South Carolina
Revolutionary Era Biographies

# *The Revolutionary War of Colonel Robert and Mary Ouldfield Heriot*

*by*
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SC 250 ANNIVERSARY
American Revolution

ISBN: 978-1-961813-95-3

Published by
the South Carolina American Revolution
Sestercentennial Commission (SC250),
Columbia, S.C.

in conjunction with
United Writers Press
Asheville, N.C.

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# DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to three people who helped me move along the historical highway. All three of them would be delighted to see this book and to know their efforts were not in vain.

- ***Caroline Thompson Harrington*** *was a lifelong South Carolinian and my grandmother. When I was very young, she would tell me fascinating history stories and weave them in such a way that made me feel I was a natural part of history.*
- ***William H. Harrington****, my father. When I was young, he would subtly show me the charms of historic battlefields, sites, and homes which introduced me to famous people of the past. He never pushed history on me but rather put history in front of me and allowed me to absorb the magic. It was many years later that I understood that he was the magician.*
- ***Hugh T. Harrington****, my uncle. It was he who, 40 years ago, introduced me to Robert and Mary Heriot and their fascinating letters. We were both captivated by the Heriot story and he allowed me to work with him on some history projects that we both enjoyed immensely. He was a great friend who is very much a part of this book.*

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# FOREWORD

At first glance, it would appear that an account of the lives of Robert and Mary ("Polly") Heriot of South Carolina adds little to the story of the American Revolution. Robert Heriot held no major political offices, gave no fiery speeches extolling liberty as did Patrick Henry, and wrote no stirring appeals to patriotism such as those composed by Samuel Adams.

Although Heriot held the rank of colonel in the Revolutionary militia, he led no gallant charges, nor did he boldly defend important posts against great odds. On the contrary, it is likely that he never came under enemy fire throughout the entire war.

Mary Heriot's experiences seem similarly unremarkable. She penned no works in support of the American cause as Mercy Otis Warren did, and she did not even push privately for women's rights in the new republic, an effort that made Abigail Adams famous. What, then, can be learned from the Heriots' lives and wartime experiences?

The short answer is: much. While it has become a cliché to say that the Revolution affected the lives of everyone in the thirteen American colonies that rebelled against British rule, there is scant evidence to provide direct support for that generalization. Glimpses into the personal experiences of people in that era are rare, and the materials that are available usually come from prominent figures, such as John and Abigail Adams, and General Nathanael and Catherine Greene. The lives of Robert and Mary Heriot, related through their correspondence, reveal a great deal of information about the impact of the Revolution on families, and the struggles of individuals to navigate the vicissitudes of war.

Robert Heriot's early years in South Carolina were marked by unusual success. From his beginnings as a Scottish immigrant working for a Charleston merchant, and military service in the Cherokee War 1759–1761, Heriot's marriage to wealthy heiress Mary Ouldfield catapulted him into the planter class, with all the benefits that accompanied such status. He owned a home in Georgetown as well as his plantation house and acreage, profited from the labor of dozens of enslaved workers, and held local offices. Robert and Mary began raising a family and their future seemed to promise happiness and success.

Then came the Revolution. Most recent immigrants from the British Isles became Loyalists, but Robert, with economic and family ties to the low country planters who led South Carolina into the Revolution, joined the opposition to Britain. As a militia officer, he was present, though not a direct participant, in the defense of Charleston in 1776, and carried out various assignments to secure Georgetown from attack. Nevertheless, daily life for Robert and Polly continued with only minimal

disruption until General Sir Henry Clinton's British army captured Charleston in May 1780. Soon after, the British occupied Georgetown. Robert surrendered to the British and was sent to James Island, leaving Mary to raise their children, manage the plantation, and find means to accommodate to the new circumstances.

Instead of sharing the Georgetown house with her husband, Mary Heriot had to deal with British officers quartered in her home. She faced numerous challenges in so doing. How far could she press demands for Robert's release? Could she confide all her activities and opinions in her letters to Robert, knowing it was likely that the British would read her letters, as well as those written by her husband? And how far could she trust prewar acquaintances like James Cassells, a relative by marriage, or Robert Gray, both of whom now held colonels' commissions in the Loyalist militia.

## *Our Story*

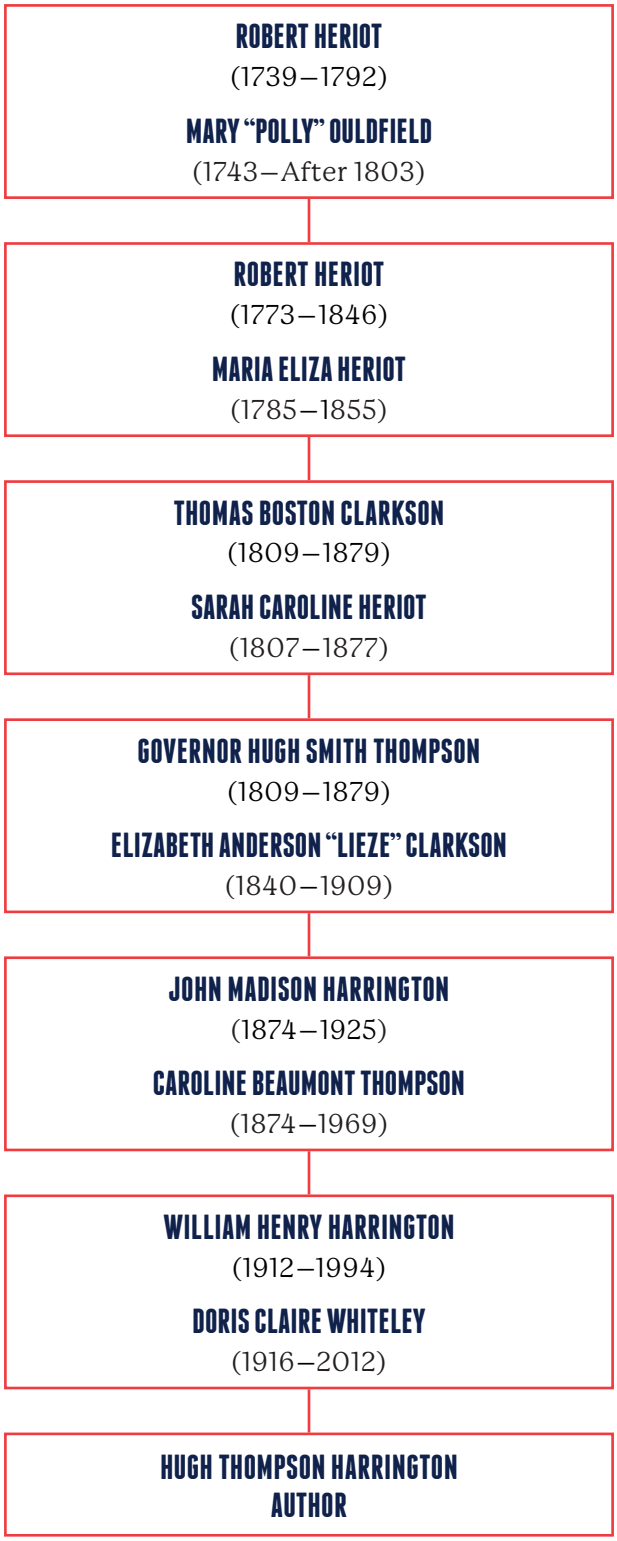
These were treacherous grounds, for if Mary Heriot could not fully trust any of these people, she could not afford to alienate them, either. Fortunately, Mary was an intelligent, capable woman who succeeded in avoiding conflict, except in one instance when a drunken British ship captain threatened her. The intervention of an enslaved man ended the confrontation, and a sympathetic British officer ensured that she suffered no ill consequences from the incident, though Mary found the incident terrifying.

Mary was plagued with loneliness, as was Robert. As an officer, the conditions of his confinement were not particularly harsh—he was spared the rigors of the prison ships in Charleston harbor that held enlisted men—yet he worried for his family and was frustrated by his inability to assist them. He found it especially painful when he learned that his children were afflicted with smallpox—he could not be present to offer comfort and encouragement, and when one child subsequently died of the disease, Robert and Mary could not grieve together or provide solace to one another; each had to bear alone the burden of their loss.

These are only some of the insights into a family's experiences during the War for independence that Hugh Harrington has diligently assembled and narrated here. In fact, the scope of this work extends beyond the Revolution. It furnishes glimpses into the lives of immigrants in the late colonial era, their efforts to maintain communication with families in the homes they left, and their attempts to establish new lives for themselves in America.

This volume also covers the years after the Revolution, when Robert and Mary Heriot, at last reunited, worked to restore the shattered bonds of family and rebuild their lives. Through the Heriot correspondence and other relevant sources, Harrington provides a rare look into the trials, tragedies, and triumphs of an eighteenth-century family swept into the vortex of political tumult, war, and disease, and demonstrates that much can be learned about the Revolution from the lives of lesser-known people who surmounted hardships every bit as difficult as those faced by their more famous and celebrated contemporaries.

*Jim Piecuch, Ph.D.*




*Author Hugh Harrington is the 4th great-grandson of Robert and Mary Heriot*

# INTRODUCTION

I was introduced to Colonel Robert and Mary Heriot, along with the letters they exchange during the War, by my uncle Hugh T. Harrington in the in the mid 1980s.

I was immediately fascinated by the "fact" that Heriot had been at Fort Sullivan during the attack of June 1776 and was captured at the fall of Charles Town in 1780. Unfortunately, neither of those "facts" proved to be true as Heriot was not at Fort Sullivan at the time nor was he captured at Charles Town. However, at the time, those "facts," along with the enjoyment of the teamwork with my uncle, ignited a fire in me to learn more.

Unfortunately, at that time I was not up to the task. Decades later, my research capabilities had advanced, and a much wider range of quality sources were available that has brought Robert Heriot and his family much closer to the light of scrutiny and into a finer focus.

The Heriots' story would almost certainly have been lost without the benefit of over a dozen personal family letters that have survived. As these letters are 250 years old and are almost literally unavailable anywhere else, when feasible, they have been included here in full. All letters and excerpts are indented and presented in *italics*. Editorial comments are in [brackets]. The letters have also been separated into paragraphs to make reading easier.

The terms "Whigs" and "Loyalists" are used to describe Americans with opposing political and military views. As both groups considered themselves to be "Patriots" and "Americans," to avoid confusion those words have not been used in that context.

The Heriot correspondence was laborioulsly transcribed from the original documents by Caldwell Woodruff and included in three typed manuscripts he published privately in 1918, 1919, and 1939. Only a few copies of those manuscripts still exist. Transcriptions included herein are derived from his work. For further review, one can find his works in the following repositories.

- *Colonel Robert Heriot, Revolutionary Soldier of South Carolina*, 1918.
- *Heriots of Scotland and South Carolina*, 1939 (microfilm 1952, Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, Indiana).
- *Heriot Family in Scotland, Canada and the USA*, 1939.

Also visit the South Carolina Historical Society in Charleston and the Caroliniana Library of the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC.

The majority of originals and other fragile documents of the Heriot correspondence can be found in the Heriot Family Papers, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

The final two letters exchanged by Mary and Robert, dated May 23, 1781 and June 9, 1781 are in the South Carolina Historical Society archives, "Robert Heriot Correspondence, 1781" manuscript 43/0111. The South Carolina Historical Society also has typed copies of the manuscripts of Heriot books authored by Caldwell Woodruff in which he transcribed the Heriot correspondence. Digitized images of these letters are presented at the end of the book with links to the archive.

# 1. THE JOURNEY BEGINS

*Robert Heriot's boyhood home in Scotland. Google Earth (map data © Google 2025).*

Robert Heriot had it all. He was the oldest son and therefore would inherit the prosperous farm in Scotland that his family had occupied for generations. His family was well-known and respected in the community. His future was bright. Yet, before the age of 20, he left it all behind, forever, to seek his future in South Carolina.

What sort of man would make such a decision? Only an adventurer. Robert Heriot was born July 28, 1739, on a farm in Castle Mains, part of the village of Dirleton (pronounced "dire-le-ton"), Scotland, 20 miles northeast of Edinburgh. His substantial two-story stone boyhood home still stands 75 yards east of Dirleton Castle.[1]

The farm had cattle, horses, colts, and sheep according to the will of his father, James Heriot (1700–1762), dated April 29, 1760.[2] His will also listed personal property such as silver plate.

James Heriot did not own the land he farmed. It was owned by one William Nisbet and held by James Heriot under a lease or "tack" as it is called in Scotland.

The lease system in Scotland at the time was much like a 99-year lease in the United States except that the lease remained with the heirs of the lessee as long as they wanted to keep it. In his will,

1 The current house can be seen on Google Earth

2 Caldwell Woodruff, *Heriots of Scotland and South Carolina* (Linthicum Heights, Maryland: privately printed, 1939).

James Heriot states that he had taken his second son John into the business and assigned the Tack over to him as his first son, Robert, was in South Carolina.

Robert faced a monumental decision as a young man. What caused him to turn his back on his home, family, and family history to go to South Carolina in about 1759? Was it because his father's farm was on leased land, with his brother having an interest in farming it? Or were there other factors?

In the mid-1700s, Scotland, and most of Europe, was in the midst of an economic downturn with few jobs. However, farming was not affected. Did he leave because of a failed love affair, or a criminal act on his part requiring him to flee, or was he looking for adventure in a distant land. Perhaps he dreamed of a future in the New World where the possibility existed for a man, with luck and hard work, to find success beyond that of his ancestors in Scotland. Whatever his motives, his was a bold move—the sort of move only a man of courage would undertake.

Although the challenges to get started in the New World were not trivial, Robert was not long in Charles Town before he met a woman who would change his life forever, Miss Mary Ouldfield[3] of Georgetown—"Polly"[4] to her friends.

3 Multiple spellings of the Ouldfield (Oldfield) name exist in the records. Throughout this book, the Ouldfield spelling will be used.

4 Although in intimate letters, Mary is referred to as "Polly," her formal name is used throughout in the narrative. Likewise, Robert is used throughout the narrative, but as will be seen, Heriot was known to his family and friends as "Bob" or "Rob."

# 2. MARY

Brought up in a wealthy household, she likely would have had the educational benefits of a private tutor and an exclusive female academy in Charles Town. Both of those likely would have emphasized subjects such as French, drawing, needlework and proper etiquette and deportment. In addition, and perhaps very importantly, her father had an extensive library that would have been available to her.

As a result, she could write beautifully. Not everyone could have penned, as she would on October 31, 1780, "My children once used to afford me inexpressible pleasure, but I have learned to look on them as a blessing lent for a short time," and, when writing to Robert after a long absence: "For my part, tho I have never said, as many perhaps in my situation might, that it is impossible for me to live without you, (to die when we please is not in our power.) I may with greater sincerity say I have never known one peaceful moment since we parted, nor shall I know either joy or comfort till we meet again."

Regrettably, Mary Ouldfield can only truly be known through her letters, but these are the words of an intelligent, well-educated woman. Mary's grandfather, John Ouldfield, Sr. (1673–1742), immigrated from England to Goose Creek, S.C., 13 miles NW of Charles Town. His son, John Ouldfield, Jr. (1706–1752), was born in Goose Creek and moved to Georgetown in the 1730s. He prospered, growing rice and, in the 1740s, was hugely successful in the indigo boom.

John Ouldfield Jr. married Anne LaRoche, the daughter of prominent Huguenot John LaRoche their only surviving child was Mary, who was born August 13, 1743 in Pee Dee, South Carolina. Ouldfield was one of the early Georgetown lot owners in 1737 and an important, influential, and wealthy man. In 1734, he was Justice of the Peace and sat in the Royal Assembly of South Carolina 1733–1736 and 1746–1751.

The inventory of John Ouldfield, Jr.'s estate reveals a wealthy and educated man. He owned mahogany tables, a dozen chairs, a backgammon table, silver flatware, 12 ivory-handled knives, and both pewter and china dishes. He owned five maps of the world plus music books, a violin, and a flute. His library included at least eighty titles including *Gulliver's Travels*, *John Milton's Paradise Lost*, the ancient Roman poet Ovid's *The Art of Love*, and an early encyclopedia called *Bayles' Dictionary*. Not surprisingly he was an early member of the Charles Town Library Society, which was the center of intellectual life in Charles Town. He also owned a four-volume set of Cato's letters. These essays condemning abuse of power, political corruption, and governmental tyranny were extremely popular—and influential—in the decades prior to the American Revolution. Many

South Carolina families had a history of conflict and persecution during the English civil wars of the previous century and were receptive to such writings. All these books would have been available to Mary. A copy appears at the of the end of this book before the Bibliography.

In 1745, when Mary was a small child, her mother Anne died. Seven years later, in 1752, her father died of smallpox on a trip to London, leaving his daughter the only heir to multiple plantations and 73 slaves.[5]

Mary had just reached the age of 16 when she first met 20-year-old Robert Heriot. Her financial guardian was none other than Thomas Middleton, about whom we will soon learn.

Little else is known of Mary Ouldfield at that time, other than that she was young and very wealthy. A watch belonging to her is extant with the name "Mary Oldfield" used instead of numbers on the face, clearly an indication of extravagant conspicuous consumption for any teenager.


*Mary Ouldfield watch exterior (L) an dial (R). Watch is part of a private collection.*

5 George C. Rogers, Jr. *The History of Georgetown, South Carolina* (University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 61.

*"Polly Ouldfield of Winyah" by Jeremiah Theus, Smithsonian American Art Museum, public domain.*

# 3. GETTING STARTED IN THE NEW WORLD

Robert Heriot's precise activities and whereabouts from 1756, when he was 17 years old, to October 1759, when he was 20, are vague. It is certain that he was in Holland in 1756, as his cousin John Heriot wrote him there on October 2. "I suppose you are still going on with the German Flute, and will certainly be in a short time an eminent Performer, by the assistance of a little practice…"[6] If we assume that cousin John was not being facetious, we may conclude that Robert was accomplished with the German flute, which may imply that he was well educated. However, where he was educated is unknown. He stayed in Holland, perhaps for a year, training in "Italian Bookkeeping," known today as double-entry bookkeeping.[7] In his will of April 29, 1760, James Heriot states that he gave Robert £100 sterling "on his going abroad…"[8] This gift, or advance on his inheritance, was likely intended to help Robert get a start in life in his great adventure to the New World.

The first indication that Robert had gone to the colonies is an August 20, 1759 letter from his father. Writing from Castlemains, Dirleton, he addressed the letter to "Mr. Robert Heriot, at the house of Mr. Chas. Mayne, Merchant in Charles Town, South Carolina."

> *My D. Bob,*
>
> *I was surprised to hear from Mr. Moodie* [unidentified] *of your voyage to Jamaica & nothing of it from yourself till I got your letter Nov. 21* [Robert's last letter was Nov. 21, 1758, 9 months earlier]*, last several weeks after Mr. Moodie wrote me; you promised to write me on your arrival at Kingston* [Jamaica] *& as often afterwards as you had opportunitys, likeways to write me Immediately on your return to Charn. none of all of which you have done.*[9] *I shall be sorry if the common observation shall be veryfied by you likeways that young men going abroad in your way in a great measure forget their dearest frds. at home. I think it very strange not to hear from Jamaica when so frequent intercourses pass and repass to Lon.* [London] *I wrote to the Dr., Mr. Moodie and yourself Aprile 9 by Lo'n* [London] *I have heard frequently from them both since you went to Jamaica & they are surprised never to hear from you also; Mr. Moodie wrote his wife some time ago, the not from yourself, but a frd. at Kingston wrote that you was well and that you lodged there. I hope you are arrived safe at*

6 October 2, 1756, Letter of John Heriot, Sheriff-Clark at Haddington to Robert Heriot.

7 The synopsis of Heriot manuscript holdings includes a reference to "Italian Bookkeeping," dated May 1757.

8 Will of James Heriot (1700–1762) dated April 29, 1760. Recorded January 6, 1763, in Register House, Edinburgh.

9 It is not entirely clear, but it seems that Robert had been in Charles Town prior to Kingston, Jamaica, as indicated by "your return to Charn."

*Chrs'n before now, whence would be very agreeable news to us all but especially to your poor Mother who is now turned extremely anxious about you.*

*Howev'r. say Rob that I can rely on my own judgment to give you advise but I think you should not undertaken this voyage without a view of some visible advantage as I think the practical part of business & understanding the nature of the trade of the place ought to be your chief study.*

*I wou'd beg you would weigh things rationally in your mind & not sufer yourself to be drawn away by motives that are pleasing to young, giddy minds, of being seen in the World & making a show. I suppose Mr. Mayne encouraged you in this by something flattering to youth more than some small profit, but the real useful part of your business lyes at your littern for sometime, but that is now over. I hope in the Goodness of Divine Providence for your protection these Ticklish times. There is very great hazard in going to sea & as God has preserved you hitherto from the enemy* [the French, as the Seven Years War was in progress] *I think it was very wrong to go to Sea again. It will be a great pleasure to us all to hear you are returned in safety & applying close to business.*

*You are my dear Bob, part of my daily prayers to Heaven to bless, preserve & prosper you & keep you from youthful snares & Temptations, which is the Rock that many many promising young men has split on. As you are now out into the World & conversing with mankind you will find that many vices & follies which the sober, Rational, prudent part of mankind views in a true light, are scofed & laught at by the Generality but I must in the way of my Duty as a parent who had the Charge of your Education as a Christian tell you that those are all deceptions of the Corrupt heart of man; that virtue is the only ornament & happiness of the human mind & what only can Justify claim the favour & esteem of God & man & only in the way of true prudence & Godliness can men expect to thrive & prosper in the World. I would fain persuade myself when you left that you had an abhorrence at all kinds of vice I pray God it may be so with you still & as I have heard nothing to the Contrary I hope it is so with you still than which no Earthly thing will give your parents greater pleasure.*

*I had a letter the last from your Uncle May 28, he is very well, takes some thoughts of coming home soon as he is confirmed in his health. I think I wrote your sister* [Janet] *was married to Jo* [John] *Cunningham by her own choice they were married privately in Nov last Fall. Jo done her justice notwithstanding & settled a contract since her marriage. She is here staying to bring forth her first child. She seems very happy in her choice, may it long last.*

*There is nothing material to write you from this country; as for private things Mrs. Moodie who bring this will inform, as for the publick news, they will reach you long before this arrives.*

*Mrs. Moodie, poor woman has ventured over with her small family. I don't wonder at it considering what kind husband she has.*

*I shown her all the frd'ship in my power both on Mr. Moodies own acct., who was always a very good neighbor & more so for all his Civillitys to you who has in his power & I hope whose heart also to do you service.*

*Your Mama has enjoyed pretty good health for some time. She was pretty ill in the Spring with her old trouble of low spirits but is now tollerably well.*

*Mrs. Moodie goes passenger with Capt. Ritchie of Brant Island. Robert Watson your old frd. goes out for Charles Town, Commander of the Industry of Cockenzie, Jo Caddell, Wm. Caddell's second son with him who is advertised to sail the end of August, by whom I am to write to the dor., Mr. Moodie & yourself in case of accident to this.*

*We have been f 'vd. with one of the mildest Winters I ever mind & one of the best summers. I begun to cut my cropt the 13th inst which is amongst the earlyest harvest in our time; the cropt is a midlin cropt but the wheat only is very indifferent.*

*Pray Bob write me if this finds you safe arrived at Charles Town as often as you can, if by Lon'dn, may direct to the care of Mr. William Yate, who puts them under a frank along with William's* [perhaps] Robert's brother (1745–1807)] *letters with whom he corresponds & write him to this effect as I sent him some franks to Lon. for that purpose. May God Almighty bless you & prosper you & spare you for a Comfort to us. I have been a little out of health by a disorder in my stomack but after blooding, vomiting & other helps I thank God I am now better.*

*Your mother, Jenny D* [illegible] *who stays with us now, Jacky, Jamie & Willy* [brothers, John, Richard, James and William] *all send their love to you.*

*your very afect Father, while,*
*Ja Heriot*[10]

In the third paragraph, James Heriot uses the word "enemy." It should be remembered that the French and Indian—or Seven Years—War was being fought at this time and James was cautioning Robert about the dangers of traveling. Robert, as his father pointed out, like many offspring, did not write as often as parents would wish.

It may be that James was telling his son to stay away from the slave trade. His statement that "I suppose Mr. Mayne encouraged you in this by something flattering to youth more than some

10 Woodruff, *Heriots of Scotland and South Carolina (1939)*, unpaginated. South Carolina Historical Society.

small profit" implies that Robert was employed by Mayne and that Mayne may, for some obscure reason, have attempted to lead Robert astray.

Robert's function in Jamaica is unclear but may well have related to the slave trade, as the Scots were involved in both the triangular slave trade between Britain, Africa and the West Indies and owned slaves—in Scotland and Jamaica.[11]

Charles Mayne, to whose home James Heriot addressed the letter, was a merchant dealing with a wide variety of merchandise that included slaves. In the period 1753–1755, prior to Robert's appearance, Mayne brought portions of five cargoes of slaves, consisting of approximately 525 individuals, into Charles Town.[12]

It is unknown exactly when Robert arrived in Charles Town or when he became associated with Mayne. If indeed Robert worked for Mayne, he likely performed a financial service.

In June 1759, Mayne placed a notice in the newspapers that he "intended to go to the Northward the ensuing fall" and asked those who owed him money to please settle their accounts. Mayne was likely ill as he died three months later on September 30.[13] His obituary noted that he "had lately retired from business."

11 The Scottish History Society, https://scottishhistorysociety.com/scotland-and-black-slavery-to-1833/.

12 W. Robert Higgins, "Charles Town Merchants and Factors Dealing in the External Negro Trade 1735–1775," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 65, no. 4 (Oct. 1964): 205-217.

13 See *South Carolina Gazette*, December 18, 1755, for Mayne's involvement with the slave ship "Gambia." Mayne's desire to leave Charles Town appears in *South Carolina Gazette*, June 16, 1759. His death is found in the *South Carolina Gazette*, October 6, 1759.

# 4. WAR WITH THE CHEROKEE, 1759-1761

Although Charles Mayne was no longer in Charles Town, the year 1759 was a busy one for Robert Heriot—as well as for South Carolina, the other colonies, the British, the French, and native Americans. In very broad terms, the western settlements and isolated farms along the frontier of South Carolina were caught up in the French and Indian War. The war was violently brought home to S.C. settlers by Cherokee attacks and reprisals in a deadly cycle of violence. These Cherokee attacks often were in retaliation for losses suffered by the Cherokee in attacks in North Carolina and Virginia.

Deaths, scalpings, and burned homes were common. The Cherokee believed they had a right to retaliate for violence done to them, and their young men saw war as a matter of honor and duty. War was an opportunity for the young men to win respect among their peers.

There were other issues at play as well. The Cherokee believed, rightly, that their land was being encroached upon by the whites, which not only cost territory but also cut down the populations of deer, bear, and beaver. Unlicensed traders sold rum to them, which impacted the productivity of their hunting, their social activities, and consumed their expendable incomes.[14]

The colonial South Carolina governor, 34-year-old William Henry Lyttelton, considered the Cherokee to be murderers and demanded that those Cherokee responsible for the deaths of settlers be handed over to the authorities. The Cherokee saw their men as acting for the honor of their families. Lyttelton did not address any of their grievances and, instead, escalated the conflict.[15]

To complicate matters, the huge enslaved African-American majority in South Carolina, riled up by evangelical preachers and Spanish governors offering freedom in St. Augustine, saw the white men's conflict with the Cherokee as a potential life-changing opportunity. As a result, fear of a massive slave revolt spread through Charles Town.

In July 1759, some black conspirators were captured. Their plan had been to get arms from a storehouse and literally attack Charles Town. There were rumors that the Cherokee would join with the slaves in their revolt. The situation was unacceptable and terrifying in the extreme to whites such as Robert Heriot. One popular solution was that the Cherokee must be pacified by force if necessary.[16]

14 Daniel J. Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis, Cherokees, Colonists, and Slaves in the American Southeast, 1756–1763.* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 61.

15 Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis,* 63.

16 Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis,* 65.

Captured ring leaders of the slave revolt were brought to trial. One man was hanged, another escaped, and those who testified for the colony were released. That ended the threat of a slave uprising temporarily, although the fear of such an event was always present among the whites.

As for the Cherokee, Lyttelton made the problems worse by invoking economic sanctions. Sales of guns and ammunition were withheld. This embargo infuriated the Cherokee—they could not hunt without ammunition and, as a result, they would not be able to obtain animal skins to sell in exchange for goods at the white trading posts.

In response, the Cherokee took settlers' scalps, which they displayed at Fort Prince George in the far northwestern part of the colony, and told the commander there that they were going to sell the scalps to the French. The idea of selling scalps to the French suggested that settlers would be killed and scalped to obtain the guns and ammunition withheld. In fact, the Cherokee made it clear that if the embargo were ended, the settlers would not be killed.[17]

In August and September 1759, attacks on settlers continued. While few in gross numbers, the vision of Cherokee attacks on the frontier stirred the white population and Governor Lyttelton into action. The militia was called out. Curiously, slaves could be included in the militia provided their owners certified to their good behavior,[18] but there is no evidence that any slaves were engaged on the Lyttelton expedition.

In mid-October, dozens of Cherokees came to Charles Town to negotiate with Lyttelton to resolve the situation. They spoke of their need for ammunition and supplies. They also brought up the long-standing fact that soldiers were raping Cherokee women.

However, as they would not turn over those who had killed white settlers, nothing was accomplished. The Indians, Lyttelton decided, were to be held as hostages to be taken along on the march to Fort Prince George to force the Cherokees to give up the murderers. The governor would lead the expedition personally.[19]

The expedition consisted of about 1,500 militiamen. A major difficulty was that the Commons House of Assembly agreed to fund the expedition but only until January 1, 1760, thus limiting Lyttelton to a very brief show of force. They left Charles Town on October 16, moving toward their pre-arranged militia rendezvous at the Congarees, near present-day Columbia, S.C. Along the line of march, other units joined the expedition.

17 Rogers, *History of Georgetown,* 68.

18 Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis,* 68.

19 Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis,* 75.

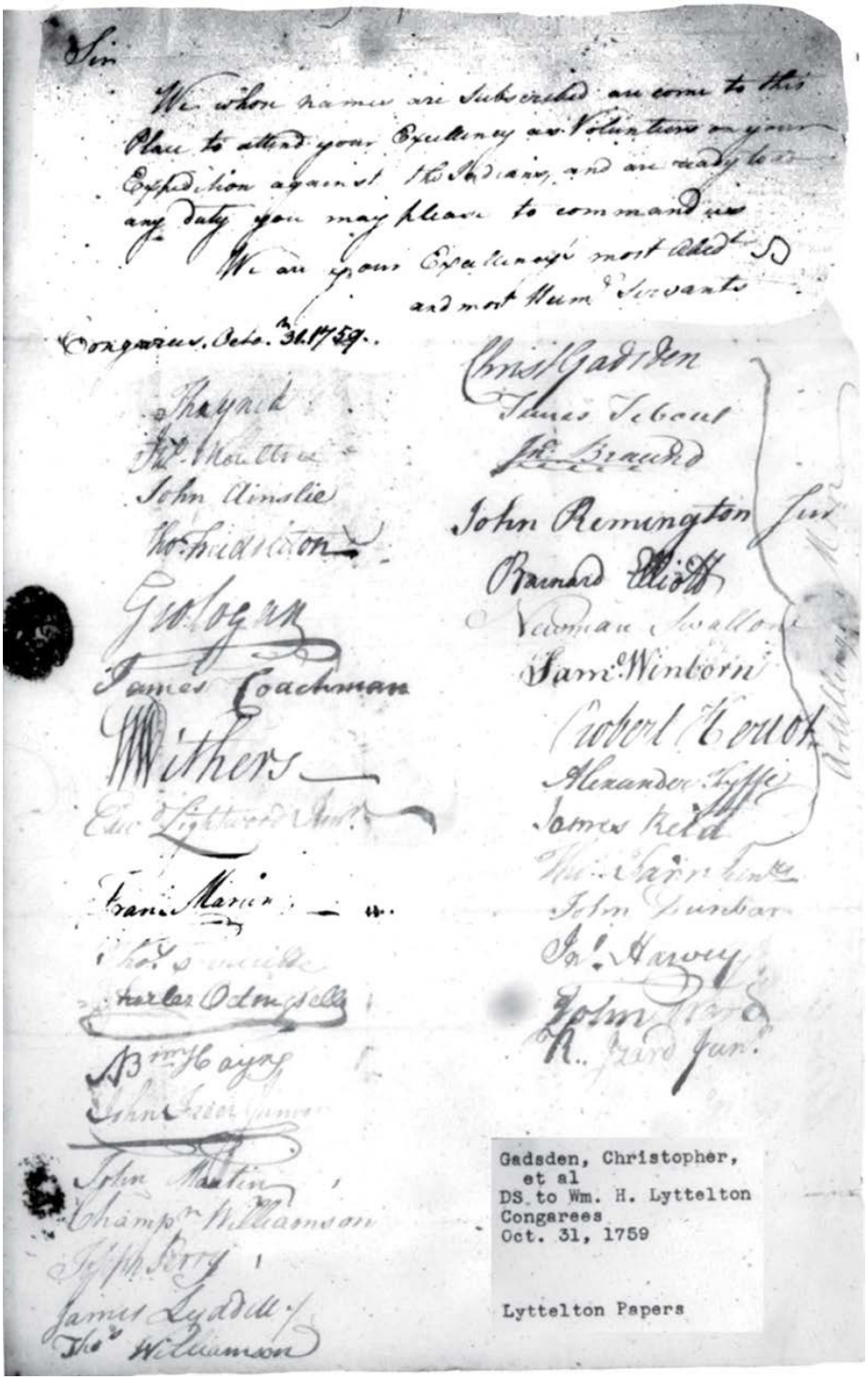
*Christopher Gadsden*

Among Governor Lyttelton's men were a group of "gentlemen volunteers" from Charles Town organized by Christopher Gadsden. For the past couple of years, Gadsden had headed a group called the "Charles Town Artillery Company," which was a group of citizens who often casually learned the arts of using small artillery pieces.

The colonial militia, throughout the colonies, were mostly social and semi-military organizations, sometimes with uniforms, who indulged in much drinking, dances, and camaraderie… and a bit of drilling. But the drilling was often a secondary consideration. Robert may have joined the artillery company as it would have stood apart from other companies due to their choice of weapons. Why deal with muskets when artillery was available.

Then again, Robert may have been taken with Christopher Gadsden's personality. Thirty-five-year-old Christopher Gadsden was the leader of a radical South Carolina faction long before the Revolution. A very wealthy merchant and ardent patriot when he was elected to the Commons House of Assembly in 1757, his strong stand against the royal government and its governors likened him to Samuel Adams of Massachusetts.

Gadsden wrote Governor Lyttelton, on October 31, 1759. Thirty-three men signed this document including Robert Heriot and future revolutionaries, Christopher Gadsden, Francis Marion, and Thomas Lynch, Sr. Ten of the men, including Robert Heriot and Christopher Gadsden, are singled out as "Artillery Men." The fact that there are ten "artillery men" suggests that there were two pieces of artillery. As 20-year old Robert Heriot was identified as an "Artillery Man," it is likely he was a member of Gadsden's Charles Town Artillery Company before Lyttelton conceived his expedition against the Cherokee.




*"Gadsden to Lyttelton, Oct. 31, 1759"*
*The William Henry Lyttelton papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan*

On November 5 at the Congarees, the Gentlemen Volunteers elected Thomas Middleton (1719–1766) their captain.[20] The route of Lyttelton's march went from Charles Town to Monck's Corner, Amelia, Congarees, Saluda Old Town, and Ninety Six, and ended at Fort Prince George in the northwest corner of the colony, on December 9, 1759.

With time running out in less than three weeks, the Governor immediately attempted to engage the Cherokees in negotiations. The army suffered from daily desertions, smallpox, and measles. Not a shot was fired in anger. Clearly, the army was no serious threat to the Cherokees and the Cherokees knew it.

However, due to the hostages, the Cherokees could not take the chance of attacking the whites. Less than impressed with the ineffective show of force, they dragged out the negotiations as Lyttelton's force grew weaker. With his army ready to disband on January 1, Lyttelton concluded the Treaty of Fort Prince George with the Cherokees on December 26. He brought back three murderers turned in by the Cherokees. However, left behind at the fort were 21 hostage Cherokees representing those settlers killed by the Cherokee. The hostages would only be exchanged for additional murderers. The treaty settled nothing. The expedition was an utter failure.[21]

The governor and his army headed back to Charles Town on December 30. Late in the evening of Jan. 8, 1760, Lyttelton along with Captain Gadsden and the gentlemen volunteers arrived at Charles Town from Fort Prince George to a hero's welcome.[22] The streets filled with cheering crowds. Celebratory bonfires were lit, cannons fired salutes from ships in the harbor and the forts. Very likely this was Robert's first military experience, and it ended in failure despite the celebration.[23]

The failure continued even after their return. Within a few weeks, the Cherokees had renewed hostilities and even killed the commander of Fort Prince George while he was under a flag of truce. The 21 hostage Cherokees left at Fort Prince George as representatives of the slain settlers were also killed by the military.[24]

20 *SC Gazette*, November 10, 1759.

21 Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis,* 80.

22 *SC Gazette*, January 8-12, 1760.

23 Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis,* 81.

24 Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis*, 81. The best coverage of the wars in S.C. and the Lyttelton expedition is in Tortora, Daniel J., *Carolina in Crisis*, p. 60-81; See also Alan Calmes, "The Lyttelton Expedition of 1759: Military Failures and Financial Successes," *South Carolina Historical Magazine 77*, (Jan 1976): 10-73.

Although inoculation was illegal in South Carolina, a great many citizens sought inoculation for themselves, their families, and their slaves. Doctors, as well as well-intentioned laymen, performed inoculations. The procedure was to run a needle and thread through a pustule on the body of an infected person until the thread was wet. The wet thread was then placed in a cut made in the arm of the person being inoculated and bandaged. If all went well, the patient would then suffer a mild case of smallpox and become immune to future infection. Of course, some died from the procedure itself.[25]

Six thousand people out of a population of 8,000, evenly divided between white and black, were inoculated. Six-hundred-fifty people died, of whom 300 were white and 350 black.[26] No estimate has been found of the number of deaths among those who had been vaccinated.

Eliza Lucas Pinckney, wife of Charles Pinckney, Chief Justice of South Carolina, later wrote:

> *The people of Charles Town were inoculation mad, I think I may call it, and rushed into it with such persipitation that I think it impossible they could have had either proper preparation or attendance had there been 10 doctors in town to one. The Doctors could not help it—the people would not be said nay.*[27]

She also commented that she had her slaves inoculated.

It is interesting to speculate on Robert Heriot's situation in the summer and fall of 1759 just before the Lyttelton expedition. Charles Mayne, his employer—if that's indeed what he was—had retired and then died. Twenty-year-old Robert's occupation, therefore, is unknown, and his income was likely not substantial.

In 1760, there was another expedition against the Cherokees in South Carolina, an operation conducted by British regulars commanded by Colonel Archibald Montgomery. It is almost certain that Robert Heriot was not connected with this expedition as the only colonial troops involved were from the back country. State militia Colonel Thomas Middleton was not involved, either. Col. Montgomery took the Cherokees by surprise and burned villages and destroyed crops in South Carolina. He continued on to the Northwest but was ambushed in the North Carolina mountains along the Little Tennessee River near Echoe, which is close to present day Franklin, NC. After that battle Montgomery returned to Charles Town. Hostilities with the Cherokee continued.[28]

The third and last campaign of the war, in 1761, was led by British Lieutenant Colonel James Grant who had been Montgomery's second in command in the 1760 operation. South Carolinians wanted the

25 Suzanne Krebsbach, "The Great Charlestown Smallpox Epidemic of 1760." *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 97, no. 1 (Jan. 1996): 30-37.

26 Krebsbach, "Charlestown Smallpox Epidemic," 37.

27 Krebsbach, "Charlestown Smallpox Epidemic," 33.

28 Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis*, 118-130.

Cherokees crushed to end the threat to the frontier and also reduce the threat of slave uprisings. Grant led a force of 1,600 British regulars plus the South Carolina militia commanded by Colonel Thomas Middleton, for a total force of about 2,250. The army of Colonel Grant marched to Fort Prince George in May 1761. Continuing to the northwest on June 10, the army was ambushed near where Montgomery had been attacked the previous year. Grant, however, fought off the attackers and continued on his mission. He burned many Cherokee towns and a couple thousand acres of their crops in the Little Tennessee and Tuckasseegee valleys. By the time Grant returned to Fort Prince George on July 9 he estimated he had driven 5,000 Indians into the woods, leaving them short of ammunition, shelter, and food.[29]

The Cherokees sued for peace and signed a preliminary treaty in September 1761. The final treaty was signed December 18, 1761. While not destroyed, the Cherokees were subdued. However, many South Carolinians, Thomas Middleton among them, wanted a complete military victory and were not satisfied, believing that Grant had been too soft on the Cherokees.[30]

Colonel Thomas Middleton, prior to embarking on the campaign, had obtained an extraordinary letter from Lieutenant Governor William Bull giving Middleton permission to leave the expedition any time that it became "disagreeable" to him. Two days after returning to Fort Prince George, Middleton, without even notifying Colonel Grant, his commanding officer, who was unaware of the letter from Lieutenant Governor Bull, left the army and proceeded to Charles Town.[31] He arrived in Charles Town on the evening of July 14.[32]

It is unlikely that Heriot participated in the second and third Cherokee campaigns due to other events, as detailed in a letter to his mother written August 30, 1762.

> *"My Dear Mama",*
>
> *It is with the greatest of pleasure I hear of your welfare by Papa's letters of 26th April and 30 of May, last and hope that my sister and brothers are likeways well. I am very sorry that my letters to Papa should miscarry so often and be a means of making you think I have forgot you. Be assured I never can and that my regard for you is as great as on the morning I parted with you.*
>
> *You no doubt have heard by this time the particulars of my marriage by my letter of January last to Papa. But in case you should not, I'll trouble you with them. About three years ago [1759] I went to Geo.Town, 60 miles to the northward of Chas.Town, to see our friend and*

29 Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis*, 147-153; Robert M. Weir, *Colonial South Carolina, A History*, (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1893), 272-273.

30 Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 273.

31 Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis*, 156.

32 Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis*, 147-157; Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 272-273; David D. Wallace, *South Carolina, A Short History* (University of *South Carolina Press*, 1951), 180-181. For date of Middleton's return to Charles Town, see South Carolina Gazette, July 18, 1761.

*relative, Mr. Cleland,*[33] *[the relationship between the Heriots and John Cleland, and his wife Mary, has not been established] where I got first acquainted with Miss Polly Ouldfield, sole heiress of John Ouldfield, Esq. deceased. Soon after this I went to Chas. Town to spend the Winter, where I got still more intimate with her. Polly must have gone to Charles Town for the winter. This intimacy continued about a year. I never disclosed to her, being too sensible of the great difference between my means and circumstances and those of so many of the first and richest young gentlemen of the Province, whose repeated offers she had rejected. Still, one day hearing her bantered about the many men of fortune she had rejected, she generously declared fortune was no merit in her eyes, that she had a fortune sufficient of her own and being independent, could marry the man she loved, if he had a good character and only six pence in his pocket [one wonders if this remark by Mary was intentionally made within Robert's hearing]. This frank declaration was no unfavorable omen to the part I had to act. About a week after, I left Chas. Town, I set out for Geo. Town, in company with Mr. Kinlock [unidentified], who lived hard by. On my arrival I found everything on the lady's part as favorable as I could expect but was opposed by some of her relations to whom her estate would devolve should she die under age, which, by her father's will was 18, or the day of her marriage. This gave me little concern, knowing she minded nobody but her guardian, the Honble. Colonel Thos. Middleton, of the So. Carolina regiment, who, fortunately for me, knew me on the expedition to the Cherokee Indians. This gentleman presented me with a letter for the lady which was greatly in my favor. Soon after we were married at her aunt's,*[34] *where were present many of her relations and my friends. You no doubt will think I should be particular about the person I am joined to for life. I therefore assure you she is possessed of every qualification to render the married state a blessing. As to her person, I propose sending you her picture some time hence. By what I can remember, she resembles Miss Peggy Lewis of Leith very, very much in person, size and I think a little in the face, only she has black hair and a very great bloom in her cheeks while Miss Lewis was pale and reddish hair…*

On July 11, 1761, while the military expedition was in progress, the South Carolina Gazette published the announcement: "On Monday the 30th ult. Mr. Robert Herriot, was married (at Winyah) to Miss Mary Oldfield, only Daughter of the late John Oldfield, Esq."[35]

33 John Cleland. Robert Heriot witnessed the will of John Cleland, May 17, 1760. A house at 405 Front Street, Georgetown, S.C. belonged to John and Mary Cleland. However, it was sold in 1753 to the Clelands' nephew, so it was not the house that Robert Heriot visited in 1759. Cleland was the largest landowner in Georgetown in 1736. See Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 81. John Cleland was active in the slave trade. He, along with one Wallace, brought into Charles Town two cargoes during 1736–1738 consisting of approximately 500 individuals. In 1738, acting alone, John Cleland imported approximately 225 more individuals in one cargo. See Higgins, "Charles Town Merchants and Factors Dealing in the External Negro Trade 1735–1775," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 65, no. 4 (Oct. 1964): 205-217.

34 Aunt Susannah (LaRoche) Mann, widow of Dr. John Mann. The wedding was likely held at the Mansfield Plantation on the Black River. Susannah Mann bought the plantation in 1756 after Dr. Mann died in 1755, and named it Mansfield in his honor.

35 *South Carolina Gazette* [Charles Town] July 11, 1761, "Monday the 30th ult." implies June 30th. However, June 30th was not a Monday but was rather Tuesday.

Note this was not a statement that they *would* be married but rather that they *had* been married on June 30. However, the announcement was in error.

The July 18, 1761 issue of the newspaper retracted the marriage notice: "The account in our last of Mr. Robert Herriot's marriage to Miss Mary Oldfield was premature. Neither the gentleman nor the lady being married."[36]

One wonders how this erroneous information got into the newspaper. Presumably, Robert had asked Mary to marry him and she had accepted. Also in the letter to his mother, Robert wrote that Mary's guardian, Thomas Middleton, who "knew me on the expedition to the Cherokee Indians" had "presented me with a letter for the lady which was greatly in my favor." Perhaps Middleton, as Mary's guardian, notified the newspaper that the couple had not been married, as the very same issue carried notice that Middleton had returned to Charles Town.[37] Clearly, Robert Heriot was not on the expedition but rather in Charles Town involved in marriage arrangements.

As noted earlier, Mary Ouldfield Heriot must have been a most remarkable woman. In the letter to his mother, Robert spoke of a young lady, less than 18 years old, who clearly thought for herself and did not consider wealth and position when looking at a potential husband. "[T]he great difference between my means and circumstances and those of so many of the first and richest young gentlemen of the Province, whose repeated offers she had rejected."

She also apparently did not submit to the views of her relatives, whose advice she may have sought and valued as she was growing up. "[S]he was opposed by some of her relations to whom her estate would devolve should she die under age."

After the wedding, it can be presumed that Robert moved from modest accommodations in Charles Town to Georgetown. As a single teenaged lady, it is unlikely that Mary Ouldfield had a home of her own. More likely she lived with her aunt, Susannah (LaRoche) Mann. After they were married, the couple would likely live in Georgetown in their own home, perhaps keeping a substantial home in Charles Town as well, although no such residence has been identified.[38]

36 *South Carolina Gazette*, July 18, 1761.

37 *South Carolina Gazette*, July 18, 1761.

38 No residence for Robert Heriot, nor George Heriot, appears in the 1782 or 1790 Charleston City Directories. The Charleston County Public Library has print and digital copies of the extant City Directories. However, it is entirely plausible that property was rented or leased for which there would likely be no documentation.

Georgetown was a port of entry, although on a much smaller scale than Charles Town, which cleared 360 ships in 1765 while Georgetown cleared only 40. These figures do not include the coastal trade to Charles Town, which, of course, was very large. One hindrance to shipping was the shallow bar in Winyah Bay at the mouth of the Georgetown harbor that measured only 12 feet in depth.[39]

Winyah Bay is formed from the Sampit, Black, Pee Dee and Waccamaw Rivers. The vast rice and indigo plantations were on these rivers and used them for transport. Just south of Georgetown are the North and South Santee Rivers that empty into the Atlantic.

It is unfortunate that Middleton's letter of recommendation has not survived as it might have provided more information on the timing of Robert's proposal to Mary. In any case, Robert and Mary were married November 5, 1761, with the appropriate and correct notice appearing a week later in the newspaper.

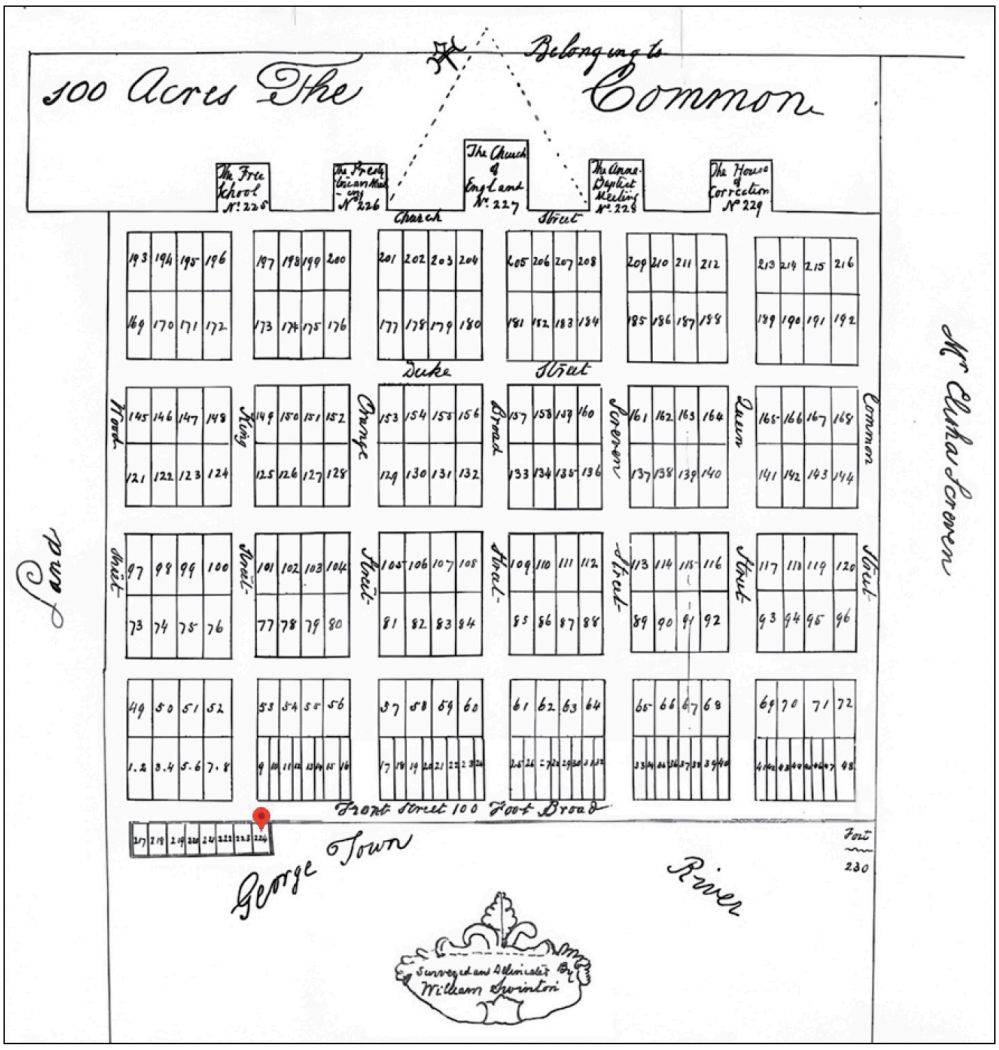
> *On Thursday the 5th instant, was married, at Winyah, Mr. Robert Herriot, to Miss Mary Ouldfield.*[40]

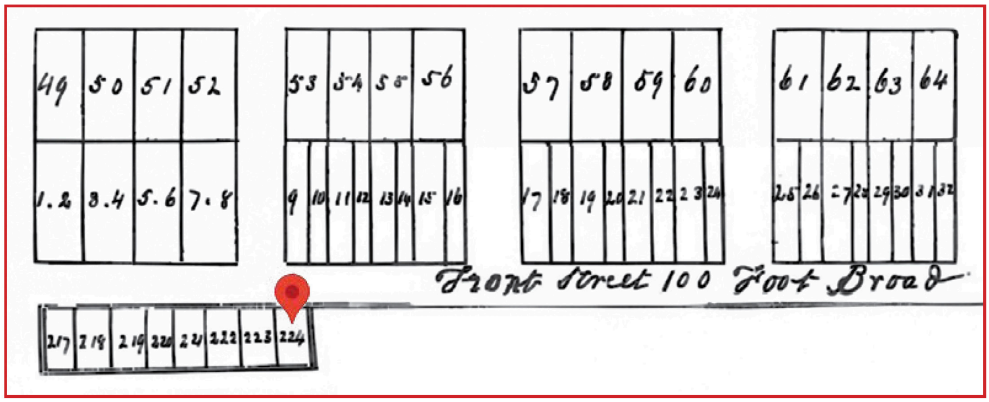
Polly was 18 and Bob was 22 years of age.

After being apparently so instrumental in facilitating the ultimate marriage of Robert and Mary Heriot, Thomas Middleton fades from their story. He died in Beaufort, South Carolina in 1766 at the age of 47.

39 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 97, 98.

40 *South Carolina Gazette*, November 14, 1761.




*Excerpted from 1734 Georgetown plat map by William Swinton.*
*Lot 224 is the lot on which the Heriot house once stood.*

# 5. LIFE AS A PLANTER

Upon his marriage to Mary, Robert Heriot was catapulted from a young man with limited prospects to a wealthy planter with considerable responsibilities, a position for which he had no knowledge nor experience. He would have known farming in Scotland but that likely was not much help dealing with rice, indigo, overseers and a large enslaved workforce. After the crops came in, he then had to learn how to market them. Naturally, he would have had a factor, his man of business, in Charles Town but he would have to know if the factor was dealing fairly with him. He had much to learn, on the job, and fast. He also would have to learn how, when, and what slaves to purchase for the plantation as well as for their home.

Indigo, the sought-after blue dye, was an important crop and was advantageous, as it could be grown on land not suitable for rice. In addition, the work periods to produce it did not coincide with that required for rice production, allowing the same workforce to produce both crops. Production is very labor intensive; thus an increase in slave labor was necessary over rice alone. In 1748, the British Parliament granted a bounty, or incentive, on each pound of indigo. Production boomed as did the profits.

In 1748, South Carolina produced 138,118 pounds of processed indigo. In 1754, it had leaped to 216,924 pounds. In 1775, production reached 1,107,660 pounds. Simply put, John Ouldfield, Jr.'s investments reaped a fortune. His daughter not only inherited that fortune, but it continued to grow after the death of her father in 1752.[41]

After planting, a great deal of weeding was required to prevent the plants from being choked out. In two months the first cutting could be made. It took skill and judgment to get the dye from the plant. Three vats, a steeper, a battery and a settler were used in succession. In the steeper the leaves were

41 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 88-92.

kept under water to ferment for 20 hours. The weather had to be watched and the temperature of the fermenting batch controlled. After the steeper, the liquid was drained into the battery where it was continually mixed until it changed into the proper color when the mixing had to be stopped at the right moment. The liquid was being checked constantly. The liquid was then transferred to the settler for four to twelve hours. The indigo particles would settle and be gathered up in trays or bags to dry. When dry, it was cut into cubes and sent to market. One acre could produce about fifty pounds of indigo that would sell for about twenty shillings per pound. The process required skill and judgment.[42]

Slave importation into South Carolina, of course, increased during this period of growth in rice and indigo production. From 1720 to 1726, the average annual importation of slaves to the colony was 616. The average for the years 1731–1738 was 2,089.[43]

With Robert's newfound wealth and social standing came public positions. Less than a year later, in April 1762, Heriot would be named Justice of the Peace for Craven County, a position he would hold for many years. The Justice of the Peace was appointed by the Governor and was responsible for the local government of the counties. The justices would try cases where less than £20 was involved and not crimes involving homicide, robbery, rape, or assault. He could investigate such crimes and set bail or bind the defendant over to the Court of General Sessions and have the constable take the defendant to Charles Town for trial. Georgetown did not have a jail until 1772.[44] From 1763 to at least 1767, he was also tax collector.[45]

Justices of the peace were concerned with issues involving slaves discovered off their plantations without passes, masters failing to provide proper clothing and food, or working a slave more than fifteen hours per day. If a slave was found guilty of a capital offense and executed, the justice of the peace would determine the value of the slave so that the owner could be compensated out of public funds.[46]

42 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 89; Virginia Jelatis, "Indigo," University of South Carolina, Institute for Southern Studies; *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/indigo/. Accessed 8-27-2025.

43 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 29.

44 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 65.

45 *South Carolina and America General Gazette*, May 8, 1767.

46 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 64-67.

*Fork and spoon from the Heriot household with closeup of crest.*
*Private collection, with permission.*

They were required to take an oath of allegiance to the British Crown, another pledging allegiance to the monarch as the supreme governor of the Church of England, and an oath pledging loyalty to the protestant succession of the monarchy. In addition, the justice of the peace signed a declaration against Roman Catholicism. Militia officers took similar oaths. All the oaths were to confirm loyalty to the crown and *not to* Parliament.[47]

At some point, Robert and Mary acquired a home on the southeast corner of Front and King streets in Georgetown—Lot 224 in the town plan. The rear of the property was on the Sampit River.

Robert and Mary's first child, Janet (nicknamed "Jessie"), was born on August 31, 1762, as further noted in addenda enclosed with Robert's letter of August 30 to his mother.

> *As no opportunity offers at present of sending this, I shall not conclude, as I may write you again more late accounts.*
>
> *Geo. Town, So. Caro. Sept. 1762*
>
> *On the 31st of last month, you was made a Grandmother and of a girl, a fine little girl, which in remembrance of my dearest Mama was christened Janet, and of the nick-name, Jessie.*[48] *Your daughter-in-law is quite well again, and longs for an opportunity to acknowledge her mother, &c. and I will trouble you with a few lines her first opportunity.*
>
> *Nov. 1st we are still all well. Your little grand daughter grows fast is healthy. Polly presents respects and will be very happy at a letter from you. As I hear _____ I must conclude. Praying God _____ and my sister and brothers prove a blessing, to my dear Mama, I am your most dutiful son.*
>
> *Robert Heriot*
>
> *P.S. The conditions on which I could send you your daughter's picture are that you should have Papa's and yours drawn at my expense. Send them to me. If this is not convenient, I beg it as a very great favor let yours be drawn without a cap, in loose dress, which fashion never varies, and Papa's with illegible*[49]

47 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 64-67.

48 The first "Jessie" died circa 1764.

49 Woodruff, *Heriots* (1939).

In the same letter to his mother, Heriot complained that his brothers and friends in Scotland hadn't written him since his arrival, speculating that they expected to be asked for favors—and that their failure to write might change if they learned that his "fortune" was "altered."

> *It looks very unnatural my brothers don't write me. It would have been no disadvantage to them to have corresponded with me. Some people I thought friends in Scotland have never put pen to paper to me. I suppose because they thought I would ask favours of them, and some few that wrote at first, left it off, I suppose for the same reason, tho' I often wrote both, but as my fortune is altered, they may likeways alter. But while my blood is warm, I hope to have spirit enough to despise those who are in reality beneath me than ever their emptiest vanity raised them above me.*

Soon thereafter, his "altered fortune" did indeed bring expectations of favor from family back in Scotland. On April 23, 1765, his younger brother, William (1745–1807) wrote a "newsy" letter to him from Edinburgh.

> *Dear Bob,*
>
> *I received your most affectional letter of the 1st May last* [May 1764, 11 months before] *& am obliged to you for your many expressions of kindness in promising to do for me as far is in your power, of which I shall always have a true & just remembrance. I was sorry to hear by your letter to Mamma the death of Little Jessy, it was to be sure a very afflicting stroke the death of an only child, but was happy to learn by another letter of the 12th January that fortune has favoured you with another daughter, which I hope God will spare for your & Mrs. Heriots comfort. Mama would have wrote you this opportunity but we had not time to inform her of it as it threw up so unexpectedly but she will write you the very first that offers, she has not kept her health so well as she has done for some time past but she is now pretty well recovered, she lets her situation with regard to Jamie & I afflict her too much, but a year or two will put an end to that when I hope we will be able to do for ourselves.*
>
> *Our Uncle John* [John Heriot (1698–1774)] *would take it as a singular favour you would take the trouble to write him a line or two letting him know your agreeable situation, he always expresses a very tender regard for you. Georgie Dickson* [unidentified] *came to this Country about a month ago & he has informed us particularly with regard to your happy situation with so fine a lady, he tells many surprising story & thanks you very much for your kindness. I must beg it a favour you will write me often, nothing gives me greater pleasure than hearing of your welfare & I shall embrace every opportunity to do the same on my. John's family & Mr. Cunninghams* [William and Robert's sister Janet (b. 1736) married John Cunningham Nov. 1758] *are all well they have a prospect of a large family. Mama & all*

*Friends joins me in Compliments to you and Mrs. Heriot & expectation of hearing at first opportunity from you I remain.*

*My Dear Brother,*
*Your Mo. Afft. Brother,*
*Wm. Heriot*

As noted in William's letter, the child Robert wrote happily to his mother about died sometime in early 1764. Neither the identities nor the number of Heriot children are recorded consistently by researchers. Based on their mention in the family letters, a list is provided below:

Janet "Jessie" Heriot, 1762-circa 1764
Mary "Jessie" Heriot, unk—August 7, 1780
John Ouldfield Heriot, 1767—February 4, 1833
Robert Heriot, May 1, 1773—March 12, 1846
James LaRoche Heriot, 1777—1794
Susanna "Suki" Mann Heriot, 1779—1845

Then, in late 1765, George Heriot, Robert Heriot's first cousin, arrived from Scotland bearing a letter of reference to Robert from his brother John, dated August 31, 1765, at Haddington, Scotland.

*Dear Sir,*

*Tho you have never been so kind as to write me since you left this Country, I have recently had the pleasure of hearing from your Mother and Brother, by Letters they received from you, that you were well, & happy in a married state.*

*My Brother* [George Heriot], *who is the bearer of this, has resolved to go and push his fortune in your part of the World. I think he is in the right On't* [?]*; for there is very little Encouragement here for a Young Man to stay at home. He has little besides his own Merit and industry to recommend him. He is a Lad of good disposition, sober and capable of Application; and I believe may be found qualified in any branch of the mercantile Business. I make no doubt but you will be readily disposed to give him all the assistance and do him all the Service in your power. He tells me he wrote you some time ago, of his intention to visit South Carolina.*

*My Wife and her Sister Baby who is just now with her, offer you their best Compliments, and join with me in wishing you every domestick Happiness with the Lady you have chosen for your Wife. I shall be extremely glad to hear from you & am, Dear Sir,*

*Your most affectionate Cousin & Obedt. Servt.,*

*John Heriot*

Exactly how Robert helped advance his cousin George's career is unknown. However, George Heriot would join with Daniel Tucker to create the very successful firm of Heriot & Tucker.

In November 1766, Robert Heriot bought 2,177 acres in Hobcaw Barony. All of Waccamaw Neck, the area between the Waccamaw River and the Atlantic Ocean, was considered part of the 16,000-acre Hobcaw Barony. In general terms, Robert's property was 1.5 miles north of present-day Route 17 where it crosses the Waccamaw River. It is now a private estate known as Arcadia Plantation. Nothing remains of any Heriot owned buildings.

On June 25, 1768, Robert's younger brother, William, wrote to their mother from London:

*Dear Mama,*

*I wrote you yesterday was* [illegible] *advising you of my safe arrival here, which I hope came safe to hand. I have now seen Mr. Hill* [unidentified] *and the other gentlemen to whom I had letters, and after waiting on, and conversing with them, I find its impossible for me to get into a Counting House in this city, & as this is the case, I have engaged with the Master of an Academy, & propose attending same on Tuesday first. I am very well boarded with one of the name of Henderson, who came from about Boiness* [Bo'ness?] *& whose husband (Captain Robertson) is commander of a Jamison vessel, she is a very frank, agreeable woman. Captain Tibbetts recommended me to her. I have a very good room & every other thing in a very genteel manner. The terms of my Board is 10/6 a week & I pay for the washing of my shirts, stockings &c. myself. we have never anything to drink after dinner but small beer, and if we choose to have a can of beer (which you call Porter) we club for it — I dined with Mr. Mill* [this may be brother of Charles Mill of Georgetown] *yesterday from whom I have held more Friendship than the rest of the People to whom I am recommended; he told me that Bob had lodged a credit of £50 or £60 with him for me and that I might command same whenever I think proper.*

*He expressed a good deal of concern that it was not in his power to take me into his Counting House, and to apply to any of his acquaintance was needless, as he well knew that no such thing would place, as my getting into Business. He informed me that Bob had been*

*of great service to his Brother in Carolina, & that nothing would have been more agreeable than to have served me had it been in his power; he desired me to come & see him frequently during my stay here.*

*I have now seen a little of this city and am very fond of it; it is no wonder that the English have such an antipathy at Edinburgh when its compared with London, what a poor appearance it makes; this City is reckoned fifty times larger than Edinburgh yet every House here appears as it was in the Country — the most of the streets are lined up on each side with tall Lime Trees, which makes the town vastly agreeable at this season of the Year — there is another great happiness attends this City, and that is that every Family possesses one House from top to bottom, by which means the long stairs so disagreeable in Edinb. does not take place here, every house also has a little back yard, which is commonly planted with Flowers with great Taste. Since I am informing you of the conveniences, I shall not omit that there is no occasion for the Man in long robes who cries, whit hay, - me for a Bauble, as every house has its own appartms. for that purpose* [can William be referring to toilet facilities?].

*Write me first opp.y & direct for me at Capt. Robertsons, Number 31 Bree Street. I find myself rather better since I came here, the feverishness is quite left me, neither is my Stomach so uneasy as when I left you, which last circumstances I attribute to the London Porter, of which I now and then, take a large Toute. John Wilks* [John Wilkes (1725—1797), a radical member of the British Parliament, was considered a champion of liberty. He backed the Whigs in the American Revolution] *has now got his Sentence, of which I need not inform you, as you will have seen it in the News Paper. I have heard at Change to-day, that he is pardoned, but suppose this piece of news is Premature. When you write me send your Letter to Mr. Hogg* [unidentified] *& desire him to forward it under cover, which will save the Postage. I beg my compliments to all Friends, and am every.*

*Dear Mama, Your mo Ob Son,*
*Will Heriot*
*Saturday 5 o'clock afternoon.*

Four months later, on October 11, 1768, Will wrote another letter to his mother. It would be his last from London.

*Dear Mama,*

*I am favoured with yours of 28th August, and 8th inst., the first along with the pieces of my flute. I again beg you will not let that cursed affair grieve you* [it is unknown what "cursed affair" is being referred to] *so much, and as to anything John Cunningham* [Cunningham,

a brewer in Edinburgh and Glasgow, was married to Robert and William's sister, Janet] *may have wrote Bob, be assured I shall place you in the way your character deserves, so soon as I have the happiness of seeing him. Be assured my dear Mama, nothing on earth will ever remove my affection from you. Sooner shall I plunge a dagger into my bosom than forget the parent who has ever made it her only concern to do everything in her power for my welfare. I shall endeavor to write you every opportunity, which I assure you will give me pleasure, and hearing from you after will be my greatest happiness.*

*Thomas Gray* [unidentified] *never called on me. I would have been glad to have seen him. I was down a jaunt in that part of the country where his brother stays about two months ago. There is little to be seen at Richmond, only the King's country house, which is nothing remarkable for its beauty, indeed the gardens about it are not fine, the tolerable—but I am apt to think that people always conceive any of the King's apartments finer before than after seeing them. I went about fourteen miles farther than Richmond to another seat of the Royal Family called Windsor Castle, which indeed is worth seeing. I also had a day's ride in Windsor Forest, which was agreeable beyond expression. There is a particular one avenue six English miles long, it gradually ascends from head to foot, so that when you first enter, you see the other end of it, so you may easily conceive what a grand prospect this is to a person who never seed such a thing before, nor do I think it is to be seen in Europe.*

*Monday evening the King of Denmark gave a grand masquerade ball, but as to the particulars I refer you to the newspapers. I am informed that three hundred and fifty guineas were paid the forenoon before the ball for three single tickets. Mama, how would this suit your purse? Indeed, I can't help thinking but that they for their diversion in the full sense of the word. The masquerade did not brake up till 10 o'clock next morning. The King of Denmark sets out for Paris tomorrow, forenoon.*

*I have taken passage in the Union, Captain William Coombes, and expect to get away by the end of the month. I shall write to Uncle (John) before I leave and to you also. I am greatly obliged to you for your wishes for my wellfare, and hope if its the Almight''s will to spare me, I will convince you of my affection. If my Uncle is still with you, make my compliments to him in the kindest manner. I beg also to be minded to Jock & Peggy, I am ever,*

*My Dear Mama, Your ever affectionate son,*
*Will Heriot*

Finally, on February 26, 1769, a "Mr. Heriot" arrived in Charles Town from London. It is assumed that this "Mr. Heriot" was William.[50]

Robert wrote his mother on June 11, 1769, addressed to "near Berwick." The letter is faded and torn, so little can be read, but it appears that Robert is trying to help set up financial support for Will:

> *Dear Mama,*
>
> *I wrote you about a month ago, to which I have* [illegible]. *The bearer,* [probably "Charles"] *Mill,* [illegible] *particular friend.*
>
> *I am* [illegible] *same time* [illegible] *assured of the pleasure it will afford you to see in person* [illegible] *I am most anxious* [illegible]
>
> *I beg to recommend to you thru the authorized party for you to advance Willie's patrimony, also half of my proportion on the terms I wrote to you and that as soon as you are able he must not be idle. For particulars I refer you to Mr. Mill & W.B. [unidentified]*
>
> *My best wishes for you welfare, I am,*
> *Dear Mama, Yours most affct, Son,*
> *Robert Heriot*

As mentioned in the beginning, in addition to owning slaves, Robert may have been engaged in the slave trade—with the merchant Charles Mayne.

Another such merchant in Charles Town was John Deas. Deas sold a variety of imported merchandise and also dealt directly with ships bringing slaves to Charles Town.[51] Deas and a Charles Mill, of Georgetown, were friends of Robert's. Little is known of Charles Mill other than that he lived in Georgetown and on January 17, 1772, when he was returning to England, named Robert Heriot as the executor of his will.

At Robert's request, these gentlemen apparently visited the Heriot family in Scotland. On June 17, 1769, Mill, along with John Deas and his wife, sailed for London on the ship Carolina Packet. After Mill visited Robert's mother, he wrote a lettery addressed to: *Robert Heriot, Esqr., in Care of Mr. Marr, Merchant, Chas. Town, South Carolina.*[52]

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50 *South Carolina and American Gazette*, February 27, 1769.

51 *South Carolina Gazette*, July 24, 1769, an advertisement appeared announcing "A Cargo of Ninety-Four Prime Healthy Negroes consisting of thirty nine men, fifteen boys, twenty four women, and sixteen girls" from a ship just arrived from Sierra Leone. The sellers were "David and John Deas." Higgins, "Charles Town Merchants and Factors Dealing in the External Negro Trade 1735–1775," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 205-217. John Deas in 1790 Charleston Directory is listed as a planter living at 14 Meeting Street.

52 The merchant "Mr. Marr" may be Andrew Marr although Andrew Marr appears to be an attorney rather than a merchant.

*Dec. 9, 1769, Edinburgh*

*My Dear Sir,*

*The enclosed letters are of a very old state. I wrote them from Aberdeen some time in October, here they have laid since & missed many opportunitys & its only to convince you that I'm not so negligent as you have reason to conclude that I now send them.*

*It is with pleasure that I inform you of Mr.* [John] *Deas & I having seen your Mama bout a month ago. She was then extremely well & seemed very happy to see us; When we was on the road to Dirleton your Brother John* [1742–1782] *passed us on horseback. Mr. Deas imagined he saw in his face a great look of you, however I was not sensible of it at first, but upon looking again I concluded it must be a Brother of yours & we sent the Servant back to inquire if he was not Mr. Heriot & to acquaint him that we were on our way to see his mother. He turned back immediately & went with us to Castlemains where we would gladly have staid all night had not an Engagement obliged Mr. Deas to be in Edinburgh next morning at 10 o'clock; so we only dined and drank tea with your Mama & went all night to Haddington. It is not very easy to say how glad the good old Lady was to see people who could inform her of so many particulars about her Son and as for me I do not remember to have felt more inward satisfaction than I experienced the few hours I talked with your Mama, she is a truly affectionate mother, indeed the tear was hardly out of her eye while we were there and many a blessing did we get for coming to see her. Mr. Deas has promised her a longer visit when he returns from France next Summer.*

*I found she had wrote you some particulars about Billy's money so I did not press her on that head. I shall recollect many circumstances on this subject when I have the pleasure of seeing you. Your friend Mr. Hogg* [unidentified] *is now in London. I shall call again before I leave Edinburgh, possibly by that time he may be returned. I see Mr. Grieve* [unidentified] *often. He is very well & desires to be remembered to you & Billy. He has given me a direction where to find your Brother & I shall be at his Brewery in a few days.* [James Heriot (1744–1798) was a brewer in Edinburgh.] *Mr. Grieve* [unidentified] *tells me he is now in a way of doing exceedingly well, having got his works in pretty good order and will begin to Brew soon. Mr. Gough* [unidentified] *desires his best Compliments to Mrs. Heriot & yourself. He is applying very closely to his studies & I dare say will turn out extremely well; he does not purpose being in Carolina these 3 years yet he is much in the right for he may never have an opportunity again such as this of improving himself.*

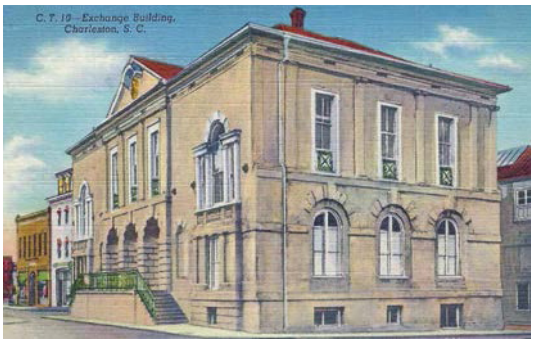
*I now begin to wish very much for a letter from you; I shall be anxious to know of Mrs. Heriot and the young ones, and I hope you'll write me particularly.*

*Pray tell your Brother* [William] *that I only received his letter of 20th Aug. two days ago and that I'll write when I get to London. I shall take Glasgow in my way. I'll have an opportunity of seeing your sister Mrs. Cunningham, you Mama begs I would go & see her before I left Scotland. The time is not yet fixed for my sailing but I imagine I shall leave England some time in February expecting to hear from your family I remain My. Dr. sir,*

*Your most affct. & very Obedient Serv,*
*Chas. Mill*

The 1760s were a period of amassing great wealth for the planters such as Heriot and merchants of Charles Town and Georgetown. They jointly owned hundreds of ships used in an ever-increasing import-export trade of rice and indigo as primary cash crops. A financial investment in land supporting rice and indigo, along with sufficient slave labor, could be recovered in just a few years. Large fortunes were made in a decade. For the fortunate it was a giddy era of large profits and extravagant spending. Lavish houses, and a lifestyle to match, were the order of the day. The booming agricultural success was fueled by slave labor, which was of little concern to most of those who benefited.

In 1770, the population of Charles Town was about 12,000, evenly divided between enslaved and free. In the rural agricultural areas, such as Georgetown, the percentage of whites was far lower. Any rumor of slave revolts or insurrections spread like wild-fire and were taken very seriously.



*The Exchange Building in Charles Town*

The great wealth in parts of the low country spurred the creation of spectacular public buildings such as St. Michael's Church in Charles Town in 1762, the South Carolina provincial capital, and the Exchange building in 1771. The Exchange has a Great Hall on an upper level where civic meetings were held. The beauty and extravagance of the public and private buildings in Charles Town made it an extremely attractive city. It was a great place to live for those fortunate enough to be able to take advantage of it. The Heriots would have been part of a society built upon elegance, some might say decadence, with society events lasting for "the season." There were dances, balls, musical events, and theatrical plays. During the 1773–74 season 118 performances were given in Charles Town, including eleven of Shakespeare's plays.[53] It was a golden age of materialism and conspicuous consumption built on rice, indigo and slave labor.

53 George C. Rogers, Jr. *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys* (Univ of SC Press, 1980), 110.

Charles Town boasted a Library Society and the Natural History Museum, which was the first in America. The sons of the elite would often go to Europe for higher education. Many studied law. Some, perhaps most, simply enjoyed Europe for the change of scene. Education was not considered important by many, as shown by the colonial [and later state] Assembly not voting funds to create schools for decades. It has been said that prior to the Revolution there were fewer than 20 low-country South Carolinians who held college or university degrees.[54] This may be a slight exaggeration.

Ebenezer Hazard, Philadelphia-born and Princeton-educated, traveled the post road along the South Carolina coast in 1778 while conducting a survey of the roads for the Continental Post Office. In his journal he wrote:

> [T]he people of Charlestown possess liberal sentiments and polite manners. A learned education has been much neglected among them. Gentlemen of fortune usually sent their children to Europe for education, but they generally attended more to fashions while there than to learning. The young ladies are generally kept in the country till they are 15 or 16 years old, and then brought to town and put to a boarding school for a year. I am told their education in particular is scandalously neglected.[55]

Hazard may have modified his views somewhat had he ever met Mary Heriot, but one thing was certain. As a whole, the South Carolina aristocracy, with its great wealth, land, and slavery, did not see change on the horizon.

An east wind was blowing nonetheless—the British government was looking at a new policy of closely controlling the colonies.

54 Walter J. Fraser, Jr., *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats, "Poor Sinful Charles Town" during the American Revolution*, (University of South Carolina Press, second edition, 1993) 26-27.

55 Merrens, H. Roy, "A View of Coastal South Carolina in 1778: The Journal of Ebenezer Hazard," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 73, no. 4 (Oct 1972): 184.

# 6. THE SPIRALING DESCENT INTO WAR

The South Carolina royal government had a crown-appointed governor and an Upper House or Council of 12 appointed members that assisted the governor. Elected members of the provincial parliament would act as a Commons House of Assembly much like the English House of Commons. The Assembly is where the laws were enacted.

The low-country aristocracy controlled the Assembly and had eroded the powers of the Council and taken control over the spending of tax revenues. The Assembly had also acquired the power to select many colonial public officers.[56]

The Assembly was elected by secret ballots cast by white males. To qualify for membership in the Assembly a candidate had to own 500 acres and 10 slaves or significant town property. This elite collection of planters, merchants and lawyers served as unpaid public-spirited representatives of the people. They were protective of their own power as individuals and of the Assembly in general. They were also protective of the institution of slavery.[57]

Great Britain had spent a great deal for defense during the French and Indian War. The standing army was also a great expense. As the expenditures were to protect the Colonies it seemed entirely reasonable that the Colonies ought to contribute revenue to pay for their own defense. Therefore, Parliament passed several acts to raise funds in the Colonies.[58]

When the South Carolina Assembly learned of the pending Stamp Act in 1764, it wrote Parliament expressing opposition to the Act. Christopher Gadsden, Robert Heriot's old comrade from the 1759 Lyttelton Expedition, headed up the opposition to the Act, writing that it was inconsistent "with that inherent right of every British Subject, not to be taxed but by his own consent, or that of his representative." However, the Act was passed by Parliament in March 1765. The Act required that tax stamps be purchased for official and unofficial papers, playing cards, advertisements in newspapers, and legal documents.[59]

56 Mary Ouldfield Heriot's father, John Ouldfield, Jr., was an assemblyman for years prior to his death in 1752.

57 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 32.

58 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 33.

59 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 33.

In October, nine colonies sent representatives to New York for a meeting to discuss the Stamp Act at what became known as the Stamp Act Congress. South Carolina Assembly chose Christopher Gadsden, John Rutledge, and Thomas Lynch, another of Robert Heriot's comrades on the Lyttelton Expedition. The Stamp Act Congress sent resolutions to the King and Parliament in opposition to the Stamp Act that would become effective on November 1, 1765.[60]

The stamps arrived aboard the ship Planters Adventure on October 18. Lt. Governor William Bull II had it anchor under the guns of Ft. Johnson on James Island fearing that mobs might take and destroy the stamps by force if the ship was tied to a wharf.[61]

In Charles Town, angry citizens, concerned about paying the stamp tax—as well as allowing Parliament to tax them, were in the streets on October 19. The mob, in search of the stamps, beat and stoned a man suspected of harboring the stamps. The search for stamps spread into some private homes.

The Inspector and the Distributor of Stamp Duties were forcibly induced to resign their positions. To calm the situation, Lieutenant Governor Bull issued a statement declaring that the stamps were not in Charles Town.[62]

The Stamp Act went into effect, yet there were no stamps available, which created a serious problem. The courts were unable to conduct business without stamped paper.[63] Ships arrived in the harbor expecting to load rice, but could not leave as their clearances required stamped paper.

Ironically, no official copy of the Stamp Act had actually been received in South Carolina. All knew what was in the Act but the Act itself had not physically appeared.

This was a loophole that would be used by cagey lawyers to bring down the Act without resorting to violence. Bull agreed to allow ships to sail after they paid a fee equal to the cost of the stamps as if the stamps had been available. This was disobeying the literal terms of the Act, but it was agreed upon by all parties.[64]

The lawyers now looked for a way to open the courts. The courts had been adjourned in November as there was no stamped paper, and the adjournments were extended each month. In March 1766, lawyers, who had pre-arranged their strategy, approached the court demanding that their cases be ruled upon. They argued that necessity would take priority over the law. The Act, it was contended, was not designed to force the stoppage of all legal business merely because stamped paper was

60 Maurice A. Crouse, "Cautious Rebellion: South Carolina's Opposition to the Stamp Act." *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 73, no. 2 (1972): 59-60.

61 Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 295.

62 Crouse, "Cautious Rebellion," 60-61.

63 Crouse, "Cautious Rebellion," 61-62; Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 295.

64 Crouse, "Cautious Rebellion," 61-62.

not available. If the stamps had been lost in a storm, they asked, would that have required all legal business to halt? Of course not, ran the argument. Justice was being withheld from the citizens of the colony due to circumstances that were beyond their control.[65]

This clever legalistic maneuver and reasoning allowed the South Carolina government to avoid making a decision regarding the use of the despised stamps. Documents that were not stamped did not make them invalid, as the purpose of the stamps was not to certify the documents but to raise tax revenue from their use.[66]

Then, news reached Charles Town on May 3 that the Stamp Act had been repealed. The urging of British merchants and widespread colonial opposition had caused Parliament to back down. There was great joy in the land. Parades, ringing of church bells, booming cannons were part of the celebrations.

However, Parliament had not given up. The Declaratory Act had been quietly passed which stated that the American colonies were subordinate to Parliament in all cases. This was of great importance to firebrands such as Christopher Gadsden who saw the Declaratory Act as a dark cloud on the horizon.

And...Gadsden was right.[67] In 1767, Parliament, still seeking revenue from the colonies, passed the Townshend Acts. Taxes were to be required on glass, lead, paper, and tea imported into the colonies.[68]

The South Carolina Assembly urged resistance to the Townshend Acts by boycotting British products. The idea was that British merchants would apply pressure on Parliament to rescind the Acts if they were being hurt by them.

The royal governor responded by dissolving the Assembly. In turn, Christopher Gadsden answered by parading his Liberty Boys through the streets and organizing the boycott.[69]

The Townshend Acts required that payment be made in coin, not paper. This created a shortage of hard money, which made it difficult to pay debts. The Acts also allowed royal officers to search any premises without the benefit of search warrants as they sought untaxed goods.

Skilled workmen felt that their rights as Englishmen were being violated. Planters were attracted to Gadsden's boycott as they were pinched by the scarcity of hard money but a boycott would be devastating to merchants.

65 Crouse, "Cautious Rebellion," 63-64; Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 296.

66 Crouse, "Cautious Rebellion," 64-66.

67 Crouse, "Cautious Rebellion," 68; Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 298-299.

68 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 41.

69 Despite Robert Heriot's connection with Gadsden, there is no evidence that Heriot was a member of the Liberty Boys. However, very few of those individuals have been identified.

A compromise was worked out. Merchants were to be allowed to import books, cloth, and hardware such as tools. Slaves were not allowed to be imported, as skilled workmen often had to compete with slave labor to their disadvantage. The committee of merchants, artisans, and planters gathered signatures to the agreements to make the boycott successful. They used the menacing slogan "Sign or Die" and, on occasion, threatened violence to those who were reluctant to sign. Importers were faced with the difficult decision of joining the boycott or supporting the crown's law. Other towns, in other colonies, also adopted the nonimportation agreement, which caused imports to plummet by as much as 50% in 1769.[70]

The boycott was almost entirely successful. As was hoped, the British merchants pressed Parliament to repeal the Townshend Acts. In 1770, all the Townshend duties required by the law were repealed except for the tax on tea. The colonies, having won a major victory, dropped their non-importation policies. South Carolina reluctantly agreed to end the boycott at a general meeting on December 13, 1770.

However, the issue of Parliament's still maintaining its right to tax the colonies continued. Christopher Gadsden, his Liberty boys, and many wealthy South Carolinians were not pleased, but they had neither the political power, nor the numbers, to continue the boycott. The continued tax on tea, however, was to raise its ugly head, and the world would never be the same.[71]

The return of trade brought renewed prosperity. However, tensions brewed under the surface. The trigger for the next round of political unrest was a fund for John Wilkes.

Wilkes was an outspoken agitator who, while a member of Parliament, had criticized a speech by King George III. Wilkes was expelled from Parliament and imprisoned. When released from prison, he continued speaking against the King and was reelected to Parliament in 1768. However, he was not permitted to take his seat, was tried for libel of the king, and was sent back to prison.

Wilkes's fight against the king and Parliament made him a hero in the colonies. Christopher Gadsden initiated a bill in the South Carolina Assembly to appropriate funds to send to Wilkes's associates in England for his defense. In December 1769, the Assembly approved a financial contribution of 1,500 pounds sterling.[72]

It may be remembered that William Heriot, Robert's younger brother, wrote his mother in June 1768 that "John Wilks has now got his Sentence, of which I need not inform you, as you will have seen it in the News Paper." Mentioning Wilkes in the letter may indicate that William, and perhaps the Heriot family as a whole, supported Wilkes.

70 Despite Robert Heriot's connection with Gadsden, there is no evidence that Heriot was a member of the Liberty Boys. However, very few of those individuals have been identified.

71 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 45.

72 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 47.

When all was said and done, South Carolina was the only colony to vote money for Wilkes. Parliament—and the king—considered Wilkes to be a criminal and viewed such a payment an affront to the crown. To make matters worse, the funds had been appropriated without the approval of Lt. Gov. William Bull II, the acting governor, who would have, of course, vetoed it.[73]

As a result, the royal governor of South Carolina was instructed to remove from the Assembly its ability to introduce action on financial matters. This move outraged Assemblymen such as Thomas Lynch, Henry Laurens, and Christopher Gadsden, who saw the Assembly's entitlements on money concerns as an essential part of their governance. Laurens said that "nothing less than the very essence of pure liberty" was at risk, asserting it was the "right of the people" to decide questions of taxation and spending.[74]

While the colony was struggling with its government, George Heriot, Robert Heriot's cousin, returned from London, in the *Beaufain*, arriving in Charles Town on January 5, 1771.[75] The purpose of his trip is not known.

In the fall of 1771, the Assembly engaged royal Governor Charles Montagu in a power struggle. The Assembly had requested the colony's treasurer to disburse money from the treasury. This request was denied as it had not been approved by the governor and his council, and the Assembly ordered the treasurer jailed for contempt. In response, the governor dissolved the Assembly on November 5, 1771. When it reconvened in April 1772, the Assembly refused to do any business until its power to write and pass tax bills was restored. Governor Montagu dissolved the Assembly again.[76]

To apply pressure on the independent-minded Assembly, the governor reconvened it, inconveniently, at Beaufort, seventy miles down the coast. The Assembly vehemently objected, as did the press.[77]

Life went on during the governmental wrangling. On January 28, 1772, Robert and Mary Heriot sailed on the sloop *Little Bessy* to New Providence (Bahamas) for "the recovery of Mrs. Heriot's health."[78] The nature of Mary's health problem is unknown. They returned on the schooner *Dispatch* on May 21. Robert Heriot added 1,711 acres to his holdings in Hobcaw Barony in 1772. By this time, he had at least 3,888 acres.[79] It is not known if he retained the plantations formerly owned by Mary's father, John Ouldfield, Jr., but in any case, he had a great deal of property generating a great deal of income.

73 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 33.

74 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 48.

75 *South Carolina Gazette*, January 10, 1772.

76 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 49.

77 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 49.

78 *South Carolina and General Gazette*, January 29, 1772, and *South Carolina Gazette*, March 26, 1772.

79 Henry A.M. Smith, "The Baronies of South Carolina," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 14, no. 2 (1913), p. 63-65.

When the Assembly reconvened in Charles Town in the fall of 1772, they passed resolutions condemning the governor with "an unwarrantable abuse of a Royal prerogative" and demanded his removal from office. Montagu responded by dissolving the Assembly again. Having lost both control and the respect of the Assembly, Montagu resigned and returned to Britain.[80]

For four years, there had been no legislative action in South Carolina. After Montagu's departure, the crown appointed Sir Egerton Leigh, president of the governor's council, as governor. He tried to bully the Assembly, but a personal scandal of his own made him intolerable.[81] In disgrace, Leigh returned to Britain.

The Assembly then took it upon itself, without approval by crown appointed officials, to issue certificates of indebtedness to pay off public debts in late 1773. This was a further, and steeper, slide toward a break with the mother country. However, it should be pointed out that most citizens, and Assemblymen, considered themselves loyal to the King but at odds with the British Parliament and the King's ministers.

Lieutenant Governor William Bull was made acting governor but was not formally elevated to the rank of governor, retaining his title as lieutenant governor. On July 1, 1773, he commissioned Robert Heriot as captain of a light infantry company in the militia regiment commanded by Colonel Job Rothmahler.[82] The commission was made despite Heriot's having no military experience other than the march to Fort Prince George, 14 years earlier, on the 1759 failed Lyttelton Expedition. Doubtless, it was Robert's social position that prompted the appointment. The militia was a very social organization, although all males sixteen to sixty were required to join the militia and attend periodic drills.[83] Their combat effectiveness was minimal.

George Heriot and Daniel Tucker joined with one Roger Smith, in October 1773, forming the partnership called "Heriot, Tucker & Company" and opened their store offering imported goods in Georgetown.[84] Soon Roger Smith would leave the firm. The firm would prosper and both remaining men became wealthy. On January 24, 1775, George would marry Daniel Tucker's sister, Sarah Harriet Tucker (1754–1820), daughter of Captain Thomas Tucker (d. 1784).[85]

80 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 49.

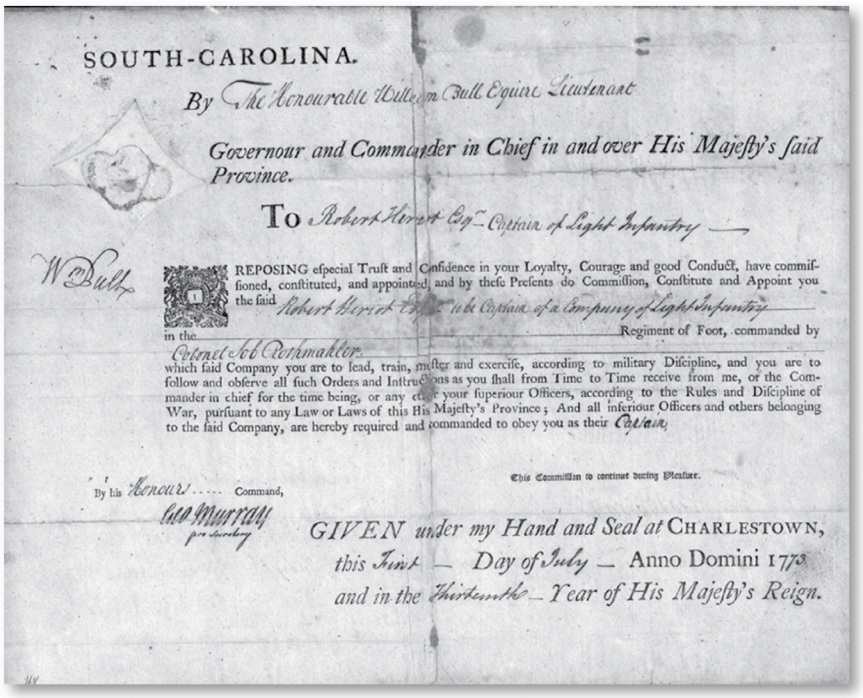
81 Leigh had seduced his ward, who was his wife's sister, who became pregnant. Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 50.

82 Heriot's commission, July 1, 1773. South Carolina Archives, series S213089, box 0005, folder 00001.

83 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 96.

84 *South Carolina Gazette*, October 25, 1773.

85 *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, January 24, 1775.



SOUTH-CAROLINA.

By The Honourable William Bull Esquire Lieutenant Governour and Commander in Chief in and over His Majesty's said Province.

To Robert Heriot Esq^r Captain of Light Infantry

W^m Bull

REPOSING especial Trust and Confidence in your Loyalty, Courage and good Conduct, have commissioned, constituted, and appointed, and by these Presents do Commission, Constitute and Appoint you the said Robert Heriot Esq^r to be Captain of a Company of Light Infantry in the Regiment of Foot, commanded by Colonel Rob^t Rohmahler. which said Company you are to lead, train, muster and exercise, according to military Discipline, and you are to follow and observe all such Orders and Instructions as you shall from Time to Time receive from me, or the Commander in chief for the time being, or any other your superiour Officers, according to the Rules and Discipline of War, pursuant to any Law or Laws of this His Majesty's Province; And all inferiour Officers and others belonging to the said Company, are hereby required and commanded to obey you as their Captain

This Commission to continue during Pleasure.

By his Honour's Command,
Geo Murray
pro Secretary

GIVEN under my Hand and Seal at CHARLESTOWN, this First Day of July Anno Domini 1773 and in the Thirteenth Year of His Majesty's Reign.

*Robert Heriot's Commission July 1, 1773*

The ship *London* arrived in Charles Town harbor on December 1, 1773. It was carrying 257 chests of tea, shipped by the East India Company to local merchants. This was not a surprise. The newspapers had been writing about the anticipated arrival of the dreaded tea and stirring up their readers. As the tea was taxed by Parliament, and not by South Carolina, it was strongly believed that "it would be criminal to give up any of our essential rights as British subjects and involve our posterity in a state little better than slavery" by accepting the tea. Citizens, merchants, and planters, organized by Christopher Gadsden, met in the Great Hall of the Exchange Building in Charles Town on Friday December 3 to discuss what should be done. It was agreed not to import any tea that bore a tax not voted in South Carolina.[86] A committee was formed to obtain the signatures of all merchants engaged in the import business who agreed with the non-importation agreement. The three agents of the East India Company, seeing the writing on the wall and not having much choice, quickly agreed that they would not receive the tea. Their decision was greeted with cheers of approval from the crowd gathered to witness their compliance.[87]

86 *South Carolina Gazette*, December 6, 1773; *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, December 7, 1773; Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 52-53.

87 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 54.


*Flag designed by Christopher Gadsden*

Unlike Boston citizens who on December 16 boarded tea ships and threw the tea into the harbor, the tea on the *London* was allowed to sit unclaimed, and the tax unpaid, for 21 days. As required by law, it was then taken into custody and stored in the basement of the Exchange Building. South Carolina was the only port where tea had been landed rather than turned back or destroyed as at Boston. Many months later, the same tea was sold to help finance the war with England.[88]

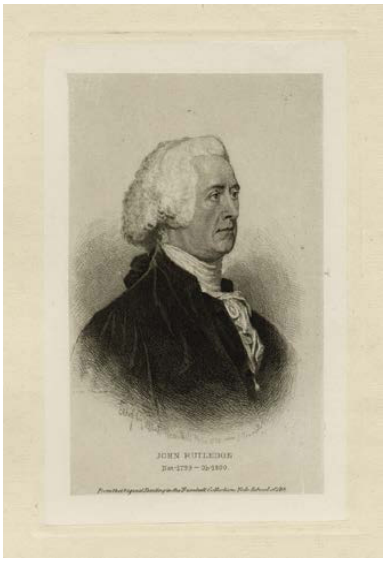
Furious at the destruction of the tea at Boston, the British Parliament closed the port of Boston to all commerce, except the importation of food and fuel, effective June 1, 1774. In addition, a law was enacted which required that any royal official who was to be tried for a capital offense would be taken to Britain for trial rather than tried in the colonies. It was widely assumed in the colonies that any such trial would not be in the best interests of colonial justice. These acts of Parliament were referred to as the "Coercive Acts" in England and the "Intolerable Acts" in the colonies.[89]

Closing the port of Boston was devastating to the economy of Massachusetts. Unemployment soared and supplies of every description became scarce and expensive. It was a serious crisis.

At this point, Robert Heriot had to make some critical decisions. He could support the colonists' efforts to thwart the British or he could back the lawful government. Or, he might try to straddle the fence and remain neutral. In the end, he chose to support the colonies. Many others remained loyal to the crown, so in a couple of years, the war in the South was to become much like a civil war, as colonists—and even families—were divided and fought fiercely against each other ideologically and militarily.

88 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 56.

89 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 57.



*John Rutledge*

The colonies sent financial assistance, as well as produce, to beleaguered Boston. South Carolina, being wealthy, sent contributions that totaled more than any other colony. Robert Heriot personally contributed £25 which was turned over to Christopher Gadsden to be sent to Boston on July 6, 1774.[90] In 2024 dollars, £25 equaled approximately $4,798.[91]

There were more mass meetings in 1774 including the important "General Meeting" on July 6 that selected delegates to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. It also established a "General Committee of 99" with wide powers to act between sessions of the General Meeting.

Delegates to the First Continental Congress were Thomas Lynch, Christopher Gadsden, Edward Rutledge, John Rutledge and Henry Middleton. It should be understood that, at that time, these men were still not seeking independence but rather ways and means of obtaining a repeal of the Coercive Acts and to convince Parliament of the need to address American grievances. The oaths many of these men had made were to the crown—not to Parliament. Their goals were sought while the colonies remained in the British Empire.[92]

In September 1774, the First Continental Congress agreed on a program of non-importation and non-exportation that would apply to all the colonies to be overseen by a "Continental Association." The South Carolinians held out for an exemption to export rice to Europe, which was granted, much to the delight of the planters. The committee of observation and inspection joined another committee consisting of five local merchants, including George Heriot to supervise the export of the rice.[93]

In an unrelated action on October 31, 1774, Heriot, Tucker & Co., announced they were moving from their location on the southeast corner of Broad and Front streets in Georgetown. They were building a house and store at a new location. The premises they were vacating consisted of a brick house, back stores, and a wharf. In the 21st century, this location would be approximately at the site of the South Carolina Maritime Museum.[94]

90 Edward McCrady, *History of South Carolina Under the Royal Government, 1719–1776*, (New York: MacMillan, 1899), 743-744.

91 Eric W. Nye, *Pounds Sterling to Dollars: Historical Conversion of Currency*, accessed June 2, 2025, https://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm

92 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 58-64.

93 Rogers, History of Georgetown, 116; Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 64-65.

94 *South Carolina Gazette*, October 31, 1774.

On January 15, 1775, Robert Heriot, Daniel Tucker and others were appointed to the Georgetown Committee of the Continental Association.[95] Robert served on the committee to enforce the Continental Association's trade restrictions.[96] His active participation, combined with his wealth and influential status in Georgetown society, would mark Robert Heriot as an ardent—and dangerous—revolutionary in the eyes of the British.

The South Carolina General Committee oversaw the election of a General Provincial Committee which proclaimed itself the First Provincial Congress of South Carolina. The Provincial Congress assumed the legislative powers of the colony when it met in January 1775. Most of the members of the now defunct Commons House of Assembly were now members of the Provincial Congress. The planters were still in control. Committees of safety, observation and inspection were created to enforce the non-importation, non-exportation agreements of the Association. Robert Heriot was one of the eleven men on the Committee for Georgetown.[97]

During the night of April 21, 1775, arms and powder were removed from royal government magazines in and around Charles Town by citizens including members of the new Provincial Congress. They had no way of knowing that two days earlier blood had been shed at Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts and the British army was besieged in Boston. This earthshaking news from Massachusetts arrived in early May.[98]

In response to the escalating crisis, the Provincial Congress reconvened at Charles Town on June 1. Funds were authorized for raising three regiments. A Council of Safety was created. A document known as the "Association" stipulating that signers "go forth and sacrifice lives and fortunes against every foe" while defending the liberty of South Carolina was adopted unanimously. It was required that all citizens sign the Association or be considered enemies. To sign the oath was to renounce the oath taken to the King that all the militia officers and justices of the peace had taken.

95 *South Carolina Gazette*, January 30, 1775.

96 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 115.

97 *American Archives* (Washington, D.C.: M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force, 1837), fourth series, vol. 1; South Carolina Provincial Congress List of the Several Members of the Provincial Congress held at Charles Town on Wednesday 11th day of January and continued from day to day til Tuesday evening the 17th of January 1775, 1109-1115; Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 106-115.

98 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 66-67.

The more radical elements of the Provincial Congress were now in power. Moderates were shouted down and violence was inevitable. Coercion, intimidation and force were used to get some citizens to sign the Association. Several men were tarred and feathered and dragged through the streets of Charles Town. A free black man, Thomas Jeremiah, was charged by a mob with inciting a slave rebellion and was hanged.[99] To pledge loyalty to the provincial association and the continental association was a commitment to fight if so ordered by the Provincial Congress.[100] Robert Heriot signed.

Lieutenant Governor William Bull was replaced in June by crown-appointed Lord William Campbell. The new governor was powerless in the face of the mood of the population and the violence of the radicals. Fearing for his own safety and realizing that he could not govern in any matter, he slipped out of Charles Town in the dead of night to the safety of HMS *Tamar*, a British warship, moored in the harbor. He would be the last royal governor of South Carolina.[101]

In 1775, thirty-seven newspapers were being published in the colonies, and to each the news of the battles at Lexington and Concord on April 19 came with explosive urgency.[102] The news was sent out by express riders and on sailing ships.

War had begun. Overnight, the world had changed.

99 J. William Harris, *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A Free Black Man's Encounter With Liberty*, (Yale University Press, 2009); Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols and Petticoats*, 67-68.

100 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols, Petticoats*, 64-68; Lewis P. Jones, *South Carolina: A Synoptic History for Laymen* (Sandlapper Press, 1971), 98-100.

101 Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols, Petticoats*, 71.

102 *The South-Carolina and American General Gazette*, May 12 and May 19, 1775, *The South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, May 16, 1775.

# 7. THE REVOLUTION BEGINS

*William Moultrie*

Robert Heriot, as captain, began his active duty the first week of June 1775, commanding his company that patrolled Sullivan's Island. His company was relieved on July 1, 1775, by order of Colonel William Moultrie.

> *Advance Guard,*
> *Sullivan's Island.*
>
> *Captain Heriot's volunteer Company of Light Infantry having been in the service of this Colony for one month and a relief ordered for them, they are therefore to return to their own homes, and will in their turn march again in defense of their own homes* [illegible] *noble cause in which we are engaged.*
>
> *Signed Wm Moultrie,*
> *D. Horry, Colonel.* [Daniel Horry]

With the war in progress, it was necessary to fortify and patrol the South Carolina coast. As part of that effort Henry Laurens, President of the Council of Safety, issued the following order authorizing Robert to transfer cannon to Georgetown.

*By Authority of the Council of Safety*

*2nd December 1775*

*Whereas the Provincial Congress in their late session began the 1st and adjourned the 29th of November last, did resolve that six pieces of Cannon together with a proper quantity of ball should be forthwith sent to Georgetown for the defense and security of that part of this colony and Whereas it is necessary that the said resolution should be carried into execution without delay.*

*Resolved that Robert Heriot, esquire, Captain of the Light Infantry Company of Georgetown, aforesaid, have authority and he is hereby authorized and empowered to impress any one proper schooner or other vessel for taking on board and conveying the said cannon and shot from Charles Town Neck to Wappataw Bridge*[103] *there to be discharged.*

*Resolved that full compensation shall be made to the owner or owners of any schooner or other vessel impressed into this service, upon producing a proper certificate from Mr. Heriot or other authentic proof.*

*Ordered that all persons do pay due obedience hereunto. Signed Henry Laurens,*

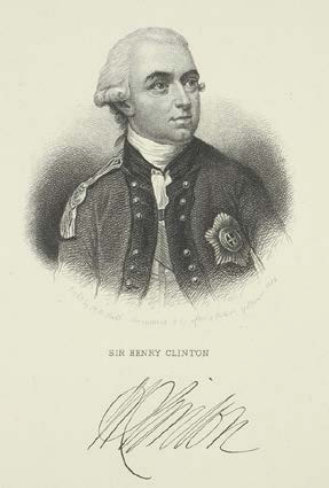
*President of the Council of Safety*[104]

The British government believed that their closing of the port of Boston and imposing virtual martial law as punishment of Massachusetts would not only quell the restless population of Boston and Massachusetts but would intimidate other colonies into submission. Instead of bowing to the supremacy of Parliament, the colonies were incensed.

The British army was now under siege in Boston. Their aim was to retake the colonies. The British made several major errors in their plans, which became known as the Southern Strategy—to conquer the colonial South. First, they believed that the vast majority of the population were loyal to the crown and would willingly take up arms against their Whig neighbors when British regulars were present. The Southern strategy also assumed that after the regulars restored rule the Loyalist militia was capable of maintaining order after the regulars moved on to conquer another area. In addition, the British misjudged the capabilities of the amateur armies that they would face. The Whig forces were sometimes but not always as easily routed as had been anticipated.

103 Near present-day Rt. 17, 1 mile east of Woodville, S.C., near site of historic Revolutionary War-era Wappetaw Independent Congregational Church, approximately 17 miles northeast of Charleston.

104 Journal of the Second Council of Safety, appointed by the Provisional Congress, November 1775, *Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society*, 3:35-271, p. 41-42.




*Sir Henry Clinton*

John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia, wrote Major General William Howe on December 2, 1775, that several hundred British regulars could "reduce, without the smallest doubt the whole of this southern Continent to a perfect state of obedience."[105] Such statements were seconded by the ousted royal governors of South Carolina, Georgia and North Carolina who were now residing on British warships for their own safety. It was also accepted by both the British military and the British Parliament.[106]

Royal governor Josiah Martin of North Carolina continuously lobbied Parliament for a major military action in North Carolina. He believed that he would be able to raise a force of several thousand loyal North Carolina citizens who would fight alongside British troops. Once an area was subdued, the local militia would remain to provide security and the British redcoats could move on to other areas of the South where they would repeat the process.[107]

The British accepted the concept and planned to send an expedition from England in the fall of 1775 consisting of a fleet commanded by Commodore Sir Peter Parker with seven regiments of infantry commanded by Lord Charles Cornwallis. Upon arrival at the American coast, Cornwallis would turn over command to Major General Sir Henry Clinton, the British commander in North America who was to sail from Boston with another army and fleet. These two forces would meet near the Cape Fear River in North Carolina in the early Spring of 1776 where they would join with the loyalist forces of Governor Martin.[108]

Unfortunately, the massive bureaucracy within the British government and military delayed the fleet. Instead of departing the first week of December, the fleet failed to sail until February 12, 1776. It ran into a huge storm and then a long period of calm which delayed the crossing. Parker was unable to rendezvous with Clinton until May 3, 1776.[109]

On February 27, 1776, long before the arrival of the British troops and warships, the North Carolina loyalists had been routed at the battle of Moore's Creek Bridge. Entirely vanquished and scattered, the loyalists were no longer a military threat to the triumphant Whigs. The British plan had directed

105 Lord Dunmore to General Howe, December 2, 1775. Naval Documents of the American Revolution, https://www.navydocs. org/node/14286. Accessed August 27, 2025.

106 David K. Wilson, *The Southern Strategy, Britain's Conquest of South Carolina and Georgia, 1775–1780* (University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 2-3.

107 Hugh F. Rankin, *North Carolina in the American Revolution*, (North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1982), 11-12.

108 Rankin, *North Carolina in the American Revolution*, 11.

109 Terry W. Lipscomb, *The Carolina lowcountry, April 1775-June 1776*, (South Carolina Department of Archives & History, 1991), p. 20-22.

Clinton's forces to join Sir William Howe's army in the north for a campaign. There simply was no time for a prolonged expedition in North Carolina or South Carolina.[110]

However, it was decided that it might be possible to make a quick strike at Charles Town. An engineering officer was sent to reconnoiter the harbor. He reported on May 26 that the South Carolina fort on Sullivan's Island was not yet completed.

Clinton and Parker now had a new objective. They could take the fort on Sullivan's Island, install a British garrison, and leave a pair of frigates in the harbor to provide support. The rest of the force could then return north for a summer campaign.[111]

The British assumed that the Whigs would be fearful of slave insurrections and Indian attacks and thus would not commit large portions of their defensive forces against the British and Loyalists. This was essentially correct. Despite the passage of over 30 years, the 1739 Stono Rebellion was never far from the minds of the white population in the South—and especially in South Carolina. It was well remembered that a group of about 80 slaves, near the Stono River south of Charles Town, had obtained arms and attempted to reach Spanish Florida and freedom. On their march, they burned several plantations and killed a couple dozen white people before being defeated by the South Carolina militia. Of even greater concern among the upcountry settlers, as there were fewer slaves in that area, was the threat of Indian attacks along the frontier.[112] Historian Robert M. Weir summed up the situation: "[B]lack resistance to slavery was like static on an older radio. It was always there, but one became accustomed to it. Only a significant increase in its volume or a headache caused the listener to pay much attention. Conflict in the white community doubtless increased the volume of [slave] resistance; for rival powers might provide sanctuaries and other assistance, masters would be distracted."[113]

By 1775, the number of slaves in South Carolina reached 107,000. The fear and danger felt by the whites posed by the large numbers of slaves were both real.[114]

110 Lipscomb, *The Carolina lowcountry*, 22.

111 Lipscomb, *The Carolina lowcountry*, 22.

112 Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 193-194.

113 Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 202.

114 Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis*, 187.

South Carolina made it a practice to patrol the coastline and report any sightings of enemy vessels or attempted landings. When news arrived in Charles Town that the British may have had plans to attack Charles Town, the Charles Town Council of Safety requested assistance from the militia units in Georgetown. However, Captain Robert Heriot's company was retained in Georgetown as he was acting as engineer at the harbor fortifications. Paul Trapier, committee chairman at Georgetown, replied to the authorities in Charles Town:[115]

> *Georgetown, January 15, 1776*
>
> *Last Night after 10 o'clock the express arrived with your Letter of the 13th. It was the first notice we had of the alarming situation the Metropolis was in, from the appearance of three men of war just without the bar, the Alarm fired at Fort Johnston was not heard by any person with us; Col. Rothmahler being on the spot received your letter, we have advised him to recommend to the officers of the Volunteer Companys in his Regiment to March at least half of their men with all possible dispatch to your assistance; Captain Robert Heriot of the Light Infantry Company, & Captain George Cogdell of a Volunteer Company both of this Town offered their service on the first Notice of your situation, the latter with Twenty Men of his Company will set out from hence tomorrow Morning, but it was Judg'd that Captain Heriot's company could not possibly be spared, as we have but few men & as our situation as a seaport is very insecure, add to this that the Forts for the Security of our Harbour & Town are now in hand, which require Men for garrisoning them & Capt Heriot is kind enough to officiate as principal Engineer in conducting the same, we sincerely wish the cause of your alarm may prove less formidable than at its first appearances we shall pay proper attention, that in these times of confusion no produce is shipped from any part within our district…*

Robert Heriot was commissioned a captain by Governor John Rutledge (or "president" as he was styled) on April 29, 1776:

> *South Carolina*
> *By his Excellency, John Rutledge, Esquire, President and Commander in Chief of the said Colony.*
> *To Robert Heriot, Esquire*
>
> *By virtue of the power and authority in me vested by the Constitution or form of Government agreed to and resolved upon by the Representatives of South Carolina, assembled in a Congress holden at Charles Town on the twenty-sixth day of March in the Year of our Lord One thousand seven hundred and seventy six, I, with the advice*

115 David R. Chesnutt, Ed. and C. James Taylor, Ed., *Papers of Henry Laurens*, (University of South Carolina Press, vol. 11, 1990) 36-38; Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 118; Heriot Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

*and Consent of the Privy Council, reposing Special trust and confidence in your courage and good conduct, and in your fidelity and attachment to the liberties of America, have commissioned, constituted and appointed, and by these presents do commission, constitute, and appoint you the said Robert Heriot to be Captain of the George Town Volunteer Light Infantry Company in the Lower Craven County Regiment of Militia commanded by Colonel Daniel Horry* [pronounced "Oree"]*, which said company you are to lead, train, muster and exercise according to Military Discipline.*

*And you are to follow and observe all such orders and instructions as you shall from time to time receive from me or the Commander in Chief for the time being, or any other of your superior officers, according to the Rules and Discipline of War, pursuant to the Laws of this Colony as established by the said Constitution.*

*And all inferior officers and others belonging to the said Company are hereby required and commanded to obey you as their Captain.*

*This commission to continue during pleasure.*

*Given under my hand and seal at Charles Town this twenty ninth day of April in the year of our Lord One thousand and seven hundred and seventy-six.*

*Signed J. Rutledge*[116]

It will be remembered that Robert had already been commissioned a captain July 1, 1773, but that commission was from the governor of His Majesty's Province of South Carolina.

He had changed allegiances. The colonies had not yet declared their independence, but they no longer considered themselves under the military or civil laws of His Majesty. They were in rebellion.

In early May, it was learned in Charles Town that a British fleet had arrived at Cape Fear in North Carolina. Fearing that Charles Town was in danger, a large body of Virginia and North Carolina Continental troops, commanded by former British officer Major General Charles Lee, were ordered to Charles Town. Continental officer, Brigadier General John Armstrong, another former British officer, arrived in late April to take command of troops in South Carolina until General Lee arrived. Clearly, Congress meeting in Philadelphia considered South Carolina and the entire South to be in great danger of a British operation.[117] On May 31, a fleet of fifty British ships was spotted 15 miles north of the entrance to Charles Town harbor. President John Rutledge sent express riders to summon the militia

116 Heriot Family Papers.

117 John Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution as Relating to the State of South Carolina, Vol 2* (Charleston: A.E. Miller, 1821), Reprint (New York: The New York Times & Arno Press, 1969), 275-332.

from the countryside.[118] Robert Heriot, captain of a Georgetown company of light infantry in Colonel Daniel Horry's militia regiment, would have received orders to march to Charles Town at this time.

Major General Charles Lee arrived at Charles Town in early June and took overall command of the defense of the city. He immediately began an energetic assessment of the defenses and ordered changes and new construction, as well as the positioning of troops to repel any attack. Warehouses on the wharves along East Bay were torn down to provide fields of fire for artillery and musket-fire. Traverses were erected across streets to prevent raking fire of the enemy. Lead from the windows of churches and homes was melted and cast into musket balls.[119]

The inhabitants—civil, military, enslaved and free—were put to work creating defensive positions and stockpiling ordnance and supplies. Batteries were mounted on James Island, Fort Johnson and along South and East Bay in Charles Town itself. Construction at the unfinished Fort Sullivan on the west end of Sullivan's Island at the mouth of the harbor was given top priority. Public records were removed to the countryside for fear of their capture or destruction by the British. Printing presses and type were also removed from the city.[120]

The Charles Town area began to fill with incoming militia as well as Continental soldiers. The final tally was North Carolina Continentals, 1,400; Virginia Continentals, 500; South Carolina Continentals, 1,950; Charles Town Militia, 700; Country Militia, including Robert Heriot, 1,972, for a combined force of 6,522.[121]

On June 11, Gen. Lee wrote Col. William Moultrie, the commander at Ft. Sullivan, "[T]he main body of Horry's regiment are at Point Haddrell."[122] Most likely, Robert, as a captain in Daniel Horry's regiment, was at Haddrell's Point.[123] Haddrell's Point was along the Charles Town harbor waterfront from Shem Creek to Cove Inlet immediately to the north of the west end of Sullivan's Island. This area is now part of Mount Pleasant.

In early June, despite frantic efforts, Fort Sullivan was still incomplete. The seaward or front and one side were standing but the rear and remaining side were only a few feet high. The main front side however was formidable. It was built of palmetto log walls with 16 feet of sand filled between them. The fort was armed with 31 cannons.

118 William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution* (New York: David Longworth, 1802), 140.

119 Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 328. Moultrie, Memoirs, 140-141.

120 Drayton, *Memoirs*, 2: 281.

121 Drayton, *Memoirs*, 2: 282.

122 Moultrie, *Memoirs* 154.

123 Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 154.

Several experts, including General Lee, thought that the fort could not stand up to the coming British bombardment. As the fort's commander, Colonel Moultrie, however, was adamant that the fort and his men were up to the task. The fort's entire garrison consisted of 413 men of the second South Carolina regiment of infantry and 22 men of the fourth South Carolina regiment of artillery, for a total of 435.[124] President Rutledge ordered Moultrie that he was to obey all orders from General Lee except an order to abandon the fort.

If the British were to attack on the landward side, it would be disastrous, and fatal, for the defenders caught inside. To prevent that from taking place, forces under Colonel William "Danger" Thomson were placed on the northern end of Sullivan's Island. Positioned three miles from Fort Sullivan, their mission was to prevent a British landing either directly from the sea or from British forces located on Long Island, now Isle of Palms, crossing Breach Inlet onto Sullivan's Island.[125]

Colonel Moultrie felt confident that the rear of the fort was safe as at the north end of Sullivan's Island he had sufficient defensive forces. He wrote:

> [F]or my part, I never was uneasy on not having a retreat [from the fort] because I never imagined that the enemy could force me to that necessity; I always considered myself as able to defend that post against the enemy. I had upwards of 300 riflemen, under Col. Thomson, of his regiment, Col. Clark, with 200 North Carolina regulars, Col. [Daniel] Horry, with 200 South Carolina, and the Racoon company of riflemen, 50 militia at the point of the island behind the sand hills and myrtle bushes.; I had also a small battery with one 18 pounder, and one brass fieldpiece, 6 pounder, at the same place, which entirely commanded the landing and could begin to fire upon them at 7 or 800 yards before they could attempt to land...[126]

Additionally, Moultrie wrote that he was not concerned even if the British had successfully landed as "the riflemen would have hung upon their flanks for three miles as they marched along the beach, and not above fifty yards from them."[127]

Fort Johnson, between Fort Sullivan and Charles Town, at the tip of James Island, had 20 heavy cannons. The artillery was commanded by Robert Heriot's old comrade from the 1759 expedition against the Cherokee, Colonel Christopher Gadsden. Batteries were erected along the water front of Charles Town and on Haddrell's Point, a mile north of Ft. Sullivan.[128]

124 Drayton, *Memoirs*, 2: 318, 290.
125 Lipscomb, *The Carolina lowcountry*, 22-23.
126 Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1: 142.
127 Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1: 142.
128 Drayton, *Memoirs*, 2: 293.

Stationed at Haddrell's Point and in advanced parties opposite Sullivan's and Long Island were about 1,500 men. These men, under the command of General Armstrong were in reserve to reinforce Fort Sullivan or Colonel Thomson on Long Island. On the day of battle to come, Horry's regiment, which included Robert Heriot, would be ordered to support Col. Thomson on Long Island.[129]

On June 28, thirty-six British vessels entered the harbor and anchored. The first shot from the British fleet into Fort Sullivan was a 13-inch mortar at 10:30 a.m. The artillery duel was very one-sided with the British having far more guns and well trained gunners. At about 11:30, four British ships, anchored across the front of the fort, began what has been called "one of the fiercest cannonades in the annals of eighteenth-century naval warfare."[130] Mary Heriot, 50+ miles away at Georgetown, wrote that she stood "trembling and amazed and listen to the guns that I distinctly hear."

No one on either side had ever seen anything remotely like this bombardment, nor would they ever see the like again. One military observer described the fleet as "an eternal sheet of fire and smoke." Another wrote, "I think it was by far the grandest sight I ever beheld." One British captain wrote: "After the first hour we began to be impatient, and a good deal surprized at the resistance of the battery [Fort Sullivan]. But when for 4 hours the fire grew every moment hotter and hotter we were lost in wonder and astonishment."[131]

Another British captain, during a lull in Fort Sullivan's firing and once the white smoke from the powder dissipated, used a spyglass to observe the fort's walls. He was surprised to find that there was very little damage despite the ferocious cannon-fire. The palmetto logs had absorbed the shot without splintering. The cannonballs had simply pierced the palmetto logs and disappeared into the sand.[132]

The fort had little ammunition so was required to fire slowly, taking careful aim as they fired each gun at 10-minute intervals. During the battle, when supplies of powder were almost exhausted, a few hundred additional pounds were delivered to keep the guns firing. The British fired twenty shots for each one from Fort Sullivan.[133]

129 Drayton, *Memoirs*, 2: 293.
130 Lipscomb, *The Carolina lowcountry*, 28.
131 Lipscomb, *The Carolina lowcountry*, 29.
132 Lipscomb, *The Carolina lowcountry*, 29.
133 Drayton, *Memoirs*, 2:300.

The fort's fire was concentrated on the two fifty-gun ships, the *Bristol* and the *Experiment*. The Bristol, the flagship, had an anchor cable severed that caused the ship to turn into the wind with its stern to the fort. This position allowed the fort to repeatedly rake the ship's decks fore and aft. The quarterdeck was cleared by shot that killed or wounded all there, including the fleet commander, Admiral Sir Peter Parker, who was seriously wounded. The Bristol suffered 40 killed and 71 wounded while the Experiment counted 23 killed and 56 wounded.[134]

At 9:30 p.m., the British, now running low on ammunition, taking serious losses, and causing little damage to the fort, silently withdrew out of range. The battle for Fort Sullivan was over. The 435 men of Fort Sullivan had repelled the British fleet.

The magnitude of the battle was enormous. It has been calculated that the fort used 4,766 pounds of gunpowder. The British used 34,000 pounds of gunpowder and 102,000 pounds (51 tons) of cannon balls, which was equivalent to 12,000 individual cannon balls.[135]

Of overriding concern to Gen. Lee, yet much less of a concern to the confident Col. Moultrie, was any attempt by the British to attack the unfinished Fort Sullivan from the landward side. The British, commanded by General Sir Henry Clinton, had landed 3,500 men on Long Island, now called Isle of Palms, weeks before the battle. The plan was for these soldiers to wade across Breach Inlet and attack the Whig forces on Sullivan's Island. After brushing aside the Whig forces, the British would then march the three miles to Fort Sullivan and attack it from the landward side or simply join up with the British Marines who would have already taken the remains of the fort demolished by the gunfire from the British fleet.

Every aspect of the plan failed.

On June 27, the day before the bombardment, Gen. Charles Lee wrote Col. Moultrie advising him, "I have ordered Gen. Armstrong to send an hundred volunteers to ease Col. Thomson's regiment of their heavy duty, for I find, a part of Col. Horry's regiment had most magnanimously refused to take this duty on them: We shall live I hope to thank them."[136]

This refusal to obey an order by a portion of Col. Daniel Horry's regiment has not been explained nor any repercussions discovered. It is unknown what effect this refusal to obey an order in the face of the enemy by part of Col. Horry's regiment may have had on Robert Heriot's activities (since he was in the regiment) and his physical location. During the afternoon, Col. Thomson was reinforced by 700 of Col. Muhlenburg's North Carolina Continentals along with other detachments.[137]

134 Drayton, *Memoirs*, 2:303.
135 Drayton, *Memoirs*, 2: 297.
136 Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1: 165.
137 Drayton, *Memoirs*, 2: 296.

The British were misinformed as to the depth of the water between Sullivan's Island and Long Island. It could not be waded as they had intended.[138] Instead, at 2 p.m., the British attempted an amphibious landing with an armed schooner and many flatboats filled with soldiers. They faced an 18-pounder and a brass six-pound field piece behind sand and palmetto log breastworks.

Included in this defensive force was Col. Daniel Horry's regiment, which, again, may have included Robert Heriot. The defensive position of Col. Thomson was a strong one. Had they pressed home their attack across open water with little cover, the British would have taken large casualties with very little chance of success. Gen. Clinton, perhaps remembering his own experience in the slaughter at Bunker Hill when British soldiers marched against Whig forces behind breastworks, called off the attack.

Two years later, on March 3, postal road surveyor Ebenezer Hazard wrote in his journal about Daniel Horry: "There is a Col. Daniel Horry] in Charles Town who encouraged his men to fight the day after the battle at Sullivan's Island by saying, 'Fight stoutly, my lads, for those brave fellows who were killed yesterday at Sullivan's Island are now in heaven, riding in their coaches like hell, by God.'[139]

Fifty miles away, Mary wrote a letter dated Friday, June 28, 1776, the day of battle. The letter is very calm and newsy. Clearly, she was not aware that the battle was about to begin. She mentions the fact that with the militia units elsewhere "there will be scarce a white man left in this part of the country." This was more than simply a statement of fact; it illustrates the ever-present anxiety of a potential slave uprising.

> *To Capt. Heriot*
> *Haddrell's Point*
> *June 28, 1776* [Friday]
>
> *My dear Rob,*
>
> *It is with pleasure I send away Cupid with the horses. Your brother sends six. I don't know how many Mr. Smith is to send. I hope nothing may happen to prevent your setting out on Monday* [July 1]*, tho I am full of fears. The Militia are not gone yet, when they are gone, and Capt. Postell's Company, who are to go next week, there will be scarce a white man left in this part of the country.*
>
> *I hope, my dear Rob, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you next Tuesday* [July 2] *or Wednesday* [July 3] *at the fartherest. If you leave,* [illegible] *enough, otherwise I am afraid you will be detained. I sent you a letter last Tuesday* [June 25] *by a boy of Mr. Allston's.*

138 Lipscomb, *The Carolina lowcountry*, 23-24.

139 Merrens, *Journal of Ebenezer Hazard*, 193.

*Notwithstanding the joy I felt at the thought of once more seeing you my dear Rob, yet I cannot quite get well. I was in hopes that joy would have had as much an effect upon my constitution as sorrow had, however I can eat now and have recovered my spirits. I hope your presence will do all the rest. Miss Mann, Miss LaRoche, and the young ladies desire to be remembered to you. Mrs. Mann says she now hopes to meet you again. Do not forget our compliments to Mrs. Tucker and Doctor Hyrne.*

*In the pleasing expectation of meeting again, I remain with the truest affection my dear Rob,*
*Yours,*
*Mary Heriot*

Shortly after the first letter, Mary wrote a second letter which she inexplicably dated "Saturday night, 12 o'clock." The date and time are confusing as Saturday was June 29, the day *after* the battle, over 24 hours after the British had withdrawn. She begins by writing "Since I wrote the above..." which likely refers to the prior letter dated June 28.

*Saturday night,*
*12 o'clock To*
*Capt. Heriot*
*Haddrell's Point*

*My dear Rob,*

*Since I wrote the above, by a boy of Mr. Allston's we have had the intelligence that the attack is begun.*

*My fears have now proved true. I have got a white boy to go to Haddrell's but my poor heart forbodes that all that is dearest to me in life is removed from there to some dangerous station. I am amazed at myself that I am able to write this calmly, but I am entirely stupefied and know not what to do. I cannot shed a tear but just stand trembling and amazed and listen to the guns that I distinctly hear.*

*Oh, my dear, dear Rob, do I live to say all that I fear you may not be in a situation to read this note when it arrives. Thank God this last cruel thought has forced the tears to find a passage from my heart, and I am something more resigned but at the same time I most scarcely will put me in a situation above the reach of any mortal evil, in which case may the Almighty God grant that we may one day meet in those inhabitations of bliss where we may never more be parted, and my dear Rob I think I can assure you that it is impossible for any one ever to have loved with a more ardent affection or tender love than your distressed unhappy*

*Mary Heriot*

*Received after the engagement begun at the advanced post of Sullivan's Island. RH* [last line and initials written by Robert Heriot]

The "advanced post" was at the north end of Sullivan's Island, at Breach Inlet, which was defended by Col. Thomson. Robert's notation is not necessarily an indication of where he was physically located but more likely the time he received the letter. The British were likely across the inlet on Long Island (now Isle of Palms) attempting its amphibious landing on Sullivan's Island, which took place at about 2 p.m.

The "boy" that Mary sent to Haddrell's Point to deliver her letters—and probably letters from other people in the Georgetown community—would have had to ride about 60 road miles to Haddrell's Point. If he left Georgetown at 1 p.m., when the guns had been firing for two hours, he would have arrived at Haddrell's Point long after the engagement at Breach Inlet was over. The boy would probably not have had access to Sullivan's Island, but may have reached Robert at Haddrell's Point.

This corresponds with Robert's note that the letter was "*received after the engagement begun*." If the boy found him at Haddrell's Point, then he was not in combat at the advanced post with Col. Thomson's force on Sullivan's Island.

In short, what part Capt. Robert Heriot played in any of these actions is unknown, but that he was present in the immediate area is certain. As captain, he commanded a company of light infantry in the militia regiment of Daniel Horry. Horry's regiment was encamped at Haddrell's Point but, thus far, it cannot be determined if Heriot was in the portion of the regiment that joined with Col. Thomson's in the active defense of Sullivan's Island.

Even so, Mary's letter is fascinating, filled with emotion, fear and shock. The guns firing at Ft. Moultrie 50 miles away must have brought the entire population of Georgetown into the streets. In decades to come, grandmothers would tell the tale of that memorable day.

After the victorious defense of Charles Town, relative peace descended upon the coastal areas. Patrols continued but without major incidents.

# 8. CALM BEFORE THE STORM

In mid-June 1777, the young Marquis de Lafayette and Baron de Kalb came ashore on semi-deserted North Island from Lafayette's ship *La Victoire*. They soon found their way to Georgetown and then went north to join General Washington.

In January 1778, Ebenezer Hazard, the postal road surveyor, arrived in Georgetown from the north. He observed in his journal:

> George Town is a decent little town, composed of frame houses, pleasantly situated. The entrance into the harbour is defended by a fort of 9 or 10 guns, but the principal defence is a shoal bar, and other shoals between that and the town which make the navigation intricate: there is also a six gun fort at the town." He attended a Presbyterian service at the court house, framed and clapboarded "after the Connecticut manner," where he heard a "tolerable" sermon and noted that "some of the ladies were midling handsome, but none could be called beauties." He observed "a pretty large brick church [Prince George Winyah, Anglican] in George Town, but they have no parson belonging to it; their former one having refused to preach since the declaration of independence."[140]

The parson he described was James Stuart, a Loyalist, who later sought the protection of Major James Wemyss [pronounced "Weems"] in August 1780 and was sent to Charles Town for his safety.[141] It may be that the congregation refused to allow him to preach.

Hazard again confided in his journal:

> [T]he common country people talk very much like Negros, and indeed many of the better sort use a little of that dialect. This arises from the number of Negros in the state, of which I am told there are 50 for one white person. The white children are usually suckled by Negro wenches, and associate mostly with the Negros for several of the first years of their lives.[142]

140 Merrens, *Journal of Ebenezer Hazard*, 181, 182.

141 Wemyss to Cornwallis, August 4, 1780, in Saberton, ed., *The Cornwallis Papers: The Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in The Southern Theatre of the American Revolutionary War*, (East Sussex, Naval and Military Press, 2010), 1: 325; Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 84, 127.

142 Merrens, *Journal of Ebenezer Hazard*, 181-182.

Even so, the frightening specter of slave uprisings was never far from the minds of the slave-owning population. While in Georgetown, Hazard noted in his journal, "We are told that the Negros have lately rose at Surinam, and burned the town of Paramaribo."[143] Suriname was a Dutch colony in northeastern South America situated between Guyana and French Guiana. Paramaribo was the capital.

Hazard wrote in his diary an observation about many people he met:

> [There was a] mixture of vanity and ignorance [which] forms a contemptible character. The country gentlemen are striking instances of this: accustomed to tyrannize from their infancy, they carry with them a disposition to treat all mankind in the same manner they have been used to treat their Negroes. If a man has not as many slaves as they, he is esteemed by them their inferior, even though he vastly exceeds them in every other respect. It is strange that men should value themselves most upon what they ought to be most ashamed of; this is a clear proof [of] the depravity of human nature. The number of Mulattoes in the four southernmost states is as clear a proof of a viciated [sic – vitiated; degraded, debauched, degenerated] taste in their inhabitants.[144]
>
> I have conversed with many people respecting the slavery of the Negroes. The ignorant brutes which some of the poor wretches have for masters insist that they were born on purpose to be slaves: the more sensible (though they cannot vindicate the practice of keeping them in slavery) alledge that white people could not endure the fatigues attending labor in the southern states, and infer from that the necessity of keeping Negroes: but I apprehend this to be only begging the question, as I do not find that any experiments have been made to prove it. I am clearly of opinion that the white people who are born here, would endure the fatigues of labor, were they accustomed to it from their infancy (as with us) as well as the Negroes now do. I believe the pride and indolence of the white people (which are great beyond description) are the true causes of their keeping Negroes: perhaps too they may suppose the expense of Negroes will amount to a less sum than hiring of white people would, and therefore they will not hire: the falsity of this supposition can easily be demonstrated. The reason assigned for the severity with which the Negroes are treated is that it is necessary in order to break their spirits, and thereby prevent insurrection, which, from the numbers of the Negroes, would be attended with fatal consequences. That man can enjoy but little happiness who is under continual apprehension from his slaves, and the policy of that state which allows of such a number of them as to be formidable, must be bad indeed.[145]

143 Merrens, *Journal of Ebenezer Hazard*, 181-182.

144 Merrens, *Journal of Ebenezer Hazard*, 190.

145 Merrens, *Journal of Ebenezer Hazard*, 192-193.

The traveling journalist was clearly disturbed by slavery. It is unlikely that Ebenezer Hazard made many friends in South Carolina.

Skirmishes between the British and the Patriots continued. On Dec. 29, 1778, the British captured Savannah, Georgia. The capture seems not to have involved Heriot in any way. Orders from Governor Rawlins Lowndes to Capt. "Herriotte,"[146] written February 4, 1779 in Charles Town gives a view of the type of service he was performing.

> *Sir,*
>
> *As the Garrison from Cat Island Fort is not yet arrived in Town I am afraid some mistake has happened, or misapprehension of the orders.*
>
> *It was intended that you should relive the Detachment of the Artillery who did duty at that Fort, with a Detachment from your Company of Militia and that the Artillery should proceed to Charles Town to Strengthen Fort Johnson, where they are much wanted.*
>
> *I hope, Sir, you will, on your part, further this arrangement.*
>
> *I am, Sir,*
> *Your most Obed't Hum. Serv't*
> *Rawlins Lowndes*[147]

It is not clear from the orders if Lowndes meant that Robert himself should go to Fort Johnson in Charles Town harbor or if just a detachment of artillery was required. Cat Island in the 18th century was on the west side of Winyah Bay, west of North Island which is on the Atlantic Ocean at the entrance to Winyah Bay. It is now part of the Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center. Robert did see minor action when on April 27, 1779, a small party of the enemy landed near Georgetown. Extract of a letter from George Town, May 1, 1779:

> *Tuesday last the 27th instant* [April 27, 1779], *a party of men belonging to the Germain [named for Lord George Germain,British Secretary of State for the American Department] privateer of New York, landed on North Island, near George Town bar, with a design of getting a supply of fresh provisions. Capt. Heriot of the George Town light infantry company, (then on duty at Cat Island fort) being informed of their landing, went with a detachment of his company, and came up with them, when four seamen and a Captain of Marines, all well armed, were made prisoners; some others took to their boat, attempting to get on board the vessel that lay*

146 Lowndes was the governor of South Carolina (called the President during his term), replacing John Rutledge who would later return to replace Lowndes.

147 Letter, Lowndes to Heriot, February 4, 1779. Copy in Georgetown Public Library, History Room, Heriot Family History folder.

*close in shore, which kept up a warm and brisk fire of grape and langrige* [langrage – a kind of cannon shot made up of small scrap metal encased in a thin metal canister] *shot on our people, but they lost their lives by the boat sinking in the surf. They were next day brought up to town under a guard, and upon examination said, they did not expect to meet with any resistance as they had heard that all the militia were taken to the southward. This and other late instances plainly evince the utility of the militia being stationed along the sea coast."*[148]

Robert Heriot was promoted to lieutenant colonel of the Lower Craven County Regiment of Militia on May 2, 1779.

*State of South Carolina*
*By His Excellency, John Rutledge, Esquire*
*Governor and Commander in Chief of the said State:*

*I, reposing special trust and Confidence in your courage and good conduct, and in your fidelity and attachment to the liberties of America, have Commissioned, constituted and appointed and by these presents do commission, constitute and appoint you, the said Robert Heriot to Lieutenant Colonel of the Lower Craven County Regiment of Militia, commanded by Colonel Archibald McDonald, which said Regiment you are to lead, train, muster and exercise, according to military discipline.*

*And you are to follow and observe all such orders and instructions as you shall from time to time receive from me, or the Commander in Chief for the time being, or any other your superior officers, according to the Rules and Discipline of War, pursuant to the laws of this State. And all inferior officers and others belonging to the said Regiment are hereby required and commanded to obey you as their Lieutenant Colonel.*

*This Commission to continue during pleasure.*

*Given under my Hand and seal at Charles Town, this twenty-eighth day of April in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy-nine, and in the third year of American Independence.*

*By His Excellency's Command:*
*J.W. Huger*
*Secretary*[149]

148 *The Pennsylvania Packet or the General Advertiser*, June 8, 1779, p. 2. This is a reprint of a May 1, 1779, letter from Georgetown, S.C. referring to events that took place on April 27, 1779.

149 Letter, Rutledge to Heriot, April 28, 1779. Copy in Georgetown Public Library, History Room, Heriot Family History folder.

In October 1779, a combined Whig and French force under Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln and Admiral-General Count d'Estaing, respectively, attempted to retake Savannah but failed. As before, the operation did not involve Heriot.

# 9. THE FALL OF CHARLES TOWN

As the year 1780 began, the only significant territory the British held in the colonies was New York City, Long Island, and Savannah, Georgia. In short, they were losing the war.

As noted before, the British had conceived a strategy in 1776, based on poor intelligence and wishful thinking, to turn the tide and win the war. A major error in the plan was the accepted belief that the vast majority of the colonial population was Loyalist at heart. These loyal citizens would, it was thought, step up and form Loyalist militias to maintain control as the British armies captured an area and moved on to new conquests.[150]

At the center of this misguided plan was to use Charles Town as the perfect base from which to start the campaign to retake the colonies. The city had extensive dock and storage facilities to handle its role as the major supply point from which troops could advance through South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina and into Virginia. Loyal militias would spring up, they believed, in the wake of these conquests to provide local security. Garrisoned posts would be created at intervals to support the troops and maintain lines of communication.[151]

Sir Henry Clinton, the British commander-in-chief, had between 25,000 and 30,000 troops. Half of them would be required to garrison New York City and Long Island. The other half would be sent to Charles Town.

Clinton himself kicked off the campaign when he sailed from New York with 8,700 British regulars. His second-in-command was Charles Earl Cornwallis, who would take on the brunt of the operation.[152]

Charles Town is on the end of a peninsula with the Ashley River on the west and the Cooper River on the east. They join to become Charles Town harbor. At this time, the harbor defenses were weak. Fort Sullivan, now Moultrie, site of a dramatic victory in 1776, had been allowed to fall into disrepair. Fort Johnson was vulnerable from the landward side. In short, the city itself had few defenses.

The British strategy called for a substantial base to begin operations, which Charles Town was. An added bonus was that the Whig general, Benjamin Lincoln, had gathered a huge force at Charles Town with more arriving. What a prize it would be for the British if they could catch so many of the enemy marooned on a peninsula!

150 Wilson, *The Southern Strategy*, 2-4.
151 Wilson, *The Southern Strategy*, 16-22.
152 Wilson, *The Southern Strategy*, 22-25.

Although they had been defeated in Charles Town in 1776, this time the strategy seemed to work. On March 3, 1780, seven hundred North Carolina Continentals arrived at Charles Town. The first week of April saw 750 Virginia Continentals reach Charles Town. Days later, Clinton completed his encirclement of the city.[153]

Before Charles Town was completely cut off, however, Governor John Rutledge escaped—the civil government of South Carolina would still be represented in unoccupied areas. Lt. Gov. Christopher Gadsden remained behind.

On March 5, Rutledge issued the following orders to Robert Heriot.

> *Orders: Gov. Rutledge to Lt. Col. Heriot Sir,*
>
> *I think proper and accordingly do hereby put the following Companies viz. Bonneau's, Benson's, Mitchell's, Dunn's, Warden's, McColey's, Ford's and Lerew's under your immediate command, to act with them only under orders from me, and I desire that you will keep one half of those companies always on duty at Georgetown and Cat Island, on guard duty along the sea coast, Patrol duty must be performed by so many of the remainder of those companies as may be sufficient for that purpose.*
>
> *In case of the Enemy's actual invasion, you are to employ the whole of these Companies in such manner as the security and safety of that part of the Country render most expedient and advisable.*
>
> *I am Sir,*
> *Y'r very Hu'ble Serv't.,*
> *Chas. Town*
> *J. Rutledge*[154]

By mid-April, the noose had tightened around Charles Town, making it impossible for the trapped army to get out or fight its way out. The British guns began to fire at Charles Town on April 13. The British continued their efforts to dig supporting trenches to bring their heavy artillery ever closer. The city was doomed.[155]

With no chance of resisting the siege and, with the threat that the British would level Charles Town, there was no choice but to surrender. The city fell to the British on May 12, 1780, with very little damage to the city or loss of life on either side.

153 Wilson, *The Southern Strategy*, 31-37.

154 Woodruff, Heriots; See also Caldwell Woodruff, *Heriot Family in Scotland, Canada and the USA, and Colonel Robert Heriot, Revolutionary Soldier of South Carolina*, 1918.

155 Borick, Carl P., *A Gallant Defense, the Siege of Charleston, 1780*. University of South Carolina Press, 2003, 167-169.

The consequences of the fall of Charles Town cannot be overstated. This was a huge defeat for the Whig cause. Almost the entire Continental forces from Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina—3,465 officers and men—were captured. These were disciplined veterans which would be very difficult to replace. In addition, over 2,500 militiamen were taken. Along with the men, 400 artillery pieces of all sizes, 5,000 muskets, and ammunition were seized. Three Continental frigates, *Providence, Boston, and Ranger* and the South Carolina navy's *L'Aventure* were captured, along with many smaller vessels. A third of the entire Continental army had been lost in one blow.[156]

It was a massive defeat that shocked and crushed the spirits of Whigs across the South, causing large numbers of them to go to Charles Town and other British posts to proclaim their peaceful intentions. The Loyalists throughout South Carolina were provided with a huge boost.[157]

Although some sources erroneously place Heriot there at the time of the fall, he was not at Charles Town and did not surrender with the captured garrison.[158]

Robert had recently been in Charles Town, however. On March 3, 1780, orders were issued by Lt. Colonel John F. Grimke, Deputy Adjutant General, ordering "the Brass 2 pounders with carriages Limbers horse Gear, for 2 Horses to each gun 4 sponges & rammers 2 ladles 2 wadhooks & 2 setts of Dragg Ropes 600 Rounds of fixed Case shot, Tube & Portfiers, to be delivered to Col. Heriot."[159]

It is not clear if Robert was in Charles Town when this order was written—the March 5 order from Governor Rutledge suggests that Robert was in the Georgetown area.

British Lt. Gen. Sir Henry Clinton, commander-in-chief of all the British forces in America, issued a policy of pardon and amnesty on May 22, ten days after the fall of Charles Town. All those who would take an oath of allegiance to the crown, he said, would be pardoned. He warned, however, that those who attempted to intimidate Loyalists or prevent them from joining the British forces would be treated severely and would have their estates and property confiscated. A great many Whigs felt, after the catastrophic British victory, that resistance was futile. A large number of men came forward seeking protection for themselves and their property.[160]

Colonel Daniel Horry was a South Carolina assemblyman, a very wealthy planter along the Santee River, and had been Robert Heriot's commanding officer back in 1776.

156 Borick, *A Gallant Defense*, 222-223.

157 Borick, *A Gallant Defense*, 230-232.

158 Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the Revolution* (Washington: The Rare Book Shop Publishing Company, Inc., 1914), 287; N. Louise Bailey and Elizabeth Ivey Cooper, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives*, Volume III, 1775–1790 (University of South Carolina Press, 1981), 331-332.

159 "Order Book of John Faucheraud Grimke," *South Carolina History Magazine* 18, No. 3 (July 1917): 149-150.

160 Borick, *A Gallant Defense*, p. 232-233.

Horry had a choice to make—the same choice facing thousands of South Carolina men. Was he going to continue the fight after the loss of Charles Town? Was he going to switch sides and join the British? Was he going to take the oath of allegiance to the crown and accept British protection? Or was he going to give his parole and remain out of the war.

Horry chose to take the oath of allegiance and take the protection of the British.[161] Very likely his aim was to preserve his plantations and his property in a war which he believed to be lost.

Robert Heriot was faced with the same dilemma. At risk was his life, a plantation, a house in Georgetown and his possessions. He also had to consider his wife and small children. But he chose parole, never gave his oath to the British, and never accepted British protection.[162]

On June 3, 1780, Clinton issued a supplemental proclamation. This proclamation released all prisoners on parole—except those captured at the fall of Charles Town. However, the proclamation stipulated that "all persons should take an active part in settling and securing His Majesty's government and delivering the country from that anarchy which for some time past hath prevailed."

In other words those who accepted the pardon and amnesty would now be expected to take up arms against those who were resisting British authority. Those pardoned could not remain neutral, which many of the signers of the oath of allegiance had believed was an option. Clinton included in the proclamation the ominous statement that those "who shall afterwards neglect to return to their allegiance and to His Majesty's government will be considered as enemies and rebels to the same and treated accordingly."

Obviously, many Whigs had wanted, perhaps reluctantly, to sign the loyalty oath, and accept the pardon, to protect themselves, their families, and their property. However, now that the conditions had changed, they were not willing to fight against their friends.[163]

Sir Henry Clinton wrote his friend William Eden on May 30, 1780. "They [the Whigs] seemed at first to boggle at the idea of arming against the Congress … We seem so totally masters here that I insisted on their being ready at the first call."[164]

161 Rogers, *History of Georgetown County*, 160.

162 Letter, Robert Heriot to Mary Heriot, June 9, 1781.

163 The text of the June 3, 1780 proclamation can be found in Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America*, London: T. Cadell, 1787, 73.

164 Sir Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion; Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775–1782*, reprint of Yale University Press (1954), Hamden, CT. Archon Books (1971), 175

The June 3 proclamation by Clinton turned out to be a huge mistake. Many who had signed the oath felt they had been betrayed by the British—that the British had broken the contract of their paroles—and considered the oath no longer binding. Not allowed to sit the war out as neutrals, these men, in large numbers, took up arms and fled into the backcountry to forcibly resist the British occupation.[165]

*Charles Earl Cornwallis*

Two days after issuing the proclamation, Clinton departed South Carolina to return to New York, leaving Lt. Gen. Charles Earl Cornwallis to implement, and live with, the ramifications of his thorny proclamations in the midst of continuing to execute the strategy to reclaim sovereignty in the South.

It is not known exactly where Robert was located after the fall of Charles Town, but the military situation statewide was in chaos. One clue is found in the Revolutionary War Pension Application of one Thomas Burnham, who wrote that on April 20, he was working at a fort and "pressing pork on Waxhaw by order of Colonel Heriot."[166] The Waxhaws is 150 miles from Charles Town, near the North Carolina border, about 45 miles north of Camden.

165 Wilson, *The Southern Strategy*, 265.

166 South Carolina Audited Accounts relating to Thomas Burnham, file 929, series S108092, reel 0016, frame 00461, South Carolina Archives.

# 10. PRISONER OF WAR: LIVING UNDER ENEMY OCCUPATION

After the fall of Charles Town, the British and Loyalist troops expanded their control throughout most of South Carolina. Hessian officer Captain Johann Ewald wrote in his diary under the date of May 21, 1780, "We have received the news that the enemy had left Georgetown and retired toward Camden..." Another Hessian officer, Captain Johann Hinrichs, wrote in his diary on May 22, "The enemy have abandoned Georgetown and have withdrawn to Camden."[167]

It may be that Robert had been in Georgetown and had left prior to May 21 for Camden. If so, Mary would have more than five weeks of waiting, anxiety, and stress, until occupying forces arrived on July 1. She would have new challenges and stress, not to mention danger for her children and herself. She would not know Robert's condition or whereabouts.

By the end of June the British and Loyalist troops had swept through South Carolina. Resistance was minimal as the Whigs were in complete disarray.

Twenty-six-year-old Lt. Col. Francis Lord Rawdon was in command of the British headquarters in Camden, South Carolina, July 1, 1780, when Robert Heriot signed the parole agreement.

> I, Robert Harriott of the Province of South Carolina, acknowledge myself to be prisoner to His Majesty's Forces, and hereby promise upon my parole of honour, that I will repair to James Island, John's Island, Edisto Island, Eding's Island, St. Helena in the said Province, on or before the twentieth day of July Inst., (notifying the place of my residence to the commissary of prisoners at Charlestown, within two days after my arrival) & there remain until regularly exchanged, or permitted or ordered to remove; and that while prisoner I will not write, speak or act directly or indirectly against His Majesty's interest, and that I will surrender myself at any time & at any place when ordered by the Commander in Chief or any other of His Majesty's officers.[168]

A search for known skirmishes in South Carolina in the weeks preceding July 1 reveals no significant combat in the area of Camden where Robert Heriot may have been captured. It is possible, even probable, that Robert—as did many others after learning of the catastrophe at Charles Town—simply turned himself in to the British. Meanwhile, in Georgetown, British seamen commanded

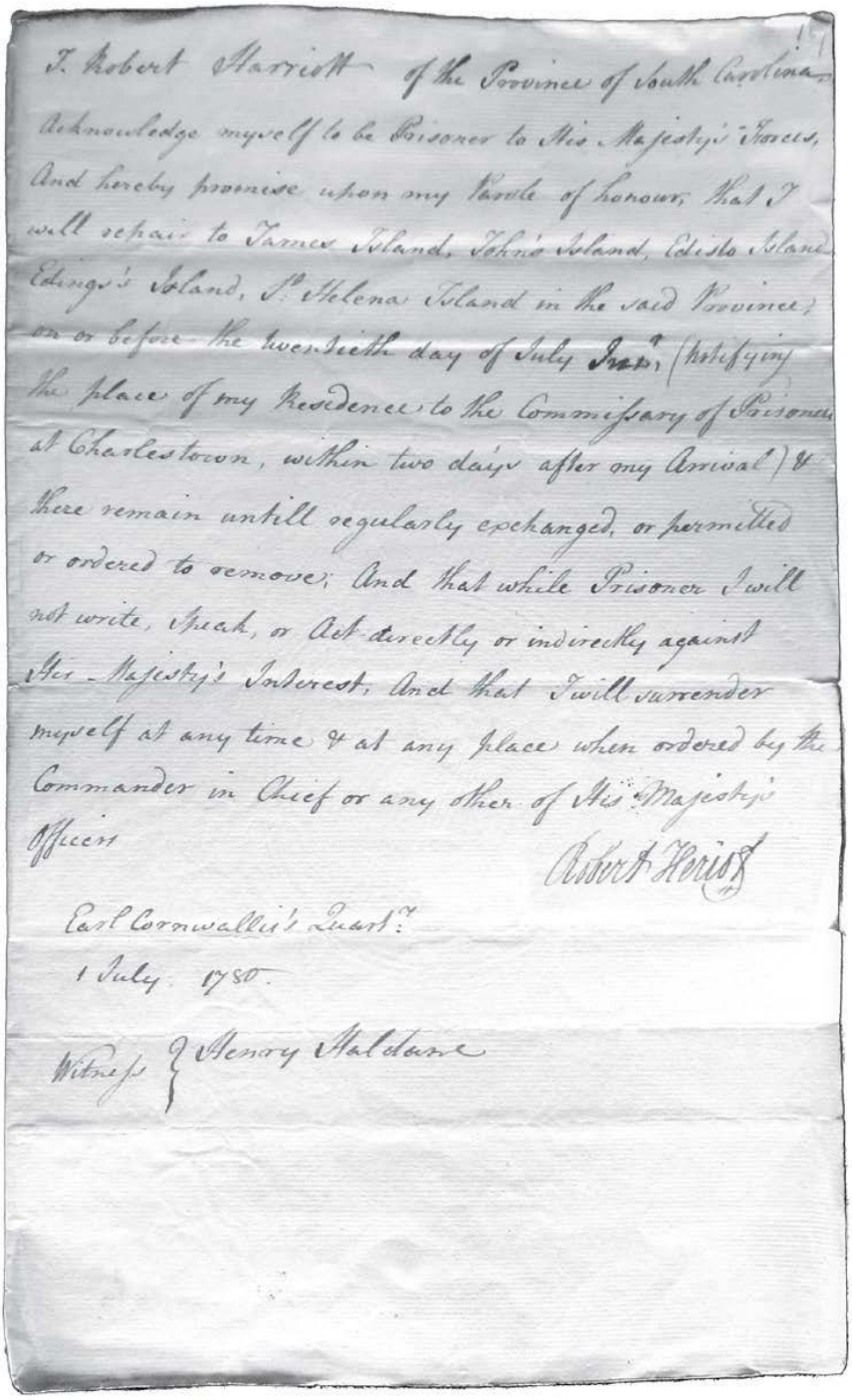
167 Bernard A. Uhlendorf, *The Siege of Charleston, With an Account of the Province of South Carolina: Diaries and Letters of Hessian Officers From the von Jungkenn Papers in the William L. Clements Library* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1838), 91, 303.

168 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 124; *Cornwallis Papers*, (British) National Archives, 20/11/2/233-234.

by naval Captain John Ardesoife (1737–1790) arrived July 1 in the British sloop *Loyalist*, which had an 80-man crew and an armament of fourteen four-pounders.[169] Ardesoife immediately seized the ships in the harbor and their cargoes and sent armed vessels up the rivers to loot the plantations.[170]

169 Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1714–1792*, (Seaforth Publishing, 2007).

170 Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780–1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America* (London, 1787), reprint (New York: NY Times and Arno Press, 1968) 87.



I Robert Harriott of the Province of South Carolina Acknowledge myself to be Prisoner to His Majesty's Forces, And hereby promise upon my Parole of honour, that I will repair to James Island, John's Island, Edisto Island Edings's Island, St. Helena Island in the said Province, on or before the twentieth day of July Inst., (notifying the place of my Residence to the Commissary of Prisoners at Charlestown, within two days after my Arrival) & there remain untill regularly exchanged, or permitted or ordered to remove; And that while Prisoner I will not write, Speak, or Act directly or indirectly against His Majesty's Interest, And that I will surrender myself at any time & at any place when ordered by the Commander in Chief or any other of His Majesty's Officers

Robert Heriot

Earl Cornwallis's Quart.r

1 July. 1780.

Witness { Henry Haldane

*Robert Heriot's parole dated July 1, 1780, given at Camden, SC. Witnessed by Lt. Henry Haldane, Aide-de-camp to General Cornwallis. Cornwallis Papers, (British) National Archives, 30/11/2/233-234.*

On July 8, Major James Wemyss (1748-1833) and several hundred men of the 63rd Royal Regiment arrived. Claiming the crops as prizes of war, Wemyss immediately seized the rice stored at the nearby plantations.[171]

The white population of 500-600 souls in Georgetown would have been reduced with the Whig militia away. Besides Loyalist sympathizers, remaining would have been women and children and elderly residents who would have to contend with the invasion of British troops. There would also have been a considerable number of enslaved persons in the town and surrounding area, which would have caused concern among the white population. Mary Heriot, while caring for her young children, would be forced to face the situation on her own.

Maj. Wemyss (pronounced "Weems") wrote Cornwallis on July 11 that the "principal inhabitants" who he believed to be among the "most violent and persecuting of rebells" wanted "to save their estates, [and so would] profess a desire of becoming good subjects" and therefore should "be treated with some marks of disscouragement." He considered that if "ten or twelve of the leading people" should be sent to the sea islands, "the Friends of Government [the Loyalists], who are much inferior to the other party both in numbers and in consequence will be pleased and will be roused to take every method of carrying on the purpose of Government." He also believed that if the leading rebel Whig citizens were allowed to stay in Georgetown on parole, their presence and standing in the community would greatly hamper efforts to raise a Loyalist militia, which was vital to the success of the southern strategy.[172]

Cornwallis agreed. He wrote:

> *"I would have you by all means seize all violent and persecuting rebels and send them directly on parole to the islands unless there are a few, very notorious for acts of cruelty, who might be sent under guard of militia to the Provost's at Charles Town."*[173]

Cornwallis added that Loyalists would be required to take the oath of allegiance when they joined the militia. Ordinary citizens who did not take the oath would be placed on parole and required to remain at their homes "with the most solemn assurance that if they break their parole by committing any act of hostility, they shall instantly be hanged without any form of trial farther than proving the identity of the person."

Cornwallis was describing exactly the situation confronting Mary and Robert Heriot. Robert refused to sign the oath and was paroled, not to his home but, because of his standing in the community, to

171 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 122.

172 Wemyss to Cornwallis, July 11, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 1: 304; Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 124.

173 *Cornwallis Papers*, 1: 305.

James Island near Charles Town. Both he and Mary knew that if his parole was considered broken, he would be hanged. Clearly, there would not be any leeway or discussion with the British as to what constituted a breach of parole. As a result, both Mary and Robert, in their written communications with each other, were extremely careful not to write anything that might be considered a breach of Robert's parole. They lived on thin ice.

On September 20, Maj. Wemyss wrote Cornwallis that he "had burnt and laid waste to about fifty homes and plantations 'mostly' belonging to people who had either broken their parole or oath of allegiance."[174] Clearly, Wemyss was not a man Mary and Robert could look to for relief of their distress or from whom they could presume a sense of fairness and security. However, neither of them was yet aware of that fact.

Wemyss was 31 years old when he entered Georgetown. A Scot born in Edinburgh, he had been in the British army for 12 years. Mary may have been tempted to believe that as Wemyss was a Scot who had grown up less than 20 miles from the Heriot home—and would likely have had acquaintances in common—she could possibly trust him. But he had gained the reputation, second only to Tarleton, for brutality and waging war on civilians. Whether the rumor was justified is not clear.

On July 12, George Heriot, Daniel Tucker, and William Heriot, along with 23 other leading citizens of Georgetown, signed the following statement, which Wemyss forwarded to Cornwallis:

> *"We Inhabitants in and about George Town Winyah beg leave to represent to Major Wemyss, that as the original cause of the disputes between Great Britain and her colonies was our being taxed without being represented—and as by a Proclamation of the 1st June last issued by His Excellency Sir Henry Clinton Knight of the Bath General and Commander in Chief of his Majesty's Forces in America, and Mariot Arbuthnot Esquire Vice Admiral of the Blue and Commander in Chief have behaved better than many others. of his Majesty's Ships, We are assumed that we shall not be taxed but by our representatives in General Assembly, We are therefore desirous of becoming British Subjects in which capacity we promise to behave ourselves with all becoming fidelity and loyalty."*[175]

174 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 129, citing Wemyss to Cornwallis, Sept. 20, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, PRO, 30/11/3.

175 Wemyss to Cornwallis, July 14, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 1: 308.

Very likely the signers of this document believed that resistance was futile, and they were intent on preserving their businesses, plantations, and their families. Wemyss did not take their statement well as he wrote Cornwallis on July 14 that many of the signers were "principal people in this part of the country and have acted as chairmen of committees, sheriffs, magistrates etc." He suggested that "the leading part of them ought to be sent to the sea islands on their paroles immediately, as their remaining here on parole I think will (as they have been used to command) discountenance the raising the militia much."[176]

Several of these men, including George Heriot, are mentioned by Mary in a July 28 letter as being sent to the sea islands, to be followed by others to Charles Town.

At the same time as they pledged to "behave ourselves with all becoming fidelity and loyalty," George Heriot and Daniel Tucker wrote Major Wemyss complaining that their property had been taken by Captain Ardesoif and requesting that Wemyss have it returned to them. Their list of items included two hogsheads of sugar, three barrels of sugar, two barrels of flour, and a barrel of wine along with other items.[177]

Wemyss wrote of their request to Cornwallis, but the general replied negatively to their request to Wemyss on July 18.

> *"I cannot receive professions in contradiction to acts and believe that those who have been acting violently against us for four years are now become our friends only because they tell me so. You must therefore proceed to parole all the most obnoxious and dangerous to the islands and the remainder to their own plantations."*[178]

Heriot's movements immediately after giving his parole on July 1 are uncertain as the letters involved are convoluted. Likely, he went to Georgetown as he was not required to be at the sea islands until July 20 according to the terms of his parole. On July 18, Wemyss wrote Heriot that he was requesting Lord Cornwallis to grant him "an addition to his leave" due to "the distress of his family," which turned out to be smallpox.

176 Wemyss to Cornwallis, July 14, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 1: 307.

177 Heriot and Tucker to Cornwallis, July 12, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 1: 309-310.

178 Cornwallis to Wemyss, July 18, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 1: 313.

*Major James Wemyss's compliments to Mr. R. Heriot, is now writing a letter to Lord Cornwallis, requesting an addition to his leave, which Mr. W. hopes will be granted, is exceedingly sorry for the distress of his family.*

*The letter will be ready in half an hour, if Mr. Heriot will send for it.*

*Wednesday Morning*

*Lord Cornwallis has been pleased to permit Lt. Colonel Heriot to visit his family at Georgetown, and to be absent from the island fourteen days from the date hereof, (adhering strictly to his parole during that time), at the expiration of which he is to comply with all the terms of his present parole.*

*Signed A. Ross,*

*Aide de Camp,*

*Headquarters, 18 July 1780*[179]

That Robert could "send for it" in "half an hour" implies that both Robert and Wemyss were located in Georgetown. It may be that Wemyss wrote the message to Heriot earlier than July 18 as the response from Cornwallis allowing Heriot "to be absent from the island fourteen days from the date hereof " also carries the date of July 18.

Robert, as seen in his letter to Mary merely dated "July 1780," mentions her letters of July 14, 18, and 20 which indicates he was not at Georgetown with her, yet Mary knew where he was as she wrote him letters as well.

*July 1780*

*My Dear Polly,*

*Your letters 14, 18, and 20th, I have received. Be assured I am under the greatest restlessness on account of my absence from you and my dear children at this trying occasion, and that distress is doubled by reason of what you must suffer on that account. I am as well as it is possible, to be suffering so much under the circumstances.*

*I am glad that poor Mary's suffering so much is better. Wish to God it was over with all the other sweet creatures as well. In consequence of your desire, I laid the case of the*

179 Caldwell Woodruff, *Colonel Robert Heriot, Revolutionary Soldier of South Carolina*, 118. This communication does not appear in *The Cornwallis Papers*.

*children before Dr. Hyne by letter and desired him to bring an answer to you through Mr. Rose which I suppose Thomas will bring up. If Dr. Hyne is sick, I do not know that Dr. Machie is in the practice of* [illegible – perhaps "inoculation"]*, but he must have had great opportunity of being acquainted with the small pox in England. I am glad that your neighbors are so kind to you and that the officers are so civil.*

*There is no person who has it so much in his power to obtain my return on parole to my family as Major Wheims* [Major James Wemyss] *being commanding officer at my place of residence from which many unfavorable report have been made. I hope it may please God that the other children will get safe over the small pox and that I am permitted to return that I may enjoy that quiet and happiness that I have been so many years a stranger to.*

*I have sent home a few articles of clothes. Hoping to hear from you and that my dear children are all in a fair way of doing well and that you are in health yourself.*

*I commit my dear Polly, Yours ever,*

*Robert Heriot*

Robert's comment that "I may enjoy that quiet and happiness that I have been so many years a stranger to" is puzzling. What was he doing that kept him from happiness for "so many years"? The record is silent.

Robert's status as merely an officer in the militia did not warrant his detention on the sea islands. Rather, it was his wealth, position as justice of the peace, and his participation in the Committee for Prince George where he enforced the association subversive of the royal government. In addition, his social position and concerns for his influence on the local population relegated him to the "obnoxious" and "leading people" category that Maj. Wemyss and Cornwallis desired sent to the sea islands. It was part of the British southern strategy to identify prominent community leaders and separate them from the population so they could not influence, even by their mere presence, the vast numbers of Loyalists thought to be ready to come forward and take up arms.

It was wishful thinking for Robert and Mary to consider that Wemyss would ever allow Robert to return to Georgetown. However, neither he nor Mary appear to be aware of the fact that they were in the "obnoxious and leading people" category. If they were aware, it is certain that neither would have put it in writing. In fact, they may have made polite comments about Wemyss in their letters in hopes that the letters were read by the British and that their planted comments might be well received.

In Mary's letter of July 28, 1780, she names others who would fit the category of Georgetown's "leading people" including the merchants Paul Trapier, Job Rothmahler, and George Heriot, who

were being sent to the sea islands.

The more troublesome, influential, and dangerous leaders were exiled even farther, to St. Augustine, in the British colony of East Florida, where they had the freedom to move about the town. This exile would remove them from providing negative influence on potential Loyalist supporters or providing inspiration to Whig sympathizers. In addition, the harsh treatment of these men would be a severe lesson for all who advocated for resistance to British and Loyalist domination.

On the night of August 27, 1780, Lt. Gov. Christopher Gadsden and twenty-eight other leaders, although technically already on parole, were arrested without warning. Eleven more were picked up in the following days.[180] Gadsden was even placed in solitary confinement in St. Augustine.

Robert Heriot was not in the same league as these men. Rather than risk his providing any assistance to the Whig militia or intimidating locals who were believed by the British to be willing to join the Loyalist militia, he was doomed to exile to the sea islands.

In his case, he was sent to James Island where he was not imprisoned and was allowed freedom on the island. However, he could not leave without a pass. The island must have seemed small and became exceedingly boring in a very short time. Being separated from his family may have been Robert's greatest trial while in captivity.

It must also be remembered that the letters written by both Mary and Robert Heriot were not private. They would have been carried to each other by individuals known to them, but, at any time, the British could have, and almost certainly did, read them. Knowing this was the case they took great care not to write anything that would cause them trouble with the authorities, as Robert was required to adhere to the strict conditions of his parole.

Prior to Robert's detention, they almost certainly talked about what they could—and could not—write, and they may have arranged code words that would look innocent to casual readers but would have meanings for themselves. Despite her managing the plantation and household, Mary rarely mentioned specific problems nor asked Robert's advice. Clearly too, neither Mary nor Robert wanted to give the other cause to worry, but some events were too important to be suppressed.

One such worrying event was described in Mary's letter of July 28, 1780.

> *My Dr Bob,*
>
> *I received yours by Thomas, and shall send him off again directly, as the last letter I wrote you dated Tuesday 25th was of the most alarming nature.* [The July 25 letter has not survived;

180 Borick, Carl P., *Relieve Us of This Burthen, American Prisoners of War in the Revolutionary South, 1780-1782* (University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 94.

the incident "of the most alarming nature" is regrettably unknown.] *I then told you that poor Nancy lay dangerously ill with the confluent small pox.* [Nancy is unidentified. Perhaps another Heriot child or possibly a slave.] *I was so alarmed and in such deep distress at the time, I scarce know what I said, She still lies extremely ill, she has now what the doctors call the secondary fever but Doc. Hyrne assures me her case is as favourable as the disorder will allow, which he says is always violent and that he sees no unfavorable symptoms. What alarmed me so much the other day was some purple spots that appeared but since that they have proved to be bruises.*

*Oh my Dr. Bob, forgive me for alarming you so much, but my situation is distressing beyond expression, not one near or dear connection with me to sympathize or speak the voice of comfort to my poor afflicted heart, but in pity to you will restrain my pen, and tho' with violence to myself, I will drop the painful subject. John, Robert and Suky* [Suky is a nickname for daughter Susanna] *have just sickened, they are all very sick with hot fevers, but no symptoms that are unfavorable. Robert and Suky have one or two of the pock out already. Doct. Hyrne says they will have it very favourably.*

*To my un-speakable grief and mortification, I find I cant even flatter myself with the thought of having you with me soon. Your friends here have by no means been unmindful of you, but alas they them-selves are to be sent down prisoners to some of the Islands. Mr. George Heriot, Old Mr. Trapier* [Paul Trapier (1716-1793)], *Old Mr. Wragg* [Samuel Wragg, died 1787], *Col. Rothmahler* [Militia Colonel Job Rothmahler] *and several others are in a short time to be sent to town* [Charles Town, as prisoners of war on parole].

*As for Major Weems he has positively declined tho' in a very polite manner doing any thing in your behalf, from a thorough conviction as he says that it would be in vain, this I had from an Officer who is obliging enough to interest himself on our behalf. The Officers in general still behave with the greatest politeness and attention. Mr. McLeroth* [British officer, Major Robert McLeroth] *in particular is kind and attentive beyond any thing I could have expected, I know not what I should have done, had he not happened to have, been at home the other night, a Capt. of a vessel that lies at the Island* [Goat Island, 150 yards from the shore behind the Heriot home in the Sampit River] *frightened me beyond expression, he wanted our whale boat, and as he was coming to speak to me, very drunk, Sentry* [probably the same enslaved "Centry" who would be killed by cannon fire from a British galley May 1781, see Mary's letter of May 23, 1781] *flew at him, he drew his sword in a violent passion and run all over the hill to kill him* [Sentry/Centry], *and then was comeing in the house, when very luckily Mr. McLeroth came home and after some altercation carried him away, he did not get the boat.*

*I have a thousand Interesting things to say, what would I not give for one hours conversation, when, Oh! When shall I have that happiness. May the Almighty God watch over you and protect you, and grant me strength to go through this trying scene, you ask my Dr. Bob how I do, I'm as well as fatigue and anxiety will permit, the sufferings I undergo on your and my children's account, are almost too much for the tender heart, and weakly frame of*

*Your distressed but ever affect.*

*M. Heriot*

[postscript] *I had a letter from Doct. Garden,*[181] *Doct. Macky even having the small pox and therefore could not see Nancy, Bobby missed his fever* [probably malaria] *by taking the bark* ["Peruvian bark," a plant containing quinine] *before he sickened.*

All of the living Heriot children had smallpox at the same time. Mary had called in a doctor as the children were "all very sick with hot fevers, but no symptoms that are unfavorable." That surely was an optimistic point of view. The tropical climate combined with the nearby swamps, marshes and rice fields produced a multitude of insects, ticks, leeches, and clouds of mosquitoes that spread many diseases for which there was often little protection or cure.

As described in Mary's letter, an "enemy" appeared literally at the doorstep in the form of a "very drunk" British sea captain. The man wanted to steal her whaleboat. An enslaved man "flew at him" to protect Mary and the children. The officer drew his sword with intent "to kill him" and chased the man, who very slyly led the officer away from the house. The drunk officer then returned to the Heriot house. Fortunately, Major Robert McLeroth, another British officer, arrived on the scene and after "some altercation carried him away."

One wonders what the determined Mary would have done to protect herself and her children had McLeroth not appeared. Would she have been a victim of a physical assault? If Mary had, for example, shot the drunk captain in her own defense, what would have been the consequences?

The incident with the drunken officer was significant, as indicated by a letter sent from Wemyss to Lord Cornwallis July 31, 1780.

*I am sorry to say that the officer commanding the Keppell brig has not shown that attention either to his duty or character which might be expected. His vessell is gone to sea, and himself and a small boat's crew are still in this neighbourhood. When he came*

181 Dr. Alexander Garden (1730-1791) was a Scottish physician, botanist, zoologist, and a Loyalist. The gardenia flower is named for him. He was a great believer in smallpox inoculation.

> *first here, he got drunk and in the grossest manner insulted both me and every officer of the detachment. By this I mean only to observe that he is not a very fit person to be trusted in any active or critical situation.*[182]

The vessel in question, HMS Keppel, a sloop rigged as a brig, was commanded by Lieutenant Richard Whitworth, bearing the courtesy title of "captain." The Keppel mounted 14 four-pounder cannons and carried a crew of about 75 men. Lt. Whitworth was removed from the Keppel on October 7, 1780.[183]

The Heriot house—where the altercation with the drunken British captain took place—was the home in Georgetown described earlier on Lot 224. The house was probably set back 200 feet from Front Street, as are the surviving Stewart House (which belonged to Daniel Tucker from the late 1780s) and the Kaminski House Museum. In Daniel Tucker's 1796 will he describes his house as "the premises where I now live on the Hill, known in the plan of said Town by number 220…"[184] Not only is the house on lot 220 two lots away from Heriot's, but also described as being on "the Hill" as Mary Heriot wrote in her letter of July 28, 1780 when describing the scene of Sentry being chased. British officers were housed in private civilian homes as Mary wrote, "[L]uckily Mr. [Major] McLeroth came home…" It was providential that Major McLeroth, who apparently was quartered in the Heriot home, arrived in time to bring the situation to an end. McLeroth, of the 64th Regiment, is the only British officer known to have been quartered in the Heriot home. However, undoubtedly, there were others as the officers posted to Georgetown changed frequently.

McLeroth was born in County Down in Ireland and joined the British army in 1769 when he was 29. He would have been 40 years of age—about the same age as Robert—when he resided at the Heriot home. In December, McLeroth was involved in a peculiar, almost mythical and shadowy event at Halfway Swamp where he allegedly negotiated a duel between 20 of Francis Marion's men and 20 of his own. It was a ruse to gain time so his command could make their escape. The details and facts have been lost to time and legend. He apparently was considered timid when dealing with the famous partisan leader, Marion. He also may have had the reputation of being restrained and too kindly to civilians as historian George C. Rogers refers to him as "the most humane of the British officers."

He was transferred and promoted to the 57th Regiment as a lieutenant colonel and died March 6, 1805, in County Down, Northern Ireland and is buried there at the Saint Elizabeth Church graveyard.[185]

182 Wemyss to Cornwallis, July 31, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 1: 323- 324.

183 Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1714-1792* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2007). https://threedecks.org/index.php?display_type=show_crewman&id=1504

184 Will of Daniel Tucker dated September 21, 1796. Tucker, George Haig and Caldwell Woodruff, *Tucker Family of South Carolina*, (undated, found in the LDS Library Microfilm roll 22796, filmed 1952)

185 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 135; Wm. Thomas Sherman, *Calendar and Record of the Revolutionary War in the South: 1780-1781* (Seattle: Gun Jones Publishing, 2021), 85. https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/138206290/robert-mcleroth.

Francis Marion, who in the 19th century acquired the title of "Swamp Fox," was well known to Robert Heriot, as both had belonged to Christopher Gadsden's gentlemen volunteers for the Lyttelton expedition against the Cherokee. Marion also had close relatives in Georgetown. One of the great partisan leaders of the war, Marion was notorious for his surprise attacks on smaller outposts and supply trains, thereby keeping the British and Loyalists on the defensive.

For a second time granting Heriot a leave for his family, Lord Cornwallis wrote Wemyss July 28 and added a postscript: "On the most melancholy representation of the distress of Colonel Herriot's family I have given him leave to visit them and to be absent fourteen days from the place to which he was paroled."[186] This would allow Robert to leave James Island, travel to Georgetown and remain until August 11.

However, on August 8 Wemyss wrote Cornwallis from Georgetown.

> *From the same motives of humanity which led your Lordship to give Colonel Herriot leave to come here to see his family, I am induced to intercede for an addition to his leave. His daughter died yesterday* [August 7, 1780]*, his son, it is imagined, will not live, and his wife is taken very ill in consequence of her distress on their account. In this situation I hope you will not think I have acted improperly in permitting him to remain here untill he shall receive your further directions.*[187]

It is not known when Robert arrived at Georgetown nor when he returned to James Island and there is no known record of Cornwallis's reply. The couple's suffering and stress at this time must have been extreme.

Serious illnesses plagued the British army as well as the civilian population. On July 11, Wemyss wrote Cornwallis requesting permission to relocate his men to North Island, near the mouth of Winyah Bay, as sea breezes would be more healthful. That request was denied as Cornwallis wanted Wemyss to march to Camden due to the imminent approach of General Horatio Gates.

In early August, six of Wemyss's British soldiers died within three days of putrid fever. Thirty-two men were seriously ill, of which eighteen were sent, by water, to Charles Town for treatment.[188] The deadly infectious disease, now known as typhus, was spread by lice, ticks, mites and rat fleas. Besides fever, it involved severe headache and delirium; the mortality rate was high.

186 Cornwallis to Wemyss, July 28, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 1: 318-319.

187 Wemyss to Cornwallis, August 8, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 1: 326.

188 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 127.

Adding further destruction and misery to the Georgetown area was the summer arrival of 36-year-old Major James Moncrief. A noted military engineer who designed and built the fortifications at Savannah in 1779, he also worked on the defenses of Charles Town after it was captured on May 12. The British considered that Georgetown was regularly threatened by Francis Marion and wanted to be sure the town could be held as it was a critical supply, storage and shipping site.

Moncrief strengthened the defenses of Georgetown and also served in non-engineering capacities. On September 20, he reported—or boasted—to Cornwallis: "I have now done all I can to punish the People in the lower parts of this Country." He enclosed a list of the prisoners he had sent to Charles Town and the sea islands. He took slaves from the plantations of Whigs, sending them to Charles Town to work on the defenses there. In addition, he sent 150 horses he had seized from the area to the notorious British cavalryman Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton.[189]

The garrison at Georgetown often numbered fewer than 100 men and was protected by their fortified positions, artillery, and armed ships. However, they were on occasion harassed by Whig units of varying sizes who were intent on cutting communications, disrupting supplies, and generally requiring the British to maintain defensive troop strength in many locations—which reduced the number of troops available elsewhere.

There was violent unrest between the Georgetown civilians which involved, among others, the clergy and, despite the widespread sicknesses of the summer season, at least one local physician. A "James Stuart," the minister of Prince George Winyah—the Heriots' church in Georgetown—was a Loyalist. So too was the prominent Dr. Charles Fyfe, who abandoned both his medical practice and his plantation. Robert and Mary would have known both Stuart and Fyfe well.

Fearing for their lives, the clergyman and physician both fled to the protection of Major Wemyss, who sent them to Charles Town. Near the end of the war when the Whigs were back in power, Dr. Fyfe's plantation was confiscated by the Jacksonborough Assembly. Fyfe sailed to England when Charles Town was evacuated. His property was returned two years after the war when Fyfe paid a 12% fine. However, with anti-Loyalist feeling running high he was afraid to live on his plantation, so remained in Charles Town.[190] The Whigs scored a significant victory on October 7 by overwhelming Loyalist militia at the battle of Kings Mountain, just across the border in North Carolina. This news would have brightened the moods of the Whig residents in occupied Georgetown as well as those on parole on the islands around Charles Town. The news would have been disheartening to the Loyalists.

189 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 129-130.

190 Wemyss to Cornwallis, August 4, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 1: 325; Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 84, 127.

Thirty-eight-year-old Nesbit Balfour was commandant of Charles Town. Balfour's duties included managing civil affairs as well as supporting military troops. His headquarters, formerly used by General Sir Henry Clinton, were in the magnificent former home of Miles Brewton, who had been one of the wealthiest men in Charles Town. (The home still stands at 27 King Street.)

An experienced officer, having been wounded at Bunker Hill and serving at the battles of Germantown and Brandywine, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel, of the 23rd Regiment, posted at Camden in January 1778, and, some two years later, appointed commandant. Gen. Moultrie wrote later that Nisbet Balfour was "a proud, haughty Scot, carried his authority with a very high hand; his tyrannical, insolent disposition, treated the people as the most abject slaves."[191]

Balfour wrote Cornwallis on October 1, 1780, saying in part:

> *I am distressed to inform you that yesterday* [September 30, 1780] *I received a letter from Colonel Cassells to say that Marion with a party had surprised his post at Black Mingo and that he found it necessary to evacuate George Town, where the enemy were last night* [September 30, 1780]. *This kind of behavior is too bad, but it is no more than I expected from these militia. I hope the galley will not come away, and if she does not, I must send Brown's corps consisting of forty men with the convalescents (about thirty) to retake it. The galley has twelve of the 63rd with her, which will join and all together make about ninety men, which with the rascally militia I conceive will do the business of driving off Mr. Marion, when some work* [defensive redoubt] *must be thrown up and Brown's corps left to defend it, covered by a galley, and to be joined by Ballingall and Lechmer's regiments, who are ordered. This is the only mode I can think of to repossess George Town, where it is not possible to allow them to remain for obvious consequences.*[192]

Lt. Col. George Turnbull wrote Cornwallis on October 4, 1780, referring to issues that involved militia and the retaking of Georgetown:

> *About fourteen of the most noted rebells were must'd* [mustered] *at Georgetown by officers of militia, who, I suppose, wanted to be popular; but Captain De Peyster told Moncrief that several of the militia which he had muster'd were noted rebells, broke their parole, and Wemyss had burnt their houses. He said he hoped it would be for the good of the service.* [This event clearly took place prior to the evacuation of Georgetown, September 30, 1780.]
>
> *Wemyss says positively that three out of four inhabitants are rebells in that country. Mr. Marion, who took possession of Georgetown, has about 400.*

191 Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 2: 252.

192 Balfour to Cornwallis, October 1, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 2: 113-115.

> *Harrison's corps* [Loyalist militia], *Wemyss says, are not worth any thing. There is but fifty of them, irregular and plunderers, and are all dispersed. He is now gone to assemble them, and in a week, I suppose, we may see him.*
>
> *Depend upon it, militia will never do any good without regular troops.*
>
> *Balfour talks of retaking possession of Georgetown in three or four days. If he sends all militia, I doubt very much his success. He is puffed up with the number of regiments of militia and does not consider that our officers of militia in general are not near so active as the rebels, and great numbers of their privates are ready to turn against us when an opportunity offers.*
>
> *I have been unlucky enough to have a third attack of the fever and it is even with pain now that I write.*[193]

Balfour wrote Cornwallis again on October 5, 1780.

> *As soon as the wind is fair, Major Delancey with about 70 men made up from Brown's corps and some of the recovered* [convalescent] *men of your army will proceed to George Town. I am assured the great danger of sickliness is over, but I have desired they may not yet for some time remain on the same spot.*[194]

The operation to retake Georgetown was suspended due to the illness of Balfour, as he writes Cornwallis on October 10, 1780:

> *My recovery has been but slow....*
>
> *The George Town affair has been stopt by my illness but will now take place with Lieutenant Bluck* [John Blucke] *of the 23rd* [Royal Welch Fusiliers] *to command. The season is now so far advanced that I think there will not be much danger* [of illness]. *Marion talks big but keeps on the other side of Black River. I own I begin to doubt much of our keeping the Pedee quite clear. However, no operations will take place upon it that can effect your operations. It will only be the inroads of small partys, and which I hope your movements will in time entirely stop.*[195]

Finally, on about October 23, Georgetown was retaken by the British as related by Balfour's October 26, 1780, letter to Lt. Col. Lord Rawdon:

193 Trumbull to Cornwallis, October 4, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 2: 249-250.

194 Balfour to Cornwallis, October 5, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 2: 117-118.

195 Balfour to Cornwallis, October 10, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 2: 119-120

*The Pedee, I fear, is totally in the enemy's possession, and indeed they make inroads into the very banks of the Santee. George Town is possessed by Lieutenant Bluke a few days ago with seventy men composed of the convalescents of your army and Brown's corps, and I mean to reinforce him with some of the same kind of troops to make his party as near a hundred men as I can. He has got into a redoubt made there by Major Wemyss and got two howitzers from the galley, which, with what he will be able to do in a few days and the galley, I have no apprehensions but will put him in a state of security.*[196]

Georgetown was now back in the hands of the British. However, due to Marion's special talent of surprise attacks, they were not to feel secure.

On October 31, Mary wrote her husband a distressing 1,600-word letter.

*My dr. Bob,*

*I received your letter by Tom and Andrew and am surely glad to hear you are well, little Robert* [age 7] *is at length entirely recovered, he speaks as well as ever he did and I am in hopes he will gather strength as the cold weather comes in, but poor little baby* [probably one year old Susannah, known as "Suki" or "Suky," who would live until 1845] *still continues sick. Doct. Machie attends her but he has such a number of patients that I cant see him as often as I could wish.*

*How happy I am my dr. Bob to think you approve of my conduct during your absence, to merit you approbation has ever been the wish of my heart, nor Know a satisfaction equal to that of pleasing you, it is indeed almost the only cheerful idea of my poor afflicted heart can entertain. My children once used to afford me inexpressible pleasure, but I have learned to look on them as a blessings lent for a short time and in spite of all my efforts to the contrary, every day something or other occurs to put me in mind of my late irreparable loss* [this is probably reference to death of about August 7], *poor little baby's continuing so long ailing adds greatly to my distress. Without being sensible of it, I ever run into an error that I strive to avoid, for I would rather affect a cheerfulness I do not feel, than add to your disquiet, by dwelling on my own.*

*In regard to our long and cruel separation, I am really distressed. I have spoke with Col. Cassells* [Col. James Cassells, Loyalist Militia], *he was friendly in his professions but it was not in my power to prevail on him to write anything in your favor, he desires me to tell you that he assures you, nothing of that kind is necessary, but at any rate it is his most serious advice to wait a few weeks at the expiration of which time he seems certain matters will*

196 Balfour to Lord Rawdon, October 26, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 2: 131-132.

*be in a better footing and he has promised then to do everything in his power and in the meantime to assist me with his advice. Almost sinking as I am under my present unhappy situation I have made every effort in my power to act in such a manner as might prove most favorable to you, may the Almighty still direct me for the best.*

*I am under great obligations to Doct. Garden for introducing Capt. Blucks* [new British commanding officer at Georgetown in mid-October 1780, Capt. John Bluke or Blucke] *to my acquaintance. He appears to be everything that is polite and human. I flatter myself I shall find a friend in him. He has already offered me every protection and civility in his power. At present he is much engaged at the redoubt. By Capt. Causzer* [Lt. Robert Causzor,[197] commanding a galley] *I am treated with the greatest politeness and respect; from him and Capt. Blucks I have repeated assurances of protection and friendship.*

*Col. Cassels declared his not writing anything in your favor did not arise from an unwillingness to serve you, but repeatedly desired me to tell you it was his advice to wait two or three weeks longer. Well acquainted as I am with your political sentiments I made him every assurance I thought necessary. Unhappy commotions still continue to distress this part of the country, but I am hopeful they draw near a conclusion.*

*An intimate acquaintance of ours who thinks of going to Charles Town very soon will come and see you, by him you will hear particularly from me. In regard to going to Providence, it is the advice of all our friends we should at present decline it, it is the opinion also of those British officers with whom I am acquainted.*

*Acreman* [an enslaved worker] *I believe is honest and faithful and means well, but it requires something more at present to keep such an interest as ours together. I think upon the whole our negroes have behaved better than many others. Mr. William Heriot* [Robert's younger brother] *has lately lost four of the most valuable of his, notwithstanding the discouragement (they are sold) they meet with from the British when they desert their lawful owners.*[198]

*This part of the Country has been more sickly than ever I knew it, Mrs. Wragg, Mrs. Young and Mrs. Jeffries are very ill, Mrs. Trapier, Mrs. Martin and Mrs. Rothmahler are better, Poor Mrs. Crofts is thought dying, young Mrs. Mitchell lost her little daughter some time ago.*

197 https://threedecks.org/index.php?display_type=show_crewman&id=4550. accessed Dec. 21, 2022. Robert Causzor, although a Lieutenant, would have had the honorary title of "Captain" while serving as commanding officer of a galley.

198 Mary was very well informed, probably by her British officer friends, as part of the British plunder after taking Charles Town and the surrounding areas, was the taking up of large numbers of slaves. These individuals were sold and shipped by the thousands to the West Indies among other places. Alexander R. Stoesen, "The British Occupation of Charleston, 1780-1782," South Carolina Historical Magazine 63, (April 1962): 71-82.

*Mrs. Wate has been long ill but is better again. Mrs. LaRoche is at present well and deserves to be remembered to you. I can scarcely imagine a more distressed place than George Town is at present. Poor Miss Green is still very sick. I have not seen Miss Man these several weeks, she has been confined to the country with her mamma who is unwell.*

*I am troubled with a slow fever* [Typhoid Fever] *myself, but thank God not sick enough to lie down. I have a good deal of fatigue with the negroes, that are inoculated, I have had 70 in hand already they still have the small pox very favourable, and I hope God it may continue so, nothing is wanting in that cruel disorder but strict attention. I am clothing those who are most in want with the indigo cloth, as you directed. I shall be very glad when you can buy for all the rest of the children, who are in great want of clothes, but they have gone through the small pox almost every one of them already. If they all get over it I shall think my trouble well bestowed.*

*I observe what you say in regard to Philander* [an enslaved worker], *he did behave very much amiss but it is a long time ago and I believe not so bad as you heard. We have had the highest tides lately that ever I remember, many people have suffered greatly by it. I forgot to mention that Jonah Horry* [brother of Col. Peter Horry and Col. Hugh Horry] *called on me. I write things as they occur to me for I am often interrupted.*

*My distress my Dr. Bob at our long separation can be imagined only by those who have tender and susceptible hearts, this I had a proof of the other day from one who tho he calls himself a friend, from the cold and insensible manner that he mentioned your absence from your long afflicted and distressed family, plainly proved that he was unacquainted with the feelings of a fond parent or an affectionate husband. For my part, tho I have never said, as many perhaps in my situation might, that it is impossible for me to live without you, (to die when we please is not in our power.) I may with greater sincerity say I have never known one peaceful moment since we parted, nor shall I know either joy or comfort till we meet again.*

*I cant help flattering myself that I shall meet with a friend in Capt. Blucke, if I am not mistaken in him, he possesses a humane heart. Besides Doct. Garden's introduction Capt. Causzar was kind enough to mention me to him in a particular manner and would have come with him to see me but that he was ill at the time. I am sorry to hear there is a probability of Capt. Causzar's removing and another gally sent to this place. I hope it may not be so. With Capt. Blucke there is a Doct. Dawson who appears to be a civil obliging young gentleman.*

*I still strive to keep up my spirits, but am afraid I shall not be able to do it much longer unless it pleases God to* [illegible] *some friend that will interest himself in my behalf and restore you once more to your afflicted family. To the protection of an all Merciful God I once more recommend you, and remain with the tenderest affection, my dr. Bob, Your, etc.*

*Mary Heriot*

*PS. I had almost forgot to thank you for the Port wine, it was truly acceptable to me. I hope it will be of service to me for that slow fever which is so troublesome to me, for I have really not time to take physic. I can't help again mentioning Dct. Garden. I think I am under infinitely greater obligation to him than to many from whom I had as great a right to expect it.*

*As soon as I can get a pass I shall send Tom and you will receive by him the clothes you wrote for. I have told him to ask you about the indigo, there is no more old rice, I sent all there was by Manual.*

*Baby says I must tell you what a good girl she is and beg not to forget her cap. I really think she is the best child I ever knew. Little Robert is fonder of me than ever he was (since he had the small pox), he often tells me I don't kiss him so often as I used to do, he is very anxious at present he is quite bald. I wish I had any kind of school to put poor John* [age 13] *to he is losing a deal of precious time. Old Wallace is dead and there is no school at all in George Town. Once more Adieu my dr. Bob, did everybody wish as much to see peace and quiet restored as you and I do we should have been blest with the society of each other long before this.*

*I have been convinced that it is not owing to the British that I suffer by your absence. Had Lord Cornwallis received Major Weemy's letter in your favor or had either of those gentlemen returned, you would have been with your family I dare say before this. Would to God you were as well known to the present Commandment* major of Bluck's.

The daughter who died on August 7 may have been Mary, also known as "Jessie." As indicated earlier, little is known of the Heriot children. Their sons John, Robert and James survived the war. However, the Heriots may have had now unknown children, including a son that Major Wemyss suggested was about to die in August 1780.

Mary also mentioned in her letter that she had spoken to James Cassells about Robert's "political sentiments." The Cassells and the Heriots had much in common yet were separated by the barrier of their being on opposite sides in the conflict. Cassells was a Scot having emigrated in 1759, an indigo planter on the Waccamaw River near the Heriots, but, unlike the Heriots, he was a Loyalist. To make the situation more complex, but perhaps also more advantageous to the Heriots, Cassells was a relative, as he had married Mary's first cousin, Susannah Mann (1745-1770).

This was dangerous ground for the Cassells as well as the Heriots. Mary would have needed to choose her words to Cassells with great care as she would not want to give Cassells any opportunity to use her words against Robert, herself, or their family. Cassells, in his new position as colonel in the Loyalist militia, would have needed to be very careful in what he told Mary, and perhaps what

he told the British regarding the Heriots, as he would not want to jeopardize his standing with the British. This was a civil war and neither the Cassells nor Mary Heriot would, or could, forget it.

For Mary to have had such a talk with a man who now was an enemy would have been dangerous and Robert surely would have been concerned to read of it. It would be very interesting to know about Robert's politics and his motivations for his actions throughout his life. However, nowhere does Robert mention his views. To make a political statement, even to his wife in a private letter, would likely risk being seen as a violation of his parole.

It is impossible to determine precisely why Heriot joined the Whigs rather than the Loyalists, why he kept slaves, why he did much of what he did. To do so would require a great deal of speculation. To make it even more complicated his motivations may have changed, or evolved, several times through the course of the war and his life.

However, it can be said generally that the wealthy planter class sought the respect and command which they believed they deserved. They, also generally, did not want to be overburdened with taxes from a foreign powerbase such as Parliament. Their ideal would be a republic controlled by an elite made up of white planters such as themselves. This class required a continuance of slave labor to maintain their status and their lifestyle. Likely, Robert Heriot would have agreed.

To the Cassells, the Heriots, despite their being neighbors and related by marriage, were the enemy.

Balfour and Cornwallis held Cassells in high regard. Balfour wrote:

> *Cassells's character and his whole behavior are much more manly and worthy of credit than any other colonel of militia I have yet seen, and as far as I have had connection with him, really seems by no means a man of chimera or capable of undertaking any plan without a rational and well founded reason.*[199]

In her letter, Mary also writes: "Unhappy commotions still continue to distress this part of the country, but I am hopeful they draw near a conclusion."

This may be a vague reference to the British looting of plantations, harboring and encouraging runaway slaves, and military operations in the area. Those military operations would include actions of the British and their Loyalist allies against Whig units as well as partisan Whig and guerilla actions in what had become an extremely violent civil war of constant retaliations. Lawlessness and settling of personal old scores were common.

199 *Cornwallis Papers*, 1: 307n4.

Tantalizingly, perhaps, Mary wrote to Robert, "An intimate acquaintance of ours who thinks of going to Charles Town very soon will come and see you, by him you will hear particularly from me."

Clearly, this is a very private message that will be given to Robert by the acquaintance. Of even more interest is the following sentence. "In regard to going to Providence, it is the advice of all our friends we should at present decline it, it is the opinion also of those British officers with whom I am acquainted."

This may be a code in which she is telling Robert that he, she, or they, should not take whatever action the word *"Providence"* meant to them. "*Providence*" appears again in a letter of Robert's dated June 9, 1781, in a similarly mysterious manner.

Mary mentions that 70 of their slaves were recovering from smallpox inoculation. One wonders how many slaves they normally had on the property and how many had either run away or been taken by the British. How production was affected by the war and disease, as well difficulties in getting produce to market, were concerns that Mary would have had to address herself.

She also commented that there was no school in Georgetown and that she wished young John were not missing his education. Mary very likely added educating her children to her many other responsibilities during the occupation.

Mary's letter is interesting both for what she writes and for what she left out. She does not mention, for instance, due to the circumstances of living in an enemy-occupied territory and Robert's detention, that on September 30 Georgetown had been liberated by Francis Marion's forces. A large group of Whigs had appeared, more than could be fought, which forced Colonel Cassells and his command to take to their vessels and slip down the river to safety.[200] The Whigs retained control of the town for three weeks, after which the British retook control of the town.

Marion continued to plague the British troops, as is related in this letter of Balfour to Cornwallis, November 17, 1780:

> *Marion appeared with 500 men before George Town, where I am sorry to say he now is within a few miles. However, Bluck is not allarmed and writes in perfect security. He has orders to apply to McLeroth at King Tree if necessary, and I have apprised the major of Bluck's situation. Indeed cavalry now is so essentially necessary that nothing will be quiet in this province without them. Marion's movement…is no joke to us.*[201]

200 Balfour to Cornwallis, October 1, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 2: 113-115; Balfour to Lord Rawdon, October 26, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 2: 131-132.
201 Balfour to Cornwallis, November 17, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers*, 3: 83-85.

Balfour and Bluke may have been referring to two skirmishes that took place on November 15 on the outskirts of Georgetown. One, at White's Plantation a few miles up the Pee Dee River from Georgetown, occurred when Marion's forces under Col. Peter Horry came across some Loyalists slaughtering cattle. In the resulting skirmish two of his men were killed, including Marion's nephew Gabriel. They killed four of the enemy and captured twelve.

In the other skirmish, at Col. William Allston's plantation on the Waccamaw River, Marion lost another two men killed and three wounded while the enemy lost three killed. He again captured over a dozen. Marion reported to General Henry William Harrington that he remained within three miles of Georgetown for two days and claimed that during that time most of the Loyalists in Georgetown left and went home. These two actions typify much of the guerilla warfare in the Georgetown area.

Maj. James Wemyss was captured and paroled after being seriously wounded at Fish Dam Ford on November 9, 1780 and would not take further part in the war.[202]

Unfortunately, many more letters that may have been exchanged between Mary and Robert have not survived. One that has—undated from Christmas 1780—describes a very difficult time for the Heriots in Georgetown. Thirteen-year-old John O. Heriot wrote they had a dull time as he imagined his father did as well. Christmas: a time of family, laughter, gifts, food and joy was entirely different in an enemy-occupied town with armed boats in the river. Many men were away from home serving in the opposing armies. Many men were in prisons, prison hulks in Charles Town harbor, or simply detained on the sea islands. The facts of life during wartime made it difficult for those left alone.

Young John wrote to his father, who was still held on James Island:

> *Dear Papa*
>
> *I am much obliged to you for my hat and watch. I would wish you a Merry Christmas but I am afraid you have had as dull a Christmas as we have. We had an alarm Christmas but it is all over again. I hope to see you again as so many of the gentlemen are allowed to return.*
>
> *Mama and Suky are poorly but Robby and I are well, I am,*
>
> *my dear Papa,*
>
> *your affectionate son,*
> *John Heriot*
> *PS Capt* [Robert] *Gray has lent Mama a pretty book called Shensome Green.*[203]

202 Purvis, Randy A.,. "Major James Wemyss: Second Most Hated British Officer in the South." *Journal of the American Revolution* November 27, 2018, https://allthingsliberty.com/2018/11/major-james-wemyss-second-most-hated-british-officerin-the-south/.

203 "Shensome Green" is the novel *Shenstone-Green* or *The New Paradise Lost*, by Samuel Jackson Pratt. London: R. Baldwin, 1779.

Young John wrote that his mother and baby sister were not well. That knowledge would not have provided comfort for his father. Disturbing, too, is that John did *not* mention his three-year-old brother James. John also mentions that men have been allowed to return, which probably gave Robert renewed hope.

John *did* remember to thank his father for the gift of a watch and hat. One would have thought that Robert would have needed the watch, and perhaps the hat, to barter with other detainees, civilians, or the enemy for articles he needed such as food, but his children came first.

John mentions an "alarm," a term used to describe local skirmishes. Mary never mentions anything that may in any possible way be considered military or involving conditions in Georgetown. Clearly, she did not want to give any authority an excuse to cut off her mail or endanger herself or Robert. The "alarm" involved Col. Peter Horry and about 30 men, who surprised and routed a small group of the enemy just outside Georgetown. The enemy retreated to Georgetown and were met by a mounted force coming out to counterattack Horry's force. They, too, were driven back into Georgetown. A few were wounded on each side.[204] It was a very minor skirmish, as were many others, in the Georgetown area.

In happier times and before the confused war in the South, the Heriots would have known Robert Gray as a plantation owner on the Pee Dee River.[205] Now, he was a Loyalist. Relations between them would never be the same. Mary had to walk the tightrope between the peaceful coexistence of herself and her family versus former neighbors who were now the enemy.

Perhaps, the loan of the book was Gray's way of making a peace offering. According to Cornwallis, Gray was "a very sensible, spirited man." Balfour agreed, adding "by much the best militia man I have seen."

In 1782, Governor Rutledge reestablished the South Carolina General Assembly to conduct the civil affairs of the state. The Assembly met at Jacksonborough, 32 miles from Charles Town. Gray's estate was confiscated by the Jacksonborough Assembly, and he was banished. After the war he lived in Nova Scotia.[206]

204 Sherman, *Calendar*, p. 339.

205 *Cornwallis Papers*, 1: 135n27.

206 Robert Gray, "Colonel Robert Gray's Observations on the War in Carolina," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 11, no. 3 (July 1910): 139.

# 11. 1781: ROBERT HERIOT'S PAROLE AND THE OCCUPATION OF GEORGETOWN CONTINUE

Col. Peter Horry and 30 to 40 mounted militiamen attacked some Loyalists butchering cattle on January 6, 1781, just outside Georgetown. The Loyalists scattered. On hearing the gunfire, a larger group of the enemy, perhaps 60 in number, rode out from Georgetown to join the fight. It was Horry's turn to scatter.

The fight broke into a series of minor actions, sometimes involving as few as two or three men, but lasting for hours. All of this, of course, would have been within earshot of Mary Heriot and the family.[207]

Great news for the Whig cause arose from the victory at Cowpens, South Carolina when British Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton was soundly defeated by Brig. Gen. Daniel Morgan on January 17, 1781. The British forces suffered such large numbers of casualties that the survivors were no longer an effective combat force.

Gen. William Moultrie was on parole in Charles Town when the news of Cowpens arrived. He wrote that he saw British officers and Loyalists talking in small groups in the street "with very grave faces."

He wrote Governor Rutledge:

> *The British sent a person on some pretense with a flag* [of truce]*; but in fact, it was to inform the Americans prisoners of our success; the person informed me of the whole affair, which I communicated to the officers at Haddrell's point. The news gave great joy and put us all in high spirits.*[208]

Undoubtedly, Robert Heriot on James Island received the news as well.

Georgetown had been garrisoned since July 1780. It was the port that linked the upcountry and Charles Town. In addition, several of the winding lowcountry rivers terminated in the area, allowing easy transport of bulk goods by shallow draft watercraft.

Brig. Gen. Francis Marion had been active in the area for months. When opportunity was ripe, he would attack Loyalist militia units and British troops. He would also harass foraging parties, cut communications with Georgetown, and drive off livestock that would have been useful to the British.

207 Sherman, *Calendar*, 350

208 Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 2: 256-257.

Molesting Georgetown hampered supplies and communications with isolated British commands. Marion's ambushes and raids also forced the British to strengthen their positions and send larger and stronger units into the field for routine duties—thus tying up men that could have been used offensively elsewhere.

In mid-January 1781, Marion learned that the force at Georgetown had been reduced to 200 men. They were protected by redoubts and several cannons. Marion's men were reinforced by Lt. Col. Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee and his Continentals to enable a joint attack on Georgetown.

The attacking forces were divided. The infantry came down the Pee Dee River on small boats and hid behind an island during the day with plans for an attack from the waterfront at about 2 a.m.—an attack from the water would bypass the land defenses and would be unexpected. The cavalries of Marion and Lee, just outside of town, waited for the sound of the infantry firing before they attacked on horseback.[209]

In the early hours of January 25, 1781, the infantry came out of the water in two parties. One was to proceed to the quarters where the commanding officer, Lt. Col. George Campbell, was immediately captured. The second group was to prevent any of the British troops from reaching the redoubt. At the sound of the firing, Marion and Lee's mounted men charged into town ready to take on the British as they resisted the assault. Lee described the scene.

> *To the astonishment of these officers, every thing was quiet. Not a British soldier appeared; not one attempted either to gain the fort, or repair to the commandant. The troops of the garrison kept close to their respective quarters, barricaded the doors, and determined there to defend themselves.*[210]

The attacking infantry forces did not have cannons so could not attack fortified buildings or the redoubt. With daylight approaching, the disappointed Marion and Lee decided to withdraw and Col. Campbell was released on parole. Each side lost about three men.[211]

As far as is known, Robert Heriot was allowed to visit Georgetown and his plantation at least once. An order dated February 19, 1781, allowed him to "remain in Georgetown until further orders."

209 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 137.

210 Henry Lee, *The American Revolution in the South*, edited by Robert E. Lee, originally published as *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department*, (New York: University Publishing Company, 1869), reprint (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 224.

211 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 137.

*February 19, 1781*

*Lt. Col. Heriot having permission from the Commandant of Charles Town, is commissioned to remain at George Town until further orders, adhering strictly in the meantime to his parole.*

*I hereby give him permission to visit his plantation of Waccamaw with the approbation of the commanding officer of the Militia at George Town.*

*Signed John Saunders,*
*Capt. Comm'dg Town.*
*Georgetown*[212]

Since this was an extension of his visit, it is possible Robert had been in Georgetown or at his plantation during the January 25 attack. It is not known when Robert returned to James Island.

Three months later, Mary wrote Robert a letter describing how their home in Georgetown had been fired upon by a British galley. A copy of this letter appears at the end of the narrative.

*May 23, 1781*

*My dear Rob, I wrote you a letter yesterday by Mr. Tucker [perhaps Daniel Tucker, partner of George Heriot, or Capt. Thomas Tucker (died 1784 father of George Heriot's Wife Sarah Harriett Tucker (1756-1820). Sarah Harriett Tucker (1756-1820] who I find has not yet sailed.*

*Since I wrote I have had the pleasure of receiving a letter from you which has relieved me from a state of great anxiety. I am sorry you have had so fatiguing a jaunt, but I am truly thankful you were not at home. Myself and poor little helpless innocents have had a very narrow escape and met with a signal deliverance.*

*It is impossible for us, my dear Rob ever to be thankful enough to the Divine Being for an event, in which his interposition was so very perceptible. A shot from the gally while we were unsuspectingly looking at her, came directly into our house, and the balls have gone through every room except the hall in which (a very unusual thing, and a mere chance) we were every one sitting in together, the very recital makes me shudder, and it has cast a damp on my spirits that I cannot get the better of. How thankful I am that you were not at home for just in the very spot where you usually sit to read, poor Centry*[213] *happened to be standing and the ball went thru him, a cow that I had just sent for, from the country, was walking before the door and was also shot with another ball. Capt. Smith was not on board at the time the Gally fired.*

212 Woodruff, *Heriots*, 132

213 "Centry" is almost certainly the same man who had defended Mary in May 1780 when a drunk British officer threatened her.

*I hope my dear Rob, you will not let the danger we have been in make you uneasy, now that it is past, but rather rejoice at our escape. I have hitherto, I think, been blessed with good spirits and some share of resolution, but the danger my sweet children have lately been in, has affected me beyond anything I have yet experienced. I shall take care to be seldom out of the Cellar while we are in town.*

*The Overseer and the Negroes are all quiet, and our neighbour*[s] *are all in good health. I am glad to hear that you have an order for apprehending runaways, and which you may be lucky enough to find them.*

*I am happy my dear Rob at the compliments you pay me in regard to my prudence and discretion, but at present my situation is rather perplexing. I have the consolation however, to be sure that let what will happen, you will be convinced I acted for the best. I am glad to hear Mrs. Lewis* [unidentified] *is well, as she is so desirous to see some of her relations and as I can't go myself directly, I wish you would take a trip yourself. You don't dislike the sea, and it would be a means of establishing your health. I beg you will not let slip you opportunity of writing to me if it is but a single line, and you may depend I will do the same.*

*Adieu my dear Rob, May Heaven protect and guard you is the constant prayer of,*

*Your affectionate,*

*Mary Heriot*

What a horrific experience for Mary, her children, and any others that may have been at the home! From the size of the Sampit River as it bends past the Heriot homesite, it is likely that the galley was within 200 yards. At these distances the cannon fire would be extremely accurate and devastating to a frame house with balls going "through every room except the hall." It is difficult to imagine the scene with Mary, under unexpected cannon fire, caring for her children. Their oldest child, John Ouldfield Heriot, was 13 or 14 years old. Robert Heriot, Jr. was eight, James LaRoche Heriot was three, and the youngest, Susanna "Suki" Heriot, about one year old.[214]

There is no mention of how long the shelling lasted, if the galley stayed nearby, or if it moved on after firing. It may have shelled other dwellings or commercial buildings as well. In any case, Mary had to deal with her own terror and that of the children, as well as of the enslaved people on the premises. Centry, who had defended Mary the previous year, had been killed in front of them all. One hopes that Mary gave this loyal man a proper burial.

214 https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/LY65-RWY

Mary dates her letter May 23. She states that she had written to Robert the previous day, May 22, and certainly would have told him about the attack on their home in that letter if it had taken place when she wrote. As she tells of the attack in the May 23 letter, it may be reasoned that the attack occurred either on the 22nd after she had sent her letter of that date or that the attack took place on May 23, the same day that she wrote to Robert about it.

Oddly, Mary writes, "I am glad to hear Mrs. Lewis [unidentified] is well, as she is so desirous to see some of her relations and as I can't go myself directly, I wish you would take a trip yourself. You don't dislike the sea, and it would be a means of establishing your health." As Robert was confined to James Island, we assume he was not at liberty to take a sea voyage to see anyone. Was Mary writing in code? Was she telling Robert to break his parole?

Of interest is that Mary writes, "I shall take care to seldom be out of the cellar while we are in town." This implies that she and the children spent time in the cellar of the house in Georgetown for safety—something she had not done prior to the attack by the galley. It is also implied that she thought she and the children were under threat of further gunfire from the armed British ships. Presumably, when she and the family were not "in town," they were at their plantation on the Waccamaw River.

At the same time, on May 17, 1781—six days before Mary's letter—Captain Robert Gray, commanding at Georgetown, wrote three letters to Lt. Col. Nisbet Balfour at Charles Town, asking for instructions regarding an evacuation. Balfour responded on May 20 that he should have given Gray directions for "quitting George Town."

> *But shou'd you find yourself so press'd by the enemy as to make a retreat necessary, you must execute it before it becomes unsafe, for which purpose you will retain the vessel which takes you this and in such an event bring off with you all those whose principles may induce them to come with you.*[215]

Why were they talking of evacuating? Most likely because Francis Marion, with a force of about 400 men, had appeared outside the town. And, on the evening of May 29, six days after Mary wrote that they had been shelled by the enemy, the British indeed evacuated Georgetown by sea on a galley, two gunboats, and an armed schooner. With a defensive force of only about 100 men, Robert Gray had no option but to withdraw. He spiked the three nine-pounders and a carronade that he was forced to leave behind. An unknown number of Georgetown Loyalists fled on the British ships.[216]

215 Balfour to Capt. Robert Gray, May 20, 1781, *Cornwallis Papers*, 6: 265.

216 Balfour to Capt. Robert Gray, May 20, 1781, *Cornwallis Papers*, 6: 265.

After 11 months of occupation by the enemy, Georgetown was again in Whig hands. The joy must have been overwhelming for the Whig residents. For the Loyalists who remained, however, it must have been devastating, as they would now face the return of *their* enemies unprotected.

On June 9, 1781, Robert responded from Charles Town to Mary's disturbing letter, a copy appears at the end of this book before the Bibliography. At that point, 17 days had passed since Mary had written. Robert must have been in a turmoil of rage and worry as he wondered what had happened in Georgetown since she'd last written. *Were Mary and the children even still alive?*

> *June 9, 1781, Charles Town*
>
> *My dearest Polly,*
>
> *How thankful I am to the Divine Being for the Miraculous escape you and the dear children have made from the imminent danger you were exposed to from the fire of the Galley.*
>
> *Heavenly God; how could they have pointed their guns against the house. My blood runs cold while I read your recital of such imminent danger and such a signal deliverance. When will the fate of an unhappy Husband and Father cease to follow you and my dear little helpless innocents? How much you have suffered for these twelve months past. In short, your sufferings have rendered totally insensible my own, or I should rather say, I feel no distress but for you and my sweet little creatures, who have so often been deprived of the care and protection of the tender husband and Father in times of difficulty and danger.*
>
> *My consolation is that on this, as well as on former occasions, it may please Heaven I hope to raise up friends to you, on whose protection I may firmly depend. I shall dwell no longer on melancholy reflections, but would rather choose to say something that might amuse or please you, and to effect of the latter purpose. I flatter myself nothing can be more conducive than to inform you that I am at present well, and as to the former, I will give you an account of the most material circumstances that have occurred to me since I left you.*
>
> *I had in general a very fine weather during my passage crossing Bull's or Sunne Bay* [a bay midway between Georgetown and Charleston], *it blew extremely hard, with a very heavy head- sea. On my arrival at Sullivan's Island, because I had been ordered down as a prisoner on Parole, after examining my pass, the Commanding Officer at the Fort informed me, I could not go at large, until I was carried before the Court at Chas. Town. I was therefore taken into custody and carried before the court, who after some time allowed me the liberty of the Town. This no doubt, will give you some relief from what I am afraid you may have suspected that I am in a much more disagreeable situation.*

*As to that, I have availed myself of my former plea, Earl Cornwallis orders that no test of allegiance should be required of the inhabitants of Waccamaw. In consequence of which, I am permitted to be as nearly on a footing with the other inhabitants as circumstances will permit, by continuing on parole at my plantation on Waccamaw with the liberty of visiting my family at Georgetown.*

*You will observe that my limits are now much more circumscribed than they were. I expected to have been up with you before now but from the change of affairs in that part of the country I am afraid I shall not be permitted. I shall, however, try, as I think it my duty, if in my power to be near my family.*

*I observe what you say of your Aunt Lewis' anxious desire to see some of the family, and would willingly go down to Providence for that purpose, but should* [illegible]. *I beg you will write me fully on this subject.*

*Never did I long to see you and my dear children, on whose tender minds I am certain you will never omit your most earnest endeavors to impress principles of Religion, and virtue. Say to John from me, everything you think proper on his head. Tell him in particular that I expect the utmost duty and affection from him to his poor Mama, and that he will be attentive and obedient to whatever you may direct. Say also what you think necessary to little Susanna and Robert, the latter I hope begins to* [illegible] *the Overseer in every instance, moderation in their work and management.*

*I have found Larey but he is almost dead with the camp fever* [Typhus]. *Mungo was on the public works, but I understand he is run away from them. Jupiter and Frank I've heard of, Joe I've heard nothing of. John and Snow, many months ago on their way home were taken at Mrs. Hume's plantation and were carried off with Mrs. Hume's negroes to North Carolina, where together with Davy and I understand they were reserved for me.* [He is speaking of slaves.] *As many reports have been circulated in regard to me, I beg you will inform friends very particularly of my real situation which I expect will be attended with the best consequences.*

*I am very glad George Heriot is in that part of the country. I am very sorry to hear the neighbors begin to be sickly. I hope Holmes' indisposition will not hold him off the cutting of indigo, which will be attended with much loss to us. Much need is there for making something. I am not able to raise money by any means whatsoever, for the discharge of the money I borrowed to support me during my confinement on James Island. But do not let my necessitous situation induce you to expose your and my dear children's health by doing that at this season of the year. I flatter myself you may find some friend to assist you. It is impossible you can't be friendless if I be entirely forgot.*

> *I understand your flat* [shallow draft boat] *was taken away and is ashore on N. Island. Your friends can advise you and assist you in what is best to be done. As I shall write you again before there is an opportunity for the present.*
>
> *Adieu,*
> *Your affectionate,*
> *Robert Heriot*

Robert's reply to Mary's account of the shelling of their house is explosive, as would be expected. The attack must have angered Robert as no other communication from Mary could have done other than the murder of a child. The situation had become intolerable. Then, in his fifth paragraph, he describes how, on his recent return to James Island from a visit at Georgetown, he was arrested despite having a pass when he reached Sullivan's Island. This too was an intolerable situation.

Lt. Col. John F. Grimke, the same Whig officer who issued orders in April 1780 at Charles Town mentioning Lt. Col. Heriot, suffered a serious difficulty while he himself was a prisoner on parole in the Spring of 1781. On March 23, 1781, Grimke was tried by a court of inquiry made up of British officers and sanctioned by Balfour. He was convicted of violating the terms of his parole because he corresponded with a friend in Beaufort. The content of the letter was not at issue; the crime was that the communication had taken place at all.

Colonel Grimke wrote to General Moultrie.

> *I was detained in the City-guard for ten days, without any allowance of provisions, fire, or candles, and it is probable that if you had not interposed and represented the injustice of such proceedings, that the same injurious treatment would have existed to the moment of my dismission.*[217]

The "city guard" was the Provost under the Exchange Building, Bay Street, Charles Town.

At length, Balfour agreed that Grimke had not intentionally broken his parole. However, he would not release Grimke until he heard from Lord Cornwallis. This is astonishing, as the whereabouts of Cornwallis had been unknown by the British in Charles Town since the battle of Guilford Court-house in North Carolina, on March 15. Finally word came and Grimke reported the result. After a "confinement of five weeks, I was told by Major Fraser, that letters had been received from Lord Cornwallis, and that his lordship was of opinion, that I had not been guilty of a breach of parole."[218] Grimke's five weeks of confinement would have ended about May 1.

217 Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 2: 188-193.

218 Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 2: 188-193.

Col. Grimke also wrote to General Moultrie.

> *The confinement I suffered, in the City-guard of Charles Town, having rendered the parole which I gave upon surrender of that place null and void,...I thought myself at liberty to return to the duty of my country. The situation* [being a prisoner] *in which you are, precluded me from asking your opinion upon a point of so much delicacy; I have therefore left my reasons for your perusal; hoping that I shall be vindicated in your opinion ....*

In other words, Grimke thought that, due to the actions of the British, he was no longer on parole and should be free to join the Whig cause. He made his way out of Charles Town and joined General Nathanael Greene's army.[219]

Upon reaching the army, Grimke requested a court of inquiry to judge whether or not his reasons for considering his parole null and void were justified. The court determined that Grimke's confinement had violated his parole and he was justified in escaping.

Robert Heriot's arrest, court appearance, and incarceration seems similar to that of Colonel Grimke and took place at just about the same time. The Articles of Capitulation agreed to at the surrender of Charles Town stated: "[W]hich parole as long as they observe, shall secure them from being molested in their property by the British troops..."

That would lead a prisoner on parole to believe that he and his property would be safe as long as he did not violate his parole. However, Robert's home was deliberately shelled by a British galley, his family seriously endangered and threatened. His property "molested" included his home damaged and a cow and a slave killed. Further, also without violating his parole and after showing his pass, Robert was arrested, taken before Balfour's court in Charles Town and held for "some time."

It is likely that, like Grimke, Robert Heriot was confined in the Provost beneath the Old Exchange building. And it is possible—even probable—that Robert, as did Col. Grimke, believed that his parole was violated and thus invalid, allowing him, with honor, to consider himself no longer bound by the parole and act accordingly. He, in some way, returned to Georgetown.

General Moultrie described the Provost in this way:

> *The place allotted to confine their prisoners, was a part of the cellar under the Exchange, and called the Provost; a damp, unwholesome place, which occasioned amongst the prisoners much sickness, and some deaths. It was a horrid place to confine citizens in. They had no respect to age or sex: they were all huddled up together in one common room; American prisoners of war, and British felons. Two young ladies of a respectable family, were confined*

219 Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 2: 177-193.

> *among the other prisoners, for several days on a groundless suspicion of giving intelligence to the Americans. I had frequent applications from the unfortunate suffer*[er]*s in the Provost, requesting I would interest myself in their behalf, to get them released from that loathsome place: in some of my applications I succeeded; in others I could not. The unfortunate citizens of Charleston, who would not take the British protection, on the slightest pretence were hurried away to the Provost.*[220]

The dates of Robert's arrest, court appearance and confinement are undetermined, but there are a few clues from the letters. Mary wrote Robert on May 23, 1781. He had obviously left Georgetown prior to that date—and her letter gives no indication she is aware that Robert had been arrested.

Robert responded on June 9, writing that when he was released from confinement he would be allowed "the liberty of the Town," meaning he would be free to roam Charles Town. He mentioned his release saying.

> *This no doubt, will give you some relief from what I am afraid you may have suspected that I am in a much more disagreeable situation. … You will observe that my limits are now much more circumscribed than they were. I expected to have been up with you before now but from the change of affairs in that part of the country I am afraid I shall not be permitted. I shall, however, try, as I think it my duty, if in my power to be near my family.*

His movements were apparently limited to Charles Town, which means that after 11 months, he found himself with less freedom than earlier. He was also aware, from both Mary's letters and other sources that the military situation in the upcountry and Georgetown area had changed, as revealed by his statement that he would, "however, try, as I think it my duty, if in my power to be near my family."

He made no definitive statements of this nature in any prior letters—it may be that he intended to escape and was indiscreet enough to have almost spelled it out. He also wrote: "As many reports have been circulated in regard to me, I beg you will inform friends very particularly of my real situation." One wonders what reports he's referring to—and who was circulating them. Whatever they were, the reports were apparently not accurate.

In addition, Robert's letter contained the odd comment that "I understand your flat [shallow draft boat] was taken away and is ashore on N. Island. Your friends can advise you and assist you in what is best to be done." It is peculiar that Robert would know of the flat being missing—and where it was located. He was somewhat out of touch with the world outside while confined to James Island, although the prisoners undoubtedly shared whatever information they obtained from new arrivals or letters.

220 Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 2: 299-300.

Plus, as Mary had been managing family affairs for a year, one would suppose that she could handle the problem of the missing boat without it being suggested that she seek advice from her friends. It seems probable that underlying, pre-arranged messages were being sent between Robert and Mary in the many letters they exchanged. Some of the messages may have been so well disguised even their existence may not be apparent. They were both educated, intelligent people in a very difficult situation with a need to communicate beyond what was permitted by the enemy, and they almost certainly did so.

It should also be noticed that Robert mentions that he, or they, are financially desperate. He wrote, "Much need is there for making something. I am not able to raise money by any means whatsoever, for the discharge of the money I borrowed to support me during my confinement on James Island."

The war and his confinement had used up their liquid resources. She would have known this, of course. For him to have written it may indicate his state of mind.

Although he would not have known of it, escape was not an immediate necessity for Robert as a prisoner exchange was imminent. In Cheraw, on May 3, British and Whig negotiators had agreed upon a wholesale exchange of prisoners. The men exiled in St. Augustine were to be freed as well.[221] The agreement was not published until June 23, 1781, when it appeared in *The Royal Gazette*, and was effective immediately:

> *Whereas, in pursuance of adequate Powers respectively delegated to us, to carry into execution articles of a cartel, made on the 3rd day of May, in this present year, between Capt. Cornwallis, on the part of Lieutenant General Earl Cornwallis, and Lieut. Col. Carrington, on the part of Major-General Green, for the exchange and relief of prisoners of war, taken in the Southern Department; We the underwritten have mutually agreed, that all the Militia prisoners of war, citizens of America, taken by the British arms in the Southern Department, from the first commencement of this present war, to the 15th day of this present month of June, shall be immediately exchanged for all the Militia prisoners of war, subjects of Great Britain, taken by the American arms in the said department, within the above-mentioned term.*
>
> *NOW PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, That all the above mentioned British and American prisoners, wherever they may at present be, are hereby declared to be fully, absolutely and reciprocally exchanged, and such of them as are on parole within the Lines of their respective parties, are hereby declared to be released therefrom; and such as are within the towns, garrisons, camps, posts or lines of the powers who captured them, shall be immediately liberated and permitted to pass, without restriction, to the party to whom they belong. June 22,*

221 Borick, *Relieve Us of This Burthen*, 101.

*1781.*[222]

Thirteen days elapsed between Robert's letter of June 9 and the announcement of the release of prisoners. Perhaps he was already in now-liberated Georgetown. In any case, his homecoming must have been wonderful for all, as the war was over as far as Mary and Robert were concerned.

They each had their stories to tell. For instance, while it appears from her letters that during the war, Mary had the services of an overseer during Robert's absences, the management of the plantation was still in her hands. Planting, harvesting, and marketing their crops were ongoing concerns, notwithstanding the plundering or confiscation of them by the British and Loyalists. In addition, as commerce was disrupted, she would have had to produce food for her family and the workers. With no schools operating, she would have had to teach the children herself. And, on top of all, she managed the plantation of her brother-in- law, William Heriot, as well, while he was detained on the sea islands.

Throughout the war, both Mary and Robert had to be wary of everyone. Lifelong friends and relatives may have posed as their friends when, in fact, they were secretly collaborating with the enemy. To make matters even more complicated, those loyalties sometimes shifted depending on which side was prevailing.

Prudently—though cautiously—Mary made friends with British officers and Loyalists, especially those who took quarter in her home. In return, she was lucky in that they offered her advice and protection—and to some extent suggested help in achieving Robert's return. (Although the suggestions may have been offered out of politeness and nothing more, Mary still garnered them when others in her place might not have.)

Robert faced a similar situation, especially while on parole. Some, perhaps thinking of gaining advantage for themselves with the British, might have betrayed Robert's trust. The inherent dangers of his position and confinement would not have allowed him to fully open up to anyone, isolating him in the frustrating inability to defend his family in person.

It may be thought of as ironic that Robert appears not to have been involved in armed conflict while his wife drew the duty of protecting their family, servants, and their home—and of burying the dead. Mary's wartime adventures surely would have made her a fascinating dinner companion for the rest of her life.

222 *The Royal Gazette* (Charles Town, S.C.), June 23, 1781.


*Inset of Bar and Harbor of Charleston, Mouzon Map, 1775, Public Domain.*

# 12. WHERE WAS ROBERT HERIOT DURING HIS CONFINEMENT?

Robert Heriot's exact whereabouts during much of the thirteen months between July 1, 1780—when he initially received his parole—until August 4, 1781, when Lt. Col. Hugh Horry[223] wrote that Robert was "*exempted from bearing arms,*" is unclear.

The surrender of Charles Town on May 12, 1780 netted the British over 5,000 prisoners. Most of the militias were released to their homes on parole. The Continental Army-enlisted men were destined for the dreaded prison ships where they suffered in appalling conditions. Officers were dispersed in many areas including the barracks at Haddrell's Point and other facilities in the greater Charles Town area.

The officers on parole were not locked up in prisons. Nor were they placed on prison ships. They were provided with minimal housing or left to fend for themselves.

Most of the Continentals were confined to Haddrell's Point. There, they had freedom to roam at will although to leave, they were required to have a pass. They were supplied only with the barest of necessities for survival—British supplied prisoners with two-thirds of the ration issued to British soldiers.[224] The men could supplement their meager supplies with purchases made privately.

As indicated on the document he signed, Robert Heriot's parole required him to go to James Island, John's Island, Edisto Island, Edding's Island, and/or St. Helena. From the records we have, it appears that he was confined to James Island only. He would be allowed to visit Georgetown sometime prior to February 1781, but it is unknown when he was required to return to his lodging as a prisoner.

Other than at Fort Johnson, there were small farms, houses and taverns on James Island. Farms also had outbuildings. Just where Heriot lived is unknown. Like the men at Haddrell's Point, he probably spent time fishing and crabbing to supplement his meager food supplies. Boredom, worry about his family, and loss of his personal freedom would have been very difficult for him.

According to David Ramsay, the officers—men "born in affluence and habituated to attendance—were compelled to do not only the most menial offices for themselves but could scarcely procure the plainest necessities of life."[225] Most were entirely unaccustomed to the hard lifestyle so they were limited in what they could do.

223 The Whigs Hugh Horry and Peter Horry were brothers, who also had a Loyalist brother Jonah. They were cousins of Daniel Horry.

224 Borick, *Relieve Us of this Burthen*, 18.

225 David Ramsay, *The History of the Revolution in South Carolina* (Trenton: Isaac Collins, 1785) 2:294.

In a way, they experienced some of the conditions they had imposed (and would continue to after the war) on their own enslaved people.[226] It must have been pretty grim living, indeed, for a man who only a few years before had lived in a golden age of materialism and conspicuous consumption.

226 Borick, *Relieve Us of this Burthen*, 54.

# 13. OUT OF THE WAR

When Robert Heriot returned home in June or early July 1781, he would have found his home damaged by the cannon fire. Other homes and businesses were damaged as well. But Georgetown was now in the hands of the Whigs, and he and Mary likely thought they were removed from the war and could live at peace with their children.

That was not to be the case. The war returned with a vengeance. A month after his return, Georgetown was attacked, leaving destruction that would last for decades.

An August 1781 incident caused widespread fire damage. David Ramsay, publishing in 1785, wrote.

> *[O]ne Manson, an inhabitant of South Carolina, who had joined the British, appeared in an armed vessel and demanded permission to land his men in the town. This being refused, he sent a few of them ashore and set fire to it. Upwards of forty houses were speedily reduced to ashes.*[227]

William Johnson, published in 1822, expanded on Ramsay's description.

> *The only plausible excuse ever uttered by the enemy for the destruction of the place was, "that the whigs were about to draw from it supplies for their army." The raking of the streets by fire from a galley, whilst the town was consumed, seems to have been calculated to prevent the merchants from saving their goods." And, "This beautiful little town, the seat of taste, wealth, and hospitality, was committed to the flames on the first of August. Under the name of Manson, the immediate perpetrator of this incendiary act, is consigned to infamy, and to the execrations of the inhabitants of a place which has never recovered from the blow it then received." He continued, "the operation was too important in its nature, to have been undertaken by him, on his own responsibility. The galley he commanded, was dispatched from Charleston; Lord Rawdon was still in that place, and must bear the reproach, or enjoy the eclat* [conspicuous distinction]*, of this destructive outrage. Posterity will judge whether it was not, like the burning of Camden, another proof, that he wanted but an excuse, when obliged to abandon his conquests to leave them a desert.*[228]

227 Ramsay, *The History of the Revolution*, 2:237.

228 Johnson, William, *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene* (Charleston: A.E. Miller, 1822), 2:215-216.

Another impression, from Francisco de Miranda in July 1783, just two years after the attack, states that there "are some very good houses, although some of these are burnt and others completely in ruins as a result of the last war."[229]

Less than seven years after the fire, on February 16, 1788, John Martin, a Georgetown resident, wrote his son in England.

> [T]he Town was almost all Burnt by the British Troops when here, there are about 150 House's built since, the Church [Prince George Winyah] they made a Stable and then Burnt it, they have since got a Roof upon it and a Few Temperary Seats, but not half Finish'd.[230]

William Johnson, writing 40 years later, related that Georgetown "has never recovered from the blow it then received." The great fire and attack of August 1781, a constant reminder of the war, would clearly have affected the Heriot family for the rest of their lives.

After his return from captivity, Robert Heriot was the subject of several orders from the military clearly designed to clarify his status as not being eligible for active service. Lt. Col. Hugh Horry, on August 4. 1781, issued an order that included the following: "Col. Robert Heriot is exempted from bearing arms."[231]

This was likely done to free Robert of pressure to rejoin the military. It may be that he was physically unfit for duty after the rigors of his year as a prisoner of war. Whether on parole or not, he suffered from malnutrition, boredom and lack of medical care that likely made his life very difficult and would have taken a toll on any man, let alone one in his 40s. Post-traumatic stress (PTSD) due to his detainment on James Island and the lack of essentials may have played a part and should not be dismissed.

Even so, the Heriots remained committed to the war effort. Robert wrote Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene, the commander of the Southern Department of the Continental Army, on October 30, 1781, offering to send him wine. On November 7, Greene replied, saying he'd send a wagon to pick up the wine and asked Robert if he could send "a hogshead of Spirit, or good Rum, which at present we want exceedingly."[232] Robert replied on November 12, saying that he would send wine, rum, a cask of porter, and cheese, and that he was pleased to be of service.[233] On November 24, General Greene responded.

229 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 167.

230 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 166.

231 Woodruff, *Heriots*.

232 *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene, 11 May 1783–13 June 1786*, with Additions to the Series, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 13: 745 (addenda).

233 *Greene Papers*, 9: 567.

*Gen. Nathanael Greene*

*Sir,*
*I have received the wine and rum you were so obliging to procure for me and return you my thanks for your trouble.*

*The army is in the greatest want of writing paper and bar iron, if you could possibly procure those articles it would render essential service to your country and be a means of facilitating future operations. I must urge the necessity of exerting yourself in this instance as the demand is great and the want of them, particularly the latter may be attended with fatal consequences.*

*I am, Sir,*

*Yours Most Obed't Humble Sv't*

*Signed Nathanael Greene*[234]

On December 2, Robert wrote from Waccamaw indicating that he was at his plantation rather than his home in Georgetown saying that despite "every exertion" and those of his friends at Georgetown, he had not had "the smallest success" in obtaining the items that Greene requested. For example, all of the writing paper in the area had recently been sent to the governor. One Georgetown firm could obtain, he wrote, "if serviceable," 1,500 or 2,000 pounds of "old Iron," which he would reserve for the general.[235]

234 *Greene Papers*, 9: 617.
235 *Greene Papers*, 9: 653.

On February 1, 1782, he was again formally exempted from duty when Lt. Col. Peter Horry wrote:

> *By order of Brig. Gen. Marion, Lt. Col. Heriot, commanding the late Sea Coast Regiment, formed out of and again incorporated with the Lower Craven County Regiment of Militia, considered a supernumerary officer of said Regiment and is to act accordingly.*

Two months later, on March 29, Peter Horry again wrote:

> *I certify that Col. Heriot subscribed to my regiment of Cavalry and was allowed by Gen. Marion as exemption from duty.*

This correspondence was dated at Georgetown. It is unclear why it was necessary to repeatedly make official Robert Heriot's exemption from active duty.

Then, again from Waccamaw, Heriot wrote Gen. Greene on March 20, 1782, that he could not fill Greene's request for bar iron. He had engaged a ton which he would reserve until he heard from Greene, adding that he would still be happy to render "every service in my power."[236]

One month later, on April 20, 1782, Governor John Mathews wrote:

> *Governor John Mathews to Robert Heriot*
>
> *Robert Heriot, Esq., is by me appointed to take account of all the provisions in the district of Georgetown, and he is hereby authorized and empowered to enter any house or houses where he might suspect provisions are lodged, or into any other suspected place, and to call to his aid any of the good citizens of this State as he shall from time to time require their assistance.*
>
> *Given under my hand at Cans-Acre this 10th day of April, 1782.*
>
> *Signed Jn. Mathews*

Indicative of a return to some form of "normalcy," the firm of Heriot & Tucker (George Heriot and Daniel Tucker) concluded a sale of fifty slaves consisting of men, women and children on June 22, 1782. These people, likely seized by the state from Loyalist owners, were sold in Georgetown on the account of the State of South Carolina.[237] On that date, Governor Mathews wrote Robert Heriot, thanking him for his handling of the Georgetown provision accounting mission assigned to him.

236 *Greene Papers*, 9: 653.

237 *Greene Papers*, 9: 653.

*John Mathews to Robert Heriot, dated*

*Uxbridge, Ashley River*

*Having now received the whole of your returns relative to the business I requested you to undertake, I am now to signify to you my approbation of your proceedings; and the satisfactory information I have received by your indefatigable attention to, and the accuracy with which you have stated a business in its nature intricate and troublesome, and be pleased Sir, to accept my sincere thanks for the same.*

*I am Sir,*
*with esteem regards,*
*Your most Obdt. Servant,*
*John Mathews*[238]

This task for the governor is Robert Heriot's last known contribution to the war effort.

238 *Greene Papers*, 9: 653.

# 14. POST-WAR

At last, life returned to a semblance of normal for the Heriot family. In 1784, Robert was again appointed tax inquirer and collector for All Saints Parish, an area of the Waccamaw neck that would become Horry and Georgetown Counties.

On June 5, 1786, the Heriot family sailed from Charleston. "This day the ship *Philadelphia*, Capt. Matthew Strong, sailed for Philadelphia, with whom went the following passengers ... Colonel Heriot, of Georgetown, with his family."[239]

John Ouldfield Heriot (1771-1831), a son of Robert and Mary Heriot, was a student at The College of New Jersey (Princeton). He wrote a letter dated August 15, 1786 to a friend from "college," also named Robert. The letter gives a glimpse of the lifestyle of Robert and Mary Heriot away from Georgetown:

> *Dear Robert,*
>
> *It is with singular pleasure I now acknowledge the receipt of your very agreeable favor of the 30th of May. Papa and family have gone to Rhode Island and I believe will go from thence to Boston, & at Commencement they will return to New York and there we spend the vacation together, at the expiration of which we return to Princeton, where Papa leaves Mama for the Winter. He returns to Carolina to look after the mane chance* [opportunities for financial gain]*, and in the Spring he comes and takes away Mama, and then I shall be denied the greatest blessing upon earth, that of being in the presence of Parents who so dearly love their children as mine do. It does not concern me to think that this letter will be less entertaining to you than some I have written, for (as Papa says) I think a kind letter as good as an interesting one.*
>
> *The senior class have passed their examination and all admitted to their first degree in the Art. My brother (Robert) joins Mr. Clymers and Stockton in their compliments to you.*
>
> *I remain with the most brotherly regards,*
> *Yours, etc.,*
> *John Heriot*[240]

239 *Charleston Morning Post*, June 5, 1786.

240 Woodruff, *Heriots*.

At the end of the war, James Cassells, having been a Tory holding the rank of Colonel in the militia and bearing arms against the Whigs, was banished and his property confiscated by the Jacksonborough Assembly. In 1788, perhaps remembering help that the Cassells had given Mary during Robert's absence during the war—or that Cassells was married to Mary's first cousin, Susannah Mann—Robert assisted Cassells's son John who was a minor at the time.

Along with the young man's sister and her husband, Robert petitioned the legislature to prevent the commissioners of forfeited estates from seizing slaves that rightfully belonged to the son—and not to the father. The slaves in question had belonged to the boy's grandfather, Dr. John Mann, who had willed them to his daughter, Susannah, who had died in 1770, shortly after her son was born.

The petition was granted and the slaves were awarded to John Cassells, a minor.[241]

Robert would petition the legislature on behalf of young Cassells again.[242] Prior to their marriage, Susannah Mann and James Cassells had made an agreement that should Susannah die, Robert Heriot would be the trustee of a considerable sum of money, to be used according to Susannah's will.

Again, the legislature responded as Heriot hoped, and ordered that the commissioners of forfeited estates pay to John Cassells 750 pounds sterling out of the proceeds of the sale of Cassells's estate.[243]

Between 1787 and 1791, Robert, a Federalist, represented All Saints Parish in the 7th (1787-8), 8th (1789-90) and 9th (1791) South Carolina General Assemblies, and attended the Constitutional Convention of South Carolina, May 10–June 3, 1790.[244]

The 1790 census of Georgetown District indicates that Robert owned 128 enslaved workers in All Saints Parish, whose population included 430 white people and 1,795 enslaved. Only the Allston family had more enslaved workers than Robert Heriot—collectively, a total of 759.[245]

241 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 163-164.

242 John Cassells was Mary Ouldfield Heriot's first cousin, once removed.

243 Thomas Cooper, ed. *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina, vol. 5, Containing the Acts from 1786, Exclusive, to 1814, Inclusive.* (Columbia: A.S. Johnston, 1839), 84.

244 Hutson, Francis, ed., *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of South Carolina, May 10, 1790 – June 3, 1790* (Columbia S.C.: printed for the Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1946).

245 Rogers, *History of Georgetown*, 165-166.

# 15. GEORGE WASHINGTON VISITS GEORGETOWN

George Washington, while president, took a tour through the country in 1791. On the Southern leg of his trip, he went through South Carolina. Acting as an advance man, James Iredell of North Carolina made the journey in February 1791, laying out a route and potential places for the president to stop along the way. Iredell visited the Heriot plantation. He wrote:

> *This gentleman is extremely respectable and hospitable, and is a Man of large Fortune. He will undoubtedly meet the President long before he reaches his house; if he should go that way. I know not the way by the common Ferry, nor what accommodations there are there. Across the Bay from Colo.* [Colonel] *Heriot's to Georgetown — about 2 or 3 miles.*[246]

Regrettably, President Washington did not visit the Heriot plantation. Instead, he spent the night of April 29, 1791 at the nearby plantation of William Alston. There he met General William Moultrie, John Rutledge, Jr., and Colonel William Washington, who would escort him to Charleston.

On April 30, Washington took a boat down the Waccamaw for about three miles, passing the Heriots' plantation, to reach Georgetown.[247] Even so, Washington's brief stay at Georgetown was a huge event for the town as well as for the families of the Heriots and Tuckers.

George Washington spent the night of April 30th in the home of Daniel Tucker.[248] That home still stands and is 100 yards from the site of Robert and Mary's Georgetown house on the southeast corner of Front and King Streets. Both houses were set back about 200 feet from Front Street.

While it is not documented, it is entirely reasonable that the new president met Robert and Mary Heriot. Because of George Heriot's partnership with Tucker, Washington would have also met him and his wife, Sarah Tucker Heriot.[249]

At Georgetown, Washington dined with the citizenry in public and attended a tea party with 50 ladies. He was handed an address of welcome signed by seven prominent men, including George Heriot. Washington also attended events of the Masons and the Winyah Indigo Society, of which

246 Founders Online, National Archives, "Memorandum of James Iredell on the Route through the Carolinas, February 1791."

247 "[April 1791]," https://www.loc.gov/item/75041365/. [Original source: *The Diaries of George Washington, vol. 6, 1 January 1790-13 December 1799*, ed. Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979) 107- 125.]

248 1019 Front Street. Daniel Tucker acquired the house in 1787. In 2025, it is currently the Robert Stewart House.

249 There is a tradition in the Heriot family that two goblets have survived from that meeting and were used by Robert Heriot and George Washington.

Robert was a member.[250] George Washington rarely shook hands. He was very formal at state gatherings and would greet guests with a bow.[251] It can be assumed that this was his manner at the Georgetown reception.

Washington's visit to Georgetown was covered by the *Gazette of the United-States* newspaper of Philadelphia:

> *Georgetown, SC, April 30*
>
> *This morning the President of the United States and his suite arrived here, on his tour through the Southern States — He was rowed over the river by seven Captains of vessels, dressed in round hats trimmed with gold lace, blue coats, white jackets, etc. in an elegant painted boat.*
>
> *On his arriving opposite the market he was saluted by the artillery, with fifteen guns, from the foot of Broad Street; and on his landing he was received by the light infantry company with presented arms who immediately after he passed, fired thirteen rounds; after which the committee appointed to receive and address him, conducted him to an elegant house prepared by the inhabitants for his reception. At two o'clock he received the congratulatory address of the inhabitants, and immediately after that of his Masonic brethren—at four, he honored the citizens with his company at a public dinner, at which the following were the principal toasts:*
>
> 1. *The United States of America.*
> 2. *The Grand Council of the Union.*
> 3. *The King of France our great and good ally.*
> 4. *The National Assembly of France.*
> 5. *The memory of Major General Greene.*
> 6. *The memory of M.G. Baron de Kalb.*
> 7. *The other brave officers and soldiers who fell in the war.*
> 8. *The Vice-President of the United States, may the esteem and gratitude of his country be equal to those important services which he has and continues to render her.*[252]

250 *Gazette of the United-States*, (Philadelphia), May 21, 1791.

251 The Washington Library at Mount Vernon. https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/levees-receptions.

252 The Vice President was John Adams.

9. *Our ministers in foreign countries.*

10. *The Federal Government.*

11. *The State of South Carolina.*

12. *The Marquis de la Fayette.*

13. *May the nations of the earth enjoy an equal happiness with us in having rulers equally sedulous*[253] *to make themselves acquainted with the true interests and situations of the people.*

14. *The Governors and Legislatures of the respective States.*

*The President then retired, and the following toast was given:*

*Our Illustrious President, may calmness, peace and felicity, bless the evening of his life, as his youth and middle age have been glorious by the most exalted achievements of military renown.*

The evening closed with a tea party and ball, which the President honored with his company, and the next morning set off for Charleston.[254] The article mentions "the committee appointed to receive and address him." George Heriot was a member of that seven-man committee which gave the president Georgetown's written welcome. George was the second man to sign the document. He signed as "Geo. Heriot" with an elaborate flourish beneath his signature.[255]

George Washington wrote in his diary of his visit to Georgetown:

*Friday 29th. We left Doctr. Flaggs about 6 oclo*[ck] *and arrived at Captn. Wm. Alstons' on the Waggamaw to Breakfast.*

*Captn. Alston is a Gentleman of large fortune and esteemed one of the neatest Rice planters in the state of So. Carolina and a proprietor of some of the most valuable grounds for the*

253 "Sedulous" definition: adjective, showing dedication and diligence.

254 *Gazette of the United-States*, (Philadelphia), May 21, 1791.

255 George Washington Papers, Series 4, General Correspondence: Georgetown, South Carolina, Citizens to George Washington, May 1, Address. May 1, 1791. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw437072/.

*Culture of this article. His house which is large, new, and elegantly furnished stands on a sand hill, high for the Country, with his rice fields below; the contrast of which with the lands back of it, and the Sand & piney barrens through which we had passed is scarcely to be conceived.*

*At Captn. Alstons we were met by General Moultree, Colo. Washington & Mr. Rutledge (son of the present Chief Justice of So. Carolina) who had come out that far to escort me to town* [Charleston]. *We dined and lodged at this Gentlemens and Boats being provided we* [left] *the next morning.*

*Saturday 30th. Crossed the Waggamaw to George town by descending the River three miles. At this place we were recd. under a Salute of Cannon, & by a Company of Infantry handsomely uniformed. I dined with the Citizens in public; and in the afternoon, was introduced to upwards of 50 ladies who had assembled (at a Tea party) on the occasion.*

*George Town seems to be in the shade of Charleston. It suffered during the war by the British, havg. had many of its Houses burnt. It is situated on a pininsula betwn. the River Waccamaw & Sampton Creek about 15 Miles from the Sea. A bar is to be passed, over which not more than 12 feet water can be brot. except at spring tides; which (tho' the Inhabitants are willing to entertain different ideas) must ever be a considerable let to its importance; especially if the cut between the Santee & Cowper Rivers should ever be accomplished.*

*The Inhabitants of this place (either unwilling or unable) could give no account of the number of Souls in it, but I should not compute them at more than 5 or 600—Its chief export Rice.*

*Sunday—May first. Left Georgetown about 6 Oclock, and crossing the Santee Creek* [Sampit River] *at the Town, and the Santee River 12 miles from it, at Lynchs Island, we breakfasted and dined at Mrs. Horry's*[256] *about 15 Miles from George town & lodged at the Plantation of Mr. Manigold about 19 miles farther.*[257]

256 "Mrs. Horry" is Harriott Pinckney Horry (1748-1830), widow of Colonel Daniel Horry, Robert Heriot's old commander at the battle of Sullivan's Island in 1776, who died in 1785. Hampton Plantation.

257 "[April 1791]," *Founders Online* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington /01-06-02-0002- 0003. [Original source: *The Diaries of George Washington, vol. 6, 1 January 1790-13 December 1799*, ed. Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979) 107-125.]

Washington's trip was national news. The Maryland Journal gives an account that clearly was written by an unnamed witness who was present:

> *Extract from South-Carolina News Papers received by the Sloop Eliza, Captain* [illegible] *arrived from Charleston.*
>
> *George-Town, (South Carolina) May 7.*
>
> *The chair of the President, at the public dinner where our citizens were honored with his company, on Saturday last, was beautifully ornamented with an arch composed of laurels in full bloom. Each person present appeared to partake in the general festivity, and to exhibit indications of the most unfeigned joy and satisfaction.*
>
> *But, upon the whole of this occasion, nothing was more conspicuous than the Whigism of the ladies to honor our our American hero, the fair sex of George-Town vied with each other in shewing him marks of the highest respect. Several of them waited on him in the morning, and were received with all that attention and politeness for which this great character is so eminently distinguished. At the tea party, there appeared sashes highly beautified with the arms of the United States, and many of the ladies wore head-dresses ornamented with bandeaus, upon which were written, in letters of gold, either 'Long life to the President,' or 'Welcome the hero.' The assembly-room, and a chair intended for him, were handsomely decorated with arches and festoons of laurel, interwoven with flowers; but as he declined the formality of being placed in a manner unsocial, after being introduced to all the ladies present, he seated and entertained several of them, in succession in the chair intended for himself. At six o'clock, on Saturday morning, the President, with his suite, set out from this place on his way to Charleston. He was rowed over the Sampit* [River] *in the same manner, and by the same Captains of vessels who rowed him over the Bay. Upon his passing Broad Street, he was saluted by the artillery, and, on the opposite shore, was received by the light- infantry company, and accompanied by several of the citizens of this place to the Santee* [River], *and by several Gentlemen who had come up for the purpose of conducting him to Charleston.*
>
> *When we reflect upon the event which has taken place, we cannot but regret that, from the uncertainty of all human affairs, our village will probably never again be entertained with a spectacle so truly grand, exhibited in a character so truly great.*[258]

258 *Maryland Journal* (Baltimore), May 31, 1791, p. 2.

# 16. THE END OF THE JOURNEY FOR MARY AND ROBERT

The only sources of information regarding the death of Robert Heriot are newspapers of the period. The first newspaper to carry the story was *The City Gazette* published in Charleston July 30, 1792:

> *Died, at Georgetown, on Sunday last, in consequence of a hurt he received by the fall of a balcony in which he was standing with a number of other gentlemen, on the 4th July, Col. Robert Heriot, a representative of that town in the general assembly of this state.*[259]

"Sunday last," the day of Robert Heriot's death, would have been July 22. Other accounts are that he was injured on July 4 when a balcony in Georgetown collapsed and that he likely died there.

This version of the obituary was printed in at least two other newspapers, word for word, as was the custom of newspapers of that period. Those other newspapers were in New York City and Norwich, Connecticut.[260]

A second version of the obituary was first published on August 18, 1792, in the *National Gazette* in Philadelphia. It states:

> *Lately died in Charleston, South Carolina, Col. Robert Heriot, a gentleman of respectable connections and character in that state. He has left behind him a large, and amiable family, to whom his loss is irreparable. Col. Heriot had been dining with several gentlemen at George-town, (S.C.) and upon some disturbance happening in the street, they stepped out, to the number of sixteen or seventeen, upon a projecting gallery of a second story, which being rotten, unfortunately gave way and brought them all to the ground, not one of them escaping broken bones, or severe bruises. Col. Heriot had one of his legs broke, and the foot of the other leg badly cut, which mortified in a few days, and carried him off.*[261]

This second version of the obituary appeared, word for word, in no fewer than seven newspapers.[262] A major discrepancy exists between the two versions: the second version states that Robert Heriot died in Charleston rather than Georgetown, where the accident took place.

259 *City Gazette* (Charleston, S.C.), July 30, 1792, p. 3.

260 *The Daily Advertiser* (New York), August 16, 1792, p. 2; *Weekly Register* (Norwich, CT), August 28, 1792, p. 2.

261 *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), August 18, 1792.

262 *Supplement to Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), August 20, 1792, p. 2; *General Advertiser* (Philadelphia), August 20, 1792; *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia), August 22, 1792, p. 2; *New York Daily Gazette*, August 25, 1792, p. 2; *Delaware Gazette* (Wilmington), August 25, 1792; *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven), August 29, 1792.

Was the first published account correct? Did he die in Georgetown or Charleston?

There is no indication that the story was corrected or updated, as those newspapers were further away from South Carolina, and the news was not published quickly. The second newspaper to carry the first version, which stated that the death was in Georgetown, was published on August 16, seventeen days after the first version appeared in Charleston.

It is possible that the injured Robert was moved from Georgetown to Charleston in search of better medical care. Some of the best doctors in the country were located in Charleston. However, for an injured man, a journey of 50+ miles by carriage would have been difficult. Going by sea would have been easier and faster.

If Robert had been buried in Charleston, the question of where he died would be settled. But the location of his grave is unknown. At the time of his death, Robert Heriot was 53 years old. He must have been aware of the seriousness of his condition because 13 days after the collapse of the "projecting gallery," and five days prior to his death on July 22, he wrote his final will.

> *In the name of God Amen I Robert Heriot of Georgetown planter make this my last Will and Testament. To my beloved wife Mary her heirs and assigns forever (if she so dispose of it) I give and bequeath the house and Lot No. 224 in Georgetown wherein I now live together with all and singular the Tenements and Hereditaments — house, lots, furniture, plates, and linen. To my well beloved wife I also give and bequeath my Carriages and Carriage Horses. To her I also give my watches, firearms, swords, canes, and books, and boots that she may distribute them among my sons as they may best deserve and also I give and bequeath the following Negroes with the issue to wit Paggy, Dianna, Lucia, Nanette, Minda, Dinah, Philander, Thomas, and Delia. That is to say their future issue after the above gift. It is my will that the residue and remainder of my estate both real and personal be distributed among my wife Mary, sons John, Robert, and James, and daughter Susanna to them their heirs and assigns forever to be taken share and share alike as tenants in common and not as joint tenants and that until such division shall be made the annual income of my estate last mentioned be equally distributed among my wife Mary, sons John, Robert, and James, and daughter Susanna in separate portions for their maintenance. I do hereby make and constitute and appoint my wife Mary Executrix; George Heriot, William Heriot, and Daniel Tucker, and my sons John and Robert executors of this my last will revoking all former wills and for the better payment of my just debts do authorize my executrix and executors above mentioned to sell and dispose of, but to the best possible advantage, any part of my estate either real or personal except the house at Lot No. 224 above mentioned and I do request of all my children that they consult with my wife and other executors concerning any future*

*plan in life which they may wish to pursue or adopt. I wish my executors to continue in my employment as long as possible my present overseer at Rose Hill. (Welding) In witness where I, the said Robert Heriot, have set my hand and seal to this my last will and testament continued in the above and the foregoing half sheet of paper this seventeenth day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety two.*

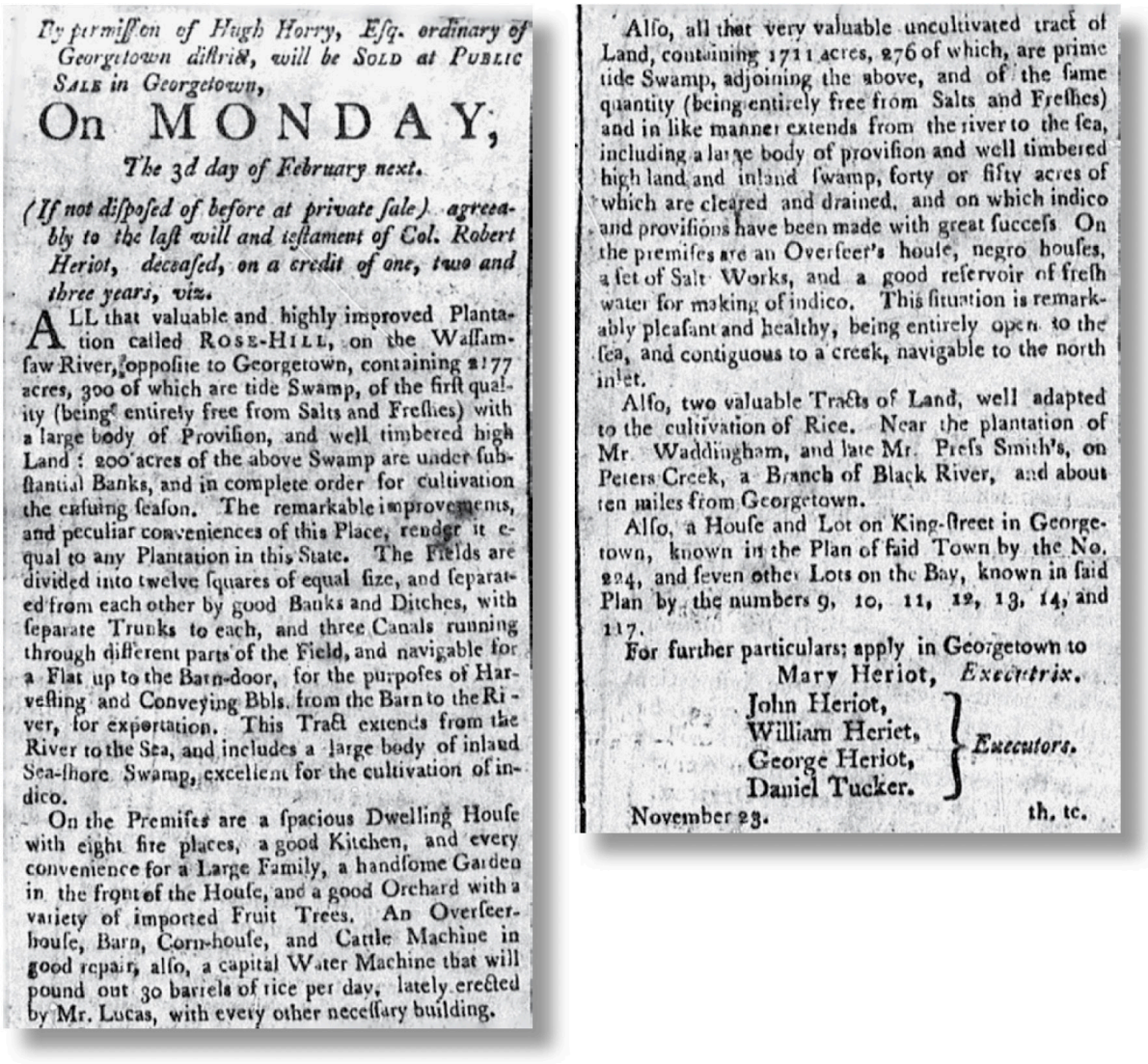
*Robert Heriot*[263]

Both of the Heriot families (Robert and George) were obviously close to Daniel Tucker's family. Tucker named one of his sons—George Heriot Tucker—after his partner. Robert Heriot, Jr. named one of his children Daniel Tucker Heriot.

In addition to his wife Mary, Robert selected George Heriot, Roger Heriot, John Ouldfield Heriot, Robert Heriot, Jr., and Daniel Tucker to be his executors.

Eighteen months later, the *State Gazette of South Carolina* contained an advertisement for the sale of Robert Heriot's Rose Hill Plantation on the Waccamaw River. This ad provides a description of the plantation property.

263 Heriot Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.



*By permiſſion of Hugh Horry, Eſq. ordinary of Georgetown diſtrict, will be* SOLD *at* PUBLIC SALE *in Georgetown,*

On MONDAY,

*The 3d day of February next.*

*(If not diſpoſed of before at private ſale) agreeably to the laſt will and teſtament of Col. Robert Heriot, deceaſed, on a credit of one, two and three years, viz.*

ALL that valuable and highly improved Plantation called ROSE-HILL, on the Waſſamſaw River, oppoſite to Georgetown, containing 2177 acres, 300 of which are tide Swamp, of the firſt quality (being entirely free from Salts and Freſhes) with a large body of Proviſion, and well timbered high Land: 200 acres of the above Swamp are under ſubſtantial Banks, and in complete order for cultivation the enſuing ſeaſon. The remarkable improvements, and peculiar conveniences of this Place, render it equal to any Plantation in this State. The Fields are divided into twelve ſquares of equal ſize, and ſeparated from each other by good Banks and Ditches, with ſeparate Trunks to each, and three Canals running through different parts of the Field, and navigable for a Flat up to the Barn-door, for the purpoſes of Harveſting and Conveying Bbls. from the Barn to the River, for exportation. This Tract extends from the River to the Sea, and includes a large body of inland Sea-ſhore Swamp, excellent for the cultivation of indico.

On the Premiſes are a ſpacious Dwelling Houſe with eight fire places, a good Kitchen, and every convenience for a Large Family, a handſome Garden in the front of the Houſe, and a good Orchard with a variety of imported Fruit Trees. An Overſeer-houſe, Barn, Corn-houſe, and Cattle Machine in good repair, alſo, a capital Water Machine that will pound out 30 barrels of rice per day, lately erected by Mr. Lucas, with every other neceſſary building.

Alſo, all that very valuable uncultivated tract of Land, containing 2711 acres, 276 of which, are prime tide Swamp, adjoining the above, and of the ſame quantity (being entirely free from Salts and Freſhes) and in like manner extends from the river to the ſea, including a large body of proviſion and well timbered high land and inland ſwamp, forty or fifty acres of which are cleared and drained, and on which indico and proviſions have been made with great ſucceſs. On the premiſes are an Overſeer's houſe, negro houſes, a ſet of Salt Works, and a good reſervoir of freſh water for making of indico. This ſituation is remarkably pleaſant and healthy, being entirely open to the ſea, and contiguous to a creek, navigable to the north inlet.

Alſo, two valuable Tracts of Land, well adapted to the cultivation of Rice. Near the plantation of Mr. Waddingham, and late Mr. Preſs Smith's, on Peters Creek, a Branch of Black River, and about ten miles from Georgetown.

Alſo, a Houſe and Lot on King-ſtreet in Georgetown, known in the Plan of ſaid Town by the No. 224, and ſeven other Lots on the Bay, known in ſaid Plan by the numbers 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 117.

For further particulars; apply in Georgetown to

Mary Heriot, *Executrix.*

John Heriot,
William Heriot,
George Heriot,
Daniel Tucker. } *Executors.*

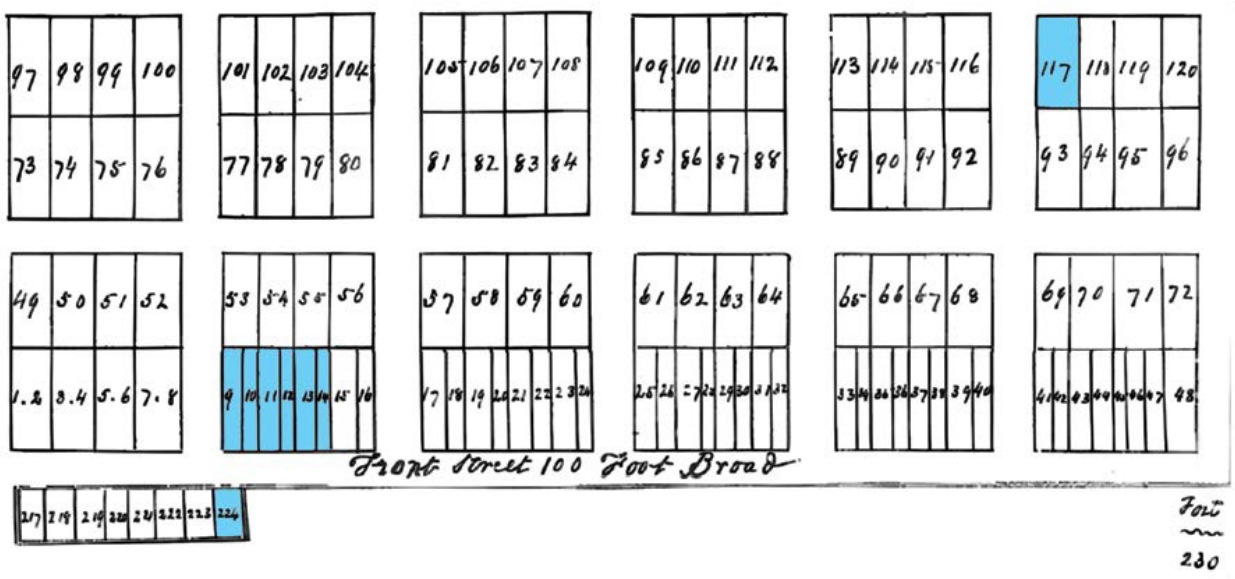
November 23. th, tc.

All that valuable and highly improved ... containing 2,177 acres, 300 of which are swamp ... The tract extends from the River to the Sea ... On the premises are a spacious dwelling house, with eight fire places, a good kitchen, and every convenience for a large family, a handsome garden on the front of the house and a good orchard with a variety of imported fruit trees. An overseer house, barn, cornhouse, and cattle machine in good repair, a capital Water Machine that will pound out 30 barrels of rice per day ... Also all that very valuable uncultivated tract of land, containing 2711 acres, 276 of which are prime swamp adjoining the above ... Also a house and lot on King Street in Georgetown, known in the plan of said town by the No. 224 and seven of the lots on the bay, known in said plan by the numbers 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 117.

The ad was placed by Mary Heriot as executrix and John Heriot, William Heriot, George Heriot, and Daniel Tucker, executors.

Nothing remains of the house listed on Lot 224. The southeast corner of King and Front Streets, forty- five yards east of the Kaminski House Museum, is now Joseph H. Rainey Park.

The six other lots on Front Street are on the north side of the street, across the street from the site of the Heriots' house, and consist of the first six of eight lots in the block between King and Orange streets. On the south side of the street were wharves extending into the Sampit River.




Daniel Tucker died December 29, 1797. He was 45 years old.

William Heriot died November 10, 1807 at 62.

The following day, November 11, 1807, George Heriot died. He was 61.

George's wife, Sarah Tucker Heriot, died June 3, 1820. She was around 64 years old.

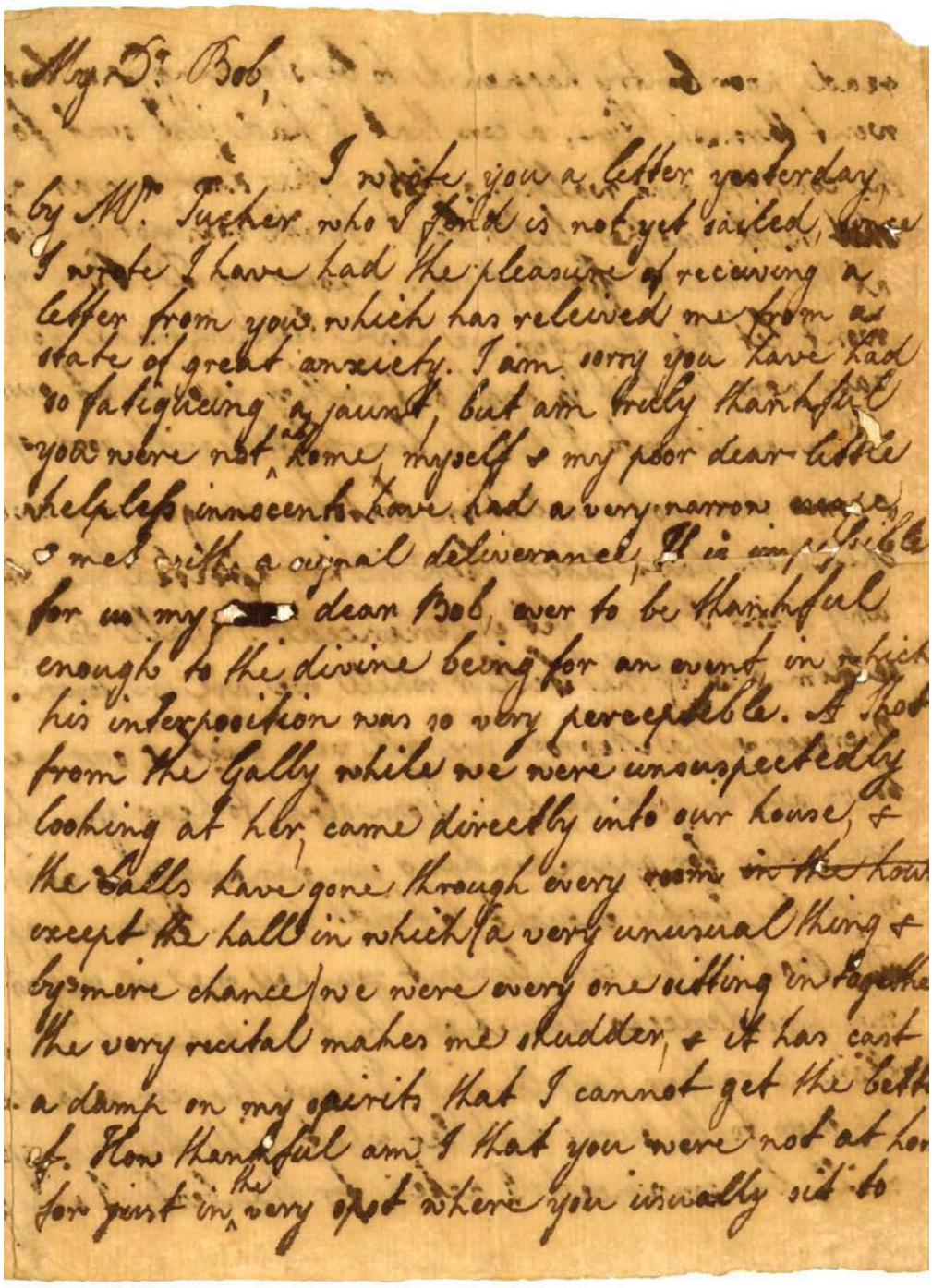
All are buried at Prince George Winyah.

Property records show that on January 1, 1802, Mary Heriot sold 1,243 acres. Ownership of the plantation known as "Rose Hill" passed to William Alston.[264]

264 Smith, "The Baronies of South Carolina," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Jan., 1912), 65.

After that date, when she would have been around the age of 60, Mary Ouldfield Heriot vanishes into the mists of time. It is not known where or with whom she lived, nor when or where she died. One hopes that, with her eventful journey through life at his side, wherever they are, Robert's "Dearest Polly" and her "Dear Bob" rest in peace together.

## *Mary Heriot to Robert Heriot, May 23, 1781*

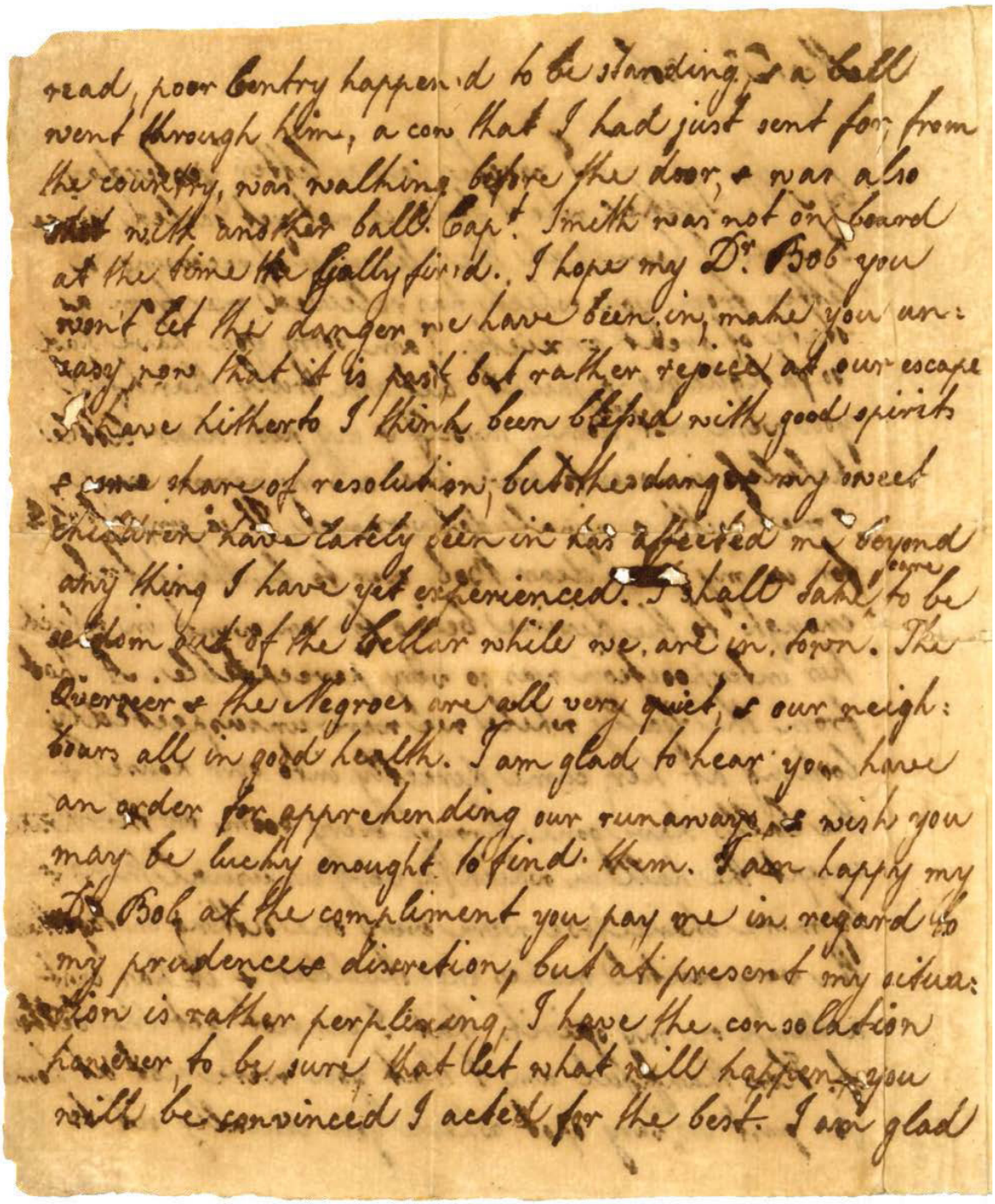


My D. Bob,

I wrote you a letter yesterday by Mr. Tucker who I find is not yet sailed, since I wrote I have had the pleasure of receiving a letter from you which has relieved me from a state of great anxiety. I am sorry you have had so fatiguieing a jaunt, but am truly thankful you were not at home, myself & my poor dear little helpless innocents have had a very narrow escape & met with a signal deliverance. It is impossible for us my dear Bob, ever to be thankful enough to the divine being for an event in which his interposition was so very perceptible. A shot from the Galley while we were unsuspectedly looking at her, came directly into our house, & the balls have gone through every room in the house except the hall in which is a very unusual thing & by mere chance we were every one sitting in together. The very recital makes me shudder, & it has cast a damp on my spirits that I cannot get the better of. How thankful am I that you were not at home for just in the very spot where you usually sit to

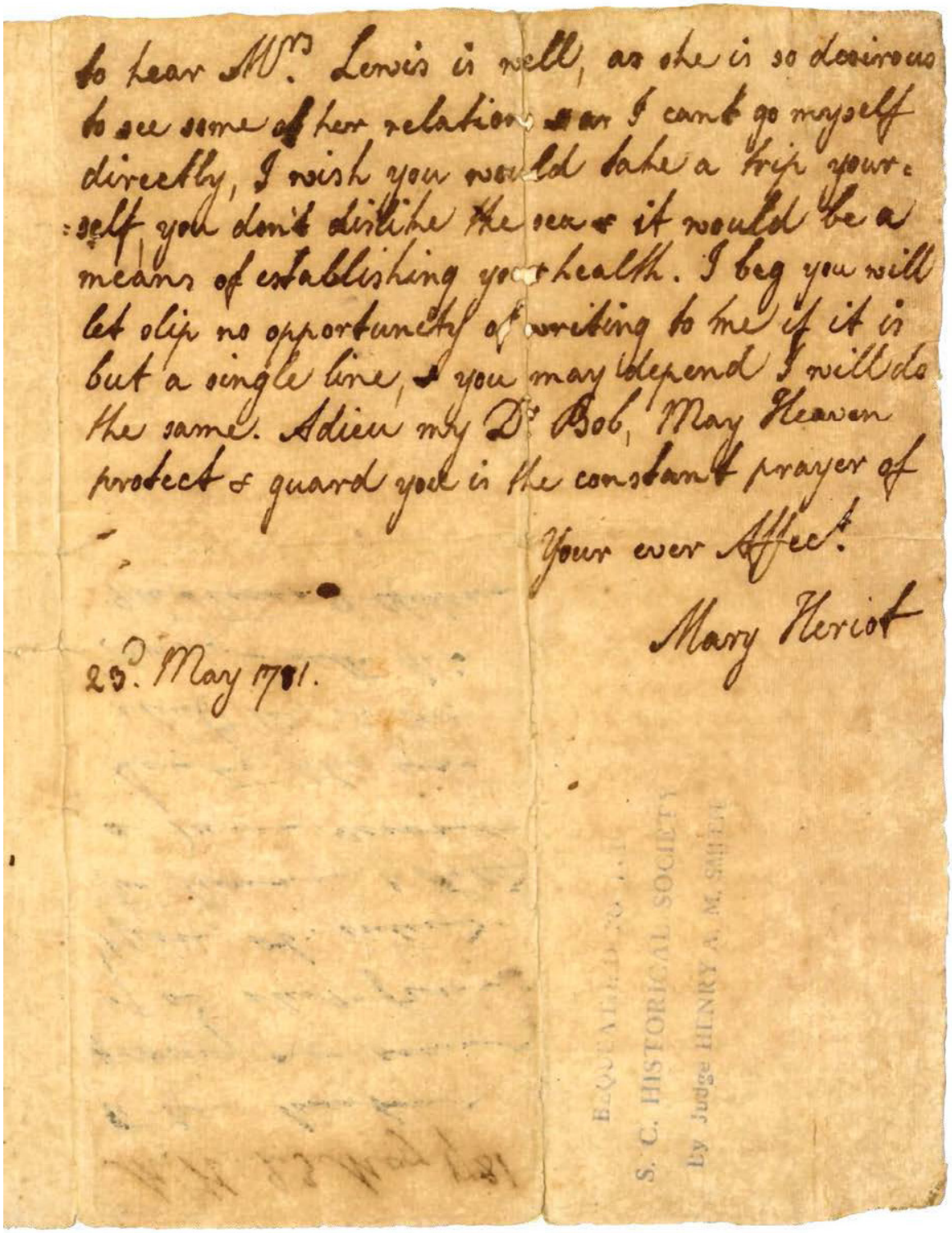
*Lowcountry Digital Library, College of Charleston Libraries*
*https://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/292335*

## *Mary Heriot to Robert Heriot, May 23, 1781, p. 2*



read, poor Gentry happened to be standing & a ball
went through him, a cow that I had just sent for from
the country, was walking before the door, & was also
killed with another ball. Capt. Smith was not on board
at the time the Galley fired. I hope my Dr. Bob you
won't let the danger we have been in, make you un-
easy now that it is past but rather rejoice at our escape
We have hitherto I think been blessed with good spirits
& some share of resolution, but the danger my sweet
Children have lately been in has affected me beyond
any thing I have yet experienced. I shall take care to be
seldom out of the Cellar while we are in town. The
Overseer & the Negroes are all very quiet, & our neigh-
bours all in good health. I am glad to hear you have
an order for apprehending our runaways & wish you
may be lucky enought to find them. I am happy my
Dr. Bob at the compliment you pay me in regard to
my prudence & discretion, but at present my situa-
tion is rather perplexing. I have the consolation
however to be sure that let what will happen you
will be convinced I acted for the best. I am glad

## *Mary Heriot to Robert Heriot, May 23, 1781, p. 3*



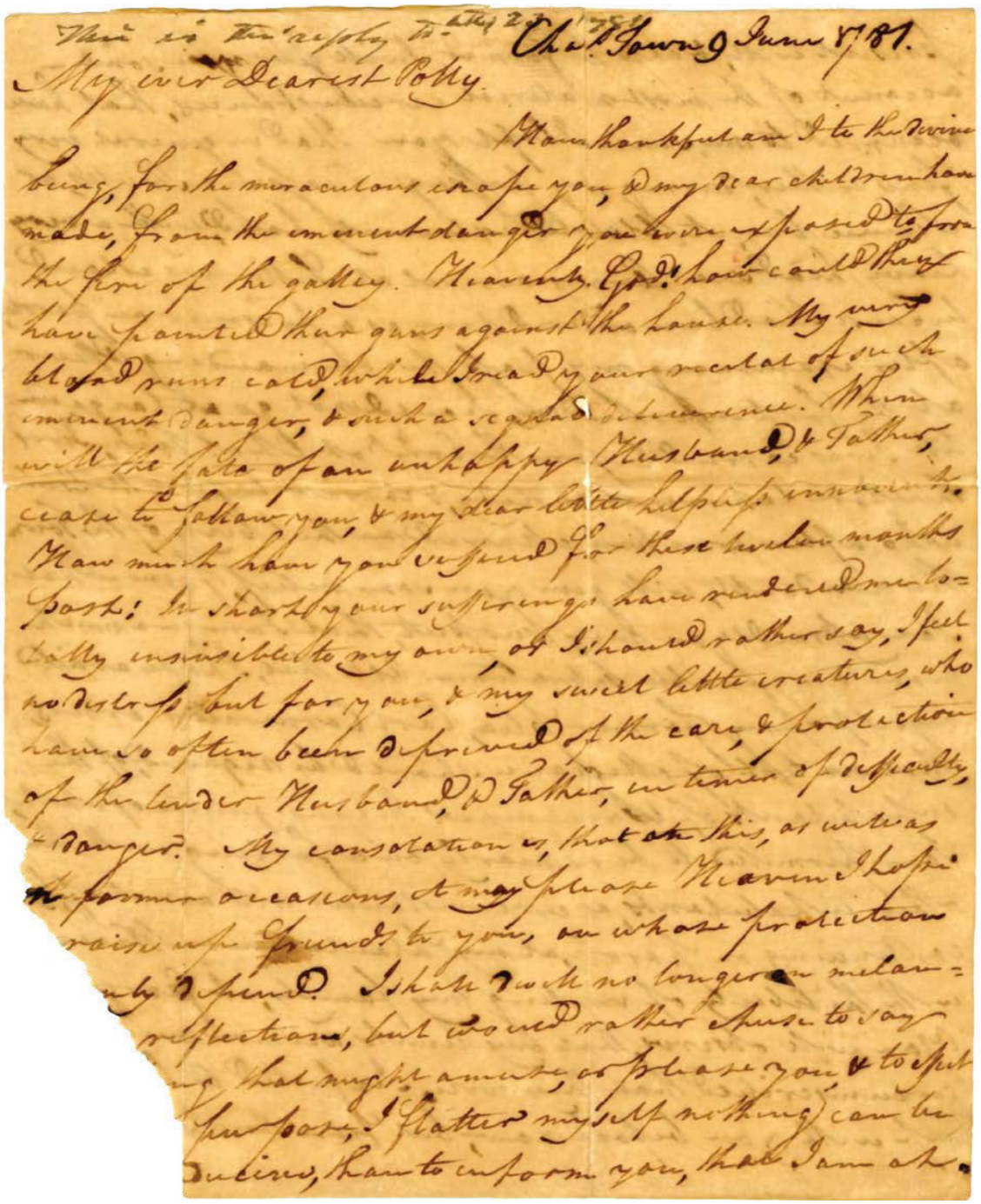
to hear Mrs. Lewis is well, as she is so desirous to see some of her relations as I cant go myself directly, I wish you would take a trip yourself you don't dislike the sea it would be a means of establishing your health. I beg you will let slip no opportunity of writing to me if it is but a single line, & you may depend I will do the same. Adieu my D.r Bob, May Heaven protect & guard you is the constant prayer of

Your ever Affec.t

Mary Heriot

23.d May 1781.

## *Robert Heriot to Mary Heriot, June 9, 1781*



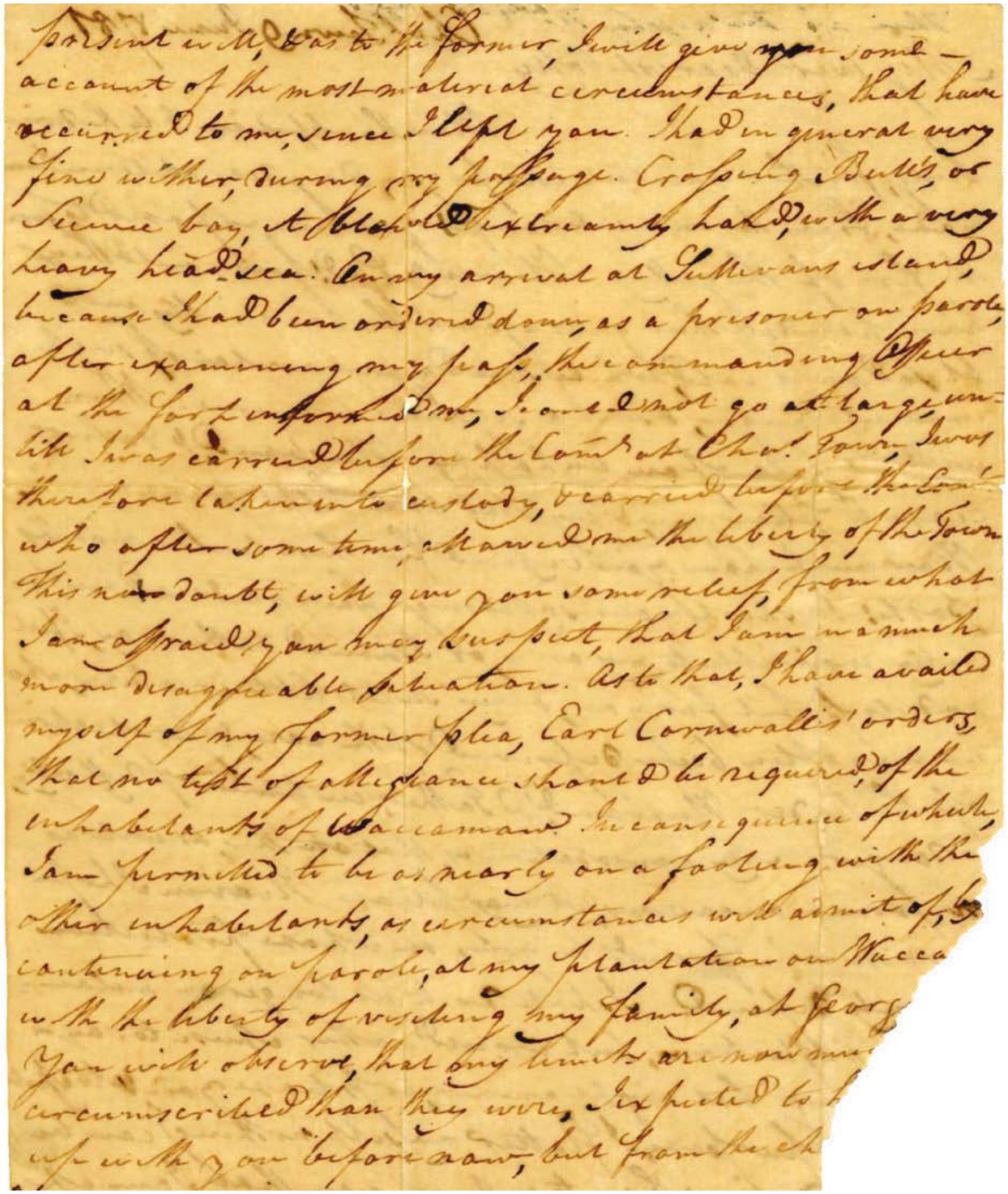
This is the reply to [illegible] Chas Town 9 June 1781.

My ever Dearest Polly.

How thankful am I to the divine
being, for the miraculous escape you, & my dear children have
made, from the imminent danger you have exposed to from
the fire of the galley. Heavenly God! how could they
have pointed their guns against the land. My very
blood runs cold, while I read your recital of such
imminent danger, & such a regardless deliverance. What
will be the fate of an unhappy Husband, & Father,
cease to [illegible] you, & my dear little Lilliputs unconscious
How much have you suffered for these twelve months
past! In short your sufferings have rendered me to=
tally insensible to my own, or I should rather say, I feel
no distress but for you, & my sweet little creatures, who
have so often been deprived of the care & protection
of the tender Husband, & Father, in times of peculiar
danger. My consolation is, that on this, as on the
former occasions, it may please Heaven I hope
raise up friends to you, on whose protection
only I depend. I shall not be longer on melan=
reflections, but would rather chuse to say
something that might amuse, or please you & to suit
purpose, I flatter myself nothing can be
[illegible] than to inform you, that I am at

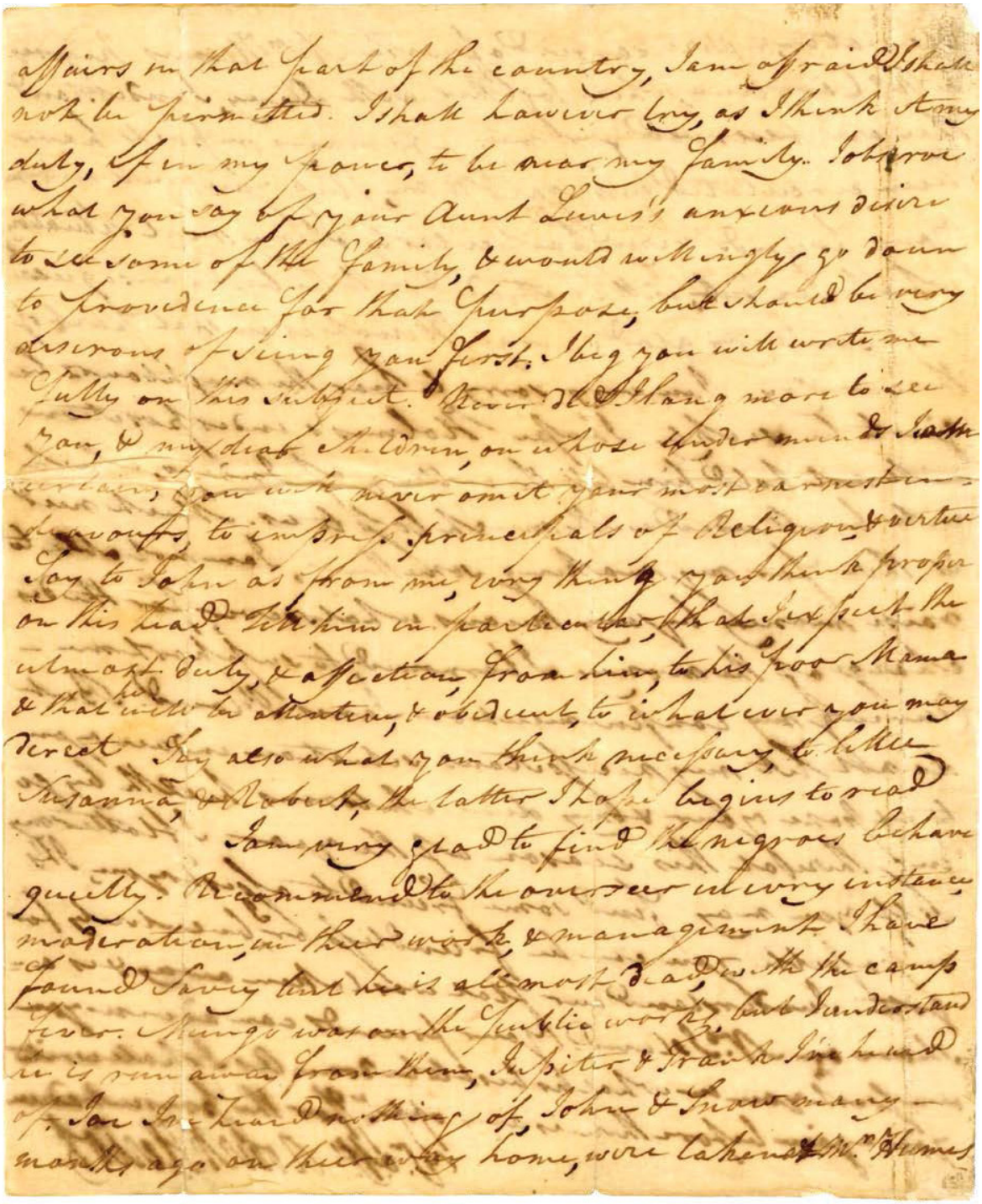
*Lowcountry Digital Library, College of Charleston Libraries*
*https://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/292336*

## *Robert Heriot to Mary Heriot, June 9, 1781, p. 2*



present will, but to the former, I will give you some
account of the most material circumstances, that have
occurred to me, since I left you. Had in general very
fine weather, during my passage. Crossing Bulls, or
Saune bay, at Black Pt extreamly hard, with a very
heavy head sea. On my arrival at Sullevans island,
became I had been ordered down as a prisoner on parole,
after examining my pass, the commanding Officer
at the fort informed me, I could not go at large, un-
till I was carried before the Comd.t at Chas. Town, I was
therefore taken into custody, & carried before the Com.t
who after some time, shewed me the liberty of the Town
This no doubt, will give you some relief, from what
I am afraid, you may suspect, that I am in a much
more disagreable situation. As to that, I have availed
myself of my former plea, Earl Cornwallis' orders,
that no test of allegiance should be required of the
inhabitants of Waccamaw. In consequence of which,
I am permitted to be on a footing with the
other inhabitants, as circumstances will admit of, I
continuing on parole, at my plantation on Wacca
with the liberty of visiting my family, at Georg
You will observe, that my limits are now mu
circumscribed than they were, I expected to
up with you before now, but from the

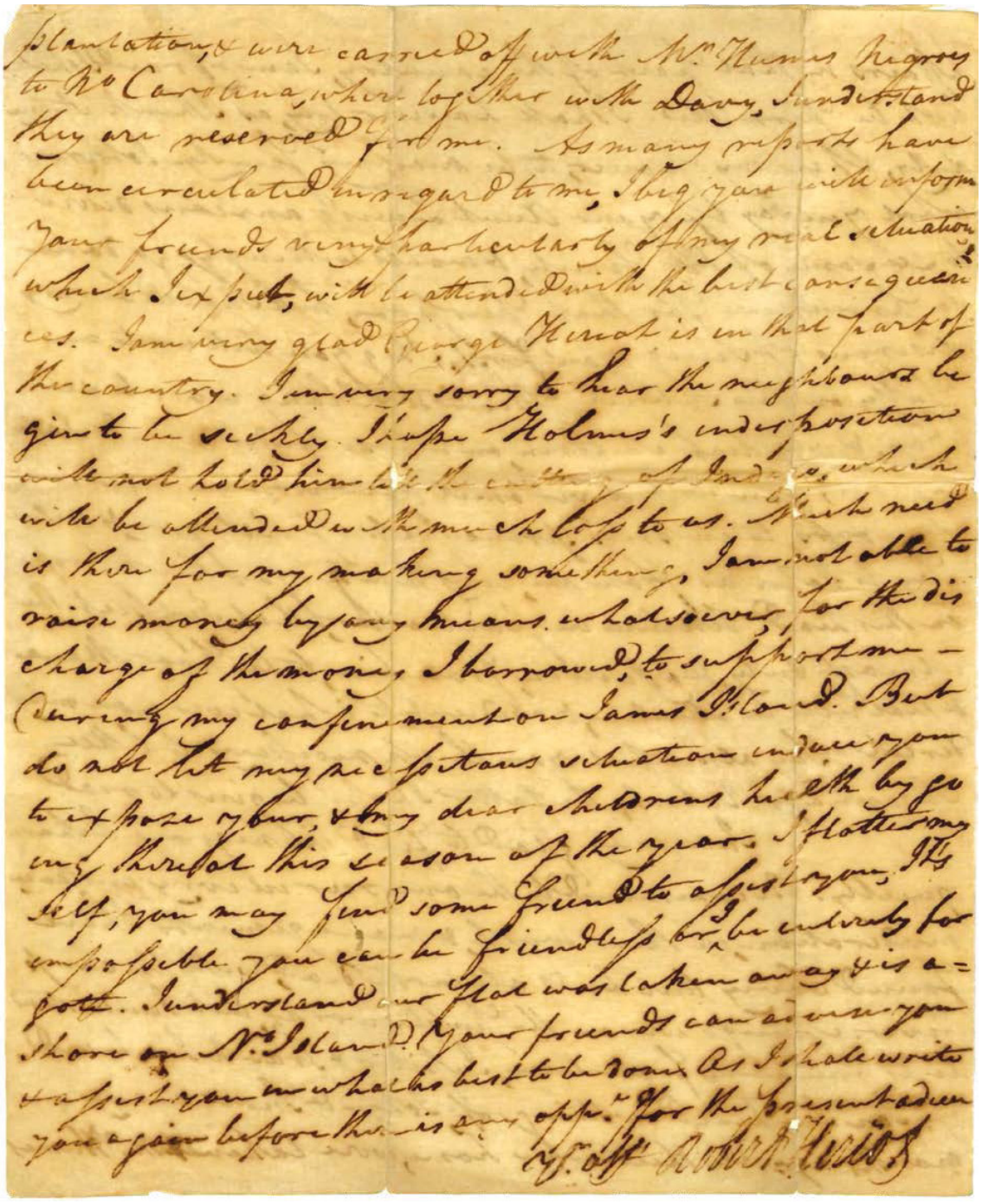
## *Robert Heriot to Mary Heriot, June 9, 1781, p. 3*



affairs in that part of the country, I am afraid I shall not be permitted. I shall however try, as I think it my duty, & for my Honor, to be near my family. I observe what you say of your Aunt Lewis's anxious desire to see some of the family, & would willingly go down to Providence for that purpose, but should be very desirous of seeing you first. Beg you will write me fully on this subject. Never did I long more to see you, & my dear Children, on whose understanding & Heart certain, you will never omit your most earnest endeavours to implant principals of Religion & virtue. Say to John as from me, every thing you think proper on this head. Tell him in particular, that as I expect the utmost duty, & affection from him to his poor Mama & that he will be attentive, & obedient to whatever you may direct. Say also what you think necessary, to Miss Susanna, & Robert, the latter I hope begins to read

I am very glad to find the negroes behave quietly. Recommend to the overseer in every instance moderation, in their work, & management. I have found Savey that he is almost Deaf, & the camp fever. Nanny was on the Public work, but I understand he is run away from them, Jupiter & Frank I've heard of. Jos. I've heard nothing of, John & Isaac many months ago on their way home, were taken at Mr. Hames

## *Robert Heriot to Mary Heriot, June 9, 1781, p. 4*



plantations were carried off with Mr Thomas Negroes to N° Carolina, where by Ther with Davy, Sundrys and they are reserved for me. As many reports have been circulated in regard to me, I beg you will inform your friends very particularly of my real situation, which I expect, with be attended with the best consequences. I am very glad George Heriot is in that part of the country. I am very sorry to hear the neighbours begin to be sickly. I hope Holmes's indisposition will not hold him till the autumn of Indies which will be attended with much loss to us. Such need is there for my making exertions, I am not able to raise money by any means whatsoever, for the discharge of the money I borrowed to support me — during my confinement on James Island. But do not let my precipitous situation induce you to expose your & my dear Children's health by going that at this season of the year. I flatter myself, you may find some friends to assist you. If impossible you can be friendless or be entirely forgotten. I understand our Plate was taken away & is a= shore on N° Island. Your friends can advise you what is best to be done. As I shall write by post you in which the best to be done. As I shall write you again before the is an opp.ty for the present adieu

Yrs. affe Robt. Heriot

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A great many people over many years have aided this project beginning with my uncle, Hugh T. Harrington, in 1985. In the years since, I have been given help in many ways.

William Glasgow Thompson provided inspiration, incentive and a goal. I am grateful to historian Jim Piecuch who kindly offered to provide the foreword and extensive historical advice. My friend, novelist and historian James N. Littlefield, offered great insights and helpful suggestions. Historian Mary Boyd reviewed an early draft of the book. Historian John L. Smith, Jr., took time away from a huge project of his own to help with the Heriot project. Joan H. Clayton has been a constant source of encouragement, especially during difficult times. Emily Iland provided expert family information. Ray Harriot and James Heriot supplied a wealth of Heriot knowledge.

Palmer Clarkson Hamilton contributed his privately published Heriot history and genealogy circa 2004. Historian Daniel Tortora provided expert historical assistance and answered a great many questions along the way. Experts Mauriel Joslyn, Jane Gormley and Mary Reiss offered insights that were beyond my ken. Shirley I. Tallon was a constant supporter.

Many thanks to Vally M. Sharpe whose editing skills brought order out of chaos. My friend, the incomparable historian, Charles Baxley encouraged me to pursue publication and provided help when it was most needed. I am exceedingly grateful to Molly Fortune, executive director of the South Carolina 250th Commission, who has given Robert and Mary Heriot's story opportunity to once again see the light of day—and, in a small way, tell their story.

At the darkest hour the South Carolina Militia including Thomas Persons, Wesley Herndon and others members of the board of the South American Revolution Trust (SCART) came to the rescue. I thank each of you. Support the Trust at www.sc-art.org.

Hugh T. Harrington

September 2, 2025

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Hugh T. Harrington is an independent researcher and author and the 4th great-grandson of Mary and Robert Heriot. He is co-founder and a past editor of the Journal of the American Revolution. His articles have appeared in The Journal of Military History, Georgia Historical Quarterly, America's Civil War, Journal of the American Revolution, and Over the Front.

He and his wife Sue live in Gainesville, Georgia.

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