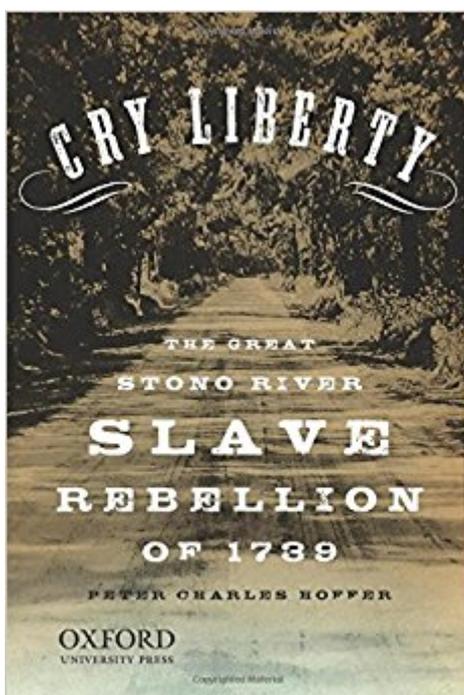


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# Cry Liberty: The Great Stono River Slave Rebellion Of 1739 (New Narratives In American History)



## Synopsis

The story of slavery in the colonial New World is, in part, one of rebellion. In Jamaica, Hispaniola, Dutch Surinam and elsewhere, massive uprisings threatened European rule. But not in British North America. Between the founding of Jamestown in 1607 and the start of the American Revolution in 1775, the colonies experienced only one notable revolt, on South Carolina's Stono River in 1739, and it lasted a single day. Yet, writes Peter Charles Hoffer, as brief as this event was, historians have misunderstood it--and have thus overlooked its deeper significance. In *Cry Liberty*, Hoffer provides a deeply researched and finely nuanced narrative of the Stono River conflict, offering uncomfortable insights into American slavery. In particular, he draws on new sources to reexamine this one dramatic day. According to conventional wisdom, recently imported African slaves--warriors in spirit and training--learned of an impending war between England and Spain. Seeking freedom from Spanish authorities, the argument runs, they launched a well-planned uprising in order to escape to Florida. But Hoffer has mined legislative and legal records, land surveys, and first-hand accounts to identify precisely where the fighting began, trace the paths taken by rebels and militia, and offer a new explanation of its causes. Far from a noble, well-crafted revolt, he reveals, the slaves were simply breaking into a store to take what they thought was their due, and chance events put them on a path no participant had originally intended. The truth is a far less heroic, but far more of a human tragedy. Richly researched, crisply told, and unflinchingly honest, this book uncovers the grim truth about the violent wages of slavery and sheds light on why North America had so few slave rebellions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This is a smart book--smart because it forces readers to think anew about a topic that is well known to scholars of colonial slavery, the Stono slave rebellion of 1739...Readers will come away with lots to contemplate about the nature of slave resistance in colonial American and about the reading of fragmentary and tantalizing evidence. It is the sort of smart book that students will love." --The Journal of Southern History

Peter Charles Hoffer is Distinguished Research Professor at the University of Georgia. He specializes in early U.S. history and legal history. He is the author of numerous books, including *Past Imperfect*; *Seven Fires: The Urban Infernos that Reshaped American History*; *The Brave New World: A History of Early America*; and *The Supreme Court: An Essential History*.

Let me say I was attracted to this book for two reasons; I am an amateur history buff and I happen to live very close to where the events in the story occurred. The author made a very enjoyably read story unfold without stating in the typical dogmatic fashion of many educators that he/she has some new clues without substantiating or documenting the reason for their position. The author is a professor at the University of Georgia and has written several other books and many articles on the similar time frame in US history. The author also avoided the one thing in the book he notes many others do, which record a particular fact and then work backward to try to come out with a definite scenario to explain the incident. The author gives several reasons for how things may actually have occurred without being dogmatic about his conclusions. The book was extensively documented throughout with notes and references at the bottom of each page to which they referred. Let me say this is a rather small book in both physical dimensions and also length [173pp] and were it a work of fiction, I would certainly rank it a novella rather than a novel. The upside of that is that it can be easily read in one long or two short readings. The author sets the tone for his work in the opening paragraph: "The only large scale rebellion in British North America occurred on a single day, from very early Sunday morning to late afternoon, on September 9, 1739. The setting was similarly limited - a store, a bridge, nearby plantations, and a road along the North Branch of the Stono River known as Pon Pon at the time but [now known as US-17 or alternatively Savannah Hwy when heading south from Charleston and conversely called Charleston Hwy when heading north from Savannah]. The author included some obvious facts known to any amateur history buffs as "Without

slaves, Carolina would never have been profitable enough to merit colonization." Yet he also explained many interesting observations as "To show deference to whites, ...slave speech was often slowed or mumbled, or spoken with a glance to the side or down. This was a defense mechanism the enslaved learned in Africa, where it was a sign of respect for young people to avoid meeting the gaze of their elders." He also noted that the sex ratio in the late 1730's of slaves was 1.7 males for each female, which made females far more valuable to male slaves but not necessarily to slave owners who felt they couldn't produce as much heavy work as males. This along with a myriad of other minor facts is what made the book interesting and hard to put down. I heartily recommend this book.

I bought Hoffer's earlier work, "The Great New York Conspiracy of 1741" a few years back. Cry Liberty was all right but not as in depth as his earlier work. Probably because not as much information was available on the subject for research. His conclusions are probably on the mark. A good but not great book.

This was a very interesting read for a history student as it really does try to create a narrative on an event we know little about. It is a defining work whose insights are worth the read but its particular type of historical narrative is worthy of note and study in itself. The book arrived in good condition and on time.

This book was a very good read on the large slave rebellion in SC in 1739 at Stono river. While it told me a lot of info I did not know it was a lot smaller than I expected in size.

- Good reading, not much written about this part of South Carolina or American history. Or about the people who took part in it.

A research (inquest) into the probable events of slave activity which carried onward till the Civil War. The 150th anniversary of that war is a great time to look at this slave conflict. "Cry Liberty" covers much slave activity in early 18th century near Charles Town (Charleston), SC. The author has done an intellectual work in gathering research and visiting (photos in book) the area to attempt to make a determination if the Stono River slave rebellion was planned or a chance accident. As an unbiased writer, he looks between the previously written lines, the culture, Colonial needs, status of people, misinformation, economics of the area, fear, religion, politics, and even land surveys. So well

researched and footnoted that reading more on this "rebellion" seems needless. It's not a textbook, but it is solid nonfiction, worthy of an educated look. The uprising of 1739 was almost silenced for 2 3/4 centuries. It is a story worth reading. Slave activity was little different then than in 1861 when, let's face it, slavery divided America, north to south. Was Stono really a prequel to that slavery rebellion? Or was it simply a case of "chattel stampede?"

**PROLOGUE:** Maps and a look at the Shono/Charles Town area.

**Chapters:**

- 1 AT HUTCHENSON'S STORE- The revolt's beginning place and its likely composition.
- 2 INHUMAN BONDAGE- Slaves by law, creation, color, economic need as rice field labor. Slaves were mobile.
- 3 TERROR IN THE NIGHT- Ditch digging slaves kill whites (23 total in the end) but began in a search for food and drink. Death & mayhem, even slave against slave. Like white vs white in Civil War.
- 4 ON PON PON ROAD- The road was slave constructed in 1739. Weary slaves marched, Florida freedom bound, rested, the beginning to their end. Sever times black deaths compared to white.
- 5 NEVER FORGET- "But the memory of Stono among the whites was quickly recast in the face of the necessities of the colonial economy."--author Hoffer. Slavery & blood had left its mark.

**EPILOGUE:** The author wraps it up well.

as described

So-so

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