

Foundations of America

Studies Weekly

PAST AND PRESENT

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LIFE IN THE SOUTHERN COLONIES

The Southern Colonies, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, covered the largest land area in the 13 Colonies. But this region had the fewest cities. We usually picture the old South as a land covered in large plantations with grand mansions. In reality, most of the southern colonists lived on small, isolated family farms. The soil was fertile, and the growing season was long. Most crops did well there. Because of this, the Southern Colonies were also the wealthiest of the 13 Colonies.

With the success of tobacco as a cash crop in Virginia, other colonies also looked for crops they could make a profit from. The main cash crop in Maryland was also tobacco. In South Carolina and Georgia, it was rice and indigo, a plant that creates a popular blue dye. People in North Carolina used the sap from trees in the pine forests to make pitch. Pitch was used to make ship hulls waterproof. As the demands for these cash crops grew, large plantations became more common. Only a small portion of the southern population were merchants and artisans.

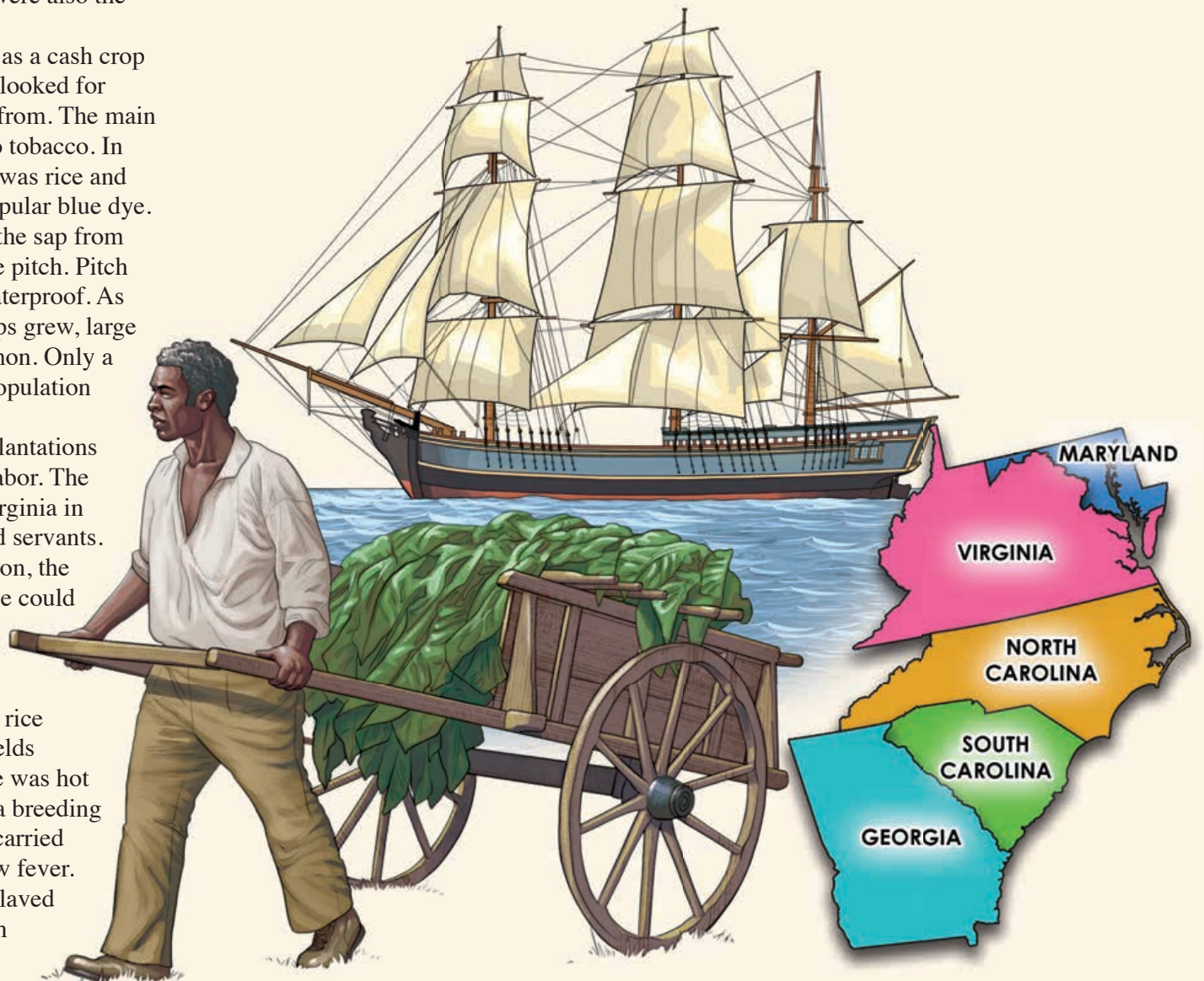
As the number and size of plantations increased, so did the need for labor. The first Africans who arrived in Virginia in 1619 were treated as indentured servants. They were eventually freed. Soon, the idea developed that these people could be kept as enslaved workers for life. The work of enslaved people was harsh and difficult, especially in the deep South on rice plantations. Rice is grown in fields flooded with water. The climate was hot and humid. The water became a breeding ground for mosquitoes, which carried diseases like malaria and yellow fever. These diseases killed many enslaved workers. While life in the South

was good for most of the planters and farmers, it meant suffering and misery for enslaved people.

Citizens in the Southern Colonies were almost exclusively Anglican. Anglicans were members of the Church of England. The church was supported by the people's tax money, which was collected by the government. Maryland was first settled as a safe place for Catholics to live. However, the

Protestants eventually took over the governing of the colony.

Plantation owners grew wealthier and more powerful as the Southern Colonies grew. A class system developed with the planters at the top and enslaved people at the bottom. Some of the best-known colonial leaders came from these colonies. For example, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison were all from Virginia.



Connections

Prison Reform Act of 1729

We already know that James Edward Oglethorpe had a life goal to help others. His humanitarian ways guided his whole life. He created the colony of Georgia mainly to give debtors and the less fortunate a fresh start, but before his idea to start the Georgia colony, he set out to help prisoners in England. You see, a person that owes a lot of money is said to be in

debt. There were many debtors in England. When someone could not pay the money they owed, they were sent to debtors' prison.

The conditions in debtors' prisons were terrible! Many people got sick, and some even died from the harsh environment. This hit close to home for James when one of his friends was sent to debtors' prison and never returned. He died of

a disease called smallpox. Oglethorpe realized he had to help. Oglethorpe worked hard to improve the conditions of the prisons and limit the number of people sent there. In 1729, the Prison Reform Act was passed. Hundreds of debtors were released from prison and conditions within the prisons were improved. Think about it: is it a crime to be in debt today?



A CLOSER LOOK AT SETTLING GEORGIA

Establishing the Georgia Colony was one of James Oglethorpe's greatest accomplishments. It took James and his 114 colonists two months to get from England to Georgia.

They sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and reached Port Royal in South Carolina. The settlers waited there as Oglethorpe and several other men scouted out the area, looking for a good spot to call home. On their hunt, they came across Yamacraw Bluff, a 40-foot cliff that overlooked the Savannah River. The men wanted this area to be the start of their new settlement but it was already occupied by the Creek Indians. Oglethorpe elicited help from John Musgrove, who was the son of a South Carolina governor. His wife, Mary Musgrove, was a native Creek Indian. With their help,

Oglethorpe was able to make trades with the Creek Indians for the land. Once the deal was made, Oglethorpe went back to Port Royal and escorted the colonists to their new home.

The new Georgia Colony was built on a strong motto: Non Sibi Sed Aliis, which means "not for self, but for others." This slogan helped the colonists remember how Georgia would be different from the other twelve English colonies. Georgia was the thirteenth colony for England and the final one before the United States was created. Its purpose was to provide refuge for Protestants under religious persecution, a new home for the poor and those in debt, and to act as a military buffer between Spanish Florida and the remaining English colonies located to the north. This protected all of the Southern Colonies.

Although the trip to Georgia was chartered by King George II and mostly funded by Parliament, Oglethorpe paid his own way. He was not alone in this. Noble Jones was another who paid his own way on the Anne. The Anne was the ship that the colonists took on their two-month journey across the Atlantic Ocean. Once they arrived in Georgia, Jones was a great help in many ways. He served as a doctor, constable and carpenter. His efforts were so greatly appreciated that he was



rewarded with 500 acres on the Isle of Hope, located just outside of Savannah. Jones used some of his land to serve as a military outpost. Jones called his plantation Wormsloe and dedicated his life to protect Georgia.

Oglethorpe and the other trustees had a big job to do when they reached their new land. (A trustee is someone trusted to complete a job.) First, they needed to protect their new land. Spain was not the only country that Georgia needed to defend against. There was also France, which occupied lands to the west. They occupied what is now known as Louisiana and also owned much of the land along the Mississippi River. Not only did the trustees need to protect their land, but they were also in charge of creating laws, charging taxes and giving out land grants. Since the land and voyage was financed by Parliament, the trustees were not allowed to take money from it, and

they were not allowed to own their own land. These trustees were very honorable men. The purpose of Georgia was to benefit the poor, not the people in charge. Those that received land as charity were not allowed to sell it or borrow money using it.

Unlike every other English colony, Georgia did not have a group of representatives in their government. In the other twelve colonies, landowners and colonists were represented in the government. However, since Georgia was made up of less fortunate people who were given land and did not purchase it, the trustees thought it best not to trust them with large governmental decisions. Instead, the trustees made all the decisions. Although Oglethorpe and the other trustees had good intentions, the people of Georgia became increasingly unhappy. Landowners wanted to be able to have enslaved people work their land. They

were also angry that the amount of land they could own was limited. They did not like the rule against consuming or selling rum and were very unhappy with the fact that they were not represented in the government. So you can see how the Georgia Colony was different. Slowly, the trustees had to give in to the demands of the people, and Georgia's original plan started to change and conform. Georgia soon started to resemble the other twelve colonies.

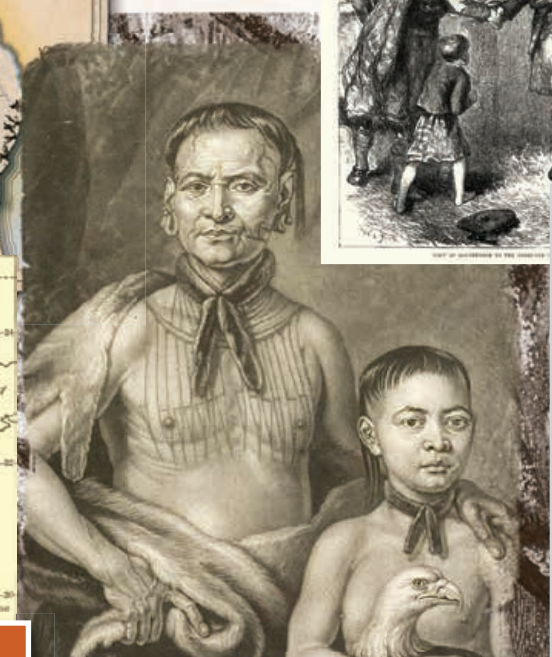
Georgia grew to be the largest colony east of the Mississippi River. It also grew away from its original ideals. More and more people of skill and trade like bakers, merchants, tailors and carpenters sought out land there. Oglethorpe's vision for Georgia was falling apart. It was no longer an asylum or sanctuary for the less fortunate. Because of this, he decided to leave the Colony in 1743. By 1752, Georgia had become like the other colonies, full of large plantations and slavery.



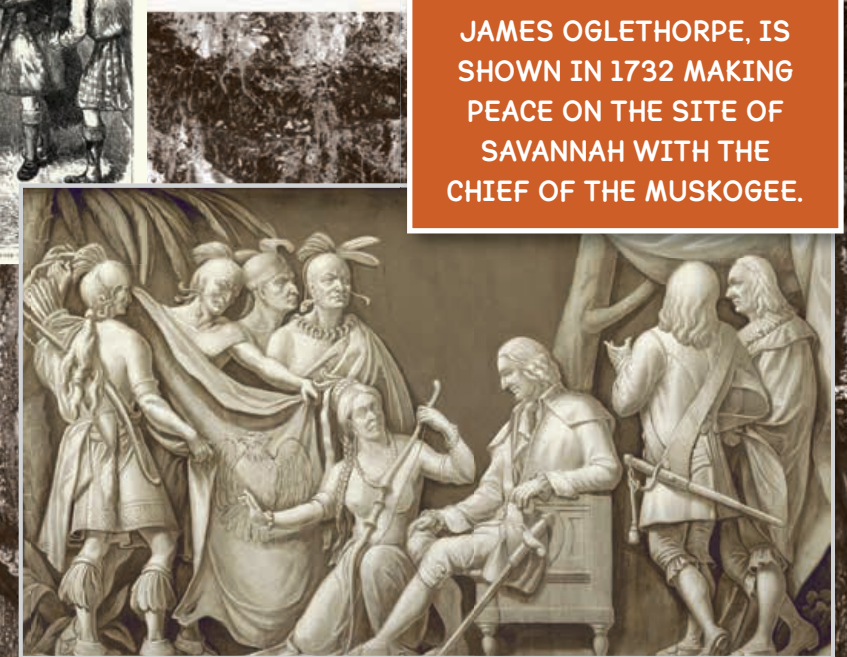
GEORGIA IN 1763



JAMES EDWARD OGLETHORPE VISITING SCOTTISH IMMIGRANTS



SAVANNAH AREA AMERICAN INDIANS



JAMES OGLETHORPE, IS SHOWN IN 1732 MAKING PEACE ON THE SITE OF SAVANNAH WITH THE CHIEF OF THE MUSKOGEE.

Cash Crops

Cash crops are large crops that are grown to sell. They are products that can be exported to other countries for profit. The plantation farms in the Southern colonies grew cash crops like tobacco, rice and indigo. Tobacco became the most important cash crop in Virginia. Further south, in Georgia and South Carolina, the biggest cash crops were rice and indigo. The climate in the Southern colonies was ideal for growing these crops.

Rice is grown in fields that are always filled with two inches of water.

The swampy areas of coastal South Carolina and Georgia had plenty of water. There was also a long, hot growing season. In order to grow large rice crops, the planters bought many enslaved people. They looked for people who came from a part of Africa where rice was grown. These enslaved people knew much more about growing rice than the colonists did. Their skill and knowledge became a necessary part of the plantations' success. This meant that there would always be a demand for enslaved labor.

Indigo is a deep blue dye that

comes from the indigo plant. These plants were raised in many countries in ancient times. The Spanish explorers discovered a form of the plant in the Americas. They began to cultivate it and produce the dye. Soon the English were growing the plant in the drier regions of Georgia and South Carolina. The process of fermenting the plants to produce the dye is really smelly. The result is a beautiful deep blue color that was very popular in colonial times. Many enslaved people were also used to grow this cash crop.

Let's Get Personal: James E. Oglethorpe

Born in England, James Edward Oglethorpe was the seventh of nine children. When he was old enough, he enrolled at Oxford University. His family was full of wealthy politicians, and this influenced Oglethorpe to go into politics. He served as a member of Parliament (part of the English government that creates laws) for 32 years. Little did he know that this position would help him accomplish his lifelong humanitarian goals.

Even though James grew up with money, he was very aware of the less fortunate. He made a career out of assisting others. Using his political background, he was able to create a colony in North America to help the poor. In his colony, Georgia (named after King George II), poor people lived better lives. They owned land and worked. This is what Oglethorpe wanted. He did not hand out money but rather offered a fresh start in life for less fortunate people that

had fallen on hard times. With few skills and experience, these colonists needed a lot of help and guidance to create a successful colony. How was this different from the other Southern Colonies?

Oglethorpe paid his dues to the military as well. His father and oldest brother died at war when James was very young. This made him want to serve his country. He was a good leader, fought in wars and slowly climbed the ranks to become a general. His intelligent leadership helped his troops to victory many times. The last victory was the Battle of Bloody Marsh, where he defeated Spain.

James married Elizabeth Wright in 1744. She was a wealthy heiress and they enjoyed their life together. The two did not have children.

James got sick and died on June 30, 1785 at 88 years old. He will forever be remembered for his philanthropic ways.



Name _____

The War of Jenkins' Ear

Activity

An Ideal Location

England picked the perfect location for Georgia. It became known as a buffer colony because it served as a military safeguard against the Spanish. Florida, which is directly south of Georgia, was owned by Spain. Georgia was able to defend English-owned land to the north, against Spain, because of its prime location. Its location also gave Georgia control over many coastal waterways. The English used these waterways for trade. Spain desperately wanted control of the seas and was willing to fight for it.

The Conflict

Controlling the waterways was of much importance. Spain wanted to be able to use the coast for trade, so they decided to invade Georgia and take over the seas. Oglethorpe was the leader of the army at the time and successfully defended his colony. This conflict between Spain and Britain became known as "The War of Jenkins' Ear." The name came from British historian Thomas Carlyle. Robert Jenkins was a British captain that was said to have had his ear cut off in battle. It is believed that this sparked the feud between Spain and Britain in 1739, but there is little evidence to prove it. However, the catchy name stuck.

Oglethorpe Wins

Oglethorpe was smart. He set up a base at Fort Frederica. Take a look at the map and find Fort Frederica to see how its location gave Oglethorpe a vast advantage. From this vantage point, he was able to see his enemies and control the waterways. After Spain's invasion in 1740, Oglethorpe retaliated but lost several battles. However, he never gave up power at Fort Frederica. By 1742, he and his troops were able to fully defeat the Spanish at the Battle of Bloody Marsh on St. Simons Island. The victory was a great accomplishment for Oglethorpe because it ended the conflict. Spain retreated. It was also agreed that the St. Mary's River would be the border between Georgia and Florida.



Mapping Locales of the Southern Colonies

Activity

In order to understand how important Georgia's location was, it is crucial to understand where everything is located. Georgia was an ideal spot for English settlers. Places like Florida, South Carolina, the St. Mary's River, Fort Frederica, Port Royal and the Mississippi River played a big role in making Georgia such a desirable place. All of the following places are marked on the map with a number:

- South Carolina
- Georgia
- Florida
- Port Royal
- St. Mary's River
- Mississippi River
- Fort Frederica

Think back to what you have learned about these places. Locate each of them on the map. Write the name of each place next to its corresponding number.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____

Then write the following facts next to each location it defines.

FACT BOX

- _____ place where 114 colonists landed before settling in Georgia
- _____ river that separated Spanish-owned territory from English-owned territory
- _____ battle advantage location for Oglethorpe
- _____ river that separated French-owned territory and English-owned territory
- _____ thirteenth English colony
- _____ land owned by Spain
- _____ colony owned by England located to the north of Georgia

Now that you have everything mapped out, answer the following question:
Why was Georgia such a great location for English settlers?



- ### Think & Review
1. How did the Prison Reform Act of 1729 help prisoners in England?
 2. How did the Georgia Colony change after its beginnings with Oglethorpe?
 3. What political career did James Oglethorpe have in England?
 4. What were some advantages of the Georgia Colony's location? Name at least two.
 5. What was the importance of waterways for the English settlers? Name at least three reasons why they were important.
 6. In what ways were the Southern Colonies different from the other colonial regions?

Let's Write

How did James Oglethorpe show that he was a humanitarian? Give at least three examples of actions he took to help others.

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