

Enslavers in the Carolinas - Benjamin Heron and descendants

The Heron Lineage and Slavery

The exploitation of the tragedy of enslaved people over the last 400 years permeates at least one branch of my family history - the Herons of Galloway, Scotland, and their descendants. The Heron family were originally landowners in Northumberland¹, one branch emigrating to Galloway from about the 15th century. Some became politically powerful, holding influential positions in government and civic affairs, owning large estates and passing down privilege from one generation to the next. Breeding cattle was one of their major sources of wealth as well as being landlords.

The connection to slavery is probably more deep-rooted and extensive in this family than I know of, especially considering their strong connections to trade and seafaring in the 17th and 18th centuries. But I have endeavoured to open a window into one family's intergenerational economic and cultural dependency on the enslavement of people which would no doubt apply to many families of wealth and privilege directly and indirectly over the preceding four centuries right into the present. Certainly, white Americans, British and other western Europeans have developed an economic and cultural dominance at the expense of others' freedoms through exploitation of people, land and resources of other parts of the world annexed into their empires, the British Empire being the most extensive and powerful of these.

So, what follows here is a focus on just one family line's history in relation to slavery. It's an example that is repeated by many similar families in all parts of the once colonial world.

Galloway origins

I began discovering links to slavery through tracing what I could about the children and grandchildren of my ancestors in Galloway:

Andrew Heron (of Kirroughtree 1617-1695) and **Jean Dunbar** (of Machermore 1623-1646).

One of their sons, **Patrick Heron** (1642-1721) was born and died at the family estate Kirroughtree, Minnigaff in Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland, and was buried in the Minnigaff Cemetery. When he was 20 years old, in about 1662, *"in his rambling yeirs, he gott a boy upon a country girl"*². In other words, he had a son out of wedlock. According to the historian of Galloway, Peter Handyside McKerlie³ writing in 1878:



Kirroughtree House near Newton Stewart, Kirkcudbrightshire, Dumfries and Galloway.
Photo: Rogers Family Papers

"When old enough, this boy was sent to sea and married well in Liverpool. Out of that port he commanded a large ship. At last the young man settled in Bermuda. Wishing to revisit his native land, sailed home with his only child; but when a few leagues from the shore, the boat sank and the only survivor was a young negro boy."

Who was this 'negro boy', a young servant or deck hand, or maybe his son?

Bermuda, the British owned archipelago in the north Atlantic Ocean lying alone about 965 kms off the coast of North Carolina, was the first English colony to use enslaved Africans in the early 1600s. They grew tobacco, corn, potatoes, fruit trees, poultry and livestock for export. In the second half of the 17th century Bermuda gradually became a maritime economy. Assuming McKerlie is correct, this would explain why this son (name unknown) of Patrick Heron who *'commanded a large ship'*, came to settle there. Much of the labour in Bermuda was provided by enslaved sailors, carpenters, coopers, blacksmiths, masons, and shipwrights, usually from the West Indies or the British colonies on the east coast of America. Owners of skilled enslaved workers would hire them out taking two thirds of the wages they earned. By 1710, enslaved workers provided much of the vital labour and skills of the colony and in 1721 made up 3,517 of Bermuda's total population of

¹ Chipchase Castle

² McKerlie: *History of the Lands and Their Owners in Galloway*, 1878

³ McKerlie: *History of the Lands and Their Owners in Galloway*, 1878

8,366⁴. So, it can be assumed that a Bermudan mariner would be mostly dependent on, and profiting from, the work of enslaved people.

One of the daughters of Andrew Heron and Jean Dunbar was **Margaret Heron** (b1671)⁵. She first married John M'Kie (d.1708) of Larg, Minnigaff but had no children by him. Her second marriage was to James Lidderdale⁶, of Saint Mary's Isle, Kirkcudbrightshire and they had a son **Thomas Lidderdale**. Thomas went to the West Indies and "made a fortune"⁷ but died on a "Spanish Voyage"⁸. Making a fortune in the West Indies at that time, could only be done through slavery.

Another son of Andrew Heron and Jean Dunbar was my direct ancestor **Andrew Heron** (c1666 -1740 of the *Bargaly* estate in Kirkcudbrightshire). He married **Mary Graham** (c1665-1705 of Floriston, Scotland) and they produced 6 children, some of whom were directly linked to the slave trade. Andrew was a renowned amateur botanist and his '*Bargaly Paradise*' displayed a highly admired range of native and exotic trees⁹. None of his sons followed this pursuit and were more interested in money and adventure.

One of these sons, **William Heron** (1683-1708), is described as a "wholesale African Merchant in London"¹⁰ and seems to have been employed by a relative of the same name operating from Fen Court, Fenchurch Street¹¹. At the age of 25, suffering from consumption (tuberculosis), he returned to his family home, *Bargaly*, to die¹².

William's younger brother, my direct ancestor **Patrick Heron** (1690-c1752) when still a teenager, was encouraged by William to take two voyages on a Guineaman (a slave ship) to the west coast of Africa "by way of frolic"¹³ - a bit of fun and adventure. His father quickly took action to remove the boy from his brother's bad influence, and to instil some discipline, bought him a commission as Ensign in Lord Mark Kerr's Regiment of the English Army. Patrick would go on to achieve the rank of Captain but with a reputation for being irresponsible, unreliable and generally troublesome in his work and his personal life. (see my story *Conduct Unbecoming*) Many of his descendants benefitted directly from the work of enslaved people.



Capt. Patrick Heron 40th Regiment Age 21 by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1711) Painting at Borough House. Photo: Mackenzie Scholtz 2023

The sons of Captain Patrick Heron

In 1710 (now Captain) Patrick Heron married **Ann Vining** (1692-1733) the daughter of Portsmouth mayor and wealthy merchant, **John Vining**¹⁴ (1659-1743) and **Elizabeth Vining** (1663-1709). Patrick and Ann produced a very large family of 12 children, 10 of whom lived to adulthood. All were born at Lymington, Hampshire. When Ann died (in her 40s), Patrick left his children and sailed for Nova Scotia to be part of the 40th Regiment at Annapolis Royal. He married again and had another family and had little to do, if anything, with his English children, leaving the younger ones to be supported by their married older sisters¹⁵.

"Obscure appointment"

Several of Patrick and Ann's sons had connections to the African slave trade in the colonies. The eldest son **John Vining Heron**¹⁶ (1713-1772) was set up in the mercantile business by his maternal grandfather John

⁴ Jarvis, Michael: *In the Eye of All Trade* 2010

⁵ In 1705, Margaret was accused of having an illegitimate child in Edinburgh. She refused to appear in front of the church and left for Edinburgh. (McKerlie P H: *History of the Lands and Their Owners in Galloway*, 1878)

⁶ Commissioner of Kirkcudbright in 1690 (Lidderdale.com)

⁷ McKerlie P H: *History of the Lands and Their Owners in Galloway*, 1878

⁸ McKerlie P H: *History of the Lands and Their Owners in Galloway*, 1878

⁹ How did Andrew Heron acquire the exotic trees on his estate?

¹⁰ Rogers, Julian C. *The History of Our Family (Rogers of West Meon) 1451-1902* (1902)

¹¹ Listed in *The Compleat Compting-House Companion; or, Young Merchant and Tradesman's True Guide ...* Compiled by a Society of Merchants and Tradesmen, 1763. London Ancestry collection

¹² Rogers, Julian C. *The History of Our Family (Rogers of West Meon) 1451-1902* (1902)

¹³ Rogers, Julian C. *The History of Our Family (Rogers of West Meon) 1451-1902* (1902)

¹⁴ Made money by provisioning the Navy, and land speculation making great profits by reselling land to the government as sites for barracks and fortifications Among John Vining's estate was some South Sea stock, (Julian C Rogers) showing that he also profited from the slave trade.

¹⁵ Jane Reade (1711 - 1788 later Shaftoe) and Ann Elliott (1716 - 1784)

¹⁶ married Frances Leeke in 1738 and Sarah Staples in 1766

Vining in whose will of 1740 was left "considerable property"¹⁷. Despite this advantage John Vining Heron was declared bankrupt by 1770, most likely brought on 4 years earlier through an expensive, drawn-out, and ultimately unsuccessful lawsuit against his brother **Dr Andrew Heron** (see below) over the inheritance of their paternal grandfather's *Bargaly* estate in Scotland. In June 1772 his assets were liquidated¹⁸ to pay his debts and in August, on the eve of departing for West Florida, he made his last will and testament - his legacy being only a few possessions and a little cash for his wife and three adult children.

The reason for his voyage was to take up an "*obscure appointment*"¹⁹ in Florida as a naval agent and *vandue master* to Pensacola and then to the Mississippi. A *vandue master* was a term of Dutch origin used in South Africa in the Transvaal, meaning an official auctioneer "a person appointed and paid by government to conduct all auction sales of every description"²⁰ It is highly likely that auctioning enslaved people was part of the job. However, John Vining Heron never made it to America. His brother Charles Heron records in his bible:

"John Vining Heron departed this life, 4th November 1772 aged 58, he dyed on his passage from Jamaica to Pensacola in Sight of Cape Antonia, his disorder a Fever which lasted three days, the two first days he came on deck – he was on board a Merchant ship, Chester, Capt. Lockear, 180 ton, after he died they kept him only 12 Hours, then Buried him at sea".

Julian Clarke Rogers²¹ sums up John Vining Heron's end: "*his life closed in gloom and impoverishment and in exile from his native country.*"

Making a fortune

Dr Andrew Heron²² (1714 -1785) Capt. Patrick and Ann's second son mentioned above, began his medical career apprenticed to a surgeon in Bath. A record of 1741 shows he is an apothecary in Bath and Charles Heron (probably his brother) is his apprentice. Andrew also had a practice in London²³. In 1743 like his other siblings, he inherited a lot of money, stocks, shares and property from his maternal grandfather John Vining²⁴.

Perhaps seeking to capitalize on this inheritance, Andrew decided to explore business opportunities, and the West Indies beckoned. Based on enslaved African labour, the West Indies, through the production of coffee and sugar had become economically most advantageous for Britain. From the mid-17th century onwards, as Britain gained more West Indian territories from Spain and France, these islands attracted thousands of British agriculturalists, merchants, investors and physicians²⁵.

Apparently, no one, neither family nor friends, heard from Andrew for several years and it was thought he must be dead. However, after making his fortune²⁶, he eventually turned up back in Britain,²⁷ and despite rumours he was an imposter, was eventually able to prove his true identity. By 1770 he was successful in challenging his brother John Vining Heron for the inheritance of *Bargaly*, his paternal grandfather's estate in Galloway which he put up for sale only 6 years later. Andrew died in Edinburgh in 1785. How he 'made his fortune' in the West Indies is not known but it certainly would have been either directly or indirectly through the labour of enslaved workers.



Bargaly House, Newton Stewart, Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland. Built 1694. The property a subject of a filial drama in 1770. Photo Euan McGillivray 2014

Benjamin Heron (1722 - 1770)

Benjamin was one of the youngest sons of Patrick Heron and Ann Vining. He served as a British naval officer, and in 1740, aged 18, he participated in the

¹⁷ Rogers, Julian C. *The History of Our Family (Rogers of West Meon) 1451-1902* (1902)

¹⁸ *London Chronicle* 1772

¹⁹ Rogers, Julian C. *The History of Our Family (Rogers of West Meon) 1451-1902* (1902)

²⁰ Rogers, Julian C. *The History of Our Family (Rogers of West Meon) 1451-1902* (1902)

²¹ The distant descendant who wrote the Rogers/Vining/Heron family history in 1902 *The History of Our Family (Rogers of West Meon) 1451-1902* (1902)

²² It is believed he married twice: firstly, to Isabel Maxwell and secondly to Elizabeth Hay. He had three children none of whom survived into adulthood. (Charles Heron's bible and Julian C Rogers)

²³ Scotland, Court of Session Index 1616-1920

²⁴ John Vining's Will of 1740, proved 1743

²⁵ Dobson, Dr. David: *Migration to the West Indies Before 1800*

²⁶ KcKerlie, P H: *History of the Lands and their Owners in Galloway* 1878

²⁷ Brereton, Bridget M. Clarke Colin Graham: *Colonialism of the West Indies* "A major feature of European settlement in the West Indies was its transitory nature. The object of adventurers, especially the British, was not to stay permanently in the West Indian colonies but to return to Europe with their fortunes made."

disastrous fever-stricken Battle of Cartagena²⁸ against the Spanish in the Caribbean²⁹. The British³⁰ failed to take Cartagena, one of the main reasons being the decimation of troops due to yellow fever. Benjamin was a lieutenant in the 100-man Cape Fear company from the colony of North Carolina, and was one of the 25 fortunate survivors of that company³¹. Whether he was already living in North Carolina prior to 1740 and joined the expedition from there, or whether he joined from England or Jamaica where the rest of the regiment was formed, I don't know, but it is said that when the failed expedition ended in 1742 and the survivors returned to North Carolina, Benjamin went via England³².

From Portsmouth to North Carolina and Cape Fear



Above: Benjamin Heron (1722-1770) Slave owner of North Carolina, USA. Photo: Rogers Family Papers, Above right: detail of Collet's 1770 map - *A Compleat map of North-Carolina from an actual survey* showing part of New Hanover County. Underlined is the area where "Cap. Heron" had his plantations and just below that, Heron's Bridge. Source: *North Carolina Maps* (<https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ncmaps/id/467>)

In the 1750s Benjamin Heron was captain of a trans-Atlantic merchant ship *Heron*, which frequently sailed between England, the colonies in north America and Jamaica.³³ In 1752 Benjamin listed this ship as being 'plantation' built, registered in Portsmouth and owned by John Vining his, by then, deceased grandfather). And even though by this time he already owned land in the Northeast Cape Fear River area³⁴ in the county of New Hanover, he gave his home address as Portsmouth in England. However, it is known that from at least 1755 Benjamin was one of the first residents in the Lower Cape Fear River area³⁵. Living and working in what was initially a small settlement³⁶, Benjamin thrived and became a very wealthy man. Where did his wealth come from?

Firstly, there was his inheritance due in 1743 when his maternal grandfather John Vining died in Portsmouth, and like his siblings he inherited land, money and shares. Secondly, he had a career as an officer in the Royal Navy. But his opportunities really multiplied in Wilmington³⁷. Situated near the confluence of two branches of the Cape Fear River and close to the Atlantic coast, are the traditional lands of the Skarure Woccon³⁸ and

²⁸ A wealthy and fortified city in Colombia, Central America, from where the Spanish exported South American gold, silver, tobacco, and sugar and the imported enslaved Africans.

²⁹ (<https://www.cartagenaexplorer.com/battle-of-cartagena-de-indias-history/>)

³⁰ The regiments consisted of British, American, and a company of enslaved men from Jamaica.

³¹ Perhaps he survived because not all the American regiments were allowed to land at Cartagena as they were regarded as so undisciplined as not to be trusted in battle!

³² (<https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/16993>)

³³ "The transatlantic slave trade was the second or 'middle passage' of three stages of the so-called triangular trade, in which arms, textiles, and wine were shipped from Europe to Africa, enslaved people from Africa to the Americas, and sugar, tobacco, and other products from the Americas to Europe." (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Middle-Passage-slave-trade>)

³⁴ Hall, Wes: *An Underwater Archaeological Survey of Heron's Colonial Bridge Crossing Site over the Northeast Cape Fear River near Castle Hayne, North Carolina* 1992

³⁵ (<https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/heron-benjamin>)

³⁶ Wilmington had about 1,200 residents at the time of the Revolution in 1775.

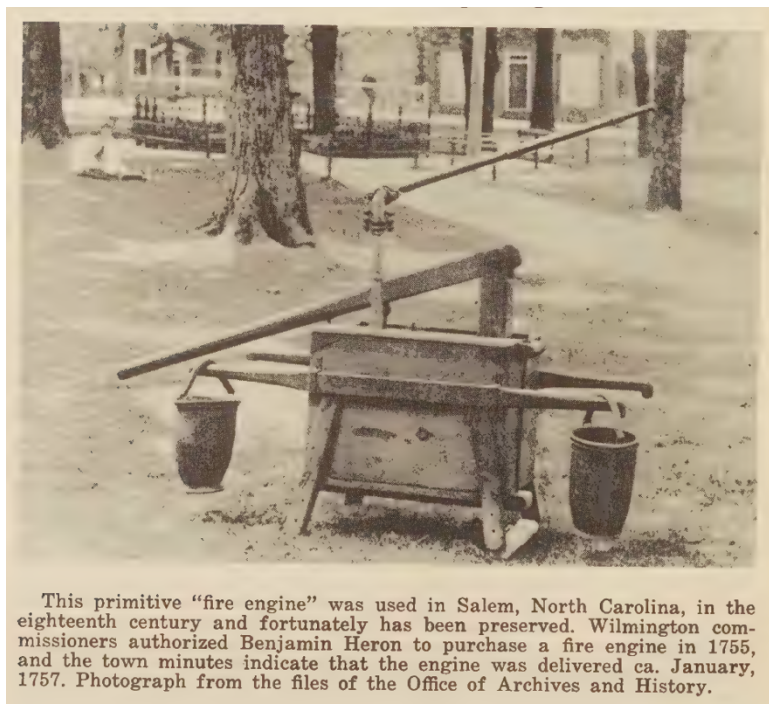
³⁷ (<https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/wilmington>)

³⁸ Also known as the Cape Fear Indians (<https://www.skarurewoccon.com/>)

Waccamaw native Americans³⁹. From the 16th century onwards, Europeans invaded, occupied these lands, destroyed the villages and farms, and after various local wars,⁴⁰ captured native Americans were sold into slavery.

Wilmington

Although initially only a small town, over the 1740s, '50s and '60s Wilmington gradually became a centre for trade⁴¹, shipbuilding, and the processing of timber products from local plantations, mostly for the Royal Navy but also for merchant ships engaged in the Transatlantic slave trade. The enterprising Benjamin developed his political ambitions and his wealth within this environment and slavery was a key part of his success - Wilmington was the only port in North Carolina suitable for embarking enslaved people⁴². Today he is remembered in Wilmington history as having provided a fire engine and building a drawbridge. In 1755 he was commissioned to purchase, with the help of his brother⁴³ in England, the town's first fire engine - fire being a constant problem in the town due to chimneys often catching alight.⁴⁴ The taxpayers of Wilmington had agreed to pay £60⁴⁵ proclamation⁴⁶ money for this purchase but " When the engine was delivered, the cost including freight, insurance and commission amounted to £121 12s 9d proclamation money - more than twice the expected sum."⁴⁷ In 1768, oddly, Benjamin's name was on a list of people who had not complied with an Order to provide buckets (presumably for the fire engine). The penalty was 40 shillings.



From *The Wilmington Town Book 1743-1778* North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History edited 1973

At about this time Benjamin was also gifted some land and a ferry in the Northeast Cape Fear River area as a wedding present from his father-in-law, **Job Howe** (d 1748. Benjamin married his daughter **Mary Howe**).

Over the 1760s Benjamin held many official positions in Wilmington which he could use to his advantage including: in 1761 Clerk of the Pleas of the Province, Deputy Surveyor and Deputy Auditor of the King's Revenue; and from 1762 Clerk of the Crown, Secretary of the Province, and Naval Officer for North Carolina. His position of Clerk of the Pleas (created by him pressuring Governor Dobbs) became controversial as it unusually gave him the power to appoint offices of Clerks to the County Courts⁴⁸ - these positions could be sold which helped him quadruple his salary. In 1768 Benjamin was appointed lieutenant general of the governor's forces in the Regulator Rebellion⁴⁹ but he left the colony before hostilities began.

³⁹ Trinkley, Michael and Hacker, Debi: *Historical synopsis and archaeological reconnaissance of Orton and Kendal plantations, Brunswick County, North Carolina* 2015

⁴⁰ For example, the Tuscarora War 1713. Tuscarora is the English version of Skarure (<https://www.skarurewoccon.com/>)

⁴¹ After 1750 the colony revitalized its road systems, promoting the growth of sea towns such as Edenton, New Bern, and Wilmington. (Samantha Winer) "Founded near the Cape Fear River in the early 1730s, Wilmington became the world's largest exporter of naval stores during this era. The city quickly became central to the growth and maintenance of the Transatlantic Slave Trade as Wilmington ship builders began supplying slave trafficking ships to nearby regions." (Equal Justice Initiative - *The Transatlantic Slave Trade* 2022)

⁴² Because of its geography, North Carolina's initial trade of enslaved people was limited. The string of islands that make up its Outer Banks made it dangerous for ships carrying enslaved people to land on most of North Carolina's coast, and most enslavers chose to land in ports to the north or south of the colony. The one major exes during this exception is Wilmington. It became a port for ships carrying enslaved people due to its accessibility as it sits on the Cape Fear River. *The Growth of Slavery in North Carolina - Colonial legacies* (<https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/growth-slavery-north>)

⁴³ Probably Charles Heron (1724-1782)

⁴⁴ Lower Cape Historical Society Inc. Bulletin May 1975 Vol 18 No.3 *Fire and Fire Control in Colonial Wilmington*

⁴⁵ Equal to 'Thirty Seven pounds 10 shillings sterling money' - *The Wilmington Town Book 1743-1778*

⁴⁶ Coin valued according to a proclamation issued by Queen Anne on 18th June 1704 and in effect until 1775.

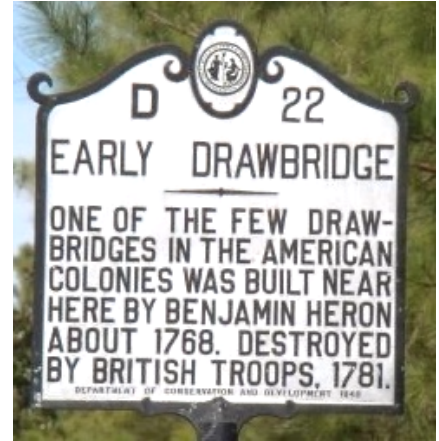
⁴⁷ *The Wilmington Town Book 1743-1778*

⁴⁸ Three of the men he appointed as Clerks were suspected of extortion and corruption.

⁴⁹ Rebels wanted better economic conditions for all, not a system benefiting often corrupt colonial officials.

Heron's bridge⁵⁰

In 1764 Benjamin served as a Commissioner of Pilotage for the Cape Fear River and was a member of the North Carolina Council from 1764 to 1769⁵¹. Access to Wilmington's port was often hampered by poor roads and difficulties crossing rivers and swamps. Benjamin and his neighbouring planters were some of the affected producers, so in 1766 he petitioned the General Assembly of North Carolina for permission to build the first drawbridge in the colony. Known as *Heron's Bridge*, it spanned the Northeast Cape Fear River, near his ferry and his property on both sides of the river. Permission to erect the bridge was granted on the condition he built it at his own expense (the builders most likely would have been enslaved labourers), but that the bridge would form part of his heritable estate. He was given permission to collect the toll money from bridge users and to disallow anyone from building a bridge or operating a ferry within 6 miles (about 9.5 kms) of his bridge. The bridge operated until 1781 when it was burned by British troops. Benjamin also owned properties in Wilmington which he leased out.



History marker indicating the **Location of Heron's Bridge**: on Castle Hayne Road (U.S. 117) north of Castle Hayne in New Hanover County North Carolina. Source: The Historical Marker Database

Enslaved plantation workers in Cape Fear

Benjamin's plantations

These various official positions enabled Benjamin to become the owner of four plantations in the Wilmington area. These included *Marl Bluff*, *Mulberry*⁵², *Mount Blake*, and *Four Mile House* and were situated between Wilmington and the Cape Fear River. The total area of his plantations was more than 2000 acres (809 ha). He also had 56 enslaved workers⁵³ and an annual income of over £500 sterling⁵⁴. More income came from the labour of his skilled enslaved workers, for example carpenters, masons, builders and sailors whom he could hire out.⁵⁵

The products from longleaf pine



Extraction of resin from the long leaf pine. Image: <https://www.ourstate.com/longleaf-pine/>

The pine plantations consisted of 100-foot-tall native longleaf pine trees and apart from the timber, the trees were mostly valued for the other essential resources for Britain's naval industry (including the slave trade), such as tar, pitch and turpentine. Enslaved Africans were the labour force and had to extract the pine resin. When heated, the resin produced pine-tar⁵⁶, used for preserving ships' masts, sails and ropes. When the resin was boiled, it produced pitch which was used to waterproof and prevent leakage in the bottom and sides of ships⁵⁷. Turpentine was another important by-product made by distilling the resin. It was used as a water repellent for cloth

⁵⁰ Heron's Bridge went by many other names after Benjamin's death in 1770. In 1781 during the Revolutionary War, the British partially burned it down to protect Wilmington from the Americans. After the war it was repaired by later owners.

⁵¹ (mosaicnc.org/name/3884)

⁵² A gift from his father-in-law Job Howes whose daughter Mary, Benjamin married in 1755

⁵³ Trinkley, Michael and Hacker, Debi: Table showing the Wealth of North Carolina's Royal Councillors from the Cape Fear area *African American Lives on the Lower Cape Fear River in the late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries...* (2018)

⁵⁴ *Historical Synopsis and Archaeological Reconnaissance of Orton and Kendal Plantations, Brunswick County, North Carolina*. Prepared by Michael Trinkley, Ph.D. and Debi Hacker with contributions by Sarah Fick

⁵⁵ "By the 1800s, black people in Wilmington outnumbered white people 2 to 1. The town benefited due to the abilities of enslaved peoples' trades. Professional skills of enslaved people, like carpentry, masonry, and construction, as well as skill in sailing and boating, made Wilmington grow and succeed as a city." *The Growth of Slavery in North Carolina*. NCPedia. Accessed Dec 19th 2024 (<https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/growth-slavery-north>)

⁵⁶ Hence North Carolina's moniker of the Tar Heel State. "The nickname stuck, as one tale has it, when the gluey stuff met poor workers' bare feet in farms and distilleries." Kenny, Andrew (<https://www.ourstate.com/longleaf-pine>)

⁵⁷ (<https://northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/naval-stores>)

and leather⁵⁸ and before 1860 when kerosene was available, turpentine produced by enslaved Africans was used for lighting in homes, public buildings, and streets.

Growing rice

As the exploited pine forests soon began to recede from the coast⁵⁹, rice farming was attempted in the remnant swampy land. But unlike in South Carolina, Cape Fear rice was not a particularly profitable crop compared to supplying naval stores. However, Benjamin produced some rice and probably also grew crops and ran cattle.

"Even as late as just prior to the Revolution, the detailed accounts existing for Benjamin Heron reveal that while he owned a large, and very profitable, plantation 37% of his returns came from tar and 17% came from turpentine. While he was one of the few planters on the Lower Cape Fear at the time with the resources to invest in rice, only 6% of his return came from this product."⁶⁰

To grow rice, a crop the British were not experienced with, there was a specialized market in trafficking enslaved people from the west coast of Africa, particularly areas of the Gold Coast such as Ghana where rice was a dietary staple. Africans from that area had the skills and knowledge in rice growing and so were in great demand in the southern colonies.

Working conditions

Wilful indifference to human rights and historical prejudice were nurtured, often by the clergy and bogus 'scientific' investigations that declared Africans a sub-species of humanity, providing justification for white people to own, control and use enslaved people as they wished. Whether work was on the pine plantations or in the rice fields, for the enslaved it was hot, sweaty and exhausting work from dawn till dusk:

"Slaves near the Tar and Cape Fear Rivers worked in the production of naval stores. Many slaves were forced to spend numerous hours in swampy environments rendering resins over open fires to create tar and pitch. The largest population of slaves was found in the counties of Brunswick and New Hanover. Rice was a predominant cash crop in the Wilmington area. Rice planting was a long and arduous process under very hot and humid conditions" (Winer, Samantha⁶¹)

Gold-Coast SLAVES
FOR SALE.
On TUESDAY the 16th instant,
On board the Ship **COMMERCE**, Captain
Thomas Morton, directly from the **GOLD-**
COAST,
A CARGO of upwards of
200 prime SLAVES.
Fisher & Edwards.

Advertisement for sale of Gold Coast enslaved Africans. Source: *South Carolina Weekly Gazette* 6/8/1785



African American workers on a Cape Fear rice plantation, etching, date and artist unknown. Source: Library of Congress

⁵⁸ (<https://northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/naval-stores>)

⁵⁹ "Thanks to a combination of over-harvesting and ecosystem changes, the longleaf pine population shrank from 90 million acres in the Southeast to less than two million at the turn of the millennium. Of that sum, perhaps 500 acres in North Carolina is virgin, old-growth longleaf." (<https://www.ourstate.com/longleaf-pine>)

⁶⁰ (Wood 2004:204-205) Historical Synopsis and Archaeological Reconnaissance of Orton and Kendal Plantations Brunswick County, North Carolina (Chicora Research Contribution 546) 2012

⁶¹ "The work week was five and a half days, sunup to sundown. Children and the elderly often worked in the vegetable gardens and took care of the livestock. The majority of the enslaved population lived in huts or log cabins..... Some slaves were fortunate enough to receive ample rations from their masters, others were fed the bare minimum. Slaves typically received two suits of clothes throughout the year..... Children's clothes were commonly made of old flour or gunny sacks. Clothing was commonly given out at Christmas." Winer, Samantha: *A brief history of slavery in North Carolina, North Carolina Runaway Slave Advertisements, 1751-1840* (<https://dlas.uncg.edu/notices/history/>)

"Rice cultivation was very labor intensive, as well as notoriously hard and unhealthy.(nearly all) Cape Fear rice planters left their plantations and their enslaved laborers in the hands of an overseer for long periods during the summer to avoid malaria, yellow fever and other mosquito-borne diseases. During most of the year, those rice planters resided at their townhouses in Wilmington Because of a rice crop's special demands, Cape Fear planters generally considered it unrealistic to grow rice unless they were wealthy enough to employ at least 50 enslaved laborers. They relied on those African and African American workers to tend their fields and to build and manage the extensive systems of ditches, levees and water gates that were necessary in order to harness the river's tidal flow for rice cultivation." (Cecelski, David⁶²)

Dependence on enslaved labour

From the beginning of European colonisation of the east coast of North America, there had been slavery in North Carolina like the other American colonies. Enslaved people were traded from the West Indies and other Caribbean colonies as well as many directly from Africa to be agricultural workers and domestic servants. The following excerpts briefly describe how dependent the economy was on slavery and how embedded slavery was in the culture of colonialism:

"Cape Fear residents were far more likely to own slaves during the colonial period than were families elsewhere in North Carolina. In fact, the Lower Cape Fear was the only region in North Carolina where enslaved Africans made up most of the population. While land ownership might provide economic competence and even independence, the ownership of slaves indicated 'mastery over social inferiors' – both white and black. Most of these slaves in the Lower Cape Fear, about 73%, lived on plantations with 20 or more slaves, and more than 87% lived on plantations with 10 or more. This suggests the presence of large and relatively stable black communities along the Cape Fear River." (Trinkley, Hacker and Frick⁶³)

"By 1767, there were about 40,000 enslaved people in the colony. About 90 percent of these enslaved people were field workers who performed agricultural jobs. The remaining 10 percent were mainly domestic workers, and a small number worked as artisans in skilled trades, such as butchering, carpentry, and tanning."⁶⁴

Laws to control enslaved people

Across the 17th and 18th centuries colonies in America variously enacted laws to legitimise slavery⁶⁵ and as the population of enslaved people grew⁶⁶, created increasingly tougher laws to keep social 'order'. In Wilmington, punishment for breaking these laws included being put in the stocks or given 30 lashes at the public whipping post as recorded in the *Wilmington Town Book 1743 - 1778*⁶⁷

ORDERED that any Slave or Slaves that shall be found playing or making a noise in the Streets so as to Disturb any of the Inhabitants of this Town every slave so offending shall receive at the publick Whipping Post thirty lashes on his or her bare back, unless the owners of such slave or slaves shall pay to the Commissioners the sum of Five Shillings Proclamation money.

In 1715 the first law in North Carolina to control enslaved people was the North Carolina Slave Code which directed that anytime an enslaved person left the plantation they must carry a ticket from their enslaver stating their reason for travel and their destination. The Code also made gathering in groups illegal, even for religious practice, and there were curfews at night. To further limit enslaved people's independence, laws were enacted preventing enslaved people from owning livestock or carrying guns, even for hunting, without their enslaver's permission. Manumission (freeing of enslaved people) was also made very difficult: it could only be granted for "meritorious services," which then had to be approved by the county court.⁶⁸ Rebellions against these unjust laws were severely put down and followed by even harsher laws. Such as in 1739 in South Carolina the Stono

⁶² (<https://davidcecelski.com/2018/11/30/the-road-to-the-cape-fear-susan-johnsons-diary-part-8/>)

⁶³ *Historical Synopsis and Archaeological Reconnaissance of Orton and Kendal Plantations, Brunswick County, North Carolina*. Chicora Foundation, Inc. Prepared by Michael Trinkley, Ph.D. and Debi Hacker with contributions by Sarah Fick

⁶⁴ *The Growth of Slavery in North Carolina*. NCpedia. Accessed 17/12/2024. (<https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/growth-slavery-north>).

⁶⁵ "1641 Massachusetts Colony formally legalizes slavery for both Blacks and Indians. It is the first English colony to do so. This law is later used in the Articles of the New England Confederation. The statute is eventually adopted by all of the colonies" (<http://americanabolitionists.com/>)

⁶⁶ "1750s: On average, 7,500 Africans are imported and sold into slavery every year in the colonies. The total slave population in the colonies is 236,420, including 206,198 in the southern colonies and 30,222 in the northern colonies. Slaves comprise 20% of the colonial population." (<https://worldhistoryedu.com/slavery-in-america-timeline/>) "By 1715 the black population made up about sixty percent of the colony's total population. This marked another distinctive feature of South Carolina, for it was the only colony in English North America where this proportion existed." (<https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/slavery/>)

⁶⁷ *Wilmington Town Book 1743 - 1778* ed. by Donald R. Lennon and Ida Brooks Kellum 1973

⁶⁸ <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/growth-slavery-north> *The Growth of Slavery in North Carolina - Colonial legacies*

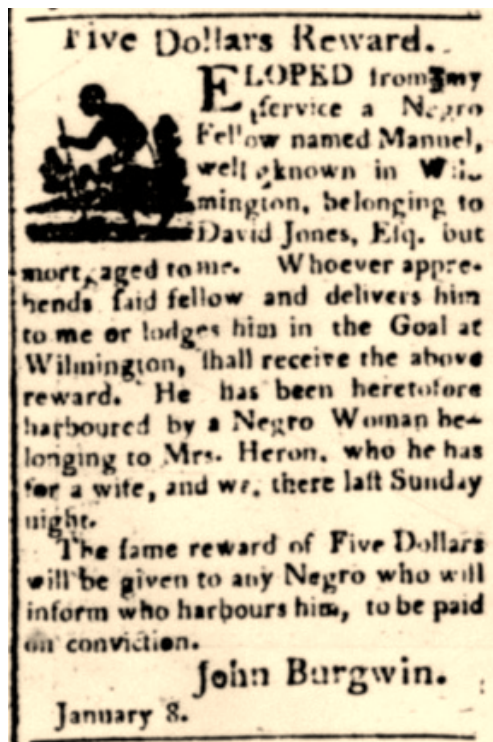
Rebellion⁶⁹ was one of the largest and bloodiest slave uprisings in the colonies and was brutally suppressed. This led to harsher laws and greater restrictions on enslaved people in South Carolina⁷⁰.

'Runaway Slaves'

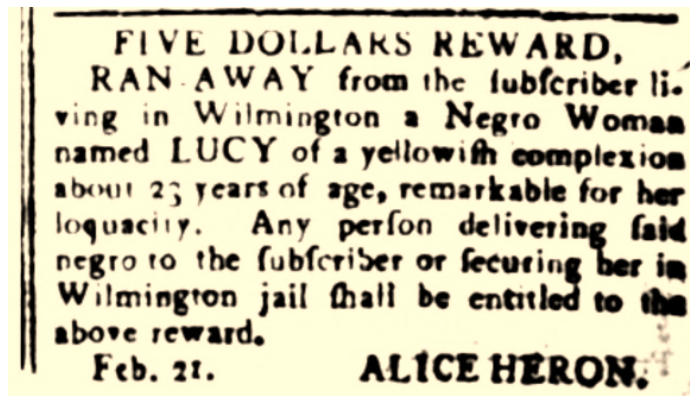
Laws dealing with 'runaway slaves' were extremely harsh and varied from time to time. The 1715 Code required white people to help capture enslaved people who were seeking freedom. In the 1740s, if an escapee refused to surrender, he could be shot with no punishment to the shooter. Enslavers would be foolish to disable or lose a valuable worker in this way, however if the enslaved person had no or little monetary value, for example if they were elderly, disabled or generally troublesome or inefficient, their life could be seriously at risk should they try to seek their freedom.

"In the Lower Cape Fear region, special courts were developed where enslaved Black people often were found guilty on a mere accusation alone. White officials publicly executed enslaved Black people accused of running away or charged with other crimes, generating terror to deter other Black people from escaping. In 1768, after two enslaved men named Jonny and Quamino were hanged and decapitated after being charged with robbery, white officials in Wilmington put their heads on display for the public to see."⁷¹

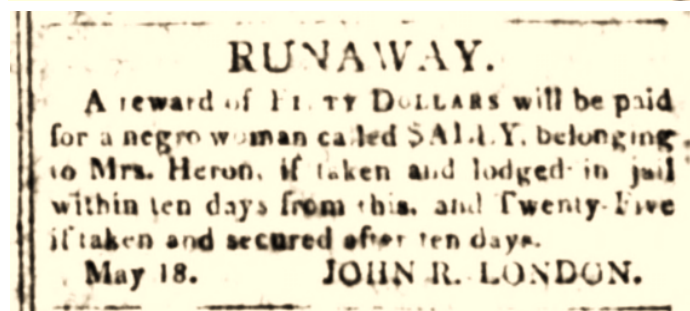
Why would an enslaved person risk punishment, injury, torture, or even death trying to leave their enslaver? Possibly to reunite with a loved one - a spouse (as in the advertisement below left), a child or a parent. Perhaps to seek or provide extra food or other items, or maybe to escape abuse at the plantation. From these advertisements it seems Benjamin's second wife Alice Heron had trouble keeping her enslaved women, Sally and Lucy, on her property.



Five Dollars Reward.
ELOPED from my service a Negro Fellow named Manuel, well known in Wilmington, belonging to David Jones, Esq. but more aged to me. Whoever apprehends said fellow and delivers him to me or lodges him in the Goal at Wilmington, shall receive the above reward. He has been heretofore harboured by a Negro Woman belonging to Mrs. Heron, who he has for a wife, and was there last Sunday night.
The same reward of Five Dollars will be given to any Negro who will inform who harbours him, to be paid on conviction.
John Burgwin.
January 8.



FIVE DOLLARS REWARD,
RAN AWAY from the subscriber living in Wilmington a Negro Woman named **LUCY** of a yellowish complexion about 23 years of age, remarkable for her loquacity. Any person delivering said negro to the subscriber or securing her in Wilmington jail shall be entitled to the above reward.
Feb. 21. **ALICE HERON.**



RUNAWAY.
A reward of **FIFTY DOLLARS** will be paid for a negro woman called **SALLY**, belonging to Mrs. Heron, if taken and lodged in jail within ten days from this, and Twenty-Five if taken and secured after ten days.
May 18. **JOHN R. LONDON.**

Advertisements in the *Wilmington Gazette* concerning Benjamin's second wife, Alice Heron. Above left: 9/1/1800. Above right: 21/2/1809 and below right: 18/5/1812

Ensuring supply of enslaved people

As slave numbers grew, colonists wanted to ensure complete control over the sustainability of their workforce:

"colonies, mainly Virginia and the Carolinas, set about establishing the economic structure that would establish slavery as not only an economic benefit but also one of property. And under English common law, property was a sacred right that governments had limited authority in repressing. By the 1740s, chattel slavery existed in every North America colony and the practice of breeding slaves – it was cheaper to claim the children of

⁶⁹ A "large slave uprising on September 9, 1739, near the Stono River, 20 miles (30 km) southwest of Charleston, South Carolina. Slaves gathered, raided a firearms shop, and headed south, killing more than 20 white people as they went. Other slaves joined the rebellion until the group reached about 60 members. The white community set out in armed pursuit, and by dusk half the slaves were dead and half had escaped; most were eventually captured and executed. The slaves may have been hoping to reach St. Augustine, Florida, where the Spanish were offering freedom and land to any fugitive slave. White colonists quickly passed a Negro Act that further limited slave privileges." (<https://www.britannica.com/event/Stono-rebellion>)

⁷⁰ For example, enslavers were prohibited from teaching the enslaved to read or write. (<https://www.americanhistorycentral.com/entries/stono-rebellion-1739/>)

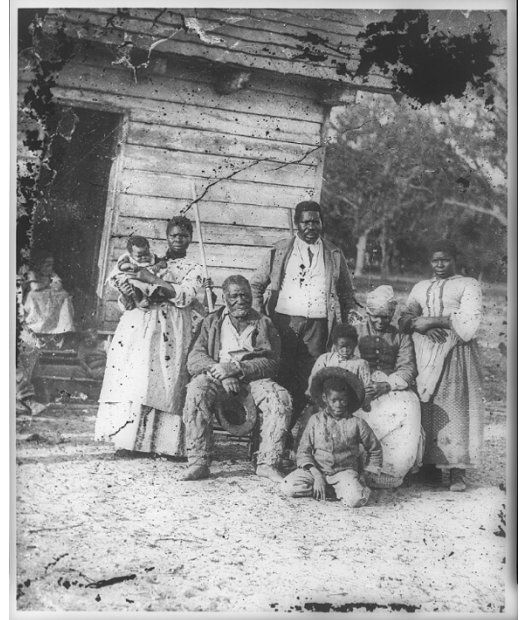
⁷¹ (<https://ejournal.org/report/transatlantic-slave-trade/carolinas/#resistance-to-enslavement>)

currently enslaved people as property than to purchase new arrivals – became an economic incentive unto itself." (Zielinski, Adam E ⁷²)

Gradual changes over the late 18th and well into the 19th century, through anti-slavery legislation, would threaten the enslavers' supply even more, such as the 1794 Slave Trade Act banning American ships from participating in the slave trade and banning the export of slaves in foreign ships. As overseas supply became restricted there was even greater impetus to produce one's own enslaved people.

'Breeding' enslaved workers

For relief from the harsh working conditions on the plantations, social occasions were organised whereby enslaved men could meet enslaved women, form relationships and thereby produce future workers. Enslavers would encourage what they regarded as advantageous, meaning profitable, sexual relationships between their enslaved people, matching those with ideal physical attributes of strength, size and stamina, in order to 'breed' valuable future workers. Enslavers had the power to approve or disallow partnerships,⁷³ and therefore could discourage any that didn't suit their purposes. And this is where enslaved women were doubly abused - enslaved men could appeal to their enslavers who held this power, to force a sexual arrangement with a non-consenting enslaved woman.



Five generations on James Joyner Smith's Plantation, Beaufort, South Carolina 1862 Photo: O'Sullivan, Timothy H. Source: Library of Congress.

Charles Heron Jnr. (b1752)

Death of Benjamin Heron

In 1769, with his pregnant second wife and two of his daughters, Benjamin sailed to England, initially for only one year for health reasons (maybe seeking better medical care in England and milder weather). But in June the following year, whilst at Islington in London, he fell ill and died at age 48. Probably because he was still a colonial official, he was buried in Windsor Castle churchyard⁷⁴. Three months later his new baby daughter also died at Bristol.

Benjamin's nephew **Charles Heron Jnr.** (b1752 Somerset, son of Benjamin's brother **Charles Heron** 1724-1782 who in England facilitated Benjamin's purchase of Wilmington's first fire engine) was living with him in North Carolina. In October 1770 after Benjamin's death was confirmed, young Charles was appointed to officiate in his place as Auditor for North Carolina⁷⁵, although how long his appointment lasted, I do not know. In 1770 Charles also received £600 from Benjamin's will:

"Charles Heron Junr my nephew now living with me Exclusive of the aforementioned Legacy of One hundred Pounds in my Will mentioned, five hundred Pounds of Great Britain Sterling"⁷⁶

What happened to Charles?

With the help of Benjamin, Charles Jnr seems to have embedded himself comfortably in North Carolina and cut all ties with his family in England. These excerpts from the letters⁷⁷ written by his aunt **Ann Elliott** (nee Heron 1716-1784) in Portsmouth to her niece, Benjamin's daughter Mary Heron Hooper, reveal young Charles's lack of communication with his family back home (original spellings given):

"1773 September

..... Pray tell my nephew I wonder he does not recolect he has A Father, Mother & Sisters⁷⁸ in England - I beg you will urge him to write to them, what can be the reason he does not. You my Dear Girl tell me in your Lr

⁷² Zielinski, Adam E - *Slavery in the Colonies: The British Position on Slavery in the Era of Revolution* (<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/slavery-in-the-colonies>)

⁷³ "... African American marriages, accepted as de facto in the Old South but technically extra-legal." were legitimized after the Civil War. *Black Codes 1865-67* Zuczek, Richard. (<https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/black-codes/>)

⁷⁴ June 18th Died in Islington after two days illness, buried Windsor Castle churchyard under pavement between the south doors and the east cloisters of St Georges Chapel. According to family notes in the Bodleian Library, headstones were removed by order of George III but bodies not disturbed.

⁷⁵ Colonial and State Records of North Carolina - Minutes of the North Carolina Governor's Council October 16th - 18th 1770

⁷⁶ Will of Benjamin Heron 1768, proved 1770

⁷⁷ Letters from Ann Elliott (nee Heron 1716-1784) at 22 Penny Street Portsmouth to her niece Mary Heron in North Carolina 1773 and 1775. Copies at the Bodleian Library Oxford

⁷⁸ His parents Charles Heron (1724-1804), Cecilia Rogers (1822-1782) and sisters Frances, Ann, Mary and Cecilia.

he is abt 50 mile from you in the Mercantel way - but you omitted the particulars - Is He for Him Self or who is He with, what is the Place called....."

"1775 January 28

..... Your next Parigraft relates to my Nephew Charles. You say he has not been well, hope He is recovered & like to do well in Buisness but my Dear what can possess him that he does not write to us, in Perticular his Father & Mother who live yet at Twiford near Winchester, with Fanny & Nancy⁷⁹ at home....."

I wonder if Ann Elliott ever received any helpful information from her niece about young Charles. I have been unable to find anything about him after this last-mentioned letter. Was Mary deliberately keeping details of Charles' business activities from her aunt because these may have involved slavery? Also, the letters were written when the American Revolution was brewing. Could Charles have been involved on the American side of the Revolution against his native country? Are these the reasons why he didn't write to his parents?

In the same letter of 1775, aware of the increasingly turbulent times, Ann Elliott also writes:

".....Never a Day passes without A care of our American Relatives & the troubells that inviron You. All grieves me very much God of his infinite mercy grant all soon may be quiet & Tranquil. You have my most Devout Prayers for that Peace I cannot give, if I could rule there would soon be an end to the Animosity that invirons our Dear much Loved Friends....."



Ann Elliott, Benjamin's sister at Portsmouth. She wrote to her niece Mary Heron Hooper in the 1770s. Painted copy in the Rogers Family Papers,

Slavery and the American Revolution (1775 - 1783)

Promise of freedom - as a weapon

Wilful ignorance of human rights and historical prejudice (nurtured by the clergy and bogus 'scientific' investigations that declared Africans a sub-species of humanity) provided justification for white people to own, control and use enslaved people as they wished. This was despite opposition to slavery gradually being argued and publicised, mostly by Quakers⁸⁰ and a few individuals in Britain and parts of America. In 1772 a court case in London found that slavery was not legitimate under English common law indicating that the anti-slavery movement was getting the attention of legislators in Britain. This sent alarm bells in colonial America and was a motivating factor for the Americans to rebel. During the revolutionary war two Royal Governor Proclamations (1775 and 1779), made promises that enslaved men would be granted their freedom if they escaped their plantations to assist the British army⁸¹. This had little to do with any British anti-slavery sentiment as much as it was used as an effective way to disrupt the rebels' economy and cause panic among the planters by depleting their labour force. But the southern states' fears that Britain would completely outlaw slavery, coupled with the northern colonies' temporary acceptance of slavery in the south, gave the revolutionaries cause for optimism and spurred them onwards.

However, the British government was not as adamantly anti-slavery as the colonials feared. Over the 1780s the transatlantic slave trade was more active than ever: about 78,000 enslaved people were brought to America each year and about half of the enslaved people were transported from Africa in British merchant ships.⁸²

⁷⁹ Fanny = Frances Evans (nee Heron 1749-1787); Nancy = probably Ann Young (nee Heron 1750-1800) the eldest daughters who didn't marry until 1779 & 1785 respectively.

⁸⁰ 1676 - Quaker William Edmondson, in Newport, Rhode Island, writes an anti-slavery letter to fellow Quakers in America; in Philadelphia, Germantown Mennonites issue an anti-slavery proclamation, written by Francis Daniel Pastorius declaring slavery is inconsistent with Christian principles; 1696 - at the Society of Friends (Quakers) Yearly Meeting, they declare their adamant opposition to the importation of slaves; 1700 - Chief Justice Samuel Sewall writes an anti-slavery document, *The Selling of Joseph; A Memorial*. He organizes an anti-slavery group called the Boston Committee of 1700; 1712 - Anti-slavery activist William Southby successfully lobbies the Pennsylvania colonial legislature to ban the importation of slaves. The law makes Pennsylvania the first colony to abolish slavery. (<http://americanabolitionists.com/>).

"Among the earliest to speak out against slavery's existence was John Woolman (1720-1772), a Quaker from Burlington County, New Jersey. Drawing from religious texts and the Enlightenment, which demanded thinkers use reason, Woolman challenged how an Englishmen could tolerate such cruelty and injustice to their fellow human beings?" Zielinski, Adam E. *Slavery in the Colonies: The British Position on Slavery in the Era of Revolution* - (<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/slavery-in-the-colonies>)

⁸¹ "By promising freedom, the British would potentially benefit in the short term by gaining thousands of laborers, carpenters, cooks, and scouts who could assist the army.""Very few black Americans were given muskets to march off into battle. However, it is notable that in a few instances this was indeed the case. When the British landed at Charleston, South Carolina in 1780, it sent mixed units containing African Americans into the city. The sight of former slaves now armed and fighting with the enemy terrified southern residents. It was a short-term victory for the former slaves, but its memory would loom large over the southern states and have dire consequences in the following generations." *Slavery in the Colonies: The British Position on Slavery in the Era of Revolution* - Zielinski, Adam E.

⁸² (britannica.com)

Inheriting enslaved people

Benjamin Heron married firstly **Mary Howe** (c1736 -1763) in c1757 in Wilmington. Her father **Job Howe** came from very wealthy plantation families, and it was he who gifted the ferry and the plantation *The Mulberry* to Benjamin as a wedding present. One of Mary's brothers was Major General Robert Howe, the highest-ranking Revolutionary officer in North Carolina but with a well-known reputation as a womanizer with many illegitimate children. When Job died (c1748), Robert inherited his father's large estate which included enslaved people as part of the 'property'. Mary was bequeathed:

"..... one Mourning⁸³ Being only to be purchased by my Executors out of the produce of the work of my Slaves"

Mary's sister Elizabeth Howe received:

*"..... my Mullatto⁸⁴ Girl called Hester and as many more of my Slaves as my Executors or any use good & substantial freeholders shall adjudge upon Oath to be worthy of the Value of five hundred pounds Sterling money to be Set apart for her at the Division of my S^d Slaves....."*⁸⁵

The Heron daughters' inheritance

Benjamin had three daughters and no surviving sons. By his first wife Mary Howe he had Mary and Elizabeth:

Mary Heron (1757 - 1820) the eldest child, inherited property from her father in 1770 including his main place of residence *The Mulberry* as well as *Marl Bluff*⁸⁶. She also inherited several enslaved people from her father, maternal grandfather and uncle, as noted in Benjamin's will of 1768:

"..... Job Howes⁸⁷ Grandfather to my Daughter Mary did by his last Will and Testament did Bequeath her a Negroe Wench called Phylis who has since had two Children and whose eldest Son Robert I bought at the Division of the said Job Howes Negroes I do therefore to make that family Compleat to my said Daughter Mary Give and bequeath to her the said Negroe Slave called Robert, as a Distinct Legacy from her Share of my Estate which three Negroe Children and their Mother together with the two left her by her Uncle Joseph Howes makes Six Slaves She will be entitled to in her own Right...."

In 1770, **Elizabeth Heron** (1762 - 1810) like her sister Mary, inherited property and people from her father - a plantation called *Mount Blake*, a ferry house, bridge (probably *Blossom's Ferry* and *Heron's Bridge*) and surrounding land which was next to her sister Mary's land.

Also from Benjamin's will:

"Joseph Howes Uncle to my Daughter Elizabeth did in his last Will and Testament bequeath my said Daughter two Negroes which is all she is at present Intitled to in her own Right, In order to make her my said Daughter Elizabeth equal to her Sister Mary I Give and bequeath to my said Daughter Elizabeth my Negroe Woman called Sue and her Son Simon together with Dorris and Poll, Nannys two Children."

Hiring out enslaved labour

Enslaved people were regarded as personal property to be moved around, cashed in or traded whenever it was convenient for the enslaver - treated no differently to livestock. They could also be hired out to work when extra funds were required, for example, to provide for white children's education or to pay off debts.

Benjamin's second wife was **Alice Marsden** (1746–1813) whom he married in 1765 at Wilmington. She was the daughter of **Rufus Marsden** (1695–1750) and **Alice Rigby** (1707-1759). Rufus was a local politician, Justice of the Peace, and owned a large plantation, other landholdings and a brigantine called the *John & William*. The will that Alice's mother made in 1755, instructs that her enslaved people are hired out to work to pay for her daughters' (Alice and Peggy) education.

Fifteen years later, from Benjamin's will, his wife Alice received:

"..... my House and all its furniture in Wilmington with my Negroe Slaves Gift Latham Blacksmith Tom Sarah and her two Children and the two Mulattoes Johnny and Katty, together with Sixteen hundred pounds Procl,⁸⁸ all my Plate, all my Table and sheeting Linnen One half my China with as much of the rest of my furniture out

⁸³ A funeral outfit presumably for her father's funeral.

⁸⁴ Person of mixed African and European ancestry

⁸⁵ Job Howe's Will of 1758

⁸⁶ "..... All that Tract or Parcel of Land called The Mulberry, including that Tract joining in that River and Given me by Mr Job Howes together with all that Tract or Parcel of Land called Marle Bluff which I bought of John Ashe Esq'. as low down as the Creek opposite the Mulberry House together with the Houses and remaining furniture after my Wife has Drawn her part" (Will of Benjamin Heron 1768 proved 1770)

⁸⁷ Howe variously spelled Howes

⁸⁸ proclamation money

of the Mulberry House as she thinks proper to the Amount of Sixty Pounds Procl. which shall be valued by my Executors which part of my Estate I would have Given her Immediately after my Death and what my ready Money Debts Pay or Wages may fall short at that time of making up the said Sum of £1600 Procl. I would have raised as soon as possible by the Work of all my Negroes "

Alice outlived Benjamin by 43 years. In her will made in 1811 (she died in 1813), enslaved people are still 'chattels' to be bequeathed to family members and whose labour or sale price was used to pay her debts:

"I give and bequeath unto my Nephew Marsden Campbell to himself executors the following negro slaves Primus Sally John Sarah and Lucy"

and the executors are:

"authorized and directed to sell and dispose of the above mentioned slaves if necessary for the payment of my debts of whatsoever nature."

Alice's only surviving child was daughter **Frances Heron** (1767-c1800) who was about 3 or 4 when her father Benjamin died. She shared with her half-sisters (Mary and Elizabeth) enslaved people from their father's will:

"..... Six hundred Pounds Procl., to be paid her Mother [Alice] for her use out of the Work of my Negroes within five years after my Death.... I Give Devise and bequeath all the remaining part of my Negroes amongst my three Children Mary, Elizabeth and Frances to be divided equally Share and share alike between them for ever."

In the name of God, Amen
I Alice Heron of Wilmington
North Carolina being of sound and perfect mind and
memory but considering the uncertainty of this mortal
life Do make and publish this my last Will and Testament
in manner and form following. (that is to say). First
I give and bequeath unto my Nephew Marsden Campbell to
himself executor administrator and assigns for ever the following
negro Slaves Primus Sally John Sarah and Lucy but
subject to the payment of all my just debts due or owing
at the time of my decease and my executors herein after named
are hereby authorized and directed to sell and dispose of the
above mentioned Slaves if necessary for the payment of
my debts of whatsoever nature -

Excerpt of the Will of Alice Heron made in 1811. Source: Ancestry.com

The Waddell and Swann inheritances

Every white generation benefitted from the previous generation's land and wealth produced by enslaved people. In about 1790 Frances Heron married plantation owner **Hugh Waddell Jr** (1766-1823) son of a wealthy merchant and military man, General Hugh Waddell (1734-1773). General Waddell also owned one of the largest estates on Cape Fear which, in his will of 1773,⁸⁹ was split between his two sons Hugh and John and would have included a very large number of enslaved people: "... lands in Rowan, Bladen and New Hanover Counties, and in slaves, town lots, goods and profits in trade, plate, &c...." (note how enslaved people are casually included here with his property).

In 1791 Frances and Hugh had a daughter **Frances Margaret Waddell** (1791-1870). Around 1800 Frances senior died and Hugh remarried. In 1810 he made a new will stating that his daughter Frances had been well provided for at her marriage (to **John Jones Swann**⁹⁰ in c1809), and he had since remarried and had several more children to provide for and so would not need to leave anything for Frances. But no matter, because in 1813 on the death of her grandmother Alice Heron, Frances inherited land in New Hanover County, which was to be sold and the money invested to provide for her future.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Waddell, Alfred Moore: *A Colonial Officer and his times 1754-1773: a biographical sketch of Gen. Hugh Waddell, of North Carolina* (1890)

⁹⁰ "Samuel Swann's daughter Jane (1740-1801) married her cousin, Frederick Jones of Virginia,She and her husband had one son, John Swann, and five daughters.....When he reached maturity, John Swann Jones took Swann as his surname, becoming John Jones Swann, in deference to the wishes of his grandfather's brother, John Swann, who died childless."
(<https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/swann-samuel>)

⁹¹ "I give and devise to my Executors hereinafter appointed all that tract of land lying between the Southern boundary of Wilmington and the Greenfield Plantation also all my land lying on or near Long Creek in the County of New Hanover to be sold and the money arising

In the 1857 will of Frances' husband **John Jones Swann** (1783-1857), two enslaved people, Robert and Hannah, were included in his 'property' (along with land, and livestock) to be sold to pay off his debts:

"..... I desire and direct that all my plantation and lands in the County of Brunswick, and also my cattle and livestock upon my said plantation (except my horses and mules) and also my negroes Robert, a cooper, and Hannah shall be sold by my Executor at such time and upon such terms as he may deem best and the proceeds applied first to the payment of my debts....."

Robert, who had a specialist skill as a cooper, would have brought a high price.

An enslaved person's life was totally dependent on the preferences and requirements of their enslavers and the enslavers' families - where they lived, whose control they were under, how they were treated, how they were employed and for how long.

Frances and John's son **Frederick Jones Swann** inherited: "..... my slaves Bob, John, Lisbon and Ben..." also "... my slaves Davis, Sandro, Josh and Abel in trust for the sole and separate use of my daughter **Rebecca Moore Swann**...."

Even the unborn were enslaved: ".....I give and bequeath to my executor my slave Phillis and her future increase⁹² born after this date, in trust for the sole and separate use of my daughter **Mary Hill**....." and " I give and bequeath to my daughter **Ann Ivy Swann**.....my slaves Fanny and her two children Abram and Lucy Ann, and all her future increase born after this date....."

John also wanted to make sure his children had their own servants: "I direct that my executor shall invest the sum of Four Hundred Dollars in the purchase of a little maidservant for my daughter **Fanny** which I give to her absolutely....." and " slaves..... George, Fred, Paris and Thomas in trust for the sole and separate use of my daughter.... Four Hundred Dollars in the purchase of a little maidservant to be held in trust for the sole and separate use of my daughter **Lucy E Waddell**" also ".... I give and bequeath to my children **Frederick, Rebecca, Ann and Fanny** as tenants in common my negro boy **William**, for a house servant."



Enslaved or recently freed women and babies outside slave cabins in South Carolina c1866. Source: Library of Congress

In a Codicil to John's will, the enslaved Hannah (I presume the same Hannah as above) he declared was not to be sold but to stay with his wife, as was the enslaved boy William:

"I give and bequeath my woman Hannah to my wife Frances M Swann absolutely I also give to her during her life, my negro boy William and after her death I give the said boy to my son Frederick J Swann solely and absolutely....."

Who was the "boy" William? How old was he? Where was his family?

Opposite is an example of the sale of a 7-year-old.

Bill of sale of "one Negro boy named Sanders aged about seven years" from James M. Nye to Robert Pugh. Ashe County, NC, 31st January 1837. Source: Printed & Manuscript African Americana, Swann galleries.com

State of North Carolina
Ashe County
3

Know all men by these presents that I James M Nye, for and in consideration of the sum of four hundred and fifty dollars to me in hand paid by Robert Pugh - hath bargained and sold unto the said Robert Pugh one negro boy named Sanders aged about seven years - to him the said Robert Pugh forever

Witness my hand and seal this the 31st day of January A.D. 1837

attest
R. Murdison.

James M. Nye
Robert Pugh

from the sale... to be loaned upon interest until it shall amount to \$1500 and then such sum to be expended by my Executors in the Improvement of my lots hereinafter devised in Trust to the use and benefit of my granddaughter Frances Swann." Will of Alice Heron 1811
⁹² My underlined emphasis

The Borough Plantation, Sumter County, South Carolina

Benjamin Heron's eldest daughter Mary, in 1778 married **Thomas Hooper** (1746c - 1798) a Wilmington and Charleston merchant, lawyer and judge (and son of Rev. William Hooper of Christ Church Boston and brother to William who was a signatory to the Declaration of Independence for North Carolina). Wilmington and the Cape Fear River area was Thomas and Mary's home until 1783 when Thomas was moved to Stateburg, South Carolina, as a county judge.

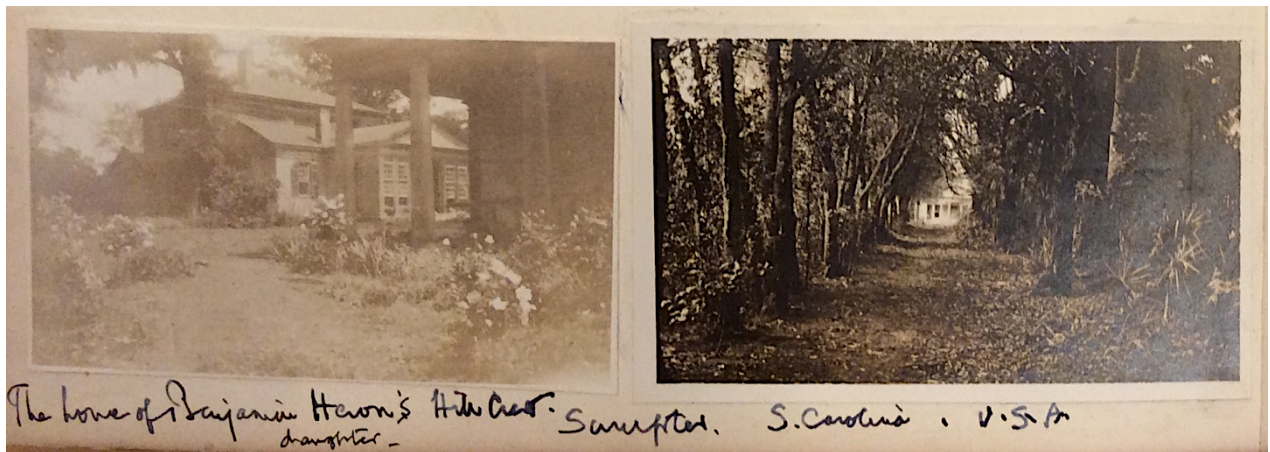
In 1792 Thomas bought the property *The Borough* (also known as *Hillcrest*, and now on the *National Register of Historic Places*⁹³) a prominently situated house on 75 acres (30 ha) and a cotton plantation of, at the time, 450 acres (182 ha), in Sumter County, South Carolina. It has been in the possession of the same family since then right up to the present. The *Historic American Buildings Survey* (1987) describes it as "An unusual plantation house of the late 18th and early 19th century, partly constructed of pisé-de-terre⁹⁴, with attractive features and dependencies."



Mrs. Hooper's house as shown in a plat dated June 12, 1809. Artist unknown (enlargement from photocopy of plat in the *Borough House* archives). Source: Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 1967

From 1800 the cotton planters of South Carolina prospered, and many rural mansions began appearing in the countryside around Stateburg. In the 1820s the area was described by the architect Robert Mills: "there is not a more desirable place for residence, either for health or society, in any part of the state" He added that the "affluence and hospitality" of the residents "give to the place a character of ease and dignity."⁹⁵

It was at this time that *The Borough* underwent an extensive upgrade. The original house was built c1758 in two storeys of timber frame construction. From 1821 the house underwent significant alterations and additions directed by Dr. William Wallace Anderson who married into the family in 1818. The old front porch was removed and a grand two-storey classically inspired front portico was added and included tall Ionic solid pine columns. The dependencies (out buildings) include: the School, Weaving House, Dry Well, Summer Kitchen, and the Cook's House, all using the rammed earth method. There is also the Doctor's Office, appearing as a classical temple in keeping with the house. Many more outbuildings such as barns, a carriage house, stables, a smokehouse, wash house, chicken house, chicken brooder, garage, woodshed, tool shed, pump house, and cistern were added at later dates right up into the 20th century using brick or timber building methods.



Early 20th century photographs of *The Borough* (*Hillcrest*) in a Rogers family album "The house of Benjamin Heron's daughter Hill Crest Sumter S. Carolina USA." Source: Rogers Family Papers,

⁹³ "Occupied by General Cornwallis as headquarters for a time during the Revolution. Occupied by General Greene as headquarters for his Continental Army, for a time during the Revolution.... Confederate General Richard Heron Anderson was born here, as was his brother, Dr. William Wallace Anderson (the younger), noted surgeon. The Honorable Joel R. Poinsett, statesman, diplomat and scientist, died here while on a visit in 1851. This was the home of Captain William Harrison Saunders, the first American in observation aviation to go over the German lines on a mission during World War I, and the first man from the U.S. Army to be both a pilot and an observer." Historic American Buildings Survey 1987

⁹⁴ Wings constructed of rammed earth in 1821

⁹⁵ Lockhart, Matthew A: *Stateburg 1783* (<https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/stateburg/>)

Pisé-de-terre (rammed earth) construction

In 1821, as well as the portico, side wings to the house and several outbuildings were added using pisé-de-terre construction. Enslaved people provided the labour. The construction method is described in the *Historic American Buildings Survey* (1987): firstly, the earth was dug on site, then the work consisted of:

".... the pounding of successive layers of red clay soil between wooden forms until monolithic walls of the required thickness and configuration were built up. (The soil used in this process must be moist enough to cohere when squeezed in the fist, and each three-inch [7.5cm] layer must be pounded hard before the next layer is added.) The forms used were only a few feet high and held about 15 to 18 inches [38cm to 45cm] apart by wooden timbers or joists. As the wall rose to the tops of the forms, the forms were raised, and more earth rammed.... Once completed, the exterior surfaces at the *Borough House* were coated with a stucco-like slurry of sand, lime, pebbles, and molasses called *pebble-dash* or *crepissage*. This composition was slung onto the walls with brooms so the impact would ensure a firm bond to the earth. Interior surfaces were finished by applying plaster directly to the earthen surfaces."



Left: *Borough House/Hillcrest* 1921. Source: Leiding, Harriet Kershaw *Historic Houses of South Carolina* 1921. Right: Dependencies northwest of main house, looking north along eastern boundary allee (the courtyard in middle of view used to be a chicken yard) Dependencies, from left to right: Smokehouse, wash house, chicken house, chicken brooder, Cook's house, and garage to right of tree. *Borough House* 1987. Photos: Historic American Buildings Survey. Source: Library of Congress

The grounds

At *The Borough*, the grounds include avenues of large trees both native and exotic, broad-walks, lawns, a driveway, a pecan orchard, and originally a racetrack. The Hooper tombs are also in the grounds. Mary Hooper was acknowledged as being responsible for the layout of the gardens - terraced and in a formal English (more French/Italian) pattern⁹⁶:

*"One-fourth of original gardens, which have unusual variety of old roses Magnificent live oaks and enormous crape myrtles line driveway. Some other oaks on grounds were planted in the 1930s from acorns from Heron property in Scotland, owned by relatives of Mrs. Hooper"*⁹⁷

No doubt the landscaping works, gardening and maintenance was all done by enslaved people. The plan below gives an idea of the size of the gardens alone:



"The Hooper Tombs contain the remains of Thomas Hooper and his wife, Mary Heron Hooper, who were the first occupants of the *Borough House* to begin to develop the house and its grounds. The tombs are located in the northwest corner of the present formal gardens whose outlines were first planned by Mrs. Hooper. The *Borough House* complex was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Stateburg Historic District in 1971 and as an individual site in 1972." Source: Library of Congress

⁹⁶ "There is also an area designated as 'Mrs. Hooper's garden' to the north of the house. From the looks of it (a small square), it is likely this was a kitchen garden containing vegetables and herbs, and its location may overlap the present kitchen garden..... Educated in England, Mrs. Hooper very likely remembered formal, geometrically designed gardens whose antecedents could be traced to France and Italy." *Historic American Buildings Survey* 1986

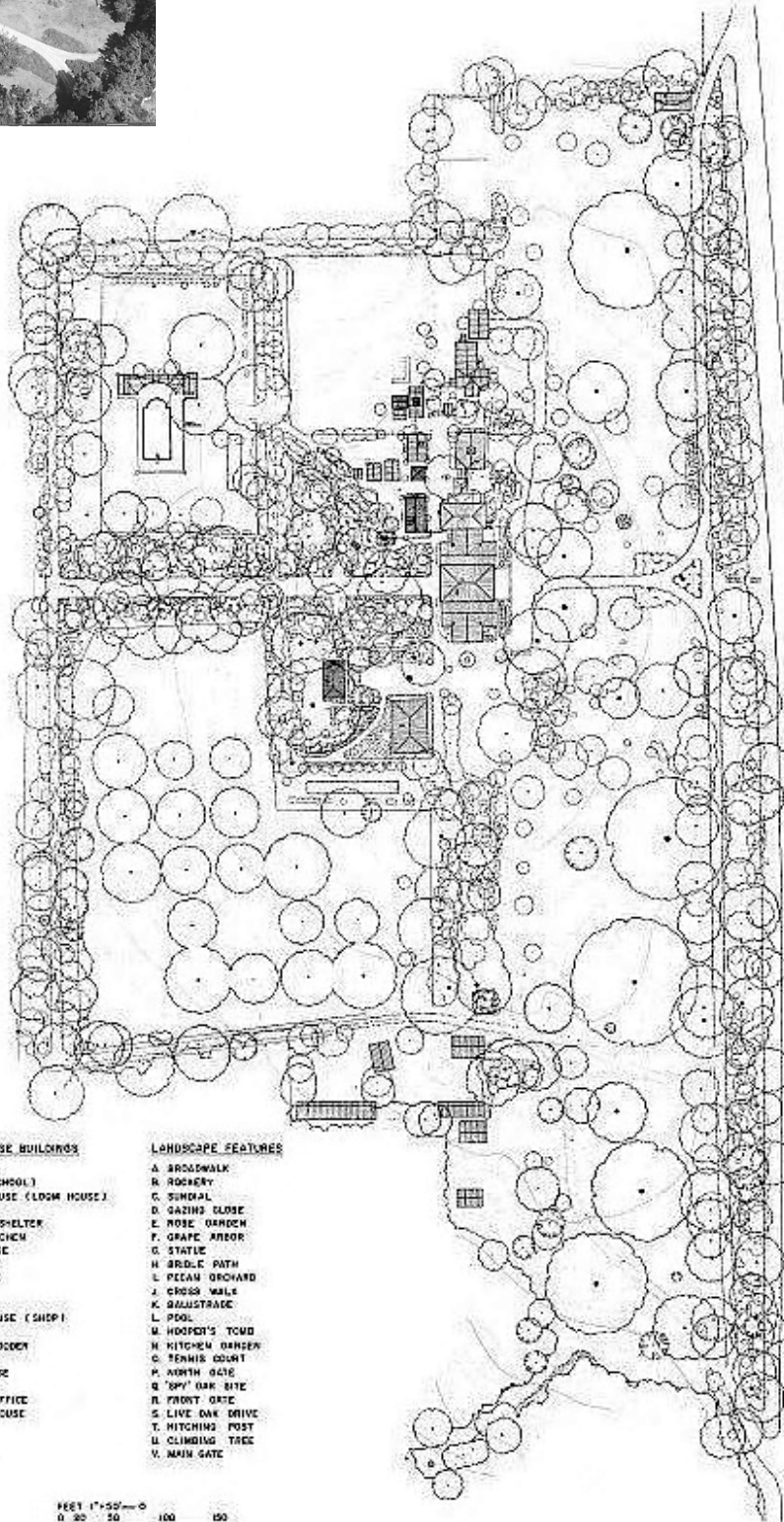
⁹⁷ *Bargaly* in Galloway. "During the 1930s a series of English oaks (*Quercus rober*) were added along the old drive; these were raised from acorns sent from the Duke of Bedford, who was then renting "Bargaly Paradise", an arboretum near Ayr, Scotland which once belonged to Andrew Heron, a family ancestor." *Historic American Buildings Survey* 1986



Borough House and dependencies 1979.
 Photo: William S. Anderson, source: Library of Congress.

Plan of Borough House and the gardens.

Source: <https://picryl.com/media>

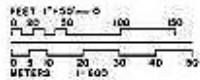


BOROUGH HOUSE BUILDINGS

- 1. MAIN HOUSE
- 2. LIBRARY (SCHOOL)
- 3. WEAVING HOUSE (LOOM HOUSE)
- 4. PLAYHOUSE
- 5. DRY WELL SHELTER
- 6. SUMMER KITCHEN
- 7. SMOKE HOUSE
- 8. WASH HOUSE
- 9. PUMP HOUSE
- 10. CISTERN
- 11. TOOL SHED
- 12. CHICKEN HOUSE (SHEEP)
- 13. CHICKEN BROODER
- 14. BARN
- 15. DOCK'S HOUSE
- 16. WOOD SHED
- 17. DOCTOR'S OFFICE
- 18. CARRIAGE HOUSE
- 19. BARN
- 20. STABLES
- 21. OLD WELL

LANDSCAPE FEATURES

- A. BRIDGEWALK
- B. ROSEBURY
- C. SUNDIAL
- D. GAZING GLOBE
- E. ROSE ARBOR
- F. GRAPE ARBOR
- G. STATUE
- H. BRIDGE PATH
- I. PECAN ORCHARD
- J. CROSS WALL
- K. GALUSTRACE
- L. POOL
- M. HOOVER'S TOMB
- N. KITCHEN GARDEN
- O. TENNIS COURT
- P. NORTH GATE
- Q. DRY DAK SITE
- R. FRONT DRIVE
- S. LIVE DAK DRIVE
- T. HITCHING POST
- U. CLIMBING TREE
- V. MAIN GATE



DESIGNED BY LORA J. SCHULTZ, MARCH 11 1986
 THE BOROUGH HOUSE
 RECORDING PROJECT SUMMER, 1986
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORIC

THE BOROUGH HOUSE

STATE ROUTE 241 STATE ROUTE 241 SUMTER COUNTY SOUTH CAROLINA

SC 362

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY Form 3 or 3D users

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Where many of the enslaved women worked.

Left, above and below: The Weaving (or Loom) House is a Greek Revival dependency of the *Borough House* plantation complex. Built of rammed earth c. 1821, the structure is one of six dependencies (in addition to portions of the main house) to be built of this material. Above right: The Kitchen-Storehouse, or Summer Kitchen, is another dependency of the *Borough House* plantation complex, also built of rammed earth in 1821.

The *Borough House* complex was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Stateburg Historic District in 1971 and as an individual site in 1972.

'Goods & Chattels'

After Thomas died in 1798, Mary Heron Hooper took ownership of *The Borough* house and plantation. When she died in 1820, an inventory and valuation was undertaken of her personal estate, '*Goods & Chattels*' etc. These included firstly, her household furniture, utensils, linen, silverware, carriage, harness and riding chair, gardening and other outdoor implements and materials, animals (horses, sheep, hogs and cattle) and lastly, "*Negroes*". Here the enslaved people are named, sex, age and relationships given, and of course their monetary value:

One negro Woman Named Lucky about 38 years old	£400
<u>Lucky's Children</u>	
Charles (a boy about 17 years old	550
Andrew, a boy " 15 "	400
Phoebe a girl " 11 "	300
Matilda, a girl " 7 "	200
Cromwell, a Negro Man about 60	200
Murriah, his wife " 56	200
<u>Murriah's Children</u>	
Cromwell, a Negro Man about 34	600
Billy, a Negro Man " 32	700
Jim, a boy " 15	400
Sally, a Negro Woman " 36	300
<u>Sally's Children</u>	
Maria, a Girl " 14	400
William, a boy " 10	275
Charity, a Girl " 5	200
Milley (a deformed child) 1	5
March, Sally's Husband about 33	700
Old March " 55	200
Crenah his wife " 33	400
<u>Crenah's Children</u>	
Judy, a Girl " 10	250

Lucy	"	7	200
Sally	"	3	150
Abram a child	"	1	100
Jack a Negro Man	"	42	450
Abram an Old Man with a wooden leg			25

Obviously, the more able bodied and of prime age an enslaved person was, the more productive their labour, and therefore the higher their monetary value. On the above list little Milley, a *'deformed child'* has the lowest value, able-bodied men in their 30s, the highest value.

You can also see enslaved people have been placed in family groups. However, in general in colonial America, these relationships were disrespected and ignored when it was convenient for the enslaver. Your spouse, parent, son or daughter could be taken from you to be sold at any time, especially if they were given a high value. One of the most stressful moments in an enslaved person's life was when a plantation owner died and his or her will directed that the enslaved families were split up, in the same way as household goods and property. Individuals were sold or bequeathed to a plantation elsewhere, possibly never to be seen again⁹⁸.

I do not know how Mary and Thomas Hooper treated their enslaved workers and families. However, below are the reflections of two former slaves from other plantations in South Carolina:

"Some people think that slaves had no feeling – that they bore their children as animals bear their young and that there was no heart-break when the children were torn from their parents or the mother taken from her brood to toil for a master in another state. But that isn't so."(Jennie Hill)

"They sell one of Mother's chillun once, and when she take on and cry about it, Marster say, "Stop that sniffing there if you don't want to get a whipping." She grieve and cry at night about it." (Savilla Burrell)⁹⁹

The Borough passes to the next generation

Elizabeth Heron (1762 - 1810) Mary Heron Hooper's sister, married **John McKenzie** (1762 - 1813?) in 1785 and they had two children, only one of whom reached adulthood. Not much is known about Elizabeth and John, exactly where they lived and when, or what they did for a living¹⁰⁰. However, their daughter **Mary Jane McKenzie** (1789 -1832) was adopted by her aunt, Elizabeth's sister Mary, possibly because the Hoopers had no children of their own, or that Mary Jane's mother was dead (1810) and likely her father by then.¹⁰¹ More on Mary Jane and family later.

"All men are created equal"



Left: Josiah Wedgwood's official emblem for the anti-slavery movement in England 1787 and a female variant from 1828. Wedgwood produced medallions for free distribution for members of the cause. Source: [researchgate.net](https://www.researchgate.net) and [webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk](https://www.webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

In 1776 the American Declaration of Independence that asserted "all men are created equal," led to questions asking how slavery could be reconciled with the new nation. Towards the end of the 18th century, the slave trade was also challenged by the intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment (arguing that liberty was the right of all individuals) which led more people to question the morality of slavery and inspired the formation of such organisations as the Abolition Society in Britain in 1787.

⁹⁸ "As the plantation system expanded across the Lower South, many enslaved people in North Carolina were 'sold south' to work on these large plantations. Enslaved people and families deeply feared this fate because it usually meant permanent separation from friends and family." (<https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/growth-slavery-north>)

⁹⁹ (<https://www.sciway.net/afam/slavery/flesh.html>)

¹⁰⁰ John McKenzie's father held positions as Crown Collector at two ports in the 1770s

¹⁰¹ Mary Jane McKenzie would have been at least 20 by 1810, but the actual dates of the 'adoption' I do not know.

Between 1777 and 1804 all of the states in the USA north of Maryland had abolished slavery. The 1794 Slave Trade Act signed by George Washington banned US ships from being used in the international slave trade and was strengthened further in 1800 by banning Americans from investment and employment in the international slave trade.¹⁰² In 1808 it was made a criminal offence for Americans to import or export enslaved people.

But in the UK it took until **1833** for the Slavery Abolition Act to become law, abolishing slavery in most of the British Empire.¹⁰³ In the same year the American Anti-Slavery Society, was formed which called for the immediate abolition of slavery within the United States. By **1840** they had 2,000 auxiliary societies, with between 150,000 to 200,000 members.¹⁰⁴

Economics over human rights

So, the abolition movement and the exposure of the immorality of slavery, was not a new idea. But in the southern states of America, when the plantation economic model and its subsequent privileged way of life for white people was at stake, abolition was fiercely rejected,¹⁰⁵ especially in North and South Carolina. The economic imperative (and greed) served to permit slaveholders to disassociate themselves from the human rights of Africans and other enslaved people. As a result, more conflict arose between the states whose economies had become dependent on enslaved labour (the south, whose interests were represented by the Democratic Party) and the states whose economies were much less affected (the north, represented by the Republican Party).

One of the largest slaveholders

Right: Dr William Wallace Anderson Snr. portrait in *Borough House*. Far right: Dr Anderson's Office, *Borough House Plantation* 1960
Source: Historic American Buildings Survey (Library of Congress).



Mary Jane McKenzie (mentioned earlier, niece of Mary Heron Hooper) married **Dr William Wallace Anderson** (1789-1864) in 1818 in South Carolina. When her aunt died in 1820, Mary Jane and her husband became the owners of *The Borough*. Dr Anderson was not only a plantation owner but was also a medical doctor. In 1829 he was accredited with being the first American to successfully remove a cancer from a jawbone, an operation he performed at his home office. One report says his patient was an enslaved African.¹⁰⁶

The Anderson's had 8 children in approximately 10 years¹⁰⁷, which must have been exhausting for Mary Jane, but of course there would have been plenty of unpaid nannies and housekeepers to do the hard work. In 1850 the Andersons had 128 enslaved people at *The Borough* and by 1860 they had 149 enslaved people, one of the largest slaveholders in the state.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² UK abolition of the Slave Trade Act abolishes slave trading throughout the British Empire.

¹⁰³ "... but on a gradual basis over the next six years. Legally frees 700,000 in the West Indies, 20,000 in Mauritius, and 40,000 in South Africa. The exceptions are the territories controlled by the East India Company and Ceylon."

(en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_abolition_of_slavery_and_serfdom#1830-1849) One of its major caveats "intended to appease the pro-slavery lobby was that West Indian slave-owners were to collectively receive compensation of £20 million to account for the 'confiscation of [their] property'. This amounted to 40% of government spending in 1833. The formerly enslaved population received no compensation." (https://historyofparliament.com/2024/08/28/1833-slavery-abolition-act/)

¹⁰⁴ (https://www.britannica.com/topic/American-Anti-Slavery-Society)

¹⁰⁵ "Despite these ideals, slavery remains entrenched, particularly in the southern states." (https://worldhistoryedu.com/slavery-in-america-timeline/) But antislavery sentiments had little effect on the centres of slavery themselves: the great plantations of the Deep South, the West Indies, and South America. (Britannica)

¹⁰⁶ "An account of this operation is given in *The American Journal of Medical Science*, Vol. 10 The patient was Tom, an African slave belonging to Colonel Thomas Sumter. Tom became so devoted to Doctor Anderson during the course of his treatment, that he begged the doctor to buy him, which he did. The operation was witnessed by several other doctors, and since chloroform had not been discovered, liberal drinks of whiskey were administered to Tom to ease the pain.....The medical office in which this operation took place, is still standing. It resembles a small Greek temple and is constructed of pisé de terre." *The State* 18/5/1958

¹⁰⁷ Ancestry records (https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/)

¹⁰⁸ Slave Schedules for Sumter County South Carolina

That year Abraham Lincoln was elected President, and it was known he objected to slavery (called a 'Black Republican'¹⁰⁹). The next year Civil War broke out.

Civil War (1861 - 1865) begins in South Carolina

Prior to the Civil War, there had been much agitation within the southern states, particularly South Carolina, to split from the Union and form a new southern nation. So, it was no surprise that South Carolina was the first state to secede from the Union declaring that Lincoln's "opinions and purposes are hostile to slavery"¹¹⁰.

When Dr William Wallace Anderson made his will in 1863¹¹¹, he specified that *"Should any of my Heirs, from Scruples of Conscience, refuse to be the owner of Slaves - He or She shall forfeit all rights to any portion of them, or to his or her share - and said share go to the rest of my Heirs above named."*

A threat, or reminder of whose side of the conflict they were supposed to be on? Dr Anderson had 131 enslaved people on the 'Appraisement of Negroes Belonging to the Estate of Dr W W Anderson' taken in 1864 after his death the previous year. Each enslaved person is recorded with name, age and dollar valuation, from 46-year-old Abram who is described as 'diseased' and valued at \$25 to 38-year-old Peterson, a blacksmith, who is valued at \$1800. Even several infants are valued at \$100 each.

Dr Anderson's eldest son **Richard Heron Anderson** (1821 - 1879) aka 'Fighting Dick', trained for the army at West Point graduating in 1842. He fought with the Confederate Army in the opening Civil War battle at Fort Sumter in 1861 as well as in many other significant campaigns throughout the war. He rose to Brigadier General serving under General Robert E Lee. As a career soldier Richard would have had little need for large numbers of enslaved people and yet not only his father's legacy included enslaved people but also his brother Edward bequeathed him enslaved people. In 1866 after the war, Richard tried cotton planting, perhaps with the labour of his family's previously enslaved labourers but went bankrupt.¹¹² He had no experience of running a plantation, and of course, you had to pay people to work for you now.



Richard Heron Anderson Source: findagrave.com

In 1862, Richard's brother, **Edward McKenzie Anderson** (1823 - 1862) made his will. In it he stated:

"I.....bequeath to my said brother Richard Heron, the family of Mulattoes I purchased from Charles Moody that is to say Willoughby and her three children, Larrisie(?¹¹³), William, Charlotte and Essex, and it is my will expressly that the said Family of Slaves shall be most kindly treated and every privilege allowed them that is consistent with the Laws of the State of South Carolina and furthermore it is my will and desire that the said Family be held subject to the same Limitations as are herein before named in the devise of my Plantation Hiwassee. Should the above named woman Larrisie prefer to live in the city of Augusta as I have always allowed her to do, I desire that she be permitted to do so"



Ruins in Columbia, South Carolina Photo: George N Barnard. On February 17, 1865, in the last months of the Civil War, much of Columbia was destroyed by fire. The city is only 33 miles from Stateburg. Source: Wikimedia Commons

The remainder of Edward's enslaved people were to be sold and the proceeds split between his brothers and sister. The kind treatment he requested for the 'mulatto' family perhaps made

¹⁰⁹ "At that time, the term "Black Republican" did not indicate an actual African American politician but referred to those members of the Republican Party who were sympathetic to the abolitionist movement." *The 1860 Campaign and the 'Black Republican President'* 6/10/2012 Bachmann (<https://archive.blogs.harvard.edu/>)

¹¹⁰ Power, Tracy J: *Civil War 1861-1865*

¹¹¹ In 1863 the Emancipation Proclamation attempted to abolish slavery throughout the USA.

¹¹² "Anderson settled in Stateburg, South Carolina in 1866, where he attempted to raise cotton. With no experience in farming, he was unsuccessful and went bankrupt in 1868. He then went to work for the South Carolina Railroad in Camden, South Carolina. After the death of his first wife, he married Martha Mellette in December of 1874. Anderson became an agent for the railroad, but was fired from his position in 1878. He then became a South Carolina state phosphate agent in 1879." (<https://civilwarintheeast.com/people/richard-anderson/>)

¹¹³ Illegible handwriting on Will of Edward Mackenzie Anderson

Edward feel he had relieved his conscience a little, but he was not willing to grant any one of them their real freedom, especially during this time of conflict and belief that the South would prevail. Hopefully Larrise was able to live where she preferred, until permanent post-war freedom was granted.

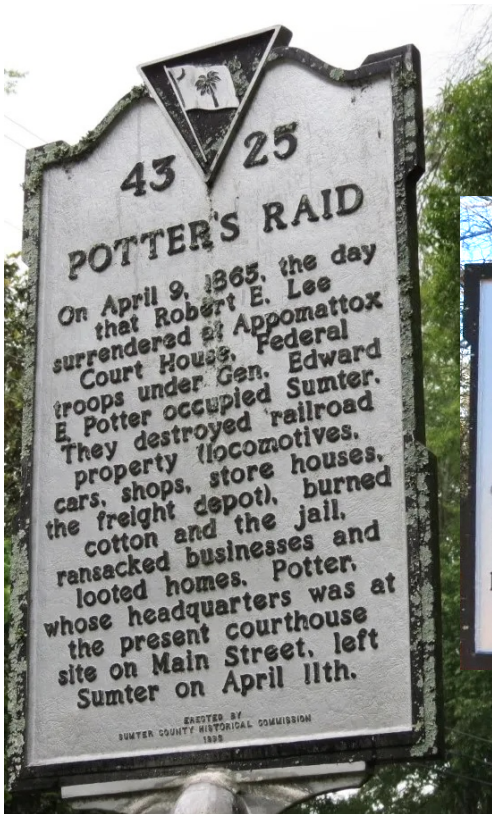
War's last assault ends at Stateburg

It was not until late 1864 to early 1865, towards the end of the war, that South Carolina experienced much destruction, mostly centred on Charleston and Columbia. Inland rural areas, such as Sumter County, were less affected. However, in April 1865 Unionist General Edward E. Potter¹¹⁴ (under the command of General Sherman) launched the final assault (also known as Potter's Raid) of the Civil War on the Sumter town of Stateburg, which was mostly burned and nearby areas bombarded. *The Borough*, was undamaged due to Potter intervening. He was a Mason and recognized that Dr. Anderson's (second) wife Elizabeth was a member of the Eastern Star, the women's branch of the Masons. He stopped the Union troops burning the house allowing them only to plunder the plantation.¹¹⁵ The website civilwartraveler.blog gives a little more detail:

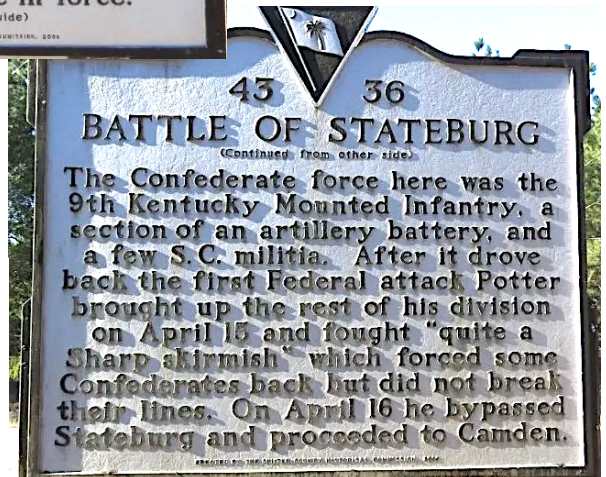
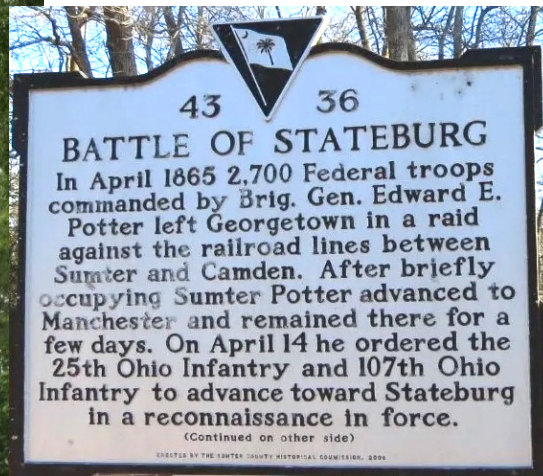
"April 19. The Federal infantry, supported by cavalry, followed the Confederate force sent to Stateburg and in the last cavalry saber charge of the war, overran the Southern pickets stationed beyond Beech Creek on Davis Hill and surprised the Confederates camped near the church of the Holy Cross in Stateburg. The Confederates were driven back and forced to take refuge in the woods and swamp. This is considered the last battle of the war in South Carolina."



Above: The Church of the Holy Cross, Stateburg, Sumter County, South Carolina c1860 painted by Francis D. Lee (of the architectural firm Jones and Lee) and presented to the Rev. J.J. Roberts, Rector, 1853-1866) exterior, general view. Source: Library of Congress. The *Borough Plantation* is across the road from this church.



Some of the Historical Markers Erected in 2006 by The Sumter County Historical Commission. Photos: civilwartraveler.blog



¹¹⁴ "Potter commanded one division of black troops and one division of white troops. His column snaked through the Pee Dee and Midlands, with skirmishes outside of Manning, Sumter, Camden and the hamlet of Stateburg in Sumter County. The Battle of Beech Creek, near Stateburg, was the last encounter of the Civil War in South Carolina." (<https://www.wadehamptoncamp.org/br-prtsc-0615.html>)

¹¹⁵ (<https://south-carolina-plantations.com/sumter/borough.html>)

The 'Reconstruction' period 1866-1877

In April 1865, the Civil War came to an end, and by December with the passing of the 13th Amendment by the Republican majority, slavery was finally outlawed throughout the USA - in theory at least. In the aftermath of war, the Southern states were in physical, economic and social upheaval: ruined cities and towns, food shortages and inflated prices, shortage of agricultural and urban labour, and in South Carolina, a large number of newly freed African Americans - at least half of the population.

During the war some enslaved people escaped the plantations to travel north, or to join the Union army. But after the war many remained on the plantations where they had been enslaved. But now they had to be paid employees. This was the case at *The Borough* plantation where many of the workers stayed on under contract for several years after the war. What were the terms of their particular contracts, I do not know.

The reluctance or inability of many to leave the plantations is understandable. For the majority of previously enslaved people, the South was the only place they had ever lived, and it was where they had their family and social connections. But as well as that, few had anything to help them establish a new independent life - no money, little if any education and no tools or implements by which to earn a living. All that most people had was their labour - agricultural or domestic.¹¹⁶

One step forward

To ensure that emancipation did occur, the Federal Government kept Union troops in the South and set up Freedmen's Bureaus. In 1868, with a narrow majority, South Carolina's government created a new Constitution which included removing the racial and property barriers to the right to vote. Also, a land commission was set up to help Black as well as poor white farmers purchase their own property. By 1876, an estimated 14,000 Black families in South Carolina owned their own farm, unlike in other states¹¹⁷.

Having voting rights enabled African Americans to take their rightful place in civic life and many freed men held political office.

Radical members of the first South Carolina legislature after the war. The numbers of African Americans in political office demonstrates how strong the desire was for equal rights in South Carolina. Source: Library of Congress



¹¹⁶ (<https://pressbooks.pub/ahistoryoftheunitedstates/chapter/the-civil-war-reconstruction-and-the-settlement-of-the-west-1860-1880/#7.6>)

¹¹⁷ "State governments, no longer under the control of the Democrats, could have taken bold action, but few did. South Carolina alone adopted 'a path-breaking program of land distribution overseen by a land commission with the power to purchase real estate and resell it on long-term credit.'" (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ajes.12233>)

Many steps back - the Black Codes

However, the white community felt threatened by the freedom and potential political power of their once enslaved workforce. In order to maintain the status quo, state regulations known as Black Codes¹¹⁸ were implemented in all southern states to keep African Americans 'in their place'. These were highly restrictive and unjust rules and punishments that made it practically impossible for most freed people to improve their situation. To what extent these Black Codes were applied or supported by the Andersons, I do not know. Research¹¹⁹ reveals the cotton plantation districts, being further from the cities, with political power dominated by a wealthy landed white elite, were slower to acknowledge and unwilling to accept Reconstruction and the subsequent social and economic changes it was meant to bring in.



Visit of the Ku-Klux 1872 by Frank Bellew Source: Library of Congress

The later 1860s and the 1870s were turbulent and violent times in South Carolina. Various Federal Acts and Amendments to combat the Black Codes and advance Reconstruction met with a strong white backlash. Continuous violence and intimidation (including of Blacks and their white supporters known as *Scalawags*) were perpetrated by the terrorist organisation the Ku Klux Klan, particularly prominent in South Carolina¹²⁰, and other white supremacist groups. Electoral fraud and suppression of the Black vote, corruption in local government, weakening leadership in the Federal government, and economic depression in the northern hemisphere, eventually led to almost the reverse of what the Civil War had hoped to achieve. Federal troops were withdrawn from the South in 1877, and

the Black Codes were reinstated. By the 1890s, these codes developed into what is known as the 'Jim Crow laws'¹²¹ legalising racial segregation and entrenching Black disadvantage. They were not repealed until the 1960s following civil rights protests.

To what degree, if any, were the Andersons and their descendants actively involved in either side of racial politics, I do not know. What was the particular way the Herons and Andersons organised, communicated with and treated their enslaved workers and families? Were they lenient or harsh, did they grant any concessions to individuals as Edward McKenzie Anderson did to the enslaved woman Larrisie(?) How were the infirm, disabled 'less valuable' people treated? How did slavery sit with their 'Christian' principles? Did they make fair contracts with their freed workers after 1865? Were they in favour of emancipation, including voting rights for African Americans? What were their views on racial segregation and white supremacists? Maybe others closer to this branch of the family may have the answers to these questions.

One writer, Charles Broadwell, wrote in 2010 that the "Sumter district had a reputation for tolerating free Negroes" and that "in 1816 there were more free Negroes than in any other rural area of South Carolina"¹²² and yet in the Reconstruction era the number of black members at the Church of the Holy Cross, Stateburg, the Andersons' church, dwindled from 91 in 1866 to 3 in 1879. Perhaps some families migrated north or

¹¹⁸ Examples include: "No person of color shall migrate into and reside in this state, unless, within twenty days after his arrival within the same, he shall enter into a bond with two freeholders as sureties"; "Servants shall not be absent from the premises without the permission of the master"; "Servants must assist their masters "in the defense of his own person, family, premises, or property"; no person of color could become an artisan, mechanic, or shopkeeper unless he obtained a license from the judge of the district court – a license that could cost \$100 or more; the crop lien system (sharecropping); agreements among Whites not to sell to Blacks and agreements not to hire the people working on another farmer's land; unemployment was regarded as vagrancy which could be punished by forced labour for no pay - basically a return to slavery.

¹¹⁹ Frieden, Jeffrey; Grossman, Richard; Lowery, Daniel: *Political and socioeconomic effects of Reconstruction in the American South* 2024 (<https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/political-and-socioeconomic-effects-reconstruction-american-south>)

¹²⁰ "Most famously in the (Federal) Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871, Congress authorized the president to declare counties in a state of insurrection, suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus, and use the military to arrest and hold vigilantes and terrorists for trial in federal court. With these tools the US government arrested hundreds of Klansmen in South Carolina and defeated the Klan there. But those efforts soon ground to a halt. Vigilantes changed their strategies and shed their disguises." (<https://www.nps.history.com/publications/nhl/theme-studies/reconstruction-era.pdf>)

¹²¹ Named after a black-face minstrel character Jim Crow - had become a pejorative term for African Americans since the early 19th century (Britannica.com)

¹²² Broadwell, Charles: *Old Houses on Hwy 261, Sumter County, SC The Stateburg Area Part #6 - The Sumter County Genealogical Society* 2010

changed to worship at another church nearby. For example, the Wayman Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, originally called the *Borough Church* and later, *Stateburg Church*. It was built c 1870 on land "donated by the Anderson and White families who were owners of historic *Borough Plantation*, located near the church."¹²³

William Ellison Jnr. (1790-1861) Anderson's African American neighbour

A couple of generations on, in the 1920s, Dr. William Wallace Anderson's great-granddaughter **Mary Virginia Saunders White** (1889-1959) took ownership of the plantation neighbouring her home at *The Borough*. Well before the Civil War, from 1838, this adjacent property was owned by William Ellison Jnr., an emancipated African American who became a slaveholder himself¹²⁴ (born "April"¹²⁵ into slavery of an enslaved mother and a white slaveholder father, William Ellison.) When he was an enslaved boy, William Jnr. learned to repair and make cotton gins. He became a master gin-wright and obtained his freedom. In 1822 he owned a cotton-gin shop on the main road near the cotton planters. With his technical and business skills William was eventually able to purchase the plantation and house next to the Andersons known at different times as *Miller House*¹²⁶, *Wisdom Hall* and then *Ellison House*. Using enslaved labour, he made a lot of money growing cotton as well as making and repairing cotton gins for the white community (some of whom tried to avoid paying him).¹²⁷

The Andersons knew William Ellison and his family because not only were they neighbours, but William Wallace Anderson was also the Ellison's doctor. A medical book of 1824 records William having a tooth pulled by Dr. Anderson, for the price of \$1. In the same year, this relationship may have helped the Ellisons gain permission to purchase a pew in the local church where Dr Anderson was a vestryman, the nearby Church of the Holy Cross¹²⁸. The Ellisons' pew was on the same floor (but at the back) as the wealthy white planter slaveholders, unlike other African Americans (free and enslaved) and poorer whites who had to sit in the balcony upstairs. Permission for this uncommon 'privilege' for non-whites would be granted by the vestry.

When William Ellison died in 1861 his daughter and sons inherited his plantation, and they remained neighbours of the Andersons' descendants up until 1920 when the last of William Ellison's family¹²⁹ at Stateburg died. She was Gabriella Ellison (b.1832), William Ellison's daughter-in-law, "she was carried to her grave in the [Ellison] family plot by white neighbours who had looked after her in her declining years, and a few weeks later they in turn received a silver spoon from distant Ellisons as a token of appreciation."¹³⁰ The recipient may have been one of the Anderson descendants, **Ann Catherine Anderson Saunders** (1864-1928), mother of **Mary Virginia Saunders White** living at *The Borough*.



Miller House aka Wisdom Hall and then Ellison House built c 1826, the home of William Ellison Jnr. Photo: 1982. Source: South Carolina Dept. of Archives and History



The Church of the Holy Cross, Stateburg, designed by Edward C. Jones of Charleston 1850-52. Photo: <https://www.sumtersc.gov/>



William Holmes Ellison III (1819-1904) husband of Gabriella Ellison and son of William "April" Ellison Jnr. All buried in the Ellison family graveyard. Source: Findagrave

¹²³ "The church began as a bush-tent where the Black People of the community came to worship on Sunday mornings. The exact date of the founding of the church is not known, but it was more than a century ago, and the year 2020 marked the 150th year since construction of a building at the current site." (<https://waymanchapelame.com/about-us/>)

¹²⁴ "By 1840, Ellison owned 12 slaves. His sons, who lived in homes on the property, owned an additional nine slaves. By the early 1840s, he was one of the most prosperous men in the area. By the year 1850, he was the owner of 386 acres of land and 37 slaves." (https://fairfieldgenealogysociety.org/Members_Only/Families/Ellison/Documents/William%20April%20Ellison%20Biography.pdf)

¹²⁵ A practice of naming enslaved people after the month in which they were born.

¹²⁶ "In 1838 Ellison purchased his family mansion, known as Wisdom Hall, from Stephen Miller, a former congressman and governor of South Carolina." (<https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/ellison-william/>)

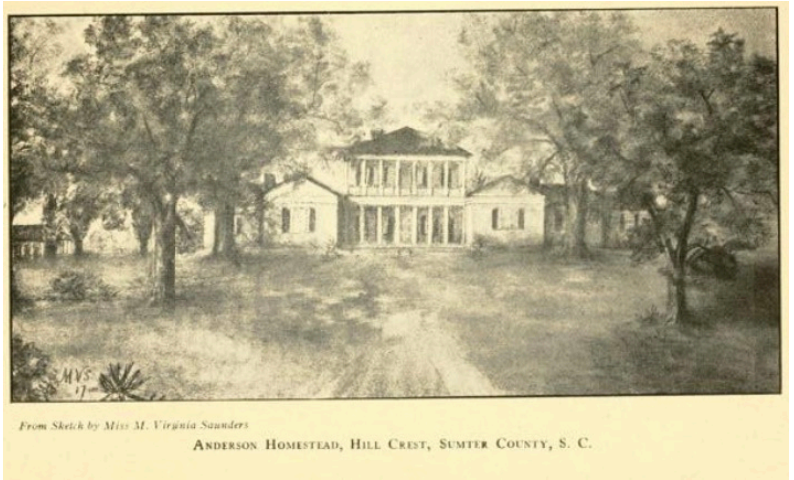
¹²⁷ Lewis, Justin: *Blacks Owning Blacks: The Story of William Ellison* - (<https://heritagepost.org/americana/blacks-owning-blacks-the-story-of-william-ellison/>)

¹²⁸ (https://fairfieldgenealogysociety.org/Members_Only/Families/Ellison/Documents/William%20April%20Ellison%20Biography.pdf)

¹²⁹ The Ellison fortunes changed during the Reconstruction period when slave labour was outlawed and the Ellison sons turned from plantation owners to running cotton-gin shops without enslaved craftsmen. The family lost its associations with the white elite as the white backlash against emancipation intensified. They also lost a lot of money donating to the Confederate cause during the Civil War.

¹³⁰ Review of *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* by Michael P. Johnson, James L. Roark by F N Boney 1985

Right: Memorial plaques to members of the Anderson family in the Church of the Holy Cross, Stateburg:
 from left: Dr William Wallace Anderson; Capt. Edward McKenzie Anderson; Lieut. Richard Heron Anderson.
 Photo: HABS (Library of Congress) Below left: Mary Greenleaf White c1946. Source: Instagram



Clockwise from above left: Mary Virginia Saunders (1889 - 1959) and her husband Walter Charles White Sr. (1876 - 1929) married in 1919. Source: familysearch.org; Illustration of Hill Crest from a sketch by Mary Virginia Saunders. Source: *The life of Lieutenant General Richard Heron Anderson of the Confederate States Army* - Walker, C. Irvine, c1917. Ann Catherine Anderson and husband William Leonidas Saunders. Source: Ancestry.com family trees. The Walter White Family. Source: Ancestry.com family trees.



THE WALTER WHITE FAMILY
 Walter Harrison [489], Ann Heron [485], Mary Greenleaf [486],
 Katharine Coryton [491], Virginia Saunders and Martha Welles [490] White



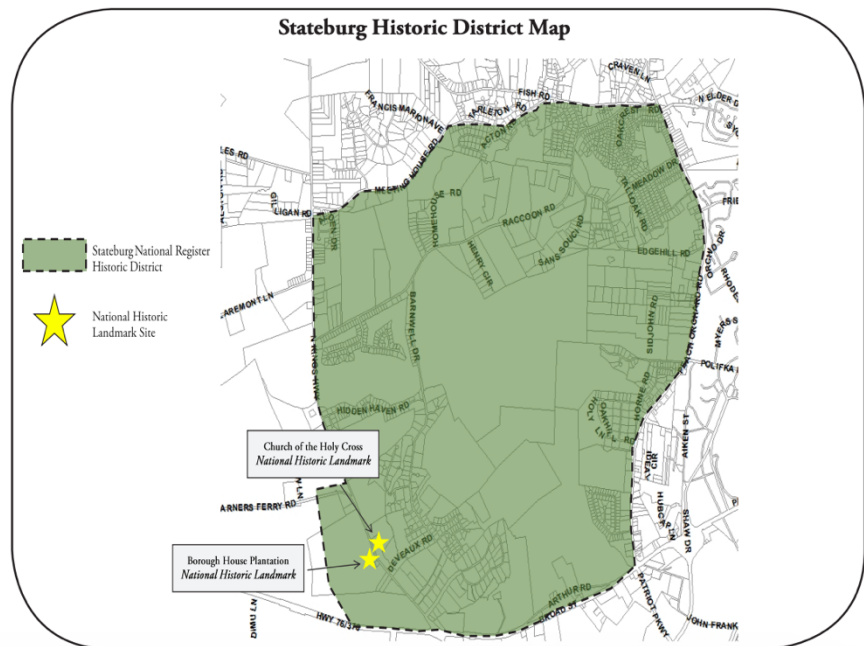
10cc2 WILLIAM LEONIDAS SAUNDERS
 III ANN CATHERINE ANDERSON

The Borough House Plantation stays in the family - Chronology¹³¹

- c1758 – Earliest known date. A grant for 450 acres was given to William Hilton who built a two-storey house of frame construction. It may have also served as a tavern known as High Hills Tavern.
- William Moore acquired the property from William Hilton.
- William Moore transferred ownership to Adam F. Brisbane.
- 1780-1781 – The house served as headquarters for both Lord Cornwallis and General Nathaniel Green during the Revolutionary War.
- 1792 – **Thomas Hooper** (d.1798) purchased the plantation from Adam F. Brisbane and his wife Mary.
- 1802 – **Mary Heron Hooper** (1757-1820) became owner of the plantation after husband Thomas Hooper died.
- 1820 – The niece and adopted daughter of Mary Heron Hooper, **Mary Jane McKenzie Anderson** (1788-1832) and her husband, **Dr. William Wallace Anderson I** (1789-1864), became owners of *Borough House Plantation* after the death of Mary Heron Hooper.
- 1821 – Dr. William W. Anderson I added the wings to the house and several outbuildings using pisé de terre (rammed earth) construction.
- 1832 death of first wife Mary Jane McKenzie. Dr. Anderson remarried in 1833 to Elizabeth Waites and willed *Borough House Plantation* to Elizabeth until her natural death then it was to go to his eldest son, **General Richard Heron Anderson** (1821-1879)
- 1864 – Dr. William Wallace Anderson I passed away.
- 1865 – End of the Civil War. The house was spared from being destroyed by Union commander Colonel Potter.
- 1877 – **Virginia Childs Anderson** (1833-1912), wife of **Dr. William Wallace Anderson II** (1824-1911), became the plantation's owner. It is not clear if she purchased *Borough House* from the estate of Dr. William Wallace Anderson I after Elizabeth's 1876 death or from the son, her husband's brother, General Richard Heron Anderson. It is also unclear if Virginia owned the plantation solely or jointly with her husband.
- 1912 – Virginia Childs Anderson passed away and willed the plantation to son **William Wallace Anderson III** (1869-1946) who gave title to his sister **Ann Catherine Anderson Saunders** (1864-1928). Ann Saunders and her husband purchased adjoining property to greatly increase the size of the plantation.
- 1923 – Ann Catherine Anderson Saunders gave the plantation to daughter **Mary Virginia Saunders White** (1889-1959 wife of Walter Charles White 1876-1929)
- 1946 – Mary Virginia Saunders White converted the plantation from growing cotton to a timber managed tree farm. *The Borough House Plantation* was the first farm of this type in South Carolina.
- 1959 – Mary Virginia Saunders White died and left *Borough House Plantation* to her daughter **Mary Greenleaf White Anderson** (1922-1959) who was married to **Richard Kerfoot Anderson** (1909-1984) the great-grandson of Dr. William Wallace Anderson I and Mary Jane McKenzie
- 1972 – Mary Greenleaf White Anderson was still owner of record. She passed away in June 2016.

The Borough today

Today, the *Borough House and Plantation*, the Church of the Holy Cross (also made from rammed earth) and *Ellison House*¹³² and plantation are part of the Stateburg Historic District in Sumter County and are on the National Register of Historic Places.



¹³¹ <https://south-carolina-plantations.com/sumter/borough.html>

¹³² Miller or Ellison House--home of Miss Martha White, built c. 1816. Owned by S. C. Governor and U. S. Senator Stephen Miller in early 19th century; acquired 1838 by William Ellison, free Negro who operated cotton gin factory and plantation with 40 or 50 slaves. House has hand-wrought hinges, handmade/nails, wainscoting of wide single boards, small windowpanes, narrow central hall - National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form- National Park Service.

Family portraits

The Borough is still owned and occupied by descendants of Benjamin Heron. Inside the house are displayed some ancestral portraits:

"Among the portraits are *Mary Heron Hooper* (1783), painted by Copley in England; Captain Benjamin Heron (1750) a pastel made in Temple Inn, London; Colonel Patrick Heron and Ann Vining (1711). by Sir Godfrey Kneller, court painter to Charles II and George I. A Bartolozzi engraving of the Lady Cicely Heron, dated 1798, was copied from the Holbein portrait at Windsor Castle; she was the daughter of Sir Thomas More, and wife of Sir Giles Heron....."¹³³ I am not sure that Sir Giles Heron is an ancestor of my Herons.

There are several other portraits at *The Borough* of ancestors who have not been identified. However, amongst them is the portrait of Benjamin Heron's maternal grandfather **John Vining**¹³⁴, which (according to information on the reverse side of a photograph of the painting at the Bodleian Library in Oxford) was "presented to Virginia Saunders White of Gates Mills Ohio by Mrs E R Longcroft of Hall Place, Havant, Hants., November, 1947."¹³⁵ The Longcrofts are also descendants of the Vinings.



Benjamin Heron's ancestors' portraits at *Borough House*:

Clockwise from above: John Vining, his daughter Ann Vining, her husband Patrick Heron. Photos: Mary MacKenzie Anderson Scholtz 2023. Right: Patrick Heron's portrait in situ on right-side wall in dining room. Photo: Historic American Buildings Survey (Library of Congress).



¹³³ *The WPA Guide to South Carolina: The Palmetto State* (Federal Writers' Project 1935).

¹³⁴ The portrait that until very recently was thought to have been destroyed or lost. A distant relative, Mackenzie Sholz had read my webpage *Mayor of Portsmouth* about John Vining and was able to kindly assure me, with a photograph of the painting, that the portrait was alive and well at *The Borough*. See

https://www.hurleyskidmorehistory.com.au/_files/ugd/a0424a_2cdd2883d0b84f39be682cd071839aba.pdf

¹³⁵ A year earlier in 1946 Mary Virginia Saunders White converted the plantation from cotton to a timber managed tree farm, the first farm of this type in South Carolina.

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