

**“The King of England’s Soldiers”  
Armed Blacks in Savannah and Its Hinterlands  
during the Revolutionary War Era, 1778–1787**

*Timothy Lockley*

The Revolutionary War was never simply a struggle between the British on the one side and Americans on the other. Americans themselves were deeply divided about whether a war to achieve independence from Britain was a good, moral, or legal thing to do, and friends, neighbors, and even families split between those loyal to Britain and those supporting the American patriots. Neither was the war of concern only to whites. Southern black people hoped that the war would mean the end of slavery. In December 1778, it was a black man, Quamino Dolly, who guided British troops through the surrounding swamps in their successful effort to capture Savannah. When a joint Franco-American force attempted to recapture the city the following October, their efforts were thwarted because reinforcements from Beaufort, South Carolina, led by sympathetic blacks “plunged through swamps, bogs, and creeks which had never been attempted before but by bears, wolves, and run-away negroes.”<sup>1</sup> About 400 slaves worked on the fortifications of Savannah during the siege, while others, particularly women, worked as cooks and laundresses for the troops. A further 150 enslaved men were organized into two companies and “armed and equipt as infantry.” The loyalist governor James Wright later commented that the black soldiers had “contributed greatly to our defence and safety” during the joint Franco-American assault on the city.<sup>2</sup>

Black troops continued to serve with the British until the evacuations of Savannah (July) and Charleston (December) in 1782. Most frequently, black recruits served as drummers, but a significant number were also used as general laborers, and a few served as musketeers in the infantry.<sup>3</sup> As patriot forces gradually pushed loyalists back to their urban strongholds of Charleston and Savannah in 1781 and 1782, British commanders created a cavalry unit from black volunteers. As late as December 1782, one South Carolina planter complained to the patriot governor about the activities of upward of a hundred mounted

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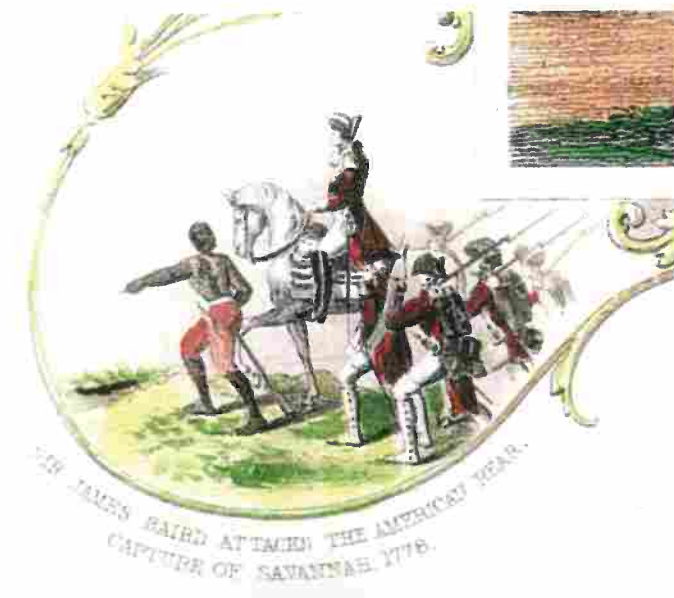
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Some Lowcountry slaves took advantage of the confusion caused by the war to flee  
into swamps. This was the point at which runaway slaves became maroons, intending to  
create their own distinct communities completely separate from white society. One of the  
largest of these communities formed on islands in the Savannah River, about eighteen  
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Unknown Artist, Sir James Baird Attacks the American Rear. Capture of Savannah. 1778. Publisher: J & F Tallis, London & New York. This image, probably from the mid-nineteenth century, depicts Quamino Dolly leading British Troops on Savannah. Courtesy Ed Jackson.



## The Haitian Revolution's Savannah Connection



Monument dedicated to Haitian soldiers' participation in the American Revolution, Savannah. Photograph: David J. Kaminsky.

In the summer of 1791, nearly fifteen years after the United States declared its independence from Britain and only two years after the start of the French Revolution, the French colony of Saint-Domingue erupted in its own bitter and bloody twelve-year revolutionary struggle. Thousands of bondpeople rose up against the Caribbean island's white and mixed-race slaveholding class in a bid to secure freedom and national independence. After defeating imperial armies from France, Britain, and Spain, the revolutionaries ultimately triumphed. In January 1804, Saint-Domingue became Haiti, the first independent black republic outside Africa. The Haitian victory sent aftershocks throughout the Atlantic world. Even as the revolution inspired fear among slaveholders throughout the Americas, it gave hope for freedom to those suffering under slavery and European imperialism.

In the United States, white citizens rarely made the connection between their struggle for freedom and that of slaves, though the language of slavery had often been invoked by the founding generation to express their perceived mistreatment by the British government. But the Haitian Revolution had an important, though rarely told, connection to the U.S. struggle for freedom: many of the future Haitian revolutionaries had first gained valuable fighting experience through their participation in the American Revolution.

In December 1778, well-equipped British soldiers led by Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell took the city of Savannah, Georgia, hoping eventually to capture nearby Charleston and then the greater Carolinas. Strong loyalist support in Georgia, coupled with unremarkable resistance by the colonists and a floundering militia and Continental army, made the British army's successful siege of Savannah a foregone conclusion. In early September 1779, black and mixed-race soldiers from Saint-Domingue joined American colonists and French troops in a failed effort to retake the city. The total number of Saint-Domingue troops who sojourned to Georgia remains contested, but estimates place the number at 500–800. The Saint-Domingue fighters, who were known as free people of color (*gens de couleur libre*), constituted the Chasseurs-Volontaires de Saint-Domingue (volunteer

light infantry). Led by the French general and admiral Charles-Hector, count d'Estaing, the infantrymen joined regular French metropolitan troops stationed in Saint-Domingue and a host of smaller volunteer units from across the island when they set sail for Georgia in some twenty-five warships.

Arriving in the waters off the coast of Georgia by September 11, 1779, General d'Estaing had moved his troops, which included members of the chasseurs, into Savannah by September 16. Despite pounding the city heavily with cannon fire for weeks, d'Estaing's forces failed to cripple entrenched British defenses surrounding the city. And even though illness ran rampant among his troops and hurricane season was quickly approaching, d'Estaing stubbornly ignored advice from subordinates to call off the siege. Instead, he mounted a highly secretive and bloody ground assault on the morning of October 9 at Spring Hill. He hoped to finish the job quickly and return to the Caribbean and then to France. Poor weather and scattered enemy forces, however, hindered his troops' best efforts. In the morning fog and swamp-like conditions, General d'Estaing was injured and the famed Polish cavalry officer Casimir Pulaski killed; countless chasseurs fought valiantly at the Spring Hill redoubt, though many perished. As fighting intensified into the third week of October, the death count rose on the Franco-American side. The British suffered only minimal losses. Realizing that victory was impossible, d'Estaing ordered

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a retreat on October 17, 1779. British troops showed no mercy, firing upon Franco-American forces as they hastily withdrew. Members of the chasseurs were assigned rearward positions to guard the retreat of d'Estaing's troops; they were later credited with saving the Franco-American forces from total destruction.

Back on Saint-Domingue, some black soldiers continued to serve in the Chasseurs-Volontaires until the unit disbanded in the early 1780s. But their experiences in Savannah provided them with useful fighting tactics. In a sense, the siege of Savannah was their rehearsal for revolution.

Though historians have yet to identify and account for most of the Saint-Domingue fighters or the scope of their involvement during the siege of Savannah, legend has it that Henri Christophe, a future king of Haiti, was among them, perhaps as a drummer boy. He became a leading figure during the Haitian Revolution, serving as a general under Toussaint Louverture and ruling as king from 1811 until 1820.

A monument honoring the contributions and bravery of the Chasseurs-Volontaires who fought on behalf of Savannahians and the American colonists sits in downtown Savannah in Franklin Square. Dedicated in 2007, the monument pays homage to the long-ignored efforts of Saint-Domingue soldiers to secure American freedom—and by implication, honors their struggle for freedom from slavery as well.

JERMAINE THIBODEAUX

*Purrisburg in detail from Sketch of the Northern Frontiers of Georgia, Extending from the Mouth of the River Savannah to the Town of Augusta, by Archibald Campbell (London: William Faden, 1780). Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Maps Division.*



creeks also exist. Modern maps tend to overemphasize the main channel of the river at the expense of the other creeks, but a map of 1780 shows more clearly that Abercorn Creek was navigable by smaller boats and could be used as an alternative to the main channel of the river.

These river islands were particularly attractive to maroon groups for several reasons. First, being surrounded by water, they were defensible, and all were heavily forested with cypress trees, which provided natural cover. The ground was often more swamp than terra firma, and in the spring, when river levels were generally higher than normal,

the islands became impassable other than by boat, located on the highest, and therefore driest, places raised up on stilts. The islands were also home to all diamond rattlesnakes, which deterred any casual v

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the islands became impassable other than by boat. Maroon settlements were most likely located on the highest, and therefore driest, places, and dwellings might well have been raised up on stilts. The islands were also home to alligators, water moccasins, and eastern diamond rattlesnakes, which deterred any casual visitors.

Second, the islands, being roughly thirty square miles in area, were large enough to support a significant population of maroons. Aside from the dangerous fauna mentioned above, the islands were home to turtles and birds, such as geese and ducks, and the creeks offered the opportunity to catch fish. Lowcountry slaves were well accustomed to supplementing their diet by hunting in nearby swamps. The naturalist William Bartram, visiting Jonathan Bryan's plantation about eight miles north of Savannah in 1770, observed that "several of his servants came home with horse loads of wild pigeons (*Columba migratoria*), which it seems they had collected in a short space of time at a neighbouring bay swamp."<sup>6</sup> For slaves skilled in such techniques, surviving in the swamp for longer periods of time was certainly viable. Small plots of cleared land could be planted with vegetables, corn, and rice, all of which slaves had grown on plantations, and in the virtually frost-free climate the crops could be harvested for much of the year.

Third, the maroons had found a location that was sufficiently distant from white settlement to ensure their isolation. Ebenezer was eight miles to the north, while Purrysburgh was four miles to the east on the South Carolina bank of the main channel of the Savannah River. Neither town was of any size. The 1780 map marked a road that crossed the river at Zubley's ferry, eventually meeting the Savannah-Ebenezer road on the other side of the swamp. No other contemporary map showed this road, and it does not exist now, suggesting that it might have been a military road used solely during the Revolutionary War. One British force had crossed the Savannah River very close to where maroons later took up residence. It is entirely possible that black troops gained firsthand knowledge of the islands while still in the king's service.<sup>7</sup> The twin roads that ran parallel to the river on either side were at least a mile, and often several miles, from the river itself, and the plantations that could be accessed from the roads were few and far between. For the most part, the land between the river islands and the roads, especially on the South Carolina side, was simply an extension of the same low, swampy ground that characterized the islands. Furthermore, the size of the river islands meant that settlements could be constructed and land cleared and planted with crops without sacrificing secrecy. Even when whites were aware of a maroon settlement on the Savannah River islands, they had

to find the precise location by searching an inhospitable environment and navigating almost impassable terrain.

Fourth, the river islands were positioned on a boundary between South Carolina and Georgia, meaning jurisdiction over them was unclear. The Savannah River, which forms most of the boundary between South Carolina and Georgia, flows into numerous channels as it nears the sea. The exact demarcation of authority over the marsh lands and islands in the river was unclear; not until the signing of the Treaty of Beaufort, in April 1787, did South Carolina and Georgia come to an agreement on the boundary line.<sup>8</sup> Since any military action against the maroons would involve public expense, each state government probably hoped that the other would take the initiative and thus pay the bill. It is possible that military authorities on both sides were cautious about violating the sovereignty of a neighboring state by sending troops in pursuit of maroons without express permission. The maroons' location in the Savannah River exploited this jurisdictional confusion.

Further confirmation that the Savannah River islands west of Purrysburgh were an ideal location for a maroon settlement: the islands have not been settled or built on in contemporary times. Their remote and inaccessible location meant that even planters of the antebellum era never drained and divided them up, as they did with similar islands nearer Savannah. The pristine landscape became part of the Savannah River National Wildlife Refuge in 1927 and has remained undisturbed by people ever since.

For former slaves who had fought for the British at the siege of Savannah and during the ensuing four years, but had been left behind by the British after the war, finding a secure refuge where they could maintain their freedom was evidently preferable to the alternative—a return to enslavement on a rice plantation. Since so many slaves were missing after the war, or had been removed by the British, planters set about restocking their estates with slaves, partly by direct importation from Africa and partly by transshipment from the Caribbean. One estimate suggests that by 1787 the black population of the Lowcountry had already reached, and most likely exceeded, prewar levels.<sup>9</sup> The slavery experienced by the newly imported was just as harsh, unrelenting, and soul destroying as it had been before the war. The act of 1770 that set out how slaves were to be controlled continued to be the basis of slave law after the Revolution, and indeed remained largely unchanged until 1865; little to no amelioration for the condition of Georgia slaves came out of the American war for liberty.<sup>10</sup> Johann David Schoepf, a German

visiting the Lowcountry in 1784, believed that the Lowcountry was "more troublous than that of their northern brethren": "On the Lowcountry, for food, they are allotted more work; and the treatment of their overseers and owners is capricious and often most oppressive. For most Lowcountry slaves endured, it is not surprising that the Lowcountry was an attractive proposition.

Later sources confirm that black loyalists first settled on the Savannah River islands shortly after the British left in 1782, and by late in 1786. Some whites knew, or suspected, the existence of the maroons in Savannah as early as 1783; James Houston's advertisement in the *Georgia Gazette* and Jupiter, both coopers, stated: "There is great reason to believe that by the Abercorn negroes."<sup>12</sup> In general, however, the maroons remained secret and hidden from white eyes for four years. The maroons' enough profile not to arouse attention or anger from the whites. Years of tranquility made the maroons overconfident. Former soldiers became augmented by new fugitive slaves. The maroons' proach, but by 1786 the maroons were committing "mistakes" and clearly causing enough trouble to be noticed. The grand jury of Chatham County, Georgia, brought the activity of the maroons to the attention of the grand jury by complaining about "large gangs of runaway Negroes who are quietly within a short distance of this town, without being apprehended in the districts where they are . . . to subjugate them."<sup>11</sup>

The grand jury's complaint spurred those in charge of the militia. Just over a week later, a combined force of militia and maroons were involved in a skirmish with the maroons. The militia's try were involved in a skirmish with the maroons. On October 11, 1786, ended inconclusively, with "three maroons while a similar number of the militia were wounded." The maroons on the "out-guards" posted by the maroons was reported to be in such numbers that it was judged advisable to remove the Negroes attempted to cut them off." Only the discharge of the militia's boats held back the maroons long enough for the maroons were well armed, aware of the need to post sentries. "supposed upwards of 100"—as well as brave enough

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insurrection.” Jackson, who had fought in the Revolutionary War, also warned that the maroons should not be underestimated, since “their leaders are the very fellows that fought, & maintained their ground against the brave lancers at the siege of Savannah, & they still call themselves the King of England’s soldiers.”<sup>18</sup> The governor of Georgia, no doubt alarmed that runaway slaves “have with arms opposed the Militia that have been ordered out to suppress them,” responded immediately to Jackson’s letter with an offer of a £10 reward for each maroon captured or killed, but his South Carolina counterpart made no immediate response.<sup>19</sup>

In March 1787, the maroons raided the home of the South Carolina planter John Lewis Bourquin, wounding him in the process, and departed with one of his drivers and “ten barrels of clean rice.” Bourquin reported to his representative in the South Carolina legislature that “they have in my hearing threatened the lives of many of the citizens,” and he requested that the state take immediate action. In particular, he pointed out that the militia were “not willing to go after them . . . As it will require more than a few days to have them entirely extirpated they say there ought to be provisions ordered to be provided for them by the public.” Bourquin also hinted at the connections that most likely existed between maroons and those who remained enslaved. Plantation slaves often supported maroons with food, weaponry, and information. Most plantations were too large to be monitored constantly and therefore slaves were able to contact maroons at night on distant parts of the plantation, especially where there was river access. Bourquin feared that if the maroons were not suppressed, then the real danger would come from “our own indoor domestics,” emboldened by white inaction and maroon success.<sup>20</sup>

Galvanized into action, the governor of South Carolina ordered that a hundred “minute men” be engaged, at a salary of one shilling a day, for a full month, with rations and ammunition provided by the state. For each maroon captured or killed, a £10 reward would be payable, matching the proclamation made by the governor of Georgia the previous December.<sup>21</sup> To augment the minutemen, the South Carolina government also recruited twenty Catawba Indians. The Catawba had been used to hunt maroons before, since their “manner of hunting renders them very sagacious in finding an Enemy by their Track,” and also because they were able to “hunt the Negroes in their different recesses almost impervious to White people at that season of the year.”<sup>22</sup> Once his forces were assembled, the leader of the expedition, Colonel Thomas Hutson, faced an obvious problem: how to locate and destroy the maroons? He must have had some intelligence on the movements of

the maroons, since on April 21, 1787, he was able to see the maroons in Collin’s Creek (probably Big Collis Creek) was not until May 6, however, that the main encampment was on the lower side of Bear Creek.” The camp itself “was 700 acres and contained twenty-one houses, enough to house upwards of 1000 men. A few maroons are mentioned by name in the records. The land was planted in rice and potatoes.” This camp was established in the previous October and is evidence of the speed with which the maroons cleared land. Surrounding the camp was “a kind of breach or fence made out of logs & cane that came out of the cleared ground. It would admit but one person to pass at a time.” One look-out sentry was posted, and “about two miles below their camp a guard was posted on the creek in order to prevent boats passing up (small boats only). The maroons were well versed in defensive tactics, as the King of England’s soldiers” who had successfully defended Savannah. Historians have observed that the use of fortified camps was common in warfare, and since much of the enslaved population consisted of men, it is plausible to argue that the Savannah River maroons were able to defend their settlements.<sup>25</sup> Once their defenses had been breached, the spirit of the maroons quickly evaporated, and most of the men were shot at random.” Six maroons were reported killed. A few days later, the Effingham County, Georgia, militia captured the maroons “on their way to the Indian nation” and captured Lewis, one of the maroon leaders, on trial.<sup>27</sup>

Lewis’s trial record provides a vast amount of information of the maroon camp and, uniquely, of the person who captured him. For instance, Lewis stated that he joined the maroon camp because the White Overseer used him ill,” an indication that not all maroons on the River islands had necessarily served with the British army. The camp was not a static institution. Rather, it grew as children were born and shrank as members sickened and died, or even as the camp’s styled leader of the maroons was Sharper, who “was c



ght in the Revolutionary War, also warned that the nated, since "their leaders are the very fellows that against the brave lancers at the siege of Savannah, & of England's soldiers."<sup>18</sup> The governor of Georgia, no "have with arms opposed the Militia that have been bonded immediately to Jackson's letter with an offer captured or killed, but his South Carolina counterpart ed the home of the South Carolina planter John Lewis ocess, and departed with one of his drivers and "ten orted to his representative in the South Carolina leg- ing threatened the lives of many of the citizens," and mediate action. In particular, he pointed out that the r them . . . As it will require more than a few days to ay there ought to be provisions ordered to be provided lso hinted at the connections that most likely existed emained enslaved. Plantation slaves often supported l information. Most plantations were too large to be e slaves were able to contact maroons at night on dis- ially where there was river access. Bourquin feared ssed, then the real danger would come from "our own white inaction and maroon success."<sup>20</sup> nor of South Carolina ordered that a hundred "minute shilling a day, for a full month, with rations and am- each maroon captured or killed, a £10 reward would ation made by the governor of Georgia the previous emen, the South Carolina government also recruited vba had been used to hunt maroons before, since their very sagacious in finding an Enemy by their Track," "hunt the Negroes in their different recesses almost season of the year."<sup>22</sup> Once his forces were assembled, el Thomas Hutson, faced an obvious problem: how to must have had some intelligence on the movements of

the maroons, since on April 21, 1787, he was able to send three boats to "waylay" a party of maroons in Collin's Creek (probably Big Collis Creek) and succeeded in killing several.<sup>23</sup> It was not until May 6, however, that the main encampment of the maroons was located, "on the lower side of Bear Creek." The camp itself "was 700 yds in length, & about 120 in width" and contained twenty-one houses, enough to house up to two hundred people, though far fewer maroons are mentioned by name in the records. In addition, "the whole of the cleared land was planted in rice and potatoes." This camp was larger than the one destroyed the previous October and is evidence of the speed with which maroons could construct settle- ments. Surrounding the camp was "a kind of breech work about 4 feet high" constructed out of "logs & cane that came out of the cleared ground," while the single narrow entrance "would admit but one person to pass at a time." One hundred fifty yards down the creek a sentry was posted, and "about two miles below their camp they had fallen large logs across the creek in order to prevent boats passing up (small canoes might pass at high water)."<sup>24</sup> The maroons were well versed in defensive tactics, as one might expect from "the King of England's soldiers" who had successfully defended Savannah in 1779. Moreover, several historians have observed that the use of fortified camps was a common tactic in African warfare, and since much of the enslaved population of the Lowcountry was African, it is plausible to argue that the Savannah River maroons were using traditional knowledge to defend their settlements.<sup>25</sup> Once their defenses had been breached, however, the fighting spirit of the maroons quickly evaporated, and most escaped "into the swamp firing a few shot at random." Six maroons were reported killed and their camp was destroyed. A few days later, the Effingham County, Georgia, militia encountered a group of eighteen maroons "on their way to the Indian nation" and captured nine of them.<sup>26</sup> A week later saw the capture of Lewis, one of the maroon leaders, who was taken to Savannah and put on trial.<sup>27</sup>

Lewis's trial record provides a vast amount of information about the internal organi- zation of the maroon camp and, uniquely, of the personalities of the maroons themselves. For instance, Lewis stated that he joined the maroons in 1785, only after "his Masters White Overseer used him ill," an indication that not all the maroons on the Savannah River islands had necessarily served with the British army.<sup>28</sup> The maroon community was not a static institution. Rather, it grew as children were born or as new recruits arrived, and shrank as members sickened and died, or even returned to plantations. The self- styled leader of the maroons was Sharper, who "was called Captain Cudjoe," most likely

after the leader of the Jamaican maroons who had successfully negotiated in 1739 a treaty with British authorities that recognized maroon freedom on the island. Sharper had been taken from a plantation in Colleton District, South Carolina, by British forces under General Provost during a raid into South Carolina in the spring of 1779. Evidently left behind after the British evacuation, Sharper had remained at large in the Lowcountry. At one time he was detained in Sunbury, twenty miles south of Savannah, before at some point taking up residence in the Savannah River.<sup>29</sup> Lewis was second in command of the maroons, calling himself "Captain Lewis," but he and Sharper clearly had an uneasy relationship, with Lewis refusing to follow Sharper's orders on more than one occasion. According to two female maroons who testified at Lewis's trial, the two leaders "frequently quarrelled," with one suggesting that it was because Lewis suspected "he did not get his share of plunder," while the other thought that "Lewis wanted his own people as Sharper took all his men." Sharper and Lewis "disagreed and Separated" after a local white man, John Casper Hirschmann, was murdered by the maroons.

Hirschmann had encountered the maroons more than once, once stopping to talk to them from a boat in the Savannah River. The day before he died, Hirschmann met Lewis and two other maroons in the swamp and "begged" them "to carry him to the Camp . . . as he wanted Victuals of which he was in search." Little is known about Hirschmann's circumstances, but evidently he was not above trading with maroons, and if he was aware of their raids on nearby plantations, it did not prevent him trying to make contact. Lewis made Hirschmann wait overnight at a campfire before taking him to the main camp at first light. Sharper was outraged, saying that "Lewis had no business to bring White people to camp," and ordered Hirschmann be killed immediately. Chicheum, a maroon with possible Native American ancestry, judging by his name, shot Hirschmann and dumped his body "in to a pond." After the murder, Lewis "Separated camp with Sharper."<sup>30</sup>

Other information about maroon life can be gleaned from the record of Lewis's trial. The maroons grew rice and corn on the island, but for meat they raided nearby plantations, taking sheep and cattle with apparent impunity. At least eight of the maroons had guns, which they used mainly for killing livestock but which, of course, could also be used to defend the camp and to threaten adversaries. Lewis stated that he had "called on Mr Thomas Pollhill and told him to take Care of the runaway Negroes, or by'e and by'e, they would Come and hurt him." Raids on plantations not only netted maroons food,

but also were opportunities to restock their powder. Lewis for example had "a great Coat which he sould recruit more slaves. The first skirmish between them in 1786, had prevented "Sharper and Lewis going to the Lowcountry though it is not clear whether these recruits were joining the maroons.

The two women who testified against Lewis, Jemima and her sister, had their plantations together with their husbands with them. Jemima, a stout, strong made wench, . . . about 28 years old, was taken from the Cashall-Hall plantation in 1783, taking her one-year-old son. Dasher captured her in 1787, she still had the boy with her, suggesting that his father might have been the maroon leader. The gender was clearly gendered: "all the women Stayed in Carolina and conducted raids on nearby plantations and organized the women had guns, and when the militia attacked to send "all the women in the canes" to hide. When they were captured and attempted to flee northeast, away from the Lowcountry and toward land still occupied by the maroons, they made it, but of the ten maroons listed in the newspaper, nearly all were women, who may not have been able to have at least one had a child with her. The only man recorded was but he was traveling south toward "his Master's Mouth" and blend back into the slave population as an ordinary slave. He was "taken by two negroes belonging to Mr Bland" and the fact that he was captured by two slaves is not surprising. It had its limits. Even if the two slaves had been sympathetic to the maroons were forced to abandon their island refuge when finished. It is also possible that the increased vigilance that the maroons might inspire greater resistance among those remaining on plantations. When they were supplied, and recruits, those most likely to suffer were suspected them of colluding with the rebels, or being on the plantation.

is who had successfully negotiated in 1739 a treaty for maroon freedom on the island. Sharper had been in the District, South Carolina, by British forces under the British in the spring of 1779. Evidently left behind, Sharper had remained at large in the Lowcountry. In 1785, twenty miles south of Savannah, before at some distance from the Savannah River.<sup>29</sup> Lewis was second in command of the maroons, but he and Sharper clearly had an uneasy relationship, as evidenced by Sharper's orders on more than one occasion. At Lewis's trial, it was testified that the two leaders "frequently disagreed and Separated" after a local white man, Hirschmann, was killed by the maroons.

Lewis visited the maroons more than once, once stopping to talk to Hirschmann. The day before he died, Hirschmann met Lewis and "begged" them "to carry him to the Camp . . . in search." Little is known about Hirschmann's relationship with the maroons, and if he was aware of their activities, it did not prevent him trying to make contact. Lewis was seen at a campfire before taking him to the main camp, where Hirschmann was killed immediately. Chicheum, a maroon of African ancestry, judging by his name, shot Hirschmann. After the murder, Lewis "Separated camp with

the maroons. Life can be gleaned from the record of Lewis's trial. The maroons on the island, but for meat they raided nearby plantations with impunity. At least eight of the maroons had been keeping livestock but which, of course, could also be used as weapons. Lewis stated that he had "called on the maroons to take Care of the runaway Negroes, or by'e and by'e, to take care of the plantations not only netted maroons food,

but also were opportunities to restock their powder and ammunition, to take clothes—Lewis for example had "a great Coat which he said he got from Lowerman"—and to recruit more slaves. The first skirmish between the maroons and the militia, in October 1786, had prevented "Sharper and Lewis going to fetch more of Mr Guerards hands," though it is not clear whether these recruits were volunteers or were to be pressed into joining the maroons.

The two women who testified against Lewis, Julieta and Peggy, had run away from their plantations together with their husbands within the last year. Phillis, on the other hand, "a stout, strong made wench, . . . about 28 years of age," had fled from James Gunn's Cashall-Hall plantation in 1783, taking her one-year-old son with her. When Captain Dasher captured her in 1787, she still had the boy with her, now named "Sharper," suggesting that his father might have been the maroon leader.<sup>31</sup> Labor among the maroons was clearly gendered: "all the women Stayed in Camp" and planted rice, while the men conducted raids on nearby plantations and organized the defense of the settlement. None of the women had guns, and when the militia attacked, one of Sharper's first orders was to send "all the women in the canes" to hide. When the battle was lost, the maroons scattered and attempted to flee northeast, away from the concentration of white settlement in the Lowcountry and toward land still occupied by the Creeks and Cherokees. Not all made it, but of the ten maroons listed in the newspapers as being captured by the militia, nearly all were women, who may not have been able to travel as quickly as the men, and at least one had a child with her. The only man recorded as being captured was Lewis, but he was traveling south toward "his Master's Mills on Ogeechee," perhaps hoping to blend back into the slave population as an ordinary runaway and not a maroon leader. He was "taken by two negroes belonging to Mr Bird" before he reached his destination, and the fact that he was captured by two slaves is further evidence that racial solidarity had its limits. Even if the two slaves had been sympathetic to those resisting slavery, once the maroons were forced to abandon their island refuge, it was clear that their cause was finished. It is also possible that the increased vigilance of whites, as a result of their fear that the maroons might inspire greater resistance among the enslaved, caused resentment among those remaining on plantations. When maroons raided plantations for food, supplies, and recruits, those most likely to suffer were the slaves, either because masters suspected them of colluding with the rebels, or because there was now simply less food on the plantation.





asper Hirschmann and three counts of robbery  
tham County Inferior Court. A jury of seven was  
eord indicates that only three people testified:  
eing no bar in the slave code to black people tes-  
ke the jury long to convict Lewis of all charges,  
nmit the murder. Even if he had been acquitted  
been same: the robbery charges also merited a  
t “the Negroe Lewis . . . be hanged on the South  
head on the Ninth day of June next at ten o’clock  
be Cut off and Stuck upon a pole to be sett up on  
and in Savannah River.” By ordering the mutila-  
allowing the act of 1770 “for the better governing  
inner of death” in capital cases involving slaves  
to deter others from offending in like manner.”<sup>32</sup>  
sentences had to be approved by the governor,  
elating to the trial were sent to Augusta. The  
entence” and issued a warrant for the execution  
eport in the local newspaper the following week  
head-men of the camp of runaway negroes lately  
entence.”<sup>33</sup> Two years later Lewis’s owner, Oliver  
n by the state for his executed slave. Requests  
n for slaves “killed among the Runaway Negroes”  
r slaves executed after a trial, not for those killed  
s state.”<sup>34</sup> Those unable to produce a trial tran-

in the Savannah River in May 1787, and the dis-  
ed to mark an end to the use of those islands as  
oubt individuals, and perhaps small groups, fled  
sisted in the South. As late as 1823, newspapers  
g informs us, that a number of armed negroes  
ad that several gentlemen had gone in pursuit of  
wever, and there are no records to suggest that  
to mount large-scale expeditions against armed

slaves on the Savannah River as in 1787. If the maroons numbered “upwards of 100,” as reports suggested, the militia killed very few of them. Just £60 was paid out by the South Carolina government, equating to six deaths, and only a small number were reported in the press as being captured. Those who were captured could expect reenslavement, since masters were expected to claim those advertised in the press. If no claimant came forward, the slave would be sold by the state.<sup>36</sup> But it seems likely that the majority of the maroons succeeded in escaping northward and avoided a return to slavery.

After the chaos of the Revolutionary War, the removal of the maroons in the Savannah River marked the completion of a process of reestablishing racial slavery in the Lowcountry that had been in progress since 1782. The “general asylum” offered by the maroons to prospective runaway slaves was a challenge that could not be ignored. Lowcountry planters were well aware of the situation in Jamaica and in Suriname, where maroon groups had “fixed and fortified the recesses . . . and opposed and harrassed their masters until they were obliged to treat with them; and they are now an actual independent colony.” They did not believe that the “runaway negroes” (contemporaries never called them *maroons*) were yet comparable to Jamaican maroons, but “to have despised or neglected” the Savannah River maroons might have led to independent maroon communities becoming so strong that even “the best stationary regiments could not subdue them.”<sup>37</sup> The effort put into the destruction of the maroons—two state governments together provided more than a hundred troops and recruited a party of Catawba, all of whom had to be paid or rewarded as well as supplied with food and drink—was considerable. The South Carolina government alone paid out £241 for supplies, with soldiers’ pay in addition to that.<sup>38</sup> Such sums are evidence of how seriously the threat posed by maroons was taken in societies where the entire economy was constructed around racial slavery. By eliminating the maroon threat, white authorities reasserted their control over African Americans and ensured that whatever future resistance they encountered from the enslaved, although varied and widespread, would ultimately be insufficient to challenge the institution of slavery until the Civil War.