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Fighting For Revival: Southern Honor and Evangelical Revival in Edgefield County, South Carolina, 1800-1860

James Welborn

Clemson University, welborn@clemson.edu

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FIGHTING FOR REVIVAL: SOUTHERN HONOR AND EVANGELICAL REVIVAL
IN EDGEFIELD COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, 1800-1860

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

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

by
James Hill Welborn, III
December 2007

Accepted by:
Dr. Paul Christopher Anderson, Committee Chair
Dr. Rod Andrew
Dr. Christa Smith

ABSTRACT

The focus of this work is Edgefield County, South Carolina, a small, rural district in the central-southwest portion of the state. Edgefield has proven indicative of Southern society in general and as a case study has allowed historians to make broader generalizations on the development of Southern culture. This work will show how the seemingly oppositional Southern cultural ethics of honor and Protestant Evangelicalism developed simultaneously and coexisted in Edgefield, emphasizing the aspects of each ethic that reinforced and intensified one another, as well as the resulting public perception of the ethics in tandem. The result will reconcile two overarching historical analyses of the South—one based on the ethos of honor and the other on the evangelical ethos—as well as illuminate the maturation of a broad cultural ethic in Edgefield County that at once personified as well as defied religious and cultural development in Southern history at large.

The first chapter will establish the culture of honor as it existed in Edgefield County, and will illustrate the extent to which Edgefield reflected and later epitomized the cultural ethic of Southern honor into which it was born. To achieve this end, Edgefield's founding and cultural maturation will be placed into the prevailing historical analysis of Southern honor. The result will suggest that Edgefield culture was the embodiment of the Southern ethic of honor as well as highlight specific aspects of the ethic of honor which lent themselves to manipulation and incorporation by the other prevailing cultural ethic in the South, evangelicalism.

The second chapter will present this other side of the Southern ethic: Protestant evangelical religion. This chapter will document the extent to which Edgefield identified itself culturally with this Protestant ethic and was pioneering in the establishment of Evangelical religion and the ethical values associated therein in the state of South Carolina. Again the development of Edgefield evangelicalism will be placed into the historical analysis of Southern Protestant evangelicalism at large. The emphasis here will be upon the broader evangelical ethic as it came to be employed and understood in the form of religious revival. The nature of the revival and its effects upon both the evangelical religious ethic and society at large will be the focus. The result will illustrate the prevalence of this ethic in the general culture of Edgefield County and highlight the specific characteristics of the evangelical revival that were receptive and adaptive to notions of Southern honor.

The final chapter will tie these two cultural ethics together by focusing largely on the public mind of Edgefield itself as well as the aspects of each ethic that upheld the other. In this way, broader conclusions regarding the complexity of Southern cultural development will be expounded. The chapter will show how Southern leadership reconciled two seemingly mutually exclusive cultural ethics—both in rhetoric and action—with the ultimate goal of cultural and social stability. At the same time it will highlight unique aspects of Edgefield County with regard to time and place that allow Edgefield to loom large in the historical narrative of South Carolina and Southern regional cultural analysis.

DEDICATION

For my Mama and Daddy

And

For Bebbe, You're always with me

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“If one knows what he wants to do, others will not only not stand in the way but will lend a hand from simple curiosity and amazement.” – Walker Percy

These words from Walker Percy certainly describe my experience in completing this work. Once I finally accepted as my path that of a historian, countless people have been instrumental in guiding me along that path. Dr. Paul Anderson has been nothing short of a mentor during this process, giving encouragement while still teaching the tough lessons necessary to realize and appreciate success. Without Dr. Anderson, I may have never begun this work, and certainly would not have completed it to satisfaction. Dr. Rod Andrew and Dr. Christa Smith also provided unique perspective and insight throughout the process, and I am deeply indebted to them as well for their encouragement and on-going interest. I have the deepest respect and affection for the Clemson family, a member of which I have and always will be.

Tricia Price Glen has not only given me access to the rich historical sources of Edgefield, but has spent countless hours assisting me in my research, inquiring and listening to my ideas, and lending a perspective only attainable from someone so intimately associated and enamored with Edgefield history. But more than that, in Ms. Glen I have truly found a friend.

The Edgefield community at large has been nothing short of spectacular in their acceptance of me and their interest and excitement regarding my work. I am truly proud to be associated with the history of the place these people are so proud to call home.

There are simply no words to describe how much my family has meant to this work. They have been my rock when I needed support and the prod when I needed motivation, but throughout it all they have shown me all the love and support anyone could ever ask for. Everything I have become and everything I have accomplished is due to them, which is a debt I will never be able to repay, and a love words will never fully convey.

My future bride was a source of much of the direction of this work, and has been a sounding board probably more often than she had ever imagined. Fully understanding my other passions, she still said yes to an eternity together. She is the one passion that makes all others worthwhile.

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INTRODUCTION

DUELING ETHICS?

Southerners managed to balance the tensions between masculinity and evangelicalism fairly well during the antebellum period. The nature of Southern life enabled men to take both sides, embracing masculine competitiveness while still respecting evangelical self-control.¹

The historical narrative as it relates broadly to the American South has generally taken one of two perspectives—one focusing on Southern tendencies toward violence and honor, the other examining the so-called “Bible-Belt” and the pervasiveness of evangelical religion. The two appear to be contradictory even at a superficial glance, but upon further review of the historiography, the dichotomy becomes even more dramatic. Until recently, historians themselves have tended to remain true to these contradictory perspectives when studying the South. When bridging the apparent gap at all, historians have treaded lightly, and the majority of the historical narrative has been ambiguous as to the relationship between these cultural ethics.

Edgefield County, South Carolina has proven a fertile field for historical inquiry into a plethora of historical topics, and the county’s history itself provides much historical interest. Edgefield developed a reputation for violence early in its history, long before the county had become officially incorporated in 1785. Early periods of violence which lent to this reputation began with recurring conflicts between settlers and Cherokee Indians that plagued the region’s early development, continued with civil violence in the

¹ Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, & Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 167.

region as an overall sense of lawlessness spawned the “Regulator Movement” which essentially took the form of vigilante justice, meted out by local militia against criminals. This movement was tarnished by corruption from its inception, as the regulators themselves soon came to be viewed as more of a threat than the common criminals. This period was followed by the intense in-fighting that occurred between Tories and Whigs in the area during the American Revolution. But it was during the early years of the republic, just after Edgefield became an official district, that the region’s reputation took root.

Already cited historically as a hotbed of violence and honor in the decidedly Southern mode, Edgefield has been in the political spotlight of the state and nation for most of its history. Throughout its colored history, Edgefield has been noted by historians, politicians, judges, newspapers, and even parsons as to her record of violence. Historian Lacy K. Ford pays special attention to this “Edgefield tradition,” and though he disputes the extent to which this reputation is deserved, the reputation itself is never questioned—Edgefield was viewed, and viewed itself—according to this reputation. The reputation, as much as the violent acts upon which it was based, contributed much to Edgefield’s development—culturally and politically.² Most influential among these acts of violence in fostering this reputation for violence was the crime of murder, which was particularly prevalent in Edgefield from its earliest historical record. As historian Jack Kenny Williams noted, “The frequency of murder, owing to the spectacular nature of that

² Lacy K. Ford, “Origins of the Edgefield Tradition: The Late Antebellum Experience and the Roots of Political Insurgency” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 98, No. 4 (October 1997), 329-341.

offense, may have been responsible for Edgefield's badge of infamy." Edgefield did deserve its unsavory reputation in connection with homicide, citing that eight percent of the district's criminal indictments were for murder, compared to only four percent on average across the state.³ One state judge in particular who propagated stories of Edgefield violence was Thomas Jefferson Mackey, who served the state of South Carolina in the 1870s. Judge Mackey was fond of telling jokes on Old Edgefield, and was once quoted as saying "I am going to hold court in Edgefield, and I expect a somewhat exciting term, as the fall shooting is about to commence."⁴

The self-proclaimed "Home of Ten Governors," Edgefield has perpetually been at the forefront of important events in South Carolina state history and the subject of countless headlines along the way. Such notable South Carolinians as A.P. Butler, Preston Brooks, George McDuffie, Louis T. Wigfall, James Henry Hammond, Francis W. Pickens, Matthew C. Butler, Benjamin Tillman, and J. Strom Thurmond have all claimed Edgefield as home.⁵

By focusing on Edgefield County's unique position in both time and place, and upon the ethics of honor and evangelical revival as they played out in the region, this

³ Jack Kenny Williams, *Vogues in Villainy: Crime and Retribution in Antebellum South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1959), 4.

⁴ Ulysses R. Brooks, *South Carolina Bench and Bar, Volume I* (Columbia: The State Company, 1908), 198-199.

⁵ Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985); For more on Edgefield's rich history, see also John A. Chapman, *History of Edgefield County: From the Earliest Settlements to 1897* (Greenville, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, 1999 ed.); Francis Butler Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman: South Carolinian* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002 ed.)

work will set out to show that Southern honor and evangelical revival not only exchanged cultural mores and intensified each other through their opposition, but were part of the same understanding of personal integrity and success in Edgefield. The balance mentioned in the excerpt from Ted Ownby's work *Subduing Satan* will be given a particular location in which to be analyzed, and the nature of this balance will be examined with special interest paid to the public nature of both the ethic of honor and evangelical revival, as well as the public comprehension of these ethics. The public mind and public mindedness of Edgefield will guide this study.

There have been several recent works which have initiated the process of a fuller understanding of the relationship between Southern honor and evangelicalism. These works have attempted to address the ambiguities of the earlier narrative, bringing together those singular points made in many early historical works addressing the apparent Southern contradiction. Most prominent among these works have been Ted Ownby's *Subduing Satan*, Christine Leigh Heyrman's *Southern Cross*, and A. James Fuller's *Chaplain to the Confederacy*. Each of these works took up questions and ambiguities existing in the historical narrative with specific regard to the concepts of honor and evangelical religion in the South. Heyrman's work approached Southern religious history from social perspective, her focus being on the cultural concessions that occurred during the late 18th and early 19th century rise of the evangelical faiths in the South. Her shifting of the focus of Southern religious history was in and of itself monumental, but the important aspect of her work here is that she redefined many of the

assumptions involving the evangelical rise to prominence, showing that evangelicalism made many concessions to established Southern cultural mores.⁶

The other two works influential to this study take on this cultural exchange more directly, albeit in different ways and in different periods. Ownby's work directly addresses what he perceives as a cultural conflict between masculine notions of honor and evangelical notions of piety in the post-war South (1865-1920). He argues that during this period, the two forces in Southern society intensified one another through their aversion—Southern sinners sinned in spite of evangelicals, and evangelicals prayed more fervently because of these sins. The result, according to Ownby, is that both ethics intensified one another. "If some Southerners raised hell to dramatic heights, others felt a special need to bring heaven down to earth on a very personal level."⁷

A. James Fuller takes much the same approach, focusing on the cultural exchange inherent in the interaction between Southern honor and evangelical piety, but his focus turns from a broad social study to a particular biographical analysis. Fuller's focus on Baptist Reverend Basil Manly lends a personal portrait to the broad cultural trends discussed by Ownby and Heyrman. Manly's personal reconciliation of his sense of honor and pious religious sentiment illustrates important personal psychological motives at play in the Southern cultural ethic.⁸

⁶ Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 1-27, 252.

⁷ Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan*, ix, 1.

⁸ A. James Fuller, *Chaplain to the Confederacy: Basil Manly and Baptist Life in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 2,4-5.

These works taken together provide the foundation upon which this work was conceived and pursued. Like Fuller's work, this study takes a singular perspective, with the focus being a particular community rather than personality—Edgefield County, South Carolina. Also like Fuller, this work attempts to make broader conclusions regarding Southern culture at large, but the focus remains on the particular subject and its unique qualities. The aspects of social history in this work are drawn directly from both Ownby and Heyrman's works, focusing on the cultural exchange between Southern concepts of honor and evangelical religion.

Though these three works provide the foundation, a multitude of other works which addressed the issues at the heart of this study deserve mention. Representative of the notion of Southern honor as it has been understood historically is Bertram Wyatt-Brown's works, specifically *Southern Honor* and *The Shaping of Southern Culture*. Especially influential were Wyatt-Brown's findings regarding aspects of honor which were given to manipulation and incorporation by evangelical religion.⁹

Southern religious history also contributed substantially to this work and its focus. In addition to the aforementioned work by Christine Heyrman, such stalwarts in the field

⁹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 88-114, 350-361; Other works that follow and in some instances even predate Wyatt-Brown were also influential in the understanding of the concept of Southern honor: Bertram-Wyatt Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

of Southern religion consulted heavily here include Donald G. Mathews *Religion in the Old South*, John B. Boles *The Great Revival*, Anne C. Loveland's *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*, and Richard J. Carwardine's *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*.¹⁰ Rhys Isaac's monumental work *The Transformation of Virginia* also provided much needed historical context to the method and social forces at play during the rise of early evangelicalism in the South.¹¹

While providing a broad understanding of Southern history with regard to the prevailing Southern social perspectives of honor and evangelicalism, these works also contained certain questions and ambiguities which directed the focus of this work. Taking that focus and applying it to the specific case of Edgefield County, South Carolina during the early republic and antebellum periods allowed for conclusions that alter and enlighten the social forces of honor and evangelicalism as they are understood historically.

The historical records in Edgefield, religious and secular, provided the true impetus for this study. An initial query into the reasons behind Edgefield's reputation for violence and political prowess, later coupled with an attempt to determine religious sentiment in the community, led to an enlightening discovery; The periods in the court

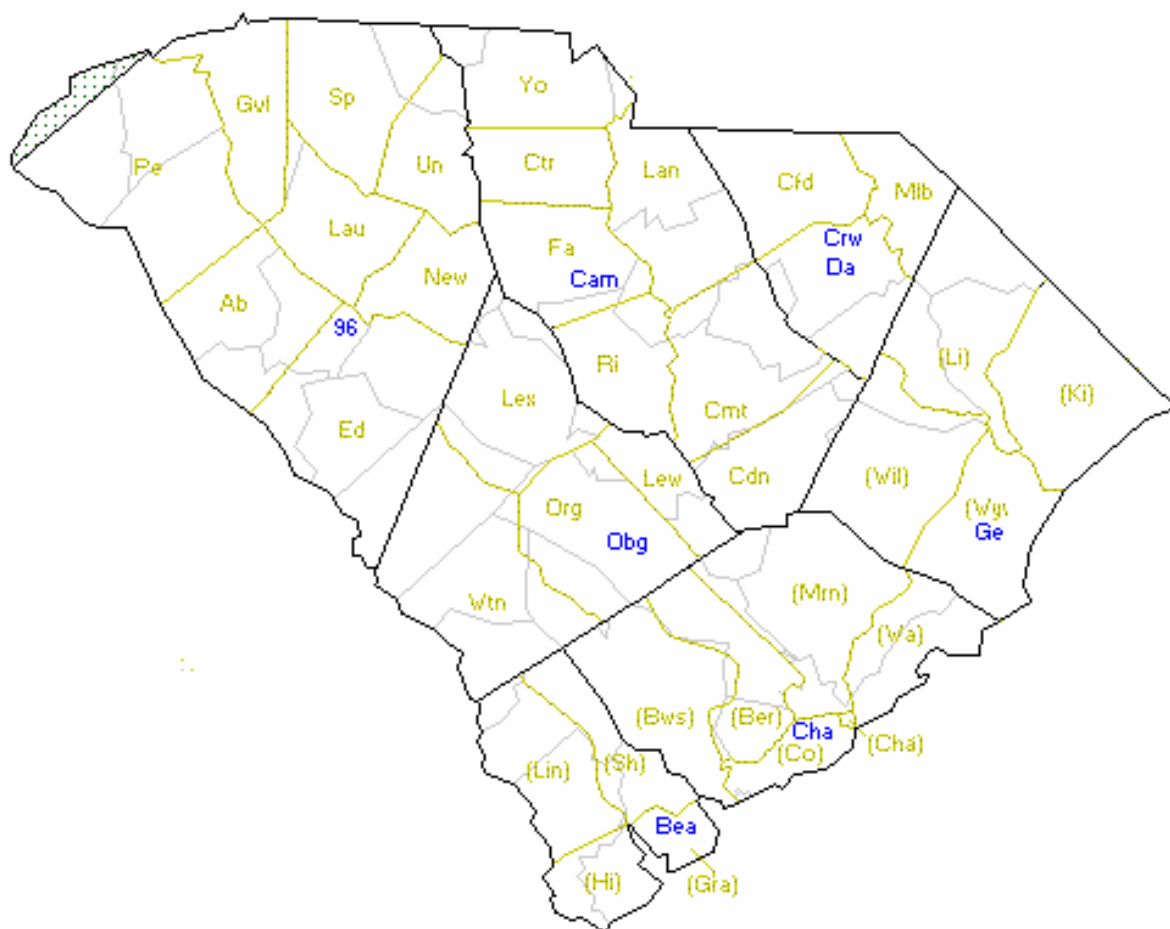
¹⁰ Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977); John B. Boles, *The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1972); Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980); Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997); These works provide an in depth study of the development of evangelical religion in the South during the late 18th and 19th centuries.

¹¹ Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

records which were most violent, in terms of violent crimes involving white men with both implied and explicit notions of honor, coincided with periods of intense religious revival. The initial observation of this trend in the primary sources guided the remainder of the study.

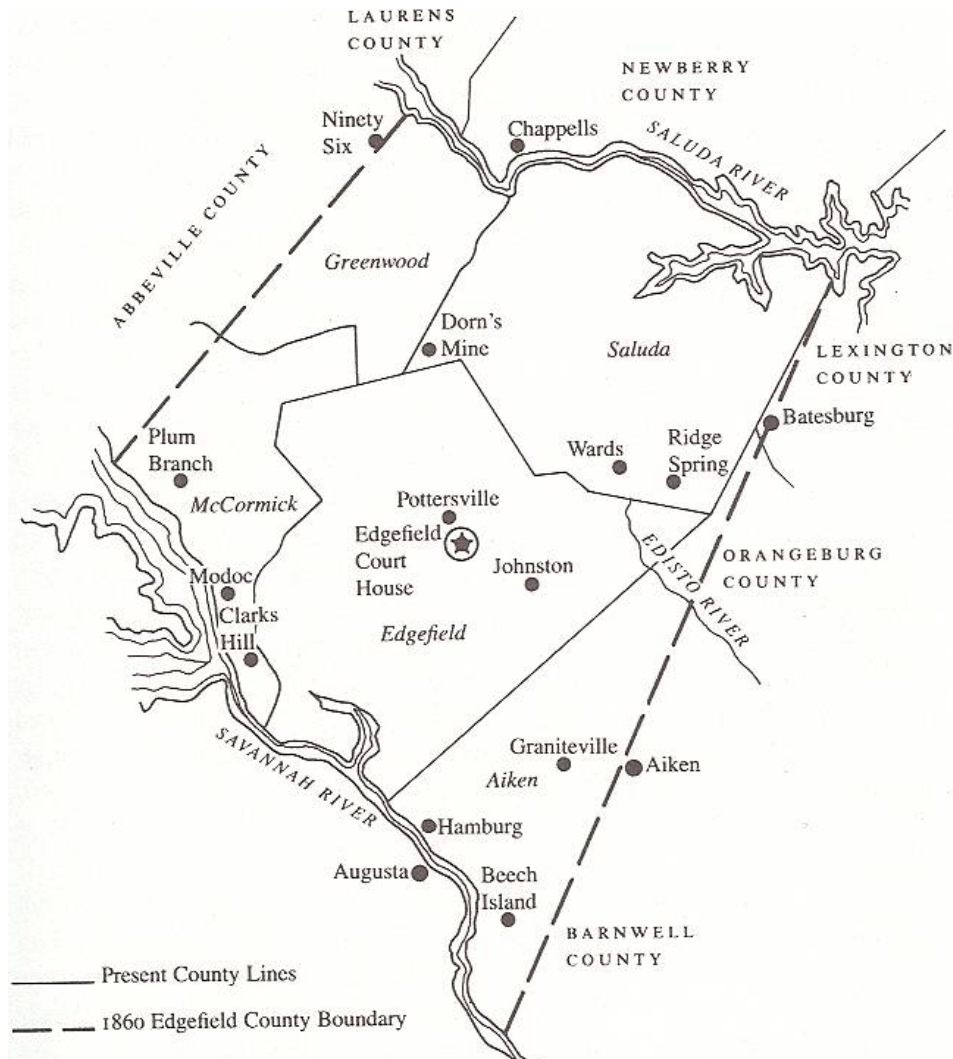
The end here is to use this historically rich region to bear out greater truths regarding Southern cultural history, while simultaneously revealing complexities in the culture of Edgefield itself. At once this study will place Edgefield amongst the most historically unique locals in the South Carolina and the nation, but also exhibit fundamental forces at work in state and Southern regional historical patterns regarding religion and the broader culture.

Edgefield County(Ed), South Carolina, 1790-1860



Courtesy of www.mysouthcarolinagenealogy.com/sc_county/ed.htm

Edgefield County, South Carolina 1860-Present



Courtesy of Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House are Many Mansions*, p. 17.

CHAPTER 1

THE SPIRIT OF EDGEFIELD¹²

*If you're going to commit a murder do it in Edgefield as jurors there understand the idiosyncrasies of a gentleman!*¹³

As historian Joanne B. Freeman points out, a historical review of the early United States “uncovers a ritualized, honor-bound, public-minded, yet personal level of political interaction—a grammar of political combat that politicians recognized and manipulated as a means of conducting politics in the early republic.”¹⁴ It was in this political environment which Edgefield County, South Carolina, as an official entity, was conceived and under these strictures of honor which its political culture took shape. Southern political culture remained wedded to this ethic of honor well into the nineteenth century; Edgefield County, though only a fledgling rural locale in 1804, and her political leadership became the embodiment of this ethic by 1830 and throughout the antebellum era.

On March 12, 1785 the South Carolina legislature divided the Old Ninety-Six District, which comprised most of the upper part of the state, into separate counties,

¹² Carol Hardy Bryan, “Basil Manly II: Distinguished Baptist Leader Had Important Ties to Edgefield,” *Quill, Old Edgefield District Genealogical Society Newsletter*, March-April ed., 2003.

¹³ Noted Edgefield historian and leading citizen Bettis Rainsford and Edgefield County Archivist Tricia Price Glenn provided this quote, which is attributed to Wade Harrison of Troy, South Carolina. It is representative of the reputation Edgefield “enjoyed” across South Carolina. Over the last seventy-five years, Mr. Harrison’s father and grandfather told him this fact many times over. The origin of the quote itself is not known, but the elder Harrison gentlemen were fond of repeating it.

¹⁴ Joanne B. Freeman, “Dueling as Politics: Reinterpreting the Burr-Hamilton Duel,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 53, No. 2 (April, 1996), 293; Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 159-198.

called Districts, of Edgefield, Abbeville, Newberry, Laurens, Union, and Spartanburg. Though the area which made up Edgefield District had been “settled” as early as 1748 these settlements were few and far between; the district remained by and large a frontier settlement until the village of Edgefield itself was finally incorporated in 1830.¹⁵

The early settlement of Edgefield reflected this sense of a perpetual frontier culture, especially among the middling classes of society that consisted of the yeoman and semi-subsistence farmers. The court records that date back to the very beginning of Edgefield settlement bear witness to the prominence of a violent nature in the county. Between 1785 and 1830 (the year that the Village of Edgefield was officially incorporated as the county seat) there are on record 424 cases of violence, with twenty-seven of these cases being for murder.¹⁶ Though not all of these cases resulted in convictions, they were brought to trial. The point being two-fold in that, on the one hand, violent acts like these were frequent occurrences in the everyday life of early Edgefield, and on the other hand, that many of these cases resulted in acquittals or reductions to manslaughter insinuate the point alluded to in the chapter’s opening quotation—violence

¹⁵ John A. Chapman, *History of Edgefield County from the Earliest Settlements to 1897* (Newberry, S.C.: Elbert H. Aull, Publisher and Printer, 1897), 1, 6, 28.; Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father’s House are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 18-19.

¹⁶ Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Minutes of the General Sessions Court, 1785-1830, Edgefield County Archives (hereafter all sources from the Edgefield County Archives will be denoted ECA: The records cited here are those that involved white male crime against other white persons and include the charges of assault, assault and battery, riot, manslaughter, murder, sending a challenge, affray, assault with intent to murder, assault with intent to ravish/rape. Cases involving the assault of slaves on white masters were rarely brought to trial in the county court, but when tried have not been included here. Also omitted are crimes of whites against slaves, which normally resulted in nominal fines. The records from the fall term 1790-spring term 1794 and fall term 1795-spring term 1802 are incomplete or missing and not included here.

as a part of honor and gentlemanly conduct was not lost on the average Edgefieldian called upon for jury duty. Particularly noteworthy during this period of court records is the lack of cases involving duels. There are two such cases between 1785 and 1830, and both resulted in a reduction to a charge of assault and battery punishable by fine rather than the capital punishment prescribed for dueling. The remaining cases consist of the very informal, passionate acts of violence which are more typical of frontier notions of honor.¹⁷

Because Edgefield lacked a newspaper covering local news during its early development, one must rely on accounts from neighboring areas to begin to grasp the extent to which these acts of violence were acted out in the public eye. One of the earliest such acts to garner widespread attention was the duel between George McDuffie, of Edgefield, and William Cummings, a political rival of McDuffie. The event was covered in both the *Pendleton Messenger* and the *Augusta Chronicle*, with the *Chronicle* the more extensive. The *Messenger's* coverage is largely limited to accounts and descriptions of the event after the fact, with three articles coming on the heels of the event. The first appears on June 19, 1822, and reports the time and place of the duel, as well as a brief summary of the results. The second article provides more detail, as the particulars of the event are related to the paper through McDuffie's second in the duel. McDuffie and Cummings reportedly faced off at eight o'clock on the morning of June 8th at the Sister's Ferry on the Savannah River below Augusta. McDuffie fell wounded after

¹⁷ Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Minutes of the General Sessions Court, 1785-1830, ECA.

the first fire, having been shot above the hip, and the affair was quickly ended.

Cummings was unhurt in the exchange of bullets, but McDuffie's wounds were also minimal and not life-threatening.¹⁸ This summary coverage on the part of the *Pendleton Messenger* pales in comparison to the extensive coverage provided by the *Augusta Chronicle*.

The *Chronicle* carries the very public exchange of words between George McDuffie and William Cummings in late 1822, after their exchange of shots earlier in the summer of that year, providing the events which served as a precursor to the duel itself. The formal affair was initiated by Cumming, feeling he had been dishonored by McDuffie, when he posted a note at the Greenville, S.C. Courthouse which pronounced McDuffie "an equivocating scoundrel and base coward."¹⁹ The next three issues covering the affair involve a number of persons—publishing statements by both McDuffie and Cumming themselves—as well as remarks from their seconds. Common to all of these accounts was a desire to shape the public perception of the duel and maintain the reputation of those involved. Included in this end goal was a desire to contrast the virtues of one side against the alleged dishonor of the other.²⁰

¹⁸ "The Duel," *Pendleton Messenger*, June 19, 1822; "Duel," *Pendleton Messenger*, June 26, 1822; "Reply," *Pendleton Messenger*, July 24, 1822; "Captain Elmore's statement," *Pendleton Messenger*, July 24, 1822, ECA.

¹⁹ "Copy-Greenville, 5th Sept. 1822," *Augusta Chronicle*, September 19, 1822, ECA.

²⁰ "Copy-Mr. McDuffie's Handbill posted up at Greenville Courthouse," *Augusta Chronicle*, September 24, 1822; "Explanatory Statement-published in Handbills in Augusta," *Augusta Chronicle*, September 24, 1822; "For the Chronicle," *Augusta Chronicle*, September 28, 1822; "For the Chronicle," *Augusta Chronicle*, October 12, 1822, ECA.

McDuffie emerged from this duel physically wounded but unscathed in reputation. He continued his service to Congress, and eventually returned to Edgefield to a very successful law practice, and was later elected governor of South Carolina. That a violent event of this magnitude—involving a person of George McDuffie’s public stature—enhanced his reputation and standing in Edgefield speaks volumes to the validity of the “Edgefield tradition.”

Other violent events in Edgefield found the public page during this period. Both the *Pendleton Messenger* and *South Carolina Republican* reported the murder of Peter Morgan in Edgefield by Alexander Howl. The *Messenger’s* report reads “Another horrid murder was committed in Edgefield District on the evening of the 22nd ult. Peter Morgan, who resided near the junction of Turkey and Steven’s Creek. The horrid deed was committed by Alexander Howl, son-in-law to the deceased.”²¹ The *Republican* provides precursory detail, reporting that the two had been to a tax gathering, and were heard disputing before they entered the home of Mr. Morgan:

Howl pressed harder on the old man when he picked up a board and retreating struck Howl one blow. Howl then seized him by the throat with his left hand and with the right inflicted a mortal wound in the left groin, with a Spanish knife, which cut the main artery; he expired in 15 minutes. I am sorry to add, Howl made his escape. Mr. Morgan stood high among his neighbors as an honest, upright citizen. He was one of the survivors of the Revolutionary War, and was at the siege of York when Cornwallis was captured.²²

The *Augusta Chronicle* reported several violent crimes coming out of Edgefield District, the first being the case of Henry Shultz, founder of the city of Hamburg in the

²¹ “Murder,” *Pendleton Messenger*, April 20, 1825, ECA.

²² “Murder,” *South Carolina Republican*, April 20, 1825, ECA.

southern portion of the district, for the murder of Alexander Boyd. The *Chronicle* presents Shultz as having a reputation, built upon more than twenty years of public service, of a gentleman, and “even in the unfortunate affair in which he violated the laws, and which has brought on him so much public censure and self reproach, he was not the voluntary actor. . .” The jury returned a verdict of manslaughter, which owing to the reputation of Shultz “seemed to give general satisfaction.”²³ An extract of a letter from Edgefield published in the *Chronicle* follows much the same line of reasoning and appraisal of Shultz, closing by saying “It may be gratifying to the friends of Mr. Shultz to know, that on the trial he proved a character for generosity, humanity, and benevolence, equaled by few and surpassed by none.”²⁴

Another violent crime reported along with the Shultz trial is that of Absalom Roe, of Edgefield, who was tried for the murder of his brother and was found guilty.²⁵ Also in the pages of the *Chronicle* is the case of Jonathan Williams:

In ‘Old Edgefield,’ on the 10th inst. Jonathan Williams inflicted a mortal wound, with a rifle, upon John W. Yates, where of he died on the 12th. The Jury of Inquest rendered a verdict of Murder. Williams has escaped from justice . . . Benjamin Evans was brought to our jail, on Thursday last, charging with aiding and abetting in the crime.²⁶

²³ “Trial,” *Augusta Chronicle*, October 13, 1827, ECA.

²⁴ “Extract of a letter dated-Edgefield Court House, 5th Oct. 1827,” *Augusta Chronicle*, October 10, 1827, ECA.

²⁵ *Augusta Chronicle*, October 13, 1827, ECA.

²⁶ “From Edgefield (S.C.) Carolinian, Oct. 23,” *Augusta Chronicle*, October 27, 1830; “From Edgefield (S.C.) Carolinian, Oct. 30,” *Augusta Chronicle*, November 3, 1830, ECA.

A murder by Joseph J. Knapp in Edgefield is reported in 1830 in the *Edgefield Hive*, a short-lived local paper begun the year before. The murder is noted as being mysterious with the victim, Mr. White, being related to the accused through marriage. The *Hive* cites the expectation of inheritance as the most plausible cause of the murder, and laments the killing of “an aged old man, whose only crime was the accumulation, by honesty and industry, of large estate for ungrateful heirs.”²⁷

It was not until well into the 1820s and 1830s that a plantation style of agriculture based upon the production of a staple, cash crop of cotton became firmly established in Edgefield. From 1790 to 1820, the population of Edgefield grew from 13,289 persons, of whom twenty-eight percent were black, to 25,119 with the black population nearly doubling to forty-eight percent. This demographic shift illustrates the shift in the economy of Edgefield County toward a planter aristocracy reliant upon slavery and staple-crop agriculture. This period of development did not occur in a political vacuum, and the influence of both the frontier lifestyle and the planter aristocratic element had consequences on the political culture of the county. The characteristics which allowed for survival in a frontier community like Edgefield up to 1820 certainly persisted, but as Edgefield matured economically and politically, its ethic of honor became more refined even amidst its infamous culture of violence. With the ethic of honor prevalent in both, “this mixture of seaboard aristocracy and heterogeneous backcountry elements in Edgefield helped to account for the distinguished white political leadership that

²⁷ “Murder of Mr. White,” *Edgefield Hive*, June 25, 1830, ECA.

emerged.”²⁸ This duality allowed Edgefield to develop a political culture that was at once characteristic of broader South Carolina and Southern culture while at the same time a historically unique crossroads of time, place, politics and personalities.

At that crossroads was the ethic of honor. This ethic was understood at all class levels of Southern society but it manifested itself in different ways which were tied to class. Regardless of class status these manifestations took the form of violence and physical confrontation. Bertram Wyatt-Brown perhaps best sums up the ethic of honor when he says that “. . . honor is reputation. Honor resides in the individual as his understanding of who he is and where he belongs in the ordered ranks of society.”²⁹ Men of honor conceived of themselves in this way, but true honor was not found in this inner conception alone, but beckoned a public recognition of these honorable qualities. Publicly claiming and asserting one’s honor was a prerequisite, and a general understanding of this notion of honor was pivotal in the establishment of the code of honor across the South.³⁰

A tendency toward violence has been one of the character traits most frequently attributed to southerners. In various guises, the image of the violent South confronts the historian at every turn: dueling gentlemen and masters whipping slaves, flat-boatmen indulging in rough-and-tumble

²⁸ Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father’s House*, 19-21.

²⁹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 14.

³⁰ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South*, 14-15; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th-Century American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 12-25.

fighters . . . and other less physical expressions of a South whose mode of action is frequently extreme.³¹

Honor and violence seemed to go hand in hand in the South, and were widely understood, if not widely observed and practiced, across the spectrum of Southern society. In a work focusing on more contemporary renditions of this culture of violence, sociologist Raymond D. Gastil alluded to this point in saying that “it is a predisposition to lethal violence in Southern regional culture that accounts for the greater part of the relative height of the American homicide rate. This regional culture was already developed before 1850.”³²

Dueling became the prevailing form in which notions of honor were exhibited among the gentry and landed elite of Southern society. As one historian noted “The prominent political leaders, military men, and newspaper editors who duelled did so to avoid the shame before a public audience—an audience that clearly understood and accepted the language and values of honor.”³³ A fledgling county with a developing aristocratic sense of self embraced dueling not as an outdated barbarism, but as a sign of increased modernity and cultural progress. While much of the rest of the nation had

³¹ Sheldon Hackney, “Southern Violence,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 74, No. 3. (Feb., 1969), 906.

³² Raymond D. Gastil, “Homicide and a Regional Culture of Violence,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3. (Jun., 1971), xiv, 33, 412; For more on violence in Southern culture generally, see Elliot J. Gorn, “Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch: The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 1 (Feb., 1985), 20; Clement Eaton, “Mob Violence in the Old South,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 29, No. 3, (Dec., 1942), 352; Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 11-12.

³³ Kenneth S. Greenberg, “The Nose, the Lie, and the Duel in the Antebellum South,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (Feb. 1990), 58.

largely discarded the “code duello” by 1830, the South maintained its adherence to the traditional concept of honor, and Edgefield was first among the adherents.³⁴

The *Edgefield Advertiser* gives several accounts of duels and “affairs of honor” that occurred during this time in the district, with many of these involving distinguished families and political leaders. In 1840, Col. Louis T. Wigfall and Preston Smith Brooks, noted Edgefield politicians, were involved in a duel, and were both wounded. Initial accounts reported mortal wounds to both, but later information came forth that “the parties were but slightly wounded, and are nearly restored to health.” The circumstances leading to this personal confrontation were not publicly known, but it was assumed that Wigfall challenged Brooks after an alleged public assault upon his honor in correspondence and the press.³⁵ That the paper presents this act as an almost necessary part of the life of a public leader speaks volumes as to the cultural climate of Edgefield and the clout carried by the ethic of honor.

Hamburg, in the southern sector of Edgefield district, was the site of “an affair of honor” that took place on August 9th, 1843 between James Gardner, Jr. and “our brother Jones of the Chronicle and Sentinel [Augusta].” The paper recounts the event:

The cause or causes of their resort to “horrida bella,” we know not but congratulate them heartily at their scathless escape from the field of Mars. After an exchange of shots, their feelings of resentment seemed to be

³⁴ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 43; For more on honor, violence, dueling, and Southern culture see Elliot J. Gorn, “Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch,” 19-22; Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 3-26; For more on violence and dueling, see Clement Eaton, “Mob Violence in the Old South,” 352; Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 3-26.

³⁵ *Edgefield Advertiser*, December 10, 1840, ECA.

satiated, and they left the ground. We must add, that we regret our soil being made the scene of such gladiatorship, and would prefer the gentlemen settling their disputes at home. . .³⁶

The very next year another “affair of honor” took place, again in Hamburg, between Col. John Cunningham and S. McGowen. “They fought with U.S. Yangers, at the distance of thirty paces. Mr. McGowen was severely wounded.”³⁷ Other duels include “a difficulty existing between Mesers. Bayly and Davis, of the House of Representatives” that was “settled.”³⁸

Two such duels covered in the *Advertiser* involved one of Edgefield’s most respected politicians of the antebellum period, U.S. Senator A.P. Butler. The first occurred in Washington, where it was reported:

Mr. Butler challenged Mr. Benton today to mortal combat, on account of the harsh language used by the latter to him in the course of debate in the Senate on Sunday morning. Col. Benton accepted the challenge and the time was fixed for the deadly encounter, when the police got wind of the matter and both parties were arrested. . .³⁹

The affair was later “honorably adjusted”, but what is interesting about this duel is its coverage in the *Advertiser*. Butler is heralded for having acted with “cool deliberate courage.”⁴⁰ In later editions, the *Advertiser* corrects itself in citing the event as “honorably adjusted” and relates a paper-trail of correspondence between seconds acting

³⁶ “A Duel,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 9, 1843, ECA.

³⁷ “Duel,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 20, 1844, ECA.

³⁸ “The Duel,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, January 13, 1847, ECA.

³⁹ “Duel in Prospect—Messrs. Butler and Benton,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 5, 1848, ECA.

⁴⁰ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 5, 1848, ECA.

on behalf of Mr. Butler and Mr. Benton which the editor presents as having shamed Mr. Benton in the matter, “He did not reply and thus the affair terminated, at whose expense the public can at once see.”⁴¹

A.P. Butler was again at the center of a duel on the national scene, this one between him and Senator Foote of Mississippi.

It will be seen, by reference to another column, that Senator Butler has already encountered Mississippi’s Foote, without being upset or in the least degree injured. On the contrary, he has made use of an excellent opportunity of giving the old wrangler a very decent castigation early in the action. And for this we among many others, return the Judge our sincere thanks, adding the usual cry of “hit him again” with a hearty good will.⁴²

This event and the others like it were typically treated with a sense of positive good, and the Edgefieldians involved in them were quite deliberately celebrated in their actions to this end, to the point of this last duel warranting a cry, meant to represent the feelings of the Edgefield community, of “hit him again!” Taking these many public accounts of these affairs of honor as a whole, it becomes increasingly obvious that actions such as these were expected of political leaders when honor was at stake—and furthermore that the community they represented completely understood honor of this kind.

However, violence in Edgefield was by no means limited to these personal confrontations. What sets Edgefield apart, both in outside perception and self-conception, is the very public, often brutal and bloody violent acts which have colored its history and the frequency with which they have taken place. Again, the court records

⁴¹ “Difficulty between Judge A.P. Butler and Hon. Thomas Benton,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 22, 1848; *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 30, 1848, ECA.

⁴² “Butler vs. Foote,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, December 18, 1851, ECA.

prove fruitful in illustrating this fact. From 1830 to 1860, 386 cases of violence were brought to trial, including thirty-two cases of murder. One of these cases involves an affray and none carry the charge of dueling or the sending of a challenge, but the general numbers show that violent acts were an unmistakable part of Edgefield life. Despite an increased sense of civility and settlement in the county, a culture of violence was readily apparent to even the most casual observer.⁴³

The role of honor in these cases, specifically the murder cases, is as conspicuous as the murders themselves. Many of the acts seethe with the same notions and displays of honor exhibited elsewhere in the South during this period, drawing warranted comparisons to the “Jacksonian” concept of the “duel” personified in Andrew Jackson’s acts of violence and passion, most notably the Jackson-Benton Affair in Nashville in 1813.⁴⁴ The county coroner’s reports from this period provide exemplary detail into the circumstances which surround these murders, as well as graphic description of their outcomes. The first murder on record is that of Joseph Glover by Lovett Gomillion on September 2, 1844. Glover, apparently incensed over a prior disagreement with Gomillion, confronted him on the Courthouse Square in Edgefield and exclaimed “Damn you Gomillion prepare and defend yourself!” Glover then fired at Gomillion, who after initially retreating returned fire and stuck Glover in the breast. Glover died almost

⁴³ Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Minutes of the General Sessions Court, 1830-1860, ECA: The records cited here again involve only white crime against other white persons. Cases of violence are those of assault, assault and battery, riot, affray, and murder as they appear in the court minutes.

⁴⁴ Robert V. Remini, *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (New York: Perennial Classics, 1990 ed.), 42-48, 52-54, 68-71; Andrew Burstein, *The Passions of Andrew Jackson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 36-39, 52-54, 85-86, 93-97; H.W. Brands, *Andrew Jackson: His Life and Times* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 188-191.

immediately. Gomillion was dismissed in court in the act of self defense. This event captures the vivacity and violence of antebellum Edgefield, especially its prickly sense of honor and its public defense. Glover, though from the record the specifics are unknown, felt his honor had been infringed upon by Gomillion and sought a very public resolution on the public square. Gomillion, after being accused of a wrong, and then fired upon publicly, had no choice according to the strictures of honor other than to act in kind.⁴⁵ This “fatal recontre” was given extensive coverage in the *Edgefield Advertiser*, recounting the events similarly to those described above, and closing with remarks on its meaning for the Edgefield community:

We cannot, however, as a faithful conductor of the press, and as a citizen concerned for the welfare of the community, allow this occasion to pass without calling the attention of our *legislators* to the pernicious practice of carrying concealed and deadly weapons; in their hands must the remedy be found.⁴⁶

Taking issue with the concealment of the deadly weapons, and not with the issue of how these weapons were used toward the destruction of human life, reveals much about the public mindset regarding violence in Edgefield. Acts of violence were well understood and even accepted, but only if they remained true to the notions of honor upon which they were validated. The concealment of deadly weapons was presented as being in violation of these honorable notions, which only then brought into question the acts of violence in which the weapons were employed.

⁴⁵ “The Murder of Joseph Glover by Lovett Gomillion, September 2, 1844,” Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Coroner’s Book of Inquisitions, 1844-1850; *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 4, 1844, ECA.

⁴⁶ “Fatal Recontre,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 4, 1844, ECA.

Other very public murders had similar underlying themes, such as the murder of Benjamin F. Jones by Charles Price in 1845 and that of William Bailey by Thomas Prince the following year. In the first case, the *Advertiser* began “It again becomes our painful duty to record another fatal affray which occurred on Monday last, near Dunton’s Post Office, about nine miles northwest of this Village. . .”⁴⁷ Price entered a store on the Square in Edgefield and exclaimed he had “met a rascal he didn’t expect to meet and had heard he[said rascal] had said his daughter had sworn a lie.” To this, Jones, who was among the crowd in the store, replied “she had sworn a lie!” Price replied simply by shooting Jones in the chest with his shotgun, killing him instantly. Here again, honor is the culprit of violence, as Price felt his and his family’s honor insulted with the allegation that his daughter was liar. Jones too was dishonored in the store when Price referred to him a “rascal” and stood up and confronted his accuser. Price’s only course of action was to shoot Jones.⁴⁸

The second “melancholy affray”⁴⁹ involving William Bailey and Thomas Prince ended with a similar result, only the weapon of death was a knife. Prince and Bailey had a heated discussion, which nearly came to blows several times, until finally when facing one another in the streets Bailey accused Prince of hiding a knife, to which Prince replied “God damn you! What have you got?!” After Bailey showed himself to be unarmed,

⁴⁷ “Fatal Recontre,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 26, 1845, ECA.

⁴⁸ “The Murder of Benjamin F. Jones by Charles Price, March 24, 1845,” Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Coroner’s Book of Inquisitions, 1844-1850; *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 26, 1845, ECA.

⁴⁹ “Melancholy Affray,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, July 22, 1846, ECA.

Prince, his sense of honor and passion provoked, slashed Bailey's side and throat, killing him.⁵⁰

Other murders occurred in more or less similar fashion. "Another act of violence within our district—the murder of Joshua Hammond, Jun. Three men, a Father and two sons, by the name of Green, are implicated in the murder. . .The murder, it is said, grew out of a gambling spree."⁵¹ The murderers beat Hammond to death with a fence rail.⁵² Britton McClendon was also killed by Felix Hubbard with a knife.⁵³

However, these murders pale in comparison to the conspicuous nature of the murders that occurred between 1851 and 1860, involving some of the most successful and respected families in Edgefield County. The first "melancholy affray"⁵⁴ is the murder of Eldred Glover by Dr. Walker Samuel, a respected doctor in the Village and later the county coroner. On March 2, 1852, Eldred Glover entered a bar where Dr. Samuel was and demanded an explanation of a letter that Glover alleged Samuel to have written. Samuel refused an explanation but challenged Glover to meet him the next Monday saying "you shall have satisfaction with the weapons of warfare!" After another

⁵⁰ "The Murder of William Bailey by Thomas Prince, July 18, 1846," Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Coroner's Book of Inquisitions, 1844-1850; *Edgefield Advertiser*, July 22, 1846, ECA.

⁵¹ "Another Murder," *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 12, 1849, ECA.

⁵² "The Murder of Joshua Hammond, Jr. by John Green, Jr., and Julius Green, September 4, 1849," Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Coroner's Book of Inquisitions, 1844-1850; *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 12, 1849, ECA.

⁵³ "The Murder of Britton McClendon by Felix Hubbard, November 11, 1850," Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Coroner's Book of Inquisitions, 1844-1850, ECA.

⁵⁴ "Melancholy Affray," *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 4, 1852, ECA.

inquisition on Glover's part was answered by Samuel with "I wish to have no correspondence with a damned rascal!" Glover punched Samuel. Samuel then drew his pistol and shot at Glover twice. After Glover ran out onto the Courthouse Square, Samuel fired again. Glover died a day later from wounds to his abdomen.⁵⁵

The second affair involved William D. Thurmond, who was killed by William P. Jones in early 1856. As is frequent with these acts of violence, this event took place on Sale Day, the monthly county market on the Courthouse Square. Thurmond and Jones were involved in a dispute, which soon resulted to blows. Jones lifted a chair and hit Thurmond over the head several times, leaving him lying motionless on the floor, eventually dying of a skull fracture ten days later. The dispute in question is again one of a perceived affront of honor on the part of Thurmond toward Jones.⁵⁶ The *Advertiser* commented on the affair, saying "Both these unfortunate individuals were young men of family and of good standing in their respective neighborhood. Their sad fate is truly to be deplored."⁵⁷

The murder of J.H. Christian by George D. Tillman, brother of Benjamin Ryan Tillman, is perhaps the most famous murder case during this period in Edgefield history. The *Advertiser* was especially concerned with this particular event:

⁵⁵ "The Murder of Eldred Glover by Dr. Walker Samuel, March 2, 1852," Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Coroner's Book of Inquisitions, 1851-1859; *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 4, 1852, ECA.

⁵⁶ "The Murder of William D. Thurmond by William P. Jones, February 4, 1856," Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Coroner's Book of Inquisitions, 1851-1859, ECA.

⁵⁷ "Coroner's Inquests," *Edgefield Advertiser*, February 20, 1856, ECA.

It grieves us to the heart to have to record a most melancholy occurrence which took place in our village on Monday night last. We allude to the death of Mr. J. Henry Christian, who was shot in a sudden affray by Mr. George D. Tillman and expired very soon afterwards . . . Mr. Christian was well known to us, as he had been for several years engaged in superintending a number of mechanic and other hands in our employment. We drop an unfeigned tear of regret at his sad fate. He was an independent and an honest man. May God protect his widowed relict and fatherless daughters!⁵⁸

During the summer of 1856, Tillman and another man were playing cards outside of the Planter's Hotel on the Square in Edgefield. A dispute arose over the amount of the bet, and after an appeal to the gathered crowd, J.H. Christian sided with Tillman's opponent, to which Tillman called Christian a "damned liar." Christian answered with "who do you call a damned liar?!" After advancing at one another, Tillman pulled his pistol and shot the unarmed Christian in the breast, and as he fell, Christian exclaimed "Tillman, you've killed me!" This event, like the others, illustrates the very prickly sense of honor as it was understood in Edgefield. Something as simple as false accusation or allegation could result in a violent and often fatal confrontation. Tillman's actions clearly show the often superficial reasons for violence in the name of honor.⁵⁹

The murder of Isaac M. Jones by Thomas Markey with a knife on the Courthouse steps in October of 1858 was called a "grievous death" and it was said that the community was "greatly shocked . . . by the sudden killing of young Isaac Mathias Jones,

⁵⁸ "Most Melancholy Occurrence," *Edgefield Advertiser*, July 23, 1856, ECA.

⁵⁹ "The Murder of J.H. Christian by George D. Tillman, July 21, 1856," Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Coroner's Book of Inquisitions, 1851-1859; *Edgefield Advertiser*, July 23, 1856, ECA.

a member of one of our most highly-esteemed families. . . It is a grievous affliction to the bereaved family. May heaven help them to bear it with fortitude!”⁶⁰

Three especially public and brutal murders occurred in 1860. The first of these again involved the Tillman family, this time John M. Tillman, who was killed by George R. Mays and his son John C Mays. The Mays’ men were apparently waiting in the road for Tillman, and refused to allow him to pass when he arrived, calling him a “damned rascal” and demanding that Tillman exit his buggy. Tillman said he was unarmed, but George Mays replied “Damn you I’ll kill you anyway!” He then fired three rounds, unprovoked, into Tillman, before John Mays hit him with three more rounds. Tillman drove off injured, and was later treated by Dr. Walker Samuel. He later died of his wounds, telling Dr. Samuel as he died “it is not worth while to do anything for me, I am a dead man and feel the blood running internally. I know I’m shot through and there is no chance for me!”⁶¹

The next two heinous murders involved the Samuel brothers, Joseph, Wade, and Musco, and occurred on the public square in Hamburg on December 18, 1860. The first murder by the brothers was of James Reynolds by a head wound inflicted by Joseph Samuel in response to an alleged insult of his brother in the correspondence of Reynolds. Reynolds denied the accusation, to which the brother Wade Samuel replied he “told a damned lie!” Joseph demanded Reynolds never to speak to him again, to which

⁶⁰ “The Murder of Isaac M. Jones by Thomas Markey, October 13, 1858,” Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Coroner’s Book of Inquisitions, 1851-1859, ECA.

⁶¹ “The Murder of John M. Tillman by George R. Mays and John C. Mays, April 19, 1860,” Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Coroner’s Book of Inquisitions, 1859-1868, ECA.

Reynolds replied that he would speak to any man he wished. At that moment Joseph struck Reynolds, killing him instantly. All three brothers drew their pistols, but the gathered crowd urged them not to shoot. At this point Stephen Shaw, a man in the crowd, began to quarrel with the brothers when they refused to allow him or anyone else to aid Reynolds. Shaw defied them, and they fired 10-12 shots at Shaw, with Joseph believed to have fired the fatal shot. Shaw died immediately.⁶²

Notions of honor were integral in nearly all of these acts of violence, and the method by which these actions took place exhibit fundamental notions of honor as they were understood in the South. There were key words and phrases that served as signals of an affair of honor. Some had honorable implications whether written or uttered; words like *coward*, *liar*, *rascal*, *scoundrel*, and *puppy* all demanded immediate challenge as they were a direct affront against the manliness and chivalry at the heart of the ethic of honor. As honor was reputation, failure to meet the challenge presented by words such as these could result in a loss of honor. Furthermore, since physical appearance was a part of reputation, specific physical gestures were also understood to be an affront to honor—most notable among them a “nose-pulling.” The nose was seen as the most prominent physical feature, and men of honor regarded the nose as such. A nose pulling, as understood in the ethic of honor, was simply a more aggressive form of calling a man a liar. What the acts of violence already mentioned in Edgefield illustrate is that the concept of honor was widely understood and strictly followed in Edgefield—and the lie,

⁶² “The Murder of James Reynolds by Joseph Samuel, Wade Samuel, and Musco Samuel, December 18, 1860,” and “The Murder of Stephen Shaw by Joseph Samuel, Wade Samuel, and Musco Samuel, December 18, 1860,” Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Coroner’s Book of Inquisitions, 1859-1868, ECA.

the nose, and the duel were intimately tied to the ethic of honor at the heart of acts of violence in Edgefield.⁶³

However, these deadly affairs are only a glimpse of the magnitude of such violence in Edgefield in the thirty years leading up to the Civil War. The *Edgefield Advertiser* registers nearly fifty accounts of other acts of very public and bloody violence between the paper's founding in 1833 through 1860. Many of these had the same underlying notions of honor—accusations of lying, cowardice and rascality and the often violent and physical response required—at their root.

The paper's treatment of these events, the tone of the articles, insinuate that by 1833, the reputation for violence and the relative frequency with which these events happened was firmly established in Edgefield County. Fatal affrays, melancholy murders and rencontres between many of the leading white men of the county litter the *Advertiser's* headlines throughout this period.⁶⁴

The first such report appears in 1836 and tells of the shooting of Adam Taylor by J.P. Terry. A report in late 1840 recounted:

⁶³ Kenneth S. Greenberg, "The Nose, the Lie, and the Duel," 65-69; Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, The Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3-23; Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 173.

⁶⁴ Randy Roberts and James S. Olson, *A Line in the Sand: The Alamo in Blood and Memory* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 2-4: This work conveys the historical reputation of Edgefield that is the focus of this chapter, providing the quote discussing William Travis and James Butler Bonham, two leading Edgefieldians who served at the Alamo, "Edgefield produced cotton, tobacco, and me with attitudes. . . Violence was not something that Edgefield's leading citizens boasted about, but a prickly sense of honor was a source of pride." What follows is validation in the county newspaper of that sense of honor and the community pride therein.

A sudden recontre occurred in the streets of this Village, Friday evening last, between Mr. Thomas B. Bird and Col. Louis T. Whigfall [sic], in the course of which, pistols were mutually discharged. One of the shots inflicted a mortal wound upon the former of these young gentlemen, of which he died Sunday morning.⁶⁵

Especially frequent are shootings—pistols, rifles, shotguns—there is even one case in the summer of 1841 in which a man named Ansley J. Colvin was beaten to death by Philip Falkner using a rock.⁶⁶ A particularly bloody event in 1845 was brought to life in the pages of the *Advertiser* as follows: “The streets of our Town were on Monday last, (Sale Day,) again the scene of riot and bloodshed. Two men quarreled near one of the grog shops and a fight ensued.”⁶⁷ The article goes on to give detail of the affair, citing an errant pistol shot as responsible for the death of an innocent bystander, as well as one of engaged parties to have been “severely beaten over the head with a stick. It gives us sincere pain to advert to this occurrence; but as a conductor of the press we feel it our duty to notice it, and to call public attention to the subject.” The paper stated that this was the second such occurrence in the last nine months that resulted in the shooting of innocent bystanders and made a fervent appeal to the legislators and citizenry to seek some remedy. This event sheds light on the frequency and conspicuous nature of these events in Edgefield.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ “Fatal Affray,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, Thursday, November 5, 1840, ECA.

⁶⁶ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 19, 1841, ECA.

⁶⁷ *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 9, 1845, ECA.

⁶⁸ *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 9, 1845, ECA.

In 1847, the paper reports “On Saturday last, the day of the battalion parade at Mount Willing, in this District, a number of personal recontres took place, in which many of those present were severely injured.”⁶⁹ The following year saw another “atrocious murder,” this time of Major Adam S. Camp, by Joseph Glenn. Glenn apparently held a grudge with Major Camp, and waited for him on his way home from properties near Spartanburg, S.C. Glenn shot Major Camp and attempted to shoot one of his negroes [sic] who ran to inform Major Camp’s party. Glenn was later arrested.⁷⁰

The headlining act the following year was more of the same, a “fatal affray” involving Elbert Hardin, William Treadaway, William Wilson, and Stephen Wilson and their dispute over the position of a fence line dividing their respective plantations. After exchanging shots, two men, Treadaway and William Wilson both fell wounded, with Treadaway later dying of his wounds.⁷¹

Eighteen fifty-three saw another such event, which the *Advertiser* reported as follows: “We regret to learn that a serious difficulty occurred near this place on Thursday night last between a respectable citizen of our neighborhood, Mr. Carson

⁶⁹ “Lamentable Occurrence,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 28, 1847, ECA.

⁷⁰ “Murder of Maj. Adam S. Camp,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 11, 1848; Also during this period, Martin Posey’s trial for the murder of his wife occurred. This case is included because although it did not involve two men of honor in the sense that the other cases cited did, it represents how honor was publicly sanctioned even when it was violated. “Trial of Martin Posey,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 10, 1849; “State Trials,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 17, 1849; “Trial of Martin Posey,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, December 26, 1849, ECA.

⁷¹ “Fatal Affray in this District,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 3, 1851, ECA.

Warren and some up-country wagoners, in which one of the latter was killed by Mr.

Warren.”⁷² The paper also gave coverage of the three day trial of Carson Warren, stating:

Much interest was felt in the result as Mr. Warren is a citizen of excellent character and much esteemed by many as a friend and neighbor . . . Our deepest sympathies are with the unlucky prisoner and his distressed family. At the same time, we trust his grievous fate will prove an effectual warning to others, not alone against the shedding of human blood, but against all strife and wrangling which are too often in this latitude the certain precursors of violence and crime.⁷³

Hamburg was the scene of several such violent occurrences over the next few years, including the murder of Mr. William Spires by Lucius Pond for repeated trespasses in 1857⁷⁴, and an “almost fatal affray” between Major Gardner, his son John Gardner and Mr. B.L. Hall, “three of our most valued and respected citizens.”⁷⁵

A final report by the *Advertiser* during this antebellum period bears witness to “another fatal affray,” this one involving Samuel Posey, Jr. and Henry Williams, resulting in the death of Posey. The parties fired upon one another, having partaken of “spirits” and incensed over an apparent affront of honor. The *Advertiser* again uses this opportunity to make another plea to the citizens and legislators bedeviling the influences of liquor and firearms.⁷⁶

Public pleas of this kind in response to these events occur nearly as often as the events themselves, and judging from the continued violent acts being reported, fell

⁷² “Fatal Affray,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 3, 1853, ECA.

⁷³ “Trial of Carson Warren,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 23, 1853, ECA.

⁷⁴ “Serious Affair in Hamburg,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, July 22, 1857, ECA.

⁷⁵ “An Unfortunate Rencounter,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 30, 1858, ECA.

⁷⁶ “Another Fatal Affray,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 24, 1860, ECA.

largely upon deaf ears in Edgefield County. Particularly interesting, though, is the *Advertiser's* treatment of periods of relative peace in Edgefield. As evidenced by the incredible regularity and conspicuity of violence in the district, these occasions of peacefulness were rare indeed, and the editors of the *Advertiser* often took public notice of these times in an almost nostalgic tone for the fiery times of the past. Commenting on the affairs of the County Court in the spring of 1851, the *Advertiser* reports with emphasis; "There is *only one* indictment for murder."⁷⁷ Similarly, reporting on the events of Sale Day in April of 1854, the article reads "Our public day for April passed off very quietly and peaceably. A single blood-stained countenance was all we saw to remind us of the sale-days of old . . . the day was especially dull and every way unimportant."⁷⁸

However, later that month, the *Advertiser* considers the events of the season in total and observed the following:

The Dog-star must have been in the ascendant all Summer, if we may judge by the astonishing frequency of murders, duels, suicides, riots, rapes, etc. with which the newspapers have teemed. Never do we remember to have heard the like, and we imagine it would even puzzle the "oldest inhabitant" to recall so passionate a season."⁷⁹

The following year's court report rang with nostalgia for the action of old, saying that the lack of reports of fighting and violence is "a circumstance which the 'oldest inhabitant' says is unprecedented in the history of Edgefield."⁸⁰

⁷⁷ "The Court," *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 5, 1851, ECA.

⁷⁸ "Sale Day," *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 5, 1854, ECA.

⁷⁹ "Murders, Duels, and the Like," *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 31, 1854, ECA.

⁸⁰ "The Court," *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 21, 1855, ECA.

Against this cultural backdrop, Edgefield proved a fertile breeding ground for political leadership during the early republic and antebellum period, for its voting populace comprehended and encouraged such forms of public physical assertion of honor as a necessary part of manhood. Edgefield's rather rapid ascent from the status of frontier to the ranks of a plantation culture allowed for its concept of honor to be highly energized and more frequently exercised.

Orville Vernon Burton makes the same connections between Edgefield culture and broader Southern culture, though his focus is upon the family origin and dynamic of this connection than the politicians' conception and projection of the ethic of honor.

Notions of honor and virtue were characteristic of the southern family, and the families of Edgefield were no different. Edgefield youths heard of their virtuous ancestors and were taught that they also should live by a moral code. Ideas of individual, family, and community honor were instilled from youth. Honor generally connoted personal rectitude, independence of spirit, and the courage to maintain these characteristics against challenges. It meant living by one's word, no matter what the consequences. Finally, honor meant having to seek redress for grievances and defending perceived "rights."⁸¹

Given this cultural foundation, it is little wonder that Edgefield's political sons exhibited a tendency toward this same sense of honor and violence. Names such as A.P. Butler, George McDuffie, Preston Brooks, Francis Pickens, James Henry Hammond, Louis T. Wigfall read like a who's who of political stalwarts of the pre-war South, and all called Edgefield home. All were frequently involved and well versed in the actions and language of honor and violence. Duels, shootings, and personal affronts to honor were

⁸¹ Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House*, 90.

handled very publicly by these public men, and their actions reflect the culture from which they sprang—with its emphasis on violent defense of honor.⁸²

Perhaps the most telling political action in the cause of Southern honor was undertaken on the part of the Preston Brooks. His caning of the Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts provided yet another highly visible, nationally renowned defense of the ethic of honor.

The significance of Brooks' assault lies not only in the action, but in the reaction from the Southern populace, especially the South Carolina electorate, and the community of Edgefield in particular. The phrase "hit him again" was a mainstay in the political vocabulary of Edgefield and was employed again here, echoing similar public acclaim for the defense of the honor of the community by A.P. Butler. Brooks received countless replacement canes for the one broken over the person of Charles Sumner, many inscribed with the phrase "hit him again" or accompanied by similar remarks therein. The phrase was used almost in celebration, and is illustration of the Edgefield's reputation and the pride with which it was regarded. Perhaps the most telling validation of Brookes' action on the part of the average South Carolinian came the following year when he was reelected unanimously to his seat in the U.S. Senate. Even at his untimely death as a U.S. Senator in 1857, his eulogies, both at his funeral and in the public press were full of praise for the brave young Carolinian who defended the honor of his region, his state, and his community in the face of adversity.⁸³

⁸² Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House*, 90-93.

⁸³ *Edgefield Advertiser*, Micro-film-Clemson (South Caroliniana Library), Oct. 15, 1856 –Oct. 26, 1859. These newspaper accounts begin with a testimonial to Preston

Edgefield politicians and the violent culture of Edgefield prior to the Civil War did nothing to discourage, and in fact provided much of the spark that led to the outright public display and defense of Southern honor and a definitive sectional identity.

Historians typically locate the emergence of sectionalism either in the political crisis regarding Missouri statehood in 1819-1820 or in the heightened tensions over slavery in 1831 following the founding of William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* . . . These episodes certainly signified the strident political sectionalism that divided antebellum America. But the origins of sectional identity and defensiveness appeared a generation earlier, among college students in the early Republic.⁸⁴

These students inherited the mantle of Southern political leadership and exhibited that sense of sectionalism ever-more-frequently. Honor played a pivotal role in this developing sectional strife, but was not alone in the formation of a Southern sectional identity; the other prevailing cultural force in the South—Evangelical religion and revival—would prove just as influential. The implantation of the culture of honor having been illustrated in Edgefield, the focus will now shift toward this religious ethic and its role in Edgefield—ultimately arriving at the effects of the exchange between the two on the broader cultural ethic in Edgefield and the South.⁸⁵

Brooks and Brooks' reply on October 22, 1856 and proceed to include a "Defense of Col. Brooks," Oct. 29; "The Gutta Percha of the Pen and P. Brooks' reply," Dec. 10; "Remarks of Hon. P.S Brooks," Jan. 7, 1857; Following Brooks' death in January 1857 there are several tributes and memorials dedicated to him, most notably Feb. 18; these end with funeral acknowledgements printed April 8, 1857; Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House*, 93-95.

⁸⁴ Craig Thompson & Lorri Glover, eds., *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2004), 22.

⁸⁵ Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 3-33.

CHAPTER 2

EVANGELICAL EDGEFIELD

The great patriot always retained the easy affability of the gentleman, yet he adopted a sober manner of dress and became deeply preoccupied with fostering Christian virtue in his society. Supremely, what enabled Patrick Henry to tower above his generation—in its general estimation—was his ability to communicate in popular style the passion for a world reshaped in truly moral order that lay at the heart of both the religious revolution of the evangelicals and the political revolution of the patriots.⁸⁶

At once this quote from Rhys Isaac’s monumental work on Southern evangelical religious and cultural history highlights several aspects of how this history developed. Evangelical religion in the South was not native to Southern culture—it was a cultural transplant—and contended from the beginning with the cultural ethos of honor discussed extensively in the previous chapter. That relationship will be the subject of a later chapter. Here the focus will remain on what else is illustrated in the excerpt above: the principal Protestant Christian virtues at the heart of Southern evangelical religion as well as the period in which these principles became paramount and not peripheral in Southern culture.

Edgefield will at once provide an illustrative example both of how Isaac’s analysis of the “transformation of Virginia” was indicative of this development across the South as well as illuminate how this development arrived at different times and under varying circumstances in other areas of the South. Protestant evangelicalism did not take over the Southern religious and cultural landscape in one fell swoop during the Great Awakening of the mid-to-late eighteenth century. South Carolina as a whole, and

⁸⁶ Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999 ed.), 269

Edgefield County in particular, differed from other Southern states from the outset in its religious development. From the first settlements in Charleston, religious toleration had been the norm, and as settlers moved westward, this trend continued. Edgefield certainly fits squarely into this picture, as religious toleration and cooperation was present from the earliest settlements in the region.⁸⁷ This development process will set the stage for further analysis of how two dominant Southern ethics developed parallel to one another and ultimately became mutually influential.

Evangelicalism, according to Christine Leigh-Heyrman, “came late to the American South, as an exotic import rather than an indigenous development.”⁸⁸ Historians have generally agreed that the first forays of evangelicalism into the South came as part of the Great Awakening during the middle of the eighteenth century, in the form of New Light Baptists and George Whitfield’s Wesleyan Methodism. The pillars of this Protestant evangelical faith flew in the face of many existing Southern cultural customs, and initially it has been documented that this brand of religious faith was slow to gain acceptance, and was confined to the lower classes in Southern society.

Though differences existed even between the different sects of Protestantism, there were common moral foundations, a specific system of values that persisted in every denomination. All were appalled by the apparent violence and licentiousness of Southern culture and the social hierarchy inherent and reinforced in the establishment of the

⁸⁷ Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father’s House are Many Mansions* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 21-28; Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 181-185.

⁸⁸ Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.), 9.

Anglican Church. They sought a more individualistic religious experience that placed its emphasis on personal conversion and humility rather than on conspicuous displays of honor and manliness as signs of respectability. They adopted codes of action that stressed restraint and discipline: an individual detachment from the concerns of this world to develop a personal religious relationship in preparation for the next life. As one historian put it, “They were trying to replace class distinctions based on wealth and status—they called it worldly honor—with nonclass distinctions based on ideological and moral purity.”⁸⁹

These evangelicals were seen as an alternative to an established social structure based on respect and deference earned through public displays of wealth, vigor, and courage—the hallmarks of honor. They offered those who otherwise could never entertain the notion of garnering such respect a means of establishing personal independence through a higher degree of spirituality. There was much appeal for a man to hold the key to his religious conversion and maturation in his own hands, supported but not controlled by the clergy of the Protestant denominations.

The revolutionary quality of the early evangelical movement was not its assault upon power, for it made none, but its weakening of the cultural, religious, and psychological constraints upon people of relatively low estate by elevating them in their own esteem and giving them the personal discipline to use their lives best as they could in Christian service.⁹⁰

This sense of personal religious freedom was contagious among the initial converts of Southern evangelicalism. However, Protestant evangelicals remained a fringe group

⁸⁹ Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 38; Charles H. Lippy, ed., *Religion in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 1-17.

⁹⁰ Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 79.

through the end of the 1700s in most of the South. Isaac shows that evangelicals in Virginia had by the time of the Revolution and shortly thereafter become more firmly established, but even in Virginia during this period they constituted only ten percent of the religious community. The oppositional nature of evangelicalism's spread through Virginia serves as a precursor to similar developments throughout the rest of the South in the early nineteenth century, but South Carolina, with its history of religious toleration, proved the exception rather than the rule. The seed had been firmly planted in Virginia, and the vine of Protestant evangelicalism proved as durable as the kudzu of later Southern lore. There were detractors throughout, but in the end the sheer passion associated with this new form of religion proved stronger than any opposition to it. As in Virginia, even those in South Carolina who were initially introduced to Protestant evangelicalism with intent of "violent opposition" often later came "under conviction and experienced conversion."⁹¹

Noted Southern religious historian Donald G. Mathews stated that "Evangelicals developed a view of the world which affected, although it did not completely dominate, all southerners."⁹² This emerging influence on larger Southern culture did not come all at once across the South, but building upon the inroads made in Virginia and the coastal

⁹¹ Charles Reagan Willson, ed., *Religion in the South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 5-6, 14-19; Rhys Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 147-177; Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 46-47, 81-90; Helen Lee Turner, "The Evangelical Traditions I: Baptists," in *Religion in South Carolina*, Charles H. Lippy, ed., 24-32; A.V. Huff, Jr., "The Evangelical Traditions II: Methodists," in *Religion in South Carolina*, Charles H. Lippy, ed., 35-42; John. B. Boles, "Evangelical Protestantism in the South" in *Religion in the South*, Charles Reagan Wilson, ed., 13-34.

⁹² Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 58.

areas, Southern Protestant evangelicalism spread like wild fire over the course of the first half of the nineteenth century. Another historian claimed that “Beginning with the frontier revivals of the early nineteenth century, evangelical Protestantism became the dominant religious impulse of the South.”⁹³ Between 1785 and 1792, Protestant religious revivals expanded beyond the formerly local scope, and it is into this period of change that Edgefield County, South Carolina was born. Between the time Edgefield District was officially founded (1785) and the turn of the century Baptists alone in South Carolina built twenty-nine new churches, bringing their total number to nearly one hundred.⁹⁴ Horn’s Creek Baptist Church in Edgefield set an early precedent for evangelical religious presence in the South Carolina upcountry, as it was founded in 1768 by Reverend Daniel Marshall of New England. He was one of the first Baptist ministers to preach in the upper region of South Carolina.⁹⁵ However, churches such as Little Steven’s Creek Baptist, founded in 1789, are representative of the expansion of that early foray of evangelicalism into Edgefield County at the end of the eighteenth century.⁹⁶

⁹³ Charles Reagan Wilson, ed., *Religion in the South*, 3; Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 67-69; Thomas J. Little, “The Rise of Evangelical Religion in South Carolina During the Eighteenth Century” PhD. Diss., Rice University, 1995, 408.

⁹⁴ Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 49.

⁹⁵ Horn’s Creek Baptist Church, Edgefield, South Carolina-Church Minutes, 1768, 1824-1851, Tompkins Genealogical Library, Edgefield, South Carolina (information cited from the Tompkins Library in Edgefield will hereafter be denoted TGL: The early records for Horn’s Creek Baptist were lost, but in 1824, a member of the congregation, William Robertson, was commissioned to write an early history of the church for the official church records, using the sources available. This early reference to Horn’s Creek comes from this historical account.

⁹⁶ Little Steven’s Creek Baptist Church, Edgefield, South Carolina-Church Records, 1789, 1833-1860, TGL: Little Steven’s Creek Baptist was founded in 1789, but

Methodism also made a claim on the religious culture of early Edgefield, with the first Methodist societies being founded in and around Edgefield as early as 1790. Francis Asbury, the pioneering bishop of American Methodism, made multiple visits to Edgefield, in October 1801 and again in November of 1807. The early history of the Methodist sect in America proves more difficult to document than that of the Baptists, for their approaches differed. The Methodists were organized under a “society system” which often consisted of rather isolated groups of “adults devoted to scriptural teaching and Christian accountability.” The gathering place was less important than the gathering itself, and various facilities were utilized, ranging from a home parlor or chapel to the most rare, a church proper. Also adding to the difficulty is that these individual local societies were not the basic administrative unit of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America—that distinction lay in the circuit. These circuits often covered vast geographical areas, many the size of several counties or districts combined. They were under the pastor-ship of often only two “circuit riders,” preachers who traveled from society to society preaching almost daily. Edgefield Methodism developed along these lines, with the first circuit riders in the area being reported as servicing the larger “Cherokee circuit” which included Edgefield District, as early as 1789. This circuit was over 300 miles in circumference and was preached by two circuit riders, one of whom, James Jenkins, commented that Methodism when this circuit was formed was in its “infancy” in the region. That Bishop Asbury visited Edgefield twice in 1801 and 1807 is indicative that by this time Methodism had become firmly established in the county, and

records and church minutes for the antebellum period only exist for the years 1833-1860.

although official meeting houses would not appear until around 1820 at the earliest, his visit was a validation of the Methodist societies already in place in Edgefield by the turn of the nineteenth century.⁹⁷

The conflict of culture that characterized the First Great Awakening in Virginia became less pronounced as Protestant evangelicalism spread into other areas further south. The First Great Awakening, though most firmly effective in Virginia, also made many inroads across the Southern coast. That movement began the process by which the system of established Anglican religion was undermined, opening the door to religious pluralism, albeit predominantly Protestant. As John Boles stated, “By the 1820s evangelicalism was definitely no rebellious force but rather a pillar of the establishment.”⁹⁸ What had seemed an affront to the traditional rule of order in eighteenth-century-Virginia had become the norm only a couple decades into the nineteenth. During this antebellum generation, status and class were much less rigidly defined as they had been a generation or two earlier. The elements of the evangelical ethos changed as they became more accepted and mainstream in the Southern society in which they flourished. Influential in this shift was the change in social position of evangelicals themselves. According to Mathews, what was initially a minority

⁹⁷ Edgefield United Methodist Church Record, 1790-1860, TGL: These records consist largely of officially commissioned church histories that have appeared over the years, with authors varying from church historians to reverends. The early lack of record keeping within the Methodist church as a whole makes tracing the histories of specific societies and churches dubious, and these official church histories rely chiefly upon public deeds to place official church house construction, as well as Quarterly Conference meeting records that sometimes make specific mention of individual societies.

⁹⁸ John. B. Boles, “Evangelical Protestantism in the Old South,” 32.

movement in the South, “which provided bonds and identity for those otherwise deprived of them” it became one who’s “style of self-control, and rules of social decorum became dominant in the social system.”⁹⁹

It was this change in the structure of evangelicalism which proved much more conducive to widespread acceptance of evangelical faith. The focus was still upon the individual relationship with God, but accountability increasingly shifted from to oneself to the congregation and community at large. As acceptance of evangelicalism grew, so too did the public eye which held evangelicals accountable to its ethic. Though always reliant upon an emotional “conversion experience” as the basis of its faith, evangelical churches saw the individual reputations of their membership as reflective of the church, of the community, and of God Himself.

The church records from Edgefield County are certainly indicative of this point. The records of Horn’s Creek Baptist, Little Steven’s Creek Baptist, Edgefield Baptist, and Edgefield Methodist are all full of cases heard by the church committees regarding the behavior of their members. Cases that appear most frequently are those involving public intoxication, but other offenses ranging from excessive dancing to adultery—namely actions which caused public disgrace to the congregation as a whole in addition to the individual member—were frequent offenses as well. A glimpse at some typical cases went as follows: “John Mays appeared before church in vindication of reports of his frequent use of profane language,” “Bro. Thomas Youngblood came before the church and professed repentance for having drank too much for which he had resolved

⁹⁹ Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 82-83.

for the future to abstain altogether,” “John Miller professed intoxication, professed repentance, forgiven and restored by the church,” “Charles Parrott expelled due to admittance of drinking too much.”¹⁰⁰ Members had to answer to the rest of their “worshiping brethren” for their actions, and when in violation of church rules of proper Christian behavior, were called before the church and either repented and were reprimanded publicly or were expelled from the church altogether. Congregations in Edgefield proved much less forgiving for repeated offenses of intoxication, as cases like those above litter the records of all of the churches, and repeat offenders are the majority of the cases of expulsion from the church.

Other offenses though, were met with more laxity, specifically fighting and rioting. Several examples in Edgefield illustrate this point: “John Quattlebaum reported Thomas Youngblood had a difficulty at Edgefield Courthouse on sale day-Committee found he was ‘in no way criminal in what he did,’” “Case of Vann Swearingen taken up-charge of fighting to which he plead justification,” “Cases of Brother Bettis-charged with rioting and expelled only to be returned,” “Brother Edward S. Mays disciplined for fighting, confessed his wrong and received rebuke,” followed the next month by “Edward S. Mays among delegates elected by church to attend Baptist Association Meeting.”¹⁰¹ Church discipline of this kind was nothing new, as churches had policed their members’ actions all along in accordance with proper Christian behavior. The important change is

¹⁰⁰ Little Steven’s Creek Baptist Church Records, Sept.6, 1833; Jan. 11, 1834; Sept. 1834; Horn’s Creek Baptist Church Records; Edgefield Baptist Church Records; Edgefield United Methodist Church Records, TGL.

¹⁰¹ Little Steven’s Creek Baptist Church Records, Jan. 1837; Horn’s Creek Baptist Church Records, Feb. 1825; July 1828; June 1839; September 1839, TGL.

the prominence of the evangelical faith and a broad adherence to its ethic culturally. Whereas early evangelicals were few and far between, by the 1820s in Edgefield most citizens who professed religious faith belonged to an evangelical church. Hence, the discipline of the church had more profound social impact on the expected behavior than had been the case in the early rise of evangelical faith.

The process of accepting members into the church follows this same trend. Candidates for membership were called forth to relate “an experience of faith” to the church congregation, who would then either accept or decline the experience as valid and welcome the person into the congregation. These “conversion experiences” were often also very public events, which occurred either during regular worship, or more commonly, at a protracted meeting or camp meeting in which powerfully emotional preachers sought to win souls for conversion.¹⁰² This great sense of public accountability was conducive to a revivalist spirit that guided the expansion and evolution of Edgefield evangelicalism.

This development in the South during the first half of the nineteenth century was inconsistent, taking the form of revivals. The revival saw the camp meeting become the principal mode of operation for spreading the Protestant evangelical ethic and garnering religious conversions. Also, the Anglican Church¹⁰³ (later Episcopalian after American Revolution) had been undermined and disestablished as the official religion of state, and

¹⁰² Horn’s Creek Baptist Church Minutes; Little Steven’s Creek Baptist Church Records; Edgefield Baptist Church Records, TGL.

¹⁰³ Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals*, 68-69; John B. Boles, “Evangelical Protestantism in the Old South,” 13-34.

the broader political goal of separation of church and state which was at the foundation of the newly formed American republic fostered the development of pluralistic Protestantism.

The roller coaster ride that was Southern evangelicalism during the early nineteenth century saw periods of intense religious concern ebb and flow with periods of general religious indifference. These periods of indifference often were the spark which ignited resurgence in spiritual revivals. The first of these revival periods, sometimes referred to in history as the Great Revival, came in the South between 1800 and 1810 and came out of a perceived lack of religious piety and moral fiber following the Revolutionary period.

Edgefield evangelical development falls squarely into this trend. A major religious revival, chiefly among the Baptists, took place in 1809 under the spiritual guidance of Reverends Samuel Marsh and John Landrum. The church history included in the minutes of the church states “in which time a Great and Glorious revival of religion took place in this church. It was the greatest revival we have known. There were about three hundred members added to this church,” and one particular protracted meeting in September of that same year saw “44 members received by experience and a backslider restored.”¹⁰⁴

Though Methodism in Edgefield at this time was just becoming established, many of their modes of operation were influential on the overall religious culture of early Edgefield. The circuit system of local “societies” fostered a revivalist spirit which

¹⁰⁴ Horn’s Creek Baptist Church Minutes, 1768, 1824-1860—“Early History of the Church, Written by William Robertson, May 11, 1824”, TGL.

enabled the preachers of the Methodist circuits to reach the greatest number of people at one time. This revival-type worship quickly developed into the camp meeting, and these very public, often cross-denominational religious meetings were an emotional time for believers and non-believers alike. The power of these public spiritual gatherings was quickly recognized, and Baptist churches did not hesitate to borrow from the Methodist example and hold meetings of their own. In this way, Methodism directly influenced Baptist faith, and increased the overall prominence of evangelical revivalism in Edgefield, playing a particularly important role in this early revival of evangelical religion known as the Great Revival.

Following this revival period, however, was another period of religious apathy in which conversions were infrequent and a perceived licentiousness was more prevalent. Edgefield's role in the expansion of Protestant evangelicalism in South Carolina becomes predominant immediately following this period. A major revival in Edgefield in the 1820s saw the conversion of hundreds of souls to the Protestant faith as well as the emergence of a viable clerical leadership.

This revival grew out of a concern for the decade before that saw a decline in religious activity and spiritual contemplation. With Protestant evangelicalism, in the form of Baptists and Methodists, having held a firm presence in the area for over a generation, the scene was set for a more conspicuous assertion of the values and principles of the evangelical ethic. The leader of this revival proved to be one of the most enduring and influential figures in Southern evangelical religious history—Baptist minister Basil Manly Sr.—who began his career of service to God in Edgefield County,

first with a summer ministry in 1821 and then as head of his own congregation beginning in 1822 after graduation from South Carolina College.¹⁰⁵

In one sense, Edgefield seemed a highly unlikely place for a fledgling Protestant preacher to seek a foothold to success. It was incredibly rural and isolated, and the county seat, Edgefield Courthouse, was nothing more than thirty or forty houses and a populace of less than three hundred. Furthermore, even at this early stage in its history, the region was infamous for its violence as well as the “fierce independent spirit of its patriarchal planters and farmers.”¹⁰⁶

At the same time, however, Edgefield in the first two decades of the nineteenth century was undergoing a transition toward refinement economically, culturally, and hereafter religiously. In short, Edgefield proved ripe for a religious revival that would capitalize on the emotion of such a transitional time as well as the desire to continue to expand a sense of community and modernity befitting an established region.

The prevalence that the Baptists had established during the Great Revival enabled Basil Manly to assume the lead role in this latest Protestant evangelical revival. He encountered success almost immediately as the number of conversions he administered rose steadily from his first summer in Edgefield until the time he left for a larger congregation in Charleston in 1826. One key ingredient in the success of this revival in Edgefield was the “community spirit” that existed in Edgefield, specifically between the different Protestant denominations. The Baptists were more firmly ensconced into the

¹⁰⁵ A. James Fuller, *Chaplain to the Confederacy: Basil Manly and Baptist Life in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 43-55; Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House*, 26.

¹⁰⁶ A. James Fuller, *Chaplain to the Confederacy*, 43.

religious fabric of Edgefield by 1820 in terms of overall membership and number of churches. However, Methodism, as related earlier, also exhibited considerable clout, especially with regard to revivalism in the county. Furthermore, because of the disconnected nature of the Methodist circuit system, and the relative isolation of various religious communities in Edgefield County, Methodist circuit riders often preached before largely Baptist congregations upon invitation, and there was an overall commingling of religious spirit during the period.¹⁰⁷

Capitalizing on this built-in community religious cooperation, Manly's youthful exuberance and passion fostered a general spirit of revival which persisted throughout the area during his tenure as minister at Little Stevens Creek Baptist and Edgefield Baptist Churches. The latter of which was actually a manifestation of the increased sense of religious revival in the county, being formed as a result of the expansion in Baptist membership in Edgefield Court House in 1823 under Manly's direction and pastoral stewardship.¹⁰⁸ His influence affected not only the development of the Baptist faith in Edgefield, but also the Methodists, who were becoming more settled in their establishment with the construction of several permanent meeting houses during the early

¹⁰⁷ Edgefield United Methodist Church Record, 1790-1860, TGL: Two specific instances of this cross-denominational attitude appear repeatedly in the church histories of Edgefield Methodist, both occurring during this period of overall expansion of evangelical faith in Edgefield. The first comes in January of 1824, when Rev. Stephen Olin preached to the newly formed Edgefield Baptist congregation, followed later that year by Mr. Bray, who preached to the same; Edgefield Baptist Church Records, 1823-1860—the church minutes document the preaching of both Stephen Olin and Mr. Bray in 1824.

¹⁰⁸ A. James Fuller, *Chaplain to the Confederacy*, 44-45.

part of the decade, including Edgefield Methodist in the village, as well as McKendree Methodist and Harmony Methodist outside of town.¹⁰⁹

Manly kept notes of his sermons given during his time in Edgefield, and many of these notes found their way into later sermons delivered in Charleston. These sermons often expanded upon themes first developed in Manly's early Edgefield ministries. Through these notes and sermons it becomes clear the impact of these early years of revival in Edgefield on Manly's world view and value system. He clearly recognized the compromise required of religion to the cultural mores of honor in Edgefield, as the following excerpts from his sermons suggest: In his sermon "Against Following the Multitude-On the dangers of associating with wicked men but also on necessity of this association, this interaction in society-well ordered. Every man is accountable for the influence he exerts." The sermon on the "character of true wisdom," Manly uses the language of honor to assert the idea that "I have fought a good fight. . .The war in Heaven extends to earth, good and evil, Christ and Satan-all men are engaged in it. . ." Manly says in another sermon "In contrast with the present accommodations of men, the mansions on high which are to receive them appear divinely glorious. This is in many respects a goodly earth-We can form an idea of pleasure from many of its advantages combined." He recognizes the conflict, even seems to struggle in his own mind in the following excerpt; "We are subject to both the good and evil influences which attach to

¹⁰⁹ Edgefield United Methodist Church Records, 1790-1860; Harmony Methodist Church Records, 1825-1860; McKendree Methodist Church Records, 1817-1860, TGL.

society. And if sometimes we rejoice to have a spiritual benefit imparted, we are liable at other times to partake of other men's sins."¹¹⁰

Even more important than the personal effects of these revivals on Manly are their effect on Edgefield County culture in general. Protestant evangelicalism spread like wildfire across the county and quickly spilled over county lines into other South Carolina districts and even into Georgia. Manly himself was invited to speak to the Georgia Baptist Convention in 1824 to spread the news of his revival in Edgefield and his personal as well as his congregation's conversion experiences. That a religious revival could erupt with such fervor and be maintained for an extended period of five years (1822-1826) illustrates how, by the 1820s the evangelical ethic at the forefront of these revivals had become mainstream in the cultural landscape of Edgefield. Further proof to this end comes with the founding of the Furman Academy (later Furman University), a Baptist theological institution, in Edgefield District in 1826,¹¹¹ as well as the aforementioned construction of permanent houses of worship for the several Methodist societies of Edgefield.

Manly, a young fledgling Baptist minister fresh out of college in 1821-22, epitomizes Southern evangelical leadership and its methods during this pivotal period of Protestant evangelical expansion. As Christine Heyrman noted "evangelical leaders

¹¹⁰ Basil Manly, Sr., Papers, 1826-1866; Manly Family Papers, 1829-1857: Most of the sermons in the Furman University collection are later copies and revised editions of earlier sermons developed during Manly's first pastor-ship in Edgefield. They are contained in the James B. Duke Library on the campus of Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina

¹¹¹ A. James Fuller, *Chaplain to the Confederacy*, 49-53; Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House*, 25.

knew that the youth held the power to shape the religious future of the South and its western country, regions where over half the white population was under the age of sixteen.”¹¹² The reliance upon emotional conversion as the linchpin of the evangelical ethos, the foundation upon which a converted person should base his life dedicated to God, naturally lent itself to utilize the exuberant passion of youth in leading religious revival. The overwhelming majority of the spiritual leaders among the evangelical ranks in the South were, as Donald Mathews said:

. . . self-confident, energetic, and ambitious young men who entered the ministry in the generation after the War of 1812. They thought of themselves as popular leaders of an expanding, self-conscious constituency through which they could exercise enormous influence. Theirs was almost a political vision, although they would have denied it, and the key to their power was “popularity.”¹¹³

Integral to this popularity was the religious revival that centered on the camp meeting. While consistent church attendance remained elusive, attendance at religious revivals and camp meetings, especially during the summer months in the South, was increasing exponentially every year, and many of these monthly meetings resulted in extended periods of overall religious revival. Edgefield was the site of just such religious revival on numerous occasions in the antebellum period following the Manly-led Edgefield Revival.

The next of these revival periods in Edgefield came just a few years later, beginning in 1831 and continuing more or less consistently throughout the first half of the decade. Again most prominent among the Baptists, this revival was reported in every

¹¹² Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 81.

¹¹³ Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 83.

Church record, and various numbers were reported for conversions and additions to church memberships. Edgefield Baptist appears at the center of this revival spirit, and the church minutes from August of 1831 go into extensive detail to recount the event.

Beginning on Tuesday of the second week of August that year, the reports are as follows:

“Preaching appointed at candlelight. At this service, there were some pleasing prospects of a revival—Christians began to pray in earnest for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹⁴

This is followed by reports on Wednesday that “The Lord began to show himself in a powerful manner. God’s people greatly encouraged and sinners began to look about. .

.Sinners began to tremble and cry mightily to God what they should do to be saved,”

followed on Thursday with “The spirit of the Lord was evidently seen and felt among the people, and some conversions spoke of.”¹¹⁵ The weekend saw the a true validation of

this spirit of revival, and the reports stated that on Saturday “Several conversions talked of at this service—all hearts gladdened and much prayer was sent up to God for a

continuation of his Holy Spirit upon us,” followed on Sunday with “The balance of this Holy day was spent in preaching, praying, and exhorting, and it was now most evident,

that God intended a mighty display of power among the people.”¹¹⁶

The pastor of Edgefield Baptist during this period was another pillar in the development of Baptist and evangelical faith in South Carolina and across the South, William B. Johnson. He spent twenty-two years in Edgefield beginning in 1830 and was

¹¹⁴ Edgefield Baptist Church Records, August 1831, Tuesday, TGL.

¹¹⁵ Edgefield Baptist Church Records, August 1831, Wednesday and Thursday, TGL.

¹¹⁶ Edgefield Baptist Church Records, August 1831, Saturday and Sunday, TGL.

at the helm of numerous revival periods, none more influential than this one in the early 1830s. In his reminiscences, Johnson refers to this revival:

In August of the same year [1831] it pleased our Heavenly Father to grant us a spiritual revival, accompanied with the addition of many redeemed souls to the church. I have been present at many such meetings, but none, that I have ever attended, were [sic] equal to this. . . ¹¹⁷

Little Steven's Creek Baptist reported similar revival in spirit drawing upon these events at Edgefield Baptist. In 1833, a six days protracted meeting is reported to have seen the conversion of "several received by experience for Baptism." The following year, again the August monthly meeting was protracted for four days and "several men and women came forward and united themselves to the Church by experience."¹¹⁸

Horn's Creek Baptist reported similar revival experiences growing out of those at Edgefield Baptist, and the August 1831 meeting saw 13 conversions and 14 baptisms. The next year's August meeting was protracted for four days, and 13 more conversion experiences were related to the church, and another such protracted meeting received similar numbers of conversions two years later, in 1834.¹¹⁹

In total, the revival spirit begun at Edgefield Baptist under Johnson spread across the Edgefield County, and in total, reports stated that "twenty-eight persons had been brought to the knowledge of the truth, eight were baptized, and it was supposed that not

¹¹⁷ Hortense C. Woodson, *The Life of William B. Johnson* (Springfield, Missouri: Particular Baptist Press, 2005 ed.), 73-74.

¹¹⁸ Little Steven's Creek Baptist Church Records, August 1833; August 1834; July/August 1839, TGL.

¹¹⁹ Horn's Creek Baptist Church Records, August 1831; August 1832; August 1834, TGL.

fewer than five hundred souls had received deep awakenings.”¹²⁰ Commenting on the effect of this revival period on the community, Johnson said the revival “came upon the inhabitants like the mighty shock of an earthquake, overturning the foundations of skepticism and self-wrought schemes of salvation, and convincing every one that there was a power and reality in the religion of Jesus Christ.”¹²¹ The way in which this revival was viewed as a community experience illustrates the extent to which this type of evangelical revivalism had become imbedded into the religious culture and community of Edgefield, and the strong language with which it was reported only tended to strengthen and foster this sense of community religious experience.

Similar, though less fervent religious revivals occurred among the Baptists over the proceeding twenty years, the first beginning in 1838-39, with Edgefield Baptist again leading the way and Little Steven’s Creek quickly following suit. Reports from Edgefield Baptist from August and September of 1838 relate protracted meetings of four and twelve days, respectively, with nearly forty total conversions and baptisms. The public nature of these events and the role of the community at large is reflected in the following excerpt from the September report, “. . . here is recorded public thanks of the church to Almighty God, for this special outpouring of his spirit upon the church and the inhabitants of this place.”¹²² Little Steven’s Creek Baptist reported thirty-four

¹²⁰ Hortense C. Woodson, *The Life of William B. Johnson*, 74.

¹²¹ Hortense C. Woodson, *The Life of William B. Johnson*, 77.

¹²² Edgefield Baptist Church Records, August/September, 1838, TGL.

conversions and baptisms a year later at a camp meeting at which Edgefield pastor William B. Johnson was one of the leading invited preachers.¹²³

Again between 1841 and 1843, both Edgefield and Little Steven's Creek Baptist reported protracted meetings and a revival of spirit in which "the church was greatly refreshed by the Lord. . .The word of God was faithfully preached to the people, many were deeply affected and some were brought to rejoice with salvation of God."¹²⁴ Steven's Creek reported "Our Heavenly Father was pleased to pour out his blessing upon us, and revive our drooping spirits." In total, the reports by the *Advertiser* estimated fifty conversions and baptisms, as well as announced similar meetings at Antioch Baptist and Dry Creek Baptist, as well as plans for one at Edgefield Baptist¹²⁵

The Methodists were also experiencing a revival of similar proportions in the early 1840s, and again the public nature of these revivals can be seen in an article which appeared in the *Edgefield Advertiser* in 1841 that stated:

It has come to our attention that several very interesting revivals have been and are still going on in various parts of our district. A very interesting meeting at Mt. Vernon by the Methodist denomination closed last week, where we understand about forty joined the Church.¹²⁶

Throughout the 1840s, several announcements and reports of various revivals in both the Methodist and Baptist denominations appeared in the pages of the *Advertiser*. A report in

¹²³ Little Steven's Creek Baptist Church Records, July/August, 1839, TGL.

¹²⁴ Edgefield Baptist Church Records, September 1842; August 1843, TGL.

¹²⁵ Little Steven's Creek Baptist Church Records, August 1843, TGL; *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 26, 1841; September 28, 1842, Edgefield County Archives (ECA.)

¹²⁶ "Protracted Meetings," *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 26, 1841, ECA.

1841 from the Edgefield Baptist Association Meeting revealed that the Baptist faith had in the county “twenty ordained and eight licensed preachers, and about five thousand communicants. Four hundred and thirty nine were added to the churches during the present year by Baptism.”¹²⁷

A letter received in this village from the Mount Vernon Camp Meeting states that there had been a considerable revival, and that many souls had been happily converted, about forty of which had been already added to the M.E. Church. The meeting was very large, and still in progress, on Monday evening last.¹²⁸

This meeting was followed the next year by another protracted meeting in the Methodist Church, lasting five days toward the end of May and beginning of June, and a camp meeting announced in the *Advertiser* in July scheduled for August, which also incorporated the third Quarterly Conference for the year. Again in 1847, the *Advertiser* announced a Methodist Camp Meeting for August of that year to be held at Mount Vernon Camp Ground, followed with another announcement the following year of a protracted meeting at the village Methodist Church to last three days in late June and early July.¹²⁹

In the early 1850s the *Advertiser* reported in its April and June issues on the state of religion in the county, citing statistics involving the various denominations that made

¹²⁷ “Religious Intelligence,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 27, 1843, ECA.

¹²⁸ “Revival,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 14, 1844, ECA.

¹²⁹ “Religious Notice,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, May 28, 1845; “Camp Meeting,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, July 30, 1845; “Camp Meeting,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 11, 1847; Religious Notice,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 21, 1848, ECA.

up the religious spectrum in Edgefield. The April report stated that there were thirty-one Baptist churches,

. . .nearly all of which have large congregations, the general deportment of which, is altogether praiseworthy and such as becomes a Christian people. . .and twenty three Methodist Churches, and though their congregations are not at all times very large, yet it is exceedingly pleasant to any one to see the happy greetings and good feeling that prevail amongst them. . .¹³⁰

The report in June again comments on the state of religion, focusing on new construction projects among various denominations and congregations. “It is with real satisfaction that we notice a great improvement, of late, in our houses of worship throughout the country.” Specifically mentioned in the article are Baptist meeting houses at Rocky Creek, Stephen’s Creek, Antioch, and Dry Creek as well as well as improvements to the chapel of the Methodist church in Edgefield. “We conclude by saying, that we hope to see the day, when men shall think that it does not, at least, interfere with undefiled religion, to increase the beauty of our sanctuaries, within the bounds of propriety and simplicity.”¹³¹

The first half of the decade of the 1850s saw another revival among the Baptists in Edgefield, with Horn’s Creek, Little Steven’s Creek Baptist reporting general revivals in spirit and an increased number of conversion experiences and baptisms.¹³² Edgefield Baptist, unlike the two earlier revival periods, was not at the forefront of this revival, and remained relatively static until a later revival in April of 1855, which the *Advertiser*

¹³⁰ “Letter to the Editor,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 3, 1851, ECA.

¹³¹ “Our Country Churches,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 19, 1851, ECA.

¹³² “Revival of Religion,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 29, 1852, ECA.

reported produced fifty-one whites received into the church. The paper goes on to state that “Our village has not known a period of such intense religious excitement since 1831. . .”¹³³ Little Steven’s Creek Baptist also proved a fertile ground for religious revival during this period, as a sixteen day protracted meeting in August of 1850 was reported “This meeting protracted for 16 days and Our Heavenly Father was pleased to visit us by an outpouring of his Holy Spirit.”¹³⁴ Over the following seven years religious revival was a consistent presence in the minutes of Little Steven’s Creek, with every August meeting during this span protracted between six to seventeen days. The total church membership during this period increased from two hundred-fifty in 1850 to four hundred-sixty-three in 1857, with a remark that “The Lord was pleased in his goodness to greatly revive us by the influence of his blessed spirit. . .”¹³⁵

Horn’s Creek Baptist, drawing upon the events at Little Steven’s Creek, reported revivals every summer between 1852 and 1855, and nearly fifty additions to the church membership through conversion experience and baptism.¹³⁶

The revival spirit in the 1850s was certainly not limited to the Baptist denomination, as a multitude of religious revivals within the Methodist faith in Edgefield were reported throughout the decade in the pages of the *Advertiser*. The majority of these

¹³³ “Religious Revival,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 18, 1855; “The Late Revival,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 25, 1855, ECA.

¹³⁴ Little Steven’s Creek Baptist Church Records, August 1850, TGL.

¹³⁵ Little Steven’s Creek Baptist Church Records, August 1850-August 1857, TGL.

¹³⁶ Horn’s Creek Baptist Church Records, September 1852-August 1855, TGL; “Protracted Meeting,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 1, 1855; “Revivals,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 29, 1855, ECA.

occurred at spring and summer camp meetings at both Mount Vernon Camp Ground and Bethlehem Camp Ground, both prominent Methodist camp meeting locations in the county. Some of the more notable of these numerous revivals took place in September of 1856 and 1857, October of 1858 and September of 1859. All of these drew large, passionate crowds and produced large numbers of conversion experiences and increased church membership.¹³⁷

In a report in September of 1855, the *Advertiser* states that the nearly six hundred conversions in the past year were due to:

. . . large accession (nearly a hundred) to the Baptist church at this place. Many additions have been made also to the Methodist Church. These denominations preponderate in Edgefield. Indeed there are very few, of other sects, within our limits. . . may be said to have swept the district.¹³⁸

What lies behind all of these revival periods are broader truths about Edgefield evangelicalism and the connection to the overall community in Edgefield. These revivals were a very public outpouring of religious fervor, and were instrumental in placing the evangelical faith at the forefront of community life in Edgefield. One thing becomes certain in analyzing this revival spirit; the evangelical revival had become the dominant means of fostering religious spirituality in Edgefield by 1820 and continued to grow and expand throughout the antebellum period.

¹³⁷ *Edgefield Advertiser*: “Camp Meeting,” September 19, 1855; “Camp Meeting,” July 16, 1856; “Camp Meeting,” August 20, 1856; “Camp Meeting and Association,” September 17, 1856; “Camp Meeting,” August 5, 1857; “Revival in the Methodist Church,” September 9, 1857; “Camp Meeting at Mount Vernon,” August 4, 1858; “Camp Meeting,” September 15, 1858; “Methodist Revival,” October 27, 1858; “Religious Meetings,” August 10, 1859; “Religious News,” September 21, 1859, ECA.

¹³⁸ “State of the Churches,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 19, 1855, ECA.

The period between 1820 and 1860 saw Protestant evangelicalism position itself as a mainstay in the sectional identity of the South as a whole. As John B. Boles noted;

Studying southern evangelical religion fairly and with all the sensitivity one can muster provides a unique window through which to observe antebellum southern culture with its nuances, subtleties, and apparent contradictions.¹³⁹

From 1831 through the early 1840s, a resurgent spirit of religious revivalism became widespread among both Baptist and Methodist denominations across Edgefield County and the South in general. That these revivals occurred at the same time that perceived threats to the “southern way of life” were being launched from the north highlights the increased political awareness and attachment of the evangelical leadership and their message. According to Anne C. Loveland, “One of the functions of the pulpit was to be ‘the means of instructing Christians in the Christianity of their political relations.’”¹⁴⁰ This was necessitated by the growing sectional crisis in the country during the latter half of the 1830s through the outbreak of Civil War. Just as the culture of honor was indelibly tied to this sectional identity, so too was evangelical religion. Evangelicalism had become just as dominant a social force as the code of honor, and was just as threatened by the outside force of abolition.

The Southern evangelical leadership saw the political role of the church as a “voluntary establishment” which essentially meant that though the church itself was not a recognized part of the civil governmental structure, the Protestant evangelical ethos and the principles and values associated therein was the backbone of this civil authority.

¹³⁹ John B. Boles, “Evangelical Protestantism in the Old South,” 34.

¹⁴⁰ Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals*, 108.

Ministers were encouraged to speak out on political issues that involved religious and moral principles. Protestant evangelical ministers saw it was their Christian duty to shepherd their flock with regard to political questions and concerns of the day. This increased political role of the evangelical minister reflected how firmly established the evangelical ethic had become in Edgefield and Southern culture, as well as the importance of the public community in this ethic. The growing sectionalism served as a uniting force between the ethics of honor and evangelicalism for it perpetuated a heightened emotionalism which allowed for each cultural ethic to draw upon the other.¹⁴¹ Both ethics and their development in Edgefield County have been delineated—the remainder of this work will focus on the nature of the cultural exchange between the two; specifically, why evangelical revival and honor and violence in Edgefield seem wedded to one another, and what aspects of sectionalism enhanced this cultural matrimony.

¹⁴¹ Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals*, 108-112; Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1-19.

CHAPTER 3

THE RHYTHM OF OLD EDGEFIELD

*When you have caught the rhythm of Old Edgefield you will discover that here, God and the Devil are often one and the same.*¹⁴²

The strictures of honor and the scriptures of evangelicalism at a glance appear as mutually exclusive—the one a direct refusal to accept the other. The ethic of Southern honor placed emphasis upon garnering public respect and reputation through conspicuous exhibitions of courage, bravery, and fortitude. These displays of honor most often involved defending affronts through violent and possibly fatal means. There was a certain passion required of the combatants, to be willing to face the fire in the name of honor and reputation, but also a requirement of gentlemanly restraint to know when that honor was secured. Also required was a public acceptance—even expectance—of men to defend themselves against affronts to their honor. Southern honor was a two way street along the very public thoroughfare that was reputation and its refined emphasis on gentility.¹⁴³

Evangelicalism and its ethical principles of “sober-mindedness” and Godly restraint seem a direct affront to this sense of honor. The very actions heralded under the ethic of honor were those shunned under this evangelical ideal: violence, conspicuous

¹⁴² Tricia Price Glen is an Edgefield native in every sense but her place of birth. Ms. Glen has for some time been the head archivist for Edgefield County. She exhibits a love for her adopted home and a passion for its history, and her duties as archivist have allowed her an intimate understanding therein. She often writes articles chronicling “This Day in Edgefield History” for the *Edgefield Advertiser*, one of which is the source of this quoted appraisal of Edgefield history and culture, Edgefield County Archives(ECA).

¹⁴³ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 88, 350-360.

display, and courage under fire were thought of as displays of “worldly honor” not spiritual piety. The dichotomy between the two seems such that neither could ever coexist, much less influence and encourage one another. The relationship between each ethic, already shown to be firmly entrenched in the cultural climate of Edgefield County, South Carolina, will be re-evaluated, and it will be shown that not only did these two ethics commonly associated with Southern culture not exclude one another, but actually fostered entrenchment of both into the social fabric of the early republic and antebellum South.

The dynamic interaction of these two prominent Southern cultural ethics in Edgefield County illuminates the complex relationship of honor and evangelical revivalism. Developing simultaneously in Edgefield in the latter decades of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, the two ethical standards met frequently at a crossroads. At that crossroads are met the dynamics of public accountability, emotional fervency, and the respectability inherent in each ethic. The result is that Edgefield experienced periods of increased violence on the court docket during the same periods in which revivals of religious spirit were capturing the county, the initial trend becoming an established pattern by 1860.

There are numerous accounts of sermons denouncing the culture of violence and honor prevalent in Edgefield, some of which even predate the founding of Edgefield District itself. So far as is known, these sermons came predominantly from one denomination—the oldest religious denomination in South Carolina and traditional

religious home of the white elite—the Episcopalians.¹⁴⁴ It is most interesting that priests of the very established, hierarchical religion which the evangelicals were breaking away from were the first to denounce the violent nature of Edgefield and its early inhabitants. This fact is indicative of an underlying trend within the ethic of Southern honor itself that saw prominent members of southern society, who subscribed at least in principle and often in action to the ethic, publicly denounce its negative social effects and violent methods. That the church evangelicals most associated with this secular honor code were prevalent among its detractors belies a cultural compromise already well intact in southern society before the true rise of evangelical revivalism. A precedent was already in place to bridge the apparent ethical gap.¹⁴⁵

Among the more notable Episcopal clergy to forward views against honor and violence was a prominent member of Edgefield society, Reverend Arthur Wigfall, who preached a powerful sermon in 1856. The *Edgefield Advertiser* reports the sermon as a “striking production, and should be disseminated among Christians everywhere.”¹⁴⁶ The *Advertiser* commends Wigfall for taking the high ground and states that the church should “crush out this crying evil.” Furthermore, it was reported that the Church in Grahamville, S.C. where Wigfall first preached this sermon, formed an association for the suppression of dueling, and the article included in that churches’ constitution requiring

¹⁴⁴ Mason Locke Weems, *Revenge Against Murder, or The Drowned Wife* (Philadelphia: Printed for the author, 1816); *The Devil in Petticoats, or God’s Revenge Against Husband Killing* (Edgefield, S.C.: Advertiser Print—Bacon & Adams, 1878); Lewis Leary, *The Book-Peddling Parson* (New York: Algonquin Books, 1984 ed.).

¹⁴⁵ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 351-360.

¹⁴⁶ “Rev. Arthur Wigfall on Dueling,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, December 17, 1856, ECA.

legal action to be brought against persons involved in duels, especially members of the church. This very strong and public act on the part of the Episcopal Church, prompted by a leading citizen of Edgefield, is reflective of similar sentiments in Mason Locke Weems' early sermons against murder and dueling which were based in Edgefield. That these sentiments came from the Episcopal faith and not from among the Evangelical Baptists and Methodists is indicative of the shifting religious power structure in Edgefield toward the evangelical faiths as well as toward a more public and passionate experience of faith found in the revival. The Episcopal faith was by and large on the outside looking in Edgefield by the 1820s and beyond, having lost the cultural clout it once enjoyed to the evangelical denominations.

The Baptists and Methodists were not excluded from taking such stands against acts of violence and even laying down church laws to prevent duels and other acts of violence. Little Steven's Creek took up the issue of dueling as early as 1826 as a potential problem in the church, but did not put down any official church laws regarding the issue. Edgefield Baptist, however, on a recommendation from Little Steven's Creek, did adopt a church law of discipline regarding dueling that read: "we as a church will not support any individual in his election to any office, who may after be concerned in any manner in fighting a duel."¹⁴⁷ State legislatures enacted similar laws against dueling across the South, which were accompanied by a similar laxity of enforcement. As Edward L. Ayers stated, "Southern judges and juries apparently wielded the power of the

¹⁴⁷ Edgefield Baptist Church Records, December 1826; Little Steven's Creek Church Records, Tompkins Genealogical Library (information from this location will hereafter be denoted TGL).

state with great care—not merely because honor caused them to hold law in contempt, but also because their political ideology made them wary of the state’s power, whatever form it took.”¹⁴⁸ Whether wrought from the church pulpit or the legislative chamber, the law proved more powerful in word than in execution.

There were no cases in the Edgefield church records between 1826 and 1860 involving duels, and only a handful of cases involving fighting or rioting. Little Steven’s Creek Baptist and Horn’s Creek Baptist church records show similar enforcement of church laws regarding dueling, fighting, and rioting. The case of Edward S. Mays of Horn’s Creek Baptist Church, already cited previously, exemplifies this trend. Mays was “disciplined for fighting, confessed his wrong and received rebuke” in June of 1839 but just two months later was “among delegates elected by the church to attend the Baptist Association Meeting.”¹⁴⁹ This case and others like it are reflective of the relative laxity of the issue in the church and overall Edgefield community.

The state records indicate no harsher punishment regarding the law and dueling. Between 1785 and 1860 in the Edgefield Courthouse, there are no criminal cases that carry the specific charge of dueling, and only two cases of sending a challenge. Both of

¹⁴⁸ Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th-Century American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 32.

¹⁴⁹ Horn’s Creek Baptist Church Minutes, February 1825; July 1828; June 1839; September 1839; February 1840; November 1840; June 1859; Little Steven’s Creek Baptist Church Records; Edgefield Baptist Church Records, TGL.

these were reduced to charges of assault and battery, which was punishable by nominal fine rather than the capital punishment required of conviction of dueling.¹⁵⁰

These actions taken by the county court as well as the most prominent churches in Edgefield imply broader, more complex connections between the ethic of honor and evangelical revivalist spirit in Edgefield County. The Baptist and Methodist leadership recognized the reliance of their congregations' strength and membership upon the passionate, emotional conversion experience—an experience which drew upon certain conceptions of passion and emotion in which the Edgefield populace was well versed in its other form—honor.

The language employed by the evangelicals mirrored that of the ethic of honor so prevalent in Edgefield and the South in general. Evangelical clergy borrowed heavily from the language of honor, especially during times of revival for two important reasons: the first being that honor was a concept understood at all levels of Southern society, from the lowliest depths to the highest heights of white society, and the second being two-fold in that on the one hand the language of honor was inherently emotional in its nature, but at the same time could be reconciled with evangelical notions of discretion and reserve. The duality of language and its grassroots understanding among society enabled the two dominant cultural ethics of Edgefield to coexist and promote one another. It should come as no surprise then that the public perceived this language not as oppositional but as part of the same principle of success—why a man killed in a duel could still be eulogized publicly as pious and bound for Heaven—and likewise how evangelical clergy were

¹⁵⁰ Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Minutes of the General Sessions Court, 1785-1830, ECA.

readily comprehended when they spoke of the Christian battle for purity of heart against evil for the glory of God.

The *Edgefield Advertiser* exhibits this duality on several occasions during the antebellum period in various causes and situations, from intemperance (commonly associated with the lower forms of the code of honor) to the experience of revivals themselves. Language such as “Virtue no more shall stoop to own thy sway; To death, or victory, we’ll lead the way, And proud to fall, if virtue’s cause demand, To pay the tribute that we owe to man.”¹⁵¹ A similar vein can be seen nearly ten years later, as two articles side by side in the *Advertiser* illustrate the duality of the public mind of Edgefield. The first is an advertisement for a three day camp meeting at the Methodist church while the second urges the wider Edgefield community to embrace “the survivors of that gallant band, who has represented ‘Old Edgefield’ upon the bloody plains of Mexico. . . They come back to us covered with the smoke and dust of battle, and the ‘conquerors of a peace.’”¹⁵² There is no perceived dichotomy in the parallel printing of a religious meeting with gallantry on the field of battle—and the honor of the community is upheld simultaneously in both.

The importance of public perception in the religious realm again becomes apparent in the pages of *Advertiser* in June of 1851 when the editor commented on the

¹⁵¹ “Temperance,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 23, 1838, ECA: This quote comes from part of a series run in the *Advertiser* during August of 1838 denouncing intemperance and its effects upon not only the Christian mind but the overall strength of the community. The series was predominantly forwarded by leading Baptist and Methodist clergy in Edgefield.

¹⁵² “Religious Notice,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 21, 1848; “Honor to Heroic Conduct,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 21, 1848, ECA.

appearance of the community's houses of worship—citing the marked improvement in many, most notably in the Baptist and Methodist faiths. The improvement is cited as the “duty of honoring God with appropriate tabernacles for the observance of His religion, as their improving Chapels throughout the district testify.” The editor then states “True, the Almighty will hear a prayer breathed in a forest as readily as one that goes up from the most magnificent cathedral. But, He may, nevertheless, be well pleased with that pious solicitude of his people, which seeks to advance the externals of his religion to greater respectability, *that good may come of it.*”¹⁵³ Perhaps the most poignant article included in the pages of the *Advertiser* to illustrate the duality of language in Edgefield comes in the editor's analysis of the effects of one particular revival on the individual mind and community of Edgefield. In recounting the virtues of the leader of this revival, the editor proclaims him akin to:

the glorious martyrs who have died for the faith. . .and, in his Christian warfare, he almost sees before him the embattled hosts of Satan standing in martial array ready to strike down and trample in the dust, the consecrated Cross of Christ—the watchword and the banner of every true Christian warrior. At these moments, his pride, his courage, his enthusiasm, and all his noble sentiments are raised to the highest temper, such as nerved the heroes of old, arming for battle.¹⁵⁴

The editor then proclaims the purpose and power of the revival on the community at large:

Nothing is, or could be, more appropriate than these occasional encampments. Sinner as we are, we almost fancied ourselves in the camp of war, and preparing mind, and body, and soul, at the sound of the Great Leader's voice, to march into the dreadful

¹⁵³ “Our Country Churches,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 19, 1851, ECA.

¹⁵⁴ “Revival,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 17, 1854, ECA.

conflict. These camp meetings have a tendency not only to remind the Christian, Methodist and Baptist, of the great warfare in which they are engaged, but it recalls to them the hard struggles of the early founders of their sects, Wesley, Whitfield, Calvin, Knox, Luther and others. . .¹⁵⁵

Other instances of the language of honor employed in religion can be observed, one in 1859 stating that “Rev. John R. Pickett, of the Methodist Church, has also been wielding the sword of the spirit with zeal and energy, and we understand that many have been added to the roll of his circuit.”¹⁵⁶ Another comes amidst the heightened excitement of secession in 1860, harkening back to the Revolution of 1776, calling upon God to sustain “They who take the sword. . .” even as they “shall perish by the Sword.” This image of good versus evil and the impending battle thereof struck a common chord within the Edgefield community, as it upheld ethical notions common across the community, drawn both from the code of honor and the evangelical ethic. The battle—figurative and literal—would reveal true honor and glory, in the name of God and community.¹⁵⁷

The fluctuation between religious fervor and apathy that characterized evangelical revival in Edgefield and across the South during the early nineteenth century illustrates another correlation between the ethics of honor and evangelicalism—but not in the way customarily assumed by historians. Most historical narratives have tended to assume that the periods of religious apathy that so concerned evangelicals and often led them to push

¹⁵⁵ “Revival,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 17, 1854, ECA.

¹⁵⁶ “Religious Progress,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 22, 1859, ECA.

¹⁵⁷ “Revolutionary Sermon,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, February 22, 1860, ECA.

for revival were periods in which the older customs of honor and violence held sway. Often, however, these concerns on the part of the evangelical clergy and congregations were based more upon church attendance records than a perceived return to old habits. Religious fervency in the form of revivals tended to parallel and even instigate increased crimes of passion and public posturing. Thus, a lamentation in the pages of the *Edgefield Advertiser* stating “The worst of it with our people seems to be that they won’t stay converted”¹⁵⁸ is not a comment on the personal behavior of evangelicals but on the ebb and flow of regular church attendance figures.

Of the five major religious revivals in Edgefield analyzed extensively in the previous chapter, four prove extremely pertinent when viewed in comparison with how they correlate to the ethic of honor: the revival periods of the mid-1820s, early 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s all hold one theme in common—they extended beyond denominational lines and became truly community-wide religious revivals. These revivals created an emotional stir across the broader society in Edgefield and were experienced equally within both the Baptist and Methodist sects. These high tides of religious revival also highlight the most violent periods on record in Edgefield County. When not directly coinciding with religious revivals, these periods of increased violence followed closely on the heels of revival fervor.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ “Revivals,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, November 2, 1854, ECA.

¹⁵⁹ Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Minutes of the General Sessions Court, 1785-1860, ECA; Horn’s Creek Baptist Church Records, 1768, 1824-1860; Little Steven’s Creek Baptist Church Records, 1789, 1833-1860; Edgefield Baptist Church Records, 1823-1860; Edgefield United Methodist Church Records, 1790-1860; Harmony Methodist Church Records, 1825-1860; McKendree Methodist Church Records, 1817-1860, TGL.

The first revival period in Edgefield—that which took place between 1809 and 1812 was a milestone in the county because it provided the cornerstone for the evangelical religious expansion that followed. The result of the Second Great Awakening, or the Great Revival as it is often called in the South, this revival laid the foundation, in method and spirit, for the reliance of evangelicals on the revival as the primary form of gaining converts and spreading the gospel in Edgefield. When compared to later revivals, however, this period appears rather tame—as the heightened level of emotion and passion that came to define later evangelical revivals was largely absent. Still somewhat at odds with the declining but pervasive Episcopal Church, the method employed during this early revival lacked the sense of social stability and confidence that fortified later Edgefield revivals.¹⁶⁰

The first Edgefield revival to truly represent what came to be seen as the evangelical mode in all its emotional fervor took place during the mid-1820s under Baptist Reverend Basil Manly. This revival meant more to the Edgefield community than its religious impact discussed in the previous chapter. This revival and its leader created in Edgefield the sense of emotion and passion described in the earlier article excerpted from the editor of the *Advertiser*. Manly began his ministry in Edgefield in the summer of 1822 and remained the Baptist pastor at Little Steven’s Creek, and then Edgefield Baptist, until 1826. During this period, a revival which had religious impact far beyond the borders of Edgefield County took place, providing a blueprint for the

¹⁶⁰ Horn’s Creek Baptist Church Minutes, “Early History of the Church” May 1824, TGL.

establishment and advance of evangelical religion in a newly developed area. Manly's methods and the overall religious fervor spread across the state and into others, as it set off a chain reaction of revival in Georgia as well.¹⁶¹

Manly himself is indicative of the crossroads and duality between the ethic of honor and evangelicalism in Edgefield. He came to Edgefield, his first ministerial stop, straight from the halls of South Carolina College. In his final year at the college, Manly defended his honor when it was threatened by a jealous rival during graduation ceremonies. Manly's brother Charles later recounted the event, saying he "flew upon him like a raging tiger, seizing him by the throat with both hands, bore him to the ground, throwing himself heavily upon his body where the fellow could neither kick nor holler."¹⁶² The witnessing assemblage, following the breakup of the combatants, cheered Manly wildly, throwing up their hats and exclaiming that it was "the best fight they had ever seen a Baptist preacher make." Perhaps it was this personal history which led Manly to choose a ministry in Edgefield, South Carolina as his first, rejecting other seemingly more lucrative offers. The district was already infamous as a hotbed of fierce independence, violence, and general riotousness. Perhaps Manly understood this duality present in Edgefield because he himself had lived with this duality of ethics throughout

¹⁶¹ A. James Fuller, *Chaplain to the Confederacy: Basil Manly and Baptist Life in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 7, 43-55.

¹⁶² A. James Fuller, *Chaplain to the Confederacy*, 26-27.

his life, and had found a way to not only reconcile, but to utilize characteristics of each to the advantage of both.¹⁶³

It is important to note here that the development of these ethical characteristics were commonly moving toward greater refinement during this period. Honor as it was understood socially was getting away from its frontier forms and placing more emphasis on respectability and chivalry. This chivalry at once required manliness and sentimentality, which, as one historian has noted, “tended to soften honor’s rougher aspects.”¹⁶⁴

Evangelical revival also moved away from its frontier beginnings reliant upon outright emotional fervor toward a greater sense of emotional sentiment. The restraining mechanism inherent in this refinement did not remove honor’s penchant for violence or the revival’s reliance on emotional conversion experience—but the two were increasingly viewed as part of the same transition toward cultural refinement.¹⁶⁵

With Basil Manly as leader and the general nature of Edgefield during the period, it is not surprising that the same phenomenon which led Manly to defend his honor that day at the college at risk of jeopardizing his Baptist loyalties and credentials should play out in the Edgefield community at large during the revival period of the 1820s.

¹⁶³ A. James Fuller, *Chaplain to the Confederacy*, 27, 38, 43: For more on Manly complete life, Fuller’s *Chaplain to the Confederacy* is pivotal, as it is the only full length historical biography of this very influential man. Especially provocative is his treatment of Manly’s concept of honor and religion, some of which is drawn upon for the purposes of this work.

¹⁶⁴ Paul Christopher Anderson, *Blood Image: Turner Ashby in the Civil War and the Southern Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), xi-xvi.

¹⁶⁵ Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1993 ed.)

Beginning in 1822, Manly's first full year in Edgefield, and lasting through his tenure in the community, the average number of cases of violence heard in the Edgefield Courthouse was sixteen, while the number of murders during the six year span numbered ten. This compared to the previous decade in which there were but four cases of murder in ten years. Further evidence of the correlation between increased religious fervor and heightened public passion can be observed in how closely these acts of violence occurred to one another. The four cases of murder during the decade preceding the revival were dispersed, isolated events. However, during the revival period, the murders occurred rapidly in succession, with the three year period between 1825 and 1827, the height of the revival, witnessing seven of the ten murder cases.¹⁶⁶

This revival over the next forty years proved a precedent and not a pariah. The general social trends expounded here proved pervasive as well, not reliant upon the leadership of Basil Manly, who left Edgefield for Charleston in 1826. The first two and last two years of the decade of the 1830s saw a small, but equally eventful religious revival that again spilled over into the broader community. Without murder cases in the years between 1827 and 1829, 1830 and 1831 saw two in succession, correlating directly to the increased emotion of the revival period. The middle years of the decade see sporadic cases of murder, but again corresponding to religious revival in 1838-1839, two more cases in succession occur. Though this decade illustrates the same general trends, the church records from this period do not ring with the emotional reports that

¹⁶⁶ Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Minutes of the General Sessions Court, 1815-1827, ECA.

characterized Manly's revival, and as a result of this weakened fervor, public passion, though still affected, is not as profoundly impacted.

The following two decades, however, quell any doubt as to the effect that religious revival had on the public mind with regard to public crimes of passion. Both the 1840s and 1850s were characterized by three prevailing cultural tides—continuous evangelical revival, dramatic increase in cases of violence and crimes of passion, and an increasing sense of a distinct Southern sectional identity—all of which occurred in the very large public eye of the Edgefield community.

Between 1840 and 1849, the Edgefield General Sessions Court heard eleven cases of murder, and the entire decade saw the kind of frequent crimes of passion that have thus far been shown to have correlated to times of religious revival in the county. In addition, the court heard, on average, fourteen cases of violence per year during the decade. The following decade illustrates more of the same, as the years between 1850 and 1860 saw fifteen cases of murder reach the court docket, as well as an average of fourteen cases of violence, again exhibiting the general trend of a string of violence parallel to periods of increased religious fervor. Taken together with the religious revivals during these decades denoted in the previous chapter, there again appears a definitive pattern linking the increased emotional fervor brought on by religious revival to increased crimes of passion and general violence.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Minutes of the General Sessions Court, 1840-49, 1850-1860, ECA.

To place these statistics into some context, all one needs do is examine the court records for years that do not coincide with religious revival. These years are decidedly less violent across the board, with the average number of cases of violence nearly cut in half, and cases of murder a distinct rarity. When occurring, murder cases do not appear in a recognizable string of increased frequency, but are rather singular events. The years between the early religious revivals reinforce this point, as the late 1820s, mid-1830s, and even a few isolated years between religious surges during the 1840s and 1850s show a drastic decrease in cases of violence and few murders.¹⁶⁸

The truly telling aspect of the violent cases of the 1840s and 1850s with regard to the connection between honor and revival is that these are some of the most publicly famous, and infamous, murders in the Edgefield tradition. These are murders that were indicative of that “spirit of Edgefield” analyzed in the first chapter of this work. That they occurred at precisely the same periods as some of Edgefield’s most influential religious revivals is more than coincidence. But the actions themselves are only half of the story, as the integral component to both Edgefield’s ethic of honor and religious revivalism was the public, community perception, a perception which by the latter decades of the antebellum era had become decidedly shaped by the sectionalism.

This sectional strife was at its core a defensiveness on the part of Southerners against perceived threats to Southern honor and society from outside the region, and this threat necessitated a unified response and opposition—or at the very least the appearance of such. To this end, Southern churches increasingly defended the pillars of Southern

¹⁶⁸ Edgefield County Judge of Probate, Minutes of the General Sessions Court, 1828-29, 1835-37, 1847-48, 1857-58, ECA.

society—honor and slavery—through biblical references. Most conspicuous among these church defenses were evangelicals. At the same time secular leaders were harping on the affronts to the honor of the South. The resulting environment brought on by this increasing sectionalism intimately linked the Southern cultural ethics of honor and evangelicalism.¹⁶⁹

Events in Edgefield certainly exemplify this development. The acts of violence during the 1840s and 1850s, involving some of Edgefield's most prominent citizens were often discussed simultaneously with the effects of religious revival on the community. The public mind of Edgefield itself recognized the connection between the two, not as conflicting factions but as part of a communal integrity and a broader Southern sectional identity.

The duality of the communal ethic in Edgefield is exhibited repeatedly in the pages of the *Edgefield Advertiser*, the voice of Edgefield's public eye. In one breath the editors will condemn violence and bloodshed as well as exalt the advances of religion in the district while in the next breath giving acclaim for men in the public light defending their honor and that of their community in mortal combat. One particular example in 1851 proves significant: The first article in the April 3, 1851 issue gives a lengthy appraisal of the state of religion in the district, celebrating the appearance of Edgefield's houses of worship as well as the strength and vitality of her various denominational congregations. Especially prominent in the article are the "thirty-one Baptist Churches, nearly all of which have large congregations, the general department of which, is

¹⁶⁹ Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1-49.

altogether praiseworthy and such as becomes a Christian people” and the “twenty-three Methodist Churches, and though their congregations are not at all times very large, yet it is exceedingly pleasant to any one to see the happy greetings and the good feeling that prevail amongst them.”¹⁷⁰ These sentiments are directly followed, in the subsequent article, with an article outlining the particulars of a “Fatal Affray in this District,” in which the editor makes no statement condemning the violent action but seems to present the details of the case in order to validate that the confrontation was warranted under the code of honor. William Wilson, the plantation owner whose gunshots produced mortal effects, is presented as having done the honorable thing, having “delivered himself up in Hamburg.” The *Advertiser’s* treatment of this case and its appearance in the paper directly following the article on religion illustrates quite vividly the duality of the communal ethic in Edgefield and how it was drawn from elements of both evangelical religion and the code of honor. This case in 1851, though significant, is certainly not the lone example of such public ethical duality.

Two of Edgefield’s most important citizens and politicians received similar articles of praise for defending their honor in the pages of the *Advertiser*. The first is Col. Louis T. Wigfall, combatant in a number of duels, who was heralded in articles outlining the details of duels he fought in 1840 with a Thomas Bird, and with another young Edgefield politician Preston Brooks later that same year. In each case, Wigfall is

¹⁷⁰ “For the Advertiser,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 3, 1851, ECA.

presented as having faced the fire honorably, and in the latter, both combatants are congratulated in surviving the affair, honor intact.¹⁷¹

The second notable Edgefield politician involved in multiple “affairs of honor” is A.P. Butler, who fills the pages of the *Advertiser* in August of 1848 and again in 1851. Both affairs occur not only on a community-wide stage, but national, as they involved Butler, a U.S. judge and later senator, and other notable politicians. The first affair with Senator Thomas Benton never came to an exchange of shots. Initially reported as “honorably adjusted” the paper shows Butler to be the true man of honor throughout the affair, “characterized by the cool deliberate courage which neither offers nor submits to insult.” The last of three articles on the affair proves the most significant, as the editor comments on just how honorably the affair was adjusted. Here the editor truly defends Butler’s actions as that of a true gentleman and that of his adversary as that of an uncooperative bully. Butler, after several attempts to conclude the affair preserving both men’s public integrity eventually let the affair drop, to which the editor comments “at whose expense the public can at once see.”¹⁷²

The second affair involving Butler comes three years later against another senator from Mississippi. Having already encountered Henry S. Foote once, the paper explains that Butler “has made use of an excellent opportunity of giving the old wrangler a very decent castigation early in the action. And for this we among many others, return the

¹⁷¹ “Fatal Affray,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, November 5, 1840; *Edgefield Advertiser*, December 10, 1840, ECA.

¹⁷² “Duel in Prospect,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 5, 1848; “Difficulty between Judge A.P. Butler and Hon. Thomas Benton,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 22, 1848; *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 30, 1848, ECA.

Judge our sincere thanks, adding the usual cry of “hit him again” with a hearty good will.”¹⁷³

Other lesser known Edgefield citizens involved in duels during this period are greeted with similar appraisal in the pages of the *Advertiser*, from congratulations for “their scathless escape from the field of Mars,”¹⁷⁴ to general reference to “affairs of honor” and “the duel” settled and honorably adjusted.¹⁷⁵

It should be recognized that these events covered in the *Advertiser* took place during the 1840s and 1850s, decades in which there is a deluge in the pages of the *Advertiser* of accounts and advertisements of religious revivals, in both the Baptist and Methodist congregations. This period, as already discussed earlier, was one of high emotion religiously, and this emotion carried over into the broader society and culture in Edgefield. What superficially appears as hypocrisy on the part of the editors of the *Advertiser* in exclaiming the virtues of both the religious revivals and the affairs of honor taking place in the community is, upon further reflection, additional evidence of a distinct connection in Edgefield culture between religious revival and the code of honor. The *Advertiser’s* appraisal of Butler, Wigfall, and Brooks as men of honor and a tribute to the Edgefield community concurrent with celebrations of religious revival and an uplifting of Christian spirit across the community is representative of a broader cultural understanding that saw both as integral to community success.

¹⁷³ “Butler vs. Foote,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, December 18, 1851, ECA.

¹⁷⁴ “A Duel,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 9, 1843, ECA.

¹⁷⁵ “Duel,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 20, 1844; “The Duel,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, January 13, 1847, ECA.

During these two decades in which these prominent Edgefieldians were involved in very public defenses of honor, the *Advertiser* posts no less than forty articles either advertising or recounting the effects of religious revivals in both the Baptist and Methodist faiths. Many of these articles give particulars as to number of baptisms and conversions received during the various revivals, while others comment on the strength of the preaching and subsequent emotion produced as a result of the religious revival across the community.¹⁷⁶

This treatment in the pages of Edgefield's public chronicler reflects the views of the community at large—a very conscious duality of the code of honor with the evangelical ethic as experienced in the religious revival. Taken together with the statistics which bear out the trend that public crimes of passion occurred in correlation with periods of religious revival, as well as the aspects of both the code of honor and the evangelical ethic and its revival mode that reinforced one another, a conclusion begins to reveal itself. The Edgefield community recognized the beneficial features of both ethics, and both ethics drew upon one another in methodology and language, producing a result which saw the convergence of both into one broadly understood communal ethic, intimately tied to the broader Southern sectional identity. The rhythm of Old Edgefield in many respects set the pace for Dixie, as the dominant social forces of evangelical

¹⁷⁶ *Edgefield Advertiser*, 1840-1859, ECA: The articles referred to here begin in 1841 and continue frequently throughout the subsequent twenty years. Many are advertisements of upcoming revivals, focusing on camp meetings and protracted meetings of various lengths. Other articles recount particulars in the revival meetings themselves, including the number of conversions, strength of preaching, and general emotional atmosphere produced as a result. For more in depth analysis of these articles themselves and the events they describe, refer to Chapter 2. The emphasis here is that these articles and the events they portray are occurring simultaneous and are celebrated equally with acts of violence and affairs of honor during this period in Edgefield.

revival and the ethic of honor encouraged one another under the pressures of sectional crisis. The resulting historical song of the South becomes a much more complex arrangement.

CONCLUSION

The complexity of Edgefield, South Carolina, with all her heroes and villains, saints and sinners—her propensity for both pistols and piety—make her the perfect laboratory in which to study an equally complex historical question: the relationship between Southern honor and Southern evangelical revival between 1800 and 1860. That Edgefield, as a community, was just coming into its own just as these two dominant Southern social and cultural ethics were taking root naturally lends to an examination of how these ethics acted upon one another in their maturation, as well as how they were understood publicly by a community growing alongside. Drawing upon the historical narratives of the violent, honor-bound South and the South of the “Bible Belt,” this work has attempted to go beyond the apparent contrast and contradiction at the heart of Southern culture then and now.

By focusing on the code of honor and evangelical religious revival in Edgefield, a region noted historically for its passion across its social stratum, this work has illustrated how specific characteristics of each ethic consciously drew upon the other, consequently readjusting the historical understanding of Southern cultural ethics in general. The importance of public perception in each ethic, as well as the public understanding of how these two ethics were related, reinforced both in one common Southern conception of right and wrong, success and failure. Throughout, the sectionalism of the latter decades of the antebellum era and the increasing sense of a distinct Southern sectional identity during this period has been referenced as a major impetus behind this broader Southern self-conception.

This historical reevaluation was grounded in the historical body of work on both Southern honor and Southern religion, and while forwarding a new perspective and level of mutual influence between the two dominant Southern cultural ethics, remained cognizant of the roots of the historical question implied in the previous works. These previous works, with their implied and explicit questions with regard to the perceived dichotomy of cultural ethics provided the framework and inspiration into which this study fell in line.

Edgefield County, South Carolina between 1800 and 1860 exhibits the more complex nature of the relationship between Southern honor and evangelical revival. At once a ubiquitously unique region as well as representative of the state of South Carolina and the South as a whole, Edgefield's place in the historical narrative has been pronounced, while the historical concepts it represents have been more generally applied to Southern history at large. The result is a deeper understanding of Edgefield itself, as well as a broader historical knowledge of Southern cultural trends in which the forces of honor and revival in Southern society make unlikely but undeniable bedfellows.

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