WACHOVIA SYMPOSIUM
Reassessing Colonial South Carolina History: Peter Wood’s Black Majority After 25 Years

Panelists are:
David Shields (English Department, The Citadel),
Robert Olwell (History Department, University of Texas)
Philip Morgan (The William and Mary Quarterly and the History Department, College of William and Mary)

Response by Peter Wood (History Department, Duke University)

October 1, 1998, 7:30 pm (Alumni Memorial Hall, Second Floor, Randolph Hall, College of Charleston)

This symposium will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of Peter H. Wood’s Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion. No other single volume has had such a profound effect upon the historiography of the colonial Lower South. By showing in detail the centrality of slavery to the emergence of the culture of colonial South Carolina, it both revolutionized the study of the history of the Lower South and brought the study of the African-American population during the slave period to a new level of sophistication. As the first book to show that the history of the Africans in colonial America could be reconstructed in a complexity that few earlier scholars had thought possible, Black Majority may be said to be the foundation book for modern studies of slavery during the colonial era.

The symposium will involve short presentations from three younger scholars who have themselves made important contributions to aspects of this subject: Philip D. Morgan of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and the College of William and Mary; Robert Olwell of the University of Texas at Austin; and David Shields of the Citadel. Professors Morgan, Olwell, and Shields will assess the impact of Black Majority upon subsequent scholarship, consider its continuing relevance to our understanding of colonial British American history, and speculate on what we still need to learn in order to have a full picture of the culture Europeans, Africans, and Amerindians built together in the Carolina lowcountry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Following a response by Professor Wood, the panel will engage in a general, free-ranging discussion and will take questions from the audience.

New Books by Panelists


In one of the most important studies of Lowcountry slave life to appear in recent years, Morgan endeavors to provide a "balanced appreciation for the oppressive nature of bondage and of the ability of slaves to shape their lives." Reviewer T. H. Breen in the New York Times Book Review (July 19, 1998) calls Morgan's book a "massive reconstruction of life in the 18th-century American South" that "helps us understand how African-Americans, caught up in a web of interdependencies made sense of their lives, not as slaves, but as human beings." Breen concludes that Morgan "has succeeded splendidly, and in the process reminded modern readers that the world of the 18th century is not so distant as they sometimes imagine."


Olwell examines the complex relations among masters, slaves, metropolitan institutions, officials, and ideas in the South Carolina lowcountry from the end of the Stono Rebellion through the chaos of the American Revolution. He details the interstices of power and resistance in four key areas of the colonial social order: the criminal law and the slave court; conversion and communion in the established church; market relationships and the marketplace; and patriarchy and the plantation great house. Olwell shows how South Carolina's status as a colony influenced the development of slavery and how the presence of slavery altered English ideas and institutions within a colonial setting. He is a pathbreaking examination of the workings of American slavery within the context of America's colonial history.

Civil Tongues and Polite Letters by David Shields was reviewed in Vol. I, No. 2 of CONNECTIONS.
Conversations with: S. Max Edelson and John Radford
by Terry Bowers (English Department, College of Charleston)

Joining the History Department at the College of Charleston this Fall is S. Max Edelson, who has earned an M.Litt. degree (1994) from Oxford University and is just completing his doctorate (1998) at The Johns Hopkins University under the direction of Jack P. Greene. Edelson's research is on the early history of the Lowcountry. His dissertation, "Planting the Lowcountry: Agricultural Enterprise and Economic Experience in the Lower South, 1664-1785," is a study of the economic experience and behaviors of the early planters in South Carolina and Georgia. Edelson examines in detail the strategies the planters employed to respond to a series of challenges they faced as they developed their agricultural settlements -- such as the challenge of working in an environment "they at first thought of as wasteland." A significant section of Edelson's work is devoted to showing how the customs and ways of thinking that the planters brought with them from England informed their economic behavior and were instrumental in enabling them to achieve their goals of accumulation and status. Making use of such understudied archival sources as Memorial Land Records, which documents the property transactions of the early planters, Edelson constructs a fascinating narrative that enriches our understanding of the lives, practices, and modes of thought of the colonial agriculturists in the Lowcountry.

Edelson was attracted to the College of Charleston both because it provides him with "the chance to study and teach South Carolina history" and because of his interest in the Program in the Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World. Edelson, whose own work has a strong transatlantic component, sees the notion of "Atlantic world" as "crucial for the early part of Carolina history and American history. It's not a fad," he stresses. As a framework for historical inquiry, the Atlantic world, Edelson explains, is part of a general re-thinking of American history. For one, examining American history within an Atlantic context "works against the idea of American Exceptionalism," which sees the development of American nationhood as largely a process of abandoning old world precedent in response to American conditions. Edelson also notes that an Atlantic perspective pays closer attention to a wider range of influences upon American culture (from Africa and the Iberian peninsula, for example) than that paid by earlier historiographical traditions and provides a fruitful way of doing comparative work on such central issues as slavery and the development of plantation societies.

John Radford, associate professor in the Faculty of the Arts at York University in Toronto and the author of numerous scholarly articles, is spending Fall semester at the College of Charleston as the first Visiting Research Fellow in the Program in the Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World. As a historical geographer, "I am interested," explains Radford, "in landscapes and environment and in what is fundamentally behind the allocation of space." A large portion of Radford's research has been done in urban geography and this semester at the College he will teach a course on urban historical geography that will examine how the rise of capitalism shaped the development of urban spaces. Another strand of Radford's work has focused on Charleston and the Lowcountry. In a faculty seminar organized by the Lowcountry and Atlantic Studies Program, Radford will present a paper entitled "Symbolic Landscape and the Myth of Charleston." This paper, which is part of a larger research project, focuses on the inland movement of the Lowcountry plantation and investigates how the plantation came to be seen as the norm of what the South Carolina farm should be. The success of the plantation model, which displaced other kinds of farms (such as the small yeoman farm) and allowed planters to impose a certain kind of economic and social order on the landscape, is usually explained by economic reasons. Radford argues that other factors were at work and that the success of the plantation model and the enormous authority that it achieved also stemmed from the ways in which plantations were represented within culture and endowed with symbolic meaning.

An important section of Radford's argument stresses the ways English and Venetian images and ways of representing landscape were re-worked in South Carolina and put to powerful ideological use. In this respect, Radford sees his work as participating in a larger trend in historical geography that looks at the global diffusion of cultures, plants, and animals. And more specifically, his work on Lowcountry plantations develops an important line of research that examines the focus on the early history of the Lowcountry. His dissertation, "Planting the history within such larger frameworks is, Radford argues, essential: "it is impossible to understand the Lowcountry," especially in the colonial period, without situating it in the broader context of the Atlantic world and seeing it "as on the edge of something" larger. "We are also becoming increasingly aware of the Caribbean connection and the importance of African-American contributions to the cultural landscape." Many forces circulating in the Atlantic basin helped create the Lowcountry -- its culture, society, and environment -- and Radford's work this Fall will be devoted to investigating these shaping forces and helping us better understand their impact on South Carolina.

With support from the South Carolina Humanities Council, the Charleston Museum opens a special exhibit, "Queens & Commoners of Egypt's New Kingdom," on October 2. On loan from the British Museum, this show celebrate the 225th anniversary of the Charlestown Museum, and recognizes its own Atlantic Connection of equal duration with the British Museum. For details call the Museum at (843) 722-2996.

Call for papers: "The Emergence of the Atlantic Economy"

The Program in the Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World will host an international conference from October 14-16, 1999 on the emergence of the Atlantic economy in the late medieval and early modern periods. In recent years, a substantial body of new work has been published by Europeanists, Africanists, and Americanists on aspects of this topic, and the time seems right both to bring together these findings and to attempt to analyze and interpret Atlantic exchange and production relations at higher levels of historical generalization. At the conference we hope to provide a forum both for new micro studies and for broader examinations of the systematics of the emerging Atlantic economy as a whole. Please send paper proposals to Professor Peter Cochran, Department of History, Hamilton Hall, C181, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3270. (Phone: 919-962-9824. FAX: 919-962-1403. E-mail: cochran@unc.edu). The deadline for proposals is April 2, 1999.

Program Sponsor: Huguenot Heritage Tour of France

Plans are underway for a specialized tour of Historic Huguenot France for the summer of 1999. The tour is organized and conducted by Dr. Bertrand Van Ruymbeke of the College's History Department, an expert on Huguenot history, and a graduate of the Sorbonne, who has conducted two previous tours. The tour will cover important sites in an area called the "Huguenot Crescent" extending from Nimes in Languedoc to La Rochelle in Saintonge with stops in Paris, Geneva and other cities. Sites include John Calvin's birthplace in Noyon; the Musee Du Desert, the largest museum devoted to Huguenot history, the French Huguenot Society headquarters, library, and museum in Paris the Protestant Museum and temple in La Rochelle; and other important sites off the beaten tourist path. Join Professor Van Ruymbeke and other interested travelers on an exciting and informative journey combining breathtaking sites, excellent food, and fascinating lectures into an unforgettable experience.

For further information please complete the following form:

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Date Preference (Please circle):
March, May, June, July, August
Would you prefer a tour of 1 or 2 weeks?

Return to Huguenot Tour via History Department, College of Charleston 66 George St. Charleston SC 29403.
"The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World"

October 16-18, 1998

This Fall the Program will host an exciting international conference focused on the impact of the Haitian Revolution outside Haiti, an event funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent federal agency. The Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804 was unique, the only example of an enslaved population successfully seizing its freedom and creating an independent state. Throughout the Americas, the destruction of the French colony of Saint-Domingue was an inspiration to slaves and a warning to slave owners. In a period when both libertarian ideology was spreading and ideas of racial hierarchy were gaining legitimacy, when the future of colonies was being discussed, and the anti-slavery movement began to mobilize, the creation of an independent Haiti, the first black republic in the world, was a matter of intense interest and controversy throughout the Atlantic World.

The conference will open Friday morning at 9:00 a.m. and continue through Sunday morning at the Lightsey Conference Center at the College of Charleston. Unlike most conferences, papers will be circulated in advance. Presenters will not read their papers, but will give only brief summaries of five minutes in length. Each one and one-half hour session will be devoted primarily to discussion and questions from the floor. Conference registrants will receive the papers in advance on diskette (or in printed form for an additional charge). Our guest convener of the conference is Professor David Geggus of the University of Florida, the author of Slavery, War and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793-98 (1982) and co-editor, with David B. Gaspar, of A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean (1997).

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Friday, 9:00 a.m.
Welcome and opening comments: David Geggus (University of Florida)

I. Opening Plenary Session
Chair: Jack P. Greene (The Johns Hopkins University)
David Brion Davis (Yale University), "The Haitian Revolution in the Age of Emancipation"

Comments by Seymour Drechsler (University of Pittsburgh), Robin Blackburn (Cambridge University), and Michel-Rolph Trouillot (University of Chicago)

II. "The Haitian Revolution in Charleston"
Chair: Jack P. Greene
Stan Deaton (Georgia Historical Society, Savannah), "Falling Darkness: Charleston and the Legacy of the Haitian Revolution"
Robert Alderson (Midlands Technical College, SC), "Charleston’s Rumored Slave Revolt of 1793"

Discussion Initiator: James Sidbury (University of Texas, Austin)

III. "The Intellectual Impact of the Haitian Revolution"
Chair: David Brion Davis
Simon Newman (University of Glasgow), "Nathaniel Cutting, Thomas Jefferson, and the Haitian Revolution"
Roy E. Finckenbine (University of Detroit Mercy), "Black Abolitionists, the Symbolism of the Haitian Revolution, and the Uses of Cultural Memory"

Discussion Initiator: Sylvia Frey (Tulane University)

IV. "The Intellectual Impact of the Haitian Revolution"
Chair: David Brion Davis
James Walvin (University of York), "Views from London: Black Issues in Britain in the Age of Revolution"
Karin Schuller (University of Cologne), "The Impact of the Haitian Revolution on German Thought in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries"

Discussion Initiator: Seymour Drechsler

Saturday, 9:00 a.m.
V. "The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in Latin America"
Chair: Michel-Rolph Trouillot
Marita Lasso (University of Florida), "Haiti as an Image of Popular Republicanism in the Colombian Caribbean, Cartagena Province (1811-1828)"
Aline Helg (University of Texas), "A Fragmented Majority: Free of All Colors, Indians, and Slaves in Caribbean Colombia During the Haitian Revolution"

Discussion Initiator: Robin Blackburn

VI. "The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in Cuba"
Chair: Michel-Rolph Trouillot
Matt Childs (University of Texas), "The Aponte Rebellion in Cuba"
Jane Landers (Vanderbilt University), "Black Militia Mutiny in 1812 in Cuba"

Discussion Initiator: Franklin Knight (The Johns Hopkins University)

VII. "The Impact of the Haitian Revolution on Caribbean Slave Societies"
Chair: David Geggus
Juan Gonzalez-Mendoza (Universidad Interamericana, San Germán, Puerto Rico), "Puerto Rico’s Patriots and the Slave Trade After the Saint Domingue Revolution"
Laurent Dubois (Michigan State University), "The Promise of Revolution: Saint Domingue and the Struggle for Autonomy in Guadeloupe, 1793-1809"

Discussion Initiator: Rosemary Brana-Shute (College of Charleston)

Sunday, 9:00 a.m.
VIII. "The Impact of the Haitian Revolution on Caribbean Slave Societies"
Chair: David Geggus
Julius Scott (University of Michigan), "The Haitian Revolution at Sea"
Olwyn Blouet (Virginia State University), "Bryan Edwards and Revolution"

Discussion Initiator: Edward Cox (Rice University)

IX. "Refugee Communities in the United States"
Chair: Lester Langley (University of Georgia)
Susan Branson (University of Texas, Dallas) and Leslie Patrick (Bucknell University), "Strangères dans un Pays Étranger: Female St. Domingan Refugees in the Philadelphia Community, 1789-1800"
Paul Lachance (University of Ottawa), "Refugees from Saint Domingue in New Orleans"

Discussion Initiator: Gwendolyn Hall (Rutgers University)

Summing Up

REGISTRATION FORM: For conference or registration information contact Ms. Amelia Spatz at the Department of History, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424 (note Haiti Conference on envelope). Phone (843) 953-1420 (FAX -6349), or e-mail: spatzl@cofc.edu. For information on the wide variety of accommodations available in the Charleston area contact the Visitors Center at (843) 553-8000, (800) 808-8118. Please note: this program is subject to change.

Name: ____________________________ City/Zip: ____________________________
Affiliation: ____________________________
Street: ______________________________ Telephone: ____________________________
FAX: ______________________________ Email: ______________________________
Registration Fee [postmarked before October 1]: $40 [after October 1]: $50 [Includes copies of papers on WordPerfect diskette] Additional Fee for Photocopies of Papers: $30 [Includes postage and handling] ______________________________ TOTAL

Please make checks payable to: The College of Charleston Foundation
From the Director:

The academic year 1997-98 was an active one for the Program in the Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World. Of particular importance was the Wadsworth Lecture Series which brought four distinguished scholars to the College of Charleston to address the general subject "Conceptualizing the Atlantic World." These were Bernard Bailyn, Charles Warren Professor Emeritus at Harvard University and the most distinguished living historian of early America, who spoke on "The Idea of Atlantic History"; David Brian Davis, Sterling Professor of History at Yale University, and a prizewinning analyst of early modern slavery, who talked about "Anticipations of Racist Ambivalent Images of Africans in the Early Modern Age"; J. G. A. Pocock, Harry Black Professor of History at the Johns Hopkins University and the person most responsible for raising the study of early modern British political thought to its present height of sophistication, who lectured on "The Atlantic Archipelago: British History and the American Southland"; and Sidney W. Mintz, Strauss Professor Emeritus at the Johns Hopkins University and a leading anthropologist of food, who spoke on "Funding the Red Thread: The Atlantic Moment in Culture and History.

Additionally, as a follow up to its 1997 conference on the Huguenot diaspora, the Program sponsored four events concerned with Huguenot history, including public lectures by Dr. Charles H. Lesser of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Professor Darlene Dabbs Williams of the College of Charleston and Dr. Mary C. Anderson of the University of South Carolina, and a panel discussion on "The Edict of Nantes in Historical Perspective," featuring Professors Barbara Defenbaugh of Boston University, Orest Ronan of the Johns Hopkins University, and Bertrand Van Ruymbeke of the College of Charleston.

In the most important event of the year, the Program held its annual conference on "The Evolution of the Portuguese-Atlantic Quimcentenary Reflections, 1498-1998," from May 14-16. The conference was specifically intended to mark the 500th anniversary of the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama's discovery in 1498 of a sea route around Africa from Europe to the Indian Ocean. The Program was especially fortunate to have Professor Timothy J. Coates of the College of Charleston organize, raise funds for, and preside over this intellectually stimulating event, which brought together more than thirty scholars from universities and historical institutes all over the United States as well as Canada, Great Britain, Portugal, and Brazil. These participants were enormously enthusiastic about this conference, which, in terms of bringing together scholars with common interests and promoting interdisciplinary and international links among them, could scarcely have been more successful.

Beginning with the coming academic year, the Program will shift its annual conference to the fall, a time when more College of Charleston faculty and students are in residence. On October 16-18, we will have a conference on "The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World." Occurring at the time of the French Revolution and during what the historian Robert Polner has labeled the Age of Democratic Revolutions, the Haitian Revolution, the only successful large-scale slave revolt in the history of New World slavery, was the most democratic revolution of that revolutionary age. Not only did it stimulate enormously powerful egalitarian impulses throughout New World slave societies but it created massive anarchy and deep fears among the slaveholding elites that dominated those societies. Professor David Geggus of the University of Florida, a well-known student of the Haitian Revolution, will be the guest speaker and coordinator of this event, for which Professor Rosemary Brana-Shute, one of the Program's codirectors, has secured a substantial grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities that will defray much of the conference expenses. Professor Brana-Shute is to be congratulated for taking the principal role in crafting the proposal that received the grant, one of only 35 conference grants awarded by the National Endowment this year.

Jack P. Greene
Executive Director

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