

The Ills of Sir Francis Bathurst

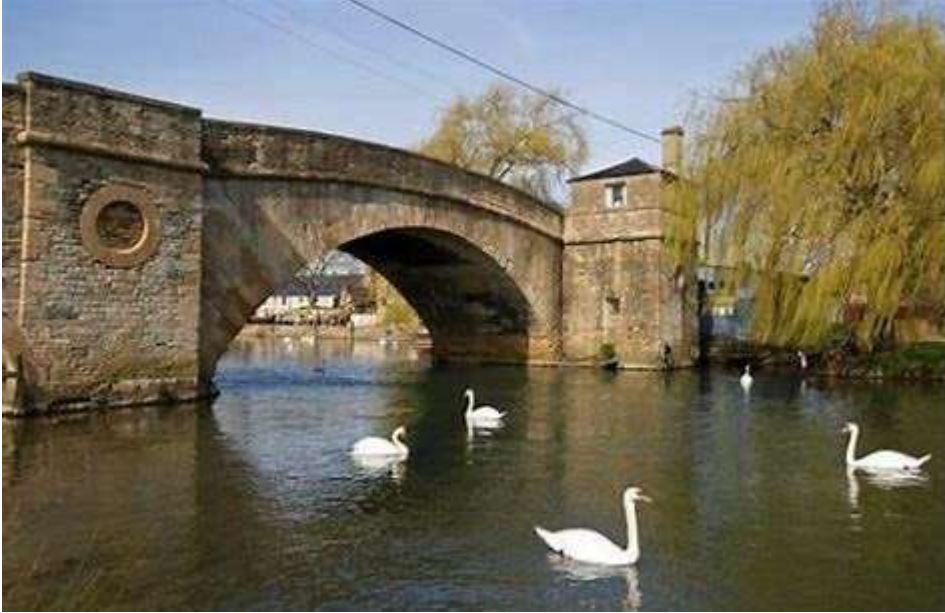
By Jeannette Holland Austin

Preface

This is a true story.

The colonization of Georgia had its pitfalls. After losing a dear artist friend to smallpox after he was cast into prison for non-payment of debts, James Edward Oglethorpe joined a group of 22 entrepreneurs who sought to create a silk industry in the new colony. Oglethorpe gave himself as colonizer and military general, a task which required fifteen years of his most promising years. His idea was that he could take the poor off the streets of London for a better life in the New World. The result was that impoverished persons, some from Fleet Prison in London, and large religiously persecuted groups from Europe flowed into the colony. The lifestyle which they embraced was one of hardship and turmoil, and eventually war with Spain. During the early years, survival in the humid climate was difficult, and those who indentured themselves as servants, fell ill and died. During droughts and rainspells, people ran formed malecontent groups and away to Charleston, South Carolina. Lazy persons suffered the most. The facts which surround the story of the Bathurst family are true. Sir Francis Bathurst (5th Baronet) of Lechlade was born and baptised there in February 1675. He succeeded his father Edward, 4th Baronet, as the 5th Baronet and married Francis his cousin, Frances Peacock. After her death he married Mary Pember. Son of Edward Bathurst II and Mary Bathurst Husband of Lady Frances Bathurst and Mary Bathurst Father of Lawrence Bathurst IV and Robert Bathurst V Brother of Mary Turner Occupation: Sir Francis obtained a grant of 200 acres near Savannah in 1734.

Pictured is Lechlede in England.



Lechlade 1734

Lechlade, a little town at the southern edge of Cotswolds in Gloucestershire, was situated on the Thames River. The town was named after the River Leach which joins the Thames near the Trout Inn and St. John's Bridge, 68 miles from London.

The weather was typically mild with a cloudy overcast when Sir Francis Bathurst crossed the bridge on foot and walked briskly towards an ancient manor house situated on a hill overlooking the Thames. From a distance, it had its air of elegance, however, a closer approach revealed the crumbling stones laid by his ancestor. Sir Francis was the 5th baronet, having succeeded his father, Edward. In lieu of his present circumstances, his concern might have been for his eldest son, Lawrence, who was destined to secede him and claim the title of the 6th baronet. His lordship had already sold off many of the assets of his estate, including the surrounding orchards and gardens with only the old shackled tenant houses remaining to serve as a reminder that his father before him had managed poorly. All to pay off all long secession of creditors who held the debts of his father and those before him. The creditor visited that morning laid claim to a debt which promised imprisonment for the baron's family. The baron could have only reduced the debt somewhat, but as he planned to leave the country, held fast to his purse.

Although his marriage to his first cousin, Frances Peacock, had been wise, her dowry has been spent early in the marriage. The fifty-nine year old baron dreaded telling her the consequences should the family not leave the country. The plan, still forming in his mind, had yet to be

solidified with one of the twenty-two entrepreneurs investing in the silk business in the new Colony of Georgia. He entered the manor, pausing only the corridor to examine a series of dusty family portraits and iron candelabras hanging on the wall. His father's portrait revealed a baron dressed in the scarlet and purple clothes which distinguished the nobility from commoners. A note was delivered him by a servant on a tarnished silver tray. He quickly read it, then whispered something in her ear. It was from the Earl of Egmont stating that he would entertain Sir Francis later that afternoon on the subject of debarkation upon a vessel departing the port of Gravesend several days hence.

Sir Francis ascended the stairs and found Fannie (as he called her) sitting quietly in the ladies parlor making tatting to add to an old gown. The family expenditures on entertainment had been precarious for a number of years, especially with their eldest son Lawrence attending Oxford University. He paused in the doorway to feast his eyes on his young wife. He had waited late in life to wed. Fanny had provided a modest dowry which was quickly absorbed in the debts of his father's estate. She provided the Earl with five healthy children, the youngest being five years of age. He thought of these things as he observed the fine stitches made by her slender fingers into a linen cloth. She was a good wife, quiet, and without complaint. His decision to leave the country was one of utter frustration and desperation, yet she accepted it as easily as a stroll in the park. He had the urge to take her into his arms and apologize for his failures, but did not wish to alert her as to how truly frightened he was.

"The Earl of Egmont hath summoned me to London," he said quietly.

"When will you know?"

"I shall have my answer this afternoon. My understanding is that the Prince of Wales is docked at Gravesend and already taking on passengers. Wherein lies our opportunity. "

"It is all happening so fast," she said, laying her stitching aside and lowering her large sad eyes, thought of their son Lawrence, whom they would leave behind. He would soon return from Oxford University and the large gloomy rooms and peeling plaster of the ancestral home would soon be his, as well as the title of Earl upon his father's death. "Do you think that Lawrence can manage?"

"He hath a chance, with the stipend that he will receive as a law clerk. Please pardon me, my dear, for I must go," Sir Francis said. He ascended a layer of stairs and went to his bed chamber where he washed his face and hands in a bowl of murky water from the Thames. The exercise reminded him of the inconvenience of water being delivered to the Lechlade residents through hollowed-out tree trunks running beneath the streets. At times, sand lay in the bottom of his basin. He quickly doffed a worn vest, replacing it with a newer purple satin and matching long coat. Then covered his graying hair with a stylish white periwig and selecting a proper long coat,

used the back stairs to ascend to the carriage house. Two fine roan mares were being attached to the family coach by one of the servants who would be left behind, and he patiently waited for his ride to London .

The Earl of Egmont

The Earl of Egmont was a recent title afforded to John Perceval, the 1st Viscount Perceval, an Anglo-Irish politician, born in county Cork, Ireland and educated at Westminster School in London and Magdalen College in Oxford. He was appointed leader and spokesman for a group of peers who acquired a Charter for the Georgia Colony from the King. The peers, all seeking their fortune, were keen on establishing a silk industry, equal to the superior silks woven in China. Among the group was James Edward Oglethorpe, deemed as founder and who would reside in the Colony for fifteen years and fight a war for England against the Spanish at St. Augustine, Florida. All of the twenty-two were not present that day; only a select few who were interviewing prospective settlers. The politician in the Earl had acquired a lease on a public building of Palladian architecture as an office to hold the interviews. Sir Francis stepped out of his coach and did little to observe the palladian architecture with venetian windows. Once inside the building, he was led to the interviewing room where the trustees were engaged in various conversations with persons of obvious lowly status. He was seated next to one of those sorts being interviewed by the Lord Perceval, and was privy to an interesting conversation.

Henry Trent was a prisoner brought in from Newgate Prison as a likely candidate. His ragged appearance suggested that he had apparently been incarcerated for a number of years, yet was still in his prime years and talked a good game. When asked about his trade, he told an elaborate tale about his success as a exporter on the river Thames. In the end, the Earl allowed that the trustees were willing to pay his passage, but that he would be required to indent himself as a servant for seven years. Trent seemed disappointed in the prospects of being bound into servitude, and rolling his eyes, rangled with the Earl, insisting that his services would be of great value to the colony. The Earl, anxious to get on Sir Francis Bathurst, his last interview, waved a document under Trent's nose. Seeing he was about to lose his opportunity, Trent quickly agreed.

Sir Francis presented himself with a slight bow. The Earl, feeling that he had heard every sordid scheme in London, quickly observed the peruke and purple satin vest. It was rare that one of his peers present himself before the trustees.

"Sir Francis Bathurst, how is your family?"

Sir Frances, reluctant to blurt out the details of his plight, responded with light conversation.

"My son, Lawrence is soon to graduate from Oxford with a degree in the legal profession. He is my heir and will assume control of the family estates Lechlade."

"Tell me, Sir Francis, do you plan to pay for the passage of your family and servants?"

"Yes sir, for my wife, two daughters and a younger son."

Are you taking any servants abroad?"

"No sir."

"How old are you, sir?"

The conversation was moving too quickly. Sir Francis coughed and he attempted to clear his throat. He was well past his prime, and remembering the theme of the Trent interview, realized that he could offer little to the good of the colony. "Fifty-nine, my Lord."

The Earl paused, and allowed himself to more fully observe the aging gentleman. The committee had interviewed other members of peerage desperate to leave the country, he thought. Yet, Sir Perceval's recent raise in rank had done little towards fattening his own purse. He was persuaded to become one of the entrepreneurs in raising a colony to produce silk, an industry they hoped would replenish their personal fortunes for generations to come. The founder, James Edward Oglethorpe, a member of Parliament and philanthropist, had been in the colony for over a year building the filature and staffing it with German gardeners and Italian weavers, helping the poor lost souls from London to construct a village, and much more.

Oglethorpe was motivated by a young artist friend who was cast into debtor's prison where he died. He was very vocal on giving the poor street peasants an opportunity to better themselves. How often had Sir Francis wrangled with himself over his aging body and the incommensurable prospects of starting over? If the truth be known, he was well into his forties when he settled on a marriage to his first cousin, Frances Peacock. He had young children, Now, seated before the Earl inside his office, suddenly realized that he possessed none the skills of ordinary men. Sir Francis struggled deep inside of himself for answers and remembered the glowing report which the man Trent gave of himself when he had nothing to offer.

"I am an expert horseman, good at tracking and chasing, and if caught, killing the red fox," Sir Francis said. But the Earl's retort cut sharp the ego.

"Can you fell a tree with an axe, or till the ground?"

"No sir," he groaned, "but I should like to make good of the opportunity in the new colony."

"I can give you 150 acres of land and a servant equal to every person that you transport. That would be four indentured servants under your care. At the end of seven years, you would owe them 50 acres each of land and whatever their needs."

Sir Francis breathed easily. "Thank you, my lord."

"There is one other matter; you will be responsible to plant a rather large crop of mulberry trees for the benefit of our silk industry in the colony. When the trees mature, the leaves may be harvested for use in breeding the silk worms nurtured at the filature. This crop will eventually net you a small income if that is of any satisfaction to you."

Embarkation

Sir Francis scurried around all week collecting small debts from friends. It was awkward, however, his desperation to fill his purse drove him on. Meanwhile, Fannie collected two changes of clothing for each child and packed a large iron-bound trunk with bare necessities. Her last chore was dribbling a long sorrowful letter to Lawrence, expressing her regrets for leaving the country. "I can only imagine a wilderness country of savages and wild animals," she penned before remembering to add a kitchen pot and kettle to the trunk.

Sir Francis dressed in a woollen long coat that October morning of 1734. Around his neck was a plaid scarf tied in a loose knot. He thought of himself in the same room as the wretched peasants who appealed so desperately to Lord Pervercel for free passage. From this time forward, he reflected, he would not live amongst his peers, rather with failed peasants, criminals, and the scum of the earth. He pitched his peruke into the trash, along with some family jewelry. Then, having second thoughts, retrieved the jewelry as possible trade items among the Creek Indians he'd heard were abundant in the region. Also, perhaps the Spanish conquistadors might come up from Florida and impose upon the colony. Least wise, he might have certain advantages. Likewise, the flamboyant purple satin vest was also included in the loot. Other than that, he imagined himself tromping around clad in old clothing and leather hunting boots.

Already the cold wintry winds were bearing down upon the streets of northwest Kent as the family carriage found its way to the deep-sea port of Gravesend. The pier was already crowded with immigrants clamoring to get onboard the Prince of Wales, most of them clad in one of the two woollen outfits furnished by the trustees. It was a depressing sight to view so many poor hungry countrymen anxious to leave the country, but Sir Francis, accustomed to peasants crowding Lechlade, used the tip of his silver-knobbed cane to create a passage. The driver and coachman carried the huge trunk to the pier.

"Allow my family room," his authoritarian voice echoing across the waters.

Trent, spotting Sr Francis in the distance, waved heartily.

"Who is that person?" Fannie asked. "Should you wave back?"

"No response is forthcoming. He is no one important, my dear."

The chest was stacked on the pier alongside other tonnage. Francis turned to his driver.

"Return the carriage to Lechlade," he said, "Sir Edward will soon return home from Oxford. He is your master now."

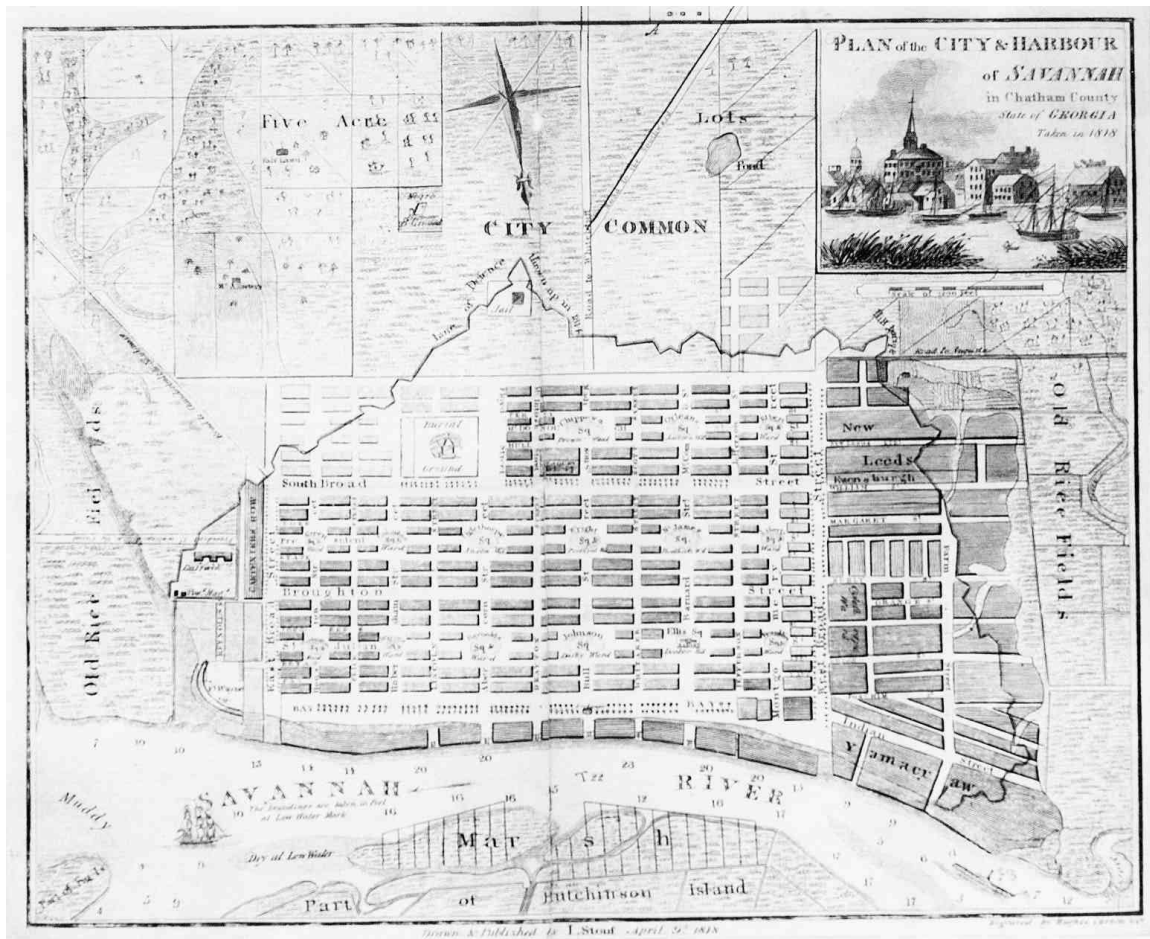
As people stepped aside for the baron and his family to board the vessel, he gained proper respect from the captain. The Earl's presence onboard signalled a generous passage fee, at least twenty pounds. "I hath several trunks," he told the captain pointing to the baggage. It was a dreary day, with thin layers of fog hanging low in the sky. It was all the English had ever known, so they ignored the clouds blocking out the sunlight and sending instead a chilling drizzling rain. As the winter drew down upon the English and the Prince of Wales weighed anchor, the passengers went below deck and claimed their space, unaware that they were bound for the milder weather of the Georgia colony. But the voyage would be challenging.

A space and bedding had already been prepared for the peerage class. It would be shared with a recently appointed magistrate, Thomas Causton returning from London with a cargo of books on the English Law. However, Causton, with his cockney dialect, was indistinguishable from the peasants. But he insisted that he was worthy of sharing quarters with his lordship and swore to use his powerful influence in assisting Sir Francis assuming title to his land grant and acquiring proper sawyers to build a house.

The voyage was purported to take six to eight weeks. The captain's costs were modest. He expected to feed hundreds of passengers for a few pennies per week. In return for the food he supplied, the master was ordinarily well reimbursed. On this first voyage, the trustees paid passage for Thomas Causton, yet he bragged that upon landing he expected to pay three to five pounds.

The ocean passage required six weeks to eight weeks under favorable conditions. Although the wind and tide frequently delayed debarkation, the vessel was well on its way. Sir Francis took an evening stroll on deck. Soon after debarkation, the gloomy clouds and drizzling rain lifted itself high into the sky and revealed an orange harvest moon, and something Sir Francis had never before imagined, an opaque greenish sea of glass. During the day time, a school of dolphins treadtred alongside the vessel while sailors fished for albacore. The transparency of the crystal sea encompassed by luminous blue skies was a reality he had never known. Suddenly, his concept of choppy seas and storms dissipated, and he was no longer afraid.

Savannah



If the truth be known, he was well into his forties when he settled on a marriage to his first cousin, Frances Peacock. The elder children, Robert and Mary, acclimated very well during the voyage, but the youngest daughters, Elizabeth and Patty, suffered from stomach viruses. Mary was sixteen years of age when they arrived in the colony. Anxious to find a husband, her eyes were upon the tanned muscled arms of the sailors as they performed their duties. The children creened anxiously at the view of Yamacraw Bluff and its wooden dock as they approached the village. The plan of Savannah had been sketched by Oglethorpe as he walked from Charleston alongside his first voyages of settlers into the area because the captain had never been further south and was uncertain of sand dunes and shallow streams. The plan actually was part and parcel of some architectual drawings of his artist friend whom he had failed to get released from prison. The new sketches would serve as a reminder.

The captain stood at the helm collecting transportation fees from the passengers as they departed.

One of the first items of interest was the sight of so many persons clad in the plain gray woollen

fabric donated by the trustees despite the fact that it was a mild December afternoon. Also, as they reached the top of the hill, they were greeted by people bartering their vegetables and wares. Robert pointed at some large boards being traded for tin pans.

Patty stumbled along beside her mother, unsettled by all of the confusion. "Where is our house?" Patty asked.

Fanny did not answer. She had her own difficulties keeping the children together in a large crowd. It was too much. She felt rushed. They came to the end of the selling and passed through a district of land which Oglethorpe had labeled Johnsons Square. A dug well provided water for the settlers and there were watering troughs for horses and mules. A long line of people were lined up in front of the well with ewers, urns and jugs. The square was cluttered with palm huts used for sleeping while the sawyers built wooden houses.

Thomas Causton caught up with the Bathursts, anxious to exhibit himself as an authority figure to the Earl. After all, he had spent a life-time as an outcast in the dreg districts of London. The trustees had been unimpressed with him, but he managed to be among the first voyagers where his loud, authoritarian voice caused the passengers to listen and brought order amidst chaos.

He impressed Oglethorpe to the extent that he was appointed a magistrate to establish law and order in the new colony. In that capacity he had commandeered several palm huts be kept vacant for jails. Several had been violated, and he cast out some duds and toiletries. He waved to Sir Francis.

"My lord, please sir, use these huts for your family whilst your house is constructed," he urged .

Sir Francis frowned disapprovingly. He had not expected to sleep so well exposed to others, on the ground shielded by an umbrella of palm leaves. Fannie decryed her disappointment by squeezing his arm.

"My home was recently completed. Come and be my guest at Ockstead," Causton said embarrassed. "We 'ave to make the best of it, unless, of course.... there were some sawyers onboard amongst the servants waiting to be indentured."

"Will I have first choice?" Sir Francis asked.

"Yes sir, I will guarantee that you have first selection."

"Where are the indentures now?"

"They were taken to the stockade," he answered, while pointing to a fenced area in the woods.

The stockade

The afternoon sun was brought the December temperatures up to comfort. Sir Francis, leaving his family with the huts, removed his coat and walked slowly towards a stockade cluttered with more than fifty antsy creatures don in their shirt sleeves, waiting to be culled out by a new master.

"Do you trust those peasants?" Sir Francis asked noting that none of the indentures were shackled.

Causton shrugged. "Where would they go?" Oh, I suppose that some would run off, if it were not for the constable standing there. Also, my cargo consists of much needed rifles and ammunition."

Sir Francis observed that the lot of them appeared to be street beggars and some poor children released from work houses. "I do not want the children," he said firmly.

"Yes, of course," Causton sputtered, "ye want tillers of the ground."

Trent was engaged in conversation with several people when he recognized Sir Francis and made his way to the edge of the stockade; and upon catching the eye of the Earl, threw up his hands excitedly and grinned. "My lord, we meet again!"

"Who is that fellow?" Causton asked.

"I overheard him as he made his case to the trustees. Although he was not convincing, still he managed to persuade the trustees to pay his passage."

"What skills does he claim?"

"He told them that he could hunt game, cut wood, plant gardens, and construct barns."

"If you need an overseer, you would do well to choose me," Trent said loudly, as he moved closer to the fence.

Sir Francis moon-halfed his eyes and lifted his nose. "Do I know you, sir?"

"We met in the interview room of the trustees. Remember? I am Trent!"

"Trent, what are your skills?" Trent enunciated a long list of employers and jobs. "I see that ye are acquainted with some of the passengers."

"Oh yes, sir, I could easily select the best farmers for ye new place!"

Trent did not offer himself as a hard-laboring farmer, rather as an overseer. Causton squinted his eyes and examined the wide grin spread across his lips. Although he was slender and short of statue, the sloped eyebrows and wrinkled forehead suggested a certain experience drawn

from age. Like so many others, Trent had chosen to be a servant in the New World because he was down on his luck.

"If his lordship were to choose you, would you be able to recommend two farmers and a cook?" Trent nodded.

Causton turned to the Earl. "Do ye trust this fellow enough to work for ye?"

Sir Francis glanced back towards his wife and children who appeared to be well displaced in the crowding flow of new immigrants. He groaned. "I must do what I can to make my family comfortable."

Ockstead



That evening Causton took the family to a clapboard house overlooking a bluff over a wide, bristling creek just west of town. Like so many of the wooden homes, the construction had been rushed, the foundation was propped up with large stepping stones and it still had no porch nor columns. They ascended stairs to reach a narrow hall way offset by various rooms. Sir Francis silently counted the rooms and wondered where they were sleep.

Martha Causton, his wife, sitting in a parlor with her sewing, greeted them. She had not quite become accustomed to the solitary effects of life in the woods and the sight of a lord and his lady caused her to withdraw somewhat. She prepared a dinner that evening of trout and potatoes. Causton was embarrassed when all that he had to serve was English beer, explaining "strong drink is not allowed in the colony." Martha Causton gave up her bedroom to Sir Francis and made pallets for the children. It was the beginning of winter, and a fire was lit in the fireplace which brought some comfort to the wearisome Earl and his children. As they snuggled

under the blankets, Fannie expressed her appreciation that they would be well taken care of during the cold, rainy months.

The following morning Causton took Sir Francis on a tour of his farm, pointing to several acres of mulberry seedlings. "We planted those seedlings last spring, and already they are a couple of feet in height!"

"How do you manage, with only the prospect of nurturing trees?"

"That is what the trustees expect of us, is to raise the trees. Other than that, I hath a milch cow and couple of horses in the barn. Others claim they cannot survive, so are raising cattle. But now I must go in town and perform my duties return later this . When I evening, shall bring a plat of your land grant and we can make plans from there."

Causton did not say so, but Martha was prompting him to influence the location of Bathurst's 200 acres near Ockstead on Augustine Creek, so that she would have neighbors.

The Land Grant

The first two months of winter were wet and chilly. Sir Francis wore his full bottomed wig and long coat every day while Fannie, taking her cue from Martha Causton, combed her hair neatly in a bun and covered it with a white ruffled lappet cap. After the rain settled into colder days, Sir Francis borrowed one of Causton's horses and rode to town. He took his Brown Bess Musket with extra large triggers so that he could shoot game while wearing his gloves. One of this first purchases in the market place would be ammo, 22 beaver pellets. It was a clear day for hunting.

The woods was full of rabbits and squirrels. But first, he planned to seek out the employment of some sawyers. He reached inside his trousers and feeling the half-full purse attached by a hemp string, withdrew a paper listing what was needed. The negotiations with the sawyers were more difficult than he anticipated. He glanced around the village and counted the number of hewn boards sitting in mud holes and houses under construction. Fiinally, he persuaded two sawyers to begin construction in the early spring, but, they considered his peerage and charged more. Ironically, just about everywhere that he shopped, his title was a consideration.

He went to the stockade to speak with Trent. As there was no grass to sit upon, the indentures stood around water holes complaining with one another. Trent, anxious to leave the stockade, hustled over to the edge of the fence.

"I need to speak to you, Trent," Sir Francis said glumly. "I am not ready to get you released . I have no where to put you yet. There is a shortage of sawyers and it will be spring before they agreed to construct a house and barns on my 200 acres."

"Let me speak with them as I am sure to be convincing."

"Patience, Trent. My wife and children are also being inconvenienced."

Trent wrinkled up his forehead and slammed his fist hard upon a wooden post.

"I do not owe you an explanation, Mr. Trent!"

The ride home that afternoon seemed unduly burdensome. The glumness in his cheeks displayed an apparent disappointment in Trent's bad temper as well as the diminishing size of his purse. As he crossed over the creek, he shot several squirrels. If there was any satisfaction derived from it, he did not show it.

When he came near Causton's bluff, he recognized the site red scarf Causton had tied around a bush as a marker of his 200 acres. He climbed down from his mare and led her down to the creek. While she drank, his eyes followed the curvatures of the creek. He figured that his first assignment to Trent would be to construct a flat boat. He would build a home on the crest of the knoll above the creek, a vantage point where he could observe the business of sending his crops to market. The winter was fading away now, and he imagined a cornfield behind the house and barn for storing fodder. He had already created certain debt in town with the purchase of two mares and a milch cow, however his creditors assured him that the long growing season would deliver a profit. He bent down and swooped up a fist of black soil. Yes, he nodded to himself, a long unvaporous season of sunshine and plenty.

The trail to and from Causton's Bluff was well worn between the two plantations when the sawyers commenced construction of the house. It was to be forty feet in length and contain sufficient rooms for his three daughters and son. The building of a commodious home for the Earl created a certain curiosity and regular traffic from town. While the flat boat transported tools and equipment, wagon loads of people came by road to observe. Did it resemble his mansion in Lechlade, they would ask? And did he have any of his fine furnishings and emblems shipped to Savannah? Sir Francis only shook his head; he was the poorest of earls. Yet there did seem to be a need to impress the crowd by bringing his family to the construction site donning their finest dress. He directed the sawyers to construct a barn first as shelter for his new servants. Trent packed some corn seeds and farm tools and delivered it one spring afternoon on the flatboat. Two pale thinly-set male servants met him at the creek. They had not fared well in the stockade during the winter and did not have the appearance of experienced farm laborers.

Sir Francis' cynicism was confirmed the first day when Trent failed to have the corn field properly cleared of its stub trees and plants. The little man had superciliously assumed the role of overseer, and, covering his head with a wide-brimmed hat, sat in the shade observing the servants as they worked at hard labor. The early afternoon sun blistered their skin and took its toll on their physical strength. They stumbled to a wooded area and laid down in a clump of

dried leaves.

"What sort of employment hath these men heretofore known?" Sir Francis asked, anxious to get this crops planted.

"My lord, the soil is thick with roots and briars," Trent said excusing himself. "It may take a week to clear this field."

Sir Francis lost his temper. "If it is not cleared by tomorrow evening, I shall return those men to the stockade!"

Trent stood up and wiping the sweat from his brow, said: "I beg ye pardon, sir."

The primary concern of the Earl was his new accumulating debt. He failed to realize that ordinary englishmen were unaccustomed to working long hours in a humid climate. His anxieties caused him to observe the daily slow-prodding work of the garden. Just as the house was completed as well as some primitive furnishings and the family moved inside, the oldest daughter, Mary, announced that she was to be married to a local sailor that she had met that during all of the building activity. Fannie was saddened by the loss of her daughter, however, Sir Francis, weighed down with more expense, felt somewhat relieved. He sat down and wrote a personal letter to the Earl of Egmont, expressing his happiness with Mary's marriage.

However, if Sir Francis thought that a poor sailor employed on local fishing vessels would be of future assistance in his financial affairs, he was sadly mistaken.

The Drought of 1734



Just as the tender buds of corn sprouted on the stalks, a hot spell loomed over the colony and wilted the gardens for miles around. Trent had water urns lugged from the creek to the corn field but soon even the healthiest of plants parched brown in the dry soil. By mid-summer, one of the indentured servants dropped dead in the field from the ill effects of scorching

temperatures.

"We can plant again in the fall," Trent said. However, the sawyers would have to wait for their payment and the Earl would have to pay a higher premium to acquire additional seed. He saddled his mare. A grove of tender young mulberry trees growing along the road to Ockstead plantation had grown wildly tall, thus offering some shade. As he approached the house he noted that Martha had picked certain of the maturing fruit to be used for pies and had several baskets full.

"Will you have any corn seed this year?" He asked Martha Causton.

She pointed to a corn field while shaking her head disparingly.

As the summer wore on and the corn stalks dried yellow, Trent picked dried and wormy ears to feed to the stock. The irreversible losses were devastating to the colonists, so much so that when a thorough rain finally brought relief, it was too late. And the plan to replant went awry as the Heavens continued its downpour into all of the ditches and empty places of the earth. The winter months dragged on into a interminable misery when Sir Francis learned that the other servant had run off. As Fannie and the children lay ill with fever, the despondency of Sir Francis weigh heavy upon his shoulders.

When Fannie finally succumbed to the fever after suffering the long months, Sir Francis was overcome by grief. Tears streamed down his face as he gave the three remaining children the bad news. Not sparing the youngest, Patty, who bawled loudly. He placed two castle coins over her eyes and bid lay in the bed three days before burying her.

Trent reluctantly dug a grave, while Sir Francis and his neighbor, Thomas Causton observed.

That was when he heard the tale of the widow's stipend.

1735. A Widow's Stipend Mary Pemberton was a none-too-attractive widow who resided in one of the new houses on Johnson's Square. It was the typical plain wooden structure thrown up in a hurry by the sawyers. A rather prosperous silversmith and his wife were among the first arrivals in the colony. They brought several fine queen anne chairs, dining table and mahogany bed. In addition, several chests of silver ornaments and candlestick holders. As the furniture was carried from the pier to the new house, a crowd of onlookers stirred in the streets. The craftsman, unlike the

milling peasants in the streets, was dressed in the austere fashion of his peers and carried a silver-tipped cane. He was a thin fellow whose coughing fits brought him notice. Yet, his demeanor and the number of silver goblets he brought into the colony left an impression of tradesmen wealth. He sold his goblets in the square and did well. Ah, but he soon died and left Mary to fend for herself. There was no stipend in London, as rumored. In fact, after she sold the

remainder of the silverware, she began to amass a large amount of debt. Yet it was the rumors which caused her creditors to continue to provide for her.

The day that Sir Francis came calling was several days after the unfortunate death of his wife and during the pinnacle of his grief. It was a hot arid day in August and Elizabeth and little Patty were splashing around in the creek. As the herbs in the kitchen garden were severely wilted, Robert was busy dragging vats of water from the creek to water it. Earlier that morning his father had sent him into the corn field to search the cobs for evidence of growth. He returned with several dried nubs. Had there been corn perhaps the Earl would not have gone into the village to search for the widow, but he was desperate. He had been all too willing to accept Fannie's paltry dowry, and now the dowry of the widow was weighed as the decision to marry.

He groaned when he realized how badly the young girls needed a mother. He washed his face and hands in a basin. He was reluctant to don the white peruke on so hot a day, but he must make a favorable impression upon the widow.

Mary Pemberton met Sir Francis at the front door of her house with a sour expression on her face. He uncoiffed strands of gray hair flopped across her eyes and a white cotton apron tied in front with a small bow covered an ordinary dress. Sir Francis removed the regent hat he'd worn to the best occasions in London and introduced a slight bow to a woman quite apparently below his class. A lump was in his throat and his eyes were wet with tears from a jag earlier that morning.

"Madam," he said, "please allow me to introduce myself. I am Sir Francis Bathurst, the Earl of Lechlade."

"Lechlade?" She asked while staring at his attire. Owing to the rumors floating around about her wealth, this would not be her first proposal of marriage since the death of her husband.

"Near London, madam."

He was invited inside the house where she felt a need to show the earl her Queen Ann walnut wing chairs and a display of silver candlesticks on a sideboard which her husband had transported across the sea for a new beginning in the New World. Later, she would show him the pine blanket chest chocked full of silver sugar nips scissor tongs and spoons which he had planned to sell in the colony. Although unimpressed over a sparse collection of furniture, the earl took the gesture as a hint of her dowry. When he returned home that afternoon, he removed his courting clothes and went down to the creek to observe his children as they played in the water. The riveting heat rays drawn from a big yellow sun bore down upon a new crop of corn planted from the shriveled seed of last year's drought, all prompting the reluctant earl of his desperate situation. That evening he told the children of his plan.

The Wedding.

With scarcely time to learn the ways of Mary Pemberton and mostly because the minister was preaching an open air sermon in Savannah, the wedding occurred at her home after the event. Also, as she stood wearing a plain gown with some worn lace sewn into the collar, it was a rare opportunity to observe her distinctively plump cheeks and thighs. Earlier that morning, Sir Francis had the unpleasant experience of being pinned by a creditor urging payment. He closed his eyes and consoled himself with the thought of finally being able to resolve his debts. The minister was keenly aware of the rumors concerning this widow's wealth, yet had no inclination to warn the Earl. If the Earl had any plans to become the legal recipient of her stipend, all those ideas were squashed when Mary Pemberton insisted that her furnishings be packed and transported to her new home that very day. The Earl was unable to locate his lazy overseer, he hired workers. Meanwhile, he hitched up his wagon to the roan mare and transported Mary home.

The children were surprised to learn that their father had executed his plans so quickly and Mary had no idea that the Earl had three children. Too, her expectations of a grand house were diminished as the mare trudged across the creek and trotted up the hill.

"Where are ye servants?" She asked while he personally unhitched the mare from the wagon and carefully brushed the long sinewy mane.

"They ran away," he murmured.

"What did ye say?"

"I said that all of my servants ran off, " he answered as he took the mare to the barn and secured her in a stall. Meanwhile, he was aware that Mary was impatiently waiting to be helped down from the wagon. When he returned to assist, her cheeks were flushed and lips turned downward in a disapproving frown. Elizabeth and Patty came into the yard to greet their new stepmother.

"This is Mary Pemberton," Sir Francis announced. The children giggled.

"Aunt Mary," she said. "Call me Aunt Mary."

Sir Francis turned his face away to absorb her meaning. The grief of losing the children's mother held a prominent position in all of his thoughts. Should the children refer to the widow as mother, his feelings would crumble and blow across the land in a raging wind. Yet, Mary chose for herself a familiar term meaning a relative one-generation-removed. She had softened the blow.

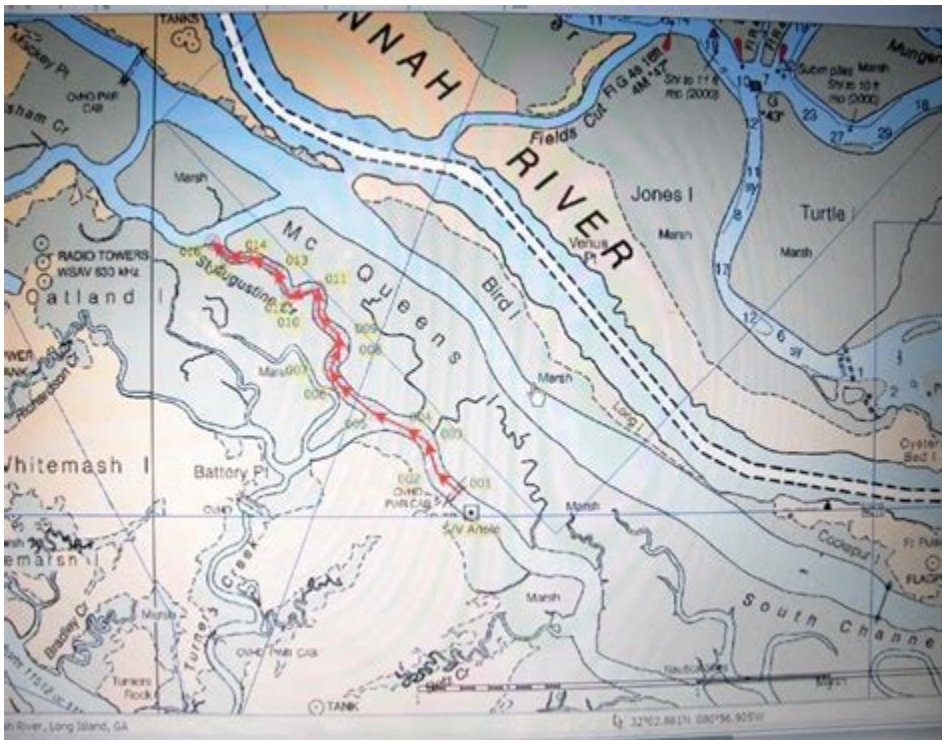
The afternoon would pass without difficulties, with Mary supervising the placement of her

furniture. Actually, the Earl's house was larger than her little house in Savannah. When she stared at the plaintive settling, its pine wooden chairs and pine-stuffed mattresses, he explained that nothing of his furnishings had been transported from Lachlede. He stared at the chest, calculating the value of the silver. "We might wish to sell your husband's silver relics," he said aloud.

"No," she said firmly, while ordering the valuable pine chest removed to the bedroom, where she would later hide the key.

When the time came to pay the workers, Sir Francis emptied his purse, promising himself that he would soon get control of Mary Pemberton's stipend.

The Drowning.



Sir Francis seemed content. Although he did not love Mary Pemberton, his house was kept in order and the widow dutifully looked after the children. Also, Mary planted a kitchen garden near the house and April sprayed its showers across the land. That summer they found a blackberry patch in the woods and baked pies.

Meanwhile, while Sir Francis awaited word from London concerning the stipend, he proceeded to hire laborers to plant his crop and borrow money to purchase another milch cow at Mary's

request. When he returned home with the cow, he found that Mary had sent the kids to the creek to play. A raucous wind stirred the waters of Augustine creek as he stood observing from the bluff. Suddenly he saw the youngest child, Patty, stumble and fall. He head went under the water, and as Elizabeth struggled to pull her out, she drowned. Sir Francis ran down the hill. His heart was pounding as he feared the worst. "Robert!" He screamed.

Afterwards, as Sir Francis lay ill in his bed, he did not remember the details of the drowning. Nor did he recall that his son, Robert, heard the screams where he was working in the barn and rushed downhill to the creek. It was Robert who lifted Patty's head from the stone where it rested and took her limp body up to the house. Aunt Mary, taking charge, attempted to revive the children with her flask of smelling salts. At some point Sir Francis's knees went weak and he dropped to the floor in a swoon. The days which followed were consumed with tears. He could scarcely believe that his daughters were dead. When he finally arose from his grieving bed, he found that Mary had washed and ironed Patty and Elizabeth's best clothes and laid them out in one of the side rooms. Beside the bed burned a little candle made from bayberry leaves. Sir Francis reached deep into his purse and removed 4 pence to place upon the eyes. Tears streamed down his face as he kissed and folded the little hands and bade farewell. His was a double-dose of sorrow. .

Claiming the Fortune

The grieving period was interrupted by the farm chores and current business. Sir Francis received the long-awaited message from the Earl of Egmont concerning the Pemberton stipend. The affliction which had handicapped him for years was about to disappear. He saddled the horse. As he rode past the corn field, the budding yellow ears weighing down the stalks lifted his spirits. And at a far distance he spotted a covey of egrets lift off the freshwater marsh and sail across the blue sky while a doe and her fawn stood under the white blossoms of a giant magnolia tree. The marketplace was filled with summer vegetables, milk carts, and an array of chicken eggs and a happy chattering seemed to permeate the atmosphere. He walked slowly down Yamacraw Bluff, using his silver-tipped cane to assist, and nodded to Tomochichi , the friendly chief of the Yamacraw Indians as he led a small band of trading party of braves up river.

Since his arrival, a wooden structure had been erected as a shipping warehouse . The letter awaited him inside.

"Dear Sir Francis Bathurst," the letter read. "I find in the notes of the trustees an account of one, Edward Pemberton, who paid the passage to the Georgia Colony for himself and his wife during the summer of 1733. The well-appointed gentryman pled his cause well, promising to establish himself as a silversmith in the colony. His cargo consisted of furniture and one pine trunk filled with pewter spoons and plates along with several silver goblets and candlebras. He

claimed no other wealth. Your Obedient Servant, Sir Perceval, Earl of Egmont."

While reading it, he stumbled on a loose board in the floor and, oblivious to everything, dropped his cane. Somehow he ascended the bluff without the cane and placed himself back in the crowded marketplace and made his way to Johnson's Square where he'd tied his roan mare. Suddenly he found himself surrounded by several of Mary Pemberton's creditors. The letter from the Earl was daunting, but a second truth smacked him down. The marriage was a farce. Oh why was he so quick to accept the rumors of wealth? Sweat poured down his face.

The day of reckoning was at hand. Sir Francis focused his slanting eyes and drooping lips upon the letter as he fought to prevent another onslaught of tears. He had lost his dear Fanny, then Patty, and the steps he had taken towards solvency failed in the marriage of a woman whose debts out-shadowed his own.

He gave them his mare.

He did not remember walking the road back home. Instead of a warm, happy day, the experience was one of sorrow and grief.

The End of Summer

As bad-luck had won its day, summer and fall slipped away into a mild December. The battered Earl fell ill and died on the 19th.

Conclusion:

After the death of Sir Francis Bathurst, his son, Robert left Savannah to avoid paying creditors. He journeyed to Charleston where he died three years later. Sir Francis left no Bathurst descendants in Georgia.

Notes: The old site of the Bathurst home eventually became part of the old Drakies Plantation. The third and last attempt to retain the English barony was by Sir Francis's eldest son, Lawrence Bathurst; who became the 6th Baronet after his fathers death.

Sir Francis Bathurst d. dec 19 1736

Robert Bathurst 1719-1739

Edmund Bathurst 1719

Mary Bathurst, oldest

THE END