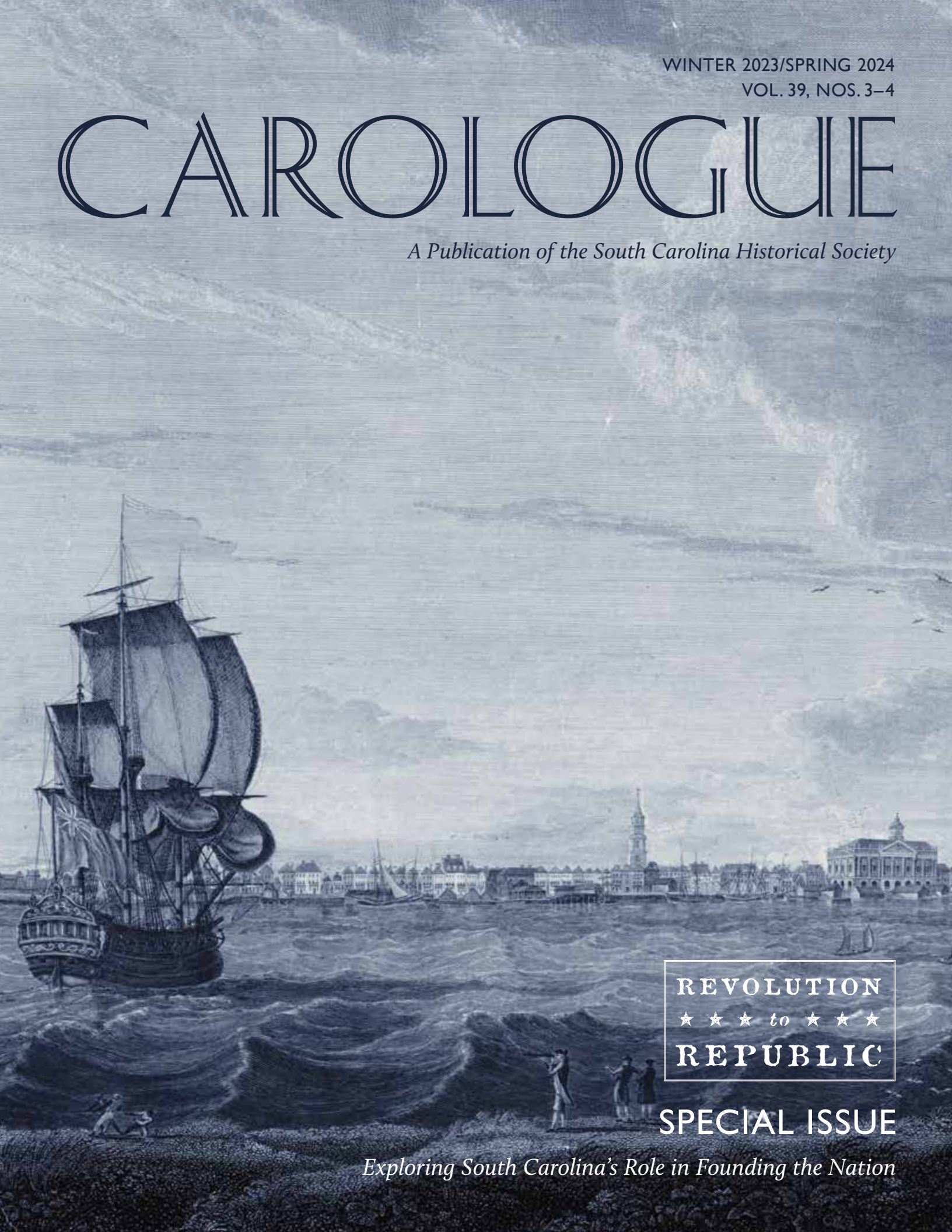


WINTER 2023/SPRING 2024

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# CAROLOGUE

*A Publication of the South Carolina Historical Society*



REVOLUTION  
★ ★ ★ to ★ ★ ★  
REPUBLIC

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

*Exploring South Carolina's Role in Founding the Nation*





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## ON THE COVER

Shown here in an engraving by Samuel Smith, Thomas Leitch's 1774 painting of Charleston provides a vivid depiction of the waterfront and maritime commerce in the period of the city's tea protests. For more on this, see "Charleston: The Tea Party That Wasn't?" on page 14. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



## South Carolina History Is American History



At the 169th Annual Meeting of the South Carolina Historical Society on March 16, I was honored to give my first State of the Society address. After working at historic sites in Virginia—Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and James Madison's Montpelier—since 2000, I am thrilled to be focusing now on the history of the great

state of South Carolina. As I told SCHS friends in Greenville recently, Virginia has *nothing* on South Carolina!

My new mantra is the centrality of South Carolina to the story of the United States, or, in other words, *South Carolina history is American history!* I want to start by ensuring that everyone in South Carolina knows this.

I believe in a broad approach to teaching history. History includes moments of great accomplishment and

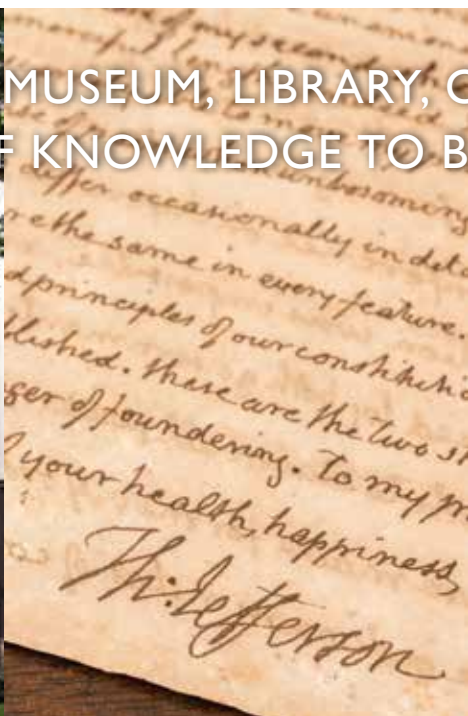
triumph, like the patriot victory over the British army in 1781 at the Battle of Cowpens, in what is now Cherokee County. This battle turned the tide of the Revolutionary War and led to the British surrender at Yorktown nine months later. The story of South Carolina includes other notable events—like Secession—that had different kinds of repercussions.

I am thrilled to be starting my journey with the society to spread the word about the critical importance of South Carolina to the history of the United States. In the months to come, I will be traveling across the state to meet more South Carolinians and learn how the society can best serve communities in all our regions. If you would like me to visit your town and/or speak to a group you are involved with, please do not hesitate to reach out.

*Elizabeth Chew*

Elizabeth Chew, PhD  
SCHS Chief Executive Officer  
[elizabeth.chew@schsonline.org](mailto:elizabeth.chew@schsonline.org)

MORE THAN A MUSEUM, LIBRARY, OR ARCHIVES:  
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Founded in 1855, the South Carolina Historical Society is the state's oldest and largest private archive as well as a modern historical museum. Our mission is to expand, preserve, and make accessible our invaluable collection, and to encourage interest in the rich history of our state.

## SCHS Welcomes New Chief Executive Officer



Raised in Augusta, Georgia, Elizabeth Chew received a BA in art history from Yale University, an MA from the University of London, and a PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. During her eight and a half years at

James Madison's Montpelier, Chew led teams of experts in researching and interpreting Madison and his family, his essential role in framing the US Constitution and leading the nation, and the community of enslaved people who made Madison's achievements possible. Chew worked closely with the Montpelier Descendants Committee, the organization that represents and is led by the descendants of those enslaved there, in achieving structural parity in the governance and operation of the site. Prior to joining Montpelier, Chew led the curatorial and education division at the Reynolda House Museum of American Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Earlier in her career, she worked as a curator at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. During her thirteen-year tenure there, Chew was responsible for ongoing research and interpretation initiatives that wove together the Monticello house, its collections, the Jefferson family, and the enslaved community. Chew has also worked in curatorial positions at the Phillips Collection, the National Gallery of Art, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

## SCHS Earns Four-Star Charity Navigator Rating

The SCHS has been evaluated by Charity Navigator, the world's largest and most trusted nonprofit evaluator, and earned its highest possible rating. This third-party accreditation validates our operational excellence, and this achievement couldn't have happened without the support of our members. To learn more about Charity Navigator and our rating, visit [charitynavigator.org](https://charitynavigator.org).

*Access to the SCHS Museum just got easier—for the rest of 2024, admission is only one dollar! It remains free for all South Carolina educators and children under five.*

## About This Issue

In 2022, the SCHS received a state appropriation to highlight the important role that South Carolina played in building the nation. These funds allow us to focus on the period spanning 1763 to the early 1800s through digitization of archival materials; educational outreach to students, teachers, and others throughout the state; a new exhibition in the SCHS Museum; and special publications, including this themed issue of *Carologue*. Thanks to Representative Leon Stavrinakis, Mayor William Cogswell, and Senator Dick Harpootlian for their support of the SCHS and help securing this appropriation.

## REVOLUTION ★ ★ ★ to ★ ★ ★ REPUBLIC

## New Staff Members

Metadata specialist **Annette Guild** oversees the society's digitization projects. Raised in Anderson, she received her BA in history and political science from Anderson University and her MA in public history from James Madison University.

Before joining the SCHS, she was a graduate assistant for James Madison University's Histories along the Blue Ridge project and worked with the Rockingham County Circuit Court and Clerk's Office to preserve and digitize their archival materials.

**Sachi Shepherd** is the administrative coordinator for the SCHS. Raised in Southern California, she received her BA in politics from the University of Virginia and her MA in American studies from the College of William and Mary. She has previously worked at the Museum of Tolerance, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and Preservation Virginia in addition to currently serving at Charleston's Powder Magazine.





## A Bounty of Events

1–2. On October 29, 2023, the South Carolina Historical Society hosted its annual Fall Tour in Kingstree, a historic city on the Black River. Sites featured on the tour included the Scott-Atkinson House (1) and the Harrington-Atkinson House (2), shown here with attendees gathered on its expansive front porch.

3. On November 10, education coordinator Melina Testin showcased SCHS materials at Liberty Live Education Day, a Battle of Camden Reenactment event that was attended by thousands of elementary and middle school students.

4. On December 2, the SCHS co-sponsored a theatrical reenactment celebrating the 250th anniversary of Charleston's 1773 Tea Party protest. After the performance, costumed "townspeople" toured the SCHS Museum and enjoyed a Historic Charleston Supper Club meal on the third floor of the Fireproof Building.

5–6. On January 19, 2024, the SCHS hosted a meet and greet at the Fireproof Building with its new CEO, Elizabeth Chew (5, pictured in center). Attendees heard remarks and mingled while viewing exhibitions in the SCHS Museum.

7. On February 24, SCHS senior archivist Molly Silliman (on left) and COO and director of collections Virginia Ellison participated in an archive ministry workshop at Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist Church in North Charleston. Silliman and Ellison discussed preserving family and organizational archives and also shared information on how church archives can be organized and made accessible.

8. Held in February, the SCHS's seventeenth annual Winter Lecture Series featured a variety of discussions on the Revolutionary War. On February 6, University of South Carolina history professor Woody Holton presented "Liberty Is Sweet: The Crucial Role of African Americans in the Revolutionary War" at Charleston's First Baptist Church.



1



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9–12. On March 15, the SCHS hosted a conversation on nonfiction writing between best-selling author Erik Larson (9, on left) and historian Walter Edgar at the Charleston Museum. Following the talk, attendees enjoyed a cocktail reception and book signing (10–11). Larson also stopped by the Fireproof Building (12, pictured with the SCHS's Molly Silliman) to film a segment for CBS Sunday Morning and discuss some of the SCHS materials he used to research his latest book, *The Demon of Unrest: A Saga of Hubris, Heartbreak, and Heroism at the Dawn of the Civil War*.

13–16. On March 16, SCHS members gathered at Charles Towne Landing for the society's 169th Annual Meeting. Attendees were first briefed on the state of the society during the business meeting, and they then mingled at a mimosa social before settling in for lunch, an update from Brett Bennett of the South Carolina American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission (SC250), and the presentation of awards. For service to the society, the Chairman's Award was given to Steve Osborne and John McCardell (13, shown with Bill Davies on left), and the Mary Elizabeth Prior Award was given to Harlan Greene (14). Neil Kinghan received the George C. Rogers Jr. Award for *A Brief Moment in the Sun: Francis Cardozo and Reconstruction in South Carolina* (LSU Press), voted 2023's best book on South Carolina history. The Clark-Weir Award for the best article in the *South Carolina Historical Magazine* was given to Jessica L. Wallace for "Bound by a 'Chain of Friendship': The Treaty of Whitehall and the Anglo-Cherokee War." Faye Jensen, the society's retiring CEO, was also recognized for her outstanding contributions (15). Keynote speaker Elizabeth Chew, the society's new CEO, then spoke about the importance for South Carolinians today to understand the centrality of their state to the story of the nation and the Founders' expectations that education would ensure citizens' essential participation in a self-governing republic (16).

## Locally Made Favorites Now Available

As the SCHS Museum shop continues to grow, and we expand the number of vendors that we work with, it is important to us to support artists and businesses based in South Carolina. Here is a brief look at the dedicated creators of some of the newest items that are available to purchase in our shop on the first floor of the historic Fireproof Building (100 Meeting Street, Charleston) as well as in our online store ([shop.schistory.org](http://shop.schistory.org)).



### Lillie's of Charleston

Lillie's of Charleston is a family-owned specialty food company with recipes born out of their father's love for barbecue and Sunday meals at their aunt Lillie's house. The family recalls that their aunt Lillie "represented a generation that taught their kin how to cook with love. No matter who came to visit, they never left her house feeling unwanted, unloved or hungry." Their father introduced his recipes to the public at his restaurant, the Rib Shack, which opened in 1985. The SCHS Museum shop is thrilled to include Lillie's of Charleston's delicious Low Country Loco Hot Sauce and Haut Pimento Cheese Gullah Pop Gourmet Seasoned Popcorn, both of which have become visitor favorites.

### Made on Maidstone

Linda, the founder and designer of Made on Maidstone, was born and raised in Charleston and still lives in the lowcountry with her husband and two daughters. Linda loves crafts and is a self-taught seamstress. Her longtime dream of opening her own shop of handcrafted products has become a reality, and her coastal-inspired and Charleston-themed items are now available in the SCHS Museum shop. Linda personally handcrafts each piece, making each item unique and one of a kind. Some of her beautifully made oyster shell ring dishes can be found in our shop, including the Under the Sea and Pineapple oyster shell ring dishes as well as the Rainbow Row decoupage oyster shell.



### Charleston Candle Co.

Charleston Candle Co. is run by husband-and-wife team Chaz and Kristen Schwiers. In the summer of 2016, Kristen began making candles for fun out of their small apartment kitchen. When the idea arose to develop candles based on different places and things in Charleston, an Etsy shop was launched, and a fun side project had begun. As the candles gained in popularity, this fun side project became a full-fledged business, and Charleston Candle Co. candles can now be found in stores across the country. A variety of scents representing lowcountry culture—including Coffee on King, Sweetgrass Basket, and Edisto Breeze—are available in the SCHS Museum shop.





## 1777 Sheriff's Writ

This 1777 sheriff's writ from the Baker Family Papers includes a very telling detail highlighting the progress of South Carolina's fight for independence from Great Britain. Found among the business and legal papers of Richard Bohun Baker (1736–1783), the document calls for the apprehension of William Storey, after which it is ordered that he appear before the Court of Common Pleas in Charleston in a case brought by Brian Cape. Notably, the pre-printed form includes the word “colony,” which is repeatedly scratched out and substituted with the word “state.” This small change illustrates efforts to affirm South Carolina's new identity as an independent entity following the adoption of the state's first constitution in March 1776.

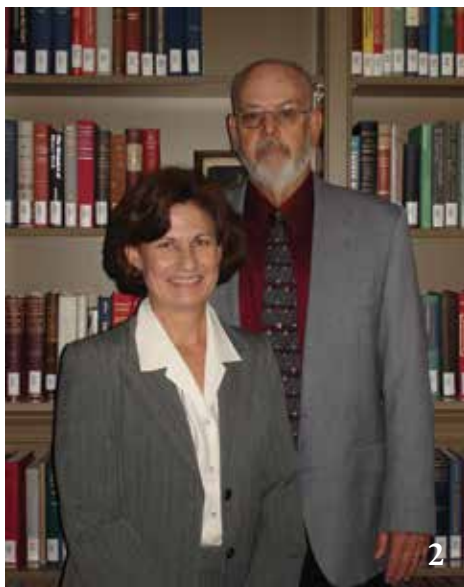
The Baker Family Papers include many documents revealing experiences leading up to and during the Revolutionary War. The Baker family became established in South Carolina in the eighteenth century, when Richard Baker (d. 1698) emigrated from Barbados and acquired large landholdings along the Ashley River. His grandson, Richard Baker (d. 1752), married Mary Bohun (d. 1736), the daughter of Nicholas Bohun (d. 1718). Their residence was at Archdale Hall Plantation in St. George's Dorchester Parish. Their son, Richard Bohun Baker, was the next owner of Archdale Hall and served as a legislator and captain in the Second South Carolina Regiment. In 1776, he was appointed a justice of the peace for Berkeley County.

—Molly Silliman

# A Special Thanks

To the staff, members, and friends of the SCHS:  
It has been an honor to serve as the leader of this outstanding organization. I leave filled with gratitude for the past seventeen years, pride in what we've done, appreciation for all the help from devoted colleagues and friends, and confidence that this organization will continue its very important mission to protect the past for the future.

Warmest regards,  
Faye Jensen







1. Faye Jensen leaves Charles Towne Landing's Founders Hall with her husband, David, after the society's 169th Annual Meeting in March 2024. 2. Jensen is shown in 2006 with John Tucker, who retired as the society's chief operating officer in 2022. 3. A Post and Courier article from December 19, 2006, announces Jensen's hiring. 4. Jensen is pictured with historian Walter Edgar in the 2000s. 5. Jensen (right) is shown with author Dorothea Benton Frank and author and historian Harlan Greene in 2011. 6. Jensen gives a tour of the SCHS vault at the College of Charleston's Addlestone Library shortly after the society's collections were relocated there from the Fireproof Building in December 2014. 7. Jensen is recognized by then-SCHS president William Cain Jr. during the 162nd Annual Meeting at the Columbia Museum of Art in March 2017. 8. Jensen inspects the renovation of the Fireproof Building with architect Glenn Keyes and contractor Richard Marks in May 2017. 9. Jensen (center) cuts the ribbon to open the SCHS Museum with then-SCHS first vice president Emilyn Sanders, then-Charleston mayor John Tecklenburg, then-SCHS president Dan Ravenel, Glenn Keyes, Richard Marks, and John Tucker in September 2018. 10. Jensen (center) attends the opening reception for the SCHS Museum exhibition *Africa to America: The Plantation Culture of Early South Carolina* with guest curator Daniel C. Littlefield and historian Valinda Littlefield in April 2022. 11. Jensen explores the SCHS Museum with two young visitors in 2023.







# COLONEL JAMES MAYSON, PATRIOT AND REGULATOR

**O**n the night of October 8, 1767, as reported by the *South-Carolina Gazette*, a gang of outlaws kidnapped justice of the peace James Mayson from his home in Ninety Six, South Carolina. The men bound his hands, tied his legs to the saddle of a horse, and dragged him some eighty miles, insulting him along the way. This incident typifies the lawlessness of the South Carolina backcountry after the conclusion of the Cherokee War in 1760.

The defeat of the Cherokee led to an influx of White settlers in the South Carolina backcountry, many of whom traveled the Great Wagon Road south from Pennsylvania and Virginia. As the population increased on the western frontier of the colony, crime increased, with little or no means of redress for victims. With no organized local government in South Carolina beyond the lowcountry parishes, a handful of justices of the peace had limited power to maintain order in the backcountry.

Though little known today, James Mayson (1733–1799) would prove to be a major force in the South

Carolina backcountry, bringing stable government, leading patriot forces in the fight for independence, and serving many terms in the General Assembly following the Revolution. Born in Scotland in 1733, he likely immigrated to South Carolina in the mid-1750s, settling in the Ninety Six District. He became a well-known planter and slaveholder, owning Glasgow and Peach Hill Plantations on the Saluda River.

In 1767, backcountry settlers, mostly landowners, formed a vigilante group calling themselves the Regulators to control and punish criminal offenders. James Mayson's tenacious opposition to crime as a magistrate and major of militia made him a leader of the South Carolina Regulator movement. In addition to their vigilante activities, between 1767 and 1769, Regulators lobbied in Charleston for courts and other means of law enforcement on the western frontier.

The passage of the Circuit Court Act in 1769, which ended the Regulator movement, saw James Mayson given the task of overseeing construction of a courthouse and

*Above, dated July 18, 1775, James Mayson's lists of artillery, ammunition, and stores at Fort Charlotte, a Loyalist post on the Savannah River, can be found in the society's Henry Laurens Papers. From the collections of the South Carolina Historical Society.*



other facilities in the Ninety Six District. Ninety Six was one of seven court districts formed by the Circuit Court Act, encompassing most of the northwest corner of present-day South Carolina from Aiken through Spartanburg. The town got its name as an important trading post ninety-six miles from the major Cherokee town of Keowee, near present-day Clemson. In 1772, Mayson along with Patrick Calhoun, Moses Kirkland, and others were selected to serve on one of the district's first grand juries.

By 1775, with government structures in place, the question of independence and the growing tensions between Great Britain and the colonies were deeply dividing South Carolinians, especially in the backcountry. Many professed loyalty to Great Britain for the safety they believed the Crown provided against Indian conflict and in the hope of receiving future land grants. James Mayson allied himself with the patriot cause. Patriots supported independence because they felt the British had neglected their promise to create a stable government and law enforcement system in the backcountry.

At the start of the fighting, Mayson was commissioned a major in the rangers of the Third South Carolina Regiment. In June 1775, he led patriot forces in the seizure of Fort Charlotte, a Loyalist post on the Savannah River near Ninety Six which held a large cache of weapons and gunpowder. The triumph was short lived. Upon their return to Ninety Six, the patriot forces were met by Loyalists. Mayson was arrested, and the weapons and ammunition were returned to the fort. The incident ended without bloodshed, and Mayson was released.

Several weeks later, another conflict erupted when Loyalist forces gathered near Ninety Six and threatened to advance. In response, the Council of Safety, a thirteen-member committee of patriots elected in Charleston as the shadow executive power in the colony, sent William Henry Drayton, leader of the Whig political party, to counter the threat with a formidable show of force. The standoff ended in September when both sides agreed to a truce.

The repeated threat of conflict between Loyalists and patriots revolved around a cache of weapons and ammunition at Fort Charlotte as well as a subsequent shipment of weapons and ammunition sent to Ninety Six by the colonial government in Charleston. On November 18, 1775, Loyalist forces numbering eighteen hundred men attacked the lesser patriot forces under Mayson and Andrew Williamson at Ninety Six. The patriot forces were able to rally more men and build a makeshift stockade

to defend their position and protect the weapons and ammunition. The fighting spanned three days and saw minimal casualties before the two sides agreed to a truce. The patriot forces held their ground, leaving the Loyalists to withdraw without the cache of weapons and ammunition. This first battle of Ninety Six marked the first major conflict of the Revolution in South Carolina and the first bloodshed in the state in the fight for independence.

In September 1776, James Mayson was promoted to lieutenant colonel, and in 1778, he commanded the Third South Carolina Regiment. In 1780, the British under General Cornwallis instituted a change in strategy focusing on the South. Charleston was considered by the British to have a major strategic position because of its port and access to surrounding areas. Mayson and the Third Regiment were stationed in Charleston in April 1780 when the British surrounded the port city. Patriot General Benjamin Lincoln was forced to surrender, giving the city to the British. Patriot troops were captured and taken

prisoner. Under the terms of surrender, prisoners could be paroled if they would swear allegiance to the Crown and not bear arms against the British. After the fall of Charleston, Mayson and his troops agreed to the terms of surrender and retreated to their backcountry homes. Mayson remained in the patriot army until 1783 and was promoted to brevet colonel before his discharge from service.

After independence, Mayson represented the Ninety Six District as a member of the First and Sec-

ond Provincial Congresses and General Assembly. Mayson was elected to the Third General Assembly in 1780. In 1787, he served the Little River District in the Seventh General Assembly and as a delegate to the state convention to ratify the new United States Constitution. He served as a representative of the Newberry District in the Ninth General Assembly. In 1791, he served as a county court judge in Newberry County.

The Regulator movement marked a turning point in an era of regional hostilities plaguing South Carolina and intensifying division among South Carolinians in the lead up to the fight for independence. The Ninety Six District, a beneficiary of the Regulator movement's gains, played a crucial role in the fight for independence in the southern theater during the Revolution. Colonel James Mayson leaves a legacy as an ardent champion of law and order in the Regulator movement, an unwavering supporter of independence in the Revolution, and a dedicated public servant in the state of South Carolina throughout the rest of his life. ♥

## **This first battle of Ninety Six marked the first major conflict of the Revolution in South Carolina and the first bloodshed in the state in the fight for independence.**

A decorative border of detailed tea leaves and branches surrounds the central text area. The leaves are dark green with visible veins and serrated edges.

# CHARLESTON: THE TEA PARTY THAT WASN'T?

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By JAMES R. FICHTER

What exactly occurred between December 3, 1773, when South Carolina colonists protested the arrival in Charleston Harbor of a seventy-thousand-pound shipment of British East India Company tea from London, and December 22, 1773, when the tea finally was unloaded and stored in the Exchange Building on the Charleston waterfront? What eventually happened to the tea? And how and why did this all come about? Working on the larger project that became my book, *Tea: Consumption, Politics, and Revolution, 1773–1776* (2023), I started to stumble on answers to some of these questions.

Before the 1773 tea protests, East India Company tea, and taxed tea in general, was imported into the North American colonies in large quantities. In 1767, the British government passed the Townshend Acts, which included new taxes on lead, paint, glass, and paper. In the case of tea, however, the acts instituted a substantial tax cut. American patriots nonetheless led a boycott movement against all the Townshend Acts, promising not to import or consume any taxed British goods.

The Townshend Acts protests and boycotts were slower to take effect than we may realize. Approximately twelve to eighteen months passed between the patriots'

receiving news of the Townshend Acts and their establishing a continent-wide response. Organizing began in 1768, but the protests and the boycotts did not come into force until 1769 and 1770. Table 1 contains data from the British North American Customs Administration. Based in Boston, it regulated customs everywhere from colonial Newfoundland to the Bahamas. The table, which shows legal tea importations from Great Britain into North America, indicates that colonists were drinking hundreds of thousands of pounds of tea in the late 1760s. Anticipating the boycott, we see that they imported extra tea before nonimportation began. Only in 1770 did tea imports to Massachusetts really drop, to about forty-eight thousand pounds. New York and Philadelphia's tea imports went from hundreds of thousands of pounds to almost zero that year. Merchants in the southern colonies—both the Chesapeake and Deep South—imported meaningful amounts as well. The table indicates that southern imports collapsed during the 1770 boycott and bounced back after it was withdrawn.

Due to the 1770 nonimportation movement, we tend to remember colonial resistance to the Townshend Acts as successful. However, the boycott was famously leaky. In Boston, Loyalist bookseller and publisher John



Mein published a list of all the tea and other taxed goods imported by self-described patriotic merchants. This included goods in the merchants' own accounts as well as cargoes carried on their vessels for others. Mein revealed the degree to which merchants who publicly supported the boycott were evading it privately. This duplicity was detrimental to the boycott movement as a whole and a reason why Boston's legal tea importation levels never dropped as low as other cities. But blame fell more on Mein for publicizing the problem than on the merchants for double dealing, and the patriots eventually hounded him out of the city.

In April 1770, the British Parliament repealed the duties on everything but tea. New York abandoned non-importation in July 1770. Boston and Philadelphia followed in September and October. South Carolina held on through December 1770. All the colonies claimed, even after the boycott ended, not to import British tea. Yet looking at table 1 for 1771 and 1772, we know this is false, except for New York and Philadelphia, which imported almost no tea in those years.

The Townshend Acts expired in late 1772. Parliament then passed the Tea Act, which carried forward the tax cut from the Townshend Acts. Given that importation levels had returned to 1769 levels in many colonies, especially those south of Pennsylvania, this seems to have been unobjectionable.

The Townshend Acts and the Tea Act allowed legally imported tea to be taxed at three pence per pound. The goal was to make it competitive with illegally smuggled tea. Prior to these acts, taxes comprised up to half the cost of some legally imported tea, creating a substantial market for smuggling. In addition to renewing the low tax rate established by the Townshend Acts, the Tea Act allowed the East India Company to ship tea to North America directly, another cost-saving measure that would help legal

tea compete with smuggled tea. All the tea statistics from table 1 concern legally imported tea.

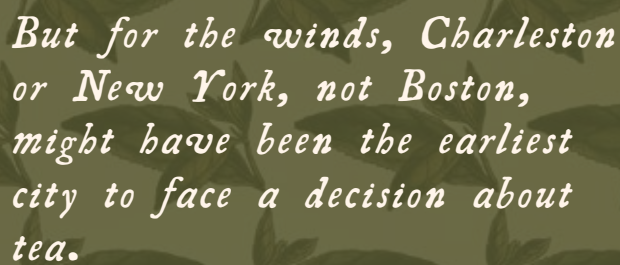
Following the Tea Act, tea was sold around the British Empire in three different ways. The first was tea legally shipped by the East India Company directly to North America under the act itself. This was the tea that would be protested in 1773. The second was tea legally imported by the East India Company to London, where it had sold all tea prior to 1773. Wholesalers bought this tea at auction, holding and transshipping the lots around the British Empire. The third category was tea smuggled into North America from continental Europe, particularly the Netherlands. This was called "Dutch" tea, but the name was deceptive, as it was a catchall term for tea imported from not only the Netherlands but also France, Sweden, and elsewhere. Most tea consumed in North America was smuggled in this way. There was nothing particularly anti-governmental or anti-British about the illegal tea trade. Most tea consumed in Great Britain and Ireland in the 1770s was smuggled from continental Europe as well, due to the high taxes. Thus, in consuming illegal Dutch tea, American colonists were being quite British.

Colony	1768	1769	1770	1771	1772
Newfoundland, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Hampshire	8,098	5,931	38,051	20,749	20,101
Massachusetts (incl. Maine)	298,251	95,567	48,070	265,884	113,456
Rhode Island	3,446	15,393	17,988	17,754	3,079
New York	352,488	16,986	147	344	530
Pennsylvania	146,763	112,159	65	0	128
Virginia and Maryland	40,743	43,112	17,251	25,034	85,279
North Carolina	53	166	786	238	0
South Carolina	28,693	21,238	1,032	26,974	22,138
Georgia	6,754	5,250	2,980	5,864	10,420
East and West Florida	2,551	1,818	918	2,799	2,435
Bahamas and Bermuda	347	788	347	170	0
Total	888,187	318,408	127,635	365,540	257,566

Table 1: Legal tea importations from Great Britain into North America, 1768–1772. Source: British National Archives, CUST 16/1.

The Tea Act also gave rise to colonial wholesalers. Although the Tea Act authorized the East India Company to ship tea directly to North America, it continued auctioning tea in London, and British merchants kept shipping tea to the colonies. Consequently, the act increased competition by pitting the East India Company's American wholesalers—known as the consignees—against the London wholesalers. The consignees sold the East India Company tea, still formally owned by the company when it arrived in North America, for a commission.

There were three consignees in Charleston: partners Peter Leger and William Greenwood Jr., along with Roger Smith. The company expected these men to wholesale its tea not only to other merchants in Charleston but also to those operating in the city's larger commercial orbit—Beaufort, Georgetown, Savannah, North Carolina, Florida, and the Bahamas. The consignees were not moti-



*But for the winds, Charleston or New York, not Boston, might have been the earliest city to face a decision about tea.*

vated to hold out for higher prices. The company capped their commissions, which they only got paid when they made sales. For the consignees, then, moving the tea quickly and getting paid their commissions as soon as possible made the best business sense.

In 1773, the East India Company sent seven ships laden with tea to four cities in the American colonies. Four smaller vessels together brought a little more than one hundred thousand pounds to Boston. One vessel carried over two hundred thousand pounds to Philadelphia, and another transferred the same quantity to New York. The smallest amount, seventy thousand pounds, was shipped to Charleston.

Ever since the Revolutionary era, the responses to the tea in Philadelphia, New York, and Charleston have been judged against the Boston patriots' activism. It is worth remembering, though, that no one knew the order in which the vessels would arrive. Distance played a part in the duration of a transatlantic voyage, but often, weather was more important. The first ship carrying East India Company tea reached Boston on November 27, and the second arrived there on December 2. As it happened, the *London* sailed into Charleston Harbor on the same day. One vessel en route to Boston wrecked in a gale, and a

storm delayed the *Nancy*, bound for New York. But for the winds, Charleston or New York, not Boston, might have been the earliest city to face a decision about tea.

It also is worth remembering that merchants, patriots, and established politicians in the four cities possessed different viewpoints and motivations, which led them to deal with the tea differently. In Boston, the patriots destroyed as much tea as they could, and Crown officials secured the rest. In Philadelphia and New York, patriots, consignees, and colonial officials cooperated in getting the ships to return to England with their tea cargoes intact. In Charleston, as we will see, local merchants worked with customs agents in eluding the patriots, landing the tea, and placing it in locked storage. Had Charleston's tea arrived first, the city's course of action might have set the precedent, initiating a very different sequence of events in which the Boston Tea Party was seen as an overly zealous aberration.

For American merchants, commissions as East India Company consignees must have seemed initially like sweet deals. Certainly, the consignees had no cause for concern earlier in 1773. Leger and Greenwood, for example, were small-time merchants trying to prosper in Charleston's mercantile community. Their letter book, today at the University of Michigan's Clements Library, documents their modest operations. The company was connected to the larger London firm Greenwood and Higginson, whom they wrote seeking backing to enter the African slave trade. While the London office could not supply capital or credit for slave trading, it obtained less lucrative commissions for Leger and Greenwood as tea consignees.

The *London* dropped anchor in Charleston Harbor on December 2, 1773, carrying approximately seventy thousand pounds of East India Company tea. Patriot firebrand Christopher Gadsden and his Sons of Liberty railed against the tea. Rousing men in the taverns and tacking up printed notices, they called a meeting for the next day.

On December 3, Charlestonians gathered in the Great Hall on the upper floor of the Exchange Building, the center of public life in Charleston in the late colonial period. The customs house was in the Exchange's basement, where the vaulted ceilings provided space for the storage of goods. Confronting what they called "an unconstitutional act of raising revenue upon us without our consent," colonists debated what steps to take concerning the tea. Some wealthier Charlestonians announced, "We, the underwritten, hereby agree not to import either directly or indirectly any tea that will pay the present duty laid by an act of the British Parliament for the purpose of raising revenue in America."

Not everyone agreed, however. Next, the meeting summoned consignees Roger Smith, Peter Leger, and William Greenwood. In later correspondence to the



company, Smith, Leger, and Greenwood described encountering a majority in Charleston against landing the tea. The editor of the *South-Carolina Gazette*, Peter Timothy, claimed that the consignees refused to accept the tea. The *Gazette* is an invaluable primary source—as one of only a few newspapers in South Carolina at the time—but Timothy misled readers here on behalf of the patriot cause. The consignees neither landed the tea nor resigned their commissions, as Timothy alleged. Instead, they wrote to the company promising to “do everything in our power” to advance its interests, “consistent with the safety and future welfare of our families.” They added that the meeting had decided “to wink at every pound of tea smuggled in” to ensure an adequate supply. This created a contradiction, with Leger and Greenwood reporting that the Charleston merchants had “determined against” the meeting’s idea of boycotting all taxed tea.

Members of a committee established by the patriots’ meeting approached merchants about signing a nonimportation agreement. Some avoided the deputies, while others signed. Some planters sought to advance nonimportation by refusing to trade with merchants who did not sign. But the agreement was weak and full of loopholes. Merchants who did not sign could ignore it, and planters who refused to buy tea could still drink all that was in their cupboards.

Peter Timothy indicated that roughly fifty people signed the agreement, but what did this mean? Timothy never named the signers, so we do not know who they were. Presumably, they were merchants. Were they influential? Did they represent Charleston’s mercantile community as a whole? Were they well financed or even involved in the tea trade in any meaningful way? After all, if a merchant’s business was something entirely differ-



*A theatrical reenactment of Charleston’s 1773 tea protest is held at the Old Exchange and Provost Dungeon on December 2, 2023. Much of the action involving the Charleston tea protests took place in the Exchange Building, which was the center of the city’s public life in the late colonial period. Photograph by Virginia Ellison.*

ent—exporting rice and indigo or importing slaves, for instance—then he might be perfectly happy to sign the agreement and get the patriot organizers off his back, at no cost to his own bottom line and with no practical change to the tea trade.

After the committee’s deputies made their rounds, a push to sign the boycott appeared in the *South-Carolina Gazette*. This came from an author using the pseudonym Junius Brutus. We do not know the identity of Junius Brutus—it could have been Timothy, or it could have been one of many other patriots writing in the *Gazette*. Urging his readers to go beyond resisting the East India Company’s tea consignment, Junius Brutus called on colonists to stop consuming tea completely until the tax was repealed. He further proposed that any tea on hand should be burned publicly, including the tea on the *London*, regularly taxed tea, and smuggled tea. Amusingly, the same issue that carried Junius Brutus’s inflammatory declaration also contained three advertisements placed by separate merchant firms with tea for sale.

Meanwhile, the Charleston merchants organized

themselves, forming a chamber of commerce, the first in the colonies. They met for the first time on December 9, selecting leadership and positioning themselves, not as pro- or anti-patriot, but rather as concerned about commercial disputes. Their main issue was that all parties—the patriots as well as the East India Company—should treat each merchant equally.

Leger and Greenwood, who attended the meeting, explained, “When every merchant imported his own teas and calmly paid the duty,” there was no problem, but the moment when news got out that the company would ship its tea exclusively to the consignees, the rest of the merchants “held up against it,” fearing for their own business. In addition, the merchants objected to the patriots’ ban because it left smuggled tea untouched. As Smith, Leger, and Greenwood related, “Unless smuggling is altogether prevented and every man who imports tea be on an equal footing, they [the merchants] will as usual import tea.” This put paid to the agreement then circulat-

ing not to import taxed tea, but notably, it did not necessarily contradict what Junius Brutus had said either.

The patriots soon realized how feeble their efforts had been. On December 3, as they packed the Exchange’s Great Hall in protest, merchants had landed “private” parcels of tea from the *London* and other vessels. The *London* carried not only the tea owned by the East India Company but also tea that the company had auctioned in London, purchased and shipped by private merchants in the same vessel. While the radicals shouted upstairs, the merchants had quietly landed their tea, paid the taxes at the customs house downstairs, and carted the taxed tea right “by the meeting of the people in their conveyance to the respective owners.” Even Peter Timothy conceded that the merchants “had not desisted from importing teas subject to the odious duty.”

Adding to the patriots’ consternation, they could not agree about what they had agreed on at their December 3 meeting, so they called a new meeting for December 17. At

this meeting, according to Timothy, the “unpopular” side, as he termed it, was greatly outnumbered, leading to a resolution that the consignees should not accept the tea on the *London*. However, others recalled the December 17 meeting differently. William Henry Drayton, a future delegate to the Continental Congress from South Carolina, wrote: “Many friends to liberty and opposers to the view of the administration consider the East India Company in the light of a private merchant and, therefore, were of the opinion that no exception ought to be taken of the landing of their tea, saying none had been taken to landing tea from private Merchants from London.” In other words, taxed tea had “always been landed.” Why fuss now?

The consignees attended the meeting too. They argued that allowing other shipments but barring theirs was “unjust,” causing singular harm to the consignees by “depriving us



*Constructed in 1771 as a commercial exchange and customs house, the Exchange Building included a vaulted basement that provided space for the storage of goods. When Robert Halliday, Charleston’s collector of customs, seized seventy thousand pounds of tea from the *London* on December 22, 1773, it was stored in the basement’s northernmost section. The basement also housed a military prison when Charleston fell to British forces in 1780, and it can be toured by visitors today. Photograph by Riis2602 (licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0).*



of the liberty” of conducting business and selling property entrusted to them. At least, the consignees contended, the company’s tea should be stored in the Exchange for safe keeping, and they deployed “every argument and all the interest in our power to that end.”

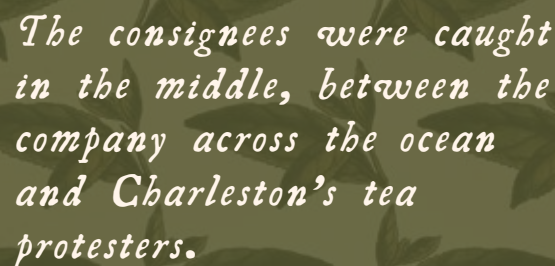
The consignees’ arguments seemed to fall on deaf ears. The December 17 meeting maintained the ban on the *London’s* tea. The consignees did achieve a small measure of success because their minimum demand that the tea be landed and stored rather than shipped back to England ultimately was honored. At this point, the consignees resigned their commissions. They did so first simply by announcing that they would longer be involved with East India Company tea, which, as it turned out, was not quite true. They also informed the company in writing, but it would take months for their letter to reach London. In the meantime, the company would expect the consignees to act on its behalf.

The consignees were caught in the middle, between the company across the ocean and Charleston’s tea protesters. Corresponding merchants like Leger, Greenwood, and Smith could do business only if they had the trust and respect of others in the far-reaching Atlantic mercantile community—a trust that might be substantially undermined if they were not reliable stewards of the company’s interests. At the same time, local business depended on their being trusted and respected in Charleston, where patriotism increasingly politicized commerce. For the consignees, balancing these economic, social, and political concerns was difficult. In correspondence with the company, the consignees noted that their withdrawal from the tea trade came under duress—as a last resort, lest they become “enemies to our country and be subject to the insults of the many rascally mobs convened in the dark, high charged with liquor to do every act of violence their mad brain could invent.” This was partly true, but the consignees also gave up on tea to preserve more important business. Leger and Greenwood’s main concern was exporting Carolina planters’ rice and indigo to Europe and importing European dry goods to South Carolina. Roger Smith engaged in the same transatlantic trades in addition to importing enslaved Africans. All three tried to preserve reputations for reliability by emphasizing to the company, and anyone in London who would listen, that amid the protests, relinquishing their commissions as consignees was their only recourse.

The December 17 meeting put other tea merchants, whether tea smugglers or taxed tea importers, on the same footing as the East India Company consignees, resolving that Carolinians had six months to “consume all the Teas now on hand.” This six-month deadline was a small gift to importers. Tea prices in North America were rising in late 1773, as shortages emerged in anticipation of the arrival of the East India Company’s cargoes. Keeping

the company’s tea off the market helped to maintain high tea prices. Merchants could take advantage by selling off their remaining stocks of taxed and smuggled tea over the next six months—but only if they eschewed the company’s tea. The meeting did not set a firm date by which tea imports had to stop. In this respect, it was not so much an angry mass protest as a negotiated solution between the patriots and the merchants.

Although Leger, Greenwood, and Smith had attempted to renounce their responsibilities as consignees, Alexander Curling, master of the ship *London*, did not. Curling had given bond in England for exporting the tea to America, and he could only get his bond money back if he returned with a certificate from a North American customs house showing that he had landed the tea and paid the duty there. Charleston’s patriots had found a way to work with the consignees and other merchants,



*The consignees were caught in the middle, between the company across the ocean and Charleston’s tea protesters.*

absorbing them into their cause, but they used British navigation laws to put Curling in a tough spot—and make an example of him.

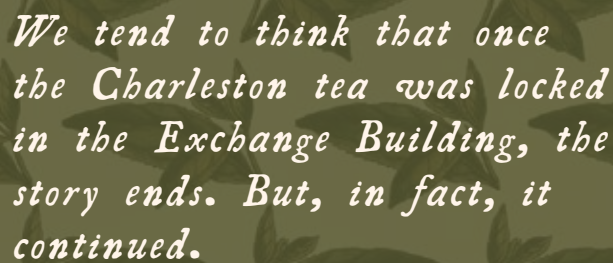
Curling had laid out the “Difficulties” he faced at the December 3 meeting. Winter was setting in, and he wanted to return to England without losing his bond money. For the patriots, forcing Curling to forfeit the bond might deter future captains from carrying taxed tea to Charleston. According to the law, Curling had twenty days after the *London’s* arrival to unload the tea—that is, until December 22—or else the customs collector would impound it for non-payment. As the deadline approached, the Sons of Liberty began threatening Curling, promising to burn his vessel unless he pulled away from the wharf, but nothing happened.

On December 22, Robert Halliday, Charleston’s collector of customs, seized the seventy thousand pounds of tea. Given the quantity, Halliday could hardly have acted on his own. Rather, he relied on the assistance of the sheriff and his men. This was the type of seizure that Massachusetts patriots prevented by throwing Boston’s tea shipments into the water.

It took five hours—from 7:00 a.m. until noon—for Halliday and the sheriff to store the *London’s* tea in the

Exchange's northernmost cellar. During this time, "there was not the least disturbance," noted South Carolina's lieutenant governor, William Bull II. Gadsden and the Sons of Liberty, for their part, admitted to being caught off guard by Halliday's starting early in the day and storing all the tea before noon. In Bull's opinion, if they had not backed down already, the consignees might have been able to sell the tea quickly that morning in the confusion.

Such was the Charleston Tea Party of 1773—the tea party that wasn't. We tend to think that once the Charleston tea was locked in the Exchange Building, the story ends. But, in fact, it continued. We know that throughout 1774, despite many rumors to the contrary, the tea remained in the Exchange, where Robert Halliday aired out the cellar several times a week so that it would not mold.



*We tend to think that once the Charleston tea was locked in the Exchange Building, the story ends. But, in fact, it continued.*

The tea's presence was a bit embarrassing for the Charlestonian patriots. They did not meet again for some time. Their next general meeting was supposed to coincide with the seating of the colonial legislature. Lieutenant Governor Bull, getting wind of the plan, discontinued the legislature for several months, hoping that the delay would allow passions to cool. When the legislature finally assembled in mid-March, the patriots held their meeting. They banned tea imports, effective on April 16, 1774, but the *South-Carolina Gazette* reveals shipments arriving at Charleston aboard the *Magna Carta* and the *Briton* after that date. The customs collector duly impounded these cargoes in the Exchange. Finally, the province-wide non-importation and nonconsumption agreement took effect on November 1, 1774, one month prior to the Continental one.

In many ways, the real Charleston Tea Party occurred in 1774. In South Carolina, the first week of November 1774 was full of anti-tea politics. Nonconsumption of tea started on November 1. On that very day, the *Britannia* arrived at Charleston with more tea. Also on that day, schoolboys knocked on doors throughout the city, collecting tea to destroy. Presumably, this was Dutch tea, but it is interesting that households still retained so

much. At noon on November 3, a crowd convened, joined by a patriotic committee. These groups forced the tea importers from the *Britannia* to dump their cargo into the Cooper River.

The climax of the tea protests came two days later, on Guy Fawkes Day. This annual observance on November 5 marked the anniversary of the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, an attempt by Roman Catholic conspirators to blow up Parliament and assassinate the Protestant King James I. In the North American colonies, it also was known as Pope's Day, an anti-Catholic mock holiday filled with public displays of ritual devils and popes. Elites tried to control these celebrations, but in the streets, common people often dominated them, making for a riotous break from the normal social order. In 1774, patriots used the symbolism of Pope's Day to express their fears that the Quebec Act would establish Catholicism in North America—that the ministry in London plotted to replace British rights and Protestantism with despotism and the Roman church. Indeed, there were rumors at this time that King George III had secretly converted to Catholicism. These fears, however wildly misplaced, were quite potent.

Tea was central to the events that followed. In the early morning of November 5, with bells ringing, the patriots displayed four effigies on a rolling stage: Lord North, the British prime minister; Thomas Hutchinson, the former Massachusetts governor; Pope Pius VI; and the devil. These four villains were placed in front of Ramadge's Tavern, on Broad and Church Streets. The pope sat in his chair, flanked by North and Hutchinson. Satan stood behind, watching over his minions. The devil carried a lantern "in the shape of a tea canister, on the sides of which were written [in] capitals, Hyson, Green, Congo and Bohea Teas." North's supposed goals were plastered on his chest—that is, to bring in the Stuart pretender, to establish popery, and to crush British freedom. Men and women came out all day to view the spectacle, and some swore they saw the pope and the devil tip their hats toward friends in the crowd.

The crowd rolled the stage about town briefly but left it at the tavern most of the day. Religious services were held in St. Michael's Church. Meanwhile, schoolboys paraded a second pope and devil through the streets. This pope had a lantern with illustrations on each side. One side depicted a burning tea canister, and another presented an allegory of America, spearing Lord North, who was kneeling on a tea chest. In the evening, protestors rolled the main stage to the parade ground, where they tossed the tea collected earlier by the schoolboys. Along with the schoolboys' effigies, everything was set ablaze. The tea brought "on our enemies in effigy that ruin which they had designed to bring on us in reality," wrote Peter Timothy.

This was a *real* tea party. Yet it was not the end of the

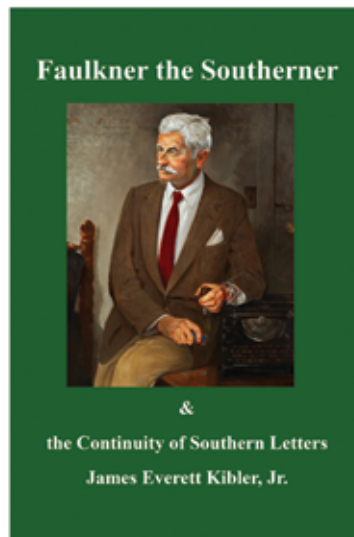


story either, for by 1776, the Continental Congress had reauthorized tea. At this point, the tea stuck in the Exchange Building, where it had been kept for nearly three years, was suddenly saleable. Roger Smith, Peter Leger, and William Greenwood were still doing business in Charleston. Unlike the tea consignees in Boston, these men had found ways to get along with the patriots, and now, they were appointed along with George A. Hall, a patriotic merchant-politician, to sell the East India Company's tea (rebranded as "publick tea") for the South Carolina state government. These sales occurred in late 1776 and 1777. They did not raise much money, but it was perhaps enough to pay for construction of some of Charleston's defenses, which had been so needed earlier that year during the British attack on the city, repulsed in the Battle of Sullivan's Island. The relative windfall from public tea sales was especially significant because South Carolina, like other states, had become locked in a cycle of money printing to fund the war effort. Selling hard assets, as opposed to printing paper money or raising taxes, was a welcome alternative source of government revenue for the patriots.

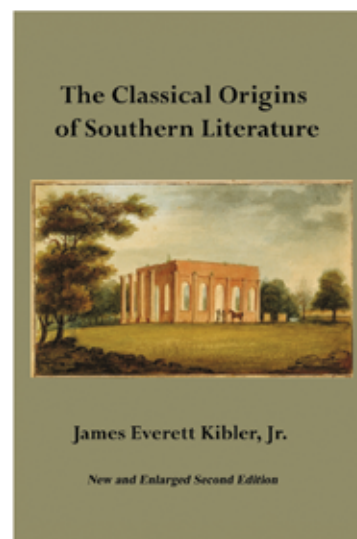
The final question we might ask is, was all this a success or a failure? The Charleston Tea Party always has existed in Boston's shadow, but that is misleading. It seems like the Bostonians were good patriots, who destroyed their tea, and the Charlestonians were less fervent patriots, saving the tea and selling it later. The reality is somewhat different. Four shiploads of tea left London for Boston in 1773. Patriots destroyed tea on board three vessels—the *Dartmouth*, the *Eleanor*, and the *Beaver*—but the *William* wrecked off Cape Cod. The *William* has almost always been ignored by historians. In fact, the tea from the *William* was salvaged and brought safely to Castle William, a fort on an island in Boston Harbor, where customs officials kept it under lock and key throughout 1774, until General Thomas Gage arrived with occupying British troops and wrested control of the city from the patriots. Then, the tea at Castle William could be legally sold, and the funds were remitted to the East India Company in 1775. Charlestonians were no more or no less successful than Bostonians. In both cities, the tea was impounded by customs officials, and in both cities, the tea was sold and drunk, if under radically different circumstances. ▼

*James R. Fichter is international historian and associate professor of global and area studies at the University of Hong Kong. He is the author of Tea: Consumption, Politics, and Revolution, 1773–1776, published by Cornell University Press.*

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