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Saint Dominguan Refugees in Charleston, South Carolina, 1791-1822: Assimilation and Accommodation in a Slave Society

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Saint Dominguan Refugees in Charleston, South Carolina, 1791-1822:
Assimilation and Accommodation in a Slave Society

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandfather Calvin Templeton Lindsay who always shared his love of learning and love of history with me.

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Daniel C. Littlefield as my advisor offered hours of guidance and pressed me to ask the questions necessary to produce this dissertation. I appreciate the helpful suggestions offered by Lacy Ford, Matt Childs, and Kenneth Kelly. Each approached my work from a different point of view and helped to broaden the approach I took.

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ABSTRACT

During the 1790s and the first decade of the nineteenth century, nearly 20,000 refugees fled the French colony of Saint Domingue for asylum in the United States. They found new homes in such American port cities as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, and New Orleans. This dissertation explores the experiences of the white planters, *gens de couleur*, and slaves who sought asylum in Charleston, South Carolina, and the effect their presence had on the city's long time residents. It might seem from first glance that finding acceptance in Charleston would be easy for them, but this was not the case. From the early days of the Haitian Revolution, South Carolinians struggled with how to relate to their newest residents. While an obvious kinship existed between the two slave societies, the violence of Saint Domingue raised difficult questions about how a society could maintain slaves in a place where the ideals of republican revolution were spreading to larger sectors of the population.

Charlestonians had many reasons to be anxious about these new arrivals as Saint Domingue's experience represented the materialization of the state's worst worries. Concern that Saint Domingue's slaves would spread insurrection to the American South was ever present. South Carolinians attempted to reassure themselves that their own slaves would never rebel as they looked for explanations of why French slaves had turned violent.

In addition to these difficulties, white Saint Domingans also faced attacks by France's republican leaders, particularly Citizen Édmond Genet, France's ambassador to the United States from 1793 until 1794. He accused them of being royalists who actively worked to destroy France's colony instead of embracing the republican changes that were occurring in France. These charges and concerns about slave violence forced the refugees to seek ways to prove they held republican ideology. Over time, as they made their case for acceptance in economic, political, and religious realms, South Carolinians began to embrace them.

In many ways, South Carolinians had few other options. The presence of these refugees on their streets highlighted the paradox under which southerners had lived since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, that of simultaneously holding men, women, and children in bondage while openly declaring allegiance to republican ideals of freedom and equality. The state's leaders and residents needed to enfold Saint Domingue's refugees into their definitions of republicanism in order to protect the institution of slavery in America. Unwilling and unable to turn from slavery, South Carolina's slave owners redoubled their efforts at patrolling and controlling their slave population for the next fifty years.

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INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the Haitian Revolution, an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 refugees fled the violence and political instability of Saint Domingue and came to the United States.¹ White planters, *gens de couleur*, and enslaved blacks who were often African-born poured into port cities along the coastline from New York to New Orleans.² Most of these travelers had little say regarding their destination; they were just relieved to have made an escape. As the violence of slave insurrection and colonial rebellion escalated, particularly in Saint Domingue's northern port of Cap Français, frightened colonists often with their most trusted servants, made their way to the docks in search of passage away from the carnage and fire. Those who arrived in Charleston, South Carolina, may have thought that they had reached the place in the United States most like the home they fled.

South Carolina's economy depended on agricultural exports; wealthy merchant and

¹Winston C. Babb, "French Refugees from Saint Domingue to the Southern United States, 1791-1810" (Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1954), 255-264.

² Any study that attempts to understand race must define the racialized terms employed. This dissertation recognizes that all free people of color, those defined as "other free people" by the United States Census of 1790, were not a unified group. On the other hand, those referred to as "*gens de couleur*" were much more homogeneous. They were generally mixed race people of substantial means in Saint Domingue, people who often were planters who owned large numbers of slaves. The enslaved in Saint Domingue on the eve of the Haitian Revolution were largely African born. The plantation crops grown in Saint Domingue were particularly hard on the enslaved population, and owners required their slaves to produce their much of their own food with limited free time to do so. These factors in addition to harsh discipline led to high mortality rates among Saint Dominguan slaves. The population had to be regularly replenished. This slave population did not reproduce in the way that North American slave populations did, so importation of newly captured Africans was necessary. During the eighteenth century approximately 864,000 Africans were imported, and in the six years immediately before the slave insurrection erupted more than 220,000 Africans arrived in the colony. David Geggus, "Saint-Domingue on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. David Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 7; Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America : Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 15; Stewart R. King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig : Free People of Color in Pre-Revolutionary Saint Domingue* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

planter classes held close ties with the Old World; and slaves were commonplace on Charleston's streets. Echoes of home seemed to be everywhere.

In spite of the similarities, Saint Domingue's refugees did not experience immediate assimilation. They spoke French and were citizens of a French nation in transition. The coming of the Haitian Revolution had altered their way of life beyond repair, and their fleeing of France's wealthiest colony forced them to build a new life devoid of much of what was familiar. The planter class no longer owned vast and fertile lands peopled with slaves who generated ever increasing wealth. The *gens de couleur* found themselves in a southern American city that was struggling to adapt to an expanding free colored population.

The slaves who traveled with their masters knew little English, stood out among Charleston's enslaved because of their different dress and foreign tongues, and were the objects of suspicion as southerners feared they would provoke rebellion among South Carolina's slaves.³ The process of assimilating would not be easy.

This dissertation explores the intersection of the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions through the lens of these refugees and argues that their presence in Charleston highlighted the incompatibility between republican ideology and maintaining a slave society. The fear Charlestonians felt caused them to avoid fully embracing the principles of the new American republic because doing so meant the possibility of that

³ Robert J. Alderson, "Charleston's Rumored Slave Revolt of 1793," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David Patrick Geggus (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 93-111; Edward Bartlett Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation the Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008); Ashli White, "The Politics of 'French Negroes' in the United States," *Historical Reflections* 29, no. 1 (2003): 103-121. Recently scholarship by historians such as Laurent Dubois emphasizes that over two-thirds of Saint Domingue's slave population was African born. Their ethnic identity and African religious traditions played an important role in the rebellion that occurred in Saint Domingue. These characteristics made the recent arrivals from Saint Domingue stand out in South Carolina and contributed to the fear felt by many.

ideology passing to free people of color and slaves, both of which the dominate white elites wanted to keep in subservient states. The events surrounding the arrival and eventual settling of Saint Domingans in Charleston provide insight into Charleston and the realities of life under the new Constitution and into the larger Atlantic World where the Age of Revolution was just beginning to tear down the foundations of colonialism and build a new world that emphasized greater equality and freedom. The 1790s were a watershed moment in World History; and as the decade progressed, it became obvious that living out the ideology that republican revolution proclaimed would not be easy.

For Charleston the arrival of Saint Domingue's refugees forced the city's residents to acknowledge the problems associated with maintaining a slave society in a republic. Since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, many had recognized that slavery was incompatible with the principles upon which the nation was founded, but they did not know how to move away from dependency on slave labor. Prior to the 1790s they regarded this as a problem to be dealt with in the future. The possibility of slave insurrection was ever present, but with appropriate laws and armed patrols they controlled their slaves. The arrival of the refugees forced Charlestonians to acknowledge how tenuous their system really was. In some cases they tried to make excuses for why Saint Domingue's slaves were able to rebel: the owners were too harsh, whites had carelessly allowed slaves to hear the rhetoric of freedom and equality, outsiders had infiltrated the slave society and provoked slaves to revolt. Regardless of how the insurrection occurred, for Charlestonians, the possibility of similar violence occurring in America sent chills through their blood and made them see that their society was also teetering on chaos.

Each of the first three Atlantic revolutions was progressively more inclusive, and the refugees who fled Saint Domingue for Charleston provide an excellent avenue for examining how republican revolution influenced the Atlantic World. The American Revolution created a society where white men, mostly property owners, found freedom and equal treatment before the law. Americans initially applauded the French Revolution for spreading these same principles to a wider audience. But the revolution did not stop there; race was the next hurdle. Colored and enslaved Saint Domingans took hold of the language of liberty and equality and began to demand an end to exclusion and a beginning to the rights of full citizenship.

Each step toward greater inclusion was accompanied by greater and greater bloodshed, however. Americans who had hoped their revolution would inspire others to seek change were forced to reexamine what they had started. While northerners were more likely to approve of extending equality than southerners, all Americans regardless of geography were repulsed by the violence occurring in Saint Domingue. The possibility of slave insurrection spreading dominated conversations about the French colony but took on different meanings for different groups of people. For slaves and abolitionists, the events that became known as the Haitian Revolution offered hope for permanent change. Blacks trapped in slavery began to look to the events in Saint Domingue for inspiration and even hoped for assistance from the new nation of Haiti after 1804. For those charged with maintaining peace and the status quo throughout the Americas, the Haitian Revolution ushered in new worries of slave insurrection and destruction. No other group living in the Atlantic World at the turn of nineteenth century embodied all of these contradictions to the degree that refugees to Charleston did.

These worries about violence spreading from the Caribbean to the mainland United States dominated conversations about Haiti throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. The upheaval in Haiti was a living example of the dangers of American political ideology spreading to a wider group of people. Haiti's struggles continued to horrify Americans who read regular reports in their local newspapers. The word "horror" became closely associated with Saint Domingue during the 1790s and with Haiti following its independence in 1804. This dissertation further argues that the close association between the western third of Hispaniola and the word "horror" results in large part from attitudes that were born in South Carolina with the arrival of the colony's refugees. As South Carolinians looked at the events that drove these people from their homes, they recognized that these events were the result of both the realities of slave society and the spreading of republican ideology. Even though many states were moving toward gradual emancipation at this time, the nation as a whole allowed slavery. This made the entire nation vulnerable to slave insurrection; the very principles of republican revolution were at odds with this reality. Americans regardless of where they lived or whether they were slaveholders were horrified at the prospect of becoming another Haiti.

The colony of Saint Domingue was the jewel of the French empire prior to the outbreak of revolution in 1791. This western end of Hispaniola had 793 sugar plantations, 3150 indigo plantations, 789 cotton plantations, and 3117 coffee plantations, together representing two-thirds of France's foreign trade.⁴ The population consisted of an estimated 465,000 slaves while the free population numbered 59,000 with 28,000 of

⁴ Babb, 6.

these being *gens de couleur*.⁵ The white population contained two distinct groups: the *grands blancs* who were the large landowners and the *petits blancs* who were smaller landowners, colonial officials, or merchants.⁶ As the French monarchy faced increasing financial difficulties and called the *États généraux* to gather, the *grands blancs* of Saint Domingue saw an opportunity to reduce trade restrictions and exercise more independence from the metropolis. They looked to the burgeoning French political rhetoric of liberty, equality, and fraternity in hopes of great personal benefit without contemplating the potential such ideas would have on the non-white population of Saint Domingue. In addition, the *petits blancs* and *gens de couleur* saw possibilities in the revolutionary rhetoric for themselves and wanted to be treated more equally.⁷

Conflicts resulted as all of the free elements of the colony competed for augmentations to their rights, and eventually, the island erupted into chaos as the slaves took advantage of the disorder and rhetoric of revolution.⁸ While historians have debated the events that propelled the slaves to organize themselves, the traditional account is that at a meeting on August 21, 1791, a slave reported to be a voodoo priest claimed that

⁵ Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 30. Other works which explore Saint Domingue before the revolution as well as the revolution itself include Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti : The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990); David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins : Toussaint L'ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2d ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1989); Thomas O. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973).

⁶ Hunt, 10-16; Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 164.

⁷ Dubois, 60-90.

⁸ Laurent Dubois argues that African ethnic identity and religious experiences helped lay the ground work for rebellion as they constituted a place a freedom away from the dominant master class. In these spaces slaves were able to organize and eventually rebel. *Ibid.*, 43.

Louis XVI had granted the slaves three days per week to work their own gardens.⁹ This slave, known as Boukman, claimed that the decree would arrive by ship from France and that the planters of Saint Domingue were planning to ignore the king's decree.

Regardless of the validity of this story, rumors of freedom and ideas about natural rights were in the air.¹⁰ News of the events in France had been reaching the ports of Saint Domingue for nearly two years, and slaves recognized the opportunity that the French Revolution presented. Their demands constituted a call for France to fulfill the ideals set forth in the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme and du citoyen*.

On August 22, 1791, fighting began in the Northern Province. Slaves burned thousands of acres of valuable crops; they killed whites with cane knives as they moved freely from plantation to plantation, seeking revenge for the horrible conditions that they had endured. The result was the destruction of over 1,000 plantations and the deaths of over 2,000 whites and 10,000 slaves within the first few months of insurrection; these numbers continued to climb in the months and years to come. By December of 1791, troops began arriving from France in an effort to restore order; however, their mission was ultimately unsuccessful. Unable to gain control of the island and sorely in need of allies on the ground, France agreed to grant full citizenship and equality to all *gens de*

⁹ The character of Caribbean slavery was quite different from North American slavery. While slave owners in North America provided food and clothing, although certainly not in abundance, to their slaves, those in the Caribbean, particularly in Saint Domingue, were forced to grow the food they ate. Dubois, *Avengers*, 48-49, discusses the evolution of this system. The Code Noir required masters to provide provisions for their slaves; however, following the Dutch model, owners quickly moved to a system where slaves provided for themselves through group or individually cultivated garden plots. Slaves used any free time they had on Saturdays and Sundays to work these gardens.

¹⁰ Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens : Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 89-92; Julius Sherrard Scott, III, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution (Caribbean)" (Ph.D., Duke University, 1986). Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 89-98, 105-107; Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Buford Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra : Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

couleur in April of 1792. Conflict between the various groups continued, and French authorities grew more and more worried about the damage the violence was doing to trade relationships within the French empire. In September of the same year, Léger Félicité Sonthonax and Étienne Polverel arrived from France as the appointed commissioners; their mission was to stabilize the island by making peace between the whites and the *gens de couleur*.¹¹

The original mission of Polverel and Sonthonax was to ensure the political rights of the *gens de couleur*; yet, changing political dynamics in France necessitated that their roles in Saint Domingue adjust. In October of 1792, news from France reported that revolutionary leaders had arrested the king as he and his family attempted to flee the country. At the same time, much of Europe, including England and Spain, was assembling at France's borders in preparation for an invasion. Sonthonax and Polverel realized that winning the allegiance of the enslaved population was essential since France's enemies were planning to send troops to take control of Saint Domingue. This eventually led to Sonthonax issuing a decree of emancipation for the colony's slaves on August 29, 1793, so that they could and would fight in defense of France.¹²

¹¹ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 142-147; Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free : The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 85-154.

¹² Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 142-147. Sonthonax and Polverel, prior to arriving in Saint Domingue, had expressed their opposition to slavery and their support for the radical republicanism gaining strength in France. Because of these views, they were poorly received by the white plantation owners in Saint Domingue. They carefully asserted that they were not in the colony to bring about slave emancipation but to ensure that the *gens de couleur* received their newly won political rights. The death of the king, however, ushered in the French Republic and more threats for Europe's monarchies. These perils led the civil commissioners to seek alliances wherever they could find them. The slave population's support of the Republic became essential. Many have speculated about the civil commissioners intentions toward the abolition of slavery when they arrived in Saint Domingue. Jeremy Popkin demonstrates that they were fiercely determined to uphold the principle of national authority and that goal guided their actions. He argues that emancipation was the only way they could

Events prior to emancipation, however, created the impetus for mass migration off of the island. On June 20, 1793, Cap Français, St. Domingue's primary northern port, erupted into chaos as tension between the civil commissioners and the newly appointed governor of the colony, General François-Thomas Galbaud, came to a head. Galbaud had arrived in St. Domingue in early May 1793 with plans to deal harshly with the insurgent slave population only to find that the civil commissioners had formed alliances with the *gens de couleur* and had taken steps that appeared to be in the direction of general emancipation of the slaves. In a last ditch effort to avoid being transported back to France because of his differences with the commissioners, Galbaud led a large group of sailors in an attack on the commissioners that culminated in the burning of Cap Français and precipitated the fleeing of thousands of colonists and slaves to the coastal cities of the United States.¹³

In the following years British, Spanish, and ultimately French soldiers came to Saint Domingue in an effort to win control of the colony and its important export crops. Not only was the colony involved in a civil war between the various factions residing on the island, but it was also the site of numerous battles between Europe's most powerful nations. The violence ebbed and flowed but still lasted for twelve years and forced many to flee the island and seek asylum in the United States, Latin America, France, and on

fulfill their duties to the French government. Popkin, 85-93. Details of the immediate events leading to Sonthonax's emancipation decree appear in Popkin, 269-272.

¹³ For a detailed account of how and why the abolition of slavery occurred in Saint Domingue, see Popkin.

other Caribbean islands.¹⁴ These refugees constitute what Darrell Meadows has called the “first truly modern international crisis of exiles.”¹⁵

This study emanates from the recent transnational turn in American history by exploring how people and places around the Atlantic influenced each other. The experiences of refugees who fled the Haitian Revolution provide a unique window through which to view the Atlantic World. The group as a whole contained people born on two different continents and on a Caribbean island. They were part of an empire undergoing a republican revolution and were fleeing from one plantation economy to another. They really were citizens of the Atlantic in ways that many others were not. While histories of the early years of the United States have long considered the impact of international factors on American foreign policy and relations, this dissertation adopts a more narrow focus as it examines the personal interactions of Saint Dominguan refugees, both white and black, as they encountered long-time residents of Charleston and

¹⁴ The fighting in Saint Domingue finally ended with the defeat of Napoleon’s troops who arrived in 1801 to restore the institution of slavery on the island. Under the leadership of Napoleon’s brother-in-law General Charles Leclerc, France suffered vast losses in their fighting with the insurgent slaves. It was during this final set of battles that Toussaint L’Ouverture was captured and transported to France where he died in prison. The defeat of Napoleon’s men proved important for the United States since the loss of a foothold in the Caribbean made Napoleon eager to dispose of his claims in Louisiana. Edward E. Baptist, “Hidden in Plain View: Haiti and the Louisiana Purchase,” in *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution, 1804-2004*, ed. Martin and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw Monroe (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2008). Edward E. Baptist discusses the ways that the study of the Louisiana Purchase has neglected to include an examination of how the slaves in Saint Domingue eventually led Napoleon to abandon his plans to re-establish slavery in Saint Domingue. He argues that historians have claimed that Yellow Fever defeated Napoleon’s troops, yet this illness was not new. Instead, the emphasis of Yellow Fever as the cause of retreat serves to avoid giving credit to the slaves who aptly defeated the most powerful army of the day. Therefore, Baptist states the United States has Saint Domingue (and later Haiti) to thank for the vast expansion of the United States’ territory in 1803.

¹⁵ R. Darrell Meadows, “Engineering Exile: Social Networks and the French Atlantic Community, 1789-1809,” *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 1 (2000): 67; R. Darrell Meadows, “The Planters of Saint-Domingue, 1750--1804: Migration and Exile in the French Revolutionary Atlantic” (3120207, Carnegie Mellon University, 2004).

immigrants from other European nations.¹⁶ By doing so, this study brings Saint Dominguan refugees and other immigrant groups to the forefront of early American studies.¹⁷ Seeing Saint Dominguans on the streets of Charleston forced Charlestonians to look in the mirror and examine the difficult principles that guided their society. Could they continue to lay claim to the fruits of the American Revolution while refusing to allow all in their society to enjoy the same advantages? Would their own slaves rebel with the violence that Saint Domingue's did, or were they bound closely enough to their masters through paternalist bonds to allow for the continuation of the plantation economy?

In many ways the refugee experience has changed little over the last two hundred years. Refugees often arrive with few personal resources and demand financial and emotional assistance. They do not typically understand the politics and customs of their new homes; the strangeness of their new home often baffles them. Their presence also causes long-time residents to grapple with oscillating emotions ranging from pity to resentment to curiosity at the cultural attributes of their new neighbors. The particular political and economic circumstances of the receiving nation often guide how the integration of refugees will occur. Recent examples in Africa and the Middle East demonstrate that societies already experiencing precarious conditions can buckle under the stress of additional people. Even economically powerful nations such as the United States are torn between compassion for those seeking asylum and concern for how they

¹⁶ Historians have long recognized the impact of international events as they have studied the Alien and Sedition Acts, the Jay Treaty, the Quasi War with France, the Louisiana Purchase, and the War of 1812; yet the international influences on domestic issues are ignored.

¹⁷ The vestry records of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church provide an excellent source for exploring the nationalities of the church's leaders. In her master's thesis, Mary Lucinda Morgan transcribes the vestry minutes from 1806 -1823 and includes footnotes detailing the national origins of each member of the church's leaders.

will impact the existing social structure.¹⁸ When the immigrants are part of a religious community different from the majority of their new neighbors, the situation is further complicated.

Immigration historians have long recognized the important role that immigrants have played in American politics, economics, and society, but typically these studies begin after 1820 and frequently not until the Irish potato famine of the 1840s. Immigration to the United States blossomed during the second half of the nineteenth century as thousands of eastern and southern Europeans came searching for better economic opportunities. In studying these immigrants, historians often examined migration from the point of view of how these new arrivals changed the United States. The library of immigration studies is immense, and much of it deals with situations very different from those which the Saint Domingans encountered. However, one work is worth mentioning because it turned the conversation away from the impact that refugees had on America to the impact immigration had on immigrants. In his work *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*, Oscar Handlin examines the process of immigration from the point of view of the immigrant. The choice to leave home in search of a different life was extremely difficult and painful, but by doing so the immigrant forever changed his world.¹⁹ From the early twentieth century, historians emphasized the importance of America being a frontier society and that American institutions and character were profoundly shaped by the ever beckoning

¹⁸ This is particularly obvious in the current debates about undocumented workers from Mexico and other South American countries and even in policies governing the circumstances under which the America will accept foreign nationals.

¹⁹ Historians prior to the 1950s examined migration from the point of view of the United States and explored how immigrants changed America. With the work of Oscar Handlin in 1951, that conversation changed to the experiences of the immigrants themselves. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted; the Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* (New York,: Grosset & Dunlap, 1951).

frontier.²⁰ With Handlin's contribution, historians began to challenge Turner's thesis and the influence of the frontier on American character and argue that immigration was actually the more enduring and essential element of the American experience.

While these studies of immigration are important and certainly add to our understanding of the United States and her people, they often underestimate the importance of pre-1820 migration. Much of the study that does occur concerning this period focuses on African migrations, both forced and voluntary, to the United States, the British West Indies, and Brazil. One such study is the work of Alex Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World*.²¹ Byrd argues that understanding the experiences of black migrants in the Atlantic is necessary in order to fully analyze the British Atlantic. The migrants he focuses on are in some ways similar to those at the heart of this dissertation because neither group of migrants travels exclusively in one direction. Byrd does not limit his study to those who are captured and forced to travel to the British colonies in the Atlantic; he also incorporates the stories of those who travel back to Africa and those who travel around the British colonies. Still, his analysis is limited in the fact that his migrants are a relatively homogeneous group. The refugees explored here are much more diverse, and therefore, allow us to ask different questions.

Saint Domingue's refugees, unlike many other immigrant groups, were diverse in terms of race, economics, and even political ideology. Their experience of fleeing slave insurrection forced Americans to look closely at their own society and consider their own

²⁰ Frederick Jackson Turner, Ray Allen Billington, and Myerson Collection., *The Frontier in American History* (Huntington, N.Y.: Robert E. Krieger Pub. Co., 1976).

²¹ Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers : Black Migrants across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

harsh realities. As thousands of destitute people arrived, the new nation had to determine whether to help and to what degree. The answers to these questions have guided American debates and decisions about refugees up to the present day, and they also have driven many of our deeply held attitudes toward the places from which refugees come.

The United States' newly formed government in the 1790s struggled to deal with the needs of the refugees. Foreign relations were still uncharted at this point, and the arrival of foreign nationals seeking asylum on America's shores required governmental policy and negotiation. South Carolina, like most of the former North American British colonies, had the burden of war debt with which to contend. New political tensions were emerging with the rise in population in the state's upcountry, particularly following the invention of Eli Whitney's cotton gin.²² Some in the lowcountry were beginning to express concerns about the continued spread of slavery, and the arrival of slaves from a slave insurrection elevated deep-seated anxieties about the difficulties of maintaining a society built on the institution of slavery.²³ South Carolina was most definitely not a static society but was instead one undergoing immense change as it adapted to post-revolutionary American realities.²⁴

²² Peter Coclanis discusses the changing demography of the backcountry at length and demonstrates that the population of the lowcountry remained stagnant from limited economic opportunity while the backcountry continued to accept Scotch-Irish and German immigrants from the mid-1700s forward. Peter A. Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream : Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

²³ Joyce E. Chaplin and Institute of Early American History and Culture (Williamsburg Va.), *An Anxious Pursuit : Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

²⁴ Discussion of the political tensions in South Carolina following the American Revolution appears in Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina : A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 244. Artisans and mechanics in Charleston as well as farmers of the backcountry recognized the important role they played in the fight for independence yet they witnessed the elite from the colonial era seeking to reassert control over the state.

This study finds its origins in a number of fields of historiography and provides new links between these fields. First, by virtue of geography and world historical events, it is grounded in Atlantic history.²⁵ Key players in the historical events detailed here came from numerous places around the Atlantic basin, and the Atlantic Revolutions often guided their actions and reactions in the newly formed United States of America. Charleston's place as a key port on the Atlantic meant that its streets teemed with sailors, merchants, refugees, and travelers from around the world. This study is part of this line of inquiry as people from around the Atlantic encountered one another on the streets of Charleston.

Within the context of Atlantic History, scholars largely agree that the revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were both the outgrowth of the geographical peculiarities of the region as well as the recent history dating from the so-called Age of Exploration and the ensuing colonization movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Studies too numerous to count have resulted from scholarly examinations of the American and French revolutions; however, until relatively recently, historians frequently neglected the Haitian Revolution and failed to examine the three revolutions in the context of one another. When scholars did attempt to explore the end of the colonial era in Saint Domingue, western racial attitudes often clouded their interpretations.

²⁵ This literature is extensive. Some surveys that are helpful are Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History : Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); Philip D. Curtin and American Council of Learned Societies., "The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex Essays in Atlantic History," (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heh.03231>; Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, *Atlantic History : A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

As the slaves rebelled in Saint Domingue, contemporaries in the United States worried that the Haitian Revolution would have long arms and threaten the perceived stability of plantation societies in the New World. Newspapers were the first mass-printed sources to discuss the events on Hispaniola, but scholarly analysis was slow in coming. When the Haitian Revolution did move beyond mere reporting, those writing about it, both avowed historians and political commentators, recounted the events in such a way as to support particular political ideologies. This is not surprising considering the debate over slavery that was gaining wings in the United States. The Haitian Revolution was co-opted for two very opposite purposes. First, those in support of abolitionist movements presented the Haitian Revolution as a cautionary tale of the violence that mistreatment of slaves could create. Secondly, for anti-abolitionists radicals like Abbé Grégoire and the *Amis des Noirs* had sparked the violence and were thereby untrustworthy. Nineteenth and early twentieth century attitudes about race also inclined professional historians to avoid writing about the Haitian Revolution because of the difficulty of explaining how enslaved people achieved victories over established European powers.²⁶

²⁶ In 1797 Bryan Edwards published an account of the Haitian Revolution that blamed the slave insurrection on the actions of abolitionists. In spite of writings by people like Marcus Rainsford who emphasized the role of master brutality in bringing about insurrection, Edwards's account remained dominant for nearly over one hundred years. See Rugemer, 50-52. He argues that the seeds of the Civil War can be traced to attitudes about slave insurrection and its close connections with abolition that resulted from the early writings of Edwards. Bryan Edwards, *An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo: Comprehending a Short Account of Its Ancient Government, Political State, Population, Productions, and Exports; a Narrative of the Calamities Which Have Desolated the Country Ever since the Year 1789 and a Detail of the Military Transactions of the British Army in That Island to the End of 1794* (London,: Printed for J. Stockdale, 1797). Marcus Rainsford, *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti: Comprehending a View of the Principal Transactions in the Revolution of Saint Domingo; and with Its Antient and Modern State* ([London]: Albion Press printed; published by James Cundee, 1805).

The work of T. Lothrop Stoddard was one of the first comprehensive studies of the Haitian Revolution and demonstrated a continuing anxiety about the events that occurred in Saint Domingue. In 1914 he wrote *The French Revolution in San Domingo* portraying the revolution as a threat to white supremacy and focusing on the dangers of a race war. Following this, the first alternative view came in 1938 as C. L. R. James argued in *Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* that the enslaved population acted as they did in order to claim equal rights within the French Republic. James recognized the importance of Saint Domingue in western history as he focused on how the enslaved were able to organize, fight, and ultimately succeed in securing their independence. His account was a story of triumph and did not focus on the fear that Stoddard identified.²⁷ James' work, while influential during its first publication, was reissued in 1963 and coincided with the United States' Civil Rights Movement and with increased interest in exploring the lives of individual slaves and the slave experience. During a period of such profound social and intellectual change, one might have expected an explosion of work on topics related to the Haitian Revolution, but Haiti and its past remained in the background of studies about revolution. This began to change in 1995 with Michel-Rolph Trouillot's groundbreaking work, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, where he grapples with not only the way historians tell stories, but with the very stories they tell. Westerners, even highly trained scholars, for nearly two hundred years adopted one of two approaches to the Haitian Revolution. They either chose to relegate it to a footnote of history or they employed its story to reinforce certain western ideology and values. The very efforts to ignore it emphasized

²⁷ Lothrop Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (Boston,: Houghton Mifflin, 1914). and James.

the supposed inappropriateness of black slaves rebelling against their white owners. By calling historians out, Trouillot became arguably the most important figure in Haitian scholarship.²⁸

Rapid change did not occur, however. It took the arrival of the bicentennial of the Haitian Revolution to prompt significant scholarship on Saint Domingue's slave insurrection. Over the last twenty years, historians such as Carolyn Fick, David Garrigus, David Geggus, Laurent Dubois, and Jeremy Popkin, have employed creative techniques in order to tell the story of Haiti's revolution in spite of the difficulties the sources pose. Archives in Haiti are often incomplete or have poor management; yet, French colonial records have served as a valuable resource for examining the evolving politics that led to the bloodshed, chaos, and eventual end of slavery and colonization.²⁹ By bringing the Haitian Revolution much needed attention, these scholars and numerous others like them have called upon historians to explore the interconnectedness of the French, American, and Haitian revolutions and to move beyond national histories to see how events in one place came to influence seemingly unrelated happenings on distant shores.

Historians have long recognized that the French Revolution owed some of its beginnings to the American Revolution. As Louis XVI offered troops and funds to help the American colonists defeat France's historic enemy England, he unwittingly opened Pandora's box. France's active involvement in a republican revolution along with the

²⁸ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past : Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1995).

²⁹ The Haitian Archives was not created until 1860; therefore, important documents from the early years of the nation are few. In addition, the earthquake of 2010 further endangered many of the existing documents. The Smithsonian Institute in cooperation with Haiti's government has established the Haiti Cultural Recovery Project to locate and protect Haitian documentary and artistic resources. More information is available at <http://www.haiti.si.edu/>. Fick; John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti : Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue*, 1st ed., *The Americas in Early Modern Atlantic World*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

ready exchange of Enlightenment ideas that occurred throughout the last two decades of the eighteenth century set the stage for the French Revolution. Years of connections between the two nations led to American interest in and excitement of the French Revolution. But the power of ideas worked both ways. Americans who followed the developing violence in France reacted with horror as they tried to understand the relationship these two revolutions shared. Rachel Hope Cleves explores how American attitudes towards the French Revolution shaped party politics in America. This dissertation follows up on her research and asks how refugee presence in the United States and the debates about assisting them contributed to each party's developing ideology.³⁰ Along these same line, celebration of the French Revolution contributed to an extension of the American public sphere. Refugees often found themselves in the middle of such celebrations and the controversy they evoked; yet these discussions were not so much about celebrating the French Revolution as they were about establishing an understanding of what constituted appropriate and useful political action in the newly created American republic.³¹

One of the most obvious ways that these revolutions spread was through the movement of people – both those who chose to travel and those forced by dangerous circumstances to flee their homes. The stories of these travelers, many of whom were

³⁰ Rachel Hope Cleves, "'Jacobins in This Country': The United States, Great Britain, and Trans-Atlantic Anti-Jacobinism," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 8, no. 2; Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³¹ For discussion of the uses of the French Revolution in America, see Robert J. Alderson, *This Bright Era of Happy Revolutions: French Consul Michel-Ange-Bernard Mangourit and International Republicanism in Charleston, 1792-1794* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008); Simon Newman, "American Political Culture and the French and Haitian Revolutions," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* ed. David Geggus (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2001); Simon P. Newman, "Celebrating the French Revolution," in *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

refugees, have intrigued scholars for several generations even as the Haitian Revolution failed to gain significant attention. One of the first studies to explore the role that refugees played in the United States was Winston Babb's doctoral dissertation in 1954. With only brief comments about the fear generated by refugees of color, both enslaved and free, Babb did not examine the plight of any people of color but confined his study to white refugees and how they "improved" American culture. Reflecting 1950s attitudes about French culture, he claimed, "Everywhere the coming of the French refugees brought an Old World courtesy and charm, together with a polishing of the manners of the Americans."³² His portrayal of Saint Domingans argued that they were able to rebuild their lives quickly and exert important influences on the economy, education, music, and arts. However, he failed to acknowledge that French speaking refugees were also arriving from France because of the violence of the French Revolution. He claimed that politically these refugees were royalists, which may have been true of the former planters in the white population, but he did not recognize the lower social status within the French Empire that French colonists often occupied nor did he acknowledge the fact that among the refugees were also *petits blancs gens de couleur*, and the enslaved Africans.³³

The work of Alfred Hunt represents one of the first studies to argue that Saint Domingue's refugees and the events of the Haitian Revolution changed American perceptions of race while at the same time exerting a Caribbean influence on American

³² Babb, 403.

³³ The label of "royalist" was a common burden many refugees carried as the French government, in an effort to explain and assign blame for the violence to someone or some group. Refugees often actively asserted that this was not the case and carefully guarded their reputations in America. Because of the chaos that participated their fleeing, it is entirely possible that people of a variety of political identities were among the refugees.

culture. In *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean*, Hunt argued that Haiti's revolution "had a significant impact upon both America and France and provided the focal point for American attitudes toward the French Revolution, black freedom, and slavery."³⁴ In order to prove this thesis, Hunt explored the vast influences that refugees had on American culture with particular attention to the reactions of black and white Americans to what they heard about the Haitian Revolution. Whites, fearful of the spread of slave insurrection, employed their knowledge of the actions of Saint Domingue's slaves to reinforce their existing prejudices.³⁵ Still, Hunt's work was an examination focused on how refugees influenced American attitudes toward race without exploring how refugee voices shaped many other aspects of American life and politics.³⁶

In the early nineteenth century, St. Dominguan refugees were visible on the streets of cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Charleston; however, perhaps the most studied area where refugees fled was New Orleans. The majority of refugees arriving in New Orleans came in 1809 and immediately afterward. They had fled to Cuba in the early 1790s following the outbreak of violence in Saint Domingue and were quite successful in rebuilding their lives as coffee and sugarcane planters, but war between Napoleon and Spain erupted in the first decade of the nineteenth century and led to their expulsion from Cuba. New Orleans' long history as a trading partner with the

³⁴ Hunt, 2.

³⁵ For detailed responses across the American South, see *Ibid.*, 2, 107-146.

³⁶ While Hunt's work demonstrates the importance of Saint Dominguan refugees in America, he was not the first to write about French immigration to America during the French Revolution. Much of this work deals with the émigrés who fled France. See Frances Sergeant Childs, *French Refugee Life in the United States, 1790-1800; an American Chapter of the French Revolution* (Baltimore,: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940); J. G. Rosengarten, *French Colonists and Exiles in the United States* (Philadelphia, London,: J.B. Lippincott, 1907).

Caribbean together with Louisiana's French heritage made it a logical destination. The first treatment of these people in a scholarly study occurred in 1917 when Alice Dunbar-Nelson, in an article about the free people of color in Louisiana, wrote of the arrival of thirty-four ships carrying several thousand refugees in 1808 and 1809. She identified these refugees as "ten thousand white, yellow and black West Indian islanders" who were destitute upon arrival.³⁷ While she did not explore their impact extensively, she did indicate that the arriving *gens de couleur* merged with the existing free people of color and made positive contributions to this middle caste that served as a buffer between whites and enslaved blacks. Following her were scholars such as Carl Brasseaux, Paul Lachance, Nathalie Dessens, and Caryn Cossé Bell who identified the names of numerous refugees and followed their lives well into the nineteenth century.³⁸ The written record of these refugees is much more thorough, so these scholars have been able to examine the concrete ways the refugees changed New Orleans, particularly in the realm of race relations. The sheer number of Saint Domingans who sought refuge in

³⁷ .Alice Dunbar-Nelson, "People of Color in Louisiana: Part 2," *The Journal of Negro History* 2, no. (1917): 52.

³⁸ Paul F. Lachance, "The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans: Reception, Integration and Impact," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 29, no. 2 (1988). Nathalie Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans : Migration and Influences* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007). Caryn Cosse Bell, "Haitian Immigration to Louisiana in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *African American Migration Experience* (2005). <http://www.inmotionaame.org/texts/index.cfm?migration=5&topic=99&type=text>; Caryn Cossé Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718-1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997); Carl A. Brasseaux, *The "Foreign French" : Nineteenth-Century French Immigration into Louisiana* (Lafayette, La.: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1990); Carl A. Brasseaux, Glenn R. Conrad, and David Cheramie, *The Road to Louisiana : The Saint-Domingue Refugees, 1792-1809* (Lafayette, La.: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1992). Lolis Eric Elie Dawn Logsdon, Lucie Faulknor, Jo Nell Kennedy, "Faubourg Tremé the Untold Story of Black New Orleans," (San Francisco, CA: Louisiana Public Broadcasting, WYES-TV, California Newsreel, 2008). Some of the refugees became prominent during the Civil Rights movement. They were responsible for the first black newspaper to appear in New Orleans. One descendent of free colored refugees from Saint Domingue was Homer Plessy who challenged New Orleans' "Separate but Equal" law regarding seating on passenger trains.

Louisiana was much higher than in any other city in America; therefore, their impact was greater and had a more lasting influence.

Events in New Orleans represent an exception rather than a typical example of how refugees adapted because of New Orleans's long history as a French and then Spanish colony. The social landscape of New Orleans already possessed many of the same characteristics as Saint Domingue, so refugees found their places more quickly than they did in Charleston. While both cities acquired their fortunes through their plantation economies, the prevailing French Catholic culture, favorable attitudes toward France and French speakers, and the presence of an established three-tiered social structure made the experiences of individual immigrants less difficult. The same was not true for the newly appointed and elected officials following Louisiana's purchase by the United States government. Governor William C. C. Claiborne was caught between American policies regarding slave importation and the needs of arriving refugees accompanied by their slaves.³⁹ In short, New Orleans and the surrounding countryside had only been a part of the United States for a few years. This fact determined that the experiences here would be quite different from those of refugees in South Carolina. South Carolina's long history as a British colony and trading partner, the rapidly increasing tensions between the Federalists and the newly forming Democratic-Republican Party, and the ever

³⁹ George Washington Cable, *The Creoles of Louisiana* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884), 160; Charles Gayarré, *History of Louisiana: The French Domination*, 3rd ed., vol. IV (New Orleans: Armand Hawkins Publisher, 1885), 214. Laura Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue: A Comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Slave Societies," *Journal of Social History* 3, no. (1970): 430. Examples of such collections include books that deal with the general impact on the Atlantic World as well as one that explores the impact on Louisiana. Brasseaux, Conrad, and Cheramie, *The Road to Louisiana : The Saint-Domingue Refugees, 1792-1809*; David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus, *A Turbulent Time : The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, Blacks in the Diaspora. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); David Patrick Geggus, *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, The Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World. (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2001). Robert L. Paquette, "Revolutionary Saint Domingue in the Making of Territorial Louisiana," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, ed. David Barry and David Patrick Geggus Gaspar (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 214.

changing feelings about the French Revolution and French politics in general made the events in South Carolina evolve in a different manner from those in New Orleans in spite of apparent similarities between the two cities.⁴⁰

In recent years, a number of theses and dissertations have emerged exploring the experiences of refugees both in America and in France. In 1975 George Terry's master's thesis explored the impact of Saint Dominguan refugees on South Carolina. While his analysis was helpful in ascertaining how the events in France's rebelling colony served as a catalysis for South Carolina's evolving policies toward slavery and the prevention of insurrection, the scope of his study did not allow for considerations beyond the immediate fears this situation engendered.⁴¹ In 1986, Julius Sherrard Scott's dissertation argued that news of events and even rumors of an end to slavery traveled around the Atlantic region. His work formed the basis for much scholarship exploring the movement of ideas around the Atlantic World.⁴² He addressed the issues of refugees in a limited way and emphasized the ideas that they brought with them.

Saint Dominguan refugees have taken center stage in a number of dissertations over the last ten years. Darrell Meadows, following on the work of Scott, argued in his dissertation, "The Planters of Saint-Domingue, 1750-1804: Migration and Exile in the French Revolutionary Atlantic" that *émigrés* from Saint Domingue were part of a wider

⁴⁰ John Harold Wolfe and Donald S. Russell Library., *Jeffersonian Democracy in South Carolina*, James Sprunt Studies in History and Political Science, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940).

⁴¹ George D. Terry, "A Study of the Impact of the French Revolution and the Insurrections in Saint-Domingue Upon South Carolina: 1790-1805" (Thesis (M A), University of South Carolina, History., 1975).

⁴² Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens : Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804*; Geggus, *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*; Geggus and Fiering, *The World of the Haitian Revolution*; Martin Munro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw, *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution, 1804-2004* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2008); Scott. Linebaugh and Rediker.

Atlantic community and encountered people they knew as they dispersed from Saint Domingue. While he recognized that many refugees fled to North America, his study followed those who returned to France either in their initial flight from Saint Domingue or after a brief stay in the United States. Similarly, Jennifer Palmer's dissertation also looked at experiences of Saint Domingans who found their way to France throughout the colonial period. She paid particular attention to the ways that gender and family relationship impacted their interactions with residents of La Rochelle, France.⁴³ Ashli White's dissertation, "'A Flood of Impure Lava': Saint Dominguan Refugees in the United States, 1791-1820," and the ensuing book *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*, provided a comprehensive study of the impact that Saint Domingans had on early republic politics. Her study, while discussing the experiences of refugees in various cities, focuses on the United States instead of on the refugees themselves.⁴⁴

John Davies, in his dissertation "Class, Culture, and Color: Black Saint-Dominguan Refugees and African-American Communities in the Early Republic," examined refugee experiences in Philadelphia by using Catholic Church records as a significant source.⁴⁵ The dynamics in Philadelphia were quite different from those in Charleston. The numbers of free people of color were much higher there, and gradual emancipation had begun. These factors allowed for quicker acceptance of the colored

⁴³ Jennifer L. Palmer, "Atlantic Crossings: Race, Gender, and the Construction of Families in Eighteenth-Century La Rochelle" (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 2008).

⁴⁴ Ashli White, "'A Flood of Impure Lava': Saint Dominguan Refugees in the United States, 1791-1820" (Columbia University, 2003); Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

⁴⁵ John Davies, "Class, Culture, and Color: Black Saint-Dominguan Refugees and African-American Communities in the Early Republic" (Ph.D., University of Delaware, 2008).

refugees who arrived from Saint Domingue. While scholars clearly are beginning to ponder the importance of Saint Dominguan refugees, the full impact is still ambiguous. The element of their experience that is missing from this discussion is an examination of how they used conflicts they encountered in order to find acceptance. This dissertation seeks to fill this void. Previous works have identified important contributions and challenges that *émigrés* and refugees encountered but stop short of assessing the importance of regional differences in their efforts at assimilation. In many ways South Carolina was different from her northern neighbors. South Carolina held close connections with Europe and the Caribbean through trade and cultural exchanges; therefore, many saw events outside the borders of South Carolina as having immediate impact within this small but economically and politically powerful state.⁴⁶

In addition to aligning itself with other studies that have explored the impact of the Haitian Revolution on America, this dissertation contributes to a number of other important areas of historical inquiry not directly entertained by the previously described works. First, it examines immigration and assimilation in early republican America. Most scholars have argued that Saint Domingue's refugees quickly disappeared into the social framework; however, their presence evoked profound changes on local society, particularly in the southern United States. White southerners, and particularly white

⁴⁶ Throughout the colonial history of South Carolina, planters and wealthy merchants sent their sons to Europe for education. South Carolina did not found its first university until 1801. With her lawyers and business men trained in Europe, close personal ties across the Atlantic existed and made events in Europe seem more immediate to South Carolinians. For more on this see George C. Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, 1st ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969). Coclanis; Peter A. Coclanis, *The Atlantic Economy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries : Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, The Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005); Richard Waterhouse, "South Carolina's Colonial Elite : A Study in the Social Structure and Political Culture of a Southern Colony, 1670-1760 / by Richard Waterhouse" (Thesis, (Ph.D.) Johns Hopkins University, 1973., 1973); Richard Waterhouse, *A New World Gentry : The Making of a Merchant and Planter Class in South Carolina, 1670-1770* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2005).

political leaders, grappled with how to respond to Saint Dominguais. The refugees represented a failure of the plantation system and demonstrated that slavery could result in chaos. The timing of Saint Domingue's slave insurrection coincided with the early years of the American republic and forced South Carolina's elected leaders to examine more closely the role they played under the new American constitution. They were torn between their feelings of good will and sympathy for the white landowners of Saint Domingue and their responsibilities as a state within the newly created United States of America. In the early days of fighting, South Carolina's governor received a request from Saint Domingue's Colonial Assembly for financial assistance to suppress the slave rebellion.⁴⁷ While many in South Carolina's legislature felt a close kinship with the French, they recognized that giving assistance to a foreign government remained in the domain of the federal government and was not an endeavor state government could undertake.

In addition to these tensions, many South Carolinians, or at least those in positions of power, wrestled with conflicting feelings towards those who arrived in their ports. Were the French colonial landowners responsible for the chaos that reigned on the island or was the French government (and its ever changing factions) accountable for matters getting out of hand? In short, were the destitute land owners victims or perpetrators of the crimes they fled? The treatment of white immigrants depended upon which side of this argument individuals and the community at large adopted. For *gens de couleur* and slaves, the questions were even more complex. On one hand, a destitute people begged Charleston for help. They, like their white fellow travelers, had fled with

⁴⁷ Governor's Messages, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina, (hereafter SCDAH) letter from colonial assembly of Saint Domingue requesting aid to suppress the slave rebellion. Communicated to legislature on 4 December 1791.

few possessions and lacked the means for supporting themselves. Slaves found themselves caught between their masters and the white population of Charleston. Saint Dominguan masters brought their slaves because of personal ties they shared and because of the slaves' abilities to earn money through Charleston's slave hiring out practices. Whites in the American South viewed those they called "French negroes" with great suspicion and feared they would incite rebellions and assist runaway slaves.⁴⁸ All of these circumstances prevented assimilation from being a smooth or quick process.

Second, this dissertation examines the ways that Saint Dominguan refugees participated in early republic discussions of republicanism. While the early debates about how republicanism shaped America's new government have received much scholarly attention, this study adds a new dimension to these debates. From the first arrivals in the early 1790s until the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century, refugees from Saint Domingue were at the heart of many local debates about republicanism. At times when the French Revolution seemed to be espousing principles similar to those of the American Revolution, refugees found acceptance and welcome. Then, increased violence in France and declining good-will towards France's leaders impacted the refugees negatively and led to suspicion about their actions and intentions.⁴⁹ The end of

⁴⁸ From the arrival of refugees in the early 1790s until 1822 when the supposed Denmark Vesey conspiracy occurred, there were several rumors of the planning of insurrection. Alderson, "Charleston's Rumored Slave Revolt of 1793."; White, "The Politics of 'French Negroes' in the United States." In November 1797 city officials in Charleston discovered a plot by "certain French Negroes to fire the city and to act here as they had formerly done at St. Domingo." Two of the leaders were executed after a brief trial. *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, Charleston, South Carolina, 22 November 1797, (hereafter *CGDA*.)

⁴⁹ For a discussion on how the Haitian Revolution influenced American foreign policy, see Gordon S. Brown, *Toussaint's Clause : The Founding Fathers and the Haitian Revolution* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005). American attitudes towards the French Revolution changed over the course of the 1790s and many have explored this. For discussion of the relationship between America and the French Revolution, see Michèle R. Morris, *Images of America in Revolutionary France* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990); Philipp Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots : Americans in Paris in the Age of Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010). Parades and celebrations of the

the French Revolution did not terminate these concerns as Napoleon assumed power, declared France an empire and himself emperor for life. Finally, the fall of Napoleon and the restoration of the monarchy in France renewed concerns about how republican those of French origin were. The turbulent political world of France had a direct impact on the daily lives of the refugees and frequently forced them to take political stands they might otherwise have avoided.

In order to examine the impact Saint Dominguan refugees had on South Carolina and Charleston in particular, this study follows a chronological as well as topical outline. The first chapters explore the arrival of refugees and the early years of residency. The last two explore conflicts in which the refugees were embroiled and examine how they used these events to assert their ability to be good republican Americans.

Chapter One explores the arrival of refugees from the early days of the Haitian Revolution. Long before the first significant group came ashore, Charlestonians followed the unfolding story in Saint Domingue. As the French Revolution erupted, many Americans took pride in seeing their ideas about freedom and liberty spread to their allies across the ocean; however, when slaves in Saint Domingue began to advocate for similar rights, South Carolinians regarded the resulting violence with grave concern. This chapter argues that the attitudes refugees encountered in Charleston had been developing for several years prior to 1793 when the largest number arrived. While most residents looked with sympathy toward the former planters among the refugees, concerns about their politics were in the air. These concerns came to characterize not only the treatment

French Revolution were common in America. See Matthew Dennis, Simon P. Newman, and William Pencak, *Riot and Revelry in Early America* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); Simon Peter Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic*, Early American Studies. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

the refugees received but the way they negotiated the economic, political, social, and religious landscape.

Chapter Two explores the needs of refugees upon arrival. While those who arrived early in the conflict were able to prepare and plan for their trips, most came in the wake of the burning of Cap Français and were unable to bring even the most basic provisions. This lack of preparation coupled with the difficulty of passage left passengers destitute upon arrival. Charleston's leaders recognized the need for fund raising and worked diligently to assist them. As the 1790s gave way to the nineteenth century, refugees continued to arrive in smaller waves driven by circumstances both in Saint Domingue and in Europe. With each successive group, the earlier refugees assumed more and more responsibility for assisting their fellow countrymen. This transition emphasizes the efforts Saint Domingans were making to assume significant roles in Charleston society. By doing so, they demonstrated they had much in common with their new American neighbors.

Chapter Three continues the story of the refugees by exploring how they slowly became economically independent. First, it includes an analysis of the variety of advertisements that appeared in local newspapers as refugees attempted to utilize whatever skills they had in order to provide for their families. Refugees established schools, operated stores, and founded theaters in their efforts to earn money and contribute to the larger society. The breadth of their entrepreneurial activities provides insight into both the previous experiences of the refugees and the needs of the local community. Perhaps more important, however, is how refugees attempted to use the advertisements to project a particular image of themselves to their fellow Charlestonians.

By noting that the proprietor was a Saint Dominguan refugee, these eager workers attempted to both capitalize on any lingering sympathy the community might have for them and to demonstrate that they were able contributors to society. All these endeavors contributed to the local community's attitudes towards the refugees. In addition these publications kept the plight of refugees before the local community and slowed their disappearance into the larger society. Secondly, refugees often employed personal relationships – either with other refugees or with prominent Charlestonians – in order to gain acceptance and business contacts. The emphasis of these contacts demonstrates efforts on the part of refugees to claim a solid place within the city. They did not desire to remain a separate group but sought integration into the larger community. How the rest of Charleston saw them was essential to their success. This concept came to guide many of their interactions. When they found themselves at the center of political and religious conflicts, they carefully shaped their responses so that Charlestonians would see them as good republicans who were becoming good Americans.

In the fourth chapter refugee influence on politics takes center stage through an exploration of the various societies they joined or formed. In the early years of the French Revolution, Americans, particularly those in Charleston, felt a kinship with their French counterparts. Elaborate celebrations of France's Bastille Day occurred on the streets of Charleston as participants highlighted the amicable feelings between the French and the American populations and as Americans rejoiced at the spread of many of the ideas that guided the American Revolution. These attitudes about France were not constant throughout the French Revolution, however. As violence escalated with the

ascension to power of Maximilien Robespierre and the arrest and execution of the royal family, many Americans sought to distance themselves and their country from France.

In addition to concerns about how the French Revolution was playing out in America, the refugees also faced difficulties created by a fellow countryman. Édmond Genet arrived in the United States just before the Cap Français refugees. His duties included more than just representing the new French Republic. In his directives, he was advised to be on guard against arriving refugees who were royalists and dangerous. Through the course of his time in the United States he launched numerous attacks in the newspapers where he accused the refugees of being anti-republican and of inciting slave rebellion in Saint Domingue. For their part, they repelled these attacks with carefully written responses that delivered accounts that highlighted commonalities the refugees shared with their Charleston neighbors. Because of Genet's attacks, the refugees had a platform from which to defend themselves against both spoken and unspoken charges. These letters constitute the largest collection of documents left by Charleston's refugee population and demonstrate that they understood their new home quite well.⁵⁰ It was essential that they emphasize that their beliefs were compatible with American republicanism so as to distance themselves from concerns about the dangers of slave insurrection.

⁵⁰ For discussions about the impact of the Genet crisis on America, see Alderson, *This Bright Era of Happy Revolutions : French Consul Michel-Ange-Bernard Mangourit and International Republicanism in Charleston, 1792-1794*; Harry Ammon, "The Genet Mission and the Development of American Political Parties," *The Journal of American History* 4 (1966); Harry Ammon, *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity*, [1st ed. (New York,: McGraw-Hill, 1971); Harry Ammon, *The Genet Mission* (New York: Norton, 1973); Meade Minnigerode, *Jefferson, Friend of France, 1793; the Career of Edmond Charles Genet, Minister Plenipotentiary from the French Republic to the United States, as Revealed by His Private Papers, 1763-1834* (New York, London,: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1928); United States. Department of State. and others, *Genet's Attempt to Raise Fighting Force* (Philadelphia,: 1794).

Chapter Five explores the struggles to create a Catholic Church in America and the role Saint Dominguans played in defining Catholic identity under a republican government. When Saint Dominguans arrived in Charleston, the American bishop in Baltimore realized the need for a French speaking priest at St. Mary's Catholic Church. In his efforts to make such an assignment, he met much resistance from the church's elected board of trustees who wanted to employ a more republican church structure. Over time Saint Dominguans became embroiled in this conflict and used it to present themselves as republican. By supporting the trustees who opposed the French priest, they were able to move into positions of authority within the church.⁵¹ Again, as they did with the conflicts over Genet, they presented themselves as people who adhered to republican ideology.

In conclusion, this study interjects a new group of people into the conversation about early republican America and Charleston in particular. The events and circumstances explored here are not unusual or unique to this work. They take, however, a different spin. By neglecting to see Charleston as an immigrant society, we fail to appreciate the diversity that not only shape South Carolina history but American history. America was not an isolationist society and her close ties to other nations and colonies on the Atlantic shaped most debates about economics, politics, and religion. This

⁵¹ For discussions of trusteeism and the establishment of an American Catholic Church, see Patrick Carey, *An Immigrant Bishop: John England's Adaptation of Irish Catholicism to American Republicanism* (Yonkers, N.Y.: U.S. Catholic Historical Society, 1982); Patrick W. Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates: Ecclesiastical Democracy and the Tensions of Trusteeism*, Notre Dame Studies in American Catholicism. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987); Patrick W. Carey, "American Catholic Religious Thought the Shaping of a Theological & Social Tradition," (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2004); Peter Keenan Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll, Archbishop of Baltimore, 1735-1815* (New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1922); Peter Keenan Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston (1786-1842)* (New York: The America Press, 1927); Peter Keenan Guilday, "Trusteeism (1814-1821)," (New York: The United States Catholic Historical Society, 1928); Richard C. Madden, "Joseph Pierre Picot De Limoëlan De Clorivière (1768-1826)" (Catholic University of America, 1938); Richard C. Madden, *Catholics in South Carolina: A Record* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985).

examination of Saint Dominguan refugees does not seek to over emphasize the importance of this group but instead attempts to show that even a small sector of a society can influence debates in a variety of arenas. Just as African American stories or women's history have changed the historic landscape in recent years, a more thorough analysis of this refugee group can tell different stories. These refugees were people fleeing a slave insurrection who at various points over the last few years had often opposed their nation's newly formed republican government. They had arrived in a slave society where local residents were becoming more and more uneasy about their status as slaveholders in a republic. As Saint Domingans were struggling to find acceptance in Charleston, Charlestonians were striving for full acceptance in their new nation. They recognized they could lose political clout if their status as slaveholders began to outweigh their status as republicans. The similarities of their concerns led Saint Domingans and Charlestonians to form a silent pack whereby broadcasting their republicanism would be their primary goal. Therefore, slavery ceased to be their common characteristic; republicanism won the day.

One final note on who constitutes a member of this group of refugees: many scholars of the French in America have struggled to determine which people came from France and which came from Saint Domingue.⁵² That is also a difficulty in this study. In some cases the refugees themselves were helpful as they listed themselves in naturalization records or in newspaper announcements as coming from Saint Domingue. On occasion, tradition deems a person or family to herald from Saint Domingue. These are the easy ones to classify. The fluidity of movement between France and her colonies complicates this issue as many clearly recognized France as their permanent home, their

⁵² Babb; Childs.

ancestral home if you will. In these cases refugees who in other areas identified themselves as former residents of Saint Domingue recorded their place of origin on federal naturalization documents as France. All of this creates an enormous problem for a scholar attempting to categorize these people. Throughout, this dissertation attempts to be as transparent as possible. Footnotes indicate where doubt exists regarding someone's origin. Among the refugees themselves distinguishing between those who were colonists and those who resided in the metropole does not seem to have been an issue. They were all displaced by violence in their homeland, all had been under the protection of the French government and saw themselves as unified by their connection to a common government and homeland. Perhaps the title of this study should be "French in Charleston" instead of "Saint Dominguans in Charleston;" however, clearly the events in Saint Domingue shaped the experiences of all French speakers who arrived in the United States during the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century. To try to separate them into two distinct groups seems in many ways to be both frustrating and futile as Charlestonians do not seem to have cared.

CHAPTER 1: STORM OF DESTRUCTION: TURMOIL IN THE CARIBBEAN AND IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Since its earliest days as a British colony, South Carolina had a close relationship with its Caribbean neighbors; and, initially, these connections were with Barbados. Barbados had been a British colony since 1627, and the population had grown immensely by the 1670 settling of Carolina.⁵³ Land was at a premium on the island, and its lack of availability limited many colonists' efforts at economic success. The settling of a new colony on the North American mainland offered a solution to this problem for many of these Barbadians. Among the first one hundred and thirty colonists to arrive at the new settlement that would become Charleston were a small number of Barbadians, but over the next twenty years regular migration created a Carolina population with a substantial number of Barbadian immigrants.⁵⁴ In spite of a decline in Barbadian migration after this early period, the imprint of Caribbean influence lingered in South Carolina through its architecture, the presence of African slaves, and the plantation economy that thrived for a time.

⁵³ Hilary Beckles, *A History of Barbados : From Amerindian Settlement to Nation-State* (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2 and 27.

⁵⁴ The exact percentage of Barbadian immigrants to South Carolina during its early years is somewhat debated. According to Walter Edgar approximately fifty-four percent were Barbadian while Max Edelson claims that the numbers were more likely somewhere between thirty and forty percent. Barbadians did not restrict their emigration to mainland America. Migration began in large scale in the 1660s with approximately three thousand exiting the island. In 1670 alone two thousand left; over the next five years that total climbed to four or five thousand colonist seeking land and riches elsewhere. Nevertheless, clearly migration from Barbados was important and resulted in a close kinship with a Caribbean colony, one that would continue to thrive through commercial activity. For more discussion of these numbers and South Carolina's early settlement history see *Ibid.*, 27; S. Max Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 43; Edgar, 48-50.

Even with changes in migratory patterns, movement between the North American British colony and the islands known as the West Indies continued to be frequent. Lifestyles in the Carolinas and on many Caribbean islands were similar as plantations thrived under the toil of African slaves. The circular currents of the North Atlantic made travel between Carolina and the West Indies relatively quick, but these same winds that generated vigorous trade also brought violent storms to the beaches of the southern British colonies. Atlantic hurricanes historically have their genesis in the Atlantic mid-way between the Caribbean islands and Africa. Their paths move west and northwest toward the southern coast of the United States. All do not make landfall, but even those that do not often leave a mark of storms and high winds.⁵⁵ At least four hurricanes reached landfall along the Carolina coast during the colony's first century of existence: in 1700, 1713, 1728, and again in 1752.⁵⁶ While detailed climatic records do not exist for this period, colloquial accounts indicate that these storms brought much damage to Charleston.⁵⁷ Naturally, eighteenth century Charlestonians had no modern satellites or weather radars with which to follow the track of a storm aimed at their coast, but they

⁵⁵ Robbie Berg, "Hurricane Life Cycle and Hazards," in *National Hurricane Conference* (New Orleans, Louisiana: 2013). This presentation contains maps that show the trajectories of Atlantic hurricanes since 1851. Such illustrations mirror the transatlantic slave trade path from Africa to the Caribbean and America with slave cargo, then up the coast of the United States before moving out into the Atlantic to complete the triangle and begin again.

⁵⁶ News of other storms in the Caribbean regularly appeared in the South Carolina press. One such example is a reference to a possible fifth hurricane or earthquake and tsunami that appeared in *South-Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser*, Charleston, South Carolina, August 31- September 2, 1784 (this is a weekly paper). The article stated, "Advices from Hispaniola, say, that on the 24th, 25th and 31st of last month, severe shocks of an earthquake were felt in the neighborhood of the Cape and Port-au-Prince, accompanied with strong winds and heavy rains, but we have not learned whether any damage has been sustained."

⁵⁷ David Ramsay, Simms-Oliphant-Furman Collection., and Kohn-Hennig Collection., *The History of South-Carolina, from Its First Settlement in 1670, to the Year 1808* (Charleston: Published by David Longworth for the author., 1809), 177-182. The first English city in Carolina was called Charlestown. The modern spelling was adopted when the city was incorporated in 1790. See Edelson, 261.

still recognized that these storms came to them from the Caribbean. David Ramsay, noted historian of the revolutionary era who lived in Charleston from 1749 until his death in 1815, wrote in 1809 that the people of Charleston referred to these storms as hurricanes, “an appellation usually given to those convulsive storms in the West Indies Islands in which the fields of sugar canes are destroyed, and the canes torn up and hurried away in confusion.”⁵⁸ In absence of modern weather-predicting equipment, such violent storms seemed to appear out of nowhere with only the occasional news of an upcoming storm arriving via a ship’s crew. Indeed, contemporary accounts of the days before a hurricane usually mentioned beautiful, yet excessively warm, weather.

South Carolina’s experiences with Caribbean hurricanes, in many ways, served as a precursor to her experiences with another of the Caribbean’s violent storms, that of the slave insurrection that became known as the Haitian Revolution. The imagery of storms gaining power in the islands, crossing the tropical Caribbean, and crashing upon the southern coastline was not unknown to people of the early republican era. As unrest began to erupt in Saint Domingue, one official reported that the colonial legislature had met to consider ways of “calming the tempest which threatened the most precious part of the French empire.”⁵⁹ The American Revolution had ended in 1783; the nation adopted its new constitution in 1787 and began the work of enacting a new government. In spite of the practical and ideological questions many had about their future, peace had come, and the new nation was no longer embroiled in a long fight for self-determination. Calm weather appeared to be on the horizon. This chapter explores the links between Saint Domingue and Charleston, South Carolina, and follows the progression of the Haitian

⁵⁸ Ramsay, 176.

⁵⁹ *CGDA*, September 20, 1790.

Revolution from its first appearances in Charleston's newspapers and through the successive arrivals of numerous refugees between 1791 and 1809. Even as they expressed concern for fellow slave owners fleeing a slave insurrection, South Carolina's leaders worried about maintaining the safety of the state's residents and engaged in actions aimed at preventing a similar revolt of South Carolina's enslaved population.

As Americans worked to build a new nation, their former allies from the American Revolution, the French, also caught the fever of revolution. In addition to the obvious shared political ideology of republicanism and natural rights, having an economy that relied on international trade encouraged American interest in the evolving political events in France. Newspapers in all of the new nation's major cities obliged such demands with detailed accounts of street protests, political debates, and even violent bloodshed in France.⁶⁰ As Enlightenment rhetoric drove the advancing revolution, France's colonists in Saint Domingue, both white and mixed race, began to petition for more rights under the newly passed *La déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*. Colonists, who typically held membership within the Third Estate, hurried to France to request the right to participate in the new republican government so that they could lobby for favorable changes in colonial legal and economic policies. As the colony's leaders worked for an extension of their rights, *gens de couleur* and eventually the enslaved on

⁶⁰ A partial list of newspapers that carried articles about the fall of the Bastille includes *Courier de Boston*, Boston, Massachusetts, September 24, 1789; *New Jersey Journal*, Elizabethtown, New Jersey, September 30, 1789; and *New York Daily Gazette*, New York, New York, September 26, 1789. For reports on the evolving political debates within the National Assembly, some examples include *Carlisle Gazette*, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, September 9, 1789; *Independent Gazetteer*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 29, 1789; and *New York Gazette*, New York, New York, January 4, 1790.

the French portion of Hispaniola also jockeyed for their own versions of freedom and equality.⁶¹

The extreme upheaval in France quickly spread to her wealthiest colony Saint Domingue. *Gens de couleur* took up arms in protest of national and colonial policies that prevented them from fully participating in France's new rhetoric of equality. Thousands of slaves, encouraged by the ideals of liberty and natural law, organized and launched a rebellion against their masters. Destroying the fields where they had worked and the towns and homes their slave labor had built, Saint Domingue's enslaved population launched in August 1791 what became the first successful slave rebellion in the history of the world. For those in America, the Caribbean's unrest was reminiscent of the hurricanes with which they had much experience, and many feared it would follow the same path as the familiar violent storms.⁶²

⁶¹ The use of *gens de couleur* or *gens de couleur libres* Saint Domingue refers to mixed race people during the colonial era. Racial distinctions in Saint Domingue are quite complicated. From the early days of the colony white French men came usually temporarily to the colony and through liaisons with women on the island produced offspring. The women in these relationships may have been enslaved women, freed women, runaway slave women, or free women; many were African born. As time passed, white men continued to have relationships with women in the colony; and in some cases these women were mixed race women themselves. These relationships produced children of various percentages of African ancestry. In cases where the mother was enslaved, the white father might free his children and sometimes their mother. Mixed race children, whether from the beginning of the colony or from later, were often educated in France and acquired through inheritance or economic advantages great amounts of wealth. Over time this mixed race group attained important economic and social status and were considered to be white. Much of this changed with the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763. New restrictions became law that sought to separate whites from mixed race people (*gens de couleur libres*). These included laws that stated that *gens de couleur* could not work in certain professions, that they could not wear clothing or hair styles deemed "white," and that they could have have "white" last names. For more on racial definitions in Saint Domingue, see Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*; John Garrigus, "Blue and Brown: Contraband Indigo and the Rise of a Free Colored Planter Class in French Saint-Domingue," *The Americas* 50, no. 2 (1993); Garrigus, *Before Haiti : Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue*; John D. Garrigus, "Opportunist or Patriot? Julien Raimond (1744-1801) and the Haitian Revolution," *Slavery & Abolition* 28, no. 1 (2007); John D. Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," *Americas* 68, no. 1 (2011).

⁶² Much scholarship on the slave insurrection that became the Haitian Revolution exists. Some of the most prominent studies are Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*; Fick; C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins : Toussaint L'ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2d ed. (New York,: Vintage Books, 1963).

News of events in Saint Domingue mattered a great deal to citizens of South Carolina and the United States as fully half of all exports from France's colonies went to the United States. For the new North American nation, this represented a trade deficit of \$1,152,400 in the currency of the day.⁶³ While average Americans may have been unaware of this close economic relationship with Saint Domingue, most white South Carolinians recognized a shared kinship between the French colony and their home state as a result of their similar economic and social systems. Already closely following the political turmoil in France, they expanded their concern to include France's most prosperous colony as well. As events unfolded on both sides of the Atlantic, American newspapers linked the first reports of violence in St. Domingue with ongoing events in France, and accounts of both often appeared simultaneously in the same articles.⁶⁴ In Saint Domingue's Provincial Assembly of the North, Monsieur Chesneau de la Megrière delivered a "speech to the deputies of the national ships crews" in March 1791 stating "that the French revolution hath extended its suffering branches to this our far distant country."⁶⁵ As unrest continued South Carolinians began to worry that revolution would also spread to their shores.

For Charlestonians one of the first reports of widespread unrest in St. Domingue appeared in the local newspaper on January 20, 1790. Not yet fully cognizant of the coming destruction, the account highlighted the violence's impact on the local economy

⁶³ *CGDA*, August 26, 1793. This article argues that Americans should be even more interested in events in Saint Domingue than they already are because of the value of trade the United States and the French colonies exchange.

⁶⁴ This was the case with the announcement of the arrival of Dr. Polony's ship. The article begins with the first announcement of insurrection to appear in a South Carolina newspaper, moves to list the passengers arriving on the sloop Polly, and then ends with an account of the king and queen of France's attempt to flee the country for Germany. *CGDA*, September, 12, 1791.

⁶⁵ *CGDA*, May 2, 1791.

and began with a declaration that “the turbulence of the times had arisen to a pitch as to have produced a . . . total stagnation of business” and concluded with reports of how much the price of rice, tobacco, and flour had fallen.⁶⁶ At the very least, political upheaval in France and Saint Domingue was clearly having a negative impact on South Carolina’s economy – an economy still struggling to recover from the expense and losses garnered by the American Revolution. Therefore, from the early days of 1790, South Carolinians began seeing themselves entangled in Caribbean events that could easily cross the one thousand mile span of ocean water separating the two plantation societies.

In addition to concerns about the economic troubles of Saint Domingue, newspapers in South Carolina were no different than newspapers throughout America as they carried detailed articles about the evolving political situation. In September 1790 one Charleston newspaper printed a letter from M. de Saint Olympe, president of the Provincial Assembly of Croix de Bouquets, where he described “the alarming situation into which this colony is plunged.”⁶⁷ In the same month a newly arrived captain in Charleston reported that the governor of Saint Domingue was beheaded at Aux Cayes and that “everything was in the utmost confusion.”⁶⁸ Regardless of the validity of this violent account and others like it, South Carolinians recognized a significant shift from protest and destruction of crops to attacks on persons of authority within the colonial administration.⁶⁹ This escalation of violence moved those reading this news to a higher

⁶⁶ *CGDA*, January 20, 1790.

⁶⁷ *CGDA*, September 20, 1790.

⁶⁸ *Pennsylvania Packet*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 29, 1790. Report of Captain Antonie who arrived in Charleston, SC, from Cape Français.

⁶⁹ Scholars have long debated the validity of some of the reports of violent murder that surfaced during the Haitian Revolution. It seems that certain particularly horrifying reports resurfaced in popular conversation

level of concern and paved the way for humanitarian outreach that refugees would need and thankfully find once they arrived on America's shores.

As unrest in the colony grew, Saint Dominguan legislative bodies worked vigorously in late 1790 and early 1791 to quell erupting violence. Many in leadership positions sought to assign blame for the unrest to groups other than slaves, and news of these actions also appeared in South Carolina newspapers. Saint Dominguan leaders fingered the very same groups that South Carolinians had traditionally worried would generate violence among her slaves: outsiders, "free negroes," and Quakers. Believing that the enslaved, many of whom spoke various African languages, were incapable of the wide spread organization that was disrupting Saint Domingue, colonial leaders argued that outsiders had to be behind the unrest. One such example came through a letter signed Rouvray (likely the Marquis du Rouvray) who asserted that "the colony is verging on destruction – that there is daily on all sides an ingress of persons of all colors, who emigrate hither; especially from the foreign colonies and settlements."⁷⁰ This letter is

over and over. One example is of a pregnant woman who was murdered and her unborn child torn from her womb. While this may have happened on one occasion, it is likely that it did not occur as frequently as contemporary accounts led eighteenth century readers to believe. Laurent Dubois in his comprehensive narrative of the Haitian Revolution dispels many of these tales by comparing them to written accounts of those he deemed unlikely to embellish. One example he offers is that of insurgents carrying on a "standard the body of a white child impaled upon a stake." Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 111-112.

⁷⁰ Laurent François Lenoir, Marquis de Rouvray, was a planter in Saint Domingue. He served in the Seven Years' War and was a member of the seventeen men who formed Saint Domingue's delegation at the first meeting of the *États Généraux* at Versailles in June 1789. This group of planters was able to form an important alliance with French merchants in key port cities such as Nantes and Bordeaux in order to lobby for the protection of slavery in France's colonies. He wrote *L'Etat des Nègres* which the Club Massiac, an alliance of white planters in Saint Domingue, published. In this document argued against extending voting rights to the *gens de couleur* in Saint Domingue and appealed for the continuation of slavery in the colony. For the full text see Assemblée Nationale Constituante, *De L'état Des Negres Relativement À La Prospérité Des Colonies Françaises Et De Leur Métropole. Discours Aux Representans De La Nation*. (Paris: s.n., 1789). See Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 76. For a discussion of De Rouvray's experiences during the Saint Dominguan insurrection and a transcript of letters written during the revolution, see M. E. McIntosh and B.C. Weber, "Une Correspondance Familiale Au Temps Des

particularly useful in that it highlights the major concerns Saint Dominguais had as the colony fell into upheaval. Since South Carolinians shared similar concerns, the publishing of this letter contributed to a feeling of kinship between the two slave societies.

In an attempt to stave the mounting threats to order, Rouvray offered three rather harsh policies for the legislative assembly's consideration. First, he believed that no persons of color, free or enslaved, whether passengers or sailors should be admitted to the colony's ports. In a rather horrifying suggestion, he further recommended that ships' captains who violated this order "be condemned to lose their lives." Secondly, he stated that the same penalty should fall to all Quakers who enter the colony "for be well assured, gentlemen, that it is from among this pernicious, extravagant and hypocritical sectary, all your most inveterate enemies have issued and still continue to spring." Finally, he wanted a policy in place whereby no white man could relocate to the colony "unless he be strongly recommended by some substantial planter of established credit and property."⁷¹ While his proposal was excessive, it did reinforce the prevailing attitudes about the source of Saint Domingue's violent events. He clearly recognized the important role that sailors and ships' passengers were playing in the spread of news and possibly violence. No one in the Atlantic World was isolated as sailors came ashore to share stories of how the British American colonists had defied their king and how slaves were rebelling against their masters. News of worlds turned upside down was leading more worlds to upend.

Troubles De Saint-Domingue (1791-1796). Lettres Du Marquis Et De La Marquise De Rouvray À Leur Fille," *Revue d'histoire des colonies* 45, no. 159-160 (1958).

⁷¹ CGDA, February 2, 1791. The issue of sailors carrying information about revolution and liberty to slaves in the Caribbean is the subject of Scott, 67-68. Quoted in Scott, 133.

The thriving economies that produced extreme wealth both in the New World but also in port cities in France meant that sailors were constantly moving from port to port transporting news of revolution, liberty, insurrection, and abolition. As slaves and others burdened by inequality heard news of how men and women of similar status were effectively challenging the status quo, they recognized the possibilities that were before them. Julius Scott in his ground breaking dissertation “The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution” quotes the Minister of Marine La Luzerne who reported that ships arrived at Saint Domingue’s ports carrying “Majorcans, Minorcans, Italians, Maltese, and other seafarers.”⁷² This sundry group of sailors mixed freely with the enslaved and the free colored population as they drank and gambled in the colony’s taverns. According to Scott, a “constant yet shifting stream of itinerant seafaring folk provided the masterless underground in the [British and French] colonies with a crucial transatlantic connection.”⁷³ Limiting the disembarkation of all sailors was virtually impossible, but forbidding people of African descent from coming ashore was well within the rights of political leaders. South Carolina, as the Haitian Revolution progressed, made the same provisions although thankfully no evidence exists were someone called for the murder of any ship captain found guilty of bringing such nefarious characters into port.⁷⁴

⁷² Scott, 66.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ South Carolina made numerous attempts to prevent free people of color and slave from entering the state. In many cases, officials were specifically concerned about those arriving from the Caribbean. See *CGDA*, October 17, 1793; *Carolina Gazette*, Charleston, South Carolina, January 22, 1801 and January 19, 1804; South Carolina, "An Act to Alter and Amend and Act Entitled 'an Act to Prevent Negro Slaves and Persons of Color from Being Brought in or Entering This State'," (Charleston, South Carolina: 1800).

Since the end of the American Revolution, South Carolina's free colored population had been increasing, and this also created a climate of fear.⁷⁵ Arriving sailors or foreign free people of color carrying news of insurrection might stir this group to revolt. The American Revolution had enabled a portion of the enslaved population to acquire freedom by serving in their masters' places in the Patriot army in exchange for freedom or by running away in the chaos of revolution and immediately thereafter. The nature of slave ownership in Charleston also explains some of this concern about rising numbers of free colored Charlestonians.⁷⁶ Because this was a thriving urban environment, numerous people came in and out of the city on a regular basis. Slave owners sent trusted slaves into the city to conduct business for their plantations, slaves were hired out by their masters and allowed to freely move about the city, and runaway slaves often mixed with the city's free black population in order to escape capture. In 1790 the city boasted a black majority with 8,270 slaves and free blacks, a number which

⁷⁵ Ira Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York,: Pantheon Books, 1975), 19, 36. Exact numbers of free people of color in South Carolina prior to 1790 when the first official census occurred are unavailable. However, the numbers of free people of color increased tremendously from the 1790 to the 1800 census. According to the 1790 United States Census, the city of Charleston had 586 free persons of color; this number nearly doubled in the next ten years to 1,024. Larry Koger, "Black Masters: The Misunderstood Slaveowners," *Southern Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (2006): 67. For a discussion of the importance of free black artisans in Charleston, see Carl-White Allison, "South Carolina's Forgotten Craftsmen," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 86, no. 1 (1985).

⁷⁶ South Carolina's population contained three main groups: whites, slaves, and free blacks. Within the white population, as in all parts of the new republic, there were various classes of people ranging from the poorest laborer to the wealthiest plantation owner. As the first census of the United States occurred in 1790, all people who were not white or enslaved were grouped together as "all other free persons." In this final group were people of various economic levels, people who were recently freed, and people whose families were free for one or more generations. In addition to these variations the free colored population also included people of numerous skin colors ranging from very dark skinned people to the very light brown. In some cases lighter skin accompanied higher economic standing, but not always. Ira Berlin writes of a middle caste of free colored people who acted as a buffer between the white slave holding population and the enslaved population, but in some ways the racial divisions were much more complicated. Elite free people of color often nurtured a careful relationship with whites in order to advance their own business and social aspirations. For more on Charleston's free colored population, see Berlin; Larry Koger, *Black Slaveowners : Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina, 1790-1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

exceeded the white population by nearly 200 people. These figures, of course, only account for the permanent residents of the city and do not include those passing through for business and pleasure. With this large number of people of color moving about the city, telling who was free and who was enslaved as well as who was dangerous and who was benign would have been impossible.

Gens de couleur in Saint Domingue held very different characteristics than free people of color in South Carolina. Examining these differences will help us to understand the events that surrounded *gens de couleur* efforts to acquire more rights. Saint Domingue was a multi-racial society, and within this structure were multiple classes of people. At a simplified level Saint Dominguan society contained three groups of people: whites, freedmen, and slaves, a caste system that on the surface was similar to that found in South Carolina.⁷⁷ The historical background and the economic characteristics of the *gens de couleur*, however set Saint Domingue's group apart. The *gens de couleur* were generally a mixed race group of a variety of economic and social backgrounds. The most prestigious of the *gens de couleur* were those who could trace their family heritage back to white French slave owners who produced children with their African born slaves. During the early days of the colony, white slave owners did not make their permanent homes on the island. After fathering children, most returned to

⁷⁷ During the era before the Haitian Revolution numerous terms were used to discuss Saint Domingue's mixed race population. Under the dictates of the *Code Noir*, those who were freed were called "*affranchis*" which literally meant "freed." "*Affranchis*" only applied to those who were former slaves; their descendants were not referred to with this word. "*Affranchis*" were expected to treat their former owners with respect, but no formalized system of expectations existed for those born free. For much of the colonial era, these children of former slaves were often referred to as "*mulâtres et nègres libres*" although this label was not a legal label. These titles had little to do with economics but were solely based on percentage of African heritage and free status as opposed to enslaved status. The term *gens de couleur* was typically used to distinguish wealthy free mixed race people from those with closer ties to Africa who had fewer economic resources. See Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 61-62.

France to marry white French women and live off the profits of their plantations. The slave mothers of their children often received their freedom as a result of these liaisons and raised their mixed race sons and daughters to marry other mixed race people of similar background in the colony. These women, in addition to their freedom, frequently acquired great wealth eventually owning prosperous plantations. This wealth enabled them to send their children to France for education.

In spite of their wealth, *gens de couleur* did not possess the same rights and status as the white population. The *Code Noir*, created by Louis XIV in 1685, declared that slaves who were emancipated would receive the same rights as those who were born in France.⁷⁸ The decree set forth rules for the emancipated but did not extend these limits to their offspring. Their offspring were able to live as free people and frequently mixed and married over time with the islands growing white population. More importantly, this act did not include discrimination based on skin color or African descent. For nearly one hundred years, this meant that *gens de couleur* in Saint Domingue and France's other colonies enjoyed freedoms similar to their white counterparts. In many cases, p these people were considered white by their neighbors and the government. Beginning in 1764 much changed for these people as numerous new decrees appeared and redefined the status of *gens de couleur*.

With little explanation the French government instituted legislation placing restrictions on what *gens de couleur* could wear, on what professions they could hold,

⁷⁸ "The Code Noir (The Black Code)" in *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, Department of History and Art History, George Mason University, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/335/> <Accessed February 19, 2013>. While scholars debate how this law was written in terms of who contributed various statutes and why, the fact remains that the final text stated that all freed persons had the "the same rights, privileges, and immunities" as native born Frenchmen. For this part of my argument, I am indebted to Malick Ghachem and Jean Hebrand and their discussion at the "Symposium on Comparative Early Modern Legal History: Law and the French Atlantic" sponsored by the Center for Renaissance Studies at the Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.

and even on the ways they could spell their names (no one could adopt a spelling that was the same as that of a white person). To make matters worse, these laws did not just define the effected group as *gens de couleur* but explicitly stated that this legislation applied to anyone of African descent. Scholars have presented numerous reasons for these legal changes, but regardless of why this occurred, it led to frustration and difficulties for many of the colony's *gens de couleur*.⁷⁹ When the French government finally called for a meeting in 1789 of the *États généraux* to address the kingdom's serious economic problems and Saint Dominguan legislative assemblies began considering how they could appeal for more rights for themselves, leaders within the *gens de couleur* decided to appeal for changes that would restore the rights they believed the *Code Noir* gave them.

In October 1789 Julien Raimond and Vincent Ogé appeared before the French National Assembly bearing a petition stating that “there exists in one province of this Empire a race of men debased and degraded; a class of citizens consigned to contempt, to

⁷⁹ Julien Raimond, a member of the *gens de couleur* who was one of the men who would travel to France to petition for equal rights in Versailles, believed that the changes resulted from concern about white men marrying their slaves. During earlier generations white men had married their slaves and given them the means to acquire a great deal of wealth. In later generations when more whites made their permanent homes in the colony, many white men were rejecting marriage to white women who often possessed less wealth than free women of color. White women then were jealous of the advantages that colored women possessed, therefore, more racialized laws materialized. Laurent Dubois who discusses Raimond's theory recognizes that this is likely an overly sexualized version of the factors that drove legal changes, but he does argue that at the root of the issue was jealousy over the advances the *gens de couleur* had made. In addition, colonial authorities wanted to ensure the loyalty of the white population and they used racial distinctions in order to do this. John Garrigus holds to a similar view as he highlights the importance of creating laws that bound the colonial white population to the metropole. Émile Petit was a colonial judge who wrote *Le Patriotisme Americain* where he argued that the French crown needed to pass legislation that would solidify the loyalty of the colonists so that they would not begin to see themselves as separate and thereby independent of the mother country. With this he argued that it was in the best interest of the French government for whites to remain on the island. Encouraging white women to move to the colony would entice white men to stay and reduce the chance that they would intermarry with women of color. Marriage with colored women, many believed, led obviously to mixed race children who felt less allegiance and loyalty to the French crown. For extended discussion of both lines of reason see Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 60-63; John D. Garrigus, "Saint-Domingue's Free People of Color and the Tools of Revolution," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. David Patrick Geggus & Norman Fiering (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 52-53.

all the humiliation of slavery.” They claimed they were treated as “slaves in the land of liberty.” Their goal was to bring about an end to such treatment and to have the right to vote in local assemblies in Saint Domingue. They carefully structured their appeals to demand, as the *cahier des doléances* stated, “equality for all non-whites and freedom for mulatto slaves.”⁸⁰ It is important to recognize that they were not attempting to tamper with the existing plantation system in Saint Domingue, but their choice of the phrase “mulatto slaves” was problematic. Raimond and Ogé were slave owners themselves, but their request unleashed a passionate debate about the status not only of *gens de couleur* in Saint Domingue, but also about the future of slavery in the empire.

As debate over rights of *gens de couleur* occurred, concerns surfaced over how such changes might influence the balance of power in Saint Domingue. White planters and merchants spoke against awarding equal rights to *gens de couleur* on the grounds that this would upset the balance of power. Operating on the premise that traces of African ancestry would unite the wealthy *gens de couleur* with recently imported African slaves, some delegates worried that *gens de couleur* with equal rights might be able to overrule whites in the Colonial Assembly and hasten an end to slavery. Raimond and Ogé along with Abbé Grégoire of the *Société des Amis des Noirs* argued that *gens de couleur* occupied an important position in the colony as a middle caste. They were in fact “the only ones capable of containing the slaves,” they claimed, and that giving them equality would solidify their loyalty to the white population and the French empire and ensure the

⁸⁰ Quoted in Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 81. The person of Vincent Ogé has generated much debate among historians. He was clearly an extremely wealthy man as his family owned one of the most prosperous coffee plantations in the Dondon region of Saint Domingue. In spite of increasingly harsh rules that segregated those of mixed race in the colony, Ogé’s wealth and his traditional acceptance as white prevented him from suffering from such discrimination. The question then becomes one of why he would engage in political and eventually militant battles to win equality for all free people of color. John D. Garrigus poses such questions in Garrigus, “Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution.”

continuation of slavery.⁸¹ Eventually, the assembly passed legislation allowing planters to rule the colony as they saw fit and made ambiguous statements about the rights of *gens de couleur*. This uncertainty led the Colonial Assembly in Saint Domingue to resist granting them these rights.⁸²

Following the rulings in the Constituent Assembly, Ogé and Raimond parted ways. Raimond remained in France to continue his work for *gens de couleur*.⁸³ Ogé began making plans to return to Saint Domingue. He had exhausted his bank account and needed to return to his colonial holdings. He was unable to book passage directly from France to the colony, so he was forced to travel to London where he boarded a ship that took him to Charleston, South Carolina. He later claimed he did not know anyone in Charleston, and, contrary to what historians have stated, no evidence exists that he acquired arms for his upcoming revolt while he was there.⁸⁴ After spending two weeks in the port city, he was finally able to board a ship bound for Saint Domingue. Upon

⁸¹ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 73-85; Fick, 82-85; Garrigus, "Opportunist or Patriot? Julien Raimond (1744-1801) and the Haitian Revolution," 6-7; Garrigus, "Saint-Domingue's Free People of Color and the Tools of Revolution."

⁸² For detailed accounts of these events and how they pertained to Saint Domingue, see Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 73-90; Garrigus, "Opportunist or Patriot? Julien Raimond (1744-1801) and the Haitian Revolution."; Jeremy D. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 43-48.

⁸³ Garrigus, "Opportunist or Patriot? Julien Raimond (1744-1801) and the Haitian Revolution," 6-7.

⁸⁴ Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," 60. This has been a long standing argument concern Ogé and his connection to Charleston. Certainly, if he remained in the city for two weeks some people would have come into contact with him and may have learned of his intentions; however, no evidence exists to support this or his purchase of weapons. Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," 53. As Garrigus traces this rumor to Edwards. Garrigus argues that the source of Edwards' allegations that Ogé purchased weapons in April 1790 was actually from a charge levied against him by the Club Massiac and probably was based on a rumor. According to Ogé's testimony after he was arrested, he departed London on June 26 or 27 and traveled seventy-four days to Charleston. This would mean he arrived in Charleston on September 8 or 9 and remained there for two weeks.

arriving he allied with Jean-Baptiste Chavannes who he had previously known.⁸⁵ Within one week of Ogé's return to Saint Domingue in October 1790, groups of free people of color, not just *gens de couleur* but other free mulattoes, gathered first in Dondon then in other areas around the colony. Bearing arms, they demanded that colonial leaders recognize the rights they believed the Constituent Assembly in France had awarded them. News of violent deaths perpetrated by these groups quickly spread and sent fear throughout the colony. The movement expanded to include more free colored people representing various economic and social backgrounds. The armed assault was short-lived and Ogé, Chavannes, and many of their other compatriots fled to Spanish Santo Domingo, hoping to receive asylum. This was not the case as Spanish colonial authorities quickly transported them back to Saint Domingue. Shortly after this, Ogé and Chavannes were broken at the wheel with their heads displayed on pikes; nineteen other insurrectionists were hanged in public executions designed to deter any others of engaging in race war in the colony.⁸⁶

The impact of these brutal executions was not limited to Saint Domingueans. News of this spread throughout the Atlantic World, and Charlestonians read these tales with fear and apprehension. A letter from Saint Domingue claimed that Ogé "[committed] murder with impunity, and without reserve [of] distinction of age or sex, upon the white inhabitants of the country." He and his accomplices raped and stole as

⁸⁵ While both Chavannes and Ogé have received credit for the so called "revolt" of the *gens de couleur* in Saint Domingue, three important differences between them support the argument that Chavannes was the more militant of the two and that Ogé was likely only the figurehead of the movement. Chavannes had served as a sergeant in the free colored militia in the colony, he was of more modest means and the majority of his associates were not wealthy, and finally he had long been involved in political activity on behalf of the *gens de couleur*. Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," 54.

⁸⁶ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 88; Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," 61.

they crisscrossed the countryside collecting more and more people of color to take up arms in their cause.⁸⁷ The significance of these graphic details was not lost on the reading public in South Carolina but served to emphasize the need for quick and sound judgment on the part of officials, to raise alarm about the dangers free men of color posed, and eventually to encourage South Carolina's governor to call for increased protection from the state's militia.⁸⁸

The story of Vincent Ogé's revolt in Saint Domingue naturally sent chills through its South Carolinian readers for a variety of other reasons. First, the article that appeared in Charleston's newspaper stated that he had arrived "from the continent of America," raising suspicion that he had been in the United States. Could he have laid plans for a similar revolt in North America? Secondly, he apparently understood French law well enough to know that his was a reasonable claim based on historically recognized French statutes. This reinforced fears about the dangers posed by people of color with the ability to read.

As their numbers climbed, the free people of color in South Carolina also began to argue for extensions to their rights in ways similar to those employed by Ogé during his trip to France.⁸⁹ One such example occurred at St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, the most prominent church in Charleston. The church's membership rolls

⁸⁷ *CGDA*, December 14, 1790. This article refers to someone named Augé who is clearly Vincent Ogé as the dates of his revolt match those of Vincent Ogé's and later articles in the same newspaper correct the spelling. Referring to anyone from the New World as American was not uncommon during this era. Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution." *CGDA*, December 14, 1790, and May 5, 1791.

⁸⁸ Charles Pinckney, Governor's Message to House of Representatives, December 5, 1791, South Carolina. General Assembly. House of Representatives. and others, *Journals of the House of Representatives, 1791*, 1st ed., The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia, S.C.: Published for the South Carolina Dept. of Archives and History by the University of South Carolina Press, 1985), 319-320.

⁸⁹ Maryland is another example of a slave state that saw similar suits for increased rights.

included some of South Carolina's wealthiest and most powerful citizens. During this era, becoming an official member of a congregation required the purchase of a pew in the church.⁹⁰ Such an action would not only award the purchaser with an established place to sit during worship, but it granted him the right to vote on church matters, serve on the church's governing board, and secure the use of the church cemetery for himself and his family.

In the years following the revolution, free people of color purchased pews in St. Philip's church. The vestry records contain no mention of an official decision to allow this; and, according to the existing records, people of color were not allowed to vote or participate in church business. In fact, the church's minutes include a clarification stating that only white males over the age of twenty-one who owned pews possessed the right to vote or serve on the church's vestry.⁹¹ The cemetery, however, was another matter. Peter B. Mathews, a colored pew owner at St. Philip's, requested permission to bury his child and future family members in the St. Philip's Church cemetery in 1788.⁹² Interestingly, this is the only such request that appears in St. Philip's minutes. In the case of Mathew's request, the vestry denied permission without further comment. While the

⁹⁰ See Margaret Gillikin, "Free People of Color and St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, Charleston, South Carolina: 1790-1822," in *Consortium on the Revolutionary Era*, (Charleston, South Carolina: 2010), <http://pavones.highpoint.edu/conferences/revolutionaryeuropa/documents/CRE-Conference%20Paper-M-Gillikin.pdf>.

⁹¹ Vestry minutes, St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, Charleston, South Carolina, 1 August 1788, Microfilm, Amendments to the By-laws, SCDAH.

⁹² St. Philip's vestry minutes throughout the early years of the nineteenth century contain much discussion of pew ownership and the need to collect the annual pew rents that the church required owners to pay. In these efforts the church wardens inserted comprehensive lists of the names of pew owners as well as the amount of their appointed pew rent. Contrary to common understanding, the pews in the balcony were owned by individuals instead of being left open for the slaves of white planters who attended the church. These pews carried much smaller annual pew rents (many \$5 as opposed to \$28 or \$30 downstairs), and a number of free people of color were the owners of these pews. For more discussion of this, see Gillikin. St. Philip's Vestry minutes.

vestry minutes did not refer to him as a person of color, other citations in the parish registry and the South Carolina legislative papers indicate that Mathews was a free person of color.⁹³ Clearly, he believed that his status as a free man with enough financial resources to purchase a pew alongside St. Philip's white members should allow him this one privilege.

Following this incident, Mathews along with two other free men of color, Thomas Cole and Mathew Webb, petitioned the South Carolina Senate for the right to provide testimony in courts of law. Demonstrating an awareness of South Carolina legal structures, they argued that this prohibition in the "Act for the better Ordering and Governing Negroes and other Slaves" enabled criminals to escape conviction and prevented hardworking people of color from recouping debts owed to them by business associates. As part of their presentation, they claimed that "they have at all times since the Independence of the United States contributed and do now contribute to the support of the Government by cheerfully paying their Taxes." They stated that they "have been and are considered as Free-Citizens of the State [and] they hope to be treated as such" and claimed they "[were] also willing to take upon them any duty for the preservation of the Peace in the City or any other occasion if called on."⁹⁴ No evidence exists to demonstrate that these men's appeals achieved any success; however, their actions show an increase in agitation for rights on the part of people of color in South Carolina. Since they filed their petition in the months immediately following the Ogé events, they quite possibly were inspired by Ogé's legal approaches in Paris.

⁹³ *Records of the General Assembly, Petitions*, 1791, No. 181, SCDAH.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* The other free blacks who filed this petition with Mathews were Thomas Cole and Mathew Webb.

In many ways the free colored South Carolinians' appeal did not deviate very much from that made by Ogé before the National Assembly. Both harkened back to previous laws – for Ogé this was a law that granted privileges of equality for all, and for Mathews and his fellow petitioners it was a law that was well-enforced that denied him rights he felt he deserved as a free man. While all South Carolinians were not privileged to the entirety of the legislative record, Charlestonians held a number of important positions in the state government. News of this petition would likely have circulated through Charleston. While South Carolina was able to silence such requests and prevent the development of violence as a result of Mathew's requests, Saint Domingue's leaders were not so fortunate.

The death of Vincent Ogé and his accomplices did not end the quest of Saint Domingue's *gens de couleur*. South Carolinians continued to watch the progress of these events with much interest; and in August 1791, just days before the violent slave insurrection began on the island, news came that France had awarded equal rights to all “free negroes and mulattoes” in French colonies. The headline was “Fresh disturbances in St. Domingo.”⁹⁵ This article contained no mention of particular unrest or violence; it merely announced the change in French law. The newspaper's editors' choice of the word “disturbance” is interesting, however. Awarding equal rights to people of color threatened the status quo and possibly opened the door to changes unpleasant for the white population.

⁹⁵ *State Gazette of South-Carolina*, Charleston, South Carolina, August 4, 1791. The ship carrying the news docked on July 21, 1791, in Charleston. The National Assembly awarded political rights on March 15, 1791, to all free blacks and mulattoes born of free mothers and fathers. Jack Censer and Lynn Hunt, *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/> <Accessed October 10, 2012>.

South Carolinians were not the only ones who recognized a kinship with Saint Domingue. The colony's ruling assembly saw South Carolina as a potential ally once the actual violence of slave insurrection began. In one of its first acts following the outbreak of violence in August 1791, the Colonial Assembly's agent, Mr. Polony, sent an urgent letter to South Carolina's governor requesting assistance in combating the turbulence. He wrote that they had "cast (their) thoughts around and have formed some consolation in recollecting the intercourse which has long since subsisted between the State of South Carolina and ourselves."⁹⁶ The writer of the letter clearly understood the fear that circumstances in St. Domingue was engendering in South Carolina's leaders and included phrases such as "the planters have already bathed with their Blood the ground that their own labors had rendered fertile" which served to heighten fears of similar violence on Carolina soil.⁹⁷

South Carolina, now part of the United States, did not have the privilege of engaging in such relations with a sovereign nation or a colony of a foreign entity; therefore, this request constituted perhaps the first time that South Carolina's elected officials grappled with the new realities of a strong federal government. Nevertheless, the governor clearly wanted to offer the requested assistance but was unable to do so. Instead, his concern for Saint Domingue's white residents and its rightfully appointed government exuded from his communications with St. Domingue's colonial establishment.⁹⁸ The appeal had arrived while the South Carolina legislature was in

⁹⁶ Governor's Messages, December 4, 1791.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid. Include a quote in the footnote. Since the legislature was in recess with this communication arrived from Saint Domingue, the governor responded without consulting the elected body. The original letter and his correspondence with Saint Domingue's colonial assembly appeared in the Governor's Messages as

recess in August 1791; therefore, a decision on whether to offer some sort of assistance did not occur until December at the legislature's annual meeting. Eventually, the General Assembly agreed to send humanitarian aid to the residents of Saint Domingue, a donation intended to be no larger than three thousand pounds.⁹⁹ By this time, South Carolinians were well aware of the destruction happening across the warm Atlantic waters.

As hurricanes found their way to South Carolina from the Caribbean, these same winds carried ships bearing news of the upheaval in Saint Domingue to Charleston. In early August 1791, slaves in the northern plain of Saint Domingue began meeting to plan their revolt. On August 21, 1791, the violence began as slaves spread out inflicting unspeakable violence on their owners and other whites in the region. In one case they entered a sugar refinery and took an apprentice working there, "dragged him to the front of the dwelling-house, and there hewed him into pieces with their cutlasses: his screams brought out the overseer, whom they instantly shot. The rebels now found their way to the apartment of the refiner, and massacred him in his bed."¹⁰⁰ Similar attacks continued

information to his legislators in December 1791. Naturally, since this was after the slave insurrection occurred, such news brought more anxiety than it would have in August before the uprising. The minutes from the November 26-December 3, 1792 session of the South Carolina House of Representatives indicated that Governor Charles Pinckney had received a letter of thanks from the colonial assembly of Saint Domingue for "the assistance afforded by our Legislature at the last Session." Michael E. Stevens, ed. *The State Records of South Carolina: Journals of the House of Representatives, 1792-1794* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 63.

⁹⁹ Ibid. Acts and resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South-Carolina, passed in December, 1791. Charleston, South Carolina: T.B. Bowen, 1792, 41. The minutes from the November 26-December 3, 1792 session of the South Carolina House of Representatives indicated that Governor Charles Pinckney had received a letter of thanks from the colonial assembly of Saint Domingue for "the assistance afforded by our Legislature at the last Session."

¹⁰⁰ M. Dalmas, *Histoire de la Révolution De Saint-Domingue Depuis Le Commencement Des Troubles, Jusqu'à La Prise De Jérémie Et Du Môle S. Nicolas Par Les Anglais; Suivie D'un Mémoire Sur Le Rétablissement De Cette Colonie* (Paris: Mame Frère, 1814), 121-123. Quoted in Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 94. According to Dubois, Dalmas served as a surgeon on the Gallifet plantation in the northern plain. His is the only known account of religious ceremony that occurred at Bois-Caïman just prior to the August 21 insurrection. He later escaped the island and sought refuge in the United States.

as they moved from plantation to plantation. The first ship carrying news and refugees arrived on September 10, 1791, after just 15 days at sea. As the sloop Polly entered Charleston's port, passengers told of "a very alarming insurrection of the mulattoes and negroes" that had resulted in the destruction of sixty-four plantations and the killing by whites and soldiers of "all the negroes who fell in their way, amounting, by the Friday following, to the number of 15,000."¹⁰¹

The refugees on the Polly proved to be just the first of many who would arrive in the years to come. Ship after ship docked and filled the city with destitute people seeking asylum from the storms of slave insurrection. Charleston was not the only city where white colonists, *gens de couleur*, and slaves from Saint Domingue sought asylum; numerous cities along the Atlantic seaboard welcomed them. However, the important economic ties combined with the social similarities and close proximity meant that the experiences of refugees to Charleston were somewhat unique.

When the first refugees arrived in Charleston in September 1791, the city's residents had no idea of the scope of the destruction that would engulf their Caribbean neighbor over the next two decades. Between 1791 and 1809 four major waves of refugees fled into Charleston's port, each driven by political unrest. The earliest refugees recognized that the political situation in their colonial home was reaching a boiling point and began preparing to relocate before the slave insurrection began in August 1791. These refugees were able to make plans, financial and material, that assisted in their smooth transitions. They often brought money, valuable property, slaves, and even letters of introduction which helped them to make important social and professional contacts. Later refugees were not as fortunate as they often fled with little warning and

¹⁰¹ CGDA, September 12, 1791.

no preparation. The first wave of these refugees arrived just after the 1791 slave insurrection, followed by a second wave that fled during the 1793 burning of Cap Français. The third group escaped at the end of 1803 just before Saint Domingue made the transition from being a colony of France to being the independent republic of Haiti, and the final influx occurred in late 1809 after Napoleon declared war on Spain which resulted in the forced migration of all Saint Dominguans who had sought asylum in Cuba earlier in the Haitian Revolution.

One early refugee who was able to build a successful life after immigration was Jean Louis Polony. Fleeing a mere six days after the violence began in August 1791, he arrived on the sloop Polly along with a number of other passengers seeking safety. Polony, a native of France, received his training as a medical doctor at the Université de Montpellier. Prior to the unrest in Saint Domingue, he held the position of Inspector-General of the King's hospitals there. According to his lengthy obituary that appeared in Charleston's *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, he contributed extensively to study on the treatment of "diseases incidental to warm climates" and even had a working relationship with Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, often called the father of natural history.¹⁰²

Once in South Carolina Polony was able to accrue a fairly large estate although he had mortgaged much of it by the time of his death in September of 1805 to a fellow refugee, Madame Marie Laurent Thérèse Leaumont de Lomenie.¹⁰³ Two large sales

¹⁰² *CGDA*. September 27, 1805.

¹⁰³ Jean Louis Polony, Will, September 9, 1805. Will Book D, Charleston, SC. Madame Marie Laurent Therese Leaumont de Lomenie, Inventory, October 6 1806, Charleston, South Carolina. A letter appeared in the *CGDA*, October 24, 1793, describing the appropriate treatment of Yellow Fever. The only signature that appeared was "Un Medicin de les Iles;" but from the evidence in Polony's obituary, it is likely he was the writer.

occurred during the settling of the estate, and announcements of these give a clue as to the kinds of resources he possessed. In addition to farm animals, one advertised sale included sixty slaves, two hundred and forty-nine physics, chemistry, agriculture, and medical books, and a lot in Charleston containing an eleven room house. A final sale occurred over three years after his death and included his plantation on the Stono River outside of Charleston.¹⁰⁴ For later arriving refugees such wealth was much more difficult to attain.

Another such colonist who arrived early in the Saint Dominguan conflict was Jean-Baptiste de Caradeux.¹⁰⁵ Seeing that the increasing unrest might force him to flee, he sent some of his possessions to Charleston in advance of his exodus from the colony. Finally, in 1792 at the age of fifty, he left the island for the United States accompanied by his children, household servants and their children, his widowed sister Marie-Louise, an overseer's daughter, and about twenty-five slaves.¹⁰⁶ Using a few diamonds he brought with him, he was able to purchase a plantation in St. Timothy's parish, South Carolina, in

¹⁰⁴ *CGDA*, January 15, 1807; *Oracle*, Charleston, South Carolina, February 2, 1807; *CGDA*, November 2, 1808. There was also a petition in Charleston's District Court concerning the estate of Polony. M.R.C.D. Menude claimed that she came from Saint Domingue with Polony in 1791, and he encouraged her to bring "with her whatever funds she could command, out of her Estate, which was, at that time, very considerable." She alleged that he used her funds totaling \$17,239 from the sale of her coffee crop "towards the payment of [his] House, Plantation & Negroes" in South Carolina. In this appeal to the court she asserts that in spite of the fact that his estate owes \$30,000 to other creditors, she should be paid first. No statement of the result of her petition was recorded.

¹⁰⁵ His surname is sometimes spelled "Caradeuc."

¹⁰⁶ Mabel L. Webber, "Copy of some Loose Pages found among the Manigault Papers," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 40 (1939), 15. According to the account given to Dr. Gabriel Manigault, Caradeux arrived in the United States in 1797; however, his tombstone at St. Thomas Church indicates that he arrived in 1792. This would be more consistent with his economic status as he was able to flee with slaves and diamonds. The 1800 Census lists Caradeux as the owner of 25 slaves.

1797, and lived there until his death on May 25, 1810.¹⁰⁷ By all accounts he was able to resume a successful lifestyle with the resources he brought to South Carolina.

Interestingly, the 1800 census lists that he owned twenty-five slaves. This likely indicates that he was not forced to sell any of those he brought from Saint Domingue, but he also did not increase his holdings once he purchased his South Carolina plantation.¹⁰⁸

Events in the summer of 1793 ended these types of situations as residents of Saint Domingue's northern port city fled fire, blood, and chaos, resulting in the second and largest wave of refugees to the United States. On June 20, 1793, Cap Français, St. Domingue's primary northern port, became chaotic as tension between the colony's civil commissioners Étienne Polverel and Léger-Félicité Sonthonax and the newly appointed governor of the colony, General François-Thomas Galbaud, came to a head. Galbaud had arrived in St. Domingue in early May 1793 with plans to deal harshly with the insurgent slave population only to find that the civil commissioners had formed alliances with the *gens de couleur* and had taken steps that appeared to be in the direction of general emancipation of the slaves. In a last ditch effort to avoid being transported back to France because of his differences with the civil commissioners, Galbaud led a large group of sailors in an attack on the civil commissioners that culminated in the burning of Cap Français and precipitated the fleeing of thousands of colonists and slaves to the coastal towns of the United States.¹⁰⁹ Charleston, South Carolina, alone saw an estimated five

¹⁰⁷ A detailed study of Caradeaux's life appears in David P. Geggus, "The Caradeaux and Colonial Memory," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. by David P. Geggus (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001): 231-246.

¹⁰⁸ United States Census 1800, HeritageQuest online, <Accessed April 11, 2012>.

¹⁰⁹ Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). This book utilizes numerous colonial records and provides the first substantial account of the colonial politics that led to the freeing of St. Domingue's slaves.

hundred white men arrived in the immediate aftermath, and this number does not include white women, free people of color, or accompanying slaves. Their arrival profoundly altered the character of Saint Dominguan immigration to the United States.¹¹⁰ No longer were Saint Domingans arriving after careful planning, instead they were refugees fleeing for their lives.

Passage from Cap François only required about fifteen days at sea, yet these were often just as horrifying as the days of fighting they had endured in June. One ship which left Cap François on July 28, 1793, was the brigantine Thomas under the command of Francis Peyrinnaut . Carrying about one hundred white passengers and sixty-one “negroes and mulattoes,” the ship traveled in the direction of Charleston. During the first day of its voyage, the ship encountered the hostile sloop Susannah. The Susannah’s crew, under the leadership of Francis Tucker and sailing under the British flag, fired on the Thomas twice and brought the ship to anchor.¹¹¹ Tucker and his crew then boarded the ship and “began to overhawl (*sic*) and plunder the baggage of the passengers of their money and plate.” The next day, the pirates continued to rob the terrified passengers and

¹¹⁰ David P. Geggus, ed. *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2001), 232. Refugees actually arrived over the course of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), but the majority came during 1793 and early 1794. George D. Terry, “A Study of the Impact of the French Revolution and the Insurrections in Saint-Domingue Upon South Carolina: 1790-1805” (Master’s Thesis, University of South Carolina, 1975) provides a nice synopsis of reports of the number of refugees in Charleston as well as a brief examination of death records that include immigration information.

¹¹¹ Privateering on the high seas was a enormous problem for ships in the early republican era. International law stated that a country’s ships could seize those of another country if the attacking country believed a ship carried cargo or subjects of an enemy country. Tucker was sailing under the British flag, Britain and France were at war, and he felt justified in attacking this ship bearing an American flag because he suspected it carried Frenchmen and French resources. While on the surface this was a tool of war, more often than not these maritime laws only served as a front for piracy. For addition discussion on this and its impact on Charleston and the United States during the early republican era see Alderson, *This Bright Era of Happy Revolutions : French Consul Michel-Ange-Bernard Mangourit and International Republicanism in Charleston, 1792-1794*; Melvin H. Jackson, *Privateers in Charleston, 1793-1796 : An Account of a French Palatinate in South Carolina* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press : for sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1969).

removed a number of slaves and free persons of color from the ship. Peyrinnaut, approaching the attacking ship's captain, demanded payment to cover the passage of the kidnapped people of color as this would be due when the Thomas reached Charleston. Tucker, unwilling to comply with this request, instead issued a statement to the Thomas' master attesting to the plundering of his ship and giving account of the stolen objects and kidnapped people. He listed thirty-three slaves, one of which was pregnant, four enslaved children, and two free people of color. Such a document constituted a compromise between the two captains and cost Tucker no money but gave Peyrinnaut proof of what transpired during the voyage. In addition to these persons, passengers lost numerous silver objects and currency they were attempting to transport to America to help with their resettlement. Thirty-five passengers affirmed the accuracy of Tucker's report by signing the inventory indicating they had lost valuable property.¹¹²

This valuable report demonstrates several important details about emigration from Saint Domingue. First, even though these refugees left in the immediate aftermath of the conflict at Cap Français, they still attempted to bring items of value with them. Most reported losing between one and three slaves, and these were likely trusted family servants. The slaves on the inventory were African-born as their owners carefully recorded their ethnicity in the piracy inventory. Secondly, silver tableware and coins were logically the most common objects stolen as they would have been easy to transport and sell. A number of passengers even remarked on the excellent conditions of these items suggesting that they selected their best, and therefore, most valuable for the trip. Most of the travelers recognized that return to their island homes would be difficult; and,

¹¹² *SGSC*, September 7, 1793. *CGDA*, August 16, 1793. A report was filed immediately after the ship arrived at port indicated that the captain and crew of the *Susannah* removed thirty-five "prime slaves" and "upwards of 60,000 crowns in cash and plate."

if such return were ever possible, their possessions on the island would likely be no more. Thirdly, escape did not mean an end of physical danger or even death. After the initial reports about the pirate attack on the *Thomas* appeared, further details emerged concerning the horror refugees on board experienced. When Tucker and his crewmen boarded the *Thomas*, a slave woman was nursing the child of white refugee. They quickly “tore the nurse from the infant” in spite of the “supplication of the mother, who upon bended knees and gushing tears entreated them to desist.” However, they paid her no mind and carried the nurse away. Having no one to feed her infant, the mother watched her baby die in the ensuing days.¹¹³

Passengers fleeing Saint Domingue did not only fall victim to robbery and violence but were also caught in the middle of various attacks on other ships by privateers. One such ship was the schooner *Eliza*. Carrying twenty-eight French passengers, she set sail for the United States on the morning of July 17, 1793, with a companion ship, the brig *Mary*. The first night at sea, a privateer from Jamaica named David Harris attacked and boarded the ship, “broke open our hatches... and took out a considerable part of our cargo, which consisted of hides” and continued his assault on the vulnerable passengers by robbing their trunks. About the same time, another ship appeared in sight, and Harris ordered the *Eliza* to chase it. As the *Eliza* approached Harris’ next victims, the *Eliza*’s passengers recognized this ship as the *Mary* with which they had left Saint Domingue. The two ships dropped anchor near one another, and the robbers recommenced their searches of both ships. This second ship had one hundred and fifty French passengers, presumably white, and an unknown number of passengers of color. The pirates stole five slaves and “drank most of the passengers’ wine.” Finally, an

¹¹³ *CGDA*, August 19, 1793.

end seemed to have come to this ordeal as both ships received permission to proceed on their travels. No sooner had this occurred than they encountered another privateer, the schooner *Brothers*, whose captain boarded the *Eliza* and “roared like a madman and took possession of the vessel.” He refused to give account for the source of his authority but declared that he often found the best “pickings out of other’s leavings.” A second round of pillaging on the *Eliza* began as several other privateer ships arrived on the scene the next day. They were robbed again and lost another five hundred dollars. They finally escaped and were relieved to have “lost none of their clothes, except a few handkerchiefs.”¹¹⁴

In some cases, the sailors trusted by refugees to provide them safe passage actually collaborated with attacking privateers. One such account appeared in a Philadelphia newspaper stating that, upon arrival in port, the master, the mate, and two crewmen were under arrest for betraying their destitute passengers.¹¹⁵ Attacks of ships on the high seas like these were not a new factor during the era of the French Revolution; however, increased conflict in Europe exacerbated the prevalence of such incidents by ships known as privateers. International marine laws allowed a privately owned ship to accept missions from a sovereign state whereby the ship’s crew would attack and seize cargo from the ships of the sponsoring nation’s enemies. A lack of regulation of privateer ships and their crews allowed for gross misuses of power. Sponsoring nations recognized this practice as an inexpensive way to wage war, and the eruptions of

¹¹⁴ *Columbian Herald*, August 24, 1793.

¹¹⁵ *CGDA*, August 24, 1793. While this account applied to a ship that docked in Philadelphia, its presence in a Charleston newspaper is significant. Such a situation could easily have happened to refugees who arrived in Charleston, but more importantly such a report helped to elicit feelings of pity and sympathy for arriving Saint Domingans regardless of their city of debarkation.

numerous European wars in the midst of the French Revolution made privateering more prevalent during the 1790s. For the French Republic, the practice provided much needed financial gain while striking a blow at France's enemies, and provided similar benefits for France's enemies.¹¹⁶ Those destitute souls fleeing Cap Français in the summer of 1793 certainly were aware of the risks of taking to the high seas. The fact that they fled in spite of these dangers indicates even further that their circumstances at home were unbearable.

The terror these events caused only added to the horror the passengers were fleeing. The frequency with which these attacks occurred during the summer months of 1793 suggests that privateers recognized the dire plight of Saint Domingue's colonists and saw their escape from the island as an opportunity for acquiring vast resources for themselves and their sponsoring countries. Had these privateers not taken such advantage of the refugees, many would have arrived with resources they could have easily sold. However, many lost all they had, and they appeared on the Carolina coast with grave needs which the people of Charleston, South Carolina, and the United States had to meet.¹¹⁷

New arrivals, whether they came to South Carolina at the beginning of the slave insurrection in 1791 or following the fall of Cap Français in 1793, were fleeing because of unrest around them. Clearly, personal attacks drove their choice to flee. Years after Jean Baptist Cardeux and his wife fled to Charleston, their daughter recalled having been "a prisoner in the hands of the blacks" on the island. The family's captors repeatedly "threatened [them] with death and [they] suffered many privations as they were moved

¹¹⁶ Jackson, v-vi.

¹¹⁷ British privateers were attacking numerous ships leaving Cap Français in July 1793.

from place to place.” Eventually, a group of whites rescued them by attacking the insurgents.¹¹⁸ John Peter Chazal, another refugee who came to Charleston, reported efforts to hide himself and his sons in a cave near Cap Français. A black woman secured food and supplies for them in a variety of ways: some acquired from his wife and daughter, others resulted from bartering freely growing bananas for vegetables and meat at the market, and even others coming from King Christophe who was a longtime friend of the Chazal family.¹¹⁹ The trauma of the events in Saint Domingue was not confined to one side of the Chazal family. Dr. Chazal’s wife’s family also experienced trauma in St. Domingue. Her grandparents lived near Port au Prince when the insurrection began. Her grandfather was the victim of a kidnapping, and “sometime afterwards, his head was suddenly thrown in her (grandmother’s) lap by some of the men who were passing by.” While historians have questioned the validity of numerous accounts of decapitation such as this, the fact that refugees told them to residents of Charleston impacted the refugees’ reception.

The third wave of refugees to arrive in Charleston began at the end of 1803. From late 1801 the plight of whites still in Saint Domingue became increasingly precarious, and this ultimately precipitated the fleeing of even more Saint Domingans to Charleston. In October 1801 an uprising on several plantations in the northern part of Saint Domingue resulted in Toussaint Louverture ordering the execution of his adopted nephew General Moïse who he believed was perpetuating violence. Moïse had long been

¹¹⁸ “Manigault Papers,” 16.

¹¹⁹ “Manigault Papers,” 19. Many accounts of the violence highlight the indiscriminate murder of all whites; women and children were as likely as men to be brutally slaughtered. This account does not explain why the men hid and the women did not, but clearly the women remained in the home. This serves as an excellent example of the variety of experiences Saint Domingans had during the slave insurrection.

critical of Louverture's labor policies that were aimed at restoring the economic prosperity the colony experienced prior to the slave uprising in 1791. For Louverture, the only way for Saint Domingue to regain its pre-revolutionary success was to return to the cultivation of valuable cash crops. Doing so, he argued, would award Saint Domingans financial profit as well as international respect that could only come from having an orderly society by western standards; such recognition required a functioning economy that produced a product desirable on the international market. Moïse, on the other hand, saw this as selling out to colonial oppressors who had enslaved so many.¹²⁰

Following Moïse's execution, Louverture issued his November 1801 declaration where he dealt harshly with his fellow Saint Domingans. He railed against laziness and raised vagrancy to the level of crime against the people and included a particularly harsh assessment of both the parents of Saint Domingue's young but also of the youthful population as a whole.¹²¹ He promised to execute any officer who tolerated such behavior and created a new system that forced former slaves to work the plantations. Perhaps the boldest part of this act was the redefining of the word "creole" as those who were born in Saint Domingue or in Africa. Anyone outside this group, termed "foreigners" or "metropolitans," had to have the appropriate documentation to avoid

¹²⁰ Dubois, *Avengers*, 247.

¹²¹ "Barely are they born than we see these same children with jewels and earrings, covered in rags, their clothing filthy, wounding the eyes of decency through their nudity. Thus they arrive at the age of twelve, without moral principles, without a skill, and with a taste for luxury and laziness as their only education. And since bad impressions are difficult to correct, it is certain beyond any doubt that they will be bad citizens, vagabonds, thieves. And if they are girls, then they are prostitutes all of them ready to follow the prompting of the first conspirator who will preach murder and pillage to them. It is upon such vile mothers and fathers, on students so dangerous, that the magistrates of the people must ceaselessly keep an open eye," wrote Toussaint Louverture in his proclamation of November 25, 1801. One can imagine that planters in the American South were relieved to hear of Toussaint's efforts to restore Saint Domingue's plantation system. After a decade of chaos, Toussaint, in spite of being a person of color, seemed to have finally gained control. Once this change occurred the United States could then engage in discussions regarding trade with the colony. For detailed descriptions of how these negotiations transpired see Brown; Tim Matthewson, "Jefferson and Haiti," *The Journal of Southern History* 61, no. 2 (1995).

deportation. This act transformed Saint Domingue's African-born majority into native Saint Domingans, an event that would eventually lead to the creation of the first black nation in the Western Hemisphere. On the surface this may appear to constitute a new form of liberty for the former slaves, one that might eventually lead to self-determination; however, the needs of the colony, according to Louverture, superseded individual rights. This shift became the first of many that eventually led to the elimination of whites from Saint Domingue.¹²² Such actions were not lost on Americans who followed these details as best they could through their newspapers, and gradually the refugees who had taken asylum in America began to realize that returning would never happen.

As Louverture issued his decree, Napoleon Bonaparte was also preparing to intervene in Saint Domingue. While scholars have debated his initial intentions, he eventually revealed that restoring slavery was his primary goal. He sent his brother-in-law General Charles Leclerc with over 80,000 French soldiers to regain control of the island. As the rebels fought France's soldiers, the issue of race became more and more polarizing. To be white became dangerous, and various black Saint Domingue leaders, slaughtered whites from time to time.¹²³

The armies of Napoleon under the leadership of General LeClerc met defeat and the French colony moved toward independence. White colonists who remained on the island had already experience much race warfare; independence could only mean an end to hopes of returning to the lifestyle and economy that prevailed prior to the start of the French Revolution. At the worst they feared for their lives as an all black government

¹²² Dubois, *Avengers*, 248-249.

¹²³ For an account of the violence that characterized Haiti's official beginning as an independent nation, see Peter S. Chazotte's account printed in Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution : Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 336-362.

formed. As a result, the well-traveled shipping lanes between Saint Domingue and Charleston began once again to transport Saint Domingueans away from their homeland and to the shores of America. This time the refugees held no illusions that they would be able to return and reclaim their possessions.

The fighting ended with the expulsion of what was left of France's army at the end of 1803. The first independent black nation in the Western Hemisphere was born, but the pains of childbirth were still audible. Dessalines, as the nation's new leader, issued a proclamation on January 1, 1804, that not only ended all hope refugees had of returning to Saint Domingue to reclaim their property but also paved the way for a difficult future for Haiti as the region's white governments refused the new nation official recognition. Dessalines' declaration pronounced extreme hatred of France and all Frenchmen, blaming them for the crimes of slavery and eliminating any avenues for a cooperative future between the new nation of Haiti and its former colonizer France.

While some refugees fled to the United States in 1803, an estimated 18,000 fled to nearby Cuba. This group after making great gains to re-establish themselves in Cuba, was forced to flee again in 1809 and constitute the final group of refugees to arrive in Charleston and other United States cities in 1809. Before examining this last migration, let us first explore their experiences in Cuba and the events that led to their exodus from Cuba.

Cuba in the early nineteenth century was a struggling colony of Spain, one with an underdeveloped agricultural economy that was in grave need of laborers. Since the outbreak of the Saint Domingue's slave insurrection, Cuban authorities had been concerned about similar slave violence occurring on their island. As a result they had

curbed African slave importation and worked to encourage white laborers to migrate from Spain and elsewhere. In spite of efforts to encourage industrious people to migrate, the economy failed to flourish. All of this changed with the arrival of the islands newest refugees. Instead of being a financial burden for Cuba as they often were in the United States, at least initially, the French invigorated sugar, coffee, and cotton plantations, taking possession of abandoned estates and even importing additional African slaves to meet labor demands. The economic success that Cuba experienced between 1803 and 1809 was largely due to the innovations of French refugees, but it also occurred as a result of the void left in international markets as coffee and sugar production on Hispaniola fell dramatically due to a decade of war. Using new methods developed by French chemists, the sugar industry expanded and thrived under the direction of Saint Dominguan refugees. According to one Cuba official, between 1790 and 1807 twenty water-driven sugar mills were built, nine remodeled and fourteen horse and ox-driven sugar mills constructed.¹²⁴ By 1809 the island's French residents had acquired much land, built houses, and were producing large crops for international export. In a typical year prior to the arrival of the French, Cuba's coffee production was about 8,000 *arrobres* (approximately 4,894 tons) per year. In 1805 production was at 80,000 *arrobres* and the next year rose to 300,000 *arrobres*.¹²⁵ All of this changed as political events in Europe took a turn for the worse.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ William R. Lux, "French Colonization in Cuba, 1791-1809," *The Americas* 29, no. 1 (1972): 59-60.

¹²⁵ Ibid; Ashli White, "The Limits of Fear: The Saint Dominguan Challenge to Slave Trade Abolition in the United States," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2, no. 2 (2004): 366.

¹²⁶ Lux: 58-60. Rebecca J. Scott, "Paper Thin: Freedom and Re-Enslavement in the Diaspora of the Haitian Revolution," *Law and History Review* 29, no. 4 (2011): 1061-1095. White, "The Limits of Fear: The Saint Dominguan Challenge to Slave Trade Abolition in the United States," 362-397.

Napoleon, in his efforts to conquer all of Europe, assumed control of the Spanish throne. Violence once again erupted all around the former Saint Domingans. Spaniards both in Europe and in Cuba rose in defense of their homeland and looked with fear toward the French in their midst. Riots broke out in the streets causing French speakers to fear for their lives. Violence against refugees was attributed to black Cubans. Like slave revolts in the United States and slave insurrection in Saint Domingue, news reports declared that the violence, while carried out by people of color, was inspired by whites who motivated blacks to action. Cuban officials and the military sought and arrested over two hundred believed to be responsible for the attacks, but many former Saint Domingans began to make preparations to leave Cuba. In late 1808 many began leaving Cuba and sought refuge in Haiti. By October nearly 2000 French formerly residing in Cuba had arrived at various Haitian ports and were turned away by General Pétion who controlled the northern portion of Haiti. By April 1809 the situation in Cuba had grown more desperate as Cuban cities, first Santiago and then Havana, began ordering their French residents to leave. Unable to return to Saint Domingue (now Haiti), they boarded ships to the United States, accompanied by their slaves. While refugees during the burning of Cap Français escaped with only a few trusted slaves per family, refugees leaving Cuba owned many more slaves. Their work in establishing sugar, coffee plantations meant they needed numerous slaves and likely purchased additional slaves during their time in Cuba. The majority of these last refugees went to New Orleans, but a small number arrived in Charleston.¹²⁷ Like previous refugees who sought help in the United States, their passage out of the Caribbean was once again difficult and perilous.

¹²⁷ *Aurora*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, April 13, 1809; *Supporter*, Chillicothe, Ohio, April 27, 1809; *Charleston Courier*, Charleston, South Carolina, November 4, 1808, White, "The Limits of Fear: The Saint Dominguan Challenge to Slave Trade Abolition in the United States," 367-368.

Their arrival meant that for a fourth time, South Carolinians had to deal with both massive needs on the part of the refugees and with their own fears of insurrection washing up on their shores.

In September 1804 while South Carolina was still receiving refugees generated by the storm of unrest in the Caribbean, the first hurricane in fifty-two years arrived on her shores. This storm was actually the convergence of two storms, one that, according to David Ramsay “commenced at the Caribbee Islands and proceeded northwestwardly” and the other which developed “at the northeast, and proceeded southwestwardly.” The two storms met at Charleston.¹²⁸ One can also describe the arrival of Saint Domingue’s refugees as a similar convergence of two storms. The Saint Domingans arrived out of the chaos of slave insurrection and encountered a society with fears of rebellion just bubbling below the surface. The combination of these realities was deeply disturbing for Charlestonians and their fellow South Carolinians

¹²⁸ Ramsay, 180.

CHAPTER 2: “FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YE GAVE ME MEAT:” ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF SAINT DOMINGUAN REFUGEES

Between 1791 and 1809 four waves of refugees from Saint Domingue washed up on America’s shores. The violence and chaos of life on the island of Hispaniola became successively more dangerous and forced them to leave. In most cases they were fleeing for their very lives. The immigrants included white planters, *gens de couleur* often of considerable means, and slaves. The amount of assistance each refugee required depended on the conditions under which he fled. For those who came early in the fighting between 1791 and the first half of 1793, little material assistance was necessary. For each group that arrived after the fall of Cap Français on June 20, 1793, people living in Charleston had to supply food, clothing, and shelter. In addition to these basic needs, all refugees regardless of social class or race had to find social acceptance in their new home as such acceptance was not only necessary for psychological reasons but also led to their being able to support themselves financially.

Beginning in July 1793 when the first ships carrying destitute refugees fleeing the burning of Cap Français arrived, locally prominent Charlestonians provided the leadership necessary to raise funds for their care. Over time, however, this type of aid declined, and the French refugee community began to assume the responsibility of helping their fellow Frenchmen who continued to flee the violence of Saint Domingue. Saint Dominguans and French émigrés, by assuming this responsibility, were able to demonstrate to the larger community that they were both dependable and benevolent,

characteristics which were necessary for assimilation. When the 1793 immigrants arrived, many Charlestonians expressed concern that they would continue to be a drain on the local economy by requiring ongoing assistance.

White Saint Domingans, regardless of when they came to South Carolina, had to rebuild their lives. This often meant that their new situations were quite different from those they had left behind. Even when they were able to transfer some of their resources to the United States, their new reality inevitably meant diminished wealth and social status. Still, in the midst of numerous obstacles, the white Saint Dominguan immigrant community gradually moved from accepting help from Charleston's longtime residents to being a community that cared for itself. This transition from receivers of aid to dispensers of assistance allowed the French speaking community to nurture a separate identity within English speaking Charleston while, at the same time, assuming a position alongside their English neighbors as equals. As they adopted similar techniques of fundraising that their native-born neighbors had employed, they demonstrated their ability to assimilate and also maintain their uniquely French identity.¹²⁹

All immigrants to a new nation face challenges upon arrival. They have to find places to live and work and require a social support system in order for the new nation to become a new home. The greater the refugees' financial and social resources are, the

¹²⁹ By assimilate I mean the ability to become enough like their neighbors in order to function without losing their unique character. Acculturation, on the other hand, is the giving up completely of one's culture in order to blend seamlessly into a new environment. Much early scholarship on these refugees argued that they disappeared rather quickly and lost their ethnic markers. The truth of this statement depends, in part, on what is meant by quickly. It is quite true that they did not retain an ethnic identity in the same ways that the Irish who immigrated during the Irish potato famine did or in the way that German or Italian immigrants to the upper Mid-West did. This is due to the differences in numbers and to the amount of immigration that was occurring at that time. French Saint Domingans entered a well-established largely British environment, so making a clear mark on that society was nearly impossible, but they did present an important voice in Charleston society at that time. Had they not appeared, foundational arguments about slavery, citizenship, and religious participation would have evolved quite differently.

more smoothly the process will go. For the first wave of refugees, those who fled Saint Domingue between 1791 and 1793, money was less of a problem. With time to prepare for their voyages, they were often able to transfer at least a portion of their wealth from their French colonial homes to their new residencies. Jean-Baptiste Caradeux was one such example of this as he sent sugar to the United States prior to fleeing. Due to the interruption of trade caused by the American Revolution, sugar was selling at exorbitant prices in the early 1790s. Based on the cost of sugar at the time, historians have estimated Caradeux's sugar produced \$24,000 for him to use to re-establish himself. In addition, he arrived with a cache of diamonds and approximately twenty-five slaves. These riches enabled him to purchase property in St. Thomas Parish and start a brick and lumber business.¹³⁰ Refugees such as Caradeux required little assistance from the local community and form the first group that could theoretically have assisted others coming to Charleston from Saint Domingue. Their numbers, however, were too small to address the multifaceted and numerous needs of the hundreds who arrived in the summer of 1793. This group had to have the help of well-established Charlestonians.

The second group of refugees arrived in the wake of chaos of slave insurrection and colonial warfare. The key event that sent them to seek ships off the island was the burning of Cap Français. By the second week of July 1793, ships began arriving in Charleston carrying news of violent destruction. The schooner Sally left Saint Domingue on June 24, 1793, just four days after violence erupted, and arrived in Charleston on July 9. Describing Cap Français, the captain announced the "compleat (*sic*) annihilation of

¹³⁰ "Manigault Papers," 15. David P. Geggus, "The Caradeux and Colonial Memory," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina, 2001), 231. Caradeux's obituary appeared in *Carolina Gazette*, Charleston, South Carolina, June 8, 1810.

that once beautiful and opulent city, by fire and sword.” While in Saint Domingue he reported he was unable anchor his ship close to the port but still witnessed the destruction of much merchandise and produce. He observed that those inhabitants who had managed to survive “repaired on board the vessels in the harbor, in a very destitute and miserable condition.” Numerous distressed people had approached him seeking passage off the island, but he could not help them as his ship was short on water and resupplying was unsafe.¹³¹ While his ship carried no refugees, many others quickly arrived in Charleston carrying the destitute passengers he described. Even before their arrival, Charlestonians associated the word “destitute” with their condition. This adjective became the most commonly employed descriptor of Saint Domingue’s refugees. In order for them to assimilate, they had to translate this image of destitution into one that could command respect from their American neighbors.

As Saint Dominguan immigrants entered the port city, the community quickly started to assemble resources to meet the vast needs they presented. Charlestonians opened their homes to the distressed until other arrangements were possible. In the early 1790s the city began a project to establish a large open air market in the area that became known as Market Street, but these plans had stalled by the time refugees began flooding the city. Charleston’s City Council announced in the *City Gazette* that it was “intending to fit up the New Market for the reception of distressed persons, from Cap Francois” and was accepting bids from bricklayers and carpenters. While records describing how long refugees resided at the market do not exist, we do know that efforts to refit the area to be

¹³¹ CGDA, July 10, 1793. This was only one day after the first ship arrived.

a market did not resume until 1804.¹³² In spite of these efforts to provide shelter for refugees, numerous needs still existed. While the city was working to provide housing, a concerted effort at fund raising was also developing. The manner in which this occurred indicates that aid societies that had long flourished among the middling classes were spreading to the upper classes in Charleston.

When early refugees arrived, Charleston was a city with a complicated social hierarchy. It boasted a large planter and merchant class that earned their money through rice and indigo, but the wealth of the city was not entirely dependent on these two crops. A large and diverse “middling sort” had developed over the course of the colonial era and consisted of people who earned their livings through such enterprises as real estate, construction, importation, sales, and craftsmanship. Over time developed close ties with one another due to their similar economic status and their involvement in dissenter churches. This middling sort possessed both the means and the desire to offer benevolence to those in need during the colonial era and formed societies in order to do so.¹³³

In Charleston two early examples of this were the South Carolina Society founded in 1751 and the Fellowship Society established in 1766. Membership of these two clubs

¹³² Nicholas Butler, blog post, <http://charlestonarchive.org/2010/01/27/refugees/#comments>, <Accessed September 8, 2010>. The city resumed construction on the area in 1804 by converting marsh area to useable land and adding to the available market sheds. On August 1, 1807, the new “Centre Market” opened. See also City Gazette, 19 August 1793.

¹³³ For an in depth discussion of the development of this “middling sort” and how it shaped the formation of not only Charleston, but also South Carolina, see chapter 5 of Emma Hart, *Building Charleston : Town and Society in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010). Hart explores the development of Charleston as more than just a city dependent on plantation crops. She argues that to view Charleston as simply a city founded and supported by a plantation economy misses the larger picture of Charleston as somewhat typical of other cities in the British Atlantic that developed thriving economies without staple crops. For all of these cities, a thriving urban middle class formed and contributed to the growth of physical structures, economic enterprises, and a work ethic rewarded by financial success.

“consisted not of the most opulent citizens, though many of these thereafter joined it, but of persons in modest stations, who held it an essential duty to relieve one another in such a manner as their circumstances would admit.”¹³⁴ As the century progressed, the benevolent movement expanded to include the German Friendly Society which offered assistance to newly arriving German immigrants and the Brown Fellowship Society which originally formed in 1790 as a burial society for elite free people of color in Charleston and also provided financial assistance for members and their families.¹³⁵ By the time refugees arrived from Cap Français, Charleston and other American cities had numerous benevolent organizations in place to address all sorts of community needs. Membership in these organizations had spread to include virtually all sectors of the free urban landscape. When needs of arriving Saint Domingans became known, Charleston stepped forward to offer assistance. This time the key players were some of Charleston’s more important political and economic leaders.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Andrew Hewitt, *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia* (London: A. Donaldson, 1779), 299, quoted in *Ibid.*, 143. The South Carolina Society was originally the French Society with an entirely French Huguenot membership. Shortly after its incorporation by the South Carolina Provincial Assembly in 1751, the membership voted to change the name to the South Carolina Society and admit non-French members. South Carolina Society Hall, "History and Purpose" <http://www.southcarolinasocietyhall.com/history-and-purpose/> (accessed September 1 2014).

¹³⁵ Brown Fellowship Society, "Rules and Regulations of the Brown Fellowship Society Established 1 November 1790," (1844).

¹³⁶ The reasons the leaders in this organization were different from previous benevolent groups are likely numerous. The need was certainly larger than at any point prior to this. The immigration from Saint Domingue in 1793 and after has been called the first modern international refugee crisis because of its scope and size, Meadows, "Engineering Exile: Social Networks and the French Atlantic Community, 1789-1809," 67. Because of these large numbers of needy people, a large amount of money had to be raised. This may have been easier to accomplish with well-known and well-respected men serving as the administrators of the money. One example of this was the presence of Edward Penman who was the president of the Bank of South Carolina at the time. Another possible explanation for the content of this society concerns the changes in political alliances following the American Revolution. France had contributed money and ground troops to assist in the nation’s defeat of Great Britain, and their presence was responsible in large part to the colonists’ successes. Helping the French was both a political as well as moral responsibility. Finally, offering assistance to poor Saint Domingans may have been a means of maintaining the status quo. South Carolinians had long expressed concern that poor whites might mix with

In July 1793, an announcement appeared in the local newspaper declaring that “under the patronage of some of the most respectable characters of South Carolina” plans were in the works for creating “The Benevolent Society” whose duty would be to solicit donations for the relief of “foreigners of every description who may come to this country.”¹³⁷ The Benevolent Society planned to seek contributions from “every county in the state,” and the article’s writer believed “every class of citizens” would be eager to participate as donors, particularly since most felt a kinship with the French following the assistance they rendered America during the recent war for independence.¹³⁸

With large numbers arriving daily, the Benevolent Society quickly began its work which included more than just raising money. While some of those in need of assistance were already in Charleston proper, others needed transport from nearby Georgetown, South Carolina, where ships arriving from the Caribbean regularly docked. By July 11 the Benevolent Society had already sent “vessels to Georgetown to fetch them hither”

slaves to produce insurrections. During the colonial era in rural South Carolina, local elites who served on vestries (governing boards of Anglican parishes) administered poor relief for rural whites. The amount of poor relief was much higher in South Carolina than in other areas of the British Empire, and there are many possible reasons for this. Clergy constantly preached sermons about Christian duty to help the less advantaged, so a combination of guilty and authentic desire to do what was right may have driven vestries to offer abundant assistance. Another intriguing possibility, however, is that elite whites in rural areas may have been generous with poor whites in order to create an alliance of white citizens. Since Bacon’s Rebellion in Virginia in 1676, whites had worried about the dangers alliances between slaves and poor whites might produce. In addition, as Tom Lockley states, “to allow poor whites to subsist on the same meager rations as slaves... would have suggested that whites existed on the same basic human levels as the enslaved, thereby weakening the racial basis of slavery.” Tim Lockley, “Rural Poor Relief in Colonial South Carolina,” *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 4 (2005): 971. Most of these refugees had not always been destitute, but refusing to help them might send them into the streets of Charleston looking no better off than the city’s slaves. Those who guided the actions of the Benevolent Society could surely look at these former planters and see themselves.

¹³⁷ *CGDA*, July 19, 1793. In spite of this general claim, the needs of Saint Domingans proved so great that they remained the sole recipients of the society throughout its existence.

¹³⁸ *CGDA*, July 19, 1793. In spite of the Society’s statements to the contrary, there is no evidence that they did in fact raise money for anyone other than the refugees from Saint Domingue. The reason for this is likely that at its beginning the membership had little idea of the vast needs the refugees from Saint Domingue would have or that continued waves of refugees would continue to arrive for so many years. Saint Domingans simply took too many resources and required assistance for too long for others to benefit.

and prepared for lodgings and other “necessities of life.”¹³⁹ Efforts at securing funds were not haphazard. The city was divided into fifteen districts and each assigned a man to oversee donation collection.¹⁴⁰ Since the primary goal of the Benevolent Society was fund raising, plans for ensuring fair and honest administration were essential. In response to this, the Benevolent Society called a public meeting of all contributors for July 26 where the attendees formed a committee for administering what grew to be a large outpouring of assistance. Those chosen included John Huger, Charleston’s intendant (mayor); Henry William Desaussure and his father Daniel Desaussure; Edward Penman, a respected merchant and trustee with the Bank of South Carolina; Dr. David Ramsay, noted physician and early historian of the American Revolution; Edward Rutledge, signer of the Declaration of Independence; and Joseph Vesey, a merchant who later gained fame as the former owner of Denmark Vesey.¹⁴¹ By the end of July, the Benevolent Society had already collected pledges of 1700 pounds sterling, of which 1272 were paid immediately.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ *CGDA*, July 13, 1793.

¹⁴⁰ *CGDA*, July 17, 1793. The fifteen were John Huger (the city intendant), Edward Penman, H.W. Desaussure, Dr. D. Ramsay, Edward Darrell, James Gregory, Edward Rutledge, Adam Tunno, Nat. Russel, Daniel Desaussure, Joseph Vesey, Archibald Brown, John J. Pringle, Theod. Gaillard, and Dr. T. Harris.

¹⁴¹ *CGDA*, July 13 and July 17, 1793. Others involved in the collection of funds were Edward Darrell, James Gregory, Adam Tunno, Nathaniel Russel, Archibald Brown, John J. Pringle, Theodore Gaillard, and Dr. T. Harris. The official list of trustees included John Huger, Edward Darrell, Edward Penman, Rawlins Lowndes, Nathaniel Russell, James Gregory, Edward Rutledge, John Matthews, Daniel Desaussure, Henry William Desaussure, and Joseph Vesey. *CGDA*, August 4, 1817; February 12, 1795; May 21, 1795. Edward Rutledge was widely known for his concern for the poor. David Ramsay referred to him as “eminently the friend of the distressed, and thought nothing too much for their accommodation and relief.” David Ramsay, *Ramsay’s History of South Carolina, from Its First Settlement in 1670 to the Year 1808* (Newberry, S. C.: W. J. Duffie, 1858), Vol. 2, 273. For brief history of the life of Joseph Vesey and how he came to own the slave known as Telemaque (later commonly spelled Denmark), see Douglas R. Egerton, *He Shall Go out Free : The Lives of Denmark Vesey*, Rev. and updated ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 13-15.

¹⁴² *Columbian Herald*, July 23, 1793, and July 30, 1793. *Baltimore Evening Post*, September 18, 1793, quoted in White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*, 65.

A close identification with the distressed as well Christian beliefs drove many Charlestonians to respond to the needs of the arriving Saint Dominguans. One appeal for women to contribute emphasized the presence of “fatherless children and helpless women” among the distressed. The writer called on readers to “fancy ourselves one of them; a husband perhaps, or other dear relation murdered, helpless children, looking up to our empty hand for food; driven from affluence, from our comfortable houses, and our native land, to depend on the charity of strangers.” The writer continued by pointing out that the Bible teaches the necessity of a benevolent response to the poor and that to do so would pave the way for a “heavenly invitation” at the end of life. The writer concluded her appeal with the words of Matthew 25 where Jesus promised eternal life. “For I was hungry and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked, and ye clothed me.”¹⁴³ This scripture effectively described the Saint Dominguans arriving daily.

Printed announcements such as this were enough to spur many individuals to make donations, but public appeals in churches also generated funds. The collection of money in churches prior to the arrival of Saint Domingue’s emigrants typically fell into one of three categories: the selling and renting of pews, pre-announced collections at the doors of the church, or sermons given to benefit particular needy causes.¹⁴⁴ The first two types of collections occurred in order to meet the financial needs of the church and served primarily to provide the pastor’s salary. Churches only allowed benefit sermons in order to raise funds to assist deceased clergymen’s families or to help orphan children attend

¹⁴³ *Columbian Herald*, September 10, 1793. The letter printed here is dated August 23, 1793.

¹⁴⁴ A “pew rent” was actually a pew tax. Those who owned pews paid an annual fee in order for the church to have a regular income.

schools such as the College of South Carolina. This last policy changed with the Saint Dominguan arrival as they constituted the first group not previously affiliated with the church to receive such aid.¹⁴⁵

Beginning in September 1793, numerous churches began offering sermons for the benefit of refugees. Such events were not limited to the churches where refugees worshiped but occurred in churches of nearly every denomination in Charleston. Beginning with the mother church of South Carolina, St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, on September 29, and continuing into December, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Calvinists (through the Independent Church), Catholics, Lutherans, and Baptists hosted sermons "for the benefit of the unfortunate sufferers, who have arrived in this city, from St. Domingo."¹⁴⁶ At the first sermon attendees donated more than one hundred guineas, and more money continued to pour in through the autumn months.¹⁴⁷ These fund raising efforts were quite successful, and the regularity with which they occurred kept the plight of Saint Domingans before the Charleston community until the end of 1793.

Another avenue for securing funds for refugees occurred through the prestigious St. Cecilia Society. Founded in 1766, this exclusive club included the wealthiest and most prominent citizens of Charleston. The society regularly hosted concerts for its members and provided the elite of Charleston with access to high quality

¹⁴⁵ This conclusion emerges from a review of vestry minutes of such churches as St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, St. Mathew's Episcopal Church, St. John's German Lutheran Church, the Independent Church, and the Circular Church, all located in Charleston, South Carolina.

¹⁴⁶ For advertisements of these sermons, see *CGDA*, September 28, October 12, October 17, November 1, November 15, December 14, and December 19, 1793.

¹⁴⁷ *CGDA*, October 3, 1793, and October 14, 1793.

performances.¹⁴⁸ In order to maintain an appropriate decorum, the club's leadership enforced strict rules regarding who could attend performances and how attendees should act during events. In order to attend, one had to be a member in good standing. Those visiting the city were allowed admission without membership since they were presumably in town for a short time. As refugees began arriving, the St. Cecilia Society offered concerts to benefit the Saint Dominguan cause. Out of their empathy for the refugees, the Society also allowed them to attend under their rule about visitors. Quickly, this became a problem as managers for the Society realized that these Frenchmen were not going to leave the city anytime soon and would not likely be able to meet the rigorous requirements for formal membership. Such a situation led in October 1793 to the Society's officers restating and clarifying the attendance rules at sponsored events. In an announcement in the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, the Society reiterated its constitutional provision that "no foreigner can be admitted after three months residence in the city." Members had expressed concern about the status of Saint Dominguans as it appeared they were receiving preferential treatment not available to other American men.¹⁴⁹

The presence of such a decree in the newspaper demonstrated the conflict wealthy Charlestonians faced as they encountered Saint Dominguans. On the one hand, these

¹⁴⁸ Membership was not inexpensive. Each member paid an annual subscription rate of \$30 per year which would have been approximately \$515 in 2005. In addition, new initiates paid a membership fee which would have been equivalent to over \$800 in 2005. Nicholas Michael Butler, *Votaries of Apollo: The St. Cecilia Society and the Patronage of Concert Music in Charleston, South Carolina 1766-1820* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina, 2007), xi, 90.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 21 and 85. *CGDA*, October 26, 1793. Initially, concert series presented by groups like the St. Cecilia Society were restricted to men, but around the middle of the eighteenth century women were encouraged to attend as the guests of members. Those running these concerts believed that women were "the arbiters of proper behavior and taste in mixed company," as Nicholas Butler states. By having women present, many argued men would behave better.

refugees had many of the same social graces as their American counterparts and were used to a similar lifestyle. They appreciated good music, knew how to carry themselves in polite society, and were well-traveled having friends and acquaintances on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, their current situation was quite different from their American counterparts. They no longer possessed great riches, were of foreign birth, and had little chance of returning to their pre-revolutionary status. Elite South Carolinians recognized that given a violent slave insurrection their plight could resemble that of the Saint Domingans. The conflict over attendance at St. Cecilia events was really about a desire to show empathy for fellow slave owners as well as a concern to maintain careful enforcement of social restrictions.

In addition to seeking monetary donations or hosting events designed to raise funds, the Benevolent Society also requested gifts in kind. One of the original announcements concerning the formation of the Benevolent Society declared that “every article of produce will be accepted.”¹⁵¹ While detailed accounts of the items this appeal produced do not exist, members of the committee published regular announcements in the newspapers into the winter of 1793-94 asking for donations of fire wood. As proof that the Benevolent Society carried through with its the plans to appeal for help from all counties of the state, some gifts to refugees from outside of Charleston did arrive. One such respondent living on the Enoree River one hundred and eighty miles from Charleston sent “a considerable quantity of flour” for the needy immigrants.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Meadows, "Engineering Exile: Social Networks and the French Atlantic Community, 1789-1809," 101.

¹⁵¹ *CGDA*, July 9, 1793.

¹⁵² *CGDA*, November 9, 1793.

As time passed, however, Charlestonians began to realize that the needs were too great for the city to handle without assistance from the state. By December the South Carolina House of Representatives, following a request from the governor, approved funds of twenty-five hundred pounds; and members of the legislature elected to surrender their pay for the fall session so that the donation could increase by another five hundred pounds.¹⁵³ In addition to cash from the state treasury, South Carolina also created a Vendue Tax which added an extra fee on property sold in Charleston during 1794. The legislature awarded these funds to the Benevolent Society for distribution to the refugees.¹⁵⁴ The willingness of the state's government to grant funds to refugees demonstrated both a mounting concern that the city of Charleston could not handle the problem alone and that the conditions of the refugees were not going to improve in the short run.

The realization that this was to be an ongoing problem provoked some to propose long-term ways of assisting the immigrants with rebuilding their lives. As early as August 1793 John Huger, Charleston's intendant (mayor) and the chairman of the Benevolent Society, published a letter in the local press stating that "the evil [of what occurred in St. Domingue] has exceeded expectations, and, unless we were witness to it, would exceed belief" as "vessels are daily arriving from the Cape, bringing new objects

¹⁵³ *CGDA*, December 25, 1793. A House committee met with the Committee of the Senate in order to negotiate the tax bill for the coming year. Out of this conference a request for state funds and the new vendue tax resulted. See South Carolina. General Assembly. House of Representatives. and Michael E. Stevens, *Journals of the House of Representatives, 1792-1794*, 1st ed., The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia, S.C.: Published for the South Carolina Dept. of Archives and History by the University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 474-475.

¹⁵⁴ Governor's Messages, S 165009, Message 0577, November 30, 1793; *CGDA*, December 25, 1793. The report of the Senate actions on December 7, 1793 appeared in the *Columbian Herald*, December 10, 1793. Appeal for state assistance also appeared in a speech made by Gov. Moultrie and reprinted in the *Baltimore Daily Intelligencer*, Baltimore, Maryland, December 28, 1793. *Ibid.*, 427-428, 474-475. After consideration by a Committee in the Senate, this amount was reduced to 2000 pounds.

of pity to relate new disasters.” He continued by asserting that the refugees were not exaggerating the trauma they had endured and that their needs were authentic. He called on citizens of South Carolina “to make uncommon exertions on this afflicted occasion.”¹⁵⁵ Such efforts were justified, and he believed Charlestonians were more than capable of meeting the challenges for the city.

Another correspondent to the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* in October recognized that, even though the Benevolent Society had collected a substantial amount of money, the profound problems of Charleston’s newest residents were not over. The funds were simply supplying a short-term solution when the refugees really needed help in securing their own livelihoods. The anonymous writer, who called himself “Benevolus,” stated that without a more extensive plan, the refugees “will undoubtedly perish.” Reminding his readers that many in Charleston came to America because of Louis XIV’s persecution of the Huguenots, he recognized that refugees fell into two categories: the independent people who could care for themselves and the dependent ones who required assistance from their neighbors. The former were of little concern, but the latter challenged Charleston to develop a plan to move these people to an independent state of being. In order to do this, he proposed that the dependent immigrants receive a tract of land in South Carolina’s back country where they could work the fertile soil to provide food and eventually income for their families. He suggested that the Benevolent Committee reallocate the money they were spending on boarding houses in Charleston in order to pay for the initial costs of relocation. The current system of paying refugees’ rent only meant that the money was gone at the end of the month with a new payment looming for the next month. By assisting them in becoming productive citizens, the need

¹⁵⁵ CGDA, August 23, 1793.

for aid would eventually end; and the refugees “would have some prospect of becoming a happy people.”¹⁵⁶ While this suggestion may have seemed like a reasonable pathway toward assimilation for the refugees, no evidence exists to indicate that anyone acted on this idea. Perhaps it was too reminiscent of the ways that South Carolinians dealt with Acadian refugees during the winter of 1755-56.

During the period just prior to the French and Indian War, South Carolina received nine hundred and forty-two French speaking Acadians that the British forcibly removed from Nova Scotia because of fears that they would cooperate with the French against the English. Upon their arrival in South Carolina, the governor and legislature, in spite of concern about the danger such a large number of French aliens posed, refused to provide assistance for them to return to France. After much discussion, the only viable solution seemed to be to disperse them to various parishes outside of Charleston. Unwelcomed in each of the areas, they represented not only a large expense for the church wardens charged with providing them with food and shelter, but many also carried diseases resulting from their poor living conditions. Three-fourths died or fled the colony, and by 1760 only two hundred and ten remained. A mere forty-two of these were men; the remaining one hundred and sixty-eight were women and children who were likely unable to support themselves.¹⁵⁷ Readers of the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* did not embrace this as a viable solution, however. The cost of setting up a person for agricultural pursuits entailed much higher than just the cost of acquiring land.

¹⁵⁶ CGDA, October 14, 1793.

¹⁵⁷ Marguerite B. Hamer, "The Fate of the Exiled Acadians in South Carolina," *The Journal of Southern History* 4, no. 2 (1938): 199-208; Ruth Allison Hudnut and Hayes Baker-Crothers, "Acadian Transients in South Carolina," *The American Historical Review* 43, no. 3 (1938): 500-513.

Knowledge of farming techniques and access to agricultural implements were necessary. Saint Dominguan refugees possessed neither.

As South Carolinians began to realize that the scope of the refugee problem was too much for Charlestonians and even the state as a whole to manage, other states dealing with large numbers of refugees were also experiencing difficulties. Most of the Atlantic seaboard states had worked to help those in their midst. In a short amount of time, many realized that their limited resources were running short. Federal aid was the only way to continue to help and talk about the constitutionality of this ensued. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson wrote United States Senator James Monroe that, while he appreciated the grave needs of Saint Dominguan refugees, he did not believe the federal government possessed the necessary constitutional powers to intervene. Such responsibilities remained with the individual states, and he hoped that his home state of Virginia would be generous with its aid.¹⁵⁸ Jefferson's beliefs about federal powers did not prevent individual refugees from petitioning President Washington and other federal officials for assistance, however.

One such refugee was Auguste de Grasse, the son of Admiral de Grasse who participated in the Battle of Yorktown during the American Revolution. The younger de Grasse owned a plantation in Saint Domingue and fled to Charleston with his two daughters as the violence escalated. He wrote to Washington requesting aid for his family. Washington, apparently overwhelmed by requests such as this from all over the United States, was unable to offer relief with his personal funds. He lamented that he had already contributed to the needs of refugees arriving daily in Philadelphia and that he

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, July 14, 1793, Jefferson Papers, Series 1, image 1180, quoted in Brown, 80-81.

could only assure de Grasse that Congress would be meeting to discuss aid from the federal purse.¹⁵⁹

Maryland, in particular, quickly exhausted her funds for assisting the destitute of Saint Domingue and in January 1794 appealed to Congress for federal money thus launching the official congressional debate on this subject. Prior to this, Maryland's state legislature had also allocated state resources in much the same way as South Carolina had and maintained a benevolent committee similar to the one in Charleston.¹⁶⁰ With their funds depleted, the committee finally wrote a memorial requesting federal assistance. Even at this early date, many of her citizens already recognized that America had a history of readily accepting the outcast and the destitute. Appealing in the early days of the Cap Français crisis for assistance for the new arrivals, a writer known only as "A Carolinian" declared, "You are famed for offering an ever-ready asylum to the distressed, turn not your eye from those, who have more than the claime (*sic*) of affliction."¹⁶¹ Such assertions became the basis for the first debate in the United States Congress over the nation's character and the appropriate response to the suffering of those outside the limits of American citizenship.

¹⁵⁹ Bartholomew Dandridge to Auguste De Grasse, January 28, 1794, *George Washington Papers, 1741-1799, Series 2: Letterbooks*, Library of Congress. Also discussion of other cases where refugees appealed to the president appear at George Washington to George Read, December 26, 1793. George Washington to Mrs. De Vernieul, December 26, 1793., *George Washington Papers, 1741-1799, Series 2: Letterbook..* Library of Congress.

¹⁶⁰ January 1, 1794, Proceedings of House of Representatives. *The Debates and Proceedings of the Congress of the United States with an Appendix, containing Important State Papers and Public Documents and all the Laws of a Public Nature; with a copious Index.* Third Congress: Compromising the Period from December 2, 1793, to March 3, 1795, inclusive. Washington: Printed and Published by Gales and Seaton, 1849. The Maryland Benevolent Committee consisted of William Patterson, Samuel Sterrit, and Gustavus Scott.

¹⁶¹ *CGDA*, July 16, 1793.

The arguments for and against extending financial aid to Saint Dominguan refugees were not bound to the era in which these events transpired but are remarkably similar to twenty-first century debates about assisting those who have fallen victim to political strife in the modern world. As discussion of the bill progressed, Congressmen explored the constitutionality of using federal money to assist those who were citizens of a foreign nation. They pondered how granting aid could set a precedent that might be costly in the future and even argued over the character of Americans and how responses to this crisis were or were not demonstrating an American exceptionalism.

The debate opened with an accounting of the refugees in Maryland since this was the state bringing forth the request. Samuel Smith, Congressman from Maryland, stated that “three thousand fugitives had been at once landed, without the previous expectation of their arrival” and that residents of Baltimore had donated thirteen thousand dollars immediately. Half of those arriving were “old men, or women without husbands, or children without parents.” Efforts to solicit assistance from France had resulted in the French minister agreeing to pay for the transport of only five hundred of them back to France. The others remained in Baltimore and continued to have grave financial needs. With this knowledge of the details of the problem in Baltimore, Congress embarked on a discussion of the constitutionality of the bill and the precedent such legislation might set. Particularly at issue was whether or not Congress had the legal right to give away constituents’ money to foreign nationals even if these people were indeed needy. James Madison stated that, while he wanted to help, he worried that, if they granted aid to Saint Domingans in distress, it was impossible to tell where this practice might lead.¹⁶²

¹⁶² *The Debates and Proceedings of the Congress of the United States with an Appendix, containing Important State Papers and Public Documents and all the Laws of a Public Nature; with a copious Index.*

For some Congressmen, however, the relationship that the United States shared with France made this situation different from others that might arise in the future. France had offered valuable assistance to Americans as they struggled for independence from England, and this assistance had left the young nation with not only a powerful ally but also with a debt to France. Would it be possible, then, to utilize some of the payment intended for France to provide assistance to France's citizens currently residing in the United States? In the end this was how Congress chose to pay for the assistance they offered. As for reasons to offer assistance, the most prevailing argument was that this was a matter of morality. The United States of America could not turn its back on anyone in need. This obligated Congress to act, and the fact that France was such a close ally only magnified the requirement that the young American nation lend assistance.¹⁶³

Within this debate the first echoes of American exceptionalism appeared. Mr. Smith, after detailing the numbers of refugees and the amount of money contributed by Maryland residents had contributed, stated that "in this affair, the American nation had exerted a degree of generosity unparalleled in the history of any other people." Madison later disputed this by pointing out the generous response rendered to the victims of the Lisbon, Portugal, earthquake of 1755. In the end, Congress finally agreed that federal assistance was necessary. After all, one Congressman argued, the government had previously covered the hotel costs of Native Americans who traveled to Philadelphia to discuss business with the government. By doing so, a precedent existed for offering assistance to those loyal to a foreign government. At a basic level, this was a

Third Congress: Compromising the Period from December 2, 1793, to March 3, 1795, inclusive. Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1849, January 10, 1794, *Proceedings of the House of Representative*, (3rd Congress).

¹⁶³ January 10, 1794, *Proceedings of the House of Representative*, (3rd Congress)

humanitarian crisis; they had to respond to this first group of destitute people to arrive on their shores.¹⁶⁴

Once the bill passed the House, the Senate quickly followed suit and by February 12, 1794, the President had approved the nation's first legislation for relief of asylum seekers. The monies, however, would not come from the general budget but would be deducted from the debt that France owed the United States. This provision, while certainly politically expedient, also indicates that Congress saw these refugees as French citizens and, therefore, the responsibility of the French government. Most refugees would have agreed with this assessment of their status as they intended to be in the United States only a short time. Most harbored intentions of returning to Saint Domingue and reclaiming their property. This, over the course of the next ten years, proved to be impossible. Gradually, as political events evolved, most realized that return was not a possibility. Still the relief efforts were greatly welcomed by South Carolina and the refugees. These funds provided a necessary bridge between the donations collected from private individuals and the income the refugees were eventually able to earn.

Edmund Randolph, Attorney General of the United States, wrote to Daniel DeSaussure informing him of the federal money coming to the state and of the rules governing its distribution. Upon passage of the law, the federal government requested an accounting of the refugees in each state so that a fair distribution of funds could occur. Since such a count would require much time and delay the aid, South Carolina's

¹⁶⁴ *The Debates and Proceedings of the Congress of the United States with an Appendix, containing Important State Papers and Public Documents and all the Laws of a Public Nature; with a copious Index.* Third Congress: Compromising the Period from December 2, 1793, to March 3, 1795, inclusive. Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1849. Discussion of bill occurred primarily on Jan. 10, 1794. Bill read third time and passed – Feb. 4, 1794. Senate informed of House passage on Feb. 7, 1794. Committee of Concurrence occurred after this. President George Washington signed it into law on February 12, 1794. “An Act providing for the relief of such of the inhabitants of Saint Domingo, resident within the United States, as may be found in want of support” Philadelphia: Francis Childs and John Swaine, 1794.

Congressional delegation estimated that three hundred and fifty people were in need in the state, and each of the other twelve states furnished their numbers through similar methods. Recognizing the likelihood that these numbers were inaccurate, President Washington, whom Congress charged with allocating the money, elected to hold back \$5,000 of the \$15,000 approved in order to correct inequalities once more reliable data was available.¹⁶⁵

Randolph's letter conveyed the President's request that a committee form to administer the \$1750 of federal money due to South Carolina. In the case of South Carolina, like Maryland, a benevolent society already existed and took on this additional responsibility. Washington instructed the states to give the money in a way "most conducive to the humane purposes" and stated that accurate accounting practices were obligatory. Because of the outstanding funds available, Randolph implored DeSaussure to establish a system to produce an accurate number of refugees in South Carolina.¹⁶⁶

DeSaussure penned his response to Randolph in early April 1794. He presented details regarding the money previously collected by the Benevolent Society from Charleston's residents— twelve thousand dollars- and stated that this money had assisted four hundred and thirty needy individuals in the form of "clothing, Blankets and fire wood during the winter and in the regular distribution of a Certain weekly allowance in money according to the number in families (and) their circumstances." Currently, the committee had "one hundred women and children, including a few old and sick men, to

¹⁶⁵ Edmund Randolph to Daniel DeSaussure, February 27, 1794, in DeSaussure family. DeSaussure family papers, 1716-1938. (1022.00), SCHS, Charleston, SC. This number very likely reflected the number of whites in need of assistance. It surely does not include the numbers of people of color, both enslaved and free, who were in Charleston from Saint Domingue at the time.

¹⁶⁶ Edmund Randolph to Daniel Desaussure, Philadelphia, February 27, 1794, Desaussure Family Papers.

which, on account of their lowness of funds we have been obliged latterly to curtail the allowance give at first.” Federal funds arriving in South Carolina would address their needs, he stated.¹⁶⁷ With the federal funds covering refugee needs, the Benevolent Committee ceased actively seeking donations from the local population. New arrivals were not as frequent, and those who arrived in the early 1790s began to achieve some economic stability.

Fund raising events began in December 1803 for the next group of Saint Dominguan arrivals in Charleston, just days before the declaration of Saint Domingue’s independence from France and the formation of the new nation of Haiti. Fewer pleas for assistance on behalf of destitute refugees appeared in the newspapers this time and as a result less money was raised for this assistance. These differences occurred for a variety of reasons. This third group was unlike the previous group in that some of them had more time to plan their emigration than their fellow refugees who fled in 1793. Their numbers were also much smaller. From 1801 until the creation of the Republic of Haiti, policies in the French colony had made being white in Saint Domingue more and more complicated. While certainly some arrived at the Charleston port in destitute conditions, others were likely able to bring possessions of value that had survived the previous twelve years of violence. Upon arrival they also encountered many people they knew. Saint Domingue was a small colony with less than 30,000 white residents when the violence erupted. Saint Dominguans who fled in 1793 had been in Charleston for over a decade and had settled into a comfortable existence allowing them to offer financial aid,

¹⁶⁷ Daniel Desaussure to Edmund Randolph, Charleston, April 9, 1794. Desaussure Family Papers.

shelter, and social connections to meet the needs of the newest arrivals.¹⁶⁸ Because of this, the structure of the aid offered by Charlestonians for this latest group of asylum seekers differed from that available for the 1793 refugees.

This time native-born Charlestonians did not organize relief efforts to a large degree. Instead, the French community quickly established the Committee of Benevolence to spearhead fundraising. While surely assisted by long term Charlestonians, the formation of such a committee of Frenchmen indicates the social and economic clout of Charleston's French community were beginning to attain. They correctly believed that Charleston's population would cooperate with them to aid these new unfortunate arrivals.¹⁶⁹ At the head of relief efforts was the city's French priest. Father Le Mercier arrived in Charleston during 1803 as part of an effort by the Roman Catholic Church to provide pastoral leadership for the French residents of the city.¹⁷⁰ His presence at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church proved to be a point of contention as many of the largely Irish-born church leaders resisted his pastorate.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, following his bishop's directions, he viewed his mission in Charleston as one expressly intended to assist refugees from Saint Domingue. As such he assumed the roles of

¹⁶⁸ Indeed many refugees, not just those arriving 1801-1803, may have encountered familiar faces on the streets of Charleston. Saint Domingans as well as other residents of the Atlantic World at the end of the eighteenth century traveled regularly and met others who traveled extensively. Meadows, "Engineering Exile: Social Networks and the French Atlantic Community, 1789-1809," 67-102.

¹⁶⁹ *Baltimore Daily Intelligencer*, Baltimore, Maryland, March 7, 1804, stated that the Committee of Benevolence was "appointed by the French Citizens."

¹⁷⁰ Sacramental Records, St. Mary's Catholic, Charleston, South Carolina, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Charleston, South Carolina. The Reverend Le Mercier performed his first baptism in Charleston on July 31, 1803.

¹⁷¹ Various newspaper articles refer to Le Mercier as the secretary. See *CGDA*, April 7, 1804, and *Charleston Courier*, March 7, 1803. Even as church members resisted his placement at St. Mary's and posted their opinions in the *Charleston Courier*, they still recognized and noted "the Spiritual Charity of Mr. Le Mercier towards his countrymen." *Charleston Courier*, February 21, 1804,

secretary and spokesman for the Committee of Benevolence.¹⁷² Having a Frenchman at the helm of such fund raising efforts constituted a significant difference in the manner in which benevolence was handled.¹⁷³ Saint Dominguans who sought asylum in Charleston during the 1790s were now equipped to offer some level of assistance to their fellow sufferers, but they also recognized that by leading relief efforts they could gain further acceptance in the Charleston community. The earlier refugees no longer needed help themselves but had assumed roles as the givers of assistance.

Members of the Committee of Benevolence were all new residents to Charleston. All were French with the exception possibly of Mr. Goddard, whose national origins are unknown, and had applied for and were granted American citizenship between 1796 and 1805.¹⁷⁴ For all these men, the memories of immigration were fresh.¹⁷⁵ By assisting the newest arrivals, they were offering humanitarian aid to those in need, but they were also, in a sense, protecting their own advancements. By joining their new

¹⁷² Each time an announcement concerning the Committee of Benevolence appeared in the local newspaper, *Le Mercier* submitted and signed the report.

¹⁷³ The original committee consisted of John Huger, the intendant (mayor) of Charleston who served as chair; Edward Rutledge, was a member of the First Continental Congress and served in the state House and Senate; and Henry William DeSaussure, who served in the state legislature and received the appointment of head of the U.S. Mint in 1795. In addition to their political connections, the members of Charleston's Benevolent Committee were also some of the state's largest plantation owners. White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*, 64.

¹⁷⁴ A list appeared in the *Times*, Charleston, South Carolina, September 29, 1804. John Blome was a physician who emigrated from Germany and became a citizen in 1803. United States Naturalization Records, 1783-1850, Court of Admiralty for the District of South Carolina.

¹⁷⁵ The Committee of Benevolence included these men, Mr. Fayolle was Peter Fayolle and was a Frenchman working as a dance master in Charleston. He listed his place of origin as France and became a naturalized American citizen in 1806. Mr. Dupuy was likely Claude Dupuy, also from France but who became a US citizen in 1796. Mr. Devillier was a French musician who became an American citizen in 1805. Jean Baptiste Collas fled to Charleston the 7th of October 1793 from Saint Domingue where he was a planter and died in Charleston at the age of 87 on December 20, 1808. *CGDA*, January 2, 1809. Mr. Blome is likely Jean Blome who appears as a member of the Loge de St. Jean, a Masonic organization of Frenchmen in Charleston, Loge Francaise La Candeur No. 12, "Tableau De La Loge De St. Jean De Jerusalem," (Charleston, South Carolina: Bounetheaux, 1807). The other members of the committee, Mr. Collas, Mr. Dupuy, Dr. Faonti, Mr. Goddard, Mr. Fayolle, and Mr. Devillier appear in United States Naturalization Records, 1783-1850, Court of Admiralty for the District of South Carolina.

American neighbors in reaching out to the poor in their midst, they presented an argument for further inclusion in Charleston society. They strove to portray themselves in a positive light and worked to avoid any negative press the presence of additional destitute Frenchmen might garner.¹⁷⁶ In addition, their ability to help newly arriving refugees highlighted the personal financial successes they had attained. They no longer represented a drain on the community's resources but were making positive contributions.

As the Committee of Benevolence began its work, its leadership employed some of the same avenues for raising money that its predecessor, the Benevolent Society, had used. The St. Cecilia Society was again willing to host concerts and balls in order to raise money. Initially, according to announcements in the local press, these benefit concerts and balls assisted "an Unfortunate family." By February 1804 the appointed recipients expanded to include "a number of Distressed Inhabitants from St. Domingo *who have lately arrived in Charleston.*"¹⁷⁷ As the number of refugees climbed, the Committee of Benevolence had to determine ways fairly to award aid. By properly conducting their duties, they were able to exercise compassion toward the needy as well as assure the larger community that the committee and by extension the refugee Saint Dominguan community were trustworthy and responsible.

Within the records concerning the distribution of moneys from the St. Cecilia concerts, an important difference between the Committee of Benevolence (1803) and the Benevolent Society (1793) emerges. By March that "the sum collected on this occasion

¹⁷⁶ United States Naturalization Records, South Carolina Naturalization 1783-1850, Court of Admiralty for the District of South Carolina.

¹⁷⁷ *Charleston Courier*, December 28, 1803, February 23, 1804, March 7, 1804, and February 23, 1805. Emphasis in the original text.

has equaled their most sanguine expectations.”¹⁷⁸ The Committee of Benevolence took great care in their methods of distributing this aid so as to avoid embarrassing those seeking help. An article outlining the process referred to the refugees as those “who have experienced better times” and assured them “that their applications shall be treated with the utmost delicacy” and their names kept in confidence.¹⁷⁹ Such open care with personal reputations does not seem to have been a concern during the 1793 crisis. Perhaps this difference resulted from the sheer volume of refugees in need of help in 1793, but it is also likely that the change in language occurred because of a sensitivity driven by the experiences of former recipients. Many of the Frenchmen guiding these relief efforts were likely former refugees themselves and used their new positions to help their fellow countrymen.¹⁸⁰

In spite of the gains that Frenchmen had made, Charleston’s City Council was still determined to have long-time residents of Charleston involved in the distribution of funds. The council stipulated that all monies were to be “paid into the hands of the Committee of Council to be distributed at the discretion, and under the direction of the Committee of Council, and citizens aforesaid.”¹⁸¹ This group contained some familiar names from the first era of benevolence: Henry William DeSaussure, Nathaniel Russel, John Parker, John Splatt Cripps, and Gabriel Manigault.¹⁸² During the 1793 fundraising, responsibility for both raising money and making sure dispersal was fair and honest

¹⁷⁸ *CGDA*, March 5, 1804.

¹⁷⁹ *Charleston Courier*, March 7, 1804.

¹⁸⁰ *CGDA*, February 25, 1805.

¹⁸¹ *CGDA*, April 7, 1804.

¹⁸² *CGDA*, March 28, 1804.

resided with the Benevolence Society. The prominence of the original society members apparently required no additional oversight. This extra level of care with the distribution of funds indicates that the Committee of Benevolence did not have the same level community trust that its predecessor had held. The City Council's actions, then, demonstrate that, while Saint Domingans were making great gains in Charleston after being there for ten years, they still were not fully trusted by community leaders. In spite of this frustration, funds for refugees poured in. City accounting records for the fiscal year ending August 31, 1804, indicated that needy Saint Domingans had received \$1669 and another \$2396.49 remained earmarked for them in the city coffers.¹⁸³

In addition to raising funds, the Committee of Benevolence actively sought donations of needed items from the public at large. In spite of having perhaps a little more time to prepare for flight, most did not have the appropriate clothing for the trip. Coming from a tropical climate, the approaching winter of 1804/05 led the committee to publish a short article thanking those who had already donated clothing and “invit(ing) the public in general to review their Wardrobes” and contribute unwanted clothing for men, women, and children because “the distress of some of them [was] beyond expression.”¹⁸⁴ During the 1793 refugee crisis, the focus was on soliciting monetary donations to help the destitute, but during this crisis the committee chose to emphasize a variety of ways that concerned Charlestonians could assist the new arrivals: by donating money but also by contributing clothing or household goods.

¹⁸³ *Times*, Charleston, South Carolina, September 1, 1804. The total collected during this period was \$4005.49.

¹⁸⁴ *Times*, Charleston, South Carolina, September 29, 1804.

In spite of these efforts to collect a variety of goods, the Benevolent Committee was unable to meet many needs recent immigrants had. After a year of offering, the committee had depleted its funds. In February 1805 Father Le Mercier brought the assistance to an official end and presented an account of the types and amount of goods distributed to the needy between December 1803 and January 1805. These included 37,035 rations (food stuff), 100 cords of wood, 100 blankets, 15 mattresses, and 300 yards of flannel. During the warm months in place of food rations, refugees received \$1,481.¹⁸⁵ The exact size of the immigrant population in 1804 is unclear, but this list of items indicates that the fund raising efforts and solicitation for goods did not produce a great storehouse. For example, no standard measure for a cord of wood existed at the time, but the collected amount seems excessively small. The Benevolent Committee was, after all, collecting items and funds for the duration of two winters. One can get an idea of how little this was by consulting the supply books for troops during the American Revolution. John F. Grimké served as an officer in the South Carolina Artillery Regiment during the war, and, according to his order book, a Brigadier General received a half cord of wood per week and field officers and captains received a quarter cord per week.¹⁸⁶ The one hundred cords given refugees would not have warmed many for very long. The number of blankets and mattresses was also similarly small. While the French speaking community was clearly trying to take charge of meeting the incoming refugees needs, they were ultimately unable to do so in the manner in which they had hoped. Le Mercier admitted as much when he concluded his note of thanks to the Charleston

¹⁸⁵ *CGDA*, February 25, 1805. This amount of money does not include that which the city officials collected.

¹⁸⁶ John Faucheraud Grimké, "Order Book of John Faucheraud Grimké. August 1778 to May 1780 (Continued)," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 14, no. 4 (1913): 221.

community by stating that, the contributions raised had prevented “horrors” but that refugees had continuing needs.¹⁸⁷

After this accounting, Le Mercier concluded his work as the committee’s secretary with an analysis of why Charlestonians offered help and a description about how future needs would be handled. Here, the importance of a Christian response to the needy reappeared as he wrote that for sixteen months the committee worked he “never solicited in vain the assistance of the public.” In some case responses resulted from “natural feelings” of concern for one’s fellow human being, but also generated from “the liberal instructions of the clergy of every denomination, who fertilized in their heart the good seed which nature has implanted in them.” All of the donations received did not eliminate the needs of all and produce circumstances where all recent immigrants could care for themselves.

The Committee of Benevolence as one of its final acts recognized this and adopted a resolution addressing further aid. In this act they acknowledged that the Charleston community could not support destitute refugees indefinitely, a fact that many were likely glad to see the committee leadership recognize. Proof of need had always been a stipulation for assistance, but the new regulations were more strident. Rations were only available for “infirm, old people, and to fatherless and motherless children.” For those outside the confines of assistance who still could not support themselves, Le Mercier offered two possibilities: the hope of prosperity through the coming growing season and the possibility of leaving Charleston for France.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ *CGDA*, March 13, 1805.

¹⁸⁸ *CGDA*, April 24, 1805.

The example of how the Committee of Benevolence approached offering assistance demonstrates the middle ground upon which the Saint Dominguan immigrant population sat. For many the last decade had provided economic opportunity even as they realized that return to their former homes would not occur. The independence of Haiti had solidified this fact. The arrival of new refugees forced them to take stock of the current situation; first hand news of the violence occurring under Dessaline's leadership prevented any false hopes of Saint Domingue returning to its previous economic and social structure. As quickly as this realization materialized, Charleston's refugee community also saw an important opportunity to improve their status in their new home. While the ruling oligarchy was reluctant to allow them full control over the collection and distribution of aid, they were able to work alongside prominent Charlestonians. This process allowed the refugee community to shape the ways money was awarded and to prove their worthiness as Charlestonians.

With the official end of Saint Domingue as a colony of France, many believed the end of destitute Saint Dominguans approaching Americans shores had come. This, however, was not the case. In late 1808 news reached the United States that additional former colonists were in peril. Growing difficulties between Napoleon and Spain made Saint Dominguans living in Cuba the targets of violence and eventually forced them to sell many of their possessions and flee the island.¹⁸⁹ Escaping to France was impossible since no ships from France or its territories could dock in the Spanish colony; therefore,

¹⁸⁹ In March 1809 "a powerful black mob, set on by a few white people, began to plunder several houses, inhabited by peaceable Frenchmen." Eventually, the Saint Dominguans were forced to leave first Santiago and then Havana. Those who had not sold their property had it confiscated by the Cuban government as they fled the island. For all watching this appeared to be a replay of the Haitian Revolution complete with violence perpetuated by people of color and compounded by the loss of property and the danger of fleeing. White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*, 172.

the United States was the only option.¹⁹⁰ New Orleans became the primary destination for over 20,000 refugees, but other cities on the eastern American coast including Charleston received smaller numbers.

The final group of refugees who arrived in Charleston from Cuba had a different experience from their fellow Saint Domingans who arrived over the previous twenty years. There were more Frenchmen in the city to offer aid, and the arriving number of refugees was much smaller. In 1808 the United States prohibited all international slave importation, so ships bearing slave refugees presented an immediate difficulty, and this fact led to fewer refugees coming ashore. In order to understand the debates surrounding the arrival of enslaved refugees, we must first examine how South Carolina had dealt with international slave importation and the intrastate trade in slaves that were still occurring when 1809 began.

Southern states along the Atlantic coast had worried about the dangers of insurrection spreading with new immigrant slaves since the first ships from Saint Domingue arrived after August 1791. Beginning in 1788 South Carolina had repeatedly approved legislation barring the importation of slaves from Africa and of “Negro slaves, Mulattoes, Indians, Moors, or Mestizoes bound for a term of years” from any other state in the Union.¹⁹¹ Enslaved men, women, and children continued to enter South Carolina, however. While slave traders could not enter with large cargoes of slaves, privately owned slaves could enter with their masters. In addition, the increased demand for slaves

¹⁹⁰ Minutes of the Eleventh Congress, House of Representative, June 28, 1809, printed in the *Charleston Courier*, July 10, 1809.

¹⁹¹ “An Act to alter and amend the several acts respecting the imporation or bringing into this state, from beyond the seas or elsewhere, Negroes and other persons of colour, and for other purposes therein mentioned,” reprinted in *Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC) January 19, 1804.

due to the expanding cotton crop following the invention of the Cotton Gin made smuggling slaves into the state a quite profitable enterprise.¹⁹² Officials were well-aware of these violations and made numerous attempts to restrict slave traffic but were unsuccessful at completely ending it. Instead, census records reveal that slave traders continued to import human beings during every year between the ratification of the Constitution and 1808 when slave importation finally became illegal at a national level.¹⁹³

In spite of this new legal reality, a new eruption of disorder in the Caribbean raised the question of importing slaves again. By May 1809 news that slaves had successfully entered South Carolina reached the governor's office and prompted an executive order. John Drayton, governor of South Carolina, admitted that the authorities had taken no previous actions against those importing slaves because of "compassion to the distressed owners," but that situation no longer existed. From May 10 forward both captains of ships and foreign nationals entering South Carolina would be prosecuted, he declared, for breaking state and federal laws against such actions.¹⁹⁴ The 1807 state legislation had called for, not only the ending of importing "any negro, mulatto, or person of color" with the intent "to be held, sold or disposed of as slaves," it also included

¹⁹² Patrick S. Brady, "The Slave Trade and Sectionalism in South Carolina, 1787-1808," *The Journal of Southern History* 38, no. 4 (1972): 611. Slave trade was legal in South Carolina from 1803 until 1807, yet more slaves entered the state during the decade stretching from 1790 to 1800 than from 1800 to 1810. This is largely due to the high numbers of slaves entering with their masters from Saint Domingue and due to masters from other states illegally bringing slaves into the state with the intent to sell them.

¹⁹³ Ibid.: 613-614.

¹⁹⁴ *CGDA*, May 22, 1809.

provisions for seizing the ships, cargo, and crew of the offending captain.¹⁹⁵ The governor intended to enforce this act.

South Carolina was not the only place coping with the prospect of slave importation. Since this was now a federal law, Congress got involved in the matter. Debate centered around two essential issues. Firstly, while their French owners were forced to flee from Cuba, no evidence existed to indicate that the slaves were similarly expelled. Secondly, the law stated that offending ship captains would have their cargo seized. Carrying out this provision, some argued, might result in an economic crisis. The loss of a shipload of goods was enough to ruin a ship's captain. As the congressional debate progressed, no one suggested rescinding the law. The issue at question was whether the President should have the ability to remit the penalties proscribed by the law. In the end the president received such privileges as this was "a case of a peculiar nature, attended with singular circumstances."¹⁹⁶

Since many of Charleston's city records no longer exist, determining the number of Saint Dominguan immigrants who arrived from Cuba is difficult. It is possible to make an educated guess based on the numbers arriving in other eastern seaboard cities. In May 1809 ships from Santiago, Cuba, brought two hundred and twenty French passengers to Norfolk and forty-five passengers consisting primarily of women and children to Philadelphia.¹⁹⁷ In spite of the lack of concrete numbers, we do know from

¹⁹⁵ "An Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves into any Port or Place Within the Jurisdiction of the United States, From and After the First Day of January, in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eight," *The Avalon Project: Statutes of the United States Concerning Slavery*. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/sl004.asp, <Accessed November 19, 2012>.

¹⁹⁶ Minutes of the Eleventh Congress, House of Representative, June 28, 1809, printed in the *Charleston Courier*, July 10, 1809.

¹⁹⁷ *Carolina Gazette*, Charleston, South Carolina, June 2, 1809.

newspaper accounts that refugees were arriving in Charleston, and it is reasonable to assume the numbers were within the range of those who arrived in Philadelphia and in Norfolk.

Charleston's numbers were obviously smaller than either of the previous immigrations as this time the cries for donations were significantly less. The general public, while still encouraged to contribute, was not the primary focus. Instead those who shared a like-mindedness with the refugees stepped forward to offer assistance. This time it was the French and the Catholics who responded with the most enthusiasm. The majority of this new group of refugees arrived in the fall of 1809, and the coming winter months presented an additional obstacle for Charleston's newest arrivals. In September a man who described himself as a Frenchman by birth, an American by choice issued an appeal for the "benevolent inhabitants of this city," and more specifically Charleston's resident Frenchmen who had attained a level of economic security, to contribute "food, cloathes (*sic*), or money" until the refugees were able to provide for themselves.¹⁹⁸ Such an appeal clearly indicated that Charleston's French population was attempting to take care of its own much as they had begun to do with the 1803-1805 crisis.

In addition to general appeals for assistance, the Roman Catholic Church also stepped forward to offer aid. During each phase of immigration beginning with the burning of Cap Français, churches in Charleston responded to the needs of the destitute by presenting sermons where a special offering resulted. In Father Le Mercier's final offering of thanks to the community he highlighted the role local churches played in fundraising. The clergy of each denomination, he stated, "fertilized in their (congregants') heart(s) the good seed" which caused them to donate, and he further

¹⁹⁸ *Strength of the People*, Charleston, South Carolina, September 14, 1809, and September 16, 1809.

emphasized the important work of the Reverend Mr. Percy of St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church who eloquently preached a benefit sermon for the recent refugees. Little evidence exists of widespread assistance from multiple churches during the last wave of immigration in 1809; however, St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Charleston's only Catholic Church and the one that the Reverend Le Mercier had served earlier in the decade, hosted a concert by the Philharmonic Society followed by a "Discourse, on a subject so interesting to religion and humanity" by the Reverend Dr. Felix Gallagher, who had served as priest in Charleston since the 1793 refugees arrived.¹⁹⁹

The record of assistance for Saint Dominguan refugees stops there. Were there still unmet needs within the refugee community? The answer is most definitely yes. After the assistance ended, refugees had to accept responsibility for the well-being of their families. Members of this group surely faced a long battle toward self-sufficiency; however, as the years passed the group itself began to land on its feet. By taking charge of assisting each new refugee group that arrived, Saint Dominguans demonstrated that they were not only compassionate toward the less fortunate, but that they were also capable of organizing large fund raising efforts and of handling the money appropriately. Such characteristics were valuable as they turned to the larger Charleston community for business relationships. This was essential as they explored their personal skill sets for new economic opportunities to support themselves and their families. For some this meant resuming previous occupations, but for others it required examining the skills they had from their previous lives and figuring out how to market these to their neighbors

¹⁹⁹ *CGDA*, February 15, 1810.

CHAPTER 3: SETTLING INTO LIFE IN SOUTH CAROLINA: SEEKING ACCEPTANCE THROUGH ECONOMIC EFFORTS

After the initial upheaval associated with fleeing Saint Domingue and arriving in South Carolina, the refugees had to make new lives for themselves. Primary to this was the necessity of providing for themselves and their families. Naturally, money was essential but also by joining the working community they became part of the community. For those who engaged in physical work in Saint Domingue or who had marketable skills, this was a continuation of their former lives. For the planters among the refugees seeking work meant an entirely new way of life, a life where they were more dependent on their own ability than ever before. Workers in the post-modern world recognize that identity is closely connected to the kind of job one holds. Connections in the marketplace often lead to social contacts and acceptance into a larger community made up of those one works for and alongside. Refugees from Saint Domingue, regardless of their former positions, were united in their endeavors to earn their livings. In some cases this meant that refugees patronized the shops and businesses of fellow Saint Domingans; in other cases this meant that the work refugees did put them in contact with long time residents of Charleston. This chapter explores the plight of each group of refugees, whites, free people of color, and slaves, as they sought and attained work in Charleston and argues that in the process of earning a living they secured important social contacts that assisted them in assimilating.

For white refugees it was clear that the vast amount of money collected by Charlestonians and contributed from state and federal coffers would dry up soon.²⁰⁰ Providing for their families' support was necessary but was no easy task. Prior to the revolution, the majority of white refugees had relied on their Saint Dominguan plantations to provide them with necessities as well as luxuries, but this source of income no longer existed. In addition to the burning of their fields and destruction of their homes and agricultural equipment, the slaves in whom they had invested much capital were no longer theirs should they return to the island.²⁰¹ With the French National Convention's decree of 16 *Pluviôse An II* (February 4, 1794), slavery ceased to exist, at least in name, throughout the French Republic.²⁰² Even if these refugees could have returned to their

²⁰⁰ By all indications the money went to white refugees first and foremost. Enslaved refugees likely received some benefit from these moneys as their masters' would likely have used their portions to care for their slaves. Slaves were valuable commodities for destitute white refugees and providing for them was essential if they wanted them to be healthy enough to work. By 1793 the state was only admitting a limited number of slaves deemed "trusted servants." This term indicates South Carolina's hopes about the arriving immigrants. Contemporary accounts also claimed that these were "generally the most faithful slaves" and that they had encouraged their masters to flee in some cases because they knew danger was imminent. Dessens, 42.

²⁰¹ Slaves brought to the United States, however, remained enslaved. The status of Saint Domingue's slave population in this era is somewhat confusing. Slavery ended in all of the French Empire in February 1794. Those brought to the United States prior to that date were clearly still enslaved upon arrival. After this date, the situation is more ambiguous. Most, if not all, of the slaves who left Saint Domingue were trusted domestic slaves during the fall of Cap Français. This close relationship likely trumped any ideas about freedom these slaves held. Passage off the island and away from the carnage could only happen with the help of white or *gen de couleur* slave owners. In addition to this fact, upon arrival in Charleston, authorities would have consulted the free refugees concerning their status and that of their slaves. Most slaves were not given an opportunity to assert their freedom to the authorities. For more on the complicated notion of freedom in the Age of Revolution, see Scott, "Paper Thin: Freedom and Re-Enslavement in the Diaspora of the Haitian Revolution." At a citizens' meeting on 11 June 1794 in Charleston a list of resolutions passed that included the provision that only those slaves who were the "domestic servants really and bona fide attending on the persons of their masters or mistresses" should be allowed in the state. This resolution was distributed to all of the other parishes and counties in South Carolina and to North Carolina and Georgia. They requested that the City Council provide for the funds to enforce this and other related resolutions. See *Columbian Herald*, June 13, 1794.

²⁰² For a detailed account of how this decree came to be law, see Popkin, *You Are All Free : The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*, 327-375.

island homes, they would have faced a drastically different world from that which they knew prior to 1789.

For free people of color the world had changed even more drastically than for white refugees. Any discussion about free people of color, particularly those from Saint Domingue, is complicated by the diversity within their numbers. The experiences of free colored Saint Dominguans varied depending on the region of the colony where they lived, how much economic clout they had, how dark or light their skin was, and even how they related to their immediate neighbors. French law, dating from the 1770s attempted to impose racial categories on the population, but these were unevenly enforced across the colony. In the north, custom continued to dictate that whiteness was determined by moral character and economic success rather than genealogical evidence of African ancestry or visible color differences. Still, even here the society was not completely colorblind.²⁰³ In the Southern Province, strict racial definitions led to discrimination for free people of color. *Gens de couleur* in the south were forced undergo drastic changes in the professions they could have, the type of clothing they could wear, and even in the last names authorities permitted them to use once new laws materialized beginning in 1764. In spite of these strict racial categories, wealthy *gens de couleur* in both areas of the colony still were able to stand out because of their wealth.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Sources that describe the free colored population in Saint Domingue include Garrigus, *Before Haiti : Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue*; Garrigus, "Opportunist or Patriot? Julien Raimond (1744-1801) and the Haitian Revolution."; Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution."

²⁰⁴ Garrigus, "Saint-Domingue's Free People of Color and the Tools of Revolution," 50. Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution."

Money and the cultural refinements that it provided allowed persons of color to “whiten” regardless of where they lived.²⁰⁵

Because of these advantages as well as limits they were forced to observe, *gens de couleur*, as the French revolution progressed, began to unite politically in order to take advantage of the new rhetoric of freedom and equality. During the first days of the French Revolution, wealthy *gens de couleur* attempted to align themselves politically with wealthy white planters in order to protect the institution of slavery on which both groups depended, but these efforts were largely unsuccessful. Rejected by the white elites, leading elite *gens de couleur*, such as Vincent Ogé, formed an alliance with a wider group of free colored colonists who were much more radical and eager to use force.²⁰⁶ Their primary goal was to secure equal rights for all of the colony’s free property owners. The ensuing revolt did not bring the change they intended, but Ogé’s resulting public execution served to ignite a new revolution. In the months immediately following Ogé’s death, the national assembly extended voting rights to free people of color, but the authorities in Saint Domingue hesitated in implementation. Seeing no other way to gain this right, the colony’s free people of color armed their slaves and thereby set in motion the waves that would lead to the massive slave insurrection of August 1791.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," 45. Garrigus, "Opportunist or Patriot? Julien Raimond (1744-1801) and the Haitian Revolution," 3.

²⁰⁶ Yves Benot, "The Insurgents of 1791, Their Leaders, and the Concept of Independence," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010). For an in depth discussion of how Ogé made this transition, see Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution."

²⁰⁷ Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," 60-61.

With this violence, however, some of the same free colored colonists who inadvertently created revolution found themselves forced to flee their homes.

Free people of color were clearly among those who fled to Charleston. Determining their social and economic status prior to flight is somewhat difficult, but some general comments are possible. First, the majority of Charleston's refugees came after the burning of Cap Français in June 1793, and, therefore, originated in the northern region of the colony. Free people of color from the area around Cap Français included people of all economic backgrounds from the wealthiest of planters to the poorest of domestic servants. Secondly, the financial cost of fleeing was high, so many of the poorest were not able to escape. Such a fact leads to the conclusion that most of those who fled were from the wealthier sector of the society. This, however, may not have been the case. Some of the poorest free people of color were domestic servants whose employers may have come to regard them as more trustworthy than slaves since the enslaved all around them were in revolt. According to newspaper accounts in Charleston, the majority of the refugees were women, children, and infirm men, all of whom would have needed assistance on the journey and in their new homes. While concrete proof is illusive, some free colored Saint Domingans were likely among this underclass of refugees. Upon arrival, those who had worked as laborers or domestic servants in colonial Saint Domingue may have been able to find similar work in Charleston, provided that potential employers did not assume they were slaves who had escaped the insurrection and were planning to spread its violence to South Carolina.

The wealthier free colored immigrants experienced arguably more dramatic changes than those who were poor before the revolution. The social and economic clout

they possessed in Saint Domingue was no longer theirs once they arrived in Charleston. While there was an elite class of free people of color in the city, they were not as affluent as their Caribbean counterparts and, at the same time, not willing to welcome them openly. Ever mindful of the precarious place they occupied within the slave society, South Carolina's free people of color were not willing to attach themselves to other people of color who happened to be fleeing a slave insurrection.²⁰⁸ In addition to this, South Carolina's harsh ruling on October 16, 1793, that *gens de couleur* from the West Indies had to leave the state within ten days of the proclamation, meant that those who arrived early in the Haitian Revolution had to make quick decisions about whether to try to escape detection and blend with the existing free people of color or to flee once again. A number of them surely decided to try their luck elsewhere; however, this was difficult since they, like most of their fellow refugees, had few resources to cover the expense of going elsewhere. The state attempted to prevent any who arrived after the October 1793 ruling from disembarking.²⁰⁹ Determining how many free people of color came to South Carolina and stayed is impossible, but the numbers of people in this demographic in Charleston did increase dramatically around the years of the Haitian Revolution. Between 1790 and 1810 the population of free people of color grew by 1008. This

²⁰⁸ The elite free people of color in Charleston formed the Brown Fellowship Society in 1790. This organization served as a social club, burial society, and economic safety net for its members, all of whom had to have brown skin. Membership roles from the club's first fifty years do not include the names of any people known to be refugees from Saint Domingue. In fact, no French names appear at all. The club's leaders enforced strict rules about members' behavior as they strove to avoid any conduct that might associate their members with slavery.

²⁰⁹ *CGDA*, October 17, 1793. This article is a publication of Governor William Moultrie's proclamation of 16 October 1793. Here, he states that a "number of free negroes and people of color, natives of, and heretofore residents in the island of St. Domingo have arrived in this state" and "many characters amongst them which are dangerous to the welfare and peace of the state." In order to "prevent any designs taking place that may be formed to interrupt the quiet we now enjoy," he required all free people of color from Saint Domingue or who have arrived from elsewhere during the last twelve months, "to depart from this state within TEN DAYS from the date hereof" (emphasis in the original).

constituted an increase of 130%, a number that would have been quite noticeable since the city's total population during this time period only experienced a 72% increase.²¹⁰ Many historians have attributed this radical change to an influx of free people of color from Saint Domingue.²¹¹

The white population and their efforts at independence and self-sufficiency are much easier to trace. As aid began to dry up, they had to turn to their own resources for survival. Lacking personal wealth or items they could sell, many began to search their bank of skills for anything they could turn into an enterprise. They proved to be quite willing to reinvent themselves in order to provide for their families. Both men and women willingly accepted work that would have been beneath them prior to recent events. However, the types of skills they offered to the community indicate careful efforts to walk the line between needing to earn an income and maintaining some semblance of their aristocratic persona. For some their efforts at earning an income actually put them in contact with those who were their social equals before the Haitian Revolution. Through this process of securing work, white refugees were able to find acceptance by demonstrating they were not a perpetual drain on the community's resources. In order to do this, they employed their national heritage, social capital, and/or previous work experiences to become economically independent. Finally, in addition to efforts of their own initiative, some refugees also utilized their slaves as a source of income. Refugees could earn moderate amounts of money renting out their slaves. This

²¹⁰ According to the federal censuses of 1790 and 1810, in Charleston District (county) in 1790 the whites numbered 11,801, the slaves 24,071, and the free people of color 775. In 1810 the white population included 16,011, the slave population 45,385, and the free colored population 1783. South Carolina in 1790 had a population of free people of color that numbered 1,801; by 1810 this sector grew to 4,554, constituting an increase of 252% in just twenty years. By comparison the total population rose from 249,073 in 1790 to 415,115 in 1810; a 266% increase.

²¹¹ Berlin. Geggus, "The Caradeux and Colonial Memory."

practice not only helped slave owning refugees but also gave their slaves a measure of freedom and independence.

The written record of how refugees went to work is sparse. Refugees from other eastern seaboard communities left a rich record of letters, diaries, and business ledgers. This is not the case with refugees who came to Charleston. There is evidence through newspaper accounts that provides a glimpse of the economic activities upon which refugees embarked. By examining the kinds of advertisements refugees posted, it is obvious that they were an industrious people who employed whatever skills they could in order to provide for their families and ingratiate themselves to the larger Charleston community. However, this is but a sector of the Saint Dominguan immigrant population. Those who simply looked for work in shops, in artisan workshops, on the city's docks, or in the open air markets do not appear in these advertisements. Their story which is likely that of the majority is lost to history. Still, a picture of the refugee community emerges from newspapers to demonstrate what some of them were doing.

For many white refugees teaching French was perhaps their first and most obvious skill. In the early months after their arrival in Charleston, many began seeking students eager to learn French. This practice continued for over twenty years after their arrival with new names entering the field throughout the era. In order to assure the public of their competence, teachers frequently stated that they formerly taught French in Saint Domingue or that they possessed particular training from a university in France.²¹² The prevalence of these announcements indicates that the subscribers, as the newspapers typically referred to them, recognized that wealthy Charlestonians admired the French

²¹² *CGDA*, November 7 and December 20, 1793; January 13, 1795.

language and culture and saw instruction in these realms as essential for their children's educations.

American interest in learning to speak French had waxed and waned throughout the colonial period, and this fluctuating interest typically corresponded with the number of native French speakers on American soil. A substantial Huguenot presence in Charleston made it one of the most "French" cities in America between 1700 and 1750; but by the time Saint Domingans began arriving in the 1790s, this influence had diminished.²¹³ In its place was a renewed interest in studying French driven by fascination with the French Enlightenment and by increased diplomatic and military relations between the United States and France. Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, curriculum included French at most private academies in New England; and by the early 1780s universities such as Harvard, Yale, the University of Virginia, and the College of Rhode Island (later Brown University) began adding their first French professors. By 1795 Williams College, the College of William and Mary, and the University of North Carolina required knowledge of French for admittance.²¹⁴ Scholars have recognized that throughout the new nation residents of Philadelphia, Boston, New York, and Baltimore saw more prospective French teachers advertising in their local newspapers, and the same was true for Charleston.²¹⁵ This surge in interest in and occasionally a necessity to learn French meant that arriving Saint Domingans had an immediate skill they could employ to earn a living.

²¹³ Howard Mumford Jones, *America and French Culture, 1750-1848* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1927), 96-97.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 190-193.

²¹⁵ Bernard Faÿ, *Notes on the American Press at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Grolier Club, 1927). Quoted in Jones, 193.

In addition to efforts to use their native tongue as a means of supporting themselves, most refugees advertising their services as French teachers also included other skills they deemed marketable. For example, one man stated that he “also understands a little of vocal music, mythology, and history” as well as gardening and floral arranging.²¹⁶ Another Saint Dominguan gentleman stated that he was capable of teaching drawing, violin, and writing as well as his native French language.²¹⁷ Prospective female French teachers possessed homemaking skills that could provide a possible source of income. One offered to teach “all kinds of needle work” while another stated she would “cause them (her students) to acquire, at an early age, the most elegant manner of genteel society” as she taught them “the elements of the truest politeness.”²¹⁸

While these advertisements offered services many Charlestonians desired, the eagerness with which subscribers presented these services (numerous advertisements appeared day after day) and the types of services they proposed demonstrate that many refugees were rather desperate as well. These were not people merely looking to fill empty hours as they waited to return to their colonial homes. Madame Enguehard, an English woman who was a long time resident of Saint Domingue, advertised the opening of a school where she would teach speaking, reading, and writing in both English and French. Her school represented a larger effort than many of her fellow refugees. She had employed a man who would assist with French instruction and offer arithmetic and geography as additional subjects. The first lines of this particular advertisement presented her aspirations as a rather dignified enterprise, one that many upper class white

²¹⁶ *CGDA*, November 7, 1793.

²¹⁷ *CGDA*, February 6, 1795.

²¹⁸ *CGDA*, December 20, 1793. *SCSG*, September 25, 1799.

women might entertain; however, her desperation became evident as she ended her announcement. Here, she directed her appeal to French and American ladies of Charleston. Seeking yet another way to earn money, she stated that she would wash delicate linens “in the manner practiced in London and Paris, which makes them appear nearly as good as new.”²¹⁹ She was taking in laundry.

Sometimes the advertisements expanded even further to include numerous services. In 1795 a husband and wife appealed for work. The husband’s primary skill was teaching French and literature, but the wife was an excellent dressmaker who was knowledgeable in embroidery. She was willing to sew for Charleston’s women or teach the city’s daughters her skills.²²⁰ Another subscriber who titled himself as a French planter from Saint Domingue offered to take students into his home for French lessons. Not resorting merely to teach French, he also announced that he had a “good STABLE, COACH HOUSE, and HAY LOFT” to rent and “some excellent OLD MEDOC WINE in bottles” for sale.²²¹ These refugees, like many, realized that one source of income was insufficient.

French lessons, regardless of what other services the subscriber suggested, were available at a variety of times and places in order to accommodate student needs. Study could occur during day or evening hours. Some teachers agreed, indeed needed to, move into students’ homes while others agreed to take in boarders.²²² The variety of

²¹⁹ *CGDA*, November 12, 1795.

²²⁰ *CGDA*, January 17, 1795.

²²¹ *CGDA*, December 25, 1795. Emphasis in the original text.

²²² *CGDA*, November 7, 1793. *SCSG*, September 25, 1799.

accommodations demonstrates an extreme willingness to meet the needs of the market, regardless of what they may be.

Regardless of how refugees set up their schools, their work put them in direct contact with elite white Charlestonians. Such connections allowed the immigrant community to move into the mainstream of Charleston's economy and society. By teaching children of influential people, the refugees not only earned a living and proved they could take care of themselves, but they also demonstrated they had the social graces and education to exist alongside Charleston's most important families. Through these schools teachers and students were able to meet on a personal level and form relationships with one another. In turn, Saint Domingans became a more integrated part of the Charleston community. Cultural interchange was not just limited to Saint Dominguan teachers and English children; eventually, schools opened that allowed Saint Dominguan children to learn alongside their American counterparts.

While the most obvious audience for these advertisements was the wealthy English speaking population of Charleston; as time passed, the Saint Dominguan population also became the target of these advertisements.²²³ As early as 1799 a widow from Saint Domingue announced she was starting a school for French and English girls. She had already hired "masters of the most acknowledged abilities" who would teach writing, music, and dance, but she wanted an additional English speaking woman capable of teaching English to her French students.²²⁴ By 1801 a French language newspaper was in publication in Charleston, *Echo du Sud*, and here François Lecat clearly aimed his announcement concerning his *Académie de Musique Vocale et Instrumentale* at the

²²³ SCSG, September 25, 1799.

²²⁴ SCSG, September 25, 1799.

increasingly prosperous refugee population. He offered group or private lessons and claimed that he possessed a unique method of instruction. He asserted that learning music, which he described as the most precious gift God had given mankind, would also help his students cope with the “whims of fate and the injustices of man.” He continued by stating that participation in his lessons could award them a refuge from the storms of life.²²⁵ M. Lecat was not alone in his assertion that refugees needed schools specifically for their children. Alexandre Bourgeois, in his advertisement in 1804, openly declared that his new school was “particularly (for) the French families residing in this place.” He continued by declaring that his would be a “university education” for these children.²²⁶

Offering education to English and French speaking children separately was typical; however, one forward thinking former resident from Saint Domingue saw different possibilities through his school. Advertising in 1807 François Perrissé announced the founding of a new school where French and American students would study together. By doing so he imagined they would learn each other’s languages better and gain a closer relationship.²²⁷ This final example demonstrates an important change that occurred in Charleston and among its Saint Dominguan refugee population. Initially, due to the extreme poverty experienced by most refugees, fruitful employment could only come through business transactions with the aristocratic, longtime residents of the city. As such, the first advertisements appealed to Charleston’s elites who wanted their

²²⁵ *Echo du Sud*, July 3, 1801. The text of this passage follows: les introduira dans le sanctuaire de cette aimable science, le don le plus précieux que la divinité accorda au genre humain: toujours en unison avec notre Coeur; si proper à exciter les passions ou à les adoucir, et le seul, peut-être, qui par les emotions les plus douces que l’art ait pu trouver, soit proper à accorder à l’esprit accablé par les caprices du sort et l’injustice des hommes, un prompt refuge dans l’orage. The translation in the text is that of the author.

²²⁶ *CGDA*, August 29, 1804.

²²⁷ *Oracle*, May 9, 1807.

children to learn French because of its social capital and intellectual advantages.²²⁸ As time passed, potential teachers began to appeal to their fellow countrymen for business. These were men and women well-educated by their parents during their childhoods in Saint Domingue; and they wanted the same, or a similar education for their children. The presence of such advertisements shows a refugee community looking forward in its plans for its children. This last advertisement represents a merging of these endeavors. Initially, French teachers had contact with longtime white Charlestonians. Then, their attentions turned to the children of the Saint Dominguan refugee community. Finally, with this last example, children of both communities had the opportunity to study together. Such cooperative learning presumably led to a more complete integration of the French refugee community into the larger white society.

Teaching French was not the only skill Saint Dominguans possessed and tried to parlay into income and eventually social acceptance. From the early days of immigration, a significant number of advertisements concerned activities one could term as social skills. These included leisure activities the wealthy and privileged of late eighteenth century Europe and America enjoyed and were skills many wanted their children to learn. For refugees who never thought they would have to earn a living, Charleston presented a fruitful market for these endeavors. These lessons, intended for

²²⁸ For a fascinating exploration of the concept of elitism in the Early Republic see Andrew M. Schocket, "Thinking About Elites in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 4 (2005): 547-555. Schocket argues that the category of elite varied from place to place during the first years of the new nation. Access to financial resources, social capital, education, and political power contributed to whether or not one was part of a recognized elite class. In Charleston, the elites were a small sector of the society but figure largely in many representations of the Old South because of their political and economic power. Many of the Saint Dominguan refugees were elites in their society prior to the Haitian Revolution. It is among Charleston's elites that they would have been most comfortable, yet their changed financial situations and their connection to slave rebellion prevented their immediate embrace by long-time elite residents of Charleston.

both girls and boys, allowed refugees access to the inner circle of Charleston's elite, a condition which contributed to their assimilation into the local community.

While many refugees offered music lessons in conjunction with French lessons, some chose to specialize in music lessons alone. François Lecat, the most prominent music instructor, was such example. Previously, Lecat performed with the local French theater, but eventually abandoned that to devote his time to music lessons. In 1799 he advertised that he was offering flute and fiddle lessons in his home, but by the next year he expanded his plans. He employed rather grandiose language as he announced the opening of his "Musical Academy." He assured the public of his diligence as a teacher and stated that he had two rooms available to his students, "a large, airy and refounding" one for their lessons and a second reserved for practice. Under his instruction Charleston's children had the opportunity "for the acquisition of the most exquisite talent."²²⁹ In addition to having musical abilities, Charleston's elite also wanted their children to know how to dance, and refugees regularly advertised dancing lessons in the newspapers.

Learning to dance was essential for Charleston's elite, and Peter Fayolle established a dancing academy in 1797 where he gave lessons in private homes and in a public venue. He provided separate times for "young gentlemen" and for children under the age of sixteen. The cost of such lessons, whether private or group, was one guinea per month and was the standard rate among the various dancing masters in the city.²³⁰

²²⁹ *CGDA*, April 27, 1799 and May 17, 1800.

²³⁰ *CGDA*, August 26, 1797 and September 13, 1800; *SCSG*, March 3, 1794. While it is often difficult to ascertain the place of origin for many who advertised their services in the local newspapers unless they specifically included this information, a Peter Fayolle who listed his occupation as dancing master in the United States Naturalization Records, claimed his place of origin was Rione Girone, France. Many of the

Charleston's social season lasted from early autumn until early spring, and Mr. Fayolle opened his school according to this schedule.²³¹ Similarly, J. M. Lege opened his doors for classes in the fall beginning in 1800 and continued throughout the same period as Mr. Fayolle.²³² Through dancing lessons, Charleston's children and adults received training designed to open important social, political, and economic doors for them. While these lessons were admittedly directed toward a small sector of Charleston's population, they appealed to the portion of the city that possessed the greatest financial resources and was also most concerned with preparing their children to enter polite society.

Dancing lessons were not the only way that one could attain social graces in eighteenth century Charleston and learn to carry oneself well. One could improve skills on the dance floor by partaking of fencing lessons, likely a more appealing pastime for young men and boys, but one that still met the social requirement of agility as a dancer. Fencing teachers recognized this and were quick to point out that "he who is a fencer is a dancer."²³³ Quickly after his arrival from Saint Domingue in 1793, Paster Laval opened a fencing hall where he intended to "perfect them (his students) in an art so useful for the graces and safety of the body."²³⁴ This phrase is particularly important because Laval's choice of words indicates the multiple uses for fencing – to make one graceful (on and off the dance floor) and to offer one method of protection in the event of conflict or combat.

refugees continued to list their country of origin as France even if they were longtime residents of Saint Domingue. Mr. Lege, who also advertised as a dancing instructor, is not listed in naturalization records but Marie Lege, a widow, became a naturalized citizen on Jan. 17, 1846, and claimed St. Domingo as her nation of origin.

²³¹ *CGDA*, September 23, 1808.

²³² *CGDA*, September 13, 1800, September 29, 1808, and September 23, 1812.

²³³ *CGDA*, December 27, 1810.

²³⁴ *CGDA*, October 17, 1793.

Dueling was quite common in Charleston at the turn of the nineteenth century; while most of these duels involved pistols, it was not unheard of for the opponents to take up swords to settle a dispute.²³⁵

The prevalence of fencing in Charleston's newspapers indicates the important place this sport occupied for the upper class during the early republic. In fact, since the early colonial period, Americans admired skill in this sport for both its utility and its value as a social grace. During the settling of New England in the early seventeenth century, colonists employed various types of swords and knives in their efforts to defend themselves against their communities' enemies. Fire arms during the colonial era were difficult to obtain and inaccurate at best. Militias routinely trained with swords and pikes in order to be ready for the next threat.²³⁶ Dueling with pistols became more frequent after the American Revolution. English, French, and German soldiers encouraged a resurgence in dueling as they taught the concepts of the sport.²³⁷ During the eighteenth

²³⁵ Historians have long expressed interest in dueling in the American South as its prevalence indicates something of the mindset of southerners and amplifies regional difference. Clement Eaton argues that dueling resulted from southerners' reluctance to use the courts to settle disputes. The further one moved into the backcountry the more this was true. The duel then represented an independence and distaste for taking direction. South Carolinians relationship with the courts was contentious. For some, particularly in the backcountry, the lack of courts caused protest in early republican South Carolina. Increased population away from the coast introduced a level of disorder not seen in longer settled coastal areas. John Hope Franklin sees dueling as just another example of the violence that emanated from slave holding. Duels became a rite of passage for elite whites' sons. Instruments of violence changed depending on the class of the offender. Slaves were whipped. Lower class whites were caned. Equals (others who were members of the gentry) fought duels. For a detailed examination of the duel in Jack Kenny Williams, *Dueling in the Old South : Vignettes of Social History*, 1st ed. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1980), 5-8, 26. See also Clement Eaton, *A History of the Old South; the Emergence of a Reluctant Nation*, 3d ed. (New York,: Macmillan, 1975); John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South, 1800-1861* (Cambridge,: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956).

²³⁶ Ben Miller, "Fencing in Colonial America and the Early Republic: 1620-1800," (2009). To be determined (accessed February 25, 2013). This article contains extensive details about the importance of fencing in America and provides important links between fencing and dancing in terms of how aristocratic young men were to be trained for adulthood.

²³⁷ Williams, 6-7. Dueling was most common in South Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana, but only in Louisiana was dueling with swords most common. This is likely due to the French influence. Duels were

century fencing instructors as well as others concerned about physical health, pointed out that learning to fence had important health benefits. In 1772 Benjamin Rush, a Philadelphia doctor and signer of the Declaration of Independence, implored his patients to take up fencing as it was good for muscle development and mental acuity. He argued that the invention and prevalence of fire arms had led to “a more feeble race of men” who no longer engaged in strenuous military training as they had when the sword was the weapon of choice.²³⁸

Yet, in spite of the decline in sword use in the military in America, fencing continued to be common in the French military.²³⁹ The arrival of Saint Domingue’s refugees, many of whom had military experience in France’s army, increased interest in fencing in Charleston. One immigrant offered to teach “the Small Sword, Cut and Thrust and the Broad Sword for Cavalry, as taught in the French army by him for the space of eight years,” and another suggested that perhaps a cavalry company might have interest in group lessons in both the use of the broad sword and “the manœuvres requisite for a horseman, after the manner of the French Hussars.”²⁴⁰

often reported in the newspaper under such titles as “Unfortunate Affair,” “Unhappy Transaction,” or “Lamentable Affray” if the newspaper editor sympathized with the victim. If he was on the other side, the duel was a “Horrid Murder,” “Cowardly Assault,” or “Dastardly Assassination.” Regardless of how the manner of reporting, duels concerned two people of equal social status who were settling a dispute or an insult with violence.

²³⁸ Thomas Altherr, *Sports in America: a Documentary History*, Vol. 1, Part 1, (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1996), 153, quoted in Miller.

²³⁹ Thomas Reiss, *The Black Count : Glory, Revolution, Betrayal, and the Real Count of Monte Cristo* (New York: Crown Trade, 2012), 95-96. This is history of the life of Alexandre Dumas. Raised in Saint Domingue as the son of a black slave and white French nobleman, Dumas traveled to France, and in 1786, joined the Sixth Regiment of the Queen’s Dragoons. Here he learned the art of sword fighting. France had by the eighteenth century outlawed dueling, but it remained a common practice within the dragoons. Reiss writes, ‘the aristocratic tradition of dueling for the ‘slightest offense’ was maintained, and even encouraged, by the army, as a means of sharpening combat skills.’

²⁴⁰ *CGDA*, July 19, 1808. Determining if Antony Printens was a Saint Dominguan is impossible. He claims in this advertisement that he served for the last ten years in Bonaparte’s armies. It is possible that he

On one occasion members of the theater treated the community to an authentic use of fencing to settle a conflict. After a long dispute over the affections of a ballerina in the troupe, Alexandre Placide, manager of the French Theater, challenged his star male ballet dancer Mr. Douvillier to a duel with swords. At noon on the appointed day, much of Charleston gathered in the street to see the contest between the two expert swordsmen. Placide launched the first attack to which Douvillier quite aptly defended himself and eventually disarmed Placide. Most thought that Douvillier had ended the contest as the victor; however, “suddenly springing upon his antagonist, he (Placide) recovered his sword, and before the other could put himself on his guard, he was run through the body.” Placide ended the battle as victor; Douvillier, though wounded, survived and eventually won the girl back.²⁴¹ One can imagine that the young men observing such a display would be eager to seek a fencing instructor.

Military experience may have been important as criteria for teachers, but the value of fencing for students was its ability to impress and entertain a crowd.²⁴²

Recognizing that Americans had ceased to see fencing as a primary way of defending

left Saint Domingue during the slave insurrection of the 1790s, relocated to France, served the army there, and then came to Charleston. No large migration of people from France occurred around 1810 so one can presume that he had some ties to Charleston in order to choose to migrate. According to federal naturalization records, Antoine Printens became a naturalized American citizen in 1815. He listed Marseilles, France as his place of origin. He was forty years old at the time.

²⁴¹ Charles William Janson, *The Stranger in America* London: Albion Press, 1807, www.openlibrary.org, <Accessed February 28, 2013>. The typical manner of dueling was with pistols although swords were not out of the question, but this was increasingly meeting opposition during the 1790s. In an editorial published in the *Columbian Herald* the writer under the *nom de plume* “Honor Healer” stated that modern dueling is akin to barbarian methods of disciplining wayward tribal members. The difference, however, is that barbarians used wooden clubs which seldom killed while modern men employ pistols “that leave many a sorrowing widow and orphan child.” *Columbian Herald*, October 15, 1793.

²⁴² In spite of the popularity of fencing in America, it seems to have been even more popular in France during the late eighteenth century. Not only were Europeans practicing the art, it was the subject of much enthusiasm as it played an essential role in popular novels of the time by Alexandre Dumas, père. For additional discussion of the prevalence of fencing in the training of aristocratic gentlemen in France see Reiss.

oneself, fencing instructors employed the local theater in order to encourage interest. Numerous performances at the Charleston Theater and the French Theater, both of which employed performers from Saint Domingue, often included demonstrations with the broad sword.. G.L. Barrett in 1801 was one such instructor who reminded the public of his affiliation with the theater as he announced his fencing classes. In 1808 following the arrival of a ship from Havana carrying Saint Dominguan refugees, a fencing teacher named Mr. Denis organized a public performance of fencing artists at Mr. Sollée's concert room. His advertisement claimed that "a number of Amateurs, good fencers, and other professors of that art" would be demonstrating their skill. Proceeds from the performance assisted the distressed Xavier Denis and likely opened doors for him as a teacher of the broad sword.²⁴³ Mr. Denis continued his school until 1810 when Antony Printens agreed to take Mr. Denis' students without charging an entrance fee.²⁴⁴ Clearly, his business had grown enough to pass his students to another instructor who may have also been a Saint Dominguan refugee.

Perhaps the most interesting of the fencing advertisements comes from Auguste De Grasse whose father was the famed French admiral who assisted with the American victory against the British at Yorktown.²⁴⁵ The younger De Grasse was a planter in Saint Domingue at the time of the slave insurrection and fled to Charleston. He apparently

²⁴³ *Charleston Courier*, August 22, 1808. This advertisement includes an Anglicized spelling for Denis. I have chosen to use the French spelling since he was French and his name appears elsewhere retaining the French spelling.

²⁴⁴ *CGDA*, December 27, 1810.

²⁴⁵ In 1797 the daughters of Admiral Count François Joseph Paul de Grasse appealed to Congress for financial assistance. They arrived in the United States in July 1796 and were living in Salem, Massachusetts. They were destitute and appealed for a assistance two times. The Congressional reports outline the Admiral's brave actions that brought about the end of the American Revolution at Yorktown. Alexandrine Silvie Maxime De Grasse, *Provision Made for the Daughters of Late Admiral Count De Grasse*, Claims 92 Cong., 5-2 sess., 1797.

gained notoriety in his own right and received many appeals from Charlestonians to teach the use of the broad sword. This skill, he stated, was “generally encouraged by all governments, and the knowledge of which is so necessary to the gentleman, to soldiers, and to all who are destined to serve their country, or make arms their profession.”²⁴⁶ Because this skill was reserved for the upper class, teachers did not convey the perception that they were lowering themselves socially by seeking work. Only gentlemen, after all, were capable of teaching such a skill in the first place. As with French instruction, teaching fencing allowed refugees access to the upper echelon of Charleston society and improved their chances of social acceptance in the city.

The education of Charleston’s elite youth was not limited to music, French, and fencing, but also included learning to draw. For some this served as a pastime but for others crossed into more practical skills of designing structures or gardens. Miniature painting was quite popular in Europe at this time and some refugees were particularly gifted in this art. Portrait miniatures, dating from at least the sixteenth century, remained common up to the advent of photography in the nineteenth century when daguerreotypes replaced them.²⁴⁷ The high frequency of travel in and out of Charleston, like of other port cities, made portrait miniatures particularly popular as they allowed one to carry the image of a spouse, child, or other loved one along on a trip. In 1796, Mr. Geslain began offering lessons in miniature portraiture. He assured the public that his training came from the famous revolutionary era painter David in Paris, and in so doing made subtle

²⁴⁶ *SCSG*, October 20, 1800.

²⁴⁷ Most scholarly work concerning portrait miniatures deals with a particular art gallery’s collection. Robin Jaffee Frank, *Love and Loss : American Portrait and Mourning Miniatures* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Art Gallery, 2000); "Miniature Portraits," *The Art Amateur* 7, no. 1 (1882).

reference to the connections between the French Revolution and the American Revolution.²⁴⁸

This reference actually served two purposes. First, American enthusiasm for the French Revolution was at a high mark during the early 1790s when the majority of Saint Domingue's refugees arrived in Charleston. Street festivals and recognitions of Bastille Day drew the most prominent of Charleston's residents, and this tide of support for France had contributed to American desire to aid the destitute French people in their midst.²⁴⁹ Secondly, during the years following the American Revolution, portraits of heroes from the war against Britain became quite popular. Just prior to Mr. Geslain's announcement, Charleston hosted a large exhibit of portraits of Revolutionary War heroes. Rembrandt and Raphael Peale, sons of the famed artist Charles Wilson Peale, appeared in the city to display and sell copies of their father's work.²⁵⁰ Since Charles Peale was so well-known throughout the new nation, such an exhibit drew much attention. Geslain's use of references to revolution indicate an astute understanding of American attitudes about France and a savvy ability to tie his work to other more prestigious artists. Once again, the buyers were wealthy elites for the most part.

²⁴⁸ *CGDA*, September 25, 1795 and February 13, 1796. In addition to Mr. Geslain, Mr. Heulan, brother-in-law to Mr. Fayette, offered lessons in design and painting.

²⁴⁹ By 1796 when Geslain appeared in Charleston, such excitement for France had begun to falter. Political relations with the French Directory were difficult and later 1797 would result in the XYZ Affair and the Quasi War with France. By harkening to the French Revolution, Geslain was attempting to distance himself from current politics and remind his potential students of previous positive relations between America and France. In addition, many refugees were also opposed to the changes wrought by the French Revolution as they attributed their dire circumstances to revolutionary movements that upended traditional social order and unleashed insurrection. By this point the French Republic had declared an end to slavery, so all hope of returning and rebuilding Saint Domingue into the colony that it was before 1789 had vanished.

²⁵⁰ *CGDA*, April 13, 1796.

For others, skills at drawing crossed into the field of design. Auguste De Grasse, prior to his efforts to teach fencing, advertised that he was willing to teach students how to draw plans for buildings, fortifications, and landscapes. This effort appears to have been of a small scale. Later in 1800 he combined this effort with his interest in fencing and proposed a school that taught both skills.²⁵¹ During the early republican era planned gardens became quite popular. Such endeavors constituted a merging of interests in art and scientific inquiry that had bloomed alongside Enlightenment political thought. Creating planned gardens in the United States was in part an effort by Americans to adopt the traditional styles of European elites.²⁵²

While many refugees were accustomed to earning their living through their land and slaves, a number of Charleston's Saint Dominguan population did possess particular professional skills. At least four refugees were medical doctors and gained social status and high acclaim for their abilities. The first to arrive was Dr. Polony. He became known for his experience in treating diseases associated with the Caribbean such as Yellow Fever and Malaria.²⁵³ Dr. Robelot announced in early 1794 that he was seeking patients and noted that he particularly specialized in "all the diseases of women and children."²⁵⁴ Dr. Anthony Ulmo arrived in Charleston in mid-1794 and posted an advertisement just fifteen days after his arrival.²⁵⁵ He continued to work as a doctor and

²⁵¹ *SCSG*, June 17, 1800.

²⁵² Theresa O'Malley, "'Your Garden Must Be a Museum to You:' Early American Botanic Gardens," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 59, no. 2/3 (1996).

²⁵³ Details of Dr. Polony's career appeared in his obituary. *CGDA*, September 27, 1805.

²⁵⁴ *CGDA*, January 3, 1794 and February 26, 1794.

²⁵⁵ *SCSG*, September 9, 1794.

operated a pharmacy until his death in 1831.²⁵⁶ In 1809 he relocated his office within the city and included an offer “to take under his care for treatment of Chronical Disorders, a few Negroes.”²⁵⁷ Another prominent refugee doctor, Vincent Leseigneur, initially attempted an apothecary business and advertised a wide variety of beauty products including combs, perfume, hair powder bags, and soaps; however, after three years he determined that his business had declined and showed little hope of improving.²⁵⁸ He then turned his efforts to surgery.²⁵⁹ Through his work as a physician, he became well-known in the city, and upon his death his obituary remarked that he had “succeeded in drawing towards him the friendship and admiration of many of our most estimable citizens.”²⁶⁰

Some of the refugees attempted to utilize their international contacts to establish themselves as merchants.²⁶¹ One of the first advertisements to appear in Charleston newspapers following the fall of Cap Français asserted that the subscriber had lived in Saint Domingue for the last ten years and was “well acquainted with the commerce of that island, as well as with the dispositions of the people.” He offered his services as the pilot of a ship to any merchant engaged in business with Saint Domingue.²⁶² Antoine Barbot became a prominent merchant in the city, dealing in a variety of goods including

²⁵⁶ *CGDA*, March 22, 1831.

²⁵⁷ *CGDA*, February 14, 1809.

²⁵⁸ *CGDA*, October 17, 1797.

²⁵⁹ *CGDA*, October 28, 1800.

²⁶⁰ *Southern Patriot*, Charleston, South Carolina, January 6, 1846.

²⁶¹ Meadows, "Engineering Exile: Social Networks and the French Atlantic Community, 1789-1809."

²⁶² *CGDA*, October 8, 1793.

white Havana sugar, mustard, currant jelly, and almonds.²⁶³ The Moïse family, Jewish refugees from Saint Domingue, applied for and received a license to sell liquor as well but also offered flour, candles, and barrels at their store on the corner of King and Hassell Streets.²⁶⁴ Over time they proved themselves to be trustworthy with alcohol sales carefully following policies that limited or prevented lower class whites and people of color from having access to alcohol. Using this acquired social capital, the Moïses recommended their neighbors and colleagues for similar privileges before the local liquor board.²⁶⁵ According to federal naturalization records for the one hundred twenty people who listed Saint Domingue or France as their place of origin, “merchant” was the most common occupation with fifty-four people maintaining this claim between 1799 and 1828.²⁶⁶ In addition four listed “grocer,” and two listed shopkeeper as their occupations. The numbers demonstrate that fully half of the new citizens were merchants at some point.

²⁶³ Sources, *CGDA*, April 13, 1822; November 30, 1821; April 16, 1822; Barbot Family, Barbot Family Papers, 1791-ca.1965 (1005.00) South Carolina Historical Society. Antoine Barbot’s wife Marie Esnard Barbot was the daughter of a Saint Dominguan planter who fled to Charleston. Barbot arrived in Charleston from France but the date of his arrival is unknown. The first records we have date from 1791. He was closely aligned with the Saint Dominguan community and worked to help them recover lost property in the colony.

²⁶⁴ *CGDA*, August 26, 1806 and July 15, 1808. Most likely these men were Aaron and Hyam Moïse, the oldest children of Abraham Moïse. Both were born in the Caribbean and fled Saint Domingue with their parents and two other brothers in 1791. The family became prominent in the Jewish community in Charleston and was a leader in the reform movement within the synagogue. See Harold Moïse, *The Moïse Family of South Carolina; an Account of the Life and Descendants of Abraham and Sarah Moïse Who Settled in Charleston, South Carolina, in the Year 1791 A. D* (Columbia, S. C.,: Printed by R. L. Bryan Co, 1961); Dale Rosengarten, “Port Jews and Plantation Jews: Carolina-Caribbean Connections,” in *The Jews in the Caribbean*, ed. Jane S. Gerber and Miriam Bodian (Portland, Oregon: The Littman library of Jewish civilization, 2014), 300-301.

²⁶⁵ *CGDA*, September 30, 1812.

²⁶⁶ Determining which French immigrants were indeed Saint Dominguan refugees and which were aristocrats fleeing the French Revolution has constantly plagued studies of these people. In the course of my research, I have learned that many long-time residents of Saint Domingue still considered France their homeland since Saint Domingue was a colony of France. Some of these people referred to themselves as Saint Dominguan in their newspaper advertisements seeking work. Movement between the colony and the metropole was frequent and contributed to the blurring of this line.

While no comprehensive list of refugees and their occupations exists, in addition to the merchants previously mentioned, naturalization records for the District of South Carolina provide a sampling of other professions they held. For refugees who became naturalized citizens between 1796 and 1842, there were four bakers, a blacksmith, a bookkeeper, a butcher, two cabinet makers, three carpenters, a clerk, two coach makers, two engineers, a gardener, four grocers, a gunsmith, four jewelers, nineteen mariners, a plate worker, a printer, another shoe maker, a shopkeeper, two tailors, and a tin plate worker.²⁶⁷ Newspaper advertisements provide additional occupations or efforts to seek work. One woman “reduced in circumstances” offered to “undertake the care of children in a family.”²⁶⁸ Another refugee declared she was “a complete cook” and had been “regularly bred to the business.”²⁶⁹ Finally, a French man offered his services to South Carolina’s planters as an indigo maker. He had experience in producing “indigo of the first quality, after the French manner” and claimed that “in case he should fail in the operation” he would pay damages to the owner.²⁷⁰

As artisans this group occupied a very different place socially from their fellow refugees who were plantation owners in Saint Domingue. While some of them may have owned slaves in order to do the work of their shops, they were not large slave owners. As the population of Charleston struggled to understand the refugees’ politics, this group exemplified a republican work ethic that certainly complicated any efforts to label the

²⁶⁷ Brent H. Holcombe, ed. *South Carolina Naturalizations: 1783-1850* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1985). While 1842 seems to be a late date for someone to be achieving citizenship after fleeing Saint Domingue, the person in question, Etienne Poincignon was forty-two years old at the time of naturalization. He obviously fled Saint Domingue as a very small child.

²⁶⁸ *CGDA*, September 16, 1793.

²⁶⁹ *CGDA*, January 21, 1794.

²⁷⁰ *CGDA*, February 23, 1795.

entire group as aristocrats and, therefore, royalists.²⁷¹ For many of this group, advertisements for their services did not appear in the local newspapers. Because of this, one might assume they were less desperate than those who repeatedly published the same advertisement week after week and claimed they could perform such divergent services as teach French, wash laundry, and instruct students on skills ranging from embroidery to sword fighting. This is not necessarily true. They merely had more opportunities to seek employment than those refugees who had only aristocratic skills to teach. Artisans or tradesmen who were former business owners were likely able to employ their skills to find work in Charleston's shops. Their earning potential was less than it would have been as business owners, but they were able to provide for their families in a manner similar to what they were accustomed to in Saint Domingue. The types of work this group did allowed them access to the wider public and helped them find acceptance in their new home. These connections were essential to their establishment in Charleston.

Circumstances surrounding the refugees' fleeing of Saint Domingue coupled with the humble ways they sought work indicate that as a group they were quite desperate. Charlestonians were well-aware of circumstances in Saint Domingue, and the refugees could have played on their sympathies as they advertised for work. However, as a whole, the refugees did not attempt to exploit their situation in order to earn money. They recognized that emphasizing the violence they had endured might actually alienate them from the very people who could help them settle into life in Charleston. The images of

²⁷¹ More about this debate appears in the next chapter. Refugees faced constant questions about which side they supported in the French Revolution as well as the insurrection that was occurring in Saint Domingue. Some were sympathizers with the republican revolutionaries in France and favored an end to the strict hierarchical structure that governed France. These people were not nobles but were commoners who had earned a great deal of money through their New World plantations. Other refugees were aristocrats who favored the continuation of the monarchy. They considered the revolution and its republican rhetoric responsible for the slave rebellion. Slaves had learned of the ideas revolutionaries proclaimed and wanted those rights for themselves.

slave insurrection were fresh in the minds of South Carolinians, and most either did not want to think about such dangers or wanted to assign responsibility for the violent uprisings. This responsibility could easily fall to the Saint Dominguan planters. Therefore, refugees had to distance themselves from these perceptions. In the months immediately following the fall of Cap Français, they often identified themselves as being “from the Cape” or as having “arrived lately from St. Domingo.”²⁷² They did not wax long on the details of narrow escapes or the violence they witnessed before leaving. Of those who did mention the difficulties they had endured, they described themselves as “reduced in circumstances,” as people “whom the misfortunes of St. Domingo have obliged to seek an asylum on the continent of America,” or as “an honest family which the troubles of St. Domingo have reduced from a state of affluence to straitened circumstances.”²⁷³ These were not typical advertisements, however. Most simply pointed out the subscriber’s origin then continued to list the service he could offer. This refusal to elicit sympathy through graphic references constitutes a key difference between those who landed in Charleston and those who were in America’s northern cities. Advertisements in southern newspapers rarely attempted to solicit business by forcing the

²⁷² *CGDA*, October 8, 1793; October 24, 1793; November 7, 1793; December 30, 1793; August 28, 1794; January 13, 1795; February 23, 1795; December 25, 1795; and September 25, 1799.

²⁷³ *CGDA*, September 16, 1793; February 6, 1795; and January 17, 1795. Of the records surveyed, only one from the last wave of refugees utilizes language that attempts to raise sympathy. This one, more than any of the others makes the reader appear quite desperate. In an advertisement from August 22, 1808, Mr. Dennis announced a benefit where a variety of fencers would perform (the proceeds being for his benefit) and stated that he was “one of the distressed emigrants arrived in the last vessel from Havana, being in a situation which calls for immediate assistance.” He concluded by promising that the attendees would “enjoy great satisfaction” from the performance and from “having contributed to the relief of a distressed man.”

reader to recall the details that led to the refugee presence.²⁷⁴ Northern newspapers, on the other hand, frequently contained such explicit announcements.²⁷⁵ Several possible reasons for this regional difference exist. First, Charlestonians were particularly sensitive to the circumstances in Saint Domingue. Slave insurrection was their worst fear. For refugees to point this out relentlessly would have harmed their chances of integration into the larger community. In spite of the refugee community's efforts to blame French leaders in Saint Domingue for the violence, most southerners believed the violence was the result of overly harsh treatment of slaves in the Caribbean, particularly French slave owners. Secondly, a simple statement that a subscriber was from Saint Domingue was presumably enough to make the reader want to help. Waxing long about the violence refugees had endured was not necessary. Residents of Charleston were fully aware of the events that brought Saint Domingueans to their shores and most, if forced to admit it, could imagine themselves in a similar situation. Thirdly, refugees from Saint Domingue, recognizing Charleston was going to be their permanent home, wanted to build long term relationships. They were eager to meet their neighbors on equal terms as devoid of pity as possible. In order to do this, they needed to present themselves as capable workers and not simply as destitute victims.

Part of this endeavor entailed building social connections to aid their economic efforts. In public announcements advertising services or seeking work, many subscribers not only gave information about their skills as workers but also portrayed their

²⁷⁴ In 1793 the numbers of immigrants from Saint Domingue were high, and they lacked an established French community in the city to help them. Connecting themselves to the disaster in Saint Domingue legitimated their need for help and prevented them from appearing as undeserving.

²⁷⁵ White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*, 34-35. White deals primarily with Philadelphia and other northern cities. The reality of living in a slave society made Charleston experiences different.

relationships with the local community. Most included addresses where they would hold lessons or conduct business. Often they added the names of nearby residents in an effort to clarify a location; and in so doing they were perhaps suggesting a personal connection with someone who might have social, economic, or political clout. For example, one man informed the public that his new academy was “opposite Capt. William Hall’s” while another stated his French Grammatical School was at Mr. Girardin’s shop which faced the gold and silver smith Mr. Wightman.²⁷⁶ Another advertisement stated that the subscriber felt that giving his name was not necessary for “it is sufficient to say that they reside in the house of Mr. William Bee.”²⁷⁷ Having prominent persons give accolades also augmented the social and economic possibilities for Saint Dominguan businesses. Miss Datty who ran an elite school for young ladies engaged some of the city’s more prominent gentlemen to jury an elocution contest at her school in 1812. Following the event, the five men, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, William Read, Rev. Duclos Riviere, Rene Godard, and Joseph Assalit, issued their praise for her students in the newspaper.²⁷⁸ Presumably, other Charlestonians would want to send their children to Miss Datty’s school after such an endorsement.

No discussion of the economics of work is complete without touching on how one’s occupation is tied to one’s identity. For refugees who lost all in Saint Domingue,

²⁷⁶ *CGDA*, January 11, 1796 and August 17, 1797.

²⁷⁷ *CGDA*, January 17, 1795.

²⁷⁸ *Charleston Courier*, December 11, 1812. This is an interesting combination of people including both long time residents of Charleston and relative newcomers. René Godard was from France although efforts to determine if he had connections to Saint Domingue have been inconclusive. However, it is likely he had none. In 1785 his father René Godard, Sr. died in Charleston. His son also named René was fourteen years old at the time and in France at the time of the father’s death. The Charleston City Directory of 1802 lists the son as a French teacher, and he also served as the president of the French Society in 1821. *Abstracts of Wills of Charleston District, South Carolina and Other Wills Recorded in the District 1783-1800*. Compiled and Edited by Caroline T. Moore. Columbia, SC: R.L. Bryan, 1974.

this has to have been one of the more psychologically damaging factors. Some, while not eager to embrace a new identity through their work, were surely able to do so. For others this remained quite difficult. The reluctance to assume a new identity is most obvious with some of the former planters. Five refugee men listed “planter” as their occupation when applying for naturalization in South Carolina between 1799 and 1811. No evidence exists to demonstrate they were planters in the United States, yet they still saw this as their occupation. Early in their exile, many hoped that France would gain control of her colony, restore slavery, and allow them an opportunity to resume their former lives. Imagining that eventually this would happen may have encouraged Saint Domingan planters to hold on to this identity. One planter realized by 1794 that returning was not a possibility but was still unable to come to terms with what had happened on the island. He offered his Saint Domingan plantation for sale. He described the property as three miles from Port-au-Prince, stated that it produced “one million weight of sugar” each year, and had two hundred and thirty slaves. He claimed that he would sell “very cheap” and that it was “one of the finest estates in that island.”²⁷⁹ Other planters seemed to have recognized that their time as active planters had passed, but they, or at least their family and friends, still identified them as planters. Numerous obituaries listed “Planter of the Island of St. Domingo” and described the vast wealth the deceased possessed prior to fleeing. In addition, marriage announcements frequently reported that the father of either the bride or the groom or both had been a planter in Saint Domingue.²⁸⁰ Former

²⁷⁹ *CGDA*, August 28, 1794.

²⁸⁰ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* published transcripts of marriage and death notices that appeared in the *CGDA* during the early 1800s. Some examples of this that list “planter” include Elizabeth Heyward Jervey, “Marriage and Death Notices from the City Gazette and Daily Advertiser (Continued),” *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 34, no. 3 (1933); Elizabeth Heyward Jervey, “Marriage and Death Notices from the City Gazette

planters clearly possessed few financial resources once they arrived in Charleston in spite of their pre-revolutionary wealth. Those able to bring one or more slaves to the Carolinas were perhaps the most fortunate of the refugees as they had a source of income apart from their own work.

In spite of South Carolina's efforts to prevent slaves from Saint Domingue from entering the state, some did. Once in the state, owners rented them out. Commonly called "hiring out," this activity served two purposes: it occupied slaves who would otherwise be idle and possibly dangerous, and it created income for owners short on cash. The general practice was that the slave would seek work, perform the necessary duties, and then both the slave and the owner would receive payment. Hiring out could be for simply a day at a time, or a slave might take a job for an extended time. In the latter case, he might only return to his owner on a monthly basis to settle accounts. Slaves benefitted from this as they were able to earn some money and eventually might be able to purchase their freedom. At the very least, "hired out" slaves gained a modicum of freedom as they moved about Charleston seeking work.

By deciding to hire out their slaves, Saint Dominguans participated in a practice that was almost as old as South Carolina itself. In 1712 the first laws appeared on the books that attempted to regulate the hiring out of slaves and the amount of money they were able to earn. Early experiences with hiring out had created a situation where slaves lied and worked the system for their own benefit. Instead of seeking employment and lawfully earning the money, some slaves stole to meet the earning requirements set forth by their masters. The profits from these ill-gotten gains allowed them to loiter and get

of Charleston, S. C," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 38, no. 3 (1937); "Marriage and Death Notices from the City Gazette and Daily Advertiser (Continued)," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 32, no. 4 (1931).

drunk when they should have been working. South Carolina's officials realized they had to take control of this problem. New laws resulted that attempted to regulate the kind of work that hired out slaves did and prevent them from retaining any of their earnings.²⁸¹ Enforcement of these laws was irregular and sporadic.

Over the next eighty years the laws evolved to provide more detail concerning the expectations for both slaves and slave owners. Unsupervised slaves continued to be "loose, idle, disorderly" and engage in actions that officials saw as dangerous.²⁸² New laws and appeals for the following of these laws resulted in little change. Finally, in August 1796 new and broader laws to regulate hiring out appeared on the books and were expanded in 1800.²⁸³ While more slave owners seem to have followed the new laws, many still did not.²⁸⁴ Once Saint Dominguan slaves came on the scene, they too were able to take advantage of the privileges that being hired out gave and conspire to create insurrections.

News of possible slave insurrections or disruptions of the peace circulated in Charleston throughout the 1790s. In August 1793 Governor William Moultrie received a communication from the governor of Virginia detailing a note found in Norfolk. The note, signed "Secret Keeper, Richmond," claimed that "our friend in Charleston...has

²⁸¹ Harlan Greene, Harry S. Hutchins, and Brian E. Hutchins, *Slave Badges and the Slave-Hire System in Charleston, South Carolina, 1783-1865* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2004), 15-17; South Carolina., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina. Vol. 7th, Containing the Acts from 1838, Exclusive* (Columbia, S.C.: A.H. Pemberton, state printer, 1840), 343.

²⁸² Quoted in Greene, Hutchins, and Hutchins, *Slave Badges and the Slave-Hire System in Charleston, South Carolina, 1783-1865*, 19. *South Carolina Gazette*, September 14, 1772.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 27-28. NO evidence exists to support that these new stricter laws or owners' willingness to follow them was caused by the presence of Saint Dominguan slaves in the city. However, since this was during the peak time of arrival, these refugee slaves were easily recognizable due to their language and dress. For more on this see, White, "The Politics of 'French Negroes' in the United States," 103-121.

²⁸⁴ City records and the presence of slave badges indicate that these regulations were followed.

enlisted six thousand men” in a plot to attack South Carolina where they “will kill all before us, it will begin in every town in one nite.”²⁸⁵ While no attack occurred, there were suspicious fires that put the community on edge. In early October of the same year, the governor announced a reward for information leading to the capture of those who tried “to set fire to the city of Charleston, by placing live coals and a quantity of combustibles, in the stable of Mr. Daniel Bourdeaux.”²⁸⁶ Less than two weeks later, a report of another attempted fire appeared. This time local citizens, as many as forty whites, took to the streets to protect their city.²⁸⁷ Concern continued in June 1796 as “a piece of burning coal [was] enclosed in greasy paper and thrown into a loft where hay or other combustibles were.”²⁸⁸ Again, in 1797 a possible plot was discovered whereby whites would be murdered as they left church unarmed on Christmas Day.²⁸⁹ In all of these cases, “French negroes” were suspect.

The hiring out practice was clearly important for the economic well-being of refugee slave owners. In December 1799 Henry Martin, a refugee who fled to Charleston in 1793, filed a petition seeking restitution for his slave who died while hired out to complete a public work project on Sullivan’s Island near Charleston. He stated that he had struggled to provide for his family since arriving in South Carolina but had finally

²⁸⁵ *Governor’s Messages*, SCDAH, S 165009, Message 0577, November 30, 1793.

²⁸⁶ *Columbian Herald*, Charleston, South Carolina, October 3, 1793.

²⁸⁷ *CGDA*, October 18 and 19, 1793.

²⁸⁸ *Federal Gazette*, Baltimore, Maryland, July 18, 1797 and *Hampshire Gazette*, Northampton, Massachusetts, July 27, 1796.

²⁸⁹ *Governor’s Messages*, SCDAH, S 165009, Message 0577, November 30, 1793; *Time Piece*, New York, New York, December 15, 1797, and *Imperial Herald*, Suffield, Connecticut, December 20, 1797, ran reports that previously appeared in Charleston newspapers. In the *United States Chronicle*, Providence, Rhode Island, December 21, 1797, a letter from a Charleston man told of the capture of two mulattoes involved in the Christmas Day plot.

earned enough money to purchase Figaro. Hiring out this slave had become Martin's primary way of supporting his family. The slave's death meant the sixty-four year old man and his family were once again destitute.²⁹⁰ In a similar case, Antoine Plumet also demonstrated the value of hired out slaves when he filed a petition in Charleston District court asserting that the executor of his father's estate had cheated him out of the full revenue from hiring out of six slaves. He argued that the executor of his father's will had defrauded him of his fair share of the revenue his father's slaves earned. He claimed that he was paid \$1350 when the actual amount the slaves had earned him was \$3800.²⁹¹

Over time the hiring out of slaves awarded their owners substantial amounts of money. The loss of a slave was a disaster for those who depended on that slave's income. Other refugees who had more slaves engaged in the trade of slaves or used them for collateral for business deals. Stephen Etenaud was a refugee who fled to Charleston after "dire misfortune" in Saint Domingue. Shortly after his arrival, two families of his slaves followed him to America. He began his career as a baker in Charleston but was unsuccessful. This setback induced him to enter into a business agreement to establish a coffee plantation in Cuba. His partner advanced him \$7000; and, in return, he sent seventeen of his slaves to work the plantation in Cuba. He accused his partner of stealing his slaves as he understood they were simply mortgaged and would be returned upon payment of the \$7000.²⁹² For refugees such as Étenaud, slave owning and trading were

²⁹⁰ Records of the General Assembly, Document Number 1799 #17, Microfilm: reel #2, frames 0108-111, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

²⁹¹ Records of the Equity Court, Bills, Document Number 1832-59, Microfilm: Order #215, Reel D1269, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

²⁹² Records of the Equity Court, Bills, Document Number 1806-17 Part 1, Microfilm: Order #69, Reel D1268, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

actually his professions. In this way, he was no different from South Carolina's slave owners.

In conclusion, only by going to work were Saint Domingans able to begin to assimilate. As long as they were the objects of pity, they could not integrate into the local community. Work gave them more than the money to buy the necessities of life; it also gave them personal contact with their new American neighbors. These contacts provided them with increasingly more economic advantages as they enlarged their businesses through word of mouth. They also benefitted socially as they demonstrated to the larger community that they could and would take care of themselves. As they became more accepted socially, they assimilated into the local community. While some married other refugees from Saint Domingue or émigrés from France, many married long time residents of Charleston.²⁹³ Such personal contacts might never have occurred if they had not engaged in commercial ventures that forced them to meet and work with their new neighbors.

²⁹³ Selected examples of marriages between refugees and Charlestonians appear in "Marriage and Death Notices from the City Gazette (Continued)," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 27, no. 3 (1926): 172; "Marriage and Death Notices from the City Gazette (Continued)," 98; Mabel L. Webber, "Marriage and Death Notices from the City Gazette (Continued)," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 23, no. 3 (1922): 157.

CHAPTER 4: SEEKING SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE IN THE MIDST OF CHAOTIC WORLD EVENTS

On July 15, 1793, as the first ships carrying destitute refugees from Cap Français began arriving in Charleston's harbor, the city threw one of its largest celebrations of the French Revolution.²⁹⁴ The French Patriotic Society of Charleston invited "the friends of liberty and equality" to an oration and feast. At this very public event, the organizers staged a performance billed as a marriage where "two celebrated widows, ladies of America and France" who had, as the newspaper stated, rejected their former husbands and now pledged their loyalty to one another as did their children. The women "requested that their striped gowns should be pinned together, that their children should be looked upon as one family." The detailed description of this ceremony claimed that the president of the Patriotic Society in Charleston "acted as a sponsor for the American lady" while the French Consul Michel-Ange-Bernard Mangourit presented the French widow. Throughout the ceremony Mangourit was highly emotional as "his eyes overflowed with tears of joy." The article concluded with an interesting statement about who was not present. Mangourit deeply regretted "the absence of the president and all

²⁹⁴ This event was on the 15th instead of the 14th because the 14th fell on a Sunday.

those of his colleagues that are true friends of those ladies” (the brides – France and America).²⁹⁵ Lacking other information about this statement, we are left to speculate the writer’s intent for including it. Naturally, travel during the late eighteenth century was difficult; one could hardly expect the President to be at local event staged far from Philadelphia. It seems, however, that there is more to this statement. Perhaps the writer had political reasons for adding it at the end; America was becoming increasingly divided over the French Revolution and how much celebration was warranted.

On the same day at the Exchange in Charleston, a poem appeared, and the *Columbian Herald* printed its contents which highlighted the violence of recent events in France. Instead of a day of celebration, the poet believed July fourteenth should be “Mark’d for Murder, Sacrelige, and rapine.” With a sarcastic tone the poem continued, “Lett cruel monsters as in France rejoice for those who “cut the throats of Inocents, Rip up their Mothers’ Wombs... and when the Detested Villans – Hath done all this- Then Lett them teach the Ignorant Rabbell, To Call it LIBERTY.”²⁹⁶ By the summer of 1793, French revolutionaries had engaged in numerous controversial attacks on those they deemed dangerous to the revolution. They had beheaded their king and queen, they had persecuted clergymen, and they had used violent means to put down incidences of

²⁹⁵ *CGDA*, July 15, 1793; July 20, 1793. Numerous scholars have looked to the French Revolution and the controversies it engendered to explain the growing divide between the Federalists and the new political group who termed themselves Republicans. Ammon, *The Genet Mission*; Cleves, "Jacobins in This Country": The United States, Great Britain, and Trans-Atlantic Anti-Jacobinism," 99-109; Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery*. Newman, "Celebrating the French Revolution," 120-151.

²⁹⁶ *Columbian Herald*, July 23, 1793.

resistance to their rule. With official sanctioning of such violence, a culture of fear engulfed the nation, a fear that led to violence throughout the countryside.²⁹⁷

The mock marriage obviously grew out of the close connection between France and America that formed as a result of French participation in the American Revolution. Travel between the two countries was common during the last decades of the eighteenth century, and close friendships developed between leading Americans and their French counterparts. Progressive Enlightenment ideas crossed the Atlantic on ships between the two countries. Among these ideas were the themes of liberty, equality, republicanism, and natural rights. Many Americans at the time recognized the French Revolution as a movement that grew out of America's throwing off of monarchical rule.

All Americans did not embrace and applaud these events as the poem from the Exchange demonstrates. From the initial moments of the French Revolution, crowds charged, attacked, and murdered those who represented the Old Regime. American newspapers followed events in France carefully and carried regular reports of the evolving situation. The way the French Revolution was occurring was drastically different from the way America had gone about revolution.

Into this confusion about France and her revolution came refugees fleeing an even more dangerous rebellion. The rhetoric of the French Revolution sparked the rebellions that overtook Saint Domingue and sent the colony into chaos. Americans were unsure of how to respond and southerners were particularly torn. Reasons existed to welcome Saint Domingans with open arms, but there were also concerns. White slave owners in the American South felt a kinship with their fellow slave owners from the Caribbean. The

²⁹⁷ The classic book on fear in France during the French Revolution is Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1789; Rural Panic in Revolutionary France* (New York,: Vintage Books, 1973).

fundraising efforts that occurred after the burning of Cap Français in 1793 demonstrated their compassion for the destitute and their empathy for people who shared a similar lifestyle. However, no one could ignore the reality of slave insurrection. Slave owners in the American South wanted and needed to believe their slaves would not rebel. In order to maintain such a conviction, southerners emphasized the difference in culture between South Carolina and Saint Domingue; these differences included harsher treatment of slaves and more idle and negligent behavior on the part of Saint Dominguan masters. Under this characterization, it was not difficult to see why Saint Domingue slaves rebelled.

Even before refugees began arriving, South Carolinians realized the dangers of slave insurrection in Saint Domingue. In 1791 after receiving a letter from the colonial assembly in Saint Domingue requesting assistance in putting down the slave rebellion, Governor Charles Pinckney of South Carolina wrote to President George Washington stating his concerns about the news coming from the Caribbean. He wrote that unless Saint Domingue returned to order the recent events might result in “a flame which will extend to all the neighboring islands, and may eventually prove not a very pleasing or agreeable example to the Southern States.”²⁹⁸ This chapter examines the ways in which the politics of the French Revolution and Saint Domingue’s slave insurrection impacted white refugees’ efforts to find acceptance in their new homes. In spite of the difficulties these circumstances posed, Saint Dominguans adapted to their new surroundings and used their previous experiences in a slave society to facilitate their integration into the local community.

²⁹⁸ Charles Pinckney to George Washington, September 30, 1791, *Miscellaneous Letters, Department of State*, National Archives, quoted in George C. Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist: William Loughton Smith of Charleston (1758-1812)* (Columbia,: University of South Carolina Press, 1962), 294.

American attitudes towards the French Revolution were in the process of changing when refugees disembarked in 1793. When the French Revolution first began in 1789, Americans, nearly in universal accord, cheered the spread of the liberties they believed their revolution had begun. News of the fall of the Bastille arrived in the United States in September 1789 with one early account calling it an “incredible event, a publick right to our thanks.”²⁹⁹ Celebrations occurred in all major cities in the United States including Charleston. Even though the revolution began with the bloody takeover of the Bastille prison, many Americans were quick to overlook the revolution’s violent character. Instead they emphasized France’s successes at supplanting the monarchy with a representative government and the hope that other countries in Europe might also eventually follow suit and make similar changes.³⁰⁰ Some, like Benjamin Franklin, viewed France’s move toward liberty and equality as an unsurprising step. On learning about the storming of the Bastille, Franklin remarked, “Why, I see nothing singular in all this, but on the contrary, what might naturally be expected: the French have served an *apprenticeship to Liberty* in this country, and now ... they *have set up for themselves*” a similar system.³⁰¹ James Monroe, writing under the pen name “Aratus,” believed the French Revolution was the first example of the spread of the principles of the American Revolution, and that now “the ethereal fire was caught, which has already diffused its

²⁹⁹ *Herald of Freedom*, Boston, Massachusetts, September 25, 1789. This account appeared in French the day before and was apparently the first publication of the event.

³⁰⁰ *CGDA*, January 5, 1790. In a letter dated October 14, 1789, an American living in France wrote to a friend in Philadelphia stating that he could image these rumblings of freedom spreading beyond Europe to Asia and Africa eventually.

³⁰¹ *SGSC*, September 23, 1790. Emphasis in the original.

light into the remotest regions.”³⁰² Many saw the events in France as examples of the “progress of liberty” begun by the American Revolution.³⁰³

After these first sparks of resistance to monarchical rule, France began the process of establishing a working government. Americans watched this with great interest, and numerous writers commented on France’s progress. One such commentary was Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* which appeared in two parts, the first in March 1791 and the second in February 1792.³⁰⁴ Paine’s work was a response to Edmund Burke’s enormously popular text which criticized the French Revolution for its abrupt overthrow of traditional rule and for its lack of order. For Burke gradual change seemed much more appropriate.³⁰⁵ Paine, however, believed urgent change was warranted as “the rights of the living” should triumph over those of the dead, that the living had the right to choose their leaders and should not be bound by the declarations of a dead monarch.³⁰⁶ For Paine no other way of unseating the old, dysfunctional system existed. He believed the disorder would eventually subside and open the door to a new and better system.

³⁰² *National Gazette*, Philadelphia, November 24, 1791. James Monroe authored three letters under the name “Aratus.” The other two appeared on November 14 and December 12, 1791. Ammon, *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity*, 87.

³⁰³ Thomas Paine, “Writings of Thomas Paine (1779-1792): The Rights of Man,” (Kindle Book).

³⁰⁴ Gary Kates, “From Liberalism to Radicalism: Tom Paine’s *Rights of Man*,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50, no. 4 (1989): 569-571. Through this work he gave voice to the significance of the continuation of the American Revolution in the form of the French Revolution. As Kates states, “Paine’s vision unified Philadelphia merchants, British artisans, French peasants, Dutch reformers, and radical intellectuals from Boston to Berlin into one great movement.” Excerpts of Paine’s pamphlet appeared in newspapers throughout the United States which added to its popularity as well as influence. *CGDA*, July 14, 1791; July 27, 1792; August 22, 1792; August 24, 1792; August 27, 1792; August 28, 1792; September 3, 1792; September 5, 1792; September 15, 1792; and September 20, 1792.

³⁰⁵ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution & Other Essays* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1910).

³⁰⁶ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke’s Attack on the French Revolution* (London,: Printed for J. S. Jordan, 1791), 6.

Zeal for the revolution continued throughout the United States as the 1790s began and in many ways peaked in 1793.³⁰⁷ For the 1792 anniversary of the storming of the Bastille, Charleston played host to a number of events, both private and public.³⁰⁸ Boston in January 1793 staged the largest of all French Revolutionary celebrations in America, an event planned to recognize the French victory over the Prussians at Valmy. This victory encouraged a hope that France eventually would be able to vanquish the European kingdoms that were seeking to defeat the republican revolution and reinstate the monarchy.³⁰⁹ Thomas Jefferson, always an ardent supporter of the French, claimed in early January 1793 just before the Boston event that ninety-nine out of one hundred Americans supported the French Revolution and that “the universal feasts, and rejoicings which have lately been had on account of the successes of the French shewed the genuine effusions of their hearts.”³¹⁰ Indeed, the Boston celebration and others like it drew

³⁰⁷ This popular support for the French Revolution manifested itself in public celebrations and parades. Such events occurred in most major American cities, particularly those in the northern regions of the nation. Charleston was the only southern city with significant celebrations. Democratic Republicans supported these events and employed them in an effort to further their own political ends. See Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic*, 121 and 132. Rachel Hope Cleves argues that differences in American public opinion began to develop in November 1792 when news of the prison massacres in Paris started to appear in American newspapers. See Cleves, “Jacobins in This Country”: The United States, Great Britain, and Trans-Atlantic Anti-Jacobinism,” 411.

³⁰⁸ SGSC, July 16, 1792. Charleston and Philadelphia had a long history of celebrating the French. Prior to the fall of the Bastille, both cities held elaborate celebrations commemorating the French – American alliance signed in 1778. These two cities had the largest French populations from during and after the American Revolution and saw many French sailors and French émigrés move through their ports. See Newman, “Celebrating the French Revolution,” 135-136. Newman includes a map at showing the types of celebrations various American cities held concerning the French Revolution. He divides the celebrations into four categories: anniversaries of the Franco-American alliance, constitutional reforms in France and their anniversaries, military victories of the French Republic, and celebrations in honor of French visitors and dignitaries. Only three cities played host to all four types: Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston. See Newman, “Celebrating the French Revolution,” 121.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 122-125.

³¹⁰ Thomas Jefferson to William Short, January 3, 1793, Thomas Jefferson Papers at the Library of Congress, Series 1, Reel 17. Simon Newman’s argument that these festivals appealed to women, the poor, and black Americans, those often left out of the body politic during the early years of the American republic, lends credence to Jefferson’s claim. See *Ibid.*, 122. Such beliefs in near-universal American

crowds from all levels of society. In many ways these were democratic events, characterized by countless people from the lower orders of society spontaneously gathering in the streets.³¹¹ However, Jefferson was not altogether correct in his assessment of near universal support for the French Revolution. There were those who questioned the violence that characterized France's overthrow of aristocratic rule.

As an increasing number of reports from France of extraordinarily bloody attacks on those deemed enemies of the revolution appeared in American newspapers, the public became more divided in its support for France. Some Americans began to look with distaste upon the French Revolution. Such violence was not what America endorsed; her revolution had not consumed its own citizens in the manner that the French Revolution was doing. No moral and ethical person could condone the actions of France's revolutionaries, murderous campaigns like the massacres of priests, prisoners, and other "counter-revolutionaries" that occurred in France in September 1792.³¹² There were others who continued to maintain that the French Revolution was still a positive. For these people the violent acts were necessary in order to protect the revolutionary movement from those who sought to derail it. This group attempted to downplay reports of violence and focus on military victories.³¹³ The third response to the French revolutionary violence was to continue to support the revolution's move away from

support for the French Revolution were quite common. In July 1793 William Willcocks wrote that his praise for the French Revolution was "not the unconsidered suggestions of an individual singular in his sentiments...I convey to you the language of nineteen twentieths of Americans, some will say of ninety-nine hundredths." *CGDA*, July 6, 1793.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

³¹² *CGDA*, November 19, 1792 and July 20, 1793.

³¹³ A description of Boston's celebration of the Valmy victory in January 1793 appears in Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic*, 1-2.

monarchy toward republicanism but to condemn brutal behavior. Over time, this group had to distance itself from the French Revolution as the violence gained momentum and spiraled into the Reign of Terror by 1794. No group wanted to be associated with hundreds of beheadings.

Because of their concerns about increasing violence, some Federalists quietly chose to stay away from celebrations like the ones dedicated to Valmy and very likely the mock marriage ceremony in Charleston.³¹⁴ Initially, the French Revolution divided Federalists. Some chose to applaud the republican changes occurring in their ally's government while others expressed concern as Thomas Rhett Smith, a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives, did when he wrote that there was "very little resemblance between our revolution and that of the French, either in the motives and principles."³¹⁵ For Federalists like Smith the bloodshed and the destruction of property made France's revolution seem much more dangerous than America's ever was. Not only were Federalists concerned about the violence and death the French Revolution seemed to celebrate, but they also worried that commemorations in the form of festivals and street parades in America bordered on unruliness and social chaos. As events continued to unfold in France between 1789 and 1793, the Federalists began to unite in their distaste and even fear of what the French Revolution might bring to the rest of Europe and perhaps to the United States.

³¹⁴ Newman, "Celebrating the French Revolution," 125. The end of the "Marriage" announcement laments the absence of President Washington and his colleagues. No additional information appears, but this is likely a reference to the Federalist resistance to celebrate the French Revolution. Obviously, Washington was far away in Philadelphia so it would have been rather impractical to expect that he would attend such an event in Charleston.

³¹⁵ Thomas Rhett Smith to John Rutledge, junior, December 26, 1790, *John Rutledge, junior, Papers, Southern Historical Collection*, quoted in Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist: William Loughton Smith of Charleston (1758-1812)*, 248. Smith continued in this letter to criticize the French for their "indiscriminate destruction of everything good or evil."

Federalists were not content to keep their worries about the French Revolution to themselves; they felt compelled to demonstrate to the larger American public that the events in France were not in keeping with the way America envisioned republican revolution. Federalists, in an effort to highlight the dangers of the French Revolution, began to attack the French version of democracy by regularly referring to “the flowing blood, corpse-strewn fields, and maimed bodies of its victims.”³¹⁶ In January 1793 the French executed their king; French society was moving more out of control. Because of this turn of events, the Federalists found themselves in a predicament. Even as they had early on praised the French for continuing the spread of republican revolution, they now began to fear that disorder in France would spread to America. It seemed that the cautions voiced as early as 1791 by James Monroe, who was himself an ardent supporter of the French Revolution, had proven to be valid.³¹⁷ As all of America watched the opening stages of France’s revolution, Monroe had expressed concern that France’s leaders must prove to the world that they could eliminate the injustices of their former government and yet retain the good parts characteristic of effective leadership.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery*, 61. Federalists held these attitudes, Cleves states, because they had a “traditional belief in human depravity: that was marked by anti-Catholic and anti-Gallic views.” Cleves use of the terms “anti-Catholic” and “anti-Gallic” is important for this dissertation on a number of levels since the refugees from Saint Domingue faced barriers to acceptance because of both categories. As we will see in Chapter 6, concern that their religious beliefs were hampering their integration into American society drove their actions within St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church. The Federalist, particularly in the latter half of the 1790s advocated a closer relationship with Great Britain, especially in light of the XYZ Affair and the Quasi War with France. Cleves argues that prejudice toward France was already a cornerstone of Federalist attitudes as early as 1792.

³¹⁷ For discussion of Monroe’s views of the French Revolution and his efforts to negotiate the complicated political scene that Genet produced during his time as minister plenipotentiary from France, see Ammon, *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity*. Ammon, “The Genet Mission and the Development of American Political Parties.”

³¹⁸ *National Gazette*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 24, 1791.

According to many accounts by July 1793, France's government was failing to meet this challenge. Her leaders had executed their monarch, her most valuable colony, Saint Domingue, was in complete disarray, and she seemed to be drawing her ally America into the fray.³¹⁹ For Americans France's revolution was no longer a great distance away; the products of its violence were arriving daily on America's shores.

For those who would unite as the Democratic-Republican Party, the French Revolution also posed problems. Thomas Jefferson and his colleagues continued to applaud the existence of the French Revolution but found it more and more difficult to praise many of the particular actions of the French legislature's leaders. As a result, their celebrations of the French Revolution moved away from praise of actual events that occurred in France and began to celebrate a more generic form of liberty and republicanism.³²⁰ The French Revolution's increasing violence and its eventual embracing of racial equality forced Thomas Jefferson and his compatriots, slave holders themselves, to pull away from celebrations of France. This was not the end of such celebrations, however, as the lower orders of American society continued to revel in

³¹⁹ The Spring of 1793 brought news of the execution of King Louis XVI in France and of the declaration of war between France and England. Both events led the Washington Administration to seek a greater distance between the United States and France. In 1778 the American colonists had signed a treaty with France pledging their mutual assistance to each other in response to outside threats. With the arrest of the king in August 1792, the Convention met to determine the import of treaties signed by the king. The treaty with America was one they elected to continue to honor although they offered that America would not be drawn into active combat on France's side in European wars. Part of this treaty between France and the United States, however, included a maritime agreement whereby each nation would permit the other to bring the prizes of its privateers into port. This became particularly pertinent when France entered into war with England, a war that was sure to occur on the open seas. Washington, realizing the grave difficulties a new conflict with England would present, advocated for a policy of neutrality in the war between the French and the English. The ever evolving political situation in France indicated that the tide could turn at any moment. Though controversial within his cabinet, the President hoped that such a policy would prevent the nation from becoming embroiled in a new international conflict. See Ammon, *The Genet Mission*, 28.;Minnigerode, 172-178. See also Ammon, *The Genet Mission*, 32-43.

³²⁰ Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery*; Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic*.

street festivals and parades. Free blacks, women, and the poor peopled these events through the end of the 1790s. As this wider sector of American society began to participate in political events, their actions paved the way for the significant political change that would occur with the election of Jefferson in 1800. For the time being, these street celebrations seemed to foreshadow spreading social chaos feared by Federalists.³²¹

Not only did the French Revolution cause difficulties for Americans seeking to applaud republican revolution, but the ways in which it developed on the island of Hispaniola also caused grave problems. During the early republican era, Americans, regardless of political ideology, wanted to applaud freedom and liberty where ever it appeared. Through their efforts in the American Revolution, they had successfully thrown off the mantle of monarchical oppression and were establishing a new way of government, a government elected by the people and accountable to them. These beliefs in American government drove enthusiasm for the French Revolution to a point; however, even if the French Revolution had not turned so violent, it is likely that Americans would have turned against wholehearted support for France once slave insurrection erupted on Hispaniola. The French colony was only about a thousand miles from the port of Charleston, so most South Carolinians quickly began to express concern that the violence would wash in from the Atlantic. This, in fact, is what happened as France's revolutionaries adopted more and more liberal policies.

³²¹ Newman, "Celebrating the French Revolution," 121-151. The constant struggle for the United States since its beginning has been over who should be included in the body politique. Responses to the French Revolution provide an interesting example of how the lower orders quickly began to embrace political activities in spite of the limitations they experienced. By celebrating the rhetoric of the French Revolution, they made a subtle appeal for those principles to extend to great segments of American society.

Using the rhetoric of liberty and equality present in *Les Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen*, numerous groups in Saint Domingue, like others throughout the empire, began to appeal for extended rights. Americans often expressed support for such requests when they came from white Saint Domingans who wanted more rights as colonists.³²² In spite of their wealth, representation in the *États généraux* and later in the National Assembly was not available to them, and they were exempt from many of the benefits that nobles in France enjoyed.³²³ First and foremost, the colonists demanded greater representation within the French government and changes in taxation policies that they deemed unfair.³²⁴ These appeals in many ways echoed those made by American colonists before the American Revolution; therefore, Americans were eager to voice their approval at the onset. Problems arose, however, when *gens de couleur* began to appeal for equal rights as French citizens. This was harder for a great number of Americans to accept, particularly southern Americans, and newspaper articles that attributed early violence in the colony to “mulattoes” did not help.³²⁵ In spite of the fact that this was unnerving for

³²² White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*, 85-99.

³²³ Jeremy D. Popkin, "The French Revolution's Other Island," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 201-202.

³²⁴ M. W. Ghachem, "The "Trap" of Representation: Sovereignty, Slavery and the Road to the Haitian Revolution," *Historical Reflections* 29, no. 1 (2003). Commission de recherche et de publication des documents relatifs à la vie économique de la Révolution Maurel Blanche Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, *Cahiers De Doléances De La Colonie De Saint-Domingue Pour Les États Généraux De 1789* ([S.l.]: Maxwell, 1992).

³²⁵ For example the mulatto insurrection led by Vincent Ogé in November 1790. See CGDA, December 14, 1790 and May 5, 1791. Saint Domingue and South Carolina employed different terminology for the various groups of people of some degree of African descent. Newspaper accounts typically talked about the people of African descent who pressed for equal treatment as “mulattoes.” This group was generally led by wealthy *gens de couleur libres* who were educated in France, held slaves, and owned large plantations in Saint Domingue. Once this group under the initial leadership of Vincent Ogé and Julien Raimond saw their hopes of equal treatment dashed, they turned to more violent activity and a brutal “mulatto insurrection” developed. These rebelling people of color were not all wealthy. Lower class colored Saint Domingans joined the fighting. Among this group then were people of much darker skin than the mixed race *gens de couleur*. For more details on this insurrection, see chapter 2 of this dissertation.

many in America, such demands were arguably reasonable in light of the language France's revolutionaries employed and even the legal precedents set forth by Louis XIV's Code Noir.³²⁶ In spite of these concerns, most Americans regarded these issues as nothing more than a French national event.³²⁷

The ideological difficulty for many Americans came to a head with the burning of Cap Français in late June 1793 and the fleeing of thousands of refugees. France's internal problems quickly became America's problems. The violence at the Cape provided clear evidence that France was unable to gain control of her colony. While slaves contributed to the chaos and death, much of the fighting in this particular segment of the Haitian Revolution originated from conflicts between various factions within the French government. The Civil Commissioners Étienne Polverel and Léger-Félicité Sonthonax were appointed by the French leadership in Paris in September 1792, but in May 1793 Francois-Thomas Galbaud arrived from France with orders to assume control

³²⁶ Sue Peabody, *"There Are No Slaves in France": The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). *Le Code Noir ou recueil des reglements rendus jusqu'a present* (Paris: Prault, 1767) [1980 reprd. by the Societé, d'Histoire de la Guadeloupe]. Translated by John Garrigus. https://directory.vancouver.wsu.edu/sites/directory.vancouver.wsu.edu/files/inserted_files/webintern02/cod e%20noir.pdf, <Accessed June 6, 2014>.

³²⁷ In terms of some of the debates in America over who to allow rights of participation in the republic, Saint Domingue represented an excellent example of what America's founding fathers wanted to avoid. While the rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence indicated that all men should be included, this was not the reality during the early republic or for many years to come. Americans, both those in leadership positions and those with little say in their new government, were watching how this debate in Saint Domingue was evolving. Shay's Rebellion offers one example of how similar ideas were fueling violence and protest. The difference was in how President Washington dealt with it. This event could easily have resulted in anarchy and an end to the new American nation. Even those participating on both sides, those revolting against the whiskey tax and the federal government, realized the close connections to the French Revolution. Talk of secession filled the Pennsylvania countryside and some suggested the guillotine for "stockholders or their subordinates." In the end Washington was able to create a joint military force that included both those who supported the federal government and the Republican protestors. Saint Domingue's leaders were never able to do this because they were not willing allow everyone a seat at the table. James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington: Anguish and Farewell (1793-1799)* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 163-171.

of the colony as governor.³²⁸ After his arrival it became clear that as a Saint Dominguan landowner he sympathized with the white population in the colony. The commissioners who supported the *gens de couleur* refused him access to the port which infuriated Galbaud and resulted in his attacking on the city with the help of sailors from ships docked at Cap Français. As this violence broke out, thousands of slaves no longer tightly controlled by their masters joined the fighting that ultimately resulted in the destruction of Saint Domingue's most important port city.³²⁹ Residents of the area quickly became refugees, many of whom came to Charleston, South Carolina.

A simple summation of how South Carolinians viewed Saint Dominguais is impossible to set forth because South Carolinian's attitudes were numerous. On one hand, some wanted to embrace the refugees because their countries shared an alliance that dated from 1778 and because of their similar quests to achieve a republican government. Others wanted to offer support because of the natural affinity they felt as slave owners. While South Carolinians did not like to ponder the likelihood of slave insurrection in their state, southern planters and merchants recognized that, at some point

³²⁸ Galbaud was originally sent to support the free people of color on the island and to ensure that they were receiving equal treatment under the law of April 4, 1792. Julien Raimond, the spokesperson for Saint Domingue's free colored population, was heartily in support of his appointment and hopeful that he would be able to restore order to the island. Upon arrival, however, Galbaud threw his support behind the white plantation owning population. He was, in fact, a member of this group as he stood to inherit his mother's plantation in Saint Domingue. At the time of his arrival this property and its slave population were untouched by the insurrection and still worth a great deal of money. For more details on Galbaud's background and motivation for accepting this appointment, see Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 155-156; Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution : Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 180-181; Popkin, *You Are All Free : The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*, 155-164. Historians have presented Galbaud's authority in Saint Domingue in a number of ways. Some have claimed he was the rightfully appointed governor while others have declared that he was simply a Saint Dominguan landowner who attempted to gain control in order to protect his own interests. The most recent scholarship on this matter comes from Jeremy Popkin. His book, *You Are All Free*, is an in depth study of the battle at Cape Français, and his work included much review of French archival sources. He concluded that Galbaud was sent to take control; however, he was supposed to support the cause of the *gens de couleur*, but upon arrival he threw his support behind the white landowners.

³²⁹ For a detailed account of the fighting in Cap Français, see Popkin, *You Are All Free : The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*.

in the future, they could be in the same position as the arriving Saint Dominguan plantation owners. Many were skeptical these refugees bared responsibility for the slave insurrection that precipitated their fleeing to America. American southerners wondered if the masters' harshness had driven the slaves to rebel as they did.

Saint Dominguan refugees were caught between three worlds, and the political realities of each complicated their integration into their new home. The revolutionary government in France was chronically unstable; new factions regularly assumed control or tried to do so. Such a reality made those in power believe they had to be ever watchful lest some new danger come on the scene. New perils to the existing government were not limited to those in France who might try to usurp power but also came from European nations. Once the French monarchy was in jeopardy, many of its neighbors declared war on the revolutionary government in an effort to restore the French king to power. As the fragile new government fought wars on multiple fronts in Europe, their wealthiest colony exploded into violence.

The destruction of Cap Français and the violence that consumed the colony shocked the world in the early 1790s. Nothing like this had ever happened, and officials as well as average people wanted to understand the causes. Examining the most common explanations situate how Saint Dominguan immigrants to the United States were characterized and why. Four explanations of the origins of the events in Saint Domingue quickly surfaced. First, planters and colonial officials saw the slaves' actions as emanating from outside agitation since few whites wanted to admit the slaves could plan and execute such an uprising. This group often argued that the slaves were stirred up by abolitionists sent to the colony by the revolutionary French government. Calls for an end

to slavery were growing louder, and the Assembly had already proclaimed political equality for *gens de couleur*.³³⁰ Second, before the events at Cap Français, others blamed the ideas of the revolution for driving slaves to rebel. Followers of this argument recognized slaves possessed the intelligence to understand the rhetoric of the revolution and the ability to see the hypocrisy that existed for a nation declaring equality and freedom for all men while still holding nearly a half of a million people in slavery. In these first two cases, the insurrection is seen as a continuation of the revolution.³³¹

In the second two explanations, the opposite is true. Believing that the king intended for them to be free and that the planters were refusing to follow their king's decree, the slaves rebelled.³³² The only power that could overthrow the Colonial Assembly was the king; by evoking the king, the insurgents stood with others who still regarded him as the rightful ruler.³³³ Instead of rebellion being an extension of the revolution, it was in fact a counter-revolutionary movement. Finally, some believed the slave insurrection, or at least the fighting at Port-au-Prince in April 1793 and the burning of Cap Français in June 1793, resulted from slave owners' alliances with Great Britain.³³⁴ As was later confirmed, some colonial leaders who opposed to the republican changes that were occurring in France contacted British officials. With British aid they incited

³³⁰ Some also believed *Les Amis des Noirs* were involved in conspiratorial actions on the island, but no evidence proving this has surfaced. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 103.

³³¹ Ibid., 105.

³³² Rumors of the king awarding French slaves extra days to work their own kitchen gardens regularly circled through Caribbean ports. For a discussion of the importance of these rumors, see Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens : Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804*.

³³³ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 107.

³³⁴ Account of the fighting at Port-au-Prince from the point of view of the Civil Commissioners Sonthonax and Polverel appeared in *CGDA*, June 21 and 25, 1793.

slave rebellion. In the chaos they hoped the British would take control of the colony and end the colony's affiliation with the French government.³³⁵

The ever shifting political scene in France further complicated the refugees' situation. As one faction after another took control, each ruling party had to constantly guard against subversive actions that might lead to new claims for power. Throughout the 1790s elites in the French government constantly worried that a conspiracy was underway that might harm the new republic. As France faced increasing attacks from its neighbors, suspicion ran high that there were those in France, even in the French government, who were aiding the nation's enemies. These ideas solidified between October 1791 and July 1792 when the deputies of the Legislative Assembly became "preoccupied with the 'grand conspiracy,' wherein all threats were viewed as part of a monolithic master plan."³³⁶ In November 1791 the Assembly created a Surveillance Committee to identify dangers. Claude Basire, one of the deputies declared, "We are surrounded by conspiracy. Everywhere plots are being hatched."³³⁷ Uncovering those plots became a primary priority.³³⁸

Of all the identified groups who threatened the Republic, perhaps the most suspected were *émigrés*. Many of these removed themselves to neighboring countries in

³³⁵ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 117-118; Popkin, *You Are All Free : The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*, 93-94; White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*, 101-103.

³³⁶ Timothy Tackett, "Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror, 1789-1792," *American Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (2000): 707.

³³⁷ Ibid. Timothy Tackett argues that fear about conspiracy among France's political elites grew out of their experiences during the revolution. Real plots occurred or were discovered before they could be enacted. Outside forces were attacking the nation to restore the king to power; those around him were suspected of aiding the enemy.

³³⁸ Texts that explore the role of intrigue and conspiracy in the French Revolution include François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1981); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

anticipation that France would lose her European wars and monarchy would be restored. As one deputy stated, “A wall of conspiracy has been formed around [France].”³³⁹ Government officials also worried that there were those in French society who might be working with France’s enemies. In some cases these might be people who appeared patriotic but were really working as conspirators. A close connection to the king was often a tell-tale sign.³⁴⁰ Many believed dangers were ever present within the ranks of government officials. In short, all in France had to guard their reputations lest they be accused of subversive activity. Government officials often reported their colleagues as traitors to the Revolution as a way of proving their own loyalty.

These concerns about conspiracy plots were not limited to officials in France, but spread across the Atlantic with France’s representatives in America. In 1793 France sent her first republican ambassador to the United States, Édmond Genet. He was, like those who appointed him, on the alert for plots against the Republic. When refugees arrived from Saint Domingue, they quickly became the target of his accusations that they were royalists who had actively worked against the revolutionary changes occurring in France.

Genet himself was a survivor of much political upheaval. He had carefully negotiated the changing political scene in France and moved from being a loyal servant of the king to being a dedicated republican, one capable of carrying out difficult political missions. Genet, only thirty years old when he arrived in Charleston in early 1793, had already led a fascinating life. Born at Versailles to a well-connected, yet not aristocratic,

³³⁹ Tackett: 708.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

French family, he received a superior education.³⁴¹ By the age of fifteen he knew Latin, Greek, Italian, Swedish, German, and English and was quickly becoming ready for diplomatic service. His father Edmé Genet served as Clerk in Chief of the Bureau of Interpreters which advised the Ministries of the Navy and War. This position afforded the family a modest income but more importantly provided their children with significant contacts within the monarchy. Henriette, the oldest daughter, became the official reader for the unmarried daughters of Louis XV; and Julie, the second daughter, became one of the queen's favorite ladies in waiting. Édmond in 1777 became interpreter for the future Louis XVIII. His translation skills eventually led to an assignment in the governmental division where his father had worked. This was followed by a stint in England at the French embassy, and then he became the king's representative at the court of the empress, Catherine of Russia. This final royal appointment which began in 1787 and lasted until 1792 proved to be arguably the most important for Genet because it meant that he was out of France during the early years of the revolution.³⁴²

With the storming of the Bastille in 1789, Louis XVI agreed to a constitutional monarchy of sorts. This was France's first step away from absolute monarchy and toward republican rule. Genet continued to serve as France's representative, but the terms of his service had altered. By numerous accounts, Genet learned of republican ideology through visitors to his childhood home. In spite of his father's position and later his own within the monarchical government, he embraced these new ideas that were

³⁴¹ Because of his prominence in French and American history, details about Genet's family and life in France prior to his arrival in America in April 1793 are often filled with tales that one could best describe as family folklore; however, several scholars have attempted to sort this out. See Ammon, *The Genet Mission*, 32-43; Minnigerode, 3-24.

³⁴² Minnigerode, 84-118. Frederick Jackson Turner and others, *Correspondence of the French Ministers to the United States, 1791-1797* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972). Ammon, *The Genet Mission*, 1-9.

driving change in France. In order to protect his position and status as a government official, he had to negotiate a complicated political scene. The way he was able to do this indicates much about Genet and about the times in which he lived.

At the same time, Genet's sisters in their close relationships with the French royal family were party to anti-revolutionary conversations. While the king had publicly agreed to the Constitution, he secretly hoped and worked for foreign intervention which would restore the monarchy to its previous power. Genet's sisters likely hinted to their brother that these conversations were occurring. Genet, in an attempt to avoid controversy and protect his status, had to find a way of expressing his loyalty to France without making himself vulnerable to accusations of treason. Too much loyalty to the king might appear disloyal to the Constituent Assembly while too much allegiance to the legislature could result in the king terminating his appointment. As the king's role in the government changed, Genet saw that much of what he believed government should be was coming to fruition. The challenge was to negotiate the changes so that he would be recognized as a republican and not held back by his former position as a servant of the king.

It was in this circumstance that Genet demonstrated his political resourcefulness. In order to avoid danger, he wrote a clever explanation of his position to his sister and asked that she share this with the queen. He stated that since the king had agreed, at least publicly, to support the Constitution, he as the servant of the king, was merely attending to the wishes of his sovereign. He pretended to believe that the king's wishes and those of the Assembly were one and the same. He stated that his duty in Russia was to remain ever watchful for plots against France, plots that might develop to reverse recent changes

in France.³⁴³ In doing so he manipulated the situation in order to protect his appointment and continue to serve in Russia until 1792.³⁴⁴ This letter describing his position demonstrates his chameleon-like abilities to transform himself to fit the ever changing political scene in France. Ironically, he did not offer the same opportunities to refugees from Saint Domingue. Instead, he launched verbal attacks on them and attempted to raise suspicions that they represented an immediate danger to the public. In this way he continued his efforts at rooting out those dangerous to the Republic that he had begun during his service in Russia.

³⁴³ Minnigerode, 96-97. Genet's conversion from a royal government official to a republican citizen is one that is fraught with controversy. Like most educated men of Genet's social standing, the ideology that drove the French Revolution was familiar. How much he subscribed to these ideas remains a matter of discussion. Meade Minnigerode writes, "At home, his (Genet's father's) salon was a meeting place for all the learned and artistic world of Versailles...a haven for every traveler of scholarly distinction from foreign countries," Minnigerode, 18. In spite of this, Minnigerode presents Genet as one who easily adapted to the various circumstances in which he found himself. Harry Ammon, on the other hand, argues that Genet was well-versed in Enlightenment thinking and was just waiting to openly embrace the application of these new ideas. He argues that Genet was "exposed to the liberal circles surrounding his father and accepted as axiomatic the notion that societies free of monarchy and aristocracy were the only social orders in which human freedom could flourish." He continues with the claim that Genet, because of his bourgeois background, was likely "subjected to a thousand slights" as a result of his work in the royal diplomatic service which was typically dominated by the aristocracy. Surely, Genet's knowledge of Enlightenment ideas made his transition from royalist to republican smoother, but he was first and foremost a survivor. When the Revolution began, he was assigned to the Catherine's court. She refused him access to her court and left him to his own devices. He spent this time reporting on any actions that he deemed dangerous to France, particularly efforts of émigrés to launch attacks at the new republican government in France. He was unable to safely return home; therefore, he had to prove himself to be indispensable to the French government while stationed in Russia. For discussion of his time in Russia, see Ammon, *The Genet Mission*, 6-9; Minnigerode, 84-118.

³⁴⁴ While Genet continued to serve in Russia, his role at the court of Catherine was not what it was before revolution broke out in France. Catherine was concerned that republican revolution would spread to Russia and was appalled at the status of France's king, particularly after his attempted escape to Varennes. She ended diplomatic relations with France and expelled all Frenchmen who refused to swear allegiance to the principles of monarchy. Genet remained in Russia but was denied access to her court. He continued to assert that he served at the pleasure of his monarch, but this did nothing to improve his status in Russia. In one letter he wrote to his family he described his precarious situation; he claimed he was "always dead politically" and that suspicion surrounded him. Rumors that the French were plotting to assassinate caused the Russians to constantly spy on him. In addition to this unjust treatment by the Russian, Genet was seemingly forgotten by his own government. He regularly sent diplomatic reports but never received any replies or further instructions. In the end these alienation from France served to help him emerge as a true republican, but at the time he surely felt his diplomatic career was approaching an end. See Minnigerode, 99-109.

Even before his arrival in America, Genet's superiors warned him of the danger they believed Saint Domingue's refugees posed to the French Republic. He like many of his colleagues believed many of the white refugees were royalists who opposed the tenets of the revolution and who were actively working to thwart developing efforts to offer equality to *gens de couleur* and liberty to the slaves, two key concepts that French revolutionaries came to see as the natural extension of the goals of the revolution. He also considered allegations that some of the refugees had worked with the British as likely true. If this were the case, the refugees were not just destitute Frenchmen; they were traitors. His directives did not include detailed indictments of the refugees but declared they had "already infected them [the Americans] with their falsehoods."³⁴⁵ These "falsehoods" referred to the accounts refugees were publishing throughout America of the massive destruction and continued dangerous situation in Saint Domingue. By talking about these conditions, the refugees posed a threat to both the economy of the colony and that of France.

Genet's ship landed in Charleston instead of Philadelphia as planned in April 1793.³⁴⁶ This unexpected change of plans allowed him to enjoy an elaborate reception in

³⁴⁵"The Correspondence between Citizen Genet, Minister of the French Republic, to the United States of North America, and the Officers of the Federal Government, to Which Are Prefixed; the Instructions from the Constituted Authorities of France to the Said Minister ", (Charleston, S.C.: *Markland, McIver & Co.*, 1794), 15. This theme appeared in letters Genet published in the local newspapers. *CGDA*, August 13, 1793. Civil Commissioners to Mangourit. In October 1793 news arrived in Charleston that Sonthonax and Polverel were recalled and General Galbaud received the governorship of the colony. In spite of this change in colonial administration, Genet continued to blame the refugees for events in Cap Français.

³⁴⁶ Genet claimed that adverse weather forced his ship to land in Charleston instead of following the planned route to Philadelphia. This was apparently a calculated effort on Genet's part to garner support for France and for his mission. While Charleston he participated in numerous celebrations marking France's revolutionary successes, but, as Harry Ammon suggests, this ultimately occurred at a cost for his mission. He lost valuable time with the Washington administration and had no opportunity to avert America's declaration of neutrality in Europe's wars. It was also here that he commissioned four privateers. This action, which occurred without consulting the federal government, led to his conflict with President Washington and his eventual recall to France. Ammon, *The Genet Mission*, 44-45.

Charleston and in numerous cities as he traveled to the nation's capital.³⁴⁷ The purpose of his mission was clearly stated in his directives from the French government but not immediately revealed to the American government. In an effort to combat the threats Spain and Great Britain presented to France, Genet's mission was to recruit troops and hire privateers in America in order to launch an attack on Spanish Florida and Louisiana and eventually British Canada. While he never actually carried out attacks, he was quite successful in recruiting South Carolinians to assist with his plan.³⁴⁸ For the financing of these activities, he wanted to convince American officials to pay off the debt to France incurred during the American Revolution.³⁴⁹ But accomplishing his goals meant he needed the full cooperation of the Washington's administration.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ *CGDA*, April 16, 1793; *National Gazette*, April 24, 1793; *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, April 27, 1793. Even as these accounts appeared in the newspaper, controversy was already swirling about how the United States would officially receive Genet. These articles indicate a more subdued ceremony was to occur in Philadelphia since word had already reached the capitol stating that Genet was recruiting sailors and equipping privateers without the President's approval.

³⁴⁸ Among those charged with conspiring with Genet was South Carolina Governor William Moultrie's private secretary Stephen Drayton. An investigation of this occurred in South Carolina's General Assembly. For the debate that ensure there, see Message from the President of the United States to Congress, communicating a letter from the minister plenipotentiary of the French Republic, and a copy of certain proceedings of the Legislature of South Carolina. United States, January 15, 1794, American State Papers 01, Foreign Relations Vol. 1; Publication No. 73; General Assembly of South Carolina, Legislative Committee, "Report Respecting an Armed Force Levying Within the State by Persons Under Foreign Authority, for Invading the Spanish Dominions, Series: S165005, December 6, 1793, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina; Wade Hampton, Sheriff of Camden District, Report (Part Missing) Describing His Arrest of Col. Stephen Drayton and His Search of His Papers in Charleston Concerning His Participation in the Genet Affair, Miscellaneous Communication to the General Assembly, S165029, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina; Ammon, *The Genet Mission*, 45; Alexander Moultrie, "An Appeal to the People, on the Conduct of a Certain Public Body in South-Carolina, Respecting Col. Drayton and Col. Moultrie," (Charleston, South Carolina: Markland, McIver & Company, 1794).

³⁴⁹ France. Légation (U.S.), Edmond Charles Genet, and France. Ministère des affaires étrangères., *The Correspondence between Citizen Genet, Minister of the French Republic, to the United States of North America, and the Officers of the Federal Government to Which Are Prefixed the Instructions from the Constituted Authorities of France to the Said Minister ; All from Authentic Documents* (Charleston: Markland, McIver & Company).

³⁵⁰ See Alderson, *This Bright Era of Happy Revolutions : French Consul Michel-Ange-Bernard Mangourit and International Republicanism in Charleston, 1792-1794*; Ammon, *The Genet Mission*; Wesley J.

The President had adopted a policy of neutrality and refused to give aid to France in her war against Britain. American laws forbade individual citizens from working with foreign governments to make war on nations with which the United States was on peaceful terms. This legal reality provided a major obstacle to Genet's work. In addition, Genet wanted to sell in American ports items confiscated by French privateers, a privilege only allowed American admiralty courts.³⁵¹ By the summer of 1793, Genet's mission was quickly deteriorating as he met resistance to almost every part of his plan. Coinciding with these frustrations was the arrival of hundreds of Saint Domingans of questionable political leanings. As Genet repeatedly tried to win the cooperation of Washington's administration, he saw the refugees as a threat. He added discrediting the new immigrants to his agenda.

Without a doubt, refugees from Saint Domingue represented not only a variety of social and racial categories, but also numerous political persuasions. All were angry about the losses they had incurred, and each refugee had an opinion about the causes of his misery. For some whites the *gens de couleur* were to blame since their advocacy for equal rights had upset the status quo. For others, the slaves in rebellion were the ultimate culprits; out of control bands of slaves brandishing machetes had driven them from their homes. For still others, the resistance of whites to recognize *gens de couleur* drove both sides to seek support among the slave population which in turn sent the colony into chaos

Campbell, "The Origin of Citizen Genet's Projected Attack on Spanish Louisiana: A Case Study in Girondin Politics," *French Historical Studies* 33, no. (2010); "The Correspondence between Citizen Genet, Minister of the French Republic, to the United States of North America, and the Officers of the Federal Government, to Which Are Prefixed; the Instructions from the Constituted Authorities of France to the Said Minister "; Minnigerode; Christopher J. Young, "Connecting the President and the People: Washington's Neutrality, Genet's Challenge, and Hamilton's Fight for Public Support," *Journal of the Early Republic* 31, no. 3 (2011).

³⁵¹ Ammon, *The Genet Mission*, 66.

and profoundly disrupted the plantation system. Many felt betrayed by the metropole. France had not sent appropriate numbers of troops to put down the rebellion, and the government insisted on passing increasingly liberal policies that upset the hierarchical slave society.

The story of the Haitian Revolution is one of constantly shifting alliances and of diverging political views within what might in ordinary circumstances be a homogenous class of people. At the beginning of the French Revolution, white planters eagerly embraced the revolutionary movement because they believed that new freedoms and equal treatment were coming their way. As the revolution arrived in Saint Domingue; however, many of them, although certainly not all, began to see the revolution as dangerous to the social status quo. *Gens de couleur* began to demand equal political rights. They wanted the Colonial Assembly to be dissolved and new elections held so they could have equal representation in the newly formed government. The white planters who had originally championed the changes that gave them more rights could not celebrate others acquiring new status.

As news of changes in France arrived in Saint Domingue with the civil commissioners, Sonthonax and Polverel, the colony fell into chaos. White colonists thought Sonthonax and Polverel were arriving to restore order on the island, but their actual mission was to enforce the law of 4 April which awarded equal rights to the *gens de couleur*. The fighting that resulted was compounded by the arrival of General Galbaud who as a white landowner himself took the side of the white planters. The battles in Cap Français resulted, and many were forced to flee to the United States.

Over the course of the second half of 1793, Genet launched numerous attacks on the Saint Dominguan refugee population in Charleston and other United States cities. Certainly many of these allegations were true; many white refugees were royalists. The way they arrived at being royalists was different from those in France who were accused of being royalists. In France these were typically aristocrats who, from the beginning of the revolution, did not want to lose their privileges. They were often close to the royal court and a loss of power for the monarch meant a loss of power for them. Those who became royalists in the colonial setting were somewhat different since they began the French Revolution as revolutionaries. For this dissertation, the actual political leanings of the refugees are not so important as the ways in which they navigated Genet's charges.

Before discussing the charges that Genet made against the refugees, we must first answer the question of why he bothered to engage in debate with them. They were destitute and held no sway over his professional position. He was not to blame for their circumstances so their complaining to French authorities about their condition would not result in his punishment or loss of status. The reason he felt driven to make statements about them and what he believed they had done lies in the instructions he received from his superiors before coming to America and in his drive to eliminate dangers to the Republic. He was instructed to be on the lookout for dangerous emigrants from Saint Domingue who were spreading news of extreme violence on Hispaniola.³⁵² Refugee accounts of danger and accusations against French officials on the island were causing American ships to refrain from docking in Saint Domingue's ports. Ships were not

³⁵² In a letter to the French Consuls in America written in November 1793, Genet stated that many of the refugees "openly endeavour to alienate us (France's appointed representatives) from the confidence and affection of the nation (the United States of America)." *Daily Advertiser*, New York, New York, November 27, 1793.

bringing goods into the colony, and American merchants were avoiding business transactions with France as a whole. France's economy and that of Saint Domingue were suffering extreme losses.

Prior to the outbreak of violence in 1791, France shipped 105,995 tons of crops such as sugar and coffee from her colonies to America each year. Fully half of all trade from the French Caribbean was with the United States.³⁵³ Ensuring the return of such commerce was a primary goal of Genet and the Civil Commissioners. During the American Revolution the American colonies had entered into two treaties with France, the Treaty of Alliance and the Treaty of Amity and Commerce which set up military and commercial alliances.³⁵⁴ Since the end of the American Revolution, the two nations had grown further apart in their relationship. France under Louis XVI had done little more than offer verbal support for the United States, and the United States had continued to charge French ships arriving in American ports the same rates as ships from non-alliance nations. In addition to these concerns, questions existed about the status of the 1778 treaty.³⁵⁵ The king had agreed to the treaty but was no longer in power. This raised the

³⁵³*New Jersey State Gazette*, Trenton, New Jersey, August 14, 1793. Each year 1392 ships left French ports in the Caribbean bound for the United States. This resulted in a trade deficit of nearly one million dollars for the United States. Clearly, this was important trade for both France and the United States.

³⁵⁴ "Treaty of Alliance Between the United States of America and His Most Christian Majesty," *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875*, Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=008/llsl008.db&recNum=19>, <Accessed October 15, 2014>. "Treaty of Amity and Commerce Between the United States of America and His Most Christian Majesty," *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875*, Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=008/llsl008.db&recNum=25>, <Accessed October 15, 2014>.

³⁵⁵ President Washington had many questions about how the United States' alliance with France should play out in light of France's war with Britain. On July 18, 1793, he sent a lengthy letter to Thomas Jefferson, his Secretary of State where he posed a series of twenty-five questions that pertained to the actions Genet was taking in America's ports. See George Washington, "Questions for Supreme Court on Treaty with France, Drafts and Fair Copies, 1793," Manuscript, George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799: Series 4. General Correspondence. 1697-1799, Washington, D.C.

question of whether America's treaty was with the French king or with the French nation. The only solution was to rewrite the treaty and re-establish the French-American relationship. Doing so, the French government hoped, would create more support for France's Caribbean colonies.³⁵⁶

Genet's attacks on refugees from Saint Domingue began in late June 1793 when only a small number of refugees from Saint Domingue were living in America. The first wave of accusations came in the form of letters Genet sent to American newspapers. These letters were ones he received from Sonthonax and Polverel and were an effort to discredit the Saint Dominguan refugees and raise concerns about their intentions in America. In this first attack on them, Genet did not openly criticize them himself but allowed the commissioners to make the first allegations.³⁵⁷ Over the course of 1793, Genet made three significant charges against the refugees. He suggested that their treasonous acts were responsible for the violence that engulfed Port-au-Prince in April 1793, he claimed that they displayed an extreme disregard for private property and a willingness to allow massive destruction in order to limit the freedoms of those they deemed inferior, and he called into question their embrace of republican ideology. The refugees used their knowledge of slave society to defend themselves before the Charleston community. What resulted was a pitched battle of words played out in the newspapers of the new nation. In the end the refugees demonstrated that they understood the American political scene much better than their accuser and were able to use his accusations to improve their status in Charleston. While refugees in all of America's major cities faced attacks from Genet, those in Charleston were able to

³⁵⁶ Ammon, *The Genet Mission*, 23.

³⁵⁷ *Farmer's Register*, Kingston, New York, June 22, 1793; *CGDA*, June 25, 1793.

weather the storm much better because Genet's charges against them often revealed his own views against slavery and in favor of equality for free people of color. These views obviously did not lead white southerners to hold favorable opinions of Genet.

Through Sonthonax and Polverel's letter, Genet accused the refugees of aligning themselves with the British to combat the revolutionary movement in Saint Domingue. Not only did they work with the British, the letter stated, but they did so "under the mash of national colors."³⁵⁸ In order to combat this threat to France's colony, the traitors were expelled from Saint Domingue, the colony's leaders claimed. Genet had two goals when he made the decision to publish this letter. First, he wanted to warn American officials about the potential danger these people might pose in America. By doing so, he hoped to secure the gratitude of American officials which would then lead to his second goal of securing American assistance for France's Caribbean colonies.³⁵⁹ American officials had to have faith in the leadership in Saint Domingue for this to happen. He hoped America would support Saint Domingue through commerce if the colony's leadership was decidedly republican. The tales refugees were spreading were disturbing and had the potential to make American officials unsure of who to support. Refugees, almost in complete accord, argued that the real causes of the colony's violence were the commissioners' policies, particularly in regard to the burning of Cap Français.

Refugees quickly began to combat these accounts that rendered them as traitors. Jacques Delaire, a planter from Saint Domingue who had relocated to Charleston in the

³⁵⁸ CGDA, June 21, 1793.

³⁵⁹ Popkin, *You Are All Free : The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*, 295.

early 1790s, became their official advocate and spokesman.³⁶⁰ In fluent English he regularly wrote letters and sent them to numerous local newspapers. Here, he defended the newly arriving immigrants against the various charges levied by Genet. Delaire asserted that he and his fellow refugees had not joined forces with the British but were good patriots who had long served France and supported her military. One of the concepts republicanism emphasizes is the importance of the individual and the essential duties humans have to one another. He declared that “such acts of spontaneous benevolence (as South Carolina bestowed on Saint Domingans) belong only to governments truly republican.”³⁶¹ By the same token, those receiving aid now had previously dispensed of such assistance while living in Saint Domingue. He continued by describing the kind of help “the very people you so generously assist at this moment” had offered others and the circumstances under which such action was necessary. When France sent troops “to restore peace and tranquility” in the early days of unrest, authorities did not provide enough supplies and food for the “thousands” of soldiers. Instead, he asserted, the funds allocated by the French Assembly were stolen by officials “to perpetuate ...infernal plots of destruction, in concert with Sonthonax, Rochambeau, and Pinchinact.”³⁶² Delaire had acted as treasurer for the fundraising, and \$14,000 was

³⁶⁰ Delaire is listed among Saint Domingue’s plantation owners.

http://www.domingino.de/stdomin/colons_d.htm. Numerous advertisements appeared in Charleston newspapers indicating his work as a merchant. Delaire became the unofficial spokesman for Charleston’s Saint Dominguan refugees sometimes writing under his own name and at other times assuming a moniker such as “An Inhabitant of Hispaniola” or “A French West-Indian.” Delaire also appears in the sacramental records of St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church. He appears as an executor of a will for a refugee in 1796. See *Farmer’s Register*, Kingston, New York, 350. Delaire, who traded in both merchandise and slaves, died March 24, 1814, at the age of 70 after residing in South Carolina for over twenty years. See *Charleston Courier*, April 5, 1814. *State Gazette of South-Carolina*, September 3, 1793.

³⁶¹ CGDA, July 13, 1793.

³⁶² CGDA, July 13, 1793.

quickly raised with an additional \$1200 pledged monthly. The generosity of Saint Domingans equaled that of South Carolinians.

Delaire cleverly aligned Saint Dominguan refugees with their South Carolinian benefactors. By stroking the local donors' egos, he made them feel good about offering assistance. He also created a special kinship between those offering help and those receiving help. The implication was that anyone could find himself in destitute circumstances, even those currently in a position to help others. As the letter progressed, Delaire became more political. Unfortunately, the money raised for French troops never reached them. Instead, Alexandre Pouget, a high ranking colonial official, stole the money.³⁶³ Delaire offered this as an example of the corruption of France's officials and as a way of discrediting them before Charleston readers. He ended by thanking Charlestonians for all of the assistance they had rendered "in spite of the malicious aspersions" directed toward the newly arrived by their countrymen.³⁶⁴

Genet's attacks against the refugees were not limited to accusations that they were traitors. He also argued they displayed a complete disregard for private property. Their refusal to accept the extension of equal rights to *gens de couleur* meant that property was destroyed.³⁶⁵ This property was not just that of the white planters but of significant parts of the colony. Key tenets of the French Revolution and the American Revolution were

³⁶³ Alexandre Pouget served as a colonial official and recorded his experiences in Alexandre de Pouget, *Discours Prononcé Par M. Pouget, Ordonnateur Et Directeur Ordonnateur Et Directeur Général À L'assemblée Provinciale Du Nord De La Partie Française De Saint-Domingue, Dans La Séance Du 25 Mai 1792* ((S.l.): Impr. de l'assemblée provinciale du nord).

³⁶⁴ *CGDA*, July 13, 1793.

³⁶⁵ Shortly after the beginning of the French Revolution, free people of color within the French empire began appealing for recognition of the rights they believed the Code Noir awarded them. With the assistance of the *Amis des Noirs*, mulattoes and other free people of color with Julien Raimond as their spokesman traveled to France and pressed the Legislative Assembly to recognize them. This resulted in the passing of the April 4, 1792, granting full rights as citizens to free people of color. See http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/John_Carter_Brown_Library/haitian/pages/part4.html.

equality for all and that protection of property served to guarantee political rights. If white residents of Saint Domingue had accepted as equal *gens de couleur*, colony's destruction would not have occurred.

In addition to Sonthonax and Polverel's letter, Genet published correspondence from other colonial officials that insinuated the prejudice of white Saint Domingueans led to disorder. The Ordonnateur-Général of St. Domingue claimed that the colony's white residents had "determined to bury themselves and the colony in ruins, and to give themselves up to the enemy, rather than denounce their prejudices."³⁶⁶ Guadeloupe, by contrast, did not suffer the same destruction as Saint Domingue because her residents were open to the inclusion of people of color. As Guadeloupe's governor stated, no violence had occurred in his colony because of "our frank and sincere behavior towards the new citizens, by the cordiality of our union, and by mutual good offices."³⁶⁷ By the time he wrote this letter, the French Republic had freed all of her slaves, yet this extreme change in racial circumstances had not resulted in violence in his colony. Furthermore, he claimed that the concord Guadeloupe was experiencing had allowed the island to repel its enemies, to maintain its plantations "in the most flourishing condition," and to sustain its vigorous international trade.³⁶⁸ Genet, in his letter to the French Consuls in America in November 1793, stated that once Martinique removed counter-revolutionaries from its population, she "set at defiance both the English and the neighboring anarchies."³⁶⁹

³⁶⁶ *CGDA*, November 25, 1793.

³⁶⁷ *CGDA*, November 26, 1793.

³⁶⁸ *CGDA*, November 25 and 26, 1793.

³⁶⁹ *Daily Advertiser*, New York, New York, November 27, 1793.

Genet and his fellow bureaucrats hoped that such letters would call into question the refugees' acceptance of the foundations of the French Revolution. Furthermore, their actions in Saint Domingue demonstrated they were a menace to society simply because of their disregard for property, theirs and that of the community as a whole. The implication, then, was that Americans should be wary of Saint Dominguan refugees because they were a danger to property, political stability, and even the independence of a sovereign nation.³⁷⁰ There were no guarantees that they would not ferment discord in America. They might even continue their alliance with the British who so recently were enemies of the United States.³⁷¹

Delaire, in his efforts to refute charges that refugees had little regard for the protection of private property, argued that it was the Civil Commissioners who eschewed public good as they "disposed of the lives and properties of the island's residents."³⁷² This theme appeared in numerous letters Delaire sent to the *City Gazette* in late 1793. By contrast, he presented the refugees as good republicans who were like their freedom-loving South Carolina neighbors. The Saint Domingans who were so viciously

³⁷⁰ Genet was not alone in his belief that the refugees had at all costs resisted the law of April 4, 1792. In a letter written to the Minister of the Marine, Citizen Gaspard Monge, French consul at Charleston Mangourit accused the refugees of having nothing more in common than "the dislike of the law of April 4, mal-content with Galbaud (the newly appointed governor of Saint Domingue), and cursing Polverel and Sonthonax." Richard K. Murdoch, "Correspondence of French Consuls in Charleston, South Carolina, 1793-1797 (Continued)," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 74, no. 1 (1973): 15.

³⁷¹ This concern mirrored that expressed by some Americans. The French Patriotic Society in Charleston was formed in the early 1790s to celebrate the successes of the French Revolution. They were the group that arranged the "marriage" ceremony described at the beginning of this chapter. They published a declaration in September 1793 where they expressed concern that if France were to fall to her European enemies the United States might face despotic threats.

³⁷² *SGSC*, September 3, 1793. Similar language appears in several of these letters. On June 27, 1793, in the *CGDA*, Delaire, writing under the pen name *An Inhabitant of Hispaniola*, stated that Sonthonax "has stripped the inhabitants of St. Domingo of their property, has since dispersed thousands of them, and forced hundreds to leave the island to about being massacred."

maligned by French officials were actually, according to Delaire, “cultivators, merchants, and handy-craftsmen.”³⁷³ However, instead of being able to lead peaceful lives, their “enemies...drove them from their properties by fire and sword.”³⁷⁴ South Carolinians read these charges less than twenty years after the British occupation of Charleston. The French government that was supposed to protect Saint Dominguan property had turned against the colony’s residents and contributed to their property’s destruction.

Delaire was not the only writer to accuse the commissioners of falsely attacking the colonists. At the end of June after Genet published Sonthonax and Polverel’s letter concerning the events at Port-au-Prince, a letter responding to them from a group of “about fifty” merchants from Port-au-Prince also appeared in the *City Gazette*. Some of the colonists had been listed as criminals by the commissioners, stripped of their property, and transported to France to appear before the National Convention to answer for their behavior in Saint Domingue. These writers argued that these colonists were not enemies of the Republic but were actually defending France’s economic interests. They were entrusted with protecting the property of absentee landowners, and their efforts were to stop the “revolters (who) lay waste and destroy by fire the rich plantations of the *Cul de Sac* (an area near Port-au-Prince).” Instead of joining forces with the colonists seeking to protect local properties, the commissioners waged war against the very people seeking to hold the rebels back. By this account, the commissioners were responsible for

³⁷³ *CGDA*, November 26, 1793. This letter is signed “A French West-Indian,” but, according to Robert Alderson, Jr., this letter was also penned by Jacques Delaire.

³⁷⁴ *CGDA*, November 26, 1793.

the violence; they refused to communicate with the local residents and rejected any attempts at forming an alliance to put down the insurrection.³⁷⁵

While this letter does not directly address the plight of those who fled to the United States, it did provide more support for the claims Delaire was making. The view that Genet was presenting was not the only perspective. The merchants in the end accused the commissioners of plunging Saint Domingue into civil war and along with this, destroying the colony's valuable economy. Tied closely to this was the issue of property. In addition to the fighting, the merchants claimed the commissioners closed the colony's ports and prevented crops from getting to world markets. This meant that even more property was lost or destroyed. Crops that should be shipped out of Saint Domingue were actually, by decree of the commissioners, on shore. The captains of the ships were forced to remain on board their ships and leave their cargo open to destruction or looting.³⁷⁶ The letter is clear that the commissioners' policies, while intended to restore order to the colony, were leading to more chaos as the economy was brought to a standstill.

Delaire understood the foundations of American democracy and exploited them to demonstrate that Genet and the commissioners were not as devoted to these ideas as they pretended. Not only was the right to own property and have it protected important to Americans, but the freedom of the press was also essential to American identity. Delaire used his letters to provide yet another example of how the commissioners disregarded the principles that guided the American and French Revolutions. Since the early days of American resistance to England, freedom of the press was valued as fundamental to

³⁷⁵ *CGDA*, June 29, 1793.

³⁷⁶ *CGDA*, June 29, 1793.

protecting society from abusive government. The commissioners in Saint Domingue realized the importance of the press as an avenue to spread their views but cracked down on those who opposed them. By presenting a concrete example to Americans, Delaire hoped to demonstrate that the commissioners were hypocritical and unrepublican.

In April 1793 Sonthonax's secretary began publishing *L'Ami de l'Égalité, ou Annales Républicaines*. This newspaper became the mouthpiece for the Civil Commissioners' politics and advocated for the inclusion of *gens de couleur* in the electorate. As protests formed in the streets of Port-au-Prince, Sonthonax defended his subordinate's right to publish these views and used force to eliminate those attempting to end the newspapers' publication.³⁷⁷ Delaire translated the newspaper's name as *Friend of Equality* so that his American readers would fully understand what kind of newspaper this was. Southerners worried about this very type of literature becoming available in their cities, so knowing the title would have added to the kinship the readers already felt for the refugees. In addition to this mutual understanding, Delaire used *L'Ami de l'Égalité* to demonstrate how the commissioners permitted the publication of only those pieces they endorsed. Delaire wrote, "I shall only say, that whilst the commissioners encouraged such execrable productions (as printed in *L'Ami de l'Égalité*), the author of a journal printed at the Cape, who exclaimed in plain and respectful terms against their tyrannical exertions, has been arrested by their order, and is confined on board of the

³⁷⁷ The resistance to this newspaper came from anti-republican whites who did not want equality extended to *gens de couleur*. Delaire did not mention this part of the story, but it likely would have made no difference if he had. His readers were opposed to equal rights for free people of color as much as white planters in Saint Domingue were. For more discussion of this newspaper and its publisher, see Chris Bongie, *'The Friend of Equality': Terror and Forgetting in the Novels of Jean-Baptiste Picquenard* (Liverpool University Press, 2008), 77-78.

Æolus ship of war, and his printer thrown into jail, where he is still.”³⁷⁸ Then, as Delaire concluded his letter, he offered himself as an example of the importance of freedom of the press. The first letters he wrote for Charleston’s newspapers did not bear his signature but were signed “An Inhabitant of Hispaniola” or “Emigrants.” Much speculation was occurring over who the writer was, but Delaire had one last claim to state before revealing his identity. He wrote that he believed he was “in a land where every man...is as much authorized to publish the truth as another to publish a falsity.”³⁷⁹ By publishing both the letters Genet sent to the editors and Delaire’s rebuttals, Charleston’s newspapers were demonstrating the importance they placed on freedom of the press. Stories like the one Delaire told of the imprisoned publisher surely sent chills through others of his profession.

Southerners as slave owners had a difficult relationship with freedom of the press and national notions as to the protection of property. Most alongside their northern counterparts had offered their lives to protect these rights during the American Revolution, yet they held very different understandings of how these principles should be lived out in a slave society. Over the course of the next sixty years, division between northerners and southerners will occur over these issues. Southerners will refuse to allow anti-slavery pamphlets to be distributed. They will argue with vehemence that their slave property should remain their own regardless of where they choose to travel or move to new territories. Even in the early days of the republic, these issues mattered to southerners. Delaire realized this. His readers did not want materials such as *Friend of Equality* circulated among their colored population, and they feared the havoc that would

³⁷⁸ CGDA, July 6, 1793.

³⁷⁹ CGDA, July 6, 1793.

occur if the government were to step in and offer equality to free people of color and freedom to the slaves.

Overlying all of Genet and the Civil Commissioners' charges against the refugees was the claim that they were royalists who actively worked to prevent republican policies. These claims turned out to be true for many of the white refugees, but he had greater motivation than simply a need to state the truth. He believed and wanted his readers to believe that the arriving refugees were dangerous. When Genet arrived in America in April 1793, his goal was to convince the United States government to support his efforts to take control of Louisiana and Florida. In order to finance his operations, he planned to request that the remaining balance of America's debt to France be transferred into his coffers. When the refugees began arriving in early July, he began to worry his plan would be derailed by the enormous needs they had.

From the early days following the fall of Cap Français, individual states in the United States gave a great deal of aid to arriving refugees; and, as the year progressed, it became apparent that funds from the federal government would be necessary. In August in an effort to protect the money he needed for his expedition, Genet began to call into question the political alliances of those in need. Writing to the benevolent committee in Baltimore, he acknowledged that the refugee situation was "deployable" but that further investigation of what happened at the Cape and of the refugees' political views was necessary before he could offer France's assistance to them.³⁸⁰ He would not aid those who were enemies of the Republic.

Each city's benevolent committee by November 1793 had exhausted its public as well as private funds, yet refugee needs continued to exist. As winter approached, they

³⁸⁰ SGSC, August 16, 1793.

needed warmer places to live, and the acquisition of food was becoming more difficult with the end of the growing season. Many Americans felt that France should assume responsibility for the refugees since they were French citizens, and they directed these appeals to Genet. On the second of November, he issued a response in a circular letter. He argued that he and his government had already provided vast amounts of relief to Saint Domingans in Philadelphia, Charleston, Baltimore, and New York and had established hospitals in New York and Norfolk to aid the sick and dying among the refugees. In the midst of his claims that he had already helped many, he stated that additional assistance was contingent on each refugee proving his or her patriotism.³⁸¹ The plan he hatched allowed him to appear concerned for the refugees while also determining who the royalists were.

Genet probably did not intend to award much money to refugees, but he needed a system by which he could appear to be helping. Instead, he developed a plan whereby he could acquire the resources for his attacks on Florida and Louisiana, prove to the American public that he was helping his fellow citizens, and sort the refugees based on their political ideology. Originally, he planned to recruit Americans to engage in military attacks on Florida, but President Washington thwarted these plans.³⁸² Genet then turned to the refugees for the personnel he needed. He divided them into five groups: adult

³⁸¹ *Columbian Herald*, Charleston, SC, November 19, 1793.

³⁸² Upon arrival in South Carolina, he began his recruiting efforts without Presidential and Congressional approval. See Note 55. By June President Washington had recognized the danger that Genet posed. He ordered the French privateers must leave American waters and that American citizens serving under the French flag must be arrested. See Minnigerode, 222-223. For Genet's request for the funds and his statement of their intended use, see "To Thomas Jefferson from Edmond Genet, 18 June 1793," Founders Online, National Archives <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-26-02-0283,ver.2014-05-09>. Source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 26, 11 May-31 August 1793, ed. John Catanzariti. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, pp. 308. <Accessed September 23, 2014>. After Genet requested that the United States pay off her debt to France, Thomas Jefferson wrote to Washington outlining a number of reasons he believed this to be a poor course of events.

men, boys ages nine to sixteen, women, the infirm, and the old. He claimed that the French government through “a law made in favor of the patriots driven from Martinico and Gaudaloupe” permitted the raising of a “corps of volunteers.” Genet intended for this army to form the basis of his North American troops. All true patriots, he stated, would surely want to serve France. Men would form the ranks of soldiers. Boys could serve as cabin attendants and have their food, clothing, and lodging covered by the Republic. For the women and infirm, he gladly offered to give assistance if they sewed clothing for those working for the Republic. This only left him with the very oldest of the refugees who would need charitable donations. Genet believed that only good patriots would be willing to serve in such capacities; therefore, his plan would not only address the requests for aid to the refugees coming from American officials, but would reveal France’s enemies.³⁸³ This plan was similar to the work that he did in Russia. While looking for those dangerous to the French Republic, he was able to present himself as a good republican working ardently to protect his government.

France’s constantly changing political environment forced all who worked for the government to actively guard their status.³⁸⁴ Genet was correct in his beliefs that many of the refugees were guilty of working against the republican officials in the colony. By setting up conditions that would force them to make their politics known, he was able to present himself as a defender of the republic ever seeking soldiers for the revolutionary cause. He had a professional past that aligned him with the king and the aristocracy. He had to work to ferret out those who posed a danger to the republic in order to insulate

³⁸³ *Columbian Herald*, November 19, 1793.

³⁸⁴ The Reign of Terror occurred in France in 1794 but the seeds of this were sown much earlier. Genet’s concerns for his status while working in Russia and the steps he took in his letter to his sister demonstrate that he was ever watchful for events that might result in his losing his status and bureaucratic position.

himself from charges of royalist behavior. For Genet, however, these tactics did not work. These final accusations against the refugees resulted in numerous letters appearing in the local press, some from refugees and for the first time some from native born Charlestonians, asserting the inaccuracies of Genet's statements and defending the actions of the refugees.

Delaire was previously the only spokesman for the group, but now letters began to appear in the city's newspapers with different signatures such as "Monitor," "by a Creol of Cape Francois," "The Inhabitants of St. Domingo," and "A French West-Indian." While the identity of each of these is impossible to determine, the impression was that more Saint Domingans were speaking up. The letters endeavored to discredit Genet, the commissioners, and the French Republic as a whole, but they also openly asserted that the refugees were not the dangerous counter-revolutionaries that Genet presented them to be. Genet himself was the one Americans should be concerned about. He, according to many letters, was lying about the ways in which he had helped his destitute countrymen.

In his circular letter Genet claimed to have offered much assistance to arriving Saint Domingans. To Baltimore he gave 2000 piastres and Philadelphia received 300 piastres, all of which the consuls of those cities distributed to the needy. Additionally, he asserted he sent provisions to Charleston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York and established hospitals in Norfolk and New York.³⁸⁵ Refugees and benevolent committees alike denied such donations ever occurred. The first letter refuting Genet's claims came from the Benevolent Society of Charleston. Written by Nathaniel Russil, Joseph Vesey, and Edward Penmen, these committee members stated that no donations had been

³⁸⁵ *Columbian Herald*, November 19, 1793.

“delivered to the real objects of charity, now and for four months past.”³⁸⁶ Another letter from a refugee expressed indignation that Genet waited four months to offer help; he wrote, “After the French island of St. Domingo had been for five months a prey to the most dreadful fire, murder and robbery, after its inhabitants had been on the continent for four months without any resources, then the minister Genet thinks of offering them the new means of consolation.”³⁸⁷

The writer of the letter signed “Monitor” stated he believed Genet did in fact offer help to some, but not to those who truly deserved it. In this case, provisions went “to the plunderers, not the plundered,” “to the assassins, not the wretched remains of the massacre.”³⁸⁸ No others asserted that he helped anyone. While Delaire is the only refugee in Charleston to employ his own name at the end of his letters to the newspaper, a refugee in Philadelphia contributed his experiences with Genet to the conversation in Charleston. He told how he came to America “destitute of everything, without shoes or even shirts” and believed that the French Republic “[owed] sustenance to its citizens in distress.” He appealed to Genet for help and was told, “Friend we see your portion of sorrow, but we cannot help it.” He became convinced that Genet and the other French officials in America “looked on their offices as mere distinctions. And not as an obligation to exert the duties prescribed to them by the law.” Growing desperate, he decided his only course of action was to deceive Genet. He then claimed to be the brother of Collot de Herbois, president of the National Convention. Genet quickly

³⁸⁶ *Columbian Herald*, November 23, 1793.

³⁸⁷ *SGSC*, December 12, 1793.

³⁸⁸ *Columbian Herald*, December 5, 1793.

arranged his passage to France in the officer's quarters on the *Survillante* frigate.³⁸⁹ Such accounts as these sought to discredit Genet and expose him as a fraud.

Finally, a letter signed "A French West-Indian" who was likely Delaire offered to set the record straight on a number of issues related to Genet and the assistance refugees so desperately needed. This letter, in much the same manner that Delaire's previous letter did, pointed out the gratitude that refugees felt for local residents and their appointed Benevolent Committee who had saved them from death. He described the French Republic as the true enemy and outlined the various crimes Sonthonax and Polverel committed on the island. He continued by reporting that the commissioners had been accused before the National Convention and "out-lawed." Genet instead of announcing this continued to persecute the refugees and assign blame for the violence in Saint Domingue to them. In many ways, this letter was Delaire's final assault on Genet.

By the number and ferocity of language employed, it seems clear that the French refugee community in Charleston had grown quite frustrated with Genet's regular assaults on them. His actions with regard to President Washington and French efforts to attack Louisiana and Florida had tarnished American attitudes toward him. It must have seemed amazing to look back just eight months to the round of parties and parades that greeted Genet when he arrived in South Carolina. The celebrations had ceased, many Americans were angry at his efforts to flout American laws, and the tide had turned in France. New parties ruled the National Assembly, and the Washington administration had requested Genet's recall. Perhaps he felt he had nothing to lose with his last plan to force refugees into the ranks of the Republic's military. Refugees under the leadership of Delaire capitalized on these changes. Not only did numerous letters appear defending the

³⁸⁹ SGSC, December 5, 1793.

refugees, every major newspaper in South Carolina, regardless of its politics, printed at least one letter defending the refugees and attacking Genet. Many of the refugees were royalists; they had opposed the integration of *gens de couleur* into the body politique, they had conspired against the appointed republican leaders in Saint Domingue, and they had opposed freeing the slaves. However, because they were able to take advantage of American distaste for Genet, they were able to secure support from their American neighbors and move closer to assimilating in their new home.

As Saint Dominguan refugees scrambled into Charleston, they were seeking safety from the storms of war. They needed places to live and food to eat. Beyond this, however, they needed to find acceptance in Charleston. In order to do so, they had numerous prejudices to combat. It must have seemed like everyone they met had a different view of who they were and what factors had driven them to the Carolina coast. The initial welcome some may have felt if they watched the marriage ceremony between America and France quickly dissipated as they faced attacks from their own government. No one can deny that some if not many of the refugees were guilty as charged. They did not like the direction that the French government was taking. Admitting *gens de couleur* as equal threatened the hegemonic power of the white planters. Freeing the slaves meant an end to the lucrative plantation system, and no other industry existed to replace the losses. What is fascinating about this story is the way the refugees were able to utilize their knowledge of slave society in order to gain favor with the local community and earn the right to make their permanent homes in South Carolina.

Édmond Genet has been the source of much scholarly debate. His presence in America forced the federal government to examine the system set up in the Constitution.

Genet, in his efforts to compel the United States to abandon its policy of neutrality, actually helped to solidify the rules of protocol the United States would expect future foreign ambassadors to follow. More important for this dissertation, however, is the influence that his actions had on the refugees who arrived in Charleston. Their experience was different from that of refugees to other American cities. Genet's embracing of equality for all and abolition of slavery made it impossible for him to adequately understand how southerners heard his accusations.³⁹⁰ Instead of turning southerners against white Saint Domingans, he, in effect, increased the sympathy South Carolinians felt for them.

When Genet arrived in Charleston in April 1793, no one would have anticipated he would fall from grace so quickly. His first mistake was in refusing to follow his instructions which stated that he should always adhere to the laws of the nation where he served.³⁹¹ He disregarded, or perhaps misunderstood, the role that President Washington played in the new American government. He assumed a republican government that had overthrown a monarch would have a weak executive and that all power would reside with Congress and the people. His efforts to appeal to the people when Washington did not meet his expectations only served to anger both the Federalists who already had questions about their alliance with France and Democratic Republicans who had been France's most ardent supporters.³⁹² As his inability to exact the support he needed from the United

³⁹⁰ *Daily Advertiser*, November 27, 1793.

³⁹¹ "The Correspondence between Citizen Genet, Minister of the French Republic, to the United States of North America, and the Officers of the Federal Government, to Which Are Prefixed; the Instructions from the Constituted Authorities of France to the Said Minister ", 10.

³⁹² Numerous newspaper articles demonstrated the outrage that Americans felt as Genet insulted their beloved President. See *Salem Gazette*, Salem, Massachusetts, August 27, 1793 and *Columbian Gazetteer*, New York, New York, November 7, 1793.

States government became more and more apparent, he also had to deal with a rising number of refugees seeking asylum from Saint Domingue. Here, he made another large error in judgment. Instead of using their plight to argue that military support from the United States was essential, he attacked those who had the most potential to generate support for France. He could have emphasized the similarities between Americans and those fleeing the French colony and appealed for help in repelling those seeking to destroy the French empire, the British, the Spanish, and the island's slave population. He did not do this; instead he framed these refugees as dangerous and attempted to convince Americans they should be wary of their motivations as well as their actions.

This circular letter proved to be Genet's last effort at discrediting his fellow French men and women. While determining exactly what most Charlestonians thought about Genet and the refugees is impossible, the later success that many refugees experienced in the years to come provides us some clues concerning the long-term influence Genet was able to have. At least two city constables eventually came from the Saint Dominguan emigrants. Other refugees eventually held important leadership positions in local religious communities. Refugees also assumed important roles as bankers and insurance agents. One refugee even served for fifteen years as Charleston's assistant postmaster.³⁹³ Many others became important merchants and doctors in the city

³⁹³ Daniel Remoussin was elected city constable for Ward 4 in Charleston in 1812. Pierre Esnard held a similar position in Ward 1 in 1822. See *CGDA*, July 10, 1812 and October 29, 1822. Abraham Moïse arrived in America from Saint Domingue in 1791. His family was among the early members of the Jewish Congregation Beth Elohim. His son Aaron Moïse, Sr., served as a clerk at the Bank of South Carolina from 1839-1851. Jacob Moïse, who was born in America, became the director of the Georgia Insurance Corporation. Moïse, 7, 14, and 70. Andrew Anthony Charles Lechais worked first at the Bank of South Carolina before serving as assistant postmaster. See *CGDA*, December 6, 1813. This information comes from his obituary indicating that he began his tenure as postmaster in 1798, only five years after the fall of Cap Français.

and contributed to the larger economic and social fabric of Charleston.³⁹⁴ These were not people whose neighbors rejected them. In spite of the horrific experiences they endured in Saint Domingue, on ships crossing the Caribbean Sea, and during their initial days in Charleston, the refugees were able to weather the controversy their arrival created and establish themselves as capable citizens in early republican Charleston.

³⁹⁴ Numerous obituaries demonstrate the important places refugees occupied in Charleston. See Obituaries in *CGDA*, May 11, 1809, August 11, 1820, October 16, 1823.

CHAPTER 5 – ADOPTING REPUBLICANISM: REFUGEES, ST. MARY’S CATHOLIC CHURCH, AND CONFLICT OVER THE PRIEST

As Saint Domingue’s refugees arrived in Charleston and began to settle into life in the American South, much about their past lives was quite similar to that of the Charlestonians they encountered. Many of the refugees, both black and white, had owned or still owned slaves. They had lived in a colonial environment subject to a king far away. Their primary economic activities involved planting and transatlantic shipping, and their society was a rather rigid compilation of multiple classes and races of people. The primary difference for the refugees, however, was their religious background. While the French did not see their colonial efforts as an opportunity to spread Catholic Christianity in the same way as the Spanish, they did establish churches and continued to practice their Catholic faith in the colonial setting of Saint Domingue. Once they arrived in Charleston, they discovered a city dominated by Protestants, and these were Protestants who harbored long standing prejudices against Catholics. An examination of the roots of South Carolinians’ attitudes towards Catholics and how these were changing in the early 1790s will help explain the prejudices Saint Dominguans encountered.

Negative attitudes and even fear of Catholics had traveled with Carolinians as they emigrated from England. Since the days of King Henry VIII, the arrival of a new monarch on the English throne often meant the population had to change from Catholic to Protestant or vice versa. Even after Britain settled into a Protestant faith, England’s

enemies were often the Catholic monarchs of France or Spain.³⁹⁵ Once in the New World, Carolinians still harbored their dislike of Catholics, but now that was compounded by a tangible concern for the safety of their colony. Catholic Spain represented a very real threat as they challenged the Protestant English presence in the Carolinas. During the Yamassee War of 1715 between the colonists and native Indian tribes, the Spanish contributed to the Indian war efforts in hopes of gaining control of Carolina for Spain.³⁹⁶ These plans were ultimately unsuccessful, so the Spaniards took advantage of slave unrest in hopes of upsetting the colony. In 1739 slaves exposed to Catholicism in the Kongo Kingdom staged what became known as the Stono Rebellion that resulted in the deaths of over twenty whites and had ties to Spanish Florida where the slaves planned to seek refuge.³⁹⁷ The colony seemed to be surrounded by danger; Catholicism was the common denominator.

In spite of prejudices in the local community against Catholics, there was a small Catholic worshipping community which seems to have welcomed the new arrivals into their midst in the 1790s.³⁹⁸ The Catholic population consisted of new immigrants from a variety of European countries who had recently experienced the difficulties of migration. All Catholics regardless of where they originated faced discrimination of some sort in South Carolina. As they found places to live and ways to provide for their families, Saint

³⁹⁵ John D. Basil, "South Carolina Catholics before Roman Discipline, 1670-1820," *Journal of Church & State* 45, no. 4 (2003): 788-789.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid; Mark M. Smith, "Remembering Mary, Shaping Revolt: Reconsidering the Stono Rebellion," *The Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 3 (2001); Mark M. Smith, *Stono : Documenting and Interpreting a Southern Slave Revolt* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2005); John K. Thornton, "African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion," *American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (1991).

³⁹⁸ As stated in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, the priest at St. Mary's participated in the round of sermons preached in late 1793 in order to solicit donations to help the destitute refugees as they arrived from Cap Français.

Dominguans joined their Catholic brothers and sisters in a struggle to find acceptance in the Charleston community. In the end, it was a church conflict over who should choose their priest, the local congregation or the archbishop in Baltimore, that helped the refugees prove to the people of Charleston that they were indeed worthy of being called Americans and were good republicans.

Saint Dominguans arrived in South Carolina just after legal limitations on Catholics were removed. When colonial Carolina was first organized, its original governing document, the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, declared that the Church of England was the “only true and orthodox” religion in the colony and that public money would provide for “the building of churches, and the public maintenance of divines.”³⁹⁹ Catholics were forced to support the Anglican Church through their taxes, yet they were forbidden from holding high public office and fully participating in the electorate.⁴⁰⁰

The American Revolution brought the spark that initiated significant changes for Catholics in South Carolina, changes that gave them more legal rights and the freedom to worship openly as their Protestant neighbors did. The Constitution of 1778 in South Carolina granted freedom of religion to all who believed in God. There were limits to this, however. The official state religion was the “Christian Protestant Religion” with public offices reserved for Protestants. The state allowed all Protestant churches with at

³⁹⁹ Fundament Constitutions of Carolina: March 1, 1669. Avalon Project. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/nc05.asp , <Accessed September 30, 2014>. A note at this site states that this was in part of the original document created by John Locke. One of the proprietors against the wishes of Locke added this statement.

⁴⁰⁰ Basil.

least fifteen members to apply for incorporation with the state legislature.⁴⁰¹ Finally, in 1790, just before the first refugees arrived from Saint Domingue, South Carolina established a constitution that removed all restrictions based on religion. Catholics in Charleston were finally able to worship freely and enjoy all of the legal rights their Protestant neighbors did.⁴⁰² Unfortunately, the road to full acceptance still stretched far ahead of them.

Realizing even before the Constitution of 1790 that the religious climate in South Carolina was changing, Catholics in Charleston organized a church. Prior to this many Catholics were unsure of the identities of other Catholics in their colony; keeping one's religious identity a secret protected against adverse interactions with Protestant neighbors.⁴⁰³ Communal worship during the colonial era had been rare, only occurring in private homes when a traveling priest came into the city.⁴⁰⁴ In June 1788 a French priest known as Mr. Paulin arrived in Charleston. Services occurred on Sundays throughout July. In August Charleston's Catholics met to officially organize their new church.⁴⁰⁵ The priest delivered the first services in French, but the congregation was multinational

⁴⁰¹ Constitution of South Carolina: March 19, 1778. The Avalon Project http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/sc02.asp, <Accessed September 30, 2014>.

⁴⁰² Constitution of South Carolina 1790, [http://emoglen.law.columbia.edu/twiki/pub/AmLegalHist/TheEstablishedChurchInSouthCarolina/S.C. Constitution_of_1790.pdf](http://emoglen.law.columbia.edu/twiki/pub/AmLegalHist/TheEstablishedChurchInSouthCarolina/S.C._Constitution_of_1790.pdf), <Accessed September 30, 2014>.

⁴⁰³ Thomas F. Hopkins, "St. Mary's Church, Charleston, S.C.," in *Year Book 1897, City of Charleston: Mayor Smyth's Annual Review* (Charleston, SC: Walker, Evans, and Cogwell Company, 1897), 431. This work quotes John Gilmary Shea who claimed that two Irishmen in 1775 in Charleston were "accused of conspiring with the negroes against the liberties of the country, were condemned to be tarred and feathered, then banished from the State." Bishop John England, who became the bishop of the Charleston Diocese in 1820 claimed these two men were Lochlin Martin and James Dealey and that their punishment was not because they conspired with working with blacks but simply because they were Catholic. Hopkins was a pastor at St. Mary's from 1789 until 1792.

⁴⁰⁴ Madden, *Catholics in South Carolina : A Record*, 7-9.

⁴⁰⁵ The announcement for the first three services appeared in *CGDA*, June 27 and July 4 and 11, 1788. The call for those interested in starting a congregation occurred in early August; *CGDA*, August 1, 1788.

with a preponderance of Irish members.⁴⁰⁶ The first board of trustees seems to have included representation of each nationality based on its prevalence in the church's membership. Initially, they elected one Dutchman, one Frenchman, and two Irishmen.⁴⁰⁷ One year after this, the congregation purchased a building and dedicated it on August 24, 1789.⁴⁰⁸ With the legal changes that resulted with South Carolina's 1790 Constitution, the Catholic Church was finally permitted to seek official incorporation with the state of South Carolina. St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church was finally established and ready to begin its ministry to the Charleston community.⁴⁰⁹

When St. Mary's was incorporated, the state assumed the church would adopt a certain kind of church structure that was common in Protestant Churches. This meant a board, sometimes called a vestry, consisting of approximately nine men elected each January by the members of the church would conduct the business of the church. They were generally responsible for the church property and for managing the church's finances. This system was quite different from the way the Catholic Church operated in

⁴⁰⁶ Basil: 800.

⁴⁰⁷ *CGDA*, August 8, 1788. While the names of these men and any others who were elected are unknown, Mary Lucinda Morgan, who transcribed the vestry records claims that the first board of trustees contained two wardens and seven vestrymen. She does not include these records in her transcription and does not indicate where she found this information. Later boards of trustees included similar numbers. Mary Lucinda Morgan, "The Vestry Records of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Charleston, South Carolina, 1806-1823" (Thesis (M A), University of South Carolina, 1982), 5. Announcements in the newspaper indicate that each nationality chose its own representatives.

⁴⁰⁸ Hopkins, 428. This property previously housed a Methodist congregation and was located on Hassell Street. The church's trustees paid four hundred and sixty pounds and three pence sterling money.

⁴⁰⁹ From the 1790s members referred to the church as St. Mary's even though the incorporation documents were not amended until 1839 to include this name. According to the church history posted on its website, Father Keating was responsible for selecting St. Mary's as the name. See W. Thomas McQueeney and Msgr. Chet Moczydlowski, "St. Mary's Catholic Church History" <http://www.catholic-doc.org/saintmarys/history.html> <Accessed October 3 2014>; Morgan, 5. This dissertation employs the name St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church as the official name of the church. Most historians who write about the church employ this name in their writing so continuing that practice avoids any confusion about whether or not the church described here is the same as that which other scholars discuss.

Europe. The ways that European Catholic Churches operated often varied depending on the country. For example, the church in France had a close relationship with the monarch who often exerted power over the choice of bishops for the French Church. All of the European Catholic Churches, however, still had close relationships with a hierarchy that mirrored that which existed in the temporal government. In America the Catholic Church began to take on a different persona as democracy entered into the way church business occurred. Over time this would be a source of strife as the elected trustees began to demand more control over the Church's affairs – including over who would be their priest. Their Protestant neighbors were members of churches that interviewed perspective candidates then chose the man they wanted for their pastor. Catholics also wanted this type of system, but the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, both the bishop in Baltimore and the Pope, wanted to maintain control over the assignment of priests.⁴¹⁰

The early years of St. Mary's were difficult. The building they purchased was in need of much repair, and they had a string of short pastorates. Their bishop, John Carroll, in Baltimore worried about both of these situations. He and the church vestry hoped at one point to secure funds from European governments whose subjects were now living in Charleston, but this plan failed to yield any money.⁴¹¹ More importantly, the

⁴¹⁰ This situation which became known as trusteeism caused much grief in Catholic Churches throughout the United States. John England who became an influential bishop during this era blamed the conflicts between the bishops and church trustees on the influence of the doctrines of Presbyterianism. Vestries claimed that since they controlled the finances they should be able to determine who they paid to be their priest. England stated the "The Bishop can never sanction or tolerate these principles." See Morgan, 224.

⁴¹¹ At one point Carroll received a letter from Don Jose Ignacio Viar who worked in the Spanish Minister's office in New York. This letter stated that the King of Spain had inquired about the number of Catholics in Charleston and the financial needs they had. Carroll corresponded twice with Ignacio stating that there were about 200 Catholics in Charleston and that repairs to the church building would cost about \$15,000. No funds ever resulted from this. In many ways, it is likely that Carroll was relieved that no foreign

congregation needed a priest. Carroll recognized the importance of having the right kind of priest in place, one who would represent the congregation well. Carroll believed the “success, consequently the reputation of Religion, under the blessing of God will depend on the personal characters who are to begin the work of the ministry.”⁴¹² The congregation as a whole and its members in their individual lives faced much adversity. Having a well-respected priest had the potential of improving their lot; having the wrong kind of priest would make their plight worse.

Improving the attitudes of Charlestonians toward Catholics was extremely important to Saint Dominguan immigrants. Since their arrival, they had faced much skepticism from the Charleston community because of doubts about their responsibility for the slave insurrection in Saint Domingue, because of concern they held royalist political views, and because they were a financial burden for the local community. Their Catholic faith served as yet another reason for Charlestonians to resist accepting them into full membership in the community. Three important moments exist during the first years that Saint Domingans lived in Charleston that demonstrate how they progressively worked to change how their Protestant, native born neighbors viewed them: their 1793 arrival and the beginning years of the pastorate of Father Simon Felix Gallagher, the appointment of Father Le Mercier in 1803, and finally, the events that occurred during the tenure of Father Picot de Clorivière from 1812 until 1819.

monarch got involved in St. Mary's affairs since control of much that occurred there would likely pass out of Carroll's hands and into those of the foreign entity. John Carroll to Members of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Charleston, South Carolina, April ?, 1790 (exact date illegible); Don Jose Ignacio Viar to John Carroll, April 12, 1790; John Carroll to Don Jose Ignacio Viar, April 20, 1790; Papers of John Gilmary Shea, Georgetown University, Rare Books and Special Collections, Washington, DC.

⁴¹² John Carroll to Members of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Charleston, South Carolina, quoted in Hopkins, 439.

When the largest group of refugees began arriving in July 1793, St. Mary's Catholic Church was without a priest. The previous priest, Father Keating, had traveled to Philadelphia in late 1792 due to illness possibly related to the difficult South Carolina climate and died there in March 1793 from Yellow Fever.⁴¹³ Replacing a priest was no easy task as few priests were in America; the first seminary in America had only been in existence for two years. In addition, Charleston was a remote place with relatively few Catholics, so the bishop could have easily overlooked their need. He did not, however, because he recognized the importance of supporting a Catholic mission in the American South. St. Mary's had the ability to change southern perceptions of Catholics, but securing the right kind of priest was essential. The solution that Carroll discovered for this vacancy was an Irish-born priest from the Diocese of Dublin named Father Simon Felix Gallagher. He was a graduate of the University of Paris, and Carroll was quite impressed with him.⁴¹⁴ In a letter to Gallagher's bishop in Ireland, he wrote that the church in Charleston was "a place requiring a man of considerable abilities, which Mr. Gallagher possesses."⁴¹⁵ Whether Gallagher was specifically chosen for this post because of his experience in France is unknown; however, he did speak French well enough to offer a French class in the evenings.⁴¹⁶

Gallagher quickly became well-respected in Charleston, a goal that Carroll had for him from the beginning. In addition to his duties as priest, he became a math and philosophy professor at the College of Charleston, he organized the Hibernian Society to

⁴¹³ Moczydlowski.

⁴¹⁴ Madden, *Catholics in South Carolina : A Record*, 25.

⁴¹⁵ John Carroll to Archbishop Troy of Dublin, May 1, 1793, quoted in Hopkins, 443.

⁴¹⁶ *CGDA*, November 15, 1794.

help new Irish immigrants, and he was appointed commissioner of the Free School of Charleston by the state legislature, serving as president of the board.⁴¹⁷ Perhaps the most acclaim he received was for his speaking ability, both as a professor and as a priest. One Charlestonian claimed he “possessed the requisites of a complete orator.”⁴¹⁸ Hopes were high that St. Mary’s would not only offer religious education and worship to her parishioners, but would also change perceptions about Catholics.

As refugees arrived in Charleston, many found their way to the Catholic Church. During the first ten years of Gallagher’s ministry, he conducted many baptisms and marriages for Saint Dominguans. Among these numbers were many people of color, some of whom had white baptismal sponsors. One example is the April 10, 1797, baptism of Leonide, free child of Marie Constance Rey who was also listed as free. The baptismal sponsor was Joseph Vesey, a prominent Charlestonian who served on the Benevolent Committee that assisted newly arriving refugees.⁴¹⁹ Gallagher also frequently performed marriage ceremonies for refugees.⁴²⁰ However, in spite of this evidence of ministry to the French speaking part of his congregation, the bishop began to

⁴¹⁷ Richard C. Madden, "Catholics in South Carolina, Original Manuscript, " Papers of Monsignor Richard C. Madden, Charleston, South Carolina; Madden, *Catholics in South Carolina : A Record*, 25.CGDA, November 15, 1794; January 27, 1812; February 4, 1812.

⁴¹⁸ CGDA, January 13, 1813. This account of a service he preached in Augusta, Georgia, occurred before the conflict that tore the Charleston church apart, so there is no reason to believe this writer was adding this positive assessment in order to boost Gallagher’s position before the local community. The President of the College of Charleston reported in a letter to his parents in England that these daily lectures by Gallagher were excellent. See Charles Caleb Cotton and Julien Dwight Martin, "The Letters of Charles Caleb Cotton, 1798-1802 (Continued)," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 51, no. 4 (1950): 219.

⁴¹⁹ Sacramental Records, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Charleston, South Carolina, Catholic Diocese of Charleston Archives. These entries simply state that the person was “free.” Whites do not have any racial identification in the records.

⁴²⁰ Examples appear in James W. Hagy and Ruymbeke Bertrand Van, "The French Refugee Newspapers of Charleston," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 97, no. 2 (1996): 145-147; Elizabeth Heyward Jervey, "Marriage and Death Notices from the City Gazette (Continued)," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 31, no. 1 (1930): 68-70, 72.

believe that Gallagher was not the best fit for the Charleston church. Improving the local attitude toward Catholics was a high priority for Carroll, and Gallagher had personal demons that made this part of his assignment impossible. Gallagher had a problem with alcohol that was embarrassing for his parishioners.⁴²¹

For the bishop the ordeal with Gallagher was exceedingly painful, but he believed he had to deal with it because Gallagher's continued presence at St. Mary's was both dangerous to the Catholic reputation in Charleston and perilous to the spiritual health of the church. He wrote to Gallagher in early 1799 after receiving numerous accounts of his excessive drinking and inappropriate public behavior. In addition to these concerns, Carroll was disappointed Gallagher had failed to build a new church in spite of the obvious wealth in the Charleston.⁴²² The needs of the congregation were immense, and Gallagher was not meeting them. The bishop gave the priest over two years to make improvements in his performance, but no changes resulted. In August 1801 the members of the vestry complained to Carroll that Gallagher was embarrassing Catholics in Charleston; tales of his impropriety seemed to be circulating everywhere.⁴²³ Even those who praised Gallagher's talents in the pulpit felt compelled to remark on his drunkenness.⁴²⁴ The spiritual state of the Charleston church worried Carroll as reports reached him indicating that there was a "lanquor of piety, neglect of the sacraments and other abuses, which diminish the respect due to the maxims of the Gospel and the

⁴²¹ This problem was repeated discussed by Carroll in letter to Gallagher. See John Carroll to Simon Felix Gallagher, January 23, 1799; Papers of Peter Guilday, American Catholic University Archives. John Carroll to Simon Felix Gallagher, November 10, 1801, quoted in Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston (1786-1842)*, 147.

⁴²² John Carroll to Simon Felix Gallagher, January 23, 1799, Papers of Peter Guilday.

⁴²³ Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston (1786-1842)*, 144.

⁴²⁴ John Carroll to Simon Felix Gallagher, January 23, 1799, Papers of Peter Guilday.

decency of Divine worship.”⁴²⁵ In addition to these issues, Gallagher was also not meeting the needs of his congregants. Among these were Saint Domingians. Eventually, Carroll concluded that St. Mary’s desperately needed someone to minister specifically to this Saint Dominguan population. For a brief period he sent an itinerant French priest to the parish, and his success indicated to Carroll that replacing Gallagher with a permanent French priest was the solution to St. Mary’s issues.⁴²⁶ Gallagher was asked to resign.

With this action the battle for control of St. Mary’s began. Gallagher, for his part, refused to accept Carroll’s decision, so he decided to appeal to Rome, an action which Carroll felt was wholly inappropriate given canonical law. Carroll had worked to handle the situation with Gallagher carefully because he rightly feared the priest might take such steps.⁴²⁷ Carroll recognized that circumstances in America were quite different from Europe and that Church officials in far-off Italy were likely to misunderstand issues related to the American Church; consequently, he wanted to avoid involving Rome in this

⁴²⁵ John Carroll to Trustees of St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Charleston, South Carolina, November 10, 1801, quoted in Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston (1786-1842)*, 147.

⁴²⁶ The Reverend Gile Pierre Bournonviver, a French émigré priest, worked with Gallagher beginning in the summer of 1800. He died in late 1801 and left his house on Berresford Street along with \$200 to St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Charleston. This will appears in Will Book D, 1800-1807. Madden, "Catholics in South Carolina, Original Manuscript," p. 12. Little record of his work remains except the marriage announcement for Anthony Ulmo, a medical doctor from Saint Dominguan who served on the vestry for St. Mary’s Catholic Church in 1807 and 1810. See *CGDA*, August 28, 1800. Ulmo’s presence at St. Mary’s is noted in Morgan, 23, 25, and 32.

⁴²⁷ By asking Gallagher to instead of actively removing him, Carroll created a situation where official appeal to Rome was inappropriate. Officials in Rome returned the matter to Carroll and refused to become involved.

issue. He was responsible for assigning priests in America and he believed he understood the particular American circumstances better than his superiors.⁴²⁸

After the work of the itinerant priest had ended, Carroll took steps to officially appoint a full-time French priest. Father Angadreme Le Mercier who had previously served in Savannah received the call to Charleston to replace Gallagher.⁴²⁹ The vestry reversed directions, sided with Gallagher, and refused to accept Le Mercier as their new pastor. Gallagher wanted to protect his position and status in Charleston. Not only did he hold an important position within the church, but he also occupied numerous prestigious roles in the educational and social life of Charleston. He had no intention of abandoning these roles. The vestry had other concerns. While there were certainly members who liked Gallagher and appreciated his gift for preaching, their reasons for resisting had everything to do with nationality. The majority of the vestry's members were Irish, and they did not want a French speaking priest in their pulpit. Saint Domingans, still new to Charleston and struggling to meet their own basic needs, do not seem to have had enough clout to resist the actions of the vestry.⁴³⁰ This became the first time St. Mary's vestry argued for the right to choose their own priest, a concept that became known as "trusteeism" and ravaged the American Catholic Church in the early nineteenth century.⁴³¹

⁴²⁸ This is actually the argument that St. Mary's vestry made in their appeal for a locally stationed bishop. They believed that conditions in the American South were drastically different from those in Baltimore and other parts of the United States, so it was impossible for a bishop in Baltimore to understand what kind of priest would be best for their church.

⁴²⁹ Madden, *Catholics in South Carolina : A Record*, 26.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates : Ecclesiastical Democracy and the Tensions of Trusteeism*; Guilday, "Trusteeism (1814-1821)."

Father Le Mercier arrived in Charleston in the summer of 1803 just ahead of the next influx of Saint Dominguan immigrants. On July 31 he performed his first baptism at St. Mary's and quickly became involved in the local community.⁴³² In late 1803 conditions in Saint Domingue changed once again, and by November the colony's former slaves had defeated the French troops under the leadership of General Charles Victor Emanuel Leclerc, and independence was imminent. This era of the Haitian Revolution was particularly perilous for white Saint Domingans as the rebellion's leader, Jean Jacques Dessaline, blamed the white colonizers for years of abuse and violence. On January 1, 1804, the colony of Saint Domingue ceased to exist; in its place was the new nation of Haiti. Haiti's leaders forced all whites to flee the island or face execution.⁴³³ As the end of the year approached, another wave of refugees began arriving in Charleston. Le Mercier took his charge of caring for Saint Dominguan refugees seriously and became the secretary for the newly formed Committee of Benevolence.⁴³⁴

Established in March 1804 by French residents of the city, Le Mercier led the Committee of Benevolence through its fundraising efforts and worked with local officials

⁴³² Sacramental Records, St. Mary's Catholic Church, Charleston South Carolina, Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Charleston, South Carolina.

⁴³³ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 298-301. On January 1, 1804, Dessaline published the Declaration of Independence for Haiti. Written by Louis Félix Boisrond-Tonnerre, the document blamed the French for centuries of brutality and insisted that becoming Haiti meant a complete rejection of all that was French. With the exception of a few white women who were under the personal protection of Dessaline, no whites were permitted to own property in Haiti. In spite of this, Dessaline worried a French conspiracy was in place to retake the colony. To combat this threat he ordered the massacres of whites who were left in Haiti. Such actions reinforced European and American beliefs that Haiti's people were barbaric.

⁴³⁴ Various newspaper articles refer to Le Mercier as the secretary. See *CGDA*, April 7, 1804, and *Charleston Courier*, March 7, 1803. Even as church members resisted his placement at St. Mary's and posted their opinions in the *Charleston Courier*, they still recognized and noted "the Spiritual Charity of Mr. Le Mercier towards his countrymen." *Charleston Courier*, February 21, 1804.

to disperse money fairly.⁴³⁵ Regular announcement appeared in the newspaper requesting donations and assistance for Saint Dominguan refugees and always included Le Mercier's name. He was making his presence in the city known, and his actions demonstrated a change in the way French refugees participated in the Charleston community. No longer were they waiting for long time residents to help them, they were stepping forward and taking responsibility for those in need. Even after the committee ended its official mission, Le Mercier and his colleagues continued to offer services to distressed refugees. In one incidence in September 1805, they stepped forward to help a refugee named Mr. Luztes reclaim some of his financial resources. Apparently, Mr. Luztes had entrusted sums of money to various people throughout the United States, presumably as part of his business transactions prior to the outbreak of violence in Saint Domingue. By 1805 his family had suffered serious losses and needed these resources in order to survive in America. Mr. Luztes did not possess the necessary records to locate his investments, so he turned to Le Mercier. Announcements appeared in newspapers throughout the United States.⁴³⁶ Le Mercier's diligent work toward carrying out his mission did not ingratiate him to the vestry at St. Mary's, however. They continued to claim the right to choose their priest and refused to be swayed by Le Mercier's good work. In their minds, he was not their priest.

One of Bishop Carroll's primary goals with regard to St. Mary's was to have a priest in place who would improve the reputation of Catholics in Charleston. In the cases of both Gallagher and Le Mercier, this was accomplished through their extensive

⁴³⁵ *Charleston Courier*, March 7, 1804. *CGDA*, February 13, 1805. Le Mercier requested that all claims against the committee be settled by March 1, 1805.

⁴³⁶ Two examples of this are *Connecticut Herald*, New Haven, Connecticut, November 5, 1805, and *Boston Courier*, Boston, Massachusetts, November 21, 1805.

involvement in community service. Unfortunately, circumstances surrounding both priests also tarnished any accomplishments they made. For Le Mercier the problem was not his personal behavior but the adverse publicity that resulted from a public argument over his status that appeared in the local newspaper. While he was serving as secretary to the Committee of Benevolence in February 1804, a letter appeared in the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* where a writer depicted only as “A Carolinian” appealed to the Charleston public to offer assistance to French soldiers currently living in America. Soldiers in the city were in such great need that “some...were seen at the market selling their great coats to buy bread.” Apparently, a debate ensued over, as one writer stated, “the truth of what has been asserted respecting the wants of officers and privates.”⁴³⁷ Le Mercier wrote in to commend “A Carolinian” for his concern about Frenchmen in need and for his suggestion that Charlestonians establish a fund to help them. While this letter has not survived, comments about it appeared on February 21, 1804.⁴³⁸ One writer commended Le Mercier for his work among recent immigrants; yet he faulted him for signing his name as the “rector” of St. Mary’s. The writer, as a member of St. Mary’s, stated that “he (Mr. Le Mercier) has never been received (even) as Curate by the Catholic congregation of Charleston, or by their representatives the Vestry of said church.” To this Thomas Cormick, another member of the church replied, “I am also a subscriber [member] to the Catholic Church, and as such I acknowledge him, and many others with me, as the Rector of said Church; being (if not received by the Vestry) lawfully appointed

⁴³⁷ *CGDA*, February 23, 1804.

⁴³⁸ The contents of Le Mercier’s letter are easily discernible from the first statement that appeared in the *Charleston Courier*, Charleston, South Carolina, April 21, 1804. The letters involved in this debate have not been found, but the original letter from “A Carolinian” appeared in the *CGDA*, February 16 and 23, 1804.

by the Ecclesiastical Superior of the Catholic Church – the Bishop of Baltimore.” A final note printed alongside these first two, chastised both writers for embarking on a “discussion in the public Papers of the affairs of that Congregation with the duties of the Vestry.”⁴³⁹ Since Le Mercier was closely associated with the Saint Dominguan refugee population, this exchange demonstrated to the Charleston community that they were a source of conflict. For Catholics and the refugees in particular, this was troubling

While Le Mercier was working diligently with the arriving poor from Saint Domingue, Gallagher and the vestry continued their resistance to the bishop. Gallagher’s efforts to secure the backing of the Holy See had been futile, and officials there turned the matter back to Carroll. On August 15, 1805, Carroll suspended Gallagher and forbade him to say mass outside his own home.⁴⁴⁰ The trustees, still ardently in support of Gallagher, took the shocking step of voting to tear down their church to avoid allowing Le Mercier to be their priest. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed, and this did not occur. Still, the fact that it was threatened demonstrates how passionate the players in this drama were.⁴⁴¹

Eventually, Carroll gave in to the vestry and elected to move Le Mercier to another parish.⁴⁴² With this solution, a level of peace returned to the congregation.

⁴³⁹ *Charleston Courier*, Charleston, South Carolina, April 21, 1804. Parentheses included in the original text.

⁴⁴⁰ Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston (1786-1842)*, 148.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid. From 1803 to 1805 Carroll attempted to discipline Gallagher and reinforce the authority that Le Mercier had as the legally appointed pastor of St. Mary’s congregation. Gallagher continued to oppose Le Mercier. At one point, according to John Gilmary Shea, early Catholic historian, Gallagher at one point challenged Le Mercier as the later was preparing for worship. Notes dated February 6, 1804, Papers of John Gilmary Shea, Georgetown University Archives, Washington, DC.

⁴⁴² Charleston’s Catholic Church was the last parish he served. In August 1806, Father Le Mercier perished in a ship wreck. Peter Guilday provides conflicting reports about the fate of Le Mercier. When describing the events that occurred in Charleston, he states that Le Mercier returned to France in 1806 after Gallagher was reinstated. Later in the same book when discussing the Catholic Church in Savannah which Le

Efforts at improving their businesses and putting themselves on firmer financial ground filled their time. Out of their experiences with Le Mercier as their pastor, French speaking refugees gained a more prominent role in the church. In 1807 two French citizens, Peter Laurens who was a wine merchant from France and Dr. Anthony Ulmo a medical doctor from Saint Domingue, acquired seats on the vestry. The latter had worked with Le Mercier as a member of the Committee of Benevolence.⁴⁴³

While Le Mercier's call to St. Mary's was contentious from the beginning, his actions did effect some changes for the Saint Dominguan community and their fellow countrymen who had fled the French Revolution. This pattern of controversy at Saint Mary's became a common one. The bishop placed a French speaking priest at the church, the local vestry resisted, the church engaged in public wrangling, the priest left, and then French speaking members assumed a greater role in the governing of the church. The changes that occurred after Le Mercier left were somewhat minor, but the changes that would occur after the next conflict would be much more dramatic.

After Le Mercier left, Gallagher was reinstated as pastor of St. Mary's and continued there as the sole pastor for five years.⁴⁴⁴ According to the sacramental records, he increased the number of baptisms each year, and he became convinced he needed the

Mercier is credited Le Mercier with founding, Guilday states that the priest remained in Charleston until 1811 then left for the West Indies. On this trip Guilday states he was lost at sea. The truth is actually a compilation of these two stories as he was lost at sea in 1806. The ship was traveling between Charleston and Norfolk, Virginia. After his death an auction of his household goods and clothing occurred on November 5, 1806, in Charleston. *CGDA*, August 29, 1806; *Ibid.*, 149, 160; Moczydlowski. On the official list of former pastors at St. Mary's, Le Mercier's name does not appear since the vestry never did recognize him as an officially appointed pastor.

⁴⁴³ Morgan, 23. Dr. Anthony Ulmo was elected to the church vestry on January 11, 1807. Peter Laurens who was a native of France was also elected at this time.

⁴⁴⁴ John Carroll to Simon Felix Gallagher, December 4, 1806, reprinted and quoted from the original Latin in *Ibid.*, 20-22.

assistance of another priest.⁴⁴⁵ Finally, in 1812 help arrived. A newly ordained priest, Father Joseph Picot de Clorivière arrived in Charleston on October 20, 1812. This time the vestry did not resist a French priest, and he began his work quickly. Writing to Carroll, who was now the archbishop, the priest pointed out many needs of the parish.⁴⁴⁶ He observed that many members did not worship regularly and only turned to their pastors for baptisms, funerals, and “sometimes also to marry.” He claimed, “The numbers of my countrymen are immense. More than in any city in the United States say they, I have been told that they are five thousand. But it is not in the Church that they may be seen.” In order to remedy this problem, he offered catechism classes that were successful in attracting French children.⁴⁴⁷ His ministry seemed to be starting on the right foot.

For a short time after Clorivière’s arrival in Charleston, he and Gallagher worked together in harmony, and sacramental records indicate that both men ministered to French and English speaking members. Clorivière was much more diligent than Gallagher was, however. Clorivière’s first recorded baptism at St. Mary’s was on November 8, 1812. For the first four months of 1813, the priests seemed to have alternated the responsibility for baptisms, but after May nearly all of the baptisms were performed by Clorivière. The

⁴⁴⁵ Sacramental Records, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Charleston, South Carolina, Diocese of Charleston, South Carolina.

⁴⁴⁶ Pius VII created a metropolitan see in Baltimore on April 8, 1808. Carroll officially became the archbishop on April 18, 1811. Annabelle M. Melville, *John Carroll of Baltimore, Founder of the American Catholic Hierarchy* (New York,: Scribner, 1955), 225, 228.

⁴⁴⁷ Joseph Picot de Clorivière to John Carroll, November 16, 1812, transcript in John Gilmary Shea Papers.

same was true for 1814 as Gallagher only rarely baptized anyone that year.⁴⁴⁸ Suspicions that Gallagher was neglecting his parishioners seemed to be true.

Clorivière also increased the number of people who communed and who came to worship regularly. The church required Catholics to commune at least once a year to remain in good standing; this usually occurred at Easter. Clorivière observed that church records from the Easter before his arrival stated that only about “a dozen persons...performed their easter devotions.”⁴⁴⁹ Clorivière was appalled the church had such a small number of faithful worshipers. The French priest immediately began working to remedy this problem.

He identified two issues that served as barriers to church participation. Many suffered from a lack of Christian education, so he began teaching catechism classes. At first about fifteen children attended on a regular basis and were mostly French, but later he expanded these to include sixty pupils and added another class for blacks.⁴⁵⁰ The second factor that prevented parishioners from communing and worshiping was the practice of pew renting. At St. Mary’s pews were rented to the wealthier members. While this generated funds for the support of the church, it left the poor without a place to sit during worship. Clorivière began reserving some of the pews for the poor, a practice that increased the number of communicants “to between sixty and eighty” during his first

⁴⁴⁸ Sacramental Records, St. Mary’s Catholic Church.

⁴⁴⁹ J. P. De Clorivière, *Further Documents Showing the Causes of the Distressed State of the Roman Catholic Congregation in the City of Charleston* (Charleston, SC: Hoff, 1818), 32-33.

⁴⁵⁰ Joseph Picot de Clorivière to John Carroll, November 16, 1812, and January 29, 1813, Papers of John Gilmary Shea.

two years of ministry. In the course of the following year, over one hundred and thirty communed.⁴⁵¹

Clorivière also was more open to baptizing colored people, both free and enslaved, than Gallagher was. During 1813 Gallagher baptized only two slaves and no free blacks while Clorivière baptized nine who were listed in the parish register as “free” or “slave.”⁴⁵² Of the one hundred and thirty he reported communing, twenty-five were “coloured,” but these actions met resistance from the vestry who forced him to cease actively reaching out to this population.⁴⁵³ While it is entirely possible that Clorivière was better at keeping records than Gallagher, we also know that Gallagher was the priest who originally instituted the keeping of a parish registry when he arrived in Charleston in 1793.⁴⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the record is what it is. Clorivière was not as involved in the local community as Gallagher or Le Mercier, so it is reasonable to assume he spent his time administering his duties as a priest; clearly, he added many baptized members to the church’s roles. His mission was not solely about adding numbers to the church’s role, but about making faithful Christians as is evident from his emphasis on catechism classes. After years of controversy, it seemed that much was finally going well both for Clorivière and for St. Mary’s.

Clorivière, however, had a past that threatened to derail his ministry. For a time he was able to keep this from interfering with the work he was called to do, but eventually it caused personal anguish for him and division in his church. Prior to coming

⁴⁵¹ De Clorivière, 32.

⁴⁵² Sacramental Records, St. Mary’s Catholic Church.

⁴⁵³ De Clorivière, 32.

⁴⁵⁴ Sacramental Records, St. Mary’s Catholic Church.

to America and joining the priesthood, he actively worked against France's revolution. Clorivière's family had long resisted the revolutionary movement, and his father lost his life on the guillotine for doing so. Clorivière himself was involved in an attempt to assassinate Napoleon that came to be known as the "Infernal Machine." During this Christmas Eve plot in 1800, a group of counter-revolutionaries planned to launch an explosion as Napoleon's carriage passed by on the way to the Opera. Prior to leaving his residence, Napoleon and the Empress had a dispute. He left quickly without her and told his driver to hurry so that he would not be late. His carriage passed by too fast for his would-be assassins to light their fuse. By the time the explosion occurred, the First Consul was safely out of the way. While Napoleon escaped without harm, a number of pedestrians died including a six year old girl. In order to avoid capture and execution, Clorivière realized he had to flee France.⁴⁵⁵ He went to Savannah, Georgia, where he had relatives and worked as a miniature painter of much renown.⁴⁵⁶ In spite of this success, his guilt tormented him, so he enrolled in St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1812.

For a number of years Clorivière believed he had left the controversy of his former life behind. All of that changed in 1814. Throughout the revolutionary era in

⁴⁵⁵ His actions in France during the revolution and his later relationship with Charles X confirmed his support of monarchical leadership, a position that most Americans in the early nineteenth century equated to rejection of republicanism. During his last pastoral appointment, Clorivière served as the priest at Georgetown Visitation Convent. While there he successfully petitioned Charles X of France for a painting that today hangs over the altar at the convent. Papers of Joseph Picot de Clorivière, Georgetown Visitation Convent Archives, Washington, DC; Anna Wells Rutledge, "A French Priest, Painter and Architect in the United States: Joseph Pierre Picot De Limoëlan De Clorivière," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 35, no. 9 (1948): 165. Madden, "Joseph Pierre Picot De Limoëlan De Clorivière (1768-1826)". Pierre Le Bastart de Villeneuve, *Le Vrai Limoëlan: De La Machine Infernale À La Visitation* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984); Eleanore C. Sullivan, *Georgetown Visitation since 1799*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Georgetown Visitation, 2004).

⁴⁵⁶ Examples of Clorivière's paintings are held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and by the Gibbs Art Gallery, Charleston, South Carolina. Clorivière worked as a traveling portrait painter for a time. See *Augusta Chronicle*, Augusta, Georgia, July 4, 1807.

France, the Roman Catholic Church had been under attack. In 1790 the revolutionary government attempted to make all in the French priesthood pledge their allegiance to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, a document which fundamentally changed the relationship between the Church and the State. Many clergymen refused to sign and chose to flee the country. In spite of Napoleon's attempts to make peace with the church through the Concordat in 1801, he remained in continuous conflict with the office of the Holy See under the pontificates of both Pius VI and Pius VII.

In February 1796 Napoleon, with the blessing of the French Directory, began his efforts to take control of Rome, and the plan came to fruition on February 10, 1798, when Rome surrendered. Napoleon arrested Pope Pius VI in the weeks immediately following this victory and held him until the Pope died. Conflict between the French emperor and the Roman Catholic Church continued under the pontificate of Pius VII and eventually resulted in the house arrest of the Pope in Savona from 1809 until 1812 and then in Fontainebleau from 1812 until the end of Napoleon's reign in 1814. Finally, with the Emperor's defeat there was an end to these tensions.⁴⁵⁷

Catholics worldwide rejoiced when they heard of Napoleon's downfall in June 1814. This was true in Charleston as well. Upon hearing the news, thirty members of St. Mary's approached Clorivière with a request that he mark the end of this terrible period for the Catholic Church with a service of thanksgiving, the traditional *Te Deum*. From Clorivière writings, he seems to have seen this as simply an expression of relief that this horrible time had passed for Pius VII and the Church. However, all did not see it this way because an end to Napoleon meant a return of the monarchy in France. The years of

⁴⁵⁷ Edward Elton Young Hales, *The Emperor and the Pope; the Story of Napoleon and Pius VII* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961); Margaret M. O'Dwyer, *The Papacy in the Age of Napoleon and the Restoration: Pius VII, 1800-1823* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985).

battle for freedom and equality were ending with the return of the Bourbon dynasty to the throne of France. Some in Charleston and at St. Mary's saw the *Te Deum* as tantamount to rejoicing at the return of a royalist leader.

Clorivière's years of political experience made him quick to realize the potential danger such a service could cause.⁴⁵⁸ Americans who had celebrated the French Revolution were somewhat dismayed at the turn the revolution had taken. First Napoleon had declared himself emperor and now the monarchy was reestablished. Saint Domingans who had suffered through Genet's accusations that they were royalists certainly were cautious about participating in what could be seen as an anti-republican service.⁴⁵⁹ With these concerns before him, Clorivière decided to consult the Archbishop before agreeing to host the *Te Deum*. Unfortunately, before Carroll's reply had time to reach Charleston, news that St. Mary's was hosting a *Te Deum* circulated through Charleston and compelled Clorivière to go ahead with the service.⁴⁶⁰ The events that followed confirmed that Clorivière was right to worry about how some in Charleston would regard the *Te Deum*.

As the priest made plans for the *Te Deum*, he received numerous threats on his life. The fact that a simple service in a small church elicited such a response indicates a profound depth of animosity toward his politics or, at the very least, a concerted effort to intimidate him so that he would cancel the service. Some even tried to kidnap him the evening before the service. The identities of those opposed to the *Te Deum* remain

⁴⁵⁸ Madden, "Joseph Pierre Picot De Limoëlan De Clorivière (1768-1826)", 63.

⁴⁵⁹ See chapter 4 of this dissertation for more discussion of Genet and his accusations against the refugees from Saint Domingue.

⁴⁶⁰ Clorivière provided an extensive description of the events that transpired at the *Te Deum*. Joseph Picot de Clorivière to John Carroll, June 27, 1814, Papers of John Gilmary Shea.

unknown; however, regardless of whether they were members of Clorivière's church or simply residents of the community at large, their actions heightened tensions throughout Charleston. Because of these threats, city officials accompanied by members of the local militia attended the service in order to curtail any violence that might erupt. This proved to be a wise precaution. As the sanctuary filled with "the decent and well-intentioned persons of the city," the city's intendant (mayor) and the French Consul were also in attendance. As Clorivière stood at the altar chanting the ancient words of *Te Deum*, a man moved toward the center of the church and advanced on the altar with plans to attack the priest. The authorities quickly apprehended the assailant who was armed with a dagger, and thankfully no harm came to the priest or his fellow worshippers.⁴⁶¹

St. Mary's sponsorship of a *Te Deum* for Pius VII's liberation was not unique among Catholic Churches in America. Archbishop Carroll, in the days after St. Mary's service but before he learned of the events that transpired there, wrote to all Catholic Churches in the United States. He stated that he planned to sing the hymn of thanksgiving in Baltimore at the cathedral, and he called on all other churches to do the same.⁴⁶² The *Te Deum* in Charleston, however, drew a clear line through the congregation and highlighted the long-standing concerns many Catholics in the South had about how their neighbors viewed them. For some the service was merely an opportunity to offer thanksgiving for the safe return of their Holy Father, but for others hosting such an event jeopardized the reputation of the church and its members. To align themselves with actions that some viewed as anti-American and pro-monarchical

⁴⁶¹ Joseph Picot de Clorivière to John Carroll, June 27, 1814, Papers of John Gilmary Shea.

⁴⁶² Archbishop John Carroll to Catholic Churches of the Diocese of Baltimore, July 7, 1814, Papers of John Gilmary Shea.

represented a digression from previous efforts by Catholics to find acceptance in Charleston and in America. Clorivière's status as a French priest made his actions particularly dangerous for the French as they feared their Protestant, English speaking neighbors would suspect them of similar political ideology.

After reflecting on the events surrounding the *Te Deum*, Clorivière acknowledged that nationality often determined who supported him and who avoided him. He wrote to Archbishop Carroll, "I was...perfectly attended to by my friends and even strangers, but particularly by the Irish who were very zealous and ready to die in defense of their Church and their minister." His fellow countrymen, however, abandoned him because, as he stated, they were "either [too] terrified [to attend] or [were] terrorists."⁴⁶³ Even the church sexton (clerk of the church), a Frenchman referred to as Mr. Duboc, refused to assist with the *Te Deum* and received a reprimand from the vestry.⁴⁶⁴ A news report in the Dover, New Hampshire, *Sun* also highlighted the role that nationality played in responses to the *Te Deum*. Those responsible for the threats were French, the article stated; and the militia's presence was the result of information that as many as one hundred and fifty to two hundred French men were planning nefarious acts at the service.⁴⁶⁵ Much had changed at St. Mary's since the days when the Irish-controlled vestry opposed the French priest. Now it was the French who opposed the French priest while the Irish, or at least some of them, supported him.

Exhausted from the turmoil that accompanied this event, Clorivière elected to quit his post with the blessings of his superior. He returned to France in late 1814 but quickly

⁴⁶³ Joseph Picot de Clorivière to John Carroll, Papers of John Gilmary Shea.

⁴⁶⁴ Morgan, 52.

⁴⁶⁵ *Sun*, Dover, New Hampshire, July 16, 1814.

regretted this move. With Carroll's permission he made plans to resume his duties as pastor of St. Mary's; however, returning proved much more difficult than he and his archbishop anticipated.⁴⁶⁶ In Clorivière's absence Gallagher had invited the Reverend Robert Browne from Augusta, Georgia, to Charleston to act as priest while Gallagher traveled to the northern states.⁴⁶⁷ In his communications with the archbishop, Clorivière expressed his willingness to go wherever the church hierarchy desired. Carroll, however, wanted to assert control over the situation in Charleston by sending Browne back to Georgia and placing Clorivière in St. Mary's pulpit.⁴⁶⁸ Assigning priests to parishes was the prerogative of the Archbishop. Carroll expected all of the priests and St. Mary's members to follow his wishes without question.

Clorivière returned to Charleston in November of 1815, but much had changed in his congregation during his absence. The Irish-controlled vestry had united with the church's French members who sought to distance themselves from Clorivière, creating a formidable opposition. They refused to acknowledge Clorivière as their priest on the grounds that his presence was hampering the assimilation of Charleston's Catholics and contributing to negative attitudes toward them.⁴⁶⁹ In an effort to protect the gains they had made, the vestry attempted to force the Archbishop to allow them to choose their priest. They argued that the Archbishop, because he resided in Baltimore, did not

⁴⁶⁶ Certificate of travel to France dated October 2, 1815. Papers of Joseph Picot de Clorivière, Georgetown Visitation Convent Archives, Washington, DC.

⁴⁶⁷ De Clorivière, 4; Madden, "Joseph Pierre Picot De Limoëlan De Clorivière (1768-1826)", 68-69. This action became a point of contention as the archbishop argued that Gallagher, as a missionary priest – one who was only temporarily appointed, did not have the authority to appoint Browne to serve in his place.

⁴⁶⁸ John Carroll to C.G. Cosslett, July 27, 1815, quoted in De Clorivière, 4-6. These claims appeared in Clorivière's account of the schism. He identified Cosslett as a witness to this, and he also stated that if Browne wanted to remain in Charleston he would go elsewhere.

⁴⁶⁹ Morgan, 108, 111.

understand the particular political and social dynamics of Charleston.⁴⁷⁰ In Baltimore, Catholics were much more numerous and faced fewer prejudices from their neighbors, but in South Carolina they stood out as different. Their priest was their primary representative in the community, and it was essential that he sound and act like an American.

In spite of their agreement that Clorivière was the wrong priest for Charleston, the Irish and French members had different reasons for rejecting him. For the Irish the primary argument was that his English was inadequate. Edward Lynch, a member of St. Mary's at the time, wrote to Carroll's office that the congregation contained mostly "natives of Ireland" and that they wanted an English speaking priest. He asserted that the members "have insurmountable personal dislike to the Rev. Mr. Clorivière," and "none but a person capable of preaching clearly and distinctly in the English language will suit them."⁴⁷¹ Unable to convince Carroll to remove Clorivière, the vestry in 1818 appealed to the Pope for his removal and complained that foreign priests presented enormous problems for American churches. The petition stated that in America "the minds of men are generally sway'd by reason, persuasion, and eloquence;" and foreign priests, "if they attempt to instruct their flock from their pulpits, would only excite contempt, or laughter."⁴⁷² Determining the level of fluently with which Clorivière spoke English is difficult. Some of his writings, both those he published and those that appear to be his personal notes, are in quite good English. On the other hand, there are those in his

⁴⁷⁰ "Documents Relative to the Present Distressed State of the Roman Catholic Church in the City of Charleston, State of South-Carolina," (Charleston, South Carolina: J. Hoff, 1818), 25.

⁴⁷¹ Edward Lynch to Leonard Neale, dated 7 October 1816, quoted in Ibid.

⁴⁷² Petition of the Vestrymen of the Roman Catholic Congregation of the City of Charleston, in the State of South Carolina, in North America, May 13, 1818, quoted in Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston (1786-1842)*, 241; Morgan, 108.

handwriting that demonstrate his use of the language was awkward and often difficult to decipher.⁴⁷³ None of these examples, of course, speak to the fluency of his spoken English. From the printed evidence, however, it seems the Irish argument did have some merit.

For his part, Clorivière never really addressed these concerns about his ability to speak English. He recognized that the Catholic Church was a multilingual church, and he was able to communicate in both of its dominant languages. He was sent to minister to the French; and even though many of them sided against him, he continued to see himself as their pastor. As the conflict grew, he wrote to the archbishop that a separate congregation was necessary. In spite of the role the French had played in the *Te Deum*, he still believed they were his primary supporters. This separate church, he stated, would be “mostly in favor of the French,” but would also include a number of English speaking congregants.⁴⁷⁴ This letter encouraged the issuance of the interdict that eventually forbade worship at St. Mary’s.⁴⁷⁵ Once the Archbishop communicated the interdict to Charleston’s Catholics, the congregation split. While some of the Irish went with Clorivière, a pronounced number of French speaking Saint Domingans refused to follow him, and continued to protest the archbishop’s actions.

While the issue for the Irish was clearly language, republicanism drove the French response. As soon as they arrived in Charleston, Saint Domingan refugees fought

⁴⁷³ Papers of Joseph Picot de Clorivière, Georgetown Visitation Convent, Georgetown, Washington, DC.

⁴⁷⁴ Joseph Picot de Clorivière to Leonard Neale, February 13, 1816, quoted in Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston (1786-1842)*, 174. Carroll died as the controversy escalated; Neale was his successor.

⁴⁷⁵ Clorivière published the interdict on December 17, 1816. Papers of Joseph Picot de Clorivière, Georgetown Visitation Convent Archives, Washington, DC. The full text of this is published in De Clorivière, 9,15-16.

accusations that they were royalists and had actively worked against the French Revolution. The Civil Commissioners in Saint Domingue argued that the refugees were willing to do almost anything to keep free colored people from having equal rights. Their minister in America Édmond Genet claimed they engaged in treasonous actions with the British in hopes of restoring the monarchy in France. Their American neighbors worried they had incited their slaves to rebel in hopes of overthrowing the revolution and its republican leadership. While some of these allegations were likely true, the refugees understood all too well that their future success in America meant convincing their neighbors that these charges were not true. They had to align themselves with American principles of republicanism. They were members of a church that looked and operated very much like a monarchy, and Clorivière's his celebration of the *Te Deum* suggested his royalist political leanings. His Saint Dominguan parishioners felt they had no alternative but to distance themselves from him. This conflict offered an opportunity to publicly state their opposition to monarchism and their alliance with republicanism. As the congregation became more and more polarized, some Saint Domingans embraced the chance to secure a more solid place in Charleston and within their own church. By distancing themselves from Clorivière, they appeared to be embracing the American principles of republicanism. Not only were they rejecting Clorivière's royalist leanings, they were siding with those who sought to employ democracy within the Catholic Church.

The Irish lay leaders who launched the attack against Clorivière welcomed their new allies in the Saint Domingans. Having French speakers on their side reduced the claims that the vestry was solely anti-French and reemphasized their particular

complaints about Clorivière. Having the support of Frenchmen added strength to their appeals to Rome. This was not just about the dislike of a particular priest; it was about possessing the right to select the pastor they believed to be most qualified for their congregation, a worshiping community that existed in a particular time and place that was different from any other Catholic Church in the world. They believed that only those living in Charleston had the qualification to determine who would be the best leader for their church.

Battles between the archbishop's office and local congregations over who had the right to determine pastoral leadership were not confined to Charleston but occurred in Catholic Churches across the United States during the early republican era. The type of event that sparked debate was different in Charleston, however. Immigrants were present in all Catholic Churches; the particular circumstances in Charleston concerning refugees from Saint Domingue set the experience at St. Mary's apart. Refugees to Charleston faced greater discrimination than those to the other parts of the United States because in addition to being accused of being anti-republican and counter-revolutionary, they were also accused of contributing to slave insurrection. By 1815 Saint Domingans in Charleston had made great gains, but their priest threatened to nullify all of their hard work.

This conflict forever changed the experiences of refugees in Charleston. No longer were they victims in the background. They used this conflict to effect change in the Church and to prove to their American neighbors that they really did embrace republicanism. By examining the minutes of the vestry at St. Mary's, the increasing presence of Saint Domingans in leadership positions is obvious. In democratic elections

the members of the church elected a vestry of nine men on the third Sunday of January every year. From 1807 until 1816 when the schism took place, each year a Frenchman was elected.⁴⁷⁶ In 1807 the first Saint Dominguan joined the board, Dr. Anthony (Antoine) Ulmo. The Irish continued to dominate the board occupying four to six seats each year. In many ways this is not surprising since Saint Domingans were fairly new to Charleston and did not possess much social clout during these first years. The Irish population in the city was much larger and had been in existence for years before the Saint Domingans arrived. The balance of power at the church changed, however, with the schism. Saint Domingans began to hold more and more positions until eventually they were the majority.

The first real sign of change occurred with the formation of the Committee of Seventeen which was charged with requesting the removal of Clorivière. The composition of this group demonstrates the rising importance of Saint Domingans and their active involvement in opposing the priest. While all previous vestries only had one Saint Dominguan at a time among their number, this new group contained six French speaking men, five from Saint Domingue and one from France. Other members included six Irishmen, one Spaniard, one Italian, and one Scotsman. There were three additional members whose nationality is unknown but who were likely native born Americans.⁴⁷⁷ Of the various nationalities represented, the French speakers were tied with the Irish in

⁴⁷⁶ No records exist for the years 1808 and 1809.

⁴⁷⁷ Morgan in her transcription of St. Mary's vestry minutes included footnotes for each vestry member from 1806 until 1823. For those mentioned here as unknown, she often had information about their occupations gleaned from the Charleston City Directories. She worked with naturalization records in order to determine nationality. Additional research for this dissertation has not revealed other nationality details for most of these people.

influence on the committee.⁴⁷⁸ The petition they produced set forth their concerns about “the Distracted State of their Church and the forlorn State of their Religion, vergin[g] to its ruin.” They continued by claiming that they did not want to “detail...the motives of their aversion to” Clorivière but were certain that the archbishop would “require no further motive, for removing him from them, than their Solemn assurance, that he can do no good among them.” Leaving Clorivière in Charleston, the Committee of Seventeen believed might “ultimately cause this congregation to dwindle into extinction.”⁴⁷⁹

In spite of the interdict, the church did not disappear, however. The archbishop continued to work to improve the situation and bring peace to the Catholics in Charleston. This was no easy task. Getting no assistance with their appeal to the pope, the vestry turned back to their archbishop. While they still wanted a say in the selection of a new priest, they needed his help in securing a new leader. The archbishop, after all he had endured from St. Mary’s vestry, had no confidence that they would accept the next priest he sent to Charleston. In the early days they had appealed for Gallagher’s removal. They had resisted Le Mercier’s assignment. They had grown to regard Clorivière with vehemence. In rather blunt language, the archbishop wrote to them in January 1818,

⁴⁷⁸ Two additional men were on this committee, but their national origins are unknown. It is likely they were native born Americans. Morgan, 19, 20 25, 34 , 62, 74, 77, and 78. The members of this committee by nationality were: French speaker – Charles Lacoste, Joseph Jahan, John Francis Plumeau, Anthony Barbot, Frs. Duboc, Henry Querard; Irish – Patrick Byrnes, Bartholomew Clark, Bernard Mulligan, Michael O’Doriscoll, Edmund Phelon, John Magrath, Italian – Anthony Della Torr ; Spanish – Louis Bertrand Depau; Scottish – Alexander England. For identification of some of the Saint Domingans, see “Les colons de Saint Domingue, Noms des Propri taires,” *Domingino: Service de Recherches Historique*, http://www.domingino.de/stdomin/colons_d.htm, <Accessed October 8, 2014>. It is likely that Charles Lacoste is the Charles de la Coste listed among the property owners in Saint Domingue.

⁴⁷⁹ “Documents Relative to the Present Distressed State of the Roman Catholic Church in the City of Charleston, State of South-Carolina,” 8-9.

Gentlemen, can I flatter myself with the hope, that this new appointment will put an end to the scandals and troubles, which now prevail among you?...or are you willing to be governed by the sacred laws of the Roman Catholic church...or are you determined to make use of the liberty we enjoy, under our free and happy government, to introduce into the spiritual, and temporal administration of congregation, sectarian principles, totally subversive of the discipline, sanctioned by the whole catholic world?⁴⁸⁰

Finally, the decision was made to send two new priests to Charleston who would serve in somewhat of an interim capacity. The hope was that this action would restore order and create respect for the Catholic hierarchy. On May 20, 1820, the vestry at St. Mary's received a letter from Rome. The Cardinal Prefect wrote that he was much grieved to learn of the turmoil the Charleston church had experienced. The Pope had agreed "to offer promptly and freely whatever is necessary for the restoration of peace and tranquility and stabilizing of discipline." What Catholics in Charleston needed was a locally positioned bishop; they needed to have a diocese in the American South. This new bishop, by living in Charleston, would understand the particular issues that Catholics in the American South were facing. However, the letter ended with one other charge, that "you will accept the new Pastor with the honor and obedience which he deserves and which is expected by the Holy See."⁴⁸¹ The Church's hierarchy was willing to give in to their demands but wanted no more controversy from this particular group of Catholics. The new bishop was charged with pressing them to conform and follow the dictums of the Roman Catholic Church.

In late 1820 John England arrived in Charleston as the first bishop of the Diocese of Charleston. When the 1821 vestry was elected the nationalities represented were quite

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁸¹ Quoted in Morgan, 201-205.

similar to those that existed between 1807 and 1816. Of the nine men selected, five were Irish, one was Italian, one was Portuguese, and two were French (one of these from Saint Domingue). All of this changed with the election of 1822. England had been in place for a full year by this point. While he presented himself as a reasonable person willing to work with St. Mary's leadership, he also set specific expectations in place. Under the three previous pastorates, the vestry attempted to control the priest through its purse strings. They claimed that because they paid the priest, they had the right to determine what he did. England was quite forthright in his dealings with the board. He assumed control of church property by virtue of Church Canon that prescribed it be "vested in himself [the bishop] or in some Ecclesiastical Corporation."⁴⁸² The election of 1822, however, looked completely different. Five of the nine members of the vestry were Saint Dominguan.⁴⁸³ For each of the meetings that year and the next Saint Dominguans represented at least half of those who participated and in many cases all five came and carried the majority.⁴⁸⁴ Saint Dominguans were now guiding the decisions the church was making.

Through the conflict at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Saint Dominguans were finally able to find a level of acceptance in the Charleston community. Instead of being at the center of controversy, they were at the center of a church moving forward. Much of the resistance against Clorivière seems to have been about his efforts to install a more orthodox version of Catholicism at St. Mary's. Gallagher, because of his personal

⁴⁸² Ibid., 223.

⁴⁸³ Of these five was Antony (Antoine) Barbot. While Barbot was likely an immigrant from France, he was married to Marie Esnard whose father was a wealthy plantation owner from Saint Domingue. See Barbot family papers.

⁴⁸⁴ Morgan, 218-251.

difficulties, was always at war with the church hierarchy, but his personality and apparently admirable ability to preach earned him supporters in spite of his lack of religiosity. His neglect led to conditions at St. Mary's that many considered abhorrent, particularly during the interdict. In 1817 a French traveler arrived in Charleston and sought the local Catholic Church for worship.⁴⁸⁵ His embrace of orthodox Catholicism was obvious throughout his account of his journey through Charleston. Arriving in the city during Holy Week (the week before Easter), the Frenchman found his way to St. Mary's for the Good Friday service. What he found there demonstrated that the worshipers either did not understand the appropriate ways to honor religious objects and worship or that they simply chose to ignore them. Upon arrival for worship, he found women in the choir "lingering around." Children were in the worship space "eating pieces of candy as if they were in a box at the theater." Some who he believed to be Americans "were laughing and talking loud enough to be heard by their neighbors." He observed a "statue of Christ, exposed to adoration,...lying on the floor against the steps."⁴⁸⁶ This account presents an example of the practical ways that Clorivière's complaints about what was occurring at St. Mary's played out. Clorivière, for his part, seemed to continually have to battle those who sought to dilute Catholic belief by simply going through the rituals and those who wanted a church more like that of the Protestants. In a list of items he titled "Miseries and difficulties of the congregation at Charleston," the priest wrote that the congregation regularly forgot "l'Abstinence et de Jeuna" which are the practices of fasting and avoiding meat and that the members often repudiated the

⁴⁸⁵ This traveler's journal only bears the name Montlezun but is likely the work of Barthélemy Sernin Du Moulin de la Bartbelle de Montlezun.

⁴⁸⁶ Moffatt Lucius Gaston and Joseph Médard Carrière, "A Frenchman Visits Charleston, 1817," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 49, no. 3 (1948): 138-139.

“festivals of obligation.”⁴⁸⁷ While these concerns were great for Clorivière, the most disturbing element of Charlestonian Catholicism was its relationship with Protestantism. The most obvious objection the vestry had during the schism was that they were not allowed to conduct church business in the same way their Protestant neighbors did. For Clorivière, it was the day to day expectations of his parishioners that caused strife. The religious world of Charleston was dominated by the Protestants which meant that intermarriage between Catholics and Protestants was inevitable. Clorivière complained that if he did not quickly marry a couple when they asked, they would threaten to go to the Protestant pastor. Frequently, he married Catholics with Protestants yet they never came to worship or brought their children to worship. Even for those who wanted to be faithful Catholics the pull of the Protestant church was often great. One such case where this occurred involved a Protestant husband and Catholic wife. The husband owned a pew at his church and wanted the children to go with him. Clorivière wrote, “I cannot permit her to go to the Protestant church but I tolerate it.” The turmoil raging around him seems to have made him less willing to charge head on into controversy.

All of this changed with the able leadership of John England. England with his authority as a bishop was able to stand up for Catholicism. He realized the enormous size of the task before him, but he approached the church with a firm hand. Recognizing the seriousness of the state of the Catholic Church upon his arrival, he set out to correct misunderstandings about the faith, both on the part of members and in the community at large. He worked to minister to the people and to encourage a spirit of devotion and personal piety. In short the message of the Catholic spiritual leader concerned the

⁴⁸⁷ “Le jeûne et l’abstinence,” *Salve Regine pour une Formation Chrétienne*, http://www.salve-regina.com/salve/Le_je%C3%BBne_et_l'abstinence, <Accessed October 9, 2014>. Papers of Joseph Picot de Clorivière.

importance of worship and following the dictates of the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁸⁸

England set a new tone for the church, so it seems logical that a new type of lay leadership would emerge. It seems no accident that this new leadership would be dominated by Saint Domingans.

⁴⁸⁸ Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston (1786-1842)*; Joseph Lawrence O'Brien, *John England, Bishop of Charleston, the Apostle to Democracy* (New York,: Edward O'Toole, 1934).

EPILOGUE: “TO HEAR OF THE DISTRESS:” WESTERN VIEWS OF ST. DOMINGUE AND HAITI

In January of 2010, an earthquake of a magnitude of 7.0 struck the western half of the island of Hispaniola near Port-au-Prince, the capital city of Haiti. In an era of immediate news complete with vivid images, the world saw extreme physical destruction to the built environment and countless hurt and dying people trapped in the rubble. While each news account told a slightly different story about individuals impacted by the disaster, most reports displayed a common language with which to talk about Haiti’s most recent destruction. The word “horror” filled headlines in newspapers, characterized network coverage, and fell from the lips of countless commentators and average people. Major news outlets quickly embraced the word “horror.”

From The Today Show – “Amid Haiti Horror, Stories of Survival and Hope”
The Economist – “Haiti’s Earthquake: Horror in Haiti”
The BBC – “Children Tell of Quake Horror and Sorrow in Haiti”
The New York Post – “Haiti Horror’s Political Repercussions”
The Baltimore Sun – “Horror in Haiti”
The Washington Post – “Many Faiths Unite in Facing Horror in Haiti”⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁹ *The Today Show*, http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/34857887/ns/today-today_people/t/amid-haiti-horror-stories-survival-hope/; *The Economist* http://www.economist.com/node/15267268?story_id=15267268; The British Broadcasting System, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/school_report/8547498.stm; *The New York Post*, http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/brooklyn/haiti_horror_political_repercussions_hSkBIqWOjChE6T19pFhERP; *The Baltimore Sun*, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2010-01-15/news/bal-ed.haiti15_1_haiti-poorest-nation-lutheran-world-relief; *The Washington Post* on msnbc, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34903373/ns/world_news-washington_post/t/many-faiths-unite-facing-horror-haiti/, <Accessed July 25, 2011>.

Smaller publications like the Hamilton College Alumni magazine reported of connections between the college and Haiti and employed “horror” in their headlines as well.⁴⁹⁰

Even American entertainment celebrities such as Penelope Cruz described the earthquake as “horror and hell.”⁴⁹¹

By contrast, in March 2011 an even more destructive earthquake occurred on the other side of the world in Japan. A massive tsunami compounded this event by flooding the area and creating a crisis at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant. In spite of the apparent similarities between these natural disasters and the common reactions of disbelief on the part of the world, the word “horror” was rarely used to describe the aftermath of Japan’s earthquake. A simple search of “Japan and horror” on the internet yields no articles about the earthquake, yet a similar search of “Haiti and horror” nets pages of links.⁴⁹² One could argue that this is merely a circumstance of alliteration; however, it seems that more than a simple literary device is at play. Since the early days of the Haitian Revolution, the word “horror” has been integral to how the western world saw Saint Domingue and continues to see Haiti.

For anyone who has visited Haiti in the last ten years, images of destruction are not new. Prior to 2010, the landscape of this nation contained many half-built buildings, trash-filled streets, and countless people living in rough structures made from pieces of tin, cardboard, and even refuse. For years before the earthquake, many lived a marginal existence. While scholars and social or political commentators have written volumes on

⁴⁹⁰ *Hamilton College Alumni Review*, Fall 2010, <http://www.hamilton.edu/magazine/fall10/horror-and-hope-in-haiti-an-alumna-goes-home>, <Accessed September 24, 2011>.

⁴⁹¹ *USA Today*, <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/entertainment/post/2010/01/penelope-cruz-haiti-is-horror-and-hell-/1>, <Accessed July 25, 2011>.

⁴⁹² These searches were conducted using Yahoo in October 2011.

how and why Haiti has suffered so much, no one has stepped back from this process to examine why we talk about Haiti the way we do.⁴⁹³ Certainly, historians such as Alfred Hunt, Matt Clavin, Jeremy Popkin, and Bruce Dain have explored how the Haitian Revolution and contemporary accounts of its violence served the causes of both proslavery and pro-abolition forces,⁴⁹⁴ but no one has remarked on the incredible similarities between eye-witness accounts written in the early nineteenth century and those written in the early twenty-first century. While these descriptions are certainly true for both centuries, their prevalence has contributed to the continued state of chaos and the accompanying attitudes that plague Haiti even today.

The western half of Hispaniola was not always as we now know it. On August 3, 1492, Christopher Columbus embarked on his first transatlantic voyage and eventually landed on the coast of Hispaniola on the sixth of December of that same year.⁴⁹⁵ The arrival of Columbus and his crew inaugurated a new era for the island and its European visitors. Hispaniola made two impressions on these European sailors: first, that the island was immensely beautiful and verdant and, second, that the natives did not dress, act, or speak like Europeans. Of the island, Columbus' journal reported, "The trees were flourishing and full of fruit, the plants very tall and luxuriant; the paths wide and

⁴⁹³ The number of books that concern this issue is quite long. One recent example is Laurent Dubois, *Haiti : The Aftershocks of History*, 1st ed. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012).

⁴⁹⁴ Matt Clavin, "Race, Rebellion, and the Gothic: Inventing the Haitian Revolution," *Early American Studies, An Interdisciplinary Journal* 5, no. 1 (2007); Bruce R. Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind : American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002); Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America : Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean*; Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution : Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*. Attitudes towards Haiti, particularly in relation colonization efforts during throughout the nineteenth century appear in Joan Dayan, "A Few Stories About Haiti, or, Stigma Revisited," (Indiana University Press, 2004).

⁴⁹⁵ Christopher Columbus, Bartolomé de las Casas, and Van Wyck Brooks, *Journal of First Voyage to America* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1924), 3.

commodious.”⁴⁹⁶ He continued to praise the natural beauty of Hispaniola by stating that “the most beautiful and excellent territories in Castile could not equal those of this country.”⁴⁹⁷ The natives were equally impressive, “the handsomest, and best disposed, of any they (Columbus and his crewmen) had yet seen.”⁴⁹⁸ Yet, on the first morning of encounter, this small island began its journey of misunderstanding and miscommunication with the western world.

Over the course of the next two centuries, Hispaniola saw the arrival of European settlers, the exportation or death of most of its indigenous peoples, and the creation of a thriving plantation economy that produced immense wealth for the French planters who eventually came to dominate and occupy the land. The French named their part of this lush garden-island Saint Domingue and brought hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans to till the land and produce crops such as sugarcane and coffee. The island transitioned from a free growing tropical landscape into a series of planned and carefully cultivated plantations complete with European-style buildings. The anonymous writer of *My Odyssey* traveled to St. Domingue in the early 1790s and described the scene as he arrived,

I was agreeably surprised upon disembarking to find myself in a large city, evenly built and very clean. The houses generally are of two stories, constructed of stone and ornamented with balconies. Most have gardens or thick trellises shading them from the sun and furnishing a very good Muscat grape.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 113.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution : Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 68.

Years of oppression finally exploded into what came to be the Haitian Revolution. In August of 1791, Saint Domingue's slaves rebelled and led what became the first successful slave rebellion in the New World. As slaves took up cane knives in order to claim their freedom, they also set fire to the fields where they had toiled for endless hours under the burning Caribbean sun. The enslaved were not the only ones responsible for St. Domingue's destruction although they have received most of the credit. Regardless of how or where the violence originated, the devastation was evident. Finally, after twelve years of fighting, the colony of Saint Domingue ceased to exist and in its place Haiti was born.⁵⁰⁰

The end of the Haitian Revolution did not bring a resolution to the former slaves' quest, however. The rest of the western world struggled with how to relate to this new nation that seemed, in some ways, to be the culmination of Enlightenment thinking about equality and the right to self-government, but it also defied traditional European ideas about race and citizenship. Visitors to Haiti penned vivid descriptions of a physical landscape destroyed by years of fighting and wrote of gruesome disfigurements and murders that came to characterize the Haitian Revolution for much of the western world. All that they saw seemed to be a testimony that Haiti's new rulers, those of dark skin, were uncivilized and unable to re-establish and maintain the verdant world that existed on the island prior to the Haitian Revolution.

From the early days of the slave uprising, American newspapers printed detailed descriptions of the violence of the revolution. In a nation struggling with slavery's moral and economic contradictions, Americans looked with curiosity and fear at what was

⁵⁰⁰ Sources detailing the Haitian Revolution are vast. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*; Ott. Fick; James, *The Black Jacobins : Toussaint L'ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. Geggus and Fiering, *The World of the Haitian Revolution*.

happening to its close Caribbean neighbor. Written for a readership well-acquainted with slavery, the first articles focused on the extreme violence resulting from the slave uprising. Physical destruction coupled with details of the horror experienced by St. Domingue's slave owners captivated readers. In some cases the reports depicted the destruction as a cautionary tale of what happened when slave owners failed to control their slaves or when they treated them too harshly. In other cases the accounts blamed the destruction of St. Domingue's buildings, economy, social structure, and political apparatus on an abrupt emancipation of slaves who were ill-equipped for liberty.

One Philadelphia paper printed what the editor termed "authentic particulars" by a man in Cap François. Just days after the insurrection began, he wrote that "the damage already sustained is immense" and that "planters, with their wives and children, are every minute arriving" to "bring accounts of continued distress and destruction." He was particularly struck by the speed with which all of this occurred and remarked that just three days earlier beautiful villas and lush gardens covered the area. Feeling compelled to explain why he would present polite society with such a repulsive picture, he declared, "I do not know where to stop in this horrible description! And I mention these particulars just to give you an idea of this war of horror and carnage in which we are engaged."⁵⁰¹

Newspapers also published official reports made to France's government. In January of 1792 Lord Effingham, governor of Jamaica, remarked on St. Domingue's destruction as he informed the National Assembly of the assistance he had given "against a dreadful insurrection of the Negroes, who have burned and laid waste the habitations

⁵⁰¹ *Independent Gazetteer*, October 8, 1791.

within fifty miles of the Cape.”⁵⁰² Commissioners from St. Domingue’s colonial assembly also presented accounts on a regular basis, and these frequently interested American readers. One such example appeared in the *Essex Journal* in Massachusetts and “[set] forth the new misfortunes of the colony; the cruelties committed by the blacks; the total devastation of the quarter of the North, which presents only a heap of ashes.”⁵⁰³

While eyewitness accounts were numerous, not all were published as newspaper articles. Some remained in the keeping of family members for generations, and others were published independently in book form. Jeremy Popkin’s recent book *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection* explores some of these accounts by people in St. Domingue prior to, during, and after the Haitian Revolution. Since a number of these sought to paint a picture of how the destruction occurred, many dealt with the extreme fires that ravaged the island, particularly during the first two years of fighting. In perhaps the most famous account of St. Domingue at war, an anonymous writer, who later escaped to Louisiana wrote,

The devouring sun, in the middle of his course,
Burdened the fugitive troop with his fire.
Women, children, in sad and plaintive tones
Implored heaven’s aid with every step.
Vain appeals! The torch had cut its path;
Already the flames spread on all sides
And swallowed the treasures of the fertile fields.⁵⁰⁴

Fire also appeared in a letter dated October 1793 and mailed from the French port of Lorient. The writer, a recent arrival to St. Domingue from France, stated, “The town went on burning for two more weeks with an unbelievable intensity; the surrounding plain was

⁵⁰² *General Advertiser*, January 21, 1792.

⁵⁰³ *Essex Journal and New-Hampshire Packet*, April 11, 1792.

⁵⁰⁴ Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution : Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 60.

also in flames.”⁵⁰⁵ The flames naturally resulted in the near total destruction of the city and many of its inhabitants; “I found nothing but dead bodies: the streets were strewn with them, all the houses were burned and the streets blocked by their debris.”⁵⁰⁶ The fires were so extreme that accounts by people far from the destruction also appeared. François Carteaux, stated, “We were stupefied by the sight of the immense columns of black smoke during the day, and stunned by the strength of the flames, which striking the broad and high promontory about the town, lit up from there the entire extent of the plain.”⁵⁰⁷

Not only did writers explore the destruction of the physical environment, the horrible conditions of the people were also the subject of many accounts. One journalist wrote that even though the violence in Cap Français had destroyed his newspaper, he “owe[d] [his] readers an account of the awful days of ... June [1793].”⁵⁰⁸ He was unable to take his eyes off of the suffering inhabitants. He beckoned his readers to see “the two or three thousand individuals” who were “without bread and without assistance, some in the hospitals, where care comes slowly because of the number of the injured and the lack of surgeons, others lying pell-mell in the rooms and the corridors of the barracks, along

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 221.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 221-222.

⁵⁰⁷ F. Carteaux, *Histoire des désastres de Saint Domingue, où l'on expose les causes de ces événements, les moyens employés pour renverser cette colonie; les reproches faits à ses habitants, et les calomnies dont on les a couverts; enfin, des faits et des vérités, qui, justifiant ces colons, sont encore propres à fixer le gouvernement sur les moyens de faire refleurir la culture dans cette isle infortunée* (Bordeaux: Pellier-Lawalle, An X [1802], quoted in Ibid., 229.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 186.

the roads, or anywhere that charity has given them a shelter.”⁵⁰⁹ For those of us who watched the televised accounts of the 2010 earthquake, this sounds eerily familiar.

The physical destruction of St. Domingue continued to amaze visitors after the turn of the nineteenth century, and the word “horror” remained key to their characterizations of what they saw. In 1808 Leonora Sansay, the young wife of a plantation owner who fled St. Domingue, published a short novel under the title *Secret History; or The Horrors of St. Domingo*. While Sansay presented her story as a work of fiction, she only thinly veiled the fact that she was the main character in her tale.⁵¹⁰ When her husband Louis determined that he must return to Saint Domingue to reclaim his plantation, she accompanied him.⁵¹¹ It was in the context of this trip that she had the experiences which served as the backdrop for her novel *Secret History*.

The Sansays arrived in Saint Domingue in the final year of the Haitian Revolution. From the minute they disembarked, the effects of the war were apparent, and her description combined accounts of the plight of the people as well as the state of the physical environment. On the opening page of her account, she wrote,

On landing, we found the town a heap of ruins. A more terrible picture of desolation cannot be imagined. Passing through streets choaked with rubbish, we reached with difficulty a house...The people live in tents, or make a kind of shelter, by laying a few boards across the half-consumed beams; for the buildings being here of hewn stone, with walls three feet thick, only the roofs and floors have been destroyed.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁹Ibid., 198.

⁵¹⁰ Michael J. Drexler, "Introduction," in *Secret History; or the Horrors of St. Domingo, in a Series of Letters, Written by a Lady at Cape François, to Colonel Burr, Late Vice-President of the United States, Principally During the Command of General Rochambeau and Laura*, ed. Michael J. Drexler (Buffalo, New York: Broadview Editions, 2007), 27.

⁵¹¹ Leonora Sansay and Michael J. Drexler, *Secret History, or, the Horrors of St. Domingo; and, Laura* (Peterborough, Ont. ; Orchard Park, NY: Broadview, 2007), 61. Sansay, 61.

⁵¹²Ibid.

Such description of the physical environment served not only as a report of the destruction that rebel slaves had caused, but also demonstrated to American readers that this was a place that was altogether different from America. Not only were the buildings destroyed, but the people were without many of the necessities of life. She continued with a description of those she saw; “But to hear of the distress which these unfortunate people have suffered, would fill with horror the stoutest heart, and make the most obdurate melt with pity.”⁵¹³ Sansay was not speaking of the slaves, of course, but of the white property owners who had lost much in the revolution.

In spite of the fact that Sansay’s work was fictional, her descriptions were not. Other writers attempting a more objective angle also presented their readers with detailed pictures of destruction. Writing in 1805, Marcus Rainsford drew his readers to see the results of slave rebellion on Cap Français. He wrote, “The ravages of the rebellion ... extended in all directions. The whole of the plain of the Cape, with the exception of one plantation which adjoined the town, was in ruins; as were likewise the parish of Limonade, and most of the settlements in the mountains adjacent.”⁵¹⁴ From his vantage point, the destruction surrounded him. For modern day visitors to Haiti, the chaos and destruction still extends “in all directions,” and descriptions of conditions remain consistent with those used in the nineteenth century.

The reasons for this are likely numerous. The history of Haiti is one of repeated failures and lost trust. With each new administration, the world hopes that conditions will improve and that there will be less cause for horror. However, in spite of some small

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Rainsford, 147.

successes, Haiti continues to offer much reason for discouragement. Still, the fact that many suffer from poor living conditions, a lack of food, and an unjust government does not, in and of itself, require that the world employ the word “horror” when referring to Haiti. Poverty and violence occur from one corner of the world to the other, yet, as with the example of the Japanese tsunami, the word “horror” does not dominate. So what is it about Saint Domingue and Haiti that commands the use of the word “horror?”

As South Carolinians looked to the Caribbean in the 1790s, they saw their greatest fears materialize. Since the earliest days of the colony known as Carolina, slaves supplied much of the needed labor. At first, this meant slaves working alongside their owners to clear the land, build houses and towns, and establish the rice fields that would make South Carolinians some of the wealthiest people in the world prior to the American Revolution. As rice took hold and became the dominant crop, the nature of slavery changed. More slaves were needed and this meant importing them from Africa. African born slaves were widely recognized as more dangerous than Caribbean or American born. The process of enslavement and the trials of the Middle Passage made slaves more eager to rebel. They remembered a life before slavery. In 1739 South Carolina experienced its first slave revolt of considerable size as slaves near the Stono River traveled from plantation to plantation killing twenty-three whites in their path.⁵¹⁵ While this insurrection was stopped before large numbers of people died, it highlighted for the colony’s leaders that stricter controls were necessary. The legislature quickly passed the Negro Acts of 1740 which limited both the actions of black as well as whites in an effort

⁵¹⁵ Jack Shuler, *Calling out Liberty : The Stono Slave Rebellion and the Universal Struggle for Human Rights* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009).

to prevent such violence for occurring again.⁵¹⁶ Still, even with these laws in place, South Carolinians continued to worry about insurrection.

The arrival of the American Revolution and regular discussion of equality and freedom in colonial taverns and public spaces led to a new independent nation, but the paradox of the United States was that men who espoused these ideals also held other men in bondage. The new nation operated under a delicate balance as states in the north began to practice gradual emancipation while those in the south continued to import Africans. These two contradictory elements found public expression in the events in Saint Domingue. The concepts that drove first the American Revolution, then the French Revolution spread to Saint Domingue and chaos erupted.

For southerners the only possible reaction was horror, but this was not limited to the slaveholding parts of the nation. Almost no one wanted slave insurrection, even those in the north who advocated for an end to slavery. The “horror” was not just limited to fear of slave insurrection. The violence in Saint Domingue revealed the potential for disaster in the newly created United States; for a short time following the American Revolution, the nation focused on establishing a new government and recovering from the war. With the advent of the Haitian Revolution, Americans had to come to terms with the knowledge that their nation was founded on a fallacy. This fact caused them to look with horror on their Caribbean neighbor Saint Domingue.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines “horror” as “an intense, painful feeling of repugnance and fear.”⁵¹⁷ “Horror” carries the implication that what is happening is not

⁵¹⁶ Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, eds. *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, vol. 7 (Columbia, SC: 1836-1841), 397-417.

⁵¹⁷ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

confined to the observed subject but may also spread to the observer. Closely linked to the word “fear,” one thesaurus defined “horror” as “profound fear” and “experienced in anticipation of some specific pain or danger usually accompanied by a desire to flee or fight.”⁵¹⁸ This is particularly applicable to North American reactions to the situations in St. Domingue and Haiti. As nineteenth century observers, especially those in the southern states, looked at the chaos and destruction associated with the Haitian Revolution, their feelings were not confined to mere sympathy. Many experienced great anxiety that this horror would spread to the ports of the United States. While the residents of the United States did not feel an immediate threat from the 2010 Haitian earthquake, its close proximity generated a horrified reaction. The reason for this is likely a mixture of guilt over years of neglect of Haiti and the underlying fears that North American earthquake faults generate.

By investigating the use of the word “horror” and accompanying descriptions of events in Haiti, we can better understand the complicated relationship that Haiti and the west have had over the last two hundred years. Matt Clavin argues that the techniques employed in narratives of the Haitian Revolution mirror those used in Gothic novels first introduced to the western world in the mid-eighteenth century. He points out that the use of the word “gothic” refers to the so-called barbarian invasion by the Goths that disrupted the Roman Empire and inaugurated the era many have called the Dark Ages.⁵¹⁹ Gothic literature often contrasts darkness and light, superstition and reason. The use of these

⁵¹⁸ Princeton University, Fear. Princeton University, 2010, <http://wordnet@princeton.edu>, <Accessed July 25, 2011>.

⁵¹⁹ Admittedly, this is no longer an accepted term for the era following the end of the Roman Empire. However, this term and its very existence speak to attitudes about the association of knowledge, progress, and civilization with light and the association of violence, non-western religion and culture, and chaos with darkness.

literary techniques to describe the Haitian Revolution highlighted the way the rest of the west viewed what was happening in St. Domingue and later in Haiti.⁵²⁰ The chaos wrought by slave rebellion contrasted starkly with the orderly world that existed when St. Domingue was France's wealthiest colony. For many observers the dark faces at the center of the rebellion symbolized disorder and violence while the pale complexions of the planters signified the light of order and stability. The whole world seemed to be turning upside down. Clavin even goes so far as to assert that the details of St. Domingue's horror "delighted" nineteenth century readers. He writes, that while the Enlightenment represented "a newfound optimism regarding humanity," interest in Gothic literature "allowed readers an outlet to their myriad psychological anxieties"⁵²¹ and provided them with an experience that both highlighted nearby dangers and acknowledged their own relative safety as they sat in their parlors and drawing rooms.⁵²²

Finally, an analysis of the way we have described Haiti and continue to describe Haiti has implications for how we think about other areas of the world that experience devastating events. While the word "horror" was not employed to describe the earthquake in Japan, it was prominent in reports of the destruction of much of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. In many ways this is not surprising when one remembers the close connections between Louisiana and St. Domingue. The influx of refugees in 1809 had a profound impact on the culture of New Orleans and in some ways transferred attitudes about St. Domingue to part of the United States. For many the

⁵²⁰ Clavin: 3-5.

⁵²¹ Ibid.: 15.

⁵²² For a more detailed discussion of the impact of Gothic literature on the American psyche, see Gretchen Judith Woertendyke, "Specters of Haiti: Race, Fear, and the American Gothic, 1789--1855" (Ph.D., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2007).

horror that was Hurricane Katrina was closely associated with race, and perhaps this is a key deciding factor in whether or not we are “horrified.”

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