

Ships in the Streets:  
The Charlestown Hurricanes of September 1752

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## **Ships in the Streets: The Charlestown Hurricanes of September 1752**

Colonists in Charlestown, South Carolina tended to their plantations and shipping businesses in the summer of 1752 while anxiously anticipating clashes between Governor Glen and the General Assembly.<sup>1</sup> These clashes were as constant as the high tide. The colonial government offered the colonists little sense of security, as the governor and General Assembly sparred over governmental control. War between the Creeks and the Cherokees not only unnerved the colonists, but it nearly brought the city into conflict with France.<sup>2</sup> Charlestown's plantations and ports – the lifeline of the city – were threatened by the hottest summer in living memory and the beginning of hurricane season.<sup>3</sup> Destructive hurricanes periodically damaged the city, but the two great hurricanes of September 1752 brought the city to its knees and made surviving colonists wonder how such vengeful storms were possible. These storms were immediately committed to public memory, as the most destructive storms to strike Charlestown in the eighteenth century. Extreme destruction brought on by the hurricanes of September 1752

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Stitt Robinson, *James Glen: From Scottish Provost to Royal Governor of South Carolina* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 64–68.

<sup>2</sup> Edward J. Cashin, *Guardians Of The Valley: Chickasaws In Colonial South Carolina And Georgia* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 85–86.

<sup>3</sup> Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina Under the Royal Government, 1719-1776* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), 277.

forced Charlestown's colonial government to enact new policies to address natural disasters amidst a time of ongoing change in the city's political environment.

### Before the Storm

Change in South Carolina's political environment had been a constant since the colony's inception, but colonists began to distrust the government in the eighteenth century when they felt the distant motherland did not have their interests at heart. Over time, South Carolina had evolved from an economically viable colony with a small, but strong representative government to an economically powerful royal colony with colonists who resisted having their representative government overshadowed by the Crown's interests. Originally known as the Carolina colony before it was divided into North and South Carolina, the vast track of land in this colony was a gift from King Charles II to eight noblemen who were loyal to him.<sup>4</sup> This group of noblemen was known as the Lords Proprietors, and they were given permission by the King to act as feudal style lords over Carolina, establishing a provincial government while allowing colonists to rent, purchase, or work an indenture period to acquire land.<sup>5</sup> The Lords Proprietors hoped to encourage people who would contribute to the colony with agricultural or trade skills to settle in Carolina to ensure the economic success of the colony. The first ships to arrive in Carolina left England on August 17, 1669, with the ships Port Royall,

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<sup>4</sup> Jack P. Greene, Rosemary Brana-Shute, and Randy J. Sparks, eds., *Money, Trade and Power: The Evolution of Colonial South Carolina's Plantation Society* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Greene, Brana-Shute, and Sparks, 1, 2.

Albemarle, and the Carolina arriving in Charlestown in June of 1670.<sup>6</sup> Those onboard the ships had experienced hurricanes, the loss of supplies, and separation from those aboard ships that were delayed or destroyed.<sup>7</sup> Carolina was a promising colony, but it was by no means a no risk venture.

The Lords Proprietors were cautious when making decisions about the new colony's government and land distribution, as a secure government, good land, and content colonists were essential in establishing a profitable colony. The noblemen made it clear to their selected governors that Carolina's government would only be respected by the colonists if they felt their rights as landowners were protected: "Wee having noe other Aime in the frameing of our Laws but to make...us a quiet equall and lasting Government wherein every mans Right Property and Welfare may be soe fenc'd in and secured that the preservation of the Government may be in every ones Interest."<sup>8</sup> Gradually, with the promise of receiving large tracks of land to appeal to potential colonists, the Lords Proprietors and their appointed governing officials saw a steady increase in the number of colonists arriving. Initially many of the colonists who arrived in Carolina were indentured servants who hoped to gain workable land at the end of their indenture period. The number of colonists arriving multiplied each year to the point that changes had to be made to the headright system. The headright system guaranteed certain

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<sup>6</sup> Susan Baldwin Bates and Harriot Cheves Leland, eds., *Proprietary Records Of South Carolina : Abstracts Of The Records Of The Surveyor General Of The Province, Charles Towne 1678-1698*, vol. 3 (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2007), 15–18.

<sup>7</sup> Bates and Leland, 3:15–18.

<sup>8</sup> Greene, Brana-Shute, and Sparks, *Money, Trade and Power: The Evolution of Colonial South Carolina's Plantation Society*, 4.



acreages of land to people who brought indentured servants into the colony, and also guaranteed land to be given to indentured servants at the end of their indenture from their employer. For colonists who arrived before 1671, free people over the age of sixteen received 150 acres for themselves, plus an additional 150 acres if they brought an adult male servant or an additional 100 acres if they brought a female servant.<sup>9</sup> Indentured servants who completed their period of service prior to 1671 received 100 acres each.<sup>10</sup> The next year brought about a noticeable reduction in the amount of land distributed to colonists, with free people receiving 100 acres each, 100 acres if they brought an adult male, and 70 acres if they brought a female servant.<sup>11</sup> Indentured servants who arrived in Carolina in 1672 later received 70 acres.<sup>12</sup> Headrights would continue to decrease as more and more colonists arrived.

Despite the ever-increasing numbers of new arrivals, promoters of the colony published several accounts boasting of the colony's economic benefits, particularly that of its vital port city, Charlestown. Promoters were unconcerned with the decrease in the headright system, as they believed all of the land in Carolina was useful and profitable. They also promised potential colonists that Carolina, and in particular, Charlestown, had mild climates and good weather, especially during the summer and fall months. The current colonists were well aware that summer and fall meant torrential storms and even

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<sup>9</sup> Greene, Brana-Shute, and Sparks, 8.

<sup>10</sup> Greene, Brana-Shute, and Sparks, 8.

<sup>11</sup> Greene, Brana-Shute, and Sparks, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Greene, Brana-Shute, and Sparks, 8.

hurricanes were possible. Thomas Nairne, a “Swiss Gentleman” whose account was published in London in 1710, informed his readers of the origins and geographic location of the colony.<sup>13</sup> Nairne assures his readers that good timber for building, silkworms for clothes, pitch and tar for ships, and good soil for crops is plentiful.<sup>14</sup> The threat and frequency of hurricanes was never addressed in Nairne’s account, as the months of June, July and August were categorized as being “troublesome” with “smart Claps of Thunder, tho’ seldom doing any Prejudice” while September, October, and November were classified as “pleasant dry Months, neither hot nor cold.”<sup>15</sup> John Norris, in his 1712 publication *Profitable Advice for Rich and Poor*, promoted Carolina through dialogue between two characters he created: James Freeman, a planter, and Simon Question, a farmer.<sup>16</sup> Like Nairne, Norris makes no mention of hurricane season or the fact that hurricanes were worrisome to the colonists in Carolina. Norris describes June and July as being months “refresh’d often with Showers, and then presently fair and clear Weather” while September, October, and November are described simply as “pleasant Dry Months.”<sup>17</sup> Nairne and Norris devote more time to discussing the economic advantages of Carolina, especially when informing potential colonists that they did not have to labor alone to have success in trade or agriculture. Indentured servants were available, but

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Nairne and John Norris, *Selling A New World: Two Colonial South Carolina Promotional Pamphlets*, ed. Jack P. Greene (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 36, 37.

<sup>14</sup> Nairne and Norris, 37–42.

<sup>15</sup> Nairne and Norris, 42.

<sup>16</sup> Nairne and Norris, 78.

<sup>17</sup> Nairne and Norris, 89.

Norris emphasizes that “there is a Necessity for these Slaves”, or that slaves were more easily obtainable and viewed as being a much-needed labor force to take on labor-intensive agricultural work.<sup>18</sup>

The extreme variation in Charlestown’s weather patterns would serve as a constant reminder to colonists that they lived in a city vulnerable to nature. While early promotional literature did not give an honest account of the extreme weather conditions, as promises of a mild climate would encourage more people to move to the colony, later accounts described the extreme variations in the colony’s weather, as colonists shared the difference between their expectations and their experiences with families and governing officials in Britain. Promotional pamphlets and published letters convinced colonists in the West Indies that moving to Carolina would be an advantageous move, as the colonists believed Charlestown did not have the weather variations that made life challenging on Britain’s Caribbean islands. The Lords Proprietors of Carolina heard from a Captain Brayne that colonists living on island colonies “would willingly come off and transport themselves farther from the terrible Hurry Caines that doth everie yeare distroye their Houses and crops.”<sup>19</sup> Colonists from island colonies would discover in time that Carolina was not free from hurricanes, and would have to decide if they would stay within the new colony or if they would travel further north to colonies less likely to be impacted by hurricanes.

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<sup>18</sup> Nairne and Norris, 86, 87.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 19, 164.

While colonists could not trust the published accounts of Carolina's weather, they had a sympathetic government they felt they could trust until the proprietorship was replaced by the Crown. Carolina was divided into North and South Carolina in 1712, with the proprietorship maintaining control of South Carolina. In 1721 South Carolina became a royal colony, but it was not until 1729 that the Crown had governmental authority over South Carolina after buying the land from the Lords Proprietors.<sup>20</sup> Despite the shift of authority from colony to Crown, the colonists would make sure their government had a system of checks and balances in place to keep the executive authority of appointed governors under control. What the colonists could not anticipate was a future governor who was more concerned with running the colony to please the distant motherland rather than the colonists he governed.

The arrival of Governor James Glen in 1743 marked a point of impending change in South Carolina and Charlestown's political environment, as the new governor was a vocal loyalist determined to exercise the power of the Crown. South Carolina's previous governors had been loyal to the Crown, but had desired an amicable relationship with the General Assembly. A native of Linlithgow, Scotland, Glen was the eldest son of the provost of Linlithgow. Glen's interest in law and politics was likely shaped by his father and his time studying Roman law at the University of Leiden. Glen followed in his father's footsteps as a promoter of the Anglican Church and as the provost of Linlithgow, and went on to become a successful and well-paid politician. With an interest in

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<sup>20</sup> Jack P. Greene, *The Quest For Power: The Lower Houses Of Assembly In The Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 36.

Parliament and a job that frequently brought him to London, Glen befriended many English noble families and was eager to show his respect for the Crown. Glen went on to marry the daughter of the Earl of Wilmington and was offered jobs monitoring the estates of royals and as a tax official. The Crown offered him the position of Governor of South Carolina in 1738, but he refused to travel until he could negotiate for a better salary and significant governmental authority. Glen soon discovered that the colonists of South Carolina had a different idea of what role the governor should play in the colony.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to discovering that the colonists had a perspective of government that differed from his, Glen discovered that the weather in South Carolina differed greatly from his native Scotland and London. In 1747, Governor Glen would give an account of the extremes of South Carolina's weather patterns in *A Description Of South Carolina*. Glen warned prospective colonists to be prepared for "the intense Cold we sometimes have", mentioning that a member of his family had once gone to bed with hot water bottles to keep warm and awoke to find the bottles "split to Pieces, and the Water solid Lumps of Ice."<sup>22</sup> Equally bizarre to the incident of broken water bottles is Glen's account of an eel and birds freezing to death. Glen notes that one winter was so frigid that a live eel kept in a jar in his home was frozen one morning, and that he found dead birds outside even though they had what he believed to be an adequate food supply.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> All biographical information about Glen from this article. E. Stanly Godbold Jr., "Glen, James (1701–1777), Colonial Governor," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, January 3, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> James Glen and George Milligen-Johnston, *Colonial South Carolina: Two Contemporary Descriptions* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1951), 36.

<sup>23</sup> Glen and Milligen-Johnston, 36.

Conversely, extreme heat was also cause for concern among colonists and potential colonists. While summers were usually warm in South Carolina, heat waves could make it dangerous to pursue agricultural labor and other physically demanding tasks such as loading and unloading goods on ships. Glen would later summarize South Carolina's climate as being "various and uncertain, to such an extraordinary Degree", adding "there are no people on Earth, who, I think, can suffer greater extremes of Heat and Cold."<sup>24</sup>

Governor Glen's greatest source of shock in South Carolina was the fact that while the colonial government structurally mirrored Parliament, it was concerned primarily with the welfare and interests of the colony, not the Crown. The General Assembly consisted of an upper house (Council) and a lower house (Commons House) with powerful men of wealth in each house. The Council was made up of twelve members nominated by the London-based Board of Trade or those with political connections to England.<sup>25</sup> Members of the Council had "luck and influence" on their side, and virtually enjoyed the same rights as those appointed to the House of Lords.<sup>26</sup> Council members were appointed to their position or inherited their position as a hereditary heir, and could not be removed from their positions by the governor or the Crown unless there was proof of negligence.<sup>27</sup> Members of the Council had "the right to propose

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<sup>24</sup> Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783*, 135.

<sup>25</sup> M. Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 236–38.

<sup>26</sup> Robert M. Weir, "'The Harmony We Were Famous For': An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (1969): 487; Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663-1763*, 139.

<sup>27</sup> Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663-1763*, 139.

amendments”, acted as the upper house during assembly meetings, and while less politically charged than the lower house, the Council did not like rebuke or challenge and would succeed in excluding the governor from assembly meetings.<sup>28</sup> The Commons House consisted of approximately thirty members, with elections taking place to select members every three years.<sup>29</sup> Members of the Commons House held the primary role in proposing, reviewing and approving new laws, “initiating money bills”, and had tight financial control to ensure that there was no room “for a governor to embark on projects of his own design.”<sup>30</sup> Glen would find that this General Assembly would not allow for the governor to wield as much independent power as he thought he should. While Glen was successful in his personal negotiations to prevent conflicts with Native Americans, his inability to accept that the General Assembly in South Carolina did not function like the British Parliament would delay hurricane recovery efforts, cause the General Assembly to distrust Glen, and lead to Glen’s replacement by William Lyttleton in 1755. The root cause of Glen’s problems with the General Assembly was based on the evolution of representative government in South Carolina, with the hurricanes acting as a catalyst for change.

Historian Jack P. Greene argues that the General Assembly’s relationship with Glen was bound to be problematic, as South Carolinians had developed “a strong

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<sup>28</sup> Sirmans, 236–39.

<sup>29</sup> Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 120, 121.

<sup>30</sup> Edgar, 122.

tradition of representative government” prior to becoming a royal colony and would come to resent a governor they viewed as infringing upon this tradition.<sup>31</sup> Greene notes that the Crown and governing officials became concerned when they noticed a parallel between a major power shift in Britain and movement toward a power shift in the colonies. The House of Commons had become increasingly powerful in Britain, and the Crown wanted to prevent colonial Commons Houses from becoming stronger than the Councils of each state. Efforts were made by the Crown to weaken Commons Houses by denying them authority “to frame revenue measures”, but these efforts failed in the North American colonies, especially in South Carolina.<sup>32</sup> The Commons House of South Carolina was determined, Greene argues, “to enlarge its sphere of authority”, to “make a concerted attempt to deprive the Council of its privileges”, and to make sure that subjects that were of importance to colonists were not overshadowed by the Council or Governor.<sup>33</sup>

While the Commons House was focused on doing what it could to prevent the Council or Glen from trying to diminish their authority, Glen was divided between his duty as a governor trying to work with the colony’s government and his role as a representative of the Crown.<sup>34</sup> Greene points out that while Glen promoted the Crown’s

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<sup>31</sup> Greene, *The Quest For Power: The Lower Houses Of Assembly In The Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776*, 35, 36.

<sup>32</sup> Greene, Brana-Shute, and Sparks, *Money, Trade and Power: The Evolution of Colonial South Carolina’s Plantation Society*, 52.

<sup>33</sup> Greene, *The Quest For Power: The Lower Houses Of Assembly In The Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776*, 53.

<sup>34</sup> Greene, 62, 63, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92.



prerogative in trying to bolster his own authority as well as the Council's, he was generally unsuccessful. The Commons House expected, as was common protocol, that governors would not spend the colony's money without the approval of the Commons House.<sup>35</sup> Governor Glen's tense relationship with the Commons House was largely due to the fact that he envisioned himself as having an economically powerful position, when in reality the colony's finances were not handled by the governor. His decision to take matters into his own hands when trying to settle Native American conflicts through gift giving raised red flags in the Commons House. Appeasing Native Americans with gifts was not an uncommon practice, but such a practice concerned the colony's economy and security status. The Commons House had little faith in Governor Glen, and reminded him that his spending habits would come out of his own pocket if he would not provide the Commons House a financial statement to investigate.<sup>36</sup> Glen had overstepped his role as governor. This breach of trust set the tone for the rest of Glen's administration and would impact the speed at which the General Assembly responded to the needs of colonists impacted by the hurricanes, as they doubted Glen's capability in handling money. Glen would eventually complain to the London based Board of Trade in a letter that he had no power to approve or remove anyone from the Commons House without the approval of the rest of the General Assembly, and that "little by little, the People have got the whole administration into their Hands and the Crown is by various Laws despoiled of its

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<sup>35</sup> Greene, 89.

<sup>36</sup> Greene, 91.

principal flowers and brightest Jewells.”<sup>37</sup> Historians interested in colonial South Carolina generally agree with and maintain Greene’s argument that the General Assembly’s tradition of representative government clashed with Glen’s efforts to promote the royal prerogative. Greene’s argument echoes that of earlier South Carolina historians.

Writing in the nineteenth century, historian Edward McCrady asserted that Glen’s failure to recognize that the General Assembly was shaped by the colonists of South Carolina and was not a replica of Parliament was due to Glen spending the first five years of his administration in England.<sup>38</sup> Glen did not view his five years absence as being problematic, as he corresponded regularly with his Lieutenant Governor. After arriving in the colony and reviewing Council records, McCrady points out that Glen was genuinely shocked, believing “the whole frame of government unhinged.” Prior to Glen’s arrival in South Carolina, the Council had decided in a meeting on April 11, 1738 that “The governor or commander in chief being present during the debates of this House is of an unparliamentary nature” and “would enter into no debate during his presence.”<sup>39</sup> McCrady noted that upon his arrival in South Carolina, Glen was “full of the importance of his position as Governor, and imbued with an exalted idea of the power and prerogative of the Crown of which he was the representative.”<sup>40</sup> Glen had expected he

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<sup>37</sup> Greene, 93, 94.

<sup>38</sup> Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina Under the Royal Government, 1719-1776* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), 250–54.

<sup>39</sup> McCrady, 254, 255.

<sup>40</sup> McCrady, 254.

would take on a role in which he would “govern the colony” and have a lead role in doing so, but instead “found the colony bent upon governing itself under his Majesty’s protection.”<sup>41</sup> Glen’s perspective of his duties as governor did not change in the years leading up to the hurricanes.

Jonathan Mercantini states that Glen’s administration was troubled by the fact that he tried and failed at finding a balance between the “royal instructions from London” and the “priorities of the provincial assembly”, or General Assembly of South Carolina.<sup>42</sup> Mercantini states that Glen’s term as governor was marked by “conflicts with the Commons and the [C]ouncil in South Carolina and with the Board of Trade in London [which] dogged his administration.”<sup>43</sup> McCrady and Mercantini both highlight that Glen’s distance from the colonists, whether physical or ideological, created a disconnect between colonists who felt they should play a predominant role in their government, and Glen, who felt the Crown’s perspective was essential to holding the colony together.<sup>44</sup> This caused Glen to frequently spar with the Commons House.

Robert Weir and Walter Robinson take on a neutral tone when discussing Glen, giving him credit for what they deem as success in maintaining diplomatic Native American relations, but also mentioning that Glen’s desire to promote the royal

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<sup>41</sup> McCrady, 254.

<sup>42</sup> Jonathan Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule at Home? : The Evolution of South Carolina Political Culture, 1748-1776* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 8.

<sup>43</sup> Mercantini, 8, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Mercantini, 10.

prerogative simply clashed with a colony which was used to self-governance. Weir argues that Glen tried to act on behalf of the colonists of South Carolina to maintain security within the colony, and did not hesitate to chastise governors of other colonies if he felt they were angering South Carolina's Native American allies, even if it meant he was not well liked in other colonies.<sup>45</sup> Robinson goes into great detail about Glen taking the time to learn about the different customs and cultures of South Carolina's Native American population while viewing visiting Natives as "those mighty Indian Monarchs."<sup>46</sup> Weir and Robinson note several disagreements between Glen and the General Assembly, with Robinson focusing more specifically on the disagreements surrounding recovery efforts after the 1752 hurricanes. Weir, like Mercantini, reiterates the following point on more than one occasion: "To South Carolinians the glory of the British constitutional system was that it included institutional means to limit government and insure-as far as humanly possible-that it would act according to the principles which ought to animate it."<sup>47</sup> South Carolinians viewed their local government as their way of preserving and protecting their interests. Robinson asserts that Glen's attempts to preserve the royal prerogative even after natural disasters occurred became increasingly more aggravating to the General Assembly.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Robert M. Weir, *Colonial South Carolina: A History*, Second (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 120, 121.

<sup>46</sup> Robinson, *James Glen: From Scottish Provost to Royal Governor of South Carolina*, 37–44.

<sup>47</sup> Weir, *Colonial South Carolina: A History*, 134.

<sup>48</sup> Robinson, *James Glen: From Scottish Provost to Royal Governor of South Carolina*, 66, 67.

While the attention of the colonists had been on potential conflict within and around the colony, the hurricanes of September 1752 threatened their lives and their livelihoods. Colonists in South Carolina were well aware of the precarious summer and fall months. Extreme heat was a cause for concern among colonists, as heat waves could make it dangerous to pursue agricultural labor and other physically demanding tasks such as loading and unloading goods on ships. The summer months prior to the September 1752 hurricanes had been the hottest known to the colonists who lived in Charlestown. In the shade, thermometers were often above 90° Fahrenheit, even reaching 101° on one occasion.<sup>49</sup> In the sun, the thermometer reached 120° and sometimes higher.<sup>50</sup> The looming hurricane season always had the potential to economically cripple and devastate Charlestown.

### The Storms

The first of the two hurricanes made landfall Thursday night on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, with a torrential amount of wind and rain making colonists uneasy as they settled in for the night. Floods quickly followed, and on Friday, from the early hours of the morning until afternoon, the water rose up ten feet high, perhaps higher.<sup>51</sup> Bridges, roads, buildings, and people were swept away and ships anchored in the harbor were tossed into the streets of Charlestown, damaging and destroying buildings. Fatality estimates range from ninety-seven to one hundred and three people, although this figure

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<sup>49</sup> McCrady, *The History of South Carolina Under the Royal Government, 1719-1776*, 277.

<sup>50</sup> McCrady, 277.

<sup>51</sup> "CHARLESTOWN, Sept. 19," *South-Carolina Gazette*, September 19, 1752.

likely excludes indentured servants and slaves killed by the storms.<sup>52</sup> Friday, September the 15<sup>th</sup> would go on to be called the Great Hurricane of 1752. Virtually overnight, Charlestown was transformed from a thriving economic epicenter into a ruinous mess with damaged crops, standing water that would bring about disease, and nearly obliterated fortifications. The storm that followed on the 30<sup>th</sup> was not as destructive, but it complicated recovery efforts from the first hurricane. With a shortage of food, and churches unable to provide enough aid to those devastated by the storms, strong leadership was needed to restore order and protect a now vulnerable city.

The colonists of Charlestown, whether they lived along the coast or further inland, would find that regardless of their social status, everyone would need to rebuild after the hurricanes. Some families would need to rebuild everything while others may have only lost outbuildings. Whatever their losses were, no one would soon forget the damage caused by the hurricanes. Shortly before the first of the two hurricanes struck, colonists were informed that they would make a calendar switch “because it coincided with the British Empire’s shift from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar.”<sup>53</sup> This change in the calendar system meant September the 3<sup>rd</sup> would become September the 13<sup>th</sup>. Although this change could have been confusing and a cause for incorrect dates being recorded by individuals as they wrote letters and journals, there appears to have been little confusion on the part of colonists who kept accounts documenting the hurricanes. Henry Ravenel,

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<sup>52</sup> Jonathan Mercantini, “The Great Carolina Hurricane of 1752,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 103, no. 4 (2002): 352; Tom Rubillo, *Hurricane Destruction in South Carolina: Hell and High Water* (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2006), 44.

<sup>53</sup> Mercantini, “The Great Carolina Hurricane of 1752,” 354.

the son of Huguenot emigrant Rene Ravenel, wrote an entry in his diary for the September 15<sup>th</sup> hurricane: “Fryday 15 the hardest wind ever I heard and rain it lasted from 10 o’clock to 1 in the afternoon at the heights and blow’d down our fowl house, the roof of our corn house [,] negroe kitchen[,] cooper shop[,] and 2 negroe houses...”<sup>54</sup> Ravenel noted that while much of his corn crop was damaged, the rice he was growing fared better, as it had not been ready to harvest yet. Many accounts take note of the first hurricane, but pay little attention to the second hurricane, making Ravenel an exception. Ravenel wrote that on September the 29<sup>th</sup> it “Rain’d all day” and on Friday, September 30<sup>th</sup> the weather was “very Rainey” with wind “which blow’d as hard as the Hurriqean for about 2 Hours but did no Damage on Land but at Sea.”<sup>55</sup>

Artemas Elliott, a landowner, wrote of his horrifying experience with the first hurricane to his young daughter Polly to remind her that she should not only be grateful to God for earlier surviving a bout of smallpox but to give thanks for her father surviving the storm. On September the 14<sup>th</sup>, Elliott, along with a group (presumably a trade group) traveled to Sullivan’s Island by boat, only to have the boat flip over before the group could make a return trip to the mainland in the evening.<sup>56</sup> The group returned to shore and spent the night in a trade building to awake to intense wind and water pouring in. Trying to save themselves from drowning in a building that was collapsing, members of the

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<sup>54</sup> Henry Ravenel, “Diary and Account Book of Rene Ravenel and Henry Ravenel, 1731-1860” (September 1752).

<sup>55</sup> Ravenel.

<sup>56</sup> Artemas Elliott, “Letter from Artemas Elliott to His Daughter Polly,” October 16, 1752, Bascot Family: Cochran Family Letter, South Carolina Historical Society.

group stripped themselves of clothing and grabbed one another, with Elliott surviving because he had “stript my Self, to my Shirt Breeches And Stockings, I was no Soonner in the water but Sombody got me Hold by the foot, and by my kicking, and Strugleing my Stocking Came off.”<sup>57</sup> Remorseful that fifteen people in his group drowned but thankful to have survived, Elliott’s account illustrates the vulnerability of the colonists to significant weather. Crediting the “unmerited Goodness of God” in giving him the strength to survive the hurricane when others did not, Elliott viewed the hurricane as an opportunity to show his gratefulness to God for sparing his life, and the life of his daughter.<sup>58</sup>

With religion shaping the world as they knew it, many colonists turned to God in the face of a disaster to either give thanks for their survival or to try and come to an understanding as to why the disaster occurred. Colonists viewed the hurricanes as a lesson from God, and they wanted to understand its significance to better prepare themselves for future disasters as they now knew they could not easily foresee an approaching hurricane. Undoubtedly, there were other colonists like Elliott who viewed the hurricanes as being unpredictable events in which those who were determined to survive were given the strength to do so by God. Elliott did not view those who drowned in a negative light, making his religious view of the hurricanes different from those who viewed hurricanes as punitive acts of God. Clerical figures and individuals with strong religious beliefs felt God had sent the colonists a clear message of His dissatisfaction

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<sup>57</sup> Elliott.

<sup>58</sup> Elliott.



with them, and they thought the general public needed to be informed of God's message before it was too late.

Sophia Hume, a Quaker and the wife of a wealthy landowner, had tried to warn the colonists of Charlestown before and after the hurricanes that they did not live as proper Christians should. She had her admonishments and advice published, *An Exhortation to the Inhabitants of the Province of South-Carolina*, months before the hurricanes struck Charlestown. Hume sought to guide the wayward colonists towards a Godly lifestyle.<sup>59</sup> The worldliness and wealth of some of the colonists were of grave concern to Hume, and after observing the inhabitants of the colony continue to prosper over a period of five years, she felt a firm warning was in order. Hume describes the folly of "The Wanton" fellow, describing those who spent too much time "in Jollity" as being too concerned with their material wealth, thus allowing the devil and vice into their lives.<sup>60</sup> Most importantly to Hume, colonists needed to be aware that God was aware of all acts of sin, and that the fate of those who did not seek God would be terrible.<sup>61</sup>

Published two years after the September hurricanes of 1752, Hume's *An Epistle to the Inhabitants of South-Carolina* offered colonists her "tender Love and Sympathy, on the Occasion of the late calamitous circumstance of our province", an occasion in which

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<sup>59</sup> Sophia Hume, *An Exhortation to the Inhabitants of the Province of South-Carolina, to Bring Their Deeds to the Light of Christ, in Their Own Consciencs*. (London: Luke Hinde, 1752), 6.

<sup>60</sup> Hume, 36.

<sup>61</sup> Hume, 68.

the colony experienced the most “humbling Visitation” by God.<sup>62</sup> Despite Hume’s claims to want to examine the hurricane with “love and sympathy”, her *Epistle* lacks any sensitivity towards those who died when the hurricanes struck, as she goes on to dismiss their deaths by focusing on those God chose to save. Hume tells colonists that had God not “appeared for your safety”, they would have drowned, and that God “hath given you (a few that perish’d excepted) your Lives for a Prey!”<sup>63</sup> Most of Hume’s second publication repeats the same messages conveyed in her first publication, with the main difference being her use of recent events and reprinting of newspaper articles to illustrate her points, urging the colonists to seek God. Overall, Hume summarizes the hurricanes as a “Mark of [God’s] Displeasure against your Transgressions” while also describing them as acts of “Compassion towards you, since whom he loves he corrects...”<sup>64</sup>

An Episcopalian clergy member, whose sermon from the hurricane survives while his name does not, viewed the hurricanes in the same light as Hume. The clergyman wanted to offer his congregation “reflections on the late Hurricane” and did so with dramatic flair, hoping that his congregation had understood the message he was sure God had sent them.<sup>65</sup> Like Hume, the clergyman believed the hurricanes showed God was displeased with the actions and behaviors of the colonists. The clergyman reminded his

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<sup>62</sup> Sophia Hume, *An Epistle to the Inhabitants of South-Carolina; Containing Sundry Observations Proper to Be Consider’d by Every Professor of Christianity in General*. (London: Printed and sold by Luke Hinde, 1754), 5.

<sup>63</sup> Hume, 6.

<sup>64</sup> Hume, 6.

<sup>65</sup> “For the Gospel Messenger,” *Gospel Messenger and Southern Episcopal Register (1826-1834)*; Charleston, September 1826, 267.

congregation that they should not forget that they “saw...how soon the Almighty God can destroy; how soon his word can arm his works against his rebellious creatures.”<sup>66</sup> The clergyman also shared Hume’s belief that those who survived the hurricanes owed their thanks to God for choosing to save them while others were not as fortunate.<sup>67</sup> For this clergyman’s congregation and the colony as a whole, there was only one way for the colonists to prepare themselves if more deadly hurricanes struck during their lifetimes. “Virtuous and good lives are the strongest bulwarks you can erect against the raging sea,” insisted the clergyman, as he told colonists that at least “if you should not be safe in your bodies, you will stand greatly safe in your souls.”<sup>68</sup> Ultimately, those who shared Hume and the clergyman’s perspective believed in Providentialism or the idea that natural disasters were direct messages from God and offered valuable lessons to those impacted by these disasters.<sup>69</sup>

Not everyone viewed hurricanes purely in a religious light or felt that hurricanes were a sign of God’s displeasure. There was recognition at this time that there was a hurricane season with scientists trying to record rainfall and the damage caused by hurricanes that hit the colonies. Some colonists believed there were some benefits to hurricanes, as it was thought that they helped to improve and restore air quality after

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<sup>66</sup> “For the Gospel Messenger,” 268.

<sup>67</sup> “For the Gospel Messenger,” 268.

<sup>68</sup> “For the Gospel Messenger,” 271.

<sup>69</sup> Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783*, 35, 36.

grueling hot summer seasons.<sup>70</sup> Eighteenth century scientists believed their studies helped explain the naturally occurring phenomena that were a part of God's total creation. This belief was known as natural philosophy.<sup>71</sup> Scientists of the eighteenth century felt that those who studied and observed hurricanes would be better prepared to endure them when they struck again. South Carolina's scientific community emerged early on in the colony's history, with many of these early scientists residing in Charlestown. South Carolina's scientists regularly corresponded with England's intellectual circles and societies, with both parties eager to hear from one another. Scientists in South Carolina also enjoyed close correspondence with scientists from other colonies. Colonial scientists regularly shared their findings with The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge and even sent samples of insects, animals, and shells back to the Society.<sup>72</sup> Charlestown's connection to the Society most likely encouraged English naturalist Mark Catesby to visit the colony. Catesby would go on to publish a book on his scientific findings and mentioned that hurricanes were common occurrences in South Carolina and that the colonists of South Carolina could expect hurricanes during the same season colonists in the tropical colonies expected hurricanes.<sup>73</sup> Charlestown's own prominent scientists would go on to publish works that would be well read within the British

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<sup>70</sup> Mercantini, "The Great Carolina Hurricane of 1752," 353.

<sup>71</sup> Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783*, 40.

<sup>72</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, 178.

<sup>73</sup> Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783*, 45; Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, 178.

Empire. Scottish physician, John Lining, who arrived in Charlestown in 1728, practiced medicine, conducted electrical experiments similar to Franklin's, and was referred to by historian Walter Fraser Jr. as becoming America's first meteorologist.<sup>74</sup> His records of climatic temperatures and rainfall measurements include data from the September 1752 hurricanes, which can be compared to data from the previous fourteen years (Figure I).<sup>75</sup> The temperatures Lining recorded are in degrees Fahrenheit, and his measurements of barometric pressure are the result of his own calculations, which is a measurement system close to that used by meteorologists today.<sup>76</sup> Governor Glen valued Dr. Lining's research, including much of Lining's data in his publication *A Description of South Carolina*.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Walter J. Fraser, Jr., *Charleston! Charleston! : The History of a Southern City* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 70; George C. Rogers, Jr., *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), 95; McCrady, *The History of South Carolina Under the Royal Government, 1719-1776*, 414, 415; John Lining, "Extract of a Letter from John Lining, M. D. of Charles Town, in South Carolina, to Charles Pinckney, Esq; In London: With His Answers to Several Queries Sent to Him Concerning His Experiment of Electricity with a Kite," *Philosophical Transactions (1683-1775)* 48 (1753): 757-64.

<sup>75</sup> John Lining, "A Letter from John Lining, M. D. of Charles-Town, South-Carolina, to the Rev. Thomas Birch, D. D. Secr. R. S. Concerning the Quantity of Rain Fallen There from January 1738, to December 1752," *Philosophical Transactions (1683-1775)* 48 (1753): 284-85.

<sup>76</sup> Everett Mendelsohn, "John Lining and His Contribution to Early American Science," *Isis* 51, no. 3 (1960): 285, 286.

<sup>77</sup> Glen and Milligen-Johnston, *Colonial South Carolina: Two Contemporary Descriptions*, 36.

A TABLE of the Depth of Rain, in Inches and millesimal Parts, which fell in Charles-Town.

	1738	1739	1740	1741	1742	1743	1744	1745	1746	1747	1748	1749	1750	1751	1752	Greatest	Least	The Means
January	1.097	2.310	4.875	4.472	2.189	3.172	1.994	0.863	1.144	3.429	2.112	1.056	2.563	None	3.597	4.873		2.326
February	4.416	2.875	3.084	4.615	1.650	2.435	3.063	7.739	2.701	2.860	1.573	4.516	3.135	5.374	3.798	7.739	0.798	3.389
March	4.532	5.609	1.141	5.713	5.203	0.621	0.582	3.229	1.628	2.585	3.047	7.475	0.943	1.342	1.716	7.475	0.621	3.024
April	1.082	0.195	1.092	1.308	0.918	5.292	2.866	3.822	1.128	0.292	0.979	1.760	2.310	2.310	0.440	5.292	0.195	1.721
May	3.127	5.120	5.612	4.841	5.898	2.535	2.871	1.832	3.988	0.924	1.826	5.555	2.371	5.533	2.794	5.898	1.826	3.655
June	1.567	5.839	4.648	5.538	3.250	1.903	5.814	9.510	4.109	2.470	1.859	4.686	8.690	2.462	2.618	5.839	1.567	5.000
July	10.660	5.452	3.013	3.399	1.252	7.738	8.437	6.771	9.895	6.413	9.273	6.219	5.687	6.544	1.485	10.660	1.252	6.146
August	4.104	12.211	7.301	7.144	7.647	3.767	4.202	9.339	6.114	4.895	6.881	11.124	5.346	12.144	10.725	12.211	3.767	7.536
September	10.792	4.834	3.200	6.734	2.895	4.686	5.657	0.754	0.932	7.216	7.442	1.298	12.370	11.671	14.663	14.663	0.754	6.342
October	1.358	6.593	1.358	3.399	0.759	1.672	1.595	2.962	0.506	9.504	5.550	3.900	5.000	0.352	1.199	9.504	0.352	3.046
November	2.656	1.235	1.848	2.964	3.388	3.220	1.562	0.682	3.586	1.056	5.368	1.238	3.137	0.682	0.814	5.368	0.682	2.221
December	3.877	3.689	2.736	1.919	0.957	2.706	9.680	2.623	3.916	2.921	5.588	5.594	4.609	2.409	2.035	9.680	0.957	3.684
Spring	10.030	8.679	5.317	11.636	7.771	8.348	6.511	14.810	5.457	5.737	5.599	13.751	6.388	9.026	2.954	14.810	2.954	8.068
Summer	15.354	26.411	13.273	13.778	10.400	12.176	17.122	18.113	17.992	9.807	12.958	16.460	16.748	14.569	6.897	26.411	6.897	14.804
Autumn	16.254	23.638	11.759	17.277	11.301	10.125	11.454	13.055	7.552	21.615	19.873	16.322	22.716	24.167	26.587	26.587	7.552	16.913
Winter	8.843	9.797	9.076	7.072	7.517	7.920	12.105	4.449	10.931	6.089	12.012	9.355	7.744	6.688	5.456	12.105	4.449	8.340
Total Depth	49.926	65.962	65.962	52.086	36.006	39.747	48.323	50.146	39.653	44.565	51.498	54.421	56.159	50.853	42.884	65.962	36.006	48.023

The Depth of Rain in January 1753, O. S. was 2.607 inches.

Figure I. John Lining's Rainfall Data from the September 1752 Hurricanes and the Previous Fourteen Years

Modern day scientists have been able to use historical documents and data recordings like Lining's to create hurricane databases that can simulate and categorize colonial storms. Algorithms and observed hurricane patterns over time benefit scientists and historians as they seek to gain a better understanding of natural disasters of the distant past. Researchers from the University of South Carolina compiled and organized information on eighteenth and nineteenth century into the HURDAT database (Hurricane Databases).<sup>78</sup> Hurricanes were added to the database if there was evidence to "show the classic signs of tropical storms which include sustained strong winds for quite longer than several hours, specific wind directions that indicate the motion of tropical systems, and descriptions of damage."<sup>79</sup> Data compiled for 1752 showed "highly anomalous behavior", marking it as a year with significant hurricane activity with a category three storm.<sup>80</sup> Scientific findings and known hurricane trends has made it easier for the general public to understand the extent of the damage caused by the hurricanes of September 1752 and make comparisons to significant hurricanes over the course of time.<sup>81</sup>

### After the Storms

Governor Glen had witnessed the damage caused by hurricanes before, but never had he witnessed hurricanes as devastating to the colony. Discussions between Glen and

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<sup>78</sup> Cary J. Mock et al., *Reconstructing South Carolina Tropical Cyclones Back to the Mid Eighteenth Century (2004 - 26HURR)*, vol. 26 (American Meteorological Society, 45 Beacon St. Boston MA 02108-3693 USA, 2004), 1.

<sup>79</sup> Mock et al., 26:1.

<sup>80</sup> Mock et al., 26:2.

<sup>81</sup> Suzannah Smith Miles, "Storms of Many Centuries," *Charleston Living Magazine*, October 2016.

the General Assembly on the need to improve fortifications to help safeguard the city from hurricanes had begun in 1748, but disagreements over who had the authority to make decisions on fortification repairs stalled progress.<sup>82</sup> Charlestown's fortifications desperately needed repair work at the beginning of the year 1752, but Glen refused to fill the vacant fortifications commissioner positions the Commons House urged him to fill.<sup>83</sup> The September hurricanes intensified the fortifications disagreements between Glen and the Commons House, as the Commons demanded the vacancies be filled while Glen was adamant that a skilled engineer by the name of Gerald De Brahm was needed to assess and repair the fortifications.<sup>84</sup> Glen appeased the Commons by filling the vacancies, but this was simply a formality on his part, as he hired De Brahm against the wishes of the Commons. This angered the Commons, whose officials informed Glen that De Brahm's services were not needed and that Glen's mistake would come out of his own pocket.<sup>85</sup> Glen's post-hurricane quarrels with the General Assembly had only begun.

Ships damaged during the hurricanes not only resulted in a loss of life and supplies but also a loss of trade which would further complicate Glen's relationship with the General Assembly as the loss of revenue from trade made budget recovery decisions difficult. Decisions had to be made quickly to bring in food and supplies to a devastated

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<sup>82</sup> Greene, *The Quest For Power: The Lower Houses Of Assembly In The Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776*, 254-59.

<sup>83</sup> Greene, 256.

<sup>84</sup> Greene, 258.

<sup>85</sup> Greene, 257-58.



city, but personal politics would get in the way. Animosity between Glen and the General Assembly would delay Charlestown's ability to recover physically and economically. Witnessing firsthand the ships in the streets, Glen recorded the condition of the ships he came across. Glen recorded that twenty-two ships of various sizes were impacted by the hurricanes, with schooners being the most damaged kind of ship.<sup>86</sup> Ships from North American and tropical colonies as well as British ships were impacted, financially impacting the British Empire as a whole. The Upton of Maryland carried four hundred German immigrants onboard, but Glen simply recorded that the ship was "drove on shore, 'tis hoped but doubtful whether she can be got off again" with no mention as to the fate of those onboard.<sup>87</sup> Newspapers gave a dramatic account of the damage and of the survival of the ship the Hornet Man of War. Other ships were not so fortunate with the hurricanes. The personal account of Captain Dorrington of the Africa describes the chaos onboard as his crew struggled to keep the ship afloat as they traveled through the first hurricane off the Georgia coast, two days before it struck Charlestown.<sup>88</sup> Amazingly the ship stayed afloat, but five people perished in the struggle to save the ship. Newspapers within the colony, British North America, and Britain covered the hurricane, with particular interest of the dramatic account that first appeared in *The South-Carolina*

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<sup>86</sup> James Glen, "A List of Ship and Vessels in the Port, and Harbour of Charles Town in South Carolina in the Hurricane on Fryday the 15 September 1752 and Their Circumstances" (Adam Matthew Digital, September 15, 1752), The National Archives London.

<sup>87</sup> Glen.

<sup>88</sup> Walter J. Fraser, Jr., *Lowcountry Hurricanes: Three Centuries Of Storms At Sea And Ashore* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 15, 16.

*Gazette*.<sup>89</sup> Despite the loss of life and damage caused by the hurricanes, most British newspapers paid more attention to the economic losses. English maritime newspaper *Lloyd's List* gave no account of the hurricane but printed "A List of the Ships drove ashore" in Charlestown that were likely to be recovered.<sup>90</sup> Ship owners, merchants, and those who were expecting items aboard the ships waited for news on the outcome of the ships involved in the hurricanes, with those in Britain being the last to know that two hurricanes had struck Charlestown and tossed vessels into the streets. Ships that survived were delayed but meant business as usual, whereas ships that needed to be repaired or were completely destroyed meant trade was interrupted or was altogether prevented from occurring at the end of the year.

The impact of the hurricanes on indentured servants and slaves remains largely unknown, but the conditions in which they worked and the prevailing attitudes towards them offers some insight into their fate. South Carolina's history is unique as it is the only colony "where slaves were introduced virtually at the outset" alongside indentured servants.<sup>91</sup> In the colony's early years, there were clear distinctions between the types of labor assigned to servants and slaves. Slaves were intended to do "the field work" while servants held skilled labor jobs or were overseers of slaves on plantations.<sup>92</sup> The increase

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<sup>89</sup> "CHARLESTOWN, Sept. 19," *South-Carolina Gazette*, September 19, 1752.

<sup>90</sup> W. Phillips and George Yard, "Irish and Foreign Ports," *Lloyd's List*, December 15, 1752, 1778 edition.

<sup>91</sup> Fraser, Jr., *Charleston! Charleston! : The History of a Southern City*, 4.

<sup>92</sup> Warren B. Smith, *White Servitude in Colonial South Carolina* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1961), 21, 22.

in the number of imported slaves over the years, however, indicates that slave owners saw potential in the skills that could be taught to slaves. The General Assembly had made attempts to limit the number of slaves imported into the colony and to limit the trades that slaves could participate in, but the slave population continued to increase.<sup>93</sup> While the number of white indentured servants arriving in Charlestown was low in comparison to the number of slaves being imported, a large, steady population of German immigrants made up the majority of the white servant population.<sup>94</sup> Known as “Poor Protestants” fleeing war and famine conditions, this group would not have an easy time adjusting to Charlestown, but they were offered apprenticeship indentures and would receive aid from the local government.<sup>95</sup> Despite the increase in the number of slaves and the increased number of trades taught to slaves, negative attitudes towards them would impact how they were treated after the hurricanes. In the decade prior to the hurricanes, South Carolinians had come to believe that slaves could not be trusted. Fears of slave uprisings after the Stono Rebellion and the General Assembly’s passage of the 1740 Negro Act, which made it illegal to teach slaves to read or write, generated the belief that slaves could be dangerous if placed in large groups.<sup>96</sup> Interestingly enough, rice plantations often had nine slaves to every white person, yet it does not appear that any slave activity

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<sup>93</sup> Elizabeth Donnan, “The Slave Trade into South Carolina Before the Revolution,” *The American Historical Review* 33, no. 4 (1928): 804, 805; Smith, *White Servitude in Colonial South Carolina*, 34, 35.

<sup>94</sup> Smith, *White Servitude in Colonial South Carolina*, 48.

<sup>95</sup> Smith, 44–65.

<sup>96</sup> Birgit Brander Rasmussen, “‘Attended with Great Inconveniences’: Slave Literacy and the 1740 South Carolina Negro Act,” *PMLA* 125, no. 1 (2010): 201–3.

disrupted the economic success of these plantations.<sup>97</sup> It is unknown how many slaves were killed by the hurricanes, but there were likely many casualties as agricultural work and poorly constructed slave cabins placed many in a vulnerable position.

Governor Glen and the General Assembly made no statements regarding slave losses or the conditions they were faced with after the hurricanes. Shortly after the first major hurricane, Glen and the General Assembly came together to pass an anti-looting order. White people, indentured or not, who were suspected of or guilty of stealing from the property of others were “to answer at the next General Sessions” for their conduct, or they were placed in “Custody, to be dealt with according to the Law.”<sup>98</sup> Slaves, on the other hand, did not have the law on their side and did not have the opportunity to prove their innocence and contest charges brought up against them. The anti-looting act stated that of slaves caught looting, “*it is hereby Ordered*, that all Negroes or other Slaves in, shall be sent to the Work-house, for such offence.”<sup>99</sup> No slave uprisings or revolts took place after the hurricanes, and it is unlikely that any slaves had any intention of doing so. The slaves of Charlestown were busy working to clean up and rebuild after the hurricanes. Longer days and less sleep became the norm for the colony’s slaves as they were tasked with rebuilding plantations in their entirety and worked tirelessly to restore the damaged rice crop. Through their hard work, an agricultural export loss of greater than fifty percent directly after the 1752 hurricanes was subsequently remedied with over

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<sup>97</sup> Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783*, 97.

<sup>98</sup> “COUNCIL-CHAMBER, September the 18th, 1752.,” *South-Carolina Gazette*, September 19, 1752.

<sup>99</sup> “COUNCIL-CHAMBER, September the 18th, 1752.”

ten thousand barrels of rice being prepared for export, outdoing pre-hurricane rice exports.<sup>100</sup> This increased workload was dangerous for slaves, as Charlestown's food supply had been depleted dramatically, leaving little to eat. Governor Glen worried about feeding the white colonists, and was concerned that there would not be enough for slaves to eat as there were approximately "forty and fifty thousand Negroes to be fed" who would require a corn supply of about "Eighty thousand bushels."<sup>101</sup> Everyone was concerned about food after the hurricanes, but indentured servants and slaves had more reason to be worried about receiving food rations. The conditions of slaves were perhaps the most worrisome, as an increased workload on top of a dwindling food supply jeopardized their health greatly. Charlestown would, however, rebuild itself, with slaves continuing to be the primary labor force in the colony while a small, but steady stream of indentured servants arrived and worked until they were free to establish their own cultural communities.

Charlestown would not only recover and rebuild from the hurricanes, but it would evolve into the city recognizable to us today. Early on in the city's history, visitors and newcomers alike were reminded that they were far away from the familiar streets of London. The Lords Proprietors had designed Charlestown on "a regular grid plan, with streets at right angles" and, out of concern for potential attacks, the city was originally constructed as "a walled city complete with moat and drawbridges", making it feel like a

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<sup>100</sup> Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783*, 103.

<sup>101</sup> Mulcahy, 105.

“medieval” city.<sup>102</sup> The city originally bore a closer resemblance to Italian rather than English cities, as the colony originally “functioned much like a city-state with a vast hinterland...”<sup>103</sup> The medieval walls that once protected the city were torn down as the city expanded, with newer fortifications put in place. It would not be until a decade before the hurricanes that the city became an expansive trade center, as public buildings were erected and an increased number of wharves were built to allow for an increase in trade.<sup>104</sup> Wealthy colonists built their homes and public buildings they supported out of brick, while the homes of less affluent colonists and other buildings were constructed of less durable materials. A fire swept through the city in 1740, devastating more than three hundred families who lost their homes.<sup>105</sup> After this devastating fire killed many and destroyed much of the city, colonists built more public buildings and houses out of brick. Governor Glen stated that with an increased use of bricks, fatalities would decrease during hurricanes, especially the 1752 hurricanes as “Numbers more must have perished had not our Houses been very Substantial.”<sup>106</sup>

Hurricanes, however, were of more concern to colonists than fires, and the increased use of brick in building construction was also viewed as a safeguard against potential storms. The hurricanes of 1752 devastated Charlestown when it was more

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<sup>102</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, 162.

<sup>103</sup> Edgar, 161.

<sup>104</sup> Matthew Mulcahy, “The ‘Great Fire’ of 1740 and the Politics of Disaster Relief in Colonial Charleston,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 99, no. 2 (April 1998): 137.

<sup>105</sup> Mulcahy, 138, 139.

<sup>106</sup> Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783*, 134.

populous than it had ever been, and the damage from these two hurricanes was severe. With this being said, the hurricanes intensified the city's efforts to rebuild and expand. A major construction project, the construction of the new Parish Church of St. Michael's, was interrupted by the hurricanes, but progress towards building the church resumed in October 1752. Construction of this church began after the formal laying of the cornerstones by Glen and members of the General Assembly, with the cornerstones surviving the hurricanes.<sup>107</sup> Slave labor was used in the construction of the church, with slave owners volunteering their slaves' time as a donation to the church. Starting at the beginning of October 1752, four slave owners had five slaves work a total of forty-seven days, with the number of owners, slaves, and total days worked increasing in November and December.<sup>108</sup> The number of slaves volunteered and the number of hours worked increased in 1753 while the colony still suffered from damages and food shortages. Colonists rebuilding public buildings and homes could have looked to Britain's tropical colonies for advice or assistance on how to create buildings that would better withstand the threat of repeat hurricanes. Instead, they preferred houses that would better fit in an English landscape. As a result, colonists "made relatively few accommodations to hurricanes."<sup>109</sup> Despite the fact that the 1752 hurricanes ravished the city and left "many wooden houses...wrecked to pieces and washed away..." colonists preferred elaborate

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<sup>107</sup> George Smith Holmes, *A Historic Sketch Of The Parish Church Of St. Michael, In The Province Of South Carolina* (Charleston, South Carolina: Walker, Evans & Cogswell Co., Printers, 1887), 3, 4.

<sup>108</sup> "St. Michael's Church Records (Slave Labor Tally Sheet)," 1753, South Carolina Historical Society.

<sup>109</sup> Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783*, 118.

buildings with a Georgian design.<sup>110</sup> Colonists did make changes to better withstand the climate, with piazzas to help them survive humid summers as it could mean an increase in the number of get-togethers among the well-to-do.<sup>111</sup> Physical location, however, did become a more carefully considered factor with rebuilding efforts. The Statehouse, now known as the courthouse at Broad and Meeting Streets, was built in what was thought to be a flood-proof location.<sup>112</sup> Colonists hoping to have their land resurveyed or newcomers to the colony inquiring about the land they purchased prior to arriving in the colony witnessed chaos at the Surveyor General's office and were at risk of being unable to determine which plot of land belonged to them. Floods from the hurricanes had burst through the doors of the office, with "the original Warrants of Survey, all the Duplicates of Plats of this Province, the Books of Record thereof, the Reports on His Majesty's Quit Rents & ca. were...floating about in four and a half Feet Salt Water..."<sup>113</sup> Chaos with record and building damage aside, the colonists of Charlestown aimed to build for the future in hope of quickly regaining economic prosperity. The famous Battery of Charleston was built after the hurricanes to safeguard the city from potential attacks at sea.<sup>114</sup> Twenty-one years after the hurricanes, Benjamin Guerard advertised items for sale, and proudly listed two houses for rent, located "on the Corner of the *Bay*, near the

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<sup>110</sup> Mulcahy, 133, 134.

<sup>111</sup> Mulcahy, 134.

<sup>112</sup> Robert N. Rosen, "Other Catastrophes, Briefly Visited," *The Post and Courier*, 1989.

<sup>113</sup> Bates and Leland, *Proprietary Records Of South Carolina: Abstracts Of The Records Of The Surveyor General Of The Province, Charles Towne 1678-1698*, 3:34.

<sup>114</sup> St. Julien Ravenel, *Charleston: The Place and the People* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), 136.



*Exchange*, and the other adjoining, *Broad-Street*.”<sup>115</sup> Guerard was confident that these houses would collect a profitable rent, as they were built of great materials and were a part of the colony’s history described as follows: “The Wood Materials are of the best of Yellos Pine and Black Cypress, and the Mortar made of Fresh-Water River Gravesl, so strong a cement as that none of the Tiles in the Great Hurricane 1752, were blown off, whilst the Roofs of most of the Houses tiled or stated were entirely uncovered thereby.”<sup>116</sup>

The 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1752 caused mass destruction and brought about many deaths, but would ultimately lead to the colonist’s realization that the key to their survival in the event of future disasters lay in their hands. Since the foundation of the colony, the colonists of Charlestown had played an active role in the governmental affairs of the colony. The colonists would continue to expect to have their voices heard after South Carolina became a Royal colony, with this expectation never wavering through a succession of royally appointed governors. Living in Charlestown was not easy, and early promoters of the colony misled many into believing Charlestown had a mild climate and did not have a hurricane season. Colonists found out on their own that hurricanes were a very real threat to their survival, and later potential colonists were warned by Governor Glen that the colony had a climate of extremes. Cold snaps were unusual, but a potential threat and hot summers followed by hurricanes were not unusual. Many colonists decided

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<sup>115</sup> “For SALE Privately, The Following Property of BENJAMIN GUERARD,” *South-Carolina Gazette*, May 24, 1773.

<sup>116</sup> “For SALE Privately, The Following Property of BENJAMIN GUERARD.”

to stay and hoped to become financially successful in a land full of opportunity and uncertainties. Regardless of their social status, colonists expected that their interests would be addressed by their local government, and those who held seats in the General Assembly expected the governor would work with them with his intentions being transparent. Governor Glen's desire to preserve the Royal prerogative would ultimately lead to quarrelsome disagreements with the General Assembly, with the division between the governor and the governed becoming greater in the wake of the hurricanes. Colonists tried to understand why the September hurricanes had been so destructive that year. All believed the hurricanes were an act of God, but some interpreted the storms as an act of God's displeasure with them while others looked to natural explanations for the hurricanes hoping to better understand hurricanes as a natural phenomenon God had established. The economic damage caused by the hurricanes was significant, with concerns of food shortages becoming part of the colonist's daily lives into the spring of 1753. Indentured servants and slaves worked to rebuild the city at a rapid pace, with slaves working the longest hours in the most difficult conditions. Those in Charlestown would move forward, but would never forget the hurricanes as they either remembered their close encounters with death or the destruction caused by the storms. The September 1752 hurricanes "became a part of the collective memory of the colonists", as they recorded their experiences or shared their stories with younger generations.<sup>117</sup> A brick memorial to the hurricanes stood outside the governor's mansion and reminded multiple

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<sup>117</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, 161.

generations of the impact of these hurricanes until the mansion was destroyed during the Civil War.<sup>118</sup> Two hundred and thirty-seven years after the hurricanes of 1752, Charlestonians reeling from hurricane Hugo would be reminded that the city had survived before, and would survive again. Charlestonians were assured that “as bad as Hurricane Hugo was, history fairly shouts at us that Hugo will be no match for the civic spirit, tenacity, and determination of Charlestonians.”<sup>119</sup> Now, two hundred and sixty-seven years after the September hurricanes of 1752, we are reminded that nature is still as unforgiving today as it was for the colonists of Charlestown and that we will still need to pick up the pieces after disasters and rebuild with the same determination the colonists had.

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<sup>118</sup> Ravenel, *Charleston: The Place and the People*, 134.

<sup>119</sup> Rosen, “Other Catastrophes, Briefly Visited.”

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