The Lost Cause of Unionism: How Greenville Became a Failed Stronghold of Unionism in Antebellum South Carolina

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THE LOST CAUSE OF UNIONISM: HOW GREENVILLE BECAME A FAILED STRONGHOLD OF UNIONISM IN ANTEBELLUM SOUTH CAROLINA

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts.
History

by
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Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

Greenville County, South Carolina was created in the aftermath of the Revolutionary War. The boundaries that define Greenville follow the natural topography of its mountains and rivers, but also permanently mark its relationship with the historic location of the Cherokee Nation as well as distinguishing it from North Carolina. Through the Regulation Movement and the Revolutionary War, the politics of the backcountry of South Carolina were molded by the men who occupied and laid claim to the land. The primary driver of political decisions was the protection and expansion of personal and community economics.

In this paper I argue that the economic motivations for the founding of Greenville continue to define the political persuasions of the county through the antebellum period. While this economic drive is true of the entirety of South Carolina from its inception as a proprietary colony, I argue that the same motivations in Greenville often caused it to veer off course from the majority politics of the remainder of the state. I trace this divergence from the Regulator Movement, through the tendency to remain loyal to the British during the Revolutionary War period and into the Nullification Crisis when Greenville stood as a last hope of Unionism until the eve of Secession.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to humbly thank the Clemson History Department for allowing me the opportunity to pursue this dream of attending graduate school. Also, the members of my committee, Drs. Morris, Catalano and Pickett, who patiently listened as I attempted to formulate the argument and structure of this paper. I truly could not have finished without each of your guidance and encouragement. Thank you.

And to my family. Every minute spent on this is a minute stolen from you all. I truly, deeply thank you for allowing me the freedom to do this work. I love you.
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INTRODUCTION

The Dark Corner of Greenville County is a rugged pocket of land spotted with multi-generational family peach orchards, ramshackle homesteads, multi-million homes and award-winning golf courses. Its name evokes images of Prohibition era moonshine stills and hair bend turn car chases of bootleggers by local law men. In fact, the origin of its moniker stretches back much further to a time when liquor was legal, but South Carolina was already bucking the perceived unfairness of federal regulation and taxation. Within fifty years of its creation in 1786 as an American county on the site of ceded Cherokee lands, Greenville was spoiling South Carolina’s dress rehearsal for its best-known act: Secession from the United States. The Nullifiers were whipping up support for a call to convention in order to nullify the Federal Tariff of 1828, sometimes called the “Tariff of Abominations”, and prevent federal agents from collecting it within the borders of South Carolina. No matter their tactics, though, they could not tip the scale for support in Greenville, leading John C. Calhoun to moan that the light of Nullification would never shine in that dark corner.

From the earliest days of human occupation, the area that has come to be known as the Upstate of South Carolina has been a contested site with boundary lines almost continually drawn and redrawn. The Cherokee and Catawba nations battled ferociously for the land between the Saluda and Broad Rivers, eventually designating it to be
unoccupied, mutually accessible hunting grounds.\footnote{Huff, Jr., Archie Vernon, *Greenville: The History of the City and County in the South Carolina Piedmont.* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 4-5.} Spanish expedition forces tramped through in search of precious metals and wealthy chiefdoms leaving pathogens and Catholic missions in their wake. As the various European states continued to struggle legislatively and militarily for rights to the tract of land stretching from 31 to 36 degrees from Atlantic to Pacific and began to clash more frequently and violently with the Indigenous groups attempting to maintain their rights as the first occupants, the boundaries of South Carolina began to emerge. Though hazy and fraught, social and economic hierarchies, geographic definitions and racial boundaries become visible in the written record.

The British over time and with much loss of life and property finally established a tenuous dominance among the European powers in South Carolina. Many of the earliest British arrivals to the backcountry squatted beyond the land acquired for British settlement by George Pawley in 1747. The Cherokee boundary was strengthened by the Royal Proclamation of 1763 intended to prevent further bloodshed caused by the European encroachment of Native American lands. The portion of land not deeded to Britain and still remaining under the sovereign control of the Cherokee nation was, somewhat ironically, enforced by militia firmly entrenched on the land belonging to Indigenous nations against whom the trespass was committed. With the success of the American Revolutionary War the British were displaced by the newly independent United States of America, opening a new chapter of governance and economic drive.
Facing a momentous debt following the Revolutionary War the government of South Carolina proposed selling land above the fall line to raise capital.\(^2\)

The 1820s were a time of tremendous infrastructure building and improvement throughout the entirety of the young nation and South Carolina in particular. The military presence already established deep into the interior and pushing steadily west kept barely a beat ahead of the influx of Americans arriving ready to snatch up lands recently confiscated from Indigenous people and Loyalists as a result of the Revolutionary War.\(^3\)

The state legislation in Columbia desperately pursued every avenue for economic growth to combat the massive debt the state faced and continued to accrue in an attempt to pave the way for economic expansion. This desperate search for funding enabled the fervor for personal economic gain among those people relocating steadily farther from the monied town and plantation sprawl of Charleston and the increasingly land-poor northeastern states.

Charleston had, arguably, been in economic decline since the mid 1700’s although it retained the majority of the political and economic clout within the state. With the relocation of the political capital of the state to Columbia in 1786, the visionaries of the Upstate finally gained a foothold in the landscape of power. To support this power as well as the new staple crop of cotton which was exploding onto the market in the late 1700’s, the landscape across the state had to be changed to support the economic and


\(^3\) For a detailed look at the centrality of the military’s presence to expansion and building of America after the Revolutionary War see William D. Adler’s *Engineering Expansion: The U.S. Army and Economic Development, 1878-1860* (2021).
population expansion all across the Upstate. However, in Greenville environmental change came more often in the construction of mills and building of inns, the building roads and bridges to support the drover trade moving cattle, horses and turkeys from the west, and ferry crossings and turnpikes to encourage the ever increasing number of summer visitors making their annual pilgrimage away from the sweltering Charleston heat. Large scale cotton agriculture was not suited to a great deal of the topography of Greenville County which then produced an elite class whose economic interests were different than the planter elite of the rest of the state.

I argue in this thesis that from the arrival of the first Anglo-Americans until the eve of the Civil War, the residents in what is now Greenville County in the backcountry of South Carolina consistently and intentionally opposed the political majority of the state. However, rather than ideological or moral differences I argue that the citizens of Greenville were motivated to contradict the rest of South Carolina by the same motivating force that was driving the remainder of the state. Economic prosperity built on the system of chattel slavery was at the root of every political movement prior to Emancipation, but it drove Greenville in a divergent path from the remainder of the state. I also explore the ways in which a legacy of extralegal violence contributed to the political leanings of the state and created an environment that bolstered support for Nullification and ultimately Secession.

Scholarship of South Carolina runs the gamut in attempting to orient the intertwined and often contradictory narratives of the roughly three hundred years of recorded histories leading up to, arguably, the defining moment of South Carolinian
history with the issuing of the Declaration of Succession from the Union in 1860. It is no wonder that given the complexity of the sources that the scope of early South Carolina research is often limited to Charleston, Beaufort and the coastal regions. Even terms like frontier, backcountry and hinterland when used in relation to South Carolina’s early days as a European colony and into the antebellum period create confusion. Large inland tracks of land along the Savannah and PeeDee Rivers following the same development trends (cattle to rice and indigo cultivated by enslaved labor) as those in Charleston had experienced one hundred years earlier are considered the South Carolina frontier by much of the academic scholarship. These township and plantation lands less than two hundred miles from Charleston and well below the fall line are environmentally similar to the lands surrounding the original European settlements of Beaufort and Charleston and maintained their political and economic ties to the wealth and power of the coast. In contrast, the similarities of the Upstate to the established cultural capitals of South Carolina are few. From the composition of the soil, to the rapid and shallow-flowing rivers, to the near proximity of relatively powerful Indigenous nations, the Upstate provides a more probable candidate for the concept of frontier.

Work since the 1980s has greatly expanded the understanding of the political development of the backcountry and oriented those politics with the institution of slavery. There has also been fantastic scholarship in recent years examining the cultural

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4 Examples of South Carolina “frontier” scholarship include George Lloyd Johnson, Jr.’s *The Frontier in the Colonial South: South Carolina Backcountry, 1736-1800* (1997) which examines the formation of serval communities in the PeeDee River Basin and Arlin C. Migliazzo’s *To Make this Land Our Own: Community, Identity, and Cultural Adaptation in Purrysburg Township, South Carolina, 1732-1865* (2007) which follows the development of Purrysburg Township along the Savannah River.
implications of Europeans permanently residing in the Cherokee towns in Pickens and Greenville countries and how their identity became distinctly American. A wonderful example of this new Indigenous scholarship is Jeff W. Dennis’ Patriots and Indians in which, drawing on the scholarship of James Axtell and others, he argues that pre-Revolutionary identity in the upcountry of South Carolina is inseparable from their interactions and conflict with the Indigenous peoples of that geographic region.

Incorporating the early Euro-American inhabitants of the Upstate of South Carolina into the histories of the state provides a more complete and complex view of the economic, social and political motivations of South Carolinians leading up to the Civil War. Much of the scholarship produced about South Carolina since the cultural turn has painstakingly examined the lives of those inhabiting these back country areas to ascertain the strength with which the plantation elite were able to spread their commitment to a slavery based agricultural society into the hinterlands. The consensus argument across this body of academic scholarship is that in all areas of the state the pressure to conform to plantation expansion and therefore to utilize an ever expanding enslaved labor force overpowered all other capitalistic compulsions or alternative wealth generation schemes.

This argument should be held in tension with the sectional realities of the developing state. The provincial government in place during the Anglo-Cherokee War failed the backcountry inhabitants who, by virtue of their race and aspirations of

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5 A wonderful example of this new Indigenous scholarship is Jeff W. Dennis’ *Patriots and Indians: Shaping Identity in Eighteenth-Century in South Carolina* (2017) in which he argues that pre-Revolutionary identity in the upcountry of South Carolina is inseparable from their interactions and conflict with the Indigenous peoples of that geographic region. Dennis draws on the scholarship of James Axtell and others.
becoming members of the landed farmers of the state, had reason to expect protection and aid from Charleston. When that aid did not come and the Regulators subsequently organized to provide the protection still lacking after the conclusion of the Native American conflict, the expanding white population past the fall line became acutely aware of their inferior status in the eyes of the coastal planter elite. This pattern repeats after the Revolutionary War when the backcountry is left to prosecute Loyalists without government aid. The result is a confused mix of vigilante justice and total lack of consequence.

Any scholar of South Carolina will closely examine Walter Edgar’s *South Carolina: A History* as a definitive source of political, cultural and economic information about South Carolina from prehistory through the end of the 21st century. His insistence on filling out the narrative of South Carolina beyond the elite plantation owners to include Native Americans, women, people of mixed race, and even non-English colonists has substantially raised the bar for South Carolina scholarship. Edgar’s argument that “throughout the state’s history many different South Carolinians have sought to establish ‘the good order and the harmony of the whole community’” is well presented and argued in *South Carolina: A History* as well as many other scholars of this era. While Edgar weaves together an amazingly detailed history of the state, not enough attention has been given to the very topmost corner of the “little triangle on the map”6 as an area that until the Civil War did not prioritize unity with the other inhabitants of South Carolina.

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Ryan A. Quintana’s 2018 book, *Making a Slave State: Political Development in Early South Carolina*, argues that enslaved labor not only built the infrastructure and buildings that created South Carolina as state, but that because they were the overwhelming majority of the population of the lowcountry, their movements across the landscape and their expertise in creating the colonizing changes actually formed the way South Carolina operated politically, socially and economically. Quintana begins the book with a quote from Robert Mills regarding using enslaved labor to build an environment that could then free itself of the institution of slavery. I follow this evidence regarding Robert Mills and also examine the sources on Joel R. Poinsett to explore the possibility that the Poinsett Bridge was conceived by Poinsett and Mills as a physical marker to an alternative path that lay in front of South Carolina’s political leaders in the years leading up to the Civil War. A path built with labor rewarded with a fair wage that in turn stimulated the local economy and brought useful improvements to the entirety of the state. I place Quintana’s work in conversation with William D. Adler’s *Engineering Expansion: The U.S. Army and Economic Development, 1878-1860* in which he argues that “the Army helped build the American economy, and through it the American nation.”

Rachel N. Klein provides a solution to the disconnect between the state-serving “good order and harmony” and the highly sectionalized, economics driven arguments. She builds on and expands the timeframe of Lacy K. Ford’s thesis in *Origins of Southern*

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Radicalism that the dedication of South Carolinians to the institution of slavery to power the plantation system focused on raising a single staple crop overcame any and all sectional differences to bring unified commitment to the Confederate cause by the time of the Civil War. Klein argues that the planter class had already established its hold in the Piedmont of South Carolina by the time of the cotton boom by practicing a more democratic Republicanism thereby bridging the gap between the yeoman farmers of the Upstate and the Lowcountry elites.

Archie Vernon Huff, Jr. in his book *Greenville: The History of the City and County in the South Carolina Piedmont* argues that the entirety of Greenville’s origin story is founded entirely in economics. From Alexander Cameron and Richard Pearis’ seemingly coercive tactics of securing huge tracts of land from the Cherokees, to the shenanigans of innkeepers and liquor license agents along the roads used by drovers and merchants, to capitalizing on the depressed New England textile markets and establishing mills closer to the cotton source Greenvillians followed the example given to them by the proprietary government so many years earlier: personal gain by any means feasible. My thesis brings Joel R. Poinsett and his influence on the politics and infrastructure of the Upcountry into this narrative of economic autonomy. Poinsett stands outside the economic drive of the Upstate as a Charleston-born son of a wealthy doctor; however, his determination in linking the Upstate with the free western markets via the State Road and then railroads demonstrates his foresight in attempting to protect South Carolina from the eventual ruin of single crop plantation economics. His influence on the Unionist party
during the Nullification crisis is seen abundantly in Greenville and Spartanburg which become Unionist strongholds.

In the first chapter I examine the formation of Greenville according to the legislation responsible for its creation and the boundaries it established. Trading relationships and the establishment of military installations within the boundaries of the Cherokee nation in the Upstate are tremendously consequential for the economy and identity of South Carolinians. From these incursions farther and farther beyond the legislated territory to which the colonists were to limit themselves, a pattern of settlement begins to be apparent and as well as a new, distinctly American cultural identity. Eventually the inability of the government to halt the spread of white inhabitants will spark the First Cherokee War which has tremendous consequences for the shaping of Greenville.

This colonial period also gives rise to the Regulators in the backcountry of South Carolina. They establish many important precedents that reverberate through the next one hundred years of the state’s history. Their successful use of vigilante violence as well as their nullification of Charleston law based on their armed territorial control sparks terror in their historical moment, but boldness among the white elites that follow them.

Chapter 2 examines the Revolutionary period and the large land acquisitions by traders seeking to establish a plantation economy above the fall line. Alexander Cameron and Richard Pearis offer insight into the coercive nature of Anglo-American negotiations with the Cherokee nation throughout this period. After the end of conflict and the confiscation of land from the Cherokee nation and Loyalists, boundary establishment for
political control was continued with a fervor by the newly independent South Carolinians taking their place at the helm of government. With the opening of the Land Office in 1784 a huge influx of people from the coast as well as New England arrived in the Upcountry. Significantly, this is not an influx of enslavers, but almost entirely free white people. The juxtaposition of a majority white population engaged in small-scale farming and manufacturing against the majority black, enslaved coastal population is glaringly apparent. Almost immediately this new land-owning population began clamoring for more equitable representation in the state legislature resulting in the political seat of South Carolina being relocated in 1786 from Charleston to a site equidistant from the coast to the mountains, Columbia.

Once county lines are established, the Upcountry is poised for an economic boom. Chapter 3 examines the development of Greenville’s diversified economy that looked beyond the boundaries of South Carolina to accomplish that growth. The political result of the diversified economy as well as the outsized influence of the coastal elites that began to summer in Greenville in ever increasing numbers was Unionism. This Unionism opposed the Nullification majority throughout the lower Piedmont and midlands. Benjamin F. Perry joins the tradition of the Unionist press in Greenville and expands its influence as he serves as a representative of Greenville in the state legislature. Joel R. Poinsett is also extremely active during the Nullification Crisis communicating with President Andrew Jackson in Washington, D.C. and organizing volunteer groups of armed men should violence once again be called on to settle the political dispute. If Joel R. Poinsett had been able to garner support from the Lowcountry and Midlands to the
extent that he did in the Upstate what a different history may have been written of South Carolina.

My conclusion must face the reality that the Unionist party was defeated in South Carolina and that Benjamin Perry and the Upstate surrendered to the good order of the state by joining the Confederacy in her losing fight against the Union. The legacy of political change at the end of a gun serves as the common thread from the colonial era through the Revolutionary War into the antebellum period. Until the biggest and strongest political force of South Carolina was defeated in the Civil War there simply was no room left for any divergent movement.
CHAPTER ONE

THE REGULATORS

Greenville County came to be, briefly, on March 22, 1786. The Sixth General Assembly of South Carolina meeting in Charleston approved the ordinance as follows:

“An Ordinance for establishing a County and County Courts in the new ceded lands of the North side of Saluda River. Whereas, the inhabitants of the new ceded lands on the north side of Saluda river, below the Indian line, have experienced many inconveniences, by being annexed to some of the counties heretofore established; be it ordained by the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives, now met and sitting in General Assembly, and by the authority of the same, That a county shall be established in the new ceded lands, by the name of Greenville, and shall be bounded by Saluda river and the south fork thereof, the old Indian boundary, and the North Carolina line, and shall be entitled to county courts, to be held on the third Monday in February, May, August and November.

John Lloyd, President of the Senate.
John Fauchereaud Grimke, Speaker of the House of Representatives.”

Daniel Huger proposed the ordinance on March 8th as the representative of the Third District. Grandson of Daniel Huger, Sr., a French Huguenot emigrating to Charleston in the 1680s, Huger was a representative from South Carolina to the Continental Congress and was a lowcountry planter. Huger also belonged to the

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8 The Statutes at Large of South Carolina, ed. Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord (Columbia, 1836-1840) 4: 410-13, 590; 7: 244-5. The quoted ordinance is Legislative Act #1325.
9 For an in-depth look at the Huger family and how they transitioned from an identity of religious refugees to distinctly Southern see Jason Hollis’ 2008 Clemson University master thesis “Je Suis Huger: Shaping Identity in South Carolina, 1685-1885.”
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1353&context=all_theses
Federalist party fated to fade away with the rise of republicanism championed in South Carolina by the planter from the Piedmont, John C. Calhoun. The political web of South Carolina through the early years of the 19th century grew steadily larger and more entangled with each passing year and with every new arrival.

Those inhabitants that found themselves past the fall line and nearer the mountains than the sea faced an environment and social order turned on its head. Although many of them would come over the mountains from more northern colonies via the Great Wagon Road or Great Trading Path as it was known earlier, the political sectionalism, tenuous relationships with Native American groups and massive expansion of the enslaved black population created a culture unique within the colonies. By examining the boundaries of the approved ordinance for the creation of Greenville County in 1786 much can be revealed about the people and land in the newly sectioned piece of the Upper Piedmont of South Carolina as well as their relationship with the rest of the state.

*The Saluda River and the South Fork Thereof*

Rising from its headwaters near the Sassafras Gap between Sassafras Mountain and Whiteoak Mountain the Saluda River is a prominent feature of the Upstate and forms the present boundary between Greenville County and Pickens and Anderson Counties. Its course continues toward the fall line dividing Laurens and Newberry Counties in the east from Greenwood and Saluda Counties to the west until it meets the Broad River in Columbia to form the Congaree River. While most of what would become present day Greenville County lies beyond the boundary established between South Carolina and the
Cherokee Nation, some would be annexed from Camden Precinct near where Gilder Creek forks away from the Enoree River as well as the land between the Reedy River and Saluda.

The 1775 Mouzon map of South Carolina depicts three highly significant paths and trails existing prior to the formation of Greenville. The first emerges from a network of trails around Old Keohwee, a Cherokee town. Clustered nearby are Sugar Town, Aconnee, Toxawaw, Estatoe, Quacoratchie, and New Keohwee. The trail runs northeast away from the towns and Fort Prince George following the Appalachian range past the North Carolina line. It then veers due north and continues to follow the mountains beyond North Carolina. The second trail of note also originates at Old Keohwee and runs east-west toward the Catawba Nation ending at a branch of the Trading Path running north-south through Salisbury, North Carolina. This trail is called the “Path from the Cherokees” on the Mouzon map. Finally, the third trail runs southeast and follows the western bank of the Saluda River from Old Keohwee and Fort Prince George to the Ninety Six District through Duett’s Corner (also referred to as Dewitt’s Corner). The path forks at the courthouse in Ninety Six with one branch continuing to follow the Saluda River until it joins the Broad River in Saxe Gotha Township. This path, although outside of the boundaries of Greenville, linked the governing body responsible for the representation of the population of Greenville County as approved by the 1786

10 Mouzon, Henry. *An accurate map of North and South Carolina, with their Indian frontier, shewing in a distinct manner all the mountains, rivers, swamps, marshes, bays, creeks, harbours, sandbanks and soundings on the coasts; with the roads and Indian paths; as well as the boundary or provincial lines, the several townships, and other divisions of the land in both the provinces; the whole from actual surveys by Henry Mouzon and others.* London, Printed for Robt. Sayer and J. Bennett, 1775.
Ordinance with Charleston, the seat of the state government in 1786. This, however, was not to remain the case for the historic seat of power in South Carolina. In the same session that approved the request for the creation of Greenville County, the “Act to Appoint Commissioners to Purchase Land for the Purpose of Building a Town, and for Removing the Seat of Government Thereto” was approved. This new town located near Friday’s Ferry on the Congaree River was to be called Columbia.11

In addition to the Saluda River which forms Greenville’s western boundary there are four other major rivers within the boundaries of Greenville County. The Reedy River’s headwaters are located between present day Marietta and Travelers Rest and it flows south and slightly west through the middle of Greenville County. The famous falls (sometimes called “Big Brother Falls”) that feature heavily in the early industrial development of the county are located on the Reedy River. From headwaters slightly west of the Reedy River’s headwaters, the Enoree River flows on a southwest course and forms one section of the eastern boundary of Greenville County. The final major river consists of the South and Middle branches of the Tyger River that do not converge until they wind their way into Spartanburg County to the east of Greenville. The earliest European arrivals to the area mimicked the Native American settlement patterns and congregated near the river banks providing a steady source of water and fertile land for agricultural pursuits as well as transportation routes to the fall line and from there to Charleston. As the population grew in Greenville following the Revolutionary War, the streams cascading out of the mountains forming fast flowing shoal areas in combination

11 The Statutes at Large of South Carolina. 4: 751-2.
with deeper, navigable waterways would provide the power for industrial development and a more diversified economic and social structure.

The Old Indian Boundary

Beginning with the Spanish accounts of their marches through the interior of South Carolina and with every subsequent European arrival into the lands directly east of the Appalachians in South Carolina the consensus has been that the Cherokee Nation lived in towns divided by ranges of altitude. The Lower, Middle and Upper Towns by all accounts were thriving and permanent agricultural centers. The English, having arrived and planning for permanent occupation beginning with the coast, began the arduous struggle of shaping a commercially viable colonial venture from an environment that fought back against the colonists’ basic survival. With disease and crop failure along the coast, adventurers, rogue and government sanctioned alike, ventured up the rivers and along Native American paths drawing ever nearer the Cherokee towns and the unoccupied buffer land between the Saluda and Broad Rivers.

Within fifty years of the Albemarle Point landing, the British were firmly enmeshed in international conflicts among the various Native American groups occupying South Carolina and beyond as well as intrigues with their old rivals, the

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French. Forts displayed military power, but also provided protection for certain Native American groups providing tradable goods, including Native American slaves, and protection for the colonists steadily being drawn toward the piedmont region. The Yamasee War (1715-17) devastated the groups throughout the coastal and fall line regions prompting the Cherokees, largely insulated from conflict, to fill the vacancies in the fur trade with the British and solidify their alliance with them. The violence of the Yamasee War also prompted a legislative end of the Native American slave trade and rise in numbers of African slaves allowing the Catawbas and Cherokees to further entrench themselves in the colonial economic machine as runaway bounty hunters.\(^\text{14}\)

The recruitment of Europeans to South Carolina employed many tactics during the colonial years.\(^\text{15}\) Of singular importance to the Lord Proprietors and their coastal government was the formation of a buffer between themselves and Native American groups as well as competing European colonizers. After the Revolution of 1719 throwing over proprietary for monarchical rule, the recruitment continued although with an added wrinkle of attempting to contain the westward spread of the colonists. The

\(^{14}\) Ibid, 7-9. Marshall, Stuart H. “Dividing the Carolinas: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in the Prerevolutionary Boundary Dispute, 1763–1773.” *Early American Studies, An Interdisciplinary Journal* 21, no. 1 (Winter 2023): 42–86. Stuart H. Marshall provides a very insightful comparison of the North Carolina and South Carolina Regulators through the lens of the border disputes and their resolutions. He also provides further insight into the extreme nature of South Carolina’s divergence from the rest of what would become the new republic of the United States, the South, and even from its sister colony to the north. Marshall takes a multi-faceted approach in examining the process of boundary definitions between North and South Carolina. He argues that economics were at the heart of the disputes between the provincial governments of North and South Carolina, both desiring certain areas of land into the other’s claimed territories for the perceived economic benefit it would bring them. Beyond economics, though, was the desire of both governments to formalize their mutual boundary in order to more effectively legislatively divide and therefore exert greater control over the various populations inhabiting the Piedmont areas of both colonies from their respective centers of government.

fear-inducing racial imbalances already existing in Charleston, the attempt to monopolize the deer skin trade with the Native Americans, preventing gold rushes into the mountains and the constant rivalry with other colonial states placed the added pressure of containment duties on the provincial government and military. Indian agents, appointed by the royal government beginning in 1756, venturing into the backcountry recounted the ineffectiveness of the containment, however. John Stuart reported riding for 30 or 40 miles toward the Appalachian Mountains without passing a single dwelling, but as he neared the Cherokee boundary he encountered an extensive European settlement stretched along the boundary line and doing a brisk trading business.

While some singular opportunists were willing to push the limits of South Carolina’s containment efforts, events happening hundreds of miles north and west of the Upcountry would spark a mass emigration of Europeans into the Piedmont. One such opportunist was Anthony Park, who arrived in the Saluda River area around 1758. He was told there had been white residents in that area for over a half a century prior to his arrival. Undeterred by these preceding claims, he married a Cherokee woman and fathered many children and grandchildren. The Park family became one of the better known in the area. The Seven Years War in Europe splashed its way across the Atlantic

16 The 1763 Berbice slave revolt led by Coffy in the Dutch colony of Guyana can be seen as the touchpoint of Caribbean slave revolutions continuing into the mid 19th century. See John Henrik Clarke’s “Slave Revolts in the Caribbean Islands” (1972). The reality of a black majority in South Carolina had been announced as early as 1708 and followed by the governor’s appeal to reduce the African slave trade in 1711 and an expansion of the slave code in 1712. J. Brent Morris, Yes, Lord, I Know the Road: A Documentary History of African Americans in South Carolina, 1526-2008, (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2017), 43-45.

17 Huff, Greenville, 9-10.

18 Ibid, 7-8; Landrum, Dr. John Belton O’Neall. Colonial and Revolutionary History of Upper South Carolina: Embracing for the Most Part the Primitive and Colonial History of the Territory Comprising the.
into the New York Harbour and Great Lakes region of the North American continent sparking violent disruption for thousands of Scottish and Irish immigrants. To escape the destruction they migrated down the Great Wagon Road settling into and expanding the community of frontier and trader families. However, because these people were operating outside of the legislative parish system of South Carolina and were so very far removed from the Lowcounty seat of power they were left largely to their own devices and defense.

This white incursion onto Cherokee lands gave rise to a string of conflicts known as the First Cherokee War which to those people involved was likely indistinguishable from the violence and destruction already taking place through North America as the European colonizers along with their Native American allies vied for economic and political preeminence. In an effort to stave off further bloodshed in the backcountry, representatives of Governor Boone met with leaders and members of the Cherokee Nation at Dewitt’s Corner. After establishing the boundary southwest to the Savannah River they returned to Dewitt’s Corner and laid off the boundary to the Reedy River which was then considered to be the border between North and South Carolina.

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19 For an incredibly interesting “western facing” new Native American perspective on the Seven Years War (or French and Indian War) see Michael A. McDonnell’s Masters of Empire: Great Lakes and the Making of America (2015). McDonnell argues that it was actions of the Odawa people of the Anishinaabeg in the Michilimackinac region of the Great Lakes that caused the Seven Years War.


21 Huff, Greenville, 10. This meeting and boundary survey occurred in April, 1765. The men present were Edward Wilkinson, John Pickens, Alexander Cameron, six Cherokee leaders and 30 Cherokee warriors.
This section became the “Old Indian Boundary” as the southernmost point of Greenville takes a sharp northeastern line from the Saluda River.

Another joint boundary survey was conducted in 1767, this time with Governor Tryon of North Carolina and Cherokee headmen. Tryon, frustrated with South Carolina’s lack of policing in the Piedmont and seeking to extend North Carolina’s economic reach by gaining access to the more navigable rivers in South Carolina, led the survey himself and boasted greatly of his success while casting his gaze toward the eventual assumption all of the lands north of Fort Prince George for North Carolina. The survey of this Indian Boundary began at the Reedy River and proceeded due north to Tryon Mountain in North Carolina.

While the naming of this section of boundary line in the legislative record of South Carolina speaks to the enduring impact of European encroachment ever farther west it also endures as a testament to the effectiveness of the Cherokee strategy of, at least temporarily, halting the press of colonization. They had petitioned with some success the English government regarding depletion of game from their hunting grounds and enslavement of their members. They were able to maneuver the legislative process of the colonizers from multiple directions and entities and maintain a high level of autonomy. They also kept one step ahead of the colonial governments by playing the states against one another for trading rights. Even in the midst of the “Panic of 1751”, Cherokee leaders decisively calmed the fears of their people more effectively than their British counterparts managed among the colonists, maintained open communication with Charleston regardless of the embargo levied on them by Governor Glen and provided
protection to the European traders in who chose to remain within the Cherokee Nation’s lands. 22

The Panic of 1751 gives insight into the expanding populations of the backcountry region of South Carolina. Piecing the evidence in the record together Gregory Evans Dowd traces the origin and spread of the rumors leading to the panic.

“…Rumors that spread among the Cherokees of the two regions closest to the colony, the Lower Towns and Middle Towns, that an army of Carolinians was being raised to destroy or enslave them. At about the same time, in the mountaineous Cherokee country, Carolinian traders sent word to one another of a Cherokee plot to kill them all, and the Cherokee women warned traders to be on their guard. Some traders sought the protection of Cherokee friends; others, particularly in the Lower Towns, nearer to South Carolina, formed armed parties and fled the mountains…To the South Carolina backcountry frightened traders brought false news that Cherokees had already killed four Britons and stood poised to assault the settlements. Backcountry Carolinians, many of whom were unarmed and only recently arrived from Germany, Switzerland, Ireland, Britain or Africa, took seriously the word of knowledgeable traders, since these settlers had cause to fear Indian attacks. Older Carolinians could recall the wars with the Tuscaroras (1711-1712) and Yamasees (1715-1716)…Most immediately alarming to the settlers was the harsh realization that they had inadvertently planted themselves in a war zone where Indian fought Indian.” 23

Whatever relief experienced by the legislators in Charleston and London at the successful negotiation and survey of boundary lines between South Carolina and the Cherokee Nation in 1765-1766, when viewed from those living in the midst of potentially violent confusion across the varied landscape of established families and new

23 Dowd, “The Panic of 1751”, 531-532
arrivals in the Upper Piedmont, the gulf spanning the fall line begins to show its breadth. And despite the boundaries between the Cherokees and Carolinians being formalized, the colonists living in the Piedmont area still lived in a borderless area able to evade the taxation, policing and mandatory military service of both North and South Carolina by playing on the lack of a clear border between the two colonies.

*The North Carolina Line*

The final border outlined in the establishing ordinance of Greenville County in 1786 separating Greenville County from North Carolina was the completion of decades of surveys and disputes between the two Carolinas. The conflict between those residing near and far from the seat of government in Charleston stretches back to the earliest days of the Carolina proprietary venture. While often given a cursory glance and assumed to be a peacefully settled work of British legislation, the border running along the Appalachian crest between North and South Carolina can be plumbed for further clues about the development of Greenville.

The surveying began in 1730 at least a decade after disputes had begun to rumble from the coast to the mountains. Incomplete instructions and vague wording regarding the starting point for the line at Cape Fear delayed the process another five years. Finally, the process of driving stakes into the ground commenced in May 1735, but ground to a halt again by the delayed arrival of the commissioners from South Carolina as well as their refusal to continue the project until they had received payment for their services.24

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24 [https://www.carolana.com/Carolina/Noteworthy_Events/NC_SC_border_surveys.html](https://www.carolana.com/Carolina/Noteworthy_Events/NC_SC_border_surveys.html)
While both governments of North and South Carolina had been involved with the drawing of the Cherokee boundaries, a settlement had yet to be reached regarding the delineation between the two states themselves. The political arguments made by both states as to where the line should be drawn were both economic and social. North Carolina argued that they required land past the Catawba Nation’s boundary as well as past the Blue Ridge in order to gain access to Charleston’s port as well taxation on the white settlers who had persistently refused to pay taxes as residents of both, and neither, Carolinas. South Carolina argued that it had shouldered the vast expenses of fort construction and militia provisioning in the area. South Carolina also argued the necessity of maintaining the Catawba Nation within their border as necessary to enforcing the ever expanding slave codes on their rapidly growing enslaved population. Finally, South Carolina pointed to the necessity of maintaining use of the rivers in the northern reaches of the state as the preferable travel routes for moving heavy products, especially the incentivised hemp harvests, to Charleston rather than relying on paths and roads.25

Both North and South Carolina were vying for recognition in the mid 1760’s into the 1770’s as valuable British colonial holdings and deeply embedded in both arguments was the location of the Catawba Nation and the institution of slavery. The lands of the Piedmont became the focus of their disputes. North Carolina’s white population had experienced rapid growth as a result of immigration down the Great

Wagon Road from Pennsylvania and other northern colonies unsettled by violence stemming from the French and Indian War. Their enslaved black population had also grown substantially as they began to expand their tobacco and navel stores exports, both requiring large labor forces. The North Carolinians argued that because they were narrowly maintaining a white majority that they were more protected from slave revolts and could therefore divert more of their white population away from domestic defense and into the development of the contested border lands. South Carolina argued that their black majority, renewed intensity in expanding their relationship with the Catawba Nation, and maintaining the buffer provided through trading with the Cherokees necessitated they solidify their control over the contested land in order to mobilize their outnumbered white population into military musters in the event of threats from enslaved people or Native Americans.26

Both North and South Carolina officials redoubled their negotiation efforts with King Hagler of the Catawbas attempting to settle the location of the boundary and secure the nation’s support as bounty hunters for runaway enslaved persons. South Carolina gained the upper hand by supporting King Hagler’s authority and were granted permission to construct a military fort on Catawba land.27 Concurrent with South Carolina’s success in negotiation with the Catawbas came an erosion of peace with the Cherokee Nation. In an effort to strong arm the Cherokees back into cooperation

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Governor Lyttleton imposed an embargo on their furskin trade causing severe shortages of ammunition and other supplies that the Cherokees had come to rely on from their trade with the British. In retaliation for the war of attrition as well as continued frustration over a lack of repayment for their losses in assisting the British militia in Virginia the Cherokees launched a string of attacks on the vulnerable backcountry settlements.

*The Cherokee War (1759-1761)*

Attacks from both sides were extremely violent and stretched across the entire region of the Piedmont from the Savannah River to the Broad River. Traders and farmers with their families fled to forts built for protection. It is estimated that during the winter of 1760-61 nearly 1,500 people were living cramped into thirty forts scattered throughout the Piedmont region.\(^\text{28}\) Accounts of women and children starving and ill-clothed reached the royal legislators in Charleston via messengers. In a letter from Lieutenant Governor William Bull which was read before the legislation on June 20, 1760 by Mr. Bassnett, he relayed the “repeated representations of famine, nakedness and sickness, with most pressing applications for assistance” that he received from a fort near the Enoree River.\(^\text{29}\)

This was followed by the reading of a letter from Captain Edward Musgrove dated June 10, 1760 regarding the distress at the fort and forming a committee tasked

\(^{28}\) Brown, Richard Maxwell. *The South Carolina Regulators*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), 9. *The South Carolina Regulators* by Richard Maxwell Brown is the only monograph wholly dedicated to an examination of the Regulator Movement in South Carolina of which I am aware. Published in 1963 by Harvard Press, it is a meticulously researched and succinctly written piece of scholarship. Brown’s research focus and subsequent work on the influence of violence on American politics seems as appropriate for the current cultural moment as it would have been at the time of his writing. Perhaps ahead of his time, Brown places the backcountry whites after the Anglo-Cherokee War firmly within the racial tensions so prevalent in more recent scholarship.

with investigating the conduct of a certain Mr. Joseph Nutt, Commissary of the Expedition against the Cherokee Indians. Mr. Nutt first appears in the *Journal of the Common House* on October 9, 1759 as an “Agent to the Contractors for supplying the King's Forces with Provisions”. He had been invited by the Assembly in October to answer some questions regarding the provisioning at Fort Loudoun, built by Sergeant William Gibbs’ South Carolina Provincial Militia located 100 miles west of Fort Prince George in what is now Tennessee. Throughout the remainder of 1759 he appears to have received some payments along with his partners from the Assembly for salt, flour, cattle, and various other provisions intended for backcountry forts until Mr. Andrew Williamson called into question Nutt’s impressment of 253 of Williamson’s steers at Ninety Six. The committee’s findings, presented the same day as William Bull’s letter regarding the dire conditions of the backcountry dwellers, showed that Mr. Nutt had overcharged and under-delivered in his role as Commissary. The committee found he had obtained by purchase or impressment more than 40,000 lbs of “bread kind” and 56,950 lbs of beef, not including hogs and salt beef, above the amount that was reasonable for the two thousand men he had been responsible for provisioning.\(^{30}\) He was also charged with leaving thousands of pounds of flour in Ninety Six and at Fort Prince George unattended and without delivering them to the appropriate military locations. By the standard of American Revolutionary War soldier’s rations, the amount of flour and beef that Nutt mismanaged would have been adequate to feed between 75 and 110 soldiers for a year.\(^{31}\)

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30 Lipscomb, “The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly.”, 663-4
31 Totals calculated based on the figures provided by: https://americanhistory.si.edu/explore/stories/you-asked-we-answered-what-did-soldiers-eat-during-revolutionary-war
Five days after the committee’s findings were read on the Nutt case, a memorial was presented on behalf of Mr. Nutt. In crafting his defense Nutt claims that at his commissioning the only instructions given him were to provision the army without any further detail or direction. He claims that lower ranking officers of the military had instructed him along the way regarding the amount of food necessary as well as his ability to impress British citizens to obtain provisions. He then claims the flour left at Fort Prince George and Ninety Six had been left there by a person claiming they were going to ensure its delivery to the correct military locations. As to the rest of the over-purchased flour, he claims that biscuits for sailors had been incredibly scarce at the time in Charleston and he had therefore made the decision to have the flour baked into biscuits and sold at a higher price with the intention of repurchasing the flour and turning a profit for the government. In all of this he had expended “great labour and fatigue in the public service…without any reward or pay”.

Amidst the violence and chaos of residing in a war zone, both Euro-American along with their enslaved laborers and Native American inhabitants of the Piedmont faced privation at the hands of their leaders and government agents. White colonial settlers faced violence and disruption from the neighboring Native Americans, self-interested and lawless whites, and revolts from their enslaved population. The combining

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32 The same tactic of petition was employed by Mary Musgrove in 1754-5 in her petitions to Governor Glena and the South Carolina legislation. The term “memorialist” seems to be one of deference to the point imploring or throwing oneself on the mercy of the court. Mary Musgrove had sometimes styled herself as a “princess” of the Creek Nation during the early years of petitioning South Carolina for return of her property. Similarly, Joseph Nutt had been in a position of some prominence with the Assembly, but once the tide turned against him, opted to use the “memorialist” language in his defense/petition. Hahn, Steven C. The Life and Times of Mary Musgrove. Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2012.

of internal fears and external pressures with the physical and social distance from the ruling elite class in Charleston provided the fuel necessary for the acceptance of an unsanctioned group of law enforcers.

The Rise of the Regulators

The signing of the Treaty of Charlestown in 1761 marked the formal end of the hostilities of the Anglo-Cherokee War. Charleston’s provincial government was locked in a stalemate about how best to relieve the suffering of the poor backcountry whites as session after session of the General Assembly met with no real plan for aid materializing. With the “passage of the frontier phase” came a vacuum of power. The colonial settlers emerged out of the relative safety of the protective forts and came back to a landscape greatly altered. In addition to destruction of settlements and farms they found many of the larger and better equipped lands vacated by those able to afford longer absences. And so, many opportunists simply moved in and began to reap lands they had neither cleared or sown. As some social equilibrium returned to the region it began to take on the rough outlines of Jeffersonian republicanism with small planters at the core of

34 Sometimes called the Cherokee War or First Cherokee War depending on the source. I am inclined to use the term Anglo-Cherokee War from Stuart H. Marshall's article *Dividing the Carolinas: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in the Prerevolutionary Boundary Dispute, 1763-1773* published in the Winter 2023 Early American Studies Journal for its comparative power to the so-called French and Indian War.

35 For a comprehensive study on the workings of the provincial government in South Carolina see M. Eugene Sirman’s *Colonial South Carolina: a Political History, 1663-1763* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Virginia, 1966). His scholarship on the intricacies of the workings of the government in Charleston are helpful background for Rachel Klein’s *Unification of a Slave State* and Lacy Ford’s *Origins of Southern Radicalism*.


37 Ibid., 12.
the scattered communities. The cultivated fields prior to the domination of cotton were largely sown in corn and other grains. Hemp became an important staple crop as well, not requiring the labor force of either tobacco or indigo. This small-scale farming did not necessitate or afford the farmers the purchase of enslaved labor from Charleston keeping the white population firmly in the majority. This did not, however, mean that racially driven fears regarding revolts diminished in the backcountry. As the farmers cast a wary eye toward the coast they saw the numbers of enslaved black people exploding and heard of the increasing numbers of runaways creating a potential for violent revolts to erupt in almost any location.38 Instead of feeling security in their isolation from these events, the backcountry inhabitants feared the outcome of a successful slave revolt in the Lowcountry which would leave them pinned between a black majority at the coast and Native American nations throughout the Appalachians and into the northern areas of the state.39

One should not imagine, though, that the stringent lines of social and economic division so distinctive in the Lowcountry made the same inroads past the fall line as the fears of slave revolt. Along the edges of the yeoman farmers’ claims, more tolerant communities moved with less resistance in the rural areas of the Piedmont. Maroon communities, white and black people captured and assimilated into Native American groups, descendents of European traders and their Native American wives were able to permanently reside, often with little to no harassment, in the backcountry. Religious

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groups found followers and freedom to practice untried and unconventional modes of worship. A remarkable religious movement swept through the area of Dutch Fork on the Saluda River and into Saxe Gotha when a Swiss immigrant named Jacob Weber began to preach in the spirit, assuming the role of “God the Father” to his small band of followers in 1756. He was joined by John George Smithpeter as the “Son” and a black preacher named Dauber who became the group’s “Holy Spirit”. This trinity did not prove to be perfect or eternal and ended with the killing of both Dauber and Smithpeters by Weber.40

Economic fluidity was also more rapid in the backcountry, although with perhaps less opportunity for gaining the fabulous wealth of the Lowcountry planter elites. The diversification of revenue potential in Greenville extended beyond the various crops planted in the farmer’s fields. The pull of trade in and out of Charleston opened many auxiliary occupations for the ambitious backcountry family. Ferries were built and operated across rivers and streams; country stores became central to a population dependent on certain imports; wagons or boats of furs and grains required transportation to the coast and often the drivers carried messages to and from officials and family members separated by distance; roads and bridges were being built and maintained in an effort to make travel more comfortable and convenient across the state.41

While trade relationships unified the state, issues of taxation and local governance eroded the unity. The centralized government in Charleston proved a difficulty for inhabitants of the lands beyond the fall line as did the parish system with the royal

40 Brown, Regulators, 20.
restrictions on the number of allowable members of the Assembly. As the white population steadily grew in the backcountry, the enslaved black population exploded in the Lowcountry far outpacing the white population. Representation, therefore, grew even more unbalanced and concentrated in the hands of coastal elites far removed from the aspirations of Piedmont citizens. The provision of justices of the peace past the fall line served as the only real instrument of governance outside of the military musters which were more cumbersome than effective outside of times of emergency.\textsuperscript{42}

The isolation from government, loosening of social constraints and economic upheaval following the Anglo-Cherokee War coalesced to allow for the formation of communities desiring to profit from the lack of policing in the backcountry through violence against the aspiring planter class. Among these was a man named Benjamin Burgess. His criminal streak stretched back prior to the Cherokee War, but after obtaining a tract of land on the Little River tributary of the Saluda River he joined the crime wave sweeping the countryside with his brother, Joseph.\textsuperscript{43} Charles Woodmason and others described the bands of families stretching along river banks and aiding and abetting the criminals as multigenerational and full of vice and violence. Particularly they are described as maintaining multiple sexual partners and having many children, some of whom were perhaps unhealthy or handicapped in some way, and many of whom seemed

\textsuperscript{42} Brown, \textit{Regulators}, 21-23. Another interesting source on the Regulators is D. D. Wallace, A.M.’s \textit{Constitutional History of South Carolina from 1725 to 1775} (Abbeville, S.C.: Hugh Wilson, Printer, 1899). His chapter on the Regulators focuses, predictably, on the yeoman class’ grievances with the elites in Charleston, but he argues that the division of South Carolina into seven districts as a result of the Act of 1769 directly influenced all future government organization of the state. Wallace also sees this equal division of the state as a way of unifying its citizens overall.

\textsuperscript{43} Brown, \textit{Regulators}, 30.
to observers to be neglected or abused.\textsuperscript{44} Less open to interpretation or allowance, though, are the charges of abduction and sexual trafficking and exploitation of women and girls by these groups. “When natural conditions did not furnish enough recruits to maintain the outlaw communities, the villains resorted to abduction. Young girls of respectable families ‘were either stollen-debauch’d-trepenn’d or forcibly made to take on’ with the outlaws.”\textsuperscript{45} These groups were also guilty of less sensational disruptions such as “fire hunting” at night and failing to abide by the accepted Native American boundaries.

When James Mayson, a known Regulator, was brutally attacked an organized resistance rose intent on protection of the upper class white inhabitants of the backcountry as well as forcing the government to establish permanent instruments of government throughout the backcountry region. They adopted the Ranger party characteristics used by the British militia during the Anglo-Cherokee War with resounding success and immense popular support. But by 1768, as the Regulators’ territory continued to grow and their methods of correction became more brutal, they began to draw less than favorable attention from Charleston. Rather than capitulate they attempted to use their inferred legal status to “nullify the authority of the provincial criminal and civil courts” and to “establish themselves as the supreme rulers of the Back Country”.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 30-31.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 31.
\textsuperscript{46} Brown, Regulators, 51.
Here are the first glimmers of divergence from the concentrated power of government by a group willing and able to use force to achieve their political ends. The Regulator Movement arose out of a violent and disruptive conflict between the Cherokee Nation and British inhabitants of the lands surrounding their Middle and Lower Towns in the backcountry of South Carolina. It became a violent movement precipitated on the principle that, without interference from the governing seat of Charleston, order could be restored by men invested in the expansion of the plantation system. But as vigilantes are apt to do, the violence spilled over beyond the group’s original intent until confrontation with another group of equal standing and commitment to their homes and families caused both to disband for the sake of the whole. As a group at odds with the centralized seat of government in Charleston, the Regulators function as foreshadowing of the future of South Carolina. Willing to nullify legislation, violently expel representatives of the government, and risk life and limb to maintain the right to expand their wealth on the backs of their enslaved population.

Although the legislative acts establishing circuit courts and judicial districts throughout the backcountry provided the written catalyst for dissolving the Regulators, it was a group of backcountry men assembling in direct opposition to them that may have been the true moment of disbanding. The Moderator Movement only lasted for about two weeks, the meeting between Regulators and Moderators on March 25, 1769 on the Saluda River arbitrated by two colonels of the Anglo-Cherokee War led both groups to disband
and the Regulators to cease all large-scale exploits. The Regulators on the whole are pardoned by Charleston’s government and many went on to serve in prominent public offices throughout the state. Not only was the South Carolina Regulator movement unique, but their successful use of nullification also upheld by the threat of or actual violence laid a powerful and long-lasting precedent for South Carolina. They established a precedent of gathering a group of men willing to endure bodily harm and possibly death and to inflict the same on others in order to establish what they perceive to be law and order in a section of the state or country. The Regulator Spirit of ‘68 created ripples that would not end with South Carolina’s independence from Britain. They will continue to crash through the Nullification and Secession Crisis in the crucial century following the Regulator Movement, but always veering off course in the section of land called Greenville County.

47 Brown, The South Carolina Regulators, 83-95; Rachel N. Klein, Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The North Carolina University Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture, 1990), 72-74. Rachel N. Klein provides a solution to the disconnect between the state-serving “good order and harmony” and the highly sectionalized, economics driven arguments. She builds on and expands the timeframe of Lacy K. Ford’s thesis in Origins of Southern Radicalism that the dedication of South Carolinians to the institution of slavery to power the plantation system focused on raising a single staple crop overcame any and all sectional differences to bring unified commitment to the Confederate cause by the time of the Civil War. Klein argues that the planter class had already established its hold in the Piedmont of South Carolina by the time of the cotton boom by practicing a more democratic Republicanism thereby bridging the gap between the yeoman farmers of the Upstate and the Lowcountry elites.
CHAPTER TWO
THE REVOLUTION

The Regulator and Moderator movements and the establishment of governing powers past the fall line indicate that European settlement has truly arrived in the South Carolina Piedmont. It is no longer strictly a backcountry borderland between the Lowcountry plantations and Native American, French and Spanish threats. People were arriving from various locations around the globe in ever increasing numbers and choosing to remain permanently in the hilly country at the base of the Appalachians. The land that would become Greenville County, though, still remained legally unobtainable for European purchase or occupation prior to the Revolutionary War because it lay beyond the Cherokee Boundary.

The earliest recorded attempts by Europeans to legally acquire lands in what would become Greenville County came in the form of a petition made by Michael Taylor and John and Thomas Turk of August County, Virginia in 1747. Their purpose in petitioning the British government for permission to negotiate with the Cherokees to obtain legal ownership was to resell the land to Europeans from Virginia and Pennsylvania looking to relocate farther south. Governor James Glen agreed that the land should be purchased and the Commons House agreed to grant 50 acre head right to prospective immigrants along with a 15-year exception from provincial taxes once one hundred families had arrived. This was very much in keeping with former Governor

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48 Huff, Greenville, 8.
Robert Johnson’s, ambitious township plans, although the proposed site was further removed from other European settlements than what his preference would have been (the nearest successful township being Saxe-Gotha near present day Lexington, South Carolina). The Turks and Taylor were insistent, however, on utilizing the area on the outer edges of the Ninety Six region, claiming that no other land that they had seen was as suited to substantial farming. Most interesting in Meriwether’s account is the Turks’ and Taylor’s instance that white colonists were already residing on these lands and very much desired that a legal means of ownership be made available.49

The purchase by South Carolina of the Cherokee lands was delayed, however, until a letter from the Turks and Taylor reached the Assembly informing them that many of the prospective settlers from Pennsylvania and Virginia were reluctant to relocate to another colony without the assurance that the Native Americans could not contest their ownership of the land. “The want of such a purchase has caus’d a War & Bloodshed where we now live, which makes the people here afraid of falling again into the like crooked Circumstances.”50 The violence of land disputes with Native American nations, in the minds of the people experiencing it in Pennsylvania and Virginia, could have been lessened or prevented by the clear action of colonial governments in negotiating the sale of the Native American lands for white habitation. These letters spurred action in Charleston and a deed delivered by George Pawley was signed in February 12, 1747 by the headman of the Cherokee Lower Towns extending the boundary between South

50 Ibid., 124.
Carolina and the Cherokees along “Long Cane Creek”\textsuperscript{51} to its head, thence to the head of the nearest tributary of the Saluda, along that stream to the river, and from that point north to the Catawba-Cherokee path”.\textsuperscript{52} Rather than the colony’s hoped for full-scale township, the most significant immediate white immigration to the newly deeded lands occurred from the spreading of squatters and hunters out from Ninety Six along the Cherokee Path.\textsuperscript{53}

In addition to the squatters and hunters, many surveys and warrants begin appearing in the record after the 1747 agreement between the Cherokee Lower Town and George Pawley. Henry Foster’s plat occupied one hundred and fifty acres between the Saluda and Reedy Rivers. John Reed claimed two hundred and fifty acres farther north up the Reedy River from Foster.\textsuperscript{54} The draw to this land for Europeans was as natural as the spread had been throughout other areas of South Carolina. The government’s obtaining the land and providing incentives for individuals, families and groups to relocate farther and farther from the increasingly crowded coastal plantations as well the proven success

\textsuperscript{51} Long Cane Creek is one of the main tributaries of the Savannah River. Its headwaters are near present day Donalds, SC about 40 miles directly south of Greenville. If the boundary was run roughly north-west (which seems most likely because of location to Cherokee Lower Towns) it would have passed over Turkey Creek (which also features significantly in the record), reaching Broad Mouth Creek (currently named) between Rutledge Shoals and Johnson Shoals. The 1775 Mouzon Map of South Carolina shows the Long Cane Creek headwaters rising directly south of Duett’s Corner (probably Dewitt’s Corner of treaty fame) via Hogskin Creek. By this map the nearest tributary of the Saluda River would have been Turkey Creek as it flows to the Reedy River (the Reedy being a tributary of the Saluda). Regardless, the boundary certainly ran through lands currently encompassed by Greenville County and therefore complicates the early boundaries. The early story of Greenville County cannot be simply dismissed as all Cherokee lands encroached upon by white traders and squatters. Both the Saluda River and the Cherokee Path to the Catawba Nation were well documented and enhanced the desirability of the land for all potential residents or absentee owners and speculators.

\textsuperscript{52} Meriwether, \textit{Expansion of South Carolina}, 124.

\textsuperscript{53} Meriwether, \textit{Expansion of South Carolina}, 125.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 130
of some of the township schemes in the previous decades certainly inspired expansion of white settlement as well as land speculation. Governor James Glen’s agent, William Livingston, petitioned the British government for two hundred thousand acres in South Carolina in 1741 with the intention of settling one thousand people on the land within ten years and producing rice, navel stores, silk and wine. In 1747 John Hamilton revived a project he had begun a decade prior and petitioned the Crown for a half a million acres. The British government, preferring the dense population of Hamilton’s proposal over Livingston’s, granted his petition and when Livingston’s project became delayed granted that tract to Hamilton as well. Surveyor-General George Hunter plotted “Hamilton’s Great Survey” in November of 1751.\(^5^5\) A survey of a plat within the Great Survey in 1764 indicates a mill belonging to Andrew Williamson near the location of his White Hall plantation. An earlier plat for the second warrant taken on land near Stevens Creek, near Ninety Six in 1747 also indicates the existence of a mill as does the mill paths indicated on various plats as early as 1749.\(^5^6\) John Collier declared in 1751 that he had built a flour mill on the branch of Saluda known as Samsons Fork and the aptly named Mill Creek near Daniel Burnett’s land is evidence of an existence of another mill nearby.\(^5^7\) An ambitious goal of petitioners from the Saluda and Enoree Rivers in 1755 was to raise hundreds of pounds of indigo, although it is unclear if they were able to succeed in their venture.\(^5^8\)

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 125-6.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., 128-9, 131.
\(^{58}\) Ibid.
In addition to the expansion of white settlement to obtain land to be used to raise sustenance and cash crops, the bounty law of 1751 drew a large group of German immigrants to the Dutch Fork settlement between the Saluda and Broad Rivers. Of the one hundred forty warrants and surveys issued on the Saluda River between 1752 and 1759 ten percent were for German immigrants pushing farther north from the Dutch Fork settlement. The township scheme in South Carolina along with the bounty laws enticed entire neighborhoods of Europeans to relocate to the backcountry of South Carolina on the promise of cheap, fertile land obtained in a way to ensure peace with the Native Americans. Peace in the backcountry was a fragile proposition, however, as the successive governors and colonists of South Carolina would discover.

Richard Pearis

Among the next Europeans to enter the record on future Greenville County lands is Richard Pearis. Pearis was born in Ireland in 1725 to George and Sarah Pearis, who immigrated to the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia with his two brothers and sister. Richard’s father, George, amassed a great deal of property in Virginia, and Richard followed in his path. In 1750 he owned 1,200 acres of land near Winchester, Virginia and was married with three children. By 1753, he was trading with the Cherokee Nation as an agent for Virginia’s Governor Robert Dinwiddie and traveled into South Carolina within the next year to establish relationships with the Cherokee Lower Towns. During his travels he met a Cherokee woman and fathered his son, George, with her.

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59 Kibler, Benjamin F. Perry, 10.
60 Meriwether, Expansion, 130.
61 Huff, Greenville, 13-4.
Pearis becomes involved in the Seven Years’ War under the command of Major Andrew Lewis (a fellow son of an immigrant Irish family) of George Washington’s Virginia regiment, and leaves South Carolina to head a group of 130 Cherokee warriors against the French in Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland. In one version of events, he was known to brag after the war of being the first British subject to enter Fort Duquesne in Pennsylvania after it was captured from the French.62 After his service with the British, he briefly served as the Indian Agent for Maryland.63

Once the British secured victory in the Seven Years’ War and the imminent threat from the French and their Indian allies was no longer a unifying factor among the colonies, they got back to the business of squabbling over trading relationships with the Native American tribes still interested in trading with the Anglo-Americans. Among these tribes the Cherokees were an especially important partner to the southern colonies because of their trans-Appalachian location and control of both Atlantic and Mississippi River trade routes. Richard Pearis was recruited by his former commander, Andrew Lewis, acting on behalf of the governor and House of Burgesses of Virginia, to sabotage the efforts of John Stuart, Royal Superintendent in the Indian Department, and his deputy Alexander Cameron, who had formerly been stationed at Fort Prince George during the Anglo-Cherokee War.64 Lewis also recruited Pearis’ former neighbor from the Shenandoah Valley, Jacob Hite, to assist with the sabotage. Papers were forged and

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62 Richard D. Sawyer, *10,000 Years of Greenville County, South Carolina History (The Reedy River Falls Historic Park)*. Greenville, South Carolina: Self published, 2007. 7.
64 Ibid.
carried by a young Estatoe Indian named Saluy to a conference in October 1769 held at Cameron’s plantation, Lochaber, near Ninety Six. The papers claimed to be from the leaders of the Cherokee nations indicating that they were willing to cede lands to Virginia. The ruse was not successful for Virginia, but Saluy, apparently well rehearsed by Pearis and Hite, immediately vouched for the relationship between Pearis and the Cherokee nation and their wish to convey a 12 mile square land grant to him as a token of gratitude.65

This declaration proved successful for Pearis and Hite and the tract was surveyed by William Gist, Deputy Surveyor, on August 2, 1769 and then re-surveyed by Patrick Calhoun (John C. Calhoun’s father) in 1770.66 The twelve square miles spanned the Saluda River and continued east over the banks of the Reedy River. Ownership of such a large tract of land including powerful and navigable rivers spanning land strategically located between Ninety Six, Fort Prince George and the Cherokee Path was certainly not going to go unchallenged despite Alexander Cameron’s successful claim of land adjacent to the Pearis/Hite land using almost identical tactics.67 Pearis and Hite divided the land between themselves and proceeded to sell portions of it to several of their associates in Virginia. This ceased when Pearis and Hite were charged with violation of the South Carolina 1739 statute forbidding ownership of Indian lands by British subjects. Pearis

65 Huff, Greenville, 14.
66 Hite, George. Petition Concerning Disputed Indian Lands Owned By His Late Father, And Asking That The Legislature Pass A Law To Confirm The Title To Hite And Other Relatives, February 3, 1784. Petition. From South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Petitions to the General Assembly. https://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/ (accessed January 12, 2024). Information regarding the Pearis/Hite tract is found in several letters from Richard Pearis, George Pearis (his son by his Cherokee wife), and George Hite (Jacob Hite’s son).
surrendered his deed, but like a man playing three-dimensional chess, he sent his son George to Britain to become a citizen and then had the Cherokees issue a new deed to him. George, whose mother was Cherokee, could not be found guilty of illegal ownership and subsequently was legally able to sell his father the deed.\(^{68}\)

Richard Pearis’ exploits to secure large amounts of land around the Reedy River are remarkable. Regardless of the legality (or morality) of his claims, he did personally inhabit and develop the lands that would become Greenville. His “Great Plains” plantation began with the clearing of land around the falls of the Reedy River. A large house was built, fruit trees planted, and grains sown. Based on Richard Pearis’ petitions in 1780 to the South Carolina House of Representative requesting permission to return to South Carolina and bring his enslaved workforce back with him as well as inventories from Great Plains, it’s clear that the improvements on the land prior to the Revolutionary War were accomplished by enslaved labor.\(^{69}\) Jacob Hite left Virginia with his family and came to live permanently on his tract around 1775. Because of his personal and family wealth as country gentry in Virginia the family lived comfortably until the violence of divided loyalties would take their lives during the American Revolution.\(^{70}\)

*The Revolution Goes South*

\(^{68}\) Huff, *Greenville*, 16.


\(^{70}\) Huff, *Greenville*, 17, 24.
The American Revolutionary War as it unfolded in South Carolina is often described more as a civil war than a Revolution.\(^71\) There are many complicating factors within the boundaries of South Carolina that contribute to this description. Although open hostilities between the white settlers residing within the backcountry and the Cherokee Nation had formally ceased with the Treaty of Fort Prince George on September 23, 1761 at the end of the Anglo-Cherokee War, there was still tension. In fact, the tension was mounting due to the increasing numbers of white settlers causing a steady decrease of game on the lands traditionally used by the Cherokees for hunting.\(^72\)

As South Carolinians in the lowcountry gradually coalesced around the Patriot cause spurred on by actions taken by the British government, their tea shipments, and Governor Montague in South Carolina, they began to view the colonial settlements in the Piedmont with greater apprehension. The Lowcountry’s continued finagling to maintain the majority of representation in government in Charleston despite the white population of the backcountry outweighing that of the lowcountry, and outspoken resisters clearly articulating their reluctance to rebel against Britain’s rule, the backcountry’s allegiance with the coast was anything but certain.\(^73\) This was especially concerning because of both the continued use of the towns and farms in the Piedmont as a buffer zone should the Cherokee Nation again turn to violence to defend its lands and drive back white

\(^{71}\) Rebecca Brannon provides many examples in her book *From Revolution to Reunion* of the jarringly personal nature of the conflict in South Carolina during the Revolutionary War. She also challenges the notion that sides were chosen based on lofty ideals instead arguing that often choices were made out of practicality or dire necessity. Rebecca Brannon, *From Revolution to Reunion: The Reintegration of the South Carolina Loyalists* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2016).

\(^{72}\) Huff, *Greenville*, 8-10.

encroachment, as well as the necessity of whites to monitor roads, paths and rivers for fugitive slaves and to facilitate their capture and return to the lowcountry plantations.

When a letter arrived in Charleston from London claiming that it was Britain’s intent to incite insurrection among the enslaved population and war between the Native Americans and white settlers, the people of Charleston could no longer leave protection of policies or defense of their rights to the northern colonies. A Provincial Congress replaced the royal government and immediately authorized measures to prepare the colony for war against the crown.74

Once it became apparent that the Cherokee Nation’s intention was to remain loyal to the British government it further complicated white loyalty in the backcountry. Those who had physically been present in the region during the Anglo-Cherokee War would certainly have been hesitant to revisit the terror and violence of armed conflict with the Cherokee warriors. Charleston’s extralegal Whig government sent a ranger regiment to Ninety Six, one of the three regiments narrowly approved by the Provincial government. An instrument designed to signify loyalty to the patriot cause was circulated throughout the seven districts of the state and those refusing to sign the pledge to the Nonimportation Association would be treated as enemies and hostile to the cause of freedom.75 In an attempt to persuade Nonassociators reluctant to join the Association in resisting British taxation and rule, a party was organized out of Charleston to travel inland and persuade the Loyalists of the rightness of the Patriot cause. The Counsel of Safety organized by the

74 Ibid., 203.
75 Olson, “Loyalists”, 203.
Provincial Congress in Charleston had realized almost immediately that the three regiments authorized in January, 1775 were not going to be sufficient especially as Thomas Fletchall and other prominent Tory residents of the backcountry began ramping up their recruitment efforts.

The group charged with changing the tide of public sentiment included William Henry Drayton whose strong patriot sentiments had been forged when John Stuart and other British officials had instigated his dismissal from the royal Council in South Carolina. He was the most well-known and well-spoken of the group.\(^7^6\) Also traveling with the party was William Tennet, a Presbyterian minister in Charleston; Joseph Kershaw of Camden, who advocated for the backcountry during the Regulator movement; Colonel Richard Richardson of High Hills, who was a successful businessman in the Wateree region along with Kershaw; and Oliver Hart, a Baptist clergyman in Charleston.\(^7^7\) The group left Charleston and headed for the McLaurin’s store at Congaree in August 1775. They made several stops with mixed results and separated into two groups after speaking to a German congregation on the Saluda River, one group following the Broad and the other continuing along the Saluda.

While Charleston’s clergymen, businessmen and politicians followed the rivers away from the coast, strong currents had already formed in the backcountry. Lacking the political or ideological motivation to come to the aid of the other colonies, the residents

\(^{76}\) Ibid.

of the backcountry looked instead to their own economic and personal safety when choosing to align with the Association or remain loyal to the traditional British rulership of South Carolina. Perhaps the strongest loyalist support was centered around Thomas Fletchall in the Ninety Six District between the Broad and Saluda Rivers. In July 1775 Fletchall mustered his regiment on orders from Charleston. The Committee of Correspondence desired that the Association be signed by the men serving under Fletchall as a symbol of their support for the impending clash with British authority in the colony. Rather than obtaining signatures, however, Fletchall informed Charleston that after hearing the Association’s pledge read, his Upper Saluda Regiment along with some of Colonel Savage’s regiment from Ninety Six and many other men living between the Saluda and Broad Rivers preferred to create their own resolution. This “Counter-Association” resolution denied that the constitution governing all British subjects had been violated by King George and therefore no reason could be found to use violence against the British government or their representatives in South Carolina. In fact, the signers of the Counter-Association preferred to avoid armed disagreement with anyone regardless of politics, but were very clear that should they be tested, they would not take up arms against the British government. Fletchall maintained this position when asked directly by the Council of Safety and Henry Laurens where his loyalties lay. He further claimed he was powerless to force the men of his regiment and region to comply with the Association, and until the British government acted in such a way as to violate his
constitutional rights as a British subject, he would not be compelled to act disloyally to it.78

Drayton’s commission continued to attempt to impress the importance of the patriot cause in the District between the Broad and Saluda through the summer months of 1775 without success. He began using increasingly more intimidating and subversive measures in the cause backed by the Provincial Government of South Carolina which by July 1775 succeeded in strongarming the Commons House of the royal government into issuing paper currency for use at the Provincial Government’s will. Drayton began issuing orders for the arrest of loyalists leaders after the Backcountry Commission reconvened at none other than Thomas Fletchall’s home, Fair Forest.79 Thomas Brown, Robert Cunningham and Moses Kirkland, all prominent Loyalist leaders, had been following and undermining the Drayton Commission’s attempts for months. They had received from Governor William Campbell, who had arrived in Charleston to no pomp and circumstance as the next royal governor in June 1775, a copy of the Address of the People of Great Britain to the Inhabitants of America which was to be read to those

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78 This position of Thomas Fletchall as a democratic, somewhat powerless leader is extremely interesting when viewed from the position of Jeff W. Dennis’ Patriots and Indians: Shaping Identity in Eighteenth-Century South Carolina, (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2017). Dennis argues that the white residents of the backcountry of South Carolina had taken on more characteristics of their Native American neighbors than they had retained from their European (specifically British) heritage. Fletchall’s response to the Provincial Government in Charleston is almost identical to the diplomatic, democratic responses received by colonial governments from Native American leaders throughout North America: they wanted to follow the directives, they obeyed the orders to the extent that they could manage, but their people simply would not take the last step required.

79 Olsen, Loyalist, 210; Edgar, South Carolina, 223.
assembled by the Drayton Commission.\textsuperscript{80} The Address proved to be a powerful Loyalist (or Nonassociators) tool in the backcountry.

The Address was written by Sir John Dalrymple, a Scottish judge and author best known for his work \textit{Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland from the dissolution of the last parliament of Charles II until the sea battle of La Hogue}. It begins by decrying the North American colonists’ plan to align themselves with the French against Britain. “God forbid these endearing appellations [friends and countrymen] should ever be exchanged for those of Enemy and Traitor; for the flame of liberty which burns in our breasts, we revere in yours. Your services in the late wars, with the oblivion of which you reproach us, we remember well. Your industry, your virtue, and your piety, we honour; because we believe that those who stand in awe of the estimation of their own minds, and fear their God, will seldom go far in a wrong path.” It then calls into question the plans of the Continental Congress to take up arms against and suspend trade with Britain. Four things, says Dalrymple, would be required to proceed with a war against Britain: “fortified Towns to secure the persons of their people, and intercept the incursions and advance of their enemies; a disciplined Army to defend their lands; a Navy to protect their Seas and Rivers; and not only a great annual Revenue, but the capacity of funding it, so as by borrowing present capital on the credit of future interests, to throw the abilities of several years into one.” The last article being the most needful because “in modern times, the success of war depends more on the longest purse than on the longest sword.”

\textquote{“Now, you have not a single walled Town, nor a single disciplined Regiment, nor a single Ship-of-war, nor a single Fund on which moneyed men

\textsuperscript{80} Edgar, \textit{South Carolina}, 224.}
would lend you a month’s expense of an armament; and your annual Revenue is so small as hardly to deserve the name of one. You are Englishmen. We appeal to that good sense which distinguishes Englishmen. Lay causes and effects, circumstances and their consequences together. Can you hope for success in such a war? Success do we say! Your destruction is Inevitable. No country and people were ever so peculiarly ill-situated and circumstanced for a war with us, as you are at this instant.” Dalrymple then strikes directly at the heart of the South Carolina economy: “We give vast bounties on the importation of your Flax, Hemp, Timber, and Naval Stores, to the detriment of those who raise them at home, to whom we give none. Our Merchants are restrained by prohibitions, or duties equivalent to prohibitions, from importing Rice, Indigo, and many other articles of the produce of your estates, in order to give you a monopoly of those articles, although they could bring them much cheaper from other Nations. We give a bounty upon the importation of Indigo, and continue it upon exportation, by which accumulated favour, we first give you a premium to import, and then enable you; by the advantage of a double market, to raise the price upon us afterwards.” And then follows likely his strongest accusation aimed directly at the lawyers of the southern colonies. It was they, says Dalrymple, that desired to enslave the American colonists, not Britain. “But there are men among yourselves against whom you ought to be equally on your guard. It is hard that the charge of our intending to enslave you, should come oftenest from the mouths of those lawyers who in your Southern Provinces at least, have long made you slaves to themselves. There is scarce one of us acquainted with an American, who has not been told by him, that there is no region on earth, in which the people are so much oppressed by the extortions of Lawyers, as in many parts of America; a circumstance as unfortunate for us as for you, in the present disputes, because we are to expect, that men who gain by uncertainty and disorder, will forever oppose every attempt to a regular administration of Law, Police, and Government, which must diminish their own importance; and it is not to be hoped that they should spare either the mother country or her Colonies as communities, who never shewed mercy to the individuals of either.”

It is unclear what familiarity, if any at all, that John Dalrymple, 4th Baronet of Scotland, had with the white inhabitants of the Piedmont of South Carolina as he penned his pamphlet for circulation in England and North America, but words to needle at rising concerns in the minds of men between the Broad and Saluda Rivers and at Ninety Six could not have been more eloquently chosen. The difference must have been striking as they assembled there and in other locations in the backcountry to hear the addresses made by the Safety Commission headed by Henry Drayton and other Charleston elites contrasted by the responses of men that they had served alongside during the Seven Years War, and forged paths through the densely forested landscape to build new lives alongside. The effect was to prevent Drayton from convincing any signatures to the Association from the large group assembled at King’s Creek on the Enoree or being able to hold an election to select representatives from South Carolina to the Continental Congress.  

Alongside his task to gain the support of the white inhabitants, Drayton was also charged with persuading the Cherokee Nation to side with the Patriot cause should the rift between them and the Loyalists come to violence. For this mission Drayton selected Richard Pearis, who was friendly to the Patriot cause and who had a proven track record for persuasion especially among the Cherokee Lower Towns. In exchange for his assistance, Pearis secured Drayton’s promise to intervene with the authorities of Ninety Six who were moving to seize Pearis’ property as payment of a debt he owed a firm in Charlestown. Pearis apparently attempted to sweeten the deal with Drayton with the

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promise of land which could be purchased cheaply. Drayton declined the offer, but was able to defer the confiscation of Pearis’ land for several months. Pearis made good on his end of the bargain bringing four Cherokee leaders to a conference with Drayton at the Congarees and then delivering a message to the leaders at Sugar Town where he was challenged by Alexander Cameron who reminded the assembled Cherokees of Pearis’ previous attempt to secure trading rights between the Cherokees and Virginia through deceitful tactics.

Cameron did not need to fear Pearis’ influence for the Patriots much longer, however. When Edward Wilkinson, George Galphin and Robert Rae were appointed by the South Carolina Congress to fill the three remaining roles as congressional Indian Agents (the Continental Congress being authorized to appoint five and only finding two) Richard Pearis decided to align with the Loyalist cause. Although he had been tasked with distributing an ammunition shipment from Charleston to the Cherokees to be used to defend the Patriot force, Pearis instead joined the fifteen hundred men under Patrick Cunningham to defend the supply against recapture by Major Andrew Williamson’s 500 man regiment. While Pearis’ loyalties swayed according to personal gain, Colonel Thomas Fletchall’s Nonassociation leanings hardened into Loyalism and he declared his and his Upper Saluda District militia unit’s intention of defending the British crown. To counteract this development Captain John Thomas went to work assembling a militia unit

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84 Huff, *Greenville*, 22. Patrick Cunningham was living on the Saluda River south of the Cherokee boundary. It seems likely that this is the same Andrew Williamson that is indicated on Hamilton’s Great Survey for indicating Williamson’s mill and “White Hall” plantation. The reality of the civil war environment begins to become apparent as the close proximity of the lives of these men whose loyalties often placed them on opposite sides of skirmishes is more closely examined.
led by Patriot officers around his home on Fairforest Creek in present day Spartanburg County.  

_The Brake of Canes_

The commandeered ammunition and a skirmish at Ninety Six, causing the first southern blood to be spilled in the Southern campaign of the American Revolution, led to a significant mobilization of Patriot forces culminating in what is known as the Battle of the Great Canebreak or the Snow Campaign. The Loyalists had dug in to defend their position at Ninety Six and so Colonel Richard Richardson began assembling a patriot troop at Camden moving northwest toward Ninety Six and assembling between three and four thousand men including John Thomas’ unit now known as the “Spartan Regiment”. As they closed in around Ninety Six many of the Tory leaders fled in the direction of Richard Pearis’ grant on the Reedy River and beyond the border of Cherokee Nation. By December 12, 1775 Richardson had a force more than 5,000 strong and was camped at Hollingsworth Mill near present day Fountain Inn in Greenville County. Richardson ordered the Spartan Regiment to capture the Tory forces who had made camp beyond the Cherokee boundary.  

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85 Huff, _Greenville_, 22. Captain John Thomas had also been at Fort Duquesne, although it is unknown if he crossed paths with Richard Pearis there.

86 Among the Spartan regiment joining Richardson was a group of volunteers who had elected Captain Vardry McBee (Sr.) as their leader. This democratic group of volunteers “reserved the right to vote on the activities of the regiment, refused training, and acknowledged that its members could go home whenever there were domestic concerns or crops to tend. Each expected himself and the other members to fight fiercely and boldly when there was a chance to win, and to disappear with speed when defeat appeared certain. If they disapproved of a leader’s tactics or objectives, they joined another group. At one time or another the same man served in Colonel Thomas’s, Brandon’s Roebuck’s or Steen’s regimen” Their democratic independence made them the most assertive, innovative, and aggressive soldiers of the Revolution.” Smith, Roy McBee. _Vardry McBee, 1775-1864: Man of Reason in an Age of Extremes_. Spartanburg, S.C: R.M. Smith, 1992., 31.
Snow fell as Thomas and his regiment marched the nearly 25 miles from Hollingsworth Mill to the Brake of Canes. They marched through the night and succeeded in a surprise attack at dawn recapturing the ammunition wagon along with 130 Loyalist troops and their leaders, including Richard Pearis. By the time Colonel Richardson dismissed the North Carolina regiments and broke camp on Christmas Day there was nearly two feet of snow blanketing the ground. 87 Although there were very few casualties, the Patriot forces had raised a large force quickly and accomplished a strategic victory. Perhaps the most significant result of the Snow Campaign was the capture of the outspoken Tory leaders and the demonstration that both sides were willing and able to take up arms in defense of their political loyalties. The memory of the snowy battle remained etched in the minds of veterans and their days in the “Snow Camps” were recounted in such prominent households as the McBees whose son, Vardry, would become the leading builder of Greenville. 88

The next phase of violence in South Carolina would involve the Cherokee Nation in a more direct manner than simply their lands acting as a backdrop to Euro-American violence. While it is difficult to ascertain precisely the motive for the Cherokees’ involvement in the Revolution or the moment they decided to throw the considerable weight of their military strength and resources into the battle on the British side, those actions brought a renewed scene of violence and chaos to the backcountry that had not been witnessed since the Anglo-Cherokee Wars. Among those killed were Jacob Hite and

88 Smith, *Vardry McBee*, 32.
his family. Hite had declared his intention to side with the Patriot cause in opposition to
his former partner and neighbor Richard Pearis but felt secure enough to remain near the
Cherokee boundary with his family because of his long-standing relationship with them.
In attacks occurring in July 1776 Jacob Hite was killed, his daughters either captured or
killed, and his wife captured. Her body was found in an abandoned Cherokee town in
early August by Colonel Andrew Williamson.89

The Revolution’s Toll

Beginning in May 1776 through 1777 the fighting that took place in the
backcountry was primarily between Patriots and the Cherokee Nation. Attacks from both
sides were brutal and the destruction of homes, farms and crops and the loss of life were
substantial. The Cherokee raiding parties were often joined with Loyalists and the
organization for these attacks on the surrounding farms took place at Richard Pearis’
house near the falls of the Reedy River.90 After receiving orders from William Henry
Drayton to repeat the total warfare of the Anglo-Cherokee war, burning and destroying
entire villages along with their crops and livestock, Colonel Williamson and Captain John
Thomas assembled forces around DeWitt’s Corner and proceeded to move toward the
Cherokee Lower Towns on the Keowee River. On their way they burned Pearis’ Great
Plain plantation along with his mill and seized his enslaved laborers and other property,
all of which was sold at public auction at Fort Prince.91

89 Huff, Greenville, 24.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
With the destruction of their homes and land and the British and Loyalists leaders either captured or fled, the Cherokees agreed to negotiations with the Patriots. On May 7, 1777 a gathering of South Carolina and Georgia officials including Andrew Williamson and William Henry Drayton was joined by eight Cherokee leaders at DeWitt’s Corner. All Cherokee lands except a narrow strip in present day Oconee and Pickens counties were ceded to South Carolina making the lands in Greenville County available for distribution by the provincial government to incentivise service in the Continental and regular military.92

When the British regular forces returned to fighting in South Carolina in 1778 they landed at the coast but quickly turned their sights and vitriol on the backcountry. The regular army was joined by Loyalists and Cherokees eager to see the tide turn in light of their recent defeats and the violence and destruction continued and grew from Ninety Six to Kings Mountain. In December 1780 a commander arrived with the Continental Army into the backcountry. His mastery of military tactics and willingness to work together with the volunteer regiments helped halt the advances of the British and began to shift the momentum of war back in favor of the Patriots in the Piedmont. Although not honored as highly after the Revolution as Francis Marion or Thomas Sumter, the original spelling of “Greeneville” District commemorates General Nathanael Greene as one of the most influential patriot commanders in the South Carolina backcountry.93

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92 Huff, Greenville, 26. Edgar, South Carolina, 231.
93 Edgar, South Carolina, 236-241. Huff, Greenville, 47-49.
After their capture of Charleston the reinstalled British government and the Patriot government, led by Governor John Rutledge, traded edicts for punishing the leaders of the opposition by confiscating their property or banishing them from South Carolina. Meanwhile the physical toll mounted in the backcountry. British forces harassed men and women suspected of aiding the Patriot forces. Patriot forces continued to hem in the British and cut off their supplies and conduct full-scale assaults on them. The tactics of the British, though, swayed the opinion of many and caused mass desertions to Greene’s forces, a depletion from which the British were ill-equipped to recoup. Eventually the defeats on the battlefield and attrition of the troops led to a British withdrawal. Coupled with the now ardent support of the homefront, the Patriot forces in the backcountry broke the might of the British Regulars with their Loyalist and Cherokee supporters. The bitterness of the inhabitants toward those who had chosen a different side in the fight for American independence would carry through another generation in the backcountry. Without the mass convictions and forcible removals of Tories that played out in the lowcountry, the backcountry was left to sort out their differences and divided loyalties on their own. Again, the lowcountry began jockeying for higher representation while providing less government service to the backcountry. Again, the backcountry eyed the coast with suspicion and distrust. It seems, for the backcountry of

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94 Dr. Walter Edgar, perhaps, says it best: “The war may have begun and ended in Charleston; however, it was not won there. It was won in the backcountry” (South Carolina, 241).
South Carolina, the Revolution exacted a heavy toll but delivered very little reward in the way of expanded independence or economic opportunity.\textsuperscript{95}

The inhabitants of the Upper Piedmont faced unique challenges during the Revolutionary War period. Their proximity to the Cherokee Nation and the realities of warring neighbors and families complicated and extended the violence of the conflict. Although still beyond the Cherokee Boundary, the lands fated to become Greenville County had become increasingly inhabited by white arrivals. Their Tory tendencies motivated by economics, driven very often by British trade with the Cherokee as well as a distrust of the elite planters and lawyers on the coast, rarely hardened into strident Loyalism. Rather, when the tide of war seemed to turn in the Patriots favor they traded sides, or simply waited out the end of conflict and reintegrated into the new American landscape. With the ceding of land from the Cherokee Nation the danger of occupation seemed to have lessened and hundreds of thousands of acres of land became available for legal acquisition. The ability to recreate a plantation economy at the base of Appalachians became attainable. Many men whose first visit to the backcountry occurred during a military engagement chose to remain and build lives on the edge of South Carolina’s jurisdiction.

\textsuperscript{95} See Edgar’s \textit{South Carolina} pg 244 for statistics on loss of revenue, property and life. He quotes a source that attested that there were 1200 widows in Ninety Six alone after the end of the violence of the Revolution.
CHAPTER 3

THE UNIONISTS

The decades following the Revolutionary War saw an explosion of growth in the backcountry. The large military presence that stretched the length and breadth of the Piedmont would have established a foothold in understanding the topography as well as the agricultural and township potential of the area that had previously been, at least legally, off limits for the Europeans. With the Treaty of DeWitt’s Corner, the Cherokee nation ceded the remainder of their holdings in South Carolina except a very small portion of northernmost future Pickens and Oconee Counties. The Cherokee Lower Towns destroyed by Colonel Andrew Williamson and although it is unclear if William Henry Drayton’s realized his hope for the complete removal of the Cherokees from South Carolina land, it seems certain that most of the residents of the Lower Towns removed over the mountains after the destruction of their towns, agriculture and the official seizure of the their hunting lands.

The act officially incorporating the ceded lands into the Ninety Six District took aim at men who fled beyond the Cherokee boundary to avoid military service during the Revolutionary conflict. In order to gain control over them the General Assembly passed the “Act for Completing the Quota of Troops to be Raised in this State for the Continental Service; and for Other Purposes Therein Mention” on March 28, 1778 which gave the magistrates of Ninety Six the same jurisdictional power over the ceded land as
over the old boundaries.\textsuperscript{96} Over the next few years much talk circulated regarding using the sale of land in the backcountry, especially the newly acquired acreage, to tackle the debts South Carolina amassed during the Revolutionary War. Finally in 1784 the petitions of Judge Henry Pendleton coalesced into action with the support of Governor Benjamin Guerard. The General Assembly ratified an act establishing the method of assessment, surveying and granting of land as well as the election of land commissioners for every circuit court district. Ninety Six District was divided along the Saluda River and a commissioner appointed for the north side and another for the south.\textsuperscript{97} Perhaps the size of the district necessitated this division, but it is significant to remember that much of this land had previously been claimed, occupied and developed prior to the Revolutionary War. The legislation made provisions for them in 1784 by affirming that lands obtained legally before January 1, 1775 beyond the “ancient boundary” that had been prevented from being surveyed and grants obtained by the “abolition of the British Government, or other good and sufficient causes.”\textsuperscript{98} In this manner the descendents of Jacob Hite and several others were granted fee simple ownership of their claimed lands without payment.

\textsuperscript{96} Huff, \textit{Greenville}, 36.

\textsuperscript{97} Walter Edgar views the act to establish tax assessment measures for surveyed lands as a “hushpuppy” the lowcountry threw to the backcountry in an effort to begin reestablishing order within its new boundaries (\textit{South Carolina}, 246-7). Huff, \textit{Greenville}, 37.

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Statutes of South Carolina from 1752-1786}. Statute #1206 addresses the lands that lay beyond the former Cherokee boundary and the owners prevented from surveying and obtaining grants by the British government. The inference here seems to be that it was only the British government’s control of land and negotiations with the Cherokee Nation that prevented the legal ownership of the land beyond the boundary. The question arising, then, is why Richard Pearis (or his heirs), who had one of the more provable claims to large tracts of land beyond the boundary, is not awarded land. Pearis was a Tory, but did that prevent him from legally claiming land? There were lots of Tories that stayed in the backcountry without consequence.
of fees. The twelve square miles claimed by Richard Pearis and his son George, however, were never acknowledged by South Carolina’s government.

May 21, 1784 marked the official opening of the land for grants and by the end of the day 244 warrants had been issued for a total of 97,036 acres. As Charleston grappled with poor rice harvests and the lack of hard currency, the credit so easily obtained before and during the Revolutionary War became an ever more troublesome burden. With the passage of the Pine Barren Act, lands and possessions became legal substitutes for currency and creditors and debtors alike were thrown into financial disarray. The Perrys, Benjamin and Nathaniel, had relocated from the Dutch Fork area to Greenville in 1785. They laid claim to 638 acres and erected a store roughly six miles north of the present day site of the city of Greenville. The population in the area was spread thin and consisted mostly of subsistence farmers who desired but could not afford the goods in the Perry’s store without an extension of credit. When the legislation passed the property tender law in 1785 the brothers received “blind horses, lame cows, yokes of oxen” in lieu of cash payments and, to add insult to injury, proceeded to drive up the prices on the worthless items since all were indebted to the store. Benjamin and Nathaniel sent the menagerie to a Charleston firm to attempt a sale, but could not save their store. They moved to Twelve Mile Creek at its junction with the Cherokee Path, now a widened wagon road, purchased nearly 2,000 acres of land, opened a new store, and remained

99 Huff, Greenville, 39. On the first day of land grants nearly 1/5th of Greenville’s 509,000 acres would have been claimed assuming the warrants all lay within the present boundaries.
100 Edgar, South Carolina, 247.
there until 1791. Exemplary of the quickness of relocation and the volatility of the financial gains and ruin of the time, the Perrys with thousands of other families came for newly accessible land and stayed and toiled to carve out their place in South Carolina. The fever to claim tracts by speculators and soldiers would continue until 1791 and consume the most valuable lands along the rivers and historic Native American paths and settlements and then would cool with Governor Moultrie’s refusal to sign warrants for large tracts of land as well as the realization that the more agriculturally and industrially suited tracts were gone.

If you build it…

As the population grew so did the necessity for community infrastructure and improvements. The traditional east to west paths leading from the Cherokee towns to the Catawba lands did not suit the needs of the Americans desiring to have easier access to the markets in Charleston and Augusta as well as to accommodate the drover trade from North Carolina and Kentucky. In 1785 and 1795 legislative directives appointed road commissioners and inspectors with the creation and maintenance of roads connecting well-known and used paths to create a more connected network of transportation between stores, courthouses, post offices, and industry. The Greenville community remained outspread and rural with little interest in coalescing around the town. Farmers simply constructed stores on their lands if they happened to lie near the sight of a road or path. Schools sprang up wherever a larger agricultural population could reasonably require

101 Kibler, Benjamin F. Perry, 11-14.
102 Huff, Greenville, 40.
103 Huff, Greenville, 43, 56, 63.
their children to walk the distance to the school from their homes. Church congregations gathered at the sides of rivers or in clearings until buildings could be erected, most often on the lands of a prominent member. Successful farms began to spring up throughout the country and the owners joined judges and lawyers to form the civil leadership of the town. Philemon Bradford fell short of planter status by six enslaved laborers but owned several hundred acres on the south fork of the Saluda River in between what is now Marietta and Pumpkintown. His lands were cultivated in various grains along with a successful orchard and livestock. In addition to serving as a South Carolina legislator from 1808 until 1815 he was also a justice of the peace in 1799, a commissioner of the Free School in 1811 and a member of the commission assembled in 1815 tasked with assessing the possibility of creating a turnpike road in Greenville. The ascendency of the wealthy agricultural class was reproducing itself in the foothills of the Appalachians.

The Greenville town lots continued to change hands as the inhabitants focused on accumulating ever greater agricultural tracks as planter status remained the economic pursuit of most farmers. The white population expanded from 5,888 in 1790 to 10,029

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104 Benjamin F. Perry’s recollection of his childhood education in the Pendleton District is particularly colorful.
106 Lemuel James Alston purchased the former Pearis land along the Reedy River in 1788 eventually accumulating 11,028 acres. He had the village of Greenville laid out and portioned 52 lots for sale in four blocks on either side of Main Street. Alston attempted to market the lands but with very little interest as the land was assumed to be already depleted of the necessary nutrients for cotton growing. (Smith, Roy McBee, *Vardry McBee, 1775-1864: Man of Reason in an Age of Extremes.* Spartanburg, S.C: R.M. Smith, 1992, 102-3).
in 1810 and the Black enslaved population grew from 615 in 1790 to 2,394 in 1810.\textsuperscript{107} In 1807, when the outbreak of hostilities between England and France overspread Europe's shores and when the news of the English vessel’s, the *Leopard*, crippling of the *USS Chesapeake* and impressing several of her sailors reached the Upstate the militia call sounded. So great and rapid was the gathering of men willing to rekindle war with Britain that the ranks filled and Colonel Thurston’s and Brown’s regiments immediately marched forward. As time passed it became clear that there was, in fact, nowhere for the men to march and they disbanded back to their homes.\textsuperscript{108}

In 1815 Vardry McBee purchased three tracts amounting to over 11,000 acres along with Lemuel James Alston’s “Prospect Hill” home on a hill overlooking the town lots of Greenville village. The Prospect Hill mansion was a well established spot for Charlstonians to summer and McBee leveraged its reputation to draw an ever increasing number of coastal elites to the cooler, upcountry air from May until October. So successful was McBee’s advertisement campaign along with his manager, Edmund Waddell and his wife’s hospitality, that a rash of hotel and inn building ran through the village.\textsuperscript{109}

Vardry McBee had larger plans for his newly acquired South Carolina lands than simply as a summer destination away from the coast. He had spent his younger years in Lincolnton, North Carolina fervently studying and testing various methods for renewing

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\textsuperscript{107} Huff, *Greenville*, Appendix A
\textsuperscript{108} Huff, *Greenville*, 76.
\end{flushright}
“killed soil” on his lands which stretched across the state line along the Catawba River. His success in raising a variety of crops on the sites of former plantations was remarkable and received much attention from the farming community and allowed him the opportunity of being a founding member of the Lincoln County Agricultural Society.

In Lincolnton, McBee witnessed a tremendous rise of manufacturing and enterprise beyond agricultural pursuits. Before 1790 Lincoln County boasted four iron forges. By 1816 the first cotton mill south of the Potomac River, with a design pioneered by Michael Schenck and Michael Beam, was built in Lincoln County and quickly followed by the construction of John Hoke’s and James Bivings’ Lincoln Cotton Mill containing 3,000 spindles. Hoke and Bivings expanded into axe manufacturing and Bivings eventually relocated to Spartanburg District to establish one of the first mills there. By 1816 a chemical and dye factory called “The Laboratory” was in operation along the South Fork River in Lincoln County. This rise of water powered production in the piedmont of North Carolina would inspire Vardry McBee as he surveyed his properties stretching along the Reedy River.

His first concern was the construction of a sawmill and iron works at the lower falls of the Reedy River to produce the timber and nails as well as a brick yard and stone quarry to provide the materials necessary to build his vision. Next, 1817, he sent for Conrad Michael of Lincolnton to come to Greenville to build a double wheeled flour mill on the Reedy’s upper falls capable of running two pairs of milling stones. This mill was

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111 Ibid. 88-90.
upgraded in 1829 to accommodate four sets of runners and produced such a high quality of flour as to draw buyers from surrounding North Carolina and Georgia. Probably very near the location of his father’s Revolutionary War service at the Snow Campaign, he built another sawmill and flour mill along with a paper mill. In addition he used these mills to generate power for a cotton and woolen factory. The Greenville Male and Female Academies built in 1821 on thirty acres deeded by McBee to the village in 1820 and over the next three decades he donated lands for the four largest churches still located in downtown Greenville today.\footnote{McBee led the establishment of a male academy in Lincolnton in 1813 and was a member of its board as well as the female academy established there in 1821 (Smith, *Vardry McBee*, 114-5). Christ Church Episcopal Church received the first deed of the four churches. McBee would attend the ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone in 1825 and would continue to attend services there until his death in 1864 and is buried in the cemetery. In 1824 he donated the land to the trustees of the Baptist denomination (Baylis J. Earle, Jeremiah Cleveland, Richard Thruston, Richard Harrison, George Fleming) for a building of a Baptist church. The Methodist trustees (Rev. James Douthett, Thomas Hutchings, etc) received their deed from McBee in 1832. After the organization for the First Presbyterian Church was completed by Whiteford Smith Sr. and the other trustees, they received their deed from McBee in 1848 (Smith, *Vardry McBee*, 126-7). It is often noted that the lands donated to the four churches form, roughly, the shape of a cross. It seems likely that McBee had earmarked certain amounts or locations of lands in the heart of the village for religious practice, but the long timeframe for the lands to be claimed by the various denominations as well as many migrations of the congregations before settling in their current locations, makes it seem less likely that a particular shape was the goal. A Catholic congregation, meeting at the home of the Keenan family on the corner of Main and Elford, became St. Mary’s and their first permanent building was constructed at the corner of Lloyd and Elford in 1872 on land donated by McBee’s son, Vardry, (https://smcgvl.org/who-we-are/history/).} 

When Benjamin F. Perry published in his paper, *The Southern Patriot*, that Vardry McBee had “somewhat of a passion for building” in 1852 the editor revealed his penchant for humorous understatement. After Vardry and Jane McBee permanently relocated from Lincolnton, North Carolina to Greenville in 1836 they undertook a slew of construction projects aimed at expanding the mill operations which he had previously established and the village of Greenville as a whole. Although the State Road running
through Greenville up to the Poinsett Bridge and the Saluda Gap on the state line had been constructed in 1820 under Robert Mills and Joel R. Poinsett and the Male and Female Academies accepting students since the early 1820’s the recollections of Greenville during that decade was that of a small, backwater village. Benjamin F. Perry attended the Male Academy in Greenville, a full day’s travel away from his childhood home in Pendleton, and remembers dirty streets filled with drunks, loiterers and Charleston vacationers more concerned with their evening game of cards than of any productive activity.113 With the expansion of tourism to Prospect Hill and the other hotels springing up came additional revenue, some of which was funneled to the construction of an enlarged and beautified courthouse as well as the gubernatorial mansion for Henry Middleton named “Whitehall”. Several other large in-town homes were constructed during this period and by 1830 the census reports a population of 600 people, enough to support a variety of craftsmen and some manufacturing.114 Although the area was greatly impacted by a steady stream of outflow farther west to Alabama and Mississippi, especially among the long-standing agricultural families whose lands became depleted and without available replacement tracts, the economy of Greenville continued to diversify and thrive.115

Nullification

As the population grew and industry flourished the need for a publication of a local newspaper for the residents of Greenville increased and in 1826 the Greenville

113 Smith, *Vardry McBee*, 129-130.
Republican went to press under the leadership of John Hill Hewitt, a Unionist professor of music at the Female Academy and Greenville’s first published ballad writer.116 The paper lapsed in 1828 after Hewitt fled town, but proprietor O.H. Wells determined to continue on and in January of 1829 Greenville’s residents could subscribe to the Mountaineer, whose name was suggested by Benjamin F. Perry.117 The smoldering debates over the federal tariff and possible reactions at a community and state level flashed across the pages of newspapers from the coast to mountains revealing the upper Piedmont’s preference to unite with the rice coast against Nullification.118 An editorial column in the February 7, 1829 edition of the Greenville Mountaineer claims “we do honestly believe that the Mountaineer has expressed on the important subjects which occasionally fill its columns, the voice of Greenville. If we know anything of public opinion in the back country, we know that it is firm and unalterable in its opposition to the tariff. Indeed we should be sorry, and almost ashamed, of our country, if we did not know this to be the general sentiment of our fellow citizens. But we are likewise aware, that the people of the mountains have reason and discretion in their opposition to all things. Whilst they

116 David Sims, host, “The 1800’s.” Greenville Music Preservation (podcast), May 16, 2021, accessed March 18, 2024, https://www.podbean.com/media/share/pb-div58-1039b6d?utm_campaign=w_share_ep&utm_medium=dlink&utm_source=w_share. John H. Hewitt (son of James Hewitt, America’s first composer) was in love with a young woman, Elizabeth Maclin, who was a student at the Female Academy and whose family were summer residents of Greenville from Charleston. Unfortunately, another man also loved Maclin and to clear the field as well as a consequence of Hewitt’s developing Unionist leanings in the Republican, Hewitt was hung in effigy in front of the courthouse on the day his ballad “Jubilee Ode” was set to be performed for the 50th anniversary celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. A poem written on a sign pinned to his stuffed likeness labeled him as an abolitionist and a mulatto. It is not entirely clear how John H. Hewitt’s Unionists tendencies developed. Perhaps his upbringing in New York, or his education at West Point fostered a deeper devotion to the Union or it may be while he became enamored with the South that his relatively short time spent in Augusta and Greenville did not create the same level of loyalty to state demonstrated by the majority of the state. It is interesting, though, that Unionism in the press in Greenville emerges from the very beginning of it existance.

117 Kibler, Benjamin F. Perry, 89.

118 Huff, Greenville, 103. Huff points to the diversified economies of Greenville and Beaufort as the main driver of Unionism. Because their economies relied heavily on trade and transportation from the other states and territories of the Union they had the most to lose should South Carolina secede.
hold in utter abomination all the protecting duties, they yet look with equal indignity on those, who would force us to some irretrievable issue with the general Government. They treat with contempt the proposition of those who would call a Convention and nullify the tariff acts, open our ports and harbors to foreign commerce free of duties, and absolve the people of South Carolina from their obedience to these unwise and oppressive laws. This doctrine never will suit the meridian of Greenville. Her citizens are disposed to ‘bear and forbear’ rather than to resort to such measures. They are more disposed to ‘suffer while evils are sufferable,’ and ‘to trust, to the good sense and returning justice of their Tariff brethren’ than ‘to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they have been accustomed”’.119

The public voice of Greenville strengthened its Unionist chorus when Benjamin F. Perry assumed the editorship of the *Mountaineer* in 1830. Upon completion of his time at the Male Academy in Greenville, Perry entered the office of Baylis J. Earle, Greenville’s solicitor of the Western circuit, to begin his law education. During his time as a law student Perry established himself as a public speaker by organizing a debate club among the other young men in the village as well as membership in the “Franklin Polemic Society”.120 His views on the relationship between the states and the Federal government solidified through reading George McDuffie’s “One of the People” and other essays as well as studying John C. Calhoun’s speeches. He poured over the *Federalist* papers, claiming them as his political Bible, and used Washington’s Farewell Address as a blueprint for his views on national loyalty. His first piece of political journalism appeared under the pseudonym “Junius” in the Greenville *Republican* in 1826 answering

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119 Greenville *Mountaineer*, February 7, 1829.
William Smith’s premature views on state’s rights. Junius claimed all rights, whether state or federal, belonged only to the people and their elected officials as they faithfully represented their constituents.

Perry’s esteem for John C. Calhoun increased after the two met at a dinner thrown in Calhoun’s honor at the Mansion House in Greenville upon the Calhouns returned from Washington D.C. to the Clergy House (later renamed Fort Hill). Many toasts were presented and Perry’s toast demonstrated his democratic fervor: “Power in government - none should be delegated which can be properly exercise by the people.” Perry received his license to practice law in Columbia in 1827 and returned to Greenville to begin his practice. As the district and state became more embroiled in controversy over the tariff, he saw a steady decline in cases. “Political excitement seemed to destroy the business of our course…The people were so busied in politics, & so excited by party contests that they did not care to indulge in the luxury of litigation.”

121 Walter Edgar’s descriptions of this cast of characters is remarkably helpful: “U.S. senator William Smith of the Spartanburg district was an old-fashioned states’ rights Jeffersonian”; next, “Rep. John C. Calhoun of Abbeville was an outspoken nationalist. Calhoun’s nationalism led the Richmond Enquirer to label him an ‘ultra-politician of the federal school’” and Calhoun and Langdon Cheves “were ardent War Hawks who advocated war with Great Britain and, after the war, a strong national government”; and finally, “George McDuffie, a Calhoun protege” claimed that “the only individuals who promoted states’ rights were ‘Ambitious men of inferior talents’ who could not distinguish themselves on the national scene; therefore, they sought ‘to increase the power and consequence of the state governments, the theaters in which they expect to acquire distinction.’” (Edgar, South Carolina, 325) It appears, however, that Smith was simply ahead of the South Carolina State’s Rights curve.

122 Ibid, 49-53.

123 Kibler, Benjamin F. Perry, 56. It may not be entirely coincidental that John C. Calhoun’s support of nullification began developing after his return to the lower Piedmont of South Carolina. The economy of Pendleton and the surrounding areas was heavily dependent on short-staple cotton agriculture and therefore suffered much more from the low cotton prices of the Panic of 1819. The Tariff of 1824 was seen as targeting an already struggling economy by the residents of the lower Piedmont than by those in Greenville with its more diversified economy dependent on the mills, drover trade and summer tourism from the coast. (Huff, Greenville, 103)

124 Kibler, Benjamin F. Perry, 68.
Carolina economy began to constrict because of the almost continual loss of planters seeking fertile lands farther west and the increase of protective tariff rates with the passage of the Tariff of 1828 (or so-called Tariff of Abomination) Calhoun and McDuffie pirouetted politically a full 180 degrees from support of the federal tariff for infrastructure and military developments after the War of 1812. They renounced any right of the federal government to impose protective tariffs and John C. Calhoun, having resigned as Andrew Jackson’s vice president, anonymously penned the “South Carolina Exposition and Protest” stating the state’s right and even its obligation to oppose federal interference.  

Benjamin Perry having read the Exposition and Protest, but unaware of its authorship, immediately issued an editorial in the Greenville *Mountaineer*:

“We have just seen and hastily looked over the Exposition of the Tariff, adopted at the last session of our Legislature, and now published in a pamphlet of 44 pages. It is certainly an able and powerful statement of our wrongs and injuries, and does credit to the talents and patriotism of those who drew it. But we cannot, however, notwithstanding the ability with which it is executed, concur in some of its conclusions with regard to the power of the several State Legislatures to control the proceedings of the Congress. We have always been of the opinion…that it was the intention of the Federal Constitution, to make the General Government, in a great measure, independent of the State Governments…In fact, it does seem to us, that no candid and unprejudiced mind can read the debates and proceedings of the Convention, which framed our Constitution, without seeing clearly that it was the open and avowed object of the greater part of the members, to have the General Government so constituted that the States could not clog or check its proceedings. But that there might be some controlling power over this Government, some arbiter between its proceedings and that of the States, they wisely established the Federal Judiciary for this purpose. This tribunal has the power to declare a law of Congress

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125 Calhoun was elected as Andrew Jackson’s Vice President in 1829. Part of Calhoun’s argument in Exposition and Protest is that the tariff was unconstitutional because it was aimed specifically at the southern economy and that it was not a tax for revenue (which he allowed to be constitutional) but for “protective or prohibitory duties”. (John C. Calhoun, “South Carolina Exposition and Protest, 1828)
unconstitutional, null and void, and to keep both the State and General Governments within their respective provinces. If this power of declaring a law of Congress unconstitutional and void, were lodged in the state Legislatures, our government would be precisely such as it was under the articles of the old confederation. It would be entirely discretionary with the States whether any national law or measure should be carried into effect…Indeed this power in the State Legislature would reduce all the proceedings of Congress to nothing more than mere recommendations for their adoption!”

The smoldering debates burst into full flame during the election of 1830. Seeking to gain a stronger hold in the hesitant mountain country the Nullifiers took a more artful tact by campaigning on a convention call rather than Nullification, but Perry quickly clarified the issue with his call in the *Mountaineer* for “No Convention” men and strongly stated that the only reason for a call to convention was to nullify the Congressional tariff. Joel R. Poinsett’s return from Washington D.C. to Charleston in 1830 also signaled the growing concern over Nullification in the Jackson presidency. He reassured Jackson that he was returning to South Carolina “in order to oppose…the strange and pernicious doctrines advanced by some of the leading men of our state.” Poinsett quickly organized meetings with the other leading Unionists in Charleston and set forward their candidates for the state legislation as well as mobilizing city wardens across the state to begin establishing Union strongholds. The Nullifiers, still employing a more subtle campaign, styled themselves as the “State Rights and Jackson Party” perhaps

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126 Greenville *Mountaineer*, February 21, 1829.
128 Poinsett was recalled from Mexico by President Andrew Jackson in 1830. He was appointed as the first U.S. minister plenipotentiary to Mexico by James Monroe in 1825 and continued to serve during John Quincy Adams’ presidency.
under the assumption that since John C. Calhoun, Jackson’ vice president, was beginning to air his nullification leanings that the president was in tacit compliance with the party. Joel Poinsett immediately began working to set the record straight and assembling a powerful group of Unionist supporters in Colombia and Charleston.

In Greenville the lead up to the October 1830 election became increasingly contentious as the parties became increasingly divided in their method for resolving the issue of the federal tariff. Salesday addresses from political and public figures from the balcony of the courthouse as well as to crowds gathered in from the Greenville Hotel were frequent. Political meetings also gathered in old fields where the Conventionists urged constituents to send their delegates to Columbia. Although the upper Piedmont and the coast saw Unionist victories at the ballot boxes the ultimate result of the election of 1830 was a Nullification majority. Even the victories had been slimmer than expected by the Unionist supporters. After the installation of a majority Nullifier legislation in October both parties, the battle lines now clearly drawn, continued to debate within the legislative halls and attempt to persuade their constituents back home looking ahead to the election of 1832 as the opportunity to assemble a southern nullification convention or to thwart the call. The Nullifiers, with John C. Calhoun firmly at the helm, organized in every district in the state around “State Rights and Free Trade Associations” and garnered

130 Kibler in Benjamin F. Perry reports the totals as follows for the Grenville election: “Non-Convention” candidates - Cobb, 1,256; Major Micajah Berry, 992; Harrison, 970; “Convention” candidates - Thompson, 716; Walker, 547; Butler, 515; eleven Unionists and 5 Nullifier delegates were elected in Charleston (Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 136). Joel R. Poinsett was among the Unionists elected from Charleston along with Judge D.E. Huger who eclipsed McDuffie and Calhoun as Ben Perry’s new political hero. See Jason Thad Hollis’ 2008 masters thesis, “Je Suis Huger: Shaping Identity in South Carolina, 1685-1885.”. https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1353&context=all_theses
favor by hosting community parades, dinners, balls and exhibitions. The Unionists were less socially organized and relied heavily on local newspapers throughout the state for the dissemination of their message.\textsuperscript{131} Joel Poinsett continued corresponding regularly with President Jackson and invited him to attend the Fourth of July celebration in Charleston in 1831 as the guest of honor. Jackson was unable to attend but penned a lengthy letter to Poinsett immediately became fodder for both the Unionist and Nullification parties. Jackson stated in no uncertain terms that any attempt by the state to separate from the Union would trigger dire consequences and exhorted patience while the national governing bodies attempted to reduce and ultimately eliminate the national debt and overhaul the system of revenue.\textsuperscript{132}

President Jackson’s letter further divided the constituents of South Carolina. Not only did their parties disagree on the correct response to the tariff, the role of states rights within the constitution, and the point at which a federal law became federal overreach, now their disagreements had a president at their center. Benjamin Perry, who had not supported Andrew Jackson in his first bid for the presidency in 1828 now became an ardent supporter.\textsuperscript{133} So heated were the debates between the Unionist and Nullification editors of the various local newspapers that duels were constantly threatened and sometimes carried out and within the district itself the threat of violence between

\textsuperscript{131} Kibler, \textit{Benjamin F. Perry}, 104. Kibler states there were three strongly Unionist newspapers in Charleston during the Nullification Crisis: the \textit{Courier}, the \textit{Southern Patriot}, and the \textit{City Gazette} (Ibid, 101).

\textsuperscript{132} Rippy, \textit{Joel R. Poinsett}, 135-7.

\textsuperscript{133} Kibler, \textit{Benjamin F. Perry}, 106.
Greenville constituents caused the Fourth of July celebration to be canceled in 1832.\textsuperscript{134} Supporters of Nullification began publishing a newspaper edited by Turner Bynum in Greenville in 1832 to counter the views of Perry and the Mountaineer. The verbal sparring culminated in a duel between Perry and Bynum on an island in the Tugaloo River resulting in a fatal injury to Bynum. The summer of 1832 saw conventions of both the Unionist and Nullification parties. On September 10th delegates from Greenville, Spartanburg, Charleston, Sumter, Union, York, and other districts convened in Columbia to rally support and condemn any attempt of the Nullifiers to hold a convention. Again they sought to clarify to the voters that the aim of the Nullifiers was disunity and disloyalty to the United States and the federal government. On the same day, Greenville held its own Unionist convention. It was a rousing success with over 1,000 people in attendance despite bad weather. Letters from prominent Unionists around the state were read and Benjamin Perry delivered the resolutions of the party in a stirring speech.\textsuperscript{135} The Nullifiers attempted to rally support a week later by throwing a barbeque dinner in Greenville with speeches delivered by Governor Hamilton, George McDuffie, Warren Davis and Chancellor Harper, but without success.\textsuperscript{136} Perry continued to clarify the aim of the convention was nullification and sought to fight the notion that the economic downturn the south was experiencing and the perceived prosperity of the north was a direct result of the tariff. He instead pointed to the frugality of northerners as opposed to the opulence of southerners as well the propensity of South Carolinians to acquire huge

\textsuperscript{134} Huff, \textit{Greenville}, 104.
\textsuperscript{135} Kibler, \textit{Benjamin F. Perry}, 137-8.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid, 139-40.
tracts of land in newly opened western territories and the cost of relocation and
development of those new lands and the resulting constriction on the South Carolina
economy.137

Joel R. Poinsett took to the 1832 campaign trail after returning from an overseas
trip for his health, with what his biographer calls “perhaps the most eloquent speech of
his entire public career.”138 He appeals to South Carolinians to consider the strength of
the United States was already beginning to enjoy around the world:

“I know from what I have witnessed elsewhere, that this government,
tyrannical and oppressive as it is represented to be by the nullifiers, dispenses
more of human happiness to those that live under it than any other in the world…I
know that it commands the respect of foreign nations and that it is the admiration
of all who love freedom…Wherever I have been, I have felt proud of being a
citizen of this great republic, and in the remotest corners of the earth have walked
erect and secure under the banner which our opponents would tear down and
trample under foot. I was in Mexico when that town was taken by assault. The
house of the American ambassador was then, as it ought ever to be, the refuge of
the distressed and persecuted: it was pointed out to the infuriated soldiery as a
place filled with their enemies. They rushed to the attack. My only defense was
the flag of my country, and it was flung out at the instant that hundreds of
muskets were leveled at us. Mr. Mason and myself placed ourselves beneath its
waving folds and the attack was suspended…The scene changed as by
enchantment, and those men who were on the point of attacking my house and
massacring the inhabitants, cheered the flag of our country and placed sentinels to
protect it from outrage. Fellow-citizens, in such a moment as that, would it have
been any protection to me and mine to have proclaimed myself a Carolinian;
should I have been here to tell you this tale if I had hung out the palmetto and the
single star? Be assured [that] to be respected abroad we must maintain our place
in the Union.”139

137 Ibid, 140.
138 Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 140.
139 Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 140-1. Of course, it should be noted that declaring the United States a bastion
of freedom during the antebellum period of legalized racial slavery should be questioned, if not outright
denied.
He concluded the speech by relaying a message given him by General Lafayette during his time spend in Paris in 1831 to the citizens of South Carolina:

“Tell your countrymen [that] if they are so mad and so wicked as to quarrel among themselves about the mere matter of interest, about five or six per cent more or less for duties…they will discredit republican government throughout the world. [Tell them] we are looking anxiously to them, for if they are so blind…as to dissolve the Union, and cause the failure of the great experiment…, we who are contending for freedom on this side of the Atlantic must lie down in despair and die in our chains.”

The elections of 1832 repeated the patterns established in South Carolina in 1830. The upper Piedmont, including Greenville and Spartanburg, along with the coast were firmly Unionist but did not have the necessary representation to install a majority in Columbia. South Carolina was the only state which ran the Nullification Party on its 1832 presidential ballot nominating Virginia’s governor, John Floyd, as president and Henry Lee of Massachusetts as his running mate. The pair received all South Carolina’s electoral votes but not a single vote from any other state. After the election a special session of legislature convened in Columbia and called for a convention to be held on November 24th. The Unionists were not unified in how to proceed. Those in Charleston refused to send their delegates because they feared adding their names to the roll call of Nullification and instead organized a Committee of Correspondence to communicate with other Unionists leaders around the state. Perry and the other delegates from Greenville

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140 Ibid, 143.
disagreed and proposed to send delegates from the districts in which they secured a majority, hoping to thwart the Nullification agenda.

The convention declared the 1828 and 1832 federal tariffs to be null and void within South Carolina making it illegal for any state or federal agency to collect them after February 1, 1833. The legislature went even further adding that if any federal agency attempted to collect the tariff or coerce the government or citizens of South Carolina after the February deadline that South Carolina would immediately set up its own government apart and separate from the Union. Governor James Hamilton Jr. was authorized to assemble an unlimited number of volunteers for the state militia. More men responded than had voted to install the Nullification government.141 The volunteer force was allocated $200,000 to “suppress insurrection and repel invasion” an additional $200,000 was earmarked for the purchase of weapons.142 The final act of the convention created a test oath that was required to be administered and sworn to by all military and state personnel.143 Unionists across the state decried the test oath and many faced court-martial or resigned from long-held military positions. Colonel Wilson Barton of the Upper Regiment called a meeting of Unionists at the head of the Tyger River after hearing of the test oath and drafted a preamble and resolutions against South Carolina’s Nullification Ordinance. He resigned rather than stand before a military court and joined a wagon train of one hundred families from around the Tigerville area bound for Texas

when South Carolina again set herself against the Union in 1854.\textsuperscript{144} The news of the Nullification Ordinance and the demand of the Nullifiers that the people of South Carolina be obedient and loyal to the state was answered by the residents of Greenville constructing a liberty pole and raising “Old Glory”, the flag of 24 stars, in front of the courthouse.\textsuperscript{145}

President Jackson’s response to South Carolina’s Ordinance left no doubt regarding his stance. He flatly stated to the citizens of his native state that nullification was disunion and that disunion by force was treason. Surprise at the president’s words rippled through the state, although not among those, like Joel R. Poinsett, who had taken the president’s words, communicated throughout the lead up to the elections seriously.\textsuperscript{146} Benjamin Perry published the entirety of the president’s December 10, 1832 proclamation followed by a stern indictment and warning:

“If all these military preparations of money, arms and soldiers be not an awful warning to the people of South Carolina, we know nothing of the history of revolutions. Will not this force, when embodied, be a standing army in time of peace, kept up by a state, in violation of the Constitution of the United States, and dangerous to the liberties of the people:...But will the people of South Carolina, professing an attachment to republican governments, volunteer their services in a cause so fatal to liberty, to honor, and to themselves? Are they willing to become the hirelings of a military chieftain, in order to fight against the stars and stripes of their country - against that flag which has guided them in the paths of patriotism to victory and renown? Have they forgotten that “levying war against the United states” is treason? Are they ready to incur its guilt and meet a traitor’s doom? - If

\begin{footnotes}
\item[144] Batson, \textit{History of the Upper Part of Greenville County}, 94-5.
\item[146] Edgar, \textit{South Carolina}, 336. Edgar points to two specific instances that may have given South Carolinians reason to suppose that no president or federal government was inclined to seriously challenge states rights: first, the seamen of South Carolina had been nullifying treaties for nearly a decade; secondly, Georgia had defied a Supreme Court decision.
\end{footnotes}
so, it behoves the Union Party to be prepared to defend themselves against a brother’s tyranny, and to die like Freemen, rather than live like Slaves.”

And President Jackson was not alone in employing the threat of armed resistance to engage with a state unwilling to bend its will to federal law as other southern states issued statements opposing nullification. One Tennessean went so far as to declare that “if Old Hickory would give two weeks’ notice, a sufficient number of men could be assembled ‘to stand in the Saluda Mountains and piss enough…to float the whole nullifying crew of South Carolina into the Atlantic Ocean’”. History, perhaps, would have thanked them for their efforts. Alas, confident and piss-free, John C. Calhoun made his journey back to Washington D.C. to flaunt South Carolina’s rebellious government while simultaneously urging his home state to remain patient. The organization of military units across the state in preparation for opposition to the collection of the tariff as well as defense against any federal or neighboring state troops attempting to bring South Carolina back into compliance with federal law did little to pacify the excited atmosphere. The Unionists responded by forming “Washington Societies” which were to be quickly converted to military companies should violence erupt. Joel Poinsett sent a series of letters to Andrew Jackson from late 1831 to early 1832 outlining the seriousness of the situation and urging the president to deploy federal militia and arms to South Carolina. President Jackson took an uncharacteristically cautious stance and

147 Greenville Mountaineer, December 22, 29, 1832 in Kibler, Benjamin F. Perry, 149.
148 Ibid.
149 Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 150-3.
determined to not overreach constitutional power. He did send 5,000 guns to Castle Pickney, which he made abundantly clear to Poinsett that he expected the Unionists to be prepared to use against the Nullifiers, and promised that two navy vessels would be dispatched to Charleston harbor in case violence erupted. Poinsett requested additional munitions stating that “hand grenades and small rockets are excellent weapons in a street fight, and I should like to have some of them”. At the coast and in the mountains sizable volunteer militias including cavalry and light infantry assembled to begin preparing for a violent encounter with their political foes. The Charleston volunteers seized some of the city’s church bells and determined to entrench themselves on Hampstead peninsula if necessary. In Spartanburg, John C. Calhoun and James Hamilton were hung in effigy. Greenville Unionists answered the accusations of being “Submissionists, Cowards and Tories” with two words, “Come on!”

Congress assembled in early December 1832 and spent most of the first part of the month arguing strenuously over the Bank of the United States and what oversight powers that body possibly possessed over it. Discussion about uses of public lands and whether it was fair for new states to receive the same benefits from them as the original states were entitled to receive. Mr. Daniel of Kentucky was found to be out of order for turning a discussion of President Jackson’s remarks into a states rights debate. Throughout almost every debate in the House of Representatives, from a request for additional federal grants from New York and Ohio to establish institutions for the care of

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150 Ibid, 155-6.
151 Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 151-2.
152 Ibid, 154.
disabled persons to North Carolina’s wish to create federal assessors offices to value gold being mined in the Appalachians to the cost of postage stamps, weaves the thread of the balance of power between the federal and state governments. Northern delegates waved their fingers at the southerners accusing them of only wanting federal oversight when it meant a transfer of expenses to the taxpayers. Southerners waved their fingers at the “new states” delegates accusing them of taking more than their just deserts at the expense of the federal government.\(^\text{153}\)

Slowly the situation in South Carolina begins seeping into the federal record. On December 27\(^{th}\) a resolution made by John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts was brought for consideration requesting that both a copy of President Jackson’s proclamation and South Carolina’s Nullification Ordinance be brought to the House for consideration. Henry Clay of Alabama moved for a vote on the resolution. William S. Archer of Virginia commented that Clay’s motion was premature as Adams wanted a few more days before his resolution was brought for consideration. John Quincy Adams asked the Speaker of the House, Andrew Stevenson of Virginia, if debate was permitted on the question of consideration, to which Stevenson answered that it was not. “Then I am to understand that it will not be in order for me to state the reasons which induced me to offer the resolution,” asked Adams. “It will not,” answered Speaker Stevenson. The House then voted 106 to 65 to refuse to consider John Quincy Adams’ resolution.\(^\text{154}\)


\(^\text{154}\) Ibid, 916- 917.
the moment, South Carolina was free to continue preparing to forcibly resist federal law within her borders.

After a few weeks of rankling about whether importers should be compensated for revenue lost due to the inaccurate dating and therefore uneven rollout of the Tariff of 1828, the House revisited the issue of tariff reduction. The Senate was concurrently debating their role in the legislative process. Because the Ways and Means Committee was working with the Secretary of the Treasury, Louis McLand of Delaware, there were many that felt the Senate needed to wait until a bill had been presented to the House before becoming involved and opening debate on reducing the tariff by the recommended $6 million. In both the Senate and House many representatives from every region of the Union spoke, albeit indirectly, about the perilous situation in which the Union found itself. Remarkably, the strongest words centered around the threat of civil war, and not South Carolina’s Nullification Ordinance or condemnation of it. But the idea of meeting insubordination with military force was not universally accepted. Henry Daniel, a Jacksonian from Kentucky, stated in no uncertain terms that if a state desired to quit the Union they should absolutely be allowed to go freely and with no ill will.155 Others, though, saw a much more fearful future if the Union could not be restored legislatively.

On January 8, 1833 a bill was introduced to the House of Representatives by the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, Gulian C. Verplanck of New York, which proposed a reduction of the tariff, sometimes by as much as half, over the following two

155 “Debates in the House of Representatives”; 886-70.
years. The commodities receiving the largest reductions were wool and cotton.\textsuperscript{156} Several legislatures ardently opposed the bill, most notably Jabez W. Huntington, Ralph I. Ingersoll and William W. Ellsworth all of Connecticut, Thomas H. Crawford of Pennsylvania, and George N. Briggs and Henry A. S. Dearborne of Massachusetts. All spoke of the perception of passing the Tariff of 1832 and then essentially repealing it before it went into effect and also the perceived injustice to northern and western industrial markets that the new reduced tariffs created. There was no doubt that the bill for reduction was motivated by the accusations of the southern states that the tariff had a disproportionately negative effect on the southern economy and that the proposed reduction bill was seen by the north as equally unfair. Representative Crawford speaks to the tenuous situation developing in South Carolina but fears a quick passage of the reduction bill will aggravate rather than provide a solution. He delivered the following remarks on January 10, 1833:

“\textquote{There remains, Mr. Chairman, one other reason, which I am conscious should be touched with the most delicate hand, why I would decline legislating on this subject now. Need I say I refer to the situation of a portion of our country. Looking to the permanency of this confederacy, and believing that if any State can assume an attitude which will change the legislation of Congress, the Union is gone, I am compelled to avoid any step which will lead to such a result. On this grave subject I differ with honorable gentlemen who are as conscientious in the discharge of what they believe to be their duty, as I am in the performance of what I judge to be mine. Our several convictions are the guide of the conduct of each. I trust, and fervently pray, that the impending storm will pass over us without material injury. The present condition of our country is to be deplored by every patriot. It is appalling to reflect upon what may be the consequences; but I hope never to see the day when brother shall be arrayed against brother, and that

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid, 1024.
blood, which would be poured out freely, and shed, almost unwept, in a conflict with a common enemy, flow after the blade drawn by citizen against citizen.”

Representative Dearborne expanded on these remarks on January 14th:

“In acting upon the subject before them, they were legislating under a menace. Was it proper, was it wise, was it expedient, to proceed under such circumstances?...They were told that there was danger of internal commotion in case this bill did not pass; there was danger of civil war; but even is so - and the very apprehension of such an event was to be deplored - yet war, and even civil war, was not the greatest calamity that could befall a nation. National dishonor is infinitely more to be deprecated....What right had a State to array itself against the General Government....The words “state rights” and “State sovereignty,” bore certainly a lofty, magnificent, and imposing sound; bu they brought his understanding to a very different conclusion from that which operated upon those by whom they were bruited abroad. Such a thing as “State independence” and “State sovereignty” never existed, according to the true and legitimate meaning of these terms, as applicable to a sovereign and independent State or nation. The power of a free, sovereign, and independent nation, never existed in any one of the State of the Union. The gentlemen who maintained such doctrine could not point to the moment of time, when the high attributes of sovereignty now claimed and exercised by a portion of the South, ever were possessed by either of the States from the period their charters were issued by the monarchs of Great Britain, to this day. Before the war of the revolution, we were dependent colonies, and, as such, we continued up to the time when the spirit of freedom was awakened in decided action at the meeting of the first Continental Congress. The declaration of independence which followed, was hailed as a national measure, and the Congress exercised all the power of sovereignty. The Congress made war and peace, negotiated treaties, raised armies, equipped fleets, created maritime courts, built forts, established military codes, and courts martial, and in fact, took every measure appertaining to the exercise of sovereign authority....They might give it what name they chose, but he would maintain that an armed resistance to the laws of the united States was, in the words of the constitution, and the language of our statute book and courts of justice, insurrection; rebellion; high treason...But, considering the wonderous changes which had taken place, and were daily taking place, before their eyes, it could not but be admitted that madness exists

somewhere: it was evident to him…that either he was demented, or that sanity was wanting in the South.”

More and more voices contributed to the debate through the remainder of January and into February with increasingly pointed accusations of regional favoritism as well as ever more direct condemnations of South Carolina’s pressure on the federal government. The initial propensity of the representatives to speak of their esteemed southern counterparts from the plantation states became more strident with the issue of slavery pulled more and more directly to the forefront. The regional divide based on economic priorities as well as a growing distaste for slavery in the north becomes increasingly obvious the more hours were spent in debate over the reduction of the tariff and the hyper focus on the specific commodities addressed in the bill.

South Carolina’s Nullification Convention responded by repealing the Ordinance of Nullification on March 11, 1833. As a show of force, Jackson bullied the Force Act legislation through the senate which allowed him use of the army and navy against United States citizens in order to enforce federal law. South Carolina, unwilling to yield the last word, nullified the Force Act.

After the Nullification Crisis of 1831 was passed and the issue of states rights and regional faction successfully delayed for another two decades, the piedmont of South Carolina stood poised for another growth explosion on the peaceful surface of a turbulent undercurrent of local and national change. At the center of the building of Greenville was

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158 “Debates in the House of Representatives”, 1050-1.
Vardry McBee. His mill village surrounded the mills south of Greenville accompanied by an octagonal chapel designed in the same fashion as his award-winning octagonal barn in Lincolnton. A tannery was added to the Reedy Falls mills. McBee’s Hall on the northwest corner of Main Street became a popular social gathering venue for balls, assemblies, fairs and other public and religious meetings. It also played host to concerts along with other musical halls that became more numerous as the population grew. The population of Greenville spread out from the village as well. Stretching north toward the mountains and North Carolina line, many mills sprang up along the rivers and streams with adequate water to turn a wheel. The same mills would often serve multiple purposes

Vardry McBee was an enslaver and certainly employed enslaved labor to accomplish his building of the various homes and businesses that created such wealth for him and his descendents. “[McBee] owned thirty-seven slaves in 1850 and fifty-six a decade later.” (Huff, Greenville, 113.) Also, there are several reports of the McBee family and their treatment of their enslaved people leading up to the Emancipation Proclamation. Reverend James R. Rosemund is considered one of the leading figures in bringing Methodism to the black communities of Greenville. He was born to parents enslaved by Waddy Thompson, Jr. in 1820 who were taken to Alabama by one of Thompson’s sons when Jim was 6 years old. Jim was subsequently sold to Vardry McBee and reappears in a note in the Greenville Methodist Church in 1962 as “Jim McBee” who had been preaching for more than a decade. The congregation of Greenville Methodist Church raised $500 to purchase Jim’s freedom, but the McBee family refused to grant it for less than $800. After Emancipation Jim shed the McBee name, became James R. Rosemund, and was active in the Freedmen's Bureau helping to establish more than two dozen black Methodist churches in over six countries before his death in 1902.

Perhaps more telling is the account of William Wilson Cooke, a preeminent architect born in Greenville in 1871. His father is William Wilson Cooke whose father is purported to be Vardry McBee and whose mother is assumed to be a woman enslaved by McBee. Cooke and his free black wife resided in a home on Coffee Street provided for them by the McBee family. The senior Cooke rose to prominence during Reconstruction and served as a Republican delegate to the South Carolina Constitutional Convention in 1868. The biographical essay about the Cookes appears in African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary, 1865-1945 authored by Vera E. Cooke (Wilson, Dreck Spurlock. African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary, 1865-1945. Florence, UNITED STATES: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004, 148-54). I found no other secondary source that addressed the parentage of Cooke senior.

The octagonal “McBee Chapel” in Simpsonville remains an active Methodist church. It has been on the National Registry of Historic Properties in South Carolina since 1972.
and many streams would accommodate multiple mills. During dryer times mill operators
would utilize manual labor to walk their wheels and if a stream stayed dry for too long a
period owners would dig canals to divert water back to their power source.\textsuperscript{162}

The ready power source and raw materials created a unique laboring class in
Greenville. Between 1850 and 1860 the number of gristmills more than doubled in the
upper part of the county and every other industry saw increases in production as well.
With the expansion of industry and more planters allocating more of their resources into
the establishment of mills, the required labor also expanded. This led to a great deal of
fluidity in the use of enslaved black and free white labor. “The relative efficiency and
costs of slave and free labor in textile mills changed over time and according to
place…The availability of either form of labor derived from the size and character of the
local labor pool, the regional price for slaves, the migratory patterns of whites, and the
willingness of blacks or whites to enter the mills at prevailing wage rates, or even to work
for wages, all of which were factors beyond the control of manufacturers.”\textsuperscript{163}
The racial
makeup of Greenville County would seem to predicate a larger number of free whites
employed by the mills, although a large mill at Saluda in 1849 preferred to utilize over a
hundred enslaved people, many of whom were likely women and children, in 1849
contracting them on a yearly basis. The mill was mismanaged, however, and the enslaved
people owned or contracted by the mill were sold to cover debts in 1853.\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{162} Batson, \textit{A History of the Upper Part of Greenville County South Carolina}, 323.
\textsuperscript{163} Miller, Randall M. “The Fabric of Control: Slavery in Antebellum Southern Textile Mills.” \textit{Business
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 475.
Secession

The most exciting economic development in South Carolina throughout the 1840-50s may have been the advent of the railroad. So much time had been spent legislating and laboring to develop roads and canals and attempting to make rivers more navigable with a mixed results in connecting the coast to the Piedmont markets and beyond, that the idea of reliable and efficient transportation for personal and trade use sent the people of the Upstate into a frenzy. A great deal of land speculation and capital investment was made by Benjamin F. Perry and Waddy Thompson, Jr. who were able to set their political differences aside in order to grow their portfolios. Benjamin F. Perry recorded that his hope was that the railroad would become the catalyst to heal the wounds and reunite the people of South Carolina after the political strife of Nullification.165

Although there was a definite excitement over the railroad, fear continued to be the primary unifier of the white population of South Carolina. Fear of successful and organized revolt by their enslaved population. Fear of the growing pressure of abolitionism from the North and Great Britain. Fear of the inability to continue dictating the mode of wealth creation by the use of racially defined chattel slavery. In reaction to David Wilmot’s proviso the residents of Greenville gathered and formed a Committee of Vigilance and Safety to report those within the town suspected of abolitionist activities.

165 Vardree McBee became one of the chief financial backers of the railroads in Greenville as well as of the Seaboard and Roanoke line in North Carolina. In addition to the $50,000 he contributed to the Greenville and Columbia Railroad he also did extensive fundraising for it in the north (Huff, Greenville, 120-1). Lacy Ford also presents a detailed account of the difficulties of funding and legislating the railroads in the Upcountry. Ford Jr, Lacy K. Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 219-43. Kibler, Benjamin F. Perry, 211-6. Batson, A History of the Upper Part of Greenville County South Carolina, 80-1.
Secessionists threatened Benjamin Perry with tar and feathers and to vandalize his offices at *Southern Patriot*, established in 1850 to carry on the Unionist press tradition of Greenville.\textsuperscript{166} Junius Smith, a member of the American Colonization Society and a tea farmer in present day Simpsonville, was severely beaten at his home by the committee.

Benjamin Perry spent the decade of the 1850s as a representative of Greenville in the South Carolina legislature and editing and printing the *Southern Patriot*. Over and over he warned of the consequence of secession policies, for by now in South Carolina there was no need to hide behind conventions. A glimmer of hope arose a year following John C. Calhoun’s death with the vote against Secession in 1851. It was not to last, though, as the Secessionists began serious recruitment of other Southern states gaining strength with every passing year. Perry withdrew from Greenville politics in 1860 and penned the following statements in his journal in February:

> “These two years seem to me more like a dream & I dislike to review them & note anything that has taken place. My heart has been rent by another affliction, which I must feel more deeply than I can express as a man & a patriot. It is the destruction of my country, the dismemberment of that great & glorious Union, cemented by the blood of our fathers. The American People seem demented. Nothing in History equals it. They are exulting over the destruction of the best and wisest form of Government ever vouch’d by God to man. Fools & wicked fools they know not what they do & may God forgive them.”\textsuperscript{167}

And yet, out of his sorrow emerged a Confederate. His sense of home and honor prevailed and he exclaimed that seeing the other native South Carolina sons gone “to the

\textsuperscript{166} Huff, *Greenville*, 129.
devil” that he would go with, or at least send his sons to fight for the Southern cause.  

Unionism in Greenville, South Carolina was utterly defeated.

\(^{168}\) Ibid, 348.
CONCLUSION

From its earliest days as the backcountry of Anglo-Americans pushing steadily toward the mountains away from the coast Greenville was populated by people motivated by economic gain. Habits of the increasingly outnumbered whites of the coast followed the new arrivals to the backcountry. Fear of revolts from their enslaved workforce was an ever-present specter coupled with the tenuous boundary they shared with the Cherokee nation created an environment in which land was secured and fortunes made without reliance on government protection or permission. Greenville’s earliest economic investors, Richard Pearis chief among them, operated outside of British law to obtain huge tracts of land which he developed personally and parceled out for sale to new arrivals to the backcountry. The earliest Americans in the backcountry often illegally occupied lands vacated during the violence of the Anglo-Cherokee War. The extralegal militia group, known as the Regulators, took the reclamation of that land and imposition of law and order, sort of, into their own hands until another extralegal group sanctioned by Charleston brought them to heel. The conflicts that raged in the backcountry from 1761-1769 could possibly portend the sectionalism that would come to define the Piedmont through the conflicts between both the Nullifiers and Secessionists and the Unionists. The Regulator movement along with their opponents, the Moderators, provide an intriguing early glimpse into the social, political, and economic landscape of the Upstate of South Carolina. The Regulator movement illustrates with startling clarity how deeply rooted the commitment of the planter class to spreading their economic success through the labor of enslaved men, women and children had already become prior to the
Revolutionary War in South Carolina. The Moderator movement was the first and perhaps the only successful time until South Carolina threw the entirety of the United States into a Civil War, when a group of white men stood face to face with the planter elite, refused to yield to their ideology and economics, and experienced victory.

During William Henry’s Drayton foray into the backcountry to gather support for the Patriot cause in 1775 his efforts were thwarted by Thomas Fletchall whose land and home lay between the Broad and Saluda Rivers. Although he had followed the orders of the extralegal Provincial Congress of South Carolina to assemble his military regiment for preparation to claim liberty from the British, he and his men refused to take the Association’s pledge or agree to fight against Britain. William Drayton and his companions became increasingly frustrated by the lack of support in the Piedmont and employed increasingly coercive tactics including imprisonment and threats of violence and expulsion throughout the backcountry to persuade men to join the Patriot cause.

Through the Revolutionary War the land that would officially become Greenville shortly after the conclusion of the hostilities experienced a true civil war within its very borders. Families, friends, lovers, and business partners found themselves pitted against one another, forced to choose king or country. The choice of the Cherokee Nation to remain loyal to Britain, whom they felt to be the true source of Anglo-American power and trade, brought about more violence and death in the backcountry. Despite the surrender of the British at Yorktown the violence continued in the backcountry. Vendetta violence raged as the anger and disruption and fear worked its way out of the systems of the backcountry South Carolinians. Although Richard Pearis died in exile in the Bahamas
he was in the definite minority as most of the Loyalists were simply reintegrated into this new American life.\textsuperscript{169}

Determined to pursue their own economic success Greenvillians built roads and inns to entice drovers from Kentucky and Tennessee to stop and barter for pens to contain their livestock and provisions for the remainder of their trip to the markets in Charleston. Those same inns along with the commercialization of the health-reviving springs and cooler mountain climate created a reliable summer exodus of the elite from the coast to the burgeoning village. Judges, lawyers, and planters lined the dirt streets and played cards, smoked cigars and discussed the business of the state and the nation. A young Benjamin F. Perry absorbed the old guard Federalists’ adherence to the centralized government created by the Constitution and also the ever-present fear of that government mandating an end to the system of slavery. Fissures began appearing in a widespread public form as newspaper editors in support of Nullification began trading jabs with Perry and other Unionist editors. The verbal sparring took on a more sinister note as duels and public shaming in the form of burning and hung effigies touched off around the state.

At the very height of the Nullification Crisis men in volunteer militia corps stood ready around the state to settle political loyalties staring once again down the barrel of rifles. Again, families and friends choose sides and dared the other to fire the first shot. With the passage of the Reduction of Tariff bill in Washington D.C. both sides dispersed without any large-scale violence, but neither relinquished its sense of political high ground. To the Nullifiers, the federal government had bowed to the pressure exerted by

\textsuperscript{169} Brannon, \textit{From Revolution to Reunion}, 9.
South Carolina and her political leaders in D.C. To the Unionists, the federal government had compromised in the eleventh hour placing the value of the Union above all other priorities.

More consistent than Greenville’s motives and priorities in choosing its political loyalties is the violence that accompanied those choices. The first law enforcers in the backcountry were an unsanctioned group of vigilantes. Unable to find help from lawmakers in Charleston the Regulators formed an unauthorized paramilitary group to protect the white elite class still in its infancy in the backcountry. When Charleston sent agents to attempt to disarm and disband the group they were met with ridicule and violence. The Regulators claimed authority at the edge of a sword and the muzzle of a gun and claimed Charleston’s law to be null and void within their domain. Only when stared down by another group of white men equally armed and willing to inflict or receive bodily harm to defend their political position did the Regulators realign themselves under the constraints of South Carolina law.

A very few years removed from the exploits of Regulation came the muddled clash between Patriots and Loyalists in the backcountry. Patriots armed themselves to overthrow the standing government and military of Britain in the colonies. Some South Carolinians hoped to evade conflict by remaining neutral or aligning with the ascending power of the moment, but the formidable might of the Cherokee Nation thrown in support of Britain's continued rule rendered neutrality as dangerous as actively choosing sides. Violence was perpetrated on all sides. Sometimes government sanctioned and sometimes not. Sometimes sanctioned by an extralegal government military and
sometimes by recognized authority. To those on the receiving end, it made little
difference whether their attackers had permission to inflict harm on their homes, lands
and bodies or whether they acted outside of the law. Many allegiances were pledged, and
provisions given to both sides under the threat of violence in the backcountry. When the
dust settled, and a new South Carolina emerged ruled by a new American government
very little had changed in the backcountry attitude toward their leaders in South Carolina.
They felt their distance from and underrepresentation in Charleston as keenly as
American citizens as they had as British.

    South Carolina’s decision to move the capital to a brand-new city in the heart of
the state in 1786, the same year that saw the official creation of Greenville County, rings
with the democratic excitement of the new nation. The seven jurisdictional districts
drawn to appease the Regulators created a sense of equality among the white population
spreading back into the farthest corners of the state. Areas with fledgling economies used
their first substantial period of peace to expand. Lands suitable for short staple cotton
growth were quickly snatched up and planted. The more hilly and riverine landscape of
Greenville with its mountain pass access to the markets of Kentucky and Tennessee lent
itself to mill development. The mills provided valuable services to the local economy by
grinding grains but quickly expanded into cotton and woolen processing and iron
manufacture, serving the greater Piedmont area.

    The increasing population in Greenville wanted access to the news of the state
and beyond as well as an outlet for their own creative and commercial ventures. The first
newspaper to go to press established the Unionist legacy of the press in Greenville and
the editor faced threats so serious he fled the state. The Unionist press persisted under the leadership of Benjamin F. Perry, but the verbal sparring often turned to threats of violence and once into a duel resulting in the death of another editor. Political disagreements were not at all uncommon in the county through the early part of the 19th century and by the time Lucius Bierce was traveling through Greenville in the spring of 1823 a fight between George McDuffie and William Cumming the preceding year was its most well-known occurrence.170 With John C. Calhoun’s pivot to supporting Nullification after the passing of the federal tariffs the seeds which had been sown since the earliest days of political disagreement burst into full and spectacular bloom. The one, and only, solution to the disagreement between Unionist and Nullification men was to arm themselves and prepare for physical violence. The answer to the federal government from the Nullification majority in Columbia was that if they attempted to collect the tariff they would be forcibly removed. If they attempted coercion of any kind, they would be imprisoned or worse. The answer of the Union stronghold in Greenville to the Nullifiers way that they would secede from the state to remain within the Union and if the government of South Carolina attempted to stop them they would die in defense of their ideals.

The entire political story of South Carolina from the Regulators to Revolution to the Unionists leading up to Secession is riddled with extralegal violence. Whether individuals defending their political honor in duels or volunteer militia groups assembling

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to defend against or attack their political opposition. The question that rises is why? Why so particularly in South Carolina is political opposition likely to turn to bloody altercation? From what traditions or cultures did South Carolina inherit this penchant to settle their differences over the barrels of guns? Did the original economic motives for the European colonization of South Carolina start the wheels of this defend until death mentality in motion? Was it the loosening of traditional religious jurisdictions that made room for the baser violence on display? Or was it, as it so often is in South Carolina, the white-knuckled grip on the preservation and expansion of slavery that led to the prevalence of violence even in a place where it seems out of place. The very foundation of the economic engine driving every decision trickling down from the highest seat of power to the lowest subsistence farmer was slavery. Enslavement requires violence, real or threatened, to survive. Freedom, for the enslaved, requires violence to claim on a large scale.

The purpose of the establishment of the colony of South Carolina was economic gain through the labor of enslaved people perpetuated by violence. When the economic gains of the elite were threatened by squatters on lands near the Cherokee border before the Revolutionary War, violent vigilantes mounted horses and reclaimed the land for the white ruling class. When Britain attempted to limit economic expansion in South Carolina by curtailing the trade with Native Americans and exacting a larger tax from its citizens, Patriots armed themselves against the British forces and claimed lands owned by Loyalists and the Cherokee as the spoils of war. When the Nullification Legislation hijacked the state militia and prepared to defend their economic gains against federal tax
collectors, the Unionists organized, prepared to fight in the streets and fields throughout the state to aid the federal government in bringing the state back into line.

In each instance peace and reconciliation necessarily followed the tension or violence usually around a new shared enemy. The Stamp Act brought new concerns for the Regulators, the Native American unrest forced Patriots and Loyalists to coalesce around defense of the outer edges of the state, and the Nullifiers and Unionists found a common enemy in the growing abolitionist force and the human beings they sought to free. South Carolina and the states that would join it in the Civil War would not relinquish their commitment to an economy fueled by enslaved labor and they had proven since their earliest days that death was not a price too high to protect their economy.

Regardless of the nationalistic ideals of the Unionists in Greenville County, those iron-clad rules of economy would not bend. Slavery as an institution for wealth building had to be protected for South Carolina to continue as it always had. Therefore, when Lincoln mobilized federal troops, the citizens of South Carolina found their new common enemy to unite Unionist with Secessionist.

Unionism, although claiming the majority of voters in Greenville during the Nullification Crisis, never succeeded in South Carolina politics. Firmly a minority during Nullification they boasted of national statesmen among their ranks such as Joel R. Poinsett but never were able to stem the tide of support for nullification turned secession during the antebellum years. Nullification was defeated by bullying statesmen in Washington, D.C. pushing the southern agenda through Congress rather than a homegrown opposition. But in the legacy of violent men forcing their political beliefs on
others by brute strength, the Union men stood as the last best hope for South Carolina before it threw itself against the might of the United States Army. South Carolina met its better on bloody battlefields and the “great and glorious Union” was preserved after all.  

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