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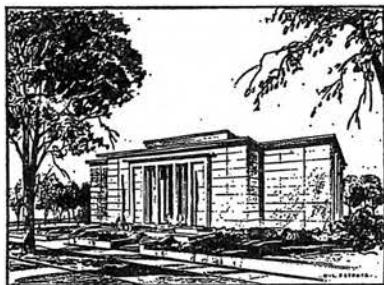
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From the Archives

Charleston Orphans, 1790-1795

Edited by WYLMA ANNE WATES



ARCHIVES, COLUMBIA

In order to get information about its holdings and activities before the public without launching yet another separate publication, in 1965 the Archives Department agreed with the Historical Society to provide a section of the *South Carolina Historical Magazine* called "Archives News." This section, for which the Department pays the printing costs, is now entitled "From the Archives," but our purposes remain the same. As our quarterly contribution this fall we offer, in addition to news of recent accessions, a very interesting document from the Records of the General Assembly concerning the Charleston Orphan House. This document is a list of the children in the Orphan House in its first five years of existence, giving date and age of admission, and birthplace. Although records of the Orphan House have been preserved, no other such list was found in extant records. Comparison of the list printed below with the other Orphan House records has allowed us to provide in footnotes other details on many of these unfortunate children.¹ Although they appear contradictory in some cases and do not always seem to coincide with the list, the dates in the footnotes indicate where the additional material may be found in the minutes and other proceedings. Apparently actions were sometimes taken which do not appear in the minutes. We have followed the erratic spelling and phraseology of the various clerks.

Under the 1783 Act to Incorporate Charleston, the City Council had among its other duties and responsibilities "the care of the poor."²

¹ Minutes of the Commissioners of the Orphan House, 1790-1865; Register of Children on the Orphan House Institution, 1791-1812; Donation Book, 1790-1821; Records of Donations and Wills, 1793-1892; and Private Accounts of the Commissioners of the Orphan House, 1790-1876, were among the records filmed in the 1950's at the Charleston Orphan House, Oak Grove, North Charleston, S. C., by the Genealogical Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. Copies of this film are available at the Archives.

² Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, editors, *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, 10 vols. (Columbia, 1838-1841), 7: 97-101.

Eligible children were placed in existing schools and supported there by the city, but this system was inadequate. "An Ordinance for the Establishment of an Orphan-House in the City of Charleston for the purpose of supporting and educating poor orphan children, and those of poor distressed and disabled parents, who are unable to maintain them" was ratified by the City Council on October 18, 1790. The Orphan House was under the direction of a Board of Commissioners who were elected by the City Council and reported to it. The Commissioners hired and supervised the staff, admitted and bound out the children, and met once a week or oftener to oversee the operation of the institution. A house on Market Street was rented for the girls and small boys. Boys nine years old or older were sent to the school kept by Philip Anthony Besselieu. These arrangements were consolidated when the Orphan House at the corner of Calhoun and St. Philip Streets was ready for occupancy in 1792.³

On October 22, 1795, the Commissioners of the Orphan House appointed a committee to report "the number of children received, dead, bound out, absent or decoyed away, from the Commencement of the Institution to the last Anniversary." The list of children with accompanying statistics was reported back that same day. This is the document printed below. Although there is nothing on it to indicate how or why it became part of the state archives, it was fortunate that it did. The statistics appear in the Orphan House Commission Minutes but not the list. The earliest surviving Register of Children in the Orphan House Institution begins on October 6, 1791, and contains only 9 of the 113 names for the same period on this list. Aside from the personal information about the individuals who appear there, the list is an interesting social document of the first decade after the Revolution. These children were part of a fluctuating and mobile population. Some of them were born during the Revolutionary War, others were refugees from the Slave Insurrection in Santo Domingo. For all of them, their inclusion on this list reflected the hazards of life and fortune in the early history of this nation.

³ *City Gazette* (Charleston, S. C.), October 9, 1790, and Newton B. Jones, "The Charleston Orphan House 1860-1876" in *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 62 (1961): 204-214.

	<i>Date of Admission</i> 1793	<i>Names of the Children</i>	<i>Age when Admitted</i>	<i>Where born</i>
104.	do. 18	Elizabeth Brookman ⁷⁴	6	Amsterdam
105.	do. 18	Jane Brown ⁷⁵	6	Charleston
106.	do. 22	William Cameron ⁷⁶	12	Pedee
107.	_____	George Robr. Logan ⁷⁷	6	Ireland
108.	_____	Robert Lowry ⁷⁸	6	Charleston
109.	_____	James Marsh ⁷⁹	6	Philadelphia
110.	_____	John Lewis ⁸⁰	4 4/12	Charleston
111.	_____	John Bazon ⁸¹	7	Abbeville
112.	_____	Lewis Disher ⁸²	7	Charleston
113.	_____	John James Hughes ⁸³	4	Georgia
114.	_____	John Mears ⁸⁴	5	Charleston
115.	_____	William Mears ⁸⁴	4	Charleston
116.	August 8	John Thos. Swords ⁸⁵	7	Charleston

⁷⁴ Daughter of Conrad and Ann Brookman, she was born at sea on Capt. Baas' ship on voyage from Amsterdam to Charleston, admitted on application of her mother, Mrs. Ann Nedderman, July 18, 1793.

⁷⁵ Daughter of Thomas and Letitia Brown, admitted on application of her mother, Mrs. Letitia Pearce, July 18, 1793. See also No. 156 on list.

⁷⁶ Transferred from the Poor House where he was with his father, to be sent to school, January 17, 1793.

⁷⁷ Son of Thomas and Ann Logan, admitted on application of his mother, Mrs. Ann Rowly, April 19, 1792. See also No. 5 on list.

⁷⁸ Admitted on application of his father, John Lowry, of Belfast, County Antrim, Ireland, "a very poor man and unable by utmost industry to educate and support his son," October 4, 1792.

⁷⁹ Admitted on application of his mother, Mrs. Marsh, November 8, 1792. See also Nos. 18 and 74 on list.

⁸⁰ Son of John and Christiana Lewis, admitted on application of his mother "her Husband being gone off the State and herself unable to support the child," December 13, 1792.

⁸¹ Son of Nicholas and Rachel Bazon who applied for his admission, February 7, 1793. See also Nos. 96 and 99 on list.

⁸² Son of Lewis and Mary Disher, admitted on application of his mother, April 25, 1793.

⁸³ Son of John and Eleanor Hughes, admitted on application of his mother, Mrs. Eleanor Stone, June 27, 1793.

⁸⁴ Son of John and Mary Mears, admitted on application of his father, his mother being dead, June 27, 1793.

⁸⁵ Son of Thomas and Margaret Swords, admitted on application of his mother, Mrs. Margaret Graham, August 8, 1793.

<i>Date of Admission</i>	<i>Names of the Children</i>	<i>Age when Admitted</i>	<i>Where born</i>
1792			
94. October 4	Elizabeth Burch ⁶⁴	10	Maryland
95. December 14	Benjamin Lewis ⁶⁵	7 7/12	_____
96. do. 24	<u>James Johnston</u> ⁶⁶	10 5/12	Abbeville *
97. do. 27	John Phrow ⁶⁷	10 7/12	_____
1793			
98. February 21	Anne Fullum ⁶⁸	10	Charleston
99. March 7	<u>Elizabeth Johnston</u> ⁶⁹	13	Abbeville *
100. April 4	John Peter P. Cannaud ⁷⁰	9	France
101. June 27	Margaret Welch ⁷¹	7	Ireland
102. do. 27	Ann Fort ⁷²	6	Georgia
103. y 18	Ann Brookman ⁷³	8	Amsterdam

⁶⁴ Daughter of Ann Woodman by her former husband, Thomas Burch, admitted on her mother's application which also included her half-sister Catherine Woodman, October 4, 1792; bound to Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Merrel to learn business of tayloress, August 29, 1793, her mother complained of improper treatment, November 20, 1794; Mr. Merrel applied to have her returned to Orphan House, November 27, 1794.

⁶⁵ Son of John and Christiana Lewis, admitted on application of Mr. Mills with his mother's approval, August 25, 1791.

⁶⁶ Son of James and Rachel Johnston, he was admitted on application of his mother and stepfather Nicholas Bazon, February 7, 1793. See also Nos. 99 and 111 on list. *

⁶⁷ Bound to Jacob Stoll, tin plate worker, February 26, 1795.

⁶⁸ Admitted on application of her father, William Fullum, February 21, 1793. *

⁶⁹ Daughter of James and Rachel Johnston, she was admitted on application of her mother, Mrs. Rachel Bazon, March 7, 1793; she was found to have eloped and a warrant was issued for taking her up, September 7, 1794. See also Nos. 96 and 111 on list. *

⁷⁰ Son of Anthony Paul and Frances Adelaide Piaud Canard, admitted on application of his mother "being distressed having no means to support herself or son and her husband being absent seven months and no accounts of him," March 28, 1793; taken away and put on board a privateer by his mother, September 11, 1794.

⁷¹ Daughter of Henry and Margaret Welch, admitted on application of her mother, a widow, June 27, 1793.

⁷² Daughter of Flake and Winnifred Fort, admitted on application of her mother, Mrs. Winnifred Rand, June 27, 1793.

⁷³ Daughter of Conrad and Ann Brookman, admitted on application of her mother, Mrs. Ann Nedderman, July 18, 1793.