the records whether they were captured near the Virginia coast or in British home waters.

As Liverpool was the slaving center for Great Britain, these seizures by the enemy would be severe financial losses as most of them would be carrying human cargo, while the capture of nine Virginiansen almost certainly carrying tobacco would almost come near the loss to be expected from natural hazard: ten percent of all war time losses (and probably the least valuable) and very certainly a much smaller percentage of all Liverpool shipping.

In the breathing space between this war and the one to come, shipping returned to normality in the Chesapeake region. A solitary incident is on record to reveal Virginia's continuing attitude toward that old culprit, Spain. Colonel Thomas Lee, President of the Council, informed the Board of Trade on August 10, 1750, that several Spanish and one Portuguese vessel had taken shelter in Virginia waters during a storm. On September 29, 1750, he reported the condemnation of the unfortunate Spanish ships, as prizes of war. The Portuguese ship was released. Some memories are very long.

For British trade as a whole, two developments occurred. Commerce nearly doubled in volume, and the royal navy increased in size and efficiency. These would be the ingredients of victory at sea in the Great War For The Empire. During the 1740s, England had been, in Alfred Thayer Mahan's estimation, "H mistress now of the seas rather by the weakness of her enemies then by

103. Ibid., p. 371.
her own disciplined strength. . . . "107 The short time between the sorry peace of 1748 and the resumption of war was put to good use, and naval weaknesses were corrected with dispatch. The enemy, meanwhile, prepared to venture all on privateers to harry the shopkeeper nation where pain would most be felt.

War between Britain and France began along the forested spine of the Appalachian frontier. Here where armies of anxious amateurs and bewildered professionals were slaughtered, the seeds sown by incompetent diplomacy, economic rivalry, treachery, and miscalculation bore a harvest of dead men. The maritime war did not begin until after the announcement of hostilities, and this time the terror by sea had a different momentum.

1757 was the most dangerous year for Chesapeake shipping, sufficiently so that Lord Loudoun, commanding in America, laid an embargo on all shipping to Great Britain as of March 10, 1757. "There is not the least probability of getting a Ship on any terms," Jerdone wrote Messers. Alexander Speirs and Hugh Brown, "all manner of Shipping being very Scarce in this Colony," and likely to remain so due to Loudoun's prohibition.108 The embargo ended far sooner than Jerdone anticipated; in mid-May 1757 Lieutenant-Governor Robert Dinwiddie was prevailed upon by the House of Burgesses and his Council to countermand the Earl's orders. "They are unanimous in their Opinion of the absolute Necessity of taking off the Embargo," Dinwiddie reported to Loudoun.109

The tobacco merchants of Britain may not have agreed with the Virginia planters' solution to the vexacious problem of enemy privateers — to sail come what might. In January of 1757, a group of London's most prominent

108. Jerdone to Speirs and Brown, 25 April 1757, Jerdone Letterbooks, II.
tobacco merchants had petitioned the king to better protect their interest, which they deemed "the most Essential Trade" in the nation. In February, the tobacco dealers of Bristol presented the king a petition of their own demanding adequate protection, but with a specific recommendation: more naval vessels should be sent to the Chesapeake. Lord Loudoun's action in March 1757 may have been partly in response to these demands as well as in accord with his own thinking along these lines.

The French had an estimated two hundred privateers at sea in March 1757 and more were under construction. From August 1756 to February 1757 the French took nearly 70 English ships off Antigua alone, and a total of 637 British vessels between that August and July 12, 1757. In this first flush of enemy success, it was inevitable that lifting the embargo in Virginia would result in loss. On July 29, 1757, two Virginians arrived safely in port, but the Peggy, Boyd, and Britannia, all Glasgow bound tobacco ships, were reported lost to the French. Seizures continued, but were so scattered and infrequent as to be unusual. The French had devised a new method for injuring British commerce.

On May 26, 1761, Lloyds' List reported that "Capt. Outram, arriv'd in the River (Thames) from Virginia, was taken the 7th Inst. in lat. 44-30 North, and longit. 36-30 West of London, but ransom'd for 900£." Outram was not the first. In July 1758 the Jenny, Virginia to Dumfries, was taken in passage but "ransomed for 400£." The Bedford, Clyde for Virginia, was seized and released for five hundred guineas. These two instances occurred within a week of each other.

111. Ibid., pp. 334-335.
113. Lloyds' List, 29 July 1757.
114. Ibid., 26 May 1761.
115. Ibid., 4 July 1758.
116. Ibid., 11 July 1758.
This new French policy continued throughout the war. One week after Outram was forced to part with 900L, another ship met a similar fate. The Sunlowa, Virginia to Scotland, was ransomed for 470L.\(^{117}\) A little more than a fortnight later, the Speedwell, destined for Dover, was taken and released for 300L.\(^{118}\) The handsomest sum collected by this means was 1400L, delivered for the release of the Betty, bound for Clyde, in December 1761.\(^{119}\)

The simultaneous seizure and ransom of the Katherine and the Prince William, the later for 2990 guineas, both destined for Glasgow, by a French man-of-war clearly indicates that this was not just a profitable twist to an old method in privateering (the Betty had fallen to private parties), but, if not official French policy, at least very nearly so.\(^{120}\) By ransoming their victims, the French collected a good deal of money — which would injure their enemies while enriching themselves — and made it possible to repeat the same process again and again.

Nevertheless, this practice was impolitic and shortsighted in the extreme, for ships turned free continued in their profitable trade. Britain's merchant marine in 1760 numbered some 8000 sail; between 1760 and the war's end, the French captured an estimated 1/10th. Between 1756 and 1760, approximately 2500 ships had fallen prey to the enemy, making a total loss of some 3300 vessels. In this same time period, 1756-1760, the British seized approximately 950 French ships.\(^{121}\) French losses were not greater for two reasons: the British blockade of their coast made getting out of port difficult, and Britain's successful land campaigns steadily decreased the number of places where the French normally traded.

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In naval strength the two warring nations were unequally matched. In 1761, after years of fighting, Britain had 120 ships-of-the-line in commission and more in reserve; her losses in this year were one ship-of-the-line, captured and immediately retaken, and one cutter. The French had seventy-seven ships-of-the-line in 1758, thirty-five of which were lost in 1759, twenty-seven as prizes and eight totally destroyed. 122

It is very likely, then, that the French policy of ransoming ships rather than making prizes of them, although captures were not abandoned altogether, was in response to the pressing need for funds. Whether Virginia tobacco ships were a particular target for this form of sea-going extortion is difficult to discover, but it is certain that they suffered fewer permanent captures than other branches of British trade. For example, Liverpool, whose shipping had doubled between 1748 and 1756, had five known losses from 1756 to 1763 in the Virginia trade — down five from the previous war and well within the percentage of loss to be expected from natural causes. 123

Import figures for the war years show little change from peacetime (in thousands of pounds):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1751</td>
<td>45,714</td>
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<tr>
<td>1752</td>
<td>56,591</td>
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<td>48,610</td>
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<td>32,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>41,512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1758</td>
<td>43,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1759</td>
<td>34,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1760</td>
<td>51,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1761</td>
<td>45,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1762</td>
<td>42,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1763</td>
<td>64,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1764</td>
<td>53,662</td>
</tr>
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</table>

122. Ibid., pp. 312, 319.
The rise and fall of the annual export figures for tobacco in this
decade and a half, like those for the previous cycles of war and peace,
bear very little relationship to the presence of the enemy. The great
agricultural historian, Lewis Cecil Gray, examined the figures on gross
revenue from the English tobacco customs and found a slight decrease in
the volume of imports for the years 1754-1763. These statistics did not
include the customs revenue from Scotland — where the trade was increasing —
and Gray, therefore, saw no reason to believe that the tobacco trade was badly
injured by the Seven Years War.125 This estimate is perfectly sound.

Virginia's transoceanic shipping suffered from enemy privateering in
this war but not nearly as badly as the commerce of other parts of the
empire. There was only one recorded incident to match the humiliating
episode of the last war when the enemy slipped into the mouth of the York
River and snatched his prey like a thief in the night. In August 1761 the
schooner Peggy of Hampton was seized and plundered by a French privateer of
eight carriage and twelve swivel guns while crossing Chesapeake Bay to Oxford
on Maryland's Eastern Shore.126

There may well have been a particular reason, a very good reason, why
Virginians were molested with noticeable infrequency. Lieutenant-Governor
Gooch notified the Board of Trade on August 19, 1737, that two agents of
the French Farmers-General had arrived in Maryland "to enter into Contract
with the Planters to purchase there & in this Colony 15,000 bds of Oronoco
Tobacco, for the Account of the French Farmers of that Commodity." As the
French proposed "no other Method of carrying on this Trade, but what is

125. Lewis C. Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860,
126. Middleton, Tobacco Coast, p. 335.
strictly agreeable to the Laws of Navigation, I can foresee no inconvenience in the Project, except the loss it will be to the British Merchants in the profit they now make . . . ."\textsuperscript{127} The contract for Oronoco was duly entered into, and the French agents reappeared thereafter with clock-like periodicity.\textsuperscript{128}

War did not end this profitable dealing, although direct trade was no longer permissible. Instead, tobacco was shipped to France under an Order-in-Council permitting British American tobacco "to be exported from any of the Ports of Great Britain to the Ports of France."\textsuperscript{129} There was some delay between the war's start and the issuance of this order, but by September 13, 1744, the collector for the port of Whitehaven was writing to the British Board of Customs concerning "Mr How a Considerable mercht here and agent to the Farmers General of France having Demands upon the Collector for Tobacco exported amounting to £3573.10.83/4."\textsuperscript{130}

The Scottish Board of Customs began to issue papers to ships wishing to export tobacco to France soon after August 5, 1745, and thereafter a steady stream of applications for passes appear in the records.\textsuperscript{131} The Privy Council itself issued nine trade permits on May 2, 1748.\textsuperscript{132}

Upon the outbreak of the Seven Years War, the Scottish Board noted receipt of a letter from the Clerk of the Privy Council authorizing passes to export tobacco for two ships "in the like manner, and form, as was done during the last War."\textsuperscript{133} The practice of sending tobacco to the enemy began in earnest in February 1757, and the request for passes which began as a gentle snowstorm quickly became a blizzard. By 1763, some fifty passes

\textsuperscript{127} Gooch to Board of Trade, 19 August 1737, Gooch Papers, II, p. 480.
\textsuperscript{129} Scottish Board of Customs Minutes, 5 August 1745, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{130} Collector to Board of Customs, 13 September 1744, British Board of Customs Correspondence, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{131} Scottish Board of Customs Minutes, pp. 72, 83, 96, 100, 105, 146.
\textsuperscript{133} Scottish Board of Customs Minutes, 24 August 1756.
were issued. The Privy Council issued over fifty permits in 1756-1757; in George III, Volume I, 48 a notation was inserted that passes would run in the new sovereign's name without change of form. In Volume II, fifty-one permits were authorized, two of them for trade to Spain. On November 3, 1762, twenty-three days before the cessation of arms, the Spanish tobacco trade was placed on the same level as that with France.134

It is clear that by the 1750s commerce in Cronoco had become of sufficient mutual profit that it was permitted to flourish regardless of war between France and Britain. An example of this attitude can be found in a letter from the Glasgow firm of Stevenson and Laird to Neil Jamieson on June 16, 1762: "We wrote you the 3d April we then Intended the Port Glasgow Strait out to you but our Comp thought it best to take a french trip for her in the Middle of Summer by which means it would put her more out of the Way of Privateers and to Return to you in the fall ..."135 The French were the enemy, to be feared, but they were also valuable customers and little connection was made between these two sides of the Gallic foe. Herein well may lay part of the reason for the small losses suffered by Virginia's shipping, particularly during the Great War For The Empire.

CHAPTER IV
THE HUMAN ELEMENT AND SHIPPING LOSSES

On the whole, considering the extent of the British possessions and the subsequent demands upon the royal navy, Virginia’s tobacco trade was quite well protected. Two methods were employed — cruising and convoy — and both, while noticeably imperfect and subject to sudden fits and lapses, were usually more than adequate under the circumstances. Unless cornered or unusually foolhardy, neither pirates nor privateers would do battle with the regular navy. A man-of-war was nearly always on duty in Virginia, although the Lords of the Admiralty deemed a twenty-gun ship sufficient protection. Generally, their judgment was correct.

Virginians could hardly be expected to agree, however, particularly when war made it difficult to know what might be lurking just beyond the Capes, and mighty and persistent effort and a good deal of ink was expended in an attempt to get a better, a larger or another guardship on the Chesapeake station.

Lieutenant-Governor Robert Dinwiddie, a chronically nervous administrator who cherished an habitual, firm belief that the enemy was waiting just out of sight, began to demand further protection of the Admiralty as early as 1754.136 By 1756, he was writing frantically to Lord Loudoun:

My Id we are a very open Colony witht any Fortificate yt a Privateer may come in & robb the Plantats now

136. Dinwiddie to Admiralty, 12 March 1754, Dinwiddie Papers.
the watch Ship is gone to N. Scotia, it wd be of
great Service if You wd please speak to the
Comodore of the King's Ships now at N York to
send us two of the Ships to protect our Coast
for as the Fr. are greatly in want of Proviss in
ye Islands it's not improbable but they may send
some Privateers here on purpose for Proviss &
take some of our Trade coming or going for Britn."137

This request being ignored with his previous letters, Dinwiddie wrote to
the Board of Trade in January 1757 giving his reasons why another guardship
was imperative and concluding "I doubt not yr Idps will think with me that
these Colonies require & deserve a better Protection than one single 20 Gun
Ship."138

On the same day that this letter was written, two nearly identical
missives were sent to Lord Halifax and to the parliamentary chief, Henry Fox.139
On May 14, 1757, Dinwiddie wrote to the new war leader, William Pitt, to
protest the assignment of but one twenty-gun warship — convoying troops
and stores to South Carolina as his clerks penned his words — and
requesting more guardships.140 Similar furious letters were sent a month
later to Lord Halifax and to General James Abercrombie,141 and on June 20, 1757,
he again wrote to Pitt, and this time he did not hesitate to beg for the naval
strength he deemed necessary:

For the sake of these valuable Collonies I humbly
intreat that some Ships of Warr be immediately
sent out for our Protection, as we are an open
Country with'th any Fortificatns to the Sea, that
two or 3 Privateers may come within our Capes,
ravage & plunder the Plантatns at their Pleasure
being an extensive Country where the Militia

137. Dinwiddie to Lord Loudoun, 1 July 1756, Dinwiddie Papers.
138. Dinwiddie to Board of Trade, 14 January 1757, Dinwiddie Papers.
139. Dinwiddie to Lord Halifax, Dinwiddie to Henry Fox, 14 January 1757,
Dinwiddie Papers.
140. Dinwiddie to William Pitt, 14 May 1757, Dinwiddie Papers.
141. Dinwiddie to Lord Halifax, Dinwiddie to James Abercrombie, 20 June 1757,
Dinwiddie Papers.
cannot possibly protect the whole from the Depredations that a few Privateers may make on different Parts of this Domini. 142

The Admiralty, Pitt, Halifax, and the others made no move to dispatch another ship to Virginia. The Seven Years War taxed Britain's resources in a manner seldom known, and the money for another guardship, presuming one could be spared from duty elsewhere, would be difficult to obtain. Admiralty records of the 1720s containing accounts for the Virginia station indicate the approximate cost for cleaning and refitting three ships:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Time on Station</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H. M. S. Tartar</td>
<td>Feb. 1725-</td>
<td>197.1.113/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 1726</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov. 1726-</td>
<td>220.11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 1727</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov. 1727-</td>
<td>121.19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apr. 1728</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. M. S. Shark</td>
<td>Apr. 1727-</td>
<td>33.0.2\frac{1}{2}\</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(sloop)</td>
<td>Sept. 1727</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. M. S. Biddlesford</td>
<td>Apr.-May 1728</td>
<td>89.1.3\frac{1}{4}\</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sloop H. M. S. Lynn crossed from Britain to Virginia between June 12, 1726, and August 24, 1726. The voyage cost 1269.8.11\frac{1}{2}, and the account was not settled with the Treasury until January 6, 1730/1.144 Since it can be reasonably assumed that expenses had risen in the meanwhile, it is not difficult to understand reluctance in the Lords of the Admiralty to spend the king's money when they had no reason to believe they needed to. That they did not believe Virginia in need of immediate attention is clear from their response in the previous war when the dark year 1748 had required two

144. Admiralty Records, 1/3624-3652.
large warships. The H. M. S. Looe and H. M. S. Hector had been sent immediately and cruised so effectively that within months the enemy privateers who had hung like a noxious mist about the Virginia Capes had disappeared. So many prisoners were taken — the Hector in company with the sloop Otter once brought six prizes into Hampton Roads — that Lieutenant-Governor Gooch was obliged to hire the Mermaid to convoy them to Havana for exchange.145

The Admiralty, then, was not averse to providing adequate protection. A twenty-gun man-of-war was considered enough, and usually was. The guard-ship patrolled the coast, and when the cruising season ended often provided convoy escort to Britain.

It would be well at this point to say something about the convoy system: it was a success despite the best efforts of those whom it was designed to protect to wreck it. The lot of the convoy escort was arduous, exasperating, and thoroughly miserable. The men-of-war had no authority over the ship masters, who usually behaved in a very highhanded manner, as no degree of impertinence or deliberate insubordination was illegal and irate convoy commanders who thought that they ought to be were told that the Admiralty could not ask for such a bill. Ship captains very often came out too heavily laden, or in an unfit condition for the crossing, and once at sea often refused to heed signals and even cannon shot across the bow. Slow ships expected the pace to be set for them, while everyone who could pushed far ahead in an effort to reach port first. Inevitably, these stragglers were picked up by privateers who hung about waiting for just such a contingency.146 Alfred Thayer Mahan listed inattention to convoy escorts'
orders as the primary cause of shipping losses in the Seven Years War. He was right.

There were, of course, occasional accidents on convoys — foundering, scattering due to storms, and so on — and such appears to have been the case with the Supply. Captain Downs commanding, "who was so unlucky after sailing with Convoy as to be separated therefrom & to be taken ...." Downs was retaken by the British, so he proved luckier than most prizes.

Virginia had less to fear from the sea than at first glance would appear to be the case. There remains, then, the not atypical letters of Robert Dinwiddie to be explained. Dinwiddie was not Virginia's best lieutenant-governor, but not its worst either. He was competent, efficient, and careful and the particular urgency, even the vehemence, of his letters reveal very clearly that his perpetual concern was based upon psychological considerations. Nearly every inch of Virginia's coast line is vulnerable to assault of some sort, and it was rarely provided with fortifications. The House of Burgesses simply would not appropriate sufficient funds to maintain forts at the principal river mouths, and such places as Fort George on Point Comfort were usually more fit for the habitation of rats and water moccasins than for a garrison. Accordingly, the lieutenant-governors upon whom fell the burden of defending this extensive and valuable dominion were forced to rely almost exclusively upon the station ships of war.

Coupled with this dependence was the chronic fear that the enemy would come in force to ravage and plunder. Fear of invasion which never materialized (and to a much lesser degree of pirates long gone) haunted the imagination of the authorities in Virginia, and was a constant fear in the people. In

147. Mahan, Influence of Seapower; p. 319.
the spring of 1745, while the guardship was temporarily absent, the rumor spread that a French fleet of seven warships and twenty-eight transports was preparing to invade.\textsuperscript{149} A panic resulted. The Lords of the Admiralty did not share in these anxieties and did not understand them, and their attitude was interpreted in Virginia as neglectful, indifferent, and careless—hence, the tone of Dinwiddie’s letters.

Dinwiddie wrote to Commodore Richard Spry, royal naval commander in North America, on May 24, 1756, in a letter that illuminates the state of mind in Virginia:

This comes by Capt. Arbuthnot who being under your Orders to proceed for Halifax cou’d not be prevail’d upon to remain on his Station, his going gives great Uneasiness, as you know our Colony is much expos’d having no Fortifications, that Privateers may do what they please, having nothing to resist them, upon which Account I hope you will immediately order Capt. Arbuthnot back to his Station, for we shall be under great Fears and Apprehensions during his Absence.\textsuperscript{150}

Arbuthnot remained in Halifax. In a letter of June 20, 1757, to William Pitt, Dinwiddie put his fears into explicit form: "... But what we fear is an Invasn by Sea, & we have not our King’s Ship here, the Garland station’d here is employed in Convoying Troops to the Assistn of So Carolina, & I am humbly of Opin that these two valuable Colonies of Virgina & Maryland are greatly neglected in having only one 20 Gun Ship on this Station."\textsuperscript{151}

That most of Dinwiddie’s fears were for the potential rather than for the actual can be demonstrated by two letters written as war was beginning. On March 12, 1754, Dinwiddie replied to a letter from John Cleveland,

\textsuperscript{149} Purdie’s \textit{Virginia Gazette} (Williamsburg), 23 May 1745.
\textsuperscript{150} Dinwiddie to Richard Spry, 24 May 1756, Dinwiddie Papers.
\textsuperscript{151} Dinwiddie to William Pitt, 20 June 1757, Dinwiddie Papers.
Secretary to the Admiralty: "Yr two Letters I read the first in answer to my Letr to their Ids recomending two Ships of War on this Sta: (illegible) of Myld: it is true we have no Pirates on this Coast as yet, & hope we shall not, but if that shd be the Case it will be too late to write home." 152

In February 1756, in the course of a discussion with the Board of Trade on the state of Virginia's paper currency, Dinwiddie proposed that coin of the realm be imported, putting forward several arguments in support of this scheme and concluding "(H)or can I see yt there is much Risque in sendig the Money, as any of the Station Ships of War may be ordered to bring it out ...." 153

The amount of gold that would be needed to finance transactions in Virginia could conceivably be brought out in one vessel — provided it were a ship-of-the-line. A guardship of twenty guns would be inadequate protection for a cargo sure to attract every sea-going criminal on the North American coast, most of whom would muster at least twenty guns themselves. The explanation for these two letters must be that the fears which plagued Dinwiddie were primarily for the possible, not for the probable or the certain.

It is curious that Dinwiddie did not do what Lieutenant-Governor Gooch had done when the station ship was absent during the War of Jenkin's Ear — commission privateers to cruize the coast in lieu of a naval vessel. 154 On another occasion, Gooch simply exercised his authority as a vice-admiral to countermand orders from the station commander to the Virginia guardship which would have sent it to Louisbourg. Instead, the astonished naval captain was sent to "immediately take a Cruize directly for the Protection of the Trade." 155

152. Dinwiddie to John Cleveland, 12 March 1756, Dinwiddie Papers.
153. Dinwiddie to Board of Trade, 23 February 1756, Dinwiddie Papers.
Dimwiddie probably had a reason for not doing as Gooch had done — Gooch had a little better ground for his actions than Dimwiddie had for his demands, but not by much — but whatever his motive was has not come to light. Perhaps the time for such behavior had passed. His fears, however, were reflected in the mercantile community, and an indication of their state of mind at any given time is provided by two price indexes — freight rates and insurance premiums.

A merchant named John Bannister, testifying before the House of Commons in 1738, stated that tobacco paid a freight rate of from £4 to £5 per ton.156 This was a gross underestimation. In 1720-1721, the normal rate was £8 to £10, usually the latter.157 The normal rate from 1722 onwards was £7 10s to £8 for Virginia, £7 for Maryland.158 In war time these rates rose precipitously and in direct relation to the degree of danger believed to exist.

An example of this type of thinking is provided by two advertisements in the *Maryland Gazette*. In 1727, when rumors of war with Spain were especially prevalent, one captain loading tobacco set his rate at £7, or at £10 if war were declared. Again in 1734, when the same war rumors were being heard, seven captains took note of them, one announcing his rate as £7 if no war were "Proclaimed in England before the departure of the said Ship out of this Province," in which case he would charge £12.159

Spain had a history of setting privateers upon Virginia's coast war or no war. Therefore, the danger from them would not alter with a formal declaration of hostilities; in fact, considering Spain's steadily weakening

condition which would by 1760 render her maritime threat very nearly zero, the degree of real menace to be expected from this quarter was most surely minimal. The real cause for adjusting rates upward — and the peculiar wording of the advertisements makes this clear — was psychological.

This same reasoning process is evident in the sharp rise in freight costs for Maryland (roughly similar to those from Virginia, which were probably slightly higher) when Spain entered the Seven Years War in 1762. In August 1762 £10 was the asking price; in September 1762 the price was £13. In October 1762 the rates fell to £11.60 Spain's pathetic showing in this war makes it clear that she was a threat to no one, and had the potential for endangering nothing. The sharp rise and the equally swift fall in freight rates was all a question of fear.

This is not to state that there were no legitimate reasons for rate increases. In war time, seamen's wages rose (and usually more hands were signed on), and insurance premiums went up. Shipping being disrupted by embargoes, waiting in port for convoy and other problems, and financial crises in Britain, such as the severe one in the winter of 1745-1746, all contributed to freight rises.161 But all this was aggravated by privateers and, equally or perhaps more importantly, by the fear of privateers. As an example of this last, John Hanbury informed John Custis on March 7, 1745, that shipping for Virginia was hard to get on any terms, and that some ships were asking £16 per ton.162 In this same time period, the rate being asked in Maryland by ship captains was £12.163

Freight rates in Maryland during the War of Jenkin's Ear rose little

162. John Hanbury to John Custis, 7 March 1745, Custis Papers.
until November 1744, when they went from £9 to £12, and in October 1746
rose to £14. By April 1748 they were £16, dropping sharply to £12 in
June 1748 — one month before the Maryland Gazette announced it considered
the Chesapeake safe and two months before the H. M. S. Hector brought in
its six prizes — and to £8 in October 1748. In Virginia, rates would
be somewhat higher; in January 1744/5 a price of £12 was reported as
40 percent below the usual rate. The highest rates reflect the time when
privateers were most active (or believed to be around), decreasing instantly
when the royal navy sent two guardships, and dropping to almost normal levels
with their activities plus a small 1747 crop and planter refusal to pay
exorbitant rates once real danger lessened. This last reason casts a
somewhat suspicious light on high freight rates altogether. An all-the-
traffic-will-bear attitude may have played its part.

Between 1749 and 1755, the Maryland rate was £7, which means that
Virginia had no doubt returned to around the same level. In 1756, the
price began to rise — between £8 10s and £10 by 1757, between £12 and
£14 by 1761, falling to £10 in mid-1762. Then Spain entered the war and
the rates rose briskly, to fall as quickly. Again, Virginia's rates
were higher — Francis Jerdone notified the firm of Speirs and Brown in
October 1757 that he would try to load for £12-£13, but doubted if he could.

That many of these rates were unnecessarily inflated is shown by a
letter to Neil Jamieson dated November 20, 1761, from Glasgow, which shows
that at least one Scots firm was shipping tobacco from Norfolk for £7 10s
per ton — normal rates. This would never have been done if the danger

164. Ibid., pp. 177-183.
165. Jerdone to Freeman Partridge, 23 January 1744/5, Jerdone Letterbooks, I.
168. Jerdone to Speirs and Brown, 25 October 1757, Jerdone Letterbooks, II.
from privateers had been as formidable as the very high rates (£12 to £14) would indicate. The answer seems to be that not the knowledge that privateers were about but the fear that they might be was acting upon the men who determined freight rates.

Insurance premiums were another gauge of the prevailing level of fear in the merchant community. Insurance underwriters, however, were a special class, for the tobacco merchants had to continue shipping except in cases of extreme risk but the assurance societies could and did refuse to venture their capital. On some occasions insurance was refused altogether. John Glassford wrote to Neil Jamieson from Glasgow in August 1761 "By the Samuell John McBride Master on which we endeavoured to get Insurance today but to no purpose as the underwriters here will name no premium on Acct of the french Ships of war that were on the Coast of Virginia on the beginning of July and are uncertain when they would leave it . . ."170

In the previous war, in May 1744, insurance rates rose from the peace-time norm of 3 or 4 percent to 12 and 15 percent for the outward passage and 20 to 25 percent for homeward passage. In September 1744, London brokers refused to insure Chesapeake bound vessels and Bristol's underwriters wanted 40 or 50 percent.171 According to Lloyds' List, seizures were few in 1744, and none occurred in September. (It is possible that this refusal to issue policies or to issue only for prohibitive rates helped lessen captures by keeping ships in port — which is one way to save them from privateers).

Merchants and the underwriters did not always agree upon what degree of real danger, if any, existed. Francis Jerdone, who was not careless with anyone's property, wrote to Messers. Morgan Thomas and Company in February 1758,

171. Middleton, Tobacco Coast, pp. 299-300.
when freight would be around £14, concerning goods to be sent "on which I would only have you insure £100 being inclinable to risque the remainder my self, as the premium is so excessive high & in the opinion of many the risque not very great." It would appear that the chances of becoming a prize decreased in direct proportion to the length of time spent with an escort. In 1757, Chesapeake bound vessels received a 3 percent abatement if they sailed with the Channel convoy, 5 percent if they came with the West Indian convoy and 7 percent if they waited for the Virginia fleet. In 1762, John Parke Custis was charged £31.4.0 premium for £348 insurance on twenty-nine hogsheads of tobacco, "warranted to Sail with Convoy for the Voyage" to London -- a rate of eight guineas per ton which, with the convoy abatement, would bring the cost very near a reasonable rate.

These instances are an eloquent testimonial to the effectiveness of the convoy system, but they also reveal the extreme wariness of the British underwriters. There is no evidence that the convoy system was any less effective during those periods when they declined to insure. Jerdone's letter makes it clear that there was not always a close correlation between premiums demanded by insurance companies and the degree of danger from the enemy. Nor was there necessarily any correlation between the risk estimation of one city's brokers and those of another city's. Jerdone wrote Speirs and Brown in 1758: "Let me remark that your high premium of Insurance from Glasgow of £13 p c et & at this time only 5 guineas from London, is a great loss to your town in the Sale of Glasgow goods here."

173. Jerdone to Capt. Hugh Crawford, 10 December 1757, Jerdone Letterbooks, II.
174. Robert Cary and Co. to John Parke Custis, 18 November 1762, Custis Papers.
175. Jerdone to Speirs and Brown, 10 June 1758, Jerdone Letterbooks, II.
Taken alone, insurance rates indicate how much of a threat the enemy was deemed to be, not how much he actually was.

Shipping between Virginia and Britain, then, was affected by the frame of mind of the people involved no less than by actual conditions. Whether one could venture safely upon the seas was a question not just of what was, but of what might be. Many ingredients went into forming this mental state, and the most curious was philosophical.

Those political beliefs which have become known as the Old Whig philosophy were engrained deeply in the colonial mind, very deeply. Among the records of tobacco shipments, the letters of merchants, and the journals of official bodies, there appears an occasional odd sentence or inexplicable act which reveals a side of commercial Virginia that would reappear in adult form with the Stamp Act crisis. The illuminating words are infrequent but they are clear and precise and point out the way in which Virginia would move most accurately.

In 1741, the naval guardship was temporarily gone. Accordingly, the Council of Virginia authorized two sloops to be fitted out as "Private Sloops of War to annoy the Enemy as occasion Shall offer; and that they be kept in the Said Service for three Months and no Longer." Notice the peculiar wording of that last phrase. There were good reasons for not wishing to use private means of defense any longer than necessary — the naval ship would be back soon, and the cost was prodigious, $1697.18.0. It is the unusual, vehement wording that strikes the eye. This was war time and the need for protection obvious, but something else was being considered, something equally as important as the war.

In 1757, Lord Loudoun laid an embargo upon colonial shipping to Great Britain. His intention was to protect British American trade. In Virginia, Lieutenant-Governor Dinwiddie was prevailed upon to lift the prohibition in May 1757 upon "the pressing Solicitations of Councill No: of Burgesses, & Petitions from Nos of People all over the Dominion." In July 1757 Dinwiddie wrote in reply to an angry letter from Loudoun demanding to know the reason for this act of sabotage.

Dinwiddie, at the time he lifted the embargo, had been in urgent need of money to raise troops for Loudoun. The House of Burgesses had adamantly refused to appropriate any money until and unless the embargo was removed. But their reason was not the inconvenience or expense being incurred. The Burgesses, Dinwiddie explained, were questioning the legality of the embargo and were beginning to debate the government's right to impose one. The rights of Englishmen had somehow become involved in a matter that began as a security measure and quickly became instead a question of right, ancient, immutable, and threatened. The safety of the colony, its trade and its borders were of no interest to the Burgesses compared with this intangible -- the Rights of Englishmen. Dinwiddie lifted the embargo because he feared to dispute abstractions, and because he felt it was easier, and wiser, to yield than to tread on dangerous and very thin ice.

In this fierce, incredible, brief dispute almost ignored by history the more astute could have seen a distant finger writing on a shadowy wall of loyalty a message of simple and devastating force: the Rights of Englishmen. Even in the midst of the Great War For The Empire, on a subject that was the colony's very life, certain steps no man might take no matter how useful or desirable or to how good an end.

178. Dinwiddie to Lord Loudoun, 6 May 1757, Dinwiddie Papers.
179. Dinwiddie to Lord Loudoun, 9 July 1757, Dinwiddie Papers.
CONCLUSION

Upon an intensive examination of all available evidence, it is apparent that Virginia's trade with Great Britain between 1734 and 1764 was profitable, relatively secure, and generally unmolested. Of the four major threats to commerce, one, natural hazard, was a constant and a low factor: they who went down to the sea had every reason to believe that the sea would not hinder their crossing. The second danger, pirates, was a matter of history by 1730, and only memories, legends, and the continual fear that they might return remained of a once deadly crew: they had been a tough lot, but all were gone now.

The third menace from the sea, privateers, was a more serious matter: they took a respectable toll of Virginia's commerce, and their presence was a factor to give pause to the most reckless. But for every privateer who proved a danger, who gathered in ships and carried off prisoners, there were dozens who lurked in vain. The presence of the naval guardships and the practice of sailing in convoy discouraged and scattered privateers, and Lloyds' List is eloquent testimony to the small, almost negligible, effect of the guerre d'course as applied to Virginia.

There remains the fourth, and perhaps the most deadly, threat to Virginia's trade: human failing. The practice of coming out of port too heavily laden for the journey or of pressing as far in advance of escorting naval vessels as possible nearly defeated the purpose of convoying fleets, and both practices were overt manifestations of avarice — against whose
ravaging affects no one can expect his government to provide protection. The chronic, irrational fear that invasion would come had a debilitating effect: panic never served a state well.

Wildly fluctuating freight rates and insurance rates and the dangerous game of guessing levels of danger were costly, confusing, cumbersome, and unnecessary. There was no real correlation between what insurance brokers and ship captains charged for their services and the amount of danger they professed to face, or believed that they must face.

Virginia's commerce was little injured by war, her relations with Great Britain were uninterruptedly commercial — the colony grew its crop and the Mother Country saw that it got to market. This pattern was strained, shaken, but never broken, and rarely lessened. When the end came, it would not be because Britain had failed Virginia, but because she was trying to fit the colony more snugly into the fabric of empire.

Virginia would disrupt her own trade, by choosing, as she did over Lord Loudoun's embargo, an abstraction to a tangible, philosophy to profit. The commercial relations between Britain and Virginia perished from an idea.
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