

British Georgia: The Trustees 1732-1752 - The Unsung Heroes



When we hear the term "British Georgia," most of us think about the state of Georgia in the United States. However, long before the birth of the American nation, there was a British colony with the same name that existed between 1732 and 1752. This fascinating period in history is often overlooked, but it was shaped by a group of remarkable visionaries known as "The Trustees." In this article, we will delve into their story and shed light on their significant contributions to the establishment of this forgotten colony.

Who were The Trustees?

The Trustees were a group of twenty-one men who were granted a charter by King George II to create a new colony in British North America. Their primary goal was to provide a fresh start for the "worthy poor" in Britain, who were facing harsh economic conditions and social challenges. Led by James Oglethorpe, a British member of parliament and social reformer, The Trustees embarked on a journey that would forever change the course of history.



BRITISH GEORGIA, The Trustees, 1732-1752: The Unsung Heroes by Liora Hendelman-Baavur(Kindle Edition)

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The Vision: A Philanthropic Colony

Unlike other British colonies that were motivated by economic gains or the acquisition of land, The Trustees' vision for Georgia was rooted in philanthropy and social justice. They envisioned a colony that would serve as a refuge for the poor and indebted, offering them a chance to rebuild their lives and escape the hardships they faced in Britain.

The Challenges of Settlement

Establishing a new colony from scratch was no easy task, and The Trustees faced numerous challenges along the way. One of the primary hurdles was securing financial support for their ambitious venture. Despite facing initial skepticism, The Trustees managed to rally support from wealthy philanthropists, who generously contributed towards the establishment of the colony.

The Foundations of Savannah

In 1733, The Trustees' hard work came to fruition as they founded the city of Savannah, the first settlement in Georgia. The Savannah settlement was meticulously planned, with a grid system that incorporated public squares, providing green spaces for the community to gather and socialize. The Trustees' commitment to creating a balanced and harmonious community was evident in every aspect of the city's design.

Relationships with Native Americans

The Trustees recognized the importance of establishing positive relationships with the indigenous tribes in the area. They implemented a policy of peaceful coexistence and made efforts to understand and respect the Native American culture. This approach led to diplomatic alliances, providing the colony with significant security and stability.

Legacy and Impact

Although the Trustees' control over the colony ended in 1752, their legacy continued to shape Georgia's history. Their commitment to social reform and philanthropy laid the foundation for Georgia's development as a compassionate and inclusive society. The city of Savannah, with its architectural beauty and preservation of historical sites, stands as a testament to their vision and enduring impact.

The Unsung Heroes

Sadly, the story of The Trustees and their contributions to British Georgia remains largely unknown. Their efforts to create a colony based on principles of social justice and equality have been overshadowed by other events in American history. However, it is essential that we recognize the invaluable role played by these unsung heroes, as their influence can still be felt to this day.

Preserving Their Memory

To honor the legacy of The Trustees, it is crucial that we educate ourselves and others about the history of British Georgia and the profound impact that these individuals had on the colony. By shining a light on their achievements and struggles, we can ensure that their memory and contributions are not forgotten.



Mary Bonurant Warren

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BRITISH GEORGIA, The Trustees, 1732-1752

WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?

Did the Trustees, ensconced in London, realize the enormous task they were

undertaking when they petitioned the King for a Charter for the Colony of Georgia? Did they have any idea of the land, or challenges to settlement? Where was the money coming from to pay for transportation, feed the people until they could be settled, housed, and provide religious and medical care?

None of the original Trustees had even been in America. Yet the lives of Georgia's settlers were in their hands – in what might become a war zone! These Trustees were independently wealthy men, many were serving as members of Parliament. There was a scattering of the clergy, and members of the nobility as well. Over 20 years they gave of their time, position, and many gave funds, to provide a new life in America for persons whom they never knew. But only one, Oglethorpe, put his life on the line, and led the first settlers into their “Promised Land.”

Were they a bunch of do-gooders, or serial philanthropists? Yes. Some had joined the “Associates of Dr. Bray” to bring Christianity to Indians and Negroes. Sea-captain Thomas Coram’s “Foundling Home” is still in operation.

James Vernon, who served continually from the beginning to end of the Trust, was too busy to pose for a portrait. Highest ranking member of the original Trustees, the 1st Earl of Egmont, kept detailed notes on the individual settlers, and progress of the colony until his death. These formed the basis for BRITISH GEORGIA, the First Settlers, 1732-1740.

DEBTORS

The initial aim of the Trust was to offer a new start to the bankrupt small business men who filled the Debtors' Prisons. Their idea was to get the men out of prison, give them another chance, while peopling Georgia. There was a problem, however. Few if any were farmers, able to feed themselves in a strange land.

FOREIGN PROTESTANTS

Before the Charter could be written, it was modified to include as potential settlers

the "Persecuted Protestants" who were flooding in from Europe. These families were aided by the Trustees, and two religious charities, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) with transportation and maintenance from Europe to Georgia. As a result, during the Trust period half the Georgians were German-speakers. Unknown to the Trustees, these foreign Protestants, who took half the resources to be used for populating Georgia, were farmers who knew HOW to farm, feed themselves and others. They had skills unknown to many of those city-dwelling British settlers.

WHERE WAS THE MONEY COMING FROM TO SUPPORT THIS EFFORT?

Donations were collected in churches, from individuals, from the SPG and SPCK, and finally the King and Parliament. Would charity collections be enough to support new settlers long enough to establish, and feed themselves?

THE SPANISH THREAT

Who would pay the cost of defense, if Spain chose to invade? The Trustees couldn't protect settlements or maintain an army. Settlers were given some military training before leaving England, and furnished with guns and ammunition.

Follow the story of this "social experiment" which became Georgia.



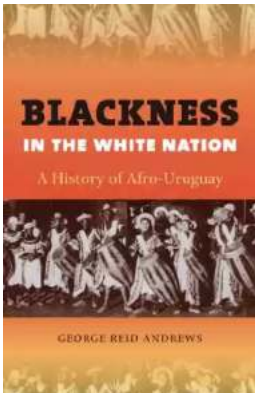
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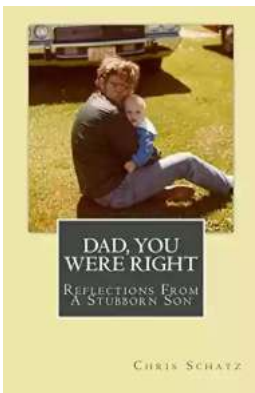
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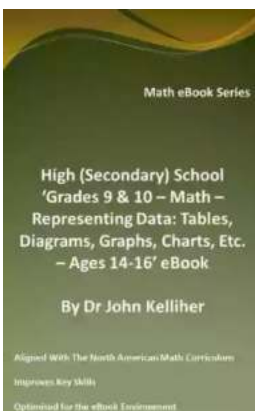
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