“FOR THE HEAT IS BEYOND YOUR CONCEPTION:”
MEN’S SUMMER DRESS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH
DURING THE LONG EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY

by

Neal Thomas Hurst

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in American Material Culture

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Approved: ____________________________________________________________
Linda Eaton, B.A. Hon.; D.T.C.
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: ____________________________________________________________
J. Ritchie Garrison, Ph.D.
Director of the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture

Approved: ____________________________________________________________
George H. Watson, Ph.D.
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Approved: ____________________________________________________________
James G. Richards, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education
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This thesis is dedicated in the memory of Jay Gaynor (1950-2014)
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ABSTRACT

During the long eighteenth-century, large numbers of men from northern Europe and particularly Great Britain, moved away from the comforts of their temperate climate to the tropical climates of India, China, Africa, islands in the Caribbean, Central, South, and North America, bringing with them their cultural traditions. Climate determines or strongly influences culture. The material culture of these uprooted Europeans serves as evidence of adaptation as people moved into regions that challenge their comfort. Architecture, foodways, and daily routine, changed due to the extreme heat. Clothing, the most outward and visual representation of culture also modified in order to meet the human desire of comfort. This thesis uses the experience of individuals living in the southern regions of North America as a case study to examine how colonists, merchants, manufacturers, and tailors adapted textiles, cut, and construction of men’s clothing in pursuit for personal comfort.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Historians have only recently begun to study climate and its effect upon Europeans who moved from temperate or cold northern climates to more tropical climates when creating empires.¹ During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Europeans moved to places like India, China, Africa, islands in the Caribbean, Central, South, and North America.² In James Rodger Fleming’s work on historic climate


change he concluded that, “Cultures are determined or at least strongly shaped by climate.”

Climate affects the food people eat, the liquids they drink, when people plant and harvest crops, and most importantly to this project, how they dressed.

Removed from their traditions, colonists arriving in North America faced major challenges in adjusting to the new climate and developing a new sense of identity.

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4 For a cultural history of English see, Valdimir Jankovic, *Reading the Skies, A Cultural History of English Weather, 1650-1850* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000) and Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of the
Cold wet winters gave way to hot long steamy and tropical summers negating the typical wardrobe worn in Britain and Europe. Men could no longer wear their prized woolen broadcloths lined with heavily glazed worsted shalloons year round. Instead they favored lighter silks, linens, and cottons with little to no color for the summer months. In the winter men could heat their homes and add multiple layers of clothing for warmth, but without the advantage of modern air conditioning, sun screen, and insect repellents, men could not simply leave off garments in the summer to adjust their bodily comfort. For many travelers, the heat was insufferable, but those willing to live through it acclimated by purchasing textiles and clothing appropriate for the temperature. While Britain and other parts of Northern Europe typically enjoyed warm summers, this thesis will focus specifically on the extreme heat in the American south and examine how men adapted their clothing to this tropical climate.

The first chapter of this thesis defines the south and considers how the heat was described and measured. The second chapter examines the variety of textiles available to men for summer wear and studies the difference between British practice and the adaptations made to accommodate the hot climate throughout the South. The final chapter looks at the modifications in cut and construction of men’s garments that contributed to their comfort and created a significant difference in their appearance.

Extreme heat forced men to adapt cut and construction of their clothing as well as the fabrics from which they were made in order to remain comfortable.

A variety of sources were used to determine what “hot” truly meant during the long eighteenth-century. Letters, diaries, pamphlets and eighteenth-century publications, ground this research. Newspaper advertisements provide important details on what merchants brought from Europe and the seasonality of their wares. Travel accounts are an invaluable source for discovering thoughts on climate, comfort and dress within the region. Defining the myriad of terms used for textiles can be difficult in the eighteenth-century, so the use of labeled swatches in extant sample and pattern books helped to further understanding of the fabrics mentioned in this thesis. Lastly, a data set of twenty-four garments studied during the course of this work, serves the purpose of documenting surviving summer clothing from the American South. Taken together, these sources show how men in the South adapted their clothing for the hot tropical climate.

Climate as a subject is currently of great interest to political and economic historians.\(^5\) It informs our understanding of the basis of political strife, physical

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hardships, and economics. Much of the current scholarship focuses on the long cooling and warming periods experienced throughout the seventeenth through the nineteenth-centuries and how this affected society, but very few discuss the relation of climate and clothing. One example is Jayne Shrimpton’s 1992 article entitled, “Dressing for a Tropical Climate: The Role of Native Fabrics in Fashionable Dress in Early Colonial India” which examines how women adjusted their clothing in India’s high heats. Other scholars, such as Linda Baumgarten briefly touched on summer dress in the South using primary sources and extant garments. This thesis builds upon their work, examining in detail the textiles, cut, and construction of men’s clothing.

Textiles remain an essential aspect of the study of economics, providing an understanding of consumption patterns across the globe. The first major studies of textiles began in the early twentieth-century surveying the long history of the linen,


wool, cotton, and silk industries. In the mid twentieth-century, research in England focused on printed textiles and culminated with Peter Floud’s ground breaking exhibit at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1955 entitled “English Chintz: Two Centuries of Changing Taste.” Floud’s exhibit, however focused primarily on furnishing textiles, rather than fabrics designed for clothing. Florence Montgomery undertook crucial


research that enabled scholars to interpret many mysterious eighteenth-century textile terms published in her book entitled *Textiles in America, 1650-1870*. Many of Montgomery’s definitions included the season in which the fabric saw usage. Subsequent researchers have built upon or corrected her earlier textile definitions. Current researchers are working very closely with specific objects, utilizing scientific analysis to further understand the spinning and dying process of fabric. Individuals such as Linda Eaton, John Styles, Susan W. Greene, Giorgio Riello, Angela Burnley, and Beverly Lemire remain at the forefront of this ongoing process.

The study of historic clothing enjoys an extremely long history of scholarship. Clothing historian Lou Taylor noted in her book *Establishing Dress History* the four major reasons that drove early interest in the study of clothing from the 1500s to the 1900s. “Firstly, as fascination for the barbarous and savage, second a thirst for information on the people of the newly discovered remote corners of the world, thirdly, a romantic European curiosity for the exotic and oriental, and finally an interest in the habits of all classes of the peoples of Europe, both urban and rural.”

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11 Lou Taylor, *Establishing Dress History* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002), 5, 39-43. Also see Taylor for an excellent bibliography at the end of her first chapter of early costume histories. For some other specific early English
Early books on fashion took a very broad chronological approach illustrating the change in cut and fashion. These books primarily focus on women’s clothing. The twentieth-century ushered in a new methodology for the study of dress history as historians examined class, gendered consumption, and the economics of garments.\(^{12}\) This led into the study of extent garments, the approach that is central to this thesis.

The study of individual garments enables historians to document how styles and construction techniques changed over time. For menswear, English costume historians Talbot Hughes, Norah Waugh and Janet Arnold pioneered this field. Hughes’s 1913 book entitled *Dress Design: an Account of Costume for Artists and Dressmakers* documented chronologically extent men and women’s clothing.\(^ {13}\) Waugh’s 1964 book *The Cut of Men’s Clothes 1600-1900*, became the first book


\(^{12}\) Taylor, *Establishing Dress History*, 44.

\(^{13}\) Talbot Hughes, *Dress Design: an Account of Costume for Artists and Dressmakers, illustrated by the Author from Old Examples* (John Hogg: 1913).
dedicated to the patterns of historic menswear. She married manuscript research with pattern diagrams to further the overall understanding of how men purchased garments and what influenced changes in style. Arnold’s series, *Patterns in Fashion*, built upon Waugh’s work, but moved beyond documenting the exterior to include focused study on the construction of each garment. From the 1970s, American fashion historians followed this same trend.

Clothing patterns drawn by historians often overlook details concerning interior linings and their construction. These intricate details are crucial to the understanding of clothing worn in tropical climates. While patterns of the exterior garments yield the fashionable shape and adaptation through looser fitting, the interior provides clues to how clothing was modified to suit tropical climates.

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15 Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 3: The cut and construction of clothes for men and women c1560-1620* (London: McMillan Publishers Ltd, 1985). Arnold has four other volumes, but this is the only one that contains menswear.

The study of men’s clothing, particularly during the eighteenth century, remains overshadowed with dozens of academic works on female fashion. The vast majority of scholarship is limited to single garment studies, chapters within books, or within histories of the tailor’s trade.\textsuperscript{17} Extravagant women’s gowns tend to survive in greater numbers, saved for their beauty and textiles for potential remaking in later generations, which probably accounts for their dominance in the literature. Men’s wear, often far simpler and made with less fabric, did not stand the test of time. Fewer

examples have been saved by subsequent generations, with the possible exceptions of elaborately decorated waistcoats.

Much like women’s clothing, men’s clothes also can tell stories of consumerism, status, fashion, frugality, and comfort. While many outside forces affect the choice of clothing during the long eighteenth-century in the American south, climate became a defining factor. In this thesis I contend that the heat of the summers defined the textiles, and as well as the cut, and construction of each garment. It forced change and adaptation from the typical garments worn in England and Europe,

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fashioning a unique appearance needed to maintain a level of comfort in the American south.  

Chapter 2

CLIMATE AND COMFORT

"Carolina is in the spring a paradise, in the summer a hell, and in the autumn a hospital." -The Diary of Johann David Schoepf

In 1607, the English settlement at Jamestown, Virginia created the first colony in the American south. Thousands of immigrants arrived on the shores of this region with varied cultural experience and backgrounds. New colonists would face a variety of challenges, but for many the climate proved the most difficult. This chapter will geographically locate the American south, examine the southern climate and its long hot summer temperatures, and work to define what comfort truly meant.

The eighteenth-century American south encompassed an enormous landscape and yet defining its location proved troublesome for many. Traveler and diarist Nicholas Cresswell, came to the colonies, found himself caught in the outbreak of the American Revolution and sought refuge in New York City. Reflecting on his journeys in 1777 he claimed, “The inhabitants particularly of the southern Colonies (what I mean by the Southern Colonies is all South of New York) are…the most hospitable people on earth.”20 Perhaps the more traditional view of Rev. Andrew Burnaby, who

traveled through the “middle settlements” of North America in 1759 and 1760, better
defined the south. When discussing the different regions of the American colonies he
stated, “our colonies may be distinguished into the southern and northern; separated
from each other by the Susquehannah and that imaginary line which divides Maryland
from Pennsylvania.”

Burnaby’s imaginary line between Maryland and Pennsylvania long plagued the
officials of both colonies. In 1632, Charles I granted a charter to the Calvert family
for twelve million acres with a southern boundary of Virginia and the northern most
boundary of the fortieth parallel. Some fifty years later Charles II gave William Penn
a charter for his province of Pennsylvania. The boundaries seemed very explicit with
the southernmost set “as Circle drawne at twelve miles distance from New Castle
(Delaware) Northward and Westward unto the beginning of the fortieth degree of
Northern Latitude, and then by a streight Line Westward,” the eastern most boundary
as the Delaware Bay, and the northernmost boundary followed the forty-third
parallel. The arc from New Castle and the fortieth parallel, however never
intersected, creating a twenty-eight mile wide discrepancy and placing Penn’s capital
city of Philadelphia in the bounds of Maryland.

21 Andrew Burnaby, Travel through the Middle Settlements in North American in the
Years 1759 and 1760: With observations Upon the State of the Colonies (London:
1775), 1, 90.

22 “Charter for the Province of Pennsylvania, 1681,” The Avalon Project: Documents
http://avalon.law.yale.edu.
This border remained in dispute until November 1763 when Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon arrived in Philadelphia, specifically commissioned to survey the boundary between the two colonies. Experts in their respected fields of mathematics and astronomy, the two men worked for nearly four years surveying the new line and...
setting boundary stones.23 Finally on November 9, 1768, the two men submitted the
final survey to the Royal and Colonial commissioners. Mason and Dixon personally
delivered their manuscript copy of the map to Rev. Richard Peters who undertook the
commission of an engraved print. Around mid July the engraver completed the
copperplate, and on August 16, 1768, two hundred copies of the new map were
completed.24

Although it took nearly eighty years to draw the official border between
Maryland and Pennsylvania, individuals such Andrew Burnaby realized that the
“imaginary line” marked both physical space and cultural differences between the
colonies. Burnaby noted that the southerners used a “mode of cultivation by slavery”
and that “the number of Negroes…is upon the whole nearly equal, if not superior to
that of the white men.”25 The backbone of the southern economy rested on enslaved
Africans tending to cash crops in planter’s fields, which was very different from the
more diversified northern economy. To further this racial divide, the Pennsylvania
assembly passed an act in 1780 entitled the Gradual Abolition Act. This provided that

23 Hubertis M. Cumming, *The Mason and Dixon Line* (Harrisburg: Department of
Internal Affairs, 1962), 1-10. Also see, Edwin Danson, *Drawing the line: How Mason
and Dixon surveyed the most famous boarder in America* (New York: John Wiley,
2001); Sally M. Walker, *Boundaries: How the Mason- Dixon Line settled a family
feud and divided a nation* (Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2014).

24 Ibid., 98-99.

25 Burnaby, *Travel through the Middle Settlements in North American in the Years
1759 and 1760: With observations Upon the State of the Colonies*, 90.
children of enslaved mothers were to be born free. Maryland would not abolish
slavery until 1864. In 1820, the American Congress passed the Missouri
Compromise, extending the original Mason Dixon Line, which in turn further defined
free verses slave states or north verses south.
Whether looking at the Mason Dixon Line as a political or cultural division it was an important boundary. Modern day Americans continue to use this line as the marker between the North and South. For the purpose of defining the south, the line drawn on the approximate mean latitude of 39° 43' 20", that created the border between Pennsylvania and Maryland, will set the parameters for this thesis. The colonies or states south of Pennsylvania, which include Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, constitute the American south during the long eighteenth-century and are the focus of this study.

At the time of the 1790 census, the American south encompassed 298,714 acres of land out of the total 867,280 acres for the whole United States. Over fifteen thousand miles of sea and tidal coastlines stretched from Maryland south to Georgia. A total population of 1.7 million people lived in the early American south that included over six hundred thousand enslaved Africans. The city of Charleston and Baltimore ranked within the top five most populated cities in the United States.26 As the south developed, immigrants of diverse backgrounds and experiences encountered a similar climate with extreme heat and humidity.

Climate

The majority of immigrants coming to the American South arrived from the present day United Kingdom. Britons pride themselves on their moderate climate. Situated between the fiftieth and sixtieth parallels, the island of Great Britain; consisting of England, Scotland, and Wales, stretches roughly six hundred miles from north to south and at it’s widest spans over three hundred miles. Off the western coast of Great Britain, Ireland sat within the same degrees of latitude. An eighteenth-century author interested in the study of climate claimed that this location created “some natural advantages and disadvantages, peculiar to an island.” When describing Great Britain he wrote, “it is subject to perpetual varieties of heat and cold, of wet and dry, but at the same time, the heat in the summer, and the cold in the winter are more temperate than any part of the continent, situated between the same parallels of latitude.” Another author added, the “variety of weather secures the island from the extremities of heat and cold, which other nations, within the same degree of latitude, experience; their summers being much hotter, and the cold in the winter much more intense. To this moderation of the climate is attributed long lives of many of the

27 J. Almon, The New present state of Great Britain.: Containing a succinct account of the climate, divisions, and inhabitants of Great Britain: an ample description of the several counties into which that kingdom is divided; their air, soil, natural productions, trade, and manufactures. : The government of Great Britain: the power, prerogatives and revenues of the king: the laws, customs, and privileges of Parliament ... : A copious description of the capitals of England and Scotland ... : To which are added, complete and accurate lists of all the civil, ecclesiastical, and military offices in Great Britain (London, 1770), 11-12.
inhabitants, of which few of the more northern, and none of the more southern countries afford such frequent instances.”

Climate zones were delineated differently in the eighteenth-century than they are today. Most early scholars divided the globe into five distinct sections: the torrid or burnt zone extended between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, the frigid zone extended twenty three and half degrees from each of the planet’s poles, and finally two temperate zones, which filled in all the regions between the frigid and torrid. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century scientists relied heavily on the correlation of degrees of latitude to equate associated climates. Books published on geography and climate at this time often used latitude to create a broad picture, but then narrowed the focus to specific regions, countries, counties, and even cities.


29 Eliza Caldwell, *A new practical geographical grammar. Containing, proper definitions of the abstruse terms that most frequently occur in reading the first principles of astronomy; with a short account of the hypothetical philosophy of the ancients; and a more particular description of the copernican or solar system. Wherein, the magnitudes, distances, and positions of the planets are briefly treated of; to which is prefixed, an explanation of the artificial sphere, and of the appendants and surface of the celestial and terrestrial globes. With directions for performing the most useful and curious astronomical, and geographical problems performed on each; and, a general description of all the remarkable countries in the world; with their subdivisions, chief cities, longitudes, latitudes, bearings and situations. Collected from the best authors, and rendered intellible to the weakest capacity. Particularly adapted to the use of schools. The firmament and stars declare the great creator's skill* (James and Richard Byrn: Dublin, 1779), 43-49.

The advancement of science and technology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries allowed climatologists to gain a better understanding of the climates around the world and particularly in Great Britain. Scientists now examine “proximity to the equator, poles, or bodies of water, as well as ocean currents, atmospheric pressure belts, and the prevailing winds.”

Warm water traveling in currents out of the Gulf of Mexico and up the eastern seaboard of the United States crosses the Atlantic Ocean and keeps England warmer than mainland Europe. Tropical winds blowing north from France and Spain out of North Africa, keep the southwestern section of England warm with heavy rains all year round. Southeastern England tends towards warm summers and mild winters, but with less rain. Northwestern England and Scotland faces maritime winds blowing off the Atlantic creating cool summers and mild winters with heavy rain year round. Lastly the northwestern section of England and Scotland feels the artic winds blowing south creating cold conditions both in the summer and winter.

These observations led to the development of the Köppen climate classification system published in its entirety in 1918 and updated in 1961 by Rudolf Geiger. Years of research at the Climatic Research Unit of the University of East Anglia and the Global Precipitation Climatology Centre at the German Weather Service placed England officially in the warm temperate climate, fully humid, with


32 Ibid.

warm summers. Overall, as observed over two hundred years earlier, Britons live in a moderate climate.

Early attempts at colonizing the New World sparked tremendous interest in the North American climate. The Indies and China grew a wide range of spices, dyestuffs, and textiles all highly desirable in England. It was believed that the unexplored regions of North America within the same latitude would yield the same commodities, thus bypassing the need to travel half way around the world. Beginning in the late sixteenth-century, English explorers started to chart and document the eastern coast of North America.

From the late sixteenth-century, the English made a series of unsuccessful attempts at colonizing the New World. On April 27, 1584, under the command of Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, two ships departed England on a reconnaissance mission to the east coast of North America. This brief voyage, funded by Sir Walter Raleigh, landed on the Outer Banks of present day North Carolina. The men mapped the region, encountered friendly Natives, and worked to find a suitable and safe harbor to base Queen Elizabeth’s “sea dogs,” who preyed upon Spanish galleons filled with gold and silver. A year later on April 9, 1585, Raleigh and Sir Richard Grenville launched a full-fledged colonizing mission consisting of seven ships and over one hundred colonists. They arrived in early July, named the new land Virginia in honor of Queen Elizabeth, and called their settlement Roanoke.\textsuperscript{35}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{35} Helen Wallis, \textit{Raleigh & Roanoke: The First English Colony in America, 1584-1590} (Lillington, NC: Edwards Brothers, 1985), 1-12.
\end{flushright}
Two men, Thomas Harriot and John White joined the colonists for passage to North America in 1585. Raleigh hired Harriot as a surveyor and scientific observer and White as an artist for the voyage. The two men created the best maps of North America in the sixteenth-century and provided the earliest glimpse of Native people and flora and fauna of Virginia. Within a year and after a sudden storm and loss of
supplies, the colony was abandoned and the remaining survivors were evacuated.\textsuperscript{36} Harriot and White returned to England. 

While White attempted a second settlement at Roanoke in 1587, Harriot began work on a manuscript about his travels and observations in Virginia. In 1590 he published \textit{A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia}. Harriot reported detailed information about natural resources, animals, and plants. In his last chapter he gave observations on the climate

\begin{quote}
What hope there is els to be gathered of the nature of the climate being answerable to the Island of \textit{Japan}, the land of \textit{China}, \textit{Persia}, \textit{Jury}, the Islands of \textit{Cyprus} and \textit{Candy}, the South parts of \textit{Greece}, \textit{Italy}, and \textit{Spaine}, and of many other notable and famous counteris, because I meane not to be tedious, I leave to your owne consideration. Whereby also the excellent temperature of the ayre there at all seasons, much warmer then in England, and never so violently hot, as sometimes is under & between the Tropikes, or near them; cannot bee unknowne unto you without farther relation.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

Harriot wrote the first English interpretation of the southern climate in North America and intended to promote Virginia as a true Garden of Eden. He probably desired his publication to spark quicker settlement of Virginia and its surrounding areas. The failure of the second colony under John White at Roanoke and the fear of Spanish invasion of England delayed further expeditions for over twenty years.

Late in 1606, Captain Christopher Newport finished fitting out three ships moored along the Thames in London, England. The experienced privateer, who sailed

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 13.

with Sir Francis Drake, commanded the small fleet bound for Virginia. On December 19, 1606, one hundred and five men and boys and thirty-nine sailors sailed down the Thames and anchored in the Downs off Kent. The fleet waited several weeks until the weather turned into their favor.

The voyage took nearly four months, stopping at the Canaries, Martinique, and Dominca. George Percy, a gentlemen making the passage to Virginia, noted the only death on the island of Mona, in-between present date Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic. Percy wrote

> Whilst some of the Saylors were filling the Caskes with water, the Captaine, and the rest of the Gentlemen, and other Soldiers marched up in the Ile sixe myles… These wayes that wee went, being so troublesome and vile going upon the sharp Rockes, that many of our men fainted in the march, but by good fortune wee lost none but Edward Brookes Gentleman, whose fat melted within him by the great heate and drought of the Countrey: we were not able to relieve him nor our selves, so he died in that great extreamitie.\(^{38}\)

The choice of poor or unseasonable clothing, combined with the lack of water and the heat, probably contributed to his death. Edward Brookes, a gentleman from Walden, England, located northwest of London, perhaps suffered a heat stroke, making him the first casualty of this group of colonists in 1607.\(^{39}\)


Death plagued the first group settlers that arrived at Jamestown in 1607. Within the first year, two thirds of the colonists died of starvation, disease, or as a result of the constant attacks from Indians.⁴⁰ Because of this rapid attrition, Captain John Smith came to the forefront as one of the colony’s leaders. Appointed as one of the seven councilors to run the colony, Smith had arrived in Virginia a seasoned soldier. Smith spent almost two years in the colony before he returned to England due to an accident suffered when a bag of gunpowder exploded on his groin.⁴¹

Like his predecessors John White and Thomas Harriot some twenty years earlier, Smith brought back to England a wealth of knowledge and experience from the New World. Over the course of his lifetime, he authored many books and pamphlets on Virginia. His 1612 publication *A Map of Virginia with a description of the countrey, the commodities, people, government, and religion* included a detailed account of Virginia’s climate. Smith wrote, “The sommer is hot as in Spaine; the winter colde as in Fraunce or England. The heat of the sommer is in June, Julie, and August, but commonly the coole Breeses asswage the vehemencie of the heat…but here the proverb is true that no extreame long continueth.”⁴² After explaining the location through latitude, Smith then wrote, “The temperature of this countrie doth

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⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² John Smith, *A Map of Virginia with a description of the countrey, the commodities, people, government, and religion* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1612), 3.
agree well English constitutions being once seasoned to the country.” He further explained, “that though by many occasions our people fell sick; yet did they recover by very small meanes & continued in health though there were other great causes, not only to have made them sick, but even to end their daies, &c.” For decades to come, the summer season would plague Southerners with fevers, agues, and other sicknesses, but, according to Smith, once they became acclimated, life became slightly more bearable. Like White and Harriot, Smith promoted Virginia as a perfect place to live, once again probably as propaganda in attempt to encourage its settlement. The interest and description of the southern climate would change over the next century.

In 1705, Robert Beverley wrote a history of the colony of Virginia. Beverley was the first native-born Virginian to author such a book, which included a large section dedicated to the colony’s climate. *The History and the Present State of Virginia* examined the colony’s early history, the natural products best suited for trade, the native inhabitants, the type of government and improvements made to the land. Beverley’s discussion of the climate and temperature gives a first hand account of living within the southern colony. He wrote, “the Natural Temperature of the inhabited part of the Country, is hot and moist…the Country is in a very happy Situation, between the extreems of Heat and Cold, but inclining rather to the first.”

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Robert Beverley, *The History and Present State of Virginia* (London: 1705), 59-60,
Like earlier comparisons, Beverley continued, “All the Countries in the World, seated in or near the Latitude of Virginia, are esteem'd the Fruitfullest, and Pleasantest of all Clymates. As for Example, Canaan, Syria, Persia, great part of India, China and Japan, the Morea, Spain, Portugal, and the Coast of Barbary, none of which differ many Degrees of Latitude from Virginia. These are reckon'd the Gardens of the World....”

Although Beverley described Virginia as a fruitful place, he had some reservations. He claimed that, “all the Annoyances and Inconveniences of the Country, may fairly be summed up, under these three Heads, Thunder, Heat, and troublesom Vermin.” Beverley wrote that the heat proved very uncomfortable “only by the accident of a perfect Calm, which happens perhaps two or three times in a year, and lasts but a few Hours at a time; and even that Inconvenience is made easie by cool Shades, open Airy rooms, Summer-Houses, Arbors, and Grottos: But the Spring and Fall, afford as pleasant Weather, as Mahomet promis'd in his Paradise.” Beverley’s history of Virginia remained an important work for over seventy-five years, but as science and technology advanced, so did the desire of a more scientific understanding of climate.

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., 63.
48 Ibid.
Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* published in 1787 arguably remains one of the most important early books written about Virginia. As Jefferson’s only full length published book, historians recognize it today as the best single statement of his personal principles and his wide-ranging interests in the scientific fields. Thankfully his interest in recording the weather resulted in a lengthy chapter dedicated to Virginia’s climate. Jefferson began his chapter on climate telling the reader that his information on the topic came from years of recording temperature and making observations of weather. With an established data set, Jefferson became one of the first Americans to support his statements about climate with scientific evidence. Although he provided a table of averages for the temperature throughout the year, Jefferson quickly qualified his information, stating, “it is taken for granted, that the preceding table of averaged heat will not give a false idea on this subject, as it proposes to state only the ordinary heat and cold of each month, and not those extraordinary.”

49 He added, “at Williamsburg in August 1766 the mercury in Fahrenheit’s thermometer was at 98 degrees...at the same place in January 1780, it was at 6 degrees.”

50 He further wrote, “Our changes from heat to cold, and cold to heat, are very sudden and great. The mercury in Fahrenheit’s thermometer has been known


50 Ibid.
to descend from 92 degrees to 47 degrees in thirteen hours.” Jefferson’s observations created an impression of a climate that quickly fluctuated between hot and cold, but he stressed that Virginia frequently suffered from high heats during the summer months.

The vast majority of the literature on the southern climate focused on Virginia, however smaller publications such as almanacs, manuals on animal husbandry, and books on geography often included mentions about the climate of other southern colonies or states. A 1775 book entitled *American Husbandry* concluded that the colony of North Carolina was “hotter then Virginia, but in other respects the climate of these two provinces is very similar; North Carolina being hotter as you advance southward, until the most southerly parts as hot as South Carolina.” The author stated that the climate of South Carolina was “one of the most unhealthy climates in the world…. He continued that, “the heat rises to an extreme which is felt in very few, if any place on the globe.” The author also concluded that Georgia’s climate “upon the coast is hot, damp and unwholesome, like Carolina.” While the author of this

51 Ibid.


book remains anonymous apart from claiming the status of “An American,” it seems he or she did not care for the southern colonies and especially their warm climates.

In 1776, Dr. Lionel Chalmers, a contemporary of Jefferson also kept weather diaries and married the data to his medical practice in Charleston, resulting in a book entitled *An account of the weather and diseases of South-Carolina*. Chalmers’ book focused on the unhealthy conditions the summers brought in Charlestown, describing the heat in the city, “I cannot convey a better idea of the heat we perceive, in passing along the streets at noon in the summer, than by comparing it to that glow which strikes one, who looks into a pretty warm oven. For it is so increased by reflection, from that houses and sandy streets as to raise the mercury sometimes to the 130th division of the thermometer.”

Chalmers noted that Charleston faced temperatures frequently above the ninetieth division on Fahrenheit’s thermometer during June, July and August and yet tradesmen and workers in his home continued to work, with only short breaks.

The climate of the southern colonies of North America quickly became a mental and physical boundary. British and European immigrants came from a moderately cool climate. Throughout the summer months, the southern colonies faced long, scorching, hot, and humid days. The intensity of the heat grew the further south an individual traveled. Ebenezer Hazard, a traveler to Charleston noted the reaction

to the heat from a Frenchman who said, “between Sharles-Town & Hell is no more as one sheet papier, & dat is very tin too.” These southern regions where many others also described the summers as hell, pushed the limits of their personal comfort.

**The Measuring of Heat**

The development of the thermometer in the early seventeenth-century and its improvement in the early eighteenth-century enabled heat to be quantified. At the time that the first settlers arrived at Jamestown, Virginia, the Italian physicist and scientist Galileo Galilei developed an instrument in order to measure temperature. Galileo developed what he initially called a thermoscope, described by his student Benedetto Castelli

He took a small glass flask, about as large as a small hen's egg, with a neck about two spans long [perhaps 16 inches] and as fine as a wheat straw, and warmed the flask well in his hands, then turned its mouth upside down into the a vessel placed underneath, in which there was a little water. When he took away the heat of his hands from the flask, the water at once began to rise in the neck, and mounted to more than a span above the level of the water in the vessel. The same Sig. Galileo had then made use of this effect in order to construct an instrument for examining the degrees of heat and cold.

This early attempt to measure heat proved troublesome. Over the next century scientists worked to develop a more accurate instrument.

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The accuracy of thermometers improved in the seventeenth-century, however scientists needed to establish fixed points of temperature in order to calibrate each instrument. Astronomer and secretary of the Royal Society of London, Edmond Halley became frustrated with the lack of standardization, “I cannot learn that any of them...were ever made or adjusted, so as it might be concluded, what the Degrees or Divisions...did mean; neither were they ever otherwise graduated, but by Standards kept by each particular Workman, without any agreement or reference to one another.”

During the period that became known as the Age of Enlightenment, people worked to create and order the world through direct observation. Scientists used the temperature of snow, frost, deeps caves, melting snow, and freezing water to set the lower divisions and the greatest summer heat, healthy body heat, boiling water, boiling spirits, and blood heat to set the higher range of the their thermometers. These various fixed points made the exchange of data difficult during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-centuries. Additionally, some thermometers placed the higher numbers as the coldest, while others placed the lower numbers at the highest temperatures, creating tremendous confusion.


Ibid., 10.
Thanks to the work of Swedish astronomer Anders Celsius, during the mid-eighteenth-century scientists began to agree that the fixed points on a thermometer should be set at the freezing and boiling point of water. With these points standardized, scientist could now calibrate their thermometers in order to collect more exact data regarding temperatures, but they developed their own scales of degrees between those fixed points. Anders Celsius calibrated his thermometers to read zero at freezing and one hundred for boiling. French scientist René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur set his scale at zero for freezing but eighty for boiling. In 1777 a committee of the Royal Society in London adopted the German physicist Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit’s scale, setting freezing at thirty-two degrees and boiling at two hundred and twelve degrees. Many other methods of measurement were created over the years, but Celsius and Fahrenheit’s thermometers remain the most popular, especially when discussing temperature and climate.

Thermometers have changed little from the eighteenth-century. George Adams, the mathematical instrument maker for Britain’s King George III wrote, “a thermometer is a tube of glass, the end of which is blown into a ball or cylinder; the

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ball, and part of the tube, is filled with mercury. The fluid in the ball dilates by the heat, and contracts with the cold, which occasions the fluid in the time to rise and fall.”  Thermometers ranged in size, from small enough fit within a pocket to larger wall mounted varieties for the home. As a piece of scientific apparatus, the price remained rather high around three or four pounds sterling, about the same price of a brand new three piece suit.

The expense of the thermometer derives from the many exacting parts needed to assemble the instrument. First, a glass blower created the stem and bulb, which they would fill with mercury before sealing off. The instrument maker would then mount the glass onto a faceplate of brass or ivory in order to engrave the fixed points of freezing and boiling. Once calibrated, they then equally marked out the rest of the divisions. Thermometers often noted additional common temperatures on the faceplate that included frost (twenty degrees), temperate (fifty-five degrees), summer heat (seventy-six degrees), blood heat (ninety-eight degrees) and fever heat (over one hundred degrees). These typical markings also provided an idea of what temperatures were considered normal and comfortable.  


61 This information comes from study surviving eighteenth-century thermometers in various collection including four examples at the Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library, Thomas Jefferson’s extant thermometer, several examples held by the Royal Collection Trust in England, along with the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich.
With the faceplate finished and fully engraved, the instrument maker typically set the thermometer into a protective case. Surviving examples of thermometers show cases made of mahogany or walnut with a pane of glass on the front for viewing. The tops were often finished with decorative broken pediments typically used for case furniture or clocks of the eighteenth-century. These carefully crafted thermometers became part of the homes of the wealthy elite in North America.

One of the earliest and best-documented uses of a thermometer in the southern colonies comes from a man named Dr. John Lining. Born in 1708 in Walston, Scotland, Lining spent his early years in the cooler climate of Glasgow and Edinburgh, Scotland before he moved to Charleston, South Carolina in 1730, where he began statistical data on meteorological observations and the effects of the heat on the human body, stating, “The vicissitudes of the weather, with respect to heat and cold, are perhaps no where greater then in Carolina; and our summer’s heat is probably not inferior to that under most places of the Equator.”

Follow the link to see Jefferson’s thermometer, the only known surviving southern thermometer from the eighteenth-century, http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/thermometer.

62 A Companion to the weather-glass: Or The nature, construction, and use, of the barometer, thermometer, and hygrometer, with a short account of aqueous meteors, the form of a register of the weather, &c. Selected from the most approved authors (Edinburgh: 1796), 69-95. This book offers one of the best period descriptions of thermometer manufacture.

63 A Letter from Dr. John Lining to C. Mortimer M. D. Sec. R. S. concerning the Weather in South-Carolina; With Abstracts of the Tables of His Meteorological
that during the summer month’s temperatures in Charleston typically sat around ninety to ninety-five degrees. He recorded his highest temperature in June 1738 at ninety-eight degrees in the shade.\textsuperscript{64} The Royal Society in London published Lining’s work on the climate.\textsuperscript{65}

By the mid eighteenth-century the practice of and interest in thermometry is better documented. In 1741 a prominent Virginia planter and member of the Royal Society, William Byrd I sent a letter to Sir Charles Wager requesting to send him “one of the Reflecting telescopes, a very good Barometer, & Thermometer with an air Pump Fountain.”\textsuperscript{66} During the 1750s, Dr. Samuel Carne who operated an apothecary and merchant business in Charleston publically advertised the first thermometers for

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\textsuperscript{65} Extracts of Two Letters from Dr. John Lining, Physician at Charles-Town in South Carolina, to James Jurin, M. D. F. R. S. Giving an Account of Statical Experiments Made Several Times in a Day upon Himself, for One Whole Year, Accompanied with Meteorological Observations; To Which are Sub-Joined Six General Tables, Deduced from the Whole Year's Course, Phil. Trans. 1742 vol. 42, 491-509; and A Letter from Dr. John Lining to C. Mortimer M. D. Sec. R. S. concerning the Weather in South-Carolina; With Abstracts of the Tables of His Meteorological Observations in Charles-Town, Phil Trans R Soc 1748, vol. 45, 336-344, accessed February 4, 2015, www.rstl.royalsocietypublishing.org.

sale in *The South Carolina Gazette*. Interest in thermometers moved from the private to the public sphere when The College of William and Mary sent Dr. William Small to England to purchase scientific apparatus for use within teaching natural philosophy. While a partial list of his purchases included a copy of *The Barometer Expert* and a standard barometer, it did not list a thermometer. Dr. James Madison, president of the college, mentioned in a letter to Thomas Jefferson in 1784 that, “The British robbed me of my Thermometer and Barometer. We have sent to England and expect a Return by this Spring.”

Starting in the 1770s, young gentlemen attending the college would receive proper instruction in the art of thermometry.

Over the next fifty years more people in Charleston imported thermometers than in any other southern city, which attests to the wealth centered within that region. By the 1770’s, they could purchase new thermometers in both Fahrenheit and Réaumur’s scales and in large and small pocket sizes from a number of merchants in the city. A thriving second hand market also allowed individuals of more moderate


means to purchase scientific instruments. At the close of the eighteenth-century, many southern homes contained thermometers.

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69 A selection of newspaper articles from 1740s -1770s from The South Carolina Gazette, Accessible Archives
Figure 2.4: A typical thermometer from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum, Thermometer by Spencer Crane & Co., New York, NY, USA, 1800-1825, Mahogany, Glass, Brass, Mercury, Museum Purchase, 1963.68
Comfort

Thomas Dyche’s 1760 publication entitled *A New General English Dictionary* defined ‘comfortable’ as “anything that gives help, relief, or satisfaction.” The conception of comfort ranges dramatically from culture to culture. With the invention of air conditioning and the development of micro-fibers, what eighteenth-century North Americans found comfortable rarely coincides with our own twenty-first-century ideas, however we share the experience of weather and temperature.

The increased use of thermometers throughout the eighteenth-century suggests a basic knowledge of what certain temperatures meant in terms of comfort. Instead of describing the weather as “hot,” it can be quantified by a thermometer. In 1752, the editors of the *Virginia Gazette* wrote about extreme heat in Charleston and stated, “Weather is so excessive hot that Fahrenheit's best Thermometers shew'd it to be, Yesterday, at 98 Degrees in the Shade, and 126 in the open Air: The same Thermometers, at 2 o'Clock this Afternoon, are at 100 Degrees in the Shade.”

While high temperatures created discomfort, humidity in the air made summers for those living in the south unbearable. Eighteenth-century instrument makers often paired thermometers with another instrument called a hydrometer. Hydrometers

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measured moisture within the air (humidity) through the evaporation rate of water within wood, causing it to expand or contract. The hotter the air, the more water wood can retain. As the human body relies on the evaporation of perspiration to keep cool, we are very sensitive to humidity. As a result, high humidity makes the temperature feel hotter than the actual temperature since perspiration cannot evaporate into the already saturated humid air. Today we combine relative humidity with heat to determine the heat index in order to describe how it feels; earlier scientists generally kept these readings separate and believed that moist air contributed to poorer health. One author wrote, “the air (whether hot or cold) when dry, is always healthy, but a moist or damp air, is productive of many disorders to mankind, as rheumatisms, colds &c.” Moist air plagued the majority of the southern colonies especially in tidal regions.

Mosquitoes flourished in hot and humid weather as warm stagnant ponds promoted the perfect breeding arenas for the pesky insects. Unknown at the time, mosquitos were the vectors of highly seasonal illnesses such as yellow fever and malaria that plagued the south in the summer. Charles Caleb Cotton, a tutor in Charleston, in a letter to his mother in June 1799 about the heat and his state of

\[\text{A Companion to the weather-glass: Or The nature, construction, and use, of the barometer, thermometer, and hygrometer, with a short account of aqueous meteors, the form of a register of the weather, &c. Selected from the most approved authors.}, 95-104, \text{See the section entitled Hygrometers for a complete discussion of their manufacture.}\]

73 Ibid., 100.
comfort and wrote, “The weather grows extremely warm, the Thermometer is daily at 86 and 87 in the shade and in a cool exposure. What then do you suppose must be the heat in the sunshine? I perspire at every pore even when sitting still, and I am literally tormented with the bites of Mosquitoes, I should thank you to tell me when you write of some good tropical application that will take away the inflammation.” A woman from Edinburgh, Scotland who visited Wilmington, North Carolina noted, “the Musquetoes, tho’ not yet so troublesome as at Point Pleasant, are swarming in town…what they do in the low parts of the town, heaven knows.” The biting insects coupled with the heat and humidity added to the level of discomfort felt by many people visiting and living in the American south.

Hot, sticky, humid, and sickly conditions created a truly uncomfortable climate in the summer months within the southern colonies. In 1776, Dr. Lionel Chalmers in Charleston wrote, “When the mercury rose to the 97th and 98th degree of the thermometer in the shade, the atmosphere seem in a glow, as if fires were kindled around us: the air like being so thick and smoaky, while the sun appeared as a ball of red-hot metal, and shined very faintly. In breathing, the air felt as if it had passed


through fire; nor were the nights much less sultry and distressing to us then the
days.” 76 Stephen Hawtrey wrote to his brother Edward warning him about the heat in
Virginia, who was about to take a teaching post at the College of William and Mary in
Williamsburg saying, “the heat is beyond your conception.” 77

Adaptation remained key in order to survive the hot southern climate. During
the first quarter of the eighteenth-century homes in the tidewater region of Maryland,
Virginia, and northern North Carolina, the floor plans changed from two small rooms
side by side adding a central passage between them, often called a summer hall or
saloon. The hall became a functional living space depending on the season, dividing
the house front to back and allowing air to pass through and up the central staircase.
In 1724 Hugh Jones noted in Virginia that gentlemen lived in homes, “with a Passage
generally through the Middle of the House for an Air-Draught in Summer. Thus their
Houses are lasting, dry, and warm in Winter, and cool in Summer; especially if there
be Windows enough to draw the Air.” 78 In 1732, traveler William Hugh Grove also
noted in Virginia, “The manner of building is much alike. They have a broad
stayrcase with a passage thro the house in the middle which is the summer hall and


77 Stephen Hawtrey to Edward Hawtrey, March 26, 1765, Alumni File, College
Achieves, Special Collections, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and
Mary, Williamsburg, Va.

draws the air.”79 The central hall with its cool breezes provided some comfort for those living within the Chesapeake region during the hot summers.80

Architecture was also adapted in other areas of the south to suit the climate. The single house in Charleston developed throughout the eighteenth-century as a single room wide, three rooms deep, with the gable end of the house facing the street. These homes ranged from one to two stories tall and often included a porch down the length of the house. Charles Caleb Cotton wrote in July 1799 about these features and stated, “The greater part of genteel houses, except in the confined part of the town, have a piazza the whole length of the house, frequently raised five or six steps from the ground, this is a most agreeable retreat when the weather is extremely hot.”81


81 Charles Caleb Cotton to his Mother and Father, July 12, 1799, “The Letters of Charles Caleb Cotton, 1798-1802,” 218-220.
piazza, much like the central summer hall in the Chesapeake, acted as an extension of
the house in the heat of the summer.  

While much of the scholarship about cultural adaptation to hot climates
focuses on architecture, southern men also changed other aspects of their daily lives.
Dr. John Lining of Charleston increased the amount of punch he drank everyday up to
ninety-five ounces or almost twelve cups. His punch consisted of “water 2 Pounds,
Sugar 1 ½ ounces, recent Juice of Limes 2 ½ Ounces, Rum 3 ½ ounces,” and he
claimed, “it is a pleasant subacid, cooling, and exhilarating drink, and proves an
excellent Diaphoretic in warm Weather.”

Men also slowed their daily activities. J.

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82 For information on the Charleston single house see, Bernard L. Herman, “The
Embedded Landscapes of the Charleston Single House, 1780 – 1820,” Perspectives in
http://www.jstor.org/stable/3514384. For more specific details on Charleston piazzas
see Carl Lounsbury, “The dynamics of Architectural Design in Eighteenth-Century
Charleston and the Low Country,” Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, vol. 7,
scholarship on porches see, Charles E. Peterson, “The American Porch,” Journal of
and Jay Edwards, “The complex origins of the American domestic piazza-veranda-
gallery,” Material Culture, vol. 21, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 2-58, accessed March 1,
brought this form of architecture to North America. For information on porches on
slave quarters see Carl Anthony, “The Big House and the Slave Quarters: African
Contributions to the New World,” in Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and
Landscapes of North American Slavery, Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg, ed. (New
Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 183-184; and John Michael Vlach, Back of the
Big House, The Architecture of Plantation Slavery (Chapel Hill: University of North

83 Extracts of Two Letters from Dr. John Lining, Physician at Charles-Town in South
Carolina, to James Jurin, M. D. F. R. S, 496.
F. D. Smyth, a traveler through the new United States in 1784 mentioned the daily routine of a Virginia gentleman. He wrote

The gentlemen of fortune rises about nine o’clock; he perhaps may make an excursion to walk as far as his stables to see his horses, which is seldom more than fifty yards from his house; he returns to breakfast, between nine and ten, which is generally tea or coffee, bread, and butter, and very thin slices of venison ham, or hung beef. He then lies down on a pallat, on the floor, in the coolest room in the house, in his shirt and trousers only, with a negro at his head, and another at his feet, to fan him, and keep off the flies; between twelve and one he takes a draught of bombo, or toddy, a liquor composed of water, sugar, rum, and nutmeg, which is made weak, and kept cool: he dines between two and three, and at every table, whatever else there may be, a ham and green or cabbage, is always a standing dish; at dinner he drinks cyder, toddy, punch, port, claret, and maderia, which is generally excellent here: having drank some few glasses of wine after dinner, he returns to his pallat, with his two blacks to fan him, and continues to drink toddy, or sangaree, all afternoon: he does not always drink tea in the evening, he eats a light supper of milk and fruit, or wine, sugar, and fruit &c. and almost immediately retires to bed, for the night; in which, if it be not furnished with musketoe curtains, he is generally so molested with the heat, and harassed and tormented with those pernicious insects the musketoes, that he receives very little refreshment from sleep.84

Although Smyth satirizes the daily routine of the lazy Virginia planter, the heat created much fatigue on the body and increased the intake of liquids.

The heat and humidity of the southern colonies of North America posed many problems for people from northern Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century. Situated over a thousand miles south of Britain and Europe, men faced the challenge of a new climate. Period accounts suggested that new colonists needed a year to

84 J. F. D. Smyth, *A Tour in the United States of America: containing An account of the Present Situation of that Country; The Population, Agriculture, Commerce, Customs, and Manners of the Inhabitants; Anecdotes of several members of the Congress and General Officers in the American Army; and Many other very singular and interesting occurences* (London: 1784), 40-43.
“season” and become acclimated. The heat altered and changed Southerners daily routines, the homes they built, the punch they drank, and the clothing they wore. Southern men and their tailors adapted their clothing to suit the climate. One aspect of this adaptation was the choice of serviceable textiles suitable for the heat.
Chapter 3

TEXTILES

“HAS a neat assortment of fashionable cloths and trimmings, sagathies, alapeens and camblets, fit for mens summer wear, with sundry other goods fit for the place and season, which he will sell very cheap at his store in Meeting-street, opposite to Mr. Daniel Cannon's.” -The South Carolina Gazette, July 23, 1762

On August 3, 1739, William Parks, the printer of the Virginia Gazette republished an article originally from in the English magazine The Guardian. He probably chose this article due to the nature of Virginia’s climate. The article read

I am always beating about in my thoughts for something that may turn to the benefit of my dear countrymen. The present season of the year having put most of them in slight summer suits has turn’d my speculations to a subject that concerns everyone who is sensible of cold or heat; which I believe takes in greatest part of my readers. There is nothing in nature more inconsistent than our Climate, if we except the humour of its inhabitants. We have frequently in one Day all the season of the year. I have shivered in the Dog-days, and been forced to throw off my coat in January. I have gone to bed in August, and rose in December. Summer has often caught me in my Frieze, and Winter in my Duroy Suit.85

The anonymous author clearly documents the seasonality of textiles, in this case a light weight woolen called frieze, typical for the cooler months, and a smooth hard

spun worsted wool for summer called duroy.\textsuperscript{86} Unlike the extreme heat in the American south, summer temperatures in Great Britain rarely reached above the 70s. Men in Britain typically chose between different wool textiles to wear on a daily basis to contend with warm or cold weather. Men in the American south also continued to use wools, but they chose from a variety of untraditional textiles such as linens, cottons, hemsps, and silks for daily summer wear. Living in a world void of central air-conditioning during the summer months, the type of fabrics used for clothing was one part of the quest for comfort.

Textiles ranked as the single largest import to North America during the long eighteenth-century. On top of seasonal differences, they ranged in price, quality, and colored pattern. Factors or purchasing agents, worked with Southern merchants to buy and import textiles from Britain. The importation of seasonal textiles became essential, especially when marketing goods. Customers looked for inexpensive fabrics that could withstand the rigors of daily soakings of perspiration and frequent laundering. Southern men often described these fabrics as thin and light. Thin wools, sturdy cottons, strong linens and slight silks created the backbone of the southern man’s day-to-day wardrobe in the summer months.

\textsuperscript{86} For textile definitions see, \textit{Textiles in America}, 243 and 230.
By the late sixteenth-century, England prided itself on producing the best woolens in the world. In 1728, the famous writer and pamphleteer Daniel Defoe wrote, “but take our English Woolen Manufacture, and go where you will you will find it; ‘tis in every Country, in every Market, in every trading place; and ‘tis receiv’d, valued, and made use of, nay call’d for and wanted every where. In a World, all the World wears it, all the World desires it, and all the World almost envies us the Glory and Advantage of it.” Men living in Britain and Europe could wear fashionable broadcloth year round. Clothing made from wool remained a cornerstone within the English economy.

As men from Britain went to parts of the world with hot climates they took with them the fashion and tradition of wearing wool. Although this thesis focuses on the American South, British and other European powers developed trading relations in


88 Daniel Defoe, A plan of the English Commerce: Being a Compleat Prospect of the Trade of this Nation, as Well the Home Trade as the Foreign. In Three Parts. Part I. Containing a View of the Present Magnitude of the English Trade ... Part II. Containing an Answer to that Great and Important Question Now Depending, Whether Our Trade, and Especially Our Manufactures, are in a Declining Condition, Or No? Part III. Containing Several Proposals Entirely New, for Extending and Improving Our Trade (London: 1728), 180-181.
India, China, African and the South Pacific where the climate was often equally as hot and the wearing of wool uncomfortable.\textsuperscript{89}

Manufacturers of wool textiles broadly fell into two categories. Worsted wools such as duroys, serges, sagathies, everlastings, camblets, and calimancoes, were produced through a method of combing long stapled fleece to align the fibers for spinning.\textsuperscript{90} Woolens, such as broadcloths, kerseys, kendals, strouds, and duffels, were created through carding the fibers, which opened the fleece making it airy and better suited for warmth.\textsuperscript{91} Together, eighteenth-century men referred to these textiles collectively as “cloth.” Today the term cloth might describe any number of textiles, but the eighteenth-century consumer usually associated the term with a fabric made from wool.

Today wool fabrics are rarely worn outside of the winter season, but for summer wear in the eighteenth-century wools filled men’s wardrobes. Worsted wools, characterized by their tight hard spun yarns and smooth finish, were the dominant


\textsuperscript{90} For textile definitions see, \textit{Textiles in America}, 230, 344, 337, 235,188, and 185.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 177, 272, 252-253, and 228. For a focused discussion on the difference between woolens and worsteds and their manufacture and best fleece cuts see Jenkins, ed., \textit{The Wool Textile Industry in Great Britain}. See also \textit{Textiles in American 1650-1870}, 375-377. For a history of the woolen industry see Mann, \textit{The Cloth Industry in the West of England from 1640-1880}. 
choice and tradition within England and the southern colonies for lightweight, comfortable, hardwearing, summer textiles. Eastern Norfolk, especially Norwich acted as the center of worsted manufacture.92 A revolt in the Netherlands in 1567 forced many Dutch and Flemish worsted weavers to seek refuge in neighboring countries, many settled in England where they helped to establish the manufactory of what contemporaries called the New Draperies.93 They produced “slight stuffs” or worsted wool textiles often blended with silks, cottons, or mohair to create very fine lightweight fabrics. These new thin materials invigorated the market for worsteds and created high consumer demand.

Worsted manufactures continued to expand in the eighteenth-century. At its height between the 1740s and 1760s, worsteds faced competition from printed cottons and linens for light fashionable summer fabrics.94 In 1741 an anonymous author estimated that the worsted industry employed over one million hands. The author also expressed concern about falling wool prices stating, “I don’t see how it will advance


again, unless the Royal Family, which is large, and occasions many Birth-days, should think proper (at least once a year) to wear Worsted Stuff’s, which maybe embellished in such a manner as to appear splendid, and by that means bring them into fashion.”

He also hoped that “gentlemen would wear Duroys or other worsted stuffs during the summer, and on such Birth-days” so that it “would not only render them Fashionable at home, but likewise in all our Colonies abroad.” While perhaps not the most highly fashionable fabrics to wear at court or for formal occasions, worsted textiles provided a comfortable and necessary option for men living within the American south.

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95 A short Essay upon Trade in general, but more Enlarged on that Branch relating to the Woolen Manufactures of Great Britain and Ireland (London: 1741), 57.

96 Ibid.
Worsted wools were available in the southern American colonies by the seventeenth-century. An inventory at the death of a York County, Virginia merchant Jonathan Newell taken on February 29, 1671, showed an enormous stock of worsted fabrics that included striped stuffs, druggets, dark and green colored tammies, and
even twenty four yards of stuff deemed “damnified” or damaged.\textsuperscript{97} Other early Virginia inventories show quantities of serge, bays, and shalloons.\textsuperscript{98} Eighteenth-century newspapers frequently advertised worsteds for sale specifically for summer wear. In 1757 a merchant advertised in \textit{The Maryland Gazette} “a great variety of Mens Stuffs for Summer Wear, Camblets, Callimancoes, Tammies…” while in 1764, Merchants Michie & MaCaulay in Charleston, South Carolina advertised, “duroys, sagathies and figured stuffs for mens summer wear.”\textsuperscript{99}

Men purchased worsted materials and employed tailors to make the fabric into breeches, waistcoats, coats, gowns, and banyans. The inventory of Alexandar McQuinn listed a sagathy coat while the inventory of Jacob Fox listed a coat and breeches of “hearse colored grogram” and a striped callimanco gown.\textsuperscript{100} In 1768 Robert Carter Nicolas, the treasurer to the colony of Virginia ordered one piece of


\textsuperscript{99} \textit{The Maryland Gazette}, June 30, 1757 America’s Historic Newspapers, accessed February 10, 2015, infoweb.newsbank.com, hereafter cited as \textit{America’s Historical Newspapers}. \textit{The South Carolina Gazette}, June 11, 1763, \textit{Accessible Achieves}.

“super fine duroy with trimmings” through his factor in Yorktown, John Norton and Sons.\textsuperscript{101} While advertisements and correspondence list a variety of worsted textiles, they only mention a few of the many dozens produced in England.

Traditionally thin worsteds dominated summer wear in both England and America, but some men still chose to wear woolens. Made with lofty carded woolen fibers, fabrics such as superfine and middling broadcloths, friezes, and flannels went through various finishing processes after weaving.\textsuperscript{102} Many went to fulling mills where workers used large combs to raise the nap on the surface of the fabric. After fulling, the fuzzy surface was carefully cut to the same length with large shears. The fabric then moved to the calendaring mill, which pressed the fibers back down with immense pressure, creating a felt like appearance.\textsuperscript{103} The northeast of England, primarily Yorkshire, specialized in the production of these fabrics. Defoe commented on the woolen industry in Yorkshire and claimed, “…the Woolen manufactures of Great Britain are the general Wear in all the Countries in Europe.”\textsuperscript{104} These


\textsuperscript{102} For textile definitions see, \textit{Textiles in America}, 177-178 and 238.

\textsuperscript{103} For a illustrated primary source of the woolen industry from 1728 see, Herman Freudenberger, \textit{The Waldstein Woolen Mill: Noble Entrepreneurship in Eighteenth-Century Bohemia} (Montpelier, VT: Capital City Press, 1963).

\textsuperscript{104} Defoe, \textit{A plan of the English Commerce}, 183.
extremely fashionable, sturdy, firm, dense, yet thin textiles became the staple for the English man’s wardrobe throughout the year.

Although woolens worked well within an English climate, they proved to be uncomfortable to wear in the American South. Stephen Hawtrey warned his brother about wearing woolens in the summer in Williamsburg, Virginia and noted, “your cloth (woolens) suit unlined may do for the month of May, but after that time you must wear the thinnest stuffs (worsteds) that can be made without lining.”105 With the booming worsted industry providing merchants with thin “stuff’s” for men to wear in the hotter climates, the woolen industry sought to compete.

105 Stephen Hawtrey to Edward Hawtrey, March 26, 1765, Alumni File, College Achieves, Special Collections, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.
In the 1760s, Francis Yerbury, a weaver in Bradford, England, began to develop a woolen fabric suitable for hot climates. On August 26, 1766, Yerbury applied for and received a patent for a new thin superfine fabric that he called cassimer, an obvious play on words from the luxurious cashmeres original made in India. He claimed that typical broadcloths allowed the weft yarns to be “two thirds bigger or heavier in weight” than those found in the warp and with little twist. This


107 Yerbury’s Manufacture of Superfine Cloth, no. 858, A.D. August 26, 1766, Patent Specification 1617-1852, 2-3. Yerbury’s patent is very confusing. Some textile historians suggests that Yerbury was trying to patent something that was already in wide production and thus he used complex wording describing the twist of the yarns and weaving structure within his patent. One cannot patent a process if it is already
allowed the cloth to acquire “a better substance and more readily unite” and make “firmer ground in the fulling mill, bear more work with the teasel, and a thicker pile raised on the surface.” Resulting in “a good and useful fabric, and much worn at some seasons of the year” but found “to hot, inconvenient, and heavy for summer wear at home and warmer climates abroad.”108 Yerbury’s fabric departed from the traditional method of broadcloth manufacture in order to make it lighter and more comfortable in the heat.

Cassimers were made from extremely fine woolen yarns. Unlike broadcloths with the larger filling weft, Yerbury’s cassimers used a weft almost identical in weight and twist of the warp. The cloth also differed in its weave structure. By definition, weavers wove broadcloth in a plain weave or tabby structure, but Yerbury’s patent and extant-labeled swatches from his personal pattern book show cassimers woven with a 2/2 twill.109 The twill structure allowed for the cloth to become strong and durable used industry wide. This may also explain the almost immediate patent violations. Sean Philips, textile historian who specializes in making reproduction woolen and worsted fabrics, e-mail message to author, February 27, 2015.

108 Ibid.

without the need of heavier yarns or intense fulling, although Yerbury suggested light finishing on the cloth.\textsuperscript{110}

The new cloth went immediately into production. Yerbury kept a pattern book dating from 1769 to 1779 with labeled swatches for specific customers that survives today in the collections of the Wiltshire and Swindon Historical Centre.\textsuperscript{111} By 1768, two years after the patent, cassimers arrived in North America. Merchant Francis Hopkinson advertised in \textit{The Pennsylvania Chronicle} that he just imported from London at his store in Walnut Street in Philadelphia, “blue, sky-blue, black, pearl, and buff superfine Cassimers, with a great variety of other colors.” He also added, “These last are a new-invented manufacture designed for summer wear; being extremely light and thin, and, in strength and beauty, equal to the best broadcloth….”\textsuperscript{112} Cassimers quickly entered into southern markets as well. Yerbury listed two South Carolina merchants in his pattern book receiving pieces of cassimer as early as 1769.

Cassimer revolutionized and revitalized the woolen industry in England. With its immediate success, weavers began copying Yerbury’s patent requiring him to take legal action to protect his brand. Attorney John Reynolds in London placed an


\textsuperscript{112} \textit{The Pennsylvania Chronicle}, May 2 to May 9, 1769, \textit{America’s Historical Newspapers}.  

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advertisement in the *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, he wrote, “Information having been received, that there are certain drapers, who countenance encourage the making a counterfeit sort of cloth in imitation of the Patentee’s, not from a Principle of serving the Public, but merely their own private interest.”¹¹³ Reynolds continued and warned customers to “take due Notice of the Mark at the Head End, where, next to the Ferrel, are wrote in Thread the words Yerbury’s Patent Cassimers.”¹¹⁴ While Yerbury attempted to fight the imposters, cassimers produced by a variety of other manufacturers soon became a staple within the English wool industry both at home and abroad.

The demand for cassimer grew exponentially in the eighteenth-century and continued in even greater demand in the nineteenth-century as a staple in men’s suiting. Perhaps the propagandist Daniel Defoe did not exaggerate too much in his pamphlet on English commerce when he stated

> But ‘tis impossible; it will not do; nothing can answer all the Ends of Dress, but good English broad cloth, fine camlets, druggets, sergees, and such alike; these they must have, and with these none but England supply them; Be their country hot or cold, torried or frigid, ‘tis the same thing, near the Equinox, or near the Pole, the English Woollen Manufacture clothes them all, here it covers them warm from the freezing breath of the Northern Bear; and there it shades them, and keeps them cool from the scorching beams of a perpendicular sun.¹¹⁵


¹¹⁴ Ibid.

In Britain, wools persisted in everyday dress, however other untraditional textiles became options for comfortable daily wear for those who traveled or settled in warmer climates. One of the advantages of linen, cotton, hemp, and certain silk fabrics was that they could be washed regularly. Worsted, woolens, and some silk textiles, such as brocades with long silk floats on the reverse of the fabric or lutstrings which gained a high luster through the application of natural gums and heat, often required specialized cleaning processes known as dry cleaning or dry scouring, that worked to remove spots or stains without water. Cleaning a wool coat in a simmering pot of soapy water would cause shrinkage and felting, rendering the costly garment useless. Linens, cottons, hems, and some silks, such as thin taffetas and Persians, could withstand regular washing.
Figure 3.3: Laundry was an important task performed in the early American south. Perspiration quickly soiled clothing that then needed to be laundered. John Lewis Krimmel, *Woman Pressing and Folding Laundry*, 1819-1820, watercolor over pencil. Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera.

Eighteenth-century laundry techniques required boiling soapy water and constant agitation to remove stains and clean heavily soiled garments. The need to launder garments frequently necessitated the use of textiles other than wools during the summer. If carefully constructed, the garment could be washed with the rest of the household linens. Janet Schaw, a “lady of quality” from Edinburgh, Scotland traveling through the southern parts the American colonies in 1775, found the laundry techniques appalling. She noted, “They [North Carolinians] are the worst washers of linen I ever saw, and tho’ it be the country of indigo, they never use blue, nor allow
the sun to look at them.”

In Britain, laundresses often introduced a tiny amount of blue dye to white clothing in order to create a very intense white color; likewise they bleached laundry in the sun. Schaw also wrote, “All the cloaths, coarse and fine, bed and table linen, cambricks, and muslins, chints, checks, all are promiscuously thrown into a copper with a quantity of water and a large piece of soap. This is set a boiling, while a negro wench turns them over with a stick.” For elite eighteenth-century women, different skills are mentioned for fine and coarse laundry. The chambermaid focused on brocaded silks, gold laces, damasks, and fine linens such as muslins and cambricks. Rarely did these finer fabrics receive the type of rough laundry methods as Schaw described, which would ruin the textile.

Like wool, cotton enjoys a long history of use within the British Empire. During the sixteenth-century, England imported some raw cotton from North Africa and the Levant regions, but the use of cotton grew exponentially as the English East India Company (EIC) began to trade in Asia in the early seventeenth-century. By the end of the century, the EIC imported over 300,000 pieces of finished cottons a year along with bales of raw cotton for the growing English cotton industry. Later, the


117 Ibid.

West Indies, the North and South American colonies, as well as the Levant provided the raw cotton needed for the rapidly expanding trade.\textsuperscript{119}

Centered in Manchester, the English cotton industry firmly took root in the late seventeenth-century and grew rapidly over the next hundred years. A description of the region provided insight into the enormous industry in the area in 1741 stating, “the trade follow’d here for a long time known by ye name of Manchester Trade wch not only makes ye Town but ye Country round about for several miles populous, industrious & wealthy. The trade consists chiefly of three general branches, viz. The Fustian or Cotton Manufactures, ye Check Trade & Small Wares.” The author continued, “The Fustian Manufacture call’d Manchester Cottons, has been long in ye place & Neighborhood…The Check Trade included several articles, as Stuffs for aprons, Gowns, Shirts, Ticking, Bolstering &c. But ye small Ware Business comprehends most as Inckle, Lace of many sorts, Tapes, Filleting, &c. All these trades employ both a great number & almost all sorts of hands not only of men both

Rich & Poor but of women & Children, even of 5 or 6 years old.” Together these trades produced a huge variety of linen and cotton textiles that they exported around the world.

**Figure 3.4:** One page of thirty-six swatches of Manchester, England produced dimities from Thomas Smith’s 1783 pattern book. Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera.

Even though the Manchester Trade became known for its cotton textiles, the fabrics often used a blend of cotton and linen. An anonymous author of the 1823 book

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A Complete History of the Cotton Trade in Manchester noted a tremendous reliance on linen. The author wrote as early as 1641 large quantities of linen arrived in Manchester from Ireland. Weavers employed the strong linens as the warp and then filled the weft with cotton and finished the cloth by slightly napping the surface producing what was called fustian.\textsuperscript{121} The author also added, “as early as 1727, at which period, all the cotton goods, such as pillow, jeans, jeanets, most of the cords, and thicksets, were made of linen warp; and even the warps for dimities were half linen.”\textsuperscript{122} Surviving swatch books in the Joseph Down’s Collection of Manuscripts and Ephemera at the Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library also show this combination of fibers.\textsuperscript{123}

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\textsuperscript{121} The term fustian seems to be very confusing amongst scholars. John Styles states that fustians are limited to, “heavy linen warp/cotton weft fabrics with a slight nap, including thickset and sometimes extending to corduroy and jean.” The term fustian does not extend to fabrics with just linen warps and cotton wefts and to our current knowledge a period term does not exist. John Styles, email message to Linda Eaton, January 11, 2013.
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\textsuperscript{122} Believed to be James Butterworth, A Complete History of the Cotton Trade: Including also that of the silk, calico-printing, & hat manufactories; with remarks on their Progress in Bolton, Bury, Stockport, Blackburn, Wigan, to which is added, and account of the Chief Mart of These Goods, the Town of Manchester (Manchester, UK: 1823), 101; For textile definitions see, Textiles in America, 271, 205, and 363.
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\textsuperscript{123} Henry Remsen, Jr., and Company Pattern Book, 1767, col. 50, acc. 07x5, Joseph Down’s Collection of Manuscripts and Ephemera, Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, Nathaniel and Joshua Gould Pattern Book, col. 50, acc 65x698-700, Joseph Down’s Collection of Manuscripts and Ephemera, Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library. It is also important to note here that much work is being conducted on the mixing of fibers through spinning. Research conducted at Winterthur shows microscopically traces of linen and cotton spun together. This research remain in its infancy but can read more here Linda Eaton, Printe Textiles, British and American
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American merchants in the South imported large quantities of Manchester cottons or fustians for all seasons. Men could purchase heavier velvets, thicksets, and corduroys for the winter and thinner quilting, dimity, and jeans for summer wear. A merchant in 1733 advertised in *The South Carolina Gazette*, “Just imported…ready made brown linen, duroy, and dimity Cloaths….and almost every other kind of Goods Proper for Summer.”\(^{124}\) Planter Robert Beverley wrote to his tailor Mr. Smither in 1772 requesting summer clothing made from Manchester textiles and said, “You will also make a dark colored jean frock coat without linings and two white jean waistcoats and breeches of the very finest sort.”\(^{125}\) The thin hardwearing materials of the Manchester trade dominated for the southern male wardrobe.

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\(^{124}\) *The South Carolina Gazette*, May 26, 1733, *Accessible Archives*.

Figure 3.5: A sample of nankeen cotton, note the unique natural golden coloring. No dye is used to achieve this color. Photo by the author.

Merchants and manufacturers in Manchester competed throughout the eighteenth-century with fabric imported by the English East India Company. One particular type of imported cotton, nankeen, is one of the most common textiles used for summer clothing.¹²⁶ Originating in the Nankin (Nanjung) region of China from where it takes its name, men favored this cotton for its durability and long lasting color. Unlike cottons grown in North America that produce a snow white like fiber, nankeen cotton naturally produces a warm golden yellow fiber. Dyed fibers often fade or loose color over time due to the sun or heavy washing, while this naturally colored

¹²⁶ Note that nankeen went by various name including India nankeen, English nankeen, Manchester nankeen, and often with no name attached. Early in the eighteenth-century this helps to establish the place of manufacture, but as imitations come out, it may also for the consumer denote quality, price, and longevity.
fiber remained strong throughout the life of the garment. One possible reason for it’s popularly is that the color is similar to that of fashionable leather breeches.

Beyond the distinctive color, nankeen fabric manufactured in China retains several unique qualities. Extant examples are a plain or tabby woven material with a thread count from sixty to seventy ends per inch. The yarns are densely packed making a very strong fabric. The selvage width is extremely narrow, ranging from only eight to eleven inches wide. The narrowness of the fabric may be the result of loom technology or expediency in production. The narrow width was extremely inconvenient for tailors, requiring them to piece together lengths for adult garments.

127 This information developed from the study of four extant pairs of breeches within the collection of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. It is hope that further scientific data can be gathered through dye analysis to see if these are true nankeens or Manchester imitations.
Figure 3.6: A pair of nankeen breeches worn in Virginia by one a member of the Taliaferro family, 1785-1810, tabby weave cotton partially lined with linen, linen and silk stitching threads, accession # 1991-564, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Museum Purchase.

Nankeen was primarily used for breeches or, later in the eighteenth-century, pantaloons due to the narrow widths of the cloth (fig. 3.6). While in Charleston,
Charles Caleb Cotton wrote, “Almost all the young persons here who are not more
then 15 years of age, go without stockings all the summer, and instead wear nankeen
or white pantaloons.”\textsuperscript{128} Thomas Walter a Charleston, South Carolina merchant
advertised, “A General Assortment of Goods, For the Summer season” that included
India nankeens.\textsuperscript{129} Malachy Postlethwayt’s English translation of \textit{The Universal
Dictionary of Trade and Commerce} suggested the size of the industry, stating the
region of Nankin produced “prodigious quantities of silk and cotton; which employs
such a vast number of hands, that, in the city of Xan-gay, and in the town and villages
under it, they reckon no less than 200,000 weavers in the latter of these
manufactures.”\textsuperscript{130} The demand for Nankeen peaked in the last quarter of the
eighteenth-century.

\textsuperscript{128} Charles Caleb Cotton to his Mother and Father, July 12, 1799, “The Letters of

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{The South Carolina Gazette}, April 17, 1769, \textit{Accessible Archives}.

\textsuperscript{130} Jacques Savary des Brûlons, \textit{The universal dictionary of trade and commerce,
translated from the French of the celebrated Mosieur Savary, Inspector-General of the
manufactures for the King, at the Custom-House of Paris: with large additions and
improvements, incorporated throughout the whole work; which more particularly
accomodate the same to the trade and navigation of these kingdoms, and the laws,
custom,} vol. 1 (London: 1757), 491.
Figure 3.7: A trade card claiming to have discovered “Nankeen, The Chinese Dye.” This was one of many imitations that stated as early as the 1770s. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Realizing the high demand for this light but hardwearing fabric, weavers in Manchester began to imitate the Chinese textile in order to reap more profits. Merchants working in the American south imported enormous quantities of nankeen from England, beginning as early as the 1740s. The yarn might be dyed prior to weaving or the yardage piece dyed after it came off the loom in order to imitate the characteristic yellow color. Prior to the 1770s weld and fustic were used to obtain a
range of yellows that often closely matched the natural color of nankeen.\textsuperscript{131} Around 1771, Edward Bancroft discovered the unique coloring properties found within the inner bark of the American black oak tree, which he patented under the name of quercitron. In examples sent to the Royal Society he noted specifically that one sample, “resembles the Colour of the Nankin cottons except that it is more beautiful and lasting and it will be uncommonly cheap, it will enable the Manufacturers of Great Britain not only to imitate but excel at that Commodity.”\textsuperscript{132} This new yellow dye allowed manufacturers to cheaply produce the golden yellow fabric loved throughout the England, Europe, and America.

While English weavers and dyers thought that they could imitate Chinese nankeen, consumers understood the difference. Merchants such as Richard Salter in Boston, Massachusetts advertised “India and English nankeens” in 1764 and over thirty years later a Norfolk, Virginia merchant advertised, “The most extensive and fashionable collection of plain and striped English Nankeens and Indian Nankeen by the piece or Bale.”\textsuperscript{133} Thomas Mortimer and William Dickinson’s 1819 dictionary

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\textsuperscript{132} Quoted from Heather Nicole Hanson, “The Quest for Quercitron Revealing the Story of a Forgotten Dye,” (Ma diss., University of Delaware, 2011), 83. \\
\textsuperscript{133} The Boston Evening Post, May 21, 1764, America’s Historical Newspapers; and Virginia Chronicle & General Advertiser, September 4, 1794, America’s Historical Newspapers.
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entitled *A Commercial Dictionary comprehending Trade, Manufactures, and Navigation* pointed out the obvious differences between the two textiles. They wrote

At Manchester, and in other parts of Great Britain, these articles are imitated with success; though the British nankeens are inferior, it must be allowed, to those of India, but time may bring them to the same perfection. The Indian nankeens are not only more durable, but hold their colour much longer than the British; which can scarcely undergo three washings without being unaltered. The cotton employed by the Orientals in the manufacture of nankeen, is naturally of a reddish colour, whereas we are obliged to impart the proper hue to our material by means of dyeing; this will serve to account for the durability of colour in the one commodity, and the weakness in that of the other.  

Americans in the South not only imported cottons from England, but also grew, processed, and wove cotton fabrics domestically. The colonists and their backing companies hoped to discover cotton naturally growing at Roanoke and Jamestown, or a climate that would allow cultivation of the plant. During the seventeenth-century, the cultivation of cotton along the coastal regions remained small and experimental. The Georgia Trustees promoted growing cotton among its early colonists in the 1730s and in the 1740s, South Carolina passed legislation for bounties raw raw cotton.  

Due to the need to diversify staple crops within the agrarian south

134 Thomas Mortimer and William Dickinson, *A General Commercial Dictionary comprehending Trade, Manufactures, and Navigation, so far as it is connected with Commerce; with brief abstracts of the laws relating to the regulation and protection of trade and tradesmen; exhibiting their present state, and their connection in these kingdoms with those of other parts of the world* (London: 1819), 644.

135 Joyce E. Chaplin, “Creating a Cotton South in Georgia and South Carolina, 1760-1815,” *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 57, no. 2 (May 1991): 176. This work also provides an interesting look at how the southern colonies were very adaptive depending on the economies demand. Chaplin shows how cotton increased and declined over time.
as well as the continued stress of relations between planters and Parliament, cotton became a staple crop during the 1760s and 1770s. Some cotton was exported, but at this time the majority turned into textiles for usage among enslaved Africans, thus alleviating the extra expense of purchasing fabric to clothe slaves. South Carolinian Ralph Izard wrote to Edward Rutledge on November 15, 1774 worrying about the current economic situation. Izard stated, “In the ensuing troubles, I foresee infinite difficulties will arise in the clothing and blanketing of our negroes. You will, I trust take every possible precaution on this subject. If the trade is to be stopped, cotton should be planted in all parts, this will produce clothes, but I do not know how blankets can be provided. Difficulties will sharpen the invention, and I do not doubt, but that some expedients will be found out.”

A few years later, Colonel Landon Carter of Virginia lamented in his diary of the poor quality of his cotton crop, and that

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138 Ralph Izard to Edward Rutledge, November 15, 1774 in C. S. Francis, ed., *Correspondence of Mr. Ralph Izard of South Carolina, from the year 1774-1804, with a Short Memoir*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles S. Francis & Co., 1844), 33.
“to give it its natural growth, it must be planted in May.”

Planters faced a steep learning curve with this new plant.

John Harrower, a servant and tutor in Fredericksburg, Virginia planted his own personal cotton field on land provided by his employer. On Saturday May 6, 1775, Harrower noted in his diary, “This afternoon I planted 41 hills of grownd with cotton seeds.” Eleven days later he wrote, “This forenoon I seed (seen) some of my cotton planted 6th Inst. Above the ground.” In January he delivered his “pickt cotton” to Miss. Lucy Gains who spun and promised to produce eight yards of fabric by the end of May. He delivered another three pounds of picked cotton Daniel Dempsie’s wife to spin and weave six yards of cotton. Harrower also mentions at least two other women in the area spinning and weaving for him. Ultimately his crop produced at least one coat, two waistcoats, and a number of handkerchiefs.

Cotton interested foreign visitors. Thomas Anburey, a captured British officer from the Battle of Saratoga in 1777, spent much of his time as a prisoner of war around Charlottesville, Virginia. He noted the production of cotton in a letter dated August 4, 1779, and stated, “The shrub which supplies our manufactures with cotton, is much cultivated in this Province, and the inhabitants of the lower sort, through the


scarceness and difficulty of procuring clothing for themselves and their negroes, pay
greater attention to it at present than tobacco…”\textsuperscript{141} Anburey also noted the
processing of the cotton and claimed, “cotton are cleaned by means of a machine
called a gen, which is made of two smooth rollers placed close and paraille [sic] to
each other in a frame, and move in contrary directions by means of different wheels at
the opposite side of the machine, which are put in motion by the foot, the cotton being
put into these rollers, while they move round, it readily passes between them, bearing
the seed which are too large to the interspace behind.”\textsuperscript{142} These early gins predate Eli
Whitney’s invention by over a decade.\textsuperscript{143} Anburey thought these cottons “a little
inferior to then made at Manchester,” but truly preferred them in the heat of the
summer.\textsuperscript{144} He wrote, “The weather being so extremely hot, woolen cloathes are
insufferable, therefore from necessity, and as is the custom of this country, the officers
wear cotton habiliments, the cotton of which mine is made I obtained from my

\textsuperscript{141} Thomas Anburey, \textit{Travels through the interior parts of America, In a series of
letters by an Officer} vol. 2 (London: 1789), 423-424.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 425.

\textsuperscript{143} Other Virginia Inventories from Amelia County as early as 1766 and during the
Revolution in Orange County show cotton gins in usage. For an in depth look at pre
and post Whitney cotton gins see Angela Lakwete, \textit{Inventing the Cotton Gin, Machine
and Myth in Antebellum America} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

\textsuperscript{144} Anburey, \textit{Travels through the interior parts of America, In a series of letters by an
Officer}, 426.
landlord, and saw the whole process of its growth and manufacture, from the seed being sown, till it came out of the loom.”  

The need for fabrics fueled a large industry when patterns of trade were disrupted during the American War for Independence. A diary from Johann Conrad Döhla, a German soldier fighting for the British at Yorktown mentioned the large amounts of cotton grown around Yorktown, Virginia in 1781. Döhla wrote

About Cotton, this grown abundantly here at Yorktown and in this region. Our entire camp stood in such a cotton field. The seeds are planted and, when they come up, hoed diligently into hills, as potatoes are by us, and they bloom prettily, with red, white and sky blue all mixed together...it must have a warm climate and sandy soil to grow, as it cannot tolerate frost or cold. When we arrived in August, it was partially in bloom, and in the middle of September, it was fully ripe. We made bed covers and floor mats of it in our tents, on which we slept, but little time for that.  

In York County, Virginia favorable conditions seem to have been maintained for the production of the cotton during the Revolution.  

145 Ibid., 426-427.  


147 While planters along the coast worked to gain a further knowledge of cotton production, those living in the backcountry continued their long-standing cultural traditions of textile production that included cotton. Germans and Scotch-Irish settlers who moved down the Shenandoah Valley from Pennsylvania brought with them deeply rooted traditions of fiber processing and weaving. Inventories of the middle and northern counties of the Shenandoah Valley show numerous looms, spinning wheels, and other equipment for processing raw materials into textiles, unlike seen on the coast. The author intends to continue this research in order to gain a better understanding of regional domestic production.
Cotton was very fashionable but it was also relatively expensive and many men choose to wear cheap linen and hemp fabrics throughout the summer. Of all the textiles imported from England, linen and hemp fabric ranked as the most common. Linens and hems arrived on the southern shores in various forms from manufactures in England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, and the Baltic. Delicate lawns, cambrics, cobwebs, and sheetings, found their way into men's shirts and ruffles while heavier hollands, diaper, and drillings made up breeches waistcoats and coats. Merchants imported dowlas, crocus, garlix and especially osnaburg in order to clothe middling class to poor whites and enslaved Africans. Linen canvas and ducks wrapped the bales of fabric sent to the American south to prevent damage from leaky vessels and poor handling. Ranging in quality, hardwearing sturdy linens and hems entered the wardrobes of wealthy men as well as enslaved Africans.


For fabric definitions see, *Textiles in America*, 187, and 277-278.

For fabric definitions see, *Textiles in America*, 277-278.
Extant merchant accounts illustrate the enormous variety of linen available in the eighteenth-century. John Hook’s storehouse located in present day Bedford County, Virginia, sat at an advantageous spot as one of the last storehouses before entering into the Carolinas. Hook’s 1771 day book showed that 35% of his sales came from textiles, 20% more then the next most common items sold (clothing and alcohol). He offered twenty-five grades of linen, ranging in price from ten pence to three schillings six pence per the yard. Although he sold cotton, silk, woolens, worsteds, and various unidentifiable fabrics, linen made up almost half of all sales out of Hook’s store. Osnaburg, a medium weight, unbleached linen, took up one third of his entire stock of fabrics.\textsuperscript{151} Other southern records such as James Poyas’s daybook from Charleston corroborate the preponderance of linens.\textsuperscript{152} The records of the firm, John Norton and Sons, factors in Yorktown, Virginia also show the use of linen to clothe not only members of the planters family but also field hands.\textsuperscript{153} Merchants up and down

\textsuperscript{151} Martin, \textit{Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumer in Backcountry Virginia}, 78-82. Martin’s work on Hook’s store provides an invaluable link to backcountry textile consumption. While Hook is a singular case study, it seems that many southern merchants follow suit in the same practice in terms of selling textiles.


\textsuperscript{153} Survey of letters from Mason, ed., \textit{John Norton & Sons, Merchants of London and Virginia, being the Papers from their Counting house for the Years 1750-1795}. 83
the eastern seaboard imported over six million yards of linen in the year 1771 alone.\footnote{154 Horner, \textit{The linen Trade of Europe during the Spinning-Wheel Period}, 236-237.}

Estate inventories also document the extensive use of linen for summer wear. Asa Porterfield of Charleston, South Carolina owned one brown linen coat, jacket, and breeches and a dimity jacket and breeches, along with another striped holland jacket.\footnote{155 September 21, 1734, Inventory of Asa or Abraham Porterfield, "South Carolina Probate Records, Bound Volumes, 1671-1977," \textit{FamilySearch}, accessed January 7, 2015.} Jacob Fox, also from Charleston, owned two brown holland coats and two pairs of breeches, one dimity jacket and breeches, and eight holland wasitcoats.\footnote{156 Ibid., September 11, 1735, Inventory of Jacob Fox, 223.} The inventory of William Purcell in North Carolina included a striped linen nightgown.\footnote{157 December 6, 1778, Inventory of William Purcell, "North Carolina, Probate Records, 1735-1970," images, \textit{FamilySearch}, accessed February 7, 2015.} Linen played a critical role in daily life of Southerners, as not only their inner most but outer-most textiles during the heat of the summer months. The range in price and quality allowed men of means to chose to a degree the variety of linen they desire to keep them as comfortable as possible.

Washable and often inexpensive, men of all classes wore linen, which seemingly startled some visitors to the south. William Hugh Grove left England in
1732 to visit Virginia and he noted, “In Summertime even the gentry goe many in
White Holland Wast Coat & Drawers and a thin cap on their [sic] head and thread
stockings.” Grove then added, “In winter [they dress] mostly as in England
and effected London Dress and wayes.” In 1753, John Tobler, a Swiss
immigrant to South Carolina echoed Groves comments and stated, “an almost
unbelievable large amount of linen is imported into this province annually...to
clothe not only the inhabitants of this province (who are seen almost everywhere
in linen clothes in the summer), but also the Indians.” Clothing typically acted
as a visual identifier of social class. The heat of the southern climate closed this
gap. While easily identifiably racial features distinguished the free from the
enslaved and free black, differentiating the wealthy from the working class in the
summer proved difficult solely from their clothing.

158 Stiverson and Butler III, “Virginia in 1732: The Travel Journal of William Hugh
Grove,” 29.

159 Ibid.

160 Walter L. Robbins, “John Tobler’s Descriptions of South Carolina 1753,” The
South Carolina Historical Magazine, vol. 71, no. 3 (July 1970): 158, accessed
Like linens, silks were also worn in the summer, although they were not as common. Spun from the fibrous cocoons of silk worms that feasted on the leaves of mulberry trees, silk fabrics from around the globe made their way onto the shelves of southern American merchants.\textsuperscript{161} In the eighteenth-century, silks

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3_8.png}
\caption{Detail of the silk cuff, sleeve and coat body from Charles Cotesworth Pinckney’s 1799 officers coat, accession #HT4603. \textit{Courtsey of The Charleston Museum, Charleston, South Carolina.}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{161} The American silk industry saw minimal production during the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. Early colonist hoped to find the perfect climate to raise silk worms, but had trouble establishing the industry. Georgia had the most success with silk production, sending a piece of American silk back to England in the 1730s. One of the Queen of England’s daughters then had the silk turned into a gown. For a short discussion of the early American silk industry see Field, Senechal, and Shaw, \textit{American Silk 1830-1930, Entrepreneurs and Artifacts}, 8-29; and Brockett, \textit{The Silk Industry in America, A History Prepared for the Centennial Exposition}. For a look at
ranged in price and quality, but were all more expensive than cotton and linen and were generally worn for more formal occasions. Silks appear with greater frequency in the Low Country (South Carolina and Georgia). This may speak to broader differences of culture or fashion or to the enormous wealth situated within the region. For the summer, men favored taffetas, persians, lutestrings and alamodes for their very thin, slight, and paper like weaves as compared to the heavier lampasses, velvets and shags where worn primarily in the winter.\textsuperscript{162}

Newspaper advertisements shed light on the silk textiles worn in the south during the eighteenth-century. Hawkins, Petrie & Company regularly advertised in \textit{The South Carolina Gazette}, “a Quantity of silks of different colours for Men’s Summer Wear.”\textsuperscript{163} Z. Kinsely of Charleston similarly advertised, “Striped, flowered, plain, brocaded silks and satins, fit for ladies gowns or Summer Wear for Gentlemen.”\textsuperscript{164} A Maryland merchant sought the attention of those who desired silk in the summer when he advertised in the \textit{Federal Gazette}

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{162} For fabric definitions see, \textit{Textile in America}, 358-360, 321-323, 283-284, and 143-144.

\textsuperscript{163} \textit{The South Carolina Gazette}, April-July 1774, \textit{Accessible Archives}.

\textsuperscript{164} \textit{The South Carolina Gazette}, May 25, 1773, \textit{Accessible Archives}.
\end{footnotesize}
Extra, "Cheap Silks for Summer Wear, consisting of six thousand yards fancy florences, raiz'ed, stripe, and plain silks and satins, new patterns, for the approaching season." Merchants readily imported silks for the summer and tailors cut and sewed them into wearable garments.

Inventories also suggest that men frequently owned silk garments. Servant John Harrower in Fredericksburg, Virginia noted in a letter to his wife of a gift of “two silk vestcoats...ready to put on for changes in summer” and later noted them in a complete inventory of his clothing. A Chowan County, North Carolina inventory of Alexander Sears included “2 silk jackets,” while the inventory of Jess Bainn recorded a “silk jacket pattern.” The South Carolina inventory Jacob Fox contained two white taffeta suits, one trimmed with silver and the other trimmed in black. John Franklin’s November 26, 1734 inventory included, “a taffety coat, breeches, and green silk jackets with silver buttons.” These inventories do not suggest that the owners of these garments purchased

165 The Federal Gazette Extra, June 28, 1797, America’s Historical Newspapers.


168 Ibid., Inventory of John Franklin, November 26, 1734.
them specifically for the summer, however the use of the thin material points towards owners probably wearing them within the hotter months.

The words ‘cheap’ and ‘thin’ described the majority of textiles used for the summer months in the American south. Southern men understood they needed garments to withstand constant wear, heavy perspiration, frequent laundering, and the damaging rays of the sun. Men required multiple changes of clothing throughout the day and this may account for the high numbers of cheap garments in probate inventories. For example, the North Carolina inventory of Andrew Little listed “eight thin jackets” and William Dormandy’s inventory that listed “three pairs of thin breeches” and “five thin jackets.”

As British men settled around the world, the demand for comfortable textiles for hot climates traveled with them. Powerful global trade networks and the enormous English textile industry developed and exported fabrics for those living in tropical climates. Using the American South as a case study, I have shown that the English wool industry manufactured a broad variety of thin worsted “stuffs” suitable for hot weather. Cottons manufactured in both Asia and England arrived on the shelves of southern storehouses for men to buy and turn into hardwearing but comfortable clothing. Many men purchased cheap sturdy

linens and chose from dozens of varieties imported from around the globe.

Lightweight silks remained as an option in the south, but most popular in Low Country region.

For southern men, the seasonal choice of textiles grounded their ideas of comfort. With fabric in hand, southern men then sought the help of their tailors to construct the clothing needed to survive the blistering southern heat.
Chapter 4

GARMENTS AND CONSTRUCTION

“Mr. Christopher Scott was the Taylor you employed to making my last clothes which fit me well and as I suppose he has got my measure, I shall be obliged you to direct him to make for me a light handsome frock for the summer with a white sattin waistcoat and two pair of silk knit breeches.”
- To Mr. Samuel Athawes from Robert Cary Esq. August 1, 1763.

Clothing throughout the eighteenth-century reflected status, fashion, culture, and for men living closer to the equator, the tropical climate. The summer heat, created the need for uniquely constructed clothing. Men left off some garments and tailors created entirely new forms of clothing to cope with both hot temperatures and pestilence. This chapter seeks to marry period descriptions with extant objects in order to examin how tailors adapted their traditional construction methods to make comfortable clothing for their southern American patrons.

The earliest surviving examples of southern American clothing dates to the 1730s and 1740s. No complete garments from the seventeenth-century are known to have survived, only a few small pieces of embroidery and fragmentary archeological evidence. A complete list of garments studied as primary sources for this thesis can be found in Appendix A.
Tailor’s worked communally on large work boards, sitting cross-legged or tailor style. This allowed garments to be constructed by multiple hands at one time. Artist Unknown, Interior of a Tailor’s Shop, ca. 1780, oil on canvas, 780 x 1265mm, © Museum of London.

In 1747, English author Robert Campbell published his book entitled The London Tradesman, which carefully chronicled the majority of trades living and working within London and provided pithy commentary. On tailors, Campbell wrote: “The Taylor sets up for antiquity, and alleges that he is not only the most necessary Tradesmen, but likewise an artist of the oldest standing.”

The tailor, “ought to have

Robert Campbell, The London Tradesman being a Compendious View of All the Trades, Professions, Arts both Liberal and Mechanic, now practiced in the cities of London and Westminster. Calculated for the Information of Parents, and Instruction of Youth in their Choice of Business (London: 1747), 109. It is also important to note here that tailor, taylor, and taylar are used interchangeably throughout the eighteenth-century. Taylor however is the most common period spelling.
a quick eye to steal the cut of a sleeve, the pattern of a flap, or the shape of a good 
trimming at a glance...he must be able, not only to cut for the Handsome and well-
shaped, but to bestow a good shape where Nature has not designed it.” 171 Campbell 
also warned about the tailors trade and that “they are as numerous as Locusts, are out 
of business about three or four months in the year, and generally as poor as rats.” 172 

Tailors, a male dominated trade, served a length of time as an apprentice to 
learn the trade whether in England or the American colonies. The apprenticeship 
might last only few months but generally five to seven years, or until the apprentice 
reached the age of majority at twenty-one. Parents and guardians paid the master of 
the shop a sum of money; in return, the master provided room, board, laundry, and 
their time to teach the trade. According to the standard contract, apprentices could not 
marry, gamble or frequent taverns. 173 

Large tailor shops maintained a hierarchy of skill; the highest paid position 
was that of the foreman who cut and measured all the garments. The journeymen or 
workmen sat below in the ranking and assembled the garments. Then came the lowest 

171 Ibid., 192  
172 Ibid., 193. For another view of London trade life see, Thomas Legg, Low-Life: or 
one half of the world, knows not how the other half live. Being a critical account of 
what is transacted by people of almost all Religions, Nations, Circumstances, and 
sizes of understanding, in the Twenty-Four hours between Saturday Night and 
Monday Morning. In a true description of a Sunday, as it is usually spent within the 

Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera
in the shop: the apprentices. Working in the shop, the master and journeymen taught the young apprentices the skills they needed to take measurements and to draft patterns, the true art of the trade. They also spent a tremendous amount of time learning to sew breeches, waistcoat, coats, jackets, cloaks, banyans, and wrapping gowns, among other items. The apprentices learned how to properly set in linings and how to carefully cut and finish difficult fabrics. At the end of the apprenticeship, the newly minted journeyman (or day worker) received a set of tools to practice his trade and a set of new clothing.¹⁷⁴

Tailoring was the most commonly practiced trade amongst men in the American south.¹⁷⁵ Tailors filled newspapers with advertisements from Savannah to Annapolis. Some had permanent shops in major metropolitan cities while others remained more itinerate, anonymous, and rural. Unlike tailors in London, who followed strict guild regulations, American tailors maintained no overarching governing body.¹⁷⁶


¹⁷⁶ For a history of the Merchant Taylor’s Trade see, Saunders and Davies, The History of the Merchant Taylors’ Company.
Eighteenth-century working men and men of means primarily wore clothing custom made by a tailor. Although, custom-made clothing remained the usual method of purchasing new garments, but men could obtain clothing elsewhere. Merchants imported ready-made clothing, slop shops produced cheap clothing for sailors, estate sales offered second hand clothing, and for the criminally minded, clothing was often stolen. This thesis will focus on custom made clothing as surviving garments were made within tailor shops.177

The basic form of men’s clothing was (and still is) the three-piece suit, consisting in the eighteenth-century of breeches, waistcoat and coat, which first came into fashion around the 1660s.178 It quickly disseminated to all ranks of society and the fashion slowly evolved over the centuries. For men in the American south, adaptations made to the cut and construction of the suit remained key for comfort. Evidence from surviving garments clearly shows that southern American tailors eliminated layers to create thinner garments and paid particular attention to construction in order to withstand constant washing.


Normal construction methods used by British tailors involved multiple layers of stiffened linens called buckram (stiffened with gums or glues) and fine woolens for shaping. The exterior fabrics needed interior structure from buckrams, button stands, stay tapes, and wool wadding, to shape the garment, reinforce areas of stress and provide a fashionable silhouette. In order to reduce bulk however, interior edges of the garments rarely were finished. Full linings covered these inner layers and often served as an extra layer for warmth. In hot climates, tailors would reduce lining to provide increased comfort in the summer heat.

In the absence of linings, tailors had to ensure that exposed seams would not unravel or fall apart after repeated wear or stress from cleaning. Planter Robert Beverley of Blandfield in Virginia, constantly reminded his tailor in England about the need for careful construction of his clothing. Beverley’s London tailor, while probably not making thin unlined garments on a regular basis, understood the need to adapt and to meet the demands of his client in Virginia. When ordering a new coat for the summer Beverley specified, “The coat to have mohair buttons and the moulds of the buttons of the waistcoat and breeches to made of something that will not stain in washing.”Waistcoats and breeches were laundered more frequently than coats. Surviving buttonmolds show various cheap woods that would leach tannin and discolor the fabric wrapped around them when wet. In 1774, Beverley ordered yet

another set of clothing from the same tailor in London, and scolded him from Virginia, “The colour of the cloth coat, I do not admire – The white jean waistcoat and breeches are not made of stuff so fine as I desired and the buttonholes were sewed so miserably with such very course thread, that they unraveled upon the first washing, and I have been obliged to have them resewn.”180 Beverley begrudgingly placed the order and concluded, “… also two white jean waistcoats and two pair of breeches, 2 pairs of the very finest drill breeches, these washing articles without lining.”181 Summer clothing worn close to the body received heavy launndering in the South due to perspiration.

Suits

Throughout the eighteenth-century, most men wore breeches, covering the body from the fullness of the hip to just below the knee. Extant examples typically show a straight out seam (seam running down the outside of the leg) with a curving inner seam that fits the thigh firmly to allow for a smooth appearance around the thigh. The knees typically buttoned with four to six buttons running up the out seam of the leg. A narrow strip of fabric known as the garter, fastened around the bottom of the knee, secured typically with a buckle, although extant objects also show ties and buttons.182 Breeches terminated at the knee and the wearer wore stockings or hose to

180 Ibid., Robert Beverley to Mr. Smither, 1774.

181 Ibid.

182 For further discussion of knee fasteners see, Bryant, “Buckles and Buttons: An Inquiry into Fastening systems on Eighteenth-Century Breeches,” 27-38.
cover the lower leg. The garters pulled tight around the bottom of the knee and helped to keep the hose in place.
Figure 4.2: Thin unlined white cotton and linen dimity breeches worn in the warmer months, England or America, 1765 – 1785, white cotton and linen “dimity” accession # 1987-730. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Museum Purchase.
Regardless of the season, breeches fastened at the front of the waistband with two or three buttons and the back closed with ties or a buckle, but the center front closing changed according to fashion. Early in the eighteenth-century, breeches closed down the center front with a series of two or three buttons. Long waistcoats typically covered this method of closure, but as fashions changed, the unsightly buttons were exposed. Around the mid eighteenth-century, tailors began to cut breeches with a flap to the front, eliminating the center front closure in order to satisfy the fashion for obtaining an overall smooth appearance on the lower half of the male body. The seats of breeches, however, were not tightly fitted. With the garters fastened around the knees, breeches needed ease to allow the wearer to walk, run, and sit astride a horse. Tailors built this extra ease into the seat, often giving a baggy or full appearance to the wearer’s backside.  

The vast majority of breeches constructed during eighteenth-century contained linings. During construction, tailors assembled the exterior and linings separately and drop them into each other, catching the lining into the waistband and garters to hold it in place. Linings were made from cheap linens or fustians and the wearer could order

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tailors to replace the worn or overly soiled linings with new ones. Tailors would not line breeches in the summer to make them more comfortable for hot climates.

To make breeches more comfortable in hot climates, tailors would not line breeches; this required them to revise their construction techniques. The back seam in the seat, only occasionally overcast when lined, was covered with cheap linen or fustian. The linen extended from the fork in the crotch up the back seam and split into a “Y” at the waistband. Fig. 4.3 shows the split at the back and the linen applied to each side that continues into the waistband. This purposeful piece served to protect the raw edges from fraying as the wearer sat on the seam repeatedly throughout the day and the near continuous washing received during the summer.
Figure 4.3: Unlined breeches worn by John Blair, Jr. of Williamsburg, Virginia. Made from extremely fine silk taffeta, 1750-1760, silk, partly lined with wool and linen, accession # 1981-182. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Gift of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities.
Other exposed seams also received special treatment. Tailors finely overcast the out seams of breeches if not placed on the selvage edge of the textile. The inner seams, when unlined also commonly were overcast. A pair of unlined thin silk taffeta breeches worn by John Blair Jr. of Williamsburg, Virginia, shows a fine linen tape along the interior of the inseam. Again the tailor was taking the utmost precaution to ensure that the cut edges would not disintegrate. The 1796 book, *The tailor's complete guide*, the first published manual for cutting out cloth, noted for nankeen breeches, “we would also advise the putting of a strip of Irish linen from the leg seam to the button-hole, to prevent the thinness of the stuff bursting across the knee. Mind that the strip of linen be narrower then the width; this will much strengthen and contract their tendency to laceration or tearing.” While the instructions in 1796 would make it seem that tailor’s commonly used this method to provide reinforcement across the knee, no breeches conducted in this study comply with these advices. Other areas of potential failure, such as the openings of the pockets, termination of the fall opening, and center back body opening, commonly show liberal reinforcement and bar tacks to prevent any ripping or tearing.

Some of the breeches examined provide evidence that the inseam was straightened, which would create a garment that fit more loosely around the thigh. Fashion called for tight or firmly fit breeches across the thigh, but a looser fit would be more comfortable in the high heat and humidity. In this way climate can be seen to challenge prevailing fashions.
Figure 4.4: A planter wearing a nankeen jacket and loose baggy trousers in the Caribbean. Agostino Brunias, *Planter and his Wife*, ca. 1780, *with a Servant*, oil on canvas, 12 x 9 3/4 inches (30.5 x 24.8 cm), image courtesy of *Yale Center for British Art*.

While breeches remained the fashion, trousers and later pantaloons slowly replaced them as the eighteenth-century came to a close, but earlier in the century men wore them for comfort due to the heat.\(^{184}\) Tailors constructed trousers identically to breeches. Trousers fell loose over the thigh and ended at the ankle providing a light and comfortable alternative to breeches.

\(^{184}\) For an in depth look at the change from breeches to pantaloons see, Murray, “From Breeches to Sherryvallies,” 17-33.
For travelers and immigrants arriving in North America, the sight of all classes of men wearing trousers was startling. Usually only men at work, sailors, and slaves wore this utilitarian garment, but gentile southern men commonly wore this useful garment during the summer. Just over the Mason-Dixon line in Chester, Pennsylvania, Irish Quaker Robert Parker commented in 1725, “In summer time they wear nothing but a shirt & linnen drawers trousers, which are breeches and stockings all in one made of linnen; they are fine cool wear in summer.”\(^{185}\) Phillip Vickers Fithian a tutor at Nomini Hall recorded in his diary that Robert Carter’s son, “stript himself naked, of everything but his shirt and trousers,” as the weather was exceedingly hot.\(^{186}\) Portraits of men in the Caribbean also illustrate the practice of wearing loose trousers in the extreme heat (fig. 4.4). Evidence suggests that the further south one traveled, the more often men wore trousers. This adaptation and repurposing of fashion allowed southern men to keep comfortable.

Waistcoats, also referred to in the eighteenth-century as vestcoats, vests, or jackets, covered the man from the pit of his throat down to his waist. Fashionable garments fit firmly across the chest with help from skillful tailoring and strategically placed ties and laces on the back of the garment. In the early eighteenth-century,

\(^{185}\) Cited in Albert Cook Myers, *Immigration of the Irish Quakers in Pennsylvania, 1682-1750, with their early history in Ireland* (Swarthmore, Pa.:1902), 74.

waistcoats extended nearly the length of the man’s coat, terminating around the knee with flaps covering the openings of the pockets set along the waistline and often had sleeves. As the century progressed, fashionable waistcoats became shorter, flared below the waist, and rarely had sleeves. During the 1780s and 1790s the waistcoat became even shorter and was made without pocket flaps. Cross or welted pockets were set high on the belly.  

 Eighteenth-century tailors cut waistcoats in four panels. The girth of the man’s body was divided into thirds. Roughly one third of the overall measure was split between the two back panels and the other two thirds made up the two fronts. They would then add buckram to support buttonholes, buttons, and pocket flaps to the front panels; and added interior pieces of linen or stay taping reinforced the lower vents at the side and center back seams. Once the tailor sewed in the pocket bags and placed the flaps on the exterior, he would lay in the lining. Linings of extant British and American waistcoats typically are fustians, often with the edges and lower skirts trimmed in silk. The backs of waistcoats commonly employed fabrics of a lesser quality and cost, as only the front would show under the coat. Some waistcoats were

lined in silk shags or wool plush for warmth in the winter. The backs and front were lined separately and then joined. Once the exterior was seamed, the interior edges of the lining were whipped together, finishing the lining.

In hot climates, waistcoats were not fitted so closely to the body and were not lined. Stephen Hawtrey warned his brother about to leave England for Williamsburg, Virginia that, “You must carry with you a stock of linen wasitcoats made very large and loose, that they may’nt stick to your hide when you perspire.” Tutor Charles Caleb Cotton mentions that Charlestonians only wear, “slight linen waistcoats” during the summer months. Surviving examples indicate that tailors removed all excess materials. Portraiture however, particularly in the Caribbean, shows many men did not wear waistcoats.

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188 Stephen Hawtrey to Edward Hawtrey, March 26, 1765, Alumni File, College Archives, Special Collections, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.

189 Charles Caleb Cotton to his Mother and Father, July 12, 1799, “The Letters of Charles Caleb Cotton, 1798-1802,” 220.
Figure 4.5: A detail of a waistcoat worn by Samuel Fisher, when in exile in Virginia. The exterior is a fine linen or linen and cotton stripe, half lined with a fine linen, accession # 90.3.6.5. *Courtesy of the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent.*

While men describe their waistcoats as unlined, surviving examples suggest that some elements of linings were retained. Tailors often placed a narrow facing starting from the middle of the shoulder seam that extended two to fours inches wide down the center front, leaving the majority of chest unlined. This covered unsightly buckrams and supported the buttons and buttonholes. Generally the entire skirt below the waist remained fully lined, covering and supporting the weight that might be placed within the pocket. The center back was also not lined with few exceptions of the lower skirt panels. Tailors overcast the raw edges of the seam allowance and on occasion felled the seams (turning the raw edge under and stitching it down) to protect them during laundering. The arms eyes on most extant pieces show simple hemming, however a waistcoat worn by Samuel Fisher, a Philadelphia Quaker exiled to Virginia in 1777, shows a narrow tape facing the interior arms eye as another method in
finishing the raw edge, similarly found along the inseam of some breeches. Neck edges were often reinforced with a narrow band cut along the straight grain to prevent stretching. On some waistcoats, even the stiffened structure intended to support the buttons and buttonholes has been left off. Two white worked thin cotton waistcoats in the Charleston Museum collection, with provenance to the Manigault family survive with only narrow facings down the center front.

Figure 4.6: Unlined undyed natural linen waistcoat with tambour worked silk vines and flowers. This waistcoat was probably made and worn in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, accession # 1991-75-27. Image courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, www.philamuseum.org.
Waistcoats provided the opportunity for men to add color to their wardrobe and exhibit the latest fashions. Embroidered waistcoats were in fashion for nearly the entire eighteenth-century, and the beauty of their embroidery caused thousands if not tens of thousands of them to be saved. Silk satins and thinner taffetas typically made up the ground fabric of embroidered waistcoats, with the floral borders and other decorations executed in silk floss. Because the embroiderer often left excess threads and floats on the back, a full lining was necessary to hide or cover areas not meant to be seen. An embroidered waistcoat made and worn in Philadelphia illustrates the change in standard practice for warm weather (fig 4.6). Embroidered on thin unbleached linen down the center front edges and around the pockets flaps with silk tambour, the garment was half lined to make it comfortable in the heat. The embroiderer added no extra embellishment across the chest, as that section remains unlined.
Men could also purchase printed, inked, or stamped waistcoats if they wanted to add some color to their summer wardrobe. With no stitched embellishment, linings were not needed to cover loose threads on the interior. At the outbreak of the American Revolution, merchant Moses Young advertised, “An elegant assortment of new fashioned Jacket Patterns, fit for summer wear, and printed near this city, quite...
superior to those imported from England.”

In 1782, a robbery in New Jersey resulted in the theft of “2 stamped jacket patterns of fine yellow jean.” A rare surviving bedcover at the Charleston Museum with provenance to the Manigault family is made from linen yardage printed to shape for waistcoats and shows the availability of printed men’s goods in Charleston, South Carolina (fig. 4.7). Stylistically the Manigault waistcoats date to the 1750s. Almost all the other descriptions of printed jackets or waistcoats date to the 1770s or later. This shows the importance of surviving objects when they provide evidence of the use earlier than documentary proof. Perhaps Charleston sat on the cutting edge of fashion, but more research needs to be conducted on these rare printed waistcoats.

Men wore coats or frocks on top of their waistcoats to complete their suit. Men were not considered fully dressed without a coat, but the lack of a waistcoat was acceptable in tropical climates. The coat covered the man from his throat down to the knee. Over the course of the eighteenth-century, coats changed dramatically in

190 The Pennsylvania Evening Post, July 18, 1775, America’s Historical Newspapers, The word jacket remained an ambiguous term throughout the eighteenth-century; one that differed between region and culture. Often period descriptions employed it to describe waistcoats or waistcoats with sleeves.

191 The New Jersey Gazette, April 24, 1782, America’s Historical Newspapers, also see Tyler Rudd Putman’s blog, Ran Away From The Subscriber, Thursday October 25, 2012, “Printed Jacket Patterns and Stamped Jacket Shapes - 1770s and 1780s.”

192 Frock is another term used during the eighteenth-century to describe a coat. Frocks early in the century are often thought as less formal, but by the 1760s coat and frock are used interchangeably.
fashion, fit and construction. The coat was made of four panels in roughly the same proportion as waistcoats, but with the addition of a series of folds that fell into controlled pleats at the hip. Coats also had sleeves, cuffs, flaps to cover pocket openings, and often collars. Like waistcoats, tailors employed buckrams down the center front of coats to support buttons and buttonholes worked through the fabric. Areas of strain, such as the center back and side vents also received extra reinforcement.

The standard method of construction was the same for coats as for waistcoats. Once they cut out the garment, the parts went into different hands within a tailor shop for quick construction. One tailor might apply the buckram down the center fronts; while others sewed together sleeves, sleeve linings, and cuffs. Another tailor sewed pocket flaps, pocket bags, and collars. With the buckram stitched in place, tailors stitched buttons and buttonholes onto the fronts and potentially on the cuffs and pocket flaps if the customer desired. Once completed, they inserted the pocket bags and stitched the pocket flaps on the exterior of the coat. The interior would then receive a full lining of silk or wool, to cover all the raw edges of the buckram, seams, pocket bags, and other areas of reinforcement. The lower half of the back received the same lining as the front, but like a waistcoat a linen or fustian was often used to line the upper back, which would not be seen when worn. With the fronts and back created separately, the tailor’s then joined the side and shoulder seams together. Once
completed, they set the sleeves and collars and whipped closed the interior linings. A final pressing finished the man’s new coat.\textsuperscript{193}

Figure 4.8: Thomas Pinckney’s officer’s coatee worn during the American Revolution. Made from an earlier unlined summer coat, this coatee is also unlined. Note also the practical length not only for the military but also for the summer months, accession #4605, Courtesy of The Charleston Musuem, Charleston, South Carolina.

This practice drastically change for coats worn in the summer. John Harrower in Fredericksburg, Virginia mentioned to his wife that he wore a short cloath (wool)
coat without linings. In another letter to his wife dated December 6, 1774, Harrower provided some key information about what he meant when he said his coat had no lining, writing, “My Dearest Life… About 20 days ago I only laid aside my summer dress and put on a suite of new claret coloured duffle neatly mounted but no lining in the coat only faced in the breasts.” Virginia planter William Reynolds makes a similar request to his factor George Norton in London when ordering a coat. He desired, “a suit of Sky Blue Corderoy (with a new fashion Embroidered’d button I mean a silver spring on a button of the same Colour) the coat to be faced with silk but not lined through a small cape & a tight cuff with buttons on them & pocket flaps….” Charles Caleb Cotton described the unusual dress of Charlestonians in 1799 and that men wore “a short coat, called here a coatee, made of light Gingham without any lining.” An extant broadcloth coat worn by Joseph Nourse of Georgetown, Virginia dated to the early 1770s, shows what Harrower meant by “without lining.” A narrow silk facing runs down the center front starting from the shoulder seam. At the waist, the lining makes a ninety-degree turn towards the side seam, covering the pocket bags of the lower skirt. The center back vent retains a narrow facing to either side, but the upper back remains completely unlined. The sleeves are lined with fine

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195 Ibid.,

white linen. A surviving thin silk officers coat worn by Thomas Pinckney in the collection of the Charleston Museum dated to the early years of the American Revolution, shows evidence of two different lining campaigns, both constructed like the Nourse suit (fig. 4.8). For the layout of this style lining see figure 4.9.
Figure 4.9: The interior view of an “unlined” man’s coat. The pink color marks a common arrangement of the linings in a summer coat. Starting from the shoulders, running down the front, and then cutting across at the waist to line the front skirt. A small facing lines each side of the center back vent. The collar is also lined in pink silk. All of the grey areas are a single layer, including the sleeves (not shown). This method is seen in both Pinckney coats pictured. Reproduction coat copied from silk summer coat the Victoria and Albert Museum, constructed by and photo from the author.
Figure 4.10: This plain unlined linen coat and breeches was worn in Massachusetts in the 1770s and shows the second variation of lining for unlined coats and waistcoats, accession # 2013.136.1. From the Collections of The Henry Ford.

An early nineteenth-century coat of domestically woven indigo dyed wool and cotton, with provenance to Thomas Jefferson shows a different method of lining. The lining starts at the neck and narrowly runs down the center front of the coat, but instead of making a turn to fully line the skirt, the facing continues down the front and
terminates at the hem. In this case the pocket bags are left exposed. A very fine linen suit in the collection of the Henry Ford Museum worn in Massachusetts that dates to the 1770s, shows this same detail. In this case, a very narrow facing runs down the front (fig. 4.11 and 4.12). The tailor carefully turned the raw edges of the pocket bag inward to ensure it would not unravel. The differences in construction techniques maybe the result in the tailors training or the type of material used in the garment.

Figure 4.11: The interior of the coat shows neatly overcast seams and a narrow facing running from neck to hem. This leaves the pocket bag exposed. The edges of the pocket bag were turned to incase the raw edge of the fabric and to prevent it from unraveling. The center back vent also shows a narrow facing to each side, accession # 2013.136.1. From the Collections of The Henry Ford.
Wrapping Gowns and Banyans

Men often chose to wear a wrapping gown or banyan as a fashionable garment instead of a coat, coatee, or jacket throughout the summer. On truly sultry days, wrapping gowns and banyans might be worn only with a shirt. Men distinguished between gowns and banyans in the method of fitting. With their geometric “T” shaped layout, wrapping gowns trace their origins to Japanese kimonos and remain loose and completely unfitted. The Banyans, a group of Hindu traders, wore long fitted robes to remain comfortable in the heat of India. These garments quickly disseminated to the western world and became extremely popular, especially in the warmer climates.  

**Figure 4.12:** Light thin banyans provided comfortable alternative to coats and waistcoats during the summer months, accession # 1954-1010. India (textile), probably England (gown), 1770-1810, mordant painted and dyed cotton "chintz", silk facing, cotton linings, cotton and silk sewing threads, accession # 1954-1010. *The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum Purchase.*
Wrapping gowns or banyans were often made from large scale printed cottons and figured silks; fabrics not generally well suited for men’s coats, waistcoats and breeches. They were worn for both formal and informal occasions. Dr. John Lining in Charleston informed the Royal Society in London that after thoroughly soaking a thin holland jacket with perspiration in the morning, he changed in the afternoon and wore his “chince” or printed cotton gown. An inventory of goods owned by George Paris from Chowan, County, North Carolina listed “2 banyans, 1 calico, 1 cotton.”

Other individuals chose plainer more serviceable gowns and banyans. Phillip Vickers Fithian, a tutor to Robert Carter’s children at Nomani Hall in Virginia recorded an extremely hot summer in 1774, “O! it is very hot, the wind itself seems to be heated…I dress in a thin waist-coat and a loose light linen gown.”

Alexandria, Virginia tailor William Carlin also made a variety of lightweight garments for his


customers that included a double-breasted banyan, a checked banyan, and a lapper (potentially another term for a wrapping gown).\textsuperscript{201}

Figure 4.13: Portrait of Charles Pinckney wearing a loose silk floral patterned wrapping and velvet cap. \textit{Charles Pinckney}, ca. 1740, by Unknown artist; oil on canvas; 30 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches; Museum purchase; 2006.002; © Image Courtesy of Gibbes Museum of Art/Carolina Art Association.

Few wrapping gowns and banyans survive that can be documented to the American south. One example, a heavy silk damask wrapping gown, wadded with fine wool batting, and lined with silk, survives in the collection of The Charleston Museum with provenance to Charlestonian, Charles Pinckney. This garment probably

saw use in the cooler months in South Carolina or when he visited London. Another extremely thin printed cotton wrapping gown survives in the collection of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association with provenance to George Washington. This thin unlined example shows very careful construction, all the raw edges are turned to ensure the cloth would not unravel during wearing or laundring.

Men could acquire wrapping gowns and banyans bespoke through their tailors, but many merchants offered them ready-made, particularly in the Low Country. James Maxwell advertised in *The South Carolina Gazette* frequently that he sold “Gentlemen’s Gowns for Summer Wear.”202 The largely unfitted gowns made for the perfect ready-made object to import and sell.

**Accessories**

Clothing not only exhibited fashion, but also provided protection against the sun. The tanning effect of the sun’s rays was not fashionable in the eighteenth-century. Clothing worn in hot weather covered most of the body to enable the elite to keep their complexion fair and for the working class to protect against burnt skin. Few trees were left for comfort and shade after colonists had cleared forests to provide fuel to burn, raw materials to sell, and to create fields for staple crops. Shade trees rarely existed in cities like Richmond, New Bern, Wilmington, Charleston and Savannah. J.F.D. Smyth’s noted this in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1773 when he wrote, “the street deep with sand (not being paved)…is disagreeable to walk in,

202 *The South Carolina Gazette*, April 11, 1748, *Accessible Archives*. 
especially in summer, when the rays of the sun are in intensely hot, and not a little increased by the reflections of the white sand, wherein every step is almost above the shoe, and where there is no shade or shelter to walk under, unless you carry an umbrella.” 203 In an era with no topical sunscreens, clothing and accessories like umbrellas provided some protection against the sun’s harmful rays.

An article placed in *The Virginia almanack for the year of our Lord God 1761*, entitled “Directions for making a Traveling-Umbrella, which maybe carried without the least Inconvenience,” explained how men would keep cool. The author wrote, “if man is to expose himself to the heat, let his clothing be of a light colour, and as the head will be greatly affected by the present preposterous fashion of wearing black hats in all weather, if he must keep to the fashion, let him cover his hat with a sheet of white paper.” 204 Members of the Philadelphia Humane Society echoed this thought in 1787 and claimed, “To wear a white hat, or to cover a black one with white paper, when you are necessarily exposed to the hot sun, and to avoid standing still when you are in such a situation.” 205 For the head and face, hats provided some protection from the sun. Black hats were unpractical as the color retained heat. A French traveler noted


204 Theophilus Wreg, “Directions for making a Traveling-Umbrella, which maybe carried without the least Inconvenience, with remarks on the property of Dress,” in *The Virginia Almanack for the Year of our Lord God 1761* (Williamsburg: 1760).

the that many Quakers in Pennsylvania wore white hats. He wrote, “The white hat, which they [Quakers] prefer, has become more common here since Franklin has proved its advantages which it possesses, and the inconveniences of the black.”

This was also discussed in a London newspaper reporting the retreat of the failed attack and capture of Charleston, South Carolina in 1776. The author recounted, “When the kings troops were leaving Carolina, a white hat and handkerchief, much stained with blood, were hoisted by the Provincials upon their fortress, as a mark of triumph. Many American Gentlemen, in summer, wear white hats, as not so attractive of the suns heat as the black ones.”

But some evidence shows that some men wanted or perhaps had no choice but to wear black hats. John Harrower of Fredericksburg, Virginia wrote his wife on June 14, 1774 and said “as for myself I suppose you wou’d scarce know me now, there being nothing either brown, blue, or black about me but the head and feet.”

The only color he wore was his black shoes and black hat.


During the summer, men also wore thin linen caps throughout the day. In Britain these caps typically were worn only for informal occasions or at night, but throughout the South men wore them as a thin, washable alternative to a hat. William Hugh Grove mentions Virginia gentlemen wearing thin linen caps in 1732, due to the heat.209 The cartouche of the Fry-Jefferson map shows a group of men along a wharf selling tobacco in the tidewater region of Virginia. The central man, dressed in a wrapping gown, wears a light soft cap upon his head. Likewise, London publisher Robert Sayer & J. Bennett printed in 1775, *The Alternative of Williams-burg*. This satirical print shows men standing around a hogshead of tobacco signing an agreement of non-importation of goods from England. The large man in the center probably meant to represent Peyton Randolph, Speaker of the House of Burgesses and President of the Continental Congress, has no waistcoat and wears a white cap on his head with a ribbon tied around it. Artists often used clothing to denote unfamiliar regions within the English Empire, but to also satirize an odd or unusual form of dress.

The hot climate also brought pestilence. Mosquitoes plagued the low-lying tidewater and low-country regions throughout the summer.210 Charles Caleb Cotton


wrote from in Charleston, “…even when sitting still…I am literally tormented with the
bites of mosquitoes.”\(^\text{211}\) In these mosquito-ridden areas, men frequently purchased
and employed what they called mosquito boots or wrappers. While stationed at Fort
Moultrie in 1777, Thomas Pinckney asked his sister to, “Please deliver to the Bearer
(For I have not as yet determined whether it shall be John or Toby) my Pavillion,
Musquito Boots, Conteau de Chasse, and Silver Shoe Buckles.”\(^\text{212}\) In 1797, Benjamin
Latrobe drew Col. Blackburn of Virginia wearing a version of the leggings and
provided directions for making a pair. Latrobe wrote, “Five yards of green baize, Four
yards of list of broadcloth, divide into two portions, apply the some to the part likely
to be affected from 4 in the afternoon till 11 o’clock at night. Colonel Blackburn’s
specific against muskitoes bites, in the month of July, Rippon Lodge, July 1797.”
While hot to wear during the summer, the thick heavy cloth provided some protection
against the pesky biting bugs.

Clothing worn in the American South was adapted to accommodate the
climate, and generated a fashion distinctive to the region. A letter written to Mrs.
Josephine du Pont from Margaret Manigault described her husband on August 29,

\(^{211}\) Charles Caleb Cotton to his Mother, June 3, 1799, “The Letters of Charles Caleb
Cotton, 1798-1802,” 218. A pavilion is a thin light gauze or net that covered the
bedstead during the summer months that allowed cool night air to pass through but
stopped biting insects from pestering the sleeping person.

\(^{212}\) Thomas Pinckney to Harriot, June 20, 1777 in Jack L. Cross, “Letters of Thomas
Pinckney, 1775-1780.” The South Carolina Historical Magazine, vol. 58, no. 2 (April
1800. She wrote, “I have hear of M. Du Pont’s travels. He has been seen in
Alexandria accoutered like a true Virginian in Gingham coat & sailors pantaloons &
avoided the ladies. I don’t remember him by that description.” This newly arrived
Frenchman immediately adapted his clothing to face the summer heat, and to
assimilate into Virginia summer fashion.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

“For your dress should be accommodated to the state of the atmosphere, and to the climate in which you live.” A Mental Museum for the Rising Generation, 1829.

For centuries, humans have tried to find comfort in various climates through dress. European powers established colonies within the equatorial belt around the world and both men and women were forced to live with extreme heat. Many of the traditions that they brought with them, including clothing, had to be adapted to achieve some form of personal comfort in the tropical climate.

Figure 5.1: Colonel Mordaunt, an English officer, stands just left of center with the shaved head, wearing a white linen or cotton jacket and pantaloons while in Calcutta, India. Mordaunt, along with the large man seated to the right with the white hat, are obviously well seasoned to the climate, compared to the sweltering officers seated behind them under the awning. Johan Zoffany, Colonel Mordaunt’s Cock Match, ca. 1784-1786, oil on canvas, 1235 x 1695mm. © Tate, London, 2015.

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The American South was not the only place that Europeans experienced excessive heat. Colonists, who came to the Mid-Atlantic and New England colonies in North America also found the heat unbearable and modified their clothing and textiles for comfort. The establishment of trade in Africa and colonies in the Caribbean, South and Central America, China, India, and the Mediterranean further put Europeans in hot climates.

Two aspects of men’s clothing that were adapted to cope with the summer heat in the American south: the fabric from which the clothes were made and the cut and constructions of the garments themselves. European men brought with them to the American south a strong fashionable tradition of wearing wool year round. Some men who wore conventional worsted wools for clothing in the warmer months, quickly found they were uncomfortable and difficult to launder. Catering to this market, English woolen manufactures developed a thin woolen called cassimer that later eclipsed popular broadcloths for its fineness and durability. Cassimer became one of the most popular men’s suitings for the late eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries.

Light, non-traditional materials such as linens and cottons also were popular due to their hardwearing properties and the inability to withstand laundering. Commonly worn by the working class, slaves, and indentured servants, the use of these non-traditional fabrics by men of means caused confusion at a time when a man was judged by the clothes he wore.

Tailors adapted the traditional cut and construction of men’s clothes to bring greater comfort for the summer. To increase comfort, garments were loosely cut,
creating a very visible difference in fashion. Tailors also did not fully line garments except when absolutely necessary to support stress points. The method of lining garments, invisible in visual sources or from the exterior of garments, can only be understood through the study of extant objects. Clothing worn through out the day in the South faced frequent soiling through perspiration and needed regular cleaning, unlike clothing worn for formal occasions. Garment construction, in the form of carefully overcast or turned seams, was adopted to guard against damage from repeated washing. While these garments remained very thin, they protected the body from the sun and swarms of biting insects.

My study of the ways that the fabrics, cut and construction of eighteenth-century men’s garments were adapted in the American South can be used as a model by which to compare practices in other tropical climates in order to broaden our understanding of how men accommodated heat around the world.
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## Appendix A

### Data Set of Extant Garments

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<th>Museum Collection</th>
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<td>The Charleston Museum</td>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>1740s</td>
<td>Manigault family of Charleston, S.C.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Embroidered Waistcoat</td>
<td>The Charleston Museum</td>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>1740s</td>
<td>Manigault family of Charleston, S.C.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waistcoat</td>
<td>Colonial Williamsburg Foundation</td>
<td>Linen</td>
<td>1780s</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waistcoat</td>
<td>Dumbarton House</td>
<td>Wool Broadcloth</td>
<td>1770s</td>
<td>Worn by Joseph Nourse of Georgetown, Va.</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waistcoat</td>
<td>Philadelphia History Museum</td>
<td>Cotton and Linen</td>
<td>1770s</td>
<td>Worn by Joseph Fisher while exiled to Va.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All fibers have been identified by eye.*
Appendix B

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Dabb, Richard <rdabb@museumoflondon.org.uk>  
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DATE OF PUBLICATION/RELEASE: 2015
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March 2, 2015

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Visual Research Librarian

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March 26, 2015

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