

SOUTH CAROLINA TREASURY

Ledgers and Journals

1783—1791

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and

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DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

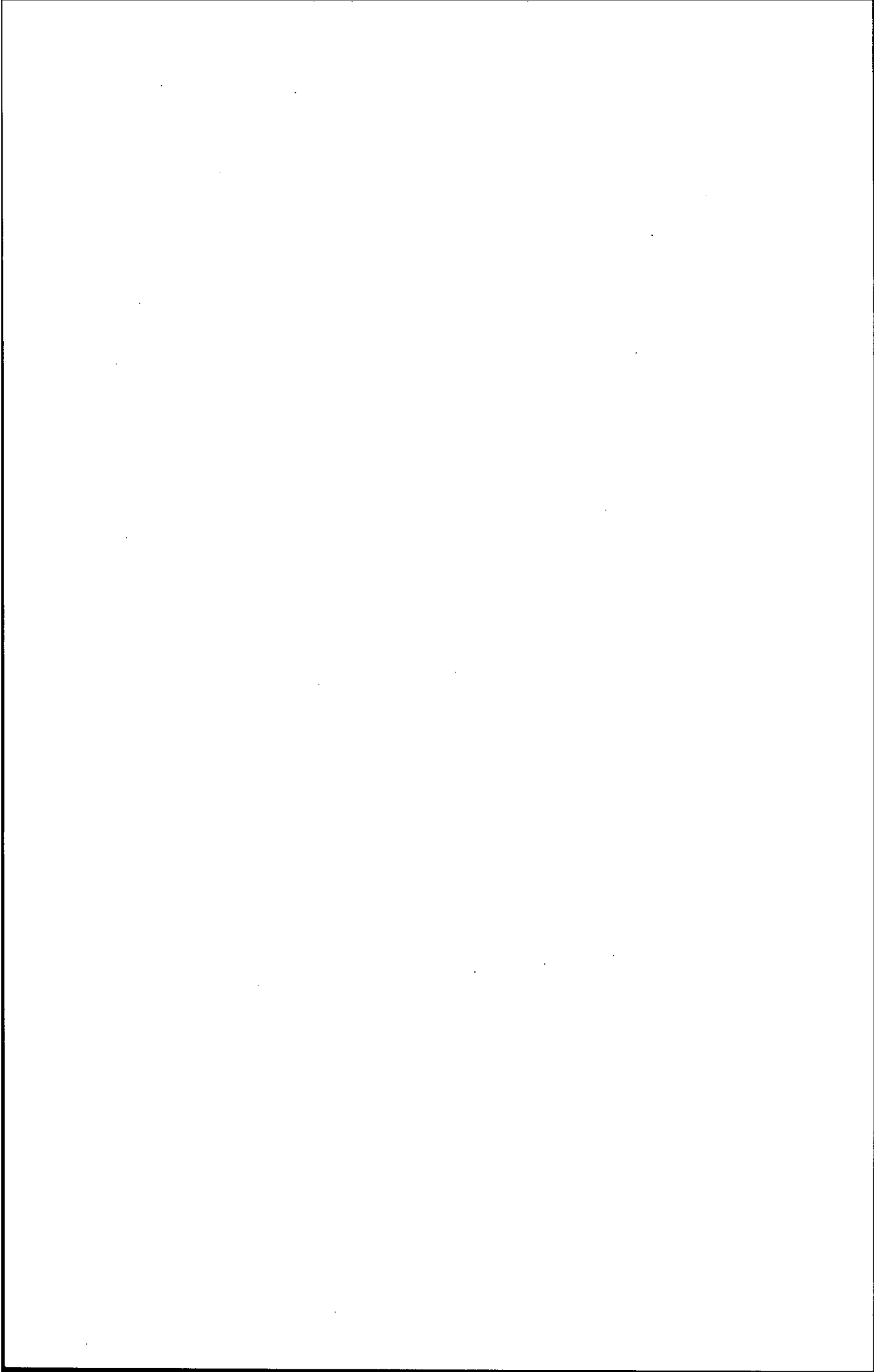
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SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

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INTRODUCTION

The records here presented contain a comprehensive summary of treasury accounts from March, 1783, when the state government was reorganized after three years of British occupation, to February, 1791, when the treasury was taken out of commission. With the *Records of the South Carolina Treasury, 1775-1780* (Microcopy Number 4), they make up a full record of all transactions conducted by the state's treasury between the outbreak of the Revolution and the implementation of the constitution of 1790, which significantly reformed the conduct of South Carolina's finances.

Except for the ten months (from June, 1775, to March, 1776) when both colonial and revolutionary treasury officers served, and for the years following the British invasion when the fugitive revolutionary government had to operate without a treasury, three commissioners ran the central finances of the state throughout this period.

The first commissioners of the treasury, John Neufville, Peter Bacot, and William Gibbes, were revolutionary officials outside the framework of colonial government. They were elected by the provincial congress—an extra-legal assembly—on 15 June 1775 to manage the currency issued by the congress and keep the accounts of the revolutionary council of safety. At the same time, two public treasurers, who were legally appointed by the colonial general assembly under an act of 1721, continued to manage the regular accounts of the colony both on orders from royal officials and on irregular demands from the congress. In the spring of 1776, after the royal governor fled, the provincial congress adopted a temporary constitution, setting up an independent government, turning itself into a bicameral legislature, and abolishing the colonial assembly. This constitution made the three commissioners of the treasury public servants under legislative appointment. The new legislature therefore dismissed the two public treasurers and transferred all control of public finances to the commissioners of the treasury. Neufville and Bacot then resigned, and on 9 April Edward Blake and William Parker were elected to replace them.

The commissioners of the treasury were to serve during good behavior. Blake, Parker, and Gibbes served together for at least eighteen months. But at some time between November, 1777, and August, 1778, Blake resigned. A new constitution, passed early in 1778, reduced the number of future commissioners to two and confined them to two consecutive two-year terms. The constitution was to go into effect in November. Perhaps as a result, neither the privy council nor the legislature seem to have made any effort to replace Blake. But in September, when Gibbes resigned to take a seat in the assembly, the legislature appointed John McCall in his stead. Since the constitution permitted the sitting commissioners to hold office indefinitely, new elections to the treasury board were not necessary until 1782, when the assembly found that McCall had left office during the British occupation. Edward Blake was then elected in his place. The assembly must have interpreted the constitution to mean that the new treasury commissioners' two-year terms were concurrent with those of the assembly, for Blake was re-elected in February, 1783, when a new assembly met.

After eight years in office, Parker died on 12 May 1784, during the recess of the assembly. The privy council appointed Peter Bocquet to serve until the assembly elected a successor. Bocquet was formally elected to replace Parker on 24 January 1785, and Blake was again re-elected on 14 February. On 1 September 1785 Blake pleaded ill health and resigned. The following day the assembly elected James Mitchell to succeed him. What part Mitchell played in the administration of the treasury is unclear, for he never handled the cash accounts, and in June, 1787, he died. The council appointed John Edwards, Jr., to serve in Mitchell's room, and the assembly elected Edwards to a full term on 2 February 1788. On 19 February 1789 the assembly declared that the constitutional limit of four years' service made Peter Bocquet ineligible for further tenure and elected William Hort in his place.¹

In 1790 a new constitution was adopted. This abolished the treasury board and placed public funds in the hands of two state treasurers, one to serve at Columbia (the new state capital) and the other at Charleston. The commissioners of the treasury had anticipated the constitution by opening a Columbia office, in which Thomas Nicholls (who was appointed in place of John Edwards on 23 June 1790)² served. On 18 February 1791 the life of the treasury commission came to an end, and their books and papers were transferred, along with those of the auditor and accountant general, to the new state treasurers.

From 1783 to 1791, the period covered by these records, the volume and complexity of treasury business was unusual. Close to ten thousand people had claims against the state growing out of the Revolution, and thousands of indented notes of credit ("indents") were issued to pay them. Loyalist estates were forfeited and released for sale, and new public lands in the upcountry were opened for grants. Many of the creditors of the state chose to redeem their indents in exchange for confiscated or vacant land. Operating largely without specie, the state's debtors left notes for duties, paid taxes by special indents, or subscribed to the paper medium loan.

The treasury commissioners, dealing with such novel transactions in such peculiar circumstances, found it hard to keep a set of systematic and balanced accounts. Treasurers, moreover, were inclined to confuse their private affairs with those of the public. Peter Bocquet closed his term some twelve thousand pounds in arrears, and all but two of the seven commissioners who served from 1783 were found to owe the public.³

The statutory administration of the state's accounts made the situation no easier, for there was not an effective audit. The auditor and accountant general, first ap-

¹ In February, 1788, Peter Bocquet announced his intention of resigning. But no resignation was forthcoming. Bocquet was entitled, by the constitution, to sit for four years and from then until a successor was chosen.

² There is no record of Edwards' resignation.

³ Report of the commissioners appointed to settle public accounts, 1794, Legislative Papers, South Carolina Archives.

pointed in 1778 to help the general assembly consider claims on the public, acted more as a "Treasury Accountant" than an auditor.⁴ Until 1789 the commissioners themselves were not obliged to maintain a smooth set of books or to balance their cash accounts; it was left to the auditor to reduce their rough accounts to fair ledgers and journals. As a result, periodic audits by committees of the assembly found that no running check had been made on either of the treasurers and that errors and omissions in their books were numerous. Nor were accounts of cash, indents, and notes always kept separate; only after 1789 did the treasurers open separate books for payments in different forms.⁵ And the auditor was so far behind in his work that he could not bring the smooth treasury journal up to date until some time after his office was abolished.⁶

The treasury's difficulties merely added to the assembly's, for it became impossible to ascertain the state's indebtedness. In 1790 the constitutional convention passed an ordinance directing the commissioners of the treasury to balance their books, and the following year, when it became obvious that they could not do so, the legislature appointed a special commission to settle and adjust their accounts. This three-member commission fared little better. After initial examinations of the accounts in the two treasury offices and of the auditor's books, the commissioners concluded that "they can never balance."⁷ The commissioners planned to open a new set of books, designed to give an audited account of treasury transactions from 1783, when the government had been re-formed, to 1791, when the new constitution had gone into effect.⁸

The corrected summary of treasury business that formed this consolidated ledger and journal could have been made either by the auditor or by the commissioners to settle and adjust the public accounts. Their precise origin is uncertain, but their nature is plain. They are audited statements of the regular accounts of the treasury from January, 1783, to February, 1791, reconstructed from the original books of the commissioners of the treasury. Apart from corrections, all entries in the extant cash books, daybooks, journals, ledgers, and waste books kept by the treasury (or by the treasury and the auditor) from 1783 to 1791 are found in this journal and ledger.

⁴ Report of the committee appointed to take into their [*sic*] consideration the present and past State of the Treasury, and the Auditors Office, Journals of the House of Representatives, 7 March 1789, South Carolina Archives.

⁵ *Ibid.* The "blending" of accounts, the house committee claimed, was more responsible for "the confused Manner, in which the Treasurers Accounts have been hitherto laid before the House" than "any appearance of want of Industry, either in the Treasurers or Auditor."

⁶ Report of the commissioners appointed to settle public accounts, 1791, Legislative Papers.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.* It is not clear, as the following paragraph shows, whether the commissioners ever opened their new set of books, and, if so, whether the records here presented belonged to them. The commissioners' inventory of the auditor's books makes it impossible to distinguish them from the treasurers'. Their account of the auditor's bookkeeping certainly suggests that the smooth journal and ledger here might have been kept by him.

Only one major discrepancy exists: the original accounts of cash received for duties from July, 1785, record individual payments, while the reconstructed journal and ledger only give monthly statements.⁹

Nevertheless, these smooth accounts of treasury business work best when used with other records relating to public finance, particularly where transactions were made in indents. The ledger and journal do not, for example, give the names of those who received public land, but of those whose indents were used to acquire it. Without reference to the Accounts Audited of Claims Growing Out of the Revolution (in which the canceled indents were filed) or the special schedule known as Account of Lands Paid, the real purchaser cannot be traced. In addition, some business was kept apart from the general accounting of the treasury. Separate schedules of indents were made—so that the debt resulting from payments of claims in paper cannot be computed from any of the general account books.¹⁰ A separate office was established to manage the paper medium loan. Although records of sales of confiscated property appear in the treasury books, day-to-day accounts of the commissioners of forfeited estates were not maintained at the treasury.¹¹ And the treasury books only summarize receipts for general tax.

The smooth ledger and journal follow the Italian method of book-keeping, so that an entry in one record always contains a reference to the corresponding page of the other. In the ledger a cross-reference to the journal appears after the date, in a column to the left of each entry; in the journal the cross-reference to the ledger is always found in the left-hand margin. The index to the ledger therefore serves as a key to both records. (The journals are in two distinct volumes, but the date of payment in the ledger always makes it clear to which journal the cross reference applies.) The ledger was made on the double-entry system: payments and receipts appear under both the payor (usually a name) and the payee (usually the title of an account). A second cross-reference in the ledger, in a column immediately before the sum, refers to the other page in the ledger on which the same entry appears. The three ledgers (A, B, and C) are divided into roughly chronological order and have continuous pagination.

⁹ Because a detailed account of revenue from duties appears in the books of manifests and entries in *Duties on Trade at Charleston, 1784-1789* (Microcopy Number 6), reference to the original accounts of cash received for duties should rarely be necessary.

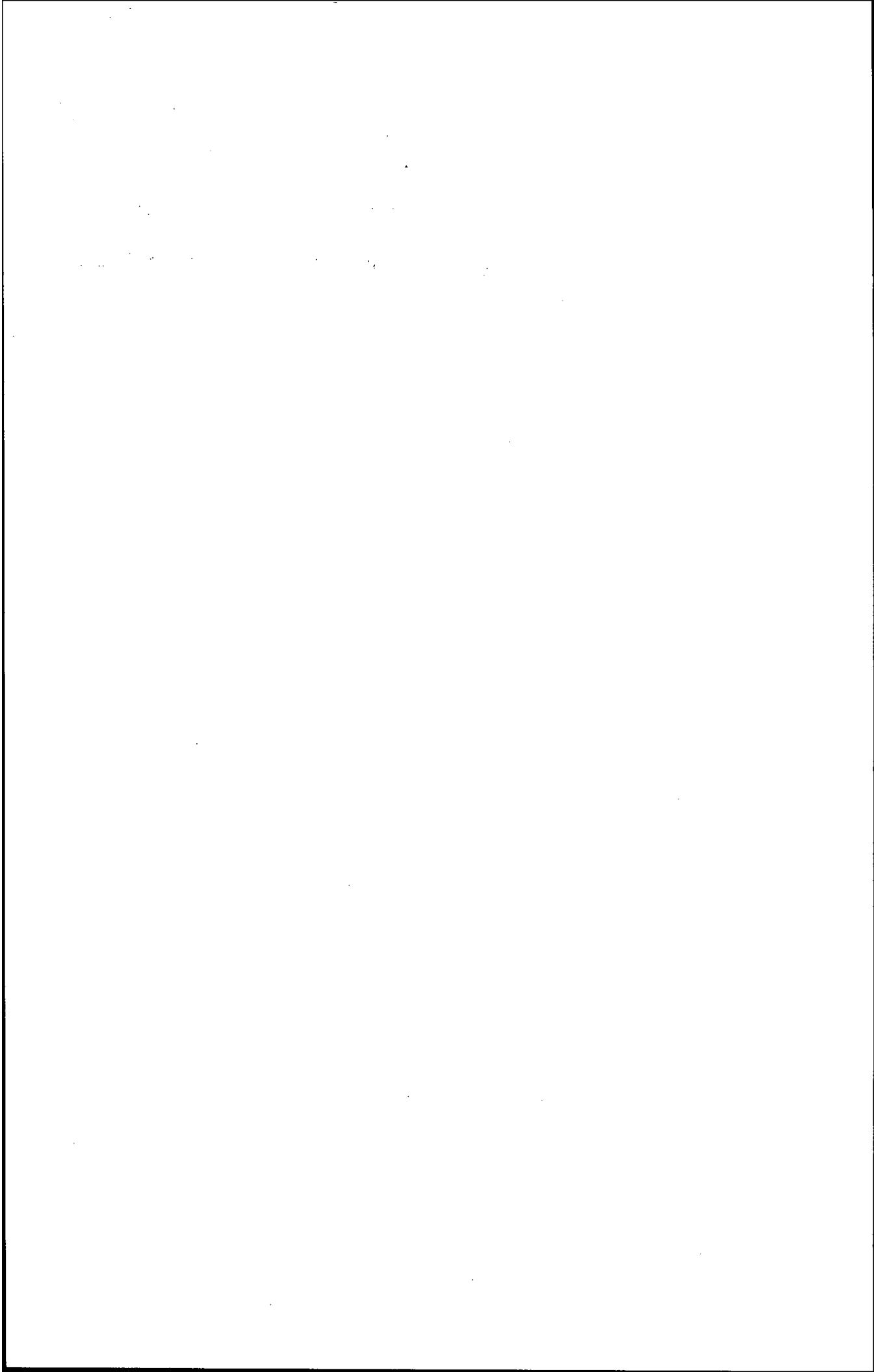
¹⁰ James McCall, late auditor and accountant general, to the commissioners for settling the public accounts, n.d., Legislative Papers. McCall says that for the first few years after the peace indents were issued without any notation in the treasury journals. Many later indents do seem to be recorded in the journals at the time of issue.

¹¹ A. S. Salley, ed., *Journal of the Senate of South Carolina, January 8, 1782-February 26, 1782* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1941), p. 115.

The legislature only required the treasury to post monthly accounts of confiscated estate sales. The house committee, however, felt that the treasurers were responsible for too much of the day-to-day business of sales of vacant and confiscated land.

Each of the three bound ledgers contains an index. The general index to the ledgers is a consolidation of these three manuscript indexes. Names of persons with identical surnames and forenames entered in each index are now a single entry. The compiled index, reduced to word-by-word alphabetical order, was taken directly from the manuscript indexes in each ledger, but was checked against the books themselves.

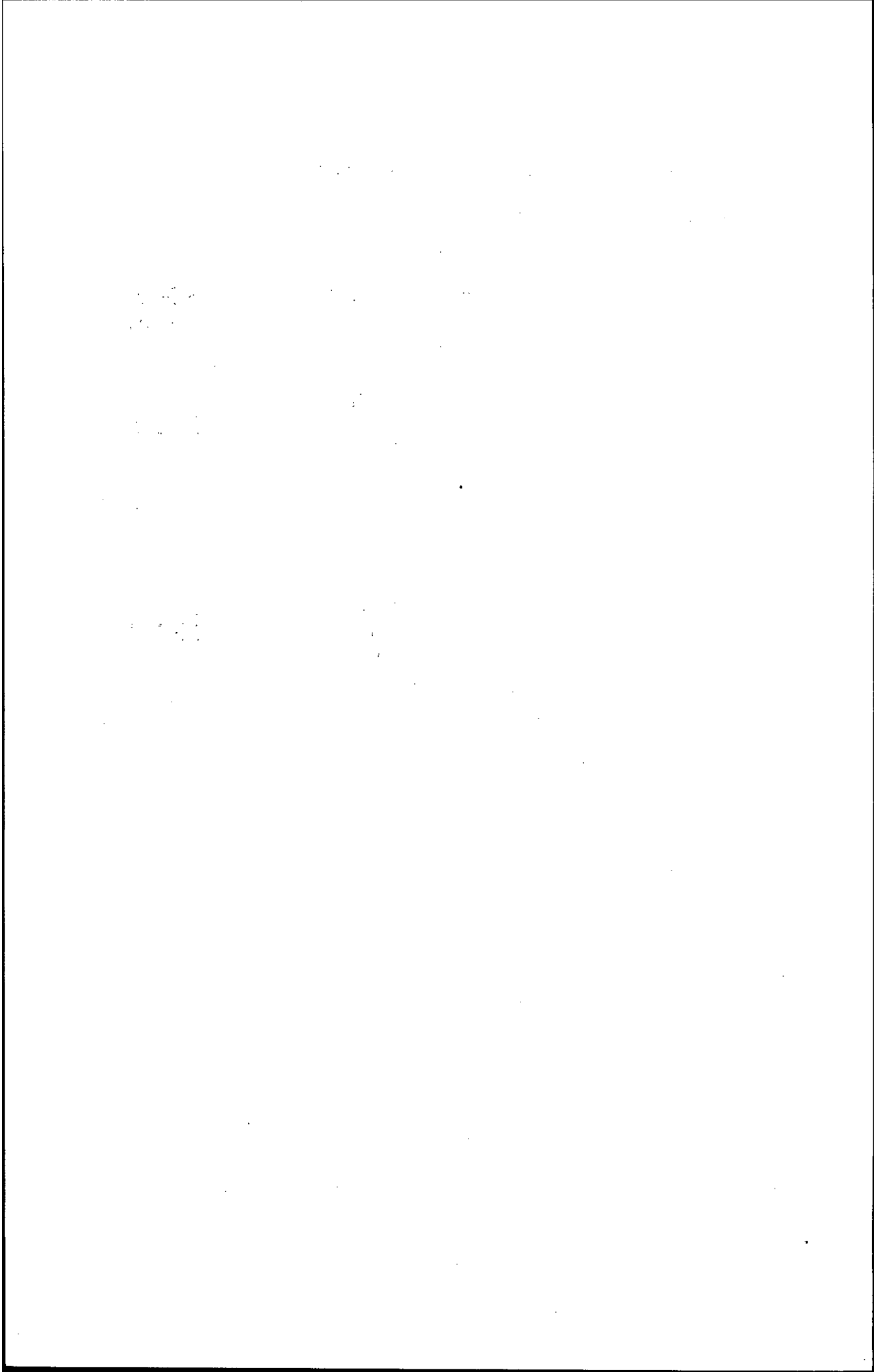
The index was prepared with the generous cooperation of the Computer Science Center of the University of South Carolina.



SOUTH CAROLINA ARCHIVES MICROCOPY NUMBER 5

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M-5/1 |
| Roll 2: | <i>South Carolina Treasury, 1783-1791</i>
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Microcopy Number 1: Records in the British Public Record Office relating to South Carolina, 1663-1782, with general index. 12 rolls.
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Microcopy Number 2: United States Census. Original Agriculture, Industry, Social Statistics, and Mortality Schedules for South Carolina, 1850-1880. 22 rolls.
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With a printed introduction and tables.

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Microcopy Number 5: South Carolina Treasury Ledgers and Journals, 1783-1791. 4 rolls.
With a printed introduction and index.

Microcopy Number 6: Duties on Trade at Charleston, 1784-1789. 1 roll.
With a printed introduction and tables.

Microcopy Number 7: South Carolina Treasury Ledgers and Journals, 1791-1865. 12 rolls.
With a printed introduction.

Prices are available on request. Introductory pamphlets to all microcopies are available at a price of \$1.00 each, plus 15 cents mailing charge. Address inquiries to:

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