

Discover the Unsung Heroes of British Georgia: The Trustees (1732-1752)

The Untold Story of the Men Behind the Founding of Georgia



The Legacy of the British Georgia Trustees

When we think of the history of Georgia, the iconic figures such as James Oglethorpe and Mary Musgrove often come to mind. However, there is a group of remarkable individuals whose contributions have been overlooked - the British

Georgia Trustees. These unsung heroes played a crucial role in the establishment and development of the colony of Georgia between 1732 and 1752.

The Birth of the Georgia Colony

In the early 18th century, the British Empire was seeking to expand its colonial presence in North America. James Oglethorpe, along with 20 like-minded individuals, approached the British government with a vision to create a new colony that would serve as a haven for debtors and a buffer against Spanish Florida. The Georgia Trustees were formed to oversee the endeavor and ensure its success.



Mary Bondurant Warren

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

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The Trustees' Vision

The Trustees had a bold and ambitious vision for the Georgia colony. They aimed to establish equality, social opportunities, and economic success for all its inhabitants. To achieve this, they carefully selected the first settlers, focusing on

those who were genuinely interested in the welfare of the colony and were committed to hard work, education, and self-sufficiency.

The Trustees' Policies

The Trustees implemented a range of policies that set Georgia apart from other American colonies of the time. They enforced a ban on slavery, believing it would prevent the social inequalities prevalent in other southern states. They also prohibited the sale of land, intending to create a society of small landholders rather than a plantation-based economy.

This approach, however well-intentioned, faced a number of challenges. The Trustees' policies clashed with the economic realities of the region and the desires of potential settlers. Many colonists, eager to pursue agricultural aspirations, saw the ban on slavery and restrictions on land sale as hindrances to their success.

The Economic Struggles

Despite the Trustees' best efforts, the colony of Georgia faced significant economic challenges. The prohibition of slavery made it difficult to attract settlers who were reliant on labor-intensive cash crop cultivation. Additionally, neighboring South Carolina, which allowed slavery and already had a well-developed plantation economy, posed stiff competition.

The Trustees sought to counter these obstacles by introducing silk production, naval stores, and indigo cultivation as alternative sources of income. However, these endeavors faced limited success, primarily due to climate and soil conditions that were better suited to other crops or economic activities.

The Legacy of the Trustees

Although the Trustees' policies were eventually phased out, and Georgia became a royal colony in 1752, their impact on the development of the colony cannot be underestimated. Their commitment to education led to the establishment of the first public schools, the construction of libraries, and the promotion of scientific research in Georgia.

The Trustees' idealistic vision for equality and social reform also left an indelible mark on the culture of Georgia. While their policies may not have been without flaws, their dedication to creating a fair and prosperous society laid the groundwork for future generations of Georgians.

The Forgotten Heroes

It is time to shed light on the British Georgia Trustees and acknowledge their contributions to the founding of the colony. These unsung heroes played a pivotal role in the establishment of Georgia, fighting against the odds to create a unique experiment in social and economic development.

The British Georgia Trustees may have been overshadowed by figures like Oglethorpe and Musgrove, but their impact on the development of the colony cannot be ignored. Through their policies and vision, they shaped the early years of Georgia, leaving a lasting legacy of education, equality, and social reform. It is important to remember and celebrate these unsung heroes for their vital role in the history of British Georgia.

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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.

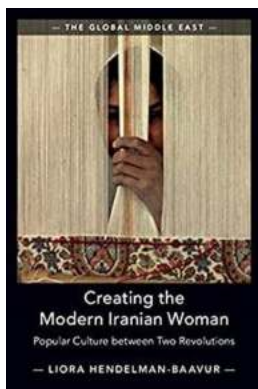
WHERE WAS THE MONEY COMING FROM TO SUPPORT THIS EFFORT?

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

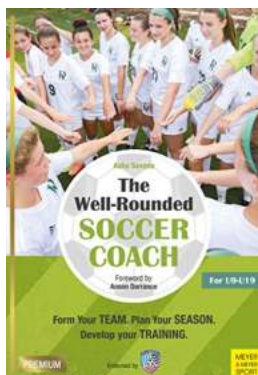
Who would pay the cost of defense, if Spain chose to invade? The Trustees couldn't protect settlements or maintain an army. Settlers were given some military training before leaving England, and furnished with guns and ammunition.

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



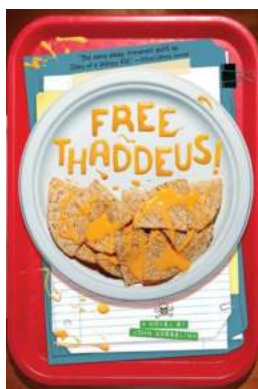
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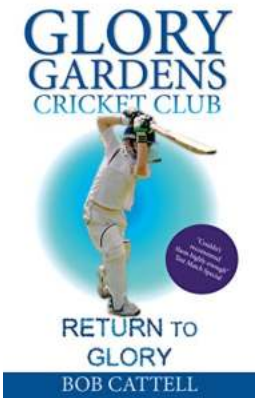
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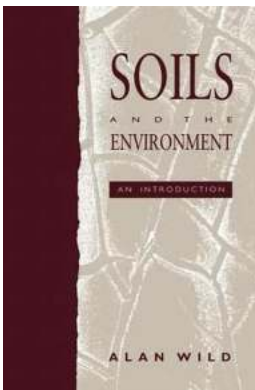
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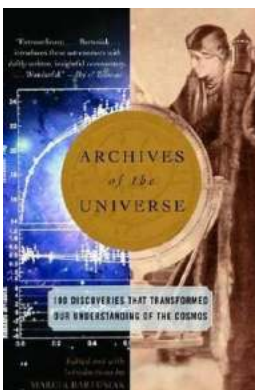
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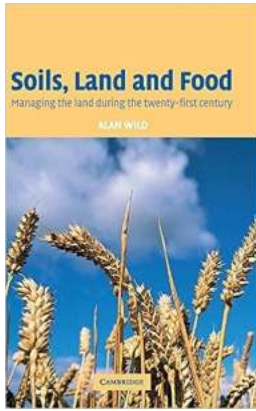
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