

The *JBS* continues its series of Book Chapters in Progress with Peter N. Moore's Introduction and Chapter 3 from his forthcoming book from the University of South Carolina Press, *World of Toil and Strife: Community Transformation in Backcountry South Carolina, 1750-1805*. A member of the History Department at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Moore is also a member of the Editorial Board of the *JBS*.

World of Toil and Strife

BY PETER N. MOORE

He lived to purpose;
He preached with fidelity;
He prayed for his people;
And being dead he speaks.

-Inscription on William Richardson's headstone, Old Waxhaw churchyard

Part I: William Richardson's World

In 1759 the Reverend William Richardson came to the Waxhaws, a newly settled, predominately Scots-Irish community in the lower Catawba River valley of South Carolina's remote upcountry. At thirty Richardson still had much of his youthful idealism intact, and he was surely ambivalent about the prospect of a settled ministry. According to Samuel Davies, Richardson's mentor and Virginia's leading Presbyterian divine, Richardson's heart was primarily set on Christianizing the "Indian Savages." Accordingly Davies dispatched Richardson on a missionary tour to the Cherokee in 1758. It was a bitter and disheartening ordeal punctuated by fever, hunger, exposure, and delays. Frustrated by an angry and unreceptive Indian audience on the brink of war with the British, Richardson was left exhausted, despondent, and tormented by self-doubt. "I think I'm incapable for the Undertaking," he confessed at the end of his tour, "and only take up the Place of a fitter Person." But that same year he accepted the call from the Waxhaw congregation. Defeated though he was, Richardson soon warmed to the prospect of the new position. It would, after all, enable him to plant new congregations in the burgeoning Carolina piedmont, to earn the salary of a settled minister and start a family, perhaps even to redeem himself by continuing his Indian mission among the neighboring Catawba. He bought land in the heart of the Waxhaw settlement and shortly thereafter married Agnes Craighead, daughter of Presbyterian preacher Alexander Craighead of nearby Sugar Creek.¹

The world that William Richardson now inhabited had many of the features of what we think of as traditional agrarian societies. It was a world where kinship mattered most. Kinship ordered immigration and settlement patterns, as in the case of Richardson's sister Mary Davie, who brought her family from Scotland to the Waxhaws in 1764 and settled on a tract adjacent to her brother's farm. Kinship lubricated the local exchange economy, providing a social framework for sharing land, tools, livestock, food, and labor.

¹ Davies, *Letters*, 39; Richardson's Cherokee Journal, 35. On Richardson see especially Crockett, "Reverend William Richardson, M.A.," Robinson, *William R. Davie*, 1-7; White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 90-94.

It reinforced sectarian identity, for marriage was interwoven with church affiliation, and even seemingly arcane disputes over doctrine and worship played out along kinship lines. The local kin group also insulated its members from intimidation and harassment, a lesson Richardson's widow, Agnes, later learned the hard way. Childless and kinless at his sudden death in 1771, she found herself the subject of malicious gossip and the victim of an informal prosecution for her husband's murder.²

The insularity conditioned by kinship was deepened by the perils of frontier life, for Richardson's world was also a dangerous one, crouched as it was in the shadow of the Catawba villages. Clustered in a half-dozen towns just upriver from Waxhaw Creek, the Catawba had suffered greatly from their encounter with Europeans, and they were in no mood to convert to Presbyterianism, despite Richardson's heart. Indians burned white settlers' fences, killed their cattle, stole their horses, burgled their homes, and threatened their lives. Colonists encroached on Indian land, unwisely traded in liquor, and in one case murdered a Catawba woman in cold blood and nearly killed her child. Nor were the Catawba the only threat to white settlers' peace and security. Richardson reported a Cherokee raid on the Catawba towns in 1763, "which caused such Terror, that there was nothing but running and flying where ever safety could be had." Such experiences conditioned Waxhaw settlers to suspicion and fear, making for a cohesive but also an insular community to whom outsiders were suspect and often unwelcome.³

William Richardson's world was also one of small farmers. Land was plentiful in Richardson's day, and land ownership in the Waxhaws was broadly and more or less evenly distributed. As the first wave of migrants from Pennsylvania and Virginia set about clearing and plowing and fencing their land, they did so largely with the labor of their own families, for there were few slaves in the Waxhaws; Richardson's four made him one of the owners with the most slaves in the community. Access to the coastal market, some two hundred miles to the south, was severely hampered by poor roads and unnavigable streams. With limited access and little incentive to produce surpluses for the commodities market, first-generation Waxhaw farmers developed a vigorous system of local exchange, meeting their basic household needs first and then growing surpluses to barter, loan, and sell to neighbors. In short, patterns of land ownership, labor, and production made the Waxhaws a thoroughly yeoman community.⁴

Finally, Richardson's world was a deeply religious world. Settlers quickly organized themselves into a congregation and constructed a church. By 1758 they had arranged to hire a settled minister—a rare achievement in the colonial upcountry. Church adherence was accordingly high, with "seldom less than 9, 10, 1200 people" in regular Sunday attendance, as one observer noted. And sectarian identity was strong. Religious outsiders—Baptists and in particular Anglicans—came in for torrents of abuse from their Presbyterian neighbors. The people of the Waxhaws thought of themselves primarily in religious terms. Their identity was bound as tightly to Presbyterianism as it was to their

² Robinson, *William R. Davie*, 7. On the economic function of kinship see especially Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers*, 38, 206, 222. On Agnes Richardson's trial see chapter 3; Crockett, "Trial by Touch"; and Moore, "The Mysterious Death of William Richardson," 279–98.

³ Richardson's letter is published in Kirkland and Kennedy, *Historic Camden*, 55–56. On Catawba-settler conflict see especially Merrell, *The Indians' New World*, 169–82.

⁴ Will of William Richardson, Will Book SS: 44, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH). On local exchange and the borrowing system see especially Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers*, 219–25.

local kin group, their race consciousness, their ethnic heritage, and their status as a class of independent small farmers. These various social, cultural, and economic strands interwove to give Richardson and his neighbors a sense of themselves as a distinct people.⁵

Traditional though it was, however, William Richardson's world was not the static, isolated backwater commonly associated with the colonial backcountry. The Waxhaws was, in fact, a bustling community, dynamic and evolving, constantly in motion, responding to the push and pull of global markets, population pressures, and imperial politics. In the years following Richardson's sudden death at age forty-two—indeed, even as he lay dead in his upstairs study on a hot July evening in 1771—these and other, more subtle, forces were working to transform his world. Farmers bound themselves increasingly to creditors as consumption increased and the Waxhaws was integrated into the regional commodities market. A new stream of immigrants introduced class, neighborhood, and religious tensions that tended to paralyze the once unified and dynamic congregation. Population growth, changing land markets, and out-migration eroded the kin-based neighborhoods, just as surely as slavery and commercial farming weakened the web of neighborly dependencies that framed the local exchange economy. And fading memories of an Anglican establishment diluted the sectarian identity of the rising generation and opened it to new and controversial forms of religious experience. Thus while the memory of Richardson's "remarkable . . . piety" and "devotion to God" lingered for more than a quarter century after his death, the world he inhabited changed profoundly in this same period. By 1800 it more closely resembled the slaveholding, staple-producing world of the South than the yeoman communities its early settlers had left behind in the mid-Atlantic region. It is the purpose of this book to chart and make sense of this important transformation.⁶

To the extent that it is known at all, the Waxhaws is most often remembered as the birthplace of Andrew Jackson. Regardless of whether he was born in North or South Carolina, no one disputes that he was born and came of age in the Waxhaws. It was the Waxhaws, biographers have long argued, that nurtured in Jackson the qualities that made him legendary: his temperament, his prejudices, his passion, his ambition. "Reared in a crude, violent, Back Country society," wrote one biographer, Jackson had within him "the virtues and faults of an entire people." His was "an embattled life, close to nature and uninhibited by traditional social restraints"; he was the "natural man," the archetypal backwoodsman weaned in a "society characterized by fighting, boasting, and short tempers." Jackson's personality was conditioned by his "chaotic environment," a lawless, disrupted, unstable, fragile community "beset by vagrancy, illegitimacy, crime, violence, and barbarity," all of which contributed to his "impetuosity, boastfulness, recklessness, daring." As raw and rough and volatile as the frontier itself, Jackson was formed by and

⁵ Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, I: 285–86; Hooker, *The Carolina Backcountry*, 14 (quotation). Most early white settlers in the Waxhaws were migrants from other colonies, but most post-1765 settlers immigrated directly from northern Ireland. Accordingly *migrant/migration* is used to describe the former group and process while *immigrant/immigration* is used for the latter.

⁶ Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, I: 418 [quotations]. For a general overview of the colonial Waxhaws see Pettus, *The Waxhaws*, chapters 1–3. For a thorough treatment of the early Waxhaws, which serves as a backdrop for understanding Andrew Jackson, see Booraem, *Young Hickory*.

came to embody the early American West, beginning with the crude backcountry community in which he was nurtured.⁷

In their desire to explain the sources of Jackson's stormy temperament, however historians and biographers have too frequently viewed the place of his birth through the lens of his personality, superimposing the Jacksonian mythos on the Waxhaw settlement. As a result, the place has become nearly as mythic as the man himself. Yet in many ways Jackson was the antithesis of his native community. Born into a world of family farmers, Jackson disdained farming. Baptized by William Richardson, raised in an intensely religious community whose central institution was the church, reared by a pious mother who encouraged her son to seek a career in the ministry, young Andy was instead wild and reckless, overly fond of horse racing, and inclined to pursue distinctly worldly ambitions. Most important, Jackson was bereft of immediate family in a world ordered and knit together by family ties. Born fatherless, he lost both of his brothers and his mother during the Revolutionary War. He was left, as he later remembered, "homeless and friendless" by age fifteen and was thus free to strike out on his own. Such a shattered childhood suggests that Jackson's temperament was shaped as much, or more, by homelessness as by home. He became who he was because he left the Waxhaws, not because he grew up there. It is therefore important to avoid viewing the Waxhaws through Jackson's strong personality, for this obscures rather than clarifies the kind of place he grew up in.⁸

The complex and shifting history of the Waxhaws in the second half of the eighteenth century may be seen more easily once it is stripped of its Jacksonian mythos. It was a history shaped by the dynamic interplay of distant and local forces: on the one hand, rising populations and declining economic prospects in northern Ireland, the ever-expanding market for rice and slaves, imperial wars that fueled Indian colonist conflict, and the insatiable demand for sugar that in turn created a growing market for wheat in the sugar islands; on the other hand, the peculiar configuration of rival neighborhoods in a community alert to seemingly minor ethnic and religious differences, the enthusiasm of small farming families for reproducing themselves and thereby creating population pressures and land shortages, the determination of colonial farmers to live comfortably on the land and their willingness to capitalize on economic opportunities. These local and regional forces existed in constant tension with one another, continually creating new historical conditions with new imperatives, new opportunities, and new layers of conflict. The story of the Waxhaws—and by extension the story of the early southern backcountry as a whole—cannot be understood apart from this complex interplay of distant, external forces and internal community dynamics that combined to transform William Richardson's world in the closing decades of the eighteenth century.⁹

⁷ Buchanan, *Jackson's Way*, 6 [first two quotations]; Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, 41, 42, 43 [next four quotations]; Curtis, *Andrew Jackson and the Search for Vindication*, 2, 3, 4, 6, 29 [next five quotations]. For a more complex view that stresses the role of Jackson's Scots-Irish ancestry, his upbringing in the backcountry, and his experience of loss in the war in shaping his personality, see Booraem, *Young Hickory*, xii-xiii, 25-26, 109-11.

⁸ Booraem, *Young Hickory*, especially 1-44.

⁹ Historians are only beginning to pay attention to the interplay of local and distant forces in the formation of backcountry communities. For a discussion of the role of imperial policies and the Atlantic market in shaping the landscape of the Virginia backcountry, see Hofstra, *The Planting of New Virginia*, 4, 7.

This study is driven by two interlocking questions. How did the sweeping economic, political, and demographic changes of the late eighteenth century affect communities in the southern backcountry? And how did these communities, given their distinctive local conditions, respond to these changes? These are large questions, which, though funneled through the experience of one community, the Waxhaws address two similarly large historical issues: the economic orientation of small farmers and the engagement of rural communities in the Atlantic market; and the complex ethnic, religious, racial, class, and local sources of identity, or stated differently, the relationship between community and identity. The second issue has two corollaries: the texture of relationships within and between communities and peoples on the late-colonial frontier; and the ambiguous place of slaves in a developing society of slaveholders.

Of the many ways historians have depicted the market behavior of Anglo-American family farmers in the late eighteenth century, two views stand out. One argues that yeoman farmers were neither profit-hungry entrepreneurs nor self-conscious peasant producers but something in between: middling farmers who established composite farms that combined household with limited commercial production in their drive to achieve competency. They were opportunists but not speculative profit maximizers. Practitioners of safety-first agriculture, these farmers minimized risk in order to maintain their autonomy, producing surpluses for commercial purposes when their resources allowed. This model has been applied primarily to New England and the mid-Atlantic region and only by extension to the southern backcountry.¹⁰ In contrast, a second view highlights the regional context but glosses over the complex picture of production and consumption so prominent in the other literature. Placing the story of southern backcountry farmers in a southern narrative, this view stresses their isolation from commercial markets, the subsistence strategies they pursued, and their destruction by a revolutionary planter class after cotton entered the upcountry around 1800.¹¹

The history of the Waxhaws suggests that both of these models oversimplify the economic development of southern backcountry communities and the market behavior of backcountry farmers. The commercialization of the Waxhaws was a halting process, proceeding in fits and starts, at times slowly, at other times swiftly, at still other times not at all. The economy developed gradually in the first two decades of white settlement. Limited land speculation, a brisk household exchange system, and the construction of a commercial infrastructure—hardly more than an afterthought in the early years—characterized this frontier economy. By the early 1770s, however, the more ambitious of backcountry farmers had created an infrastructure of roads and mills and established trade ties with coastal merchants through their intermediaries at Camden. They were also using the new local-court system to secure credit. As a result, commercial wheat production, consumption, and debt increased noticeably. The onset of the Revolutionary War probably stimulated wheat production, as it did in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, but eventually the war ravaged the countryside, laying waste to fields, farmers, and mills and

¹⁰ I have blurred some important distinctions in creating this composite view, but in general this summarizes the consensus in the recent literature on the market orientation of yeoman farmers; see especially Vickers, "Competency and Competition," 3–29; Bushman, "Markets and Composite Farms," 352–74; and Kulikoff, "Households and Markets," 342–55.

¹¹ On this score see Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 4–20, and Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 5–6. For a more complicated view that highlights the development of the backcountry economy through the agency of a nascent planter class, see Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*.

setting back the local economy for the duration of the 1780s.¹² Conditions changed dramatically in the 1790s. Population pressures drove up land prices, prompted a flurry of speculation, and forced scores of farmers to migrate into the newly opened western lands. Those who remained met this Malthusian crisis through economic intensification, shifting more resources to commercial wheat production, purchasing slaves to augment existing or replace lost family labor, and leveraging their farms to acquire the credit needed to commercialize. Between 1790 and 1800 the white population declined while the slave population nearly doubled; more than half of all households now owned one or more slaves. The commercialization of the Waxhaws—which lagged for twenty years after colonization, started so promisingly in the early 1770s, and collapsed so completely during the war—was an accomplished fact by 1800, the product of population growth, the international demand for wheat, the opening of the West, and the availability of slave labor.¹³

It was also accomplished by the ambitions of small farmers. In the 1790s the yeoman households of the Waxhaws were eagerly looking beyond competency. Wheat was fetching a good price, and the cost of slaves put slave ownership within reach. Land values were rising, and Waxhaw farmers knew a good opportunity when they saw one. With increasing frequency they risked their farms to acquire credit, sold their family lands to turn a profit, cleared and plowed more acreage to feed lowcountry and West Indian planters, and purchased slaves, who freed them from the worst drudgery, permitted them to educate their sons, and gave them a competitive edge with their neighbors.¹⁴ Whether spurred on by Malthusian pressures or simply availing themselves of market opportunities, the yeomanry oversaw the transition from a society with slaveholders to a slaveholding society. If they anticipated the planter revolution and blunted its impact, they were also a revolutionary force in their own right.¹⁵ The choices they made deepened class divisions, eroded the kin-based neighborhood, weakened the neighborly economic interdependency of the late colonial years, and commodified land and labor, the two factors of production that once expressed social and not merely economic relationships.

¹² On the role of backcountry planters in developing a commercial infrastructure in the late colonial period, see Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 45. On the importance of Camden to the Catawba-Wateree valley economy see especially Ernst and Merrens, “Camden’s turret’s pierce the skies!,” 549–74. On the rising demand for Virginia wheat during the Revolutionary War, see Hofstra, *The Planting of New Virginia*, 282.

¹³ The process of economic intensification in the Waxhaws is similar to the transformation of Massachusetts described by Rothenberg in *From Market-Places to a Market Economy*. James Henretta has also argued that the 1790s was a pivotal period in the “transition to capitalism,” although he emphasizes other processes of production and capital formation; see “The Transition to Capitalism in America,” 218–38. For a longer view that stresses the gradual decline of the yeomanry, see Kulikoff, “The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America,” 120–22. For a good summary of how growing populations in the colonial era led to economic intensification and the search for new markets, see John Brooke, “Ecology,” 67.

¹⁴ In general historians have not distinguished between yeoman farmers and petty slaveholders, since slave ownership did not significantly alter production, work patterns, or safety-first farming. This leaves many questions about the impact of slave ownership on small farming families unexplored. See Kulikoff, *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism*, 40, and McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 47–51. For a broad and largely speculative treatment of the impact of slave ownership, see Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom*, 94–99.

¹⁵ On the planter revolution see especially Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, especially 95–108.

This economic transformation had profound social consequences. For much of the eighteenth century, Old World crises and New World opportunities conspired—with the help of land speculators, provincial officials, and recruiting agents—to draw hundreds of thousands of European immigrants to the British colonies. South Carolina officials worked, sometimes feverishly, to guarantee themselves a share of these immigrants. Increasingly worried over the growing slave majority and smarting from the nearly disastrous Yamassee War, officials sought to reduce the dual threat of slave uprising and Indian attack by persuading “free poor Protestants” to settle their frontier. Generous land policies and other incentives drew colonists by the thousands to strategically located townships across the interior and into the rich lands between these townships. The result was a cultural patchwork of backcountry communities, what Charles Woodmason called a “mix’d medley” of languages, religious sects, and ethnic groups living in sometimes remote, sometimes adjacent enclaves.¹⁶

In one way or another, recent historians have tended to emphasize compatibility in considering how these diverse groups related to each other. One variation on this theme stresses accommodation. The backcountry was a meeting place, a multicultural mixing zone where various ethnic, national, and religious groups traded, intermingled, shared worship space, or quietly submitted to English cultural hegemony. Another view emphasizes class unity. Despite their religious and cultural differences, the people of the backcountry shared a common identity as small, independent producers, yeoman farmers, and they drew on this identity in their class-based sectional struggle with lowcountry planters and colonial officials in the late 1760s.¹⁷

The story of the Waxhaws, or for that matter a close analysis of any single community, complicates this picture. While class and sectional conflict might have knitted upcountry communities together, ethnic and religious differences worked to drive them apart. The economic and political forces of the Atlantic world had thrown divergent peoples together. They were keenly aware of their differences, and they were more likely to engage in conflict with their neighbors than with distant lowcountry nabobs. They might indeed be “free poor Protestants”—a class of autonomous farming families of modest means and roughly compatible religious traditions—but beneath this surface they were eager to keep to themselves and quite capable of indulging their sectarian hatreds with zeal. Attempts to overcome these differences through class unity were superficial and temporary; appeals to racial unity were utterly fruitless. Moreover, the dangers of living in an Indian borderland only deepened colonists’ suspicion and insularity. In this environment cooperation was just as likely to trigger fear than it was to signal accommodation. Historians who overemphasize accommodation or cooperation do so by ignoring the fine-grained differences that were magnified in the eyes of colonists who inhabited a culturally and physically threatening frontier.

¹⁶ The most thorough study of the European colonization of the South Carolina backcountry is still Meriwether, *The Expansion of South Carolina*. The quotation is from Hooker, *The Carolina Backcountry*, 6.

¹⁷ On accommodation see the essays in Puglisi, ed., *Diversity and Accommodation*, especially the introduction by Puglisi. The literature on class unity and cooperation is more developed for North Carolina. Because South Carolina historians have long emphasized sectional conflict in the eighteenth century and regarded unification as the major issue in the early national period, they have tended to downplay the insularity and disunity of backcountry communities. For a prominent recent example see Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*.

As microhistorians learned long ago, many of these differences surface only at the community level. In the Waxhaws identity was constructed around very specific and localized ethnic, religious, and class markers.¹⁸ Over time, two distinct neighborhoods developed: an initial settlement planted on the fine and well-watered soils of the river bottom, composed of second- and third-generation Americans of Scots-Irish descent, evangelical in their Presbyterianism and increasingly comfortable economically; and more-recent immigrants who came directly from northern Ireland and planted themselves in the more remote uplands with restricted access to roads and mills and meetinghouse, farming poorer soils, living in poorer households, and practicing a more conservative Covenanting Presbyterianism. Because the stakes were higher—locating the meetinghouse, hiring the minister, taking sides during the war, maintaining worship traditions—conflict was even more frequent and intense among these similar groups than it was between the Presbyterians of the Waxhaws and outsiders with completely different religious and ethnic backgrounds. These internal conflicts heated up during the tumultuous 1790s. The uneven effects of commercialization heightened existing class and neighborhood divisions. The Presbyterian Church, the community's central institution, was increasingly hard put to bridge these widening rifts. Instead of healing social divisions, it became the stage upon which they were acted out, a scene and ultimately a casualty of social conflict. By 1803 the economic transformation of the Waxhaws had left in its wake a shattered church and two bitterly divided neighborhoods, along with the emergence of a third, nascent slave community quietly forming amid the toil and strife of a commercial revolution.

Slaves had been a part of the Waxhaw settlement from its establishment in the early 1750s. Some belonged to households pushing up from the more commercialized, slave-rich communities in the midlands and lowcountry; others were attached to farmers migrating down from Pennsylvania and Virginia.¹⁹ They remained marginal in the household exchange economy through the Revolution; by a generous estimate slaves made up one-tenth of the population of the Waxhaws by the 1770s. As is the case for the backcountry generally, little is known of slave life in the Waxhaws—their work regimen, their family life, their place in the white community—surprising, perhaps, given the rich body of literature on colonial slavery.²⁰ The evidence from the Waxhaws suggests, however, that backcountry slaves inhabited a kind of social limbo. Too thinly scattered to form their own community and develop a shared subculture, they straddled the margins of white society, uncertain of who they were and where they belonged. This uncertainty was shared by the white community, many of whom were new to slaveholding, and was further compounded by their insularity and the powerful pull of ethnic and religious identity. There was no agreement on how to incorporate African Americans into the church, households, and community. As a result, slaves occupied an ambiguous place in the colonial Waxhaws, able to form only a minimal community life of their own and

¹⁸ Patrick Griffin has written about the fluid and elastic identity of Ulster Presbyterians in northern Ireland and America in *The People with No Name*. Without questioning the process of identity formation Griffin describes, this community analysis suggests that it could have highly localized sources.

¹⁹ On the growth of slavery in the Pennsylvania countryside during mid-century, see Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 181.

²⁰ On this gap in the literature see Morgan, "African Americans," 159.

unable or unwilling to find a comfortable place in the white society to which they were attached.

This began to change in the 1790s. The same forces that weakened economic interdependency, heightened class and neighborhood tensions, and eventually divided the white community also served to increase the slave population rapidly and lay the demographic foundation for a rich and autonomous black community. This nascent slave community left few traces in the local sources, and its existence must largely be assumed on the basis of a growing population. Questions about the development of a slave economy, the construction of a slave culture, even the formation of slave families, remain unanswered for the Waxhaws and indeed for the early national backcountry as a whole. There are signs, however, that the lingering social ambiguity of the colonial years was causing troubles of its own. The psalmody controversy that shook the church in the early 1790s may have had a racial dimension; the revival that shattered the congregation in 1802 certainly bore the marks of African American ritual; and there is ample evidence of black participation in these revivals. The borders of Scots-Irish Presbyterianism, once so carefully guarded but never fully closed to Waxhaw slaves, were being stretched and weakened by the shift to a slaveholding society. In the end white Presbyterians retreated, and slaves gradually filled the pews of the Waxhaw meetinghouse, wholly occupying it in the years after the Civil War.

Thus was William Richardson's world transformed. To some extent this transformation represented a loss of community as it existed in Richardson's time. It is a mistake to idealize this pre-commercial society. It was, after all, as clannish, narrow, bigoted, and exclusionary as it was neighborly, interdependent, and tightly knit. Yet one does not have to look far to see a distinct weakening of economic interdependency in the postwar period, an erosion of the kin-ordered neighborhoods, and a growing tendency to regard land and labor in narrowly economic terms. Economic and demographic processes took a heavy toll on the stable, cohesive society of Richardson's day, deepening its ethnic, religious, and racial fault lines. Yet theirs was no simple story of a world lost to capitalist transformation. Neighborliness remained, with or without its economic underpinnings, and religious identity long figured into marriage choices and thus remained at least partially within the familiar confines of religious identity. The narrative of the decline is further complicated by the rise of the slave community. The wheat revolution of the 1790s gave the black population of the Waxhaws a measure of autonomy and a wider range of social and cultural choices than they had enjoyed in the colonial period. The losses of the white community were the gains of the slave community.

Still, William Richardson would doubtless have frowned on the changes wrought during the 1790s. He had struggled for a more expansive concept of community, one that made room for slaves, Indians, Covenanters, evangelicals, and non-Presbyterians alike; he strove, often successfully, to bridge the cultural borders of his backcountry neighbors. In fact, that troubled generation of the 1790s itself attested to his success and mourned his absence. In the very midst of the social, religious, and economic upheaval of that decade, John Davis, the clerk at Waxhaw Presbyterian Church, penned a brief history of the congregation. Davis wrote especially movingly of William Richardson, extolling his "remarkable . . . piety," his "devotion to God, and charity to the poor." Richardson's sudden death in 1771, Davis noted, was "deeply lamented by the people of his

congregations.” Davis’s voice betrayed a tone of longing and lament nearly a quarter century after Richardson’s death, suggesting that he was missed as much or more in 1794 than he was in 1771. This is not surprising, for Davis was writing in the midst of crisis. The church had reached an uneasy truce over relocating the meetinghouse after the war, it had suffered through two unsatisfactory ministers since Richardson’s death and was still warming to a third, and it had just weathered a bitter dispute over hymn singing that divided the congregation. The kind of earnest piety, devotion, and charity that Richardson practiced were in short supply in the tumultuous 1790s. But even William Richardson, with his wisdom and generous spirit and untiring devotion, would have strained to heal the wounds of Davis’s time. His world had changed profoundly in the years since his death, and as much as he might command the hearts of his people, Richardson could not have stopped the forces that were undoing his church and dividing his community.²¹

For the most part this study is structured chronologically, with the Revolutionary War at the center (but not the thematic core) of the narrative. The prologue briefly treats the history of the lower Catawba valley before and immediately after Indian-European contact, looking in particular at the historic movement of people into and through the valley and the impact of disease and trade in the two centuries after European contact. The first three chapters describe the culture, society, and economy of the Waxhaw settlement during the colonial period. One of the defining features of the early community was its cohesiveness and insularity. Chapter 1 locates the sources of this insularity in the kin-ordered, grass-roots settlement process developed by white settlers, the formation of kin-based neighborhoods, and especially in the colonists’ proximity to the Catawba Indians and their subsequent vulnerability to attack. Chapter 2 explores the social and cultural consequences of this insularity. Conditioned by a hostile frontier and huddled in tightly knit neighborhoods comprised of kin and acquaintances, the people of the Waxhaws were fearful and suspicious of anyone outside their carefully circumscribed world. Non-Presbyterians were excluded and ridiculed, and slaves inhabited a limbo defined by their partial inclusion in the white religious community on the one hand and their more fundamental economic relationship to whites on the other. Chapter 3 moves beyond the insularity theme to examine the social and economic structure of the community. Even as they acquired their habits of insularity, the people of the Waxhaws also established civil and economic ties that reached beyond the lower Catawba valley. By the end of the colonial period the community had evolved from a remote, largely subsistence-based backwater settlement into a marginal player in the provincial economy. Economic integration came with a price, however, for it heightened inequality, exacerbated neighborhood tensions, eroded local autonomy, and led to civil strife.

Chapter 4 explores the impact of the Revolutionary War on the Waxhaws, looking in depth at how the war ravaged the community but concluding that it left the Waxhaw social structure intact. Chapter 5 examines the pivotal economic transition of the 1790s, when population pressures and rising land prices propelled out-migration, a strong wheat market made widespread slave ownership possible, and debt and foreclosure increased. The combination of out-migration and sales of inherited lands weakened the kin-based neighborhoods. At the same time, mounting tensions between the established neighborhood of the river bottom and the poorer, less developed neighborhood of the

²¹ The Davis manuscript has not survived. Portions were published in Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, I: 418.

uplands played out in a series of disputes within the Presbyterian congregation. As chapter 6 argues, these disputes came to a head during the revival of 1802–1803, when the church split permanently, signaling a larger division of the Waxhaws into two communities. Yet even as the white population of the Waxhaws was sundered by new religious controversies and old ethnic and class tensions, a third community was forming in its midst, comprised of growing numbers of African American slaves, completing the transformation of the Waxhaws from an extension of the mid-Atlantic yeoman society from which it came to a southern slaveholding society.

Part II: Toil and Strife

In more ways than one William Richardson's death in 1771 marked the end of an era in the Waxhaws. Within a year the new circuit court met in Camden for the first time, ending two decades of civil isolation along with the customary ways of resolving local disputes. A new stream of settlers was pushing onto the margins of the blackjack lands—the remote high ground marked by poor soils and limited access to water—shifting the geographic center of the community eastward and bringing a class and neighborhood dimension to the contest over church ownership. At the same time commercial improvements were opening new markets for upcountry goods, especially wheat, creating new avenues to wealth for ambitious planters. In short, though the Waxhaws might be insular, it was not isolated. As the Revolution approached, lowcountry institutions and markets were penetrating the interior; upcountry farmers were establishing stronger ties with the coast; and yeoman communities such as the Waxhaws were sinking their roots deeper into the provincial economy and society.²²

Integration, however, came with a price. By surrendering their disputes to more distant courts, the people of the Waxhaws also gave up a measure of their autonomy. No longer did neighbors arbitrate property disputes or launch informal coroners' inquests, and the church, which remained without a permanent minister until 1779, lost its judicial role after the civil court was established in Camden. The benefits of judicial and economic integration, moreover, were unevenly distributed. Those who understood the legal system could exploit it to their advantage, just as those who had good soil, plentiful labor, and ready access stood to benefit most from the new markets. As a result, even within the ranks of the landholding yeoman class, a gap emerged, fed by the impoverished new arrivals who were pouring into the blackjack district as well as by the new opportunities afforded by the market for wheat. In the years that followed this widening gap put tremendous strain on the church and fostered divided loyalties during the Revolution.

There was never a time when the white settlers in the Waxhaws practiced a purely subsistence agriculture or even sought, much less achieved, self-sufficiency.²³ Farmers might produce their own food, but the plow irons and hay forks they used to grow and harvest it, along with the kettles and pots they used for cooking it, were either made elsewhere or required imported iron. Andrew Pickens might distill enough liquor to meet the needs of most of his neighbors, but he could not manufacture replacement parts for

²² For a full treatment of this integration process see Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*.

²³ On the inability of eighteenth-century farmers to achieve self-sufficiency, see Pruitt, "Self-Sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," 333–64.

his distillery from native materials. As elsewhere in the colonial interior, farm families in the Waxhaws also depended on imports of salt, shot, and powder. And they needed cash to pay surveying fees, taxes, quitrents, and their ministers' salaries, which required at least a modicum of commercial exchanges with area merchants. Although the earliest inventories suggest that the farm families of the 1750s owned little beyond the basic necessities—there was no imported cloth, no looking glass, no featherbed listed before 1766—even the necessities demanded a relationship with outside, cash-paying markets.²⁴

Nor were these early British-American settlers newcomers to commercial markets. To be sure, migrants from the Shenandoah Valley, where commercial agriculture was the exception through as late as 1760, had essentially grown up in a subsistence economy, but most settlers had experience with outside markets and for-profit farming. Families such as the McDows, Pickens, and Kennedys had previously lived in the wheat-producing areas of Pennsylvania and Maryland. Samuel Burnett, who settled in the Waxhaws in 1754, was a weaver by trade and was certainly familiar with the vagaries of the Atlantic textile market. Alexander McKewn, who came to the Waxhaws in 1756 with three indentured servants, and Thomas Simpson, who arrived in 1753 with fourteen slaves, had invested considerably in laborers and were doubtless experienced commercial farmers. Although exceptional, a planter such as Simpson would not have waited long to seek an outlet for the goods his slaves produced. Likewise, yeoman households, once their basic needs were met, set to work marketing their surpluses to neighbors and traders in order to acquire the imported goods they wanted and needed.²⁵

Some of these settlers also had, or would soon acquire, experience in speculative land markets. For all its promises to “free poor Protestants,” the headright system enabled people with large households to patent considerably more land than they could farm. This was especially true during the land boom of the 1750s, when individual grants averaged more than 300 acres each and ranged up to 1,000 acres.²⁶ Such surplus lands provided their owners with considerably more flexibility than mere subsistence farmers could expect. They could lease land to supplement farm income, use it to settle kin and acquaintances and strengthen their neighborhoods, or retain it for the use of their children. They could also sell it, sometimes for a handsome profit. John Lynn was the largest resident speculator of the 1750s, buying and patenting five tracts for more than

²⁴ McBee, *Anson County, North Carolina, Abstracts of Early Records*, vol. 1 [hay forks, Pickens]; Estate of Robert McCorkall, Anson County Record of Wills 1751–1795, 123 [plow irons]; Inventory of George White's Estate, Inventory of Estates, W: 437, SCDAH [salt]; Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier*, 152–60 [imports]; Kirkland and Kennedy, *Historic Camden*, 55–56 [shot]; CRNC, IX: 113–15 [taxes and quitrents]; James, *The Life of Andrew Jackson*, 13 [minister's salary]. In addition to Pickens, White, and Robert McCorkall, the early inventories are James McCorkall, *Anson County Record of Wills 1751–1795*, 270–72, and William Barr, Inventories of Estates, W: 202, SCDAH.

²⁵ Rodman, *The McDow Family in America* [McDow]; Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle*, 43–44 [Kennedy]; Draper Manuscripts, VV, I: 348–49 [Pickens]; Mecklenburg County, North Carolina Deeds, 136 Notes to Pages 45–47 1: 161 [Burnett]; Holcomb, *Petitions for Land from the South Carolina Council Journal*, IV: 233 [McKewn], III: 198 [Simpson]. First-generation Ulster immigrants were all too familiar with the linen market, having suffered and profited from its occasional swings. In British North America they might continue to raise flax and export the seeds to Ireland, but there was no export market for linen; see Griffin, *The People with No Name*, 27–32, 92.

²⁶ These and the following figures are drawn from data from the Waxhaws land records; see chapter 1, note 19.

1,700 acres and reselling more than half of his acreage. William Beard was more typical, patenting two tracts for 700 acres and selling one four years later for thirty pounds Virginia currency.²⁷ During this period about one in five Waxhaws landowners sold a portion of their lands speculatively, turning 16 percent of all patented lands into a quick profit—hardly an aggressive market, but aggressive enough to show that some farmers viewed their lands at least partially in terms of exchange value.²⁸

While they might dabble in land speculation, however, these migrants from Pennsylvania and Virginia would not soon add to their commercial-farming experience in the Waxhaws. During the first decade of settlement there were no inland trading centers, no adequate roads, and no ready commercial markets for upcountry produce. River transportation was not an option. The Catawba River was not navigable above the fall line, which was some thirty miles downstream from Cane Creek. In 1752 a group of enterprising settlers on the Wateree River (of which the Catawba was a tributary), claiming to be “discouraged from raising any larger Quantities than what is sufficient for Home Consumption,” petitioned the South Carolina Commons House to have the Wateree cleared. The petitioners also appealed for a road from the Santee River to the “upper Settlements” on the Catawba, which they “humbly presume[d] might, in time, sufficiently supply the Market of Charles town” with upcountry commodities. The assembly enacted provisions for the road the following year, but it would be 1760 or later before the road was cleared to the Waxhaw settlement. Until then the only access to the lowcountry market was along the Catawba trading path.²⁹

In the meantime Waxhaws farmers produced little more than what was “sufficient for Home Consumption,” or at least for local consumption. Indian corn, potatoes, peas, pumpkins, wheat, flax, wool, butter, cheese, barley, oats, turnips—such were the staples of the household economy, along with hogs and especially cattle. Not only did cattle appear in every early inventory, but they were consistently among the most numerous and valuable goods in those estates. The estates inventoried before 1765 included between twelve and twenty cattle. Although on average valued at six or seven pounds currency each—about one-fifth the average value of horses and only 2 percent as valuable as slaves—cattle were often identified individually in estate inventories. Like all livestock,

²⁷ Anson County Deeds, B: 114; 6: 119; 1: 171 [Lynn]; Anson County Deeds, B: 334, and I: 216 [Beard].

²⁸ This suggests only that some settlers were experienced with speculative transactions, not that widespread land speculation or profit-minded farmers dominated the Waxhaws land market. In fact, the opposite was the case. On average, absentee landowners acquired fewer than 500 total acres. Of all lands granted during the boom years (more than 31,000 acres), resident and absentee speculators combined resold fewer than 10,000 acres (under one-third); the remaining two thirds were retained for their use value. Further, at least one-third of the land resold by resident landowners was purchased by kin, suggesting that many of these speculative transactions served a social function as well; see chapter 1. Contrary to Bernard Bailyn’s claim about the British- American borderlands generally, land speculation in the Waxhaws was far from the “ubiquitous enterprise” carried on by “every farmer with an extra acre of land”; see Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America*, 66–68.

²⁹ “Petition of the Inhabitants of the Wateree River,” *Journal of the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly*, May 9, 1752 [petition]; McCord, ed., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, VII: 504–506 [enactment]; Meriwether, *The Expansion of South Carolina*, 106–107, 171. On the navigability of the Catawba River see Mixon, “The Land’s Ford Canal,” 1–3. On the suitability of roads as commercial arteries in the absence of navigable streams, see Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina*, 145. Even where streams were navigable, shipping by water to the coast was risky and expensive because vessels had to venture into ocean waters between Georgetown and Charleston, often requiring cargo to be transferred in Georgetown. This was not remedied until the completion of the Santee Canal in 1790.

cattle grazed freely on an open range. The local sources are silent on cattle exports, but Waxhaw herdsmen doubtless sold some to drovers bound for coastal markets and bartered others to the new settlers streaming into the community during the first fifteen years of settlement. However, given the small size of herds, the average value of cattle, and the distance to cash-paying markets, cattle could not be raised profitably in the Waxhaws. The livestock trade provided a livelihood for drovers, but cattle generated little cash for farm households.³⁰

The Waxhaws emerged from this home-consumption phase relatively quickly, largely because Charleston merchants established an inland trading center in the region. In 1758 Joseph Kershaw set up a store and mill in Pine Tree Hill, later known as Camden, on the Wateree River fifty miles below Waxhaw Creek. Within two years the first shipments of “fine Carolina flour” reached the coast, and by 1768 Kershaw was shipping 2,000 barrels of flour and 1,500 barrels of ship’s bread to Charleston. Upcountry flour production had quickly reduced the lowcountry’s dependency on flour from Pennsylvania, and by the end of the decade flour was second only to indigo among exports from the interior. In the mean time Kershaw’s store was supplying settlements as far away as the Yadkin River in North Carolina and Purrysburg to the south, bringing in merchant capital as well as a wide array of goods from the Atlantic market. Coinciding with the completion of the Santee-Waxhaw road, the emergence of Camden as an inland trading center spurred commercial farming and raised consumption in Camden’s hinterland communities such as the Waxhaws.³¹

Farmers had grown wheat in the Waxhaws since the early 1750s. The earliest reference to it appears in a property dispute in 1754, and wheat-growing implements appear in Andrew Pickens’s 1756 estate inventory. Not until the development of a commercial infrastructure, however, was wheat’s future assured as the mainstay of upcountry commercial farming. There are no figures on local wheat production, but an observation by William Moultrie suggests that it was considerable. Moultrie, who passed through the Waxhaws while surveying the provincial boundary line in 1772, noted that there were “a great many large wheat fields” in the “pretty good lands” of the Waxhaw settlement. During the war the British considered sending a small army of regulars to the Waxhaws to safeguard its valuable wheat crop from enemy foragers. General Lord Charles Cornwallis spent more than two weeks there with the main column of the British army, most of which time he kept them busy processing wheat.³²

Because wheat required little care between sowing and harvesting, it was less labor intensive than southern staples such as tobacco, rice, indigo, and sugar, and it could

³⁰ “Petition of the Inhabitants of the Wateree River;” SCCJ, May 25, 1764 [staples]; Inventories of Andrew Pickens, Robert McCorkall, James McCorkill, George White, and William Barr. Meriwether found only one upcountry estate with more than one hundred cattle; see *The Expansion of South Carolina*, 165–66, 168. On livestock production in western North Carolina, which confirms the patterns of the South Carolina upcountry, see Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina*, 123. On cattle drives and the perils of open-range grazing, see Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States*, I: 145–51.

³¹ On Camden see Lewis, *Camden*; Schulz, “The Rise and Decline of Camden”; and Schulz, “The Hinterland of Revolutionary Camden,” 91–97. For a discussion of the wider significance of inland urban centers, see Ernst and Merrens, “Camden’s turret’s pierce the skies!” On upcountry flour production, see Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 18–19.

³² Meriwether, *The Expansion of South Carolina*, 139–40 [property dispute]; Estate of Andrew Pickens; Davis, ed., “The Journal of William Moultrie,” 552; Cornwallis Papers, Public Records Office (PRO) 30/11/2, 235–36; Cornwallis papers, PRO 30/11/80, 16, 18–19.

be produced with fewer hands. Not requiring large outlays for slave or indentured labor, wheat was well suited to the family-labor system of yeoman households. As James Cook reported in 1768, the Virginians and Pennsylvanians who populated the Waxhaws, “having but few negroes,” cultivated their lands “by the manual labor of their own numerous families”—which nonetheless “does them much credit,” for it was by their “industry and manufacture” that the settlement had been “improved beyond conception.” Moultrie was struck by the same phenomenon four years later, when he noted that the farmers of the Waxhaws, despite their “great many large wheat fields,” had “very few negroes among them,” doing “all their work . . . by plowing and English husbandry.” As in wheat-producing communities elsewhere, most Waxhaws farmers probably met the intense labor demands of the harvest—which provided a narrow window for mowing, binding, and carting the crop before the grains over-ripened—by sharing labor, either through mobilizing kin and neighbors or hiring slaves or day laborers.³³

Wheat might be an ideal commodity for a community of small farmers, but in all likelihood a small group of prosperous landowners and merchants organized the market and produced most of the surpluses in the colonial period. The Waxhaws had five mills by 1780, but only two seemed to generate much wealth for their owners. Richard Cousar’s mill on Gills Creek in the south end of the settlement made him one of the wealthiest men in the community. At his death in 1779 Cousar owned eleven slaves and nearly seven hundred acres of land. James Walkup’s mill on Waxhaw Creek was also a lucrative operation. Between his arrival in the Waxhaws in the late 1750s and his death in 1798, Walkup acquired ten slaves and accumulated some five hundred acres of the most coveted land in the area. Ambitious merchant landowners such as John Barkley and Robert Crawford, along with elite slaveholding farmers such as Thomas McElhenny and Thomas Simpson, also had a stake in commercial farming. Such men would have supervised road construction, established ties with inland merchants at Camden, controlled processing, and put their slaves to work clearing land and cultivating wheat in “a great many” of their own fields.³⁴

Revolutionary War claims for goods provided to American forces further support the view that wheat production was somewhat concentrated in the 1760s and 1770s. Of the thirteen claimants seeking reimbursement for farm commodities, only seven listed wheat or flour; five of them were among the merchant-landowning elite. The remaining two were more modest but well-established yeomen, suggesting that by 1780 middling farmers were also experimenting with wheat production. The other claimants listed noncommercial goods such as corn, barley, potatoes, and beef. Although somewhat sketchy, these records nonetheless sharpen the picture of colonial wheat production developed in the other sources: that of a cadre of merchants and prosperous slaveholders organizing the market and concentrating production in the years before the Revolutionary War.³⁵

³³ For an excellent description of wheat cultivation, including labor needs, see Gill, “Wheat Culture in Colonial Virginia,” 380–93. *Supplement to the South-Carolina Gazette, and Country Journal*, August 9, 1768 [Cook]; Davis, ed., “The Journal of William Moultrie,” 552. Notes to Pages 48–52 137.

³⁴ Nancy Crockett Collection, box 7, folder: Lancaster County, S.C., Mills, and folder: Lancaster County, S.C., Waxhaws Region [mills]; and box 9, folder: Wills of Settlers of the Waxhaws [Walkup]; Cousar, *Down the Waxhaw Road*, 36–42 [Cousar]; Booraem, *Young Hickory*, 22, 29 [Walkup, Barkley, Crawford].

³⁵ *Accounts Audited of claims growing out of the Revolution in South Carolina, 1775–1856*, numbers 283, 301, 311, 1333, 1334, 1526, 1527, 1592, and 2089.

The development of wheat as a viable cash crop, along with improvements in the commercial infrastructure, stimulated trade between the interior and the coast and gradually raised the levels of wealth, consumption, and debt in the Waxhaws. In addition to the basic plantation tools, livestock, and household furniture of the early estates, after the mid-1760s inventories listed silver watches, imported cloth, brass clocks, expensive wearing apparel, and looking glasses. Slaves first appear in the estate records in 1766. Although some had been acquired before their owners arrived in the Waxhaws, others, such as the four slaves William Richardson purchased during the 1760s, attest to the growing wealth of local farmers—in Richardson's case, to the capacity of his farmer-parishioners to support him comfortably. In the three inventories that listed item-by-item values, slave values ranged from 1,155 to 3,390 pounds currency, making up between 49 and 91 percent of the overall value of the personal property of the estates. These estate records, of course, only reflect the top tier of Waxhaws society. Slave wealth remained remarkably concentrated before the Revolution, leaving most farmers to rely on the labor of their large families. The market for high-priced consumer goods was also limited. Thus while merchant-farmers such as Andrew Foster and John Barkley might purchase allspice, silk, sugar, and imported cloth at Kershaw's store in Camden, modest yeomen such as Robert Montgomery and William Beard limited their purchases to necessities such as salt, rum, buttons, iron, and needles.³⁶

The market for wheat also led to the emergence of a local money market. As early as 1767 creditors made claims against the estate of George White for 395 pounds; most of this was in book debt and administrative expenses, but it included two interest-bearing notes for a combined 142 pounds.³⁷ Notes and bond debt began to appear with much greater frequency in the late 1770s. With the exception of White's estate, none of the fourteen inventories before 1777 mentioned bonds or notes; yet all five of the estates probated after this date included such debt, often in fairly large sums relative to the overall value of the estate.³⁸ Archibald Clark was due 557 pounds at his death in 1777; John Lockart's estate included four notes totaling 300 pounds; and Robert Howard was due 617 pounds and had 222 pounds in cash. Bond debt was far and away the largest item in four of these estates, making up between 40 and 60 percent of their value.

One would be mistaken, however, to conclude that an impersonal credit-making class was in place by the time of the Revolution, stepping in to exploit commercial

³⁶ Estate of James Patton, Inventories of Estates, W: 424–25 [silver watch, cloth]; Estate of Moses Dickey, Inventories of Estates, X: 350 [silver watch]; Estate of John McKee, Inventories of Estates, Y: 403 [brass clock]; Estate of William Richardson, Inventories of Estates, Z: 148 [wearing apparel]. Thomas Simpson had arrived in the Waxhaws with fourteen slaves; see Holcomb, *Petitions for Land from the South Carolina Council Journal*, III: 198. Based on his 400-acre headright, Cousar's household numbered eight people in 1752, but since he had nine grown and/or married children at his death twenty-seven years later, it is likely that most of these were his children and that he acquired his slaves after arrival. Cousar's will is republished in Cousar, *Down the Waxhaw Road*, 36–38. For Cook see *Supplement to the South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, August 9, 1768. In addition to Richardson, inventories that itemized slaves included John Cantzon, Z: 472; and Thomas McElhenny, CC: 14. For the transactions at Kershaw's store see "Account Book of Joseph Kershaw, 1774–1775," December 13 and December 30, 1774 [Foster], December 14, 1774 [Barkley], December 29, 1774 [Beard and Montgomery].

³⁷ Estate of George White, Inventories of Estates, Y: 145.

³⁸ Another minor exception, found in the will but not in the inventory, was William Richardson's disputed 100-pound note from his brother-in-law, Archibald Davie. For an analysis see Moore, "The Mysterious Death of William Richardson," 295–96.

growth. Rather, lending patterns were complex. John Lockhart's principal creditors were family members, and at least one other was a neighbor. George White, on the other hand, borrowed from local storekeeper John Barkley, Camden merchants Kershaw and Company, and his neighbor-minister William Richardson. The sources thus point to a growing availability of credit in an expanding economy, but only to a partial shift in lending patterns, which tended to remain largely within the confines of personal and familial relationships. On the other hand, this was beginning to change, for the growth of credit also brought increased litigation as the circuit court settled in Camden after 1772.³⁹

Between 1750 and 1780 the yeoman economy of the Waxhaws evolved from its subsistence-oriented, home-consumption base into a mixed economy with diversified markets and a strong commercial impulse. The completion of the road to Camden and to Charleston beyond and the emergence of Camden as a vibrant inland trading center made commercial wheat production profitable. In turn the wheat market stimulated trade, raised consumption, provided an avenue to comfort for many and even affluence for some, increased slaveholding, and on the eve of the Revolution gave rise to a fledgling money market. This economic integration of the Waxhaws was gradual and evolutionary, not revolutionary; it was a developmental process whose agents—whether household producers from the Wateree River, Charleston merchants, upcountry millers and storekeepers, or Waxhaw wheat farmers—were familiar with markets, roads, and cash crops and who now constructed these familiar forms in an undeveloped region. Equally important is what this economy evolved into; for although the farmers of the Waxhaws faced south toward their markets, they had become much more like the mid-Atlantic wheat-growing communities they had left, both in their agriculture and their labor system. Thirty years after the first white settlers took up land along Waxhaw Creek, the farm families of the Waxhaws had recreated the economy and the communities they left behind. The Waxhaw settlement had become an extension of a northern yeoman society tied commercially and politically to a southern slaveholding society.

The composite farms and competent households of this yeoman community were, however, only part of the picture.⁴⁰ If some modest households were carried along by the changes that made Richard Cousar and James Patton prosperous, others were left behind. Moreover, because even the most affluent farm families grew their own food, all alike were vulnerable, although in varying degrees, to drought, pestilence, blight, and wartime disruptions to food production and supply. Despite their good soil, their industry and manufacture, and the enlarged prospects afforded by economic development, the people of the Waxhaws remained no strangers to hunger and anxiety. They could not take even their subsistence for granted.⁴¹

Drought was the constant worry of southern farmers and made for periodic food scarcity during the 1750s and 1760s. In 1755 Hugh McAden, a Presbyterian missionary touring the southern interior, reported a severe drought across the entire piedmont. Near Anson County, North Carolina, there was “not . . . so much as one patch of wheat or rye

³⁹ See the following in Inventories of Estates: Archibald Clark, AA: 253; James Crafford, CC: 235; William Simpson, CC: 288; John Lockart, CC: 317; Robert Howard, BB: 71.

⁴⁰ The sources here suggest that historians have overstated both the sturdiness and the uniformity of the yeomanry; see Vickers, “Competency and Competition”; Kulikoff, “The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America;” and Bushman, “Markets and Composite Farms.”

⁴¹ *Supplement to the South-Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, August 9, 1768

in the ground,” McAden noted. Inhabitants felt the effects of this drought most keenly the following spring, when it generated tensions between white farmers and Indians. “The Indians are in great want of Corn,” reported the North Carolina Council, “and subsist by begging from the neighboring Planters and thereby obliged to Quit their families and oppress the Planters who are themselves scarce of Corn yet Dare not Deny them.” Just three years later the South-Carolina Gazette projected a poor rice crop because of a drought that apparently extended into the interior, since it lowered water levels in the rivers and left hardly enough water for cattle. In 1766 Charles Woodmason found his upcountry neighbors “in Great distress for want of Provisions” and his horse suffering for lack of grass. The drought that year followed a poor corn crop from the previous year, raising the price of corn beyond the reach of the poor, forcing corn purchases from the North, and leading the South Carolina Council to suspend rice exports and set a ceiling on the price of rice. In Camden, Woodmason reported, relief came by way of Joseph Kershaw, “who open’d all his Stores” to the distressed. In 1769 the Gazette again reported a drought, the most severe dry spell in seventeen years, extending from Virginia to the West Indies. Corn exports ceased, and cattle drivers en route to Charleston were digging as deep as ten feet to find water.⁴²

Blight, contagion, and war also threatened the food supply. In 1766, according to the South-Carolina Gazette, and Country Journal, upcountry wheat farmers, “most of whom place their whole Dependence on the Grain,” were “very great Sufferers . . . many of them losing their whole Crop by the Rust.” Just two years earlier a “contagious distemper” was reported among cattle along the North Carolina–South Carolina border, destroying seven-eighths of the cattle in the region. The previous year William Richardson wrote that Indian raiding parties had sent refugees fleeing into the Waxhaws, further draining an already low food supply. Richardson pleaded for “speedy assistance” to avert “the prospect of Famine, as our crops are but poor, scarce able to maintain ourselves far less ourselves and the frontier Inhabitants.”⁴³

Drought and food scarcity affected poor households the most, and by contemporary accounts such households made up a considerable part of the population. Charles Woodmason was deeply struck by upcountry poverty, and he saw it everywhere. Lost in the Waxhaws in the spring of 1768, he lodged with “a poor Old Dutch Woman” who “had no refreshments. Not a Grain of Corn for the Horse, nor the least Subsistance.” Cane Creek was a “starved place, where [I] have lived all this Week on a little Milk and Indian Corn Meal, without any other Sustenance but Cold Water.” In some cases entire neighborhoods lacked even the so-called basics of the household economy. “No Eggs, Butter, Flour, Milk” on Lynches Creek, Woodmason complained, nor “a Grain of Corn to spare” for his horse. There were no “necessaries of any kinds” on Little River, “and the poor People almost starving. . . . No Bread, Butter, Milk, or anything else to be had.” And where was that ubiquitous rum in which Kershaw’s store did such a brisk trade? “Not a drop of anything, save Cold Water to drink.” There was hunger even during the harvest. Despite a good grain harvest in the summer of 1768, the people on Lynches Creek were

⁴² Foote, *Sketches of North Carolina*, 161, 169 [McAden]; CRNC, V: 655 [Indians]; *South-Carolina Gazette*, September 29, 1759; Hooker, *The Carolina Backcountry*, 7–8; *South-Carolina Gazette*, June 3, 1766, and June 6, 1766; *South-Carolina Gazette*, July 6, 1769.

⁴³ *South-Carolina Gazette, and Country Journal*, July 15, 1766 [rust]; Gray, *History of Agriculture*, I: 147 [cattle contagion]; Kirkland and Kennedy, *Historic Camden*, 56 [Richardson].

“in Great distress for want of Meat and Meal” because the dry streams left no water to run their mills. Where their grain could be milled hundreds had bread “but not a Mouthful of Meat” and so were reduced to “gathering Apples Peaches etc. green from the Trees, and boiling them for Food.” Even in Camden, where Joseph Kershaw had once opened his stores to the distressed, Woodmason was forced to live on “dry Bisket and Water” for a season, for there was “no Meat to be bought for Money.”⁴⁴

Food was not the only basic necessity in short supply among the poor population of the Waxhaws and its neighboring communities. Woodmason soon learned to carry his own wares as well as provisions, “as in many Places they have nought but a Gourd to drink out of Not a Plate Knife or Spoon, a Glass, Cup, or any thing.” Even on cold winter nights they had “little or no Bedding, or anything to cover them.” As for clothing, many of the men wore “no Shoes or Stockings,” the women no “caps or Handkerchiefs.” “It is well is if they can get some Body Linen, and some have not even that.” For “want of Horses and Saddles” only two or three people per family could attend Woodmason’s services. He refused payment for most of the weddings he performed. “Their Poverty is so great,” he wrote, sounding an atypically tender note, “that were they to offer me a fee, my Heart would not let me take it.”⁴⁵ Woodmason noted one key characteristic that distinguished these extremely poor people from their more affluent neighbors: they were “all new settlers.” Changes in South Carolina’s immigration policy in 1761 dramatically altered the flow and composition of new arrivals to the interior. Lowcountry leaders, desperately seeking to shore up their frontier defenses, set out to attract “free poor Protestants” to the upcountry by paying passage from Europe in addition to granting headrights and temporary tax exemption. The program was funded for six years, so by the time Woodmason arrived in Camden in late 1767, poor white settlers, most of whom were from northern Ireland, had pushed well into the remote creek bottoms of upper St. Mark’s Parish. Unlike the first wave of arrivals from Pennsylvania and Virginia, these new settlers, as Woodmason recognized, came with very little and were exceptionally vulnerable to drought and crop failure.⁴⁶

Andrew Jackson Sr. was typical of these second-wave settlers. Jackson was a weaver in northern Ireland who “by all accounts . . . was very poor,” according to an early 52 *World of Toil and Strife* biographer, “both in Ireland and in America.” He was probably pushed to immigrate by famine or a depressed textile market and pulled by his wife’s kin, James, Robert, and Joseph Crawford, who had immigrated to the Waxhaws around 1760. In any event Jackson moved with his wife and children to South Carolina via Charleston in 1765. Too poor to purchase a choice tract near the Crawfords in the heart of the settlement, he took up land, either by headright or lease, along Twelve Mile Creek, some seven miles from Waxhaw Presbyterian Church. Jackson died in 1767, shortly before the birth of his son Andrew Jr.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Hooker, *The Carolina Backcountry*, 34, 17, 13, 35, 33, 49, 48.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 31–33, 39, 26, 42.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 7; Meriwether, *The Expansion of South Carolina*, 242–43. Contrast Woodmason’s description of these new settlers to those of the earlier arrivals, who—although they too came to the Waxhaws “on account of poverty”—were nonetheless “good farmers and worthy people,” “brave Industrious people,” and “very industrious, cultivating Indigo, Hemp, Flax, Corn etc.”; see CRNC, IV: 1311; V: 25; and V: 149.

⁴⁷ Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, 46–54 [quote on 47]; Draper Manuscripts, VV: 12, 369–74 [Crawfords].

Jackson's death came just at the crest of the second wave of settlement, which can be charted by changes in the land market. The Waxhaws did not feel the effects of the new immigration incentives immediately, but after a lull in the land-granting activity during the late 1750s and early 1760s, conveyances spiked sharply between 1765 and 1768, with the number of grants reaching a thirteen-year high in 1767 and peaking yet again in 1773. As with Jackson, most of this property went to first-time landowners, who account for nearly three-fourths of the conveyances between 1762 and 1775. The surnames of 71 of these 106 first-time landowners do not appear in the land records before 1762, suggesting that two-thirds of new landowners were also new immigrants and not the children of earlier settlers. Also like Jackson, many of these new immigrant landholders settled far from the heart of the community. Plats along Hannahs Creek and Turkey Quarter Creek do not appear in the land records until 1767, when they begin to show up with some regularity. Settlers were also pushing into the upper reaches of Cane Creek, where several plats from the mid-1760s identify vacant lands on two or more sides. Nor did new settlers choose these remote locations in order to obtain large contiguous tracts with plenty of surplus acreage. Grants after 1762 were on average hardly half the size of grants made before that date, while the average size of all conveyances was only 63 percent that of earlier conveyances. Opportunities for accumulating surplus lands were much more limited after 1762, when only one in seven new landowners acquired more than one tract, compared with one in three from the earlier period. In short, the new immigrants and first-time landholders of the late 1760s and early 1770s lived on smaller and more remote farms and were less likely to accumulate surplus land.⁴⁸

It was such new settlers that Woodmason saw in the "starved place" along Cane Creek, edging into the poorer lands of the blackjack district. Like the hundreds of other "free poor Protestants" drawn to the piedmont by the promise of free passage and free land, these immigrants settled in with little more than the badges of their own poverty: "no Necessaries of any kind," little bedding, few clothes, "not the least Subsistence." These blackjack farmers were several miles from the new road that connected the western part of the settlement to Camden, and it would take years to build an adequate commercial infrastructure linking them with the wheat market. These more remote lands also had poorer soils, more limited water access, and a hillier terrain than the choice tracts of the river bottom. The small size of the headrights—grants averaged just over 150 acres after 1762—also had significant economic repercussions. First, it meant that recent settlers had little surplus acreage that could be liquidated or leased; unlike the earlier settlers whose households averaged nearly twice that of latecomers, land was a means of subsistence to new settlers, not a flexible resource presenting a spectrum of possibilities. Second, the small headrights reflect small households. Too poor to purchase slaves or wage labor, and lacking the family labor power to produce any meaningful surpluses,

⁴⁸ For Hannahs Creek see SCCG, grants to Rachel Adams (March 6, 1773), Isaac Barr (May 19, 1773), Ananias Black (August 16, 1773), Francis Gillian (February 28, 1769), and Edmund Hull (January 22, 1773); for Turkey Quarter see William Adams (September 14, 1775), William Carson (May 4, 1768), and Middleton McDonald (December 22, 1767); for upper Cane Creek see 138 Notes to Pages 53–55 John Cain (April 29, 1773), Samuel McClaren (November 24, 1764), Mary Stinson (January 28, 1773), John Stephenson (August 21, 1766), and Philip Walker (January 16, 1765).

these new immigrants could not hope to move beyond their meager subsistence or reach the levels of competency achieved by their neighbors to the west.

Unlike Andrew Jackson Sr., most newcomers had no apparent kin connections with established settlers. This was especially true of the final wave of immigrants that washed into the Waxhaws in 1773–74. Grants reached a six-year high in 1773, and overall conveyances were at their highest since the land boom nineteen years earlier. Of the nineteen grants issued during these two years, eleven (58 percent) went to people whose surnames were new to the Waxhaws.⁴⁹ Without kin connections, these new immigrants had little means of locating good lands. When they disembarked in Charleston and registered as colonists with the land office, these settlers were assigned headrights by the surveyor general, sight unseen.⁵⁰ As outsiders to the established kinship network these new immigrants faced further problems after settlement. Slow to integrate into the existing community, they soon developed an adversarial relationship with the core community of the bottomland.

On the other hand, many of these new settlers were connected to one another. In 1773 more than five hundred families from William Martin's Presbyterian congregation in Ballymone, County Antrim, Ireland, were driven from their Ulster community by excessive rent increases and took passage to South Carolina. These immigrants scattered all over the piedmont, particularly in the settlements west of the Catawba-Wateree, but at least nineteen took up land in the Waxhaws. As hard-line Covenanters who claimed to be the only true heirs to the Reformed tradition, these new settlers distinguished their beliefs from the somewhat more fluid New Side Presbyterianism of the established congregation. They shared a common history and a common economic condition: at least one-third and perhaps many more were unable to pay the fees for their warrants. Many also possessed a common ancestry. More than half of these immigrants shared a surname with at least one other person in their group. These religious, ethnic, and social bonds served to cement ties among recent immigrants as they moved to develop a rival neighborhood in the blackjack country during and after the war.⁵¹

The "pleasing and enlarged prospects" that James Cook found in the Waxhaws in 1768 were neither for everyone nor for all times. The "prospect of Famine" also hung over this southern farm community, and despite market integration, even middling farmers and their prosperous neighbors could not take their subsistence for granted. Further, alongside the developing yeoman households hugging the rich river bottom was a rapidly growing community of dirt farmers scattered across the blackjack country. With land but little labor power, or good crops but poor roads, or wheat but no water power to

⁴⁹ The eleven new settlers, all of whom appear in the colonial grants index, were Margaret Craig, George Davison, Daniel Wilson, Andrew Wilson, Agnes Wilson, John Baker, William Barton, Ananias Black, John Cain, Mary Stinson, and Edmund Hull.

⁵⁰ Nor could these immigrants easily procure tracts adjacent to one another. For example, Daniel, Andrew, and Agnes Wilson were each granted one 100-acre tract, neither of which was adjacent to any of the others.

⁵¹ On Martin and his congregation see Stephenson, *Scotch-Irish Migration to South Carolina, 1772, 19* [excessive rents], 18–20 [Covenanters]. Stephenson has carefully culled out Martin's congregants from the ships' passenger lists. Comparing them with Waxhaws land records, the following were identified as immigrants to the Waxhaw settlement: Francis Adams, Mary Adams, John Adams, Rachel Adams, Elizabeth Johnston, Edmund Hull, Andrew Wilson, Daniel Wilson, Agnes Wilson, Margaret Craig, Rachel Adams, William Young, Ann Young, John Clarke, Janet Paterson, John McCrory, Jean Young, Mary Ann McCulloch, and Mary Stinson.

mill it, or meal but no meat, even in good years these newcomers could not escape their poverty. Despite the promise of land ownership, these immigrant families no doubt saw something familiar in the yawning gap between their peasant-like dirt farms and the composite enterprises of their yeoman neighbors.

The integration of upcountry communities into the provincial market was accompanied by, and in part gave rise to, a parallel process of political integration. This primarily took the form of the establishment of local courts in the interior during the early 1770s. Prior to 1772 all criminal cases and all civil suits exceeding twenty pounds sterling were tried in Charleston, making debt collection an onerous and expensive process and consequently retarding commercial development by unduly heightening the risk to would-be lenders. In the late 1760s the Regulators, led by upcountry merchants and wealthy planters, pressed for local courts in the interior and eventually turned to vigilantism to drive home their point. In 1769 the South Carolina Assembly passed the circuit-court act, which was implemented three years later. Although Charleston remained the court of record through which all writs were issued—one of several deficiencies that, according to one analyst, made the circuit court system ultimately unworkable—the inland courts functioned, on the whole, to secure credit and strengthen the hand, both economically and legally, of upcountry elites.⁵²

In the Waxhaws civil suits were almost unknown prior to the mid-1770s.⁵³ With the exception of one relatively minor debt suit in 1756, neither the Salisbury District Court in North Carolina nor the Court of Common Pleas in Charleston lists litigants from the Waxhaws. On the other hand, many early settlers were tied to the court in Anson County, North Carolina, where they probated their wills, registered their deeds, and paid their taxes. Through the early 1760s these people probably tried their minor civil disputes there as well, but the civil court records have not survived, leaving only one recorded civil action between Waxhaw disputants before 1774: a debt recovery suit for 40 pounds currency filed in Salisbury by Henry White against John Clark, who had fled the county. In any event not all settlers would have acknowledged Anson County's jurisdiction, and in some cases the Anson County authorities were powerless to resolve the dispute, referring it instead to the community. Further, after 1765 the Waxhaws relinquished its ties to North Carolina and its local courts. In early cases where jurisdiction was disputed or unclear, as in later cases where there was no local civil authority, the people of the Waxhaws settled their disputes, as Peter Hoffer has phrased it, "within the intimacies of communal understandings."⁵⁴

⁵² For the story of this economic-political process see Brown, *The South Carolina Regulators*, chapter 1, and Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 38–41 and chapter 2. For a discussion of how the new courts operated, see McCormick, "Civil Procedure in the Camden Circuit Court, 1772–1790," 241–54.

⁵³ Rachel Klein has found that the litigation rate for the backcountry as a whole was low prior to the establishment of circuit courts, largely because the absence of local courts made litigation expensive and time consuming; see *Unification of a Slave State*, 39. Charles Woodmason would have disagreed. His sermon on litigiousness was among his favorites, and he preached it at least four times in 1768–71. When John Chestnut of Camden took personal offense at the sermon, Woodmason wrote him a scathing, and probably undelivered, reply; see Hooker, *The Carolina Backcountry*, 130–31, 136–61. Woodmason's concerns notwithstanding, there was no evidence of litigiousness in the Waxhaws before the mid-1770s.

⁵⁴ Salisbury District Superior Court Action Papers, 1756, DSCR 207.325.1 [White v. Clark]; Hoffer, *Law and People in Colonial America*, 78.

The church was one such communal venue. Given the immigration rate, the proliferation of new surveys, the haphazard techniques of eighteenth-century surveyors, the open-range grazing of livestock, and the expanding markets, disputes inevitably arose over boundaries, property ownership, and delivery of goods.⁵⁵ And given the near-universal church adherence among white settlers, it was only natural for disputants to turn to William Richardson and the Waxhaw church elders in the absence of a clear and present civil authority. Church members were after all accustomed to the disciplinary role of the church through the session, or religious court, which heard cases involving sexual offenses, false testimony, unethical business dealings, family discord, Sabbath breaking, and profanity, and often arbitrated disputes between church members in civil cases. The church already played a role in maintaining order and mediating conflict, and in the absence of civil authority it could and did assume a judicial role in traditionally civil cases. Migrants from western Pennsylvania, where churches in remote settlements mediated in property and divorce cases as well as in cases of Christian conduct, were already familiar with this venue. Moreover, Richardson had proven himself a trusted and judicious minister—as evidenced by his success in uniting four mutually antagonistic strains of believers under one roof at a congregation he dubbed Catholic Church. Thus habit, custom, and necessity directed backcountry Presbyterians in general toward the meetinghouse as a venue for resolving their differences; in the Waxhaws specifically, Richardson’s skills and reputation, combined with a shared religious identity and a commitment to the Presbyterian Church, would have left little reason to turn elsewhere.⁵⁶

In cases where the church was unable to effectively intercede, neighbors might convene informally to hear grievances and propose solutions. Such was the case in 1754, when a dispute arose between William Moore and John Douglas over a parcel of land. According to Andrew Pickens, an Anson County, North Carolina, justice of the peace, Moore secured a North Carolina patent on the disputed property at the same time that Douglas made title to the land through South Carolina. Moore then traveled to Charleston and secured a warrant through the southern province, but Douglas would not move. The two men “strove each with the other which should enjoy the Premises which occasioned much Contentions Quarrelings and Fightings between them, and Moore plows up the

⁵⁵ For a contemporary description of eighteenth-century surveying see Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina*, 25.

⁵⁶ Hooker, *The Carolina Backcountry*, 14 [church adherence]; Klett, *Presbyterians in Colonial Pennsylvania*, 68, 119, 123–24, 160–61 [sessions]; Banks, *Catholic Church*, 7–11. See also Charles Woodmason’s “burlesque sermon” in Hooker, *The Carolina Backcountry*, 155–56, for a suggestion that Waxhaw Presbyterian Church served a civil function. This sermon is a tongue-in-cheek rebuttal of criticism leveled at Woodmason for an earlier sermon decrying backcountry litigiousness. In the rebuttal Woodmason used the Reverend William Richardson of the Waxhaws as his mouthpiece, urging his hearers to “bring all Your Matters to the little House, before the Elders, and leave all Your Disputes to their Arbitration or Determination—and then Honestly and Candidly abiding by their Decisions. If You would do this, All your Differences would soon be Adjusted, Rogues detected, Villanies expos’d or punished, and Knavery stigmatized.” Despite the obvious satire, Woodmason probably had good reasons for putting these particular words in Richardson’s mouth, proposing a system practiced in the Waxhaws as a kind of ironic model. For the judicial function of Presbyterian churches on the early American frontier, see Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier*, 169. Patrick Griffin has found that Pennsylvania Presbyterians turned eagerly from the church session to the civil courts as soon as the latter were established—a pattern that had antecedents in Ulster—and that this occasioned a great deal of tension between clergy and laypeople; see *People with No Name*, 129–34. Notes to Pages 55–62 139.

others Turnips and one turned Cattle into the others Wheat.” Douglas initially appealed to South Carolina, then both men turned to Pickens for justice. But Pickens was at a loss. The provincial boundary had not been surveyed as far west as the Waxhaws. Both provinces asserted jurisdiction in the area, and there was no mechanism for adjudicating such disputes. Pickens referred the claimants to their neighbors, but they either could not or would not help, and they referred the case back to North Carolina. Although the outcome of the case is unknown, the simple fact that such a complex and hotly contested issue should be brought before the neighbors speaks volumes about the high regard settlers held for neighborly justice. That there were, according to North Carolina governor Arthur Dobbs, “perpetual Quarrels among the Settlers near the Line” suggests that Moore and Douglas were not alone in bringing their differences before their neighbors. On the other hand, that these quarrels “sometimes end[ed] in Death” points to the limits of neighborhood courts and the advantages of a strong civil authority.⁵⁷

The most spectacular case to appear before the court of communal intimacies began with the mysterious death of William Richardson. On July 21, 1771, William’s wife, Agnes, found her husband’s lifeless body in his upstairs study, kneeling against a chair, a bridle looped around his neck. The neighbors were called to conduct an informal inquest and determined that William had died by his own hand. But in their wish to shield the church from scandal they agreed to conceal William’s suicide and announce that he had died of natural causes. He was quietly buried the following day. In time, however, news of the bridle leaked out, and rumors circulated that Agnes had conspired to kill her husband. According to one account, Agnes brought suspicion on herself by hastily remarrying. Subsequently, she was brought before the neighbors, who gathered now around William’s grave; his remains were exhumed, and Agnes was forced to touch the corpse under the belief that a corpse touched by its murderer would bleed anew. She was acquitted, and the cause of William’s death remained (and still remains) unknown.⁵⁸

The traditional account of Agnes Richardson’s speedy remarriage is erroneous. It is unlikely that she was ever subjected to the touching test, though she was almost certainly convicted by neighborhood gossip and probably brought before the neighbors and formally questioned. As a wealthy widow in a childless and probably unhappy marriage to a beloved community leader, she was vulnerable; as an outsider with no local male kin to protect her or plead her case, she was doubly vulnerable. Her foremost accuser—William’s brother-in-law (his deceased sister’s husband), Archibald Davie—was no doubt also a suspect and used her vulnerability to deflect suspicion from himself. In any case, her ordeal demonstrates that the people of the Waxhaws relied on informal mechanisms of justice for more than boundary disputes and trespass cases; even serious criminal proceedings might be brought before the neighbors.⁵⁹ Richardson’s death

⁵⁷ The Moore-Douglas dispute is detailed and documented in Meriwether, *The Expansion of South Carolina*, 139–40.

⁵⁸ There are three key sources for William’s death and Agnes’s ordeal: a contemporary report by Archibald Simpson in his *Journals and Sermons, 1748–1784*, republished in Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, I: 418–19; a somewhat later recounting by Woodmason in Hooker, *The Carolina Backcountry*, 133–34; and Howe’s own and much later retelling based on oral tradition in *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, I: 416–18.

⁵⁹ This episode opens many windows on backcountry culture and society, pointing to the central importance of kinship, the peculiar vulnerability of widows, and the myth of supernaturalism. For a complete analysis see Moore, “The Mysterious Death of William Richardson.”

coincided with the establishment of circuit courts in the South Carolina interior, the demise of informal means of dispute resolution, and a subsequent burst of civil litigation. In the four years after 1774 there were seven suits filed by Waxhaws litigants—in striking contrast to the one recorded suit over the previous two decades. In all seven cases at least one of the parties belonged to one of two families, the Clarks or the Crawfords. Untangling this knot of litigation opens a window on the power struggles that accompanied the economic evolution of the late colonial period and suggests that, while some settlers exploited the new courts to their advantage, others were not quite comfortable with the demise of the customary ways of resolving differences among neighbors.⁶⁰

Robert Crawford, the plaintiff in four of the seven suits, was a man on the make. Crawford emigrated from Ireland around 1760 and immediately established his presence by purchasing 551 acres of prime real estate on the north side of Waxhaw Creek, leasing a portion of the tract before selling it off in parcels in the 1780s and 1790s. In 1773 he purchased another 500 acres on the south side of Waxhaw Creek for 200 pounds currency; the following year he sold just over half of this tract for 1000 pounds currency, reaping a profit of nearly 1000 percent. Within a year he had negotiated yet another land deal, acquiring a 620-acre tract that snaked through the very center of the settlement. Nor was land Crawford's only route to wealth and power. He also had a commission in the British army, which he relinquished when he joined the Americans in 1776, working his way up the ranks to major before his military career ended abruptly and rather disgracefully in 1780. Disgrace or no, Crawford claimed war-related losses—meticulously itemized to include cattle, beef, fodder, timber, corn, flour, use of plantation, and military service—in excess of 560 pounds sterling. He owned sixteen slaves at his death in 1801.⁶¹

In 1774 Crawford filed suit in Camden against Amos Richard and Archibald Clark for 500 pounds currency, charging them with trespass, breaking and entering, and “depriving him of use and possession of his close and plantation.” This was probably a boundary dispute. Crawford and Clark were neighbors, and Crawford apparently believed the defendants were unlawfully using his property. The sheriff at Camden put Clark and Richard under a 1000-pound bond to be paid if they failed to appear in court to answer the charges. Fail they did, and Crawford was awarded the judgment plus 70 pounds in costs. Richard and Clark refused to pay either the bond or the judgment, Sheriff Wyly prosecuted them for the bond, and Crawford filed suit the next term for 1000 pounds.

Although filed in 1775, the second suit was tried in Charleston and was not adjudicated for another two years. In the mean time Crawford had dropped Richard from

⁶⁰ The following discussion is based on these seven cases, all of which are found in the South Carolina Court of Common Pleas, Judgment Rolls, SCDAH: *Robert Crawford v. Amos Richards and Archibald Clark*, October 17, 1774, box 101A, no. 136A; *Robert Crawford v. George Grierson, Charles Smith, and Archibald Clark*, 1777, box 135A, no. 131A; *Robert Crawford v. George Grier and Jane Clark*, September 13, 1777, box 105A, no. 139A; *Robert Crawford v. John Thompson*, October 24, 1774, box 104A, no. 163A; *John Thompson v. George Grier*, April 1, 1777, box 105A, no. 134A; *John Latta v. Jane Clark*, 1778, box 107A, no. 172A; and *Thomas Patton v. James Crawford Jr.*, 1778, box 106B, no. 37A.

⁶¹ Draper Manuscripts, VV: 12, 369–74 and W: 15, 90; Mecklenburg County, North Carolina Deeds, 2: 213; Charleston Deeds, 4K: 132 and 4V: 161; Lancaster Deeds, B: 311, 177; SCCG, 1775; *Accounts Audited of claims growing out of the Revolution in South Carolina*, 1775–1856, no. 1592; Second Census of the United States, South Carolina, Lancaster District.

the suit and added Charles Smith and George Grierson (or Grier), Clark's stepson. Archibald Clark was dead when the court finally ruled for Crawford in 1777, awarding him a mere 200 pounds for his losses and nothing to cover the costs of nearly three years of litigation. And yet Crawford was undeterred. Six months later he was back in court suing Grierson and Jane Clark, Archibald's widow and executrix, for 1000 pounds. Again the charge was trespass, with Crawford alleging that the defendants cut and took trees from his property and destroyed his grass. The court ruled for Grierson and his mother, putting an end to Crawford's tenacious three-year campaign against his neighbors.

Despite his eventual failure, Crawford's litigiousness, the ease and persistence with which he went to court, suggest that he viewed the new courts in a way that was probably foreign to most of his neighbors: not as a source of justice, law, and order, but as a tool for advancing his own ends.⁶² Like land, the military, and the war, the court was another avenue to wealth, another vehicle for his ambition. For their part, Clark and Richard apparently had no use for either Crawford or the circuit court; they refused to submit to its judgment, refused even to participate in the legal process. They probably saw little harm in felling a few trees along Crawford's line—the Waxhaws, after all, was still thickly wooded in the mid-1770s—and resented the way Crawford abandoned the customary, neighborly way of resolving grievances for the alien and impersonal venue of the courthouse. Caught between the decline of custom and the establishment of civil procedure, Archibald Clark went to his grave refusing to consent to the new legal system.

Three of the remaining four cases from the Waxhaws were suits over debt, and all three involved either Crawford, Grierson, or Jane Clark.⁶³ In his 1774 suit Crawford alleged that John Thompson, another Waxhaw Creek neighbor, owed him 5000 pounds on a bond ostensibly used to secure a mortgage. Thompson denied he had signed such a bond, and the court agreed, awarding him 64 pounds in damages. Three years later Thompson sued George Grierson for failure to deliver some 197 pounds in goods, including a mill iron, a large pot, nine cattle, ten horses, and eight sheep. The outcome of that case is unknown. The following year Grierson's mother, Jane Clark, sued John Latta on behalf of her deceased husband over a debt of 392 pounds currency. As in her previous appearance, the court found for Clark in this case.

The cases these Waxhaw litigants brought before the court in Camden reflect the concerns of people increasingly engaged in a commercial economy. As the estate records indicate, the economic integration of the Waxhaws had brought credit flowing into the community in the mid-1770s, and disputes over past-due bonds and notes were now playing out in the courts. Despite all the noise Regulators made about bringing "banditti" to justice, from the perspective of the Waxhaws the new courts functioned to service the

⁶² See Griffin, *People with No Name*, 40–45, 129–34, for evidence that Ulster immigrants to Pennsylvania in the 1730s and 1740s were not at all unfamiliar with civil courts. Even so, recourse to the court in Camden would have been seen as a break with local custom, though not necessarily a cause for concern. Such custom could, of course, be manipulated by unscrupulous men who took advantage of the absence of strong local controls, just as the new courts served as tools for ambitious planters such as Crawford.

⁶³ The seventh and final case was a 1778 suit filed by Matthew Patton against James Crawford Jr., Robert's nephew, who allegedly slandered Patton by telling neighbors he "hath buggered a mare." The outcome of this suit is unknown. Although beyond the scope of this discussion, Patton's action suggests that the court was also viewed as an arena for working out highly personal points of honor. For a broader discussion of dignity and litigiousness in the eighteenth century, see Hoffer, *Law and People in Colonial America*, 83–85.

emerging commercial economy by securing credit and enforcing trade contracts. Of course the courts reflected only the concerns of people bringing actions at law. It was no accident that in the Waxhaws, as elsewhere in early America, these people were typically those most engaged in the new market relationships—creditors, merchants, traders, millers, and ambitious planters—who used the courts largely to sue one another. Thus the courts protected the interest of monied men and powered the market economy by maintaining the free flow of goods and credit. They also altered local relationships by placing a powerful impersonal agent between neighbors, an agent that issued judgments on the rule of law, not on the whole texture and history of those relationships and their wider, personal, highly nuanced social context.

By the time of the Revolution the Waxhaws had evolved from an isolated settlement within a household economy to a geographically and demographically expanding community with growing commercial and political ties to the South Carolina lowcountry. Roads linked the community to distant markets; wheat provided a marketable cash crop; and credit infused the local economy with capital for further expansion, all of which raised consumption and lifted farm households to a level of competency that rivaled their northern counterparts. On the other hand, in this world of small farms few could take their subsistence for granted. Further, the benefits of economic integration were unevenly distributed; as poorer immigrants edged into the blackjack district, the Waxhaws became a much more conspicuously differentiated community. Class tensions were muted before the Revolution, but other kinds of conflicts featuring the most enterprising players in the new economy were working through the newly established courts, which were supplanting the customary forms of dispute resolution among neighbors and churchgoers. Thus as the community expanded, it divided, and as it attached itself to distant civil institutions it surrendered some of its autonomy.

When the war marched into the Waxhaws in 1780, it put a temporary halt to both the circuit courts and long-distance commerce, forcing yeoman households back into a subsistence mode of production. Further, although the commercial relationships that developed in the 1760s and 1770s might tie Waxhaws farmers to American revolutionaries in Camden and on the coast, local relationships—the tensions and divisions fostered by integration—ultimately informed patterns of allegiance and determine the degree of enthusiasm for the rebellion.