

CHAPTER 12

QUEST FOR ORDER

I. South Carolina and the New Nation

A. Introduction. The struggle for independence had devastated South Carolina. Farms and plantations were in ruins, old trading patterns with Great Britain and her Caribbean colonies had been broken, 25% of the labor force had been stolen by the British, and the bitterness caused by the nature of the conflict still remained.

B. Government

1. South Carolina had adopted a new state constitution in 1778.
 - a. It was a legislative act and was not ratified by the people.
 - b. Property qualifications were established for voting and for holding office.
 - c. The Church of England was disestablished after a bitter struggle.
2. The lowcountry elite controlled the government and intended to use every possible means to remain in power.

***C. South Carolina had internal disorder during the 1780s just as did Massachusetts and other states.**

- *1. There was an economic downturn after the war.**
- *2. Speculation by lowcountry merchants and planters backfired and many found themselves deeply in debt.**
- *3. Backcountry farmers had difficulty paying their debts and taxes.**
- *4. Debtor laws passed by the General Assembly favored the lowcountry elite.**
- *5. Revolutionary War veterans had to sell their bonus bonds and land grants for a fraction of their face value in order to feed their families.**
- *6. Outlaws again operated with impunity in the backcountry.**

***7. Former Sons of Liberty in Charleston rioted against what they saw as lenient treatment for “rich tories” who had powerful friends and relatives in the General Assembly.**

***8. Given these conditions, it is little wonder that the state’s leaders supported the movement for a strong central government.**

D. South Carolina and the New Federal Constitution

1. The General Assembly elected four delegates, all wealthy conservatives.

2. The Philadelphia Convention

a. All four of the state’s delegates were active in the convention.

***b. The South Carolina delegation led the opposition to having apportionment in the House of Representatives based solely on population.**

***i. Rutledge and Butler argued that wealth should be represented as well as population.**

***ii. The Three-Fifths Compromise satisfied the other Southern delegates, but not the South Carolinians.**

***3. Ratification**

***a. A special convention was called by the General Assembly and representation in this convention favored the lowcountry.**

***b. With the overwhelming support of the lowcountry delegates, South Carolina ratified the Constitution 149-73.**

E. Summary. The economic difficulties and social and political unrest of the 1780s set the stage for a fierce struggle between the lowcountry and the upcountry in the 1790s.

F. Readings

1. Edgar, South Carolina, Chapter 12

2. Blum, Catton, The National Experience, pp. 120-138
2. Bowen, Miracle at Philadelphia, see index for "Butler," "Pinckney," "Rutledge," and "South Carolina"
3. Horne, South Carolina, 182-193
4. Jones, South Carolina, pp. 330-335, 338-342
5. Kovacik & Winberry, South Carolina, pp. 84-85
6. Tindall, America, pp. 246-276

II. Who Shall Rule?: Lowcountry Versus Upcountry

- A. Introduction. The ratification of the new federal constitution and the enactment of a new state constitution in 1790 were divisive issues in South Carolina. In both cases, the lowcountry, using its majority in the General Assembly and ratification convention ran roughshod over the under represented upcountry. The creation of a new capital city in the interior, on the banks of the Congaree, was supposed to assuage irate upcountrymen.
- B. The Constitution of 1790
 1. It was not ratified by the people.
 2. Because lowcountry delegates still outnumbered upcountry delegates, they saw to it that their section of the state still controlled the General Assembly.
 3. Property qualifications for voting and office holding were continued.
 4. Columbia was confirmed as the state capital, but the state was divided into Upper and Lower divisions and major state services maintained offices in Charleston and Columbia.
 5. Under this constitution, the General Assembly was the most powerful branch of government; "the legislative state" that had been evolving since the 1750s was now fully developed.
- C. South Carolina in 1790

1. There were 83,000 more whites in the upcountry than in the lowcountry; only whites were supposed to be counted for purposes of determining representation in the General Assembly.
2. The lowcountry had 70 members in the House of Representatives as compared to 54 for the upcountry!
 - a. One lowcountry parish (St. Stephens) with 226 white residents had three representatives.
 - b. One upcountry district (Edgefield) with 9,785 white residents had three representatives.
3. The lowcountry paid 3.5 times as much money into the state treasure in taxes as did the upcountry.

D. Tensions Mounted During the 1790s

1. The apportionment issue continued to cause friction between upcountry and lowcountry.
2. A pamphlet war erupted into print between the two sections that kept tensions alive.
3. Upcountry legislators hurled “No taxation without representation” and other revolutionary slogans back at lowcountrymen who had used similar arguments against the British in 1776.
4. The sophisticated populace of the lowcountry looked down their noses at the “bumpkins” from the Upcountry and had no intention of letting the cruse upcountrymen take over the government that the lowcountry elite had controlled since the 1690s.

E. The South Carolina College

1. The college’s founders intended for the sons of the lowcountry and the sons of the upcountry to attend college together and thus help heal the breach between the two sections.
2. Within 20 years, the founders’ hopes had been realized.

F. The Compromise of 1808

1. It settled the apportionment issue until 1865.

2. One half of the seats in the House of Representatives were to be apportioned to the parishes and election districts according to their white population and one half according to their taxable wealth.
 3. The compromise was made possible by the expansion of plantation slavery into the upcountry so that the “peculiar interests” of the lowcountry were now the interests of the entire state.
 4. In 1810, as a follow-up to the compromise, the state eliminated property qualifications for voting and adopted the principle of white male suffrage.
- G. Summary. The tensions between upcountry and lowcountry were high from 1790 until 1808. The upcountry’s grievances were real. At time, it seemed as if the state were about to erupt into civil war. Right and justice were on the side of the upcountry, but it was the introduction of cotton and the spread of plantation slavery that finally swayed the lowcountry that it could share political power with the upcountry.
- H. Readings
1. Edgar, South Carolina: A History, Chapter 12
 2. Ford, Origins of Upcountry Radicalism, pp. 281-307
 3. Horne, South Carolina, 188-189, 208-217
 4. Jones, South Carolina, pp. 335-337, 343-345, 348-363, 366-374
 5. Kovacik & Winberry, South Carolina, pp. 87-88
 5. Meleney, Aedanus Burke, pp. 133-181, 208-240