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NOBLE JONES  
FROM CARPENTER TO SUPREME COURT JUSTICE  
IN COLONIAL GEORGIA, 1733-1775.

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of Social Science  
Appalachian State Teachers College

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Gary Lee Starrett  
August 1966

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ABSTRACT ON NOBLE JONES  
FROM CARPENTER TO SUPREME COURT JUSTICE  
IN COLONIAL GEORGIA, 1733-1775.

Noble Jones began his life in Georgia as a carpenter. He found himself very busy, those first months of the colonies' establishment, with the numerous construction projects which were going on. A sickness swept the colony in the summer of 1733 which carried off the best carpenters in the colony.

The most controversial years in Jones's life were those during which he served as surveyor of the colony. The Trustees of the colony, far off in England, seemingly did not realize the immensity of the job which Jones had. He not only had to survey all land grants but also record them and frequently inform the Trustees of his actions. His slowness in getting all grants surveyed brought criticism from various settlers in the colony, and also from the Trustees who received many irate letters from the colonists. Underpaid and overworked, Jones was dismissed from his position as official surveyor in 1738.

Jones's appointment relative to the Indian Trade Act seems to have been temporary. He was responsible for acquainting people with trade regulations which involved the Indians.

Jones played a important role in the War of Jenkins' Ear. Spain claimed the southern part of the colony of Georgia, and this led to much hostility between the two colonies of St. Augustine and Georgia. Jones took part in the siege of St. Augustine and the Battle of Bloody Marsh. He was also responsible for maintaining a scout-boat and fort on the island passage to Savannah, which went past his Wormsloe plantation.

As a plantation owner, Jones started with 500 acres and built his total land acquisitions to more than 5,000 acres. He and his daughter Mary, did a great deal of experimentation with silk-worms.

In his later years, Noble served as Legislator, Judge, Treasurer, and Commissioner. These positions he held until his death. Jones also served as a distinguished member of the Governor's Council.

Jones was an unreconstructed Loyalist, his son Noble Wimberly, a Patriot. This difference in political views caused some family disagreement, but the two respected each other greatly. Jones died a distinguished citizen in 1775 at the age of 74.

Jones's life, to this writer, exemplified the spirit of the frontier itself. His life is similar to unknown thousands of others, in that they made valuable contributions to the establishment of the United States.

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## PREFACE

Noble Jones was one of those rare men so needed in society, especially a society in its formative years. Jones was a self-motivated individual that involved his life in practically every facet of the colony of Georgia. Primary materials differ concerning Noble Jones, some authors are congratulatory, some damning.

This writer sees Mr. Jones as a valuable contributor to the birth, growth, and life of the colony. It will be my aim to show a defense of Jones' actions as surveyor, and his important role in major events of the colony: colonization, communication, the siege of St. Augustine, the Battle of Bloody Marsh, and the difficulties which Noble Jones had in helping formulate colonial policies, as a member of the governor's council.

His life in Georgia is the story of Colonial Georgia itself. He was among the first shipload of settlers in 1732-1733, and the last head of an original family to die in 1775, an important date in Georgian as well as national history.

In an effort to add validity and color to this account quotations are spaced throughout the paper and are left unencumbered by sic's.

I wish to thank the library staffs of the Universities of Georgia and South Carolina, Valdosta State College, Appalachian State Teachers College, and the staff of the State Archives of Georgia, for their valuable aid with which I prepared this paper.

I would like to acknowledge Mrs. Hodgins, Appalachian State Teachers College research librarian, and Mrs. Thera Hambrick, Head Librarian, of the Valdosta State College library, for their assistance in procuring primary materials.

I would especially like to thank Mr. John Upchurch, who proofread my paper, and Dr. Ina Van Noppen, my faculty advisor for this paper.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the early 1700's there was a vast, unsettled, densely forested area lying between the English colony of South Carolina and the Spanish colony based in St. Augustine, Florida.

To this region the English had already asserted their title by the Charter of 1665, which extended the nominal jurisdiction of the Carolina proprietors to the twenty-ninth parallel, several miles south of St. Augustine. This claim was never enforced; but early in the eighteenth century the South Carolina government began to push forward its posts into and beyond the valley of the Savannah.<sup>1</sup> In 1716 Fort Moore was established on the Savannah River opposite the present site of Augusta, Georgia. In 1721 Fort King George was established on the Altamaha and garrisoned by a few British regulars. This fort was abandoned in 1727, but another fort had already been built on the western bank of the Savannah, which was maintained until 1735.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Evarts Greene, Provincial America, 1690-1740 (hereinafter referred to as Provincial America) ( Vol. VI. of the American Nation) (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1905), 250.

<sup>2</sup> E. Merton Coulter, Georgia, A Short History (hereinafter referred to as Georgia). (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1933), 14; and Greene, Provincial America, 250.

In 1730 a vigorous effort was made to neutralize the French, who for two years had been trying to seduce the Lower Cherokees to their interests. In March, 1730, the British sent Sir Alexander Oglethorpe on a dangerous but successful mission to the Cherokees, which resulted in their acknowledging the English supremacy and promising the monopoly of their trade.<sup>3</sup> Two years later the British government renewed its claims to the disputed region by granting a considerable part of it to the Georgia Trustees.<sup>4</sup>

The parliamentary grant to the Georgia Trustees was the first one in the history of British colonization to receive financial aid from parliament.<sup>5</sup> The colony was to serve several purposes. One of these was to serve as a buffer against Spanish attacks from the Florida region.<sup>6</sup> It was also to be a refuge for

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<sup>3</sup> Verner Crane, The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732 (hereinafter referred to as Southern Frontier). (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1929), 295.

<sup>4</sup> Crane, Southern Frontier, pp. 324-325; and P.A. Strobel, The Salzburgers and Their Descendants. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1953), 44.

<sup>5</sup> Homer Hockett, Political and Social Growth of the American People, 1492-1865. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940), 67.

<sup>6</sup> R.S. Cotterill, The Old South (Glendale: California, The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1937), 86; and William Hesselstine, A History of the South. (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1936), 86.

the unfortunate and as an economic sponge for the English  
 unemployed. It offered an opportunity for them to "be an asset  
 to the nation instead of a burden to the community." The colony  
 was to produce commodities, such as silk, wine, olives, naval  
 stores, and was to also serve as an outlet for Britain's manu-  
 factured goods. These purposes for the establishment of Georgia  
 are shown in the personality and public career of its founder.

James Edward Oglethorpe was born in 1689. After a short  
 military career in the English and Austrian armies, he entered  
 the House of Commons in 1722, where he retained membership for  
 some thirty years. He soon became a conspicuous member and  
 showed the breadth of his public interests by speeches on a

Oliver Chitwood, A History of Colonial America (herein-  
 after referred to as Colonial America). (New York: Harper and  
 Brothers, Publishers, 1931), 341; and Louis Wright, The Atlantic  
 Frontier, 1607-1763, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1947), 293.

Ina Van Noppen, The South; A Documentary History, (New  
 York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1958), 32.

Trevor Reese, Colonial Georgia, A Study in British  
 Imperial Policy in the Eighteenth Century (hereinafter referred  
 to as Colonial Georgia). (Athens: The University of Georgia  
 Press, 1963), 10.

Reese, Colonial Georgia, 14.

Reese, Colonial Georgia, 14; and Woodrow Wilson, A  
 History of the American People (hereinafter referred to as  
American People), III., (New York: Harper and Brothers,  
 Publishers, 1901), 62.

variety of subjects.

The most attractive aspect of Oglethorpe's parliamentary career was his interest in behalf of poor debtors. Not only were honest debtors then generally subjected to the humiliation of arrest and imprisonment, but they were frequently placed at the mercy of the jailers who had purchased their appointments and regarded them as investments.<sup>12</sup> Oglethorpe became interested in the reform of this system, and in 1729 he secured from Commons the appointment of a committee of inquiry. As chairman of this committee he made a series of reports to the House, bringing to light many instances of extreme cruelty and extortion.<sup>13</sup>

Oglethorpe was now convinced of the existence of a large class of honest but unfortunate people who might under the more favorable conditions of a new country, and with a little assistance at the start, be enabled ultimately to stand on their own feet.<sup>14</sup> Public interest had been awakened by the recent investigations, and almost at the same time the surrender of the

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<sup>12</sup> Chitwood, Colonial America, 341.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Wilson, American People, III., pp. 62-64; and J.H.T. McPherson, Southern Frontier (Vol. XII of The South in the Building of the Nation). (Richmond: The Southern Historical Publication Society, 1909), 239.

Carolina Charter left the field clear for the founding of a new colony on the southern frontier.

Many prominent noblemen and clergymen agreed to support the enterprise; and in June, 1732, they received a Royal Charter incorporating them as "the Trustees for establishing the colony of Georgia in America."<sup>15</sup>

The territory of the new colony was defined as that lying between the Savannah and Altamaha rivers and extending from their headwaters westward to the "south seas." An undivided eighth part of this territory was still the property of Lord Carteret, one of the Carolina proprietors who refused to yield his share in the original Carolina grant. The Trustees finally<sup>16</sup> secured his land.

The Trustees now set themselves to secure desirable immigrants. They were ready to help the unfortunate, but they did not wish to fill the colony with recruits from the vicious or degenerated classes. Besides, the funds of the Trustees were insufficient to enable them to send over all who wished to take advantage of this opportunity.

By autumn 1732, about one hundred-fourteen men, women, and children had been gathered, including men of various occupations—carpenters, bricklayers, and farmers. Oglethorpe

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<sup>15</sup> Greene, Provincial America, 253.

<sup>16</sup> Coulter, Georgia, pp. 23-24.

assumed responsibility for the colony and was named its first  
17  
governor.

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17  
Coulter, Georgia, 24.

CHAPTER I  
BIRTH OF A COLONY

The prospective colonists gathered at Gravesend, England, and departed, November 17, 1732, on board the Ann.<sup>1</sup> Two months later, on January 13, 1733, it arrived off the coast of Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>2</sup>

Governor Robert Johnson of South Carolina had warned that the people should not come ashore at Charleston. A hundred inconveniences would ensue, he observed diplomatically, and with this the Trustees agreed.<sup>3</sup> It was the first of those reiterated cries when colonists were sent: Do not let them see Charleston, else they would be charmed and never go to Georgia.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from James Oglethorpe at Deal, England, to the Trustees, November 18, 1732, Egmont Papers, Phillips Collection, 14200, (in the University of Georgia Library), 5; and South Carolina Gazette (Charleston, S.C.), March 31, 1733.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Oglethorpe to the Trustees, January 13, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14200, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid; and South Carolina Gazette, March 31, 1733.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Governor Robert Johnson to Oglethorpe, Charleston, September 28, 1732, Egmont Papers, 14200, 2.

The Ann's passengers waited on board searching with interest the line of shore, while their leader Oglethorpe presented a copy of Georgia's Charter and the King's instructions to help the new colonists. Details concerning the practical help which South Carolina's General Assembly would give the new colony were arranged.<sup>5</sup> Oglethorpe's reception was cordial, for the men and women aboard the Ann would in some degree relieve South Carolina of her role as border colony and take from her the partial brunt of enmities and incursions from Spaniards in Florida and Indians to the south and west.<sup>6</sup>

With Mr. Middleton, the King's pilot, on board to show Captain Thomas his route through unfamiliar waters, the Ann sailed on January 14 towards Port Royal Island, South Carolina. Here the passengers landed on January 20. Oglethorpe had preceded the Ann and, together with Lieutenant James Watts of the Independent Company, was fitting out the new barracks at Beaufort as the temporary home of the colonists.<sup>7</sup> Now began the

5

Oglethorpe to Trustees, January 13, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14200, 13; and South Carolina Gazette, March 31, 1733.

6

Coulter, Georgia, 25; and Herbert Osgood, The American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century, III. (Gloucester: Mass., Peter Smith, 1958), 36.

7

Oglethorpe to Trustees, February 10, 1733, Colonial Records of Georgia (hereinafter referred to as C.R.G.), edited by Allen Candler, Vol. III., (Atlanta: C.P. Byrd, state printer, 1909), 380; and South Carolina Gazette, March 31, 1733.



business of disembarking the passengers and the stores. Some of the people of Beaufort and its vicinity paid visits to the colonists, showing them various kindnesses.

Oglethorpe made a quick trip to the Savannah River, looking for a bluff on which to build his city. About eighteen miles from the mouth, they found it, occupied by an encampment of Yamacraw Indians, an outlawed tribe of the Creeks, with their old chief, Tomo-Chi-Chi. Fortunately, Oglethorpe also found a halfbreed Indian woman, Mary, the wife of John Musgrove, a renegade South Carolina trader. Mary soon established an agreement between Oglethorpe and Tomo-Chi-Chi.

Oglethorpe returned to Beaufort on January 24. On Sunday, January 28, a celebration of thanksgiving was held, attended not only by the Ann's passengers, but by a number of people from Beaufort. The colonists gave thanks for their safe arrival, for protection from the perils of deep waters, and for their present

8

Letter from Thomas Causton to his wife, March 12, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14202, 53.

9

Oglethorpe to Trustees, February 10, 1733, C.R.G., III., 380.

10

Pat Tailfer, A True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia (hereinafter referred to as Colony of Georgia), Edited by Clarence Steeg (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1960), 44; and Lawrence Gipson, The Southern Plantation, (Vol. II of The British Empire Before the American Revolution, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939), pp. 198-199.

blessings, which included a favorable site for their settlement and friendly Indian neighbors. They had a bountiful meal from four fat hogs, eight turkeys, fowls, English beef and other items, a hogshead of punch, a hogshead of beer, and a large quantity of wine, "and all was disposed in so regular a manner that no person was drunk nor any disorder happen'd."<sup>11</sup>

On January 30 the colonists embarked in a seventy-ton sloop and five small boats, with the scout-boat and Captain Macpherson and fifteen of his rangers for protection. They camped the first night, somewhat hurriedly because of a storm, at a place called the Look-out, and the second night on Johns Island, where they ate a supper of venison and slept in huts prepared for them. The next afternoon they disembarked at the foot of a bluff on the Savannah River and stepped for the first time upon Georgia's soil.<sup>12</sup> Up went four large tents, and in went the bedding; when darkness fell on Thursday, February 1 [February 12, new style],<sup>13</sup> tired people lay down to rest.

The next morning the settlers had their first look at the wilderness which was to be their home.

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<sup>11</sup>

South Carolina Gazette, March 31, 1733.

<sup>12</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>

Ibid.; and Oglethorpe to Trustees, February 10, 1733, C.R.G., III., 380.

Thomas Causton, the newly appointed storekeeper in the colony, described the bluff as about thirty feet high, and about ten miles from the ocean, and conjectured that ships of 200 tons would be able to come within three miles of the new settlement of Savannah. He also found the location "a very pleasant one."<sup>14</sup>

Oglethorpe found the bluff healthful. This opinion would change later. Opposite the bluff on the other side of the Savannah River was an island of rich pasturage on which he planned to pasture the Trustees' cattle. He described the river as wide and the water fresh. From the bluff, Oglethorpe stated, he could see the river's course to the sea, and for about six miles upstream. He said he had picked this spot not only for the above mentioned reasons, but also because it was sheltered from the western and southern winds by vast woods of pine,<sup>15</sup> "many of which are an Hundred, and few under Seventy Feet high."

Among the families that greeted that first day in the new colony was that of Noble Jones. He was a thirty-two year old carpenter with a wife, Sarah, their ten year old son, Noble

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14

Letter from Thomas Causton to his wife, March 12, 1733. Egmont Papers, 14200, 53.

15

Letter from Oglethorpe to the Trustees, February 10, 1733, C.R.G., III., 380; and South Carolina Gazette, March 31, 1733.

Wimberly, and their three year old daughter, Mary.<sup>16</sup> Jones was probably the most versatile man in the colony, as the reader will soon find. He soon needed to prove this versatility, and would continue to do so the rest of his life. Besides his family, Jones also had brought two servants, Thomas Ellis, aged seventeen, and Mary Cormack, aged eleven.<sup>17</sup> Before the Ann had left England, Jones had been commissioned as one of eight conservators to keep the peace in Savannah.<sup>18</sup>

Jones was entered as a carpenter on the passenger list of the Ann, but Thomas Milledge and John Goddard were considered the chief carpenters.<sup>19</sup> Certainly they were busy those first few months, and Jones found himself the only carpenter in the summer of 1733.<sup>20</sup>

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16

Sarah Temple, and Kenneth Coleman (ed.), Georgia Journeys (hereinafter referred to as Georgia Journeys), (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1961), 268.

17

"A List of the Early Settlers of Georgia," Georgia Journeys, pp. 295-298.

18

Minutes of the Trustees, Egmont Papers, 14207, 61.

19

Ibid.

20

Ibid.; and Oglethorpe to Trustees, August 12, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14200, 106.

The carpenters found themselves busy from the start. Oglethorpe put them to work constructing a crane to unload the supplies from the river and hoist them up the bluff. By the end of the week, work on the crane was stopped, as too time consuming, when their labor was needed elsewhere.<sup>21</sup>

Oglethorpe divided the people into three groups: some to clear land for planting, some to begin the fort and palisade,<sup>22</sup> the remainder to fell trees where the town would be.

Colonel Bull, of the South Carolina militia, came to Savannah from Charleston with a message from the General Assembly of South Carolina to Oglethorpe which promised the settlers of Georgia 100 head of breeding cattle, five bulls, twenty breeding sows, four boars, and twenty barrels of rice. A detachment of Horse Rangers and a scout-boat [an armed boat]<sup>23</sup> were sent to receive orders from Oglethorpe.

Colonel Bull also brought with him four of his Negroes who were sawyers [men used in hand sawing of lumber] to assist the colony.

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21

South Carolina Gazette, March 31, 1733; Oglethorpe to Trustees, February 10, 1733, C.R.G., III., 380.

22

Ibid.

23

Ibid; and Governor Johnson to Oglethorpe, January 26, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14200, 21.



NOBLE JONES  
1701-1775

Clearing of the town site was begun on February 7, and on the ninth Savannah was laid out. Oglethorpe and Colonel Bull marked out one square, several streets, and forty house lots. Also on the ninth the first house, to be made of clapboards, was begun.<sup>24</sup>

Now began a busy time for the carpenters. Jones, along with the other carpenters, worked closely with Colonel Bull and several other men from South Carolina, Bull "measuring the Scantlings and setting out work for the Sawyers, and giving the Proportion of the Houses."<sup>25</sup>

By the middle of March most of the town site was cleared of trees, two clapboard houses were built and three sawed houses were framed. The crane, a battery of cannon, and the magazine were finished.<sup>26</sup>

The progress of construction was slowed by the difficulty in hiring slave sawyers. At least three escaped before they reached Georgia. At last, twenty pairs of sawyers were hired;

24

South Carolina Gazette, March 31, 1733; and Oglethorpe to Trustees, February 10, 1733, C.R.G., III., 380.

25

South Carolina Gazette, August 25, 1733; and Oglethorpe to Trustees, August 12, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14200, 106.

26

Oglethorpe to Trustees, March 12, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14200, 46.

and by spring the building proceeded more rapidly.

By the end of May, clearing of the woods and underbrush had proceeded well and an area of 100 yards was cleared around the settlement. Four months after the initial arrival in Georgia, two clapboard houses were finished. Causton described them as "made of Timber of one Floor, only a Cock loft over it Sufficient to hold two Beds, the lower part will make one large Room and two small ones and stands in a piece of Ground which with the intended Garden is 20 Yards broad in front and 30 Yards long in depth."<sup>28</sup> The houses were twenty-four feet long, sixteen feet wide, and eight feet high, exclusive of the garret. They were built of feather-edged boards and roofed with tarred shingles. The floors were made of one-and-a-half-inch planks which stood on log foundations two and a half feet above the ground.<sup>29</sup>

Also by the end of May, a guard house thirty-six feet

27

South Carolina Gazette, April 21, 1733; and a letter from Samuel Eveleigh to Trustees, May 18, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14200, 69.

28

Causton to his wife, March 12, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14200, 55; and Oglethorpe to Trustees, about December, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14200, 128; and Oglethorpe to Trustees, June 9, 1733, Ibid., 81.

29

Ibid.



long and twenty-four feet wide was finished; the sides covered with thick slabs and the top with bark, two blockhouses, proofed against musket shot, with four portholes for cannon and one piece of cannon ready to be put into each. Further defense for the colony was afforded by a battery of six cannon on the river side and by a palisade 140 feet long and seven-<sup>30</sup>teen feet high on the eastern side of Savannah.

The high point of the first year in Georgia was Saturday, July 7. On this day a celebration was held and prayers of thanksgiving were offered. A ceremony was held to name the streets, wards, and tythings. Each freeholder was put in possession of his own lot.

In the afternoon the Trustees' grant for establishing a court of record for trying both civil and criminal cases was read, the court was opened, a jury impanelled, and a case tried. Appointments of the civil government were read and oaths of allegiance, supremacy, and abjuration administered by Oglethorpe. Noble Jones was appointed a Conservator of the Peace along with seven other men. In case of the death of an officer or for failure to perform his duty substitute appointments were made. Thomas Christie had been appointed Recorder of the Court and

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Oglethorpe to Trustees, June 9, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14200, 81.

31

he was to be replaced by Jones if the occasion arose.

July of 1733 was unfortunately not just a time of happiness but also of sickness and death. The colony was struck for three months by raging fevers and deaths.<sup>32</sup>

The building program was hit hard by the sickness which ran through the colony. Thomas Milledge and John Goddard, along with five other carpenters were carried off during the summer when their talents were sorely needed. Jones must have exercised his own skill in helping provide the needed housing. He was temporarily sidetracked from work because of the illness, for Oglethorpe remarked that Jones looked after the sick upon the death of Dr. Cox. Apparently he continued to help the sick until he too became ill. Oglethorpe described the disease as causing bloody fluxes and burning fevers attended by convulsions and other symptoms.<sup>33</sup>

Women who had some experience in nursing gave willing service until they became ill and some of them died. Indian roots, rhubarb, diascordium, and laudanum were administered,

31

Oglethorpe to Trustees, August 12, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14200, 105.

32

Ibid; and South Carolina Gazette, August 25, 1733.

33

Oglethorpe to Trustees, August 12, 1733, Egmont Papers, 14200, 106.

to little effect. By the middle of July more than sixty people were so ill that it was thought most of them had little chance of recovery. Probably between thirty and forty Georgians died that first summer. Fortunately a shipload of Jews arrived in the colony and among them was a doctor "who immediately undertook our People and refused to take any Pay for it: He proceeded by cold Baths, cooling Drinks and other cooling Applications. Since which the sick have wonderfully recovered and we have not lost one who would follow his Prescriptions."<sup>34</sup>

Shortly after this the mysterious disease disappeared as quickly as it had appeared and Jones could return to his various activities.

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34

Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

### NOBLE JONES

#### SURVEYOR OF THE COLONY

It is not known what surveying experience Noble Jones had had in England, but it was a skill badly needed in the colony. As we soon shall see, this occupation brought Jones much more criticism than reward, and it is this criticism which often overshadows the whole of his public career.

Evidently Jones had some verbal agreement with Oglethorpe concerning the responsibilities of public surveyor and was prepared to meet them.

When the Salzburgers arrived early in 1734, Jones accompanied Commissary Baron Von Reck on an exploratory trip to determine the course of streams in the vicinity of the land the Salzburgers would occupy. To Von Reck, Jones was a surveyor, to the Trustees, he was the Public Surveyor appointed by Oglethorpe.<sup>1</sup>

Von Reck had this to say of his trip into the interior of Georgia accompanied by Jones:

Mr. Jones, who is a Surveyor, and I, went away this Night toward Ebenezer. It thunder'd and Lighten'd, and the Wind being contrary and strong, we could go up no higher than Musgrove's land; where we lay under the Canopy

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<sup>1</sup>

Martyn to Causton, October 28, 1734, MS., C.R.G., XXIX., pp. 65-66, 70.

of Heaven, upon the bare Ground, having made a good Fire to warm our benumbed Limbs, for tho it be hot here in the Day-time, yet it is cold in the Night.

The following day, March 28, Reck continued:

After breakfast, we continued our Journey, and came at Noon to Abercorn. At five in the Afternoon, we entered into a small River, but at nine at Night, we perceived that it was lost among the Trees and Marshes. We entered the same Night into Another River, more towards the W. very large, and having a good Stream, adorned with woods on each side of it. At last, we reache'd a rising Ground, where we landed; we cut some Canes, made a Fire, lay round it, and God granted us a good Rest.

The next morning they went further up the river, but not without difficulty.

On March 30, 1734:

Towards Night we came out of the River, which fell into the Savannah, 8 miles above Purrysburg; so our Design was frustrated, by missing the River Ebenezer, and we returned the same Night to Abercorn, where we staid.

On the afternoon of March 31, they returned to Savannah. 2

As the official surveyor of the colony Jones was burdened with a job which was practically impossible to do in itself. But, as has already been mentioned, he also owned a plantation, was a Conservator of the Peace, and had numerous other responsibilities.

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2

Extracts of Mr. Von Reck's "Journal From Dover to Ebenezer, March 27-31, 1734," in Peter Force (ed.), Tracts and Other Papers Relating Principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America (hereinafter referred to as Force's Tracts), IV., (Washington: Printed by Peter Force, 1844), 13.

The Trustees instructed Jones to keep them informed of the land he ran out, of the number of acres cleared on each lot, what crops were planted on each, and how they were cultivated.<sup>3</sup> Herein lies part of the misunderstanding of the Trustees which resulted in criticism of Jones, often unjust, which has clouded his reputation to this day. Had he strictly complied with these orders, he would have had time to do little else for this would have required constant inspection of all planted land after the initial survey. Surveying alone would have taken all his time for when a new group of colonists arrived, Jones must survey their farm lots, home lots, and garden plots.

The Trustees strongly requested that all officials in the colony send regular journals of their activities to London. The Trustees wanted Jones to keep a day to day account of the land he ran out and also of his daily activities. Numerous instructions were sent to Thomas Causton to be relayed to Jones.<sup>4</sup> Causton advised Jones to first survey the town and garden lots and the farm lots when he conveniently could.<sup>5</sup> Causton also

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<sup>3</sup> Martyn to Causton, October 28, 1734., MS., C.R.G., XXIX., 65.

<sup>4</sup> Martyn to Causton, October 28, 1734, to January 25, 1735, MS., C.R.G., XXIX., pp. 70, 78-80.

<sup>5</sup> Verelst to Bailiffs and Recorders of Savannah, May 15, 1735, MS., C.R.G., XXIX, 113.

assured the Trustees that Jones would soon run out the land granted and report on it, but criticism mounted.<sup>6</sup>

By May, 1735, criticism of Jones caused the Trustees to write this letter to him listing the following complaints:

That he was not sending over a journal of the lands which he had run out.

That since Oglethorpe's return to England little land had been surveyed.

That because of not knowing land boundaries, people were unable to fence their farm lots, and consequently much of the crop was being eaten by cows and horses.

That a Mrs. Sale had requested Jones to survey her land, which she stated he had promised to do, and had neglected to do.<sup>7</sup>

The Trustees warned Jones that if these complaints were true, he was guilty of unaccountable negligence, which had already, and may in the future, cause some very bad consequences. They ordered him to give answers to the above complaints, and these were to be shown to the complaintants, and if on their reply to the Trustees, any affidavits were necessary, he would send them, so that the whole proceeding could be reviewed by the Trustees.<sup>8</sup>

Jones reply to the Trustees was largely concerned with

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<sup>6</sup> Causton to Trustees, April 2, 1735, MS., C.R.G., XX., 572.

<sup>7</sup> Martyn to Jones, May 15, 1735, MS., C.R.G., XXIX., 131.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Roger Parker and his son, Roger Parker, Jr., whose complaints made up a majority of those sent to the Trustees. The Parkers had accused Jones of opposing their settling on the land they wanted, even though they had offered him five guineas above his usual fee for surveying. Parker estimated his losses at £ 150 "by the Negligence of Mr. Jones"<sup>9</sup> and demanded the Trustees reimburse them.

Jones stated in his reply to the Trustees that he merely had attempted to persuade the Parkers that they could not settle wherever they wanted without a grant. Jones stated that Parker had town and garden lots; his own plus those gained by marriage to a Mrs. Sale. Jones closed by stating that he had run out most of the land to which people had any title, "and hope 'ere long to finish which I had Done before Now had I not had ye Misfortune, of Being Weak handed, Occaioned by ye Sicknes & Death of Servants."<sup>10</sup>

Shortly afterwards in a letter to Oglethorpe detailing his activities, Jones remarked:

I Continue to Go on (as Nigh as I am Capable) by the Same Rules as Yr Honour was Pleas'd to Prescribe, Tho' I have Mett with some Difficultys.

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9

Parker to Peter Gordon, March 2, 1734, MS., C.R.G., XX., 332; and Parker to his wife's brother, January 30, 1734, Ibid., 555; and C.R.G., II., 102.

10

Jones to Trustees, July 1, 1735, MS., C.R.G., XX., pp. 421-428.



I have had some trouble with the two Mr. Parkers the particulars of which I have Sent to the Honorable the Trustees I have Done My Endeavour to Stick Close to the Instructions I Rec'd from Yr Honour.<sup>11</sup>

Jones's Plantation servants had helped to retard his work. One had died after a long illness. Two others had been ill, and after they regained their strength, robbed Jones and several other people, and ran away. Both were recaptured. Jones had a chain put on one's leg to prevent his running away again. He also hired a man named Ford to help him, but "What he did for me Cost me above Three times what I had for it, if I cou'd Get a Sufficient Number of Servants I don't Doubt doing well...."<sup>12</sup>

During 1735 and 1736 complaints still went to London about Jones and were noted by the Trustees. Thomas Gapen had written that he and others had been in the colony for two years without seeing their forty-five acre farm lots despite appeals to Jones. He hinted that everything went by favor. The Trustees again ordered Jones to report persons settled on granted lands and to what extent the lands were cultivated.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>  
C.R.G., II., 65.

<sup>12</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>  
C.R.G., XXI., 140; and C.R.G., II., pp. 114-115.

The Trustees also had purchased "two Circumferenters and a Spirit Level" for Jones to use in his surveying. He also was given 10 sterling for his services as Constable. Jones also received a years allowance of staple provisions for himself and family issued by the Trustees for the magistrates, constables, and tythingmen in consideration of the time they spent in public service.

In the spring of 1735 Jones began laying out 2500 acres for the Salzburgers. This required considerable time and much correspondence developed over it. Von Reck protested to the Trustees over the five shillings fee each man was required to pay for Jones's survey work. But the Trustees upheld the fee and Jones, stated that he was entitled to the fee, as set by Oglethorpe.

Jones insisted the fees were set too low to allow him to hire any help in surveying. When he hired Ford to survey the farm lots of some of the Savannah people, Ford received more pay than Jones had for surveying the whole township. Possibly the lowness of surveying fees was one reason why the surveying went so slowly.

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14  
C.R.G., II., 112; and C.R.G., XXI., 473.

15  
C.R.G., II., 76; and Von Reck to Oglethorpe, Feb. 18, March 7, 1736; and C.R.G., XXI., pp. 90, 129-30.

16  
John Brownfield to Trustees, February 10, 1736, C.R.G., XXI., pp. 321-322.

In June, 1736, Oglethorpe directed Jones to survey and lay out a town to be called Augusta. He ordered a square in the center of the town with public lots on each side, totaling not less than four acres. The main streets were to be at least twenty-five yards wide, and there was to be a 600 acre common. Originally forty house lots of one acre each were to be laid out. Farm lots of fifty acres each were to be laid out adjoining the town. Jones was directed to mark out 500<sup>17</sup> acre lots for certain men, most of them Indian traders.

Jones returned to Savannah in July, 1736, dissatisfied. He and Thomas Causton, the recorder and later a close friend, disagreed over payment of fees for his survey work. Jones had come to Causton asking for an advance of money, insisting that Oglethorpe had ordered him to be paid for the lands he had surveyed. Causton replied that he could not comply with Jones's request, but that if he would turn in a list of people who had not paid him, he would be given credit for this amount in the store. But he must bring a certificate from every person whose lands had been run out, because each person was required to pay for his own survey. Causton also reminded Jones that his helpers had been paid and food provided, and

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17

Oglethorpe to Jones, June 14, 1736, MS., Egmont Papers, 14202, 4.

his family supported, so there was little prospect of anything else being due him, unless he could obtain the Trustees' approval of his demands. Jones objected, stating that he had encountered various difficulties in surveying for which he received no pay. Causton advised Jones to return his plats and endeavor to remove some of the complaints against him<sup>18</sup> which at this time he believed to be just.

Jones remained in or near Savannah for the rest of July. An assistant in surveying was listed in the Trustees' estimate of expenses in the summer, to work in the newer part of the colony south of Savannah. A new colonist, who had arrived in the fall of 1737, John Amory, was recommended to the Trustees as a surveyor. It was suggested to Causton that Amory might aid in pushing the needed work.<sup>19</sup> Evidentially the Trustees were beginning to realize that the surveying load was far too heavy for Jones alone. Oglethorpe assured the Trustees that Jones now had enough helpers to carry on the surveying. Perhaps the comment made by the Trustees "that those who have made his [Jones] Neglect of doing it a Pretence for their Idleness, may

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Causton Journal, Egmont Papers, 14203, pp. 49-50.

19

Trustees to Causton, 1737, MS., C.R.G., XXIX., 435; and Verelst to Causton, October 10, 1737, MS., C.R.G., 456.

be left without excuse if they continue it,"<sup>20</sup> was at last proof that the complaints against Jones were taken with a grain of salt.

William Stephens was sent to the colony in November, 1737, as a recorder for the Trustees, and began an acquaintanceship with Jones about three weeks later. Stephens was instructed to send "a just Report of the Surveyor's Negligence and who among the People there are Capable of taking that Business upon them."<sup>21</sup> He was to call upon the various officers, to make up their accounts and send an account of the magistrates and other officers, "their Diligence or Carelessness, Abilities &c, without fear, Affection, or Partiality."<sup>22</sup>

In January, 1738, Stephens first reported on Jones. He stated that to say nothing good about Jones would be an injustice, for he had shown worth on several occasions. However,

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20

Martyn to Causton, August 3, 1737, MS., C.R.G., XXIX., 407.

21

"Instructions to William Stephens from the Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia in America." The Journal of William Stephens, 1741-1743 (hereinafter referred to as Journal of William Stephens). Edited by E. Merton Coulter, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1958), Appendix B., 262.

22

Ibid.

Stephens accused Jones of negligence in running out land, which had caused many to complain. Stephens called him an indolent man, in public work and private economy, "which is certainly visible from the manner his Family lives in, & the very mean appearance he makes in his Garb: I have never yet seen any of his Plans, & the Trust (I fear) not many."<sup>23</sup>

It was suggested that one John Amory might take Jones' place but Stephens feared Jones, in a fit of anger, might destroy all the land records he possessed. Besides this, Amory had refused to work for the salary which Jones was receiving.<sup>24</sup>

Stephens said he had met Jones three times, certainly not enough to gather any fair conclusions about his character. It seemed Jones could do no right, once he was twelve miles out of town surveying land, and Stephens chose this occasion to criticize him for never being in Savannah.<sup>25</sup>

In qualifying his complaint, Stephens said he had found one piece of land in which Jones had only marked out two extreme corners of the property. There were no inward lines to complete

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<sup>23</sup> Stephens to Trustees, January 19, 1738, C.R.G., XXIX., Pt. I., pp. 79-80.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> C.R.G., IV., 46.

the boundary.

Mr. Amory came to Stephens complaining that he had been trying to get Jones to ascertain the boundaries of his land since before Christmas. He was afraid that he might work someone else's land if he went ahead without knowing the boundaries of his property. Stephens promised Amory he would speak with Thomas Causton about it, and have him hasten Jones to run out the Amory property.

During January Jones was busy running out some of the Trust lands to be worked by the German servants who had arrived in December, 1737.<sup>26</sup>

In March, 1738, the Trustees again studied the conduct of Jones and Causton. On October 17, Oglethorpe condemned Causton's mismanagement of affairs and gave Stephens a written order discharging Causton from his position as magistrate and storekeeper; Jones was discharged as surveyor and suspended as first constable.<sup>27</sup>

So ended Noble Jones's controversial career as a surveyor. This had been a position which heaped much criticism upon his name, except in isolated instances. Now that he was freed of the exacting requirements of surveyor, perhaps he would be able

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26

Ibid., 70.

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Ibid., pp. 213-214; and James McCain, Georgia as a Proprietary Province; The Execution of a Trust (hereinafter referred to as Proprietary Province), (Boston: Richard G. Bodger, 1917), 166.

to improve his appearance and that of his plantation, so long neglected as he sought to carry out his unrewarding duties as public surveyor.

His personal health and the prosperity and improvement of his plantation would continue to suffer, however, for Jones was a man of many needed skills.



### CHAPTER III

#### NOBLE JONES

INDIAN AGENT, RUM ENFORCEMENT AGENT

FOREST RANGER, ROAD ENGINEER

Noble Jones's appointment relative to the Indian Trade Act seems to have been temporary, from the very nature of his duties. This act was designed to regulate trafficking with the Indians through a licensing system, whereby disreputable traders might be kept out of the Indian country and the introduction of rum into that region prevented. Though the act had been passed in 1735, it was just becoming known in Georgia by 1736, when in June of that year Jones received his appointment. According to his letter of appointment, there were numerous persons "preparing to go with Trading Goods into the Indian Nations inhabiting within the Province of Georgia." The letter also stated that "lest any unwary Person should Thro' Inadvertency or Ignorance incur the Penalties of the said act," Oglethorpe appointed Jones to acquaint the "said Persons with the said Act—that they may conform to the Regulations of the same, as they shall answer it at their Peril."<sup>1</sup>

It was felt that by constantly humoring the Indians, frequent distribution of presents to them, and entertaining

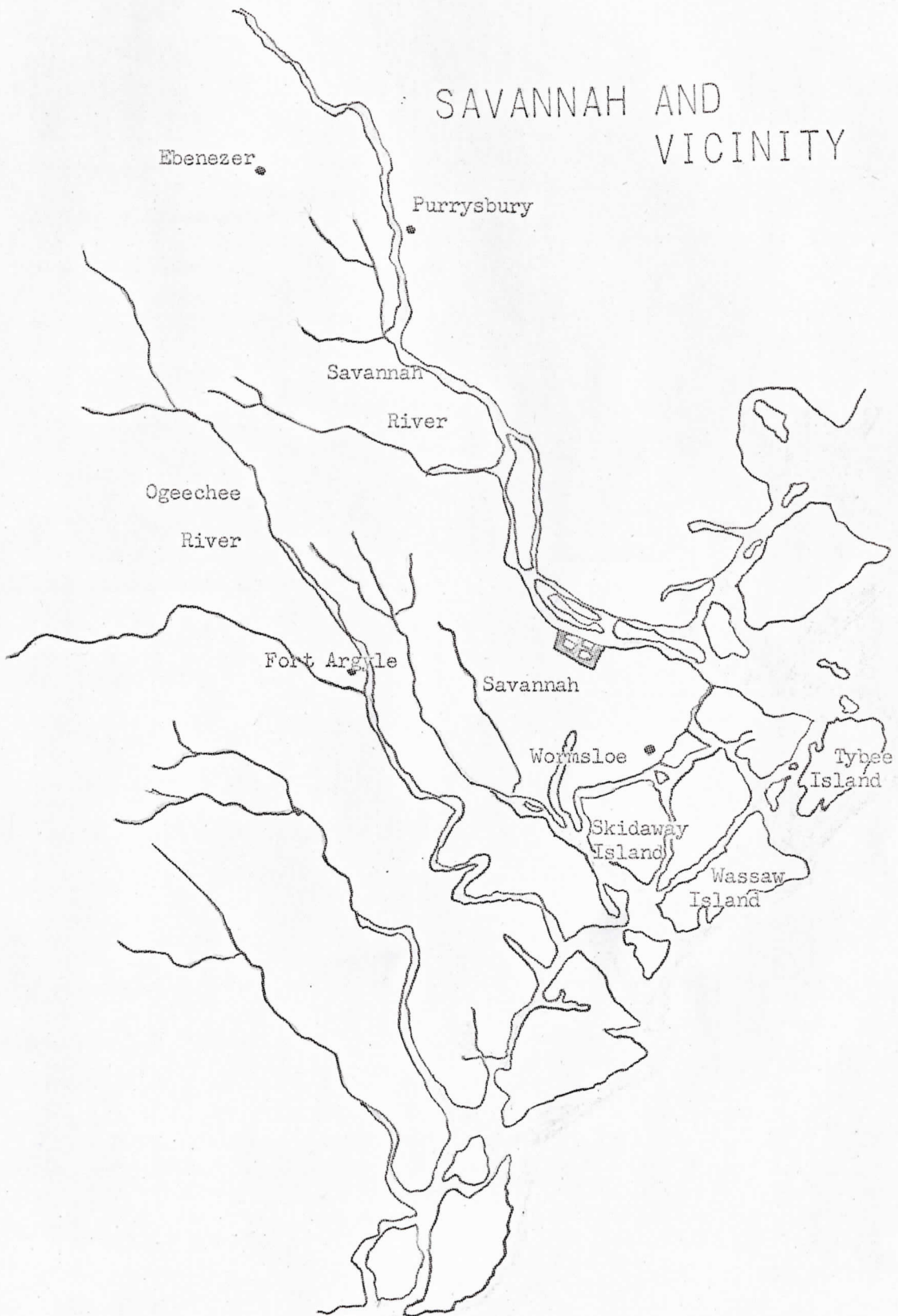
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<sup>1</sup>  
Letter from Oglethorpe to Jones, 1736, Egmont Papers, MS., 14202, 1.

them, on any occasion when they happened to be in Savannah were all necessary to guarantee their constant attachment. In line with this policy, in the summer of 1735 it was planned to have about 300 Creeks visit Savannah to receive presents, that should be equally divided between the Lower Creeks, who were largely confined to the regions eastward from the Chattahoochee to the coast and the Savannah River, and the Upper Creeks, who lived in the territory west of the Chattahoochee River. On the appointed day, only the Lower Creeks came—150 of them—and only half of the presents were distributed. The formalities attending the presentation were made quite impressive. Headed by Tomo-Chi-Chi the Indians came down the Savannah River in barges and as they landed at Savannah they were greeted by a barrage of cannon. Jones was the chief marshal of the occasion and in direct command of the main body of people, 200 men all under arms. Other groups which played a part in the welcome were thirty gentlemen and volunteers under arms and twenty grenadiers with two ensigns flying and drums beating. The whole procession marched to Johnson Square where the bailiffs welcomed the Indians. Jones's main body of men brought up the rear, but before the head of the procession reached the square, half of Jones's men by a quick detour through a side street arrived there first, and dividing into two lines, formed a lane up which the Indians marched. Then the presents were distributed and the Indians returned to

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# SAVANNAH AND VICINITY



Tomo-Chi-Chi's house outside Savannah where, for the next two days, they recounted the mythical rise and adventures of the Creek Nation, which were transcribed on a buffalo skin and sent to the Trustees in London.<sup>2</sup>

To conserve the interests of the Indians and to protect their property from depredations, Oglethorpe appointed Jones "attorney and Agent" to them. Jones immediately began proceedings against anyone who had been cutting down trees on the Indian lands, "Stealing their Canoes or any like Offences."<sup>3</sup> Also he did "any business for them" that they desired, even acting as a scribe for Tomo-Chi-Chi in writing a letter for him to the Trustees thanking them "for the many favors they had bestowed upon him."<sup>4</sup>

The protection of Tomo-Chi-Chi's trees and canoes was only one aspect of Jones's widespread duties as a ranger of the province—protecting the trees of the Trustee's throughout the entire province, running down spies, and acting in a sense as the conservator of the Trustee's interests everywhere. By the summer of 1735 he had made two expeditions to the southernmost parts of the province, the first time at the head

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Causton to Trustees, June 20, 1735, MS., C.R.G., XX., pp. 520-521.

<sup>3</sup> Noble Jones to Oglethorpe, July 6, 1735, Egmont Papers, MS., 14201, 61.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

of fifty men to investigate rumors of an alarming situation there, occasioned by the Spaniards in Florida. At another time he went down to the Ogeechee River, to look for hostile Yamessee Indians, and at "the same time to See if we can come up with those Strollers [Spaniards] who came to Spy and Disturb our Peace."<sup>5</sup> He informed the Trustees that "as Ranger I always think it my particular Duty to be the first out on these Occasions."<sup>6</sup>

As ranger, Jones considered himself as much a protector of the trees as of the people; he was, indeed, a true example of the early forest ranger. It almost seemed that Jones had a personal interest in every tree in the colony, especially cypress and live oak trees; and if he got news of anyone's having cut down a tree, he immediately inquired whether such persons had the permission of the Trustees. He wrote the Trustees to find out if one Jonathan Bryan had permission to cut down trees and make them into canoes, as Bryan had been claiming. There were also others protesting that they had Oglethorpe's permission to cut trees. A rumor had gotten started that a bounty was being paid on live oak logs, which gave Jones more trouble. "As all the Words I could speak were

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<sup>5</sup>  
Ibid., pp. 61-62.

<sup>6</sup>  
Ibid.

not sufficient for some People," Jones explained that he wrote out notices and sent them all over the inhabited part of Georgia forbidding anyone without a permit recorded in the ranger's office to "Cut Down, Deface, or Destroy any Cypress, or other Timber Trees or what, or Quality, Soever."<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, since many people cut down trees on their lands and often let them fall across passageways to plantations and, too, scattered limbs and rubbish over good pasture lands, Jones threatened to prosecute "with Utmost Severity" such persons who "do Not Immediately after Such Cutting Down Such Trees remove, burn, or Destroy all Loppes, Tops, chips & brush Occasioned by the falling, hewing, or Using Such Timber or Trees."<sup>8\*</sup> He also announced that if anyone should cut down shrubs or trees anywhere about the town spring "or Make any Fires there or Make it a place to Wash Cloaths they will have their Tubs, Potts &c broke & be Also Prosecuted for the Same."<sup>9</sup> He signed his name to his various advertisements, announcements, and notices "Noble Jones, Ranger and Surveyor."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>  
Ibid., pp. 62-63.

<sup>8</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>8\*</sup>  
This author's punctuation.

<sup>9</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid.

When the King took over Georgia, and the land leases of the Trustees were to be confirmed by grants in fee simple, the Royal government commissioned Jones to make out as full records as possible of all surveys and plots under the Trustees "and [provided] that he be allowed Ten Guinea to buy a Piece of Plate as a small Acknowledgement for his services."<sup>11</sup>

At the same time he was made one of the surveyors of highways for the district southeast of Savannah. As it was "absolutely necessary that Public Roads should be made thro' the Province of Georgia for a speedy communication system to the most distant parts of it and for the ease and conveniece of its Inhabitants,"<sup>12</sup> the attempt was now being made to give the colony a system of highways, paths, ferries, bridges, and causeways, the cost of which was to be assessed against the people living in the vicinity of these improvements.<sup>13</sup>

This communication system proved timely, for Georgia was soon to be swept up in border conflict with the Spaniards based in Florida. Jones would leave his various civilian duties and become an intregal part of the war effort.

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<sup>11</sup> Acts of the Trustees, C.R.G., VII., 291.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., XVIII., pp. 87-88, 90, 728.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

### NOBLE JONES

#### AND THE WAR OF JENKINS' EAR

The defense of the colony ranked high in the thoughts of the Georgia inhabitants. Not only was there constant danger from the Indian tribes which faced the colony on two sides; more important was the Spanish menace to the south centered in St. Augustine. The Georgians were more fortunate than some other colonists in their relationship with the Indians for the Indian leaders generally respected Oglethorpe to a high degree. The Spanish, however, questioned the validity of the British claims to the lands occupied by the colony of Georgia.

In January, 1737, Oglethorpe returned to England to secure additional funds, especially for Georgia's defense.<sup>1</sup> Lt. Governor Bull of South Carolina had acquainted the Trustees, by a letter dated February 7, 1737, of preparations being made by the Spanish at St. Augustine and Havannah to attack the colony of Georgia. The Trustees in a letter to King George II set forth the inability of the colony to protect itself against

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<sup>1</sup> John Lanning, The Diplomatic History of Georgia; A Study of the Epoch of Jenkins' Ear (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 94.



the Spanish forces. King George then ordered a regiment of six hundred men to be raised and sent to Georgia under the command of Oglethorpe who was made commander-in-chief of the military forces in South Carolina and Georgia and colonel of the above regiment. The regiment arrived at Frederica in October, 1738.<sup>2</sup>

As encouragement for the soldiers' good behavior, the Trustees resolved to give each of them property in the colony; they therefore made a grant of land in trust for an allotment of five acres of land to each soldier of the regiment. This grant was to be held until he was mustered out. In addition, each soldier, who at the end of seven years from his enlistment, should be desirous of quitting his Majesty's service, and having his regular discharge, could receive an additional twenty acres, upon showing a certificate of good behavior from his commanding officier.<sup>3</sup>

Oglethorpe was ordered by King George II to annoy the Spanish, after war had been declared on them by England in October of 1739. This war, known as the War of Jenkins' Ear, would bring Georgia into direct conflict with the Spanish in Florida.

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An Account, Shewing the Progress of the Colony of Georgia in America, From its First Establishment (hereinafter referred to as Progress of the Colony), (London: Published per order of the Honorable Trustees., 1741), 20.

3

Ibid.

Because of the vulnerability of Georgia to attack from the south, efforts were made to strengthen and add defensive outposts to the southern fringes of the colony.<sup>4</sup> The island of Frederica, one of a chain of islands off the coast south of Savannah, was fortified with earthen works with four bastions and several pieces of cannon.<sup>5</sup> Ten miles closer to the sea, overlooking the entrance into the sound, through which all ships of any size must come to attack Frederica, another fort was built. It was enclosed with a strong wall and had a guard-house within the wall capable of holding twenty-four men.<sup>6</sup> St. George's Fort was also built on the northern bank of the St. John's River.<sup>7</sup> To keep garrisons in these forts, to help the Trustees to defray the costs of the construction and salaries, ten thousand pounds were granted by the British Parliament.

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<sup>4</sup> David Wallace, South Carolina, A Short History, 1520-1948 (hereinafter referred to as South Carolina), (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1951), pp. 161-162.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Hewit, An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of South Carolina and Georgia (hereinafter referred to as An Historical Account), II., (London: Printed for Alexander Donaldson, No. 48., St. Paul's Churchyard, 1779), 47.

<sup>6</sup> Progress of the Colony, 20; and Hewit, An Historical Account, 47.

<sup>7</sup> Wallace, South Carolina, pp. 161-162.



Charleston

Augusta

Savannah

Ogeechee  
River

River

Ebenezer

Purrysburg

Savannah

Fort Argyle

Ossabaw  
Island

Altamaha  
River

St. Catherine  
Island

Sapelo  
Island

Darien

Frederica  
Island

COASTAL  
ISLANDS

While Oglethorpe was employed in strengthening Georgia, he received a message from the Governor of St. Augustine. In it Oglethorpe learned that a Spanish commissioner from Havannah was coming to make certain demands of him. At the same time he received warning that three companies of soldiers had accompanied the commissioner to St. Augustine. A few days later, the commissioner came to Georgia by water. Oglethorpe, unwilling for the commissioner to see the relative defenselessness of Frederica, dispatched a sloop to bring him into Jekyl Sound. Here Oglethorpe held a conference with him. The commissioner demanded that Oglethorpe and all settlers should immediately evacuate all territories south of St. Helena Sound, as they belonged to the King of Spain. The King was determined to maintain his right to this territory, and if Oglethorpe refused to comply with this demand the commissioner had orders to proceed to Charleston and lay the same demands before the Governor and Council of South Carolina. Oglethorpe endeavored to convince him that the Spanish King was misinformed in regard to the lands in question, but to no purpose. The commissioner said his instructions were peremptory and on this emasse the conference broke up without coming to any agreement.

Oglethorpe now realized that an offensive campaign against the Spanish based in Florida would perhaps catch them off balance and prevent an attack upon Georgia. As commander-in-chief of the combined armies of South Carolina and Georgia, he ordered a regiment of South Carolina militia to be called out. In addition, a regiment of Cherokees and Creeks was available, as well as a combined regiment of South Carolinians and Georgians.

In the days when Noble Jones was still a constable, he had come to Savannah one morning in 1738 to consult William Stephens about the state of arms of the colony. After breakfast, Stephens by a beat of drums had shown him how quickly the men of Savannah could be called to arms. Within less than an hour about eighty citizens had appeared with their weapons.<sup>9</sup>

In this war, which would be part of the War of Jenkins' Ear, Jones was to play a prominent part, from its beginning to its end. In the worsening situation, the strategic location of Jones's land was one factor in Oglethorpe's ordering a watchhouse, or small fort, to be erected there in 1739, which Jones was paid £ 40 for building. The Scots remarked sarcastically of this fort, "A Timber building called Jones's Fort: which serves for two Uses, namely to support Mr. Noble Jones, who is commander of it, and to prevent the poor People of Frederica from getting to any other Place, where they might

<sup>9</sup>

Journal of William Stephens, C.R.G., IV., 121.

be able to support themselves."<sup>10</sup> Jones contributed considerably more to Oglethorpe's war effort than keeping the people at Frederica. He carried messages, received visitors who left from his plantation going to Frederica, did investigation and scouting work, and other things which Oglethorpe directed. He also held a lieutenant's commission in the combined South Carolina and Georgia regiment.<sup>11</sup>

Oglethorpe then decided to strike at Florida. He swept up the St. Johns River and ravaged the country toward St. Augustine, while he sent a smaller force on up the river to seize the two forts of Picolata and St. Francis, which protected the Spanish road from St. Augustine to Pensacola. Nothing came of either force, for Oglethorpe was too weak to attack St. Augustine and the troops sent against Picolata and St. Francis, having no cannon, desisted after a weak effort.

After returning to Frederica, Oglethorpe then combined his forces, setting off on New Year's Day, 1740, up the St. Johns with a flotilla of fifteen craft, with a large contingent of Indians. Noble Jones and other officers were along. Early in the morning of the seventh the expedition arrived off forts Picolata and St. Francis.

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<sup>10</sup>  
C.R.G., II., 317.

<sup>11</sup>  
C.R.G., IV., pp. 535-536; South Carolina Gazette, April 4, 1740; and McCain, Proprietary Province, 166.

The Indians surprised, captured, and burnt Fort Picolata, on the eastern bank of the river, and a little later in the morning Oglethorpe landed forces on the western bank and with four pieces of cannon began an attack on Fort St. Francis. After he had carried out various maneuvers and bombardments, this fort was surrendered about sunset with all the garrison made prisoners. The booty consisted of two cannon, a mortar, three swivel guns, 150 shells, "a number of glass bottles filled with Powder, and artificial Fire works."<sup>12</sup> The loss of the two forts was a severe blow to the Spaniards, as it destroyed their communication link to the west.<sup>13</sup>

The real power of the enemy, however, lay in St. Augustine, and until this stronghold was captured the menace of the Spaniards would remain as strong as ever. After returning to Frederica for additional men and supplies, he returned to Florida with approximately 2,000 troops in the late spring of 1740, and though the beginning of summer was no time to invade Florida, strategy demanded it. Reinforced by ships of the British navy, and financed by a pledge of £ 120,000 from the South Carolina legislature, Oglethorpe planned to make a concerted attack by land and water.<sup>14</sup>

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12

Oglethorpe, Frederica, to William Stephens, Savannah, February 1, 1740, C.R.G., XXII., Part II., pp. 312-316.

13

Ibid.

14

C.R.G., IV., 638, Supplement, 32, 56.

High hopes were cherished by an officer of Oglethorpe's prestige; but the enterprise, launched in May, 1740, proved him lacking in the qualities of organization and strategy as to nullify his enormous energy. To take the castle in any event would have been difficult; but he rendered it hopeless by committing almost every possible blunder. When the fleet, upon which Oglethorpe was trusting to reduce the stone walls of St. Augustine, sailed because of fear of hurricanes on July 5, the fate of the expedition was sealed. The last troops to leave were the South Carolina regiment, which was left to destroy the artillery.

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A few weeks after the expedition returned to Frederica, Noble Jones set out for Savannah with a pouch of letters for various people there, and he also brought with him the Savannah contingent of the South Carolina regiment, whose colonel, Alexander Dussen, wanted them to proceed to Charleston to collect their pay. But Oglethorpe, fearful that many of these Georgians might stay in South Carolina, if they got to Charleston, ordered Jones to see that they were safely landed at Savannah. In the latter part of November, Jones went to Charleston in an effort to secure funds to pay the Georgians who had been members of the South Carolina regiment.

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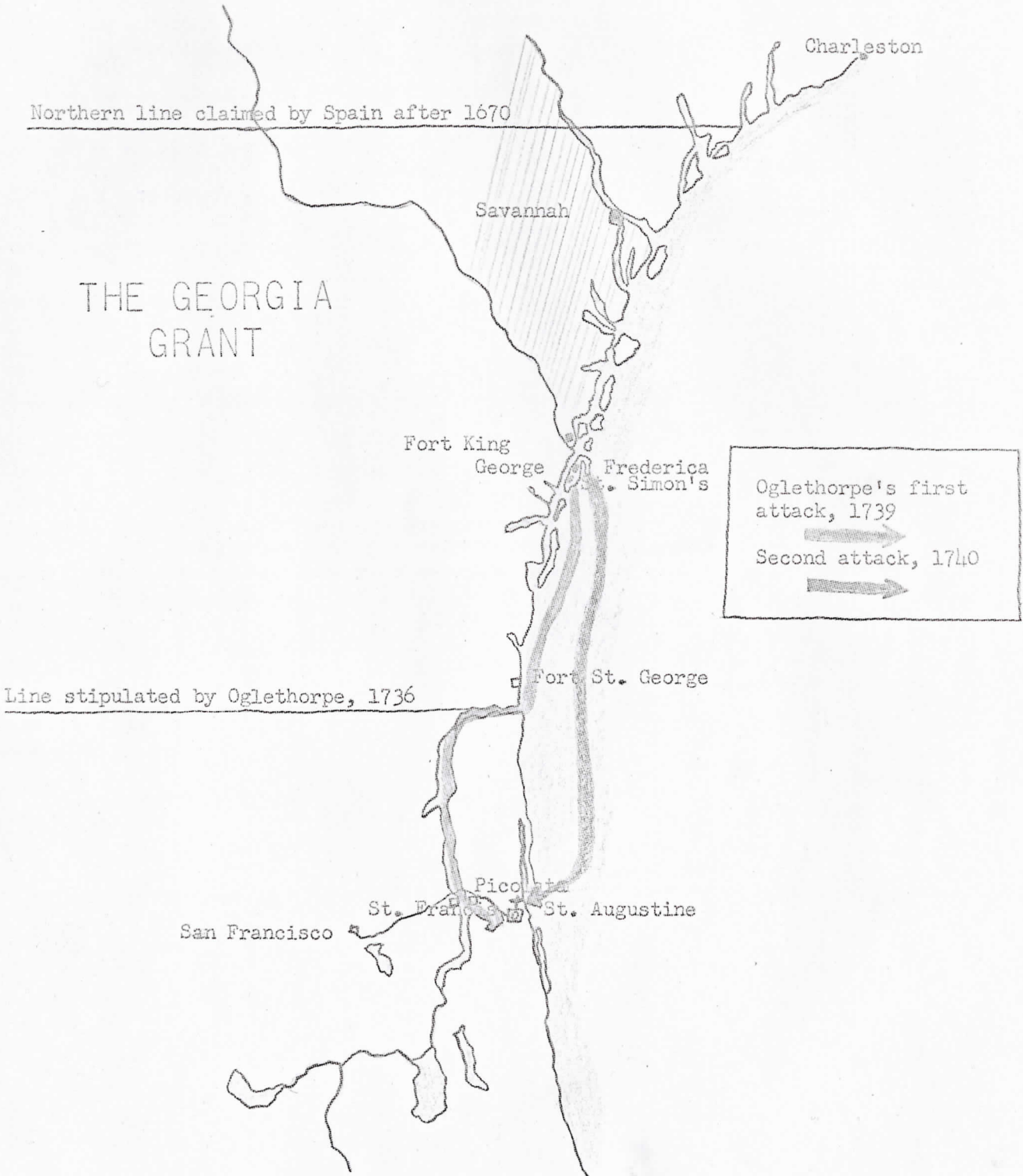
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15  
Wallace, South Carolina, 162.

16  
C.R.G., IV., 638; Supplement, 32, 56.



# THE GEORGIA GRANT



Oglethorpe's expedition against St. Augustine had done little more than stir up a hornet's nest. Oglethorpe understood that his action would probably result in attempted revenge by the Spaniards against Georgia. Putting his trust and confidence in Jones, Oglethorpe appointed him to head a scouting service for the northern part of the province, and placed him under the command of William Stephens, who was now dividing the administrative leadership of Georgia with Oglethorpe. Oglethorpe controlled Georgia south of the Ogeechee River.

The strategic spot for the protection of Savannah was the Skidaway Narrows, near which was located Jones's Wormsloe Plantation. Jones was ordered to raise ten men for a "Guard and Scout Boat,"<sup>17</sup> to be stationed at the guard house on the<sup>18</sup> Narrows.

Stephens kept a close eye on Jones and took special delight in directing the defenses of his part of Georgia. Shortly afterwards when Jones appeared in Savannah, Stephens wrote in his journal that he "had many Things to say to him"<sup>19</sup> on Georgia's defenses. He had his eye on a boat at Purrysburg,

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<sup>17</sup>  
C.R.G., IV., pp. 637-638.

<sup>18</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>  
Ibid.

which he heard was for sale, and he instructed Jones to buy it, and also to be careful in enlisting for it "able and good men."<sup>20</sup> Stephens also informed Jones that soon he would visit Oglethorpe at Frederica and that on his return he would expect to find the "Boat and Men at their proper Station; and therefore recommended to him to use all possible Diligence in so necessary a Piece of Service, which he [Jones] promised."<sup>21</sup>

On August 30, 1740, on his way to Frederica, Stephens arrived at Wormsloe and immediately went with Jones to the guard-house (also called the watch-house and the fort), which he found "in pretty good Order; but with a little more Expencc and Labour, it would be very useful, and capable of Annoyance and Defence."<sup>22</sup>

On his way back from Frederica to Savannah about three weeks later, he inspected the fortifications on the Narrows and found the scout-boat "at her proper station," and what was more, "it was a Satisfaction to me to find the Orders I left with Noble Jones...so well observed."<sup>23</sup> Evidentially Jones

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<sup>20</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>  
Ibid., 655.

<sup>23</sup>  
Ibid.

bought the scout-boat Stephens had suggested because too short a time had elapsed to build one. The boat cost 285 pounds, <sup>24</sup> fifteen shillings, one pence.

Stephens soon found occasion to reprimand Jones for "loitering about this town [Savannah] and Neighborhood for several Days past, and some of his men likewise had been seen idling and drinking here, in some private Corners." <sup>25</sup> While Jones was away from his station visiting his friend Thomas Causton, Stephens wrote Jones a letter "requiring him, on Sight thereof, to repair to his Proper Charge, and withal assuring him, that if he offered the like again, after this admonition, I should fully acquaint the General [Oglethorpe] with it, who would soon appoint one more diligent to supply that Place." <sup>26</sup> Jones quickly complied. A few days later Stephens sent a messenger to Jones to warn him "to be very diligent with his Boat in watching the Inlets...lest any Surprise should happen." <sup>27</sup>

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24

Statement of Charges for 1739-1740, Egmont MS., Phillips Collection, 14210, 64.

25

C.R.G., IV., 655; Supplement, 14, 16.

26

Ibid.

27

Ibid.

As the scout-boat was unequipped with offensive weapons and was therefore useless in chasing the Spaniards, Jones went to Savannah to inform Stephens of his needs. Stephens supplied him with a small swivel gun to be mounted in the prow of the boat, some ammunition, an additional supply of muskets, and "with an Ensign to shew his Authority."<sup>28</sup>

It had now been more than three months since the ill-fated St. Augustine expedition had returned to Georgia and still the Spaniards had made no move up the coast, but rumors were out that Spanish privateers were operating off the coast, and that especially a craft "commanded by one Van Ding, a Native of Spain,"<sup>29</sup> who had as some of his sailors several deserters from Oglethorpe's army when it was in Florida. Jones feared that he might meet up with this privateer and while chasing it, not be able to overtake it. He feared further that it might make its way through the Skidaway Narrows as there were no guns at the fort there to stop it. In the light of these fears, in February, 1741, Jones left behind a guard and hurried in the scout-boat to Savannah to warn Stephens of the situation. Stephens ordered "one of our smartest Pieces of Cannon, carrying a four pound Ball, and well mounted, to

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28

Ibid., pp. 16-17.

29

Ibid., pp. 91-92.

be delivered him for that purpose."<sup>30</sup>

The fort at Skidaway Narrows was rebuilt and garrisoned with a detachment from Jones's Company of militia. Jones was now Captain Jones, after his part in the expedition against the Spanish in Florida. The militia for the fort were garrisoned on the Isle of Hope.<sup>31</sup>

Spain's counterattack against Georgia finally came in July of 1742. A powerful fleet from Havanna came up the coast and entered the harbour at St. Simon's Island. The landing force, reportedly 3,000, got ashore undetected.<sup>32</sup>

Captain Jones was out on a scouting patrol with a detachment of militia and Indians protecting Frederica where Oglethorpe was in camp with his Highlanders. Suddenly word was brought to Jones that a small detachment of Spanish soldiers were eating lunch while their weapons were stacked and no guard posted. Jones led his militia and Indians in a surprise move against this enemy detachment and succeeded in capturing the lot. From these prisoners it was learned that the whole Spanish

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Ibid.

31

Charles Jones, The History of Georgia, Aboriginal and Colonial Epochs (hereinafter referred to as History of Georgia), I. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1883), 148.

32

Wallace, South Carolina, 162.

invasion force was advancing. Jones quickly sent word to Oglethorpe who immediately jumped on a horse, and followed by Highlanders, rangers, and Indians, engaged another advanced party of the Spanish about a mile from Frederica. In the short battle that followed, the Georgians completely defeated the Spaniards.

Oglethorpe followed the remnants until he reached a grassy meadow where he posted his men in a fringe of woods on the side—a strategic location, for the main Spanish force, which had not yet been engaged, would have to pass through this open space. Oglethorpe then hastened back to Frederica to bring up the remainder of his forces, and it was while Oglethorpe was hurrying forward with these troops that he heard firing and was soon met by panicky soldiers who informed him that the day was lost, that the Highlanders had been cut to pieces. Oglethorpe, refusing to listen, quickened his pace and soon reached the scene of action where he found the report entirely false. Instead, a detachment of more than 300 Spaniards had marched into the meadow and had been practically wiped out by the soldiers Oglethorpe had posted in the wooded fringe. This battle would be known as the Battle of Bloody Marsh.

Oglethorpe continued on to the outskirts of Fort St. Simons, where the main body of Spaniards was camped. Since at no time did Oglethorpe have at his command as many as 1,000 men on the island, the Spanish menace seemed as great as ever. Hearing of dissension in the Spanish camp, Oglethorpe decided to make a night attack and was on the point of doing so, when one of his soldiers deserted to the Spaniards. Now with his plans and his weaknesses revealed to the enemy, Oglethorpe worked a trick on the Spaniards by releasing one of the Spanish prisoners with a letter to be delivered to the deserter as if he were a spy, ordering him to make the Spaniards believe the Georgians were weak and to induce them to send their boats up toward Frederica where they would be destroyed by hidden batteries. Though some of the Spaniards suspected a trick, this supposed danger plus reports that an English fleet with a strong body of South Carolina troops was approaching led the Spaniards to reembark and sail away to Florida, never to return.

34

Jones next appearance in a military capacity occurred in 1749. In that year he was made commander of the whole militia force of the colony. He soon had a chance to exercise his power for a disorderly band of Indians was headed toward

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Oglethorpe to Trustees, July 9, 1742, Egmont Papers, MS., 14206, pp. 104-105; and Jones, History of Georgia, 348.



Savannah. Captain Jones, at the head of a troop of horse, stopped them at the outskirts of town and demanded whether their visit was of a friendly or hostile nature. Receiving no reply, he commanded them to ground their arms, declaring that his instructions were not to allow any armed Indian to set foot in the town. The Indians reluctantly submitted. They later left town peacefully. This incident gave Jones considerable prestige.<sup>35</sup>

Insistent demands that the militia be reorganized and that officers be appointed in various parts of the province "to train, Exercise and command them"<sup>36</sup> led the President and Assistants of the colony to act in April, 1751. For the Savannah region, they appointed Noble Jones to be captain of the cavalry. Noble's son Noble Wimberly was appointed ensign in the company of foot soldiers. At the same time, it was decreed that all able-bodied men who owned as much as 300 acres of land should appear "well accoutered on Horse-back"<sup>37</sup> and that the others should come on foot "properly armed." In early

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Jones, History of Georgia, 394; and McCain, Proprietary Province, 166.

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C.R.G., I., pp. 548-49; and II., 509.

37

Lilla Hawes (ed.), "Proceedings of the President and Assistants in Council of Georgia, 1749-1751," Georgia Historical Quarterly, XXXV., (1951), 347.

June there was a general muster for Savannah and adjacent settlements, in which about 220 horse and foot soldiers turned out, "well armed and accoutered, who behaved well and made a pretty appearance."<sup>38</sup> Noble Jones was in command, having recovered from a severe fever, which had prostrated him in the early part of the year.<sup>39</sup>

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38

Ibid., XXXVI., (1952), pp. 55-56.

39

C.R.G., XXVI., 165; and William Stevens, A History of Georgia, From its First Discovery By Europeans to the Adoption of the Present Constitution in 1847 (hereinafter referred to as First Discovery by Europeans) I. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1847), 250.

CHAPTER V  
NOBLE JONES  
PLANTATION OWNER

In addition to Jones's many activities, he had, almost from the founding of the colony, owned a plantation. After living in Savannah for two years, he had taken his grant of five hundred acres about ten miles south of Savannah. Jones located his plantation on "a kind of Island (call'd Hope Island)."<sup>1</sup>

By 1740 William Stephens was calling it the Isle of Hope, and he described it as "a Peninsula, cut off from the Main with a very little Isthmus, which by a short Fence makes the Island an entire possession"<sup>2</sup> of those living on it. This name was given to the island by the three families who divided it equally among themselves and doubtless the name was selected not only as having a pleasant sound to the ear but also as a

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<sup>1</sup> Pat Tailfer, A True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia. Edited by Clarence Steeg (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1960), 149.

<sup>2</sup> Journal of William Stephens, C.R.G., IV., 619.

salute to future happiness and prosperity.<sup>3</sup>

In 1736 Oglethorpe had leased this plantation of 500 acres to Jones, subject to the approval of the Trustees acting through their Common Council in London, which was the method of granting land in Georgia. No action was taken, probably through negligence, and not until 1745, when a new petition was forwarded in which Jones noted that he had been "at much expense in improving the said Lands,"<sup>4</sup> was the lease perfected.

Immediately upon the Trustees making Negro slavery legal, Jones procured seven slaves, hoping to improve agricultural development at Wormsloe, and though "at vast Expense"<sup>5</sup> he had endeavored to cultivate it, he found he could hardly raise enough food to feed his Negroes. Unless he could get better land, "Lands as would answer the expense of cultivation,"<sup>6</sup> it would be better for him to give up his slaves. He, therefore, petitioned for 500 acres on the heads of the branches of the Little Ogeechee River, nearer Savannah. As it was the policy

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<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>  
C.R.G., II., 461.

<sup>5</sup>  
Journal of the Earl of Egmont, September 28, 1750,  
C.R.G., VI., 340.

<sup>6</sup>  
Ibid.

of the Trustees to grant land to those who gave evidence of being able to cultivate it, Jones received this grant.<sup>7</sup> This acquisition started a series of grants to Jones which would eventually give him some 5,000 acres of land.<sup>8</sup>

When in 1752 the Trustees gave up Georgia and it became a Royal colony, it became necessary for all those owning land to have it confirmed and regranted in the King's name; for indeed, all holding land under the Trustee's had in fact only leases—not ownership in fee simple.<sup>9</sup> So, in 1756, Jones received Royal grants to his Wormsloe plantation and the Little Ogeechee Tract. At the same time he also obtained a grant to a lot in Hardwicke on the Great Ogeechee River, a town site which the Royal governors of Georgia sought without avail to boom into a city large enough to become the capital of the province. Hardwicke never took on life, and the very site of the venture was later washed away by the river.<sup>10</sup>

It was the policy of the Royal government in Georgia

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Ibid.

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C.R.G., XVIII., pp. 272-277; and Jones, History of Georgia, I., pp. 487-488.

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C.R.G., VII., 311, 444.

to attract settlers to the province as fast as possible by establishing a liberal land system, without however, making land speculation easy.

Every head of a family, man or women, might have 100 acres as a headright, and fifty acres each for every other member of the family and a like amount for every slave brought in, up to a total of 1,000 acres. Thereafter, 1,000 additional acres might be added time after time without apparent limit, if the person showed ability to cultivate it on the basis of fifty acres for each slave. For all land over the first one thousand acres, a charge of a shilling an acre was made, and five out of each hundred must be cleared and cultivated. Land rules were later changed in many details and those at any given time were laxly enforced.<sup>11</sup>

Noble Jones took advantage of this liberal policy to acquire considerable landholdings beyond the 1,000 acres he owned under the Trustees. In 1760 he petitioned for "some vacant Land extremely commodious for his Use,"<sup>12</sup> near Wormsloe. It consisted of 400 acres of pine lands adjoining the causeway to the Isle of Hope. He also wanted some marsh islands south

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<sup>11</sup>

Albert Saye (ed.), "Commission and Instructions of Governor John Reynolds, August 6, 1754," in Georgia Historical Quarterly, XXX., (1946), pp. 149-152.

<sup>12</sup>

C.R.G., IX., 96.

of Skidaway Island, consisting of about 100 acres. These requests were granted. The next year he received two five acre lots "lying to the East of Savannah," and in 1762 he secured "a Garden Lot in Savannah Township."<sup>13</sup> The next year he received a tract of 500 acres adjoining his Wormsloe estate on the north, thereby increasing his plantation now to 1,400 acres and his total landholdings to over 2,000 acres. This new tract was the land Oglethorpe had leased to one John Fallowfield in 1736, who six years later had gone to South Carolina.<sup>14</sup>

In 1768 he petitioned for land [a marsh island with the area unstated], as he had seventeen slaves "for which he had obtained no land."<sup>15</sup> The petition was granted on condition that he complete his title within seven months—the rule was generally six months.<sup>16</sup> A little later, the same year, he received a grant of 800 acres in Christ Church Parish.<sup>17</sup> In

<sup>13</sup>

Jones to Council, September, 1760, C.R.G., III., pp. 383-384; and Jones to Council, August, 1761, Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>

Grant from Trustees, 1762, C.R.G., IX., 96.

<sup>15</sup>

Jones Petition to Council, February, 1768, C.R.G., X., 400.

<sup>16</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>

Grant from Trustees, July, 1768, C.R.G., X., 516.

1771 he received three additional grants: 150 acres on Skidaway Island; 500 acres in St. Andrews Parish, as he had ten slaves for whom he had no land; and 1,000 acres in St. Mathews Parish, as he had "upwards of twenty Slaves"<sup>18</sup> for whom he had received no land. The next year he seems to have rounded out his land by securing 800 acres on the Little Ogeechee River adjoining his other tract there as he had sixteen slaves for whom he had received no land, and 305 acres in Christ Church Parish.<sup>19</sup>

As has already been noted in Chapter Three, the location of Jones's plantation on the southern part of the Isle of Hope gave him a strategic position in the defense of Georgia. The safe island passage along the coast led by his plantation, and was called Jones's Narrows or Skidaway Narrows. Immediately across this passage lay a small island called Long Island and beyond it was Skidaway, a much larger island. Though the modern island passage runs between Long and Skidaway Islands, and is called Skidaway Narrows, in colonial days the channel<sup>20</sup> ran between Long Island and the Isle of Hope.

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18

Grant from Trustees, November, 1771, C.R.G., X., 95.

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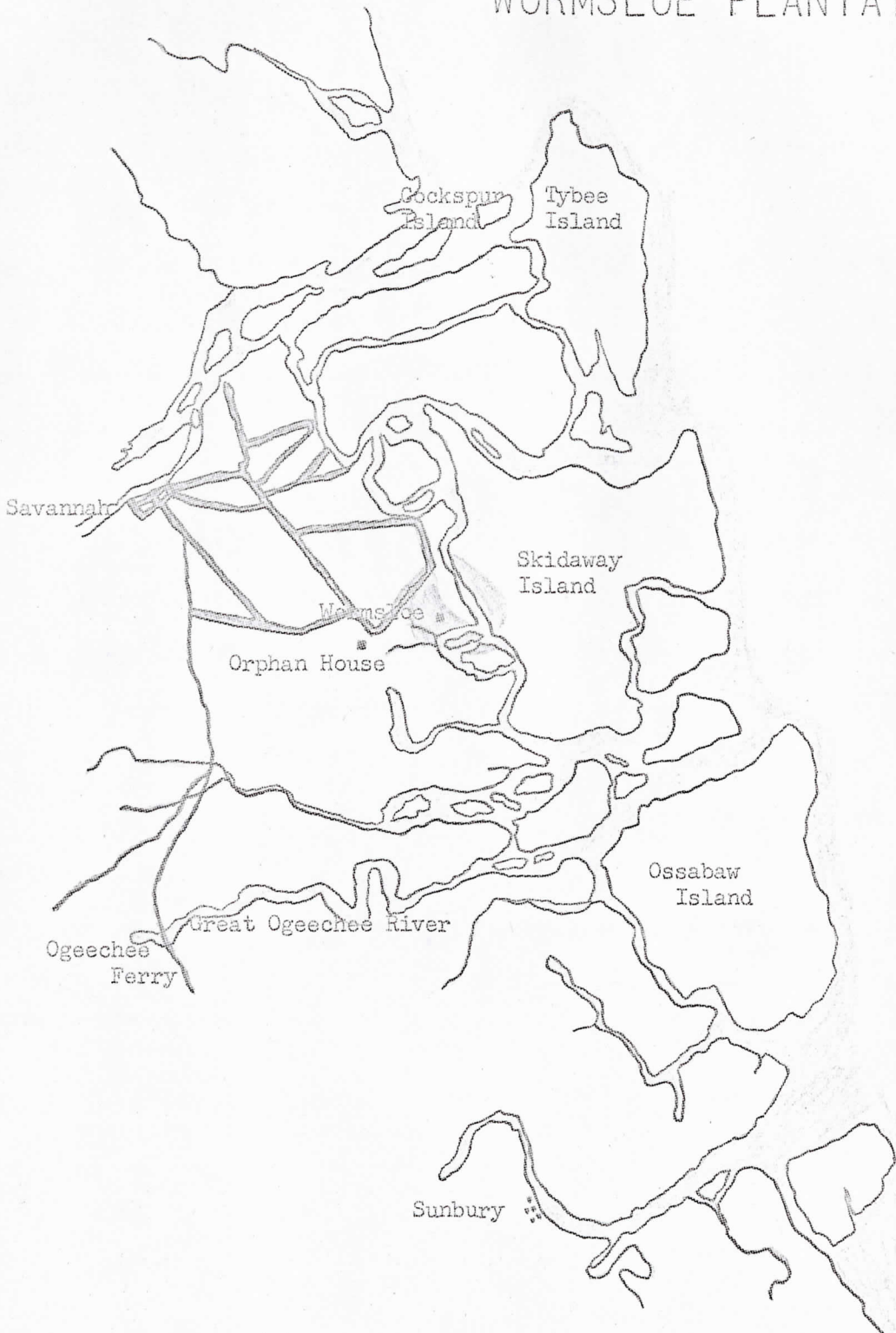
Ibid.

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E. Merton Coulter, Wormsloe, Two Centuries of a Georgia Family (hereinafter referred to as Wormsloe), (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1955), 65.



# WORMSLOE PLANTATION



The timber fort, located approximately one mile from Jones's plantation home, was replaced with a tabby structure whose ruins may still be seen.

In describing Jones's residence, Thomas Causton stated that Jones had erected "what very Justly (when finished) may be called a good house with Convenient Outhouses for Servants, Cattle, &c he has also fenced and brought into tillage about 14 Acres of Land, he appears very industrious, the Land is of the best kind and has produced very well....<sup>21</sup>

John Bartram, the famous naturalist on his trip southward through the Carolinas, Georgia, and East Florida, evidently visited Wormsloe plantation in September, 1765, and in his description of what he saw there he noted especially the fruit trees. Leaving Whitefields Orphan House, within a mile of Jones's house:

We then rode to a gentlemans house which was delightfully scituated on a large tide salt creek where ye oysters is as thick as they can ly within a stone cast of his house he hath & is making great improvements in fruits which it is properly adapted for his orange trees, pomegranates, figs, peaches, & nectarins grows & bears prodigiously. I saw one apricot tree, but it looked poorly & one grape vine ye fruits of which rotted Just before ripe like as ours ye orange trees here is not hurt with ye frost while young as in most parts of this country & allso at ye Colledge [the Orphan House] for a year or two & his pomegranates is very large, 4 or 5 inches in

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diameter & very deltitious....

Most of the silk produced in Georgia came from the industrious Salzburgers up at Ebenezer; but Jones was also actively engaged in its production at Wormsloe. His daughter Mary, who was only three years old when the family arrived in Georgia, became greatly interested in silkworms as she grew up. James Habersham, who also was so interested in silk production that he called one of his plantations Silk Hope, said in 1750 that Jones had "a pretty parcel of Trees,"<sup>23</sup> and that he was planning to unwind the cocoons at Wormsloe instead of sending them to the central filature in Savannah. Habersham thought that one reason why the silk business did not flourish in Georgia was because the planters had not learned how to unwind the silk on their own plantations—sending the cocoons to Savannah often resulted in damage to them. The next year he reported that Mary Jones had produced from her silkworms six or seven ounces of seeds, but he was a little fearful that they would not produce the best worms, as she had "suffered

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Coulter, Wormsloe, 69.

24

This author's punctation.

23

Habersham to Martyn, January 25, March 4, 1751, C.R.G., XXVI., pp. 145, 176-77.

her worms to issue from the Cocoons without sorting." <sup>24</sup> He explained that the worms in the "very best, hard, weighty and full made Cocoons" <sup>25</sup> should be saved for seed—that is, allowed to cut their way out of the cocoon and lay their eggs. <sup>26</sup>

As has been noted, Jones brought two servants with him to Georgia and he later secured three adults and a minor. But he had trials and tribulations with his servants, even before developing Wormsloe. In July of 1735 he had written Oglethorpe who was then on a visit to England. In the letter he stated "the old man continued sick from the time I first had him till his Death. So that with him that died before, I have now left but two and those have been sick and as soon as well are always in some Contrivance." <sup>27</sup> Jones went on to say that they had robbed him and his neighbors and had then run away. He had captured them and kept one of them slowed down by using a chain on his leg. Jones closed his letter by adding, "If I could get a sufficient Number of Servants I

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24  
Ibid.

25  
Ibid.

26  
Ibid.

27

Letter from Jones to Oglethorpe, July, 1735, C.R.G., II., pp. 327-328.

don't doubt doing well."<sup>28</sup>

As Jones lived in a strategic spot, he often had visitors at Wormsloe socially as well as on official business. William Stephens, head of the colony after Oglethorpe left, occasionally came to Wormsloe. Since the scout-boat was located at Fort Wimberly on Jones's plantation, Wormsloe came to be in a sense the place of embarkation and debarkation for prominent visitors on their way to Frederica or coming up the coast to Savannah. Between Wormsloe and Savannah travelers made their way on horseback as a much more convenient way than going the water passage between the two places.<sup>29</sup>

Since access to Savannah from Wormsloe was easy, Jones made many trips to the city and spent a great deal of time there in his later life, his presence being necessary by the many official duties he had to perform. William Stephens, always looking for something to write in his journal, often noted Jones's comings and goings. In 1743 he remarked that Jones "came on Horseback to Town in the Evening."<sup>30</sup>

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28

Ibid.

29

Coulter, The Journal of William Stephens, 1741-1743. I., pp. 96, 160.

30

Ibid., 1743-1745, September 22, 26, 1743, II., pp. 20-22.

When one realizes the immensity of Jones's responsibilities in the colony, one wonders how he managed to find time to run a plantation successfully.

The pioneer house at Wormsloe was replaced by a more imposing structure which was later destroyed by fire. The present house rests on the old tabby foundation.

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Medora Perkerson, White Columns in Georgia (hereinafter referred to as White Columns), (New York: Rinehart & Company, Incorporated, 1952), 112.

32

This author worked one summer on Isle of Hope and had occasion to become familiar with the island, Wormsloe, and the surrounding land and waterways. It was also at this time that I became interested in Noble Jones, and Wormsloe, for the Wormsloe estate is still in the family, after some 225 years.

CHAPTER VI  
NOBLE JONES  
LEGISLATOR, JUDGE  
TREASURER, COMMISSIONER

To succeed William Stephens as President of Georgia, the Trustees appointed Henry Parker, one of the Assistants from the beginning and a former neighbor of Jones's on the Isle of Hope. Beside his other duties performed for the colony, Jones now began to take an important part in the governing body of the colony and gain in prominence until the day of his death,<sup>1</sup> at the outbreak of the Revolution.

In the colony of Georgia the rising merchant or planter, such as Jones, soon learned that his private interests were touched by every conceivable aspect of public policy. Every measure of the government dealing with defense, Indians, public lands, trade, taxation, currency, crop subsidies, slavery, and the building and maintenance of roads, bridges, and ferries, was likely to have an immediate and sometimes vital effect on his planting and trading interests. The prudent man put himself in a position to exercise some control over the decisions

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<sup>1</sup>C.R.G., I., pp. 548-549; and II., 509.

made about these things. As the past chapters will evidence, if this was the sign of prudence, Jones must have been prudence personified, for he was involved in all of these things. A seat in the Commons House of Assembly offered to Jones a position from which he could help influence public policy.<sup>2</sup>

Jones was appointed an Assistant to the President, taking his seat on November 5, 1750, and continued in this position until the presidency of Georgia under the Trustees was merged into the Royal government of Georgia under King George II. Taking his duties seriously, Jones had a record of attendance at Board meetings unequaled for faithfulness by any unless by James Habersham. In 1752 Patrick Graham succeeded Henry Parker as President of Georgia, and it was he who surrendered the colony to the King.<sup>3</sup> Under the new Royal government of Georgia Jones was to play a part even more prominent than during the period of the Trustees. He was a member of the Royal Council, with a brief interlude, from its beginning to his death. Though weak and infirm in his old age, he continued to attend Council meetings until two and a half months before his death. At all times he was prominent on the Council. When committees were

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<sup>2</sup> W.W. Abbot, The Royal Governors of Georgia, 1754-1775. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 31.

<sup>3</sup> C.R.G., I., pp. 548-549; and II., 509.



appointed to consider amendments to House bills or to confer with committees of the House, or to formulate addresses to the governor or to the King, or to deal in some other formal capacity representing the Council, Jones was more likely than not to be a member. Occasionally he served as president of the Council.<sup>4</sup>

The principle which was developed later in American history, of a person's holding one important office at a given time, had not yet been established. In these times, as was true during the Trustee period, in 1763, Jones held three prominent positions and one or more as a minor appointee or member of a special commission. In the beginning of the Royal governorship Jones was appointed one of the judges of the General Court and of the Court of Oyer and Terminer and served to the end of his days.<sup>5</sup> These courts had been established on orders from Governor John Reynolds who had received instructions from Parliament to do so. These courts were to have no greater power than those of British courts and British court procedure was to be followed.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, in December, 1754,

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<sup>4</sup> Stevens, History of Georgia, I., 388; and Georgia Gazette, November 24, 1763.

<sup>5</sup> C.R.G., VII., 40; XII., 213; and XIX., Part I., 190.

<sup>6</sup> Reese, Colonial Georgia, pp. 26-27.

the Governor issued letters patent under the Great Seal of Georgia constituting a court of record under the name of the General Court, to be held before two or more judges appointed by him with the advice and consent of his Council. It was to sit in Savannah every three months and have jurisdiction over all actions, real, personal, and mixed, exceeding the value of forty shillings, except where the title to a freehold was in question, and over all criminal matters, with the same power and authority in Georgia as the Courts of King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer exercised in England.

In November, 1755 letters patent were issued for erecting a Court of Session of Oyer and Terminer and General Gaol Delivery, to be held twice a year, where, in order to prevent long imprisonments, all offenders committed after the sitting of the General Court were to be tried by two members of the Council or judges of the General Court commissioned by the Governor for that purpose.

Part of the time Jones served as Senior Justice, or Supreme Court Justice as otherwise denominated, and thereafter he remained as "Senior Assistant Justice of the Province"

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<sup>7</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>  
C.R.G., VII., 537; and William Harden, History of Savannah and South Georgia (hereinafter referred to as History of Savannah and South Georgia), II. (New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1913), 537.

except for a period of one year, in 1768-1769, when he was the chief justice. In commenting on the period of Jones's chief justiceship, Governor James Wright, the last of Georgia's colonial governors, who had come to power in 1760, stated that "although Mr. Jones was not bred to the law, yet I believe that justice only was administered during that time and with integrity, and I have not heard any complaint made or fault found with his conduct."<sup>9</sup>

Though Jones had not been bred to the law, his judicial services must have soon endowed him with a liberal amount of knowledge in the subject. For as a member of the Council he served as a judge of the Court of Appeals and as a judge of the General Court and of the Court of Oyer and Terminer he gained further experience; but he had still other judicial duties. He was during most of the Royal period one of the fifty or more justices of the peace, and being appointed from the Council, he was designated as one of the "Justices of the Province," which meant that he might exercise this authority anywhere in Georgia, whereas most of the others were designated for certain districts.<sup>10</sup>

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Ibid.

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C.R.G., VII., 504; VIII., 63, 425, 498, 701; IX., 179, 459; X., 428; and Georgia Gazette, February 21, 1773.

Jones became treasurer of the province in 1760 and continued to hold this position of trust and honor until his death. His duties required him not only to safekeep the public monies but also to perform related minor tasks such as issuing various kinds of licenses for which a fee was charged, and offering rewards for runaways, murderers, and other lawbreakers. 11

Jones had been removed from the Council in 1757 because of differences with Governor Reynolds, but Reynolds was on the verge of being supplanted, for two months later, February 16, 1757, he held his last Council meeting. Henry Ellis, freshly arrived from England, attended the meeting. He handed to Reynolds a letter from the King informing him that he should return to England and that Ellis should become lieutenant governor. That day Ellis took the oath of office and entered upon his duties. Two years later, February 26, 1759, Ellis took the oath of governor and on July 6 following, King George II appointed Noble Jones to the Council again. On November 24 he took the oath and on December 4 he appeared at the meeting of the Council, to remain thereafter a Councilor until his death. 12

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C.R.G., VIII., 266; XIV., 182; and Georgia Gazette, May 5, 1763, January 19, 1764.

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C.R.G., VII., 485, 909; and VIII., 190, 192.

Undoubtedly Henry Ellis had recommended the reinstatement of Jones on the Council, for a few months previously, Ellis had written the Board of Trade that Reynolds had supplanted Jones, "to gratify Mr. Little & it is positively affirmed to promote the establishment of Bosomworths Titles to the Indian Lands with a view to share their spoils."<sup>13</sup> Evidentially Jones had not liked the smell of this deal and Reynolds had gotten rid of him, for the moment. Jones worked harmoniously with Governor Ellis, who was generally liked by the people. Governor Ellis, however, wearied of his Georgia assignment. His health was not good, and soon he asked to be relieved. On May 30, 1760, King George II appointed James Wright to be lieutenant governor of Georgia, and on the following October 31, Wright appeared at the Council meeting in Savannah and took the various oaths of office and immediately Ellis sailed for England.<sup>14</sup>

Jones was probably one of the most seasoned warriors to continue on in Georgia after the end of the War of Jenkins' Ear, but he was called upon to do no fighting during the French and Indian War. In planning the construction of those forts which Georgia actually built, Jones was generally assigned a part. In 1757 he was placed on a commission to supervise the

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<sup>13</sup>

Letter from Henry Ellis to Board of Trade, 1759, C.R.G., XXVIII., Part I., MS., 260.

<sup>14</sup>

Coulter, Wormsloe, 89.

construction of a ring of log forts to protect Savannah, and three years later, to strengthen the fortifications of Christ Church Parish, in which Savannah was located. In 1761 he was appointed one of the commissioners to erect a fort and battery on Cockspur Island, near the mouth of the Midway River. These fortifications were called forth by the fear of an attack from the Spaniards in Florida, now that Spain had entered the war. To pay for this work, the legislature issued certificates, and Jones was appointed to be one of the commissioners to print and sign this money.<sup>15</sup> In the promotion of further defense, the legislature appointed Jones as one of a group to erect in or near Savannah a magazine made of brick or stone "sufficient to contain five hundred barrils of powder."<sup>16</sup>

In addition to supervising the building of forts, Jones was long concerned with constructing, reconstructing, and inspecting Tybee Lighthouse. The necessity for this aid to navigation, on Tybee Island at the mouth of the Savannah River, had been seen from the first settlement of the colony, and soon after Savannah had been founded plans were developed for constructing a light tower there. By 1735, the beacon was reported to be nearly completed, and two years later it was in use. The

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Legislative enactments, 1761, C.R.G., XVIII., pp. 205, 413, 423, 475, 646.

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Legislative enactments, 1761, C.R.G., VIII., 300.

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lighthouse was ninety feet high. But apparently it was of flimsy construction for in 1738 the prediction was made that unless it was painted, weatherboarded, and otherwise repaired,

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it would soon fall down. During the War of Jenkins' Ear,

Stephens had been much disturbed that the light tower would fall down. He went with Jones and others to inspect it, and having great respect for Jones's ability as a carpenter, he

accepted his judgement against the advice of others, that it could be fixed by means of scaffolding and so saved.<sup>19</sup> Soon

Stephens had a group of workmen following Jones's plan to repair the tower and he promised to give them "a Barrel of Beer to drink," if they hurried the work to completion and to place "a Flag flying on the Top from the Flagstaff properly

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fixed." It was finished in 1742.

Tybee Light was a constant concern of the provincial government to the very end. By 1768 it was in such ruinous condition that the General Assembly appropriated  $\pm$  2,000 for

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Egmont Papers, MS., 14207, 128; and Ibid., 14208, 156.

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Ibid., 14209, 121.

19

Stephen's Journal in C.R.G., IV., Supplement, pp. 118-124.

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Stephen's Journal in Egmont Papers, MS., 14218, 83.

21

Coulter, Journal of William Stephens, 1741-1743.,

I., 56.

constructing a new lighthouse. It was to be relocated and built of brick. It was to be 120 feet high. Jones was one of the commissioners chosen to supervise the work.<sup>22</sup> By 1772 he had grown old in his watchful concern for Tybee Light, and at that time he announced that he lacked further interest in it; though the next year he was one of three councilors appointed to go down to view the new lighthouse and make a report on it.<sup>23</sup> It seems Jones just could not say no to any request for his services.

There was also on Tybee Island another important structure, with which Jones was concerned. As plantations were now spreading out through the province of Georgia, ships with cargoes of slaves, mostly from the West Indies, but also from Africa, frequently made their way up the Savannah River. To prevent any of the diseases which slaves might have from being brought into the colony, the General Assembly in 1767 bought 104 acres of land on Tybee Island from Josiah Tallnall, on which to erect a lazaretto and other necessary buildings, where slaves affected with disease might be lodged and attended. Jones was appointed one of five commissioners to carry into effect this project.<sup>24</sup>

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Legislative enactments, C.R.G., Part I., pp. 83-89; Georgia Gazette, January 18, 1769.

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Legislative enactments, C.R.G., XII., 188; XVII., 676.

24

Ibid., XVIII., 793.



On learning that a large hall, which was used previously to unwind silk cocoons, was now vacant, the assembly appointed Jones along with James Habersham and Jonathan Bryan to examine the building to see what needed to be done to it to make it ready for the meetings of the Council and of the Commons House of Assembly. Two days later Jones informed the Council that they had completed their study and made their estimate, and shortly thereafter he had the carpenters and bricklayers to attend the Council to state their proposals for doing the work. The Council appointed Jones to superintend the new construction, and advised him to salvage and use as much material as possible from the old council house, which was being demolished, such as bricks, doors, and sashes.

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The governor's house in Georgia was never called a palace and infrequently a mansion. In the days of the Trustees, Oglethorpe as chief executive lived at Frederica and later Stephens and the succeeding presidents lived in their own private residences in Savannah. By 1760 the Council and the Commons House of Assembly felt that the dignity of the colony and the governor demanded a publicly owned home for the governor, including offices, outhouses, and other services. As it had become an invariable custom to put Jones in charge of any new construction or repairs of public buildings, it is not surprising that he and four others were now by law appointed

trustees to see that this mission was carried out. They were not allowed to spend more than <sup>26</sup> £ 500.

If anything needed to be investigated, promoted, or built, Jones was more than likely one of those appointed to do it. The Council, in 1761, appointed him one of three commissioners to join a like committee of the Commons House of Assembly "to Inquire into the State and Progress of the Silk Culture,"<sup>27</sup> and three years later the Assembly appointed him one of the trustees to see that the public market in Savannah, which had recently been removed to Ellis Square, should be completed and the adjoining area paved. For the better regulation of the market, they were charged with renting the shops and stalls, and whatever profits might be secured were to be applied to building a school house and maintaining a school-<sup>28</sup> master.

As Georgia had a large territory but few people, it soon became a special concern of the Royal government to induce people to come to the province. Governor Ellis, and more particularly Governor Wright, pushed this movement. Under the administration of the former in 1758, the General Assembly

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C.R.G., XVIII., 390.

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C.R.G., XVIII., 570-77.

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Ibid.

passed a law to encourage skilled tradesmen to come to Georgia. By this law, slaves were forbidden to engage in any skilled trade in towns except in that of shipwrights, calkers, sawyers, coopers, porters, or ordinary laborers; but to prevent white tradesmen relieved of slave competition from charging exorbitant wages as carpenters, joiners, bricklayers, plasterers, or as workers in any other occupation, the law provided for commissioners to meet annually and set a scale of wages in all these occupations. But all restrictions against employing slaves were removed in case a calamity of fire or invasion should require more help in reconstruction than white laborers could supply. Jones was made chairman of a board of nine commissioners appointed to enforce this law.

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Legislative enactments, 1758, C.R.G., XVIII., 280.

SUMMARY  
NOBLE JONES  
LOYALIST

It must have been a source of pride and satisfaction to Jones during the years 1761, 1762, and 1763 when he and both his sons were members of the General Assembly. He was a member of the Upper House, and Noble Wimberly and Inigo sat<sup>1</sup> in the Commons House of Assembly.

Often Noble Jones and Noble Wimberly Jones found themselves acting their parts on opposite sides, with respect for each other. Many times Noble as a member of the Upper House of Assembly was appointed on committees to deal with like committees of the Commons House of Assembly on which his son Noble Wimberly was a member; and as the Revolution drew nearer and Loyalists and Patriots each held their meetings and passed their resolutions, it was customary to find Noble attending the former and Noble Wimberly performing like services to the latter.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Legislative records, C.R.G., VIII., pp. 519, 630; XIV., 51.

<sup>2</sup> Allen Candler (ed.), The Revolutionary Records of the State of Georgia. I. (Compiled and Published Under Authority of the Legislature) (Atlanta: The Franklin Turner Company, Printers, Publishers, Binders, 1908), pp. 11, 15-18.

Despite Noble's allegiance to George III, he and Noble Wimberly were members of the Committees of Correspondence from 1768 to 1773.<sup>3</sup>

Noble Wimberly helped to organize the Sons of Liberty in Savannah at Tondee's Tavern.<sup>4</sup> He was also one of five delegates selected by the Provincial Congress to represent Georgia in the Continental Congress. Noble Wimberly never made it to Philadelphia because Noble was now an old man and despite their differences, Noble Wimberly realized his father would not live much longer. In describing the reason for Noble Wimberly's absence at Philadelphia Charles Jones, in his History of Georgia, gives a good description of Noble Jones's service to Georgia. It states:

Colonel Noble Jones, a trusted friend of Oglethorpe, who, as military officer, surveyor, member of council, and provincial treasurer, had, during a long life, rendered invaluable aid to the colony and maintained a faithful allegiance to the Crown, and who, now trembling upon the verge of the grave, bespoke the companionship of his distinguished and devoted son, who postponed for a while his service to the province in this prominent capacity that he might respond to his filial obligations.<sup>5</sup>

After the hot July month of 1775 Noble ceased to perform

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<sup>3</sup> C.R.G., XIX., Part I., pp. 13, 200, 250; and XIII., 731.

<sup>4</sup> Perkerson, White Columns, 112.

<sup>5</sup> Jones, History of Georgia, II., pp. 202-203.

further judicial functions and he attended his last Council meeting on August 15. A strenuous life of forty-two years on the frontier came to an end on November 2, for Noble became ill, took to his bed, and died.<sup>6</sup>

His death was a grievous loss to the Royal cause in Georgia, for Governor Wright was being hard pressed to maintain the King's rule and would in the course of a few months be forced to flee the province.

Noble Jones was buried on his Wormsloe plantation, near the fort which he had constructed and defended, on a plot of ground, which presumably had already received the remains of his wife, and which would become the burial ground of many future generations.<sup>7</sup>

Jones's life, to this writer, exemplified the spirit of the frontier itself. His life is similar to unknown thousands of others, in that they made valuable contributions to the establishment of this United States. They had their faults, but fortunately their positive qualities were those which were most influential in forming this nation.

Perhaps Noble Jones's death was timely, if death is ever such, for he died an unreconstructed Loyalist. Subsequent events would have made it difficult for Jones to remain such, if his hard-earned fortune and lands were to be retained.

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<sup>6</sup>  
Georgia Gazette, November 8, 1775.

<sup>7</sup>  
Harden, History of Savannah and South Georgia, II., 539.

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