Chapter VII

LAST YEARS AND DEATH

EARLY in the year 1761 Sir Patrick Houstoun made his will. He and his wife were then the parents of six children. Their oldest, Patrick, Jr., was about twenty years old. George was a youth of nearly eighteen and the younger children were John, James, Ann Priscilla and William. With no birth dates available for any except Patrick and George, the ages of the remaining five cannot be given with exactitude, but from the will of Lady Houstoun, executed eleven years after her husband's death, she mentions William as a minor; so he was the youngest child. He and Ann Priscilla, then, were quite small children when their father died, the former about five and the latter six years old. As will be seen later in Lady Houstoun's will, James is not referred to as a minor; therefore the deduction is made that he was the fourth child.¹

The commerce of Georgia had grown to such an extent in the few years previous to Sir Patrick Houstoun's death that by 1760, forty-two vessels plied between Savannah and other ports bringing besides their cargoes war news from the northern provinces. On November 19, 1760, the Council created a new Commission of Peace and appointed to that body the following members: Patrick Houstoun, James Habersham, Noble Jones, Francis Harris, Jonathan Bryan, James Mackay, James Edward Powell, William Knox, William Groover, William Clifton, and William Butler.²

Savannah, in 1760, was considered a healthful town, and rice

¹ With no known tombstones to which to refer, and no Bibles having been found in which their births are entered, only a surmise of the ages of John and James can be made from the records of Sir Patrick Houstoun's statement made in April, 1755, of "his wife and four children." By reading Lady Houstoun's will, it can be seen that John was of age at that time, and it seems probable that James was fully grown. Therefore by means of calculation, it has been found that John and James were boys between eight and fifteen years old when their father died.

² Colonial Records of Georgia, VIII, 425.
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planters from the neighboring lowlands in South Carolina went thither during the “summer and autumn of the year that they might escape the fevers incident to the swamps. The dense forests growing upon Hutchinson’s Island and the low grounds to the east and west of the town shielded it from the noxious vapors and malarial influences in the fields beyond which were cultivated in rice.”

Thirty-four hundred pounds of that staple were exported from Savannah in 1760. The population of Georgia at that time was barely 6000 whites and 3578 Negro slaves.

In the month that Sir Patrick Houstoun made his will, the news arrived in Savannah of the death of George II. Governor Wright received the information by packet on the night of February 5, 1761, over three months after the occurrence, and acquainted his Council with the intelligence the following morning. After the letter from the Right Honourable the Lords of His Majesty’s Privy Council had been read, with other official letters to His Excellency, Council immediately proposed that seventy minute guns be fired, “at the town of Savannah,” on Monday the ninth between the hours of nine and twelve, and that Prince George of Wales, naming all of his titles, be proclaimed King George the Third, on Tuesday the tenth of February, and also at Sunbury, Frederica, and Augusta, in the said province under a triple discharge of the cannon and musketry. It was also decided that alterations be made in the Book of Common Prayer for the Royal Family to be duly observed in the several parish churches and other places of divine worship throughout the province.

Council met on the appointed day, February 10, and with them “numbers of the principal inhabitants and planters of the Province” who attended to hear read the Proclamation of the Lords of his Majesty’s Privy Council, “having been prepared fair wrote on a large Sheet of Paper.” It was signed by the Governor, seven members of the Council including Houstoun, and twenty-seven other inhabitants. “Then the Regulars and Militia, being under Arms, and drawn up by their respective Officers before the Council Chamber and the Windows thrown open the Clerk of the Council, by Order of His Honour, the Gov-

4. Ibid., 23, 24.
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ernour, did publish the said Proclamation audibly and distinctly under a Discharge of twenty-one Pieces of Cannon; After which the said Proclamation being delivered to the Provost Marshall, His Honour and the Council accompanied by the principal Inhabitants and attended by the Regulars and Militia proceeded to the Market Place where the Provost Marshall published the said Proclamation under a like Discharge of Cannon; Then the Procession moved to the Fort in Savannah, called Hallifax Fort, where the Provost Marshall did again publish the same under a like Discharge of Cannon and a Triple Discharge of the Musketry: And his Majesty's Proclamation for continuing all Officers &c was then also published."

The next day at the Council meeting the Governor and all of the Councilors had to take again, severally, the State Oaths, and subscribe the Test to the new King.

On Tuesday, October 6, 1761, Houstoun, apparently, attended his last meeting of Council. He was present at a meeting in August and one in September, only two having been held that month; so that his illness began, probably, some time after the October meeting. After hearing a resume of the sundry instructions issued by Governors Reynolds and Ellis to Houstoun as Register of Grants and Receiver of Quit Rents, the Council ordered on October 6 that he be instructed "to register all grants already signed for six months to come, notwithstanding the time for registering the same may be elapsed."

Four months later, on February 5, 1762, Sir Patrick Houstoun died. In the minutes of the two Houses of which Sir Patrick Houstoun was the presiding officers, there is a strange omission, for neither of them makes any official mention of his death. The Royal Council met on February 3 and not again until the fifteenth, but if any resolution was passed on the death of their late president, the secretary omitted its record. The Upper House even met on the day that he died.

6. Ibid., 578.
7. In the months that intervened between his attendance at the Council meeting on October 6 and his death on February 5, the Journal of the Upper House mentions in the minutes of various meetings that "the President shall sign the address etc.," or that "Mr. President reported that his Honor the Governor had made a speech to both Houses," or that "Mr. President informed the House" etc., with no clue whatever
Sir Patrick was interred in the old burying ground of Christ Church, and it can be presumed that the service of the Church of England was read by the Reverend Bartholomew Zouberbuhler, who, at that time was the minister of the parish church.

Cut into the tombstone is the Houstoun coat-of-arms, and the motto, “In Time.” The epitaph of Sir Patrick Houstoun reads:

SIR PATRICK HOUSTOUN
Baronet, President of his Majesty's Council of Georgia
died 5th Feb. 1762, Aged 64*

All that he owned, personal and real, he bequeathed to his beloved Priscilla. His wife and her brother, George Dunbar, were named executors of his will. Sir Patrick and his wife had lived happily together for twenty-two years and with the severing of the tie she was left to care for her six children, bringing up the younger ones and taking over the responsibility of their large plantation, as well as the other holdings of her late husband in the Province of Georgia.

8. Subsequent to 1871 the remains of Sir Patrick Houstoun and of his wife were removed to Bonaventure Cemetery, near Savannah, by “E. Houstoun,” who had erected a large monument on which is cemented the original stone inscribed with the above epitaph. The “s” in the word Sir was cut off when the slab was removed. The “ir” is visible. For authority for the date, 1871, see Savannah Morning News, February 15, 1871, article entitled, “Sir Patrick Houstoun, Bart.” The handsome brick vault of the Houstoun family probably was one of the oldest in the cemetery. It was razed after the removals.

9. “In the Name of God Amen. I Sir Patrick Houstoun Baronet in the district of Savannah in Georgia being weak in body but of sound and perfect mind and memory do this Eleventh Day of February One Thousand seven hundred and sixty one make ordain and publish this my last will and Testament, in manner following that is to say I give bequeath and devise to my well beloved wife, Priscilla Houstoun and to her Heirs for ever all my Estate both real and Personal of whatsoever Consists and I hereby ordain her my said wife and my beloved brother in Law Capt. George Dunbar Executrix and Executor of this my Last Will. In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal the day and year above written:

Signed sealed Published and declared by the said Sir Patrick Houstoun the
Sir Patrick Houstoun's will was a brief document. He had spent twenty-six years in Georgia and had done his part in the pioneer days in the promotion of agriculture. Three years he had been a representative of the people of his district in the Provincial Assembly, and six years he had served his King in the Royal Council. He had lived to witness his country engaged in a bloody struggle with the French, for the possession of Canada, and he lived to hear of the fall of Quebec.

Two weeks after his death Governor Wright wrote to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations in London, February 20, 1762:

Sir Pat Houstown one of the Council here and Register of Grants and Receiver of quit rents dyed here the 5th Inst and I have appointed his son now Sir P. Houstown (I believe a very deserving young gentleman) for those offices.

Testator as and for his Last will and Testament in the Presence of us who subscribed our Names as Witnesses Georgia by his Excellency thereto and at his Desire Hugh Ross Ann Steuart John Ross personally appeared before me Hugh Ross being one of the subscribing Witnesses to the last Will and Testament of Sir Patrick Houstoun Bart late of Savannah in the province aforesaid deceased and being duly sworn on the holy Evangelists made Oath that he was personally present and did see the testator, sign, seal, publish, pronounce and declare the same to be and . . [torn] . . his last Will and Testament and that he was of sound and disposing . . [torn] . . and Memory to the best of his knowledge and belief and that he with . . [torn] . . and John Ross, signed his Name as Witness to the said Will of the . . [torn] . . and in the Presence of the Testator and in each other's Presence.

At the same time Dame Priscilla Houstoun Widow and Relict of the said deceased and Executrix — within Named Qualified as such before me. Given under my hand this 15 day of April 1762.

Ja: Wright

Will Book A, 83-84. Original will in the Department of Archives and History, Atlanta.