

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

1. GUALE – 16TH CENTURY GEORGIA

When the white man came to Georgia shores in the 1500's he found the area from St. Andrew Sound to the Savannah River populated by the Guale Indians, of Muskogean stock. Guale, as the region was called, seems to have been relatively populous, and villages evidently were centered around St. Simons, Sapelo and St. Catherine Islands, and the neighboring mainland coast. Around St. Simons alone there were some 11 towns, with Talaxe (on the mainland west of the north end of the island) as a center. On the island itself was the town of Asao, which fact evidently accounts for the fact that St. Simons in early days was called Asao.

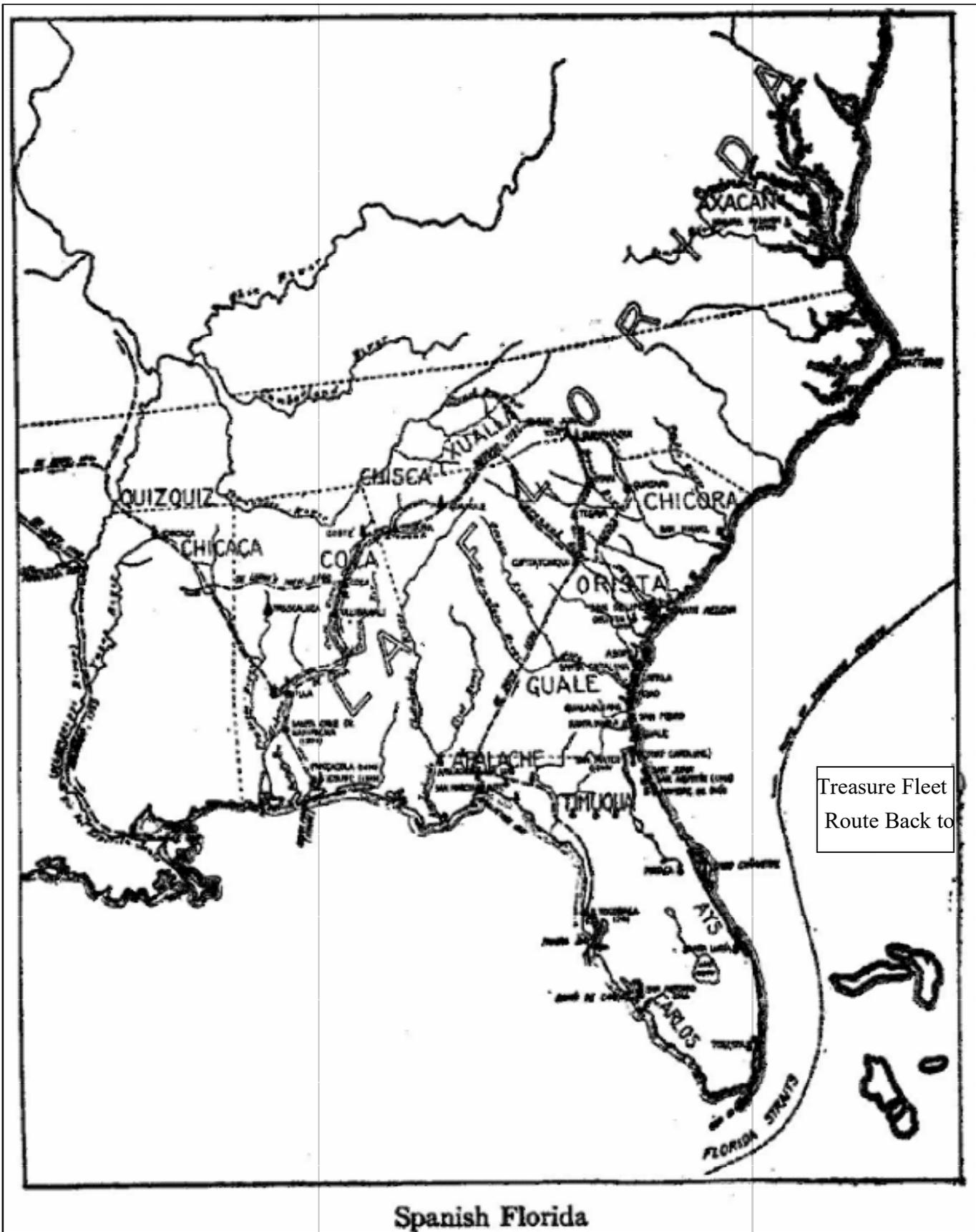
The Guale Indians were not sedentary, and their villages are hard to locate. Further, the Indian was largely dependent upon game and fish for sustenance. Like his Timucua neighbor to the south, the Gualean no doubt found it necessary to move his abode to the source of supply at certain seasons. Nevertheless, Indian houses, seasonal in some measure, were sometimes strongly built. Private houses were usually circular. The framework of wood was set up and closely fitted together, and spaces filled with reed or palmetto thatch. Every outstanding village, in addition to food storehouses and family buildings, had a communal house, usually wide and long, with reed seats along the walls.

In their semitropical clime, the Gualeans did not require much clothing. The nearly universal as well as the only garment was a breechclout, secured to the body by the simple expedient of passing it between the legs and drawing the ends up under a belt. The ends dangled decoratively fore and aft. The women fashioned skirts from Spanish moss. Feathers, shells and beads were ornaments, and the men painted their skins in red and yellow or russet and black individual designs. Both men and women wore their hair long, though the males used an upswept hair-do, tying a tuft at the crown that was said to have done utilitarian service as a sort of pincushion for arrows.¹

Not for many years after the discovery of Florida by Ponce de Leon in 1513 was the Indian seriously disturbed in his aboriginal pursuits by the white man. Leon's death

¹ J. T. Lanning, The Spanish Missions of Georgia (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1935, ch I; map facing _____). This work will be cited hereafter as Spanish Missions.

Plate 3 – La Florida and the Treasure Fleets



Spanish Florida

from an Indian arrow was an omen. But the very intrusion of a new and foreign economy to any part of the New World was bound sooner or later to affect all inhabitants of the hemisphere. Each year Spain drew out millions of ducate worth of stolen wealth from the American treasury, and loaded with these riches and eagerly sought American merchandise, the galleons retraced their outward voyage, breasting the equatorial currents to sail eastward from the New World to the Old. Since the right of discovery and the Papal Bulls of Alexander VI legitimized Spain and Portugal as the sole owners of the new discoveries, naturally other competitors anxious to profit by western wealth must do so illegitimately. The West Indies, by the wayside of the treasure route, became a pirates' nest.

Then Leon's discoveries opened a new and more efficient sailingway from the colonies, via the gulfstream and the Bahama Channel to Spain. For the moment, the sea wolves were foiled; but they soon caught on. By 1561 Spain was forced to adopt the convoy system.

Each year two armed fleets left Spain, one to load at Caribbean ports and the other at the Gulf town of Vera Cruz. These vessels rendezvoused at Havana, and sailed in united strength past Florida shores to Spain. Even then the English, Dutch and French freebooters trailed the fleets to plunder stragglers. The narrow Bahama Channel was doubly dangerous. A port was needed in Florida as security against the pirates as well as to provide storm refuge.

The colonization of Florida, or at least its pacification as commercial insurance, was only to be expected. The slowness of the process can be laid to the relative reluctance of the untamed North American Indian to accept the refinements of civilization, and to the fact that gold existed in the Florida region only by rumor. Spain perforce concentrated her efforts in the rich Central and South American regions, never finding the resources to make Florida more than an outpost protecting her commerce, and, what was equally important to at least some Spaniards, remembering this area as a fertile if somewhat rocky field for missionary endeavor. It should be further noted that in the mind of the more perspicacious Latin, the work of the friar among the Indians was identified with that same commercial insurance which Spain sought to secure for her fleets; Indians friendly to Spain would be unfriendly to Spain's enemies.

Thus came about the founding of San Agustín (St. Augustine), the purge of the Frenchmen from Florida soil, and the development of a chain of missions along the

Atlantic seaboard as far north as Chesapeake Bay. To be sure, the northerly missions did not long survive, and even in the Guale (Georgia) country some of the brothers suffered martyrdom, but during the 17th century, missions in the did achieve a
southeast
golden age.²

Menéndez, the founder of San Agustín, had brought the first Jesuits to the Guale country in 1568, but a short two years later their missions were destroyed in an Indian uprising. Then in the early 1570's came the Franciscans. Some of them went to Guale only to be driven out or slain. Not until 1595 did missionary efforts in this region reflect any gratifying success. Then in a few months, in seven towns along the coast old churches were restored or new ones built.³

In the village of Asao on St. Simons Island, Father Velascola took up his labors. This friar, a giant from the mountains of Cantabria, with simple humility and a powerful physique made a deep impression on the natives of St. Simons and the vicinity. His mission was just across St. Simons sound, in a village to the south of the spot where the English were to build Frederica.⁴

For two years, matters went well. Then Juanillo, an arrogant and quarrelsome young chief, became restless under the restraint of the religious. Juanillo brought his followers together and killed Father Corpa in his church at Tolomato, on the mainland across from Sapelo Island, on the morning of September 13, 1597.

Next day, Juanillo addressed a conference of chiefs, among whom was the chief of Asao from St. Simons. Playing upon the prejudices of these Indians, who considered themselves little less oppressed than himself, and pointing to the friars as destroyers of Indian customs and happiness, Juanillo was able to spread the insurrection. Within a week two other missions had been visited and their padres slain. Next on the list was Father Velascola on St. Simons.

Velascola was in San Agustín at the time, and a great uneasiness seized the

² For detailed discussion of Spanish commercial seas routes in this area, see Description of the Principal Objects of the Present Ware in the West-Indian (London 1741). Basic problems are outlined in V. E. Chatelain, Defenses of Spanish Florida (Washington 1941), chapters 2 and 10; general discussions are in Bolton and Marshall, Colonization of North America (N.Y. 1936), 61-66; and K. T. Abbey, Florida, Land of Change (Chapel Hill 1941), ch. II.

³ H. E. Bolton, Spain's Title to Georgia (Berkeley, Cal., 1925), 10-11, 14-15. Cited hereafter as Bolton.

⁴ Bolton, 15; Spanish Missions, 71-72

conspirators. This was a poor, humble monk, but he was physically so powerful that the Indians were much afraid of him. To their primitive notion, what had they accomplished if this giant friar were left alive? So they learned the day of his return, and they went to the spot where he would set foot ashore. They hid in a clump of reeds, and they waited. When Father Velascola drew up to the water's edge, some of them approached him with friendship in their manner. Then they seized him by his shoulders, and they killed him with their flint-edged clubs and their tomahawks, mutilating his body beyond recognition.

The wave of revolt surged southward down the coast until it reached the shores of Cumberland Island, not far from San Agustín. A small Spanish garrison waited there, and the chief of the island, the Timucua India Don Juan, was himself a political rival of Juanillo's and therefore not friend to the rebel. On Cumberland a wooden cross was pierced with five arrows – perhaps as reminders of the five missionaries who had been slain. The chief of Asao met and challenged the Christian Indians of Cumberland, displaying the robe and hat of murdered Father Velascola with the words, “Just see your padres now. Come and give them bread.” But the first stealthy attack on Cumberland, which might have been successful, was frustrated by the bark of a dog, and the followers of Don Juan beat off Juanillo's war parties. Some were captured and slain; some, who managed to escape captivity, died of starvation; and the Indian who wore the robe of Fray Francisco Velascola of Asao was among the dead.

The force of the rebellion was now broken, but to chastise the insurgents came Governor Canzo from San Agustín with a troop of Spanish soldiers, some of them wearing the heavy cotton armor against arrows. True, the natives fled in the face of Canzo's soldiery, but their punishment was perhaps more severe than if they had spilled their blood in appeasement. Canzo destroyed their towns (including Asao), their canoes and their cornfields.

In 1600, some of the Guale Indians formally swore fealty to Spain. Among the towns committed to lasting fidelity was the village of Asao. Due to the turn of events, Asao apparently replaced Tolomato as the principal town of the region. Tolomato, involved in the murder of Father Corpa, refused to yield to Spain. Canzo persuaded the chief of Asao to head an expedition to reduce the still rebellious Tomomatans. Asao issued a general appeal for help to other Guale towns and to the Cusabo Indians of Carolina, and many hitherto blameworthy Indians joined Asao in an about face to

punish their former allies. Juanillo and his followers retired to the interior, where they ensconced themselves in a stockaded town. The stronghold was assaulted, and Asao sent the scalp of Juanillo to San Agustín as proof of the success.⁵

Governor Canzo planned to make Florida (which in the Spanish mind comprised the North American continent) an integral part of the Spanish Empire, rather than a mere frontier outpost to guard Spain's lifeline. While to some of his fellows the revolt of 1597 appeared to be evidence that la Florida was a needless expense, Canzo clearly set forth the importance of the province, and more or less singlehandedly prevented the abandonment of its capital, San Agustín. Among Canzo's arguments was one calculated to arouse interest in even the most indifferent mind; only 40 leagues from San Agustín and but 200 from New Spain (Mexico) lay Tama, the hinterland of Georgia, which abounded in minerals, precious stones, and fertile soils. There were, furthermore, rich fields for the missionaries. But while Canzo's glowing reports were well received in Spain, hardheaded Spanish officials required proof of the statements. Canzo was able to send it in the form of reports on expeditions made some years before. One such report had been written by Fray Velascola, the martyr of St. Simons. Encouraged by bountiful harvests on the coast, Velascola and Father Chozas from the Cumberland Island mission journeyed eight days on horseback to distant Tama and Ocute, Creek towns near the upper Altamaha. Typical of the early exploratory narratives, these reports testified not only to the fertility and friendliness of the region, but to the presence of silver and gold in Tama, and to the existence of wonderful natural phenomena, not the least of which was a mountain of crystal.

In spite of his dreams, Canzo was a practical man. The province of Guale, he emphasized, was the very backbone of any movement toward the interior, as well as the mainstay of existing colonization. Without Guale, even the San Agustín presidio would be in straitened circumstance, for Guale furnished food to the garrison, and its natives responded with alacrity to the overtures of the governor to labor on the fortifications or to work the cornfields and gardens so necessary to Spanish existence. San Agustín itself was in a sandy, infertile location.⁶

⁵ This relation is based upon Spanish Missions, ch. IV; cf. Bolton, 15.

⁶ Spanish Missions, 111-113, 118; Bolton, 15-16, 18.

2. THE GOLDEN AGE

As the 17th century opened, Canzo appeared in a fair way to realize his dreams. In 1603 he began a personal inspection of the Guale region, partly with the idea of fully reestablishing the Guale missions, where there were reported to be some 1,200 Christian Indians. A model mission was started abuilding on Cumberland Island, while the Governor himself went northward to Talaxe, the village on the mainland opposite St. Simons. Here he was greeted by Don Domingo of Asao, he who had purged Juanillo a few years previous, and now head chief. The visit was most successful. It was but the first of a series of highly gratifying interviews that took Canzo as far north as St. Catherines Island. And with the completion and dedication of the Cumberland Island mission of San Pedro began that period of uninterrupted Spanish dominion that broke only before the waves of the English advance.

In 1604, with the appointment of Ibarra as Florida Governor, the inspection trip was repeated, this time with Ibarra in the role of inspector general. One stop was in the vicinity of St. Simons, where Don Domingo even agreed to live like the Spaniards with but a single wife, and see that other chiefs did likewise. This easy acquiescence to Ibarra's expressed wish was perhaps due in some measure to the apparent fact that Domingo currently claimed but one spouse anyhow.

As far north as St. Catherines Ibarra went. There, after calling in the chiefs of the more northerly country, he heard one of the few complaints that came to his ears during this goodwill tour. The chief of Aluste complained that certain of his sub-chiefs had thrown off his authority, and gone to live with the chief of Asao. Ibarra promised to look into the matter, and on his trip back to San Agustín interviewed the culprits, evidently at Asao. They freely admitted the truth of the charge, claiming that they had left the Aluste chief to escape his abusiveness. Ibarra got them to renew their Aluste allegiance, promising them in turn to adjust what grievances they had.

In a month's time Ibarra had assured the friendship of scores of Indian villages, had located several churches, one of which was near St. Simons Island, and had prepared the way for the arrival of new Franciscan missionaries, some of whom were even then being recruited in Spain. And the chief of Asao was one of those who expressed a desire (or at least agreed with Ibarra's pointed suggestion) to have a padre among his people. It was late in 1605 before the Franciscans arrived and Father Diego Delgado came to Talaxe, the village on the mainland, near the forks of the Altamaha and the South Altamaha Rivers, the mission post nearest St. Simons. But by December of 1605 churches and mission buildings were completed, so that the Georgia missions were established as they had been before they were driven back to the southern rim of the Guale country in 1597.

For long, Florida had been soliciting the visitation of a bishop of the Church. Finally after many vicissitudes, Bishop Altamirano from Cuba eluded the ubiquitous seawolves who were casting covetous eyes upon his person, and in March 1606 arrived off the bar of San Agustín. Ironically enough, his transport was a captured English corsair, a strong ship bristling with cannon, a vessel purchased by the Bishop himself in Santiago after the loss of the frigate sent from San Agustín to bring him to Florida

The unprecedented number of confirmations recorded during Altamirano's visitation (in the four Georgia missions, 1,070 neophytes were confirmed) is not necessarily indicative of barbarism before the Bishop's arrival. All native inhabitants of the region, white, black and red, never having had a bishop, were candidates for confirmation. For instance, at Talaxe Father Delgado and the chiefs of the region, including Asao, welcomed the Bishop, and within a few days 262 Indians were confirmed. Like Ibarra, Altamirano went as far north as St. Catherines Island.⁷

Thus blessed in their work by this strengthening Episcopal visitation the missions of Guale embarked upon a half century of hectic, but essentially uninterrupted growth.

⁷ Bolton, 19; Spanish Missions, 126-157. For another Episcopal visitation of importance somewhat later, see L. L. Wenhold (ed.), "A 17th Century Letter of Gabriel Díaz Vara Calderón, Bishop of Cuba, Describing the Indians and Indian Missions of Florida", Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, v. 95, no. 16.

More padres came. It is possible that when the missions were built with any degree of permanency, they often presented a fortress-like aspect.

In thinking about the impact of missionary on Indian, J. T. Lanning, an authority on the Georgia missions, has visualized the Indians “like beings dropped from Mars, who had never heard of the Christian religion. This was a challenge to these holy men .

. . Without trying to teach the Indians the use of Latin and Castilian, the friar immediately began instruction in the native language, through an interpreter until he himself gained a mastery of it Beginning every day with devotionals and saying prayer dutifully at the end of every day, despite all obstacles, the Franciscans soon had their charges pattering their prayers by rote.”

Of the Franciscans themselves, and their attitude toward their neophytes, Lanning wrote: “The marvelous adaptability of the Catholic clergy was never more clearly demonstrated than in their contact with the subjugated American aborigine, on whose miserable life the greatest comfort and most softening influence brought the bear was the patronage of the church and its championship against ruthless exploitation. From the laws of Isabel the Catholic and Charles V had come the notion that the Americans were wards, perpetual minors because of ‘their ignorance and weak minds.’ Centuries of experience at the confessional had given the priest a savoir vivre seldom found among men so detached from the world, and this insight was now of great service. Those centuries of experience, when coupled with the deep-seated sincerity of the Spaniard’s absorption in religion, could not but produce results. Uncompromising rigidity and dogmatism might have ended in complete failure; the friars preferred indulgence, forbearance, and at least partial success. The toleration shown by them is yet a marvel.”

Yet the problem of sustaining missionaries in a poor province on meager allowance was great; “there was never time in the history of the Georgia missions when lamentations were not being sent up to Heaven that the country was poor, the distances to be traversed were great, the king’s stipend was only a modicum the friars and soldiers were afraid to introduce cattle for fear that they would eat the Indians’ patches of corn as well as for fear of thievery. Because of difficult living conditions and the scarcity of food, the petition for new contingents of friars and special appropriations was well-nigh perennial.” Aside from the purely sincere wish of the religious to bring the light of Christianity to the natives, Georgia missions were, Lanning summarized,

“an international safeguard, whose interests waxed with foreign pressure and waned with its abatement. The French, and later the English, were a constant challenge to throw the missions up the coast to Carolina and then across from the St. Marys and on into modern Alabama.”⁸

3. THE FIGHT BEGINS

When in 1607 he heard of the Jamestown colony, Philip IV might easily have destroyed it. But complacently viewing the past record of English colonization on American shores, he left Jamestown to die a natural death. It was Spain’s mistake. For within a half century the contest for the Georgia country was in full swing.

Yet, while Spanish observers underestimated the Virginia threat, still it contributed to a new wave of missionary activity. The work of the Franciscan “was at once a crusade against heathendom and a defensive move to hold the border,” writes Bolton. In 1612 the Atlantic coast was included in a new missionary province called Santa Elena. New Franciscan fathers arrived. As many as 50 padres at a time comprised the corps in the Florida province, of which Guale was a part. By 1650 a mission had returned to Santa Elena (Port Royal, S. C.), a site that had been abandoned since 1587, the year after Drake’s raid on San Agustín.⁹

The first half of the 1600’s was a period of steady growth. Nine missions were flourishing in Georgia by 1655, and beyond, in South Carolina, were two more. While establishing the names, number and location of the missions invariably constitutes a confusing problem, it seems apparent that in the Guale region around St. Simons there were at least four churches. On St. Simons itself was the mission San Buenaventura, and possibly a substation named Ocotonico. On Sapelo was San José de Zá pala; and Jekyll, Santiago de Ocone.¹⁰

Throughout the southeast, according to missionary claims, there were 30,000 Christian Indians, with 44 mission stations attended by some 35 friars. The number of converts may have been exaggerated, but the accounts of the rigors of missionary life appear to be accurate. The Indians were scattered, and the attending friars, unshod, often made countless routine marches – some of them long and cold – to work with

⁸ Spanish Missions, 73-76, 160-163.

⁹ Bolton, 19-20.

¹⁰ Spanish Missions, 8,203, map facing ____; cf. Bolton, 21 and map facing xviii; Chatelain, op. cit., 123.

their naked, poverty-stricken charges.

It was unfortunate that the arrogant and hardheaded Diego Rebolledo came to the governorship of Florida. Rebolledo's abuses were largely responsible for the revolt of the Florida Indians in 1656. While the Guale Indians were not directly involved in this rebellion, the chaotic condition of affairs was not conducive to their wellbeing. When in the same year of 1656 Rebolledo had word of marauders along the coast, the Guale Indians from St. Catherines south hurried to San Agustín, offering their services in defense of Spain's la Florida. Rebolledo treated them like slaves, not soldiers. Their arms taken from them, fed meagerly if at all, kept long and unnecessarily in the governor's service, many of the Gualeans became sick and some died. To top it off, cannibalistic Virginia Indians raided their home towns in Guale.

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During the three decades after 1650, there was little or no change in the number of Georgia missions, though by the time of Charleston there were no missions north of St. Catherines Island. For the Englishman had gained his foothold. The shadow of Jamestown fell upon the hazy riches of the hinterland. Matters in the back country gradually became urgent, and it was an urgency that prevented Spanish concentration of effort on the coast. Missions and garrisons had to be pushed westward from San Agustín.

Meanwhile, in territory claimed by Spain, the British put Charleston in 1670 and legalized it by treaty. Charleston weathered the first tribulations of colonization, but for years these Carolina settlers lived precariously. Naturally enough, Indian disturbances were charged to Spanish complicity, especially since runaway white servants and Negro slaves found refuge in Spanish territory. And like the nut between the jaws of the cracker, it was certain that Guale and its missions must suffer.¹²

So Charleston and 1670 were the signal for intermittent heathen Indian sallies against the Spanish Christian Indians of Guale. Life for the Gualean was further disrupted by drafting him for work on the great Castillo de San Marcos under construction at San Agustín.

Only 10 years later, in 1680, a series of vitally important Indian wars began when the Yuchi, Creeks and Cherokees, allied with the English, attacked the Guale missions.

¹¹ Spanish Missions, 203-205, 208-209.

¹² Id., 203,213; Bolton, 23-27, 32-34.

These churches had, in effect, but just become well established – established, that is, to the point of beginning to inventory their stores of religious equipment like any other going concern. Under the hostile onslaughts, the mission line was moved back from St. Catherines Island to the Altamaha and Sapelo Island, though the Christian Indians under the leadership of Spanish soldiery had done well in beating off the attacks.

A casa fuerte was built on Sapelo (possibly the “Old Sugar House” standing there today), in an attempt to hold the northern line. Captain Francisco Fuentes, commandant of the Guale garrison, took some of his troops to St. Simons to forestall an expected attack there. Unfortunately, the military were often at odds with the religious over the Indian problem, and this fact was not conducive to orderly defense of the mission territory. Some of the harassed Gualeans fled to the forests; others migrated to Florida towns. Governor Cabrera wanted to move the Indians out of the danger zone to islands near the mouth of the St. Marys. Many Indians on the more northerly islands around St. Simons apparently refused to go; some disappeared in the woods; and some went over to the new English settlements in Carolina. There, not a few of them were provided with firearms – a significant move on the part of the British – for raids in Spanish territory.

Nor was Anglo-Indian fighting all that bothered the defenders of the Georgia coast. In 1683 the notorious pirate Agramont sacked the helpless missions south of Sapelo, carrying off church bells and ornaments, and killing the neophytes. Other pirates came in the next few years, and their attacks were spaced by more and bloody Indian raids. By 1686 the north coast missions had been irretrievably lost. San Felipe, St. Simons, Tolomato, St. Catherine and Sapelo were gone. The mission frontier was pushed south to the St. Marys River.¹³

But 1686 also marked the vengeful raid of Tomás de León from León wiped out the Cardross settlement at Port Royal, S.C., south of the 1670 treaty boundary, and burned the Carolina governor’s plantation on Edisto Island. A storm miraculously saved Charleston from León’s assault.

Reoccupation of the northern outposts by the Spanish was not feasible. Spain’s Florida, and indeed her other colonies too, continually suffered savage raids by English and French freebooters. British trade in Indian slaves mushroomed. And since the

¹³Spanish Missions, 213, 215-221; Bolton, 36-37, 39-40; cf. also Spanish Missions, 226, and Bolton, 169, 346, n. 56.

Carolinians bought these captives, belligerent natives were ever encouraged to war on their southern neighbors. Thus it was that the Yamasees were won to the British side, and disaffection also spread to Christianized relatives in the Guale missions.

Further, most of the frontier activity had by now shifted to the western country, where Carolina trade vied with Spanish missionary and soldier for the favor of the savage. Leading the van of the English contingent was Dr. Henry Woodward, that colorful frontiersman who had lived long enough at San Agustín to understand the Spanish, and who sadly disappointed his Iberian friends by departing with the British pirates after their surprise raid on the Florida capital in 1668. Woodward expressed the English attitude in a mocking note to Antonio Matheos, the Spanish nemesis hot on his heels in the western country. "I trust in God that I shall meet you gentlemen later," wrote Woodward, "when I have a larger following."¹⁴

In spite of determined Spanish resistance, Indian trade with Carolina grew apace. Before long the English were way over in the Alabama territory securing, as part of their profitable business, slaves. At the birth of the 18th century, new impetus was given this interior British commerce by the coming of the French to Biloxi. To the ambitious Englishman, Biloxi was both a deterrent and a challenge.¹⁵

The Spanish Indian, under pressure from Spaniard, Englishman and Indian alike, was pushed into rebellion. In 1702 there was a general uprising and many more Indians went over to the English side. The Yamasees, powerful and warlike, superimposed their name upon their Guale recruits, and by 1715 the term Guale had entirely disappeared.¹⁶

The outbreak of Queen Anne's War brought some militant order to the chaos in the southeast. Governor James Moore of South Carolina set out in 1702 in a formal attempt to take San Agustín. The attack on the capital's famed Castillo failed miserably, but the transplanted Guale missions at the St. Marys were burned. They were planted again on an insecure footing near the St. Johns River. The year of Moore's raid, 1702, finally and completely brought to an end the epoch of the Spanish missions in Georgia. The

¹⁴ Bolton, 49-50.

¹⁵ *Id.*, 38, and ch. IV; Spanish Missions, 223-224.

¹⁶ Spanish Missions, 226-227, n. 73.

next year Moore struck westward to destroy the Apalache missions.¹⁷

So, in effect, the British were successful in alienating the Indian from his Spanish guardian and removing Guale as a Spanish threat to the Carolinas. In Florida, administrative policy laid the Indian directly under Spanish care, which was “generally penurious with regard to presents, downright inflexible when it came to equipping the Indians with firearms, and avaricious in exacting forced labor,” Lanning judged.¹⁸ Obviously factors like these were conducive to insubordination. On the other hand, the English traders and frontier diplomats seldom subjected the native to the rigors of Christianity; they traded with him (more or less to his satisfaction), they supplied him with both Firearms and firewater, and they did not call upon him for labor (except, of course, when he had the bad luck to have been sold by his cousins into slavery). In fact, British prestige became such that at one time Englishmen could move among the Indians with little concern for their own hide and hair.

But success with the Indians made English officials complacent. And the Carolina traders were none too delicate in dealing with their copper-hued brothers. The slave trade, carried on more and more openly, finally brought the savages to the point of desperation. The spark to the powder is reported to have been the arrival of a party of British census takers. To the Indians, it looked as if they were being counted for enslavement. The result was the bloody Yamases revolt of 1715, which may or may not have been fathered by Spanish diplomacy. At least, the Spaniards looked on with approval; and when English defenses solidified and the Yamasees began to have trouble, they fell back to San Agustín, entered again into Latin allegiance and founded new towns near the Spanish stronghold.

The Indian disaffection in 1715 was general. However, many Indians recognized, reluctantly or no, the power of the English, and eventually either held to John Bull or else moved to territory where they hoped to be quit of both Spaniard and Briton – only to find the French. Georgia was no man’s land. There were forays from both sides, and if they had the unorganized character of provincial warfare, they were nonetheless

bloody. The coastal tribes between Charleston and San Agustín were virtually

¹⁷ *Id.*, 227-228; Bolton 60-62; *cf.* Bolton, 167, 346, n. 56.

¹⁸ *Spanish Missions*, 226.

exterminated, even though remnants of them long retained something of their old identities. After Palmer's raid against the Yamasees in 1728, practically within sight of San Agustín, itself, the population of scattered Indian villages in Guale was truly pitiful in number, ranging from 66 souls to a mere family of half a dozen. Around San Agustín were less than 500. Not only had the white man driven the Gualean from the pleasant Georgia coast, but in doing so, he had destroyed him.¹⁹

4. PRELUDE TO GEORGIA

In the great triangle formed by the Carolinas, Florida and southeastern Louisiana, Englishman, Spaniard and Frenchman came into close proximity. News of French preparations to colonize the Gulf coast had reached Madrid early in 1698. Before that year was out, a Spanish fortified settlement appeared at Pensacola. In January, a scant two months behind the Spaniards, Iberville's French fleet appeared before Pensacola to demand admittance. Being politely refused, Iberville in some annoyance moved west and established Biloxi,²⁰ beginning the first in the series of Louisiana settlements that affected even the far-off Atlantic colonies of England. Spain's Gulf possessions were split in two by this new intrusion, and equally important was Iberville's hope to be able eventually to check and even annihilate Maryland, Virginia and Carolina. By 1714 Bienville had built Fort Toulouse, a trading depot and missionary station on the Alabama River.²¹ New Orleans came by 1718. There was some friction with the Spanish, but Spain's King Philip was fairly amenable to his French grandfather's suggestion that colonization of Louisiana would protect Spain's Gulf colonies from England. And on one point, both Frenchman and Spaniard were in complete accord. Neither wanted an Englishman to set foot on the Gulf coast.²²

¹⁹Id., 218, 220, 222, 229-232, 235; Bolton, 63-64; Lanning, Diplomatic History of Georgia (Chapel Hill, 1936), 31. The latter is hereafter cited as Diplomatic History.

²⁰Biloxi was later moved to Mobile Bay.

²¹Toulouse became the base for control of the native tribes in the region and an outpost against the Carolinians. It lasted until after the settlement of Georgia, when the English built Fort Okfuskee only 40 miles away on the Talapoosa River, and eventually induced the Creeks to destroy the French Jesuit missions centered around Toulouse. See Bolton and Marshal, op. cit., 278.

²²An illustration of this fraternal spirit came about in 1707. A large party of Indians led by 18 Carolinians came westward to the environs of Pensacola. The Spanish garrison was augmented by 120 Frenchmen from Mobile, and in the face of this combined force, the Carolinians withdrew. See Manucy, "Report on Historic Sites at Pensacola, Florida" (St. Augustine 1939),

Each of the three nations sought to acquire control of the powerful Indian tribes in the interior as a means of gaining both territory and trade.²³ The resultant Indian warfare, encouraged and led by white men of three nationalities, was a major factor in awakening the Carolina colony to a sense of its insecurity. Naturally thoughts turned to defense of the southern border. But by the Treaty of 1670, England held not a foot of soil south of Charleston. Spain had emphasized that point with Leòn's destructive raid on 1686. Any southward move of the British inevitably brought on renewed struggles with the Spaniards. The Ponderous treasure fleets still sailed the swift flowing gulf stream past Florida shores almost to Carolina before they met the easterly winds that blew them over the Sargasso Sea toward the Azores.²⁴

The Carolinian John Barnwell, a Beaufort planter, seems to have been instrumental in conceiving the English strategy. He, with numerous others, expressed concern over

21.

²³ Bolton and Marshall, 275-276, 279 ff., 295 ff., 315; I. J. Cox "Florida, Frontier Outpost of New Spain", in A. C. Wilgus (ed.), Hispanic American Essays (Chapel Hill, 1942); for more specific discussion of French-Spanish relations on the Gulf coast, see Manucy's "Pensacola", cited above.

²⁴ See plat3 3; Bolton, 69; Objects of the Present War, 1-8. The following details drawn from the latter work aid in understanding the nature and purpose of Spain's so called treasure fleets. Outward course of the fleet was from Cadiz to the Canaries, thence to the Antilles. Once there, the fleet separated into two parts, one sailing for Cartagena and Puerto Bello, and other for Vera Cruz. Meeting again in Havana, they sailed "through the Gulf of Florida and Channel of Bahama into the Ocean; so that there is no other way of their returning to Europe but through this Gulf" and this was the important fact to the English.

The King's ships for Puerto Bello (where the Panama Canal now crosses the Isthmus) were called "the Galleons", and were old fashioned men-of-war, "of prodigious Bulk, with three or four Decks." Usually there were eight 50-gun galleons, and 12 or 15 large merchantmen. The part of the convoy going to Vera Cruz was called "the Flota", and comprised three men-of-war and 16 merchantmen of from 400 to 1,000 tons burden. The Flota cargo was not usually as rich as that of the galleons. The men-of-war were supposed to carry only the king's business; nevertheless they were "usually so encumbered with the Goods of other People, that it is seldom possible to defend them, when attacked." The merchantmen carried out wines, figs, raisins, olives, oils, cloth, wools, linen, iron and quicksilver for the mines, and they brought back the merchandizes to be bought at the respective ports of call. In addition to the men-of-war and the large merchantmen, there were "register-ships" which had special licenses to trade with Spanish ports not usually touched by the main fleets. Then, after arrival at Havana, out of the Galleons and the Flota a third fleet would be formed, call the Flotilla. The Flotilla carried cargoes to Europe, as well as an inventory of all on board the Galleons and the Flota, which voyaged directly to Spain. The voyage out to the colonies and back usually took two years, though actual sailing time was much less. Sailing dates were scheduled to encounter best wind and weather, and were fairly consistent from year to year.

the possibility of French encirclement. The Savannah and Altamaha Rivers must be fortified – along with Pensacola, that Spanish town on the Gulf coast. There was strange logic in even the latter proposal; by the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, Spain was not to relinquish her American possessions to any nation; and England was pledged to help her keep them.

At the behest of the Carolinians, in 1716 a fort was built on the Savannah River. A few years later (1721) Barnwell built Fort King George on the Altamaha as a bulwark against French designs, a protection for the border, and an aid for the Charleston traders. Unfortunately, Governor Benavides of Florida regarded it as a flagrant intrusion.

The year of 1721, then, marked the beginning of a new chapter in Georgia history, and one of the first moves toward eventual establishment of an English buffer colony. Charles II's grant of 1665 had set the southern boundary of Carolina down to 29 degrees, including a 150-mile line of Spanish settlements all the way from St. Catherines Island to San Agustín and beyond. True, this apparent inadvertence had been remedied by the Treaty of 1670, wherein both nations adopted the realistic principal of actual possession. But less than a half century after 1670, expediency revised the English viewpoint.

Opportunely ignorant of the fact that Spain's settlements had extended to St. Catherines less than 40 years before, England bypassed the Treaty of 1670 with its guarantee of status quo and tacitly reverted to Charles II's overly-extensive Carolina grant as the basis for her stand, though now it was conceded that including San Agustín itself in this grant was probably an oversight. Stubbornly, Spain held to the 1670 treaty; by that document, England had renounced her claims south of Charleston in 1670; ergo, Fort King George must be destroyed.

The court diplomats hit upon a plan; let the two American governors confer to determine on the spot the boundaries of the disputed area. If (and it was a big "if") Fort King George were found to be in Spanish territory, it would be razed. But there was delay, and Anglo-Spanish relations in America were going rapidly from bad to worse. Already Benavides had complained to Madrid against constant border hostilities of Englishman and Indian. In due time the Carolina governor was instructed to permit no more such acts of violence. If the orders were not pigeonholed, at least they were difficult to carry out. When Barnwell built King George, Benavides protested

vehemently to Governor Nicholson of Carolina and sent numerous epistles to Spain. Provincial negotiations failed; the Carolinians would not budge, so for the politicians across the sea, not-yet-name Georgia began to assume a paramount place in European diplomacy, and of itself Fort King George threatened to break the peace of Europe.

The opportune, if accidental burning of the problem fort temporarily removed some of the pressure. True, the fort was rebuilt; but its garrison was withdrawn in 1727. Abandonment of Fort King George by no means meant that England had relinquished her claim to the Altamaha boundary, though Spain professed to see it that way. Probably the evacuation was a result of border policy whereby rangers were substituted for stationary forts. Certainly the building of Frederica on St. Simons in 1736 was the logical fruition of the earlier ideas of the Carolinians.

Meanwhile, Spain and England continued at loggerheads over two major issues; the debatable land between Florida and Carolina and illegal commerce on the Spanish Main. Spain implicitly agreed not to molest the English so long as they kept their proper distance and lacked concern in any illicit trade; but for the Britisher of that day, these conditions were next to impossible.

And by 1732, the Carolina demand that the southern rivers be protected from both Spanish occupation and French fur trade monopoly found considerable support in England. The English position had been somewhat strengthened, too, by Cherokee Indian acknowledgment of British supremacy. A clear foreshadowing of the Georgia colony came in the grant given Sir Robert Montgomery for the proposed Azilia settlement between the Savannah and Altamaha rivers. The Azilia scheme, to quote Bolton, “went up in rhetoric”, and it remained for James Edward Oglethorpe to carry out the barrier project.²⁵

5. FOUNDING THE COLONY

Oglethorpe (1698-1785) was a man of considerable military experience, as well as a long-time member of the House of Commons, where he advocated an aggressive policy against Spain, as did, curiously enough, many of the future Trustees of the philanthropic Georgia venture. He had humanitarian sympathies which remained with

²⁵ Diplomatic History, 1-3, 9-14, 18-34; Bolton, 69-71; Bolton and Marshall, 315.

Plate 6 – James Oglethorpe, founder of Frederica



him his entire life, if we may judge from his refusal to accept command of the English forces in America in 1775; and he became interested in the debtor problem. Oglethorpe conceived the idea of planting a colony on the southern frontier to serve the double purpose of 1) protecting Carolina against Spanish and Indian attacks, and 2) offering a place of refuge for the debtor class. In 1732 he secured a charter conveying to himself and a group of interested persons (the 21 Trustees of the Colony of Georgia) the land between the Savannah and the Altamaha, and extending from the headwaters of these rivers to the western sea. If he knew, King George remained singularly unworried that the grant cut a wide swath through Florida, Louisiana, and Texas, and included within its limits Albuquerque, Socorro and other New Mexico towns.

Georgia's government was proprietary, but the proprietors were not to receive any profits individually, and financial reports and legislation had to be approved by the crown. Further, the proprietorship was limited to 21 years, after which the province was to become a royal colony. Religious liberty was guaranteed to all but Catholics; provision was made to prevent large land holdings; slavery was prohibited (but subsequently permitted); importation of rum was forbidden, and so was unlicensed trade with the Indians.

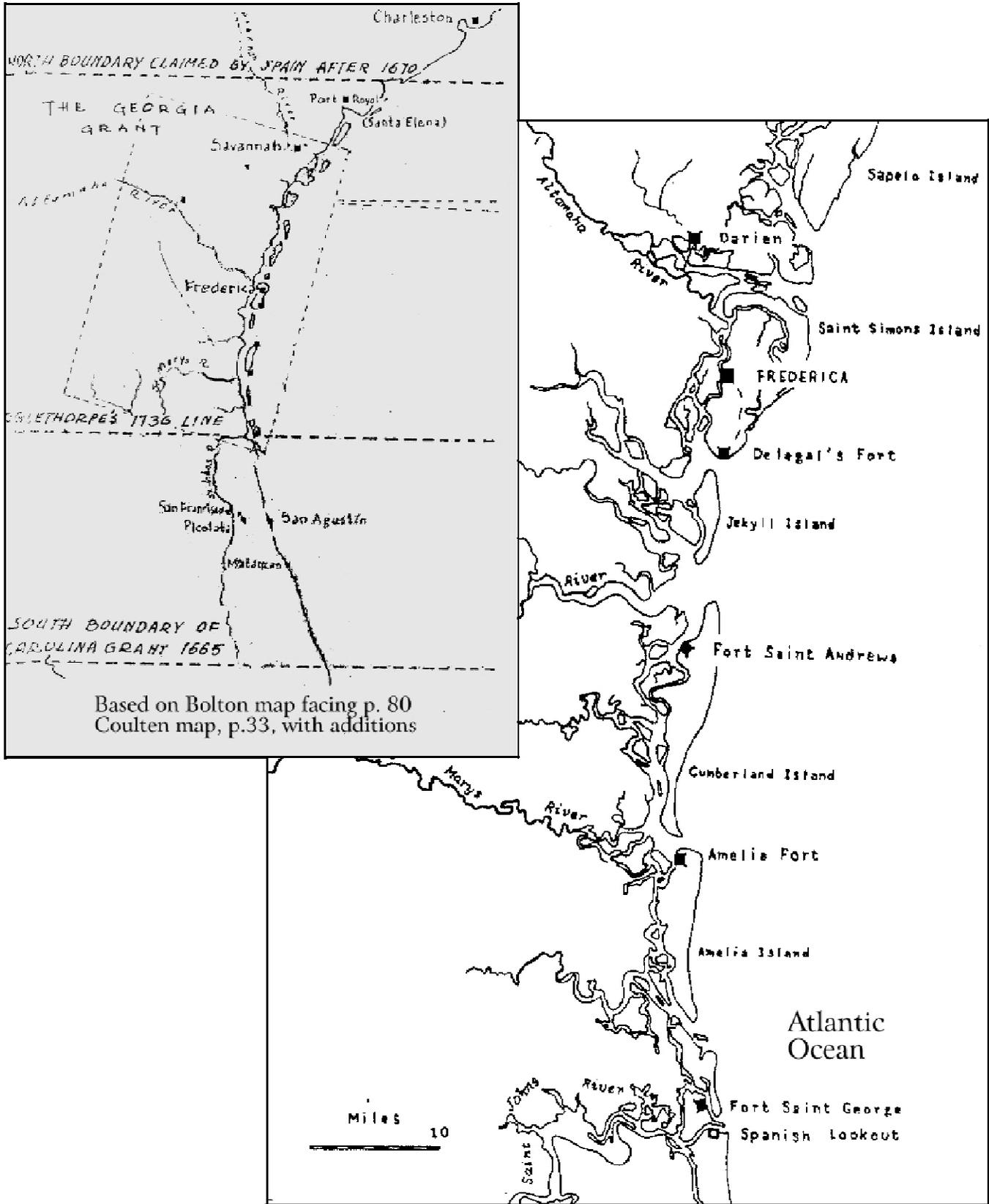
In 1733 some 100 colonists settled at Savannah on land surrendered in treaty by the Creek Indians. Before long the colony was considerably strengthened by the arrival of German and Scotch immigrants.
26

This new British hold on the Georgia country was far from secure. As a start to make it so, Oglethorpe scouted the coast south of Savannah early in 1734. It was on January 26, during a heavy rainstorm, that he landed at a bluff on St. Simons Island and found shelter under one of the great oaks. When he returned from that journey, quite likely he was turning over in his mind a plan for a chain of forts extending southward to the St. Johns River – fortifications that would either insure English possession of Georgia, or bring Spanish wrath swiftly down upon his head.

Back to England he went, there to secure authorization for beginning a fortified settlement to be called Frederica in honor of Frederick, the Prince of Wales, and to find

²⁶ Diplomatic History, 34; Bolton, 71; Bolton and Marshall, 315-316. J. F. Jameson, Dictionary of United States History (Philadelphia 1931), Georgia, Oglethorpe.

Plate 7 – Fortifications and Boundary Matters



the people for his project.²⁷ Expediency and the character of the man Oglethorpe seem to be the two prime reasons why Savannah and later Frederica were established and maintained successfully in that territory – “the debatable land’ – to which England had only the flimsiest claim. But in no small measure, too, English success was due to the diplomats. The watchword of the English was delay. While ambassadorial battles were raging in London and Madrid, the Spanish in Florida, unsure of their ground, poorly supported and (what was perhaps more important) being of entirely different temperament than the more earthy settlers to the north, informed the crown of imminent dangers, and awaited orders.

Spanish official reaction to Georgia was naturally vigorous. But Oglethorpe was wily. Before he left London in 1735 he obtained from the Spanish minister his sanction of the appointment of a commissioner to act as a go-between for the Florida governor and himself. This commissioner, Charles Dempsey, embarked for America on Oglethorpe’s vessel in “The Great Embarkation,” the largest single group of colonists

(257) to sail for Georgia. They set forth from Cowes in the Symond and the London Merchant on December 10, 1735, and reached the Savannah River on February 5, anchoring off Cockspur Island.

6. FREDERICA – “THE TRUSTEES THOUGHT IT PRUDENT –“

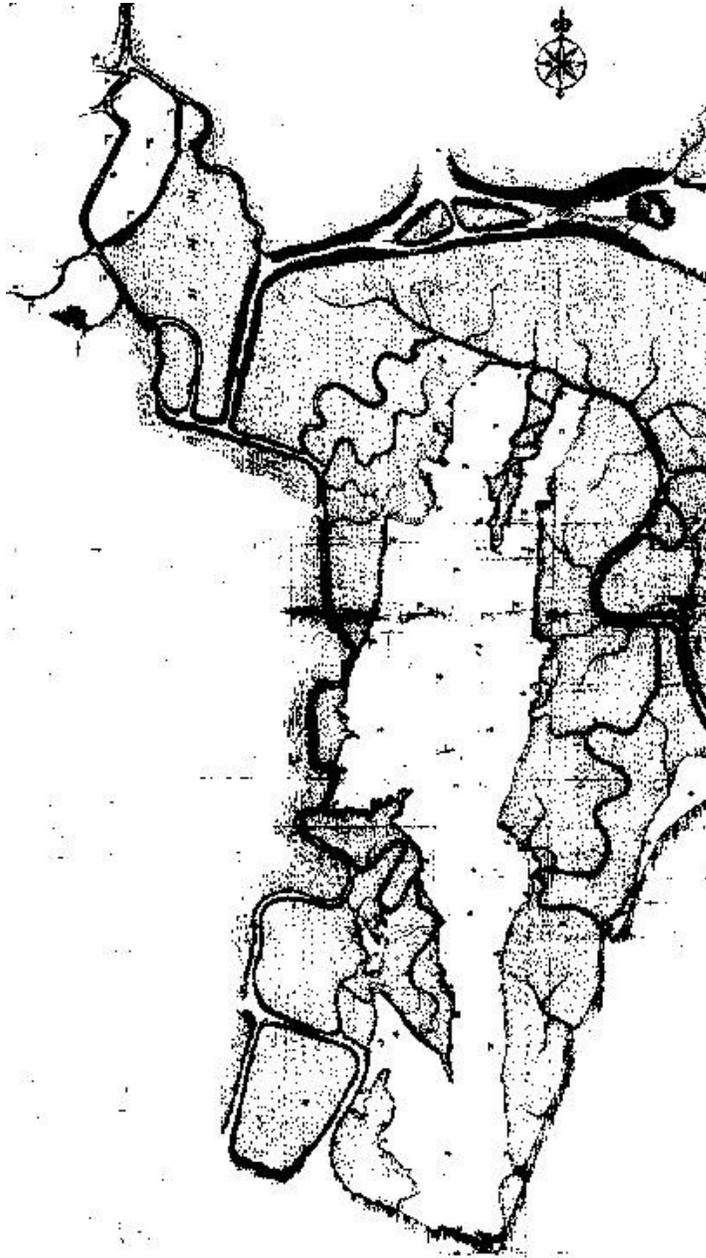
At Cockspur Island these prospective Frederica settlers divided – the Salzburgers wanting to join their brethren at Ebenezer and the Moravians going to the settlement at Irene. Oglethorpe agreed, though it meant the loss of half his Frederica population.

But Oglethorpe was not yet at Frederica, and his ship masters refused to take him. There was no pilot to guide them to harbor at St. Simons, and they were reluctant to sail those uncharted waters. Oglethorpe bought the cargo of the sloop Midnight, and sent it on to the Frederica site with 30 single men under the leadership of Mr. William Horton and a Mr. Tanner. Loaded aboard were cannon, arms, ammunition and entrenching tools, for in spite of the apparent tranquility of these coastal islands, who could know what might happen?

Col. Oglethorpe himself sailed the inland waterway in a scout boat and reached St. Simons on the morning of February 18, 1736. The Midnight was already waiting in the

²⁷ Margaret Davis Cate, “Fort Frederica and the Battle of Bloody Marsh,” Georgia Historical Quarterly, XXVII, no. 2, 111-112, Cited hereafter as Cate.

Plate 8 – “A Map of the Islands of St. Simon and Jekyll”



harbor. Oglethorpe lost no time in landing men and supplies, and starting work on palmetto-thatched booths for storage of supplies and temporary housing for the colonists. The very next day work began on the fort. Back at Cockspur, the ship captains still refused to bring their vessels to Frederica. The colonists, men, women and children, must make a 6-day journey in open boats down the waterway – or settle at Savannah. They chose Frederica. The trip was made successfully, and on March 16 Oglethorpe reported the presence at Frederica of 44 men and 72 women and children.²⁸

The site selected for the fort was a bluff on the western shore of St. Simons Island. It was on the inland waterway at a strategic spot where the river made two sharp turns so that approaching vessels would be at the mercy of Frederica’s guns; “for three miles below Frederica [*i.e.*, the approach from Spanish Florida] the river winds in such a manner that an enemy would be exposed to our fire without being able to return it.”²⁹

The fort progressed rapidly. Work began on February 19, 1736,³⁰ when Oglethorpe “traced out a Fort with 4 Bastions by cutting up the Turf from the ground, dug enough of the Ditch & raised enough of the Rampart for a Sample for the men to work upon.”³¹ Little more than a month later Fort Frederica was almost finished, and a battery of guns commanded the river. As time and opportunity presented, the work was strengthened.

The town, according to the Georgia historian Jones, was “in the midst of an Indian field³² containing between thirty and forty acres of cleared land. The grass in this field yielded an excellent turf which was freely used in sodding the parapet of the fort. The bluff upon which it stood rose about ten feet above high-water mark, was dry and

²⁸ Cate, 114-117; Diplomatic History, 36.

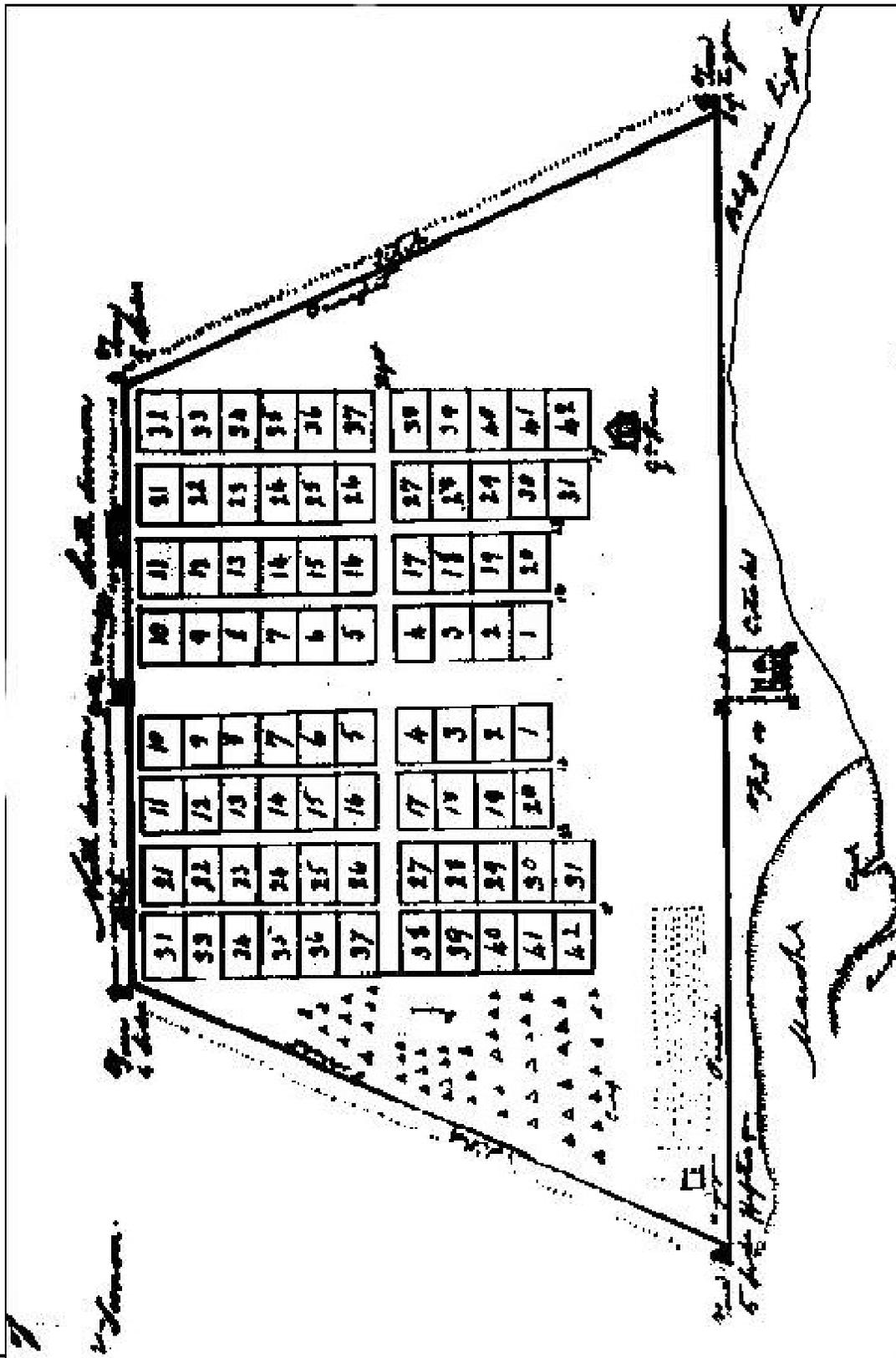
²⁹ Colonial Records of the State of Georgia (Atlanta 1904-1916), v. 28, pt. 1, p. 215, cited in Cate, 117. All citations to volumes of the Colonial Records numbered beyond 26 refer to unpublished manuscript volumes. Hereafter the Colonial Records will be cited as CR. To save space, volume and page numbers will be listed respectively thus: 28/215.

³⁰ Francis Moore, “A Voyage to Georgia Begun in the Year 1735; Containing an Account of the Settling the Town of Frederica . . .” (London 1744), in Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, I, 109. Collections of the Georgia Historical Society will be cited hereafter as Collections.

³¹ Collections, III, 15.

³² Oglethorpe had negotiated with the Creek Indian chief Tomachichi for St. Simons. “They agreed,” the Founder reported, “yt we shall possess ye Island of St. Simons, but reserved that of St. Catharines to themselves.” (CR 21/103)

Plate 9 – Miller’s 1796 “Plan of the Town of Frederica”



sandy, and exhibited a level expanse of about a mile into the interior of the island.”³³

An area of about 35 acres along the river was laid out in town streets, blocks and lots. The main street ran east and west, halving the town; its western terminus was the fort on the river bank; near the eastern end of the street was the burial lot. By the end of March each family had a “Bower” thatched with palmetto leaves, and these temporary structures were invariably located to the rear of the lots, saving the front of the property for the later erection of permanent homes. While some planting went forward immediately, it was late in the season for extensive agriculture, so Oglethorpe put many of the men on the payroll and set them to work on the fortifications and public buildings. On the southern end of Frederica bluff, Point Battery was thrown up, mounting a dozen 12-pounders.³⁴

Succeeding to the religious office once held by the martyr Velascola was Charles Wesley, the first Protestant minister of the Frederica settlement, as well as Oglethorpe’s secretary and the Secretary for Indian Affairs. For young Wesley, this was his first ministry. There was no house for public worship, and he preached in the open air. For about six months Charles Wesley stayed at Frederica, then left for England, carrying Oglethorpe’s dispatches to the Trustees. But John Wesley, who had been sent to Savannah by the Society for Propagating the Gospel, stayed almost two years in Georgia. On several occasions he was in Frederica to carry on the religious services begun by his brother.³⁵

~~33 C. C. Jones, Jr., “Dead Towns of Georgia,”~~ Collections, IV, 55-56; also p. 53. (Cited hereafter as “Jones”.) Jones continued: “Surrounded by beautiful forests of live-oak, water oaks, laurel, bay, cedar, sweet-gum, sassafras, and pines, festooned with luxuriant vines, (among which those bearing the Fox-grape and the Muscadines were peculiarly pleasing to the Colonists,) and abounding in deer, rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, wild-turkeys, turtle-doves, redbirds, mocking birds, and rice birds, with wide extended marshes frequented by wild geese, ducks, herons, curlews, cranes, plovers and marsh-hens, -- the waters teeming with fishes, crabs, shrimps, and oysters, and the island fanned by South-East breezes with the regularity of the trade winds – the strangers were charmed with their new home.” Jones’ description is based upon Moore, Collections, I, 115-120. A contemporary description of St. Simons reads thus: “The Land of the Island is very fertile, chiefly Oak and Hickory, intermixed with Savannah’s, and old Indian Fields; and is about Forty-five Miles in Circumference.” (CR 3/387).

³⁴ CR 21/103; Collections, I, 114-115; IV, 54-55; Cate, 119.

³⁵ Cate, “John and Charles Wesley,” Flags of Five Nations, 43-45. Charles Wesley organized the “Holy Club”, which grew into the Methodist Episcopal Church, at Oxford early in the 18th century. John Wesley, the elder brother, later became the

Among the colonists was William Horton, a man of gentle blood who later went to Jekyll Island to carve out a plantation and operate the first Georgia brewery. ~~Horton was the caliber man to be placed in charge of military affairs during Oglethorpe's absence. Francis Moore, King's storekeeper, secretary and town recorder, was an observant and valuable member of the little community. Dr. Thomas Hawkins, both medico and bailiff, has the aid of midwife Elizabeth Harrison on birthing eases—if indeed she did not supplant him entirely in such matters. Silversmith John Terry, the Samuel Pepys of Frederica, became town recorder. Samuel Auspourger was the surveyor, who had much to do with building the fort. There was Sam Perkins, none too reputable bailiff; Tom Sumner the tythingman; Campbell the tailor, Moore the tanner, Levally the shoemaker, Hughes the candlemaker, Stronaugh, King's Armorer, carpenter Tom Walker, an even, as Mrs. Cate records, one John Bull, laborer in the king's magazine. Not the least of these men were framers, such as Daniel Cannon, whose name is today preserved at Cannons Point, and Henry Myers, an industrious Dutchman.~~³⁶

Work at Frederica had hardly started when word arrived that a road from Savannah to nearby (16 miles by water) Darien had been surveyed. And in the middle of March Oglethorpe left his people busy at Frederica and traveled southward “to see where his Majesty's Dominions and the Spaniards joyn.” With him went Tomochichi, chief of the region, leading two score chosen warriors in a pair of scout boats, and a piragua³⁷ under the command of Capt. Hugh Mackay. Highlanders and a detachment from the King's

leader of the movement, and exerted a profound influence on contemporary life and thought. Charles Wesley, though well known as a preacher, is best remembered for the hymns he wrote, including the universally sung “Jesus, Lover of My Soul.” Christ Church, which stands near the old town limits of Frederica today, is, according to Mrs. Cate, a direct descendant of the church organized by the Wesleys at Frederica 200 years ago. Incidentally, two other members of the “Holy Club” also served at Frederica; George Whitefield and Benjamin Ingham.

³⁶ Cate, 121-122.

³⁷ The piragua was usually a long, flat-bottomed boat of 20 to 35 tons. Undecked, with a small forecastle and cabin, and stepping two removable masts, it was rigged something like a schooner, and had one or more pairs of oars besides. It was apparently developed from an earlier style large Indian dugout. These speedy, shallow draft vessels had been much used by the Spaniards in patrolling the waters of the inland waterway. The English usually called them “periaguas”, piriagours”, or similar corrupt spelling of the Spanish word, which in turn apparently derived from Cariban or Arawakan. The French form, “piroque”, is sometimes used. *Cf. Collection., I, 112; Chatelain, op. cit., 40.*

Independent Company of South Carolina were along, carrying provisions and the ever-present entrenching tools. On the northwestern point of Cumberland Island, Oglethorpe marked out Fort St. Andrews, left Mackay and his men to build it, and continued south with the Indians to reconnoiter the Spanish outpost on the St. Johns River.³⁸

Oglethorpe said Tomochichi told him that “the Lands as far as Augustine [San Agustín] belonged to the Creeks but that the Spaniards had taken forcible and unjust possession of it.” Oglethorpe was not one to argue the point. Tomochichi and his braves brooded over their loss. “It was with much difficulty,” wrote Oglethorpe, “I could prevent them from attacking the Spaniards.”³⁹

In order to hold his overly-anxious Indians in check, Oglethorpe established a marine garrison at the mouth of the St. Johns, based on San Juan Island (now called Fort George Island), the “Southwardmost point of his Majesty’s Dominions in North America which I called St. George’s Point”.⁴⁰ The Spaniards were at first happy to receive this protection, but, Oglethorpe reported, they unaccountably changed their minds, and soon began to make things warm for his “Southwardmost” patrol. When Oglethorpe later revisited the boundary, he found his men mutinied and moving back to safer territory. He “resettled” them, went back to Frederica again for cannon, men, and provisions, and returned once more to the St. Johns to find Capt. Hermsdorff, commandant of the river patrol, fortified on the site of which (in British judgment) must be the “old Fort which was erected by Sir Walter Raleigh’s first Colony when Sir Francis Drake took St. Augustine”.⁴¹ Thus was born Fort St. George, a most painful thorn in Spanish ribs. It was a serious threat to Spanish communication with west Florida.

Other fortifications were feverishly thrown up in the first year or two of occupation. Fort William was built on southwest Cumberland Island. On the mainland, just across from Frederica, was Bachelor’s Redoubt, manned by rangers, and on the Altamaha a few miles above the redoubt was Mount Venture, another ranger station.

³⁸ Collections, III, 29; 58-59; Cate, 122.

³⁹ Collections, III, 29.

⁴⁰ Id., III, 29,33; I, 133.

⁴¹ Id., III, 33-35; see also id., I, 137, 140-141; Diplomatic History, 38-39, 51-52, 119-120.

On the future site of Brunswick, Capt. Mark Carr had a plantation with a corporal's guard for protection. There were other small outposts.

On St. Simons, in addition to Fort Frederica, there was a guardhouse and a corporal's guard on the west shore at Pike's Bluff; 18 soldiers with their families were settled on the northwest point of the island at Newhampton (now Hampton or Butler Point), which was one of several small villages on the erstwhile Spanish island. Hardly less important than Frederica itself was Delegal's battery, which after 1737 grew into the extensive layout of Fort St. Simons – the "Soldiers' Fort" or "The Camp", on the southern tip of the island commanding the harbor inlet.⁴²

No better (nor more candid) contemporary analysis of the strategy behind the founding of Frederica and its related forte has been found than this extract from the 1736 official "Account Showing the Progress of the Colony of Georgia":

"... the Trustees thought it prudent to strengthen the Southern Part of the Province by making a Settlement on the Altamaha River, to which they were strongly induced, by a Memorial sent to his Majesty from the Governor and Assembly of South Carolina, dated the 9th of April, 1734, wherein, after thanking his Majesty . . . for establishing the Colony of Georgia, and after representing the Practices of the French to seduce the Indians in Amity with South Carolina, the Attention of the French to the Improvement of their Settlements, and their late Inlargement of them nearer to Carolina; the defenceless Condition of their Province, and ruinous Situation of the West-India Trade in case the French should possess themselves of Carolina; they add, That the Harbours and Ports of Carolina and of Georgia enable his Majesty to be absolute Master of the Passage through the Gulph of Florida, and to impede, at his Pleasure, the Transportation home of the Spanish Treasure, which should his Majesty's Enemies possess, would then prove so many convenient Harbours for them to annoy a great Part of the British Trade to America, as well as that which is carried on through

the Gulph from Jamaica"⁴³

Oglethorpe's departure for American in 1735 had been the occasion for a promise by British ministers⁴⁴ that the Colonel's activities would be conducive to the "most

⁴² Cate, 122, 124-125; CR 3/388. Cr. Collections, I, 132.

⁴³ CR 3/386-387.

⁴⁴ As the diplomatic crises of 1739 approached, Spain was ruled (according to British opinion) by "three or four mean,

perfect understanding” between “Carolina and Florida.” The Spaniards, instructed to contribute to this praiseworthy design, were nonplussed when “Georgians” attacked a Spanish fortification within 8 leagues of San Agustín the Georgians built a fort (Frederica) “at the mouth of the River of St. Simon.” Ambassador Geraldino presented these matters in London with some force, evincing considerable disappointment in the aforementioned promise by the British ministers.

Faced with providing a satisfactory answer for Newcastle, Secretary of State, to give to Geraldino, the Georgia Trustees flatly denied everything. The March attack on the Spanish fort must have been made by Indians “in Revenge of Injuries and Hostilities offered to them by the Spaniards”; for Georgia forts were “all within the Territories of the King of Great Britain, and erected at the Desire of the Indians . . .” Newcastle, however, did not present matters so baldly; his reply to Geraldino was noncommittal. The English had nothing to lose by delay, and at that moment Oglethorpe was negotiating a very satisfactory treaty with Sánchez in America.⁴⁵

Had Oglethorpe been content with the Altamaha as a boundary, Commissioner Charles Dempsey’s mission might have been completely successful. But Oglethorpe had determined to colonize effectively all land to the Altamaha and to fortify even beyond. He intended to insist on the St. Johns River as the south boundary of His Britannic Majesty’s dominions.

Dempsey and Maj. William Richards set out for San Agustín in February 1736. Symbolically, their yawl capsized. After a struggle through the surf and a walk of several leagues through the sand, they reached the Spanish capital in rather bedraggled

stubborn people with little minds and limited understandings.” This pungent description included Sebastian de la Quadra, Foreign Minister, Joseph de la Quintana, Secretary of Marine and Indies, and Casimiro Uztariz, economist and First commissioner of the War Office. For the English, Sir Robert Walpole, the Minister, was personally easy, good natured, and desirous of peace almost to a fault. He was at the head of a relentless political machine in an age when “standards of political corruption,” to quote Lanning, “were different from if not worse than those of today.” The principal Secretary of State was the Duke of Newcastle, a well balanced official whose influence was conspicuous. The ambassadorial position at Madrid was filled by Sir Benjamin Keene, fat, good natured and agreeable, resolute and adroit in a crisis, but somewhat handicapped by being both representative of the English crown and agent of the South Sea Company. His counterpart in London was Tomás Geraldine. See Diplomatic History, 124-126.

⁴⁵ Diplomatic History, 88-94

condition. Here, in contrast to nature's boisterous welcome to Florida, Dempsey was received with typical Spanish civility. And typically, nothing was accomplished. Three times in less than a year Dempsey went to San Agustín. Remarkably enough, each time he was cast ashore by the waves. If he gained anything other than knowledge of seamanship, it was delay.

But thanks to Oglethorpe's stratagems, Spanish scouts saw coastal Georgia as dangerously well fortified and well manned. A Spanish delegation, received by Oglethorpe with considerable flourish aboard ship (to keep them from examining his forts too closely), visited Georgia in 1736. As they drank to the healths of their respective sovereigns, the 15 guns in the battery on St. Simons roared a salute, followed by the guns of St. Andrews, and the echoing rumble of cannon from Frederica and Darien. It was but one of many convincing demonstrations. The Spaniards returned home more respectful than they had come, and with them Charles Dempsey went again to negotiate a treaty.

But to Dempsey at San Agustín came news that men, munitions and money had arrived for the Spanish. Havana's Governor Güemes had sent Engineer Antonio de Arredondo – a man not dissimilar to Dempsey – to talk to Oglethorpe. There was mounting evidence of a project to demolish Georgia. To Frederica sailed Arredondo, fortified with historical and logical evidence of Spanish claims to back up the demand that the English remove as far north as St. Helena Sound. Historical and logical Arredondo's argument may have been, but it was not convincing to the Colonel. Oglethorpe replied with counter demands. The Spanish must evacuate all lands to the latitude of 29 degrees, for had not Francis Drake occupied the country that far south by capturing San Agustín in 1586?

Eventually Arredondo, Oglethorpe and Dempsey compromised. Fort St. George at the mouth of the St. Johns should be dismantled and the island itself remain unpopulated; all hostilities should cease; boundary disputes, they agreed, should be referred to Europe. Dempsey obtained the signature of Florida's hapless Governor Don Francisco Moral Sánchez upon this Treaty of Neutrality. Madrid repudiated the treaty, and Sánchez was subsequently called back to Spain where, according to rumor, he was

hanged.⁴⁶

The latter news, however, was a somewhat unexpected incident of the future. “All matters with the Spaniards are regulated,” Oglethorpe wrote jubilantly, “and the governor of Augustine contented. Therefore all being safe I shall set out immediately for Europe.”⁴⁷ Oglethorpe, however, realized that when the 1736 treaty was rejected or violated, he would need more strength in Georgia. He got it. His report on Georgia affairs was received with satisfaction by the Trustees, who fully appreciated the service he had rendered the colony.

Back in Florida, Oglethorpe’s antagonist had arrived in the person of Manuel de Montiano, new Governor of Florida. Montiano quickly achieved a grasp of the situation. A great plan for reannexation of Spanish land was already past the first stages. Thousands of troops were assembling in Havana; 400 came to Florida. Then at the last minute, orders suspending the campaign reached Havana. Again the matter would be decided in Europe.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Id., 36-38, 40-48; Bolton, 74.

⁴⁷ CR 21/236, cited in Diplomatic History, 47.

⁴⁸ Diplomatic History, 47-50; Bolton, 75. In October 1735, when Georgia seemed both an established and increasing menace to Florida, a man named John Savy, alias Miguel Wall, appeared in Paris with information alleged to be of greatest importance to Spain. Wall was formerly an English officer, but apparently had fled as a criminal from Charleston to Georgia, from which province he escaped in 1735. With utmost secrecy and intrigue, Wall proposed to rout the English with a few troops under the command of a Spaniard, and to reduce Carolina and Georgia to satisfactorily Spanish limits. Early in the summer of 1736 he was sent to Cuba, where Governor G ü e m e s , charged with supporting San Agustín and impeding English settlement, was instructed to use Wall’s experience to best advantage. “Oglethorpe’s old dictum,” says Lanning, “that the land belonged to the country with the best army now recoiled upon him to send shivers up and down his spine.” From May to July of 1736 were especially anxious weeks for Oglethorpe, seeking reinforcements from the mainland colonies for his skeletonized forces. But G ü e m e s did not trust Wall . England learned of the plan, and Wall was suspected to be the informant . Yet the project might have been attempted had not the orders from Spain postponed it . Wall himself later found his way back to England and fought against the Spanish during the War of Jenkins’ Ear . He deserted, was arrested by English and – disappeared . The news of Wall’s intrigue and the proposed attack on Georgia in 1736 - 1737 very much helped Oglethorpe to win his demands for strengthening Georgia . In evaluating Wall’s part in the picture, Lanning writes: “the diplomatic haggling which John Savy [Wall] accentuated served to foment the agitation which resulted in the desultory War of Jenkins’ Ear . The incidents which Savy sponsored had far more immediate bearing upon the international situation than the more or less uncertain removal of an ear eight years prior to the outbreak of war . It was merely a capricious circumstance of history which gave to the

7. THE ISSUES EXPLAINED

Tomás Geraldino, the Spanish minister in London, was sure that by judicious play of opposition politics he could thwart Oglethorpe, ruin the Trustees, and force the abandonment of Georgia. Geraldino knew that the British Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, and his cohorts were interested in only the political strength of the Georgia faction – not the welfare of the colony, nor its importance as a boundary fortification. Walpole evidently did not believe that Georgia was of any advantage to England. Consequently he thought that the Georgia charter gave the Trustees too much power and made them independent of the crown.

Geraldino's weakness lay in his ignorance of Oglethorpe's ability. Biding his time, Oglethorpe shrewdly, swiftly and silently maneuvered to gain the ear of the king. And when Col. Oglethorpe finally returned to Georgia in 1738, it was with a regiment and the title of General and Commander-in-Chief of the military forces of South Carolina and Georgia. Yet Walpole managed to assuage Spain's fears at even this action by a promise that no hostilities against Florida were intended, and the ones left to worry were the Floridians.⁴⁹

The Georgia question was important, but it was only half of a very large problem. The root of the differences between Spain and England at this period grew out of the soil of commerce in the Americas. The Spanish colonial system was monopolistic. Had Spain possessed the resources to supply her monopoly, there might have been no room for foreigners. But trade between Spanish colonies was usually supplied by the galleons ferrying back and forth across the Atlantic, with Cartagena, Puerto Bello, Vera Cruz and Havana as ports of call. (See plate 3). When this system broke down, as it sometimes did, the colonies were left in straitened circumstances, and could not but welcome the "assistance" of foreign vessels. By the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) England gained the right to supply Spanish colonies with slaves and to send an annual cargo of 500 tons to Spanish ports. This paltry concession was not enough. Smuggling increased.

war that followed the name, 'The War of Jenkins' Ear' instead of 'The War of Savy's Treachery . "' Diplomatic History , ch . IV; also p . 100

⁴⁹ Diplomatic History, 50-51, 86; Bolton, 76; Cate, 123.

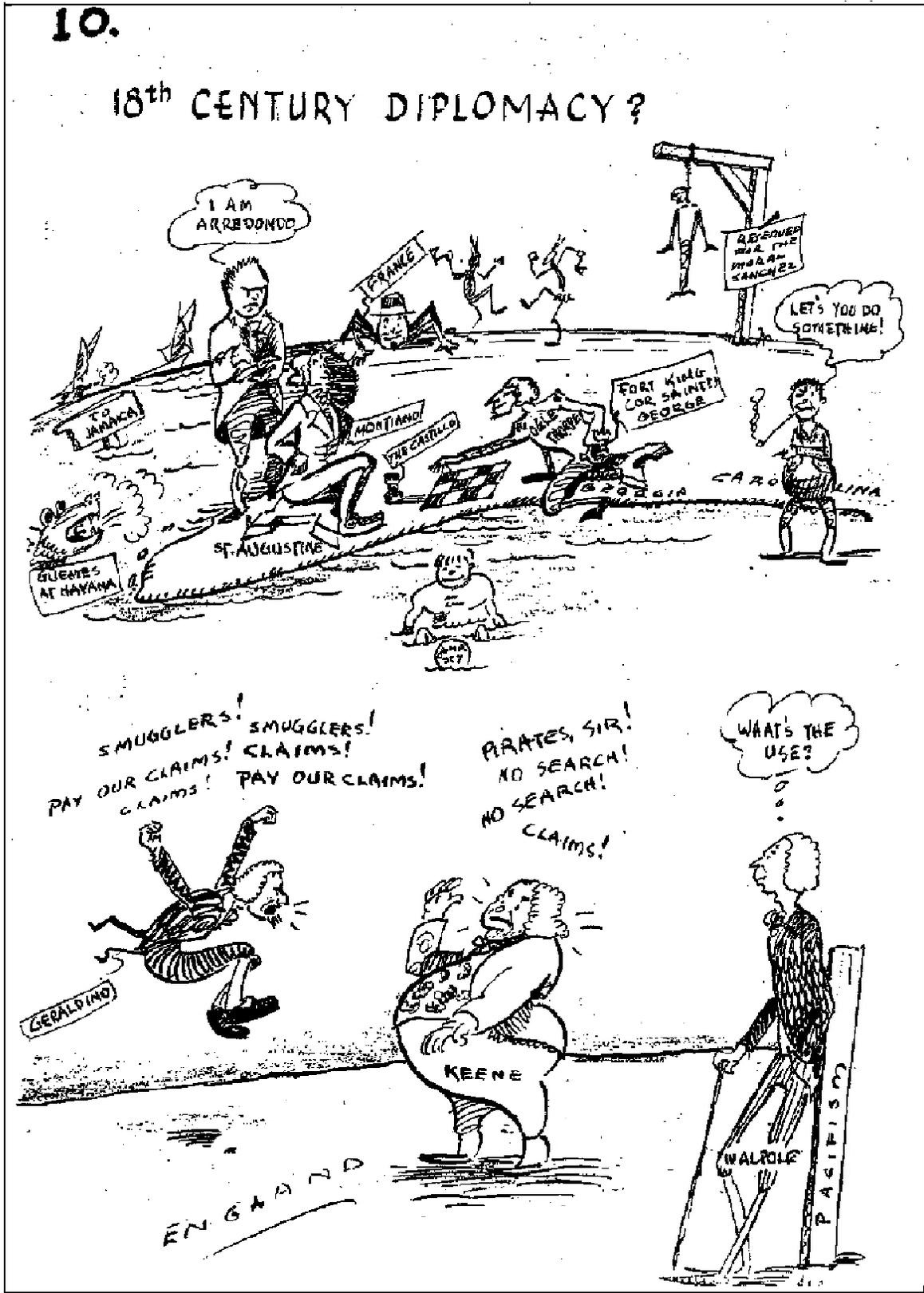
European merchants found many ways to circumvent legalities. Their goods were sometimes carried under the reputed ownership of Spaniards. Dependent on individual honesty, such trade was precarious. English merchants sometimes found themselves divested of goods with neither money nor explanation. Seizure was the penalty upon proof of undeclared or illegally declared goods. Business often turned out to be both costly and vexatious.

The Jamaicans, off the southern coast of Cuba, were in a naturally strategic location to profit by Caribbean trade. Jamaican sloops could suddenly appear at the mouths of streams between the Río de la Hacha and the Chagres, and runs between Mexico, Puerto Rico, Hispaniola and Cuba, serving settlements off the path of the galleons, proved profitable, especially since the Jamaicans avoided the numerous Spanish taxes imposed upon legitimate trade. They could effect a quick turnover in flour, manufactured goods, woolens and Negroes, and in doing so they could undersell the market. The Jamaica sloop trade was conservatively estimated at some £300,000 per year at the outset of the 18th century.

Furthermore, breasting the gulfstream from the north came a steady flow of vessels from Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania and New England, to sell flour and other provisions at Curacao and St. Thomas, to the French, and to the Spaniards themselves. These hardy Americans were loved by the Jamaicans as little as they loved honest Spanish officials, but of such enterprise were these Americans, one contemporary declared, that “neither the Laws of their Islands, nor the Laws of England, nor the Laws of other Nations, can restrain them from trading wherever they foresee Advantage.”⁵⁰ Men from England, New England and Jamaica blithely cut logwood on the forbidden shores of Campeche and Honduras with arms close by to fight Spanish soldiery that might swoop down to kill them or put them in chains.

England’s South Sea Company, which contracted for the limited Spanish trade permitted after the Treaty of Utrecht, was unsympathetic to the freelance traders, inasmuch as Company profits turned to loss in the face of rival activities by smuggling compatriots.

⁵⁰ Popular Prejudices against the Convention and Treaty with Spain, Examined and Answered, 23, cited in Diplomatic History, 128.



Spanish officials tried to regulate the Caribbean commerce by a rigorous coast guard. 55 But the guarda costa often became careless in discriminating between smugglers and ships plying in good faith between England and the English West Indies. Sometimes the Spanish coastguardsmen even looked like pirates to English seamen. Spanish courts confirmed

captures by condemning ships and cargoes and impressing English sailors thus touching England at two very tender spots – pride and pocketbook. 51

After the founding of Georgia, there had been some five years of relative quiet.

5
Then in 1737, the Spanish Queen Elizabeth Farnese, trying to get English help in the seizure of the Italian Ducky of Tuscany, was refused. As a consequence, guarda costa vigilance increased. Scores of British merchants turned in claims against Spain. They resented the implication that the discovery of logwood; coconuts and pieces of eight (all of which could be found in British possessions) meant illicit commerce, but perhaps they were most resentful of the way Spain interpreted the “right of search.” It is worth passing notice that the screeching anti-Spanish motto of “No search, my Lords, is a cry that runs from the sailor to the merchant, and from the merchant to Parliament, my Lords, it ought to reach the throne.”⁵²

This same cry was uttered again in American waters in later years, and under different circumstances. Be that as it may, for many years England’s ministry had been trying to establish the point that such goods were not proof of illegal trade. The attempts had met with but indifferent success. Spain insisted unequivocally that while British subjects might have a right to free commerce and navigation in the West Indies, if they altered their course “without necessity in order to draw near to the Spanish coasts,” they were naturally liable to

53
seizure and confiscation.

The matter gradually resolved into a fairly clear cut definition of the two opposing views. English merchants insisted that unless they were actually caught smuggling, despite proof of their having engaged in questionable commerce and the presence of incriminating goods aboard, they were unjustly taken. The Spanish assumed a right to seize ships continually trading in their ports as well as to search them on the high seas for proof of fraud. Between these two opposing theses both governments were

continually embarrassed. 54 By 1737 the embarrassment was acute.

8. PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMACY

The news of Madrid’s repudiation of the Sánchez-Oglethorpe Treaty reached Oglethorpe in England. Diplomatic affairs were at a point where Spain agreed to a

⁵¹ Diplomatic History, 126-131; Bolton and Marshall, 361.

⁵² Parliamentary History, x, 754, cited in Diplomatic History, 138.

⁵³ Quadra to Keene, 10/21 Feb. 1737, Parliamentary History, x, 1181-1182, cited in Diplomatic History, 134-135.

⁵⁴ Diplomatic History, 135

convention of commissioners to settle Georgia boundaries and maritime matters.

Thus the convention idea replaced the stillborn Georgia Treaty of 1736.

And now for the sake of legality it was suddenly important to convince Newcastle and Walpole that Fort St. George at the mouth of the St. Johns had never been given up, for these two gentlemen were of a mind to relinquish to the persistent Spaniards all of Georgia they could. Oglethorpe, who had undertaken without success to convince the Spaniards that Fort St. George was on the Altamaha instead of the St. Johns by confusing it with Fort King George (which had been abandoned in 1727), was not above victimizing English ministers in England where the Spaniards in Florida had been too sharp for him. His soldiers were too illiterate and too distant to contradict him. The Trustees, who knew no better, would have supported the Machiavellian ruse in which the General proposed to indulge. Naming a few forts which had been demolished, the great frontiersman, after deliberately speaking of “Fort King George or Fort St. George”, subtly continued to draw the veil of haziness over the entire question by holding that the dismantled fortress stood upon “that Part of the Altamaha nearest to the river which the Spaniards call St. Johns.” Thus was the legality of the English title to the St. Johns established. It was at the price of duping the Prime Minister.⁵⁵

Preparatory to the meeting of the convention, Oglethorpe had furnished information he thought would be most useful to the British commissioners in settling the boundary differences. His cardinal point was a staggering one from the Spanish point of view: since the English were in actual and quiet possession of Georgia, it was incumbent upon Spain to make out and prove her rights! The implication was that the Spaniards would have to show superior force. Spain seemed ready to do so. By 1738 there was news in England that warlike preparations were under way in Spain; ships began to move from Cadiz to the West Indies under utmost secrecy. The English were disturbed; but Oglethorpe’s departure for Georgia at this time was not less disturbing to the Spaniards.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, the matter of British merchant claims against Spain was pressing. Official Spanish efforts to redress these claims were both faint and fruitless. England began to prepare for war. At this opportune moment Robert Jenkins of the Rebecca

⁵⁵ Id., 120,135

⁵⁶ Id., 122-123, 136-137, 142.

appeared before Parliament, to exhibit his detached and pickled ear. This ear, he claimed, had been removed some seven or eight years ago off Florida by the Spanish coast guard Captain Juan de León Fandino. Cried Jenkins: as Fandino handed back the ear he said, “Carry it to your king and tell his majesty that if he were present I would serve him in the same manner.” Jenkins’ speech, whether prearranged or not, was under the auspices of the war faction; and if the relation were not wholly truthful, it did cause high excitement.⁵⁷

In this turmoil, the convention of Pardo was finally agreed upon and signed, January 14, 1739. Two commissioners of each country were to meet in Madrid to arrange the issue of the depredations and to settle the boundaries of Georgia.

The Spanish commissaries were instructed to negotiate on the basis of the Treaty of 1670, in hopes that the English could be confined to the territory they then held. Instructions to the British commissioners were apparently less clear, and confused by a number of issues. Domestic politics as well as the affairs of the South Sea Company entered the picture. Some of Georgia’s Trustees subscribed to Walpole’s casual attitude about Georgia: “if we may have peace with Spain by giving up Georgia, it were a good thing.”⁵⁸ But others of the Trustees were not so timid, and the Georgia faction had been skilful enough to sell its support of the Convention to Walpole for a large subsidy to Georgia, which would naturally be of great benefit to Oglethorpe in his plans for the province. Walpole had looked at the larger problem, and wanted peace. To certain Trustees he gave the information that the Spaniards would give up everything, even searching English ships, if Georgia were surrendered to them; and he could see no good reason why an inconsiderable part of the province might not be conceded to Spain without injury to either Georgia or England. The Trustees, in fighting mood, replied that Sir Robert was ignorant of both the situation of the colony and its importance. Georgia included the harbor of Jekyll Sound, the best on the entire continent. They decided to lay a formidable array of papers before Parliament to

⁵⁷ *Id.*, 144-145, 176; Bolton, 78. Fandino, no ordinary captain,, but a Spanish don, deserves a more illustrious niche than history has given him. It was Fandino who brought 6 galliots from Havana to San Agustín on the eve of Oglethorpe’s siege of the Florida capital. These galliots were instrumental in holding the British forces at bay. Fandino’s service throughout this period was conspicuous. See Collections VII, pt 1, 49 ff.

⁵⁸ Diplomatic History, 150.

prevent the possible surrender of any part of Georgia. Walpole would not allow it until the Convention was signed, whereupon the Trustees had resolved to oppose the Convention. Walpole at once called upon Col. Martin Bladen of the Board of Trade. Bladen backed the Trustees in saying that England had a right to Georgia, could prove it, and that he himself would undertake the proof.

“Then,” said Sir Robert, “Bu G—d the Spaniards shall not have it.”⁵⁹

In the drift toward war, the protagonists of conflict defended Georgia nobly. The newest of England’s colonies could serve not only as a buffer to shield the Carolinas, but also as a commercial substitute for European rivals:

Now bid they Merchants bring they Wine no more Or from
the Iberian or the Tuscan shore;
No more they need the Hungarian Vineyards drain⁶⁰ And
France herself may drink her best Champaign.

In the glowing language of the Trustees, Georgia became a veritable paradise. Such misrepresentation or false conception brought things to Georgia that she might otherwise have missed – an orphan house, appropriations, increased garrisons, the extension of the boundary to Fort St. George on the St. Johns. And while some Englishmen had doubts about England’s course, there was no changing it; as Newcastle said, “I fancy however the right may be, it will now be pretty difficult to give up Georgia.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ CR 5/121, cited in Diplomatic History, 153; see also id., 149-151, 164. A contemporary and succinct statement of the English position is given in Objects of the Present War, 169ff. Writes the anonymous author: “According to the Charter of King Charles II, dated June 30, 1665, which fixes the Limits of South Carolina at 29 Degrees of Latitude, San Agustín is built within the English Dominions, and consequently belongs to us; as a Forfeiture. It is true, the Spaniards say, that Grant is an Invasion of their Right; they pretending a Right of Possession to all the Coast as high as Virginia. But if first Discovery gives a Title, which is that whereon the Spaniards generally ground their Pretensions to their American Dominions, we shall find that it belongs to us: For Sir Sebastian Cabot discovered it about the Year 1497; tho’ afterwards [admits the author with some magnanimity] it was more thoroughly navigated by John Ponce de Leon, a Spaniard from Puerto Rico in 1512.” (Objects, etc., 182.)

⁶⁰ True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia in America, xii, cited in Diplomatic History, 183.

⁶¹ Temperley, “Causes of the War of Jenkins’ Ear,” Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 3rd Ser., III, 200, cited in Diplomatic History, 184, See also Diplomatic History, 183.

Even before the patriots and imperialists knew a word of the convention, they were resolved to ruin it. “England was never more misled and unreasonable,” according to a contemporary.⁶² The enthusiasm and petitions of merchants for war, eyes cast longingly in the direction of Zacatecas and Potosí, Newcastle’s promise of a share in the booty to American colonists who enlisted – all lend credence to the story of exploitative designs of certain English merchants and soldiers of fortune on Spanish America. Sentiment of merchant, political liberator, soldier of fortune and humiliated nationalist is crowded into these lines:

Our Merchants and ears a strange pother have made
 With losses sustained in their ships and their trade;
 But now they may laugh and quite banish their fears,
 Nor mourn for lost liberty, riches and ears.

To this quatrain, Pope mechanically added:

And own the Spaniards did a waggish thing
 Who cropped our ears and sent them to the king.⁶³

In this state of affairs, the more reasonable among the Spanish advocated sitting quiet (since their ports were well fortified) and thus preventing extraordinary strain on an exhausted treasury while the English expended their energy and resources on an expensive and unsuccessful war. In the light of this knowledge, it was uniformly urged in England that most damage could be done in America.⁶⁴

It is significant that without the possibility of troops and naval assets from the North American colonies, and without the fear of losing Georgia, there would probably

⁶² An Appeal to the Unprejudiced Concerning the Present Discontents, 6, cited in Diplomatic History, 177.

⁶³ Diplomatic History, 178, citing R. Wright, Caricature History of the Georges, 116, and Alexander Pope, Poetical Works, I, 300.

⁶⁴ Diplomatic History, 180. Cf. Objects of the Present War, a rather typical contemporary English publication, which significantly begins with a detailed definition of Spanish wealth in the Americas, and follows with a minute discussion of Spanish treasure fleet routes and timetables. Each important Spanish colonial city is described in all available detail, and the history of British buccaneering attacks on them is told in a way calculated to increase any Englishman’s patriotism. Spanish vessels leaving Havana “carry away with them more Riches than is to be found in any other Part of the World, the Total of their Cargo being seldom less than Seven Millions Sterling.” (Objects, 169.)

never have been a War of Jenkins' Ear. But in the English colonies on the Atlantic, the prospect of stern interference with intercolonial trade caused as much trepidation as the idea of a Franco-Spanish diplomacy during the hectic period.⁶⁵ For it had already been shown in America that the Gaul was a worse neighbor than the Iberian. "I must not omit to inform you Gentlemen," spoke Governor Gabriel Johnston of North Carolina to his fellow colonial governors at the outset of the war, "that the French and Spaniards have taken of late uncommon pains to debauch all the friendly Indians who live in the neighborhood of his majesty's Dominions."⁶⁶

The English mob howled, the merchants petitioned, and the Trustees agitated. True, there was a more sober group who saw the picture clearly and realistically, unilluminated by the dazzling light of conquest. Such violences as had occurred were the crimes of private persons – piracies, not hostilities. Only the refusal of Spain to do England justice would make them acts of state. Walpole and the peace faction were overwhelmed only after Spain withheld payment of £95,000 in claims until the counter claim of £68,000 against the South Sea Company was adjusted. Finally, on May 17, 1739, Spain suspended the Company's contract. Admiral Haddock was forthwith ordered to Spain's back door. Capt. Sir Yelverton Peyton was ordered to convey Oglethorpe's regiment to Georgia. On June 14, privateering was authorized. There was no hope for agreement by the commissioners. Each nation wised to negotiate where injured, but never where it was the aggressor. Negotiations broke off by July 14, 1739. Newcastle and the king went into the war faction, and Walpole then helplessly gave Vernon instructions to sail against Spanish America. England declared war on October 23, 1739; Spain, on November 28. Oglethorpe's dictum to dissemble and to hold, by force if necessary, now became the exclusive title whereby Georgia was retained in the British Empire.

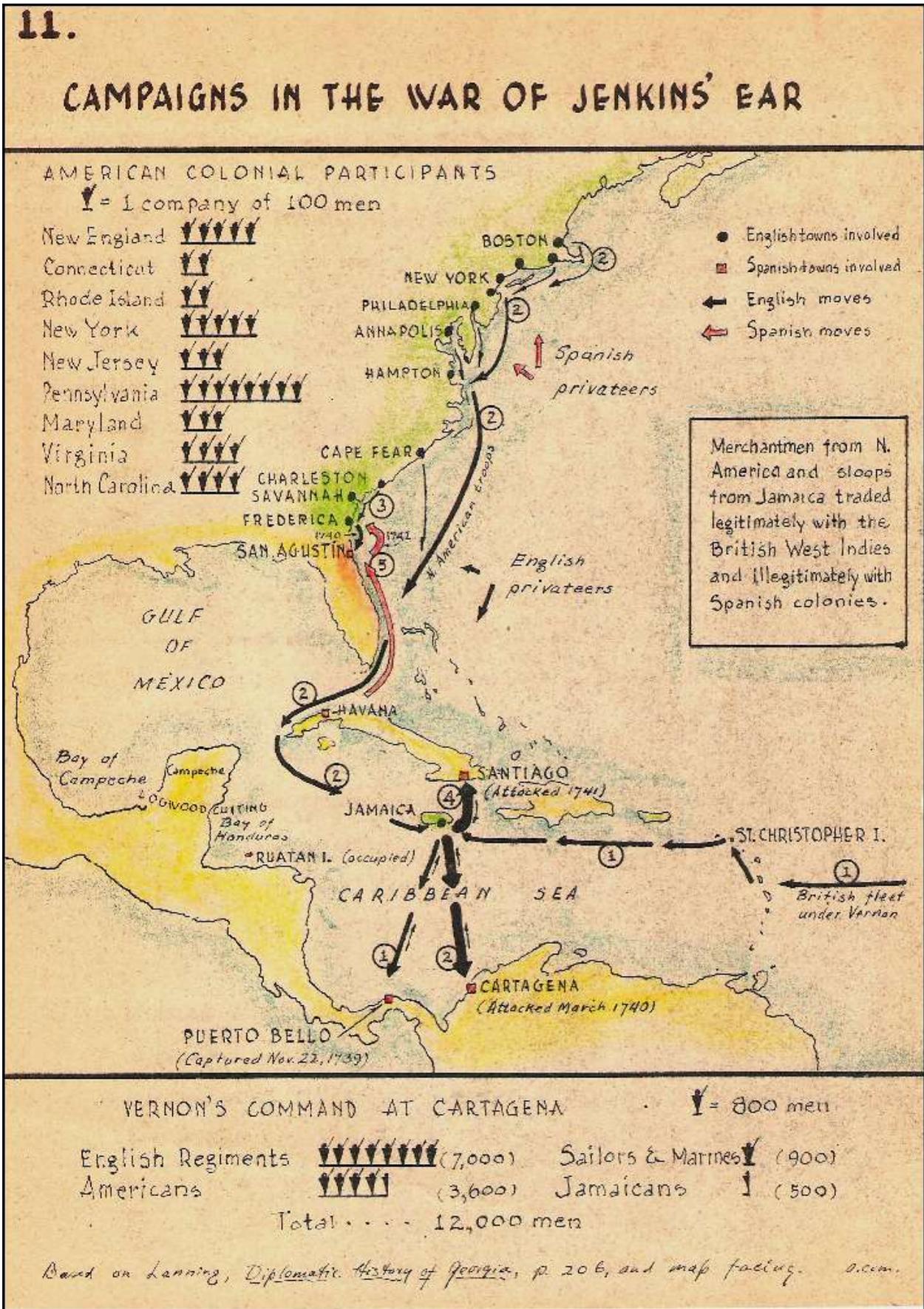
The attack was directed almost exclusively at Spain's commerce and her colonies. The main target was the Caribbean area, with Havana at the center and Puerto Bello, Cartagena and San Agustín on the perimeter. Vice-Admiral Vernon, "Old Grog," was given the center of the naval stage; Oglethorpe had the land theater.

With a small fleet Vernon sailed to Jamaica, then on the Isthmus to capture Puerto

⁶⁵ Diplomatic History, 182-185.

⁶⁶ Colonial Records of North Carolina, IV, 471-472, cited in Diplomatic History, 185.

Plate 11 - Campaigns in the War of Jenkin's Ear



Bello -- “Fine Port”, said to have been named by Columbus in 1504, the north end of the Spanish causeway across the isthmus, and the receptacle for Peruvian and Chilean treasure. England was hysterical with the victory. A medal was struck bearing the words “Brave Vernon made us free; no search upon the seas shall be!”⁶⁷ So Vernon won fame, and it was up to Oglethorpe to emulate him by capturing San Agustín.

9. OGLETHORPE MAKES READY

After a two year absence in England, Oglethorpe landed again on St. Simons in September 1736. Now he had the arms and the men to protect the Georgia colony, and he was General and Commander-in-Chief of the military forces in South Carolina and Georgia, as well as Colonel of his own regiment of infantry.

The first detachment of Oglethorpe’s Regiment, three companies under Lt. Col. James Cochran, had reached St. Simons in June 1738; the General brought the rest with him in September⁶⁸ and stationed most of them at Fort St. Simons, on the south end of the island. This “Soldier’s Fort” soon developed into a military town covering some 200 acres, with about 120 clapboard houses for 500 men “with their wives and children and Officers”.⁶⁹

Soon after his arrival, Oglethorpe had a road cut through the woods from Frederica to Fort St. Simons to afford easy communication between. Before long there was mail service between these two settlements, as well as with Savannah, and through Savannah with Augusta, so that an important system of communications with all parts of the colony was early established.

The General set himself anew to the task of strengthening his forts and laying out new ones. Frederica was garrisoned by two companies of the Regiment – Oglethorpe’s and Capt. Hugh Mackay’s. At Fort St. Simons were four companies with their respective commandants, Lt. Col. Cochran, Maj. William Cook, Capt. Richard Norbury, and Capt. Alexander Heron. Detachments from these main stations went to the outlying positions. Headquarters was Frederica.⁷⁰

During these years of turmoil, Frederica was no place for the fainthearted. Some

⁶⁷ Bolton, 85-86; Bolton and Marshall, 61; Diplomatic History, 166-167, 172-173, 178-179.

⁶⁸ Cate, 123.

⁶⁹ CR 33/90-91, 119; Cate, 123. Cf. CR 3/402. See plate 8.

⁷⁰ Cate, 123-125.

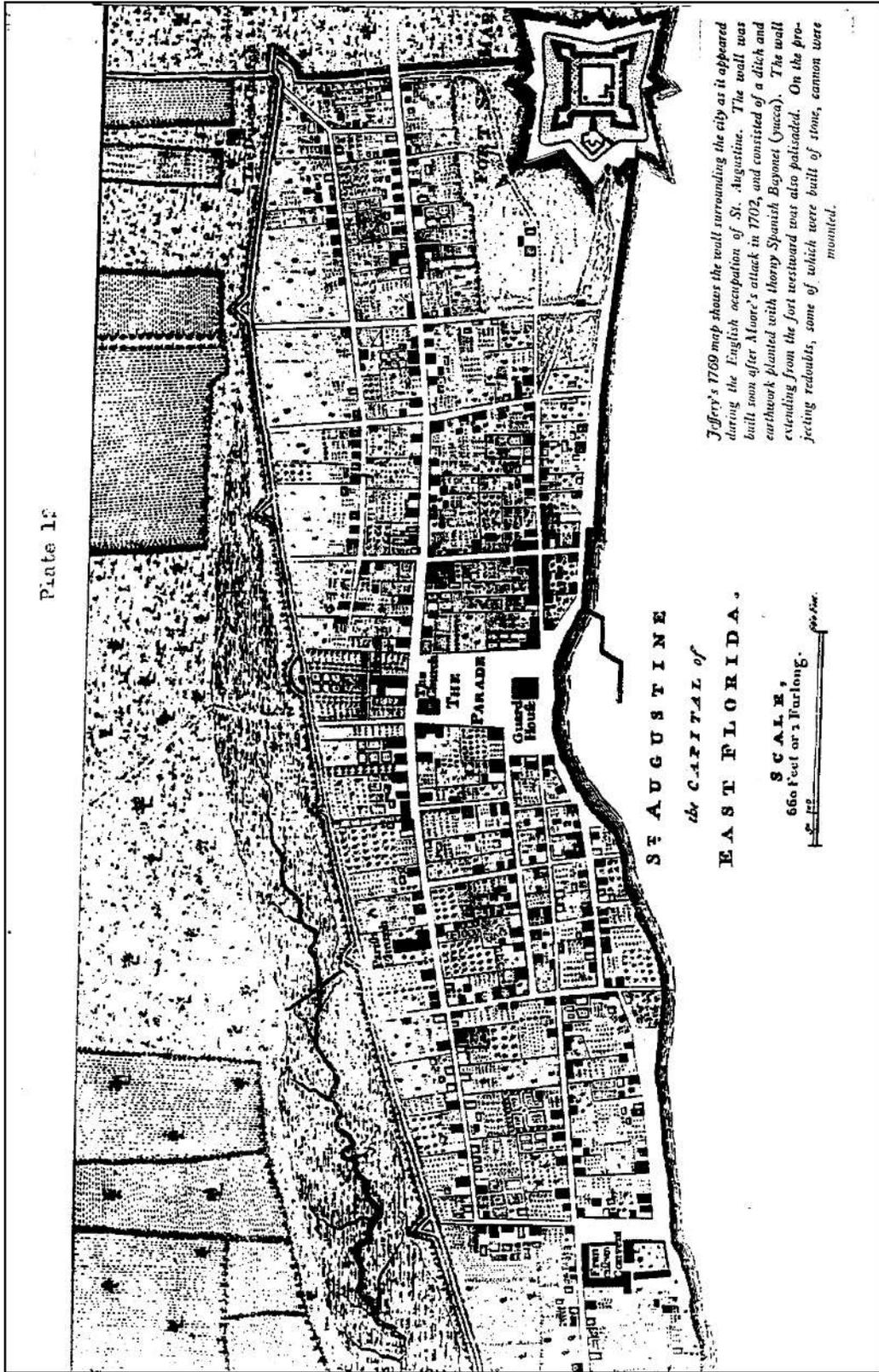


Plate 12

Jeffery's 1769 map shows the wall surrounding the city as it appeared during the English occupation of St. Augustine. The wall was built soon after Moore's attack in 1702, and consisted of a ditch and earthenwork planted with thorny Spanish Bayonet (yuca). The wall extending from the fort westward was also palisaded. On the projecting redoubts, some of which were built of stone, cannon were mounted.

settlers built houses and cleared land only to find that frequent alarms, plus lack of labor, made it difficult to live on this frontier. Men commonly complained that infertile ground was included in their grants, and they left the settlement in spite of the glowing testimonials about sea island agriculture from some of the most reputable citizens of the province. Many discontented ones settled elsewhere in Georgia; a few went back to England. But the more hardy souls stuck by their investments.”⁷¹

By 1740 the Frederica pattern was fairly clear. “Below the Town of Darien is the Town of Frederica,” a contemporary description summarizes, “where there is a strong Fort, and Store Houses; many good Buildings in the Town; some of which are Brick. There is a Meadow near adjoining that is ditched in, of about 320 Acres of which there is good Hay made. The People have not planted much there this Year, occasioned by the War, so near their doors; and chiefly Tradesmen, who make more by working, or selling to the Camp, than they can by Planting. There are some little Villages upon the Island of Saint Simons, and some very Handsome Houses built by the Officers of the Regiment, and there has been Potherbs, Pulse, and Fruit produced upon the Island, of great use toward supplying the Town and Garrison; But Corn, Beer and Meat they have from Elsewhere.”⁷² This, then shows the essentially military nature of the place. “No shipping or trade comes to the town ,” said the Widow Germain.⁷³

Oglethorpe himself clearly appreciated the difficulties. “The Desertion of the People I have been obliged to remedy by filling up the Lots . . . and thereby keep up the Guard Dutys & Improvements,” he admitted. Withal, he remained an optimist; “I still think this Province is likelier to Succeed than ever and to become a strong Frontier.”⁷⁴

Frederica assumed more and more the aspect of a permanent, thriving town. Though the Spanish scares from time to time perturbed the inhabitants, some of them had already built substantial homes to replace their earlier “bowers”. There was at least one two-story brick-and-timber “magazine” or storehouse, evidently built within the fort walls, and late in 1738 the indentured servants began sawing timber for its third

⁷¹ CR 1/423-424, 445 ff., 501; 4/166, 668; 5/170, 525; 23/26 ff., 356.

⁷² CR 35/311-312.

⁷³ CR 5/171.

⁷⁴ CR 23/23.

story, which was to be the chapel, completed about six months later.⁷⁵

Early in November of 1738 Oglethorpe moved southward to supervise the construction of defenses at Fort St. Andrews on Cumberland Island. St. Andrews was garrisoned by troops detailed from Gibraltar, and for a limited time after their Georgia arrival, they had been allowed extra provisions from the King's store. When these rations were discontinued the men became dissatisfied. One of them approached Oglethorpe, and such was his insolence that Capt. Mackay drew his sword on the fellow. Undaunted, the mutineer wrested the sword from Mackay, broke it in half, and flung the hilt at Mackay's head. He rushed away to the barracks, only to return with guns and half a dozen other conspirators. He fired almost point blank at Oglethorpe. The ball whizzed by the General's ear, and the powder scorched his face. Luckily, a second gun missed fire. A soldier drew his hanger and made for Oglethorpe, who parried the thrust with his own sword. As another officer came up and ran Oglethorpe's opponent through, the mutineers fled. They were later captured court-martialed, and the leaders shot. It was fortunate for Georgia that the attempt on Oglethorpe's life failed.⁷⁶

The very month (July 1739) that England and Spain finally halted the battles of diplomacy to make ready for the bloodier business of war, Gen. Oglethorpe set out for Coweta, and Indian town on the Chattahoochee River 300 miles from Frederica, for a conference with the Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws and others. As the king's representative, Oglethorpe negotiated a treaty with these Indians that proved to be of vital importance, for it insured Indian aid in the hostilities which had begun even before the General returned to the coast. It was at Augusta on September 13, 1739⁷⁷ that Oglethorpe learned Spain and England were at war. Just a month later two Highlanders on Amelia Island were killed and mutilated by Spanish forces.

10. THE DRIVE INTO FLORIDA

Back at Frederica, Oglethorpe mustered some 200 men. On December 1, 1739, he made for the frontier. The foray took him down the St. Johns River to capture the small Spanish forts of Picolata and San Francisco de Pupo some 18 miles west of San

⁷⁵ CR 5/96, 190, 348; 22/360.

⁷⁶ Jones, 73-74

⁷⁷ Cate, 127; cf. *Diplomatic History*, 222.

Plate 13 – Castillo de San Marcos



Castillo de San Marcos overlooks the entrance to St. Augustine harbor. From the Castillo tower, the sentries looked out over the mighty Atlantic toward the treasure fleets on their way to Spain.

Agustín. At San Francisco, a cannon ball almost cut short the General's illustrious career. But British troops occupied San Francisco on the west bank of the river; and Spanish communication from San Agustín with the west Florida granaries was severed.⁷⁸

With news of war, Oglethorpe had begun to strengthen Frederica with encircling defenses. "The Forts that I built were run to ruin, being mostly of earth," he wrote pointedly to the Trustees, "having no means to repair them, and having also orders not to fortify . . ." ⁷⁹ By November 1739, before starting southward to avenge his Highlanders, and without waiting to discover whether he was going to be "repaid the Expences", he began to build the town walls of Frederica. For, he wrote, "I could not think of leaving a Number of good houses and Merchants Goods, and which was more valuable, the Lives of Men, Women and Children, in an open Town at the Mercy of every Party, and the Inhabitants obliged either to fly to a Fort and leave their Effects, or suffer with them."⁸⁰

By the end of December, the town fortifications had progressed to the point where Oglethorpe saw fit to describe the work. Frederica's walls were to be "half an Hexagon, with two Bastions, and two half Bastions and Towers after Monsieur Vauban's method upon the point of each Bastion. . . . I hope in three months it will be entirely finished, and in that time not only to fortify here, but to repair the Forts on Amelia and Saint Andrews."⁸¹ His hopes were at least partially disappointed for more than a year later "the works making round . . . the Town" were described as "poor and unfinish'd."⁸² Now

Newcastle authorized an expedition against San Agustín. Oglethorpe planned it. In May 1740 his

expedition set out. There were about 2,000 men in it. Half of them were Indians, and the remainder were made up from Oglethorpe's Regiment, English Rangers, Highland Rangers, Highland footmen, and South Carolinians under Col. Vanderdussen. To transport the most of his troops from Frederica, Oglethorpe assembled a fleet of small boats. Mortars and ammunition from the Frederica store

⁷⁸ Cate, 126-128; Jones, 78.

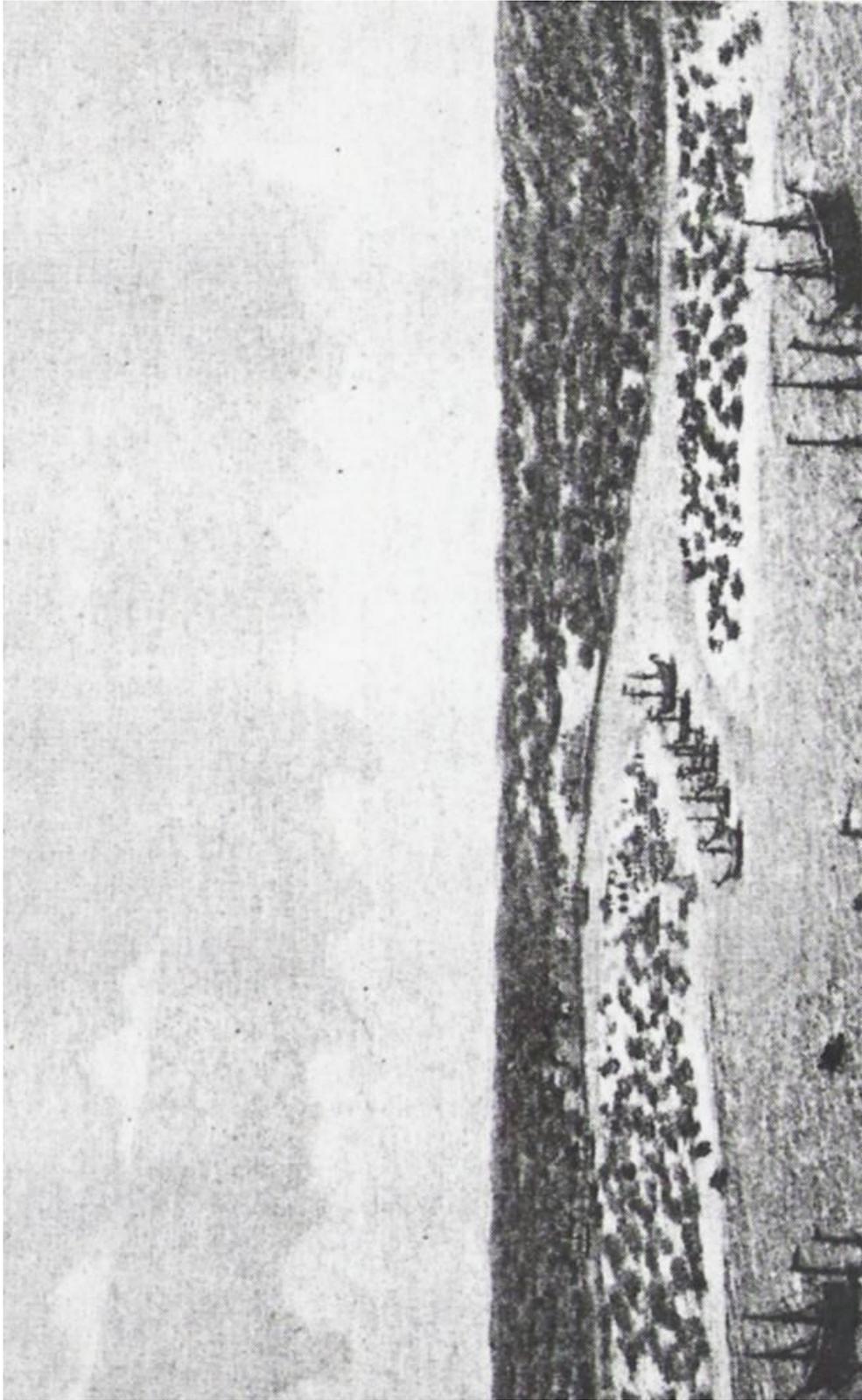
⁷⁹ CR 22, pt. 2/288.

⁸⁰ CR 30/202.

⁸¹ CR pt. 2/288-289.

⁸² CR 5/498-499.

Plate 14 - Oglethorpe's Siege of St. Augustine



were put aboard the men-of-war Phoenix and Flamborough.⁸³

In short order the English force took the outlying fortifications of San Agustín and laid siege to the town itself. But against the stone citadel of Castillo de San Marcos Oglethorpe's small army was ineffective, and lack of coordination among his various units made the capture of the town impossible. A sortie from the Castillo recaptured a small outer fort, killed almost two score Highlanders, including Col. Palmer (remembered by the Spaniards for his destructive Florida raid in 1728), and brought many prisoners into the cárcel of the Castillo. The siege dragged along until the storm season approached. The fleet risked the fate which had overtaken Ribaut's vessels on the surf-pounded beaches before San Agustín almost 200 years before. Morale among the soldiers, particularly the Carolinians, was low. So, after little more than a month, the English retired. Oglethorpe, reported to have sworn to leave his bones in front of San Agustín,⁸⁴ went with them.

Yet, in a measure, the expedition was successful. The Spaniard had been driven into the gates of his stronghold, and his outlying defenses destroyed.⁸⁵ On the other side, Oglethorpe had shown his hand. Spain knew what to expect.

Back at his home near Frederica, Oglethorpe fought off a fever contracted in the Florida campaign, and made ready to weather the storm. During the winter months of 1740-1741 work on the Frederica fortifications continued, and a large barrack building of tabby was started. The barracks were essentially finished early in 1742.⁸⁶

It was a war of failures. Oglethorpe's retreat from San Agustín was followed by a

⁸³ Cate, 128-129.

⁸⁴ Diplomatic History, 222.

⁸⁵ Cate, 129-130; Jones, 87-88. The 1740 campaign has not yet been adequately studied. Translations of documents presenting the local Spanish observations in fair measure are found in Collections, VII, pt 1. Englishmen looked at San Agustín in this light: "The Possession of San Agustín would certainly be of great importance [to] Great Britain: For first it would secure our Southern Settlements on the Continent against any Attempts of the Spaniards by Land; then it would be of great Service to our Trade, not only by depriving them of a Port from whence they might annoy us on that Side, but also as it would enable us to annoy them on occasion, by cruising on their homeward-bound Ships coming from the Gulf of Florida, and Straights of Bahama. However it lies at too great a Distance from the Mouth of those Streights (at least 70 Leagues) to be as serviceable on that Occasion as the Havana; besides the Harbour is too shallow to make a Station for Men of War." (Objects of the Present War, 191-192.)

⁸⁶ CR 35/358, 438; 36/107.

series of reverses to “Old Grog” in the Caribbean. While Oglethorpe was in Florida, Vernon was joined by 3,500 troops from the North American colonies, and later by 9,000 more men from England. A great fleet was assembled, perhaps the largest ever seen in the waters of the New World. Havana was next on the British list,⁸⁷ but Spain sent Torres to the West Indies with a powerful fleet, and Vernon turned to Cartagena. There a deadly climate and dissension amongst the English command brought disaster. Vernon returned to Jamaica. Torres still blocked Havana, and Vernon looked to Santiago.⁸⁸

Land forces went ashore to take Santiago by land. They lost heart in the trackless swamps, and again the English returned to Jamaica.

The aggressive went to Spain. Privateers swarmed in Caribbean waters and played havoc with English commerce. From Georgia to New York these little vessels terrorized the coast. Carolina and Georgia plantations were sacked. Between 1739 and 1741, while Spain had about 50 privateers afloat, 316 vessels, each valued at £3,500, were seized by the Spanish enroute to or from northern colony ports. More than 30 prizes were taken into San Agustín alone. Exploits of the Spanish privateers are obscured in the English sources, but judging from results, neither their bravery nor activity can be reproached.

As for English privateers, a good three months before was declared Newcastle had directed the colonial governors to grant commissions of marque and reprisal to applicants qualified for fitting out ships of war. Massachusetts alone commissioned 32;

⁸⁷ According to Objects of the Present War (169-171), “it is become absolutely necessary for the English Government, if they have a Mind to secure the British Trade to the West-Indies, to possess themselves of some Place or Places there, which may curb the Depredations of the Spaniards on our Ships. For we being obliged to return home either through the Windward-Passage or the Gulph of Florida, and they being possessed of all the Island [of Cuba], and consequently commanding all the Outlets towards the Ocean, our Ships must always lie at their Mercy . . .” Havana was deemed to be the only port suitable for such an English station. And “the Havana might be kept by us without giving any just Cause of Offence, since the Obstruction of Trade would not be the necessary Consequence of our possessing it . . . So that our possessing the Havana could not be construed as a Conquest to enrich ourselves with the Spoils of Spain, but only as a Pledge for securing our Navigation . . .” Obviously, this was a difficult point for the Spaniard to see.

⁸⁸ Bolton, 85-90. One of the soldiers with Vernon was Lawrence Washington. Sincere, able and loyal, he won the Admiral’s friendship and a Puerto Bello medal. He became ill at Cartagena, and returned to the colonies in 1742. When he erected his mansion on the banks of the Potomac, he named it Mount Vernon in honor of the unsuccessful hero of the Caribbean. See Diplomatic History, 219.

and other colonies, including Georgia, contributed not a few. Not many Americans know that the northern colonies played a vital part in the War of Jenkins' Ear, and still fewer realize that the first great surge of American privateering, adding the last crushing blow to mercantilism and contributing to the abolition of the Spanish fleet system in 1748, occurred long before the American Revolution. In bravery and cunning the privateers of 1775 and 1812 did not excel American mariners in the 1740's. As early as 1739 a Rhode Island privateer took a port and plundered a town on the northern side of Cuba. In 1740, New York's Captain Massward, in a disabled vessel chased by a Spaniard, escaped in the dark by letting the Spaniard chase a tubful of burning tar. Capt. Bayard in the Cape Verde Islands outwitted a French man-of-war. Oglethorpe's privateer sloop St. Philip took a Spanish privateer off the very bar of San Agustín and brought her to Frederica, as one incident in a long record of service.⁸⁹

The indefatigable General, whose Indians were raiding up to the gates of the Florida capital, proposed a new drive on San Agustín. The ministry was favorable, and the campaign was planned for March 1742. As usual there were delays. England was too engrossed in other matters to help. Some still said Georgia was not worth a war. Sir John Cotton urged Parliament to make Port Royal the boundary, as Spain demanded. "In desperation," writes Mrs. Cate, Frederica's historian, "Oglethorpe sent a power of attorney to Verelst [accountant for the Trustees], authorizing him 'to raise money on all his estate, real and personal, without limitation of the sum, as also to employ all his salary from the Government for answering the bills he should draw on him for the service of the public.' Egmont [one of the Trustees] thought this showed 'a Rare zeal for his Country.'"⁹⁰

The Trustees finally triumphed. Georgia was declared useful to England, and young Stephens, malcontent son of one of Georgia's founding fathers, was publicly humiliated before Parliament, forced to bend both knees before his accusers on June 30, 1742. But while the Trustees were gloating over their critic's degradation, Montiano's vessels had already been sighted off the Golden Isles.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Bolton, 89-90; Diplomatic History, 187-191; CR 23/225-226, cited in Cate, 130-131.

⁹⁰ Cate, 131-132; Bolton, 90-92.

⁹¹ Ibid.

11.THE INVASION OF GEORGIA

Vernon's failure at Santiago had released Torres somewhat from his arduous watch at Havana. England's northern colonies were weakened by the drain of Vernon's futile expeditions.

Juan Francisco de Gúemes y Horcasitas, Governor of Cuba, was entrusted with preparations. Havana was the supply and naval base. Manuel de Montiano, Governor of Florida, headed the expedition, with Rubiani in charge of the fleet and second in command. Antonio de Arredondo was chief of staff.

The expedition was designed to expel the English from Georgia and to devastate South Carolina. The main Georgia targets were St. Simons and Frederica. These destroyed, the fleet could continue by the inland waterway to Savannah and Port Royal.⁹²

Gúemes perfected the plans for the invasion, and on May 25, 1742, thirty vessels left Havana for San Agustín, where Florida Governor Montiano would assume command. Early in June, the fleet arrived off San Agustín, but the shallow bar of that place, so effective a defense, was also a hazard for friendly troops. Not until June 20 did the combined fleet of 52 vessels carrying some 3,000 men finally push off for Georgia. The next day a storm scattered the armada, and while some of the vessels were sighted off the coastal islands on June 22, some were a full week in beating back to St. Simons, and others did not reach the battle area until Bloody Marsh was over.⁹³

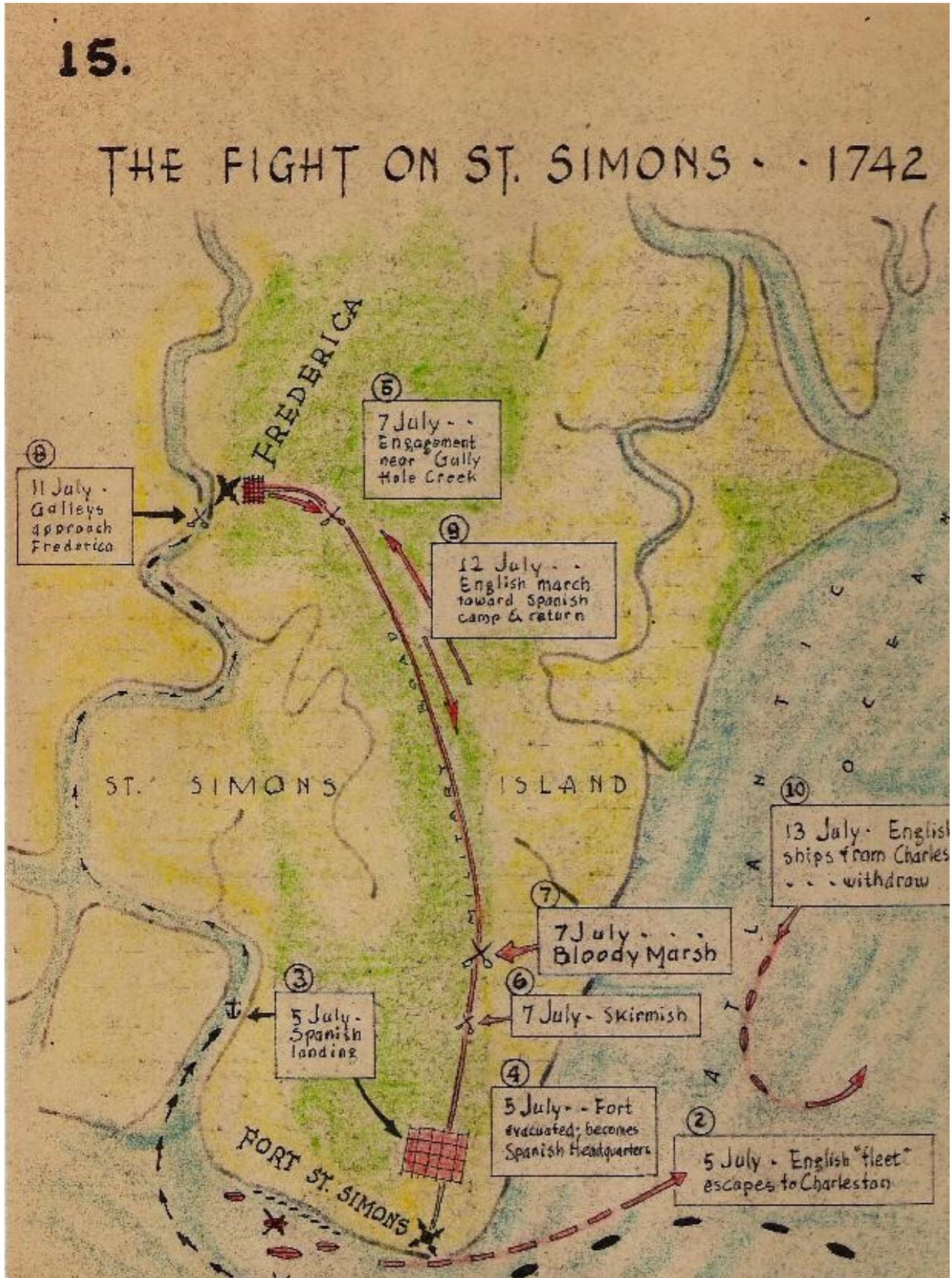
Meanwhile, Oglethorpe's spies had told him early in June that a fleet was assembling at San Agustín. He recognized the sign. Once more he looked to his defenses. The Spaniards, he wrote, "can't pass by us into Carolina, so must take us in their way, but I believe they'll meet with a Morsell not easily to be digested. Yet we are not in a situation we could wish, being very weak in cannon & shot . . . I have sent to raise men to the northward and to buy guns and ammunition of all kinds . . ." ⁹⁴ The officials "to the northward" did not rise to the alarm. Governor Bull at Charleston

⁹² *Id.*, 92-94; Cate, 133

⁹³ Cate, 133-134, 137

⁹⁴ CR 35/463, cited in Cate, 135.

Plate 15 - The Fight on St. Simons 1742



thought the Spanish ships at San Agustín were merely the usual annual relief vessels.

Even when Oglethorpe's messages grew urgent, Carolina took little notice.

Opportunely, the Success arrived from England with 100 Grenadiers aboard, together with military stores and some 50 civilians. Oglethorpe asked Savannah for help, called in the Rangers from their scattered posts, and sent for Indian allies.

It was on A Tuesday morning, June 22, 1742, that strange sails were sighted off St. Simons. Word also reached Oglethorpe that enemy vessels had been beaten off at Amelia Inlet by the 18-pounders of Fort William and the cannon of the guard schooner Walker. Oglethorpe mounted his horse, and was soon at Fort St. Simons. In the harbor, a lookout in the masthead of the Success reported more vessels converging on thePlate 15b - Spanish Approach to Georgiaisland. Oglethorpe sent mounted men to range the beaches, and drew two companies of his regiment from Frederica to Fort St. Simons.

After the attack on Fort William, part of the Spanish fleet maneuvered into the sound between Jekyll and Cumberland Islands, and on June 24 Oglethorpe went with reinforcements to the Cumberland Island Forts of St. Andrews and William. Fourteen Spanish ships were in the sound, and when Oglethorpe's three boats came to cross it, there was a sharp engagement. One of the English boats retreated, but two of them fought their way through. Once on the island, the General decided to abandon Fort St. Andrews and strengthen Fort William.

In the face of certain attack, Oglethorpe somehow raised another troop of Rangers; he freed the indentured servants; he brought in the Highlanders from Darien, and Capt. Mark Carr's Company of Boatmen from their post on Turtle River; he filled his Regiment until his guns gave out; and he received about 100 Indians as allies. His own regiment numbered about 650 British soldiers; Rangers, Marines, Highlanders, civilians and Indians brought his force to a total of about 900 men.

Lacking the warships that lay in such provoking strength at Charleston, Oglethorpe improvised a naval force by embargoing the few vessels in St. Simons harbor, fitting them for service, and manning them with marines and some of his regimentals. At best it was a puny fleet to oppose the 36 vessels that on July 4 lay off the bar of St. Simons.

On Monday, July 5, the Spanish fleet maneuvered into battle line for the drive into the harbor, past the guns of the fort. There was an east wind, "a leading Gale", and a spring tide. Two quarter-galleys carrying 9-pounders and a half-galley mounting a pair of 18-pounders in her bow led the Spanish line. Aaft the galleys was the rest of the

formidable fleet: 6 more galleys, a trio of 20-gun ships, the square-rigged snows and brigantines, and the fore-and-aft schooners and sloops. Over the bar with ample water beneath their keels, the Spanish navy came.

The batteries at Fort St. Simons opened fire, and the Spanish starboard guns answered. Spanish fire blew up a fort battery. The swift-moving ships were a poor target, boiling in with the wind fair. English gunners fired 49 rounds from the 18-pounders, but while there was some damage to Montiano's fleet, finally the fort was passed.

Beyond lay the little British squadron of four vessels. Capt. William Thomson, master of the Success, was its commodore. Hurriedly Oglethorpe had put 20 guns aboard her, and manned her with 100 regimentals and a few marines. Off the port bow of the Success was the guard schooner Walker, a 70-foot fore-and-aft rig with 14 guns, under Capt. Dunbar with 80 men. The privateer sloop St. Philip lay off the port quarter, with Capt. Caleb Davis, 50 men and 14 guns. In addition there was a prize sloop under Capt. Gill, and near shore were 8 small York sloops, useless in battle, with men aboard to scuttle or beach the little vessels to keep them out of Spanish hands.

The armed merchantman Success, her guns roaring at the Spaniards, was attacked by the 22-gun commodore and a long sharp-prowed, lateen-sailed settee. Twice the Spaniards tried to board, but each time the English beat them off. A 16-gun snow made up to Capt. Dunbar's Walker. Here, too, a boarding attempt failed. The St. Philip was disabled and sunk by enemy fire, and the small boats were destroyed at Oglethorpe's order. Luckily, the wind came about, and the Success, the Walker, and the prize sloop broke away to sea, under orders to sail for Charleston. For half a day the guns fired, until the armada finally sailed far beyond range of the fort, up the river toward Frederica.

Late in the afternoon, the Spanish convoy anchored opposite Gascoigne Bluff, and the troops began to disembark⁹⁵

Things looked black for the English. Gen. Oglethorpe called a council of war. Rather than oppose the enemy landing here, it was decided to leave the Indians to harass them and the rangers to watch them, while troops and supplies were withdrawn from Fort St. Simons and consolidated at Frederica, "to get there before the Enemy and

⁹⁵ Cate, 135-145; Jones, 106-107. Cf. Collection, III, 140, for Oglethorpe's estimate of Spanish sea power.

defend that Place.”⁹⁶ Late that night Oglethorpe and Capt. Carr were at Fort St. Simons supervising the bursting or the spiking of the guns, and at midnight Oglethorpe ordered the flag at the fort to be struck. A ranger took it to Frederica.

About daylight, July 6, Oglethorpe reached Frederica. None had been killed at Fort St. Simons, and the wounded had been successfully evacuated to Frederica. Attack was imminent, and Oglethorpe planned to send the women and children to a safer place. Few of them, however, would leave.

That day, Montiano’s forces occupied Fort St. Simons as headquarters. On the next, Wednesday, July 7, two reconnoitering parties were sent out. One, 25 men and 40 Indians under Capt. Nicolás Hernández, scouted the road to Frederica. The second party was a San Agustín company under Capt. Sebastian Sánchez, assigned to reconnoiter the road connecting Fort St. Simons and Frederica. By 9 o’clock they were only a mile and a half from Frederica itself. On the eastern shore of Gully Hole Creek they came upon a party of five rangers. One ranger was killed by gunfire, and the rest galloped posthaste to Frederica.

Oglethorpe at once ordered out the Highlanders (who at that moment were parading under arms), four platoons of his regiment, the rangers, and the Indians. He himself galloped with the Indians to the edge of the woods skirting a savannah where the Spaniards were advancing to a ditch that would serve as an entrenchment.

Without waiting for the Spaniards to dig in, the Frederica force charged. Capt. Grey commanded the Chickasaws, Capt. Noble Jones the Tomohetaus, Chief Toonahowi led his Creeks, and Oglethorpe had 6 Highlanders “who had outrun the rest.” Together this motley force engage the Spanish scouts in a short and bloody skirmish that ended in a precipitate Spanish retreat. The Spaniards lost half their men. Both Sánchez and Hernández were captured along with 14 other prisoners, a pair of whom Oglethorpe himself took. Two Spanish officers were slain on the field – one by the Creek chieftain Toonahowi. Pursuit of the fleeing Spaniards lasted until the General halted his force on a strategic piece of ground.⁹⁷

12.BLOODY MARSH

Oglethorpe went back to Frederica. Finding no immediate danger of a Spanish

⁹⁶ Jones 107; Cate, 145.

⁹⁷ Cate, 145-148

attack on the town by water, he sent most of his remaining troops to support the detachment he had posted on the military road. Before they arrived, the climax was past.

For Montiano had determined on immediate action. Three hundred men set out from the Spanish camp at Fort St. Simons under Grenadier Capt. Antonio Barba. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon battle was joined. The Spanish troops, reported Oglethorpe (who was not an eyewitness), advanced "into the Savannah with Huzzah's and fired with great spirit but not seeing our men by reason of the woods none of their shot took place but ours did."⁹⁸

It is evident that the English and the Indians in this engagement were careful fighters. Not a man was lost. Yet, in spite of the faulty Spanish marksmanship noted by Oglethorpe, somehow the Spanish managed to win. "Some Platoons of ours in the heat of the fight," Oglethorpe succinctly continued, "the air being darkened with the smoke and a shower of rain falling retired in disorder." Two miles from the battle site, Oglethorpe met "a great many men in disorder who told me that ours were routed and Lieut. Sutherland killed." Oglethorpe was successful in rallying some of them and turning their faces again toward the south. Soon he heard musket fire. It was the denouement.⁹⁹

The rear guard of the retreating Britons, a regimental platoon commanded by Lt. Patrick Sutherland, a few Highlanders under Lt. Charles Mackay with some of the ubiquitous rangers and Indians, reached a spot where the military road bent in a crescent and skirted the marsh.¹⁰⁰ To the east was the marsh. To the west was heavy brushwood – an ideal spot for an ambush. Mackay and Sutherland saw it, and with some 50 men they dove into the brush and waited.

Barba's men came on. In the sand of the road were unmistakable signs that the

⁹⁸ Collections, III, 136; see also Cate, 148-149, 153

⁹⁹ Collections, III, 136; Cate, 150.

¹⁰⁰ For a discussion of the location of the Bloody Marsh battlesite, see J. W. Holland and R. W. Young, "Some Preliminary Notes on the Location of 'Bloody Marsh', St. Simons Island, Georgia" (n.d.). In the past there has been some question as to the accurate location of this site, as well as Oglethorpe's homesite. Since neither of these areas is included within the proposed limits of the monument, no definitive Service study of them has been attempted. According to Mrs. Margaret Davis Cate, who has given the areas more intensive study than any other historian, the markers now identifying these two sites (Bloody Marsh and Oglethorpe's home) are correctly located and authenticated by documentary proof.

British were in full retreat. And here, where the road curved around the marsh and the brushwood was impenetrable, looked like a safe enough place. After the rout of the Englishmen, the soldiers were in high spirits, and hungry as well. They halted, stacked their arms, and began to enjoy a victory supper.

A Scotch cap raised on a stick was the signal for the massacre to begin. When it ended, two thirds of the Spanish force was reported lost. Capt. Barba was mortally wounded. The Battle of “Bloody Bend” (later called Bloody Marsh), July 7, 1742, was ended, and with it Spain’s hopes for recovering her lost dominions.¹⁰¹

English casualties were zero, unless we may count the death of the Highland gentleman, Mr. Maclane, who ran so hard in pursuit of the enemy that he “spoiled the circulation of his Blood” and died later in Frederica.¹⁰² There they were joined by the garrison from Fort William, which had run the gauntlet of Spanish vessels at Gascoigne Bluff. All hands set to work to improve the defenses at Frederica.

Matters were at a stalemate. Indians and rangers so harassed the Spaniards that none was willing to venture outside camp. And though the Spanish were strongly ensconced at Fort St. Simons, they were short of water. The military road, over which Oglethorpe had in a single night transported many of the supplies formerly at Fort St. Simons, was regarded by the Spanish as a dangerous footpath through difficult underbrush, where in some places the soldiers had to hazard marching in single file!¹⁰³

Montiano decided to try the water route to Frederica. On July 11 three galleys rowed up the waterway with the tide to find a debarkation point near Frederica. They went too far.

Oglethorpe soon knew of the Spanish move. To prevent a land attack along the road, he posted an ambush of Indians. Two scout boats and a pair of smaller boats were manned. The unfinished town fortifications were lined with his musketeers. The General went to the fort. When the Spanish galleys came in sight they met with such a reception from the fort guns and howitzers that it appeared to Oglethorpe they had been disabled. Oglethorpe leaped aboard his cutter, but when the galley crews saw the English vessels approaching, their oars bent with a will and they were soon back under

¹⁰¹ Collections, I, 283-284; III, 136; Cate, 149-153.

¹⁰² Cate, 150.

¹⁰³ Id., 153-154, 157-158.

the protection of their fleet.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile, Oglethorpe's "navy" had reached Charleston with the electrifying news of the invasion. There was a flurry of activity. Vanderdussen was put in command of a relief force – which was delayed in its departure. Then on July 9, after the Battle of Bloody Marsh, Oglethorpe dispatched a letter to Capt. Thomson of the Success: "the Spanish fleet," he wrote, employing something of the persuasive diplomacy he had successfully used in England, "was not near so considerable as we first thought it; their strength being in land men. God hath pleased to give us a wonderful victory. Two men-of-war I believe would beat their whole fleet. I must beg of you to get your ship fully manned and come and cruise off the bar; the very appearance of a ship there would fright them away; I hope the men-of-war will come but if they are not ready do you come before them."¹⁰⁵ In short order several British vessels bore away southward, but when they saw a Spanish fleet now numbering 51 vessels in possession of St. Simons harbor, their commanders, lacking Oglethorpe's optimism, at once sailed them back to Charleston.

Yet, Oglethorpe had been very nearly right. This glimpse of British sailcloth was to prove highly disconcerting to the Spanish, after losses in two bloody actions. Morale was at a dangerous low. Dissension appeared. To Oglethorpe, it seemed an opportune moment for attack.

On the late afternoon of July 12, 500 men under Oglethorpe's leadership marched out of Frederica and down the military road to within two miles of the enemy camp. With the English force was a Frenchman, recruited as one of Capt. Carr's Marines. The Frenchman's sympathies vacillated. He fired his gun and scuttled for the Spanish camp. Even the Indians failed to catch him. Oglethorpe realized that the shot must have alerted the Spanish, so the drums struck up the Grenadier's March and the troops tramped back to Frederica.¹⁰⁶

13. THE DECOY

The General must have been preoccupied on that weary return march to Frederica. He knew the French deserter would give dangerous information to Montiano, and he

¹⁰⁴ CR 35-526, cited in Cate 157.

¹⁰⁵ CR 35/503, 534, cited in Cate, 156. Cf. Collections, III, 140-141.

¹⁰⁶ Cate, 155, 158-159, 161.

was right. The deserter pointed out both the strength and weakness of Frederica. (Bit, which was the more perturbing to Montiano as well as to his naval commander Castaneda and engineer Arredondo, he also related that Oglethorpe had sent letters “in all direction” asking for aid.)

Oglethorpe decided to use an old artifice. He wrote a letter. This letter, the General afterward related with some glee, “was wrote in French as if from a friend of his [the deserter’s] telling him he had received the money that he should strive to make the Spaniards believe the English were weak [as indeed they were]. That he should undertake to pilot up their Boats and Galleys & then bring them under the Woods where he knew the [nonexistent] Hidden Batterys were, that if he could bring that about he should have double the reward he had already received.”¹⁰⁷ Oglethorpe bribed a Spanish prisoner to take the letter and deliver it secretly to the French deserter.

As Gen. Oglethorpe expected, the “escaped” prisoner was at once conducted before Montiano. A search produced the bogus letter; the prisoner confessed that it was meant for the Frenchman. The poor Frenchman was between the devil and the sea. The Council of War called him a double spy, but Montiano, who had hired him, refused to “liquidate” him.

Just when Oglethorpe had complicated matters with the decoy letter, Spanish lookouts saw sails approaching from the north. The news arrived at noon on July 13, and halted the war council proceedings. But Montiano talked with Arredondo and his colonels, and the decision was to withdraw.¹⁰⁸

Oglethorpe’s stratagem apparently came at the very time Montiano’s men, hungry and thirsty, were ready to be dissuaded from further action. The appearance of the English ships clinched matters. Spanish consensus was that the Frenchman was truly Oglethorpe’s spy, and feeling themselves to be on infirm ground, professing to believe the oncoming vessels (which cautiously returned to Charleston at sight of the Spanish fleet) to be only the vanguard of a greater force which would close in upon them by land and sea, the Spaniards left St. Simons and crossed southward to Jekyll Island on July 13. Fort St. Simons was thus twice abandoned – once by English and once by Spanish. But when the Spaniards left on that July afternoon, not much of the fortified

¹⁰⁷ Collections, III, 138.

¹⁰⁸ Cate, 159-160.

settlement remained. They leveled it by fire. Beyond the fort, some 30 “houses in the country” were burned, and the farm fields ravaged.¹⁰⁹ “The only Building they left standing,” lamented Kimber a few months later, “was a House which they had consecrated for a Chapel. How different the Proceedings of the more generous English!” he continued, forgetting the lessons in wanton destruction taught the Spaniards by Moore two score years ago, “even in these Parts, who never leave behind them such direful Remembrances . . .”¹¹⁰

From Jekyll Island, the Cuban contingent boarded ship and set sail for Havana. Montiano and the San Agustín forces continued southward to the Florida capital, destroying English installations and delivering an unsuccessful assault on Fort William at Cumberland Island on the way.

So the invasion ended. And now from Carolina an English fleet bravely sailed southward “to the relief of Georgia”.¹¹¹ On July 26, almost a week after Montiano was safely back at San Agustín, the British vessels appeared off St. Simons Island. Oglethorpe asked them “to come in in order to concert measures for the pursuit of the Spaniards.”¹¹² Commodore Hardy of the man-of-war Rye, however, sent the Carolina vessels back home, and told Oglethorpe that his vessel was scheduled for a cruise to the south. He left Oglethorpe stewing in his own juice.

Certainly the Boston rhymester may be excused for his levity:

“From Georgia to Augustine the General goes; From
Augustine to Georgia come our foes; Hardy from
Charleston to St. Simons hies, Again from thence to
Charleston back he flies. Forth from St. Simons then the
Spaniards creep; ‘Say Children, Is not this your Play, Bo
Peep?’”¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Id., 161-162, 165.

¹¹⁰ [Edward Kimber,] “Itinerant Observations in America.” Collections, IV, 8. Cited hereafter as Itinerant Observations.

¹¹¹ Cate, 162-165.

¹¹² CR36/60, 61, 64, 65, cited in Cate, 165-166.

¹¹³ Bolton, 96

14. "FROM GEORGIA TO AUGUSTINE AGAIN HE GOES"

Upon withdrawal of the enemy, Oglethorpe bent his energies toward strengthening the Frederica fortifications and repairing damages to the southern forts, for by no means had the danger of attack evaporated. The tower bastions proposed by Oglethorpe in 1739 for the town walls – two of them, at least – were finally built, and could hold 100 men each.¹¹⁴ When his own house was again in fair order, the General once more resolved to put the Spanish abode in English order.

On Saturday, February 26, 1743, Oglethorpe's regiment at Frederica turned out under arms. After inspection, Oglethorpe marched them out into the fosse around the fortifications. Under the General's eagle eye, each platoon fired at a 100-yard mark for the prize of a hat and a machete. Beer was issued and the Regiment was ordered to be ready for the march by 9 o'clock Sunday morning.

By the night of March 16, in spite of a delay caused by having raised a skunk ("a Pole0Cat, like ours in Europe, but more remarkable in its horrid Scent") the small English troop bivouacked about three mile from San Agustín, within earshot of the Castillo drums beating tattoo. At 3 o'clock that night the sleeping soldiers were silently awakened – there was alarm that one of their guards had deserted – and the company marched circumspectly through the dark wilderness to a strategic spot in the rear. Here Oglethorpe prepared an ambushade.¹¹⁵

The day was Thursday, March 17. "I did all I could to draw them [the Spanish] to action," Oglethorpe reported, "and having posted the Grenadiers & some of the Troops in ambushade advanced myself with a very few men in sight of the Town intending to skirmish & retire in order to draw them into the Ambuscade but they were so meek that there was no provoking them."¹¹⁶ With six or seven horsemen, Gen. Oglethorpe rode up to the out-sentries of the town. These gentlemen evidently "retir'd, without firing, into the Castle, pursu'd by him to the very Walls."

It was the English intention to hold the ambush for several days, sending out frequent parties to the very town gates. But the position of the soldiers was extremely uncomfortable. They lacked water, and they were "almost devour'd with Vermin".

¹¹⁴ Itinerant Observations, 4; also see Jones, 117-120.

¹¹⁵ [Kimber,] Journal of a Late Expedition to the Gates of St. Augustine (Boston 1935), 6, 25-26.

¹¹⁶ Collections, III, 151.

Furthermore, one of the soldiers, appropriately named Eels, did desert to the Spaniards. Oglethorpe at once realized that Eel's information would make the English position highly dangerous, so on the very day of his almost singlehanded dash toward the Castillo, he gave orders for the return to Frederica. He himself boarded the schooner Walker on a cruise to alarm the coast from San Agustín to Matanzas. But this voyage, like the entire expedition, was merely a gesture.¹¹⁷

15. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WAR

Oglethorpe's Gesture of 1743 was a fillip to the Georgia-Florida part in the War of Jenkins' Ear. The Chronicler had already put his pen to a new chapter.

Since the ridiculously named war was purely an American war, and as significant as any in the 18th century – for out of it came in clear and unmistakable stream the series of wars that were waged between England and France in the 18th century, it can be seen that the importance of North American participation did not depend altogether upon the small contingent of Americans in the besieging force at fever-ridden

Cartagena. In its preliminaries and in its execution the continentals played an important role. At the beginning of mobilization in North America, the mainland colonists owned and navigated 1,855 vessels; the annual value of their produce was £2,190,000; their fighting strength 135,000 men. In the levy for troops to augment British forces in the Caribbean, only South Carolina and Georgia, for obvious reasons, were exempt. These American facts the English war faction saw with genuine foresight as media through which England could usurp Spanish commercial interests in the American seas. The proximity of the northern colonies to the coveted Spanish West Indies made them a great nautical, commercial, and even greater psychological advantage.

The reaction of all the colonies during the war clearly foreshadowed their attitude in subsequent colonial wars. That attitude reflected both eager response and strikingly typical opposition to imperial control which, without sane and sincere attempts at amelioration, might disrupt the empire. It was an imperial lesson assigned in the French and Indian War and learned in the American Revolution.

It is difficult to evaluate the significance of the military action in the southeast. This border struggle on the Continent, reaching a climax in the Battle of Bloody Marsh,

¹¹⁷ Journal of a Late Expedition, 27, 31 ff.

was of more than provincial importance. While England executed a distinct Caribbean campaign, the little colony of Georgia baffled and stalled the Spanish for four years. Georgia met with some defeats and won no offensives, but a mere handful of men under the leadership of the indomitable Oglethorpe actually achieved more than all England's mighty fleet in the West Indies.¹¹⁸

Like Manifest Destiny a century later, it seemed certain that English colonization should spread slowly and surely down the coast and back into the rich Indian country. The Atlantic colonists were, in the main, an enterprising and hardy people. Their star was in the ascendant. On the other side, Spain's day was past. As a world power she had been slowly declining since the 1588 loss of the Armada in the English Channel. American riches had brought no fundamental stability to her unbalanced economy. Spanish colonization in America, while admirable in many respects,¹¹⁹ was by now in strong contrast to the virile civilization represented by the individualistic merchants, the horny-handed farmers, and the pioneer traders in North America.

In Florida, especially, this contrast was notable. For Florida never achieved real colonial status. To the end, this province remained a military outpost and a mission center. It is a paradox that its capital enjoyed – or suffered – the reward of longevity; and the paradox must be laid to the Spanish characteristic of tenacity.

From our vantage, the Battle of Bloody Marsh seems to have been inevitable. True, it chanced to be the turning point in the Anglo-Spanish struggle for control of the region, and consequently it has been called “a Verdun for southern North America,”¹²⁰ a battle “as decisive for Spain as . . . the Plains of Abraham proved for France, or Yorktown [for] . . . Britain.”¹²¹ Perhaps these evaluations are not far wrong. But that Oglethorpe by this victory “saved the thirteen American Continental Colonies to Britain, and so preserved the nucleus for the English-Speaking race . . . to become the United States of America”¹²² is a claim difficult to support. The lot of the invader is always hard. In spite of Spain's claims, Georgia was no longer Spanish land. The

¹¹⁸ Diplomatic History, 179, 181, 220, 229.

¹¹⁹ Cf., Chatelain, op. cit., Introduction.

¹²⁰ Coulter, Short History of Georgia, 32.

¹²¹ Ettinger, Oglethorpe 245, cited in Cate, 174

¹²² Letter, Ettinger to Cate, Feb. 18, 1936, cited in Cate, 174.

Englishmen were, in effect, defending their homes. Even had Montiano driven Oglethorpe out of Georgia, Spain still lacked the resources to destroy the firmly rooted colonies to the north.

Yet, we cannot lose sight of the fact that because Frederica was built, the Spanish attempt to reestablish their claim to the southeast by force was summarily checked, even though in the larger sense the Battle of Bloody Marsh and Frederica's part in the conflict are simply illustrative of the course of events.

Oglethorpe's role brought him to the highwater mark of his career, and earned him a shining respect, little dimmed over the years. The inspiration of Mackay and Sutherland in planning the fatal ambush is a reflection of Oglethorpe's leadership. Sometimes brash, always bold, demanding much of his men, yet solicitous for their welfare, the General was a colorful figure. Oglethorpe, says Lanning, "in many respects never appeared to have a direct interest in Georgia beyond the play it gave to his buccaneering spirit and the field which it offered for his military inclinations. . .

[He] was more than a Georgian' he was an Englishman – perhaps first of all an Englishman." ¹²³

16.FREDERICA'S FATE

Whilst Oglethorpe was absent on his derring-do Florida foray, events of some interest were transpiring at Frederica. A short, dapper man – as dapper as one could be in dress of deerskin jacket, G-string and moccasins – was sent in from the Georgia hinterland By Capt. Kent, commandant at Fort Augusta. Kent had perceived certain signs of "ill humours" among the Creeks, and by diligent and properly secret inquiry, had traced the trouble to the little man in the moccasins, Christian Preber (Pryber, Preiber).

As Oglethorpe later discovered, Preber was a German Jesuit with a pleasing, open countenance, a most penetrating look – a man of politeness and gentility who in strange contrast to his Indian dress, spoke Latin, French, Spanish and German fluently. His English, however, was broken. But while this linguist's brazen explanation of his plan to the English may have lacked rhetoric, it was nonetheless startling. Preber's purpose was the organization of a confederation among all the southern Indians, "to inspire them with industry, to instruct them in the arts necessary to the commodity of life, and,

¹²³Diplomatic History, 36.

Plate 16 - Oglethorpe as an Old Man



in short, to engage them to throw off the yoke of their European allies, of all nations.” It was evident that he had already met with considerable success.

The little man was confined in a barrack room, with a sentry at his door day and night. He was a curious figure in this frontier settlement, and attracted the more or less favorable attention of every gentleman in Frederica. “It is folly,” he would say, “to repine at one’s lot in life: -- my mind floats above misfortune; – in this cell I can enjoy more real happiness, than it is possible to do in the busy scenes of life.” His rations he ate sparingly, saving portions of fish, flesh and bread until he had enough for a gluttonous feast; “I am a Christian,” he said, “and Christian principles always promote internal felicity.”
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Christian Preber had come to America in 1735, and almost immediately had found his way into the interior, where, after some years of diligent work among the savages he had in fact established something of a Red Empire. There is no evidence to show that he ever left the little barrack room prison in Frederica.
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Oglethorpe had no opportunity to puzzle long over Preber’s case. The General had his own and personal worries. No leader is without enemies, and Oglethorpe had a sufficiency of them, even in his own camp. He had hardly returned from the 1743 campaign when he was called back to England to answer charges brought by Lt. Col. William Cook, one of his regimentals. On July 23, 1743, Georgia’s founder and defender boarded the Success and sailed for England. There he was completely exonerated, and George II made him a Brigadier General, but he never again returned to America.¹²⁶

After 1743, the country south of the Altamaha was what Newcastle had suggested, an “uninhabited tract.” Continued raids from the south left nothing English in the area except the slender island posts of Fort William on Cumberland and another outpost on Jekyll Island. The war settled nothing. Neither side relinquished its claims, but Spain had found an ally. British fears regarding France were finally realized. By the Treaty of Fontainebleau (1745) France pledged herself to “oblige the English to destroy the

¹²⁴ London Magazine (1760), 444.

¹²⁵ H. R. Sass, “The Prime Minister of Paradise”, Saturday Evening Post, June 3, 1944.

¹²⁶ Cate, 173; Cate MS., untitled history of Frederica, 59-60. Oglethorpe had had similar troubles after the failure of his 1740 campaign. See the numerous pamphlets of the period.

new colony of Georgia and all forts built on Spanish soil.”

However, France did not keep the promise. True, she entered the war, but at her coming, the vortex of the colonial struggle moved northward. The St. Lawrence supplanted the St. Johns; Cape Breton overshadowed San Agustín and Havana. The American was merged into the great European War of the Austrian Succession.¹²⁷

On March 22, 1744, came the first abrupt augury of Frederica’s decline. The big bomb magazine and a smaller powder magazine, by a strange accident which some have attributed to the machinations of a vagabond Irishman, were set afire and blew up with a great explosion. It was as if the town were under bombardment. Some 3,000 bombs were bedded in the magazine. People fled from their homes. Bomb splinters few through the air. Capt. Mackay, in command, opened the prison doors so that the captive Spaniards and Indians might run for safety. Even Preber was offered freedom, but with characteristic aplomb, he politely refused.

Fortunately the bombs were well bedded, and though the explosions lasted for some hours, no great damage was done. When finally the bursts diminished, Preber again came to mind. Gingerly the investigators sought out his cell, said to have been not 20 paces from the exploding magazine. They called Preber’s name. After some little while, Preber put forth his head from beneath his feather bed. “Gentlemen,” cried he, “I suppose all’s over; -- for my part, I reasoned thus: The bombs will rise perpendicularly, and, if the fuses fails, fall again in the same direction, but the splinters will fly off horizontally; therefore, with this trusty covering, I thought I had better stand the storm here, than hazard a knock in the pate by flying further.” And hePlate continued his explanation to the accompaniment of an explosion that was “enough to strike terror to the firmest breast.”¹²⁸

Along the southern coast, hostilities lapsed. Oglethorpe, now in Westminster, urged more troops for Carolina and Georgia, and fearing a combined advance of French and Spanish from the Mississippi, he made special efforts to hold the Chickasaws to English allegiance. There were peace proposals. Spain again demanded the evacuation of Georgia, and it was rumored that the concession might be made. But the war was

¹²⁷ Bolton, 98-99; Bolton and Marshall, 364.

¹²⁸ London Magazine (1760), 444-445; Itinerant Observations, 5; Jones, 119.

growing long, and neither side was successful. The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen), signed in October 1748, was a truce.

All conquests were restored and matters were like they had been before the war. But England and France began to make every effort to strengthen and extend their colonial possessions. Both nations entered a competition for the goodwill of Spain. On the Georgia frontier, however, it was not so easy to forget the past.¹²⁹

Oglethorpe's Regiment was disbanded (May 29, 1749), and steps taken to transport the soldiers back to England. However, to avoid leaving the frontier entirely unprotected, three Independent Companies were formed out of the Regiment and placed under the command of the South Carolina Governor. One company of a captain, 5 non-commissioned officers and 52 privates was stationed at Frederica, with a small detachment on Jekyll Island. The breaking of the Regiment did not mean that all the other soldiers went back to England. Rather, they were encouraged to stay in the colony as settlers, and many of them did. Grants of land and other bounties went to them, and Frederica received a due share of the new population.¹³⁰

The mainland south of the Altamaha became, in English if not Spanish eyes, neutral ground. Pending adjustment, it must be left unoccupied. For a decade it was so, because England, preparing for a renewal of the conflict with France, must not offend Spain unnecessarily by invading disputed territory. Then in 1750 Spain and England made mutual concessions. Spain yielded extensive privileges to English merchants. The treaty was ordered published in Georgia with a warning to tread carefully so that the harmony between the two crowns might not be interrupted. The warning was not easy to head. In 1751 uneasy Georgia settlers called for a garrison on the Altamaha. There were disturbing reports of new fortifications in Florida, and suspicious signs of Spanish activities elsewhere, especially among the Indians. On the other hand, unruly frontiersmen crossed the Altamaha without permission, seeking liberty on the Satilla River in the neutral ground. It was at a time when England was renewing the war with France, and extremely desirous of maintaining good relations with Spain. But while there was some Spanish reaction to the aforesaid interlopers, it later appeared that the Satilla settlement was more obnoxious to the English than to the

¹²⁹ Diplomatic History, 230; Bolton, 100; Bolton and Marshall, 366.

¹³⁰ Cate, MS., 60-61; cf. Bolton, 99.

Spanish authorities.¹³¹

Meanwhile, Frederica had declined sharply in importance. By 1755 the place was reported to be in ruins. There was promise of new life in the plans instigated by the Georgia governors and drawn by William de Brahm, Surveyor General of the Province, but these plans came to naught. Matters were made worse by a fire in 1757 or 1758 that destroyed the greater part of the town.¹³²

When the French and English went again to war in 1755, Spain at first remained neutral, but her French sympathies eventually drew her into the conflict in 1761. Unfortunately for Spain, the outcome of the war was already decided. Quebec had fallen. Humiliation for Spain was inevitable. Havana fell to the English, and the vise at last was tightened. England offered to restore Havana in exchange for Florida or Puerto Rico. Florida could be spared better than the island, but to cede it would give England control of the Gulf and the Bahama channel, the bitter evil Spain had so long resisted. To save Florida for Spain, France offered England all of Louisiana. But England preferred Florida, and took it. With Florida vanished all of Spain's claims to Georgia. As recompense, France's Louisiana went to Spain.

So the Treaty of Paris ended the long contest between England and Spain for the southeast. Strangely enough, it also revived an old quarrel between Georgia and Carolina. Even before the treaty was ratified, the Governor of South Carolina granted large tracts of land south of the Altamaha to Carolinians. Governor Wright of Georgia suddenly became a good Spaniard. Carolina's claim of land to the 29th degree on the basis of the 1665 grant was ridiculous, said he. The home government likewise took the Spanish view of the question and denied Carolina's claim. And Georgia's southern boundary became not the St. Johns, once the "Southwardmost point of his Majesty's Dominions," but the St. Marys.
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There had been spasmodic attempts to revive Frederica from time to time during the middle of the century. None was successful, except for a few repairs made to the guns and fortifications in the early 1760's. By the time the Treaty of 1763 eliminated the Spanish threat for Georgians of Oglethorpe's generation, a sergeant and 10 men

¹³¹ Bolton, 99-106.

¹³² Cate MS., 65-66. For Brahm's plan of Frederica, see post, p. 152, n. 125, and plate 29, no. 1

¹³³ Bolton, 107-110.

formed the complete garrison of Frederica.

Only the natural tendency to hold the now obsolete strategic site kept Frederica in the councils of the province. There were not more than 20 inhabitants in the town. The small garrison at the fort was maintained merely to keep the works in fairly defensible condition. Then in 1767 the Independent Company was disbanded, and from that time on, Fort Frederica was inactive. Many of its guns had already been removed to other fortifications.

With the outbreak of the American Revolution, Frederica was again briefly in the limelight. The Savannah Council of Safety had the military stores and the few remaining serviceable guns taken from Frederica to Fort Morris at Sunbury.¹³⁴ During the war the coast was pillaged by the British. Frederica was taken by English scouting parties from vessels in the sound, and the walls of the fort were dismantled, the barracks burned and the few remaining inhabitants driven away. By the end of the conflict, very little remained at Frederica except the ashes of burned houses and heaps of brick and tabby ruins.

Attempts by the State Legislature in the post-war period failed to revive the corporate existence of the Town of Frederica. Town commissioners were appointed, the town was re-surveyed, there were efforts to raise taxes and encourage commerce. All came to naught.

Nearly all signs of the settlement vanished during the 19th century. While the rest of the Island prospered during much of this period, Frederica was forgotten – except when its rubble could be useful. In 1805 much of its ruined masonry was carted away to go into construction of the lighthouse at the south point of the island. During the war of 1812, the British were once again on St. Simons, but their visit to Frederica's site had no special significance.

Fanny Kemble, the famous English actress who became the Harriet Beecher Stowe of the Georgia coast, spent 2 months (1839) at the Hampton Point plantation of her husband, Pierce Butler, and saw Frederica as “a very strange place; it was once a town – the town the metropolis of the island . . . Mrs. A's and one other house, are the only dwellings that remain in this curious wilderness of dismantled gray walls

¹³⁴ Cate MS., 66 ff.

Plate 19 - The "Citadel" about 1900



compassionately cloaked with a thousand profuse and graceful creepers.” Perhaps Aaron Burr was a visitor here too. Burr, fleeing arrest after his duel with Hamilton in 1804, was received at the Butler plantation and by John Couper at Cannons Point, both on the north shore of the island. One of Burr’s most remarkable notations: during his summer visit: “I have not even seen a cockroach.”¹³⁵

When another war struck the shores of St. Simons, the people hastily left. It was December 1861, in the face of advancing Federal forces. The Federals were on the island during most of the war, and pillaged even the ravaged ruins of Frederica.

The 1880’s ushered in a new era for many southern resorts, including St. Simons Island. Wealthy northerners discovered the charm of St. Simons, and no doubt many of them trampled over the ruins of Oglethorpe’s town.