HUGH WALKER AND NORTH CAROLINA'S "SMALLPOX CURRENCY" OF 1779

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A few miles outside of Salem, North Carolina, on the rainy morning of April 26, 1779, a mixed company of infantry, cavalry, support personnel, and four supply wagons under the command of Major Pierre Vernier halted.[1] Vernier hesitated to proceed and enter the small town. As part of America's struggling Continental army, he and his tired, weathered soldiers preferred to seek relief among citizens who clearly supported their fight against Great Britain, or at least among those who did not openly oppose it. The cautious officer had heard from "persons on the road" that Salem's inhabitants harbored Tory or pro-English sentiments and might object to his men's presence.[2] Vernier therefore ordered one of his captains and two other subordinates to ride ahead to visit the town and assess its mood and suspected loyalties. Returning from Salem a short time later, the advance party allayed the major's concerns, reporting that the well-ordered community's "dear people" would provide the company with "whatever we need."[3] The party confirmed, too, that Salem was populated and governed by Moravians, a highly devout sect of German Protestants who had settled the town thirteen years earlier.

Reassured by his men's reconnaissance, Vernier now gauged it safe to approach Salem. The Moravians, after all, were recognized as adherents to a strict code of personal conduct, one defined by Scripture and guided daily by the virtues of piety, industry, charity, and pacifism. Politically, the Moravians—also known as the *Unitas Fratrum* (United Brethren)—regarded themselves as bystanders or neutrals in the armed conflict between Britain and its thirteen defiant colonies. While some elders of the United Brethren were known to hold "sympathies" for King George III, Moravian congregations as a whole rejected outright any notion that they should level their muskets against either side in the Revolution.[4]

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1. A native of Belfort, France, Major Pierre Jean François Vernier (1737-1780) of Pulaski's Legion is identified as "Major Verrier" in Moravian records. See Adelaide L. Fries (ed.), *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, volume 3 (Raleigh: North Carolina State Department of Archives and History, 1968 reprint), 1300. In military references about this legion, the spelling and form of the major's name vary considerably. He is listed as "Peter Verney," "Vernie, Peter J. F.," "Major Paul Vernier," and "Jean-François Vernier" in such works. See Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the Revolution, April, 1775 to December, 1783* (Washington, D.C.: Heitman, 1893), 411; Gilbert Bodinier, *Les Officiers de l'Armée royale, combattants de la guerre d'Indépendance des Etats-Unis de Yorktown à l'an II* (Vincennes: Service historique de l'Armée de terre, 1983), 268; and Gilbert Bodinier, *Dictionnaire des officiers de l'Armée royale qui ont combattu aux Etats-Unis pendant la guerre d'Indépendance, 1776-1783* (Vincennes: Service historique de l'Armée de terre, 1982), 473. Also refer to Francis C. Kajencki, *Casimir Pulaski: Cavalry Commander of the American Revolution* (El Paso, Texas: Southwest Polonia Press, 2001), 103. It should be noted that the Moravians regularly recorded weather conditions in and around Salem. For April 26, 1779, they state, "Last night there was a thunder-storm with rain which continued this morning" (Fries, *Records of Moravians,*1300).

2. Fries, *Records of Moravians,* 1282.

3. Fries, *Records of Moravians,* 1283.

4. The Moravians' refusal to participate militarily in the American Revolution alienated patriots and loyalists alike. Over time, North Carolina's Moravians gradually yielded to secular needs and to the state government's requirements that all towns train and equip local militias. In 1831, Salem formed its own light infantry company, and thirty years later some Salem residents enlisted to fight for the Confederacy. See Leszek Szymanski, *Casimir Pulaski: A Hero of the American Revolution* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1994), 179; Janet Fox, *Winston-Salem: A Cooperative Spirit* (Montgomery, Alabama: Community Communications, 1994), 25; and Adelaide L. Fries and Douglas LeTell Rights (eds.), *Records of the Moravians of North Carolina,* volume 8 (Raleigh: North Carolina State Department of Archives and History, 1954), 3960, 3969, 3982.

Upon entering Salem near mid-day on the 26th, a Monday, Major Vernier informed town leaders that after a brief stay he and his troops planned to resume their journey toward South Carolina. Military records indicate that Vernier's force, described as "a large detachment" by the Moravians, numbered approximately 160 men.[5] These soldiers comprised part of the Pulaski Legion, which had its recruitment headquarters in Maryland, but for the past seven months had been deployed principally in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.[6] Earlier, in March 1778, at the time the Continental Congress authorized the legion's formation, officials had specified its size and composition. They instructed the legion's leader, Brigadier General Casimir Pulaski, to raise an "independent Corps ... of sixty-eight Horse and two hundred Foot, the Horse to be armed with Lances, the Foot equipped in the Manner of Light Infantry."[7] With this congressional license in hand, Pulaski had spent the spring and summer of 1778 recruiting and rigorously training American-born colonists, fellow Polish volunteers, some French and Italian enlistees, and other European émigrés. Germans accounted for the largest percentage of the 336 troops who ultimately filled the rolls of Pulaski's Legion, including a significant number of Hessian mercenaries who had fled British service.[8] In fact, Salem's record keepers described Major Vernier, a forty-two-year-old Alsatian, as a "French-German" and categorized most of the men in his company as "Germans from many lands."[9] Those particular troops must have felt a degree of added comfort and cultural familiarity when they began to mingle and converse easily with the German-speaking residents of Salem.

Simultaneous with the arrival of Vernier's company in Salem, another contingent of Pulaski's legionnaires was bypassing the Moravian settlement, opting to march "further down in the State" toward South Carolina.[10] The travel of that unit through North Carolina's piedmont and the movement of Vernier's men through the region were part of a much larger repositioning of American forces by the Continental army's commander-in-chief, George Washington. Washington's transfer of troops to the South in the first half of 1779 intended to counter the British military's shift in strategy of focusing less on New York, Massachusetts, and other northern targets to attacking more areas in South Carolina and Georgia, mainly around Charleston and Savannah.[11]

Vernier and his men remained in Salem for four days. They rested, repaired their uniforms and equipment, and enjoyed several meals in which the main courses were hefty cuts of ox meat purchased from the town. Most of the men also took the opportunity in the evenings to attend

5. Fries, *Records of Moravians,* 1282, 1300. The exact number of men in Major Vernier's combined "Company" is not known. Any military unit's size can fluctuate dramatically, especially in wartime when casualties, disease, desertions, and transfers continually affect its strength. Traditionally, a single company can range in size from a "light" company of as few as sixty soldiers to a "heavy" company of nearly 200 men. Pulaski's Legion consisted of general staff, three cavalry troops, and five infantry companies. Based on payroll accounts, the entire legion numbered 336 soldiers by March 1779, so all of its units were quite small. On average, each Pulaski company contained only thirty-seven soldiers; each cavalry troop, forty-six lancers or dragoons. Moravian records describe Vernier's force as a "Company of Cavalry," but other references identify the major as the leader of Pulaski's "infantry corps" during the legion's trek southward. The force that entered Salem was clearly a mixture of mounted troops and foot soldiers, who would have comprised about half the legion. See Kajencki, *Pulaski*, 123-26, 168; Szymanski, *Hero of the American Revolution*, 246, 252.

6. Kajencki, *Pulaski*, 62, 84-119.

7. Szymanski, *Hero of the American Revolution*, 166.

8. Kajencki, *Pulaski*, 62-72, 114-15; Szymanski, *Hero of the American Revolution,* 171-73, 246.

9. Fries, *Records of Moravians*, 1300.

10. Fries, *Records of Moravians*, 1300.

11. David Lee Russell, *The American Revolution in the Southern Colonies* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Company, 2000), 97-98.

religious services presented by their hosts, who were impressed by the soldiers' discipline and polite behavior.[12] The only notable incident during this time was one that did not directly involve Salem's citizens. Early on Wednesday, April 28, Major Vernier formally punished two of the company's baggage-handlers. Charged with theft and desertion, the pair was forced to run a gauntlet of legionnaires in the front yard of the [Single] Brothers House. There troops whipped them with "stirrup-straps" until both men fully confessed the details of their alleged crimes.[13] Two days later, when Vernier and all of his soldiers departed Salem, they carried with them fresh provisions and no doubt a few lasting impressions of the Moravians' hospitality and righteous lifestyle. Unfortunately, someone within the company's ranks had left something behind in Salem, something that soon would seriously affect everyone there: smallpox.

Moravian records note that during Vernier's stopover in Salem one of the legionnaires who "recently had small-pox" had been quarantined in a tent erected near the town's tavern.[14] In all likelihood, either that recovering soldier or a comrade in an earlier stage of infection introduced the disease to the community. Salem's brothers and sisters had no uncertainties about its source. They blamed the hapless, tent-confined patient for bringing it to their midst.[15] Irrespective of who did so, two weeks after the quarantined soldier and the rest of Vernier's men left the town, and in keeping with the projected incubation period for smallpox exposure, the contagion became apparent. The first Salem resident to exhibit symptoms of smallpox was actually not a Moravian. A slave named Jacob, the settlement's "only negro," fell ill by May 13.[16] Jacob would slowly recover; but seven days later Eva Schumacher, a Moravian woman who worked in a building where many of Vernier's men had been quartered, died of the disease.[17] One by one, more townsfolk became infected. Over the next five months, Salem would battle not just a growing epidemic but also the accompanying fear that spread more quickly than the smallpox virus itself. One Moravian observer described the surrounding population's reaction to his community's plight:

> Our ignorant and malicious neighbors threatened to destroy the town if we inoculated, so the small-pox stayed among us until October. . . . This condition practically cut off all intercourse with Salem, and if people came or passed through they were afraid. It was customary for such people to have a leaf of tobacco which they smelled as a preventative, some stuck tobacco leaves in their nostrils, one even saw some passersby who had smeared tar on the forehead, under the nose, and elsewhere.[18]

Nearly a third of Salem's population—forty-one of its 129 inhabitants—would contract smallpox by the fall of 1779. Remarkably, only three of those infected souls would perish or, as the Moravians phrased it, would be "called home."[19] The town's faithful credited divine intervention

12. Fries, *Records of Moravians,* 1283, 1300.

13. Fries, *Records of Moravians,* 1301.

14. Fries, *Records of Moravians,* 1300.

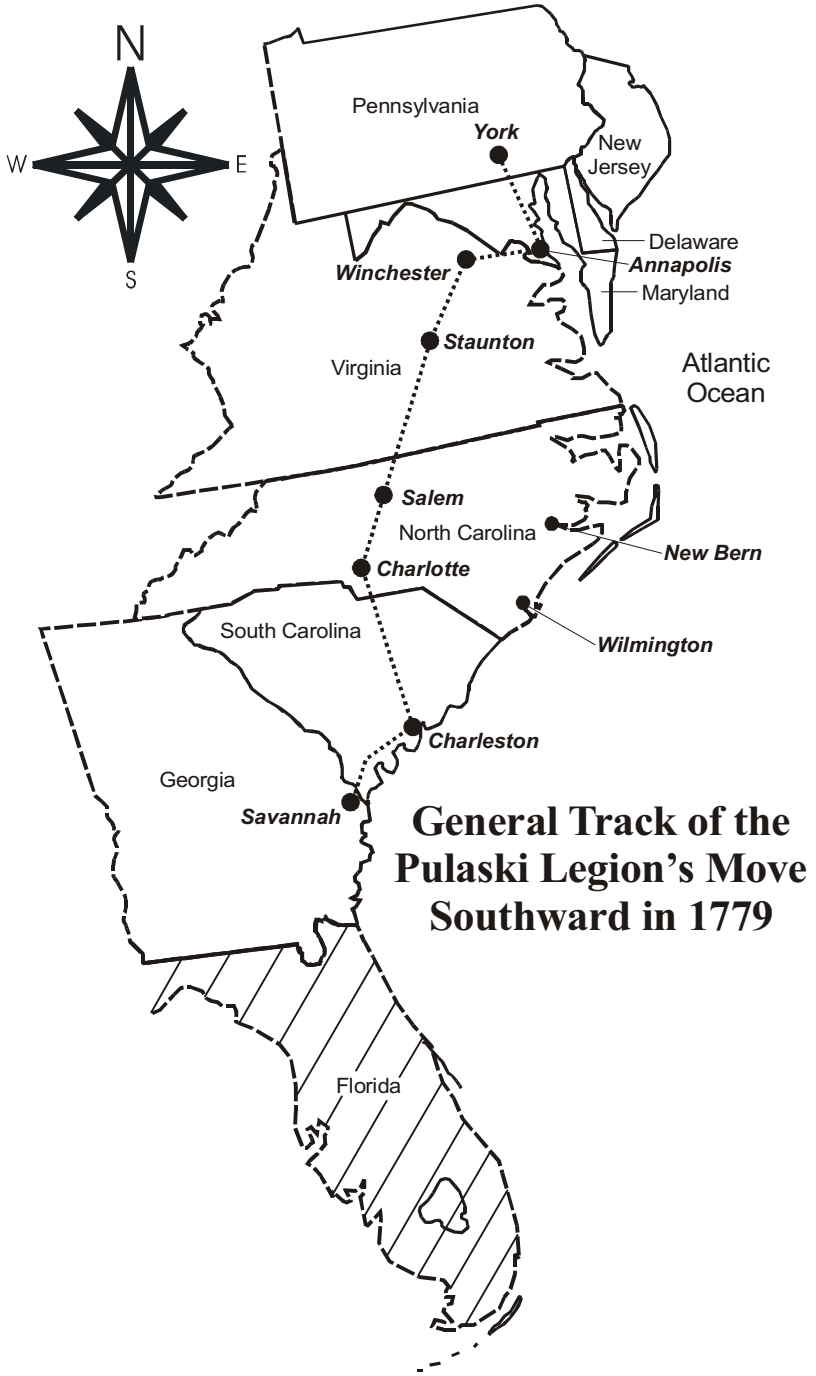
15. Fries, *Records of Moravians,* 1283.

16. Fries, *Records of Moravians,* 1303.

17. Fries, *Records of Moravians*, 1300, 1303-4.

18. Fries, *Records of Moravians*, 1283. (See also note 38.)

19. Two other smallpox fatalities occurred late in Salem's epidemic. On August 21, 1779, Christina Aust died, and Andreas Wagman succumbed to smallpox on September 4 (Fries, *Records of Moravians*, 1312-13, 1315). Three deaths among Salem's infected group of forty-one citizens establish a mortality rate there of only seven percent. For *Variola major*, a death rate two or three times higher would have been expected.



Major Vernier would be dead within a year after arriving in Salem in April 1779. The following October he assumed command of the legion when General Pulaski was mortally wounded in battle at Savannah. Six months later, on April 14, 1780, British troops killed Vernier during an early-morning raid on American forces at Monck's Corner, South Carolina. Many of the remaining legionnaires surrendered the next month in Charleston, a reduction in force so substantial that it prompted the Continental Congress to disband the Pulaski Legion by November 1780. Information for this map was obtained from Francis Casimir Kajencki's *Casimir Pulaski: Cavalry Commander of the American Revolution* (El Paso, Texas: Southwest Polonia Press, 2001), 127.

and the grace of the Almighty's hand for this unusually low death count. Salem was not alone in its battle against the disease. To the east, in Craven County, smallpox began "raging" in New Bern weeks before the start of Salem's epidemic (*refer to map on preceding page*).[20] There state and local officials took immediate steps to calm New Bern's citizenry and to contain the disease, which in all probability was brought to the town by another passing soldier or visiting mariner.

The fears incited by smallpox in and around Salem and New Bern were by no means uncommon reactions in the eighteenth century. The age-old illness remained a primary killer worldwide and would remain so for generations to come. In America, it was not the only disease that routinely attacked our ancestors. Yellow fever, malaria, diphtheria, typhus, scarlet fever, influenza, and dysentery were among other deadly threats; but smallpox, the "speckled monster," was universally the most dreaded.[21] In her 2001 book, *Pox Americana*, North Carolina historian Elizabeth Fenn examines in considerable detail the swath of misery that the disease cut through military and civilian populations during the American Revolution. She recounts how smallpox killed more than 100,000 people on the continent between 1775 and 1782 and maimed countless others.[22] Earlier, hundreds of thousands of other "New World" inhabitants had been struck down by the disease, especially Native Americans, who had no experience with smallpox until the virus arrived in their lands with the first European explorers at the close of the fifteenth century.

In describing smallpox's devastating effect on indigenous cultures, Fenn compares its arrival in the western hemisphere "as though a spark had landed in a forest laden with thousands of years of dried timber."[23] Epidemics ignited and spread through Indian villages over subsequent decades, with death rates ranging from fifty percent to more than ninety percent of those infected.[24] Territories in and around the Carolinas did not escape these cycles of carnage. Widespread outbreaks in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries decimated the Catawba, Tuscarora, Congaree, Sewee, Waxhaw, and Cherokee.[25] In a letter written to her sister in England in March, 1698, Carolina settler Affra Coming remarks that smallpox had "swept away a whole neighboring [Indian] nation, all to 5 or 6 which ran away and left their dead unburied."[26] Surveyor John Lawson, who explored much of the region during this same period, provides another first-hand account of the disease's grim toll on native peoples. The following is an extract from Lawson's 1709 publication *A New Voyage to Carolina*:

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20. Letter of North Carolina Governor Richard Caswell "To the Hon.The General Assembly of North Carolina," May 3, 1779, Johnston Court House, Smithfield, N.C., Walter Clark (ed.), *The State Records of North Carolina*, volume XIV (Wilmington: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1993), 77; Fries, *Records of Moravians*, 1300.

21. Jennifer Lee Carrell, *The Speckled Monster: A Historical Tale of Battling Smallpox* (New York: Dutton Books, 2003).

22. Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana*: *The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).

23. Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 23.

24. Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 23.

25. Chapman J. Milling, *Red Carolinians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940), 207-8, 237-38, 238, 280, and 298; Douglas Summers Brown, *Catawba Indians: The People of the River* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1966), 180-82; Douglas L. Rights, *The American Indian in North Carolina* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1957), 71, 74; Peter H. Wood, "The Changing Population of the Colonial South: An Overview of Race and Region, 1685-1790"; Peter H. Wood, Gregory A. Waselkov, and M. Thomas Hatley (eds.), *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians of the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 45, 63-65.

26. Letter of Mrs. Affra Coming, March 6, 1698, transcribed in Edward McCrady, *South Carolina Under the Proprietary Government, 1670-1719* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1897), 308.

> . . . it destroy'd whole Towns, without leaving one *Indian* alive in the Village . . . . The Small-Pox and Rum have made such a Destruction amongst them, that, on good grounds, I do believe, there is not the sixth Savage living within two hundred Miles of all our Settlements, as there were fifty Years ago. These poor Creatures have so many Enemies to destroy them, that it's a wonder one of them is left near us.[27]

Commenting further about the natives' vulnerability to smallpox, Lawson assigns specific blame to this "Plague," giving evidence that in his own day there was a general awareness of the disease's origins. "Most certainly," he writes, "it had never visited *America*, before the Discovery thereof by the Christians."[28]

When reviewing historical records about smallpox's often gruesome, lethal effects on the human body, it is understandable why our ancestors reacted so viscerally to any reports of the illness, whether those reports were confirmed cases or mere rumors. Infection passed easily through person-to-person contacts and the sharing of clothing, bed linens, blankets, or utensils contaminated by the sick. There is, quite frankly, no delicate way of describing what confronted a smallpox victim. Once infected, a person's initial symptoms seemed flu-like, usually beginning with head and muscle aches, vomiting, and followed by high fever and violent chills. Next, red spots formed on the tongue and along the lining of the mouth, throat, and nose. The spots soon developed into sores that erupted and saturated those areas of the body with the virus. Then a skin rash appeared on the patient's chest, rapidly spreading to the face, torso, limbs, and sometimes leeching into the eyes. As this rash intensified, larger pus-filled blisters or pustules formed. The more prevalent and virulent strain of the virus, *Variola major*, would riddle the body's entire surface with hundreds, sometimes thousands, of these hard pustules. If they became confluent and merged into larger lesions on the skin, rampant bacterial infections and death were near certainties. Such complications only magnified stresses on the body and led to unchecked hemorrhaging, shock, and finally heart failure.[29] The confluence of pustules is what killed Salem resident Andreas Wageman on September 4, 1779. Moravian records that day state that Wageman "had an unbelievable number of postules [*sic*], which did not develop properly but struck in [merged] on the 8th day, and caused his death."[30] For the smallpox victims who avoided these complications and survived what was normally a month-long ordeal, the oozing, raised pustules in the disease's final stages would begin to scab. Once the last of the scabs sloughed or fell off, patients were no longer contagious.

Survivors of smallpox could find some solace in their recovery, since the encounter provided them with a lifelong immunity to the disease. Many survivors, however, were affected permanently in other ways. For some, high fevers and acute infections during their illness resulted in blindness or crippling arthritis. For most, the pustules left scars or pits on their bodies. This scarring could be light to moderate in its severity, but many times it could be widespread on the skin, deep, and horribly disfiguring. Such pits or pockmarks on individuals were common sights in eighteenth-century America. In 1779, even General Washington's nose bore traces of his experience with smallpox as a young man. In 1751, at the age of nineteen, he had been

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27. John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina Containing the Exact Description and Natural History of That Country . . .* (London: John Lawson, 1709), 224.

28. Lawson, *New Voyage*, 224.

29. United States Department of Health and Human Services, *Smallpox Overview*, fact sheet (Atlanta, Georgia: Centers for Disease Control, December 9, 2002), 1-2*;* Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 16-20.

30. Fries, *Records of Moravians*, 1313.

"strongly attacked" by the disease while traveling with his half-brother Lawrence in the West Indies.[31]

Today, more than two centuries after the epidemics in Salem and New Bern, the scourge of smallpox as a naturally occurring contagion appears to be a bygone health concern. There has been no documented case of it in the United States since 1949; and in 1979 the World Health Organization declared the disease officially eradicated. This pronouncement came two years after the last reported case of smallpox was treated successfully in western Africa.[32] Notwithstanding such documentation, fear of the disease persists. Samples of the virus may remain buried or hidden within the stockpiles of national arsenals and preserved in undisclosed medical research laboratories. One rising, global concern is that terrorist groups could one day cultivate smallpox and unleash it as a biological weapon against concentrated, highly susceptible civilian targets.[33]

Looking back again to 1779 and to the outbreaks of smallpox in North Carolina, the epidemic in New Bern carried added significance. This was due to New Bern's history and status among the handful of towns in North Carolina that were of appreciable size in that era. Situated at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent rivers, New Bern had grown markedly during the 1760s and 1770s. One visitor there in 1765 estimated that Craven County's seat contained 100 houses and 500 inhabitants.[34] Those figures more than doubled during the Revolution, when the port town assumed greater importance as a receiving station and distribution point for supplies and military personnel. In this period, New Bern surpassed Wilmington as North Carolina's largest community and further enhanced its identity as the new state's leading center of political activity.[35] The town since 1746 had already served in both *de facto* and official capacities as North Carolina's capital. It was home to the Georgian-style "palace" completed by Royal Governor William Tryon in 1770 and for decades had been the preferred meeting site of the General Assembly.[36] New Bern's leadership role would survive North Carolina's transition from royal colony to independent state. The first two provincial congresses convened there, as did the fifth one that elected Richard Caswell the state's first governor in 1776. The next year the first legislature under the new state constitution assembled there as well. For the remaining years of the Revolution and until Raleigh's founding in 1792 as the state's permanent capital, New Bern would continue to act as North Carolina's principal seat of government.[37]

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31. James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington: The Forge of Experience, 1732-1775* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965), 50; John C. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, volume 1 (Washington, D.C.: United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission, 1931), 20.

32. Fenn, *Pox Americana,* 3-4.

33. The last documented fatality from smallpox is connected to a laboratory accident in England in 1978. See Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 5.

34. Alan D. Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County* (New Bern: Tryon Palace Commission, 1987), 141.

35.Virginia Kirwan, "New Bern as Colonial and State Capital," *Journal of the New Bern Historical Society*, volume 1, number 2 (November 1988), 11.

36. Between 1738 and 1774, the General Assembly held sixty-one sessions, forty-one of which convened in New Bern. John L. Cheney, Jr. (ed.), *North Carolina Government, 1585-1974: A Narrative and Statistical History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State, 1975), 39-55.

37. Beth G. Crabtree, *North Carolina Governors, 1585-1968* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1968), 46-47; Robert L. Ganyard, *The Emergence of North Carolina's Revolutionary State Government* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1978), 88; William S. Powell, *North Carolina Gazetteer* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1968) 348.

Records of pox-related deaths in New Bern in 1779 were evidently not compiled, but it is clear from the documented reactions of government officials and residents that the disease had a severe impact on the town. Prominent citizens, such as Abner Nash and Richard Ellis, evacuated their homes; and local authorities hurriedly prepared to inoculate the men, women, and children who remained.[38] Mounting public fears also prompted Governor Caswell to alter the General Assembly's plan to convene in New Bern in April. He instructed members to gather instead in Johnston County. There, inside Smithfield's courthouse on May 3, the Assembly began its first session of 1779.[39] A week later, due to the expressed concerns of New Bern "being generally infested with Small Pox," Craven County's court postponed all its proceedings and announced that all other legal business would be carried over to the next term.[40] The governor also kept his distance from the town. On May 24, from his plantation near Woodington, about forty miles west of New Bern, Caswell dispatched a letter of warning to one of his colonels in Craven. In it the state's chief executive instructs the officer to "avoid any danger of your men's taking the small-pox" and to take every precaution "in removing provisions or any thing else you may want from [New Bern]."[41] Other North Carolina officials took steps weeks earlier to contain the epidemic. Among those steps were halting the printing and further release of government currency from the town.[42] This action was taken to prevent any possibility of spreading the sickness across the state through the hand-to-hand exchange of contaminated bills. Later correspondence by Governor Caswell reveals that New Bern's epidemic remained serious for months, extending well into the summer of 1779. In July, he continued to send out alerts to his officers with orders that any drivers of military supply wagons calling on the town "had better be such as have had the small-pox."[43]

One important business located in the midst of New Bern's infestation was the shop of North Carolina's longtime public printer James Davis. It was Davis who had produced the government's most recent paper money, the issue of 1778. That issue consisted of 850,000 pounds (2,125,000 dollars) in bills of credit that the General Assembly had authorized at its session in Hillsborough in August 1778. This currency was not the first printed by Davis. He had produced no fewer than

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38. Watson, *History of New Bern*, 164. "Variolation" was the deliberate infection of people with smallpox in hope of incurring a milder case of the illness. By the early 1700s, this procedure was already being practiced in Europe, Asia, Africa, and to a lesser extent in the Americas. A distinction needs to be drawn between the vaccine developed in 1796 by English doctor Edward Jenner and variolation or "inoculation" referred to in the records of Salem and New Bern in 1779. Jenner's revolutionary vaccine relied on a pox-related virus derived from cows to vaccinate citizens against *Variola major.* Before that development, in variolation, fluids were taken from someone sick with smallpox and implanted into healthy patients through incisions in their hands or arms. Another method of inoculation, one popular in Asia, involved taking scabs from the bodies of the sick, grinding the scabs into a fine powder, and blowing the powder up a healthy patient's nose. These risky procedures invariably transmitted smallpox to people, but the resulting symptoms in such cases were less severe and their related death counts consistently lower than when people contracted the virus naturally. See Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 31-35.

39. Letter, "Governor [Richard] Caswell to Gen[era]l. Lillington," Kingston, N.C., April 13, 1779, transcribed in Clark, *State Records*, XIV, 66.

40. "Extracts from Court Records of Craven County," May 15, 1779, Clark, *State Records*, XIV, 302.

41. Letter of "Gov.[ernor Richard] Caswell to Col.[unidentified]," Woodington, N.C., May 24, 1779, Clark, *State Records*, XIV, 96.

42. Clark, *State Records*, XXIV, 333; Eric P. Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America,* fourth edition (Iola, Wisconsin: Krause Publications, 1997), 318.

43. Letter of "Gov.[ernor Richard] Caswell to W[illia]m. Heritage, Esq...," Kingston, July 8, 1779, Clark, *State Records*, XIV, 149.

eight other issues over the preceding three decades.[44] In fact, one of the earliest records relating to Davis's service as North Carolina's official printer relates to his printing money. On October 17, 1749, provincial officials paid him half his annual salary, eighty pounds, for "stamping and emitting the sum of Twenty one Thousand Three Hundred and Fifty pounds [in] public Bills of Credit."[45]

James Davis was not the only person who produced North Carolina's currency during the colonial and early statehood periods. Other craftsmen, notably silversmiths, designed and printed paper money for North Carolina. In 1775, for instance, the provincial government paid New Bern silversmith William Tisdale 100 pounds to engrave plates and "stamp" the bills for that issue.[46] With Tisdale and James Davis residing in the same town, it is possible that after the New Bern silversmith engraved the plates he enlisted Davis as a subcontractor to handle the actual printing of the bills. Such collaboration may have also occurred in the production of the next issue, which relied again on engraved copper plates. The crafting of plates for North Carolina's 1776 bills is attributed to another smith, to one who lived in Maryland: Gabriel Lewyn. Evidence of Lewyn's involvement with this currency can be found within engraved designs on some 1776 bills, namely the incorporation of the initials "GL."[47] If Lewyn were, indeed, responsible for the entire 1776 issue, he either printed the money in Maryland and shipped the unsigned, unnumbered, and uncut sheets to North Carolina; or he shipped his copper plates there, most likely to Davis, who used them in New Bern to print the currency on compatible equipment.

Another unknown with regard to New Bern's smallpox epidemic is whether James Davis himself was among the citizens who contracted the virus. By 1779, the printer would have been just shy of sixty years of age, so he may have had an earlier bout with the disease and been immune. Still, irrespective of the disease's effects on Davis's physical health, it is certain that the health of his business suffered because of the outbreak and his shop's location. When the epidemic erupted in New Bern, some of the 1778 currency already printed by him remained uncirculated; some, unprinted. Plans to complete that issue's production were suspended by the government, leaving no less than 74,700 dollars in that currency withheld from the economy. This figure included 12,500 individual pieces of the emission's smallest denomination, the one-sixteenth dollar. None of those fractional bills, which amounted to just over 781 dollars in total face value, would ever be printed.[48]

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44. Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 313-19. The typeset issue of 1756-57, two other issues dated 1757, and those for 1758, 1760, 1761, 1768 can also be credited directly to Davis. All bills that carry his name on their reverses are products of typesetting. The New Bern printer had the knowledge and equipment to print with engraved copper plates. His payment for printing the engraved 1748 issue proves this. It is therefore very likely that Davis printed or helped to print other issues with engraved plates furnished by various silversmiths. It should be noted as well that printing from plates was a much more expensive process, but it produced cursive lettering and florid designs that counterfeiters found much harder to duplicate than the characters and decorations made with set type. For descriptions of these two processes, see Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Colonial Printer* (New York: Dover Publications, 1965).

45. William L. Saunders (ed.), *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, volume IV, 1734-1752 (Wilmington: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1993), 1023; Scott Aaron Reavis, "James Davis: North Carolina's First Printer," unpublished master's thesis (July 2000), School of Information and Library Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1. The bills printed by James Davis in 1749 bear a 1748 date, the year the General Assembly authorized this currency.

46. Saunders, *Colonial Records*, volume X, 1775-1776, 285; George Barton Cutten and Mary Reynolds Peacock, *Silversmiths of North Carolina, 1696-1860* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1984), 167-69.

47. Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 317-18.

48. The original authorization for the 1778 issue included 200,000 one-sixteenth-dollar bills. The General Assembly later reduced this amount to 12,500 due to the impracticality of issuing so many small denominational bills in a period of very high inflation. Clark, *State Records*, XXIV, 333; Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 319.

Suspending production of the 1778 emission and halting further distribution of bills from New Bern were understandable, prudent actions given the circumstances in the spring of 1779. Even so, state officials needed additional funds to equip North Carolina's "naked," ill-trained militia and to meet other pressing, war-related expenses.[49] Printing money to meet those obligations proved particularly difficult for North Carolina, whose economy and fiscal policies were generally perceived as among the least stable of the American states.[50] With few assets in hand to secure loans and lacking reserves of coinage or "hard" currency, the state government found itself unable to support the bills it already had in circulation.

One of many North Carolinians who complained bitterly about the state's deteriorating fiscal situation was the respected superior court judge and future governor Samuel Ashe. In a lengthy letter dated January 15, 1779, and addressed to the speakers of the General Assembly, Judge Ashe bemoans the "rapid and extravagant rise in price of every necessary article of life."[51] "The Depreciation of our Bills," he writes, "is a matter of such notoriety that every one knows & feels it," and "Their Value at this time bears not the proportion of twelve to one of their original value."[52] Legislators were all too aware of these problems, but they saw no recourse other than to authorize yet another currency emission. By May 1779, North Carolina's exhausted treasury did not even contain "Continental money," the paper dollars that the Continental Congress in Philadelphia had been issuing since 1775 and in huge quantities since 1777. The state's financial circumstances had become so dire by mid-May 1779 that a House committee recommended that up to 100,000 dollars should to be borrowed or "drawn" from South Carolina's treasury to pay North Carolina's troops.[53] On May 15, the day after that recommendation was submitted, the General Assembly formally authorized a new issue of 1,250,000 dollars as part of its final business in Smithfield. Following that action, state officials immediately implemented plans to hire a printer outside New Bern to produce the currency.

Hugh Walker was the printer whom officials selected or temporarily pressed into service to assume James Davis's tasks of typesetting the new issue of money. Whatever the precise circumstances of Walker's hiring, both he and the press he used to make the 1779 issue were located well away from New Bern's epidemic, ninety miles to the southwest in New Hanover County, in Wilmington (*refer to map on page 2898*). Available archival records reveal little about Walker's personal or professional life. Some documents suggest that he was born around 1740, probably in Virginia, and that he moved to North Carolina just prior to the Revolution.[54] Other assorted records in Williamsburg identify a merchant named Hugh Walker, who lived there in the

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49. Clark, *State Records*, XIV, 74-75; XVIII, 811.

50. Allan Nevins, *The American States During and After the Revolution, 1775-1789* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1924), 365-368. With specific regard to the falling purchasing power of state currencies during the Revolutionary period, Dr. Louis E. Jordan, who is head of Special Collections at the Hesburgh Library at the University of Notre Dame, has researched and calculated the impact of rampant inflation on that money. Jordan informed this author that when North Carolina first emitted its 1779 currency, the state's five-dollar bill of credit was exchanging at 18:1, having a true purchasing power of only one-eighteenth of its face value (or at 26.6d, since prices were in money of account and really based on eight reales). Dr. Jordan noted further that within a year, by June 1780, the exchange rate had risen to 75:1, with the purchasing power of a five-dollar bill down to 6.4d.

51. Letter of "Judge Sam[ue]l. Ashe. To Hons. Allen Jones and Thomas Benbury, Speakers," Rocky Point, N.C., January 15, 1779, Clark, *State Records*, XIV, 248-251.

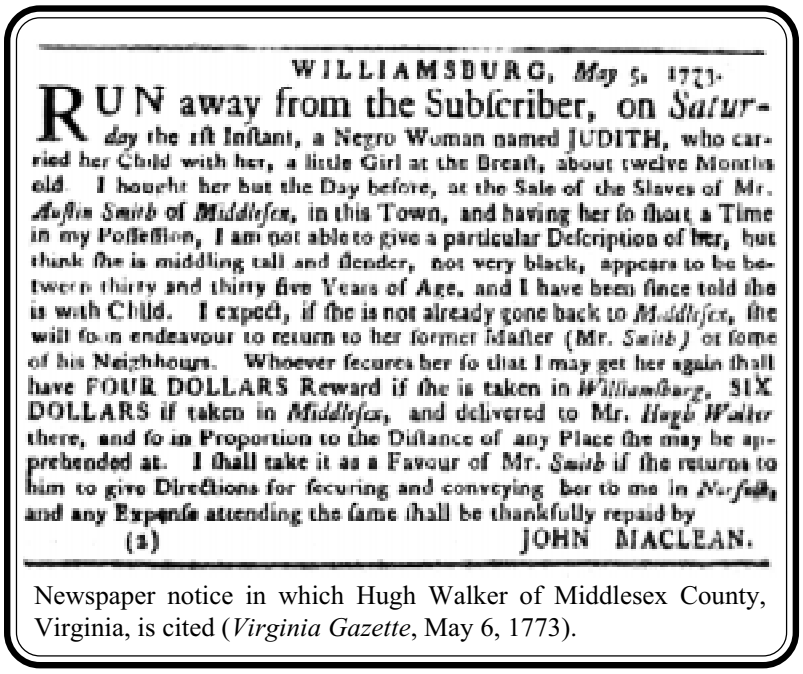
52. Clark, *State Records*, XIV, 248.

53. Clark, *State Records*, XVIII, 811. Between 1775 and 1779, the Continental Congress authorized and issued over 241 million dollars in paper currency. See Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 57-69.

54. William S. Powell (ed.), *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* [*DNCB*], volume 6, T-Z (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1996), 113.

Part of the 1778 currency printed by James Davis was not issued due to New Bern's smallpox epidemic. Illustrated here are the face and back of a one-fourth-dollar bill from that 1778 emission. In style, this bill's plain appearance represents the general standard of North Carolina's typeset currencies of the Revolutionary period (*North Carolina Collection, UNC-Chapel Hill*). [Shown actual size.]

1760s and 1770s. Those records list Walker as an estate agent and party or witness in other legal agreements and transactions.[55] References to a Hugh Walker can also be found in Middlesex County, Virginia, a full day's ride north of Williamsburg. There a parish register notes the marriage of Hugh Walker to Catherine Morgan on January 20, 1770.[56] Newspaper advertisements and public notices occasionally refer to Hugh Walker in both Williamsburg and Middlesex. One such notice is in a 1773 issue of the *Virginia Gazette*. That notice, dated May 5, instructs readers to contact Hugh Walker in Middlesex if anyone captures a runaway slave owned by a John MacLean.[57] Subsequent *Gazette* references to the merchant Walker verify that he was still living in that county as late as 1777. Other newspaper advertisements for "Hugh Walker & Co." indicate that in this period he may have divided his time between ongoing business interests in Virginia's capital and his residence and shop in Middlesex County, more specifically in Urbanna, a port town situated along the lower part of the Rappahannock River.[58]



WILLIAMSBURG, *May 5*, 1773.

RUN away from the Subſcriber, on *Saturday* the 1ſt Inſtant, a Negro Woman named JUDITH, who carried her Child with her, a little Girl at the Breaſt, about twelve Months old. I bought her but the Day before, at the Sale of the Slaves of Mr. *Auſtin Smith* of *Middleſex*, in this Town, and having her ſo ſhort a Time in my Poſſeſſion, I am not able to give a particular Deſcription of her, but think ſhe is middling tall and ſlender, not very black, appears to be between thirty and thirty five Years of Age, and I have been ſince told ſhe is with Child. I expect, if ſhe is not already gone back to *Middleſex*, ſhe will ſtill endeavour to return to her former Maſter (Mr. *Smith*) or ſome of his Neighbours. Whoever ſecures her ſo that I may get her again ſhall have FOUR DOLLARS Reward if ſhe is taken in *Williamſburg*, SIX DOLLARS if taken in *Middleſex*, and delivered to Mr. *Hugh Walker* there, and ſo in Proportion to the Diſtance of any Place ſhe may be apprehended at. I ſhall take it as a Favour of Mr. *Smith* if ſhe returns to him to give Directions for ſecuring and conveying her to me in *Norfolk*, and any Expence attending the ſame ſhall be thankfully repaid by

(1) JOHN MACLEAN.

Newspaper notice in which Hugh Walker of Middlesex County, Virginia, is cited (*Virginia Gazette*, May 6, 1773).

The architectural history of one Williamsburg structure provides a few earlier clues about the Hugh Walker in the capital. Records show that in 1760 the merchant entered into a partnership to build a shed and an "eastern wing to the dwelling house" of James Geddy in Williamsburg.[59] Related studies found that Walker and an associate used part of that addition as a shop and that "Walker and his successors held that part of the house and lot throughout the time Geddy was in business."[60] Geddy's

55. Helen Bullock, "James Geddy House Historical Report, Block 19 Building 11 Lots 161 & 162" [originally titled "Neale House Outbuildings Block 19, #11,"1930], number 1445, *Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1990), 2.

56. National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Virginia, *The Parish Register of Christ Church, Middlesex County, Va., from 1653 to 1812* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1964), 304. According to another reference, this Hugh Walker had been married earlier to a Mary Thurston. See Powell, *DNCB*, volume 6 (T-Z), 113.

57. *Virginia Gazette* (Williamsburg), May 6, 1773, 3.

58. *Virginia Gazette*, July 5, 1776, 3; January 10, 1777, 4; February 14, 1777, 3; February 21, 1777,

59. Bullock, "James Geddy House," *Williamsburg Research Report*, 2.

60. Catherine Schlesinger, "James Geddy House Architectural Report, Block 19 Building 11 Lot 161" [originally titled "The James Geddy House and Silversmith Shop Block 19, Building 11, Colonial Lot 161 (61)", 1968], number 1450, *Williamsburg Research Report*, 4-5. Silversmith James Geddy worked in Williamsburg until 1777, when he moved to Dinwiddie County, Virginia.

business was metalworking. He was a highly accomplished silversmith. While no evidence has been uncovered thus far to connect this Walker to printing, the merchant's dealings and close proximity to a prominent Williamsburg silversmith provide a circumstantial link to the engraver's art and, thereby, a marginal one to the printer's trade. Merchant Walker appears to have remained dedicated to his chosen vocation, but it is not unreasonable to speculate that another Hugh Walker, perhaps a son, could have apprenticed with Geddy and through his father's connections with other Williamsburg craftsmen had become knowledgeable about printing with engraved plates, as well as with set type. One other possibility is that the maker of North Carolina's currency was related in some way to John Walker, a printer who worked not in Virginia but in the West Indies. John Walker was "one of the proprietors" of *The Jamaica Gazette,* a long-running newspaper first published on the island in 1745. The newspaper was produced as a weekly after 1760 and continued to be printed for a time until John Walker's death in 1786.[61] Any relative of this Jamaican printer could have had routine contacts with various suppliers and tradesmen from Wilmington, New Bern, or even Urbanna. Kingston and other West Indian ports were frequent destinations for vessels sailing out of both North Carolina and Virginia.

Whatever surviving records can be linked now or in the future to the printer Hugh Walker, the most enduring and historically significant North Carolina documents are the pieces of currency that bear his name and represent his craft. Featured prominently on the back of every 1779 bill are credits to him that vary slightly in form, either "Printed by HUGH WALKER, 1779," "WILMINGTON: Printed by Hugh Walker, 1779," or "WILMINGTON: printed by Hugh Walker, MDCCLXXIX." In producing this money, Walker dutifully followed the provisions set forth by the General Assembly's previously mentioned action at Smithfield on May 15, 1779. Section two of "An Act for emitting money for defraying the expences [*sic*] of the war, and for other purposes" specified the face values and respective amounts of the bills to be printed.[62] That section also specified which commissioners would number and then co-sign each of the 66,000 bills that comprised the 1779 emission:

> ... That one half of a million of pounds [1,250,000 dollars] be emitted on the faith and credit of this state, in bills of the following denominations, that is to say, One thousand bills of two hundred and fifty dollars each, one thousand bills of one hundred dollars, two thousand bills of fifty dollars each, twelve thousand bills of twenty five dollars each, ten thousand bills of twenty dollars, twenty thousand bills of ten dollars each and twenty thousand bills of five dollars each; that the same be printed in a printing press, and that Henry Rhodes, Daniel Grant, and Memucan Hunt, be appointed commissioners to superintend the printing the same, and that Thomas Person and John Hunt be commissioners to receive the same when printed and numbered, to sign the same, and pay it into the hands of the public treasurers.[63]

As was customary with projects administered by the General Assembly, the printing and distribution of currency enlisted personnel from both legislative houses. Commissioners Rhodes and Memucan Hunt were senators, who represented Onslow and Granville counties respectively. Commissioner Person also represented Granville in the House, and John Hunt of Franklin

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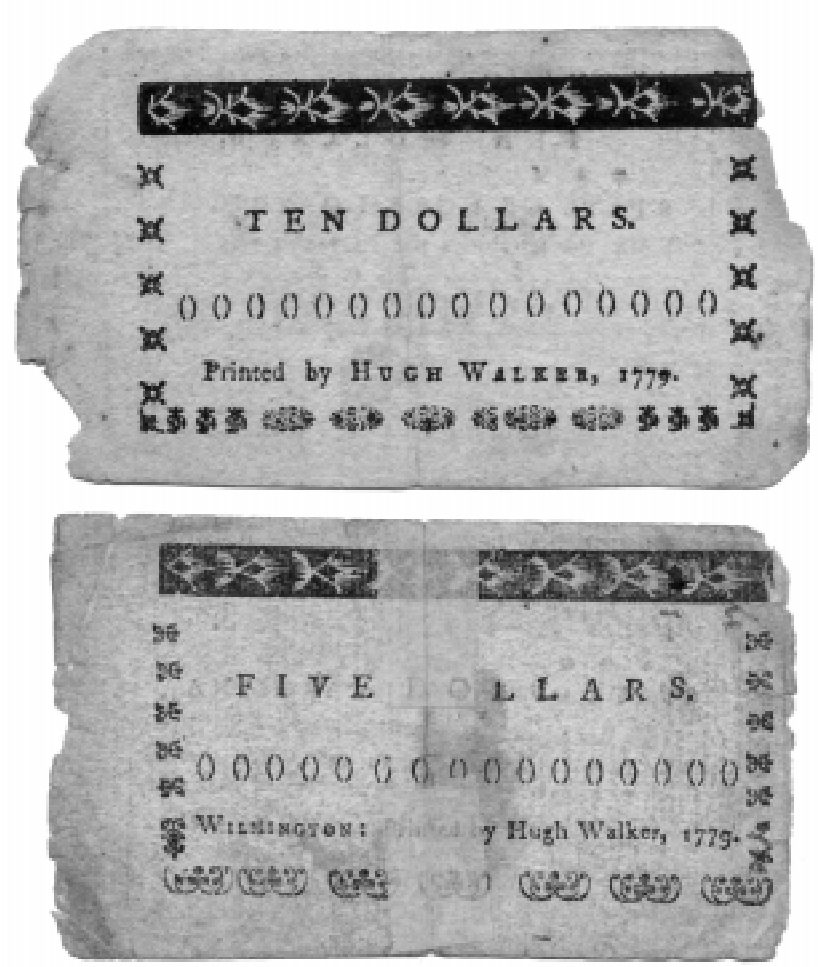
61. Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America With a Biography of Printers and an Account of Newspapers,* volume 2 (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas and Isaac Sturtevant, 1810), 383.

62. "An Act for emitting money for defraying the expences [*sic*] of the war, and for other purposes," Clark, *State Records*, XXIV, 255.

63. Clark, *State Records*, XXIV, 255.



Credit to Hugh Walker can be seen on the backs of these bills, which are part of the 500,000 pounds (1,250,000 dollars) authorized by the General Assembly on May 15, 1779 (*North Carolina Collection, UNC-Chapel Hill*). [Shown actual size.]

County served as clerk to the House.[64] Daniel Grant was the only one of the five commissioners who it seems held no political office or administrative post in the General Assembly in 1779. Grant was, however, well connected in Granville County. Records there list him in county deeds, as a developer of grist mills, and serving on juries and as a Granville justice.[65] Such assorted business and legal activities would have created opportunities for Grant to be in regular contact with fellow Granville citizens Person and M. Hunt. In 1780, likely because of their experience as commissioners for the state's 1779 issue, both Grant and Hunt would serve on a Granville committee empowered "to Inspect and [be] Judge of the Counterfeit money which shall be circulating in our County."[66]

The government's urgency for getting the 1779 money into the state treasury is demonstrated by the speed with which the commissioners began their assignment. The May 15th legislation required them to meet at "Kingston" (later renamed Kinston) by June 10, 1779. Then and there the commissioners were to "agree upon measures for procuring paper" and hiring a printer.[67] The act also stipulated that the printing and signing of the new currency should begin within a month's time after the Kingston meeting, by no later than July 10. In selecting a temporary replacement for James Davis, the commissioners would have had few choices. It appears that the hand-operated flatbed press owned by Davis and the one used by Walker in Wilmington were the only two such large pieces of equipment in North Carolina in 1779. In tracing that equipment's history and in piecing together the story of Walker's involvement in printing money, it is necessary to take a brief look at the printers who preceded him. There were very few such craftsmen in North Carolina, with the previously mentioned James Davis being the first to set up a press there. In 1749, at the age of twenty-seven, Davis had moved from Virginia to New Bern to accept the job as North Carolina's public printer.[68] For more than three decades thereafter, with some interruptions, he served colonial and state administrations in this position. His principal duties required him to publish all of the General Assembly's laws, journals, speeches, and other official documents. Davis is credited with printing North Carolina's first book in 1749 and two years later the colony's first newspaper, *The North-Carolina Gazette*. In addition to all these responsibilities and accomplishments, the "father of journalism in North Carolina," as noted, printed money for the government.[69]

The second person to set up a press in North Carolina was Andrew Steuart. An Irish émigré, Steuart earned his reputation as a printer and publisher in Philadelphia before relocating to

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64. Powell, *DCNB,* volume 3 (H-K), 232-33; Cheney, *North Carolina Government*, 204-205. Memucan Hunt fathered ten children, one of whom was named John. The John Hunt who co-signed North Carolina's 1779 currency was very likely Memucan's son, but state records do not provide conclusive evidence of their relationship.

65. Thomas McAdory Owen, *History and Genealogies of Old Granville County, North Carolina, 1746-1800* (Greenville, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 1993), 129, 161, 170, 176-77, 197-98, 201, 204.

66. Owen, *Old Granville County*, 198-199.

67. Kinston was incorporated in 1762 as "Kingston" to honor King George III. In 1784, the town's name was altered to Kinston, changed to "Caswell" in 1833, and then renamed Kinston the next year. See Powell, *Gazetteer*, 265; Clark, *State Records,* XXIV, 256.

68. Powell, *DCNB*, volume 2 (D-G), 34; Reavis, "James Davis: North Carolina's First Printer," 7-8.

69. Hugh T. Lefler, *History of North Carolina*, volume 1 (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1956), 152-53. One man who very briefly replaced James Davis as North Carolina's public printer was James Pinckney, another Virginian. Appointed by the General Assembly in 1777, Pinckney's work and conduct proved "so scandalous" that Davis was rehired the following year. See Alan D. Watson, "The Role of Printing in Eighteenth-Century North Carolina," *Carolina Comment,* volume 48, number 3 (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 2000), 77.

Wilmington in 1764 as a prospective replacement to James Davis, who was embroiled in a dispute with Governor Arthur Dobbs and other provincial officials. Even though Steuart printed North Carolina's laws for 1764, the General Assembly refused to approve Dobbs's appointment of Steuart as "His Majesty's Printer."[70] Steuart did not return to Pennsylvania after failing to secure this job. He chose to remain in Wilmington, where he managed his own print shop until the summer of 1769, when he drowned while bathing in the Cape Fear River.[71]

Not long after Steuart's passing, Adam Boyd began work in Wilmington as North Carolina's third prominent member of the printer's trade. Using a press and three sets of "aged type" he purchased from Steuart's estate, Boyd sought to fulfill the modest printing needs of the New Hanover region.[72] The inexperienced printer also sought to provide the colony with another newspaper. On October 13, 1769, he released the first issue of *The Cape-Fear Mercury*.[73] In addition to offering journalistic competition to Davis, Boyd on several occasions vied successfully for government printing jobs. In December 1771, the General Assembly resolved to pay the Wilmington printer 175 pounds to produce and distribute 600 copies of the public accounts to every county in North Carolina. At the same time, it also approved a payment of twenty shillings to him for printing 200 hand bills that warned citizens about counterfeit money in circulation.[74] Why the government contracted Boyd to perform these jobs rather than assigning them to Davis is unclear. By 1771, the public printer had recovered fully from the hurricane that two years earlier had wrecked his shop and much of New Bern.[75] Perhaps production conflicts, equipment problems, or disagreements with authorities prevented him from accepting this official work.

Adam Boyd's printing career in Wilmington and the life of *The Cape-Fear Mercury* were relatively brief, lasting a mere half-dozen years. Exasperated by the skyrocketing costs of paper and mounting difficulties in obtaining other supplies, Boyd decided to discontinue publication of his newspaper and cease his printing operations by the end of 1775.[76] He then turned to military service. On January 4, 1776, Boyd enlisted as an ensign in the First North Carolina Battalion.[77] Hugh Walker's involvement in filling the vacancy left in Wilmington by Boyd therefore falls somewhere within a three-and-a-half-year timeframe, between the time of Boyd's enlistment and the early summer of 1779. It is interesting that shortly after Boyd joined the ranks of the First North Carolina, an announcement in the *Virginia Gazette* suggests that the Hugh Walker in Urbanna had left that town. In a public notice dated January 25, 1776, Thomas Harwood informs the *Gazette's* readers that he is "now settled in the house in this town [Urbanna] formerly occupied by mr. [*sic*] Hugh Walker."[78] Three months later, on May 3, the newspaper reports that two lightly

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70. Mary Lindsay Thornton, "Public Printing in North Carolina, 1749-1815, *North Carolina Historical Review*, volume 21, number 3 (July, 1944),188; Lefler, *North Carolina*, volume 1, 153; Powell, *DCNB*, volume 2 (D-G), 34.

71. Thomas, *History of Printing in America,* volume 1, 339.

72. Durward T. Stokes, "Adam Boyd: Publisher, Preacher, and Patriot," *NCHR,* volume XLIX, number 1 (January, 1972), 4.

73. Stokes, "Adam Boyd," *NCHR*, 5.

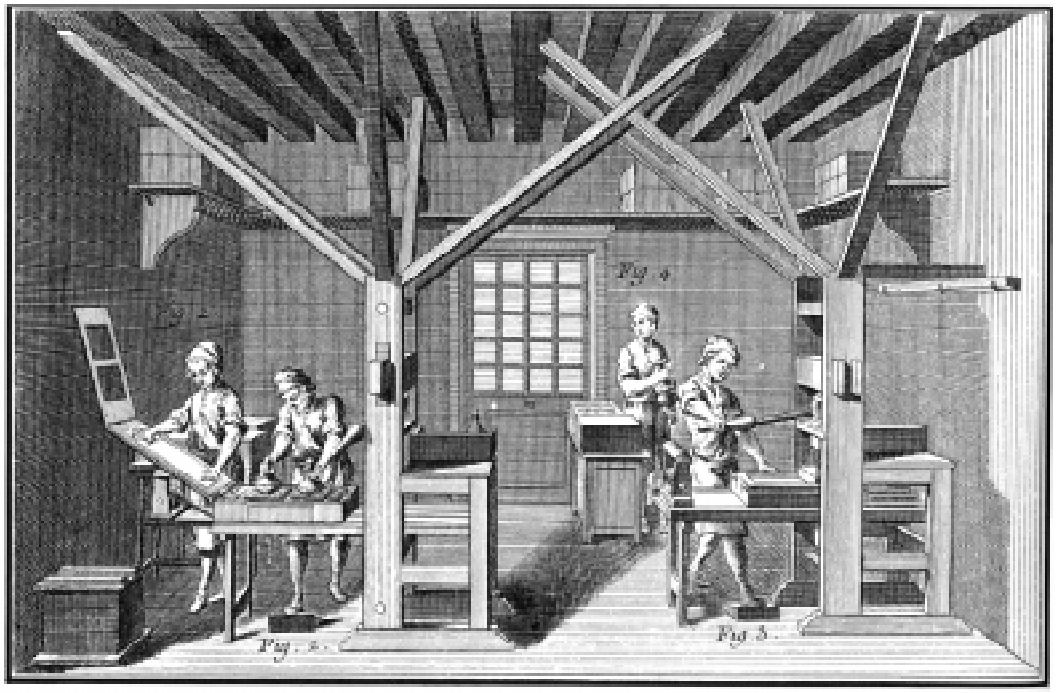
74. Saunders, *Colonial Records*, IX, 124-25.

75. Watson, *History of New Bern*, 162-63; Reavis, "James Davis: North Carolina's First Printer," 23-24.

76. Stokes, "Adam Boyd," *NCHR*, 12.

77. North Carolina Daughters of the American Revolution, *Roster of Soldiers From North Carolina in the American Revolution* (Durham: Seeman Press, 1932), 29; Powell, *DNCB*, volume 1 (A-B), 199.

78. *Virginia Gazette*, February 2, 1776, 4.



Most of North Carolina's eighteenth-century currency was produced on presses very similar to the ones depicted in this contemporary French engraving. On the right a printer's assistant is depicted "pulling the devil's tail," which lowered the heavy platen to the press bed, where the resulting pressure transferred the ink on the set type to paper. At the other press (left) two assistants are preparing paper and the printing plate for pressing. One is holding two ballstocks, as is another printer in the background. Usually covered with sheepskin and packed with wool, the ballstock was used for re-inking the type. Printing in this manner proved to be a tedious, time-consuming process that required a great deal of stamina. An experienced printer working continuously for an hour could, on average, produce a single "token" (240 sheets of paper) of one-sided impressions (Illustration from Denis Diderot's *L 'Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, 1763).

armed Virginia-based vessels had attacked a British tender, a support ship, off shore. The *Gazette* goes on to report that in the encounter the commanders of the American vessels—one of whom is identified as Hugh Walker—had "greatly distinguished themselves, by their intrepid and gallant behaviour."[79] Since it would not have been unusual for a prosperous merchant in a port town to have sailing experience and ready access to vessels, it could be reasonably assumed that the absent Urbanna resident and the participant in this maritime skirmish were the same man. Whatever the case, merchant Walker was back in Urbanna before the following spring. This is confirmed once more in the *Virginia Gazette*. In April 1777, a notice lists Hugh Walker again as the person to contact in Urbanna to obtain a six-dollar reward for the capture of another runaway slave.[80]

The news accounts, advertisements, and other passing references about Hugh Walker found in the *Virginia Gazette* provide no connections between that man and Adam Boyd or, for that matter,

79. *Virginia Gazette*, May 3, 1776, 3.

80. *Virginia Gazette*, April 11, 1777, 3.

any connections to Wilmington. The man who printed North Carolina's 1779 currency may have already been familiar with Boyd's operations, perhaps as a journeyman. If that were the case, it could be surmised that Walker purchased Andrew Steuart's old flatbed press and types from Boyd. However, Boyd did not sell that hardware to Walker. In 1778, two years after his enlistment, he sold them for 100 pounds to Catherine McLorinan, a Wilmington resident whom town records identify as "a sole trader & wife of Henry McLorinan."[81] After that sale, it is possible that McLorinan either sold the press and type to Walker or made them available to him for printing the 1779 issue.

Following the General Assembly's passage of its May 15, 1779, currency act, the appointed commissioners presumably met the legislation's prescribed contractual and production deadlines. If so, Hugh Walker would have been engaged by the state to print the new money around the middle of June. By the second week in July 1779, sheets of currency would have begun to emerge from whatever press Hugh used in Wilmington. Each of those oversized sheets would have contained multiple images of bills. Prior to cutting or trimming the various denominations from their sheets, each bill—tens of thousands of them—had to be hand-numbered and then co-signed in ink. A change in personnel for signing the currency occurred before that work started. On the day of the scheduled Kingston meeting, on June 10, Governor Caswell by executive order appointed John Taylor to replace Thomas Person, who according to Caswell "hath refused to act."[82] For this reason Taylor's autograph accompanies John Hunt's signature on 1779 bills. Taylor was another Granville County resident. He evidently had very close ties to Memucan Hunt, because Hunt in 1808 designated three of Taylor's children as among the heirs to his sizeable estate.[83]

If the 1779 bills were printed by Walker by mid-July, they were still not ready for circulation by then. On July 23, in a letter concerning the need to purchase grain for the state's troops, Governor Caswell informs General Griffith Rutherford, "There is not money signed, that I hear of, by the commissioners appointed by the late law... ."[84] It is therefore uncertain when the numbered and signed bills began entering the economy; but as late as November 1779, North Carolina officials continued to complain to the governor about cash shortages and bureaucratic delays in covering drafts on the state treasury.[85] Regardless of the reasons for the apparent delay in its distribution, the issue's 1,250,000 dollars could not come close to meeting all the government's expenses in a highly inflated wartime economy.

In printing the 1779 currency, Hugh Walker composed the bills' inscriptions, word-for-word, in accordance with the General Assembly's specifications. He then modestly decorated the bills' face and back headings and outer borders with simple hand-cut and cast scrollwork and small

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81. Stokes, "Adam Boyd," *NCHR*, 12; Donald R. Lennon and Ida Brooks Kellam, *The Wilmington Town Book, 1743-1778* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1973), 227.

82. Executive Letter Book, Governor Richard Caswell at Kingston to Colonel John Taylor, June 10, 1779; Clark, *State Records,* XIV, 115.

83. Last will and testament of Memucan Hunt, Granville County, February 23, 1808, *Granville County Wills, 1769-1968* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, n.d.).

84. Executive Letter Book, Governor Richard Caswell at Kingston to General Griffith Rutherford, July 23, 1779; Clark, *State Records,* XIV, 175-176.

85. Clark, *State Records*, XIV, 178, 180, 193, 206, 224-25, 229-30, 236. Dr. Louis Jordan of the University of Notre Dame also informed this author during his research that during the Revolution long delays in the distribution of new issues were unusual. The pressures of inflation and the rapid depreciation of currencies typically drove state and Continental officials to inject new emissions into circulation as soon as possible. "The longer the delay," explained Jordan, "the less the money would purchase, both for the government and for the people employed to produce the emission (since those people were usually paid from the money they printed)."

stylized acorns, flowers, and other ornaments. Once all the typefaces and design elements of several denominations were arranged and set, Walker would have locked them together in a wooden frame called a *chase* and placed the frame on the press bed for printing. The center portion of each bill designed by Walker carries the text required in the 1779 legislation:

> STATE OF NORTH-CAROLINA
> THIS BILL entitles the Bearer to receive [equivalent to face value] Spanish milled Dollars, or the Value thereof, in Gold or Silver, agreeable to an Act of Assembly passed at Smithfield, the 15th Day of May, 1779.[86]

Theoretically, as expressed in the above text, each piece of North Carolina's paper money represented a set, real value, with assurances from the government that any citizen who presented one of the bills to the treasury would receive its stated denomination in the same amount in gold or silver. In reality, however, state governments, just as colonial administrations, never redeemed their paper money in this manner. Their coffers simply had neither the specie nor bulk reserves of precious metals to do so.

Although North Carolina's 1779 bills, like other wartime issues, lacked qualities of true and reliable value, the quality of those bills' actual production compare favorably to those of earlier and later typeset issues**.** Hugh Walker produced seven denominations, once again in strict accordance with the General Assembly's provisions. Three of the seven denominations—the five-dollar, ten-dollar, and twenty-five-dollar bill—have two varieties, each of which is distinguished by a different motto or legend on its face. All of Walker's bills bear such phrases. They reflect not only the professed ideals of the American Revolution but also to some degree the contemporary expectations of North Carolinians. Among those ideals and hopes were the prospects of political and economic liberty, faith in good government, American solidarity, and an honorable peace. The mottoes on all ten types or varieties of North Carolina's 1779 currency are listed in Eric P. Newman's *The Early Paper Money of America:*

5 dollars	*Be Freedom and Independence steadily pursued*
5 dollars	*Good Government always revere*
10 dollars	*American Union for ever.*
10 dollars	*Virtue excels Riches*
20 dollars	*Peace on Honourable Terms*
25 dollars	*A Free Commerce*
25 dollars	*American Fortitude displayed*
50 dollars	*A Righteous Cause the Protection of Providence*
100 dollars	*A Free Commerce*
250 dollars	*A Righteous Cause the Protection of Providence*[87]

Other details about the 1779 currency documented in Newman's work relate to counterfeiting, a crime that North Carolina officials had already combated for more than half a century. Statutes outlawing counterfeiting were in place in the colony as early as 1714, only two years after the provincial government issued its first paper currency to help cover costs in the war against the Tuscarora.[88] Lacking adequate revenues in coinage, officials arranged in 1712 and 1713 to produce 1,550 bills of credit with a total face value of 12,000 pounds. Unfortunately, no printer

86. Clark, *State Records*, XXIV, 255

87. Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 320.

88. "Laws of North Carolina—1714," Clark, *State Records*, XXV, 158; Kenneth Scott, "Counterfeiting in Colonial North Carolina," *NCHR*, volume 57 (October 1957), 467.

resided then in North Carolina, so the 1712-1713 issues had to be *handwritten*. In fact, every one of the 47,360 bills of 76,000 pounds subsequently authorized by the General Assembly in 1715, 1722, and 1729 would be penned entirely by hand as well.[89]

Counterfeiting remained a persistent problem for North Carolina during the eighteenth century; but according to research by historian Alan Watson, the offense noticeably increased or "peaked" in two periods, in the 1720s and 1730s and again in 1760s and 1770s.[90] In 1720, Royal Governor Charles Eden in a formal speech to the Assembly complained that the growing "quantity of counterfeit currency among us" was abusing and destroying public credit and bringing ruin to "many honest homes and families."[91] Fourteen years later, Governor Gabriel Johnston echoed his predecessor's concerns about the evils of "the great Multiplicity" of counterfeit bills being circulated by "Vagabond and Idle people."[92] By then, by 1734, North Carolina's government had begun to issue printed money, which had to be produced outside the province since there was still no printer in the colony. The introduction of printed currencies did not stop counterfeiting. The General Assembly in the 1740s continued to enact laws with harsher punishments for anyone associated with forging, altering, or knowingly passing counterfeit bills.[93] By 1757, the terse warning "DEATH to Counterfeit" was added to North Carolina money, as it was on most other colonial currencies.[94] Later, during the Revolution, the crime assumed far greater villainy. State and Continental officials then viewed the forging of their bills and notes as no longer a solitary act of greed but as high treason and a deliberate act of war against America's struggle for independence.

Hugh Walker's 1779 bills include the requisite, often-ignored "Death to Counterfeit" inscription. His bills also carry far more subtle anti-counterfeiting measures. On North Carolina's 1779 currency, just as on other contemporary and earlier colonial issues, "secret marks" can be found in the designs of various denominations. At first glance, some of Walker's marks or misspellings, such as "Drath" instead of "Death" in the "Death To Counterfeit" warning on one variety of the ten-dollar bill, could be misinterpreted as mistakes made by someone with less printing experience than James Davis. Actually, as featured in Newman's *The Early Paper Money of America*, these defects were almost certainly deliberate.[95] Other marks in type and composition are less glaring but were included as well on bills to assist officials in detecting counterfeits. Intentional misspellings, like those found in Walker's bills, were among the anti-counterfeiting techniques employed by American printers, including Benjamin Franklin, who as early as 1739 varied the spelling of "Pennsylvania" on the paper money he produced for that colony.[96] Franklin hoped, as Walker and North Carolina authorities did in 1779, that counterfeiters would overlook slight misspellings and other defects on genuine bills when making their fraudulent copies. Rather than

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89. Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 310-11.

90. Alan D. Watson, "Counterfeiting in Colonial North Carolina: A Reassessment," *NCHR*, volume 79 (April, 2002), 197.

91. Copy of Governor Charles Eden's address to both houses the General Assembly, December 5, 1720, "Legislative Journals," Clark *State Records,* VIII, 284.

92. Robert J. Cain (ed.), *Records of the Executive Council, 1664-1734* (Raleigh : North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1984), 323.

93. "Laws of North Carolina—1745," Clark, *State Records*, XXV, 235.

94. "Laws of North Carolina—1748," Clark, *State Records*, XXIII, 295; Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 314.

95. Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 320.

96. Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 330.

To foil counterfeiters, Hugh Walker included deliberate defects or unnecessary diacritical marks in some words on the bills he produced in 1779. The five-dollar bill above contains an unwarranted *umlaut* (two small dots) over the "e" in "Silver"; the ten-dollar specimen has a tiny horizontal dash over the "y" in "Assembly"; the twenty-dollar bill has two dots over the "e" in the second "the"; and the 100-dollar bill using a "Q" rather than an "O" in "DOLLARS" its border inscription (*images courtesy of North Carolina Collection, UNC-Chapel Hill*; and *North Carolina Museum of History, Raleigh).* [Shown reduced in size.]

copying the small, intentional marks, forgers might dismiss or interpret them as accidental smears or errant spatters of ink made by the government's printer. Alleged secret marks used by Walker include the misplacement and misuse of certain characters, the omission of periods, and the printing of dashes, circumflexes, or pairs of tiny dots (*umlauts*) over letters. According to Eric Newman, at least two denominations of counterfeit 1779 currency survive: the 100- and 250-dollar bills. These fakes show that the criminals who copied the genuine articles did not miss their deliberate errors or marks. Both the authentic 100-dollar bill and its forged counterpart have the letter "Q" instead of "O" in "DOLLARS" in their face, right-hand border inscriptions. The 250-dollar forgery also carries the same marks as those found in the text on the official bill: a circumflex over the "e" in "Silver" and a small dash over the first "i" in "Smithfield."[97]

One anti-counterfeiting measure not employed in the 1779 currency involves the composition of that issue's paper, which the General Assembly had ordered the commissioners to procure and provide to the printer. Unlike the linen- and cotton-based papers used for printing North Carolina's 1776 and 1778 issues, the coarse rag paper on which Walker's bills are printed contains neither partial watermarks, colored threads, nor flakes of mica. The mixing of glittering fragments of mica or colored threads into currency papers were two well-established anti-counterfeiting techniques also popularized by Benjamin Franklin. Counterfeiters in the 1700s,

97. Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 320.

as today, usually found it much more difficult to duplicate the look and feel of a genuine bill's paper than to copy its design.[98]

What happened to Hugh Walker after he completed his assignment of printing money for North Carolina? As in the decades before 1779, Walker's life after that year remains extremely sketchy. A small number of later records contain the name Hugh Walker, but not all of those references relate to the same person. A notice in the *Virginia Gazette* dated October 10, 1779, refers to a Hugh Walker, again in Urbanna, buying animal hides to provide "shoes and leather" for the army.[99] It would seem implausible that a skilled craftsman printing currency in Wilmington during the summer months of 1779 would relocate so suddenly to Virginia and within a matter of weeks be dealing in the tanning trade. If that Walker did so, he returned to Wilmington the following year, because his name can be found on 1780 tax and voting lists for the New Hanover County town.[100] Military rosters and other references confirm, too, that in 1780 Hugh Walker from the "Wilmington Dist.[rict]" joined North Carolina's militia and that he performed part of his service in Virginia.[101]

The general absence of North Carolina-based documents about Walker prior to 1779 and the lack of any imprints made by him after that year implies that he moved to Wilmington for the sole purpose of producing the 1779 currency. There he may have borrowed or leased with state authority the equipment Catherine McLorinan had purchased from Adam Boyd the previous year. It is also possible that James Davis through his own business connections in Virginia and elsewhere suggested Walker to North Carolina officials as his temporary replacement for printing the needed money.

With the small-pox epidemic passed, Davis resumed his duties in New Bern as public printer in 1780. In April of that year, the General Assembly ordered him to finish printing the balance of the suspended 1778 issue but only in fifty-dollar denominations.[102] Legislators during the same session also approved North Carolina's last wartime emission. That May 10, 1780, issue of 3,100,000 dollars would be the last currency produced by Davis. He retired from printing two years later, before his sixty-first birthday.[103] His retirement did not end the Davis family's involvement in the trade or sever the family's contractual ties to state government. In May 1782, the General Assembly appointed one of James's three sons, Thomas, to be public printer and instructed him to "establish his office as soon as may be in the town of Hillsborough."[104] Thomas Davis already possessed the necessary equipment to carry out the obligations of his appointment, for he had assumed ownership of his father's shop in New Bern and all its equipment and book-binding material before those properties were formally bequeathed when James died in 1785.[105] In keeping with the public printer's traditional duties, Thomas produced currencies. He typeset North Carolina's 1783 emission of 100,000 pounds and another 100,000 in 1785. The

98. Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 317-320.

99. *Virginia Gazette*, October 10, 1779, 3.

100. "Poll Book of Wilmington, 1780," Clark, *State Records*, XV, 237-38; "Taxables in the District of Wilmington,"April 1780, Clark, *State Records*, XV, 192.

101. North Carolina Daughters of the American Revolution, *Roster of Soldiers From North Carolina*, 365; Powell, *DNCB*, volume 6 (T-Z), 113.

102. Clark, *State Records,* XXIV, 333-34.

103. Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 321-22.

104. Clark, *State Records,* XIX, 127.

105. Elizabeth Moore, *Records of Craven County, North Carolina*, volume 1 (Bladensburg, Maryland: Genealogical Recorders, 1960), 167.

latter would be the state government's final issue of the eighteenth century. Boldly inscribed on the backs of all the 1783 and 1785 bills is "Printed by Thomas Davis," with the 1785 bills also bearing the identity of their printing site: "HILLSBOROUGH."[106]

Thomas Davis's term as state printer would end not long after the production of the 1785 issue. With respect to Hugh Walker's ultimate fate, later documentary evidence that there were several men with this name muddles the picture further. It is unclear whether the person who printed the 1779 issue left North Carolina permanently. Following Hugh Walker's stint in North Carolina's militia, he may have remained in Virginia or returned there sometime in the early 1780s. No one named Hugh Walker is found in North Carolina's 1784-87 state census records or in the first national census of 1790. A decade later, the second federal census identifies a Hugh Walker living in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina; and the 1810 census lists two men with this name residing in the state. One of these men is again in Mecklenburg, while the other is in Caswell County, a county whose northern border forms part of North Carolina's boundary with Virginia.[107] The Hugh Walker of Caswell, though missing from the 1800 census, does appear several times in other records in that county between 1796 and 1809. He is identified in Caswell as either a buyer, commissioner, or witness in land sales and in the transfer of other properties, including slaves.[108] In Mecklenburg in the same period, the Walker there served as a bondsman at two weddings; and his will, dated October 19, 1818, is among that county's records.[109] Provisions in that will provide no evidence that the Mecklenburg Walker was a tradesman or, more pointedly, was ever involved in printing. In Virginia, correspondence and a county census indicate that a Hugh Walker continued to reside in Middlesex County well after the Revolution. A man with this name, possibly another Hugh Walker, is also listed for Madison County, Virginia, where he died in 1800.[110]

In history texts and in other published research on early North Carolina printers, James Davis is consistently recognized and justifiably highlighted. Alexander Steuart, Adam Boyd, and Thomas Davis are also frequently cited. Hugh Walker's name, on the other hand, is never mentioned in such publications. This is the case, for example, in Mary Lindsay Thornton's 1944 article "Public Printing in North Carolina, 1749-1815" in the *North Carolina Historical Review* and in George Washington Paschal's 1946 book *A History of Printing in North Carolina*.[111] No citation of Walker, not even a scant footnote about him, can be found in these works or in other more recent

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106. Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 322-23. Thomas Davis's 1783 and 1785 issues carried face values in pence, shillings and pounds. The "old" duodecimal system was employed in part to distinguish and distance these new currencies from the inflation-ridden wartime dollars that had such a poor reputation with the general public.

107. Raeone Christensen Steuart (ed.), *North Carolina 1800 Census Index* (Bountiful, Utah: Heritage Quest, 2000), 356; Elizabeth Petty Bentley (comp.), *Index to the 1810 Census of North Carolina* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1978), 260.

108. Katherine Kerr Kendall, *Caswell County North Carolina Deed Books, 1777-1817* (Easley, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, 1989), 214, 250, 272, 292, 310, 323, 340, 341, 362.

109. Brent H. Holcomb (comp.*), Marriages of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina 1783-1868* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1981), 28, 65; Herman W. Ferguson, *Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Will Abstracts, 1791-1868* (Rocky Mount: Ferguson, 1993), 136.

110. Powell, *DNCB*, volume 6 (T-Z), 113. Library of Virginia, "Index to Madison County Wills and Administrations (1793-1800), will of Hugh Walker, probated November 27, 1800 (Richmond: Library of Virginia, n.d.), 254-55. The 1790 and 1800 United States census records for the State of Virginia were destroyed by fire during the War of 1812. Profiles on Virginia's population have been partially reconstructed through the state's tax and voting lists for those periods.

111. Thornton, "Public Printing," *NCHR*; George Washington Paschal, *A History of Printing in North Carolina* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1946).

Depicted here are the faces and backs of specimens from North Carolina's 1780 and 1783 emissions. The four-hundred-dollar bill was in the last issue (May 10, 1780) produced by James Davis. James's son, Thomas, inherited his equipment and used it to print North Carolina's 1783 and 1785 currencies. *(1780 bill from North Carolina Collection, UNC-Chapel Hill; 1783 specimen courtesy of Special Collections, Hesburgh Library, University of Notre Dame.)* [Shown reduced in size.]

treatments on printing. The dearth of clear-cut records about the mysterious Mr. Walker accounts for such a lack in recognition in the past. Even so, Walker's contribution to the state's printing history, however brief, should be acknowledged and certainly deserves a paragraph in future publications on the subject. His production of currency in 1779 did nothing, of course, to advance literature or the field of journalism in the state; and no other North Carolina imprints from the few that survive from that time can be credited to his hand. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that Walker's work occurred under conditions when printers throughout America were hobbled by wartime shortages and were experiencing serious economic hardships. The decline in productivity of North Carolina's diminutive printing trade is illustrated by the fact that after 1778 not a single newspaper was published in the state until 1783.[112]

As a matter of craftsmanship, Hugh Walker's printing accomplishment was very narrow in its scope; but it directly and substantially affected for years the lives of tens of thousands of people. The bills he produced in 1779 passed through the hands and into the pockets and strongboxes of merchants, innkeepers, customs agents, teamsters, soldiers, and farmers; and they helped to fill at least a portion of North Carolina's meager treasury during the Revolution. They also helped to underwrite part, albeit a very small part, of this nation's fight for independence. To that extent, the specimens of Walker's "smallpox currency" now preserved in some museums and private numismatic collections stand as testaments to that desperate time and patriotic service. The circumstances of this money's production recalls as well the horrors of a disease that once wiped out entire communities on this continent, scarred countless other victims, and earned the added, grisly distinction of being "the major killer of the American Revolution."[113] Finally, Hugh Walker's bills should serve as reassuring reminders to current citizens of the United States that the environment in which they live, whatever the threats posed to it, is still far more predictable and far, far less deadly than the one inhabited by their eighteenth-century ancestors. CNL

112. Paschal, *History of Printing*, 15-19; 68. Hugh T. Lefler and Albert R. Newsome, *The History of a Southern State: North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1963), 245.

113. Flexner, *George Washington*, 50. Today some private collectors of early American currencies own specimens of Hugh Walker's 1779 issue, but relatively few examples of his money are preserved in North Carolina museums and libraries. The North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has four 1779 bills among its extensive numismatic holdings, and the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh has eight of them. Outside North Carolina, additional Walker bills can be found in the collections of the American Numismatic Society in New York, the Smithsonian Institution, the University of Notre Dame Library, and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

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