

Class Set 1

In Their Own Words

February 10, 1733

Oglethorpe Letter to Trustees

From the new settlement at Yamacraw Bluff now known as Savannah, James Oglethorpe wrote the Trustees back in London:

"I gave you an account in my last of our arrival at Charles Town. The Governour and Assembly have given us all possible encouragement. Our people arrived at Beaufort on the 20th of January, where I lodged them in some new barracks built for the soldiers whilst I went myself to view the Savannah River. I fixed upon a healthy situation about ten miles from the sea. The river there forms a half moon, along the South side of which the banks are about 40 foot high and upon a top a flat which they call a bluff. The plain high ground extends into the country five or six miles and along the riverside about a mile. Ships that draw twelve foot water can ride within ten yards of the bank. Upon the riverside in the center of this plain, I have laid out the town. Over against it is an island [Hutchinson Island] of very rich land fit for pasturage, which I think should be kept for the Trustees' cattle. The river is pretty wide, the water fresh. And from the quay of the town you see its whole course to the sea with the Island of Tybee, which forms the mouth of the river; and the other way you may see the river for about six miles up into the country. The landscape is very agreeable, the stream being wide and bordered with high woods on both sides. The whole people arrived on the first of February. At night their tents were got up. 'Till the 7th we were taken up in unloading and making a crane, which I even then could not get finished so took off the hands and set some of the fortification and begun to fell the woods. I marked out the town and common. Half of the former is already cleared, and the first house was begun yesterday in the afternoon. Not being able to get Negroes, I have taken ten of the Independent Company to work for us, for which I make them an allowance... Mr. Whitaker has given us one hundred of cattle. Colonel Bull, Mr. Barlow, Mr. Julian and Mr. Woodward are come up to assist us with some of their own servants. Our people are all alive, but ten are ill with the bloody flux, which I take to proceed from the cold and their not being accustomed to lie in tents. I am so taken up in looking after a hundred necessary things that I write now short but shall give you a more particular account hereafter. A little Indian Nation, the only one within fifty miles, is not only at amity but desire to be subject of the Trustees, to have land given them and to breed their children at our schools. Their chief and his beloved man, who is the second man in the Nation, desire to be instructed in the Christian religion."

Source: Mills Lane (ed.), *General Oglethorpe's Georgia: Colonial Letters, 1733-1743* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1990), Vol. I, pp. 4-5.

Class Set!

Oglethorpe's Role Settling Savannah

On November 17, 1732, James Edward Oglethorpe and approximately 114 passengers left Gravesend, England, for Georgia on the frigate Anne. When the colonists set off, there was no one from debtor's prison on board—despite what most believe about the colonists who first settled Georgia.

It took the Anne two months to travel from England to America. They stopped first in Charleston, South Carolina, and then proceeded further south to Port Royal, South Carolina. Here the colonists waited while Oglethorpe ventured ahead with Carolina Rangers to pinpoint the spot where they would settle. They traveled all this way without knowing exactly where they would be living! However, it did not take Oglethorpe too long to locate Yamacraw Bluff, a stretch of land one mile long overlooking the Savannah River. By February 12*, Oglethorpe had gathered all of the colonists at Yamacraw Bluff, and the group set about creating temporary shelters and laying out the new city.

Oglethorpe imagined the Georgia colony to be an ideal agrarian society; he opposed slavery and allowed people of all religions to settle in Savannah even though the charter stated that Catholics and Jewish people were not allowed. Oglethorpe defied this provision of the charter and allowed a group of Jewish people to settle in Savannah during the summer of 1733. In addition to his religious tolerance, Oglethorpe worked with and respected the local Indian tribes. He established a relationship with the Yamacraw Creeks, protecting them from traders who wanted to take advantage of them and settling land disputes with treaties.

Oglethorpe also established a ten-acre garden to the east of the city called Trustee's Garden. The experimental garden belonged to the Trustees of the colony and was modeled after medicinal and botanical gardens in England. This garden would have plants to be used in medicines and plants for raw materials to make luxury goods, such as mulberry trees to feed the silkworms that the Trustees hoped would thrive in Georgia. Oglethorpe also grew orange trees, apple trees, pear tree, olives, figs, pomegranates, and other fruits that grew well in the warm climate.

But the early days of the colony were soon overshadowed by the threat from the Spanish. Oglethorpe found himself thinking more and more about how he could protect the citizens of the colony from an invasion from the Spanish. He repeatedly asked Parliament and the Trustees back in England for more resources to protect the colony. Often Parliament and the Trustees didn't provide enough money and resources, and Oglethorpe used his own money to provide everything the colony needed. He knew he could lose everything if the colony didn't succeed, but he had confidence in the final outcome.

In 1737, on a trip to England, Oglethorpe persuaded King George to make him a colonel in the British army and give him a regiment of soldiers to bring back to Savannah. Oglethorpe had minimal military experience, but he got what he wanted and found himself in charge of protecting not only Georgia but also South Carolina against the Spanish forces to the south.

Source: Oglethorpe's Role Settling Savannah. (n.d.). Retrieved September 08, 2015, from <http://georgiahistory.com/education-outreach/online-exhibits/featured-historical-figures/james-edward-oglethorpe/settling-savannah/>