

Chapter 7. Frederica

Oglethorpe obtained land concessions from the Creeks, who first offered Tybee Island as a pasture for the Trustee's cows. Then, they agreed that the English should possess St. Simon's Island which Oglethorpe viewed as a favorable spot for establishing a town and fort as a defense against the Spanish. Conditions with the Indians were generally good, especially with the Creeks with whom Oglethorpe had made so many friends. A year earlier, he'd signed a treaty with 50 chiefs of the Lower Creek Nation which enabled him to receive further lands from the Indians.

On the 6th of January 1735, under the conduct of Mr. Oglethorpe, passengers from the *Symond* and the *London Merchant* were taken to St. Simon's Island to establish a Town called Frederica.

Oglethorpe heard that a private sloop called the *Midnight* had arrived on Tybee Island. He immediately purchased its cargo with the understanding that it be delivered to Frederica. Then Mr. Horton and Mr. Tanner boarded the *Midnight* to take possession of cannon, ammunitions and extrenching tools. Thirty crewmen assisted in removing the cargo, as well as Tomochichi's Indians.

In the meanwhile, the *Symond* and *London Merchant* remained anchored at Tybee Island under the charge of Francis Moore, keeper of the stores, awaiting instructions.

On the evening of 16 February, Oglethorpe, in a scout boat, met the sloop at Jekyll Sound and proceeded with haste to navigate the inland channels to St. Simon's Island. The indignant Oglethorpe was angry with the captains who still refused to bring the cargo through the Sound. Families and cargo were loaded with periaguas and flatboats which would sail from the Savannah River into Frederica. The trip took 5 days, but Oglethorpe's enthusiasm was passed to the colonists, as they rowed faster and faster. Oglethorpe put kegs of beer in the lead boat. In order to keep all the boats at their rendezvous points by evening, and the men to enjoy refreshments. The ancestors of the Creeks had cleared the fields along the Georgia coast for miles, selecting the richest soil to plant maize, pumpkins, gourds, beans and melons. Even today one can find refuse heaps of oyster shells, reptile bones, animals, birds, pottery on the bluffs.

The area selected to become the Town of Frederica was situated on a bend in the Frederica River as a defense against water approaches, commanding the river both upwards and downwards - an old Indian field of about 30 or 40 acres, lush with oak and hickory trees, intermixed with Savannahs, having wild fowl such as turkeys, geese and ducks, and an abundance of fish. The village was compared in size to the Isle of Wight. It lies about 60 leagues south from Charles Towne and about 30 miles from Savannah and about 30 leagues north from the Spanish village of St. Augustine. Settlement began on the west side of the island, while His Majesty's sloop the *Hawk* was anchored in a fine inlet of sea on the southside of the island.¹ The tall grass growing on the bluff was burnt off, and palmetto huts were constructed, 14 feet wide and 20 feet long.

Huts were quickly thrown up, arranged in rows fronting the river. Palmetto boughs were woven for roofs, and withstood the hardest rains. As the 50 families began to establish themselves, about half of them agreed to build brick houses. The first two constructed were three stories high, with clay chimneys. Town lots were small, but outside of the common area were pastures and fields to plant into orchards of oranges, pomegranates, olives and fields of corn, flat and hemp.² Around the site was a beautiful forest of live-oaks, water-oaks, laurel, bay, cedar, sweet-gum, sassafras and pines, with muscadine grapes and fragrant yellow jessamine festooning the forest trees. The island abounded in deer, rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, wild turkeys, doves, red-

¹ Letter of Joseph Cannon to Henry Flitcroft, Frederica, 8 November 1736, General Oglethorpe's Georgia, Colonial Letters, 1733-1737, edited by Mills Lane, Vol. I

² Benjamin Martyn wrote a colorful account of the proposed Frederica in his pamphlet entitled *Reasons for Establishing the Colony of Georgia with Regard to the Trade of Great Britain*.

birds, mocking-birds and great flocks of rice-birds. Geese, ducks, herons, cranes, plovers and marsh-hens hid in the marshes. The colonists would have fish, crab, shrimp and oysters.

COLONIAL GEORGIANS
by Jeannette Holland Austin

Oglethorpe directed all construction, even the assigning of work teams. Everybody labored for the benefit of the entire community. The colonists worked diligently in the building of a town and its fortifications. By the 23rd of the month they had mounted a battery of cannon overlooking the river, dug ditches, and raised a rampart covered with sod. The grass from the Indian field was used in sodding the parapet of the fort, and the position of the fort rising over a bluff commanded the reaches in the river both above and below. The projecting spur battery is now washed away, however, two tabby storehouses and a guardhouse remain. The entire area was surrounded with an outer earthen wall one mile in circumference, a dry moat and two ten-foot wooden palisades.

All the streets were laid out, with Main Street being 25 yards wide. Each freeholder was to have 60 x 90 foot lots for their house and garden, except those lots fronting the river had 30 x 60 feet. The town was built in the traditional pattern of an English village, with the lots being laid out in two wards, separated by a central road (Broad Street).

Oglethorpe, who never had a house in the colony, pitched his tent upon the Parade near the river, alongside that of Mr. Horton. Later, he built a small tabby cottage where the Military Road connected with Fort St. Simons with Frederica. It was located in the woods adjacent to the common pasture land of the village. From that vantage point, the houses and fort were visible. This spot later reverted into the possession of Thomas Spalding. The houses were destroyed during the American Revolution, and it was sold.

The fort was established within three years after the founding of Georgia. The Spanish has been christianizing the Indians since the 16th century in the regions of Florida, Georgia and the islands of St. Catherine and Cumberland. Friars traveled their districts, converting heathens, keeping journals of their tours. The journals, of course, were written in Spanish, however, a few were translated. After establishing churches in various precincts, upon return visits the friars found churches burned to the ground. As white settlers arrived, the Spanish-Indians robbed, pillaged and killed them. The new settlers at Frederica and soldiers from the regiment would play a major role in driving the Spanish from Florida and ending Great Britain's War with Spain.³

Townpeople and the regiment shared the economy at Frederica. Some of the most enterprising persons were first voyagers, such as the widow, Ann Harris. Her husband, Thomas Harris, died in 1737. They first lived on a lot in Savannah, and later Ann was granted a lot in Frederica, facing Broad Street. Her widowed mother, Ann Coles Demetre, lived with her. It was on this lot that Ann Harris established a timber and mercantile business, owning sloops and other land grants. She raised a son, William Thomas Harris, who, after the garrison left Frederica, settled on his plantation *Bethany* on the Newport River.

Frederica was a town of squabblers. It's First Bailiff, Surgeon and Magistrate, Thomas Hawkins, arrived in the colony in February of 1736. While enroute, the captain of the vessel wished to set Hawkin's off because Mrs. Hawkin's was a trouble-maker. But Mrs. Hawkins fell to her knees, begging Oglethorpe not to put them out of the ship; that it would be to their utter ruin if he did. Thomas Hawkins and his wife, Beata were given Lot 2S in Frederica. He exercised a determining influence in all the important affairs in the southern province, and was another magistrate who used his authority as a means to his own gain, and wouldn't hesitate to arrest anyone who defied him. The Hawkins shared a two-story house with Constable Davison, having a common wall. It was with this neighbor, the bawdy Hawkins' fought. Samuel Davison lived with his wife and two daughters. On his side of the house he ran a tavern and made gunstocks for the regiment. Thomas Hawkins was the regimental surgeon, town doctor, apothecary and magistrate. Continuous arguments with Hawkins caused Davison and his family to leave the colony.

Hawkins had other enemies. He frequently refused to pay others for work done, and used the court as a means to settling his disputes. Among those bullied and run off by Thomas

³ King George's War or the War of Jenkin's Ear

Hawkins were: Samuel Perkins, a successful businessman, left in 1741 for Charles Towne; William Allen; and Dr. John Perkins, tax collector from 1755 to 1757.

COLONIAL GEORGIANS
by Jeannette Holland Austin

Oglethorpe apparently had strong opinions himself in supporting public officials in the execution of their duties. The Perkins' incident is a case in point. Samuel Perkins was a coachmaker who had lived in Frederica for 5 years. He was one of the first settlers and built two fine houses, and outside of the town lot, had cleared and fenced 5 acres, planting oranges, peaches and other crops. He apparently had some success in his ventures, as one account showed that he shot 6 of his hogs when they got loose in the town. He was made a captain in his regiment, and this prevented him from working too long in his garden. On one occasion, one of Oglethorpe's boatmen beat him up. Although he was a town peace officer, soldiers were told to ignore him. Unaccepted and ignored, the persecution became too great for Perkins, and in May of 1741 he went to live in Charles Towne.

Charles Wesley, brother of John, had decided to live in Frederica.⁴ But as soon as he encountered Beata Hawkins, trouble began.

Mrs. Hawkins continually fought with her maid, Mrs. Welch. The maid ran to Wesley for advice, saying that her mistress had struck her. Indeed, she was crying and in great distress. She seemed resolved to escape bondage, but Wesley prevailed upon her to return. Then, he carried her back to her mistress, urging Mrs. Hawkins to forgive. Mrs. Hawkins became enraged with the minister, screaming vile remarks. She grabbed a pair of sizzors and pistol, threatening to kill him. Wesley escaped, but only after she shredded the sleeve of his cassack with her teeth.

Oglethorpe's orders were that no man should shoot his gun on Sunday. Nevertheless, during one of Wesley's sermons a gun was fired, and Mr. Davison ran outside. When he saw that it was Mrs. Hawkins, he accused Hawkins of disobeying Oglethorpe's orders. Hawkins flew into a rage. Then Mrs. Hawkins, brought out her gun, firing it, running here and there, like a madwoman, crying while she shot, saing that she would also be put into confinement. Constable Davison persuaded her to go away, and she did, cursing and swearing that she would kill the first man who came near to her.

The following day Wesley was again counselling Mrs. Welch not to concern herself with the disturbance. While doing so, Mrs. Hawkins screamed at the top of her voice: "Murder!" Then walked away. Wesley was perplexed. Mr. Welch advised him that the two women had joined forces, blaming him (Wesley) for everything. Wesley could not believe this, until half of the town told him the same.

The women hid in the woods. Mr. Hayden told Mrs. Hawkins not to come within the camp, that he would "carry those bottles for her". As Hayden held open his arms to hinder her, she screamed that she would come into camp. Then broke one of the bottles on his head. He caught her in his arms, while she struck him continually, screaming "Murder!" Her husband ran up to her, and threw Hayden into the dirt, setting his foot upon him, saying that if he resisted he would run his bayonet into him. In the meanwhile, the other constable, Mark Hird⁵, was holding off Mrs. Hawkins, while she yelled and swore revenge against John and Charles Wesley.

This particular set of circumstances caused Oglethorpe to have to be located and brought to Frederica to settle the matter. Oglethorpe did not defend Charles Wesley against the slanderous words of Mrs. Hawkins. Meanwhile, a group of trouble-makers threatened to leave the colony.

That night Wesley prayed for his enemies, including Oglethorpe as being the chief of them. At daybreak, Oglethorpe summoned Wesley from his hut to charge him with stirring up the people to desert the colony, giving the reason that, as men came to pray with Wesley, he instigated trouble. With these charges on his head, Wesley went to face the trouble-makers. They admitted that Wesley had nothing to do with their plans to desert the colony, nor did he cause the problems

⁴ Charles Wesley was born 18 December 1707, educated at Oxford, 1726 elected to Christ Church, embarked for Georgia on 14 October 1733, arriving 6 February 1

⁵ Mark Hird was a son of Thomas Hird. The family was among the 40 families selected to help establish Frederica.

Mrs. Hawkins was having with her maid. Mr. Horton tried to console Wesley by telling him that Mrs. Hawkins was a common prostitute and hypocrite.

COLONIAL GEORGIANS
by Jeannette Holland Austin

For Wesley, what followed was a series of abusive treatment, which seemingly occurred by Oglethorpe's own orders. "I begin now to be abused and slighted into an opinion of my own considerableness...My few well wishers are afraid to speak to me. Some have turned out of the way to avoid me...The servant that used to wash my linen sent it back unwashed. It was a great cause of triumph my being forbid the use of Mr. Oglethorpe's things, and in effect debarred of most of the conveniences, if not necessities, of life...."

By April, most of the people were sick with the bloody flux. Wesley found an old bedstead to lie on. It was the bed upon which the scout boatman died. But Oglethorpe had the bed removed, refusing the use of the carpenters to make him another. "16 April. ...I went to Mr. Oglethorpe, in his tent, to ask for some little things I wanted. He sent for me back again, and said 'Pray, sir, sit down. I have something to say to you. I hear you have spread several reports about me and Mrs. Hawkins. In this you are the author of them. There is a great difference in telling such things to another and to me. It was you who told it your brother, 'tis scandal; in him who repeated it to me, 'tis friendship. My religion does not, like the pharisees, consist in long prayers, but in forgiving injuries, as I do this of yours, not but that the thing is in itself a trifle and hardly deserves a serious answer...."

They had a long discussion, and Wesley felt that their differences were reconciled when Oglethorpe promised to build Wesley a house. Hawkins' career as a Magistrate in Frederica continued in dispute. In 1740 he wrote to the Trustees that they used him ill by not paying the accounts he submitted them, and that if the balance is not paid, he will "fling up his office". He vehemently insisted that the Trustees defray the charges for his boat and two servants. Hawkins' unpopularity increased as none of the men in Frederica would help him cultivate his land.

Hawkins launched another complaint against Samuel Perkins, the 2nd Bailiff in Frederica, and Fra. Moore, Recorder, because neither of them took his side in a cause between him and another person, Mr. Allen.

According to disgruntled townsfolk at Frederica, their indentured servants enjoyed considerable privileges. On 16 May 1739, the widow of Peter Germain, who had returned to England to inherit some money, jealously complained to the Trustees that only the Germans' servants were employed in building the new storehouse at Frederica. Although the citizens were a quarrelsome, bullying lot, they found pleasure celebrating special occasions, such as the King's birthdays. Carts of food or drink were brought into the open streets, where toasts were drunk to the King. Although Madeira wine was the common drink, rum was also in frequent use at Frederica as well as Savannah. Rum-runners from South Carolina ran the contraband up and down the Savannah River to supply colonists.

A year after General Oglethorpe had secured his regiment at Fort Frederica, Great Britain declared war on Spain, known as King George's War, which would last nine years.

By 1743, nearly 1,000 people lived at Frederica. From the beginning the crown had supplied necessities, such as food and weapons, which military outlays, combined with enterprising tradesmen, helped to build a prosperity better than Savannah. General Oglethorpe spent ten years strengthening the defense of the colony, also establishing Fort St. Simons, which was located on the south end of St. Simons Island, and which guarded the entrance into Jekyll Sound. Also, other forts were located at the north and south ends of Cumberland Island and on the St. Johns River in Florida.

South Carolina's reluctance to send troops into Georgia caused Oglethorpe to recruit a South Carolina officer into the Georgia Troops. Capt. Philip Delegal served directly under Governor Bull, and was detached to Lt. General Parson's Regiment of Invalids, St. Peter's Port, on the Island of Guernsey. Oglethorpe pressed Capt. Delegal to ask the Governor for his approval in acquiring the South Carolinian troops for Georgia's defense against the Spanish. Delegal declined, saying that it was not proper for him to ask the Governor's assistance while there was a trade dispute between Georgia and the South Carolina Indian Agent. However, Delegal did join the

troops in Frederica, leaving a son in South Carolina. During the siege of Augustine and the Battle of Bloody Marsh, De laet fought valiantly and went on to become a trusted soldier and citizen in the province.⁶

COLONIAL GEORGIANS
by Jeannette Holland Austin

Plantations surrounded the countryside. Friedrich Holtzendorf, an army surgeon, belonging to a well-known family in Brandenburg, owned one of the few improved plantations in the area. Holzendorf had first settled at Purysburg, and was later sent to Switzerland by Oglethorpe to recruit laborers.⁷

Another plantation was that of Samuel Augspurger, a gentleman from Bern, Switzerland, who removed from Purysburg in 1734 to settle in Frederica where he was employed as a surveyor. As he was denied slave labor, the plantation did not prosper, and he returned to Bern. In December of 1760, he sold his estate in Georgia, on Little St. Simon's Island, to Gabriel Manigault, a Huguenot planter from South Carolina.⁸

The regiment stationed in Frederica served as a bulwark against the Spanish, but it also provided an economy and stability for the town. People were frequently quarrelsome, especially local bailiffs and magistrates who worked for their own political gain. While John Wesley struggled for peace, atrocities did occur. The trusted Captain Horton was frequently put in charge of affairs while Oglethorpe was absent, and wrote the Board that Mr. John Terry was charged with rape on the body of a servant maid. A Warrant was issued to apprehend him. Horton also wrote that three or four others, who were soldiers and in custody at Frederica, were charged with feloniously stealing of the King's Arms, Ammunitions and Accoutrements, together with a canoe with design of deserting to the enemy.⁹

The cemetery for the fort and town is situated outside of the (original palisade) gates in a heavily oak wooded area of sprawling oaks entwined with gray moss. Mostly, the graves are above the ground vaults, constructed of brick on the sides and a mixture of shells, lime and sand on the top. No inscriptions occur. It is indeed an old-fashioned graveyard with its shadowy vaults, its seeping damp and odor of decay; its aged, mossy stones, its weeping branches entwined in gray moss, shading the dismal lives of those who died during the early colony frontier days.

John Wesley preached many funerals at Frederica. In his diary he noted that during his second visit he buried Mr. Germain in the evening. A few days later he was with the surgeon, Dr. Henry Lascelles, during his last illness when he made his will, burying him several days later in the evening. Then, a year later the son, Henry Lascelles, the only other member of the family in Georgia, was drowned in the river with many other boys and was buried.

Lives were lost during the Battle of Bloody Marsh, and presumably some soldiers from the regiment are buried here. It is difficult to determine how many graves might be nestled in that protected grove of trees.

Samuel Perkins was Bailiff of Frederica and died in 1741; Thomas Mouse was killed by Spaniards, but his wife, Lucy was a resident of Savannah in 1740; the Rev. Mr. Dyson, the Chaplain to Gen. Oglethorpe's Regiment, died on 17 September 1739; Thomas Hirt, Constable, who died ca 1747-8; Betty (Martha) Detzner or Tetzner, one of the original settlers, who died before 1738; son of Betty Detzner (or Tetzner) who died before August 1745; John Harding's first wife died in June of 1737; Joanna, the first wife of John Humble died March 1736/6; John Humble was dead by 1740; Agnese Loop, the wife of Thomas died February 1736/7; William Moore March 1745; James, son of Thomas Proctor, Sr. died before September 1738; John and Susannah, the children of Thomas

⁶ 14 August 1735, South Carolina, Ft. Frederick

⁷ The Georgia Dutch, pp. 64

⁸ The Georgia Dutch, pp. 65

⁹ December of 1745

Proctor, Sr., died after 1738; George Spencer was dead by Nov 1742; Sarah, a daughter of George
Spencer, died before August 1741; and Willes Weston died in 1740 and possibly his wife and child.

Copyright by Jeannette Holland Austin