

Chapter 17. Malatche threatens Savannah. July of 1749.

COLONIAL GEORGIANS by Jeannette Holland Austin

The history of Mary Musgrove and her various escapades is well-documented. Mary was born in 1700 in Coweta Town which was located on the Ockmulbee River, the daughter of a white South Carolina trader and Creek Indian Princess, members of the Uchee Tribe. Her mother was a sister of the illustrious “old Brim or Bream”, Emperor of the Creeks. She was named “Cousaponakeesa”. When she was about 10 years old, she was taken to Ponpon, South Carolina to be baptized, educated and taught in the principals of Christianity. During that period the Yamasee Indians at Coweta Town were revolting, so she did not return home for another 5 years. When she did return in 1716, she met John Musgrove, the son of Col. John Musgrove who was commissioned by the Governor of South Carolina to visit the Creek Nation and obtain peace treaties. Upon seeing Mary, he fell madly in love, and they were soon wed. The couple resided in Coweta Town until about 1732 when they established a trading post at Yamacraw Bluff.

After Oglethorpe established friendly relations with the Creek Chief, Tomochichi, Mary was selected to act as an interpreter to General Oglethorpe and the Creeks. She also assisted in handling general Indian relations, gaining lands and favors for Oglethorpe. Her usefulness as a trader benefited both settlers and the Creeks, however, as time wore on, she became a trouble-maker.

Mary's trading post was a convenient monopoly for herself and her husband, in that both the Indians and Charles Towne merchants traded there. This location, as well as Mary's interpretative skills and cooperation with General Oglethorpe had accelerated her importance both to the Indians as well as to the colonists. In her employ were traders and Indian couriers which was made convenient for Oglethorpe's use whenever he liked.

Jealous of her monopoly on trade, an early squabble occurred between Mary and another white trader, Joseph Watson. Watson had acquired 100 acres of land in Yamacraw upon which he built a store. Shortly thereafter, the Trustees awarded him an additional 500 acres of land, which adjoined Mrs. Musgrove. The competition caused Mary to complain bitterly against Watson. Once, when she was absent from Yamacraw, Mr. Watson would not allow the Indians to trade their skins at his store. When she returned she found that Watson was inside his store, behind bolted doors. The Indians took revenge by breaking down the door. Mary overheard a plot to break into the store again, and this time murder Watson. The second breakin occurred while Watson was gone. This turn of events further enraged the Indians. They found Mary's slave, Justice, and murdered him instead. When Watson returned to his store, he was frightened, but he knew that Mary was scheming to get rid of his trading post so that she could have all of the business so he refused to leave.

On 24 January 1735, John Musgrove, Mary's husband, wrote a letter about the situation to James Oglethorpe: “...To acquaint you that we are all safely arrived and in good health...Tunoy has been ill, but now he is upon the mending hand...Mr. Watson, who was my partner when I came from England, I do not like, nor approve of his way...for I find since I came home to Georgia...Mr. Watson's...abusing the Indians. I have lost my servant man, Justice....John Musgrove.”

Mary's complaints caused a warrant to be issued against Watson, seizing all his papers, and for his store to be nailed shut, and Thomas Causton, Chief Magistrate of Savannah, suddenly put him in jail on lunacy charges. At the court proceeding, Watson argued that the trial was illegal because he was rushed through the process, and that he had greatly suffered while in jail. Watson's wife, Sarah, persistently petitioned to the Trustees to release her husband, but it took two years before he was finally freed. “...In the case of Capt. (Joseph) Watson is worth your consideration; we are apprehensive his accusers has urged things against him that may even affect his life if his close confinement don't do it. He will die guiltless of the accusation....”¹

After being released from jail, Watson went to England, but in August of

¹ Letter from Robert Parker to Robert Hucks dated 3 June 1735, Savannah.

1750 petitioned the Trustees to pay his passage back to Georgia,²

To maintain a watchout for the Indians and the Spanish, she also established a trading post called *Mount Venture*, which was located on the south side of the Altamaha River, 150 miles above its mouth. Mary's successful plantation on the Savannah River supplied colonists with meat, bread and liquor.

From the onset, the Indians were bribed with presents by way of Mary Musgrove. The Trustees, and later the Royal Government, appropriated funds for presents. From the initial colonization, bribery was a wise choice, especially as various Indian tribes warred amongst themselves, robbing and pillaging white settlements while the Spanish courted the Indians with presents in hopes of luring them into service as spies.

As soon as John Musgrove died, Mary made an immediate replacement, this time marrying another delinquent trader by the name of Jacob Matthews. Matthews, a white man, did well for himself, by marrying a princess who was so well connected. In fact, a neighbor, Robert Williams, bragged that Matthews had probably cleared and planted the largest crop of any plantation of English wheat, Indian corn, pease, and potatoes", being more than any white person had planted.

Mary's status as an interpreter caused her to exact special treatment from Oglethorpe and his contemporary leaders, so she used intimidating methods, such as sending a gang of marauding Indians do her bidding. They harassed and terrified settlers.

Part of the duties of William Stephens was to assess the situation and court Mary's favor in keeping things in check. In the process, he simply ignored Jacob Matthews' drunkenness and that he roamed the streets at night, yelling and screaming. Stephens wrote in his journal that it was useless "to foul more Paper in tracing Jacob Matthews through his notorious Debauches; and after his spending whole Nights in that Way, reeling home by the Light of the Morning, with his Banditti about him."³

Stephens..."Dined with Mrs. (Mary) Musgrove, now Mrs. Mathews, sitting at the end of the table with two young girls, husband, and Tomochichi nearby, and a young shooter just ready barbecued over the fire in the wood. (Had two or three glasses of wine)...The occasion was a treat to Tomochichi and three or four Indians upon his granting that spot of land to Mrs. Matthews and her husband."⁴

During the dinner Mary informed Stephens that Oglethorpe had given her acreage, and that she wished it officially recorded, to which he readily agreed, but failed to record.

Mary found herself once more a widow in 1742 when Jacob Matthews was found dead.⁵ She was determined to acquire more land and money. She had some justification, since braves had been sent to Oglethorpe during the siege of Augustine and were frequently used for spying and other activities. Now that the war was over and the Spanish routed, she demanded to be paid for her services. Her past office of interpreter and intermediary to the Creeks ended when Oglethorpe disbanded the regiment and returned to England.

² Last Will and Testament of Joseph Watson dated 28 September 1757, probated 1 June 1758. To his nephews, Joseph Dacker and Edward Dacker he left all his lands in Nova Scotia. To three sisters, Martha Packer, Christia Bateman and Esther Holsey, he left his lands in Lincolnshire. He mentioned lands formerly called Yamacraw, but now Watsonburg, and two lots to Hugh Ross. Also named was Mrs. Ottlenghe, "Nancy". His Georgia estate to go to William Read.

³ 1740

⁴ A note was made in the Journal of William Stephens dated 12 December 1737

⁵ May 8, 1742.

In September of 1743 she demanded 19 or 20 pounds in reparations. This included service from Frederica into the war. She took it one step further by demanding payment for damages done to her house and plantation by Indians. And for further intimidation, she kept the Indians on her plantation to annoy and harass colonists.

Mary married again within three years. This time to an Anglican minister, Thomas Bosomworth who'd come to Georgia as an adventurer in 1739. Bosomworth first went to Ebenezer. After having gained the confidence of Oglethorpe, he was appointed as Agent of Indian Affairs. This is how he met Mary.

Bosomworth gained ecclesiastical prominence through Christopher Orton, the ordained Anglican preacher in Savannah, whose death in 1742 opened a position. Bosomworth immediately saw an opportunity and returned to England, this time for Holy Orders. On 4 July 1743, the Trustees authorized the appointment of Bosomworth as a Reverend. He landed in Savannah on 21 December 1743, onboard the ship *McLane*, with Rev. Driesler.

A hasty marriage to Mary occurred on 8 July 1744. He even admitted his ambition in a letter written to the Trustees, explaining that his marriage to Mary was a means to enable him to carry on the great work of promoting Christian knowledge among the natives of America.⁶

Bosomworth mostly served in Frederica. Once he wrote the Trustees an impassioned letter "that the people has too long been without a shepherd, and were driven to and fro with every wind of doctrine." Alas, he would lead the little flock of sinners! On 28 March 1744 he hastened to Savannah where where he consecrated the grounds for the construction of a church building.

Meanwhile, Mary and her new husband acquired another trading house and cowpen, which they called the *Princess*. Bosomworth lost interest in the church, and quite unexpectedly retired from the ministry. This left Reverend Driesler to minister not only to his own German flock, but also to preach in Savannah and Darien as well. He was perturbed, and on 24 January 1744 he wrote a letter of complaint to Gotthilf August Frank, his patron, and head of the Francke Foundations in Halle:⁷ "In the absence of the Anglican minister, who is incorrigible like others of his kind, I had to baptize the child of a local merchant... On the other hand, the Anglican minister, whom, as will be known from my previous writing, I had to marry to a half-breed Indian awhile ago, has been keeping himself on his plantation and in Savannah, and no one here does anything about all this."

Rev. Driesler was counselling Christina Bineker, the daughter of one of Samuel Augspurger's Palatine servants, because Abraham Bosomworth (brother of Thomas) had raped her. Abraham Bosomworth had previously served in Oglethorpe's Regiment at Frederica.

Like Matthews, Bosomworth, because of family connections, also held a certain threat of power over the colonists. In October of 1745, he surprised the Trustees by notifying them that he was again in England, and did not intend to return to Georgia. The Board took steps to locate another minister to succeed him, Rev. Mr. Zouberbuhler. When Zouberbuhler arrived in Savannah, he discovered that Bosomworth had stripped the parsonage of all its furniture.

Bosomworth's sojourn in England was short-lived, as a year later we find him back in Georgia, this time launching a bitter campaign (with his wife) to claim three islands, as well as a large land grant near Savannah, asserting that this land belonged to Mary as pay for her services to Georgia during its founding years. The couple's effectiveness was given power as they continually threatened Indian uprisings, and used their friends and relatives to create fear.

The Bosomworth's renewed their scheme to gain land. This time they negotiated with Chief Malatche, King of the Creeks, for land St. Catherine, Sapelo and Ossaba Islands as well as a

⁶ July 25, 1741

⁷ Georgia Historical Quarterly 79 (1995), p. 885-903.

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tract of land lying between Savannah and Pipe Maker's Creek. 1747⁸ In return, Malatchee was promised cloth, ammunition, and cattle. To fulfill their end of the bargain, the Bosomworth's contacted Major Heron, the new commander of the regiment at Frederica, telling him that there would be an Indian uprising if he did not produce the loot. Thus, in order to mollify the situation, Heron formally recognized Malatchee as supreme King of the Creeks, and sent some documents to the Trustees setting forth Mary's claims. The process went unsettled, and Mary grew impatient.

In July of 1749 Mary and Thomas rode into Savannah, accompanied by Malatchee and two other chiefs, a small band of vagabond Indians, for the purpose of enforcing her demands. Malatchee announced that he was the only reigning Emperor and that all Creeks were his loyal followers. He also told them that two hundred more chiefs and their warriors would be in Savannah within eight days.

While Mary reminded Stephens that Malatchee had been in town for six days and not been entertained, Stephens was not convinced that Mary could serve as an unbiased interpreter. To appease the Indians, a dinner was prepared for the Creek Chief.⁹ Malatchee knew that the Georgia Regiment had been disbanded, and he boldly led his braves down river, encouraging them to fire as they walked. As they fired, residents were terrified.

As soon as they arrived in Savannah, the chiefs were taken to a celebration of food and wine and while they were being thus distracted, Capt. Noble Jones and his militiamen (about 170) surrounded the area. Then Jones shouted to the Indians to lay down their arms, but they discharged their weapons instead. Meanwhile, women and children were sent to Ft. Argyle for safety and a few days later two horses laden with food were sent them. On 9 August, a vanguard of Indian invaders were seen approaching town. Jones took the precaution of temporarily arresting a potential troublemaker, Abraham Bosomworth, brother to Thomas. Then, he gathered his militia for a parade. First came the militia, then Thomas Bosomworth wearing his canonical robes with Mary following, and this his brother, Abraham Bosomworth, and Emperor Malatchee.

Malatchee was in a good mood and insisted on celebrating by drinking liquor at the local tabern. The gentlemen of Savannah all turned out to drink with Malatchee. Afterwards, the Indians asked for food and boats to take them home. The threat was over.

Mary and Thomas established another trading post at the Forks, on the confluence of the Ocmulgee and Oconee Rivers, where they worked six slaves. Slavery was, of course, against the charter, but no official complaints were made against the Bosomworths.¹⁰

In May of 1751 Thomas Bosomworth and his wife sent a letter to the council claiming a right to lands given to the Indians in the Lower Creek Treaties of 1733 and 1739. But, a complaint was brought against Bosomworth by Francis Harris¹¹ who spoke before the assembly, declaring his claims as illegal and treasonable. The fight for land and claims against the Trustees lasted about ten years, and were finally settled in June of 1760, in the courts in London. Mary was awarded over 2,000 pounds and clear title to St. Catherine's Island, where they were already residents. This is where the couple lived the remainder of their lives. Mary was buried on the island in 1763.¹²

⁸ 1747

⁹ July 28, 1747

¹⁰ Colonial Records of Georgia by Candler, Vol. VI

¹¹ Francis Harris was first a Clerk to Thomas Jones; in 1740 was an overseer to the Trust Servants, but later became politically active in the colony, gaining prestige and wealth.

¹² Colonial Records of State of Georgia by Chandler, Vol. IX

After Bosomworth lost interest in being the rector of Christ Church Parish, he was replaced by the Rev. Mr. Zouberbuhler, who proved to be very acceptable. When he took office, only the foundations of a church were visible. The process of constructing a church building was slow and painful, as funding was allowed and then disallowed, with laborers working awhile, then leaving. Finally, several years after he'd been in Savannah, a building was framed and the roof covered with shingles. It was not until 1747 that Zouberbuhler was successful in obtaining enough money to complete the structure. The outside of the church was feathered boarded, then tarred and sanded; and the inside walls boarded and painted.

Rev. Bartholomew Zouberbuhler was known to be a kind and gentleman man who happily worked alongside the parishioners. He spoke in broken English with a thick German dialect. The Trustees had a clergyman they could not criticize, and even supplemented his allowance by fifty pounds per year, which was donated by the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel. They also granted large land acreages to him and to his two brothers as well. On 7 July 1750, Zouberbuhler dedicated the building, which he described to the Trustees in a letter as being both beautiful and commodious.

He visited adjacent towns and villages to instruct. His predecessors had forced a strict observance of religion, but Zouberbuhler was more lenient. This made him welcome by whomever he visited. After Georgia became a Royal Colony,¹³ Zouberbuhler petitioned the Governor and Council to support a school in Savannah, and they set aside a public lot, 60 feet in front and 180 feet in depth in Reynolds Ward. Reverend Mr. Zouberbuhler and inhabitants of this Town were dissatisfied with the first schoolmaster, Peter Joubert, whom they complained had neglected to give proper attendance to his scholars, and was addicted to drinking. His bad example obliged them to discharge him.¹⁴

Rev. Zouberbuhler took upon himself the mantle of rearing young Negroes in the knowledge and fear of God. When Reverend Ottolenghe arrived in Georgia¹⁵, Zouberbuhler arranged for service of the Negroes not to conflict with regular worship, requiring the slaves to meet three times a week, on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Zouberbuhler remained popular until his death in 1766. He was replaced by the Reverend Samuel Frink, who arrived in 1764.

Upon Frink's arrival, he learned that William Teale, a clergyman serving on a trial basis in the Augusta Parish had undermined him before he'd arrived in the colony. Nevertheless, Rev. Frink was able to earn for himself an excellent reputation as the minister in Augusta, but when he resigned in 1767 to become Zouberbuhler's successor at Christ Church in Savannah, he commented that the "lower sort of people in Augusta have but little religion, and public worship is kept up principally by a few geneltmen and their families."¹⁶

¹³ 1752

¹⁴ Colonial Records of Georgia by Candler, Vol. VI

¹⁵ July of 1751

¹⁶ The Episcopal Church in Georgia by Henry Thomas Malone