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Contents

Figure 1. Royal Governor's chair, Charleston, South Carolina, 1756-1758, attributed to the firm of Elfe and Hutchinson. Mahogany with sweet gum blocks, HOA 53⅜", WOA 37⅝", Seat height 25". MESDA research file S-8817.

The Royal Governor's Chair: Evidence of the Furnishing of South Carolina's First State House

BRADFORD L. RAUSCHENBERG

On June 22, 1753, James Glen, the Royal Governor of South Carolina, laid the cornerstone of the colony's first State House at a site on Meeting Street in Charleston. By March 25, 1756, both construction and the furnishing of the building were advanced enough for the Governor, his Council, and the Commons House of Assembly to move into the structure. It is evident from the surviving records kept by these august bodies that they had occupied an unfinished building, since construction and furnishing of the State House was still in progress even as late as 1768. Twenty years later, in 1788, the building was consumed in flames. Only the records, the ceremonial mace, and the Royal Governor's chair were saved.

In the collection of the South Caroliniana Library in Columbia, South Carolina, is an armchair made for the Royal Governor's ceremonial use in the first State House (Fig. 1). The acquisition file in the library reveals an interesting history of this chair.[1] There is a letter dated July 1856, to Mr. McMaster, the librarian, from William C. Preston (1794-1860), a retired South Carolina Senator, regarding the gift of this chair: "Dear Sir: Seeing that you have thought proper to place a cast of my bust in the library, . . . I also give to the library a huge mutilated mahogany chair, the tradition in regard to which is that it was the *quasi* throne of the Colonial governors of our State."[2] (Fig. 2). Is this date of 1856 a coincidence in that it was exactly one hundred years earlier that the first State House was occupied? Could it be that Preston knew more than was written in his onepage letter? In 1856 there may have been people alive who remembered the chair in use in the Charleston State House, adding strength to the "tradition" of the chair having been the ". . . *quasi* throne of the Colonial governors . . ."

Just before the centennial celebration of the South Carolina College (University of South Carolina) in January, 1905, the ". . . trustees appointed a committee to restore the dilapidated chippendale mahogany State Chair, . . ." (Fig. 2). The restor-

Figure 2. The Royal Governor's chair as it appeared in the 1903 work The Old Furniture Book *by N. Hudson Moore. This view shows the original horsehair seating, fringe, and upholstery nails.*

ation was prompted by a need for a chair for use by the University's president during the 1905 celebration.[3] The restoration of the chair is discussed in an April 2, 1913 statement written by J. W. Babcock, a member of the restoration committee: "The mahogany to supply the missing parts was obtained from an old four-posted bedstead. The carving was done by Mr. [Thomas D.] Murtiashaw, a clerk in Ehrlich's shoe-store, who was self-taught. The cabinet work was (poorly) done by Mr. T. E. Sheely, a cabinetmaker of Columbia." A ". . . committee supervised the work . . . to see that the craftsmen restored or duplicated without any attempt to beautify or improve upon the grand original."[4] A more detailed account of Mr. Murtiashaw

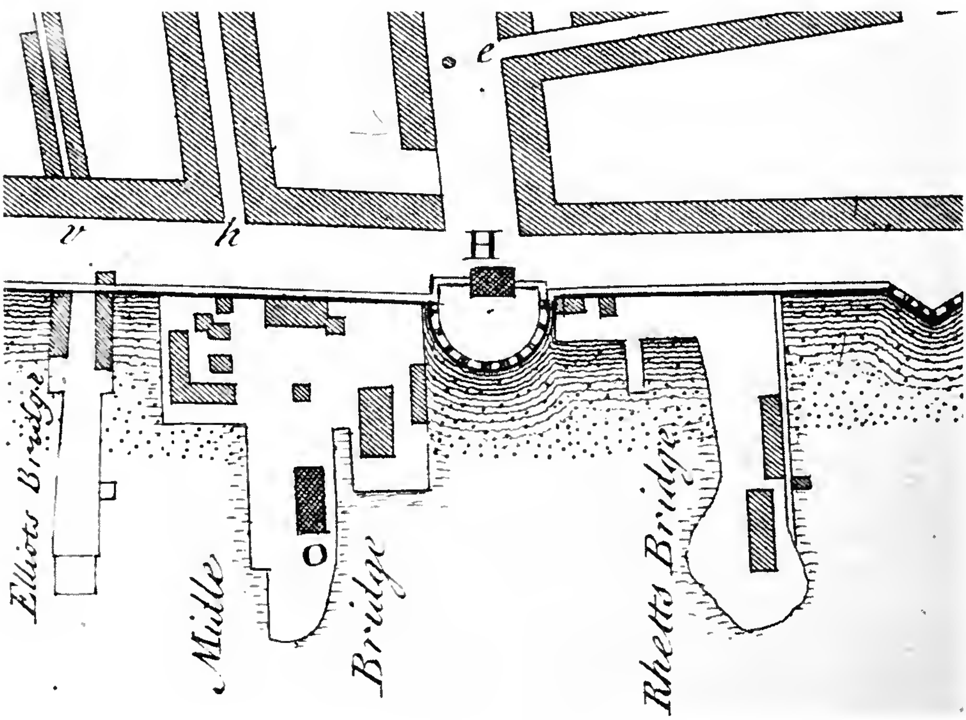

Figure 3. A detail from The Ichnography of Charles-Town at High Water *by B. Roberts and W. H. Toms, June 9, 1739. The building labelled "H" is described in the legend as "The Council Chamber above & Guard House below." MESDA accession 2226.*

appeared in *The State,* March 14, 1926, as an obituary notice. This article mentions his role in the "restoration" and provides a very brief history of the chair.[5] In 1970, the chair again became the center of attention; it was placed on exhibition for the South Carolina Tricentennial at the Old Town Plantation Tricentennial Pavillion in Charleston. After this, it again returned to the Caroliniania Library. From 1856 to the present, then, the chair has carried an interesting tradition of having been the

Royal Governor's chair. To verify this, an investigation into contemporary documents concerning the construction and furnishing of the first State House was necessary. The results of this research must be discussed before further analysis of the chair is made.

On June 7, 1712, the General Assembly ratified an act ". . . for building a convenient State House for the holding of the General Assemblies, Courts of Justice, and other public uses." This act was an early attempt to provide enabling legislation for the erection of a State House, but a controversy over the source of the funds caused the construction to be cancelled.[6] On March 20, 1718/19, the General Assembly again passed an act for construction of a State House, and the project was again dropped, due to lack of interest on the part of Governor Robert Johnson and the Lords Proprietor.[7]

Beginning with 1670, the year in which Charles Town was settled, the executive bodies had rented space to hold their functions.[8] The first visual representation of a structure used for such official purposes is a building recorded in the engraving, *The Ichnography of Charles Town at High Water* [sic], published June 9, 1739, by Bishop Roberts and W. H. Toms, London; the building is identified as "The Council Chamber above & Guard House below."[9] (Fig. 3). A companion engraving en-

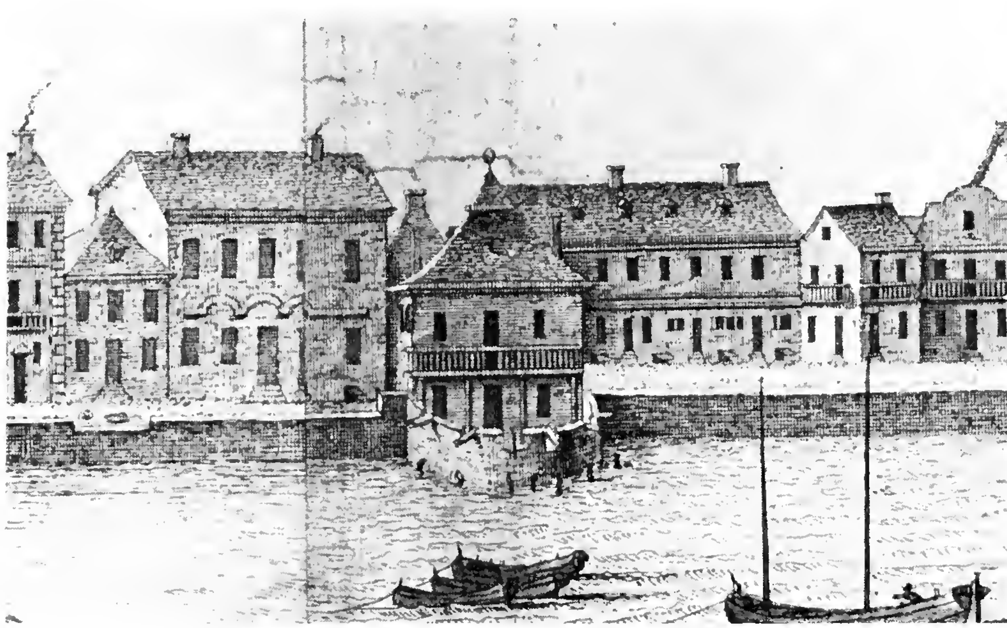

Figure 4. Detail from Prospect of Charles-Town *by B. Roberts and W. H. Toms, June 9, 1740. The Council Chamber was located in the building behind the bastion shown in the center of this detail. Photograph courtesy Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.*

titled *Prospect of Charles-Town* shows the building ("C"), located directly behind the central basion, as seen from the Cooper River (Fig. 4).[10]

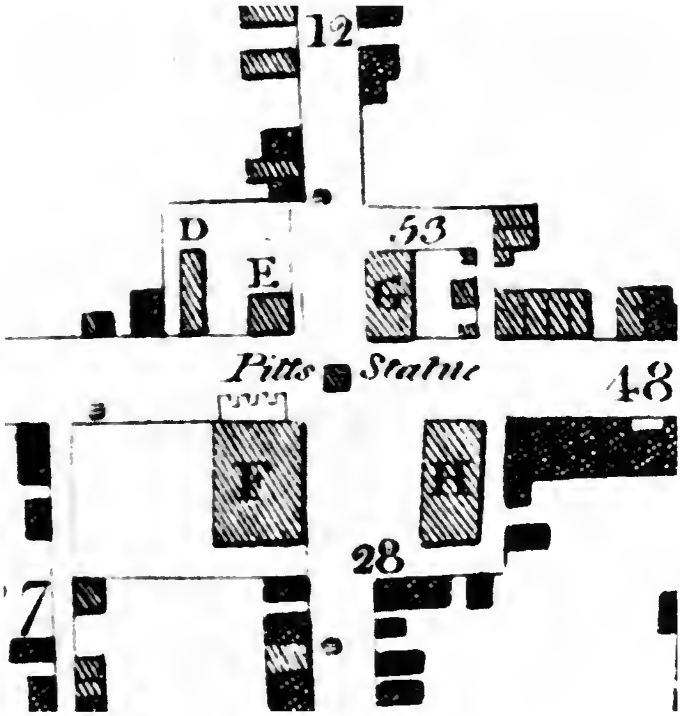

Figure 5. Detail from Ichnography of Charlestown, *published in 1790 from a survey taken by Edward Petrie August 2, 1788, six months after the fire which destroyed the State House. Number 53 is "State House Square at Broad St.," "G" is listed as "Formerly State House now Court-House & C." Photograph courtesy the Print Division, Library of Congress.*

On January 29, 1751, the need for a State House finally developed into definitive action. A committee of the Commons House of Assembly was appointed to investigate the possibility of financing the construction of a State House by means of appropriating £2,000 annually from the £8,743 raised each year as an extra tax on spirits, sugar and molasses.[11] On June 14, 1751, section 35 of the General Duty Act allocated £2,500 annually for the construction of the State House.[12] This funding was to be provided over a ten-year period. A notice in *The South Carolina Gazettte* on June 24, 1751, announced that bids were being accepted for building materials for the project.[13] Thus, everything was underway, or so it was thought, until a Commons House of Assembly meeting on March 11, 1752, announced that the site at the ". . . North-West corner of the Market Square . . ." [had to be changed because] ". . . the Ground is so loose and full of Quick-Sands . . ."[14] On March

13, a new site was selected on ". . . Meeting Street with the Center thereof fronting the South Prospect of the said street and the front to extend twenty feet on Broad Street including the Portico." (Fig. 5).[15]

With the new site selected, funds appropriated, and construction underway, Royal Governor James Glen (1738-1756) laid the cornerstone on June 22, 1753. *The South Carolina Gazette* for June 2, 1753 carried an account of the ceremony: "On Thursday the 22nd of June (being also the Day of His Majesty's happy Accession to the throne, when he entered into the 27th Year of His Reign) the cornerstone of OUR STATE HOUSE, was laid, by His Excellency the Governor, and a Sum of Money thereon: After him, the several Members of His Majesty's Council and the Assembly, the Commissioners, and other Gentlemen, laid each a Brick in the proper Manner; and then they all proceeded to Mr. Gordon's where, after Dinner, Toasts suitable to the Day and Occasion were drunk."[16]

For the next three years construction continued, so that by March 12, 1756, the Commons House of Assembly was able to record that ". . . this House will remove from the Place where it now sits into the State House on the Twenty fifth of this Instant." The next entry in the Commons House Journal is the first mention of furnishing the rooms: "Ordered, that a Commee [sic] be appointed to provide such Furniture as will be necessary for the service of this House to be placed in such Rooms in the State House as shall be appropriated to the use of this House: And it is referred to Mr. Henry Middleton, Mr. Raffray, Mr. Stoutenburg, Mr. Grame, Mr. Tho. Middleton, Mr. Manigault, and Mr. Pinckney."[17]

This message was forwarded to Governor William Henry Lyttleton (1756-1760) and his Council by the Upper House of Assembly. The reply from the Council was that "His Excellency the Governor having referred to us the consideration of your Message relating to the Furniture of some Rooms in the State House, We acquaint you that we have appointed a Committee to consider what will be suitable and proper for that purpose, and desire you [your committee] to join and assist our Committee therein. Our Committee are the Honorable William Bull, William Wragg, George Saxby, James Michie, and Othniel Beale Esqs."[18]

On March 13, 1756, the Assembly resolved to ". . . provide for defraying the Expence of such Furniture as his Exty. The

Governor & His Majty's Council shall think fit to order for the use of the New Council Chamber in the State House."[19] Also on the same day they resolved to ". . . acquaint your Excy & Hon. that we have resolved to provide for defraying the expence of such Furniture as you shall think fit to order for the use said [Council Chamber] Rooms."[20] This is an indication that the Royal Governor had an opportunity to express his taste in furniture to the two committees. Later on March 13, the *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly* records an order that ". . . an Instruction be given to the Commee [sic] who were appointed to provide furniture for the Rooms to be appropriated to the Use of this House in the State House to send for a Mace, Robes for the Speaker and a Gown for the Clerk."[21] On March 25, 1756, the Assembly notified the Governor that they had moved into the State House.[22] March 13, 1756, then, marked the day on which the order was placed for the actual furniture for the Council Chamber and other rooms, though no mention was made of who the order was to be placed with.

For a year and a half no further mention was recorded of furnishing the State House rooms. On February 10, 1758, John Murray, acting Secretary of South Carolina, registered a complaint to the Commons House of Assembly because of the condition of his office:

> That by a Act passed in this year 1751 the Legislative provided the sum of £2500 to be Employed in Building a State House . . . [this] . . . is partly finished and it having been intimated to the Memoralist by the Commissioners that the apartments intended for the Secretarys Office were prepared in the best manner which the Funds would admit of, He Immediately moved all the Records and other Writings into the same, But soon found that it was neither fitted up in so decent or Commodious a Manner as an Office of such Consequence ought to be, and as the Reputation of the Province and the Safety of the Writings requires, for although the Rooms are in themselves sufficiently Large and Spacious yet there is not one Press or Closet for the Records in the Whole, And to supply that Defect the old Presses which besides being too small to contain the Records bear no proportion to the Rooms and are almost Rotten are now made use of Neither is the Office provided with any

> Chairs three old ones which were all the Memoralist found in it being quite decayed the Desks too are not very Proper and upon the whole so many things absolutely necessary are wanting . . . it is hoped [the House] will take . . . [it] . . . into Consideration.

In good bureaucratic fashion, this was passed on to a committee so that it could ". . . examine the matter . . ."[23]

The effect of this strong report was further revealed on March 2, 1758, when ". . . the Memoralist shewed the commee [sic] three wooden presses two wooden desks & three chairs which He informed them he Received with the Books and Papers of the Office & looks on them as belonging to the Public."[24] This demonstration prompted a recommendation ". . . that another Press may be allowed at the charge of the public . . . it is unnecessary to put the public to further expence for chairs."[25] To this the Assembly resolved ". . . that this House will provide for defraying the expence of putting up a Cypress Press in the Secretary's office for holdings such part of the Records in the said office as in the other Presses will not contain and that the commissioners for building the State House do direct such Presses to be put up."[26]

This directive was undoubtedly carried out, since a few months later, on January 19, 1759, the *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly* recorded "An account of Elf and Hutchinson for making a Book Case for the Use of the Secretary's Office & c. 22^d November 1758 One Hundred Pounds 17/6 . . . £100:17:6."[27] This expense did not please the House: "Elf and Hutchinson for a Press for the Secretary's Office & c^a amounting to £100:17:6 Yo^r Committee are of Opinion that the Press is extravagent and deduct of that Article £33:17:6, the Ballance £67:10 to be allowed."[28] This must have caused consternation on the part of Elfe and Hutchinson. The reason for their costly invoice may have lain in lack of direction by an overzealous furnishings committee who quite possibly had not set price limitations upon ordering.

On March 14, 1758 the *Journal* recorded the bill of "Elf & Hutchinson for Furniture for the Council Chamber am^o £728:2:6,"[29] fulfilling the March 13, 1756 order that the ". . . New Council Chamber . . ." was to have furniture made for its use. On April 21, 1758, this bill was recorded as "No. 389 An account of Elf & Hutchinson for Furniture for the Council

Chamber amounting to £728:2:6 were recommended to be allowed.''[30] This ''Furniture'' is further explained in Act #874 of the *1758 Statutes at Large of South Carolina* as ''Extraordinary charges — to Elf and Hutchinson, for chairs and tables for the Council Chamber £728:02:06.''[31] Evidently this costly bill was acceptable since no recorded argument was found in the course of research.

Of the Elfe and Hutchinson furnishings for the Secretary's office and the Council Chamber, unfortunately only the Royal Governor's chair from the Council Chamber survives. Though a contemporary description or invoice for this chair has not survived, it can be assumed that this is indeed the chair which Elfe and Hutchinson made. With this assumption, the partnership of Thomas Elfe and Thomas Hutchinson should be examined.

Thomas Elfe, the well-known cabinetmaker, was apparently established in the trade in Charleston by 1747. Since he was known to have been fifty-six at his death on November 28, 1775, the probable date of his birth was 1719. In 1747, then, he was twenty-eight. This is a mature age for a craftsman, so it would appear that he had either arrived in Charleston in 1747, or was relatively unknown in the city before that date. The latter seems unlikely. By the following year Elfe was already advertising for runaways and offering rental houses, both a sign of prosperity. In 1749 Elfe paid £300 for a mulatto. On January 7, 1751 Elfe announced that he had employed ''. . . a very good upholsterer from London . . .'' who worked ''. . . in the best and newest manner . . .'' and that the shop offered ''. . . all sorts of cabinet work done in the best manner, by the said Thomas Elfe.'' By 1751, then, Elfe was producing enough work to be able to expand his shop and hire an upholsterer.

By 1755 Elfe and Thomas Hutchinson had established a working relationship, since it is known that the partners supplied balusters for the steeple of St. Michael's Church. In 1756 they purchased a Negro boy from Robert Riston, a cabinetmaker, for £157. This is a strong suggestion that the child had received training in the cabinetmaking business. Then, in 1757 and 1758, they were given the commissions for the State House furnishings. The firm purchased town Lot 181 from Mary Bryan on April 17, 1758. St. Michael's Church later placed a further order of additional balusters, a pair of the sanctuary doors, an altar rail, and columns for the chancel. In 1763, they made a mahogany communion table for the same church. A suit was entered by Elfe and Hutchinson for charges against a carpenter on January 15, 1763, for a "half drawers" and six mahogany chairs. The partnership may have terminated in 1767, for in 1768 Elfe entered into partnership with John Fisher, investing £1000 in the new firm. Elfe's friendship with Hutchinson evidently didn't end with the close of the partnership, however, since it is known that Hutchinson was named as Thomas Elfe, Jr.'s godfather. When Elfe died in 1775, his will listed Hutchinson as an executor, and when Hutchinson died in 1782, his will devised most of his property to Thomas Elfe, Jr.

Though notations were made of an occasional payment for the construction of the State House, the records are silent regarding the furnishings. On May 6, 1760, the building committee reported that the cost of the State House to that date was £37,437:0:5 with £3,572:6:4 still due to major claims, and a small amount to minor claims, for a total of £41,323:15:3. An additional appropriation of £20,000 for the State House brought the total to £61,323:15:3.[32] With such an amount expended by 1760 for a public building, attention was certain to be drawn to the project, and someone compelled to describe what had been constructed. One such description was recorded in 1763 by Dr. George Milligan-Johnston, a Charleston physician:

> Near the center of the town is the State-House, a large commodious brick building; the south front is decorated with four 2/3 columns of the composite order, whose capitals are highly finished, supporting a large angular pediment and cornice; it consists of two stories besides the roof; on the lower one the court-room, the secretary's office and apartments for the house-keeper; on the upper story are two large handsome rooms; one is for the Governor and Council the other for the Representative of the people, with lobbies and rooms for their clerks: the rooms, called the Council-Chambers, appears rather crowded and disgusting, than ornamented and pleasing by the great profusion of carved work in it; in the upper part of the house or roof is a large room for the provincial armory: . . .[33]

Another interesting description of the State House was recorded May 27, 1765 when Pelatiah Webster was visiting

Charleston. He described "the State-House [as] a heavy building abt 120 by 40 feet. The Council Chamber is abt 40 feet square, decorated with many heavy pillars & much carving, rather superb than elegant. The assembly room is of ye same dimensions, but much plainer work. Tis convenient eno.h there are sundry public offices kept in small apartments below: there are two flights of stairs, one leading to the Council Chamber, the other to the Assembly room. Below stairs is a court house where the courts of pleas & pleas of ye crown are kept, but is yet unfinished."[34] From this description it may be seen that the structure was not complete. A specific complaint about the unfinished construction was soon heard. On July 16, 1765 William Bull reported to the House that "the frequent complaints of the Inconvenience felt . . . in the Court room in the State House . . . [where] . . . the Brick work . . . [was] . . . designed in such [a] manner, as that a covering of plaister is necessary . . . [the wall has] . . .suffered . . . [which has] . . . long remain[ed] unfinished . . . [it is] recommended [that] . . . a liberal provision for . . . finishing the building . . . suitable to the Honor of this Province of which it was intended to be, and is justly considered an Ornament."[35] Thus, from the two descriptions of the State House and the above statement regarding the interior wall surface, one assumes that the exterior of the State House was finished.

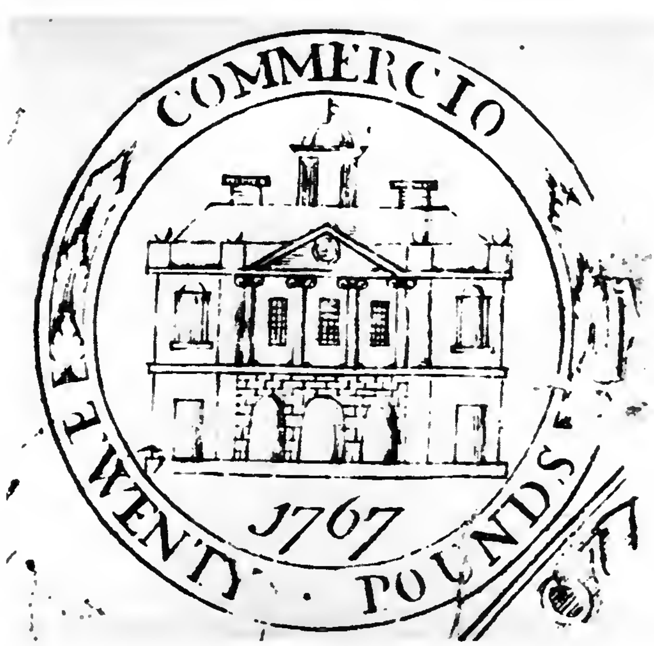

Figure 6. Detail of a twenty pound Public Order note of 1767, showing an engraved representation of the State House in Charleston. Photograph courtesy the South Carolina Historical Society.

On April 18, 1767, an act was passed for the engraving of paper money for payment of duties and taxes. In the lower right corner of these £20 notes may be found the only known view of the State House (Fig. 6).[36] Needless to say, this view represents the State House in its completed form. It may indeed have been complete, for only ten months later the *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly* recorded a summation of work to be paid. The building committee recorded on February 23, 1768, a report " . . . to examine the accounts of the Workmen and others employed in finishing and compleating the State House; . . . which they find right, . . ." A list of workers and their labor for items such as brickwork, paving, and plastering then follows. Within this list are some interesting charges for interior work, such as a charge of £2,800 "to Wooten & Danbury, for carpenters work and materials . . . [in] finishing the Court Room and Passage in the State House."[37] Also in this account is a rather remarkable billing of ". . . David Stoddard, for New England Pine Plank for the Carver £55:17:19."[38] This entry is particularly revealing in that it is both the earliest mention of white pine from New England being imported into Charleston and also that it was going to be used for a specific purpose, carving. This is documentation of a carver's preference for white pine over the locally grown softwoods such as cypress and yellow pine. The carver in this case was Thomas Woodin, who rendered an account for ". . . carving 16 Corinthian Capitals for the Council Chamber £471:18 / deduct thereout £13:12 for a remainder of wood, balance £458:6: ."[39] This account, along with the others, may have been carried on the books for several years if we recall that in 1765 Pelatiah Webster had described the carving in the Council Chamber as ". . . rather superb than elegant."

This 1768 list may well reveal evidence of various degrees of both carvers and carving, a subject later discussed by Thomas Sheraton in his 1803 *Cabinet Dictionary*.[40] It seems apparent that Thomas Woodin may have been only a woodwork carver. This is more clearly revealed in a 1767 account with ". . . Nicholas Bernard, for the King's Arms in the Council Chamber £73:10: ."[41] Without knowing who Nicholas Bernard was, one might say that he painted the "King's Arms." However, that was not the case.

Nicholas Bernard was a master carver in Philadelphia, working with Martin Jugiez. In Philadelphia the firm of Bernard &

Jugiez operated a "Looking Glass Store" and advertised in 1763 "All sorts of carving in wood or stone, and Guilding, done in the Neatest Manner . . ."[42] On October 12, 1765, the *South Carolina Gazette* reveals a most interesting advertisement by Nicholas Bernard. He announces that

> he is just arrived in this Town, and has for sale, at a Back-Store in Gadsden's Alley, the following goods, viz. GILT and painted glasses, and dressing glasses of various sizes, a variety of neat figures and busts in plaister of Paris, with brackets for ditto, paper-machie for cilelings, the King's Coat-of-Arms carved in wood, suitable for a State House or Court-House, gerindoles, mahogany desks, china table, tea-tables and tea-chests, hanging pictures of the newest fashion, with sundry other articles . . ."[43]

The ". . . King's Coat-of-Arms . . ."listed in this advertisement was probably the one listed in the 1768 billing as part of the Council chamber carving, particularly since Bernard himself characterized the work as "suitable for a State House." Evidently the committee wanted the best. At this period, Philadelphia carving certainly represented the best; existing furniture provides evidence of that today.

The firm of Bernard and Jugiez enjoyed what must have been a substantial trade outside Philadelphia. In 1770 they were chosen by Isaac Zane, Jr., to carve a magnificent fireback pattern in the form of a Fairfax coat of arms. The quality of the carving may be seen in the surviving firebacks cast by Zane's Marlboro Furnace in the upper Shenandoah Valley.[44] Unfortunately, the King's coat of arms for the Council Chamber does not survive, but it must have possessed the same vitality and strength seen today in the Marlboro firebacks. The depth of carving of the King's arms may have been greater, since the device was not intended as a casting pattern, but rather as a symbol.

By 1768, the State House was completed, and was not discussed in the records again until 1772. In that year William Dillwyn visited Charleston and was given a tour of the city. Unfortunately, his description of Pitts' statue was more complete than that which he gave of the State House. His greatest impression was that he ". . . saw Lord Cha: Greville Montague sitting in Council . . ."[45] This is the closest Dillwyn came to describing the chair.

At the end of 1782, the British troops left Charleston, and in 1783 South Carolina began its existence as a state. The transition from colonial to state government that occurred within the State House is beyond the scope of this study. It should be noted, however, that on February 17,1785, the *Journals of the Senate* reveal that a Committee was selected to order ". . . a proper Chair and Gown, be provided for Mr. President . . ." and that ". . . the same Committee be instructed to procure one dozen Mahogany Armed Chairs for the use of the Members of the House."[46] Further mention of this order was not located, nor was there reason found for the chairs having been ordered.

This is the last mention of the State House furnishings found. On Tuesday evening, February 5, 1788, the noble edifice was destroyed by fire. Two days later the *Gazette* described the grim details:

> On Tuesday evening a fire was discovered in the Senate-room of the State House, which, in a few hours, reduced that building to a pile of ruins. The conflagration commenced by the intense heat of the fire, catching a part of the wainscoting, which projected over the bricks, above the fire place. Several persons rushed into the room, and could have easily extinguished the fire if they had been readily supplied with water. But after this necessary repellent arrived in sufficient quantity, the flames ascended into the upper story, and there formed a crown of ruins over the whole building. Happily for the adjacent houses, there was a very light wind, until nearly the fury of the fire was spent. The building was begun in 1753. The first stone thereof was laid by J. Glen, Esq., then Governor, on 22nd June, attended by the Council, the General Assembly, etc. The expense amounted to 59,127 pounds, sterling.[47]

On the same day, February 7, the *Columbian Herald* of Charleston reported a similar account: ". . . the fire [had been] discovered in the Senate Chamber . . . [there had not been] . . . any possibility of saving that elegant building. The papers, records & c. were all saved."[48] The news of the State House loss was also reported in Virginia and Maryland newspapers.[49] The fire had destroyed a building which had long been an elegant symbol of Charleston, representing the product of long and expensive construction. That the fire was slow in consuming the large structure, however, is evident in the fact that the records, ceremonial mace, and the Royal Governor's chair were rescued from the flames.

Years later, the artist Charles Fraser revealed an evidently remarkable memory in his 1854 *Reminiscences of Charleston.* He was only six years old in 1788, yet he wrote "Nor can I ever forget the consternation produced by the burning of the Old State House, which happened during the session of the Legislature . . ."[50] Further, he quotes the *Gazette* report of February 7, cited earlier. Undoubtedly, most of his "first hand knowledge" was from word-of-mouth accounts and the newspaper report. Evidently the entire structure was not destroyed, since Fraser goes further to say that repairing the State House was discussed by ". . . several opulent gentlemen in Charleston . . ." One of these gentlemen was apparently Judge William Drayton, who later designed the courthouse which was built on the foundations of the first State House. The new courthouse adapted the original State House floor plan, and a third floor was added.

The building was not reconstructed as a State House because of an act ratified by the General Assembly on March 22, 1786, appointing ". . . commissioners to purchase Land for the purpose of building a Town and for removing the Seat of Government thereto."[51] Construction on the new State House was begun immediately after passage of the act. The offices of government were moved from Charleston to Columbia in December, 1789, occupying the new structure.[52] The Columbia State House, like the one before it in Charleston, was long in construction; it was not completed until 1795.[53]

The history of the State House and the Royal Governor's chair having been examined, a physical evaluation of the latter is needed to understand its form from a stylistic viewpoint.

The chair (Fig. 1) visually suggests a function of ceremonialism. The topic of ceremonial chairs is not unknown in furniture studies, for there have been recent evaluations of outstanding examples of both American and English provenance.[54] The ultimate form of a ceremonial chair is one which requires the use of a footstool. The Royal Governor's Chair from Charleston may well be the only American example to survive.[55] Evidence to support the use of a footstool with this chair may be seen in the unusual seat height, which is twenty-five inches; a more normal seating height in the eighteenth century averages seventeen inches. A height of twenty-five inches may be the standard dimension where the use of a footstool is intended, and the Williamsburg, Virginia Governor's Chair and the George III throne also share that same height at the seat. All three chairs require a footstool, and fortunately the footstool made for the throne of George III does survive.[56]

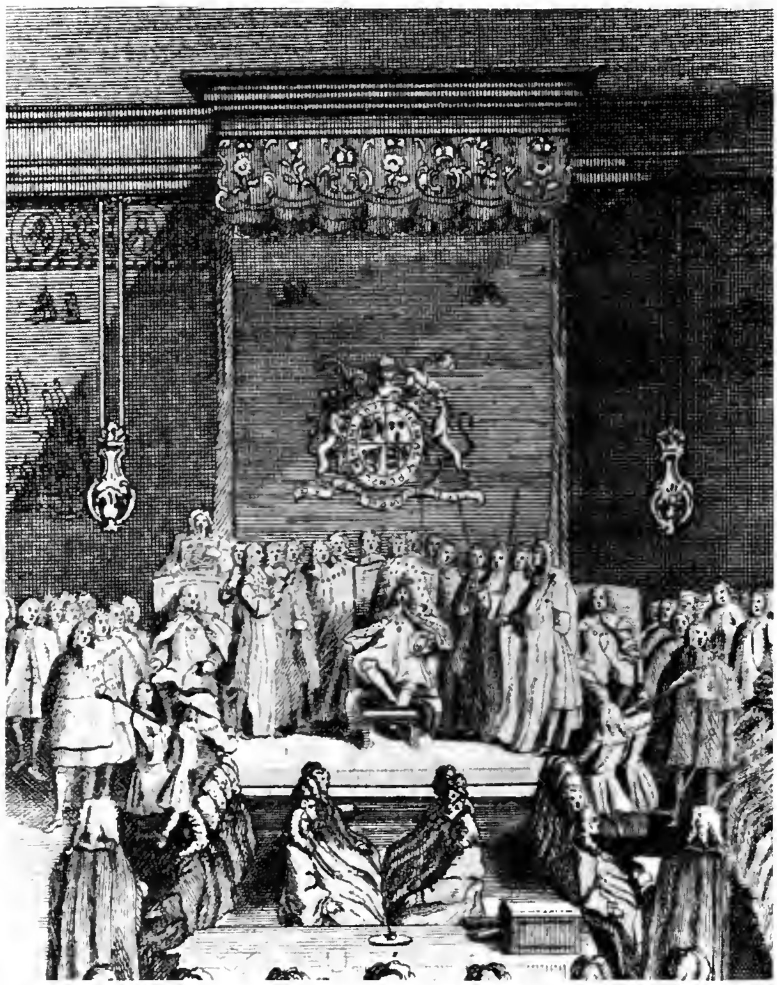

Figure 7. Detail of A View of the House of Peers, *engraved by B. Cole in 1755, showing the King in a ceremonial chair with a footstool; the Royal arms decorate the wall or a tapestry behind. Photograph courtesy Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.*

Pictorial evidence for a ceremonial chair with a footstool can be seen in the 1755 engraving of *A View of the House of Peers. The King Sitting on the throne, the Commons attending him at the end of the Session . . .* (Fig. 7).[57] This engraving shows the King in the center sitting in a higher chair than the other two on the dais. The King is depicted with one foot on his footstool, much the same way Henry Laurens is shown in a 1782 portrait by John Singleton Copley (Fig. 8), painted when Laurens was in London for the Paris peace negotiations.[58] In both of these examples an aura of ceremonialism is reflected, perhaps invoking a feeling for the atmosphere which must have prevailed in the Council Chamber in Charleston.

Figure 8. Henry Laurens, *by John Singleton Copley, 1782, showing a ceremonial chair with a footstool. Photograph courtesy the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.*

In the earlier discussion (p. 6 & 8) regarding the evidence of the furnishing of the State House, and especially the Council Chamber, the inclusive documentable dates of March 13, 1756, and March 14, 1758 were established for the order for furniture for the Council Chamber and the subsequent billing by Elfe and Hutchinson of £728:2:6 for the pieces. Based upon this evidence, the Royal Governor's Chair was undoubtedly made between 1756 and 1758. However, an evaluation of the chair must be made from a stylistic viewpoint either to support or refute this tight date range.

Figure 9a. Front view of a foot on the Royal Governor's chair.

Figure 9b. Side view of the foot.

The front feet of the chair (Fig. 9a) are of the hairy paw form, and represent the only surviving example of such a foot made in eighteenth century Charleston. The sculptural quality of the paw does not represent the ideal English example, but does exhibit defined knuckles, claws, and fetlock. The definition of the hair on the paw is somewhat näive, though when viewed from a normal distance, the knuckles have depth and make a bold statement. An interesting aspect of these paw feet is that they are not elevated by the typical ball but rather a cylin-

Figure 9c. Rear view of the foot.

drical base (Fig. 9b), which is an echo of the Baroque form "pad" feet on the rear legs. This cylindrical feature on all four of the feet parallels the common base or shoe of the pad normally found in Charleston furniture (Fig. 10).[59] An allowance on the cylinder for a projection to support the fetlock (Fig. 9b and c) is used on this paw foot. An interesting parallel exists between this foot and a ball-and-claw foot (Fig. 11) on a Charleston easy chair.[60] In profile, the two demonstrate the same sloping shape of the knuckles. When the paw feet are compared to the rather simple rear feet the ceremonial aspect of the chair is again evident. Most ceremonial chairs tend to follow a format wherein only the front feet are important, and the rear usually less formal and of an earlier period. The rear feet of some examples merely echo the front feet, and in some cases they are actually affixed to the platform.

The näive approach to carving is also carried through in the finishing of the legs. Along all four are seen scraper and/or spokeshave marks ¼" wide (Fig. 9b). These marks occurred during the final shaping of the leg, and were normally removed in order to present a smooth surface. The back stiles and the crest rail also exhibit these tool marks (Fig. 17).

From the round ankle up, the leg presents a slightly convex surface on the front, with the leading edge squared and a rear

Figure 10. Detail of a leg on a Charleston card table. MESDA accession 2976.

Figure 11. Detail of a leg on a Charleston easy chair. MESDA accession 2249.

surface that is oval in cross section. It is on the almost flat front surface of the legs that we encounter a näive approach again, this time in the carving (Fig. 12). An attempt is made to represent vines, grape leaves, and berries or grapes, elements which are typical of English furniture of the second quarter of the eighteenth century, but not in this combination. Usually, such grape leaves and grapes are found to be carved separately from the vine or stem with leaves, flowers, and nuts. Apparently this carver was a provincial craftsman, an apprentice, or a beginning journeyman, and certainly out of the mainstream of design.

Figure 12. Knee detail from the right leg of the Royal Governor's chair; the left bracket is replaced (directions indicated from a seated position).

The knee brackets have been replaced except for the side example on the right leg (Fig. 12). The knee and the original bracket exhibit a vine mysteriously appearing from underneath ruffling which ornaments an upward-turned, flat C-scroll. The edge of the brackets are bordered with C-scrolls, from which flow a meager attempt at leafage. The overall design and selection of elements used on the knees recall motifs in use during the George II styles of the 1730-50 period. When this leg is viewed in a context of 1756-58, it is ten to fifteen years out of style, and even when compared with normal mid-eighteenth century Charleston carving the elements are totally out of context in terms of design and competence of execution.

Original one-piece blocks of sweet gum (Liquidambar styraciflua) are attached to the rear of the knees, each affixed with three wrought nails (Fig. 13).[61] The blocks are cut to overlap the back and side of the knee, providing at the same time support for the two brackets. The blocks are shaped so that they are hidden when viewed from the side.

Figure 13. View of the interior blocking and rails of the Royal Governor's chair.

The four heavy mahogany rails forming the seat are one piece on the front and sides (Fig. 14), some 3⅝" thick; the inside of the front and side rails are roughly finished (Fig. 13). The inside top of the three rails is cut with a chamfer to reduce the wear on the seat webbing. The back rail is better finished than the others, though all the rails demonstrate a wasteful use of mahogany, which is not unusual in Charleston furniture.

The remarkable 1903 photograph of the chair, taken before restoration (Fig. 2), reveals the original horsehair seat, nailing,

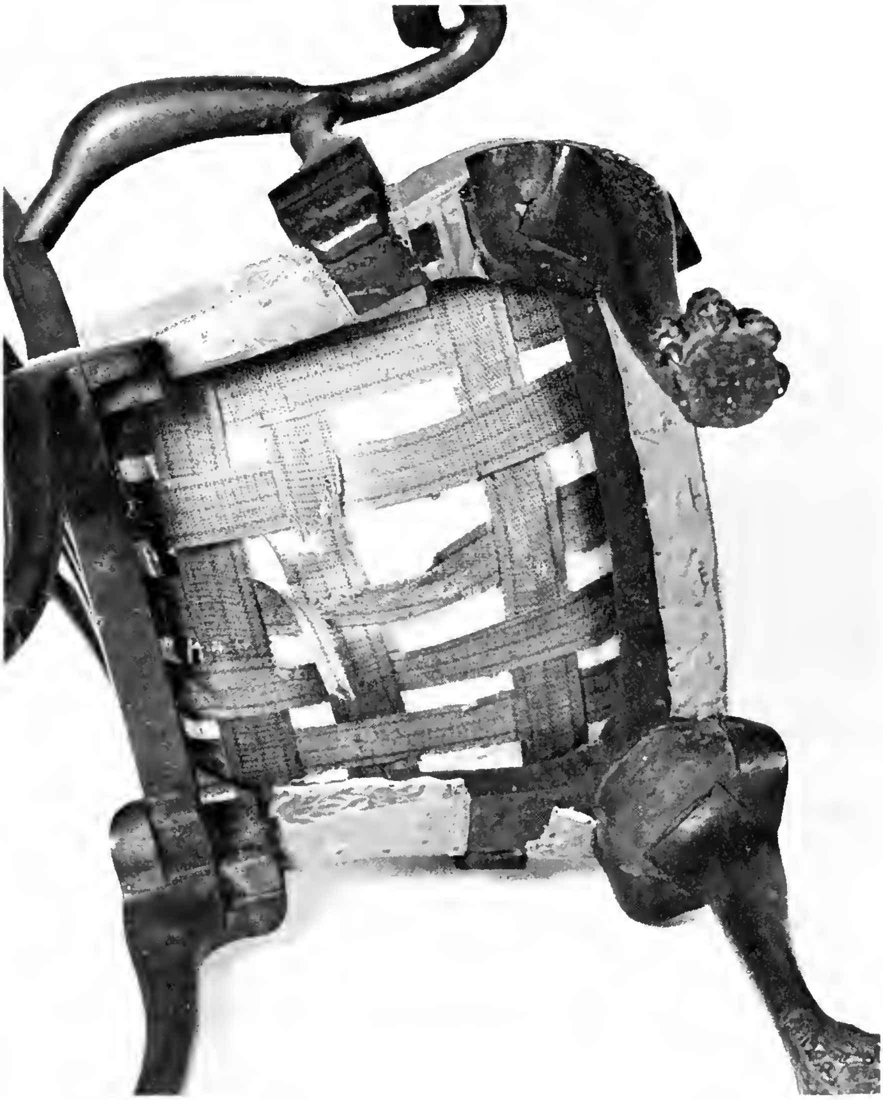

Figure 14. Seat construction of the Royal Governor's chair.

and fringe. This photograph records the undoubtedly nervous tenure of several South Carolina Governors. Horsehair seating wears extremely well and it can be seen that it has worn right through the underfabric to the stuffing. Also, one arm is missing, along with several knee brackets.[62]

Early documentary evidence for hair seating in Charleston can be found in 1765 when ". . . several neat horse hair patterns for chair Bottoms . . ." were being sold.[63] The Elfe account book of 1768-1775 first mentions in January, 1768, that hair seating was being stocked for his cabinetmaking business.[64] In England, Thomas Chippendale covered library chairs at Nostell Priory with green haircloth in 1768.[65] Also in England, Sir William Robinson ordered a dining room suite at Mersham to be upholstered in crimson haircloth in 1759.[66] Thus, during the 1756-58 period in which the Royal Governor's chair was made, horsehair was becoming fashionable in England, and probably in Charleston as well.

It is more difficult to prove that the fringe in the photograph was original. However, it was nailed to the hair seating, and the nails appear to be original, supporting the possibility that the fringe itself was original. *The II^d Edition of Genteel Household Furniture In the Present Taste,* plate 22, shows a footstool with fringe; this edition was printed in 1764 or 1765,[67] the first edition having been issued in 1760. Normally, one would expect to find fringe in use during the Federal period, but evidently it was used as early as the mid-eighteenth century as well.

Figure 15. Detail of an arm terminal.

It is fortunate that one of the chair's original arms survives, for if it had not, the use of an eagle's head arm scroll certainly would not have been identified with Charleston (Figs. 2 & 15). Normally, New York and Salem, Massachusetts, are associated with the production of American examples of eagle head arm terminals. In English furniture this element was first used in the early Georgian period, roughly 1714 to 1725. However, in this early period, the neck was straight and the head slightly turned outward. It was not until 1725 that the neck was curled, and the head turned in. This motif on English furniture gave way to lion's head arm terminals in urban areas during the 1720-35 period. It is unusual, then, to find this feature still in use during the late 1750s. This element, however, along with the näiveté of the leg carving, suggests that the carver was out of the mainstream of design, though it is not at all uncommon for ceremonial chairs to be retardataire in style.

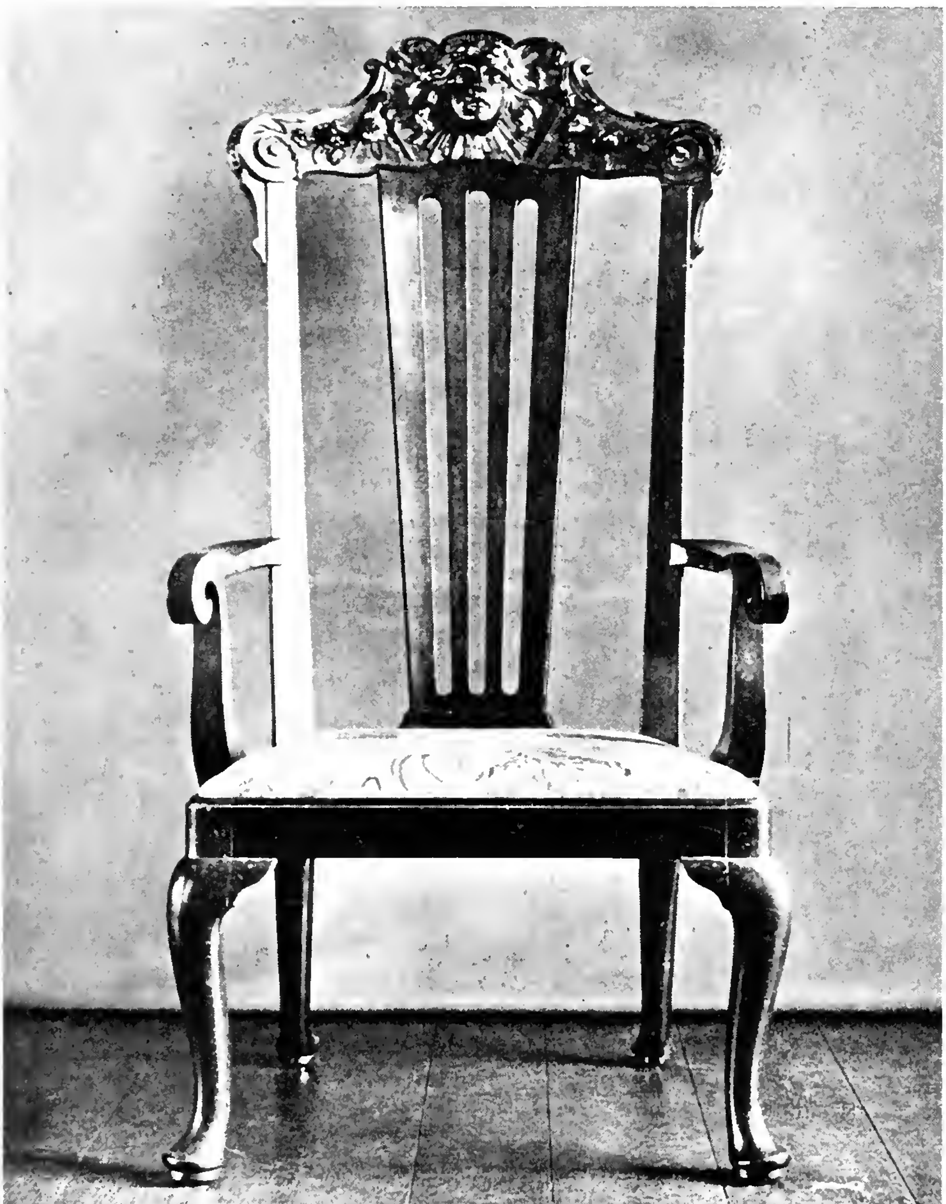

Figure 16. Masonic master's chair, English, ca. 1740, from English Furniture from Charles II to George II *by R. W. Symonds.*

The arm support (Fig. 2) does not follow the usual design employed on most of the ceremonial chairs. At the base the support swells forward, providing in its profile a more substantial design for bearing weight. The source for this shape can be found in the chair illustrated on the right side of the plate *French Chairs* (Plate XX) in the 1755 edition of Chippendale's *Director.*[68] Also, Ince and Mayhew's *Universal System of Household Furniture*, published between 1759 and 1762, illustrates a similar feature in Plate LX, which is entitled *Burjairs.*[69]

Figure 17. Reverse view of the crest rail of the Royal Governor's chair, showing mortises which received the applied cresting.

The splat of the Royal Governor's chair also recalls an earlier period in English design, reflecting styles of the 1730-40 period. A very close parallel can be seen in an English Masonic Masters' chair of ca. 1740 (Fig. 16).[70] The simplicity of the splat and back stiles on both examples suggests that some balancing feature is needed on the crest rail. On the English example, the crest rail is a Masonic emblematic device. The crest rail of the Charleston chair is one often seen on English provincial chairs, and also on seating furniture from Tidewater Virginia and the Albemarle region of North Carolina. However, it is not the crest rail which is important, but rather what was mounted upon it. That something was affixed to the rear of the crest rail (Fig. 17) of the Charleston chair can be seen from the original mortises on each side of the back of the crest. These grooves are bolstered by additional wood shaped up to assist in supporting the weight of a crest that was attached on each side and in the middle with two screws in each mortise. This crest was probably carved in the form of the King's arms (Figs. 18a & b). George III ascended the throne in 1760, but the Hanoverian crest had not changed since the reign of George I, so the arms carved for the chair would have been equally appropriate during reign of George III. Nicholas Bernard's carving of the Royal arms listed in his 1767 bill was almost certainly for a large design intended to be affixed to the wall (Figs. 7 & 19), and had nothing to do with the

Figure 18a. The reverse of the Great Seal of South Carolina, which was in use from 1721 to 1775, showing the Royal arms. Photograph courtesy the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

Governor's chair, which was finished at an earlier date in any event. Though it is unfortunate that the chair's crest has not survived, its loss is understandable. On September 15, 1775, South Carolina's last Royal Governor, William, Lord Campbell, fled the city to his ship in Charleston harbor. No doubt the symbols of the Royal offices, such as the crest of the Governor's chair, were afterward destroyed with great jubilation.

We are most fortunate that the entire chair did not represent a symbol of British rule, and because of that reduced to splinters by some patriot's axe. Instead, the chair survived both a tumultuous change of government and a disastrous fire, and remains for us as a rare example of a period of Charleston chair-making which is not well represented by surviving pieces. The Royal governor's chair, while certainly not typical of Charleston work of the period, does provide an example of the work of the important firm of Elfe and Hutchinson. The chair's stylistic anomalies, perhaps, give us something of an insight to the differing quality of artisans working in the American cabinet trade, even in a sophisticated city such as Charleston.

Mr. Rauschenberg is Research Fellow at MESDA.

Figure 18b. Detail of A View of the House of Commons, *engraved by B. Cole ca. 1755, showing the speaker's chair with the Royal arms attached to the pediment above. Photograph courtesy Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.*

Figure 19. Carved Royal arms, English, ca. 1750. HOA 35", WOA 43". Photograph courtesy Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

FOOTNOTES

1. Filed in the Library as "Museum Notes."
2. This letter was written at "Preston Place," also called "Ainsley Hall," in Columbia, S.C. This house came to William C. Preston through his marriage to Miss Sally Hampton, the daughter of General Wade Hampton, who had acquired the property in 1826 or 1828. Harriette Kershaw Leiding, *Historic Houses of South Carolina* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1921), Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, 1975, pp. 262-265.

   William C. Preston (1794-1860) served in the lower house of the South Carolina Legislature (1828-1834) and from 1833 to 1842 as a Member of the U.S. Senate, then President of South Carolina College from 1846 to 1851. David C. Roller and Robert W. Twyman, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), p. 1001.

   Just how Preston came into ownership of the chair is unknown, but when the seat of government was moved from Charleston to Columbia in 1789, the chair was undoubtedly among the papers and property moved. In the Columbia State House, it probably fell out of style and favor, especially after it became ". . . Mutilated . . ." At this time it probably was given to the College as a relic, Preston later (1856) giving it to the library. However, it was given five years after he left his office as President. Perhaps he had personally taken possession of the chair; it is known that Preston had an interest in the arts, and it may be that he was a collector as well. Mary Fulton Green, "A Profile of Columbia In 1850," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 70, Number 2 (April 1969), p. 119.
3. Columbia, The University of South Carolina, Caroliniana Library File "Museum Notes," "The College Chair" [by J. W. Babcock], 12 April 1913.
4. *Ibid.* The three-page report was written on the stationery of R. M. Kennedy, who was Librarian of the University of South Carolina at the time.
5. *The State,* Columbia, S.C., 14 March 1926.
6. A. S. Salley, *The State Houses of South Carolina, 1751-1936* (Columbia: Cary Printing Company, 1936), p.3.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
9. *The Ichnography of Charles-Town at High Water,* published 9 June 1739, by B. Roberts and W. H. Toms. MESDA accession 2226.
10. *To His Excellency James Glen Esq., Capt. General, Governor, & Commander in Chief in, and over his Majesty's Province of South Carolina, and Vice Admiral within the same. This Prospect of Charles·Town is most humbly Inscribed by his much Obliged humble Servant B: Roberts.* Published by B. Roberts and W. H. Toms, 9 June 1740 (1739).

    19¾ x 55 inches. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Va.
11. Salley, *The State Houses,* p. 4.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *South Carolina Gazette,* Charleston, 24 June 1751.

14. Terry W. Lipscomb and R. Nicholas Olsberg, eds. *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly,* 14 November 1751-7 October 1752 (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1977), p. 144.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 153.
16. Salley, *The State Houses,* p. 4.
17. *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly,* 12 March 1756, Vol. 31, p. 127, South Carolina Archives, Columbia. Hereinafter abbreviated as *J.C.H.A.*
18. *J.C.H.A.*, 3 April 1756, p. 171.
19. *Ibid.*, 13 March 1756, p. 127.
20. *Ibid.*, 13 March 1756, pp. 128,170
21. *Ibid.* The Mace still survives and is used by the South Carolina House of Representatives. It was made in London by Magdalen Feline in 1756. A. S. Salley, Jr., *The Mace of the House of Representatives of the State Of South Carolina,* Bulletins of the Historical Commission of South Carolina No. 3 (Columbia: The State Company, 1917), p. 3.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
23. *Ibid.*, Vol. 32, pp. 104-105.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 80.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.
27. *Ibid.*, 19 Jan. 1759, p. 48.
28. *Ibid.*, 8 March 1759, pp. 76, 113.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
31. Thomas Cooper, ed., *The 1758 Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia: A. S. Johnston, 1838), p. 72.
32. Salley, *The State Houses,* p. 6.
33. Dr. George Milligan-Johnston, "A Short Description of the Province of South Carolina, etc.," in B. R. Caroll, ed., *Historical Collections of South Carolina* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1836), Vol. II, pp. 486-487. The "Short Description," written in 1763, was first published in London in 1770.
34. T. P. Harrison, ed., "Journal of a Voyage to Charleston In South Carolina by Pelatiah Webster in 1765," *Publications of the South Carolina Historical Society* (Charleston: The Society, 1898), pp. 4-5.
35. *J.C.H.A.*, 16 July 1765, p. 87.
36. Eric P. Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America* (Wisconsin: Whitman Publishing Company, 1967), p. 307.
37. *J.C.H.A.*, No. 37, part 2, pp. 526-27.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. Wilford P. Cole and Charles F. Montgomery, eds., Thomas Sheraton, *Cabinet Dictionary* (New York: Praeger, 1970), pp. 134-137.
41. *J.C.H.A.*, No. 37, part 2, pp. 526-27.
42. *Pennsylvania Gazette,* 6 January 1763.
43. *South Carolina Gazette,* Charleston, 12 October 1765.

This is the only advertisement to appear by Bernard in a Charleston newspaper as in the *South-Carolina Gazette; and Country Journal*, Charleston, 15 April 1766, there is an advertisement of Bernard and Jugiez for their store in Philadelphia.

44. John Bivins, Jr., "Decorative Cast Iron on the Virginia Frontier," *Antiques*, March, 1972, pp. 535-539.
45. A. S. Salley, ed., "Diary of William Dillwyn During A Visit to Charles Town In 1772," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. 36, No. 1, January, 1935, p. 6.
46. *Journals of the Senate of South Carolina*, 1773-1785, 17 February 1785, p. 142. South Carolina State Archives, Columbia, S.C.
47. Salley, *The State Houses*, p. 6.
48. *Columbia Herald*, Charleston, 7 February 1788.
49. *The Virginia Independent Chronicle*, Richmond, 12 March 1788; *The Maryland Journal & Baltimore Advertiser*, 4 March 1788.
50. Charles Fraser, *Reminiscences of Charleston* (Charleston: Garner & Co., 1969), pp. 97-98.
51. Salley, *The State Houses*, p. 7.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
53. Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale, *Temples of Democracy* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 50.
54. Wallace B. Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia 1710-1790* (Richmond: Virginia Museum, 1979), pp. 110-113.

    Bradford L. Rauschenberg, "Two Outstanding Virginia Chairs," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* (Winston-Salem: The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, 1976), Volume II, No. 2, November, 1976, pp. 1-23.

    E. T. Joy, "Some unrecorded Masonic Ceremonial Chairs of the Georgian Period," *The Connoisseur*, Vol. 159, No. 641, July 1965, pp. 160-164.
55. The author feels as if there is not enough proof to establish the Williamsburg, Virginia "Capitol" or Royal Governor's chair as an American-made example. It probably represents the English prototype for the Williamsburg ceremonial type. This chair required the use of a footstool. See Wallace B. Gusler, *Furniture*, p. 70. There are no other Royal Governor's chairs known to exist that can be associated with American use.
56. The George III throne and footstool is privately owned by the Earl of Ancaster, Lincolnshire, England.
57. *A View of the House of Peers. The King Sitting on the Throne, the Commons attending him at the end of the Session, 1755.* This is an engraving signed by the engraver, B. Cole, in the lower right and has an impression size of 13⅓" x 8¾". Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, accession 1932-110.
58. This portrait is owned by the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., accession NPG.65.45. This oil painting was executed in London in 1782. It was probably painted to represent Laurens at the Treaty of Paris, not as President of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia from November 1777 to December 1778. This concept, however, was certainly capitalized upon by Valentine Green who, in 1782, published a mezzotint based upon this portrait entitled *Henry Laurens, Esq^{r} President of the American Congress, 1778.* See Francis W. Bilodeau, ed., *Art in South Carolina 1670-1970* (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1970), pp. 56-57.

59. This detail of a typical pad foot is from a card table in the collection of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, accession 2976.
60. This Charleston easy chair is in the collection of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, accession 2249.
61. Sweet gum or *Liquidambar styraciflua* has an extensive growth range quite throughout the eastern and southern United States. The use of it in eighteenth century cabinetmaking in the South, however, is rather limited. The furniture of Annapolis, Maryland demonstrates the greatest use of sweet gum, particularly in the work of John Shaw. Some furniture attributed to Shaw was made with little more than sweet gum in secondary positions. One late Federal Charleston sideboard has some sweet gum as a secondary wood (MESDA research file S-8234). In general its usage is minor, and suggests selection when strength is needed.
62. This remarkable photograph appears in N. Hudson Moore, *The Old Furniture Book* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1903), pp. 53-54, Figure 20. This photograph shows the original upholstery. E. Milby Burton, *Charleston Furniture 1700-1825* (Charleston: The Charleston Museum, 1955), Figure 118, text p. 53, illustrates the chair as it was apparently restored in 1905. The original upholstery has been removed, and leather replaces the horsehair. The chair as seen today in the Caroliniana Library has fabric upholstery, this being the third covering.
63. *South Carolina Gazette; and Country Journal,* Charleston, December 24, 1765.
64. Mabel L. Webber, "The Thomas Elfe Account Book, 1768-1775," *South-Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* (Baltimore: The Williams & Wilkins Co., 1934), Volume 35, p. 18.
65. Christopher Gilbert, *The Life and Work of Thomas Chippendale* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1978), p. 57.
66. *Ibid.*
67. A Society of Upholsterers, Cabinetmakers, etc., *Genteel Household Furniture In The Present Taste* (London: Robert Sayer, 1764/65), plate 22.
68. Thomas Chippendale, *The Gentleman and Cabinetmaker's Director* (London: J. Haberkorn, 1955), plate XX.
69. William Ince and John Mayhew, *The Universal System of Household Furniture* (London: Portland Press, 1960), plate LX. The original edition was published by Robert Sayer in London in 1762.
70. Robert Wemyss Symonds, *English Furniture From Charles II to George II . . . Illustrations from examples in the Collection of Percival D. Griffiths* (London: Bemrose and Sons, 1929), p. 205, Figure 165.

The author appreciates the assistance of the following people who assisted in the preparation of this article: Mr. John Hardy, Assistant Keeper, Department of Furniture, Victoria and Albert Museum; Mr. Wallace B. Gusler, Curator of Furniture, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Mr. Sumpter T. Priddy, Associate Curator of Exhibition Buildings, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Dr. Walter B. Edgar, Assistant Chairman, Department of History, University of South Carolina; Mr. Allen Stokes, Caroliniana Library, Columbia; Mr. E. L. Inabinett, Director, Caroliniana Library, Columbia; Dr. Charles Lesser, South Carolina Archives, Columbia; and Mr. Gene Waddell, Director, South Carolina Historical Society.

The Johnsons: Chairmaking in Mecklenburg County, Virginia

R. Lewis Wright

Ladderback chairs originated in Europe in the seventeenth century, and by the end of the century they were being made in America. It was not until the eighteenth century, however, that they were produced in large numbers in this country. Characteristically, most ladderback chairs have some form of turned finial on the rear posts and two or more slats that are usually concave. In most chairs the slats are curved at the top and are flat on the bottom — although there are many individual and geographical varieties. Stretchers or base rounds, either plain or decoratively turned, connect the legs.

A group of ladderback chairs prevalent throughout southeastern Virginia, known as "Johnson" chairs, has survived in great numbers due to certain enduring features of construction. Although true Johnson chairs are often seen in this area, the name is also used erroneously to refer to any slat-back chair with turned finials, due to the enormous popularity of chairs actually made by the Johnsons.

The Johnson family was established in Mecklenburg County by the early eighteenth century.[1] In the 1820s or 1830s Thomas Johnson, a farmer who lived west of South Hill (Figs. 1,2) began to make chairs for his family and later for sale. Judging from the quality of these chairs, he must have served an apprenticeship with an established chairmaker, though his master remains unknown. Thomas was one of the sons of John and Elizabeth Johnson; the family owned vast landholdings in the Buckhorn

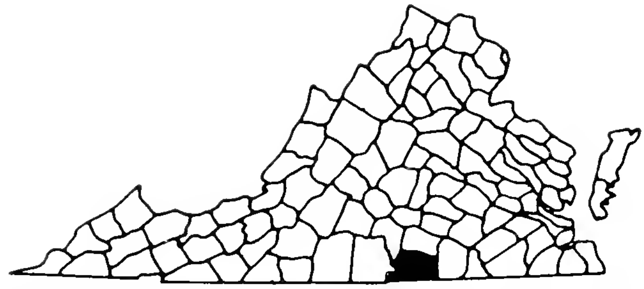

Figure 1. Mecklenburg County lies on the Virginia-North Carolina border; it was formed from Lunenburg County in 1746.

section of the county. This had been referred to as the Buckhorn area since 1736, and represented the watershed area of the creek of that name. Present-day Route 47, then called Buckhorn Road, linked South Hill to Chase City, which was then known as Christiansville (after a Scotsman who was a merchant and became naturalized in 1782).[2] South Hill was not incorporated until 1889, at the time of the completion of the Atlantic and Danville Railway,[3] though the town appeared on earlier maps.

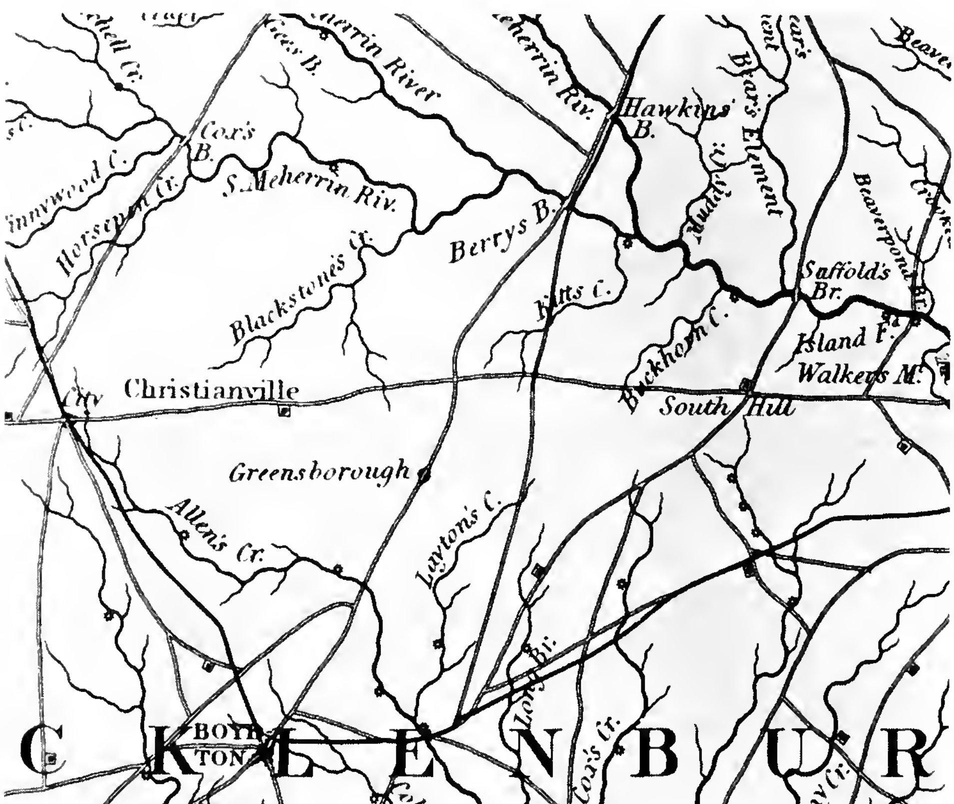

Figure 2. A detail from Herman Boye's A Map of the State of Virginia, 1825 *(revised 1859), showing the Buckhorn Creek area west of South Hill.*

At the death of John Johnson in 1793, his land was to be divided equally between his six sons.[4] This tract was just south of the present-day village of Petty's Corner (known in the nineteenth century as Smith's Store) and is still often known as Johnson's Corner. In 1812 Thomas Johnson married Agnes Keeton,[5] the daughter of Joseph Keeton. In the census of 1830 Thomas Johnson was recorded as head of a household of four males and four females.[6] He died in 1846, and his will was processed in Mecklenburg County General Court on October 19, 1846, giving his wife a life estate in the property. After her death, the estate was to be equally divided among Johnson's seven children, including sons Warner K., James, and Benjamin. An inventory of Thomas Johnson's estate was recorded on January 18, 1847.[8] Among the contents were five slaves, 2500 lb. of tobacco, 12 barrels of corn, 8 head of cattle, two head of sheep, 10 head of hogs, and a number of woodworking tools. The estate was valued at $1967.88.

At the death of his father, Warner K. Johnson, who was born in 1817, took over the operation of the farm and its ancillary enterprise, the manufacturing of chairs. Trained by his father, most of the so-called Johnson chairs were made by Warner. The marriage bond of Warner K. Johnson and Sophia Garner was issued on December 21, 1846.[9] In the 1850 Census of Mecklenburg County he is listed as a "mechanic."[10] A son, Marcellus, was born in 1848.

Characteristic of the chairs made by Thomas and Warner Johnson are the distinctive turnings of the rear posts, particularly the finials, which usually follow a pattern of a tapering, radius-sided cone surmounted by a capped ball (Fig. 4), and usually with a turned ring or lip molding at the bottom of the finial. Considerable variation of this basic pattern has been observed, however. On some chairs, the ball is elongated, though flattened on others (Fig. 3); most balls were turned with a cap, while some were not. One set of five chairs (Fig. 10) was finished with cone-topped finials, rather than balls. All of the chairs associated with the Johnsons have deep incised turnings between the upper and middle slats, cut on the lathe with a skewed chisel. The shoulders of these cuts are generally radiussed, though some have angular shoulders, and considerable variation in the depth of these cuts may be seen.

On Johnson side chairs, other differences in turnings tend to be minor. Feet have varying degrees of taper, though all are tapered, as might be expected on nineteenth century chairs. Those that appear straighter often do so because of extreme wear on the chair (Fig. 9), though such a degree of loss to the feet can usually be detected by comparison with chairs in fine condition. The average original seat height for Johnson side chairs is approximately 16″, though a range from 15½″ to 17″ has been observed.

Figure 3. Two Johnson side chairs. Left, adult: HOA 36″, WOA 17½″, Seat height 14½″; right, child's: HOA 28″, WOA 15″, Seat height 9½″. The flattened ball finials of these chairs is the most common form used by the Johnsons. Private collection. Dennis McWaters photograph.

Posts are tapered over their entire length, and the back posts often show as much as ½″ of taper from just under the finial to just above the foot taper, though ⅜″ or slightly less is more common.

The greatest departures in turning forms on Johnson chairs occurs on various forms of armchairs and writing-arm chairs,[11] which are quite rare in comparison with the prodigious number

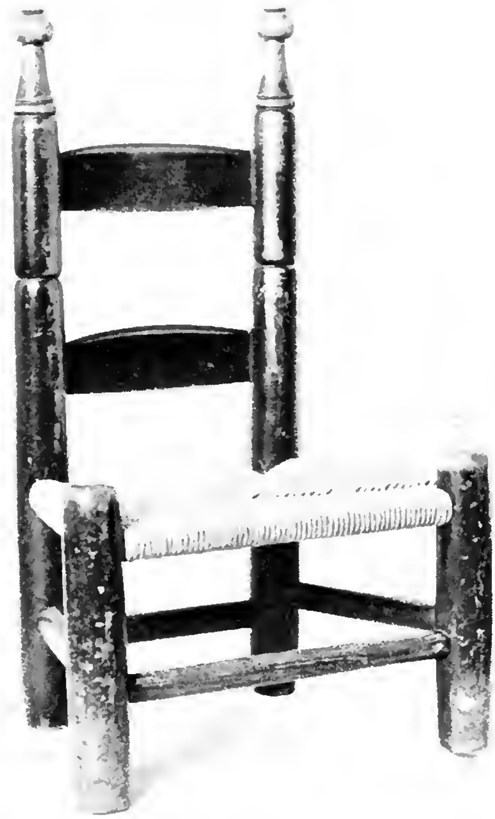

Figure 4. Child's side chair. HOA 23¼", WOA 14⅜", Seat height 8⅜". Painted green. MESDA research file S-9975.

of side chairs extant. Several examples of infant chairs have been recorded, two high chairs and one low arm chair. While the back posts of these follow the usual Johnson format, the use of plain rounds as arms, mortised into the front and rear posts, stylistically follows a tradition in chairmaking that had existed since the seventeenth century. This effect is heightened by the addition of turned finials on the front posts to complement the rear post finials, and on one example (Fig. 5) the feet, rather than being tapered in, are left straight and turned with a heavy ring. Chairs having four decoratively turned feet are relatively common in southeastern Virginia in the early eighteenth century, but it is surprising to see this early regional detail recalled more than a century later.

From the very few surviving examples, it appears that full-size armchairs by the Johnsons tended to follow mid-nineteenth century patterns more closely than did infant chairs by the same makers. Several large armchairs (Fig. 8) in the collection of Prestwould Plantation near Clarksville, Virginia have shaped flat arms and basically non-architectural vasiform arm supports, features normal to late chair production. The exceedingly unusual detail that these particular chairs share, however, is the use of a heavy turned stretcher at floor level between the rear posts; the posts are mortised into this stretcher. Whether or not this was a custom-ordered detail or not is unknown; the chairs are reputed to have been made by Warner Johnson for a portly gentleman of Clarksville, and the heavy stretchers as well as the wide stance of the chairs might seem to corroborate this bit of local oral history.

Figure 5. Child's arm chair. HOA 34⅛", WOA 16½", Seat height 18¼". MESDA research file S-7572.

The slats of Johnson chairs are graduated, and invariably chamfered off on the inside upper edge of each slat. The most common slat material was maple, though other materials including walnut and poplar have been encountered. A pair of work lines — the thin rings struck upon the posts by the point of the chairmaker's skew chisel — was provided to indicate the position of each slat mortise, a common practice in the construction of ladderback chairs. Another tool used to cut in work lines was the scribing gauge, a long stick with points set at appropriate locations to mark the finish-turned post.

Figure 6. Child's arm chair. HOA 37¾", WOA 16¾", Seat height 21". MESDA research file S-9973.

While the evidence of original finishes on country work such as ladderback chairs can be misleading, particularly in view of rampant twentieth century refinishing, surviving Johnson chairs do occasionally yield such information on close inspection. Many chairs that show little evidence may have been finished with a spirit varnish originally, and in some cases the varnish was a tinted one, with some surviving finish films distinctly showing as a translucent brown. Some chairs were no doubt left "white" or unfinished at the discretion of owners, while others were painted. Of Johnsons with original paint evidence, light green is the prevalent surviving color, though other colors have been recorded, and it appears that most chairs were painted before the seats were woven onto the seat rails.

Figure 7. Child's arm chair. HOA 21⅜", WOA 14½", Seat height 7½". MESDA research file S-9974.

The large numbers of surviving Johnson chairs are due not only to prolific output, but also to construction which is generally stouter than most mid-nineteenth century chairs. The chairs are, in fact, heavy, both in the size of their components and in actual weight. The back posts of side chairs, for example, tend to average some 1⅞" in diameter near the feet, which represents a greater thickness than one might expect on later ladderbacks. Similarly, the slightly swelling base rounds are heavily turned, usually ranging in diameter from 1" to 1³⁄₁₆", and the large size of the posts permitted unusually hefty tenons on the rounds. Posts are usually maple, although walnut and other hardwoods have been seen; base rounds are usually maple, though oak, ash, and hickory are also encountered on Johnsons. Occasionally the front rounds are of oak or ash, with the side and rear rounds of maple, the harder wood used on the front presumably to avoid excessive wear from the grinding dirt on shoe soles. Seven base rounds on Johnson chairs are the norm, though fewer rounds were used on infant chairs.

One area of construction particularly important to the strength of ladderback chairs is the arrangement of the seat rounds. Many Johnson chairs have interlocking construction for the side seat rounds that effectively prevents separation of the chair due to front-to-rear stress, like that which occurs when a chair is tipped back. During construction, the side "panels" of ladderback chairs were commonly assembled first; that is, the front and rear posts were joined by the side base and seat rounds. The side seat rounds, if they were to have a lock joint, were assembled tangent to the top work line of the front posts, just above that line. Holes were then drilled for the front and rear base and seat rounds, the mortise for the seat rounds bisecting the work line, thereby cutting into the tenon of the side seat round for at least a third of its diameter. When the chair was assembled with its slats and front and rear seat and base rounds, the tenons of the front and rear seat rounds then provided a lock that prevented the side seat rounds from being pulled out.

Figure 8. Armchair, courtesy Prestwould Plantation. Dimensions not recorded. R. Lewis Wright photograph.

Though the majority of Johnson chairs appear to have this feature, not all do. Most of the chairs have blind trunnels or pegs inserted from the rear of the back posts to lock the upper slat in its mortises; Johnsons with no lock joint at the seat often have such trunnels locking both upper and middle slats, and in such cases the holes for the trunnels are drilled all the way through the posts. Some of the later chairs simply have a pair of sprigs nailed through the upper slat from behind the posts. To compensate for the lack of a locked seat, one set of chairs examined had trunnels driven through the tenons of the lower base rounds on the sides.

Figure 9. Side chair. HOA 35", WOA 17", Seat height 13½". Showing somewhat variant finials and slightly heavier posts, this chair may represent earlier work by the Johnsons. Private collection. Dennis McWaters photograph.

The base rounds of all the chairs examined were fitted tangent to the work lines, making no attempt to provide lock joints below the seat.

Figure 10. Side chair. HOA 38", WOA 19", Seat height 15½". Also with variant finials and heavily rounded front posts, this chair, one of a set of five, does not have the "locked" seat construction present on other chairs illustrated here. Both upper and middle slats are through-pinned, rather than having a single blind pin from the rear in the top slat. Private collection.

Modifications to Johnson chairs were often made by their owners. For example, rocking chairs studied by the author all appear to have had their rockers applied at a later date. In the collection of Colonial Williamsburg is a very unusual form of modification of an early, heavy-style Johnson chair, fitted with an amusing "shoo-fly" mechanism (Fig. 11).

In 1937, Charles P. Johnson, a grandson of Warner K. Johnson, was interviewed for a Richmond newspaper for his recollections of his grandfather.[12] He recalled that Warner Johnson could produce six chairs a day. Most of the chairs were made of maple; these sold in sets of six for nine dollars. Chairs made of walnut were more expensive and sold for two dollars each. He related that his grandfather used green wood for the upright portions of each chair, and for slats and rounds he used wood that had been aged and dried for several years. This was done so that as the parts with green wood dried and constricted the joints became quite snug, according to usual chairmaking practice.

Figure 11. Side chair with "shoo-fly" attachment. Photograph courtesy Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

According to Charles Johnson's recollections, Warner Johnson used red elm bark for chair seats, softened by soaking in the creek before use. Surviving evidence, however, indicates that both split oak and rush were used most often by these chairmakers, split oak likely representing the most commonly used material. Johnson also remembered that his grandfather made wooden buttons and turned candlesticks, though there are no known survivals of these.

In 1852 Warner K. Johnson purchased a tract of 169 acres on Buckhorn Road from the estate of his wife's father at a price of three hundred fifty-nine dollars.[13] Sometime after the Civil War, judging from contemporary maps of the area, he built a large frame house on the north side of the road about a quarter-mile east of the village of Wightman.[14]

Successful as both chairmaker and farmer, he subsequently added to this acreage by purchasing adjacent land from his neighbors. In 1873 he bought an additional 86 acres for eighty-eight dollars,[15] and in 1876 he purchased a tract of 122⅕ bordering acres for one hundred seventy dollars.[16] Later that year he obtained one-third of a tract of 57 acres.[17] The price of land had risen appreciably by 1879 when he purchased 5¼ adjacent acres for $26.25;[18] he lived there the remainder of his life. The house is now in ruins and overgrown, and the shop no longer stands. His chairmaking tools are, however, owned by a descendant.[19]

Johnson chairs, produced in great numbers, spread throughout Virginia and upper North Carolina. A set of six chairs were obtained in the mid-nineteenth century by Judge Beverly Tucker who lived in his father's house — the St. George Tucker House in Williamsburg.[20] This set was painted black with yellow "pencilling" of the turned rings. Methods of such sales are unknown, however, and there are no known newspaper advertisements by the Johnsons.

Warner K. Johnson continued making chairs until about 1890. According to his death certificate, he died in December, 1893, of "paralysis" — most likely a cerebrovascular accident or stroke.[21] This document stated that he was seventy-six years of age. His will, written two years earlier in December, 1891, described him in poor health.[22] It was processed in Mecklenburg County Court on January 15, 1894. Sophia, his widow, was left the entire estate for her lifetime, and then equal division was to be made between his children.

So popular were Johnson chairs in the area that others made replicas of them into the early twentieth century. Among these were Isiah Johnson, a nephew of Warner Johnson, and Hunter N. Allen — both of Mecklenburg County.[23]

The chairs made by the Johnsons, and possibly neighboring chairmakers as well, represent the largest surviving group of nineteenth century chairs in Virginia, and perhaps in the entire South. The opportunity to study such a large sample of sturdy country work reveals an interesting study of the chairmaking technology employed by one family. Though a certain amount of chronological separation in construction technique in the group is evident, it is actually remarkable how little Johnson chairs changed over the sixty-year span of their manufacture. Such a conservative stylistic viewpoint, however, served to insure that the Johnson name would remain synonymous with southeastern Virginia ladderback chairs for many years to come.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Elliott, Katherine B., *Early Settlers of Mecklenburg County, Virginia* (Elliott, Katherine B., 1964), Vol. I and II.
2. Bracey, Susan L., *Life by the Roaring Roanoke* (The Mecklenburg County Bicentennial Commission, 1977).
3. *Handbook of South Hill, Virginia* (Clarksville, Virginia: Enterprise Power Print, 1903).
4. Mecklenburg County, Virginia, *Will Book 3,* pp. 186-187.
5. *Marriage Records 1811-1853, Mecklenburg County, Virginia* (South Hill, Virginia: Prestwould Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, 1962).
6. Simmons, Don, *Mecklenburg County, Virginia, Census of 1830* (Simmons, Don, 1976).
7. Mecklenburg County, Virginia, *Will Book 16,* p. 291.
8. *Ibid.,* pp. 388-389.
9. Simmons, Don, *Mecklenburg County.*
10. Simmons, Don, *Mecklenburg County, Virginia, Census of 1850* (Simmons, Don, 1976).
11. Personal communication, C. B. Glasscock, Halifax, Virginia.
12. McKinney, Mary, "Johnson Chair Moves to Parlor," Richmond *Times-Dispatch,* 3 January 1937.
13. Mecklenburg County, Virginia, *Deed Book 34,* pp. 410-411.
14. The house is not shown on two hand-drawn maps of the area prepared in 1864 by the Chief Engineer's Office of the Confederacy (Collections of the Virginia Historical Society).
15. Mecklenburg County, Virginia, *Deed Book 39,* pp. 482-483.

16. Mecklenburg County, Virginia, *Deed Book 42*, p. 15.
17. Mecklenburg County, Virginia, *Deed Book 51*, p. 60.
18. Mecklenburg County, Virginia, *Deed Book 42*, p. 474.
19. Personal communication, William Tucker, Baskerville, Virginia.
20. Collections, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
21. Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics, Richmond, Virginia. Filed 4 August 1894.
22. Mecklenburg County, Virginia, *Will Book 26*, pp. 445-446.
23. Personal communication, Mrs. Frances Johnson Edwards, Union Level, Virginia. Personal communication, S. Marshall Bell, South Hill, Virginia.

Figure 1. John White, Indians Fishing, *ink and watercolor on paper, ca. 1587. Courtesy the British Museum.*

Marine Art in the South: A Brief Overview

RAYMOND D. WHITE

Marine art has been a constant, though minor thread in the pattern of American life from the earliest days, and it remains so today. The new world was reached by sea and first settled on the edge of the sea. Seaborne commerce kept the faltering colonies alive, and then nurtured them to ever-increasing wealth and prestige, so when the life of these times was recorded, ships, sailors and the sea were not forgotten.

The great ports of colonial and early Federal America were New York and Philadelphia. During the 1790s New York wrested first place from Philadelphia; the nation's third and fourth busiest ports were Charleston and Baltimore, with Boston rounding out the top five. Even though two of the top five ports were southern, the three northern leaders combined handled more than twice the shipping than that of the two southern ports.[1] This disproportion was characteristic of American maritime activity in general, and also of American marine art at its zenith. If all American works of marine art were catalogued, it would undoubtedly be found that the majority has emanated from the area between Philadelphia and Eastport, Maine. Nevertheless, the honor of having produced America's earliest surviving marine art falls to the South.

During the years 1564-65 and 1585-87 two men accompanying expeditions to the new world produced the first marine art in America. The first of these was Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues (?-1588) who accompanied the French expedition to Florida, under René de Laudonnière. Le Moyne made at least forty-three drawings in the area near the mouth of the St. Johns River in

Florida. He eventually settled in England, and apparently used his drawings as the basis for a series of paintings of the new world. These paintings were in turn used as a guide for a series of engravings by Theodore de Bry. The engravings survive and one of the paintings (apparently done in England) also remains, although it is not a marine piece. Thus Le Moyne's American marine drawings are known only through de Bry's hand. Several of the engravings do show ships and ships' boats off the coast or in the rivers.[2]

Since European engravers are known to have added ships and other details for effect, even though there were none in the original drawings from which they worked, the question of just what Le Moyne's original drawings were like does arise. In this case, we have one bit of evidence that indicates that the originals were indeed full-fledged drawings of marine scenes as the engravings show. De Bry's engravings of John White's drawings (of which the originals still exist) are quite faithful to the originals, thereby leading to the hope that the same is true in the case of the Le Moyne drawings.

John White, an Irishman or Englishman, was active between 1585 and 1593, a period when he was associated with Sir Walter Raleigh and others in attempting to plant a colony in the new world, specifically on Roanoke Island off the coast of North Carolina. White made five voyages across the Atlantic; on one of them he was sent out as governor of the ill-fated "lost" colony. One of White's other contributions was that he was the grandfather of Virginia Dare, the first child of English parents born in America. The accomplishment for which he is most remembered, however, is the series of watercolor drawings he executed and which still exist today. They include the earliest surviving marine painting done in America.[3]

Five of White's seventy-five drawings have marine associations. Three are map-like drawings, one is a land profile viewed from seaward, and another is his view of Indians fishing (Fig. 1). The latter is a true marine view, not a map or chart illustration or aid to navigation. It is the earliest fully authenticated bit of American marine art.

After this very early start there was a lapse of nearly 150 years before southern marine art reappeared. The decades of the 1720s and 1730s saw an upsurge of marine art in a number of locations in the South. The first was Jean Baptiste Michel Le Bouteux' 1720 depiction of boats built at John Law's concession at New Biloxi, in what is now Mississippi.[4]

In New Orleans, which was beginning to thrive in the first quarter of the century, several artists are known to have painted or drawn marine scenes. One of the earliest by a known artist is a carefully detailed watercolor view of the city from across the river, done by the French surveyor Jean-Pierre Lassus in 1726.[5] Later, with the rising commercial importance of the steamboat from the 1820s on, that city and the other towns and cities along the Mississippi and its major tributaries were the subjects of a great deal of marine art.

One of the only known Mississippi River views in the South dating before 1820 is a riverfront view of Natchez drawn in 1817 by Edouard De Montulé, a Frenchman who traveled in this country, and, in 1821, published an account of his travels, including the drawing of Natchez.[6]

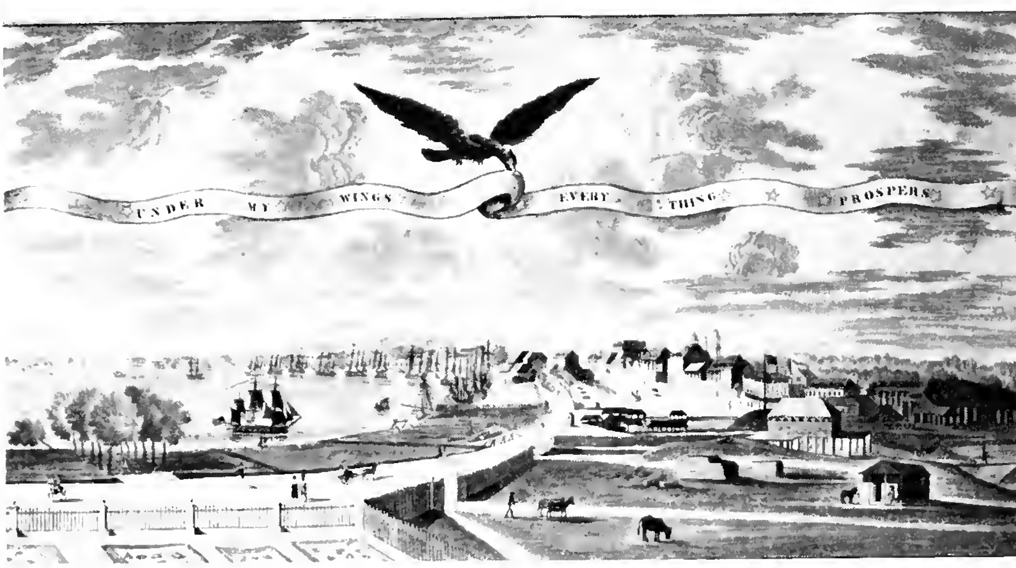

Figure 2. J. L. Boqueta De Woiseri, A View of New Orleans Taken From the Plantation of Marigny, *aquatint, 1803. Courtesy The Old Print Shop, New York.*

Toussaint Francois Bigot (1794-1869), a native of Rennes, France, worked in New Orleans as early as 1816. He was a drawing teacher and painter of portraits, historical scenes, landscapes, and marine views. Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764-1820) is known to have done marine scenes in New Orleans before his death in 1820,[7] and J. L. Boqueta De Woiseri, who worked in New Orleans c. 1803-1811, painted several marine views. In 1803 he produced an oil painting, a watercolor and an aquatint (Fig. 2) — all showing essentially the same waterfront scene and all designed to celebrate the Louisiana Purchase.[8] De Woiseri was one of the first artists in America to use the aquatint technique.

There are a number of other known artists who worked in New Orleans as early as the 1820s, and may have executed marine paintings there during that period or before. Among these are: Joseph Foster Dolliva (1795-1817), who died in New Orleans and is known to have done marine scenes depicting sea engagements during the War of 1812; Antoine Mondelli, a scene painter active in New Orleans from 1821 to 1856, and whose drawing was the source of W. J. Bennett's beautiful engraving of New Orleans from across the river done in 1841.

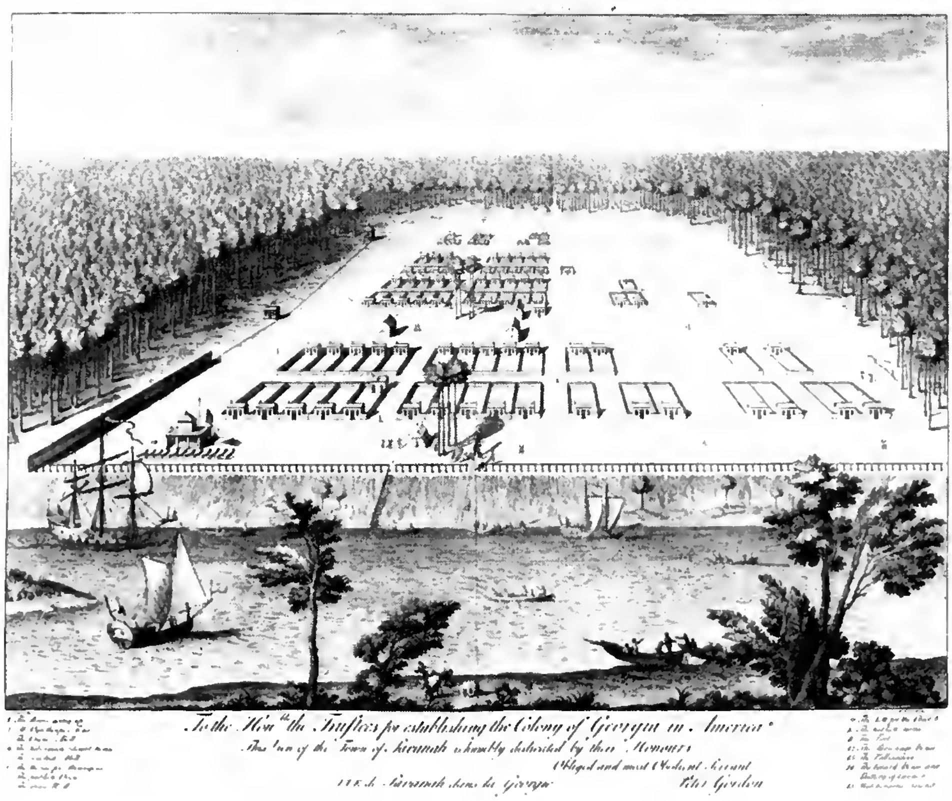

Figure 3. Peter Gordon, A View of Savanah as it stood the 29th of March, 1734, *engraving. Courtesy The Old Print Gallery, Washington, D.C.*

In addition to New Orleans, there were two other significant centers of southern marine art: the Chesapeake bay area, and the Charleston area of lowcountry South Carolina. For many years Charleston remained the South's busiest port and one of its most elegant and cosmopolitan cities. In addition to the work done in these three important centers, however, marine art was created throughout the South just as it was elsewhere by folk artists, unrecorded artists of every degree of talent, and some professional draftsmen, cartographers, and artists as well. One fledgling amateur was John Barnwell, who at age thirteen in 1799, drew a primitive *View of Beaufort (S.C.)*.[9]

An example of what might be considered cartographic art is the engraving from a drawing by Peter Gordon of *A View of Savannah as it Stood on the 29th of March, 1734*[10] (Fig. 3). This is the earliest known view of Savannah; and it was drawn to impress sponsors, investors and the general public in England with just how successful the new colony appeared to be.

That Charleston, with its commerce, money, and sophisticated tastes readily attracted artists and produced its own limners as well is not surprising. The list of marine artists who have worked in Charleston is long, and even though most of the names are well known, a brief review is worthwhile both to catalogue the artists and to consider the types of work they produced.

Marine art in the prerevolutionary period in Charleston is, with one exception, represented in surviving works by only one type of painting, the harbor view. Almost all of the original pictures became the subject of engravings that were published in England, for sale there and in Charleston. The first artist to execute a view of that city was Bishop Roberts, who painted a watercolor of Charleston from across the Cooper River about 1737. His view, showing the river filled with ships and boats of various types with the city in the background, was engraved in London by W. H. Toms[12] (Fig. 4).

Figure 4. W. H. Toms after Bishop Roberts, CHARLES TOWN, the Metropolis of the Province of South Carolina, *engraving, 1739. Courtesy Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.*

Almost a quarter of a century passed before T. Mellish painted *A View of Charles Town, the Capital of South Carolina in North America,* which was engraved in London by C. Canot in 1762.[13]

In October, 1765, a limner named Warwell proudly announced his arrival in Charleston from London. He had "taken a House on the Point opposite to Governor Boone's," where he was prepared to offer a broad repertoire of work from coach and "skreen" painting to heraldic illumination and "history pieces." Warwell also confidently offered "sea pieces," though there is no evidence that he received patronage for them. Warwell advertised in the spring of 1767 that he intended to leave South Carolina, but a little more than a month later the *South-Carolina Gazette* reported that "Mr. Warwell . . . a noted Limner" had died.[14]

Figure 5. Thomas Leitch, A View of Charles Town, S.C., *oil on canvas, ca. 1774, 19¼ x 58⅜". MESDA accession 2024-30.*

One of the most important harbor views of Charleston was executed by the English painter Thomas Leitch (or Leech), who arrived from London in 1773. The *Gazette* gloriously described the artist as "the *first* capital *Landscape-Painter* that has visited America." Leitch's view (Fig. 5), "taken with the greatest Accuracy and Care," and providing a "Portrait of the Town, as it appears from the Water," was offered for subscription sale as an engraving (Fig. 6a) in October, 1774. London engravers Woollett and (Samuel) Smith in London were to cut the plate, men whom Leitch fancied as "the two greatest Artists in the World." The print was offered for one pound.[15]

Leitch and his painting are both interesting studies. The painting is outstanding for the accuracy of its depiction of Charleston; many structures of the period remaining on the waterfront can be identified in the view (Fig. 6b). It is also interesting to note, however, that the treatment of perspective in the painting is somewhat distorted, perhaps on purpose. A bit of plagiarism on Leitch's part is evident in the large ship shown in the foreground which is the same vessel that tacked the same course a decade earlier in Mellish's view of the city. It is obvious

Figure 6a. Samuel Smith after Thomas Leitch, A View of CHARLES-TOWN, the Capital of SOUTH CAROLINA, *engraving, 1774, image impression 17⅜ x 28¾". MESDA accession 2024-29.*

that Leitch copied the ship from the engraving of Mellish's painting; such "borrowing" was not unusual in eighteenth century graphics.

The balance of Leitch's American career remains rather obscure. A mid-eighteenth century harbor view of New York (Fig. 7) in the Winterthur collection is signed by Leitch. In this earlier work, the subject is not the townscape itself, but rather the moored ships, much in contrast to the Charleston view. In the New York scene, Leitch made no attempt to present the entire panorama of the waterfront, and for this reason the New York painting shows none of the deliberately warped perspective the artist employed in the later view.

Figure 6b. A detail of Smith's engraving of Leitch's view, showing St. Michael's Church on the left, the Exchange in the center, and St. Philip's Church on the right.

Figure 7. Thomas Leitch, A View of New York, *oil on canvas, 1750, 25⅜ x 30". Courtesy the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum.*

One bit of marine art that prerevolutionary Charleston was fortunate enough to share with much of the rest of the east coast of North America was the *Atlantic Neptune,* a monumental series of navigational charts, completed under the direction of J. F. W. Des Barres (c. 1721-1824).[16] The work contained views of a number of harbors along the coast, including Charleston. Some of these views showed headlands and other features that could have been useful navigation aids; however, the view of Charleston is clearly meant for decoration only. Although Des Barres had the oversight of the entire effort and personally carried out important parts of the project, he took no direct part in the work at Charleston. The name of the artist that drew the Charleston view is unknown.

The Revolutionary War, like every war since, provided considerable stimulus for marine art. One event at Charleston, the unsuccessful attack by the British on Fort Moultrie, Sullivan's Island (June 28, 1776), produced a barrage of marine art that rivaled the gunfire in intensity. On the American side, a pair of informative watercolors was painted by Lieutenant Henry Gray (?-1779) of the Second South Carolina Regiment,[17] and Walter

Miles produced three small gouaches entitled *Attack, Engagement,* and *Retreat.*[18] On the British side, Lt. Col. Thomas James of the Royal Regiment of Artillery produced two views from which engravings were later made in England. The lengthy title and commentary on the engravings of James' views conveniently overlook the fact that this battle was a defeat for the British.[19] A few years later (c. 1782) James Peale (1749-1831) painted a fine view of this battle which shows British warships engaging the fort at point blank range.[20] As late as 1794, the still-warm embers of the Revolution served to stimulate a marine setting for a portrait of General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney (Fig. 8a) by James Earl (1761-1796). Recalling his earlier efforts to prepare the Charleston area for the coming war, Pinckney is shown with a small but handsome view of the harbor in the background (Fig. 8b). This type of format was frequently used in portraits of New England shipowners and ship captains as early as the late seventeenth century, but Southern examples are very rare.[21]

Figure 8a. James Earl, General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, *oil on canvas, ca. 1794, 45 x 36". Courtesy the Carolina Art Association, Gibbes Art Gallery.*

Figure 8b. Detail of Earl's Pinckney. *Courtesy the Carolina Art Association, Gibbes Art Gallery.*

Marine portraits of the City of Charleston continued to be popular through the nineteenth century. Charles Blacker Vignoles (1793-1875), an English surveyor who came to Charleston about 1820, produced a charming view showing a bustle of steamships and sailing vessels filling the harbor.[22]

Figure 9. Washington Allston, A Rocky Coast with Banditti, *oil on canvas, 1800, 13¾ x 19". MESDA accession 2098.*

Very few Southern marine artists can be said to have been much closer than the outer fringes of the mainstream of academic American art; most were straightforward illustrators and some were possessed of only a modest degree of technical skill. One exception to this rule is the South Carolina artist Washington Allston (1779-1843), who has a well deserved place in the history of academic art in America. Allston's career and art need no review, but it is of interest to note that one of his early paintings, *Rocky Coast with Banditti*[23] (Fig. 9), shows a new direction in American marine art. Prior to 1800, the function of such work had been almost purely reportorial; now it became, in addition, a romantic expression interpreting nature and the realm of thought and dreams as well as recording the realistic world of action and accomplishment.

The Chesapeake Bay, stretching over 150 miles from the Virginia Capes northward, with its hundreds of rivers, creeks, and inlets, provided the maritime backbone that nurtured the early settlement of the regions bordering its shores. Marine art had recorded this area by the early eighteenth century, perhaps by the late seventeenth century. Because this was an area where wealth and a measure of sophistication developed early, there is a considerable body of anonymous work. Since the Chesapeake was an intermediate area geographically, from which both artists and inhabitants traveled north and south, there are a good many tantalizing questions about Chesapeake artists arising from this mobility.

Overmantel paintings were a source of decoration in the important rooms of a number of early Virginia and Maryland houses, and in those where connection with the sea was especially close, marine themes were used. One such example of interest is the view of an early Maryland shipyard owned by Richard Spencer, which decorates the panelled chimney breast of a room from "Spencer Hall"[24] (Figs. 10a, 10b). In the St. Mary's County, Maryland, house "Ocean Haul" there is an anonymous marine overmantel showing a harbor scene dating from the period of about 1720, and in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, "Holly Hill" has two handsome marine overmantel paintings. The painter of the latter works is unknown, though it has been suggested that the artist might be Gustavus Hesselius (1682-1755).[25] Hesselius is known to have worked in nearby Prince George's County between 1718 and 1733. Hesselius' style and his advertised willingness to paint almost anything also lend credence to the theory that he may have been the artist. Such versatility was by no means unusual among eighteenth century limners.

Figure 10a. Unknown artist, The Shipyard on Grady's Inn Creek *(Kent County, Maryland), oil on yellow pine panel, 24½ x 103½". Courtesy the Maryland Historical Society. MESDA research file S-10,137.*

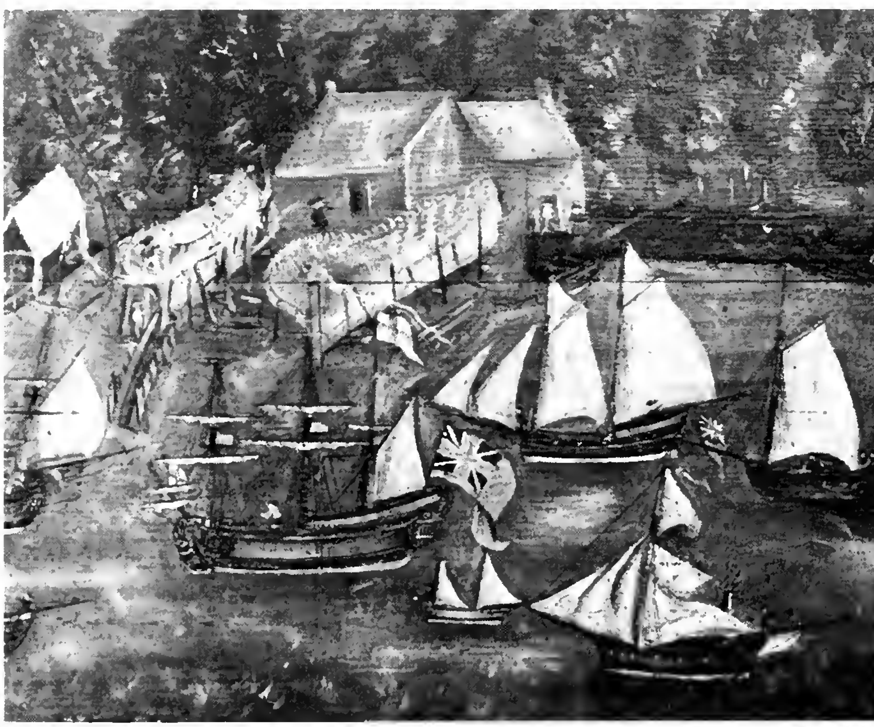

Figure 10b. Detail of the overmantel painting in Fig. 10. Courtesy the Maryland Historical Society.

Another of the artists who may have produced marine painting in the Chesapeake Bay region was Augustine Heerman (1605-1686), who painted at least two marine views during the 1640s and '50s in New Amsterdam (later New York). In 1659, Heerman was sent by the Governor of New Amsterdam on a mission to Maryland. He later returned to Maryland and entered into an agreement with Governor Calvert to draft a map of Maryland in return for a grant of 4,000 acres in the upper Chesapeake Bay area. He completed the map, receiving his grant in

1662. He named his estate "Bohemia Manor," and before his death in 1686 he had amassed nearly 20,000 acres of land in Cecil County, Maryland, and New Castle County, Delaware.[26] His New Amsterdam marine paintings are well known, and discovery of a Chesapeake Bay area marine by Heerman would indeed be an exciting event.

Another interesting artist who may have painted Southern marine views was the Frenchman C. B. J. F. de Saint-Mémin (1770-1852). Saint-Mémin traveled the eastern seaboard from Boston to Charleston between 1798 and 1810, and during that time was active in Virginia and in Baltimore, where he lived during 1803-4. The great bulk of his work is portraits, though Saint-Mémin is known for several marine scenes of the New York area, including one of the earliest views of Robert Fulton's steamboat *Clermont*.[27] The unearthing of marine works done by Saint-Mémin during his Southern travels would be a valuable addition to the study of Southern marine art.

Baltimore became the chief port of the upper Chesapeake Bay area as the eighteenth century drew to a close, and several of the painters of the Baltimore area turned their hand to marine art from time to time. Francis Guy (c. 1760-1820), an English silk dyer, is listed in Baltimore directories from 1801 as a "landscape painter;" he specialized in views of the country estates of the well-to-do. Some of these views had a hint of waterfront, as did an 1802 view of Baltimore city; but Guy's signal contribution to marine art was made when he painted a number of the immensely popular views of frigate actions before and during the War of 1812. These naval engagements were among the few victories the Americans could claim, and were painted by many artists. One of the most popular of such views was Guy's painting that represented "the late atrocious attack of the [ship] Leopard on the Chesapeake"; this "grand Historical PAINTING" was placed on view in Wharfe's Tavern on the 4th of July, 1807 "for the gratification of those . . . inclined to view it."[28]

Frederick Kemmelmeyer was an itinerant artist active from the late 1780s until past 1815, working in Baltimore, Alexandria, Georgetown, Frederick, Hagerstown, and possibly northern Virginia. In addition to teaching a drawing school in the various cities and towns, he offered his services "in the art of Painting, Drawing Portraits in Oil and Crayons, Sign and Ornamental Painting, Free Masons Aprons . . . Also, Stands of

Colors for Regiments and Companies'' and ''signs for country merchans [sic], innkeepers, and others . . .''[29] His *First Landing of Cr Columbus*, painted ca. 1800-1809, shows the party of explorers against an expansive background that included the fleet moored off San Salvador. Kemmelmeyer executed other historical paintings as well, including at least one other view of explorers landing among savages.[30]

Figure 11. Francis Guy, Christ Church at Baltimore Street *(detail), oil on canvas. Courtesy Hirschl & Adler Galleries, New York. MESDA research file S-4286.*

The collection of the Mariners Museum in Newport News, Virginia, contains an oil painting (ca. 1814) by the obscure artist Paul Schnitzler, portraying the bombardment of Fort McHenry at Baltimore. Another contemporary view of the same siege is an aquatint by the little-known Philadelphia engraver John Bower (active ca. 1809-19).[31] This view shows a large British fleet lobbing mortar shells into the fort. It is a crude work; Bower probably was not actually in Baltimore to see the event. Bower and Frederick Kemmelmeyer may have produced the only contemporary views of the sea-land battle that inspired our national anthem, though both artists may have relied solely upon eyewitness accounts.

At the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, just off the Cape Henry lighthouse, the British Captain George Tobin encountered small vessels with "Baltimore clipper" rigging and sketched two of these fast and interesting craft in 1794.[32] The successful exploits of the United States Navy during the War of 1812 sparked renewed interest in American maritime practices, and because of this one of Tobin's twenty-year-old pictures was engraved and included in the English *Naval Chronicle* for 1815.

Figure 12. John Hill after Joshua Shaw, Norfolk: From Gosport, Virginia, *engraving, ca. 1820. Courtesy the Old Print Gallery, Washington, D.C.*

Joshua Shaw (1777-1860) was another Englishman who emigrated to America, but, unlike Tobin, he came to settle. Shaw took residence in Philadelphia in 1817, and lived there and in Bordentown, N.J. until his death over forty years later. During his career he painted some "romantic" marines, but his most valuable work was the shore scenes sketched for inclusion in the series of American views that were later engraved by John Hill (1770-1850). Shaw traveled the South during 1819-20 in the course of assembling this work.[33] Two of his views were done in the lower Chesapeake Bay area: *Lynnhaven Bay, Virginia,* and perhaps the most charming of the lot, *Norfolk: from*

Gosport, Virginia (Fig. 12), a fine marine view that shows vessels underway, at pierside, and on the shipyard ways.

In 1821, shortly after Shaw's work was published, the young French botanist Auguste Pleé (1787-1825) arrived at Hampton Roads, Virginia, from the Carribbean. He did a number of sketches along the shores of Chesapeake Bay, including Cape Henry, Point Comfort, Hampton Roads and Gosport Navy Yard.[34] Pleé's drawings can be considered the end of one era in Southern marine art, but in many ways, the best was yet to come. As the South blossomed with the unfolding nineteenth century, marine art in the South spread and grew apace.

Mr. White is a Nashville businessman who is currently preparing a directory of American marine artists.

FOOTNOTES

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