

Chapter 11. War Looms

COLONIAL GEORGIANS

By Jeannette Holland Austin

Mr. Causton's books had been under scrutiny for sometime, now especially as settlers were denied food and necessities. As crop failures continued, *Ocstead* flourished, having ample steers and hogs. While steers were listed in the accounts, Causton maintained that the animals ran wild in the woods, and were lost. Causton himself owned five hundred acres of the best land, which was improved and well stocked with cattle, and it was said that he owned more land than anyone else.

William Stephens had first dined with Causton on his plantation in November of 1737, and described the visit in his journal. Causton had built a very handsome house, fit for any gentleman and he'd made improvements, both for pleasure and profit. There was a pleasant garden, which cut a vista through the woods. Causton developed the finest plantation using trust servants. His mulberry trees were planted in symmetrical groves. In springtime, row after row of white blossoms presaged the countryside. Without compunction he took what he needed from Trust stores, gardens and cowpens, while denying assistance to others. It was no secret that he was a dishonest fellow! But the prevailing drought, sickness and hardships cast him more in the spoken limelight until unrelenting complaints compelled Stephens to act.

The Germans complained that they were harshly dealt with, and did not have either clothing nor provisions given to them. After the servants were interviewed individually, it was determined that their complaints were frivolous and that they had been provided with linens and woolens. But they grew more mutinous and four of the ring-leaders went sent to the log house (jail). Threatened by what would happen if they did not do their duty, the servants were penitent.

Then, a group of Germans dropped an anonymous letter in town. They resided in huts at the out parts of town, however, who were recently seen sitting around campfire far out in the woods, with guns. Rumors circulated about the contents of the anonymous letter, when finally the one who had custody of it notified Secretary Stephens that he was ready to show it. Which he did - he read the very long letter of two or three pages to the Secretary. It was written in loose handwriting, the style copious and flowing, and discussed the many things done to establish the colony, and how it was now self-evident that the original plan was defective; and that General Oglethorpe should be the first to make it better. Many freeholders had cultivated their land with what little substance they had, but were incapable of either staying or going. That the Trustees should defray the expense of shipping these colonists back to England. Those who signed the letter wished it be sent to Oglethorpe, which Stephens agreed to do.

But first, Stephens had other business to attend to. He appointed Thomas Jones to reconcile Causton's accounts. Jones publicly declared that they were so intricate that he believed he would not be able to adjust them. Thus, Causton fostered an immediate dislike for Jones, and moved from his house in town where he resided as Chief Magistrate, going instead to live at *Ocstead*. Causton scurrilously left his employed clerks behind to carry on the work as they pleased. This enraged Jones, and he began quarrelling with Thomas Christie and Robert Williams.¹ Scandal and rumors were the order of the day. Jones continually cast public aspersions on Causton's character, then told Secretary Stephens that he thought Causton intended to escape to St. Christopher's Island onboard Captain Stewart's vessel, *Charles Transport*.

Causton took the offensive by drawing up a paper setting forth his innocence, which he defied the world to disprove! Stephens thought Jones' behavior too harsh, as he still sided with Causton. Causton no longer wined and dined public officials and gentlemen. This meant that Stephens was excluded, and he now avoided Causton as much as possible.

¹ Once, during a heated argument, Williams put his fist into Jones' face and Williams was so distraught that he headed south to find Oglethorpe in order to personally lodge his complaints.

One of Causton's men left his service at *Ocstead* and lodged himself in an old deserted hut on the other part of town. He was a volunteer indenture, with Causton having paid his passage. Now he walked openly in the streets, with a gun slung over his shoulder. When he passed Mr. Parker, the magistrate called out to him, but was ignored. Parker sent Constable Fallowfield to follow him and take his arms away. But the fellow resisted and struggled, clubbing his piece, then attempted to knock down any one who stood in his path. Some blows passed before he was carried off to jail, where he died. He was found lying flat with vomit on his face. The coroner was called to give his opinion as to whether he died from the blows. Suffocation was the verdict.

In January of 1739 Thomas Causton's enemy, Mr. Cooksey, went to court to testify against him, saying that he'd previously left the colony because he was afraid that Causton would arrest him for not repaying the 100 pounds lent him from the Trustee's money. Cooksey had been in colony four years, having settled on 180 acres of Trust Land on the river side. But court was interrupted when some German servants entered the room and declared that they would not leave until all of their demands were satisfied. Thomas Christie reacted by closing the court rather abruptly.²

Later, another dispute arose between Jones and Causton. Causton's stock of several hundred young mulberry trees, were thriving well, and began to grow out pretty good leaves. Mrs. Camuse in the Trust Garden saw that the silkworm season would demand a goodly store of leaves and persuaded Mr. Jones to purchase them from Causton, which he did at the rate of three pence per tree. Mrs. Causton expected to be paid right away and not be issued credit at the store. But events turned when Mr. Jones sent over two or three German girls to gather the leaves, without an overseer present, and while the Caustons were in Savannah. Mrs. Causton used foul language, publicly exclaiming that payment not having been made, and alledged that the trees were spoiled through the ignorance of those sent...that the girls fingers had stript every branch naked. Upon hearing this Jones was furious, and he went to Causton to ask him to control wife's wagging tongue.

But January was not done. A group of colonists in Ebenezer and Savannah whose complaints had gone unremedied, decided to take matters into their own hands and petitioned the Trustees for slaves to be permitted in the colony. Also included were a number of grievances, such as high rents, wanting to name their own bailiffs, and that Constables and Tythingmen being subject only to the orders of the Trustees. In essence, they were weary of local politics. There was chaos in the towns, robbing, stealing, while others were deserting their plantations. The petition aroused the interest of the Scots at New Inverness (Darien), and The Scotch Club was formed.

Thirteen freeholders ran away to Charles Towne³, calling themselves the "Scotch Club", and prepared a pamphlet entitled "*A True Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia in America from the First Settlement to the Present Period*". Mr. Crockatt, then a Carolina Merchant, went to London where he showed it to the Earl of Egmont. But the Trustees decided to ignore it, and Mr. Crockatt published it in London and began selling it for 18 cents a copy. This shocked the Trustees.

One member of the Scotch Club was Hugh Anderson, Esquire, (freeholder) an immigrant from Scotland who paid his own passage, arriving on 27 June 1737. Several months after arriving, he expressed his faith in the support of the Trustees: "....It has pleased God at last to land me in safety at this place with fifteen of family and servants....In general, I am fully satisfied

² 24 January 1739. Colonial Records of Georgia by Candler, Vol. V.

³ In some instances, those who quit the colony and ran off to Carolina during the hardships, returned to the colony and re-applied for land. Most of them went to Charles Towne. The hardships lasted from about 1737 to 1739 and were caused by insufficient foodstuffs in the Trustee's stores, drought, inclement weather and fevers.

that the prudent measures of the Trustees and support of the public will soon bring the Colony in a great measure to answer the expectations of the Nation. As for my own part as by expectations are not high nor my views ambitious, I no ways despair through the blessing of God upon the means of sobriety and industry to live with contentment myself and get needful education to my children, and as what time can be spared from the necessary affairs of life, I will spend in the study of nature and improvements, what discoveries I can make with certainty in my progress, this way I shall presume to communicate to you...."⁴

Hugh was granted Lot No. 178 in Savannah by General Oglethorpe for settling there, and was then made Inspector of the Public Gardens and mulberry plantations. In this office, he corresponded with Mr. Adam Anderson in England (one of the Georgia Trustees), reporting on the condition of the land, etc. One of his statements was that the land called "pine barren" was so bad that the best improver could not subsist without support from the Trustees. The Earl of Egmont welcomed personal observations on the subject of different soils, and Anderson communicated with him.

Initially, Hugh was subsidized by the Stores in Savannah, for settling there. In other words, the store at Savannah was run by Thomas Jones. Most of the colonists being thus subsidized, were instructed to concentrate on mulberry trees and raising of the silk worm. Jones complained bitterly as colonists raised cattle and foodstuffs instead while obtaining as much as they could from the store. The store, could scarcely maintain all the colonists.

Within two years of his arrival, Hugh Anderson found himself bogged down with high quit rents, and local politics. Anderson complained that he could never expect to recover his own pocket expenses. "The land here, Sir, is not so fruitful by far as represented at home. The high grounds are extremely sandy and loose, and the action of the sun so powerful that the strength and substance of the strongest mixtures and manures are soon exhausted, and nothing but an insipid *caput mortuum* of it remains....the cattle and their produce go to the woods, , where they are generally lost or killed. Many have not seen their cattle for several years...The reason is obvious. The woods and swamps are very large and extensive, and it is impossible for poor people to hunt them up, even in Carolina..."⁵

Oglethorpe told him to take his family of 17 persons and servants and settle on St. Simon's Island. But as conditions worsened, he joined a group of persons called "the Scotch Club" and ran away with other dissidents to Charles Towne. Hugh strongly favored Negro slavery in the colony and was quite angry when it was denied. He temporarily survived in South Carolina by lecturing on Botany, but eventually returned to Georgia, having no choice but to return his family to his plantation the *Hermitage*. He told the Trustees the reason that he left was due to hardships, and asked them for sustenance.

Another person who ran away to Charles Towne was John Fallowfield. He first arrived in Savannah on 15 February 1734, where he was granted Lot No. 136, and the following year he was made Collector for Savannah. Fallowfield's hardships originated when one of the three plantations on St. Simon's Island, was burned to the ground, along with all stores, goods, linens, etc. ⁶ His wife, Elizabeth, was walking out to greet him at the time, as he had just come from town with more stores and provisions. There was a little fire in the chimney which quickly caught up after she slammed the door, and it destroyed the house within a few minutes. At some point he was made Second Bailiff of Savannah, because he received a letter instructing him in his

⁴ Letter to the Earl of Egmont 10 August 1737

⁵ Letter of Hugh Anderson to the Trustees dated 15 June 1738; General Oglethorpe's Georgia: Colonial Letters, 1738-1743, Vol. II, edited by Mills Lane

⁶ January of 1738

duties.⁷ Shortly afterwards, he was removed from office because he joined The Scotch Club. When he returned to Georgia with the others, he settled on Hope Island, at the mouth of the Vernon River.

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When a headcount was taken, only 50 persons were found to still live in Savannah. Certain colonists were called to accounting at Westminster, in London, where they told of dismal failures in the colony. The Trustees reacted by sending food and provisions to the stores, and by encouraging settlement.

On 30 January a woman was found dead, cast up by the sea near Tybee. She was the daughter of Major Richards of Purysburgh who had been twice married and her last husband was yet living there. It was said that she had been at Charles Towne and was returning with her two little children, together with four or five other people in the same canoe, when they met with bad weather at Delfuska Sound. The sound was known for having many dangerous shoals, which occasioned great breakers. It was supposed that they drove on them, and every person was lost.⁸

A sloop from Charles Towne arrived with Messrs. Brathwaite, Rutledge, Amian and Fenwick onboard, searching for some runaway Negroes. They demanded that Oglethorpe make restitution. Stephens couldn't help them, so they decided to set off for St. Simon's Island. But the weather would not permit it. So Secretary Stephens took some horses and showed them the countryside. After the excursion, they determined that it was not certain whether Oglethorpe would return to Savannah anytime soon. They had no choice but to leave, and paddled down river to the sloop that waited for them on Cockspur Island.⁹

The long absence of the General was sadly regretted because Savannah was now under the control of malicious malcontents who derided public confidence and ridiculed all hopes of relief from the General. The desperate face of poverty showed itself in fluxes and fevers. Everywhere that Stephens stepped, poor people rag-tagged his heels. He avoided them, knowing full well that no foreign supplies were expected. Wondering why they couldn't slaughter some of the trustees steers in season, he wrote in his Journal on 1 February: "The fatal time was now come, when Mr. Jones found the Stores utterly empty of all Flesh Provision, which it was hoped would not have happened before the General's Presence among us again....Flour and Bread were also nearly exhausted; and what was to be expected next, who could tell?"

Mr. Bradley read the situation and took it upon himself to kill one of the Trustee's largest steers. He claimed that as Mr. Jones would not give supplies from the store, the people were starving, and they wanted him to do the deed. Stephens did not retaliate, but wrote in his journal that Bradley's house was pretentious, and that he had been formerly indicted for killing other folks cattle.

Meanwhile, the organized dissidents were gaining momentum and Stephens knew that he must be kept abreast of all activities, so he began to sit in on the meetings of the Scotch Club at the public house. On 9 February there were 17 or 18 men having a meeting in the public room. Afterwards, Stephens walked home with one of them who told him that his coming that night had put an end to a long debate they had begun among themselves, about some means to be used for making their representation more public in other parts of America, as well as in England. Although his office forbade it, they'd hoped that he would champion the cause. Stephens soon learned that petitions had been drafted and sent to England, as well as advertisements published in Charles Town newspapers. Stephens continued to attend the meetings, knowing that he was unwelcome, because he needed to tell Oglethorpe when he returned to town.

There were so many complaints and problems to which Secretary Stephens turned a deaf ear. Yet discontent was so common-spread that the unpleasant effects of it reached his own

⁷ 25 March 1740 from Benjamin Martyn, Westminster

⁸ Journal of William Stephens

⁹ *ibid*

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personal domesticity. Two of his servant boys ran away, but later returned to one of the huts because he could not survive in the wilderness. Rather than make a public example of it, he decided to whip them privately. Another one of his servants was so lazy that Stephens had him confined to jail. Others became vile and unmanageable, while others were sick. The household was in disarray, and Stephen's own son had to work using his hands.

While Oglethorpe dealt with a court martial within his regiment, William Stephens in Savannah was faced with unsettling confusion and apathy of desertions, fearing Indian attacks, possible Negro insurrection, and escaped prisoners.

On the afternoon of February 13th the people were alarmed with the sudden and unexpected landing of 30 or 40 strange Indians, who went to town before they could assemble a committee to receive them. They were Choctaws, a numerous Nation, which bordered on the French, with whom they had lived with in friendship until lately. Their disputes caused the Chockaws to take the part of the English. They were anxious to see the great man, General Oglethorpe, who was still in the south with his troops. The general policy was to entertain Indians, whenever possible, in order to avoid conflicts. The Indians were taken to the courthouse where they refreshed themselves with pipes and tobacco and were given two biscuits each. The celebration for the evening's festivities began by barbecuring a hog. By good luck, a sloop from New York anchored in the harbour, having good beer onboard. Mr. Jones ran to fetch two or three casks. For the night's lodging, in case of rain, the Indians were showed an empty court house. Otherwise, their choice was to lie around a campsite.¹⁰

Stephens' fears were confirmed as he received word of the insurrection of a large number of Negro slaves belonging to Messrs. Montaigut and de Beaufair on their plantation located on the banks of the Savannah River, within the district of Pursyburg, about a dozen miles above Savannah. The slaves' design was to slaughter their masters and families, as well as all of their white servants, and then make their way as fast as they could to Ft. Augustine. They would plunder the homes and take all weapons.

On 24 February the keeper of the prison told Stephens that one of the prisoners had escaped. Edward Haines, Stephens' servant, was still in jail for laziness.

The new spring brought severe frost, damaging tender plants. As thunder and lightening poured into a heavy rain, settlers feared another year of bad crops. Stephens noticed that the lowlands were filled with standing water, and that the corn fields on his own plantation were drenched. Even so, he required all hands to work to preserve a crop. After a long rainy season, a thick sultry heat and unwholesome air lingered in the skies. They were badly in need of a change in weather, and as the lowlands began to dry up, Stephens was hopeful for a plentiful crop. But now the servants were once again riled by fevers.

3 June. Bailiff Parker complained that his plantation was sadly neglected and that his servants had run off. He asked for a boat and two or three hands to dispatch him to the General "wherever he was". Also, he persuaded Stephen's son, who wanted to travel to England, to go with him in search of the General. They found Oglethorpe with his troops in Frederica. Oglethorpe promised Parker relief, assuring him that he would return to Savannah the beginning of July. But Oglethorpe suspected Stephen's son of being an accomplice in the fraudulent accounting of the wines which remained in Mr. Bradley's cellar. When he returned home, he told his father that his character had been deeply stained by Mr. Jones.¹¹

25 June was the Grand Anniversary of Free Masons everywhere. Rev. Mr. Norris gave a sermon on the occasion, then marched alongside public officials from church in solemn order to dinner at a public house. Dr. Tailfer, loving pre-eminence, led the procession of persons wearing red ribbons on their bosoms as badges of office, while a train of less than a dozen persons followed wearing white gloves and aprons.¹²

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² *ibid*

The widow Germain had come over in Captain Thomson's vessel, bringing with her two children, one a priest, and one by which she expected Mr. Turner to pay her a rich legacy, gave a depressing view of life at Frederica. The legacy was not forthcoming, and she was so disappointed that she resolved herself to go return to England if her passage was paid.

She said that the country was healthy, in so much that she was the only widow of 60 families at Frederica; that she had a house and small garden, the 8th part of an acre was enclosed and cultivated, out of which she sold last year to the value of 40 shillings in greens. That the people were so reduced as to feed upon alligators. Yet at other times 12-pound bass sold for 4 pence, and eggs at 4 pence a dozen, a chicken at market for a shilling, etc. That the common bread of the place is Indian wheat, that the tenure of lands is in great need of labor, that she planted a mulberry in her little garden that grew wonderfully. Cattle and hogs thrive there, but they run wild into the woods and swamps. That a new storehouse was building in Frederica, and the Germans were employed in it. A sad thing to be so long without a church or preacher, except the Regiment's Chaplain, Mr. Dyson, who was a drunkard. That the felled timber and grain raised on the land is taken to the public store and the people can have credit thereon. Otherwise, no shipping or trade comes to the town.

A long hot dry spell passed into August, and the fevers continued. Heavy rains resumed once again damaging crops, and the mill at Old Ebenezer was flooded. Stephens rode on horseback to watch one side of the mill sink away into a muddy hole. The stores had no fresh provisions to give to the servants there, and they had to sustain themselves on bread. In September another heavy rain of thundering and lightening poured out across the landscape, and people shut themselves up, fearful of an approaching hurricane.

Mr. Levett and Captain Brixy, the master of a vessel, were accused of murdering a mate while intoxicated. Afterwards, they all claimed that the deceased had resolved to go ashore without the master's leave, and that as he stepped from the deck to the ladder his foot missed the boat and he fell into the water and drowned. However, the corpses' flesh was either wounded with a fork or a pair of compass. The magistrates met to hear the case. It was decided that the officers had killed him first, then tossed him overboard. Both men were condemned to be hanged. On the 3rd of August a guard was dispatched to take the prisoners to the gallows, which stood on a bluff near the water. The freeholders were called to arms by the beat of drums, and within an hour more than seventy persons had appeared. At the gallows, Brixy, the Master, behaved very resolutely, confessing nothing. "He went up the ladder more nimbly than the hangman, fastened the rope to the beam himself; then, turning to the spectators, told them that he was satisfied to die. Levett protested being hanged, insisting that he was sick and weak at the time, and asleep when it happened. Levett gained the sympathy of the onlookers. As he was led to the foot of the ladder, the magistrates decided that they would wait for Oglethorpe to return and rule on the matter. Reprieved, Levett was returned to jail.

1739. Rations were discontinued in Frederica and townspeople and soldiers blamed Oglethorpe for it. In February, a soldier, Martin, who had lately arrived with some passengers from Gibraltar, accused Oglethorpe of cheating him of many pounds. Oglethorpe had discharged him for unhealthiness, after being salivated, where he lived idly.

An assassination attempt began among some Roman Catholic soldiers in the regiment against General Oglethorpe. They resented protestants entering the colony. One of the soldiers approached the fort and was insolent. Captain McKay was standing nearby and drew his sword. The man fought him for it, quickly breaking it in half, then threw the hilt at McKay's head. Then he grabbed a loaded gun screaming "One and All!" He ran back into the barracks with five conspirators following on his heels. While they ran, they fired at the General. A ball whizzed beside Oglethorpe's ear, and his face was scorched by the powder. Another soldier fired at Oglethorpe, but missed, while another tried to stab him. Oglethorpe sprang into action, unsheathed his sword and parried the thrust. In trying to escape being cut, the mutineers fell backwards and were overcome by some rangers. They were locked in chains. For this mutiny, the

conspirators were court-martialed, found guilty, and then shot.¹³ The following day, after the trial, some soldiers in Oglethorpe's regiment deserted. Oglethorpe sent Mr. Cadogan, a Cadet, to Savannah, in search of them. Then he went to his tent and wrote a sarcastic letter to Alderman Heathcote in London. "I am here in one of the most delightful situations as any man could wish to be. A great number of Debts, empty magazines, no money to supply them, numbers of people to be fed, mutinous soldiers to command, a Spanish Claim and a large body of their Troops not far from us."

A report came from the French that neighboring Indians intended to cut themselves off from all the white people who lived amongst them. Their purpose was to deter traders from trading in the Nation. But the Dog King assured Mr. Willy, an Indian trader who was stationed at a small fort in the Creek Nation to observe the Indians who claimed that they would never fight with the French, but had rather die with the English. Oglethorpe rode horseback into the Creek Nation to make treaties with them and thus prevent them from allying with the Spanish. The Creeks told Oglethorpe that upon their concession to the Trustees of the Sea Coast Islands, they rightfully possessed all lands as far as the St. John's River. Still, the redskins wanted to maintain goodwill with Oglethorpe and conceded additional lands, especially around Augusta. Among the Indian Traders at Augusta was John Musgrove, and after he died, his widow, Mary, received lands from Tomochichi. The occasion was celebrated with a barbecue consisting of several Indians and William Stephens who recorded the land transaction.

But another problem surfaced when the Indians told Oglethorpe that they had been poisoned by unlicensed rum traders who infected thousands with smallpox. Thousands of Indians died. As long as Tomochichi lived, the peace was kept among whites and Creeks. But time was growing short. Tomochichi lay dying.

The Spanish sent their Indians to plunder the colony. Oglethorpe was promised troops from South Carolina, but as yet none had arrived. Although Oglethorpe continued to press for recruits, the prospect of sending Carolinian regiments into Georgia was doubtful. There were only 5,000 fighting men to a staggering population of 22,000 Negroes. As rumors of invasion from the Spanish escalated, three of Oglethorpe's own servants ran away, and five more soldiers deserted. Benjamin Martyn, Secretary to the Trustees, asked that a supply of forces and arms be sent to Georgia to protect the province against threats of invasion. Citizen-soldiers bragged that they expected a successful fight with the Spanish, but were worried when they heard that there were 1,500 Spanish troops stationed at Ft. Augustine.

Two years earlier Oglethorpe had raised a regiment of redcoats in England. He was given the 42nd Regiment of Foote, known as "Oglethorpe's Regiment", which consisted of 250 men from Gibraltar, 300 men recruited from England, and 45 men from the tower of London. Including earlier soldiers, this placed about 1,000 men at his disposal. But more regimental problems confronted him as he discovered that some of the soldiers in his Regiment had served in the Irish Regiments in France and Spain and killed the officers, then escaped into foreign service.

"8 September. Very sudden and unexpected News, of open War being declared with Spain, was brought us by a Sloop that arrived here this Day, with some Provisions to sell, from Rhode-Island. The Master of which reported, that the *Tartar Pink* sailed out of England the 17th of June by Order of the Government, being sent Express, to inform the Provinces in the Northern American of it..."¹⁴

Squabbles and final decisions or rulings were frequently held in limbo until General Oglethorpe could be in Savannah. One such incidence was a privateer, Capt. Davis who prepared to take his sloop anchored at Tybee Island to trade at Ft. Augustine. As War had been declared with Spain, Stephens was alarmed, and immediately sent his Magistrates with an order to prevent sailing. Davis' temper got the best of

¹³ Collections of Georgia Historical Society, Vol. III, p. 62

¹⁴ Journal of William Stephens, dated 18 September 1739

him and he dared them hold his vessel in port. Finally, he was told to give bond in the amount of 500 pounds, until General Oglethorpe came to Savannah to rule. Davis made a convenient interpretation of the bond, that it referred only to his sloop, so he set about to hire another vessel. The Magistrates did not trust Davis, as it was evident to them that he was sneakily loading his sloop.

Davis was sleeping in a public house and convincing others to sail with him. One was Mr. Foster, who was caught putting baggage in a boat. A guard quickly secured the vessel and cargo. Davis excused himself by saying that he'd intended to sail to Tybee Island for the benefit of change of air, where he would find lodgings and await the General. But he was taken to the log cabin where he was confined.

Thomas Christie, who was absent during these proceedings, complained that Davis was held on groundless suspicion. He had long since joined forces with idlers, and disgruntled citizens who complained about every little happenstance. Stephens wrote in his Journal that "this poor, weak Man, having his Vanity tickled, and being persuaded that his Knowledge in the Law was superior to the others his Associates in the Magistracy, whicfh they ought to pay an implicit Regard to, but did not; he became peevish, and instead of giving any Assistance to the publick Affairs carrying on, he advised with none but those, who never approved of any Thing...So that by his thus withdrawing himself, the greatest Weight of civil Power to secure the Peace, fell on Mr. Parker's Share almost totally for the present...."¹⁵

Everyone was anxious to see Oglethorpe, and went to the waters edge to await his arrival, which was a process lasting several days. As his boat came ashore, the cannon was fired, and about fifty freeholders grabbed their arms. His face was still pale from an illness he had suffered over the months, but they hovelled around him, accompanying him up the bluff, anxious to foster their own individual complaints.

The Magistrates were right to wait for masterful engineer of human and political affairs - General Oglethorpe. Oglethorpe skillfully turned the Davis situation to his advantage, by commissioning Davis as a privateer to plunder the Spaniards, as before he was to succor them. It was well known that Davis had a good knowledge of their coasts and was capable of sufficiently annoying and distracting the Spanish. These tactics were deployed as well by using his friends, the Lower and Upper Creek Indians, whom he had been visiting for some weeks now, enlisting their aid against the enemy, when his fell sick with fever. In the meantime Cadet Eyre was sent with instructions to commission Samuel Brown, a trader among the Cherokees, to bring down several hundred Indians.

13 September. The worse fears were realized as an express arrived from Port Royal not only confirming that war had been declared against Spain, but that an insurrection had occurred with Carolina negroes revolting. The insurrection began at Stonoe, a place which was midway between Charles Town and Port Royal), where the negroes had forced a large store to furnish them with arms and ammunition; killed all the family on a plantation and various other white people, burning and destroying all that came in their way. The countryside was in flames, and the Militia of about twenty men had caught up with ninety negroes and taken them prisoners. They feared that the remaining negroes would make their way south to Augustine and join the Spanish. Late in the evening Capt. Norbury and Ensign Cadogan arrived from St. Simon's, enroute to Port Royal, were alarmed to hear of the news of war.¹⁶

18 September. As disgruntled colonists continued to run off to Charles Town for a more comfortable life, they discovered themselves in the midst of raging fever. Large numbers of persons died each week of a contagious, malignant fever - the dreaded smallpox. Among the runaways counted were Mr. Coates, Mr. Muer, Mr. Delgrass and Mr. Holmes, late freeholders from Savannah.

¹⁵ Journal of William Stephens. 10 September 1739

¹⁶ Journal of William Stephens

With Oglethorpe now in Savannah, the spirit seemed to change. With the prospect of war at hand, a group of gentleman volunteers formed an independent company of militia, and recruited Scotch servants whose terms had expired. Also, the Creeks were anxious to draw blood and take some French scalps, because they had recently attacked one of their northern villages. Messages arrived that a party of Chickasaws and Euchies had volunteered to join Oglethorpe against the Spanish.

But almost two years of drought and weathered crops had taken its toll. The people were starving, and there were no supplies at the public stores. With war looming on the horizon, Trust funds were drained, and entrepreneurs were drawing largely upon their own fortunes to equip the troops. So Oglethorpe did what he had to do.

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