Private Hospitality in the South, 1775-1850

By Paton Yoder

Ever since Sarah Knight was caught in a snowstorm and forced to beg for shelter at a private home — where the bed on which she slept was as “hard as it was high” — American travelers have used, either by choice or from necessity, the hospitality of private homes. And Madam Knight’s experience of 1704 on her return to Boston from New York was of course not the first of its kind. In a new country where living was primitive and travel was limited it is not surprising that at certain times, and especially in remote areas, the accommodation of travelers was a service supplied by householders.

That this practice of private hospitality became widespread in America in the late eighteenth century and continued in the nineteenth century is clearly shown by the testimony of travelers; but some of the generalizations which historians have constructed from travelers’ accounts seem to require considerable refinement and qualification. Such terms as “southern hospitality,” or “frontier hospitality,” or “Pennsylvania Dutch hospitality,” for example, may imply the existence of group or regional attitudes toward travelers which are not always supported by the facts. Tradition, to be sure, has even created certain folk types to illustrate such group hospitality. Among the familiar examples are the early settler whose “latch string” was always out and the southern planter who was accused of resorting to almost every conceivable device, including virtual abduction, to satisfy his love of entertaining. Farther west was the rancher or miner whose unoccupied shack or cabin was

1 The Journal of Madame Knight and Rev. Mr. Buckingham from the Original Manuscripts Written in 1704 and 1710 (New York, 1825), 57. For a more readily available edition see The Journal of Madam Knight, with an introductory note by George Parker Winship (New York, 1920), 58.
always open to the weary traveler. Most of these traditions have passed into American literature, and some of them have been incorporated in the writings of well-known historians.

Traditions of private hospitality in the South are among the best known, the most widely accepted, and of longest standing. "From earliest times," says a standard history of travel in America, "the people of the South displayed a personal hospitality to strangers unusual in its sincerity and universality, which has continued without interruption as a tradition and an existent reality." 2 Speaking of the early conditions on the Boone's Lick Road in the trans-Mississippi area, another writer has stated: "There were no hotels. The traveler was welcome everywhere, anytime. The log cabin with stone chimney or chimney of sticks and dried mud, had always room on pallet or shakedown for the visitor." 3 And in writing earlier of the Cumberland Road, still another authority suggested that "it may be found upon investigation that the portions of our country most noted for hospitality are those where taverns gained the least hold as a social institution," 4 thus implying a causal relationship which is flattering to certain sections of the country, but not necessarily valid. In stating that "the eagerness of the planters of the South to entertain guests in their homes made taverns less necessary than in the North," a more recent writer has obviously followed this same interpretation. 5 Such statements are derived principally from two types of literature: early tradition and the recorded experiences of selected travelers. Neither of these sources is to be despised; but it should be recognized that they do not necessarily tell the whole story.

The tradition of Virginia hospitality arose early. In 1747, for example, Thomas Salmon's Modern Gazetteer contained a comment that "Such is the hospitality of the Virginians, that a traveller needs no recommendation to their houses; he will be entertained at any gentleman or planter's house where he calls, which makes inns upon the road altogether useless." 6 Equally significant are

2 Seymour Dunbar, A History of Travel in America (4 vols., Indianapolis, 1915), I, 220.
8 Walter Williams, "Tavern on the Boon's Lick Road," Overland Monthly (San Francisco), LVIII (November, 1911), 418.
4 Archer B. Hulbert, The Cumberland Road (Cleveland, 1904), 153 n.
several lines from an earlier epic jingle—*The Sot-weed Factor* (1708)—in which a southern planter, approached by a traveling tobacco merchant, replies in rhyme:

Whether you come from Gaol or Colledge,
You're welcome to my certain Knowledge.

For Planters Tables, you must know
Are free for all that come and go.7

And although the “Sot-weed Factor,” or tobacco merchant, soon returned to England in high dudgeon because he had been tricked by a knave in the guise of a Quaker, he carried with him pleasant memories of several hospitable planters.

The southerner who sent his Negro servant out to the highways and taverns to persuade wayfarers to share his hospitality also appears frequently in travel legends as typical of his class.8 One such characterization indicates that the planter sometimes personally extended the invitation to enjoy his hospitality, and “if the traveller refused, up went the rifle to his shoulder and compliance was demanded in the tone of an European footpad. The stranger now saw that pleasure was policy.”9 Although many of these legends are found in travel accounts, they must nevertheless still be classified as legends, for they are usually presented not as actual experiences but simply as the reputed common practice of southern planters.

That hospitality was universal in the southern states was frequently asserted by travelers themselves. Mrs. Matilda C. F. Houstoun, for example, while traveling in Texas in the 1840’s, declared that “every house on the wide-spreading and dreary prairie is open to the traveller, and no one is ever turned from the door of a dweller in the wilderness without a shelter and a meal.”10 The author of *Notions of the Americans* (1830) likewise testified that “through Virginia and the Carolinas, and in several other States, we might have travelled without spending a sixpence, or eating, drinking, or

sleeping in an inn."^{11} Indeed, one traveler in Virginia declared that a stranger there was as much at home as a "child in its cradle," and cited the tale of a traveler, who, with his wife, carriage, and servants, stopped at a Virginia plantation, and forgetting that he was not at home, remained for the greater part of a year.^{12}

These attestations to southern hospitality are but samples of many found in the vast body of travel literature. But they reveal only one side of the picture. That there was another side is indicated by the fact that one can find about as many unfavorable comments — and from equally reliable sources. Not all of the negative evidence comes from such hostile critics as Edward S. Abdy, who agreed thoroughly with his Kentucky stage driver in 1833 when the latter declared repeatedly that "there is no state . . . where there is so much 'hostility'," meaning "hospitality," as in Kentucky.^{18} One of the most searching contemporary comments on American hospitality comes from Francis Hall, an English visitor of 1816-1817.

In my judgment [Hall said], their fame in this respect, as much exceeds their deserving, as in most other cases it falls below it. Hospitality in the true sense of the word, means that liberal entertainment, which spreads a couch and table for the stranger, merely because he is a stranger. . . . While I was in the North, I was constantly told of the hospitality of the South: at Philadelphia I found it icebound, at Baltimore there was indeed a thaw, but at Washington the frost, probably from the congealing influence of politics, was harder than ever; the thermometer rose but little at Richmond, and, when I arrived at Charleston, I was entertained, not with its own hospitality, but with an eulogium upon that of Boston. — I did not retrace my steps to put the matter to proof. — The experience of an individual would not be very conclusive, were hospitality a discriminating virtue; but its essence is prodigality, and the name of the stranger, the only requisite passport to its favor. Of such hospitality the traveller will find nothing, except indeed, his rank or character would be such, as to give an eclat to his entertainers.^{14}

Hall’s critical evaluation is significant not only for its testimony but also for its definition of hospitality. Similar critical remarks are easily found. Johann Schoepf, a German traveler of 1783-

^{11} [James Fenimore Cooper], Notions of the Americans (New ed., 2 vols., New York, 1850), II, 304-305. Such hospitality, the author added, "is even practised in the northern States."
^{12} [James K. Paulding], Letters from the South (2 vols., New York, 1835), I, 27.
1784, repeatedly complained of the failure of Virginia hospitality to measure up to its reputation. And Fortescue Cuming, whose view of American manners was usually sympathetic, recorded while traveling down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh that "we have rarely experienced that hospitality, which might be expected to prevail."  

These contradictions relative to the universality of the practice of hospitality in the South are frequent and they seem to cancel out one another in a disconcerting way. It is interesting to observe, however, that those travelers and reporters who merely generalized found it much more convenient to speak either of universal hospitality or of the universal lack of it. It is only when the traveler records a house-by-house account of his experiences that the picture turns from black or white to gray. Even a critical Isaac Weld, or Thomas Ashe, or Basil Hall found an occasional hospitable roof; and a friendly Cuming, or even an itinerant preacher such as William H. Milburn, was occasionally turned away or received with considerable reluctance. These day-by-day experiences provide a wealth of material for the study of southern hospitality, and from them can be drawn some well-substantiated conclusions which will require a considerable refinement of the traditional interpretation.

One of the customs which the southern host commonly practiced and which modifies the traditional concept of American hospitality was that of expecting, or at least accepting, remuneration. Exceptions to this can be multiplied, but it is indisputable that travelers paid for their food and lodging as often as not. Included in such exceptions might be the frontiersman who did not live on a main route of travel, and who entertained only occasionally. Frequently, however, even he charged the stranger for his meals and lodging. James K. Paulding's settler-host, about 1816, who "looked as if he would 'gouge' me when I insisted upon" paying him for a bowl of milk, was probably fictitious. But if real, he was no more typical than the family with whom the same traveler lodged in the vicinity of Weir's Cave, in western Virginia, "where they receive

---

16 Fortescue Cuming, Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country, in Reuben G. Thwaites (ed.), Early Western Travels, 1748-1846 (32 vols., Cleveland, 1904-1907), IV, 154; see also pp. 134 and 153.
17 [Paulding], Letters from the South, II, 7.
pay for a sort of family fare provided for strangers." 18 It must also be understood that while many of the great planters did not entertain for a financial consideration there were limitations to their hospitality in other respects. And even among the planters can be found those who accepted remuneration. Thus there are references to "inns" kept by planters, 19 and traveler James Stuart (1830) referred to a "pretty large plantation [in South Carolina] where guests are admitted." 20 In similar vein William Faux referred to his stopover at the "General Washington" in Kentucky, the manse of a Mr. Hit, "who . . . does not think it beneath him to entertain travellers." 21 In both cases a phraseology is used which implies quasi-professional hospitality and also remuneration. One major exception to these examples was the almost universal custom of entertaining itinerant preachers gratis. But this consideration was granted very frequently in the tavern as well as in the private home. 22

Occasionally the traveler was able to gain admission to a frontier army fort, where he was entertained at the expense of the federal government. 23 But if he sought accommodation at the nearby government-franchised trading post, or, if traveling among the southern Indians, at a post licensed by an Indian tribe, he could expect to pay dearly for what were usually inadequate provisions and shelter. 24

18 Ibid., I, 111.
23 Charles J. Latrobe, The Rambler in North America (2 vols., New York, 1835), II, 191, 196, 235; John Pope, A Tour through the Southern and Western Territories of the United States of North America (Richmond, 1792), 22, 69-70; Estwick Evans, A Pedestrious Tour, of Four Thousand Miles, through the Western States and Territories, during the Winter and Spring of 1818, in Thwaites (ed.), Early Western Travels, VIII, 159, 166.
PRIVATE HOSPITALITY IN THE SOUTH

425

Usually, then, whether it was Hugh Finlay's host in South Carolina (1774) who "keeps no tavern, but takes money for his victuals and tody," 26 or Squire Brown on the Ohio River (1808), who "though he does not keep a tavern . . . knows how to charge as if he did," 26 or Adlard Welby's Kentucky entertainer (1820), who told his guest, "You need not be so full of your thanks for I mean to charge you for it," 27 the entertainment of strangers was usually on a quid pro quo basis. This was confirmed by Basil Hall (1828) as it applied to areas where taverns were not to be found, 28 and by George W. Featherstonhaugh (1835) as he moved into the trans-Mississippi frontier, south of Little Rock. 29 It seems safe to say that a majority of those ante-bellum travelers in the South who have recorded their experiences confirm these comments, either by direct statements or by implication — such as mentioning as unusual those accommodations for which no charges were made.

In the second place, hospitality was often cold, and was sometimes refused altogether. The character of the early settler partly explains much of this treatment. His lack of the social graces, combined with a spirit of independence, contributed to the development of an attitude of aloofness which helped to produce a chilly effect. An experience of William Oliver in southern Illinois (1841) — at that time largely southern in background — affords a typical sample of frontier manners toward strangers. To a request for lodging, made from horseback, the woman on the porch answered with a short "yes." Immediately after her reply she returned to the house, leaving Oliver and his traveling companion to find the well (the water "looked like tea slightly colored with cream"), unsaddle the horses, and find provender. At supper "there were scarcely half a dozen words" spoken and the silence was broken only by the cracking of jaws resulting from the frequent yawns of the weary diners. 30

of the Georgia Historical Society (Savannah), IX (1916), 15; Hodgson, Letters from North America, I, 124, 125, and, for numerous references to "stands," pp. 211-89 passim.

26 Hugh Finlay, Journal Kept by Hugh Finlay, Surveyor of the Post Roads on the Continent of North America . . . Begun the 13th Sepr., 1773 and Ended 26th June, 1774 (Brooklyn, 1867), 65.


Obviously no incivility was intended, but the more polite traveler found it difficult to dwell upon the delightful and cheerful hospitality of such hosts.

Farther south, too, the traveler discovered some unwilling hosts. Alongside the indiscriminate hospitality of Mr. Tyer in the interior of North Carolina, as reported by John F. D. Smyth,31 must be placed the less courteous reception of travelers by some Virginia planters, who, on two different occasions, reminded Dr. Johann Schoepf that they did not keep tavern, and in one of those instances received him with "an ill grace" only after "prolonged counsel between husband and wife." 32 In most cases, however, once admitted, the traveler's entertainment in the planter's home was both gracious and bountiful. In Mississippi the gentleman-traveler, Cuming, found that, in contrast to the planter-owner, hired managers of plantations held by absentee owners were quite averse to entertaining strangers.33 As to the claim that the Negro servants of planters came to the inns or waited along the highways expressly to "compel them to come in" to partake of the master's hospitality, the evidence is almost entirely wanting. It is true that some travelers report this as common practice, but no account has been found in which the author himself was personally on the receiving end. 34 There are a few cases of a lost traveler being taken by a servant to his master's residence, and occasionally a planter found a friend at the tavern whom he invited to his home,35 but this is quite different from the deliberate and sustained type of effort suggested in the legends.

Much of the travelers' testimony indicates that independence and unwillingness to entertain were more common in the more remote parts of the South than among the great planters. Here poverty and bad manners, as in the Midwest, joined with independence of spirit to produce some unfortunate travel experiences. In northwestern Georgia, James S. Buckingham (about 1840) was told by

31 Smyth, Tour in the United States, I, 105-106.
32 Schoepf, Travels in the Confederation, II, 38, 96.
33 Cuming, Sketches of a Tour, in Thwaites (ed.), Early Western Travels, IV, 328.
34 An experience of Elias P. Fordham in Kentucky may constitute an exception. See his Personal Narrative of Travels in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky . . . 1817-1818 (Cleveland, 1906), 215.
35 F. André Michaux, Travels to the West of the Alleghany Mountains, in Thwaites (ed.), Early Western Travels, III, 199, 210; Smyth, Tour in the United States, 245-47; Isaac Weld, Travels through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada during the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797 (London, 1799), 81-82.
a local householder that he had no place for strangers, was too busy to care for them, and had no feed for their horses; but he was churlishly granted permission to use the shelter of the house for the night. And F. André Michaux (1802) discovered on moving into western South Carolina that "the traveller no longer meets reception at plantations; he is obliged to put up at inns." But to that inhospitable minority who offered accommodation only with reluctance must be added those who refused it altogether, sometimes merely because they preferred to be left alone. These were discovered by the traveler frequently enough that they can scarcely be considered rare. Again, this was especially true in the less highly developed regions of the South. The travel records of Dr. Schoepf and Isaac Weld in the late eighteenth century, as well as those of Adam Hodgson, Charles F. Hoffman, and Joseph J. Gurney in the 1820's, 1830's, and 1840's, respectively, bear witness to the fact that southern yeomen did not always choose to entertain strangers. While traveling in northern Alabama (about 1820) on what he called the Kentucky Trace, Hodgson discovered that hospitality sometimes came to be an onerous burden. After being refused the hospitality of two cabins in succession he was accommodated by a certain "colonel," who told him that "the few families . . . on this road . . . [were] afraid of making a beginning [of entertaining travelers], lest they should be overrun." James K. Paulding, an idealizer of southern culture, observed that he had to use discretion if he was to find hospitality in a Virginia home, remarking that if he "saw a broken pane stuffed with a petticoat [indicating a degree of poverty], then I was sure of a welcome."

In his account of his experiences in southern Illinois in the early 1840's, William Oliver reveals a little more of the attitude of many of those who refused to accommodate the stranger at the gate. To Oliver's question whether he could be provided with feed for his horse the answer was "no." Could the traveler draw some water at

36 Buckingham, Slave States, II, 148.
37 Michaux, Travels to the West, in Thwaites (ed.), Early Western Travels, III, 294.
38 Schoepf, Travels in the Confederation, II, 86; Weld, Travels through the States, 82; Hodgson, Letters from North America, I, 266-67; Charles F. Hoffman, A Winter in the West (2 vols., New York, 1835), II, 177-80; Gurney, Journey in North America, 48.
40 [Paulding], Letters from the South, II, 96.
the well? Here the answer was equally short, but in the affirmative. "It was evident that he did not want to be troubled with us, but it was equally evident that he meant nothing disrespectful." 41

Independence of spirit, however, was only one of the causes of inhospitality in many of the remote rural areas. More frequently, perhaps, and certainly more justifiably, the traveler was turned away because of the lack of provisions or other accommodations. Sometimes he was told frankly that there was no food in the house, or that there was not room for strangers; and when, like Hugh Finlay in 1774, "we beg'd, we entreated we prayed to be let in," a reluctant admission usually confirmed the householder's explanation. 42 Frequently, also, the absence of the husband on a hunting expedition or reprovisioning trip provided just grounds for the hesitancy or refusal of the mistress to admit the stranger. 43

In the third place, southern hospitality was frequently discriminatory. Some households tended to restrict their hospitality to certain classes and showed a decided inclination to exclude others. Throughout the country there was a pronounced tendency for patrician hosts to entertain only patrician guests. This was equally true of southern hospitality, which was closely related to the social life of the planter. When a wedding took place the guests often stayed on for several days. 44 The Christmas season or other holidays were celebrated with relatives and friends coming as house guests for a week, or sometimes much longer. The neighboring planters and the relatives received the lion's share of this type of entertainment. Indeed, some travelers speak of planter hospitality as being confined entirely to "neighbors" or acquaintances. 45 Although such entertainment is frequently related to the practice of hospitality, it does not fall within Francis Hall's definition of hospitality as "that

44 Robert Hunter, Jr., *Quebec to Carolina in 1785-1786*, ed. by Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling (San Marino, Calif., 1943), 206-209.
liberal entertainment, which spreads a couch and table for the stranger, merely because he is a stranger."

Usually hospitality extended beyond the neighbor and acquaintance to those who carried letters of introduction from some respected person. This practice was common throughout America. The Duke de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt carried such letters in eastern Pennsylvania in the 1790's; Fortescue Cuming was armed with a whole quiver of credentials when he arrived in Mississippi; and John Pope took the precaution to procure from two Virginia gentlemen "a joint letter of Introduction to some of the most reputable characters in Kentucky," before setting out for that state. Evidently if host and traveler both claimed a degree of refinement, and in situations where the two were not personally acquainted, the letter-of-introduction technique was well-nigh universal. That this was necessary at times, and not merely a polite ceremony, is indicated by the comments of many travelers.

The tendency of southerners to discriminate on the basis of social class may be illustrated by the contrasting experiences of Sir Charles Lyell, the eminent nineteenth-century scientist, and James Pearse, an obscure New Englander in search of health. While traveling in the South (1845) Sir Charles found only unbounded liberality, while Pearse (1820) met with a cool reception — even innkeepers as well as planters refusing him accommodations. For the late eighteenth century the experience of Elkanah Watson is equally enlightening. This native American called at the home of "Mr. Granby, a wealthy planter" near the Virginia-North Carolina border with clothes rainsoaked and soiled, and though he "had been hospitably entertained" here several years previously, he was not recognized and was received "coldly" because of his plebeian appearance.

48 Pope, Southern and Western Territories, 11.
49 Finlay, Journal, 62; Bernard, Retrospections, 204; William T. Harris, Remarks Made during a Tour through the United States of America in the Years 1817, 1818, and 1819 (London, 1821), 84.
51 James Pearse, A Narrative of the Life of James Pearse (Rutland, Vt., 1825), 19, 52-53.
52 Watson, Memoirs, 284.
A final modification of the traditional interpretation of southern hospitality concerns its correlation with the degree of development of the inn in that area. The generalizations by numerous historians that in those regions where private hospitality prevailed the inn did not flourish have been given their most specific application to the South in Seymour Dunbar's comprehensive history of travel in America. After commenting on the manifestation in the South of "a personal hospitality to strangers unusual in its sincerity and universality," Dunbar adds: "There were almost no southern inns in the commercial sense, but every habitation, of whatsoever degree, was a sure refuge for the wayfarer at any time of night or day." The basis for such an interpretation could be found, of course, in some of the accounts by the travelers themselves. Traveling up the Potomac about 1802, for example, John Davis, an English visitor, noted especially the lack of adequate public accommodations for travelers. "But the lamented scarcity of American inns is easily accounted for," he explained. "In a country where every private house is a temple dedicated to hospitality, and open alike to Travellers of every description, ought it to excite surprise that so few good taverns are to be found?"

There can be little doubt that the southern plantation, functioning as a social center, took the place of the colonial inn of the North to a degree. Yet some of the travelers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century found the poorer southern classes gathering at inns for dances and parties; and for Virginia, at least, there is positive official evidence that "ordinaries" or inns were both of early origin and of widespread development. Laws providing for the regulation of ordinaries — their licensing and the regulation of liquor prices — appeared on the statute books as early as 1644, and

53 Dunbar, History of Travel in America, I, 220-22.
54 Davis, Travels . . . in the United States, 341. See also Auguste Levasseur, Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825, trans. by J. D. Godman (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1829), II, 54; Timothy Flint, Recollections of the Last Ten Years (Boston, 1826), 335; Peter Neilson, Recollections of a Six Years' Residence in the United States of America (Glasgow, 1830), 270; François de Barbé-Marbois, Our Revolutionary Forefathers: The Letters of François Marquis de Barbé-Marbois during His Residence in the United States, ed. by Eugene P. Chase (New York, 1929), 171-72; Médéric-Louis-Elie Moreau de St. Méry, American Journey, ed. by Kenneth and Anna Roberts (Garden City, N. Y., 1947), 335.
are evident frequently thereafter. One such law (1668) required the commissioners of each county "to take special care for the suppressing and restraint of the exorbitant number of ordinaries and tippling houses in their respective counties." Taverns were of sufficient moment to capture the attention of Nathaniel Bacon's assembly (1676), which decreed that "all ... ordinaries [other than those at three specified places], ale houses and tippling houses whatsoever ... be utterly suppressed." Contrary to the traditional interpretation, therefore, it would seem that there were too many, rather than too few, taverns in the hospitable Old Dominion. When to this evidence is added the great eighteenth-century fame of Gadsby's Tavern in Alexandria, of Raleigh's and Mrs. Campbell's in Williamsburg, of the Rising Sun in Fredericksburg, of Mitchie's Old Tavern in Charlottesville, and others, it seems reasonable to conclude that since southern hospitality cannot be charged with contributing materially to a lack of inns in Virginia, such a charge would also not be applicable to other parts of the South.

Furthermore, in view of the extensive system of inns which emerged in the early 1800's on the National Road and on the Philadelphia-Pittsburgh route — averaging several inns per mile for long stretches — it requires considerable imagination to conceive that private hospitality could have prevented or retarded the development of such a system in the South. Certainly the southern manse was not prepared to care for thirty or more teamsters and several hundred horses which sometimes assembled at the tavern of William Sheets on Nigger Mountain, Maryland, along with one hundred Kentucky mules, one thousand hogs, and as many cattle; nor could it have accommodated the migrant trains which gathered nightly at the Huddleston House near Cambridge City, Indiana.

Although it is beyond the scope of this introductory survey to explain why the development of the inn was more limited in the

57 Ibid., II, 269.
58 Ibid., II, 361.
59 Reminiscence of Jesse J. Peirsol, in Thomas B. Searight, The Old Pike: A History of the National Road (Uniontown, Pa., 1894), 142.
60 Lee Burns, "National Road in Indiana," Indiana Historical Society Publications (Indianapolis), VII (1919), 231.
South than in the North, a few suggestions may be offered. Commercial transportation in the South never reached the same dimensions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as in the North, and thus the need for roadside lodgings was not as great. Furthermore, a greater proportion of existing southern transportation was by river, where a berth and shelter, as well as food, accompanied the traveler. And finally, in the milder climate of the South there was appreciably less need for shelter than farther north. The traveler in the South frequently encountered wagon trains whose drivers chose to "lie in the bush" in preference to lodging at a tavern. To these suggested explanations must be added the real possibility that an exhaustive study of the southern inn, especially in location and distribution, will reveal a considerably greater development than has been assumed.

Thus the recorded experiences of travelers do not support all that has been asserted about southern hospitality. It is evident that as often as not it was paid for, and that it was not always extended in good grace and sometimes was withheld altogether. Then too, what was commonly called hospitality was often little more than an expression of sociality within a social class. And finally, the existence of private hospitality can scarcely account for the relative inadequacy of inns in the Old South.

It is possible that the tradition of unrestrained hospitality to strangers came to be most closely approximated in practice in any given area of the South in that transitional period subsequent to the initial struggle for survival and preceding the rise of a distinct planter aristocracy. In such a period there would be a relative abundance of locally grown food, possibly only incomplete specialization on cash crops, little social stratification, and a considerable degree of isolation. Such isolation would make the appearance of the traveler at once infrequent and most welcome. This theory was proposed by traveler Adam Hodgson himself in 1824. Unfortunately, such a definite stage of development is difficult to identify and even more difficult to relate to a certain pattern of hospitality. Consequently we must be content for the present with the conclusion that

---

61 Schoepf, Travels in the Confederation, II, 46; John Finch, Travels in the United States and Canada (London, 1833), 260-61; Davis, Travels in the United States, 130-32; Smyth, Tour in the United States, 1, 173.
though there were such families as the Tyers in North Carolina and the Whitefields \(^6^3\) in Virginia who entertained all comers, there were as many others who, in some way and without necessarily bringing upon themselves any lasting condemnation, limited their liberality.

\(^6^3\) Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation*, II, 93.