

During hot summers, due to malaria the residents of Midway generally went to Sunbury, and other local resorts. Overseers were left behind to manage plantations. White people could not stay on rice plantations during the summer because standing water in the paddies bred mosquitoes. Sunbury has marsh islands, which mosquitoes avoided. These resorts were places where persons did not contract malaria. In fact, no one went to the coastal areas during summer – they had to be acclimated beforehand.

Sunbury was so typical of the Georgia coastline – sewn in a maze of live-oaks festooned with vines and wirey grass moss, cedars, magnolias, tall pines and other indigent trees entreating a beauteous primal creation. Thick Bermuda grass was woven at the feet of magnificent live-oaks which stretched across the high-ground all the way to the shoreline, and sweet-scented myrtles bloomed amidst tangled vines, while wild geese and turkeys freely roamed. In the harbor was a green marshland.

Even though persons from Midway and the surrounding countryside flocked to Sunbury during summer months to avoid malaria, there was an epidemic at the resort before the Revolutionary War, and again in 1800. Other setbacks included a hurricane in 1800 which nearly destroyed the whole town. Today, the area is privately owned, and nothing remains...not a stone, of the once-thriving sunny resort. It is now heavily wooded (upon my last visit in 1985), with an eroding black chain tacked to a partial wharf, and a distantly neglected cemetery where colonials are buried in unmarked graves. The new marshland is still in the harbor where once sailing masts were so thick that the sky was scarcely visible to the naked eye.

Originally built as a resort area, the whole of it consisted of 500 acres which were granted 4 October 1757 to Mark Carr, his heirs and assigns forever, in free and common socage. Carr was a veteran of the Spanish War who was sent by Oglethorpe to raise recruits for the colony in 1741. He developed a large plantation on the north side of the Midway River, and also had a plantation on the mainland of Jekyll Island, but his favorite home was Sunbury. Early one morning (18 March 1741), despite a guard posted by General Oglethorpe, several soldiers and servants were attacked and killed by Indians. The savages locked up the women and children in the cellar while they pillaged the house, and loaded one of Carr's boats to carry off the loot.<sup>1</sup>

His first home, however, was selected and named by Oglethorpe. *The Hermitage* was located on St. Simon's Island. But while away on a trip with the General, the place was plundered and robbed by Spanish Indians. He was afraid to live there after that. Next, he built a plantation on the Midway River, *Carrsfield*, where his son resided, but this place also became dangerous. As did his plantation *Blyth*. In 1752, the Carr family settled on the north side of the Newport River, near Midway. He also established a rice and timber land plantation at Sunbury, but he owned over 1,000 acres of land on St. Mary's Island. The latter overlooked the Midway River and was called *Bailie's Island*.

On 20 June 1758 Mark Carr conveyed three hundred of these acres to James Maxwell, Kenneth Baillie, John Elliott, Grey Elliott, and John Stevens of Midway, Esquires. The purpose was to lay out a town by the name of Sunbury, with one hundred acres for common use and the use of future inhabitants.<sup>2</sup>

"Whereas, Mark Carr, in the province of Georgia, Esquire, did by a certain deed of lease and release executed by him and dated 19 June 1758 convey unto James Maxwell, Kenneth Baillie, John Elliott, Grey Elliott and John Stevens in trust for a certain tract of land containing about 300 acres situated on the River Midway known by the Town of Sunbury...."

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<sup>1</sup> Journal of Proceedings in Georgia by William Stephens, pp. 160-161

<sup>2</sup> Book C-1, Colonial Deeds

Mark Carr died in December of 1767, while living at his home between the Turtle River and Little Satilla River.<sup>3</sup> To his son, William, he left a town lot in Frederica (No. One North); to Thomas, a town lot in Frederica (No. 21 North); daughter, Elizabeth (daughter of Elizabeth Rutherford), an island located on the north side of the River Midway and a tract of land on the Main fronting on the island which he purchased from John Cubbage; and to daughter, Judith, the remainder of the estate.

Some Lot Owners: -

Baker, William, 87 and 88  
Bateman, Mary, 252 (to Benjamin Smallwood 1773)  
Burnley, Samuel, 233  
Burnley, Elizabeth, 233 (1767)  
Burnley, Sarah, 234 (1767)  
Burnley, Mary, 236 (1767)  
Dickenson, Paynter; 1767 to son, Thomas  
Campher, Christian, 223 and 204  
Elliott, John  
Osgood, John, 57 (to nephew, Thomas Baker 1773)  
Quarterman, John; to son, Elijah, 1763)  
Simpson, William, 233

The lots were sold in accordance with the terms of conveyance and the Town of Sunbury quickly became a place of considerable size and importance as well as many of the members of the Midway Church and congregation.

In 1762 Sunbury became a port of entry, and a lucrative trade of lumber, rice and indigo was carried on with the West Indies. Goods were shipped to Sunbury as early as 1758. The ship *Venus* carried merchandise from London, England to Sunbury, but it arrived in Sunbury in bad condition.<sup>4</sup>

In 1767 Rev. James Edmonds of South Carolina arrived and made his home in Sunbury. Edmonds was a native of London, born ca 1720. In 1770 he returned to Charles Town where he died April of 1793, aged 73 years.

The first population of Sunbury consisted of members of the Midway Congregational Church. Three public squares, King, Church and Meeting, were built, and a total of 496 Lots surveyed, numbering one through forty. Each Lot measured 70 feet by 130 feet.

Several substantial wharves were constructed and used by merchants such as Kelsell & Spalding, Fisher, Jones & Hughes, Darling & Co., and Lamott.

Rice quickly became king in Liberty County as settlers and absentee landlords planted thousands of acres along the rich Georgia coastline. This county was mostly settled by Puritans and other planters of substance who brought slaves and other servants.

In 1763 Sunbury, with its eighty houses and substantial merchant activity, was made a port of entry by Governor James Wright, who appointed Thomas Carr as collection, and John Martin as the naval officer. Three merchant stores supplies the town and planters in the surrounding county with goods.

In 1773 Sylvanus Robinson resided near Sunbury; also Josiah Bacon, a South Carolina Puritan, locating on the southside of the Newport Swamp, near Sunbury.

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<sup>3</sup> Last Will and Testament of Mark Carr dated 8 June 1767 probated 4 December 1767, pp. 245-247, Will Book A, Colonial Wills

<sup>4</sup> Maritime Contract dated 21 July 1758, Abstracts of Georgia Colonial Deeds, Book J, 1755-1762 by George Fuller Walker, pp. 8

John Davis had a plantation at the head of the Midway River, adjoining that of Parmenus Way, which included 5 tracts on the north side of the Midway River, containing 1,150 acres in all. In 1749, John Davis, late of South Carolina, "petitioned for 500 acres of land on the Island Skeedaway bounding northerly on Mr. John Kellson's land and easterly on Romney Marshes, as he has brought his family and a number of hands with him sufficient to improve such a tract, and likewise being well recommended by Mr. Henry Yonge who was formerly his neighbor in Carolina." (granted)<sup>5</sup>

"Soon after its settlement and organization as a town it rose to considerable commercial importance; emigrants came from different quarters to this healthy Maritime port, particularly from Bermuda; about seventy came from that island, but unfortunately for them and the reputation of the town, a mortal epidemic broke out and carried off about fifty of their number the first year... Of the remainder, as many as were able, returned to their native country... Seven square-rigged vessels have been known to enter the port of Sunbury in one day, and about the years 1769 and 1770 it was thought by many, in point of commercial importance, to rival Savannah...."<sup>6</sup>

Sunbury commanded the rice crop from adjacent swamp regions, the plantations used Sunbury as a port to ship their rice abroad, while commodities were imported as well. Indigo was planted on Colonel's Island. Principal trade occurred between the West Indies and the northern colonies. Rum and sugar came from the West Indies, and rice, corn, peas, indigo, lumber, shingles, live stock, barreled beef and pork was exported.

William Thomson of London hired William Cecil, master of the *Venus*, to carry sixty tons of merchandise freight from London, England to Sunbury. The Maritime contract consisted of a charter party with a penal bond dated 14 January 1758.<sup>7</sup>

The deal was that after the ship was loaded in London, that the *Venus* from the Thames River would sail with the first opportunity of wind and weather, joining the first convoy that was appointed for South Carolina. Capt. Cecil agreed to safely transport Thomson's goods and to unload them within fourteen days after his arrival in Sunbury.

In the meantime, Thomson would harvest rice from his and other plantations. Within forty-two days, Cecil would reload the vessel with rice and other goods, and such other items as Thomson and his agents saw fit. Then, the *Venus* would sail to Cowes in the Isle of Wight (England) and wait ten days to receive orders whether to sail for London, Holland, Hamburg (Germany), or Bremen (Germany). The voyage would end at one of these destinations.

Grey Elliott was the agent for William Thomson of London, and a merchant of Sunbury. As soon as the *Venus* arrived in Sunbury, it was badly in need of repairs, because she ran onground several times during passage. The rice was ready to be loaded, however as it would inevitably decay, another Maritime agreement was made, allowing the parties to wait for the next crop.

Governor Wright complained that trade with the northern colonies was not profitable, as the price for guineas, pistols, etc. was far above their intrinsic value.

By the time of the American Revolutionary War, Sunbury had between eight hundred and one thousand residents who lived the leisurely life, hunting, fishing, sailing, riding and hunting, whose only civil duties consisted of clearing and maintaining the several squares, streets and lanes in common. This trifle work made them exempt from road duty in the parishes of St. John's, St. Andrew's and St. James. <sup>8</sup> During the Revolution, Sunbury was occupied by the Revolutionists as a military post.

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<sup>5</sup> Colonial Records of Georgia by Candler, Vol. VI

<sup>6</sup> Stevens History of Georgia, Vol. I, pp. 453-454

<sup>7</sup> Colonial Deed Book J (1755-1762), pp. 253-7

<sup>8</sup> Act of 26 March 1767, Watkin's Digest, pp. 144

James Maxwell was a resident of St. John's Parish, and John Stevens and John Elliott were members of the Midway Congregational Church.

COLONIAL GEORGIANS  
by Jeannette Holland Austin

There were various merchants in Sunbury. Peter Donworth, a Sunbury merchant, died in 1790 when E. Henry Schmidty, his administrator and Patrick Donworth of Sunbury, surveyor, gave notice to debtors and creditors.<sup>9</sup>

Cornelius Collins was a Collector at the Port of Sunbury; he died in 1791, with Thomas Stone applying for Letters of Administration.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The Georgia Gazette, 1 February 1790

<sup>10</sup> The Georgia Gazette, 27 December 1791