

CHAPTER ONE

# Charleston in the Age of John Champneys

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**T**HE STORY OF CHARLESTON has been told many times, but the best description of the people of the eighteenth-century city and the unique culture of the Carolina coast may be found in *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*. According to the author, George C. Rogers Jr., the greatest trait of the first generation of Charlestonians was their indomitable will to go forward despite the endless waves of yellow fever, smallpox, malaria, and typhoid that swept through the city, and the fires and hurricanes that repeatedly ravaged it.

The Carolina colony was truly a new world for Dr. Alexander Garden, who arrived in Charles Town from Scotland in 1752 to practice medicine. His many letters to friends in Europe contain an Englishman's



view of both the place and the people as he experienced them in the thirty years of his residence. Of the place he wrote:

*Our long hot summers enervate and unbrace the whole system. Were you to sweat out, for two or three summers, the finer part of your good English blood and animal spirits and have every fiber and nerve of your body weakened, relaxed, enervated and unbraced by a tedious autumnal heat intermittent under a sultry suffocating and insufferable sun, you would then be made in some manner a judge of the reason for our taste or fire. . . . Instead of fire and life of imagination, indifference and a graceful despondency would overwhelm your mind.*