

Chapter 6. A Second Transport of Saltzburghers

COLONIAL GEORGIANS

The second transport of Saltzburghers

The second transport of Saltzburghers sailed from Augsburg on 23 September 1734. Onboard was Jean Vat of Biel, Switzerland, who would play a major role in settlement. This transport left Rotterdam onboard the ship, *Two Brothers*, captained by an Irishman, William Thomson, who took them to Gravesend, which they reached several days after sailing. From there, they were transported to London. Earlier in the year, Oglethorpe had carried a party of Indians to London to show them off to his friends and contemporaries. Among them were Chief Tomochichi, his nephew, Toonahowi, as well as some other distinctive savages. This envoy was winned and dined. While in London, the Saltzburghers met Tomochichi and his family before sailing to the Georgia colony.

This second transport arrived in Georgia on 28 December and went overland to finally arrive in Ebenezer on 13 January 1735. Mr. Vat and Rev. Bolzius had trouble getting this group to settle at Ebenezer where the lands were often flooded, and infertile. But Thomas Causton and Noble Jones were determined to keep the Saltzburghers where Oglethorpe wished them to settle.

While Rev. George Whitefield engineered land grants for a heavy concentration of Saltzburghers to be located in Ebenezer, in June 116 more Germans were transported to Georgia by Capt. William Thomson.

Saltzburghers did not agree with the citizens of Savannah that only Negro laborers could do hard chores - till fields and riverbanks to raise good crops. They laughed at the idea of slave labor, saying that their last raised crop was greater than could be used for consumption. On the red banks they grew rice, and asked the Trustees for a mill to clean and process the rice, similar to the mills being used in Germany. Even though the Trustees never provided the means for such mills, there is evidence that gristmills and lumber mills were erected.

During the fall of 1735 a convoy of three ships sailed from England: The *London Merchant*, the *Symonds*, and the warship *Hawk*, as an accompaniment and protector of the high seas. Onboard the *Symonds* was James Oglethorpe, who went back and forth between Georgia and England. Also onboard was John Wesley and a party of Moravians, comprising 202, which included about eighty Germans from the city of Ratisbon and 27 Moravians, as well as a number of poor English families being transported at the expense of the Trustees. The Germans were worshipful people, and during the voyage sang psalms. During the journey, Oglethorpe instructed the men as to their duties as free-holders, while the women were required to sew stockings and caps for their families, as well as perform any mending.

Onboard the *Symonds* was brothers, Charles and John Wesley. Oglethorpe first met John Wesley in London. John's elder brother, Samuel, had given a communion plate to the church in Savannah. A young man anxious to begin his ministry, John sought the advice of his mother. The whole family was religiously included. Brothers, Samuel and Charles were already in the ministry, and his mother, when asked if her son John could go to Georgia, simply said: "If I had twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I never saw them more." John Wesley obtained a letter from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to become a missionary to the Indians. The annual wage was 50 pounds. Wesley had attended Oxford University, and persuaded two of his old friends to accompany him, Rev. Benjamin Ingham and Rev. Delamotte. Young John's emotions ran deep; he was sensitive to the state of his own soul. Several days before leaving, he said: "My chief motive is the hope of saving my own soul." Charles Wesley decided to go along, as secretary to Oglethorpe.

Also onboard the *Symonds* were a number of Englishmen who were being transported at the expense of the Trustees. The Moravians (Lutherans) were another religious group persecuted as non-conformists, who had escaped across the Bohemian border, from Moravia to Herrnhut in Saxony, where they were taken refuge on the estate of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf.

Oglethorpe took the Moravians into Savannah. The Moravians were well-pleased with their surroundings and wrote a letter to Rev. Urlsperger requesting him to encourage their kinsmen in Southern Germany to join them. By November their land was fully prepared for

cultivation, and they had 200 head of cattle which were bred for profit. For many years, either Rev. Bolzius or Rev. Cronau from Ebenezer would go into Savannah at least once a month and minister to the ^{COLONIAL GEORGIANS} by Leutherns (Moravians), delivering sermons spoken in German.

In the meantime, Count Zinzendorf sent his agent, Gottlieb Spangenberg, who sailed on 6 April 1735 onboard the *Two Brothers* in the company of 9 colleagues. David Nitschmann, Zinzendorf's Master of the Household, asked the Trustees to lend 450 pounds to transport 55 persons to Georgia. As soon as Spangenberg arrived, Thomas Causton had his town lot surveyed and ready for him.

The Trustees resolved to give 500 acres to Nikolaus Ludowicus, Count of Zinsendorf and Potterdorf, along with 20 acres of land contiguous to his, to each of his 10 male servants upon expiration of their service.¹ The settlement was to be located on the Great Ogeechee River. Noble Jones took Spangenberg up the river to inspect the land. But the Moravians were tradesmen and chose to remain in Savannah rather than to settle on the Great Ogeechee. Thomas Causton was impressed that they were dedicated to hard labor, while John Wesley wrote in his journal that they were cheap labor and the best carpenters. They received nothing but praise until an incident occurred in Savannah.

A widowed father, Mr. Howe, left for London, and placed the care of his two children to the Moravians, to be raised in the strict Christian discipline. After all, at this point the Moravians had an excellent reputation for being devoutly religious. But one of the children died. When the grandmother heard that the other one was sick, she found great difficulty in trying to visit the child. When she discovered that the child had been flogged for wetting the bed, she complained to the authorities. This incident went unforgotten by the colonists, and they began to have a change of heart towards the Moravians. Colonel William Stehens had just arrived in Georgia and expressed strong feelings against the Moravians. Public sentiment agreed, as rumors spread of an impending war with Spain. This meant that the Moravians, as servants of Count Zinzendorf and Spangenberg, would be exempted from military service.

Then Count Zinzendorf's land settlements evolved into disputes about high Quit Rents and the lack of negro laborers. A petition was sent to the Trustees, signed by the unhappy Germans² with an accompanying letter from Spangenberg, requesting permission for the group to depart Georgia, as well as asking to be paid for the improvements which they had made while they were in the colony. The Trustees did not empower them to depart until September of the same year, but only after they repaid the 260 pounds advanced them, which they did by June of the following year. Most of the group removed to Pennsylvania.

In 1742, Thomas Christie reported to the Trustees that all of the Moravians were gone from the colony.

It was Oglethorpe's intention to settle all passengers from the three vessels on St. Simon's Island and there build a town. The plan was to sail for Jekyll Sound, where the new town would be located, but the captains of the vessels did not know the waters, and refused to enter the sound. Loaded with cargo and passengers, Oglethorpe was angry. Some of the passengers onboard the *London Merchant* were sick with scurvy and the Saltburghers insisted on going to Ebenezer where they could join their countrymen. Oglethorpe had pledged the Trustees to settle these passengers on St. Simon's Island, rather than Ebenezer. Though sick with fever, the Saltburghers traveled overland to the Swiss village of Abercorn, and thence to Ebenezer. They suffered hardships along the way, being deprived of supplies and food. But just as they neared Ebenezer, the old residents met them alongside the road to bring them into the village.

Inhabitants fell under the misguided authority of their storekeeper, Mr. Vat, who was in charge of settling the new arrivals in Ebenezer. From the first, Vat refused to recognize the authority of the younger Rev. Mr. Bolzius. As the two men clashed Vat, having the key to the public storehouse, obstinately refused to give provisions to the new settlers, even refusing to give

¹ 7 January 1735

² 21 February 1737

wine to a dying man, or flour and butter to sick persons. This resulted in letters being written to Augsburg, London and Savannah.

By the middle of May, the German leader, Johann Conrad Von Reck, arrived. He was determined to be in control of all factions of Ebenezer's settlement and in doing so, pleased no one – not even Oglethorpe. His instructions from Oglethorpe were to take the third transport to Ebenezer via the Village of Abercorn, but he ignored those directions, instead taking them through Puryburg. Next, he took the liberty of recruiting a German shoemaker and his wife from Savannah to live in Ebenezer without the approval of Oglethorpe. Because of his arrogance, he drew criticism. The colonists whispered about him behind his back and spread rumors throughout the colony. While Oglethorpe was traveling southward in the colony, shoring up its defenses, word reached him that von Reck had disobeyed his instructions. Von Reck hastened to locate Oglethorpe and explain himself.

Von Reck followed southward on the trail, but continued to miss Oglethorpe. Finally, he wrote him a letter, complaining of his treatment and asking that Oglethorpe clarify his (von Reck's) authority. It was too late. There were too many bad reports from Rev. Bolzius and Mr. Vat, and Oglethorpe was agitated by the whole affair.

When in June he still had not seen Oglethorpe, he decided to visit the Yuchis Indians who resided a little north of New Ebenezer. The Yuchis had warred with the Creeks, and lost. Thus, they had small scattered encampments north of town and would come into the colony to trade deerskins and meat for money, rum, or weapons. Von Reck spent ten days with the Indians, and his good intentions going away, returned to New Ebenezer sick in body and spirit. When he returned he noticed that during his absence the settlers had built their huts on the wrong corners of their lots. This infuriated him, and he demanded that the huts be torn down.

Times were difficult for the third transport of settlers in Ebenezer who did not have pans for cooking or farm implements. Crops failed that year, and the community was dependent on the Indian trade to help supplement provisions brought from Savannah. Von Reck's fluctuating orders caused misery.

In April of 1736, Rev. Bolzius reported scurvy. Then, on Easter day, Von Reck's garden was damaged by hogs running wild. Enraged, he summoned the townspeople and gave them a sound lecture for letting their hogs out. Also affected by hogs running loose was Mr. Vat. A few days later, the frustrated Mr. Vat simply opened the door of his house and fired at some hogs running near his lot.

One day an Indian trader came to Mr. Vat's hut to sell him some honey. While in the business of it, a prospective customer in the form of a woman entered the hut. Vat physically removed her from his hut. During the process, her hand got caught in the door, and she screamed. Then he shoved her on the ground. While she was lying in the dirt, he socked her in the back with his fist. Her husband heard her screams and came running, commanding Vat to stop, but he seized his sword and chased him away.

This fitful rage was his last. The Reverend Mr. Bolzius now took the position of countermanding all of Vat's instructions. This caused Vat to lose his authority and reputation as well. He found that no one listened to him.

By the middle of August, Von Reck found himself ill with fever. He was so sick that he decided that he would leave the colony and spend his life elsewhere. In October, he returned to Germany. Surviving von Reck's ill-fated career in Georgia are his beautiful sketches and drawings of plant life and Indians, which he published, as well as his journals. This is one of the earliest authentic records of Georgia wildlife. His intentions were to return to Georgia later, but when he asked the Trustees for money, they refused saying they had decided not to transport any more Saltzburger refugees.

As the German-extracted emigrants were more industrious than other colonists and owing to the fact that they brought with them their trade skills and tools, garden lots were planted in corn, pease, pumpkins, cabbages, potatoes, sweet (musk) melons, and they even planted a little rice. No people have been more noted for industry, probity and intelligence. Their

quaint German village provided a school, a home for widows and orphans, and a church, and was the center of agricultural³

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Silk production was active in Ebenezer. The Germany industry produced half the raw silk supplied to the Savannah filature, and continued to do so (even after Savannah discontinued its operations) up until the Revolutionary War. The Germans erected a bridge over Ebenezer Creek which enabled further growth of plantations along the Savannah River, and the settlement of one hundred and sixty Germans in the town of Bethany.⁴

³ By 1741 Benjamin Martyn, the Secretary of the Trustees, estimated that twelve hundred German Protestants had settled in Georgia

⁴ 1751 by John Gerar William DeBrahm