

**BORDERS AND RUMORS:
THE GEORGIA FRONTIER IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD**

By

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This dissertation is dedicated to Stacy and the gatitos. Thanks for the patience.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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“Borders and Rumors” is a study of imperial rivalry, warfare, slavery, and Native American resistance in the colonial Southeast. By reexamining the international struggle over the Georgia territory in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this dissertation situates the conflict over the southern borderlands in the broader geopolitical disputes of the Atlantic World. My study combined British, Spanish, and French sources, to argue that the struggle for Georgia played an important role in determining power structures in North America while it also tested limits of European diplomacy.

England created Georgia in 1732, to fill a vacant and unprotected frontier between South Carolina and Spanish Florida. Although no other European power had previously settled the territory, the English did not enter the area unopposed. French, Spanish, and Native American claims to portions of the land brought a modicum of challenge and danger to early Georgia. War and threats of

force characterized the struggle for the territory; but rumors, uncertain diplomacy, and a variety of unusual domestic policies provided the impetus for the contest for Georgia.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“Borders and Rumors” is a study of imperial rivalry, warfare, slavery, and Native American resistance in the colonial Southeast. By reexamining the international struggle over the Georgia territory in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this dissertation situates the conflict over the southern borderlands in the broader geopolitical disputes of the Atlantic World. Using a combination of British, Spanish, and French sources, my work argues that the struggle for Georgia played an important role in determining power structures in North America.

In 1565, Spain founded the town of St. Augustine, Florida on the northern edge of its American empire. The Spaniards built the small outpost in reaction to a colony founded 3 years earlier by French Huguenots in northern Florida. Within a short time, they had destroyed the French settlement and seized control of Florida through colonization. By removing the French, Spain asserted that, while treaties could stipulate legal rights to land, territorial control required a physical presence. Spain had hardly expanded beyond St. Augustine 100 years later, when Britain founded Carolina. Spain considered the Carolina territory a part of Florida and protested the establishment of the colony despite its lack of any Spanish presence or possession within the debatable land. Like Spain, England assumed that occupation of an area meant more than treaties.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, England tried to eliminate any threat from Florida. Acts of piracy, campaigns of harassment, and even invasion failed to destroy the Spanish outpost in St. Augustine. Whenever England failed, Spain appeared an even greater threat. Florida's ability to menace British colonial interests also grew in proportion to the successes of Charles Town: the more wealth Carolina's capital provided, the more vulnerable it appeared. The greatest dangers lurked on the open land between the two colonies. To protect the interests of Carolina planters, the English had to move onto the open frontier that separated English and Spanish territory. After several attempts to fill the frontier, England's plan for a colony called Georgia offered the best opportunity to protect the British Southeast from Spanish aggression.

From the outset, Spain complained of England's expansion. Despite diplomatic efforts to end the controversy, an all-out struggle ensued, and the fight for Georgia took place on a battlefield that spanned the globe. Royal officials issued proclamations and agreements, and proposed treaties in hopes of ending the territorial dispute. However, in the colonies, militias, Indian allies, and unconventional tactics marked the struggle for the frontier. Georgia's legitimacy came not from a line on a map or a signed treaty, but through the assertion of authority and the appearance of strength. Despite previous agreements, a nation's right to colonize came through its ability to occupy the land. For Georgia's founders, asserting England's authority on the frontier provided myriad difficulties.

When the Georgia Trustees received a charter to colonize the land between the Altamaha and Savannah Rivers in 1732, borders were described, but this did not prevent the territorial dispute. Indeed, border placement became the primary controversy regarding the new venture. Land control and colonial boundaries were unclear. These ambiguities caused trouble from the outset. Georgia was created to fill the open frontier between Spanish and English colonies; but instead of providing the buffer zone Carolina desired, it stoked the ire of the Spaniards who considered Georgia a part of northern Florida.¹ With Spain, England, and later France debating the legitimacy of Georgia's borders, the young colony had to fight for its survival. To secure Georgia, its founders had to transform a frontier outpost into a borderland colony. Thus, the fight for Georgia centered on the need for borders.

My study examines Georgia's fight to transform itself from a frontier outpost to a borderland colony. Although the terms frontier and borderland can have similar if not identical meanings, I argue (in the case of Georgia) a clear difference between the two. The struggle to make Georgia a viable and internationally-acknowledged colony of the British Empire required its founders to transform a fluid frontier into a stable borderland colony: one that the Spanish, French, and Native American communities considered legitimate.

According to its charter, Georgia began with borders. Nonetheless, Spain disputed Georgia's limits. If England wanted to keep the new colony, it had to

¹ Because the English established Georgia; and because this colony, unlike other ventures, survived as Georgia, its name is used to describe the land between the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers.

fight the Spaniards; therefore, the borders in Georgia's charter held little meaning. As far as the Spaniards were concerned, Georgia existed on Florida's frontier. The distinction between frontier and borderland is more than an exercise in semantics. A borderland colony is one with recognized and respected limits that create an international demarcation. Georgia's founding did not end the debate over where Spain ended and Britain began. Instead, Georgia's creation brought protests, international intrigue, and ultimately, war.

Although far removed from the English-Spanish dispute, French officials interested in expanding Louisiana to the Atlantic Ocean found the same area open to future exploitation and colonization. Before Georgia's founding, France had considered moving Louisiana's settlements farther east; but as England explored possibilities for the same land, French authorities pursued their expansion plans with greater intensity. As would be repeated elsewhere, European authorities often considered colonial growth a preferred way to defend mature and established colonies.² By moving onto the frontier, existing settlements could enjoy the protection of an established and occupied buffer zone. Once a nation could defend and settle the frontier, the land became a more permanent and secure extension. In the Southeast, three nations planted colonies in close proximity, and sought ways to ensure the survival of their respective settlements. Although survival strategies varied greatly, each party attempted to transform its portion of the frontier into a borderland.

² Spain founded St. Augustine to protect its passing ships. Similarly, England built its base in Tangiers to protect its interests in the Mediterranean. In both examples, colonial expansion was designed to protect the interests of the empire.

The term “frontier” is problematic, as its definition tends to be fluid. In his seminal essay, Frederick Jackson Turner described the European frontier as a “fortified boundary line running through dense populations.” Here, the frontier creates a “political boundary.” When he referred to the American colonies, Turner imagined the frontier as “the hither edge of free land,” the “edge of settlement.” Turner’s definition described geographical limits.³ His version of the American frontier marked “the meeting point between savagery and civilization.” Here, the “wilderness masters the colonists;” command of the terrain is difficult, and control of power unclear.⁴ A frontier is something on the periphery, far from the metropole, and without a defined border. In nearly every example, early Georgia falls within this definition.

The historiography of the American West is filled with denunciations of Turner’s frontier thesis, but that is not to say all of Turner’s ideas are wrong or should be ignored.⁵ His thoughts may be short-sighted, insensitive, and simply incorrect, but his belief that the frontier played an important role in the formation of American history and culture should not be dismissed. Turner and the generation that “closed” the frontier believed that borderless lands invited an element of chaos. Without a border, territorial sovereignty could be debated; a condition that made a colony’s security difficult to maintain, a weakness endemic

³ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 3, 41.

⁴ Turner, 3-4.

⁵ Patricia Nelson Limerick, “Turnerians All: The Dream of a Helpful History in an Intelligible World,” *The American Historical Review* 100 (June, 1995): 697-716, considers the usefulness of Turner’s thesis and his “antithesis.”

to early Georgia. Which side had the right to exploit a particular region could not be ascertained without the arbitrary, but essential line in the sand.

The words frontier and border have many other meanings and in each case, the differences can be instructive. The French word *frontière* can describe an amorphous frontier *or* a border; and in Spanish, *frontera* can also assume either meaning. Although England's principle competitors may not have distinguished between the words, each side understood an important difference. The frontier represented an open space, and a border represented a closed or separated territory. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a frontier is the "part of the country which forms the border," suggesting the limits of a territory, but it also creates "a barrier against attack."⁶

My study makes a distinction between frontier and borderland settlements. In the evolutionary process of colonization, a colony often began on the frontier; where borders were ascribed by royal charter, but not defined by the limits of settlement. Gradually, as the colony grows in strength and population, borders become more visible on maps and the terrain. When cartographers and adjacent communities respect and recognize territorial lines, settlements along such borders can then be considered borderlands. The term borderland supposes that a line has been established to separate nations, counties, states, colonies, or other territorial distinctions. Neighboring communities must respect this line for a borderland to exist. A frontier where the border is not acknowledged or

⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, online version. For more on the etymology of "frontier," see John T. Juricek, "American Usage of the Word 'Frontier' from Colonial Times to Fredrick Jackson Turner," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 110 (Feb., 1966): 10-34.

settlements become sparse. Borders and frontiers can be constructed or imagined anywhere.⁷

Within a colony, one might consider an area where settlement peters out to be a frontier; but this frontier is not a limit in itself. Its land may give way to larger, more defined settlements that create a borderland. During the era of western expansion in the mid-nineteenth century, the Great Plains created an internal frontier. In the early to mid-nineteenth century, cities on the periphery like Chicago and St. Louis acted as borderland communities.⁸ In the colonial era, the western edge of most colonies created a borderless frontier where Indian alliances and trade agreements impacted the economy or structures of power more so than did the distant centers of government.

Georgia's birth as a colony sparked an intense debate over who owned the land. From Georgia's inception, property lines did not exist, and no map marked the southern edge of Carolina or northern limits of Florida.⁹ To use Turner's descriptors, Georgia's terrain was a "wilderness" or "free land." In many ways, the Georgia territory also formed a type of European middle ground. Ultimately,

⁷For an interesting example of frontiers and borders in surprising places see, Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land Marquesas, 1774-1880* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1980).

⁸ An excellent example of a community on the internal frontier is found in John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). Similarly, the transition from frontier to borderland is thoroughly described in William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1991).

⁹ That is, no map produced by a disinterested party. Spain produced many maps to prove Florida included all of North America and South Carolina claimed its original charter entailed a southern boundary near present-day Cape Canaveral, much to the surprise of Spaniards who had settled St. Augustine since 1565.

Indians played a crucial role in determining the victor in the struggle for Georgia. However, from its start, Georgia was a place “in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the nonstate world of villages.”¹⁰ No nation had the power to prevent others from attempting to settle or conquer the Georgia territory. In the language of the frontier, Georgia occupied land where “no one [had] an enduring monopoly on violence.”¹¹ To achieve permanence, one side had to dominate or, at least, create an illusion of strength so that no other party could challenge the colony’s legitimacy.

From the outset, Georgians had to fight for recognition by other European powers. Until France and Spain accepted Georgia’s right to exist alongside their respective colonies, Georgia’s growth was limited, and its future doubtful as a viable addition to British America. To be truly safe, Georgia first had to create boundaries that all parties respected. In the colonies, royal fiat did not create reality; in the colonies, borders had to be earned. The frontier invited conspiracies and allowed, even required, leaders to institute a variety of unusual policies to protect or wreak havoc, depending on the objective. In the early eighteenth century, frontiers represented areas of fear; places where barbarism reigned, and control required a combination of creativity and despotism.¹²

¹⁰ Richard White. *The Middle Ground* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), x.

¹¹ Donna J. Guy & Thomas E. Sheridan, “On Frontiers: The Northern and Southern Edges of the Spanish Empire in the Americas,” in *Contested Ground*, Donna Guy & Thomas Sheridan, eds., (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998), 10. Silvio R. D. Baretta and John Markoff, “Civilization and Barbarism: Cattle Frontiers in Latin America,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20 (4) : 590.

¹² Guy & Sheridan, “On Frontiers,” 8.

The Trustees acknowledged the precarious nature of their project, and began with a series of social policies designed to create a colony based on small-scale industry as opposed to plantation agriculture. Primary components of the early regulations limited land ownership and prohibited the use and trade of slaves and rum. Through legislation, the Trustees created an image of the enlightened colony, but they also sold the idea on the merits of security. By 1732, Spain had provided refuge to several British runaway slaves in St. Augustine. By prohibiting slavery, the Trustees attempted to eliminate a potentially disruptive policy by the Spaniards. Here, Spain used freedom as an offensive tactic, and Georgia sought to neutralize this advantage by avoiding slavery altogether. Critics complained that the Trustees' policy promised to harm a young and weak economy; but in the beginning, the need for security trumped commerce. Georgia's charter required the colony to protect English interests first and collect profits later. Since the Trustees wanted to encourage the landless and poor to settle, certain altruistic policies seemed logical for security. Still, other domestic policies could provide additional layers of protection.

In the backcountry, Georgia's creation challenged and altered Indian alliances and trading agreements. Southeastern Indians already enjoyed the prospect of three European powers to use for protection or trade. Although additional neighbors brought added vulnerabilities, since Georgia stirred controversy among other Europeans, Native communities in the region gained additional powers. Whenever Spain or France sensed an opening to take Georgia by force, they sent agents to visit the local Native communities in hopes of

building military alliances.¹³ Communities courted by the Europeans gained additional strength, but this brought certain unavoidable risks. If one community became associated with the Spaniards, England could either try to win over the particular town, or declare it an enemy and open target in the internecine border warfare. Nevertheless, the potential for Native assistance in any border conflict frightened those on all sides of the dispute. Often, the mere mention of a Native alliance caused colonial leaders to rethink their positions.

From Georgia's beginning, each side struggled to sort fact from fiction, resulting in unique situations. Perceived and actual weaknesses of all parties added to the confusion in the colonies and abroad. Multiple, concessions were made based on what one party believed to be true of the other. Thus, in two decades of European rivalry for Georgia, rumors became powerful weapons. Usually, reaction to a particular tale weakened one party, giving the other a slight advantage, real or imagined. Because the conflict over Georgia became an important component in a global debate over territorial sovereignty, England's reaction to rumors aimed at Georgia had the potential to spark a world war. How Europe imagined the struggle for Georgia created the final, and perhaps most important arena, of frontier debate and contest.

Diplomacy played a significant role in defining the parameters of the battle. Europe attempted to guide the debate or preside over the conflict, yet often the lines of communication proved too long. Events in the colonies often unraveled before official word arrived; and when orders from Europe reached the Americas

¹³ Ian K. Steele, *Warpaths: Invasions of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

in time, strategies that made sense in royal courts did not typically conform to the nuances of the frontier. As the historian Trevor Reese reminds us, “in international affairs,” particularly in the case of Georgia, “*de facto* is always more important than *de jure*.”¹⁴ Because of such difficulties, what happened in the colonies had a tendency to override imperial desires. Disparities between royal want and colonial need added to Georgia’s burdens, including exposure to the danger of constant piracy across the Atlantic. Ultimately, a single incident at sea, an event that had nothing to do with Georgia, provided the primary excuse for the rupture between England and Spain.

In 1740, England and Spain went to war over Georgia. Disputes regarding slavery, piracy, and various treaties contributed to the struggle. After a couple of significant battles, neither side succeeded. Nonetheless, the stalemate transformed Georgia. For Georgia, permanence came through the avoidance of defeat. Although the French threat remained after the fighting, Georgia’s primary opponent implicitly accepted the colony’s limits; and a borderland appeared.

Unlike other studies of early Georgia, mine places a strong emphasis on the cross-cultural elements of the fight for the colony, and considers the struggle for the frontier in the larger context of the Atlantic World. Georgia’s establishment did more than rankle Spaniards in Florida. England’s attempt to close the Southeastern frontier threatened French settlements in Louisiana, and promised to disrupt existing Indian alliances. When London created Georgia, Indian

¹⁴Trevor Reese, *Colonial Georgia: A Study in British Imperial Policy in the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1963).

agreements with Spain, France, and even South Carolina were exposed to the actions and desires of the new colonists. The struggle for Georgia occupied two fronts: one in Europe's royal courts, where treaties and secretive agreements pushed the debate in one direction; and the other in the colonies, a theater with dramatically different needs, results, and realities. Within this setting, the conflict for Georgia emerged.

My study highlights the constant tension between the authority and expressed desires of the metropole and what actually happened on the periphery. The differences between the two delayed, but also facilitated war. When the final battles for the frontier began, England, France, and Spain fought over numerous problems; Georgia was a single issue in the larger, more ambitious fight for global supremacy. It did not take long for officials in Europe to acknowledge that Georgia held the potential for much more than territorial expansion. Whoever controlled the disputed territory had direct access to the Atlantic, numerous Native trading routes and more. Still, Georgia's influence on global events is only part of its history.

In the colonies, the fight for Georgia altered power structures, and challenged the conventional wisdom of colonial strength. Many studies have looked at the diplomatic struggle. In particular, John Tate Lanning provides an expansive account that considers the diplomacy for Georgia in terms of a larger global contest.¹⁵ Few, however, have expanded Lanning's thesis to consider Georgia's role in other conflicts with France, other English colonies, and Native

¹⁵ Lanning, *Diplomatic History of Georgia: A Study in the Epoch of Jenkins' Ear* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1936).

American communities.¹⁶ To understand the larger struggle for the North American frontier, it is necessary to consider all parties involved in the Georgia controversy.

Because Georgia occupied a frontier, battles for the colony crossed international boundaries, creating a geopolitical powder keg that had the potential to upset any North American colony. The physical geography helped determine how competing parties could execute their plans for aggression. The fight for Georgia assumed many unusual qualities, some so different that many eighteenth-century observers found Georgia and its leadership bizarre. Eccentricities from the Trustees and other leaders helped provide security for the young colony, but Georgia's opponents used similar tactics with excellent results. Militias composed of former British slaves incited racial unrest in South Carolina, Indian armies from Canada threatened the security of southern British colonies, and numerous secret plots to overthrow European governments and divide the respective colonies, were only a few of the peculiarities in the struggle for Georgia.

Most plans to take Georgia assumed that the land was available to whoever could conquer the colony. Although Britain staked its claim, Spain and France considered the colony weak and easy to remove. The side that victorious would have tremendous access to power in North America. When Georgia was created, Florida was weak, and France's southern presence seemed nothing more than a

¹⁶ Recent work has started to concentrate on the relationship between Georgia and local Native American communities. Julie Ann Sweet, "Negotiating a Southeastern Middle Ground: English-Creek Relations in Trustee Georgia, 1733-1752," (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 2002).

distant and fledgling outpost. Despite the obvious weaknesses of Britain's competitors, all parties saw an opportunity for the land. Before Georgia's founding in 1732, any side could have built on its territory, but neither took the initiative. When Britain filled the empty land, Spain and France felt the colony could threaten their interests. All three countries considered Georgia a weak outpost on the limits of the empire. English officials in London and the colonies feared that the new addition could be removed with ease. France or Spain could simply launch a single large-scale attack, and the barrier to protect Charleston would fall. In communications from South Carolina to London, authorities considered the new colony a cornerstone. If Georgia failed, colonies throughout North America would be vulnerable.

The idea of Georgia as ultimate protector of the British South did not escape the attention of Spanish and French officials. As early as 1719, France declared the Georgia territory a perfect location for "incroachments upon the British settlements."¹⁷ Therefore, the struggle over Georgia telescopes the contest for the entire colonial southeastern frontier. The struggle for Atlantic and global power that played out in this large corner of North America promised to determine the fate of empires and of thousands of European, Indian, and African people in the region.

The colony's fight for survival and legitimacy is the subject of numerous monographs. One of the earliest texts to place the struggle for Georgia in an

¹⁷ State Papers, Public Records Office, Kew, England/78/166/f.8 Instructions to Martin Bladen, July 3, 1719. Hereafter, documents from this collection are abbreviated as SP.

international spotlight came from one of Turner's students, Herbert Bolton.

Bolton took Turner's lead and projected the problems of the frontier onto Spain's North American colonies. In the 1929 text, *The Debatable Land: A Sketch of the Anglo-Spanish Contest for the Georgia Country*, Bolton discusses the conflict for Georgia. Originally, Bolton's text simply introduced a treatise by Spanish official Antonio de Arredondo; but Bolton's preface covered Georgia's early history so well that it was published separately and remains a foundational work.¹⁸

A more comprehensive examination of Georgia's impact on European diplomacy is found in John Tate Lanning's *Diplomatic History of Georgia*. Lanning's 1936 text places Georgia into the larger history of Anglo-Spanish rivalry in the eighteenth century.¹⁹ From arguments over illegal logwood harvesting in Mexico by the British to incidents in Europe's courts, Lanning offers a thorough, reliable, and lasting history. Bolton and Lanning viewed the Georgia struggle as an Anglo-Spanish rivalry. French desires for the land are rarely considered. Among the early historians to examine Georgia, Verner Crane (another of Turner's students) was the only one to give Spain, France, England, and various Indian communities equal footing in the larger struggle for control of the Southern frontier.

It is Crane's expansive view that I have tried to maintain and expand. Crane's 1929 *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* does not consider Georgia's founding and the ensuing controversy, but offers a thorough portrait of the

¹⁸ Arredondo's text was entitled *Historical Proof of Spain's Title to Georgia*.

¹⁹ Lanning, *A Diplomatic History of Georgia*.

difficulties that led to the colony's creation.²⁰ In other publications, Crane tied imperial rivalries to events in Georgia, and each time he carefully considers the impact on all sides of the fight.²¹ Although others included the struggle for Georgia in studies of early America, Bolton, Crane, and Lanning create a historiographical foundation that continues to guide Georgia scholarship.²² More recently, David Weber in *The Spanish Frontier in North America* has generously considered the Georgia frontier a part of Spanish North America, a perspective essentially ignored since Bolton first introduced the idea.²³ In my study, I avoided using a particular perspective as the dominant lens to examine early Georgia, focusing instead on the desires and strategies of each side in the larger fight for the frontier. By looking at the objectives of each European power, the overarching desire to transform a frontier into a borderland becomes a more clear and urgent objective.

Military intervention over Georgia is the primary subject of several monographs.²⁴ Larry Ivers's *British Drums on the Southern Frontier* remains an

²⁰ Verner Crane, *Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1929).

²¹ Verner Crane, "The Philanthropists and the Genesis of Georgia," *The American Historical Review* 27 (October, 1925): 63-69 and Crane, "The Southern Frontier in Queen Anne's War," *The American Historical Review* 24 (April, 1919): 379-395.

²² For a Spanish perspective of the Georgia controversy, John TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida 1700-1763* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1964) is the best candidate to add to this selective list of early historians.

²³ David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

²⁴ Many recent works look at Georgia from the backcountry and its relationship to Indian communities. See, Julie Ann Sweet, "Negotiating a Southeastern Middle Ground;" Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

authoritative text on the organized battles for Georgia. Although Ivers does not delve into the external fights for the frontier, his accounts of the primary combat to end the struggle for Georgia remain an outstanding source.²⁵ Others have focused on Georgia's social aspects. From its Moravian and Salzburger communities to its unique treatment of local Indian communities, Georgia's enlightened social policies continue to interest historians.²⁶ For this study, Georgia's prohibition on slavery is considered the most crucial of the colony's domestic agendas.

Georgia's origin as an antislavery colony has a surprisingly limited historiography. To date, no single study considers the ban on slavery a protective measure. Typically, the prohibition is described as misguided idealism forced on the colony by Trustees ignorant of colonial realities. Because the policy lasted for only 20 years, Georgia's lack of slaves in the early years is considered an aberration. Recently, Betty Wood all but dismissed the security concerns expressed by the Trustees.²⁷ The scholarship of Latin American scholars, most notably Jane Landers and her investigations on Florida's Fort Mose, provides a

Press, 1999); Kathryn Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels Creek-Indian Trade with Anglo-Americana, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

²⁵ Larry E. Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier: The Military Colonization of Georgia, 1733-1749* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974).

²⁶ Sweet, "Negotiating a Southeastern Middle Ground," William Withuhn, "Salzburger and Slavery: A Problem of Mentalité," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* (Summer, 1984): 173-192; Aaron Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-1775*, Paul S. Taylor, *Georgia Plan* (Berkeley: Institute of Business and Economic Research, 1972).

²⁷ Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), 8-9.

forceful argument for another look at this unusual policy.²⁸ If Spain did not offer British runaways freedom, the Trustees probably could not have maintained a slave-free society for as long as they did. In the contest for Georgia, slavery played a crucial role for both sides. Georgia's impact on Indian alliances continues to interest historians of colonial America.

The importance of backcountry diplomacy has a large historiography of its own. Regarding the larger struggle for Georgia, Patricia Dillon Woods, Claudio Saunt, Daniel K. Richter, John Hann, and Charles Hudson provide some of the better insights into the ways Indian communities exerted their power by entering alliances with European traders or colonial officials.²⁹ More recently, Alan Gally placed Indian slavery squarely in the larger equations of colonial growth and the expansion of empire.³⁰ Others have examined the role piracy played in colonial power relationships. In particular, Richard White's middle ground thesis has many applications for an early history of Georgia. Although no single volume is devoted to piracy and its impact on the Georgia frontier, the gap will likely be

²⁸ Jane Landers, "Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose: A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida," *American Historical Review* 95 (February, 1990): 9-24; Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999). See also, Patrick Riordan, "Finding Freedom in Florida: Native Peoples, African Americans and colonists, 1670-1816," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 75 (Summer, 1996): 24-43.

²⁹ Patricia Dillon Woods, *French Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980); Saunt, *A New Order of Things*; Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), John H. Hann, *Apalachee: The Land Between the Rivers* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1988), Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976); Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*; Alan Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

³⁰ Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade*.

filled, for violence on the sea played a constant role in the numerous struggles for control in the Atlantic World.³¹

Thus, my study examined the struggle for the Georgia frontier from different perspectives. On the diplomatic front, Spain and France often worked in concert to protest Georgia's placement on the frontier. Unfortunately, French designs for the land are often ignored in the histories of Georgia. Likewise, the unusual aspects of Georgia's domestic policies are presented as serious efforts to maintain security, and not as eccentric policies forced on Georgia's early settlers by absentee landlords. My study does not consider Georgia a natural addition to the British Empire. In the following pages, I argue that Georgia's formation challenged authority structures throughout the Southeast; and that maintaining or destroying the new colony had the potential to alter the power structures in eighteenth-century North America.

Chapter 1 explores the human history and imperial transformations of the land that became Georgia. Decades before the English settled Jamestown, Spain attempted to expand its settlements north of St. Augustine. In the area that became coastal Georgia, Jesuit missionaries attempted to establish an outpost in the Guale region by the late sixteenth century. The Spaniards wanted to expand their influence into the Guale communities, but the Guale rejected the offer of a

³¹ Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002); Peter Lindebaugh & Marcus Rediker, *Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); and Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004). Each explains the importance of piracy in the Atlantic World. When the fight over Georgia began, piracy remained an active threat in the Atlantic World. The days of Francis Drake and other influential privateers had passed, but it is no accident that Parliament used a single act of piracy as an excuse to declare war against Spain in 1740.

new religion and lifestyle, and eventually forced the Catholics out of their territory.

Florida's attempts to convert and subjugate the Guale provides a cautionary example of the difficulties in creating a colony. To succeed in Guale, Spaniards had to alter an entire society, and to impose a set of cultural boundaries. Spain failed, but the Spaniards' interaction with the coastal communities left the taint of its dominion and Catholicism. When the English entered the region, they considered the Guale associated with Spain and an enemy of the English. Thus, the Guale ceased to exist partly because the English ascribed a cultural taint.

Chapter 2 considers England's desire to build a settlement south of Charles Town. Georgia was one of numerous plans to settle the frontier between Spain and England. After the nearly ruinous Yamassee War in 1715, officials in South Carolina looked in earnest for a colony to act as a buffer zone between the two nations. Earlier versions of the southern colony failed for various reasons, but every plan to expand South Carolina or add a new colony, focused on the need to secure South Carolina. As England sought an effective plan for the frontier, France spotted an opportunity to expand Louisiana. Spain complained of English activities, but spent most of its energy trying to survive. Since the settlement of Charles Town, the English had directly challenged the Spaniards on issues of territorial sovereignty nearly eliminating most of Florida's Indian alliances and trade agreements. The creation of a new colony south of Carolina promised additional security for the British colony, and it provided an offensive position for England's larger plans to remove the Spaniards and dominate the continent.

Chapter 3 describes Georgia's formation, first settlements, and how its mission to secure the frontier determined the nature of the new venture. Because Britain built Georgia to act as a buffer zone between South Carolina and the Spanish and French, the Trustees instituted a series of unusual policies. From prohibitions on rum and slaves to limiting land ownership, the Trustees wanted to build a colony unlike any other in the Southeast. Georgia's founders frequently used the danger of the frontier as justification for the colony's odd regulations. From the outset, however, the Trustees faced competition from French and Spanish interests. Typically such challenges came in the form of equally unusual practices.

The French leadership in Louisiana thought it could easily remove the new colony and build in its place. Repeatedly, French agents suggested the use of Native militias and other destabilizing tactics to remove the newcomers. Spain also followed France's belief that the young colony did not have the structure to defend itself from the unusual. On the frontier, as elsewhere, *internal* threats created by outside forces had the potential to cause considerable damage to the colony. In Florida, the Spaniards viewed race as a potential weapon in the battle for the frontier. Many people feared Florida's use of British slavery. If Florida could instigate racial unrest in the British South, Britain's hold on many of its colonies could be challenged. Furthermore, if Florida could directly harm English interests elsewhere in North America, then the Spanish outpost could prove its worth and might flourish as a vital settlement.

Chapter 4 considers the diplomatic efforts at securing the frontier. In Europe, the English had to answer Spain's charges that Georgia breached the

limits of Florida as outlined in past treaties. England found legitimacy for Georgia's boundaries in the 1670 Treaty of Madrid. The only problem for the diplomats who used this document were members of the Spanish royal court who also employed it as evidence of Georgia's illegality. Diplomats attempted to carve a peaceful border, but gradually saw this as a futile exercise.

Chapter 5 explores how rumors shaped the debate. At one point, Georgians believed an Indian force from New York, supported by French soldiers in Louisiana, was prepared to march on the colony. The widespread belief that Georgia would fall in the face of any organized military aggression only exacerbated fears of imminent doom. Efforts to find a peaceful solution continued, but actions in the colonies prevented any hopes of a bloodless solution. Florida increased its attempts at instigating racial unrest in South Carolina by creating a militia composed entirely of former British slaves. Caught in the middle, Georgia tried to defend its northern neighbor from Florida's overtures, but frequently failed to exert enough influence or strength. Through 1739, Georgia remained a frontier.

Chapter 6 examines the war that erupted between England and Spain over Georgia. In South Carolina, fears of a slave uprising became reality in the Stono Revolt. Immediately after the suppression of violence, the British blamed St. Augustine by providing refuge to runaway British slaves for inciting the rebellion. Events in Europe only compounded the impetus for war and in 1740, Georgia received permission to retaliate against the Spaniards. The War of Jenkins' Ear was an opportunity for England and Spain to settle numerous disputes. An English militia from Georgia and South Carolina began an assault on St.

Augustine that seemed certain to remove the Spaniards from North America. In a miraculous turn of events, however, the larger, more confident English militia failed to remove the Spaniards from St. Augustine. In Florida, officials considered the avoidance of defeat a victory. They prepared to retaliate and destroy Georgia, but failed also.

Following the primary skirmishes of 1740 and 1742, Georgia emerged as a colony that could survive. Its ability to withstand Spanish invasion, French and Indian threats, and other challenges to the colony's legitimacy helped Georgia make the transition from a frontier to a borderland colony. Although the controversy over Georgia did not end in 1742, the physical contest for the colony concluded with the result that the borders, described in its original charter, could remain.

CHAPTER 2 PROLOGUE TO GEORGIA: THE DECLINE OF THE GUALE

In 1702, Spanish officials abandoned an outpost on St. Simons Island. It is believed that as the Spaniards deserted their position on the island, they provided an escort for a group of Guale Indians. The refugees were likely the last of the Guale. Once the group arrived in St. Augustine, the Spaniards joined the presidio's militia and the Guale likely settled in a nearby Catholic mission. Others in the Guale community moved northward where they hoped to find protection by the English in Carolina. Instead of seeking European protection, others joined neighboring Native communities. If reports of the evacuation are correct, this retreat marked the Guale's disappearance from their native territory. Within 40 years of their departure, the Guale ceased to exist.¹

Although not directly engaged by English troops, the Spaniards fled partly because hostilities related to the War of Spanish Succession had arrived on North America's shores. Shortly after the evacuation of St. Simons, Carolina Governor James Moore led a failed attack on St. Augustine. Had the Guale and Spaniards

¹ The facts of this removal are not clear and this alleged incident is used to illustrate a larger point on Spain's abandonment of settlements north of St. Augustine. Beginning in the 1680s, the Spanish started removing the Guale. In 1722 Carballido Barcía, one of the earliest chroniclers of Florida's history, claimed that St. Augustine began Guale removal in response to England's settlement of Carolina in 1670. Spain wished to move the Guale onto nearby coastal islands a decade later and, according to Barcía, the Guale rebelled. Many historians doubt the supposed final removal in 1702. John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and their Neighbors* (Washington D. C. : Bureau of American Ethnology, 1922), 91, 93-94. John H. Hann, "Twilight of the Mocamo and Guale Aborigines as Portrayed in the 1695 Spanish Visitation," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 66 (July, 1987): 1-24.

stayed on St. Simons, Moore's advancing army would have likely defeated Florida's weak outpost.² For the Spaniards, leaving St. Simons did not represent a significant loss. The station had provided little, if any, support to the government in St. Augustine and the island did not host significant farmsteads or provide a useful defensive position to protect Florida's other settlements on the east coast. Indeed, had Moore attacked the island, the English would have gained little because Spain's position on St. Simons hardly posed a threat to the young government in Charles Town. For the Guale, however, leaving the island marked the beginning of the end for their culture.

While never the largest Native American community in Georgia, the Guale earned a reputation as an independent people who managed, for a brief period, to drive the Spaniards off their land and maintain their culture despite the desires of the Catholic missionaries.³ Although the Guale resisted the Spaniards, their independence cost them dearly. In many ways, when the Guale left St. Simons in 1702, the entire region witnessed a fundamental transformation in the territory between Florida and Carolina.

The relationship between the Guale and the Spaniards did not represent the genesis of Native-European contact in Georgia, but the Guale experience offers a unique glimpse into the transformations that facilitated and occasionally

² The decision to flee proved wise. During Moore's march to St. Augustine, English forces managed to destroy thirteen of the fourteen remaining missions in present-day Georgia. Herbert E. Bolton, ed., *Arredondo's Historical Proof of Spain's Title to Georgia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1925), 39.

³ While our story begins decades before English settlement in the area, the term Georgia is used in recognition of what the frontier between Charleston and Florida became.

determined the outcome of future battles in the contest for Europe's colonization of Georgia. In 1702, the Spanish appeared weak and the Guale even weaker. Yet, the British, who later controlled the traditional Guale territory, were not militarily dominant. In the early eighteenth century, England's ambition to settle the Atlantic Southeast greatly overshadowed its ability to accomplish such goals. The fate of the Guale suggests how notions of power, control, order, and even settlement had different meanings on the frontiers and borderlands of the colonial southeast.

The Guale's disappearance did not have a profound impact on the region's politics or balance of power or significantly alter existing trade networks. Instead, the history of the Spanish-Guale interaction illustrates how subtle changes brought by Europeans frequently exacted significant transformations on the people of the Southern frontier centuries before the English created Georgia. The retreat in 1702 not only marked the end of the Spanish and Guale settlements north of Florida's present border, but events later that year forced more profound changes to the political and cultural landscape of the Atlantic Southeast.⁴

⁴ England and Spain were not the only participants in the War of Spanish Succession. France used the war as an opportunity to expand its North American holdings. In 1701, Louis XIV declared that the expansion of English colonies in North America must be eliminated. It appeared to the French and Spanish that the English planned plans to expand their growing colonial empire all the way to Mexico. Once Louis XIV's grandson took the Spanish throne, the French had to defend Spanish interests throughout the world. In North America, this led to the creation of Louisiana. Although the French played an integral role in the politics of Southeastern colonization, they had no effect on the Guale and Spain's retreat from St. Simons. W. J. Eccles, "The Fur Trade and Eighteenth-Century Imperialism," *William and Mary Quarterly* 40 (July, 1983): 341-362.

The Spanish crown had devised mechanisms to maintain the peace and establish constructive relationships between the colonizer and Natives, but they rarely used these systems. Technically, each colony had an office of Protector of the Indians. This official acted as an ombudsman to the Natives and tried to ensure that Spaniards did not exact illegal labor tributes, enslave, or otherwise harass the Indian communities. As was often the case, the government in Florida placed little importance on this position and staffed the office sporadically after 1695.⁵ Perhaps, had this office been accorded a proper place in the colonial government, Florida would not have evacuated the northern periphery in 1702. Nevertheless, Spain's departure from the Guale territory opened the door for future settlement by the English.

Long before any English official considered expanding settlements south of Carolina, Europeans realized that strong alliances and mutual respect between their respective governments and the Native communities were necessary to maintain the peace.⁶ Shortly after the Spanish settled St. Augustine in 1565, Catholic missionaries traveled across the surrounding wilderness to convert Native communities. It is said that Spain's conquistadors came for gold, God, and glory. Since Florida and the lower southeast lacked gold and the poor economic prospects in St. Augustine hindered the attainment of glory, religion, more specifically religious conversion, became one of the few measurements for

⁵ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992), 128.

⁶ Although De Soto and others who came prior to St. Augustine's settlement learned this lesson, this chapter intends to look only at the interactions that occurred after Spain colonized Florida and the British began considering similar activities in the Southeast.

success on Spain's northern frontier. Thus, Spain based its early relationships with Florida's Native communities on religious and cultural transformation, not trade.⁷

Beginning in 1566, Jesuit missionaries visited Guale communities that lived along Georgia's coastline.⁸ Spanish missionaries may have thought they "discovered" this culture, but it is highly unlikely that in 1566, the Guale did not know of the Spaniards. To the Guale, the missionaries who arrived in the 1560s resembled the same explorers and would-be colonizers who came decades earlier. Whether their information emanated from Ponce de León's exploration in 1513, Ayllón's failed colony in the 1520s, De Soto's 1540 journey, or even French activities just years before the Spaniard's entrance, the Guale knew of these people when the first missionaries arrived.⁹ By 1566, the Guale had heard about

⁷ For recent studies on Spain's early interaction with local Native communities see, John Hann, *Apalachee: The Land Between the Rivers* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1988); John E. Worth, "The Timucuan Missions of Spanish Florida and the Rebellion of 1656," (PhD diss., University of Florida, 1992); Jerald T. Milanich, *Florida Indians and the Invasion from Europe* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995).

⁸ The Guale's first encounter with the Spanish likely occurred in 1526 when the failed Ayllón colony was planted near their principle communities. While the nature of this first interaction between European and Native American is not clear in the historical record, the residents of the shortly lived Ayllón colony likely did not exert significant change on the Guale. If anything, the Guale's first encounter with Europeans may have left the Natives with a sense of European weakness. The Spaniards who arrived in the late sixteenth century looked and acted like the same people who failed miserably decades earlier. However, the Guale also knew the Spaniards who failed at Ayllón were the same people who defeated the French at Fort Caroline in 1565. For more information see, David Hurst Thomas, *St. Catherines: An Island in Time* (Atlanta: Georgia Humanities Council, 1988), 22. Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida: Pedro Menéndez de Aviles and the Spanish Conquest of 1565-1568* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1975), 155.

⁹ For a good overview of Spain's early explorations of Florida see, Hale G. Smith and Mark Gottlob, "Spanish-Indian Relationships: Synoptic History and Archaeological Evidence, 1500-1763," in *Tacachale: Essays on the Invasions of Florida and*

their horses, weapons, and mannerisms. The local indigenous communities understood the visitors might come for precious metals. They knew that angering the Spaniards could result in horrible consequences for the community. The Guale knew what to expect, but despite past experiences, the Guale were not prepared to meet the demands of the new arrivals. More importantly, the Guale provided a significant challenge to the first missionaries. In the end, the Spaniards were not prepared to meet the needs of the Guale.

Despite the advantages of advanced technology, draft animals, and particularly effective pathogens, the Spaniards found it difficult to subdue the people and land north of Florida. The missionaries dispatched to Florida were not amateurs. With decades of experience and success throughout the New World, the Jesuits had no reason to believe the Guale would be any different. However, the northern frontier communities provided unusual challenges for the first missionaries. The Jesuits quickly realized that to change the Guale's religion, the Jesuits had to first alter their culture.¹⁰

Unlike the Timucuan, Apalachee, and other Indian communities in northern Florida, the Guale did not subsist on agriculture.¹¹ Hunting and gathering did not allow for a sedentary lifestyle and this proved problematic for

Southeastern Georgia during the Historic Period, Jerald T. Milanich and Samuel Proctor, eds. (Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1978) , 1-18. The French also interacted with Natives in present Georgia prior to permanent settlement. John T. McGrath, *The French in Early Florida: In The Eye of the Hurricane* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000).

¹⁰ Eugene Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida*, 154-155.

¹¹ John R. Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States* (Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1946), 135-136.

the Spaniards. The Guale's mobility made it difficult for the first missionaries to maintain their schedule of catechisms, masses, and other ceremonies. The Jesuits believed that before they could spread their faith they first had to sow the seeds of agriculture in hopes of fostering a community capable of participating in the rituals of their religion. In all likelihood, these first Spaniards introduced the Guale to the cultivation of wheat, with which the missionaries could teach the Guale to make sacramental bread. Although wheat was a necessity for religious ceremonies, few Guale actually consumed or benefited from the new crop. Early on, the Guale proved reluctant to accept these suggested changes.¹² The missionaries believed that by getting the Guale to adopt agriculture, the Natives would become healthier, enjoy more free time, and generally become a stronger society. Additionally, the adoption of agriculture promised to tie the Guale to the land. Experience had taught the Europeans that constant mobility not only made it difficult to convert Natives but also created a social independence that countered the Spaniards' ancillary goals of imposing a morality that frowned upon cultural oddities like polygamy and matrilineal lines of descent. Natives on the move provided numerous challenges for the proselytizers.

Initially, the Guale refused a more sedentary life, and in part, this led to Spain's early failure on the northern frontier. Many Spanish officials saw the coastal region as a potential site for future settlement. As early as 1566, St. Augustine founder Pedro Menéndez reported to royal officials in Spain his hopes for expanding onto Guale territory. Menéndez understood the value of

¹² Lewis H. Larson Jr., "Historic Guale Indians of the Georgia Coast and the Impact on the Spanish Mission Effort," in *Tacachale*, 122-123.

settlements on the periphery and realized that new ventures required a willing and helpful native population.¹³ Just a year old, St. Augustine could not supply the people and money to build a new outpost when officials first considered northward expansion. Conversion seemed the best alternative to settlement. If the Spaniards could convert the Guale, then the government in Florida could more easily exert its authority northward.¹⁴ In theory, this plan seemed logical, but the Spaniards quickly learned the difficulties in settling by proxy.

In 6 years with the Guale, the Jesuits managed to convert only six individuals; four children and two on their deathbed as they accepted the Catholic faith.¹⁵ Partly because of their failure in Florida, Spain replaced the Jesuit missionaries with Franciscans in 1572.¹⁶ The astounding failure of the Jesuits raises many questions. It is often assumed that when Europeans entered native communities of the Southeast and Caribbean they quickly destroyed a culture through a mixture of disease, war, enslavement, and other violent acts. The Guale's experience refutes this basic assumption. That the Jesuits thoroughly failed in their efforts to convert the Guale suggests that either the

¹³ Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida*, 155.

¹⁴ In his 1586 narrative on Florida, Juan Rogel argues that Florida's success depended on creating and maintaining a large population. According to Rogel, loyal, Christian Indians seemed the logical and most likely alternative to Spanish immigration. Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida*, 205.

¹⁵ James Axtell, *The Indians' New South : Cultural Change in the Colonial Southeast* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 26.

¹⁶ Although the Jesuits failed to convert many Natives, they succeeded in placing a Spanish presence on a remarkably large area of the Southeast, settling as far north as the Chesapeake. Unfortunately for the Spaniards, the Jesuits were the first Europeans many Natives directly. Thus, their offensive behavior tempered their feelings on the new arrivals. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 71-73.

Guale were stronger and more cunning than the Spaniards, or the Jesuits had a greater respect for their culture and religion than typically assumed. Either way, the Franciscan replacements accomplished little more than their predecessors.

The new missionaries entered an area that was fairly familiar to Spanish officials. Still, the Guale's living habits made proselytizing a difficult task. Unlike their predecessors, the Franciscans arrived with soldiers in tow. Only a few soldiers came to protect the missionaries, but their presence caused concern within the small communities. Immediately after their arrival, Guale residents complained that the soldiers stole their food and assaulted the town's female residents.¹⁷ With additional guests, it suddenly became the Guale's responsibility to feed the missionaries and soldiers. Clearly too busy to plant their own crops, the Franciscans imposed sustainable agriculture on the Guale.

Like the Jesuits before them, the Franciscans believed that by getting the Guale to adopt agriculture, the Natives would enjoy a healthier life and gradually become a stronger, more Catholic society. If the Guale began planting foodstuffs, the missionaries could be assured of a constant food supply for themselves, and a community tied to the land, within earshot of the church bells or demands of the friars. In short, the missionaries came to save souls, but to accomplish this goal they first had to transform Guale culture and society. The Guale were not receptive to these new suggestions. As the Spanish had found in other areas of their empire, natives rarely accepted outright the changes demanded by a new religion or political authority. After attempting to alter their lifestyle by

¹⁷ Axtell, *The Indians' New South*, 26.

instituting a new religion and insisting upon a new morality, the Franciscans gradually tested the Guale's patience.

Anger at the Spaniards reached a crescendo in 1577 when a revolt forced the Spaniards from their outpost at Santa Elena. In a familiar scene, Spanish soldiers entered a local pueblo, demanded the residents provide them with provisions, and after an argument violence erupted. The details of the confrontation are not important, but in the end, the Indians captured the Spanish fort and nearly thirty people were killed. According to one witness, after a volley of fire between the Spaniards and Indians, Indian women approached the fort "with great wailing and weeping," and declared the Spaniards must provide them with assistance for "their husbands had been killed, that he [the Spanish General] must take them away from there." The general refused to help the women and, according to the report, "they seized him, took him by force."¹⁸ Clearly, Spain's tactics in the backcountry required significant adaptation to the new environment. The Spaniards would not be able to simply conquer the northern frontier and following the conflict at Santa Elena, relations with Indian communities continued to deteriorate.

In 1597, the Guale violently rejected the Spaniards in a revolt that consumed the entire region. Spanish officials described an uprising savagely executed that spared no Spaniard. One eyewitness recalled an incident in which Guale

¹⁸ *Archivo General de Indias* 1-1-1/19, R. 27. Don Cristóbal de Eraso Summon a Junta on Hearing of the Rebellion of the Florida Indians, January 13, 1577. Hereafter, documents from this collection will be abbreviated as AGI. Translations of the testimony are also found in Jeannette Thurber Connor, trans. and ed., *Colonial Records of Spanish Florida: Letters and Reports of Governors and Secular Persons* (Deland, FL: The Florida State Historical Society, 1925), 193-202.

residents “took [Fray Antonio] from his *doctrina* house and using clubs, treacherously struck him many times. He was severely stoned and many persons hit him on the face.”¹⁹ The uprising lasted several days and when the violence ended, warriors had killed five of the six missionaries and destroyed a chain of missions along the Georgia coast.²⁰ Although the Spanish ultimately gained revenge for the native offensive, their encounter with the Guale marked the first of many failed attempts to settle the Georgia frontier. For the Guale, this decisive victory came at a steep price.

Within a year, the Spanish returned, punished those who revolted, and continued their attempts to change the Guale. The Spaniards believed altering Guale society the most direct way to prevent future uprisings. When the Franciscans investigated the causes of the revolt, they were surprised to learn that the Guale were not upset at the labor requirements or Spain's attempts at changing their religious beliefs. According to Don Juanillo, leader of the uprising, Guale warriors attacked the missionaries because they attempted to “take away our women, leaving us only the one and perpetual, forbidding us to exchange her.”²¹ Although the Catholic insistence on monogamy may have been an irritant to the Guale warriors, it seems unlikely that this policy led to the devastating uprising. The Catholic prohibition on sexual freedom marked only

¹⁹ James W. Covington, ed. *Pirates, Indians and Spaniards: Father Escobedo's “La Florida”* (St. Petersburg, FL : Great Outdoors Publishing Co, 1963), 33.

²⁰ Jerald T. Milanich, *Florida Indians and the Invasion from Europe* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 172-173.

²¹ Caraballido Barcía & Andres Gonzales de Zuñiga, *Chronological History of the Continent of Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1951, rpt.), 182.

one aspect of the Spaniards' attempt at cultural transformation. Despite the missionaries' losses, the Catholics returned to Guale determined to expand Spanish settlement through Christianization. The government in St. Augustine, hoping to secure its place among the native communities to the north, had an interest in assuring the success of the missions.²²

When new missionaries returned after the revolt, Spain exerted additional pressure on the Guale communities. Instead of allowing the Guale their independence, this third wave of missionaries came with orders, objectives, and officials from St. Augustine. After the revolt, the Spanish government decided to take a more assertive role in the region. If Spain could expand the boundaries of Florida by establishing a successful outpost in Guale, the Spaniards could begin developing a larger Indian trade, an enterprise that promised substantial rewards. Following the standard procedure, the Spaniards again turned to missionaries to launch the new venture.

By 1602, the Franciscans claimed 1,200 Christians lived within the Guale territory.²³ Because accepting the Catholic faith required certain cultural changes like the acceptance of monogamous relationships, most Guale converted with reservations. Others, accepted the new faith, but only as an adjunct to their traditional spiritual beliefs. Despite this resistance, the Spaniards succeeded in

²² The Spanish, like the English and French, frequently claimed ownership or a controlling sphere of influence wherever allied Native communities lived. This quasi-control of land, as proposed by Menéndez in 1566, ultimately became a central argument in the struggle for Georgia.

²³ Swanton., *The Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 136.

exacting some cultural transformations, changes that proved significant to the Guale's future.

Archaeological evidence suggests that the Guale eventually turned to agriculture as the missionaries had hoped. Unfortunately, this change caused a decline in the health and well being of the community. Before the Spanish arrived, the Guale managed to escape the pathogens that ravaged so many cultures throughout the region. When the Guale turned to agriculture they began living more sedentary lives and this created a new set of challenges. Recent archaeological excavations have uncovered the nature of these hardships.²⁴ As the Guale turned to agriculture, their population increased, as their mobility declined. The more stationary the community, the more likely the Guale had to deal with infectious diseases. In addition, if the community gradually became tied to the land, its contact with other nations in the region also declined, further isolating the Guale.²⁵

St. Augustine also attempted to exert an element of imperial rule over the Guale. In 1604, Florida governor Ibarra was asked by a Guale *mico*, or king, to

²⁴ David Hurst Thomas, *St. Catherines, An Island In Times* (Atlanta: Georgia Humanities Council, 1988).

²⁵ Skeletal remains that date from the mid-seventeenth century suggest a decrease in bone and muscle growth as a result in the decline of protein consumption associated with the dietary changes. Archaeologists believe this is indicative of the diet change brought by the Spaniards. It is also interesting to note that these studies examined bodies buried in Christian manner. Lewis H. Larson Jr., "Historic Guale Indians of the Georgia Coast and the Impact on the Spanish Mission Effort," in *Tacachale*, 120-139 and Thomas, *St. Catherines, An Island in Time*.

intervene in a matter of local politics.²⁶ The complaint concerned several individuals who fled the area after committing wrongs against the offended *mico*. The fugitives allegedly sought the protection of another *mico* in the area and the Guale leader wanted Florida's assistance in returning these men. To this request, Governor Ibarra wrote, "I order and command the *micos*, caciques, mandadores, and remaining principals of all that province to give him all the support and aid [and] I will order anyone who does the contrary to be punished publically."²⁷ Within his order, Ibarra demonstrated two important aspects of Spain's early involvement with Georgia's Native communities. Ibarra asserted, or at least assumed, authority over the land despite Spain's extremely limited presence. Additionally, the governor's order suggested that the Spanish accept an element of local control within the native communities. While this power could be stripped at the request of a Spanish friar, officials in St. Augustine recognized Guale leadership when convenient.²⁸

Despite the Guale's early history of resistance, Spain's assumption of authority provided the Guale with certain advantages. In 1661, the neighboring

²⁶ John E. Worth, *The Struggle For the Georgia Coast: An Eighteenth-Century Spanish Retrospective on Guale and Mocoma* (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1995), 73.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Amy Turner Bushnell argues that the Spain based this respect for Indian power structures on a medieval rationale whereby the proper way to "govern a country was to obtain the allegiance of its natural lords and through them the loyalty of their vassals." In addition, Spain legitimized its conquests by recognizing that Native Americans, though pagan, conformed to "natural law" as understood by Catholic theology. Therefore, Native independence had to be recognized, if only on a superficial level. Amy Turner Bushnell, "Ruling 'the Republic of Indians' in Seventeenth-Century Florida," in *Powahatan's Mantle*, Peter H. Wood, A. Waselkov, and Thomas Hatley, eds. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 139.

Chichimeco nation attacked Guale. During the invasion, the Chichimeco sacked “the churches and convents...killing the Christian Indians.”²⁹ The reasons for the attack are not clear, but chronic warfare between the Native communities in Georgia, as elsewhere, remained standard throughout the historic era. Whether the Chichimeco believed the Guale had conspired with the Spaniards and thus posed a threat to Chichimeco independence is not clear. Regardless of motive, the attack further weakened the Guale, but this time the Spaniards came to defend the embattled Guale. Unfortunately, Florida could not provide the resources needed to repel future invaders and those who survived the attack were removed to Mission San Joseph de Sapala on what is now Sapelo Island, Georgia.³⁰ However, the Spaniards expected something in return for the protection they provided.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, Spain instituted the *repartimiento*, a labor-tribute system, for residents in the Guale territories. Initially, Spain avoided tribute requirements as they seemed unnecessary for Florida and were difficult to institute. However, as St. Augustine faced continued threats from British privateers, stronger defenses had to be constructed. By 1665, officials in St. Augustine requested that missionaries send the most able-bodied warriors to St. Augustine. When the Guale arrived in St. Augustine, they were ordered to aid Spanish soldiers in their frequent battles against the Timucuan and Apalachee of western Florida and to aid in the construction of the new stone

²⁹ The nation known to the Spaniards as the Chichimeco in 1661 were later called the Westo by the British. Worth, *The Struggle for the Georgia Coast*, 15.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

fort, *Castillo San Marcos*.³¹ Drained of their strongest soldiers and hunters, the Guale fell deeper into economic and spiritual poverty. This depression coincided with the founding of Charles Town.

When the English first settled near the Guale in 1670, the natives found themselves with a surprisingly new set of challenges. Although the Guale had previously expelled the Spaniards from their territory, the British assumed the Guale were allied with Spain and a potentially hostile nation. Because the Guale lived in towns with Catholic missions, the English considered all Guale to be Catholic and thus a threat to their Protestant beliefs. Had a British agent investigated the Guale's history with the Spaniards, he might have felt differently about a nation that was forced into poverty by their local and regional adversaries. Instead, the British found the Guale guilty by their association with the Spaniards.

When they settled Charles Town, the British sought the removal of any Spanish presence or influence over the people and land that was declared a part of Carolina.³² Thus, when the British expanded their settlements southward, the Guale became immediate targets for the British and Indian allies who conducted slave raids. While the English moved closer to the Guale, Spain began a series of costly disputes with native communities in western Florida. Charles Town's

³¹ Worth, *The Struggle for the Georgia Coast*, 71. See also John E. Worth, "Prelude to Abandonment: The Interior Provinces of Early Seventeenth Century Georgia," *Early Georgia: Journal for the Society of Georgia Archaeology* 21 (1993): 1-58.

³² The initial southern boundary of Carolina extended to present-day Cape Canaveral, Florida. Clearly the Spanish disagreed with this assumption and much of the fight for Georgia centered on these claims. Discussion of England's assumed boundary appears in following chapters.

founding did not instantly upset existing alliances and trade networks between the Spaniards and the Natives. Yet, whenever any third party entered in the region, a minor disagreement had the potential to upset the already difficult peace. Between 1675 and 1680, Spaniards alienated many of their Native allies, especially the Apalachee.³³

Like the Guale, the Apalachee hosted Franciscan missionaries, but unlike the areas north of St. Augustine, many secular Spaniards settled the Apalachee region, where they operated cattle ranches. By the middle of the 1670s, the presence of ranchers and other interlopers created significant tensions with the local native populations.³⁴ Spaniards claiming ownership of land the Apalachee and others considered theirs led to obvious disagreements. Around the same time, construction on the Castillo San Marcos began in St. Augustine. As the local population could not provide the necessary labor to build the stone fort, authorities required natives to assist in its construction. Guale, Apalachee, Timucuan, and other natives traveled to the presidio to work on the fort. In Apalachee Province, many received their orders during a period of civil strife. As Spain ordered Apalachee warriors to travel to St. Augustine and work on the city's defenses, the province became more vulnerable to English incursions and further exploitation by the Spaniards.

³³ The Spaniards also harmed any potential trading networks between ST. Augustine and Charles Town. As early as 1688, English traders complained of dishonest trading by the Spaniards. See Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1974), 49-50.

³⁴ John H. Hann and Bonnie G. McEwan, *The Apalachee Indians and Mission San Luis* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998): 142.

As early as 1677, Chisca warriors from north of the Guale region, encouraged by English traders, began a series of slave raids throughout Apalachee province.³⁵ What happened to the Apalachee proved only the beginning of English sponsored raids on Native communities associated with the Spanish crown. For the next century, client indigenous communities attacked one another at the urging of their respective European ally.³⁶ While Spain used its Indian allies to help build defenses in St. Augustine, officials in Charles Town distributed arms and ammunition to be used against those who posed a threat to Carolina's southern frontier. When the English settled Carolina, it became clear that Spain had failed to create an Indian alliance that could be used for defensive purposes as the English found Carolina an area devoid of other European settlements. Although the Spaniards had more than a century of experience with the communities of the lower southeast, they seemed unprepared to defend their territory when the English arrived. North of Apalachee province and closer to Charles Town, communities like the Guale provided a stark warning of future battles.

Considering their difficult history with the Spaniards, it might be expected that the Guale would have greeted Spain's neglect with an amount of glee.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 143.

³⁶ By 1680, Carolina began experimenting with buffer zones constructed of Indian communities. Savannah Town became one of the first areas the English encouraged Natives to occupy to in hopes that the human barrier would prevent Spanish movement northward. Alan Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 73. What happened between the Carolinians and their native partners mirrored activities in New York where several European nations vied for the same land and the favor of the Five Nations. Daniel K. Richter, "Cultural Brokers and Intercultural Politics: New York-Iroquois Relations, 1664-1701," *The Journal of American History* 75 (June, 1988): 41.

Unfortunately for the Guale, Spain's challenger did not come to offer better trade agreements or respect for territorial boundaries; the British came to enslave. Prior to Spain's entrance, the Guale lived apart from other communities. They traded with others throughout the region, but close association with other nations appears to have played a minimal role in Guale society. Furthermore, that they lived in the coastal lowlands meant few would-be enemies ever bothered to attack the Guale.³⁷ When the missionaries arrived, the Guale found themselves further isolated from neighboring cultures. Their seclusion may have hindered trading partnerships, but life on isolated coastal areas had some important advantages. Between the time of Charles Town's founding and Spain's abandonment of St. Simons, central Georgia's indigenous populations were dramatically thinned by an internal slave trade sponsored by the English. The slavers first went after Spain's allies, but avoided those living on the coastal islands.

Although the colonial government declared Indian enslavement illegal in 1672, an Indian slave trade, sponsored by English entrepreneurs, quickly became the most important industry in South Carolina's formative years.³⁸ For the Guale and others in the region, the Westo provided the most formidable adversary in the Indian slave trade.³⁹ Although in 1670 South Carolina Governor William

³⁷ Worth, "Prelude to Abandonment," 29.

³⁸ Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 56. John T. Juricek, "The Westo Indians," *Ethnohistory* 11 (Spring, 1964): 134-173.

³⁹ Here, the term Westo is used to refer to the people the Spaniards called the Chichimecos. As the British gradually built a working relationship with this nation, the name they chose for these people became the more widely used. In June, 1672, the Carolina Proprietors passed a regulation that included the following, "Noe Indian upon

Sayle described the Westo as “reputed to be Man eaters, [who] had ruined ye place,” Carolinians saw an advantage in having the Westo help achieve their goals.⁴⁰ Westo aggressiveness was undoubtedly facilitated by their relationship with Virginia traders. After meeting members of the Westo nation in 1674, Carolina’s first Indian Agent, Henry Woodward, reported that the Westo traded deerskins to Virginians for arms and ammunition.⁴¹ The partnership between Carolina and the Westos frequently seemed ill advised and dangerous for the Carolinians, as the colony was young and weak, but the potential return on a Westo trading alliance seemed worth the risk. Such plans for future economic activity threatened the security of the Spaniards and the Guale.

The arrival of an additional hostile European nation proved the breaking point for most of the Guale. In 1675, Florida Governor Francisco de Salazar estimated that only 506 Natives lived in the entire Guale region. Many of the Guale had either left the area and joined other communities or fell victim to the slave raiders patrolling the region. The few that remained in the area constantly sought the protection of the Spanish government. Gradually, as the British and their slave raiders moved closer, the Spanish could only offer removal as protection from these new threats as even they questioned their own safety.⁴²

any occasion or pretence whatsoever shall be made a Slave, or without his owne consent carried out of Carolina.”

⁴⁰ Juricek, “*The Westo Indians*,” 135.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 135-137. W. Stitt Robinson, ed. *North and South Carolina Treaties, 1654-1756*, Vol. 13 of *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607-1789* (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 2001), 18-20.

⁴² Instead of dictating trade policy to the Native communities in Georgia, members of the Creek nation actually expelled Spanish officials from their territory in

Spanish officials moved some of the Guale to St. Augustine where many of the nation's warriors had labored for years, while others retreated to Georgia's coastal islands.⁴³ After resisting the efforts of Spanish missions and revolting against the demands of the Florida government, the Guale needed Spain's assistance for survival.

Frustrated at their continued belligerence over trading issues and land disputes, Carolina declared war against the Westo in 1680. However, by this time the English and other Native allies had essentially denuded central Georgia of its Native populations.⁴⁴ The Guale it seemed, had few options. Some chose to try their chances with the other communities associated with the English.

The Guale were not the first to encounter the Spaniards of Florida, although their story provides an excellent introduction to Spanish-Native interactions on the southeastern frontier. When the Guale forced the Spanish missionaries off their land in the late sixteenth century, Spain's weaknesses and future difficulties in expanding settlements and maintaining territory was exposed. As the English discovered over a century later, success on the frontier required constructive relationships with the Native populations. Because many Native cultures considered Georgia home, if Spain wanted to take control of the land it either had to make peace with the largest communities or subjugate them by force. Florida

1685. When the Spanish left, the Creeks invited the newly settled British merchants of South Carolina. See, William R. Nester, *The Great Frontier War* (Westport: Praeger, 2000) 20-21. Robinson, ed., *North and South Carolina Treaties, 1654-1756*, Vol. 13, 16.

⁴³ Larson, Lewis H., Jr. "Historic Guale Indians of the Georgia Coast," 136. Many Guale simply joined other neighboring nations, particularly in communities of the Lower Creek.

⁴⁴ Worth, *The Struggle for the Georgia Coast*, 34-35.

officials either lacked the desire to make peace with the Natives or were unwilling to dispense the diplomatic favors to foster alliances with the people of Georgia.

If the Spaniards wanted to take Georgia by force, they first had to develop a much larger and stronger militia. This force had to be utilized before the English settled Charles Town. Because neither option was considered or allowed to reach fruition, Spain's tenure in Georgia before the period of contestation, essentially ended with the abandonment of the missions along coastal Georgia and the evacuation from their homes. Spain's experience with the Guale illustrates the problems Europeans dealt with on the frontier.

Thirty years after the Guale left St. Simons Island, James Oglethorpe set foot on land he intended to settle as Georgia. The Guale may have left the area just decades earlier, but in 1733, Oglethorpe encountered native communities on the verge of entering their second century of dealing with Europeans.⁴⁵

Oglethorpe recognized Native ownership of land and promised to respect existing borders. Yet, it is unlikely he truly understood or appreciated the tolls exacted by centuries of European meddling in the affairs of Georgia's Native populations.

British observers correctly identified the Georgia territory as a frontier, but few, if any, understood or remembered how the area *became* a frontier. When

Oglethorpe planted his kingdom's colors on the shore of the Savannah River, he encountered a human population in a state of flux. In the 1730s, long standing alliances between Natives and the French, English or Spanish already existed, but

⁴⁵ Indeed, Oglethorpe's first encounter with an Indian came in 1733 when the colony's founder met with Tomochichi on Yamacraw Bluff. Prior to their meeting, Oglethorpe only had a superficial knowledge of the local native communities. Sweet, "Negotiating a Southeastern Middle Ground," 18-21.

when Georgia assumed its position on the landscape, the strength of many of these alliances had to endure serious, and sometimes fatal tensions. Arguably, if Spain cultivated better relationships with the Native communities in Georgia and displayed a greater interest in establishing trading partnerships, Oglethorpe might never have set foot on the Georgia coast in 1732.

As it happened, Florida remained an unimportant outpost of the Spanish empire. St. Augustine's large stone fort suggested grand plans for the presidio, but such ambitions were not realized. The land north of St. Augustine created a periphery and when the English founded Georgia its designated land entailed the periphery of Carolina. Thus, the apparent emptiness and distance between settlements assured Georgia's beginnings would be difficult.

England's success in Georgia required constructive relationships with the colony's Native populations. When the Guale disappeared, other Native communities took their place. Once the English removed much of the area's human population through slave raids, other Native communities re-settled the region.⁴⁶ Wars between Natives and Europeans also reshaped Georgia's human geography. In many ways, the frontier the English hoped to settle in 1733 had recently become a secondary frontier. When Oglethorpe arrived, he laid claim to a land that had already witnessed nearly two hundred years of European and Native American interaction. During these two centuries, each side learned a considerable amount about the other. The conflicts between the Spanish, English, and Indians prior to Oglethorpe's arrival changed the land, the power of

⁴⁶ Among those to take advantage of the Guale removal were the Yamacraw, the nation England recognized as the original inhabitants of coastal Georgia.

its people, and the nature of this particular frontier. When Oglethorpe acknowledged the authority or rights of a particular Indian community, that community became powerful at the expense of people like the Guale. The story of the Guale does not explain what happened to all Native communities before Georgia's founding, but it provides some insight into the radical changes that occurred prior to the English venture.

Oglethorpe may have had plans for building a colony on new land. In reality, his colony was situated within an old world. In the 1730s, Georgia's history included people already influenced by outsiders and nations shattered by alliances and wars. The people Oglethorpe encountered were seasoned veterans in the machinations of European colonialism. Oglethorpe arrived with little practical experience in dealing with the controversies of the frontier. The unique problems Georgia's founders encountered on the ground simply mirrored and complicated the tense diplomatic activities regarding the new colony. When Spain left the Guale region in 1702 and war followed, historical memory became an instant casualty. With Spain's departure, the land that became Georgia was ready for a new wave of European and Native settlement.

CHAPTER 3 THE FIGHT BEFORE COLONIZATION, 1702-1733

Europe did not base all of its American ventures on the hopes of instant reward through the discovery of precious metals nor did it build colonies as a valve to release various societal pressures. Sometimes, Europe created colonies to act as a defensive mechanism, founded to reduce anxiety over real or perceived threats to other interests. These colonies might have been established to protect a settlement of greater value or to prevent a nation from taking land that another might claim; Georgia was such an outpost. England hoped the new colony could provide security for South Carolina while anchoring British imperial claims to a contested region. The 1732 charter that created Georgia was not the first attempt to fill the space between Carolina and Florida.

Since the sixteenth century, England, Spain, and France considered ways to occupy the open frontier between Florida and Carolina. Between the beginning of Queen Anne's War in 1702 and Georgia's founding each nation made various attempts to claim the land. England expressed an interest in Georgia prior to Queen Anne's War, but did not devote significant resources to that initiative. How Europeans planned to occupy the land before the English created Georgia is an important aspect to the larger contest for the southeastern frontier.¹ The

¹ Numerous historians have acknowledged Georgia was built to create a buffer between two nations. Lanning, *A Diplomatic History of Georgia*; Crane, *Southern Frontier*; Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* are just a few of the major works to consider the challenges of the colony as a buffer zone. This work expands the

ravages of Carolina's Indian slave trade coupled with Spain's withdrawal from its missions north of St. Augustine eliminated much of the human population that lived on the contested land near the coast.² In many ways, events of the late seventeenth century created a frontier between the two nations. Few outposts, settlements, or other improvements existed between Florida and the settled regions of Carolina well into the late seventeenth century. When the Spaniards left the Guale region in 1702, a European presence between St. Augustine and Charleston nearly disappeared.

The history of conflict, exploration, and intentions to settle the area helped determine where and how each nation drew its battle lines over the controversial tract of land between Carolina and Florida. When France and Spain complained about Georgia's presence or plotted its destruction, excuses for aggression frequently rested on historical claims to the land within Georgia's borders. If one nation could not control the territory at the end of a particular battle, its historical fingerprints or previous connection to the land could be used in future disputes for the contested ground.

The early struggles for Georgia ultimately marked the nature of imperial conflict for the land and outlined the arguments for gaining access to that frontier. After Georgia's founding, France and Spain claimed partial right to England's new venture. At various times, all three powers sought control of the

idea of the buffer zone to show how the struggle for Georgia happened to be only one part of a larger international struggle of imperial rivalry.

² In the absence or deterioration of earlier Indian nations, new communities emerged on the Southern frontier in the early eighteenth century like the Westo and Yamacraw. The "birth" of the Westo is described in Steele, *Warpaths*, 51-52.

territory between the Altamaha and Savannah Rivers. Sometimes, plots to expand one's colonial holdings failed to leave Europe. Other designs enjoyed funding, settlers, and the support of existing colonies, but prior to Georgia's founding, no plan became a reality.³ In part, these early plans faced stiff opposition from Europe's existing North American colonies. Still, other events prevented settlement expansion in the Southeast.

International conflict coupled with local wars and a competitive Indian trade prevented the realization of many planned settlements. At the close of the seventeenth century, Spain left its last coastal outposts in the area that became Georgia. The retreating Spaniards were literally pursued by events that occurred half a world away. The founding of Louisiana in 1699, the War of Spanish Succession two years later, and the Yamasee War in 1715 became seminal events in the race to fill the Southeastern frontier.⁴ Indian alliances, missionary outposts, and a variety of schemes highlighted European activity during the three decades prior to Georgia's founding. Spain based its claim to Georgia's land on the accomplishments of the earliest explorers who traversed the area. Despite its historical connection to the land, Spain assumed a defensive role during much of this period.

Spain dated its historical links to the land that became Georgia more than a century before the settlement of Charleston in 1670. When Spanish soldiers escorted the remaining Guale to St. Augustine in 1684, they abandoned their

³ That is, no significant or permanent colony or outpost came before Georgia.

⁴ In the American colonies, the War of the Spanish Succession was known as Queen Anne's War. Each term is used interchangeably throughout this work.

position on the barrier island, but did not renounce ownership of the land.⁵ Within 20 years, Spain evacuated many outposts so that the government in Florida could consolidate its forces in St. Augustine. Since Carolina's founding, Spain's influence among the northern Native communities gradually waned and the need to support its vast system of missions increasingly became a burden on St. Augustine's coffers.⁶ Still, Spain based its right to return and resume colonization of this land on its history of earlier settlement and discovery of the contested area.

As the British gradually entered southern North America, Spain did not make immediate plans to expand its holdings in Florida. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Florida remained a tiny concern on Spain's northern frontier. St. Augustine's primary goal focused on the protection of passing ships that carried Spanish treasure. In a sense, the Spaniards built St. Augustine to guard a different kind of frontier, but before they could protect its shipping lines, the Spaniards first had to deal with Florida's earliest European settlers, the French.

Under the leadership of Jean Ribault, a group of French Huguenots built a colony near present day Jacksonville in 1562.⁷ The Spaniards saw the French

⁵ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 435-436.

⁶ Erratic and divisive policies by Florida's governors also caused a deterioration of Indian relations. In particular, difficulties between Governor Joseph de Zúñiga and the Apalachee in 1701 led to a tense situation that threatened regional peace while at the same time, Vitchuco communities began accepting gifts and diplomatic overtures of the English. See TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida*, 194-196.

⁷ Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida*, 22. For an overview of French activities in sixteenth century Florida, see: McGrath, *The French in Early Florida: In the Eye of the Hurricane* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000).

settlement as an illegal incursion on lands they already claimed. Spain based its ownership of Florida on expeditions mounted in the early sixteenth century, yet when the French settled in North Florida, the doctrine of first discovery seemed of little importance to the prospective newcomers.⁸ Arguments over which side saw what land first played a role in European diplomacy, but meant little in North America. When the Spanish returned to Florida in 1565, they did not come to debate the rights of discovery, but to evict the interlopers. After the Spaniards destroyed the French and their outpost known as Fort Caroline, they built St. Augustine and planned to stay despite the obvious difficulties in maintaining a presence on the peninsula.

Florida did not have precious metals and when the Spaniards arrived the local Indians, the Timucua, did not immediately accept the newcomers. Nor, as Ponce De Leon discovered decades earlier, did Florida contain the mythical Fountain of Youth. St. Augustine did however, have poor soil, a difficult climate, and an endless supply of hungry insects. To many, its location on the Atlantic coast seemed the only useful feature of the new settlement. After loading its vessels with gold mined from South and Central America, ships of the Spanish Main began a perilous journey back to Spain. Along the way, the passing ships

⁸ Initially, Spain based its North American claim on the papal donations of 1493 that were outlined in the Treaty of Tordesillas, but later Spain used the legal basis of first discovery as used by Protestant nations. For a thorough investigation on the basis of European land claims see, John Juricek, "English Claims in North America to 1660: A Study in Legal and Constitutional History," (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1970), 8. Often, notions of discovery and possession were used interchangeably. See, John T. Juricek, "English Territorial Claims in North America Under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts," *Terra Incognita* 7 (1976): 7-22. Patricia Seed, "Taking Possession and Reading Texts: Establishing the Authority of Overseas Empires," *William and Mary Quarterly* 49 (April, 1992): 183-209.

frequently encountered privateers. Situated near the Gulf Stream, a presence in St. Augustine had the potential to protect the passing ships. As such, the Florida town acted more as an outpost than a settlement.

From the outset, Florida's governors intended to expand their settlements. Between St. Augustine's founding in 1565 and the events of 1702, Spain's preferred method of expansion centered on the construction of Catholic missions.⁹ When Spanish settlers moved beyond St. Augustine, they typically chose areas already "softened" by the work of Catholic missionaries. As the mission system began to shrink, hopes for future growth also faded.¹⁰ A wretched economy, poor management, and corruption also weakened the colony.

Spain briefly occupied Georgia's coastal islands with small military outposts and Catholic missions, but none of these ventures came close to achieving permanence. After founding St. Augustine, Spain had to contend with dissatisfied Indian communities, occasional attacks by sea, and an inability to draw any measurable profit from the land. St. Augustine nearly collapsed following a 1586 attack by the famed English privateer Sir Francis Drake. When Drake landed, the citizens and soldiers of the Spanish presidio retreated into the

⁹ Missions first converted the Natives. Through conversion the Spaniards attempted to "civilize" the Indians and, as Herbert Bolton and others have made clear once civilized, the Indian could be easily exploited for the benefit of the Spanish government. Herbert E. Bolton, "The Mission as a Frontier Institution in the Spanish-American Colonies," *The American Historical Review* 23 (October, 1917): 43-44. Michael Gannon, *The Cross in the Sand: The Early Catholic Church in Florida, 1513-1870* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1965).

¹⁰ This only generally describes hopes for external expansion and does not begin to consider the enormous internal problems in St. Augustine in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Amy Bushnell, *The King's Coffers: Proprietors of the Spanish Florida Treasury, 1565-1702* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1981).

wilderness while the invaders burned and looted the city. According to official reports, Drake took with him all the slaves, ships, and gold that belonged to the colony.¹¹ After Drake's visit, the Spaniards lacked any resources or desire to expand beyond St. Augustine.

Despite the dawning realization that the Florida settlement would not bring wealth and fame, colonial officials imagined an expansive Florida through much of the seventeenth century. In 1600, authorities considered reviving earlier plans to expand northward and build a colony on the Chesapeake. Other plans envisioned the construction of a road to link Florida and Mexico.¹² To many, expansion meant increased security. If Spain could build several cities in the Southeast then the vulnerability of its northern American frontier would shrink. Although the ideas of the seventeenth century failed to materialize, Spain's plans for points beyond St. Augustine later played an important role in legal arguments against British colonization in the Southeast. Before Spain could complain of British actions, however, it had to face the possibility of the colony's destruction. Shortly after the Spaniards and remaining Guale left St. Simons Island in 1702, British soldiers pursued them to St. Augustine.

When Carolina governor James Moore attacked St. Augustine in November 1702, inter-colonial rivalries exploded into global politics and war. As Spaniards mourned the passing of Charles II in March, Europe erupted into a conflict known as the War of Spanish Succession. As battle began in Europe in the

¹¹ AGI 54-1-34/15 (July 4, 1586) St. Augustine to Council of Indies. See also, John Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990), 198.

¹² Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 82.

spring, authorities in Carolina began fortifying the colony's defenses and preparing to move on Florida. In Europe, England went to war in hopes of preventing a Franco-Spanish alliance that had the potential to marginalize English power.¹³ At the time of Moore's attack, concerns in Europe assumed a regional importance. Two months earlier, Moore warned that if England did not allow an invasion of St. Augustine, the French would send troops and ships to fortify the Spanish outpost and possibly launch a counter-offensive against the English.¹⁴

In October, the English marched towards St. Augustine. Along the way, Moore destroyed Spanish outposts on Amelia Island and at the mouth of the St. Johns River. By November, Moore's army arrived in St. Augustine and began its attack on the city. The Spanish did not have an adequate military to defend the population so the citizens retreated to the recently constructed stone fort, a scene reminiscent of Drake's invasion a century earlier. As the English burned the city and shelled its defenses, approximately 1,800 men, women, and children found safety behind the fort's massive coquina walls.¹⁵ For nearly two months, the bulk of St. Augustine's population huddled inside the fort while the English did everything they could to force a surrender.

¹³ A similar fear existed on the Western New York frontier. There, French, English, and Indian conflicts had the potential to disrupt a large portion of northern British North America. These concerns are addressed in chapter five.

¹⁴ Jean Parker Waterbury, "The Castillo Years, 1668-1763," in *The Oldest City St. Augustine, Saga of Survival*, Jean Parker Waterbury, ed. (St. Augustine: The St. Augustine Historical Society, 1983): 63-64.

¹⁵ Charles W. Arnade, "Raids, Sieges, and International Wars," in *The New History of Florida*, Michael Gannon, ed. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida 1996), 107.

On December 26, four ships from Havana came to the aid of the battered city. By “means of Divine mercy,” the reinforcements surprised the English ships anchored in St. Augustine’s harbor. Moore realized his tired troops could not overpower the Cuban ships and ordered his men to retreat.¹⁶ As St. Augustine smoldered from the fires set by the British, Governor Joseph de Zúñiga declared victory despite losing the battle.

St. Augustine survived the War of Spanish Succession, but barely. Governor Moore did not remove the Spanish, but his siege of the city rendered the outpost nearly impotent. Furthermore, the events of 1702 threatened to change the balance of power throughout the South.¹⁷ Two years later, in an attempt to even the score, Moore raised a private army and led a series of destructive attacks on the Apalachee Province. Spain did not have the ability to defend the western missions and, within a year, Moore had destroyed Florida’s largest remaining Indian mission province.¹⁸ Later, Moore claimed he had “killed and taken as slaves 325 men, and have taken slaves 4,000 women and children.”¹⁹ Not only did Moore boast of his conquest, he proudly declared his gains came at “the loss of four whites and...without one penny charge to the Publick.”²⁰ If Moore’s 1702

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 108. Waterbury, “The Castillo Years,” 66-67.

¹⁷ Following the English invasion of 1702, the French became convinced that they could either attack the English at Charleston or wait to be attacked by Moore and company. Gally, *Indian Slave Trade*, 151.

¹⁸ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 142.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 143. Mark F. Boyd, Hale G. Smith, & John W. Griffin. *Here They Once Stood: The Tragic End of the Apalachee Missions* (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1951), 94.

siege of St. Augustine reflected the geopolitical struggles for empire, the fate of the Apalachee highlighted the many ways power was used and created on the Southern frontier.

Moore sought revenge for his failure to take St. Augustine and the Apalachee proved an open target. After destroying the province's missions and defeating the Apalachee warriors, Moore offered freedom to the survivors if they agreed to leave western Florida with his army.²¹ It is estimated that over 1300 Apalachee accepted his terms. Some remained in the territory and sought Spain's protection; others fled eastward to the nearby Timucua territory, and some traveled west and settled in Pensacola or the French outpost at Mobile.²² Moore essentially destroyed the Apalachee, further weakening Spain's position in Florida. For the Apalachee, like the Guale before them, guilt by association with a particular European power held tremendous risk for a culture's survival and safety. The Apalachee paid for Spain's so-called victory in St. Augustine and they quickly discovered that political events in Europe could have violent ramifications on the North American frontier.

Between 1702 and 1704, Spain's remaining hopes for expansion were dashed by the activities of Moore and the ambitions of the Carolina's government. Florida survived and St. Augustine's militia remained, but its position in the larger struggle to control the remaining frontier in the Southeast

²⁰ Public Record Office General Collection 30/47/14/1 f. 29, Moore to the Lords Proprietor. Documents in this collection are hereafter abbreviated as PRO.

²¹ Hann and McEwan, *The Apalachee Indians and Mission San Luis*, 168.

²² *Ibid.*, 170-171.

seemed marginalized. Before Spain could again threaten the peace and stability of the British empire in the South, St. Augustine resumed its role in defending the Spanish main. St. Augustine's ambitions for the frontier had to be put on hold as the government rebuilt.

After failing to take St. Augustine in 1702, the English realized Spain would not disappear without a fight. Despite the blow Moore and his men dealt to the city, the Spaniards remained a potential threat to the security of Carolina. If England could not remove the Spaniards by force, it had to construct defenses along the southern frontier of Carolina. Since its founding in 1670, Charleston seemed open to attack and, as it fortified local positions, the English believed expanding into areas south of Carolina might justify their ownership of the land and provide an additional layer of security.

Ironically, to get further from the Spaniards, defensive bulwarks and thus British settlements had to be built closer to Spain's limits. While building closer to Florida meant more direct contact, establishing settlements between Charleston and St. Augustine promised to create a buffer between the primary settlements and build a buffer zone between the two colonies. When Spain abandoned its posts on St. Simons Island, the British saw an opportunity to enact the risky scheme.

According to its charter, Carolina's southern border extended south of St. Augustine to a point near present-day Cape Canaveral.²³ The Spaniards who had

²³ This refers to the grants made in 1663. In 1629, Sir Robert Heath received a land grant for lands south of Virginia, but these plans ultimately failed to reach fruition. Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1974): 13-14. Arnade, "Raids, Sieges, and International Wars," 101.

lived in St. Augustine for over a century before the English set these borders, disagreed. Anticipating future conflict over border placement, officials in Carolina urged increased settlement south of Charleston shortly after its founding. Because South Carolina's Proprietors envisioned a colony based on commercial ventures near Charleston, small settlements south of the capital seemed an inexpensive strategy to prevent, or at least slow, an invasion from Florida. Others feared that the growth of French settlements and their popularity with western Indian communities might threaten Carolina and suggested a similar approach in the western backcountry.

One of the earlier requests to expand Carolina's borders in order to protect its central settlements concerned French growth on the Mississippi. In 1713 Hughes Pryce, a Welshman, traveled and explored the area between Carolina and the Mississippi. After spending some time on the Mississippi, Pryce suggested to Carolina's Proprietors that a colony be founded along the river. Pryce envisioned a colony settled by poor residents of Wales.²⁴ A settlement on the Mississippi would extend Carolina's boundaries and secure additional trading alliances with the local Indians, then allied with the French. Before Pryce could build support for his plan, however, Indian raiders killed him in 1715. France's Indian allies, it seems, preferred the status quo. Other plans to expand settlements into the frontier fared better.

²⁴ Kenneth Coleman, "The Southern Frontier: Georgia's Founding and the Expansion of South Carolina," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 56 (Summer, 1972) : 164-165. See also, Hughes Pryce Papers at South Caroliniana Library.

Between 1670 and 1732 the Proprietors of Carolina entertained numerous suggestions for expanding their settlements. In the 1680s, the English attempted to expand their territory south of Charleston by allowing the establishment of a Scottish settlement known as Stuart Town. Its founder, Lord Cardross, envisioned a settlement for Covenanters on Carolina's periphery.²⁵ Located on Port Royal, Spain considered Stuart Town an illegal incursion into Florida and in 1686 destroyed the community.²⁶ Undeterred, the English continued planning Carolina's southern growth, especially as Carolinians increasingly feared for their safety.

The Yamasee War not only threatened the stability of South Carolina but also challenged the entire political power structure throughout the Southeast. Clearly a seminal event in Carolina's early history, the war had ramifications for all European and Native American interests in the region. When the fighting began in 1715, residents of Charleston were literally surrounded by Indians they had considered allies.²⁷ When the Yamasee launched their first attacks in the spring, few in Carolina realized the magnitude of the invasion, but many believed they understood the reason for the attacks.

Since the late seventeenth century, the British viewed the local Indian populations as potential partners in matters of trade, backcountry politics, and

²⁵ Verner W. Crane, "Projects for Colonization in the South, 1684-1732," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 12 (June, 1925) : 24.

²⁶ Coleman, "The Southern Frontier," 163.

²⁷ A census compiled by Thomas Nairne in 1715 claimed approximately 28,000 friendly Indians lived within a 640-mile radius of the Carolina capital. Roy Merrens, ed., *The Colonial South Carolina Scene: Contemporary Views, 1697-1774* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 60-61.

mutual protection. As the deerskin trade became more lucrative in the early 1700s competition and demand for access to the trade led to abuses by Europeans. After the war, English investigators blamed the hostilities on the unscrupulous practices of Indian traders and South Carolina's Proprietors who allowed these activities to continue. According to William Byrd II of Virginia, the war began because of "the Carolinians themselves, for their traders have so abused and imposed upon the Indians. . . that they have been thereby very much disgusted."²⁸ The Yamasee accused the Carolinians of enslaving, raping, and disregarding their territorial claims. South Carolina may have considered the attack part of a Franco-Spanish conspiracy, but according to many observers, war stemmed from local abuses.²⁹

When the Yamasee began fighting the British, they sought the assistance of other Native communities. With assistance from the Choctaw, Tallapoosas, Alabamas, and other Upper Creek communities, the Yamasee staged what appeared to be a well planned and executed attack on Carolina in the spring of 1715.³⁰ The sudden invasion caught many settlers off guard and considerable

²⁸Steven James Oatis, "A Colonial Complex: South Carolina's Changing Frontier in the Era of the Yamasee War, 1680-1730," (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1999), 161. Historians have echoed Byrd's accusations. See Crane, *The Southern Frontier*.

²⁹ Some claimed the Yamasee reacted to a poverty created by the Indian slave trade. The poverty that led to conflict, however, began when the Yamasee started to capture the available Indian population. By 1708, most of the Indians allied with Spain had been captured and sold by the Yamasee and British traders. Richard L. Haan, "The 'Trade Do's Not Flourish as Formerly': The Ecological Origins of the Yamasee War of 1715," *Ethnohistory* 28 (Autumn, 1981) : 347. William Ramsey, " 'Something Cloudy in their Looks': The Origins of the Yamasee War Reconsidered," *Journal of American History* 90 (June, 2003) : 44-75.

³⁰ Oatis, "A Colonial Complex," 174-175. Ramsey, " 'Something Cloudy in their Looks'."

damage occurred in the first weeks of the war, but after the initial Yamasee advance, Carolina fended off subsequent attacks. When the Carolina government formed an alliance with the Cherokee in 1716 and extended diplomatic relations with many Creek communities a year later, the war seemed over.³¹ Carolina survived the war, yet the conflict only magnified the colony's weaknesses. Naturally, many in Carolina and London accused France and Spain of creating a climate that allowed for the invasion. Neither nation probably sparked the event; but both supported resistance to English authority.

The English correctly believed their European adversaries wanted control of their land. Furthermore, Carolinians realized that their greatest vulnerability came from Indian allies. By 1715, Carolina depended on the Indian trade and alliances that brought protection to the area's settlers. When the Yamasee and their allies attacked, Carolina feared for its own survival. Following the Yamasee War, plans to expand the colony's boundaries gained a new urgency. If France and Spain had a hand in causing the aggression, Carolina had to proceed with caution. Indian alliances remained valuable and necessary for the colony's survival, but after the events of 1715, the English could not depend on Indian allies to provide security on the periphery. It was no accident that officials considered the first substantial plans to settle the land south of the Savannah River after the Yamasee invasion.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 198. Oatis suggests that despite the end of overt hostilities, effects and dangers associated with the war lingered until 1720. Still, this treaty marked a turning point in English-Indian relations. The English signed this treaty while the Spanish eagerly courted Creek officials in Mexico. David H. Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540-1783* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 62-64.

In 1717 Scottish baronet Robert Montgomery proposed a plan to expand the limits of Carolina. Montgomery planned to build a new type of settlement in the English colonies. Imagined as the Margravate of Azilia, Montgomery promised a secure and capable buffer between Carolina and Florida in the form of a unique colony. The Carolina Proprietors had entertained similar suggestions previously, but Montgomery offered what Carolina needed at the time, frontier security. If Carolina could convince another party to build south of Charleston, Spain's complaints and Indian attacks would become problems for the newcomer.

Carolina liked the proposal and agreed, provided Montgomery accepted their terms. The Proprietors offered Montgomery an initial grant of 50,000 acres on land between the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers. The new settlement could remain independent of Carolina, for a "quitrent of a penny an acre for all land occupied" and a quarter of all gold and silver that might be mined.³² In addition, the Proprietors stressed that Montgomery could not "tax or hinder the trade of Carolinians with Indians" either within or beyond Azilia's boundaries.³³ When he proposed his project in 1717, Montgomery claimed he had between five and six hundred laborers willing to settle the area.³⁴ Montgomery's designs called for the establishment of a margravate, an obscure and anachronistic type of settlement based on a feudal labor system led by a military governor.³⁵

³² J. Max Patrick, ed., *Azillia: A Discourse by Sir Robert Montgomery* (Atlanta: The Emory University Library, 1948), 6.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ John Barnwell, *The Most Delightful Golden Isles* (London, 1720).

³⁵ This unusual style of settlement likely came from a clause in the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina that allowed for a portion of the colony to be set aside for

Azilia represented an unusual plan. Nonetheless, Montgomery stressed its value in bolstering Carolina's security. This helped the Proprietors to accept his vision. Carolina had just emerged from the long and difficult Yamasee War and needed the additional security.³⁶ When Montgomery published his first pamphlet that explained the colony's value to England's other settlements, he noted the growth of French outposts on the Mississippi and the Spaniards in Florida.³⁷ Not only could Azilia discourage further expansion by France and Spain, but England's presence on the southern frontier had the potential to secure additional Indian trade routes. Montgomery declared Azilia would bring "much to the advantage of his Majesty, and his dominions, and to the welfare of . . . Carolina."³⁸ After the Proprietors accepted his plan, it seemed Azilia might succeed.

From his home in Scotland, Montgomery petitioned the King for permission to launch a lottery to help raise funds for Azilia. In his petition, Montgomery claimed "that when Virginia was first planted by the English. . . . Your Majesty's predecessor King...grant[ed] license for a lottery in aid of the said settlement, to

"titled colonists." Sketches of the plan show a large walled town that looked more like a military fortification than a colonial venture. Patrick, *Azillia: A Discourse by Sir Robert Montgomery*, 7.

³⁶ After the events of the Yamasee War, the Proprietors of Carolina could no longer depend on using Indian alliances to protect the colony's borders. Although Carolina emerged from the war intact, the causes: unchecked slave raids sponsored by whites, massive debts and other problems created by the growing Indian trade only increased Carolina's vulnerability. After the war, Indians harmed by Carolina's traders could find solace and the possibility for revenge in St. Augustine. For an explanation of the causes of the war see: Haan, "The 'Trade Do's Not Flourish as Formerly': The Ecological Origins of the Yamasee War of 1715," 341-358.

³⁷ Barnwell, *The Most Delightful Golden Islands*, 53.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

be publickly drawn in the City of London.”³⁹ Montgomery wanted to sell 100,000 tickets for forty shillings a piece in Edinburgh or any borough of North Britain. Montgomery planned to use the proceeds from the lottery to build Azilia which, he reminded the king, “might defend the Plantations on [Carolina]...against the Incursions of the Indians” and Spaniards.⁴⁰ Despite his convincing argument, the baron did not receive permission to launch the sweepstakes. In time, Europe recognized the need for a defensive position against the Spaniards; but when Montgomery sought funding, London refused assistance. Although Montgomery presented a sound plan to expand English North America, he needed funding to realize his goal.

One year after he proposed Azilia, Montgomery had raised nearly £30,000 for the venture despite the King’s refusal to allow a lottery. In all likelihood, Montgomery could have used these funds to send a vanguard to start the colony; but events in North America prevented the first ships from sailing.⁴¹ As Montgomery prepared to enact his plans, Carolina’s Proprietors faced challenges to their authority. Colonists accused the leaders of poor management and an inability to prevent attacks from Indians, Spaniards, and French.⁴² In turn, the Proprietors sought assistance from London. They received help from the crown, but in return, the leaders of Carolina lost their independence and control of the

³⁹ State Papers, Public Records Office, Kew, England, 54/13/f.53, October 31, 1718. Documents in this collection are hereafter abbreviated as SP.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Patrick, *Azilia*, 10.

⁴² *Ibid.* See also, Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 185-187.

colony. Unfortunately for Montgomery, the plan for Azilia was linked to the fate of the Proprietors.

As Azilia's implementation stalled in various royal channels through the end of 1719, Montgomery finally withdrew his plan. In 1720, a former partner of Montgomery purchased the original land grant and resubmitted the blueprints for Azilia. To help achieve their goals, John Barnwell published a pamphlet entitled *A Description of the Golden Islands*. Azilia's design had changed, but its function remained the same. The colony's new design looked more like a contemporary New World venture. The 1720 version did not imagine a margravate. Instead of being controlled by a feudal lord, the second version of Azilia called for gentlemen planters to oversee indentured laborers and slaves.⁴³ According to Barnwell's *Description*, investors in the new colony could expect substantial returns for the selected territory promised a sufficient port to complement Azilia's unrivaled natural bounty. In addition, Barnwell, like Montgomery, stressed the defensive advantages to the new settlement.

Perhaps to make the venture more appealing to royal officials, Barnwell highlighted the threats Carolina faced on the frontier and how the settlement could lessen this burden. In particular, Barnwell focused on the possibility of French expansion. As Barnwell and others understood the situation in North America, France had dramatically increased its presence among the Southern Indian communities. If the French continued to develop their trading relationships with these nations, then they would likely seek an additional, more

⁴³ Barnwell, *The Most Delightful Golden Islands*, 55.

convenient port to facilitate the trade. Barnwell described Azilia's proposed location as a hole that needed to be plugged.⁴⁴ He pointed out that his colony would provide a perfect spot to prey on passing French and Spanish ships. Azilia's port, Barnwell wrote, "would make it difficult for the Plate-Fleet or the trading vessels...to avoid being taken."⁴⁵ If the British settled between the Altamaha and Savannah Rivers, then French expansion could be checked and Spanish trade disrupted. Without an Atlantic port, the French had to move their goods down the Mississippi, and travel a dangerous route through the Caribbean to get their goods to Europe. If the English could not eliminate all French settlements, they could at least build to obstruct the French traders.

The revised plan that circulated in 1720 provided investors and government officials with many reasons to ensure Azilia's success. Despite its support in the colonies and its advantages to the security of the southern borderlands, the plans for the settlement ultimately fell through. In Carolina, local officials understood the need for something to be placed between them, the Spaniards, and the French, but the royal officials who had the final say on colonial operations, did not understand the urgency of this request.⁴⁶ Partly because they failed to fortify Carolina's southern frontier, residents of Carolina successfully challenged the authority, even the legitimacy of the Proprietors. If this happened again, would

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 50, 55.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁴⁶ That the Proprietors seemed willing to give Montgomery complete legislative authority over the land if Azilia materialized, underscores this point. Kenneth Coleman, "The Southern Frontier: Georgia's Founding and the Expansion of South Carolina," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 56 (Summer, 1972): 166.

the king become the object of protest and scorn? Officials in Europe may not have understood the immediate need to create a protected border somewhere south of Charleston, but the colonists did. Despite the concerns of the colonists, London failed to provide support for Azilia.⁴⁷ Although plans for the colony never left Europe, the idea that Carolina needed something to check Spanish or French expansion became clear to most colonial authorities by 1720. A year later, Carolina began constructing defenses on St. Simons Island.⁴⁸

Following the Yamasee War, local officials and residents called for the fortification of Carolina's southern boundaries.⁴⁹ In 1720, John Barnwell suggested that Carolina quickly do something to discourage a Spanish or French attack. Referred to as the Barnwell Plan, the South Carolina government passed a Tax Act in 1721 that included an allocation of £3,290 for the maintenance of a garrison based on the Altamaha River.⁵⁰ Initially, the Carolina Commons House refused to spend public funds on building frontier defenses, but in light of the

⁴⁷ Undoubtedly, a major difficulty for the Azilia plan had to do with South Carolina's revolt against the Proprietors. Between 1719 and 1721, the leadership of South Carolina came under question while the crown decided if it would assume control of the colony. George Edward Frakes, *Laboratory for Liberty: The South Carolina Legislative Committee System, 1719-1776* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 11-12.

⁴⁸ Coleman, "The Southern Frontier," 168.

⁴⁹ See Barnwell, *The Most Delightful Golden Islands*. These thoughts also appeared prior to the hostilities with the Yamasee with the publication of Thomas Nairne's *Muskhogan Journals* published after his 1708 expedition to the Mississippi River.

⁵⁰ David Rogers Chestnutt, "South Carolina's Expansion into Colonial Georgia," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1973), 8-9.

failures of Stuart Town and Azilia, there were few other viable options.⁵¹ Still, the Carolina government considered population growth and settlement expansion as the most attractive strategies to create and defend an English border.

Shortly after Charleston called for a military presence on St. Simons, the government offered additional incentives to lure white settlers onto the southern frontier. Beginning in 1721, Carolina offered tax exemptions to any white male who moved onto the southern barrier islands or land south of the Altamaha River. In addition to the tax incentives, settlers on the frontier could not be sued for nonpayment of debts.⁵² After several failed attempts at colonizing the southern periphery, Carolinians now willingly offered public funds and legal privileges for those brave or foolish enough to settle the land Spain considered a part of Florida.

In 1724, South Carolina again agreed to allow a semi-independent addition within the colony's established borders. Developed by Jean Pierre Purry of Switzerland, the new plan called for a small outpost of 600 Swiss settlers to be located south of Charleston.⁵³ Like Azilia, the plan failed to materialize; but this time, land grants earned approval in London as South Carolina had become a royal colony. Charleston normally determined whether to approve colonization plans and South Carolina had the authority to grant land, but this never assured success. Typically, plans approved in London seemed more stable and likely to

⁵¹ At one point, the Commons House suggested border Indians be used to protect the frontier instead of a domestic militia, but this idea did not get far. *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵² Chestnutt, "South Carolina's Expansion into Colonial Georgia," 9.

⁵³ Coleman, "The Southern Frontier," 166.

succeed than others. Yet, royal officials had to act fast, for the English were not the only nation to consider the possibilities of planting a colony between Charleston and St. Augustine. Decades before Britain moved to fill this void with Georgia, the French considered their options for the same area as a way to economic gain and possible dominance of the continent.

While England and Carolina developed plans for the area that became Georgia, French officials in Europe and North America also considered the possibilities of establishing an outpost in the contested region. By the early eighteenth century, the French controlled North America's western backcountry. Still, the prospect for a community on the Atlantic coast seemed a worthy risk. France gained a southern port when it founded Louisiana in 1699 and this promised to provide Indian traders with an excellent opportunity to export their commodities. As in most colonies, the early years in Louisiana were marked with myriad difficulties.

To ensure their safety and maintain peace, the French entered an alliance with the local Choctaw communities shortly after their arrival in Louisiana. Unfortunately, after making the alliance, the French discovered that the Choctaw were at war with England's ally, the Chickasaw. If the French wanted to maintain their alliance, they had to fight the common enemy. In 1700, Louisiana governor Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville decided to assist the Choctaw in their fight.⁵⁴ After a brief visit to France, Iberville returned to Louisiana and began assisting the

⁵⁴ Patricia Dillon Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier, 1699-1762* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 2-7.

Choctaw in 1702. The War of Spanish Succession began later that year and gradually worked its way into colonial politics.

In Louisiana, the French quickly learned of the difficulties in settling the Southeastern frontier. To ensure their safety, the French needed an Indian ally and the Choctaw seemed a capable choice. Besides, their war with the Chickasaw created additional problems. The Choctaw outnumbered the Chickasaw, but England's support of the smaller nation helped balance, if not reverse, these numbers.⁵⁵ If France assisted the Choctaw in their contest for supremacy, then they would also enter into conflict with the English.

Decades later, the French dealt with an identical situation, except considered a different approach. In the 1720s, Louisiana governor Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne Bienville saw an advantage in having the two nations fight one another. "This war was in keeping with our interests and our security in that it kept apart these two nations."⁵⁶ Either way, France quickly learned that maintaining an imperial presence on the frontier required difficult decisions, but the French presence on the southern frontier changed the calculus of regional power structures.

France's activities and designs on the eighteenth-century Southeast reflected the unique nature of frontier expansion in the colonial Atlantic World.

⁵⁵ Jay K. Johnson, "The Chickasaw," in *Indians of the Greater Southeast: Historical Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, Bonnie G. McEwan, ed. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 95. It is estimated that in 1700 there were 7,000 Chickasaw on a territory that spanned 37,060 square miles and 28,000 Choctaw who lived on a territory of 40,920 square miles.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 97. Dunbar Rowland and A.G. Sanders, *Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion* (Vol. 3 (Jackson, MS: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1932), 457.

Often what happened in distant territories and outposts caused controversy and fear in Europe's highest courts. In late 1703, the British Lords for Trade cautioned colonial governments in North America against a French threat. These warnings followed French and Spanish actions in the Caribbean in which the two nations had sacked and burned much of Providence Island in the Bahamas. According to reports, the attackers "put to the sword or carried off" all residents of the island. After word reached London, officials feared "the same attempts will be made upon Carolina."⁵⁷

The fears of 1703 nearly became realities. For the next two years, the French in Louisiana planned an invasion of Carolina. From Louisiana, Governor Iberville intended to lead a large and diverse force against the British in Charleston. Iberville's plan for the invasion included the use of Spanish ships based in Veracruz and Havana, black and mulatto soldiers from Mexico, and pirates operating out of Martinique and Saint Domingue.⁵⁸ After assembling his army, Iberville planned to capture Charleston. From there, Spanish troops would occupy the city while French forces marched northward towards Virginia and Maryland. Iberville put his plan into action in 1706 and quickly captured Nevis and Saint Christopher in the West Indies. Unfortunately for Iberville, victory on the small Caribbean islands marked the high point in his campaign. When he stopped to gather troops and supplies in Havana, Iberville became ill and eventually died. In the absence of their leader, the joint forces failed miserably

⁵⁷ *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America*, Vol. III, 1702-1727. December 21, 1703, 40.

⁵⁸ Gally, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 151.

when they moved on the British in Carolina.⁵⁹ Iberville's plan seemed audacious as even the most fearful English bureaucrat doubted its potential, yet this incident speaks volumes on the possibilities for conquering the frontier.

The Southeastern frontier appeared open to whoever could occupy the land. In the absence of clearly defined borders or stable settlement, any interested party could make a move for the open territory. A physical presence, strength, and resolve could hold the land; declared boundaries, forgotten treaties, and diplomatic insistence could not. Even though Iberville faced considerable hardships in Louisiana, the bold governor drew a plan to remove the English from three colonies. To do so, he envisioned a combined force from separate nations scattered across half the globe. In the early 1700s, any nation had the potential to become the predominant power in North America. Despite their loss in 1706, the French continued looking for a way to occupy additional land on the Atlantic coast.

In 1707, authorities in Charleston heard rumors that France had started assembling an army of Indians who intended to march against the English. Before these rumors surfaced, France started gaining the confidence of several Lower Creek communities. Not only did the Creek represent the largest trading partner in the burgeoning deerskin trade, but the manner in which France approached the Creek seemed particularly threatening to England. Unlike the English, France did not treat all Creek communities the same, preferring instead

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

to deal with each community on an individual basis.⁶⁰ By viewing the Creek communities as part of a larger political community and not a homogenous culture, the French created more useful and elastic alliances.⁶¹

While no military aggression immediately came from this alliance, the French method of diplomacy with the Creeks provided another potential danger to the English. In 1714, on the eve of the Yamasee War, the French began construction of Fort Toulouse, an outpost at the junction of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers. Built next to an English trading post, Fort Toulouse checked English expansion and provided a stark warning to English traders in the area.⁶² The Creek did not declare total allegiance to the French, but Carolinians viewed the base as a symbol of French ownership or allegiance to the Creek communities. Regardless of how the Creek accepted the French presence, the English doubled their efforts to gain favor in the backcountry. France seemed a certain threat and if the French allied with the Creeks and possibly the Spanish, then Carolina's security seemed questionable at best. Yet again, what seemed logical and helpful in North America often conflicted with the leadership in Europe. These conflicts had the potential to split the alliances necessary for expansion and conquest in the colonies. Politics and territorial desire brought an

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 140.

⁶¹ Throughout the colonial era, Europeans often confused or failed to make a distinction between ethnic identity and political union. In all, there were approximately 60 towns between the Upper and Lower Creek communities. Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540-1783*, 4. The confusing process of forming an ethnic identity is described in Patricia Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis, 1500-1700* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

⁶² Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 60. Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 185.

end to the possibility of an alliance between the French and Spanish in the early eighteenth century.

In an effort to expand the limits of Louisiana, the French occupied the Spanish outpost at Pensacola in 1719. Despite the obvious tensions caused by the land grab, France and Spain rarely plotted the destruction of one another, especially when French Bourbons assumed control of the Spanish monarchy in 1700.⁶³ Each had reason to fear England's imperial expansion in North America. From Spain's perspective, the English constantly ignored their land claims and after the Siege of 1702, Florida truly feared for its safety. France saw potential danger in England's activities with the various Native American communities, particularly the Chickasaw. To counter these threats, the French had to bolster their defenses, ensure strong alliances with friendly Indian communities, and consider strategies that might weaken their adversaries.

Some claimed the French planned, or at least stoked the controversies that led to the Yamasee War in 1715.⁶⁴ It is unlikely that the French played a role in the conflict. Nevertheless, France had considered equally inflammatory measures from its earliest years in the South. France's strategy for maintaining its possessions in North America required two very different approaches. First,

⁶³ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 166-167. While others have suggested the French-Spanish rivalry was more pronounced, in terms of the lower Southeast, England emerged as the greatest threat to French and Spanish interests; thus the English assumed the role of common enemy. Henri Fomer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry in North America, 1524-1763* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1953).

⁶⁴ Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier*, 49. During the war the French doubled their efforts to maintain an alliance with the Creek, further enforcing the fear that France intended to play a role in the conflict. Wright, *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America*, 69-72.

the French had to ensure their security in the western regions and if possible, France could settle the seemingly empty territory between South Carolina and St. Augustine to gain trading advantages and increased security. By settling vast tracts of the open frontier in order to create a borderland, the French could more easily protect their settlements in Louisiana.

When the French founded Louisiana, they quickly realized that their presence triggered a larger contest for control of the southern Appalachians. The English thought they could easily conquer this territory through their alliances with the Chickasaw and the Cherokee. When the French arrived and gained the friendship of the Choctaw, these assumptions faded.

The Europeans identified the Southern Appalachians as a potential linchpin for control of the South. Before the French arrived, the English assumed that their strategy of pre-emptive retention would be enough to secure their hold on the region.⁶⁵ France had already established trading outposts and missions across the Ohio River Valley, Canada and elsewhere. If France could assert its authority over Native communities in the southern Appalachians, then it could control a vast territory that extended from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. While the French fought the Chickasaw and tried to coax the Creek to join an alliance, officials in Paris turned their gaze eastward.

⁶⁵ The idea of pre-emptive retention deals with Native American communities that lived near European settlements. The European colony or outpost closest to the native town assumed a right of protectorate. By providing this "protection" the European power effectively incorporated the Indian territory into their larger holdings. For additional elaboration see, Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System, II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750* (New York: Academic Press, 1980) and Wilma A. Dunaway, "The Southern Fur Trade and the Incorporation of Southern Appalachia in the World-Economy, 1690-1763," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 17 (Spring, 1994) : 215-242.

France continued its plans for expanding between South Carolina and Florida after the events of 1706. England listened closely for additional plots, but did not recognize a substantial danger until 1719, the same year France declared war against Spain. After France took Pensacola, the English believed France might make a move for St. Augustine and this caused concern in Europe. “I suppose the French will also quickly make themselves masters of the Fort St. Augustin. . . which in their hands, one day or other, may be a very troublesome post in the Neighborhood of Carolina, and our Plantations on that side,” warned an English emissary in Paris.⁶⁶ English officials were inspired by the possibility of a French attack on eastern Florida commenting, “I don’t see why we should not lay hold of the opportunity of the Spanish War to make ourselves Master of that Post, which will cost us only the sending of six or seven hundred Men there, to demand it; For the Spaniards don’t seem either inclined or disposed to make any sort of Defense.”⁶⁷

Florida always appeared weak, but Spain would not simply allow the English to make themselves “master of that post.” If invaded, ships and soldiers in Cuba were ready to return, as they had in their 1702 triumph over Moore’s invading army. Although some English thought they could take Florida, others preferred to keep a careful eye on the French. Florida just barely survived the 1702 invasion and did not present an immediate concern for those in Carolina. The French, however, were relative newcomers to the region and appeared

⁶⁶ SP 78/165 f. 231-241, October 4, 1719.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

aggressive and willing to take open territory. In response to these fears, London warned Paris of potential for conflict over the matter of colonial growth.

In 1719, London instructed Martin Bladen, the principle diplomat in Paris, to warn the French against their plans for expansion in the Southeast. “You are to declare to the French,” the King instructed, “. . . that His Majesty has reason to believe the French have made several encroachments upon the British settlements in those parts.”⁶⁸ London also instructed Bladen to obtain information regarding French activities near the Mississippi. In a dispatch to Bladen, Whitehall made it clear that if the French settled in the Southeast, all of England’s colonies could face serious danger. “We cannot but be something alarmed at a Scheme that seems one Day to threaten the Destruction of all the British colonies in America.”⁶⁹

London had reason to be concerned, for in the fall word arrived from Europe that several ships of war left France for the Carolina coast where they intended to establish a colony on the Altamaha River.⁷⁰ Instead of watching the French and Spanish fight for their possessions in North America, the British had reason to fear French encroachment on their own frontiers. Like many of these early rumors and designs for further colonization, France’s attempts of 1719 gradually disappeared without incident. Although France did not appear on the Atlantic coast, Carolina took measures to discourage future designs on the targeted area.

⁶⁸ SP 78/166 f. 8, July 3, 1719.

⁶⁹ SP 78/166 f.22, August 26, 1719.

⁷⁰ SP 78/168 f. 458, September 6, 1720.

Gradually, South Carolina built defenses throughout the border regions. France and Spain frequently complained that these outposts violated their declared borders, but without a military to counter these measure, little could be done to stop England's activities. Still, expanding one's territory, even if it required the use of thinly populated settlements vulnerable to attack seemed a convenient way to defend an open frontier. If a nation did not mark its presence through physical settlements, then it had to rely on Indian alliances and at least a superficial presence on the open territory. Often the Europeans who represented their nation's interest on the frontiers, served as Indian traders or agents, underscoring the value in maintaining relationships with as many Indian communities as possible.

France, Spain, and England all considered their European counterparts vulnerable and possible targets for a land grab. The French did not act on the plans that surfaced in 1719, but word of their preparations certainly caused an uproar in colonial governments across the South. At the time, France lacked the resources to expand its southern settlements, and instead focused on developing positive relationships with Indian nations. If they could not build their own settlements on land staked by Britain or Spain, then the French sought the development of Native client-states, for by the 1710s the deerskin trade had become the most valuable and available resource to exploit in the Southeast.⁷¹ France already had the allegiance of the Choctaws and frequently attempted to

⁷¹ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 436-437. Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels*.

defeat the Chickasaw. French officials also worked with the Creek communities in hopes of weakening their long-standing relationships with the English.

The Creek, for their part, adeptly played the Europeans off one another. Between 1711 and 1718, various Creek communities promised friendship or considered treaties and trade relationships with the English, Spanish, and French. The French understood that treaties with the Creek had to be made at the community level; to their detriment, England and Spain gradually discovered this requirement. By remaining neutral in the various European conflicts, the Creek maintained their independence and strength.⁷² The Creek Confederation played an important role in the larger conflicts for control of the Southeast, while other Indian nations assumed a more active role in the fight for the Southern borderlands despite what Europe thought it understood as reality.

In the contest to settle the open territory between Florida and Carolina, Europeans did not view Indian nations as potential settlers. The Spanish, French, and English all imagined Indian communities as potential allies or military partners in the European struggle to colonize. From the perspective of European diplomats in the eighteenth century, not unlike contemporary historians, Indians were typically denied the ability to colonize. Either we assume Native communities had historical rights to the land they desired, or they

⁷² This independence, however, rested in the shadows of the forts constructed by England, Spain, and France. The French completed Fort Toulouse by 1715. In hopes of checking English and French expansion, Spain and its Creek allies began building Fort Coweta the following year. When England secured an alliance with a larger Creek faction in 1717, the English started building outposts on the western frontier and the Spanish project ended. Although the Creek remained fairly neutral overall, they gradually favored the English. See Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 60, 62, 64-67.

are seen as pawns in Europe's conflicts for control of North America.⁷³ Despite these assumptions, Europeans who sought control of the Southern frontier in the early eighteenth century often treated Native communities as essential partners for peace, prosperity, and security. They provided Europeans with the most essential needs. If a Creek town decided not to sell its deerskins to an English trader, but sold its goods to a French agent instead, then certain English subjects

⁷³ Recent scholarship has changed the image of the repressed Indian to the empowered. Within the last twenty years, scholarship has acknowledged the role Native Americans played in the construction of North America, but the idea that Indians acted on their own desires to control land, and thus assume the characteristics of colonizer is rare. Although there are numerous volumes that consider Indian power on the colonial frontiers some the following provide a brief overview of the historical problem, Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), Colin G. Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1997); Saunt, *A New Order of Things*. Certainly, historians have considered the effects of internal warfare and territorial grabs based on the politics within the larger Native American community, but Native settlement is rarely viewed as a colonizing activity. Prior to the establishment of Georgia, certain actions in the Southeast might be considered attempts at colonizing the open frontier. Recent work concerning the rise of Southeastern tribes in the wake of the devastating Indian Slave trade considers these possibilities, but this type of activity is not considered a colonization effort. If we are to assume that Native Americans could not be colonizers because colonization is the provenance of European ideals and desires than we deny many cultures a right to power and control. The Guale were decimated by the policies of Spaniards and the slave raids sponsored by the British, but the communities that followed in their place essentially *re-colonized* the land. As mentioned earlier, Patricia Galloway provides an excellent description on the formation of ethnic identity among Native groups. The Choctaw, she explains "did not exist as an ethnic group...until they decided they existed as an ethnic group." Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis*, 265. Other groups seen as nations by Europeans actually look more like political alliances than a separate culture. For example, the Yamasee as a distinct culture did not appear on the Southern frontier until their political union occurred. See, Bradley Scott Schrage, "Yamasee Indians and the Challenge of Spanish and English Colonialism in the North American Southeast, 1660-1715," (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 2001), 32-34. If there are legitimate questions regarding the nature of Indian ethnic independence versus political alliances it seems fair that we might also question an Indian's ability to colonize. James Merrell has warned against relying on ethnohistory for ethnohistoric saturation can separate Native American history from the rest of colonial history. James H. Merrell, "Some Thoughts on Colonial Historians and American Indians," *William and Mary Quarterly* 46, (January, 1989): 94-119.

faced serious financial burdens. In the contest for the Southeastern frontier, many Native communities acted like colonizers instead of the colonized.

When James Oglethorpe first met Tomochichi, the leader of the Yamacraw, in 1733, he sought permission to settle on *their* land.⁷⁴ Despite Carolina's original land grant or territorial claims, Oglethorpe accepted Indian ownership of the territory along the Savannah River and his actions marked a radical departure from the typical entrance of European colonizers. In many ways, the Yamacraw colonized the land that became Georgia. Although their "colonization" of the land did not last long and power quickly reverted back to the European newcomers, their independence is indicative of their unique place on the land.

Upon his arrival in Georgia, Oglethorpe had to negotiate his presence on the land and legitimacy as a leader of a new European colony. At the time, neither the Europeans nor Indians could claim complete control of the land. The Yamacraw occupied the space Oglethorpe wanted, but they could not deny his entrance. At the same time, however, Oglethorpe did not have the power to simply remove or subjugate the existing population. Together, the two parties formed an alliance. Without this partnership neither party could survive. The Yamacraw came to the Savannah River after previous populations had disappeared or been destroyed and they intended to occupy the land between Spain and England. Unfortunately, the Yamacraw chose a site coveted by the Europeans.

⁷⁴ Again, blurring the division between ethnicity and political confederacy, the Yamacraw were a small community of Muskogee and Yamasee Indians. In short, the Yamacraw were the offspring of external conflict. One scholar has even declared that the Yamacraw Indians were "created in 1728." It is unlikely that ethnicities can have such an accurate date of birth. Sweet, "Negotiating a Southeastern Middle Ground," 21.

By the mid-1720s, it became clear to the most myopic official in London that something had to fill the open area between Charleston and St. Augustine. England had traditionally ignored much of Spain's land claims in eastern North America. Although England occasionally argued land ownership on rights of first discovery, it typically operated under the assumption that the first to successfully settle the land became, through default or decree, the land's rightful owner.⁷⁵ If England intended to maintain this position, many believed, colonization had to begin soon. That the first attempts to expand beyond the core towns focused on the land between the Altamaha and Savannah Rivers was not an accident.

Carolina's acceptance of the Azilia plan highlighted the need to fill the frontier, but when funds and support in London failed to materialize few protested inaction on the colony's southern extremities. A few years after Azilia's collapse, and shortly after Carolina became a royal colony, the British approached the weakness of the southern frontier with a new urgency. In the 1720s, Carolina's government raised funds specifically for the defense and settlement growth south of the Altamaha River.

Defending the southern frontier required two distinctly different approaches. First, the English had to visibly defend the land which required the construction of a defensive network that not only addressed southern vulnerabilities, but also areas in the West that the French might attempt to exploit. Secondly, settlements had to be built on these frontiers in order to

⁷⁵ Christian rulers had claimed the right of eminent domain since the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Seed, "Taking Possession and Reading Texts," 188.

maintain a physical presence on the land, provide support for the military outposts, and to better mark one's territorial limits.

Events in the early eighteenth century led to a change in previous attitudes about the need to secure the frontier. After the Yamasee War ended in 1717, English authorities no longer insisted that Indian allies be used to police Carolina's boundaries. Access to the Indian trade continued to be a point of contention between Europeans for the rest of the decade, but Carolina, like Florida before, realized the difficulties in relying on Native Americans to provide security. From 1717 on, the English understood that they alone had to protect their boundaries. After the crown assumed control of South Carolina in 1721, construction began on various defensive outposts. Most of these fortifications faced Florida, but western Carolina also received attention.

Despite a larger military presence, the border between Florida and South Carolina remained porous. After several failed starts and ill-advised plans, South Carolina's best hope for a protected border rested on plans for a large and successful colony south of Charleston. By the late seventeenth century, Florida began threatening the English in a variety of unique ways.

In 1687, St. Augustine began welcoming fugitive slaves from Carolina when a group of ten runaways entered the Spanish city in search of protection and baptism in "the true faith."⁷⁶ Florida governor Diego de Quiroga claimed he invited the slaves to remain in Florida when they requested a Catholic baptism.

⁷⁶ AGI-54-5-12 (Council of Indies to Quiroga, February 24, 1688). Apparently, Yamasee Indians who helped guide the slaves to St. Augustine told the fugitives that if they converted to Catholicism, the Spaniards might provide protection.

In response to South Carolina's complaints about harboring the slaves, authorities in Madrid informed Governor Quiroga that "not appearing to be the proper thing to return them after becoming Christians, it was agreed upon. . . to buy them with the money from the Royal exchequer for the sum of sixteen hundred dollars."⁷⁷ With these instructions, Spain officially sanctioned its most powerful campaign to destabilize South Carolina.

Despite Spain's restitution for the fugitive slaves, South Carolina saw this policy as an entirely new challenge to the security of the colony. As the proportion of South Carolina's enslaved population grew, Spain's policy toward runaway slaves seemed particularly threatening.⁷⁸ In 1719, a speaker to the South Carolina Assembly described the military in St. Augustine as "a Garrison containing roughly 300 sorry Soldiers being mostly Bandeitti and undisciplined."⁷⁹ Regardless of their military weakness, the policy to invite and protect fugitive slaves made Florida a formidable adversary.

As Florida became a beacon to runaway slaves and with St. Augustine arming these fugitives, reasons to expand Carolina's borders and the urgency to complete this expansion became even clearer than before. At times, Carolina invited colonization plans because settlement growth seemed an easy way to

⁷⁷ AGI-54-5-12. See also, Verne Chatelain, *The Defenses of Spanish Florida, 1565 to 1763* (Washington D. C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1941), 161. Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 26.

⁷⁸ In 1708 South Carolina had a slim black majority (4,100 African Americans to 4,080 white settlers). These numbers became significant by 1715 when the populations reached 10,500 and 6,250 respectively. Wood, *Black Majority*, 144.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

settle future border disputes. When Florida began forming a militia of former slaves, such plans assumed a new urgency. Florida's unusual policy also reflected the nature of the frontier. If England intended to expand its territory, Spain promised a fight. Because the Spanish outpost lacked the resources to maintain traditional defenses, St. Augustine sought and used unconventional tactics in what became, for the Spaniards at least, a war for survival.

By the time the Georgia Trustees received their charter to establish a colony, the rules for frontier settlement and security became increasingly clear and uniform irrespective of national origin. Maintaining one's security on the frontier required an ability to adapt to myriad problems and surprises. Native American alliances had to be maintained for purposes of economic health and security, but could not be depended upon for complete protection. In the event of war, Indian allies could greatly increase an army's size and bolster its intelligence of the terrain and opposing force. By 1730, it also became clear that events in Europe would play an important role in determining the success in the borderlands. Gradually, two fronts emerged in the contest for the Georgia frontier.

In Europe, diplomats based colonial policy on ideas they thought provided the best security. At the same time, European officials fought over legal rights to the land. Treaties signed in cities far removed from the colonies addressed border placement and conflict in North America, but rarely did these activities acknowledge or understand the realities of frontier politics. This is not to say that Europe did not play a significant role in determining the nature of the contest for the Southeastern frontier. Often the distance between the royal courts

and their colonies allowed for an emotional detachment from the activities across the Atlantic.

Visitors to the Southeastern frontier understood the importance in protecting and securing Britain's borders. In his 1727 pamphlet *The Trade and Navigation of Great Britain Considered*, Joshua Gee warned of the dangers on the frontier. North America had enormous economic potential, but in areas like South Carolina where French and Spanish interests came together near English borders, profits came with risks. Gee thought these risks unnecessary. North America, wrote Gee, "is capable of raising within. . . its colonies, materials for employing all our Poor." In order to accomplish these goals, British officials had to "secure the Frontiers of Carolina against the Incroachments [*sic.*] of the Spaniards from St. Augustine, as well as those of the French."⁸⁰ South Carolina understood what Gee wrote and had attempted to fill this void. Five years after the publication of *The Trade and Navigation of Great Britain*, the British crown made its best and final attempt to fill the space between Florida and South Carolina.

The French, Spanish, and English governments directed their imperial ambitions on the land between Carolina and Florida. The open frontier represented a dangerous area where future conflict over the land held the potential to control events throughout the Atlantic World. By 1730, the need to

⁸⁰ Joshua Gee, *The Trade and Navigation of Great Britain Considered* (London, 1727), preface. Later, the Georgia Trustees distributed copies of Gee's pamphlet with the promotional literature that described Georgia.

transform the southern frontier into a stable borderland colony became increasingly apparent.

CHAPTER 4 FOUNDING AND FIGHTING FOR GEORGIA, 1732-1737

Whether the idea for Georgia began when a Parliamentary committee considered rehabilitating prisoners in North America, or as religious dissidents from other parts of Europe sought English protection, events on the frontier required a new colony by 1730.¹ Despite previous attempts to fill the empty land south of Charleston, colonial and royal authorities gradually believed Britain *needed* a colony between Carolina and Florida in order to create a legitimate southern border. By 1730, preservation through expansion seemed a simple formula for success on the frontier. Officials in South Carolina believed forts constructed in the 1720s provided a warning to would-be interlopers; but England required something more permanent than lightly manned outposts. The English needed a new colony, one to protect those already established, but in a constant state of danger. If the new venture failed, Britain's other colonies would only weaken. Then, Georgia would assume the role of colonial keystone.

¹ James Oglethorpe led an investigative committee in Parliament which examined the state of England's prisons. While leading this committee, he met Dr. Thomas Bray, founder of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Together, Oglethorpe and Bray led efforts to gain Parliamentary support for the establishment of a buffer colony. Others pushed the idea for a colony built by religious figures. Johann Martin Bolzius, leader of the Salzburger community promised the colony would become "a defensive Protestant bulwark against Papist Spain." For a general overview of Georgia's early European roots see; Kenneth Coleman, "The Southern Frontier: Georgia's Founding and the Expansion of South Carolina," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 56 (Summer, 1972) : 163-174 and Crane, "The Philanthropists and the Genesis of Georgia," 63-69.

When Spain and Britain debated Georgia's legitimacy, the English occasionally claimed a right to the contested territory because Sebastian Cabot spied the land from his passing ship in the sixteenth century. More frequently, the British claimed a right to the land because of stipulations found in the 1670 Treaty of Madrid and the original land grant that created the Carolinas. When asked why England sought a colony south of Carolina, the answers might have focused on its value as a defensive bulwark against the Spaniards, as an outpost for dissident Protestant sects expelled from their native lands, or as a logical progression of English colonization in North America. Whatever the answer, the controversy over Georgia's founding included numerous myths and partial histories. When other nations challenged the colony's right to exist or the placement of its boundaries, half-truths and imagined pasts frequently framed the argument for Georgia's legitimacy.

In reaction to the renewed calls for the extension of colonial boundaries in southern North America, James Oglethorpe and Dr. Thomas Bray petitioned the Privy Council in early 1730 for a charter to colonize the land between the Altamaha and Savannah Rivers.² Although Robert Montgomery held title to the same land for his proposed settlement Azilia, Montgomery's agreement required settlers and cultivated lands within three years of receiving his grant.³ Because Montgomery failed to meet these requirements, rights to the land reverted back

² Bray died before the creation of the Georgia Trust and its official request to settle Georgia, but his activities and association with the Anglican Church played a vital role in the formation of the colony.

³ Robert G. McPherson, ed. *The Journal of the Earl of Egmont* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962), 29.

to South Carolina and returned to the king's domain. After several meetings and consultations between the would-be colonists, Privy Council, and the Board of Trade, the king signed Georgia's charter in April 1732.⁴ The order that passed described a "New Colony in His Majesty's Province of South Carolina."⁵ The charter may have suggested the colony lay within the boundaries of South Carolina, but Georgia would operate independently from its neighbor.

Carolina wanted a colony south of Charleston, but Oglethorpe's relationship to the British government helped ensure the plan's approval. When King George II agreed to the charter, the monarch allowed the establishment of a semi-independent buffer zone to protect English interests in other colonies from the advances of the Spanish and French. The Trustees received near absolute control of their colony. In turn, the governing body empowered Oglethorpe to enact and enforce official policies. As the assumed defender of Carolina's plantations, Georgia faced immediate and considerable danger. The Trustees believed they alone could guide the colony to safety.⁶ Despite Georgia's perceived weaknesses,

⁴ It is interesting to note that Georgia approved in 1732 was not the first Georgia proposed as a colony. In 1717, Thomas Coram suggested to the Council of Trade and Plantations that the crown create a colony called "Georgeia." Like the colony approved in 1732, Georgeia was proposed as a barrier between established English colonies and an open frontier, but Coram planned his colony "between Nova Scotia and Maine." Like the southern colony that was approved, Coram's plan included a prohibition on rum, limitations of land ownership, and other limits that would ensure a socially enlightened settlement. That social restrictions were included in this similar plan cannot be overlooked. Both Georgias were intended to defend more established British colonies. To be successful, the founders of each plan thought social activity had to be carefully controlled. See Taylor, *Georgia Plan*, 8.

⁵ Colonial Office 326/17, September, 1732. Hereafter, documents from this collection will be cited as CO.

⁶ Although Oglethorpe assumed control of Georgia, the Trustees did not appoint a governor, as they feared a governor would answer to the crown, not the Trustees. The Trustees believed operating as a group and maintaining colonial power in London made

its independence from South Carolina and Parliamentary support created what seemed to many a viable alternative to the internecine warfare previously used to maintain order on the frontier.⁷ From the perspective of the government in South Carolina, Florida now became Georgia's problem, leading many Carolinians to assume the policies and plots from Florida could only minimally affect their lives. For many in Carolina, Georgia meant an end to the constant border warfare.

Increased acts of Spanish piracy off the Carolina coast and Florida's periodic offers of refuge to runaway slaves had, by the time of Georgia's charter, started to take a psychological and physical toll on South Carolina's residents. In response to the activities of the Spaniards, the British launched a series of raids in Northern Florida in 1728. Led by Colonel John Palmer of South Carolina, the border skirmishes prompted Florida Governor, Antonio de Benavides, to arm and free the slaves sought by Palmer. After the runaways fought against their former masters, the Spanish governor suggested they be sent north to lead a series of retaliatory raids on English plantations while the regular army staged a more concentrated attack against British interests. Although Spain did not retaliate in this manner, the knowledge that St. Augustine seemed willing to send armed

them more independent than a locally based governor or assembly house as in Virginia and South Carolina. Reese, *Colonial Georgia*, 19-20. See also, Paul S. Taylor, *The Georgia Plan: 1732-1752*, 16-17.

⁷ Independence from South Carolina proved a crucial aspect to Georgia's success in the initial stages. Previously, colonial ventures south of the Savannah River had to go through the Proprietors and later the Commons House of South Carolina. Although South Carolina assumed control of the Georgia militia, the Trustees' independence helped the colony survive its early struggles. Kenneth Coleman, "The Founding of Georgia," in *Forty Years of Diversity: Essays on Colonial Georgia*, eds. Harvey H. Jackson and Phinizy Spalding (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), 9.

former slaves to attack British plantations caused great anxiety in Charleston.⁸ Later, some of the former slaves returned to the British territory and destroyed a small military fortification “33 leagues to the north of Florida.” This represented the extent of Florida’s ability to avenge the raids.⁹ Florida may not have seemed an immediate or obvious military threat to British interests in the South, but Spain’s willingness to use different, more menacing tactics, convinced many in South Carolina that something needed to block the continued aggression. Other threats that appeared in the early 1730s also caused British officials to reconsider their existing defensive strategies.

Although nearly a thousand miles away, the governors of North and South Carolina received warnings of Indian threats from New York as early as 1720. In many ways, the politics and struggle for colonial control of Western New York mirrored the struggle for the land south of Charleston. Like the Southeastern frontier, multiple European nations fought to control the frontier in western New York and, as in the Southeastern frontier, unconventional tactics highlighted the struggle. The French in Canada constantly sought alliances with the Five Nations as favorable relations with the various communities seemed a potential route to regional power and a possible route to controlling the continent.¹⁰ Not only could

⁸ John J. TePaske, “The Fugitive Slave: Intercolonial Rivalry and Spanish Slave Policy, 1687-1764,” in Samuel Proctor ed., *Eighteenth-Century Florida and Its Borderlands* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1975), 7. Jane Landers, “Spanish Sanctuary: Fugitives in Florida, 1687-1790,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 62 (January, 1984): 296-313.

⁹ AGI 86-5-21. In all likelihood, this fortification was Fort King George, the fort Spain had disputed since its construction in 1721.

¹⁰ At the time, the Five Nations included the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca cultures and were also referred to as the Iroquois confederacy.

a military alliance with the Five Nations help the French dominate western New York, but also it allowed forces to march southward and join the French army in Louisiana. The combined forces had the potential to wreak havoc on English colonies anywhere between Louisiana and Canada.¹¹

England understood the French threat long before Georgia's founding. In 1720, English officials in Albany described the delicate balance that allowed for England's control of New York. Afraid that the Five Nations might accept French overtures for an alliance, representatives of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs declared, "that the said Five Nations are the balance of the continent of America, who if the French bring over to their interest will prove the ruin of many thousand families." The commissioners feared the advances French agents had made with the Five Nations and predicted an alliance with the French might "prove the ruin and destruction of the greatest part of this continent."¹² Twelve years later, North and South Carolina prepared for such an attack.¹³

Although the addition of the Tuscarora in 1723 made the Five Nations the Six Nations, the adoption of the new term did not immediately take hold. Here, as elsewhere, the term Five Nations will be used as it appeared in the original correspondence. For more on the etymology of the Five Nations see, Bruce G. Trigger, ed. *Handbook of North American Indians: Northeast*, Vol. 15. (Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 320.

¹¹ Spaniards also understood the potential route to power through Indian alliances. In 1734, a Catholic missionary suggested England's strength rested in their alliances with Indians and if the French could send 500 to 1,000 Indians from Canada they could join Spain in "stamping out Oglethorpe's colony." John Pitts Corry, "Indian Affairs in Georgia, 1732-1756," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1936), 115.

¹² E. B. O'Callaghan, ed. *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Vol. 5, (Albany, NY: State of New York, 1855), 570-571.

¹³ It is perhaps a coincidence that these events happened in the same year the French were rumored to have been planning a colony on the Altamaha River.

In June 1732, the Lords of Trade received word from North Carolina that French meddling with the Five Nations led to a planned attack on the Carolina backcountry. According to the information sent by the governor of North Carolina, Indians in South Carolina promised to assist the Five Nations when they invaded Carolina's western perimeter. The colonial governments immediately blamed the French for hatching this plan and doubled its efforts to maintain an allegiance with the Five Nations.¹⁴ England had every reason to suspect a French influence. Two years earlier, Indians had destroyed several French tobacco plantations on the Mississippi River. Although the attacks came from hostile Indians, the French blamed the killings on the English traders who supplied the raiders with weapons and encouragement to go after French targets.¹⁵

England avoided invasion in 1732, but the fear caused by these events only highlighted the dangerous nature of the backcountry. Although French forces in Canada seemed far removed from English settlements in the Carolinas, they posed significant threats to regional peace.¹⁶ For many in South Carolina, expanding colonial holdings south of Charleston had more to do with eliminating the French threat than preventing Spanish depredations. As distant enemies closed on British settlements across the continent, plans to fill the porous frontier

¹⁴ *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Vol. 5, 935-936.

¹⁵ SP 78/197, March 4, 1730.

¹⁶ The January 8, 1732 issue of the *South Carolina Gazette* described the fears of the French. In an article on French activities in the Northeast, the paper reported "If these encroachments of the French are not prevented, they may prove of the last consequence to this and the rest of his Majesty's colonies here in America."

were considered with greater importance. When the French showed that armies in Canada, bolstered by Indian militias, could attack settlements in the Southeast, the insecurities about the safety of the frontier remained. The Trustees proposed their project to the crown at a time when colonists across British North America demanded better security. Filling the open territories coveted by others became a favored strategy. In this manner, the Georgia project assumed a sense of urgency, and its approval gave the Trustees a sense of duty. Georgia may have been the first British colony charged with protecting other, more established colonies.

In its earliest promotional publications, the Trustees highlighted Georgia's utility to the security of other North American colonies. Shortly after the charter was approved, the Trustees distributed a tract pulled from Niccolo Machiavelli's *Discourses upon Titus Livius*. The sixteenth-century text, suggested colonial expansion could help restore "discipline" to successful, but otherwise wayward colonies. Livius also commented on a colony's ability to *enlarge* or *conserve* the dominion of the metropole. The Trustees selected Livius' discourse on a republic's need for patriotism and civic virtue. Years before the American War for Independence, Georgia's founders stressed the importance of fostering civic virtue.¹⁷ By distributing these writings, the Trustees seemed to suggest that, instead of being a burden on the royal coffers, Georgia had the potential to

¹⁷ The Trustees used Machiavelli's edited collection of Livius' works. The original writings of Titus Livius were published as the multi-volume, *The History of Rome*.

maintain and protect English interests throughout North America.¹⁸ The Trustees imagined their colony as a Southern “City Upon a Hill.”

Aside from the initial arguments for creating Georgia, most in Europe understood the advantages in filling the Southeastern frontier. Because Georgia promised to help other British ventures succeed, the Trustees received substantial support from Parliament, which nearly assured a successful launch of the project.¹⁹ In an attempt to lure colonists, the Trustees spent more than previous ventures in publishing promotional literature.²⁰ In these writings, the founders described a different approach to colonization. Much of eastern North America seemed destined for success, but the founders of Georgia wanted to offer an alternative route to happiness in the New World.

Georgia’s promotional literature described a land situated on the same latitude as China, Persia, and Palestine. Because of the semi-tropical climate, the Trustees promised Georgia could provide England with endless supplies of “silk, wine, oil, dyes, drugs, and many other materials” that England was, at the time,

¹⁸ Trevor R. Reese, *The Most Delightful Colony of the Universe: Promotional Literature of the Colony of Georgia, 1717-1734*, (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1972), 92-93.

¹⁹ Between 1732 and 1752 Parliament sent the Trustees £136,000 to be spent on the new colony. It should also be noted that during the same period, of the 70 people who served as a Georgia Trustee, 44 sat in the House of Commons and five sat in the House of Lords. Richard S. Dunn, “The Trustees of Georgia and the House of Commons, 1732-1752,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 11 (October, 1954): 551, 552. Of the original 21 Trustees, ten sat in the House of Commons and two sat in the House of Lords, see Taylor, *The Georgia Plan*, 17.

²⁰ Through 1742, the Trustees spent approximately £130 a year on promotional literature. Hugh T. Lefler, “Promotional Literature of the Southern Colonies,” *The Journal of Southern History* 33 (February, 1967): 20.

“obliged to purchase from Southern Colonies.”²¹ As such, settlers in Georgia would certainly find wealth in the new land, a familiar claim when attempting to sell any colonial endeavor. Unlike most colonies, however, Georgia welcomed and even encouraged the poor to consider the possibilities of life in North America. In its charter and early literature, the Trustees proudly described land reserved specifically for the poor. Whereas Virginia’s founders welcomed the poor as indentured servants, the Georgia Trustees envisioned its poor residents as landowners. The founders claimed money raised for the venture could subsidize the transportation of poor settlers.

Oglethorpe envisioned many of Georgia’s first settlers as a group of impoverished, but industrious workers who could quickly improve the land and make Georgia an attractive prospect for those with money to invest and a desire to settle in the colony. According to the plan, as the poor improved or planted valuable crops on their property, the value of adjacent, but undeveloped parcels of land would increase, “and the Rents of those reserved lands will [provide] a perpetual fund for the relieving more poor people.”²² By providing the transportation and set-up costs for the poor, the Trustees believed they could create a perpetual fund to provide the initial support for future indigent colonists. The unusual approach, and the confidence exuded in the Trustees’ literature convinced many to give money for the project and increased the interest of potential colonists in Europe.

²¹ Benjamin Martyn, *Some Account of the Designs of the the Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia in America* (London, 1732), 4.

²² Martyn, *Some Account on the Designs of the Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia*, 6.

Despite traditional views, Georgia did not become or set out to be a haven for debtors.²³ Instead, the Trustees imagined an economy based on small industry, not plantation agriculture, and they believed this might alleviate economic disparity. Georgia's founders wanted to avoid the landed aristocracies that controlled much of the South; Georgia's wealth would come through industry and small-scale agriculture. In order to avoid political and social domination by a minority of large landowners, the Trustees limited ownership to 500-acre parcels. In addition, only males could inherit land, as the Trustees believed prohibiting female inheritance would prevent future consolidation of land holdings, an essential element in their plan for the future economy.²⁴ Beyond their desire to limit land ownership and control the economy, the Trustees pushed for a socially enlightened colony.

The Trustees' connection to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) lent a religious element to the project. The Georgia Plan promised religious toleration and, from the outset, the Anglican Church played a central role in planning the colony. The Anglicans believed they could use Georgia as a staging ground for increased missionary work in the colonies. However, Oglethorpe invited persecuted Protestants to join his colony and they

²³ Albert Berry Saye, "Was Georgia a Debtor Colony?" *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 24 (December, 1940) :323-341. This view is explained and challenged in Rodney M. Baine, "New Perspectives on Debtors in Colonial Georgia" *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 77 (Spring, 1993) : 1-19.

²⁴ Taylor, *Georgia Plan*, 26-28. See also, *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, Vol. 2, 280-281. The limits on land ownership and rights to inheritance were the first regulations challenged by the colonists.

quickly became the most important purveyors of faith.²⁵ Regardless, the decision to invite religious dissidents and support missionary activities was not simply a social goal of the founders. Oglethorpe and the Trustees saw Florida's Catholicism as an additional threat to Georgia's security and wanted every advantage to thwart this possible danger. Spain had already converted some Creek communities to Catholicism and many British officials feared the offending faith could spread, jeopardizing trade networks and past alliances. Shortly after the charter's approval, the Trustees recruited Lutherans recently expelled from Salzburg to emigrate to Georgia.²⁶ The Trustees hoped the religious émigrés could spread their faith in areas threatened by French or Spanish Catholics.

In 1734, under the leadership of Johann Martin Boltzius, the first group of Salzburgers arrived in Georgia and built a settlement called Ebenezer.²⁷ From

²⁵ For an overview of Oglethorpe's relation to the Anglican Church and his desire to bring other religious groups to his colony see, See, Harvey H. Jackson, "Parson and Squire: James Oglethorpe and the Role of the Anglican Church in Georgia, 1733-1736," in *Oglethorpe in Perspective: Georgia's Founder after Two Hundred Years* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1989), 44-65 . Phinizy Spalding compares Oglethorpe's utopian vision akin to the Puritan desire to create an American Zion. See, Phinizy Spalding, "James Edward Oglethorpe's Quest for an American Zion," in *Forty Years of Diversity: Essays on Colonial Georgia*, Harvey H. Jackson & Phinizy Spalding, eds. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), 60-79.

²⁶ Between 1731 and 1732, nearly 20,000 Protestants were expelled from Salzburg. This expulsion marked one of the final stages in the Counterreformation. Although King George II was the head of the Anglican church, his family came from Hanover, and in private life, he was a practicing Lutheran. The British quickly accepted and offered assistance to the exiles from Salzburger. George Fenwick Jones, *The Salzburger Saga: Religious Exiles and Other Germans Along the Savannah* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), 1-9.

²⁷The invitation to the Salzburgers and other foreign Protestants had an explanation beyond the religious and defensive issues mentioned above. At the time of Georgia's founding, many in England felt that constant emigration to the American colonies had a negative impact on domestic population. Because of these feelings, Parliament made it illegal for a colony to lure skilled craftsmen from the country. Thus, most of the English who headed to ventures like Georgia were the poor, criminals, and

the outset, the residents of Ebenezer worked to achieve the Trustees' vision of a perfect colony. Ebenezer's residents came to Georgia believing their settlement would succeed through the establishment of small, home-based industry, small-scale cash crop agriculture that did not require massive plots of land such as wine and silk, and a devout population dedicated to charitable acts.²⁸ In short time, the Salzburgers distinguished themselves as the Trustees' most loyal allies and their town quickly became the colony's first model for success.²⁹ Other religious aspects were included in Georgia's founding.

To better reflect its goals for the colony, the Bray Associates changed its name to "The Trustees for Instructing the British Negroes in the Principles of the Christian Religion, and Establishing a charitable Colony for the better Maintenance of the Poor of this Kingdom, and other good Purposes" shortly after

others at the bottom rungs of society. The Salzburgers fulfilled the colony's need for skilled laborers and the maintenance of frontier or outpost towns while they also represented a social goal of the Trustees. Reese, *Colonial Georgia*, 10-11.

²⁸ Despite the Salzburgers' objections to slavery, the founders of Ebenezer built their town with the assistance of 14 slaves. As soon as the land was cleared, however, the slaves returned to their owner in South Carolina. Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 16.

²⁹ After a few years, however, Ebenezer increasingly isolated itself from the rest of the colony and assumed a financial and political independence from Georgia that seemed to threaten the very experiment the Trustees believed could be realized through the Salzburger's example. The actions of the Salzburgers and the importance of Ebenezer will be discussed in the following chapters. How the Salzburgers drifted from the larger colonial community is explored in Renate Wilson, "Halle and Ebenezer: Pietism, Agriculture, and Commerce in Colonial Georgia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1988). The Moravians also intended to build a settlement in Georgia, but when the Trustees offered land near Ebenezer, the Moravian leader Count Zinzendorf rejected the plan and eventually settled a majority of his people in Pennsylvania. Some Moravians remained in the colony and, like the Salzburgers, many in Georgia felt the group had isolated itself from the rest of the population. See Taylor, *Georgia Plan*, 88. Adelaide L. Fries, *The Moravians in Georgia, 1735-1740* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Print Co., 1905).

the crown approved Georgia's charter.³⁰ The Associates wanted to make sure that potential settlers understood Georgia was supposed to have an enlightened populace, willing to break from societal norms found in other southern colonies. This became evident when Georgia's founder first walked ashore.

In February 1733, Oglethorpe landed on Yamacraw Bluff in present-day Savannah and upon his arrival, met with Tomochichi, the leader of the local Native community. Together the leaders agreed on where the European settlers could live. Despite the royal charter that outlined Georgia's boundaries, Oglethorpe seemed to accept native sovereignty and sought a peaceful coexistence from the outset. By acknowledging the Yamacraw's right to the land, Oglethorpe gained an immediate friend, but more importantly, his recognition of Native land ownership signaled a new type of colonial venture. Georgia effectively began with the idea that colonization could occur without conquest.³¹ At every point of Georgia's founding, Oglethorpe sought a colony unlike others. The economy and morality he insisted the settlers bring to the venture prevented many aggressive tactics. Indeed, much of the Trustees' vision for Georgia required a gentle entry onto the land. Like most colonial ventures, the founders

³⁰ Rodney M. Baine, ed. *Creating Georgia: Minutes of the Bray Associates, 1730-1732* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1995), 15.

³¹ It should also be noted that Oglethorpe didn't come to Georgia in a position to forcibly remove or subjugate the Yamacraw and other native communities. Because neither side could dominate the other through military force, early Georgia truly fits Richard White's model for a "Middle Ground." Others have compared Georgia's early relationships with the local Indian communities in terms of "negotiated relationships" as explained in Ira Berlin's *Many Thousands Gone*. Although Berlin considered the relationships between master and slave, a similar pattern of shared power appears in early Georgia. For the health of their respective societies, Tomochichi and Oglethorpe had to negotiate with each other. For a larger discussion of these negotiated relationships see, Sweet, "Negotiating a Southern Middle Ground," 1-3.

came to the land weak and needing assistance, but early policies that stressed societal enlightenment over the difficult realities of colonization seemed certain to prolong this period of latency.

In March, a month after his arrival, Oglethorpe signed the colony's first administrative act, "An Act for Maintaining the Peace with the Indians in the Province of Georgia."³² The law officially recognized Oglethorpe's gesture a month earlier on Yamacraw Bluff. Oglethorpe understood the danger in alienating the Indian communities near his proposed settlements and wanted to make these sentiments official.³³ Oglethorpe also considered Georgia *his* territory to exploit and partition, despite what the other Trustees wanted done with the colony. Oglethorpe exhibited obedience to his superiors in London, but locally, he assumed control. In letters to authorities in London, Oglethorpe acknowledged the Trustees' rights to the land and recognized their right to set colonial policy. He assured officials that local Indian communities were "not only at amity but desire to be *subject* of the Trustees, to have land given them and to breed their children at our schools."³⁴ On the ground, however, Oglethorpe took charge. If the appropriation of certain lands threatened to disrupt the peace between the colonists and Native Americans, Oglethorpe typically gave in to

³² Louis DeVorsey Jr., "Indian Boundaries in Colonial Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 54 (Spring, 1974): 65.

³³ In the colony's Charter, the Trustees recognized the need to be careful with the Indians considering what had happened in the same region prior to the colony's founding. According to the Trustees, "Our Provinces in North America have been frequently Ravaged by Indian Enemies more Especially that of South Carolina which in the late war by the neighbouring Savages was laid wast [*sic*] with Fire and Sword."

³⁴ Mills Lane, ed. *General Oglethorpe's Georgia: Colonial Letters, 1733-1743 Vol. 1* (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1975), 5.

Indian requests despite the wishes of interests in London. Oglethorpe understood the necessity of ensuring peace. Georgia was a delicate operation and any external threat could easily destroy the colony.

Oglethorpe's gentle approach with the local Indian communities quickly received the approval of South Carolina's government. Residents of South Carolina's backcountry believed Georgia brought additional security to the region. In March 1733, the *South Carolina Gazette* reported French agents were traveling to St. Augustine to entice the "Spanish Indians" to join an attack on British plantations. According to the report, the French would have made it to St. Augustine had Georgia not been in place. Oglethorpe was alerted of these movements and captured the French agents on their way to Florida.³⁵ In May, South Carolina governor Robert Johnson declared Georgia an important tool for South Carolina's security. For decades, the Carolina government wanted settlements south of Charleston for defensive purposes, but refused to directly support the buffer colony. When Oglethorpe arrived, however, the South Carolina government wanted to do everything possible to welcome the newcomer. Before leaving for the Georgia coast, Oglethorpe met with members of the South Carolina Assembly. They liked his plan for Georgia as several officials suggested South Carolina might offer financial assistance for the colony's establishment. Previously, South Carolina accepted almost any plan to colonize south of the Savannah River as long as Carolinians did not have to provide any support for the venture.

³⁵ *South Carolina Gazette*, March 3, 1733.

The potential for Georgia coupled with the Trustees' connection to Parliament caused many in Charleston to change their minds. The South Carolina Commons House of Assembly proposed a "five-shilling-a-head tax on Negroes" to help fund Georgia's settlement. The Upper House, uneasy with the thought of taxing wealthy slave owners, struck a compromise with their counterparts. South Carolina passed a three pence duty on each gallon of imported rum. The government estimated the duty would raise £80000 for Georgia.³⁶ In addition to the financial assistance, South Carolina also provided Georgia's first defenses.

Part of Georgia's charter included a provision that gave South Carolina the responsibility of establishing Georgia's first defenses. Charleston sent some troops to protect the region closest to Florida and to bolster Georgia's western borders, but these forces were not meant to defend the colony from any full-scale invasion. In particular, the South Carolina Assembly provided funds for the construction of defenses near the Upper Creek communities where British interests might be able to solidify their position with Indians who occasionally traded with the French and Spanish.³⁷ South Carolina wanted to help protect its new neighbor, but it also wanted to play a role in developing closer relations with the Creek communities. The cooperation between the two governments

³⁶ Phinizy Spalding, "Georgia and South Carolina During the Oglethorpe Period, 1732-1743," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 1963), 22-24.

³⁷ Specifically, the act entitled "An Act to Provide for the better Security of that Province [Georgia] against the Incursions of the Indian Nations" allowed £8,500 to be raised through additional taxes for a garrison with twenty to thirty soldiers over at least a two-year period. Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection, MS278, Georgia Trustee Papers.

eventually led to difficulties, but in the first months, Georgia needed Carolina's help and Oglethorpe welcomed this assistance. South Carolina's willingness to help Georgia allowed Oglethorpe to concentrate on developing relationships with local and regional Indian communities and devising other strategies to ensure the colony's protection. Frequently, Oglethorpe used the Trustees' utopian ideals to create policies that could also be considered protective strategies.

In the colony's charter, the Trustees declared, "All and every person...who shall at any time inhabit or reside within our province, shall be and hereby are declared to be free, and shall not be subject to be bound to obey any laws, statutes, or constitutions."³⁸ While the passage did not clearly forbid African slavery, it can be inferred that, from the beginning, the Trustees considered slavery improper for the new settlement. The Trustees wanted Georgia's economy to be based on small industry, not forced labor. In addition, the Trustees shied from slavery because of the risk posed by the Spaniards in Florida. If Spain successfully lured enough runaways from Georgia farms, then the Trustees would have to spend considerable energy policing its slaves at the expense of patrolling the southern frontier. When Georgia's first settlers arrived, South Carolina already faced threats of racial unrest as instigated by Spain and its policy of offering refuge to runaway slaves. As Georgia promised to protect the people and economy of South Carolina, the Trustees' vision of a slave-free society seemed an important and even necessary goal.

³⁸ Allen D. Chandler, ed. *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, Vol. 1 (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Archives and History, 1904): 19. Hereafter, items from the colonial records will be cited as *CRSG*.

In March 1733, a set of bylaws established a £15 fine for anyone caught employing any “Negroe or other slave” in the Indian country. Although this statute was passed to maintain peace in the interior, it foreshadowed one of Oglethorpe’s more radical regulations.³⁹ Months later, the founder reported to the Trustees, “I have brought all our people to desire the prohibition of Negroes and rum, which goes much against the grain of the traders in these commodities in this town. But if either of them are allowed, our whole design will be ruined.”⁴⁰

Oglethorpe believed the presence of slavery would make the already vulnerable colony weaker in that controlling a slave population required resources not readily available. With or without slaves, Georgia’s settlers had to contend with Spanish and French threats, as well as the potential volatility of the western Indian communities, but Oglethorpe’s desire to prohibit slavery had another rationale. Slaves, argued Oglethorpe, made whites weak and inefficient workers. Instead of using slaves, Oglethorpe decided to bring white indentured laborers to the colony. By April 1733, the first indentured laborers arrived in Georgia with five and seven year labor contracts.⁴¹ He did not worry about the

³⁹ At the same time, however, African slaves from South Carolina were lent to the first settlers. In Georgia these slaves helped clear land and plot the original townships of Savannah and Ebenezer, so Georgia did enjoy the labor of African slaves from its first days despite the early objections. See Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia, 1730-1775* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), 4. *General Oglethorpe’s Georgia: Colonial Letters*, Vol. 1, 26-27.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* , 15-16.

⁴¹ *CRSG*, Vol.1, 110. Thus, the hope that Georgia might become a land without any form of forced labor came to an end. Although these individuals were free, the Trustees originally hoped to avoid the use of indentured labor by giving the poor land to develop on their own. This was perhaps, the earliest change to plan originally sculpted in London.

morality of holding a person in perpetual bondage, but feared slavery might bring sloth to his colony and expose its settlements to other weaknesses.

Such sentiments appear in the Act of 1735 that officially banned all forms of slavery. Slavery, argued the Trustees, “Exposed the Colonys so settled to the Insurrections Tumults and Rebellions of...slaves and...in the case of a Rupture with any Foreign State who should Encourage and Support such Rebellions might Occasion the utter Ruin and loss of such Colonys.”⁴² Clearly, the Trustees considered the dangers posed by Florida’s offer to protect runaway slaves. Following the act’s passage, the Trustees suggested, “That the admitting of negroes in Georgia would naturally facilitate the desertion of the Carolina negroes through the province of Georgia, and consequently this colony, instead of proving a frontier and adding strength to the province of South Carolina, would be a means of drawing off the slaves of Carolina and adding thereby a strength to St. Augustine.”⁴³ Georgia intended to maintain peace within its borders while protecting the interests of South Carolina.

This ban on slavery was not a humanitarian gesture since the act included provisions for the return of fugitive slaves. Any “Black Negroe or Negroes” found within the colony were to be captured, moved to Savannah until the owner could be contacted, and returned.⁴⁴ The Trustees knew the Spaniards provided a tangible threat to their colony, and slavery was simply not worth the risk.

⁴² *CRSG*, Vol.1, 50.

⁴³ Taylor, *Georgia Plan*, 25. *Georgia Historical Society Collections*, Vol. II, 281.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

By prohibiting slavery, planters in South Carolina had an additional layer of protection between their plantations and the Spaniards in Florida. Prior to the codification of the ban, Oglethorpe considered how South Carolina would benefit from a slave-free neighbor. In a letter he wrote before the ban was enacted, Oglethorpe wrote, “we raise the envy of the people of Carolina...we serve them for a bulwark against the Indians, a curb to their Negroes, [and] raise the price of their markets and the value of their lands.”⁴⁵ Now, with Georgia in place, potential runaways had to cross a more densely populated region to find refuge in Florida. While South Carolina did not ask the Trustees to prohibit slavery, it certainly understood the advantages to such a law. Others thought the policy doomed the new colony.

Samuel Eveleigh, who later became Oglethorpe’s unofficial economic adviser, claimed the colony needed slavery. He understood the desire to prohibit forced labor and suggested that instead of an outright ban, the Trustees limit slave ownership to two slaves per family.⁴⁶ Despite the early objection, the Trustees remained committed to the ban. The guiding principles for Georgia’s founding centered on security and creating an enlightened social health and slavery violated or challenged each of these principles. Slavery was not the only vice believed to threaten the initial success of the colony. With the ban on slavery, the Trustees also outlawed the manufacture, use, consumption, and trade

⁴⁵ *Oglethorpe’s Letters*, Vol. 1, 67.

⁴⁶ *CRSG* Vol. 27, 121-124. Betty Wood, “‘The One Thing Needful’: The Slavery Debate in Georgia, 1732-1750,” (Ph.D. dissertation University of Pennsylvania, 1975), 64.

of rum; a prohibition that immediately caused tension between the governments of Georgia and South Carolina.⁴⁷

On the surface, banning the use of rum seemed an odd, yet logical extension of the Trustees' vision for their utopian colony. The ban on rum only partly came from the Trustees' desire to attract a particular type of citizen. In actuality, the rum prohibition considered alcohol's impact on the welfare of and trading potential with neighboring Indian communities. In other colonies, the uncontrolled trade of rum caused great problems between Indians and colonists and the Trustees did not want this tradition continued in Georgia. In a report to the Board of Trade, the Trustees explained how the "pernicious effects of drinking Rum and other Spirituous Liquors... creat[ed] disorders among the Indians (who had been plentifully supplied with it by the Traders)."⁴⁸

The ban on liquor centered on rum. The Trustees allowed the consumption, distillation, and sale of strong ales, ciders, and Madeira wine. Still, the disapproval of rum created an immediate chasm between the Trustees and South Carolina's Indian traders. Traders in the north, who now operated within Georgia's boundaries, had long traded with rum.⁴⁹ By disallowing the commodity used to procure deerskins, South Carolina's new "bulwark" seemed determined to bite the hand that fed it. After all, South Carolina raised money for Georgia

⁴⁷ *CRSG* Vol. 1, 44. The original law provided a £5 fine for the first offense and a £50 fine for the second.

⁴⁸ CO 5/711- Account on the Progress of Georgia from the Board of Trade and Secretary of State, *f.* 11.

⁴⁹ Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Revolutionary Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 48-50.

through a tax on imported spirits. Despite mounting criticisms, Oglethorpe did not bow to the protests of Carolina's Indian traders. Instead, he pointed to the past dangers exposed in trading skins for rum. In particular, Oglethorpe believed the Yamasee War erupted after rum entered the Cherokee territories.⁵⁰ While South Carolina protested Georgia's policies, Oglethorpe received praise from Indian elders.

By banning rum, many Indian leaders believed Oglethorpe sincerely cared for their welfare. The Cherokee, who later became an important ally for the young colony, remarked that before the founding of Georgia, Carolina traders had "destroyed" the Cherokee by introducing hard spirits to the culture. When Oglethorpe met with the Cherokee, he was told that Georgia's founders "did not give them Toys nor unwholesome liquor, but gave them Wisdom and Justice." The Cherokee called the Trustees, "the Preservers of their Nations," and referred to the "South Carolina Traders, the Destroyers of it."⁵¹ Shortly after the Trustees announced the prohibition of rum, another Indian policy threatened to further deteriorate the cooperation between Georgia and South Carolina.

In its first set of laws, Georgia also established a licensing system to regulate the Indian trade. Because numerous Lower Creek, Cherokee, and other communities lived within the boundaries of Georgia, the young colony could consider the trade with these groups its earliest natural resource. Not only did the Indian trade promise to make many wealthy and contribute to Georgia's

⁵⁰ Debt, not rum led to the conflict known as the Yamasee War, but Oglethorpe understood rum served as a backcountry currency and he properly identified liquor as a potential flashpoint. Steele, *Warpaths*, 165.

⁵¹ Taylor, *Georgia Plan*, 29. *CRSG*, Vol.22, pt. 2, 247-248.

economic health, but a trade that respected the rights and needs of the Native communities might also provide a layer of security. Anyone who wanted to trade with Indian communities inside Georgia had to purchase a license in Savannah. Anyone caught trading without a license had their possessions confiscated by an appointed Indian agent and received a £100 fine.⁵² In addition, the Trustees established the office of an Indian Agent to ensure the security and honesty of dealings in the Indian communities.

By creating a license to trade within the colony, the Trustees attempted to establish an acceptable border. In part, the trading license stated that anyone doing business within a particular area was subject to the laws and regulations of the Georgia Trustees. Obviously, South Carolina would acknowledge the boundaries before France and Spain, but Carolina's initial reluctance pointed to the future difficulties in defining the limits of Georgia. Immediately following the publication of these regulations, traders from South Carolina protested.

Before Georgia, many traders from South Carolina conducted business south of the Savannah River. Not only did northern traders have to pay, but permits could only be purchased in Savannah. Thus, a trader from North Carolina who typically dealt with Cherokee communities, now had to travel hundreds of miles to obtain the proper permit. The restrictive licensing system and the prohibition on rum led many Carolinians to accuse Georgia of creating artificial impediments to South Carolina's growth. South Carolina based many of

⁵² *CRSG*, Vol. 1, 31.

its objections on historic precedent that it helped set.⁵³ Charleston complained about these policies, but the crown refused to force the Trustees to alter their laws. Perhaps officials in London understood the need for Georgia to be able to define its limits and police activity within these lines.

Despite the king's inaction, South Carolina continued to protest regulations that harmed its traders. Oglethorpe understood the need to appease the Charleston government and later agreed to make certain exceptions for Carolina's traders as long as they helped keep rum out of the backcountry. Because Oglethorpe wanted Georgia's Indian traders to operate without using distilled spirits, he also risked opening his frontier to additional meddling by the French. When the Trustees removed rum from the barter, it gave the French a potential opening with communities otherwise allied with the English. In order to prevent an influx of foreign traders, Oglethorpe ordered the construction of forts in and near Indian communities along Georgia's western edge.

To police Georgia's western periphery, the Trustees hired Patrick Mackay, an officer in the South Carolina militia, to build the first fort on Georgia's western limits. The Trustees hired Mackay to maintain the peace and assume the role of Indian Agent. Mackay's distance from a higher authority caused trouble early in his tenure and by October 1735, the Trustees fired their first agent. According to reports sent to London, Mackay encouraged the Creeks to attack the Spaniards

⁵³ In 1711, South Carolina had passed a similar law regulating trade with Indians who lived within its boundaries. Then, agents from South Carolina seized property that belonged to Virginian traders who, they claimed, violated local Indian regulations. At the time, Queen Anne sided with the Virginians and nullified the South Carolina statute. Spalding, "Georgia and South Carolina During the Oglethorpe Period, 1732-1743," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1963), 83.

operating in the area, and the people he brought from South Carolina to man the fortifications declared they would no longer work for a “person so obnoxious.”⁵⁴ Georgia removed Mackay because the Trustees feared his actions had the potential to cause a “Rupture with the French and Spaniards.”⁵⁵ The rationale for their decision underscored the dangers the Trustees had to consider. Unusual policies regarding slaves, the consumption of alcohol, and other aspects of Georgia society often came because of the colony’s vulnerabilities in the larger geopolitical contest for power. Despite these precautions other dangers could not be avoided.

In June 1735, Tomochichi reported an attack on an encampment near the Altamaha River. According to the leader of the Yamacraw, Yamasee invaders crept into the unsuspecting camp and killed seven of Tomochichi’s warriors. Although the Yamasee attacked, Georgia authorities saw a Spanish plot. Officials in Georgia had no doubt that the Spaniards ordered these attacks as retribution for Mackay’s actions weeks earlier, and feared further incursions. In a letter to the Trustees, Thomas Causton claimed the fear of Spanish aggression had started to spread throughout the colony.⁵⁶ To ensure peace, treaties had to be signed and defenses constructed.

When Georgia banned rum to keep its corrupting influences out of the Indian trade, other parties found a potential opening with the Natives in British

⁵⁴ *CRSG*, Vol. 29, 110-111.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Lane, ed., *General Oglethorpe’s Georgia, Colonial Letters 1733-1743*, 192-198. Causton to the Trustees, June 20, 1735.

territory. If Georgia would not supply the Creek communities, others would; Oglethorpe and others understood this and ordered additional defenses constructed near Indian communities. As competition for Indian allegiances became more pronounced, certain Native communities assumed the role of human buffer zones on the shrinking frontier. The Spanish had an alliance with the Yamasee, but to improve their position in northern Florida, Spaniards had to make inroads with the Cherokee and Creeks.⁵⁷ Despite, or because of St. Augustine's poverty, Oglethorpe sought the expansion of Georgia's boundaries and defensive outposts through Indian alliances. Oglethorpe acknowledged the dangers posed by the French and Spaniards, but he also understood that without Native allies, other Native communities could threaten Georgia as much as the colony's European neighbors.⁵⁸

To bolster Georgia's territorial integrity and protect its outlying settlements, Oglethorpe scouted locations to build defenses on the colony's periphery.⁵⁹ In the spring of 1736, Oglethorpe led a series of reconnaissance missions along the

⁵⁷ In July, 1736 members of a Lower Creek Community claimed Spanish traders told them that Oglethorpe would one day visit their towns, not to trade, but to "cut off their heads." *The Journal of the Earl of Egmont*, 175.

⁵⁸ In March 1735 officials uncovered a conspiracy known as the "Red String Plot." Although solid evidence never emerged, the plan was thought that have involved Tomochichi, his Yamacraw warriors, and up to forty white residents. The conspirators wanted to overthrow the Trustee government. Not only does this mark one of the earliest Indian conspiracies against the Georgia government, but it represents the first suggestion of internal dissension. Sweet, "Negotiating a Southeastern Middle Ground," 110.

⁵⁹ After the colony's first year, nearly half of Georgia's population lived in small settlements that doubled as garrisons. Although the colony showed promise the first goal of settlement seemed to focus on Georgia's defensive needs. Jackson, "Parson and Squire: James Oglethorpe and the Role of the Anglican Church in Georgia, 1733-1736," 51.

Georgia coast. On this journey he visited Jekyll Island, explored and named Cumberland Island, “and discover’d another fine Island...to which he gave the name Amelia, in memory of her Highness the Princess.”⁶⁰ These explorations coincided with the territorial expansion of Georgia. Around the time of Oglethorpe’s explorations, Scottish Highlanders founded the town Darien on the Altamaha River, Georgia’s southern boundary.⁶¹ Approximately seventeen miles east of Darien, Oglethorpe established a settlement and defensive fortifications on Frederica Island.

In the summer of 1735, the Georgia government established a new county on Frederica.⁶² The colony’s new edition happened to be located beyond the boundaries described in Georgia’s charter; in the eyes of Spanish officials, Frederica happened to be in Florida. Granted, Spain claimed most of Georgia within the limits of Florida, but because Frederica violated the British charter, this seemed particularly troubling to authorities in St. Augustine. By the following spring, Oglethorpe continued his drive southward and, without Trustee approval, ordered the construction of a fort on Cumberland Island.⁶³ With each passing month, Oglethorpe and others continued a slow march southward. The

⁶⁰ McPherson, ed., *The Journal of The Earl of Egmont*, 147.

⁶¹ Taylor, *Georgia Plan*, 78.

⁶² McPherson, ed., *The Journal of The Earl of Egmont*, 102.

⁶³ Oglethorpe planned the fort in 1737, but serious construction did not begin until 1739. The fort, called Fort William, instantly became a point of protest for the Spaniards. William Ramsey, “The Final Contest for ‘Debatable Land’: Fort William and the Frontier Defenses of Colonial Georgia,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 77 (Fall, 1993): 499.

closer the English came to Florida's settlements, the louder the Spaniards complained.

By attempting to settle and defend points south of Georgia's original boundaries, Oglethorpe tested the patience of his superiors in London and more importantly, Spain's desire to preserve the borders of Florida. Although legal according to the charter, Darien promised to cause trouble for other Georgians as the outpost was isolated from other communities, thus making it difficult to defend. Beyond the concern over Darien, Oglethorpe's determination to settle Frederica nearly caused a war with the Spaniards before the colony's fourth anniversary. A chain of events caused by the actions on Frederica marked the beginning of a long conflict for control for Georgia and the Southeast.

Less than a year after Oglethorpe surveyed the coastal island, the Trustees ordered the cessation of activities on Frederica. The committee instructed Oglethorpe to move any residents from the island to Savannah or elsewhere north of the Altamaha River. According to the Trustees, Frederica could not be supported because of financial limitations, not geopolitical difficulties.⁶⁴ London likely used this as an easy excuse to quell the obvious dangers in the plans for Frederica. It does not appear that the Trustees or the Board of Trade ever considered Frederica a legitimate part of Georgia. Yet, the Board of Trade published a report in 1736 that acknowledged a need for settlements on the southern edge of the colony. London noted the founding of Darien and approved

⁶⁴ *The Journal of the Earl of Egmont*, 144.

the legal expansion. However, shortly afterwards, the Trustees expressed doubts about the southern settlement.

In June, Walter Augustine, a Darien resident, announced plans for a road to connect the distant outpost to Savannah.⁶⁵ At a distance of over forty miles, it is unlikely Augustine could have completed the project, but news of the plan caused concern from Savannah to London. Although Darien seemed to promise a much needed presence on the colony's southern boundary, some worried it was too close to the Spaniards and beyond what the Trustees could accept as Georgia's southern boundary. Furthermore, a road or cleared path to Savannah "would expose the Settlements on the Savanah [*sic*] to any insults from the Spaniards at St. Augustine, who may be induced to make an attack when passage is laid open for them."⁶⁶ With this in mind, the Trustees told Oglethorpe to put an end to the project, effectively ordering Darien's isolation. The separation almost immediately caused the town's residents to assume a siege mentality.

Most of Darien's residents paid their own passage to Georgia and marked a break from the charity the Trustees intended to dispense. From the moment of their arrival, many suspected the motives of the new settlers. Scottish nationalists had dreamt of an independent colony in the Americas since the seventeenth century. The various plans for the colony known as Darien, called for a settlement independent of England. Certainly some in Georgia must have wondered if Georgia's Darien came from this long-standing dream. In an

⁶⁵ *CRSG*, Vol. 29, 138.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 138.

anonymous letter to the Trustees, a colonist claimed the Highlanders purposely intended to settle near the Spaniards, presumably to provoke an attack.⁶⁷ Their backers in South Carolina urged the newcomers to reconsider Darien's location. The Scotsmen replied that if the Spaniards caused trouble, "they would drive them out of their fort."⁶⁸ Later that summer, a visitor to Darien remarked, "the Highlanders were all under arms on the sight of a boat, and made a very manly appearance with their plaids, broad swords, targets, and fire arms."⁶⁹ Within a year, some of the Highlanders led a group of disgruntled colonists known as Georgia's Malcontents. Before Darien's complaints, however, the Trustees attempted to distance themselves from southern settlements that had the potential to stoke the ire of Spanish authorities in Florida. In 1737, the Board of Trade's population figures explicitly excluded those "living on Tybee...Fort Argyll...Amelia" and Frederica.⁷⁰ The decision to ignore or discourage settlement seemed prudent, but locally, would-be settlers had other ideas and called for the expansion of Georgia's accepted boundary.

Georgia's charter clearly declared the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers as the northern and southern borders. Perhaps to make their intentions clear, the Trustees placed the two rivers on the colony's original seal. Oglethorpe and other wanted to cross the southern boundary, but the Trustees refused to allow the

⁶⁷ Like others, the Highlanders believed not only could they drive the Spaniards from the area if they attacked, but they could use the invasion of Georgia as an excuse to march onto St. Augustine, conquer Florida, and gain more land.

⁶⁸ *General Oglethorpe's Georgia*, 235-236.

⁶⁹ Taylor, *Georgia Plan*, 79.

⁷⁰ CO 5/711 June 9, 1737-June 9, 1738, f. 16.

potentially dangerous growth into northern Florida. When Oglethorpe left for London later that year, he took the complaints of settlers hoping to move south of the Altamaha River.

Arriving in London, Oglethorpe met with Prime Minister Robert Walpole to discuss strategies for defending Georgia. Oglethorpe wanted a standing army of regular troops instead of a temporary militia used in times of war.⁷¹ For his suggestions Walpole named Oglethorpe the commander of British forces in South Carolina and Georgia. At the same time, Walpole asked Oglethorpe to become governor of South Carolina, a request he declined.⁷² In the spring of 1737, Oglethorpe had consolidated his power and did not need South Carolina. As the founding Trustee and now commander-in-chief, Oglethorpe could concentrate on strengthening his colony. If he wanted to implement his version of a perfect society, he first had to ensure the security of his residents, something that promised to be difficult. Oglethorpe considered France the greatest potential to threaten the colony.⁷³ The French had the potential to expand their existing

⁷¹ John Pitts Corry, "Indian Affairs in Georgia, 1732-1756," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1936), 68.

⁷² When Oglethorpe met Walpole, the usually pacific Prime Minister had entered an era of political uncertainty. In 1734, Walpole barely survived Parliamentary elections, and as William Pitt became the rising political star, Walpole had to allow a more aggressive stance towards England's enemies. The Duke of Newcastle, always powerful and influential, started to side with Pitt. According to Pitt, "when trade is at stake it is your last retrenchment, you must defend it, or perish." Spain had long caused difficulties for the British colonies, but as piracy increased its threat seemed greater than ever. When Oglethorpe returned, Walpole had to take Pitt's advice and Newcastle was prepared to guide Georgia and other colonies in Pitt's direction. Oglethorpe arrived as London changed.

⁷³ In 1734, Oglethorpe reported to his superiors, "The French are much to be apprehended from the westward, and several soldiers pretending themselves to be deserters, whom I take for spies, have come into Carolina." *Letters of Oglethorpe*, Vol. 1, 41.

Indian alliances and use Indian armies to bolster their forces should they decide to invade Georgia. At the very least, the French posed a viable threat in regards to the Indian trade. Despite fears of French meddling, St. Augustine was closer and provided an immediate and visible threat. Although most English did not believe the Spaniards could conquer Georgia, they realized Florida, with the assistance of ships and soldiers from Cuba, could do significant damage and had to be taken seriously.

Florida had long complained of English activities on the southern frontier and when the English announced the formation of Georgia, Spain vociferously protested what it saw as a breach of its borders. Spain considered the lands south of Charleston to be a part of Florida, but the English did not recognize Spain's territorial claims. England found legitimacy for Georgia's presence in several areas of law and practice. Officials in Europe had already pointed to legal precedent for territorial ownership prior to Spain's objections and these declarations continued throughout much of Georgia's formative years. Arguments over treaties and historical rights to land were typically made in European courts. While European nations complained about the activities in North America, action in the colonies frequently began before European authorities crafted official policies. Delegates representing the English and Spanish met in European courts in hopes of finding a peaceful solution, but as these talks began, the colonists for both governments decided they could wait no longer.

Florida felt aggrieved and when Georgia appeared within what it considered its borders, St. Augustine increased its campaign to destabilize British colonies

across the region. As before, St. Augustine properly identified slavery as the greatest weakness in Britain's southern colonies. While the first settlers began arriving in Georgia, the Spanish thought South Carolina seemed increasingly vulnerable to racial unrest. In the early 1730s, Florida did everything it could to thwart English efforts in Georgia. By the end of 1733, Georgia's first year as a viable colony, the Spanish government ordered all escaped English slaves to be freed and treated as Spanish citizens.⁷⁴ Policies implemented in St. Augustine often seemed to come in reaction to British activities.

In the spring of 1733, British agents captured two Spanish spies traveling through Georgia. The *South Carolina Gazette* claimed the spies were captured in stolen canoes.⁷⁵ Spies who had to steal canoes to allude capture did not seem a direct threat to the safety of Charlestonians, but the newspaper report highlighted the increased concerns in South Carolina of Spanish activities within their borders. The English already feared the activities of the Spaniards, but other events in the region caused great fear for the founders of Georgia as well as the South Carolina government. In December of the same year, more troubling news appeared in Charleston. According to John Davis, captain of the sloop *Albany*, "the negroes on the Island St. John near St. Thomas, had entirely massacred all the white people of that island, consisting of about 200 families, and were very inhuman in the Execution of their Murders." British forces were sent to the island to subdue the rebellion, but the slaves, who had already fortified their

⁷⁴ AGI 58-1-24, Royal Cedula, October 29, 1733.

⁷⁵ *South Carolina Gazette*, April 7-17, 1732.

positions, defeated the Europeans.⁷⁶ Although far removed, events in the Caribbean seemed possible in South Carolina.

Throughout the first half of 1734, the *South Carolina Gazette* included numerous reports of slave unrest, runaways, petty theft, and in one case, a slave wandering the streets of Charleston armed with a musket. Authorities urged, and eventually required slave owners to assume greater control over their slaves.⁷⁷ St. Augustine seemed willing to do anything to foster rebellion in South Carolina and the people of Charleston did not want a repeat of what happened on St. Johns.

By the fall of Georgia's first year, King Phillip V of Spain approved royal edicts that granted freedom to all runaway slaves who converted to Catholicism and served a four-year term as a public servant in St. Augustine. In addition, the King ordered the government in St. Augustine to suspend any compensation the Florida treasury had previously sent the slaves' former owners.⁷⁸ Although the new edicts called for the fugitive slaves to serve the Spanish state for four years, these runaways essentially gained their freedom when they arrived in Florida.⁷⁹ With Georgia in place, Florida's size shrank, but by creating such divisive policies, its power seemed to increase.

⁷⁶ *South Carolina Gazette*, February 23-March 2, 1734.

⁷⁷ In March, South Carolina's governor publicly chastised slave owners for hiring out their slaves for weekend work. The governor claimed that contracting slave labor was not only illegal, but contributed to "idleness, drunkenness, and other enormities." *South Carolina Gazette*, March 30, 1734.

⁷⁸ AGI 58-1-31, Council of the Indies, October 4 -29, 1733.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

St. Augustine wanted Georgia destroyed and it did not wait for official instructions from Europe to begin plotting the removal of the new neighbor. Not only did the Spaniards in Florida feel threatened by the new colony, but the French, who had long considered settling the land between the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers, also considered Georgia a potential danger to their settlements and outposts in Louisiana. England rarely thought Spain or France posed immediate danger to its colonies on the East Coast, but when the two nations worked together, the vulnerabilities in maintaining Georgia and other colonies in the Southeast seemed great and constant. France used its alliances with Indian communities on Georgia's western periphery, and Spain continued to make itself menacing by inviting runaway slaves from Carolina. Together, these plans provided Georgia's founders with an abundance of uncertainty through the colony's first decades.

During the 1730s, ships doing business in Georgia or South Carolina constantly had to contend with the threats of Spanish piracy. Spain's *guarda costa* patrolled the Atlantic to police and prevent British or other traders from carrying Spanish contraband. Spain defined anything from its colonies transported on a foreign vessel illegal. This frequently led to seizures, violence, and other incidents that had to be settled in Europe's royal courts.⁸⁰ As acts of piracy increased in the mid-1730s, South Carolina's traders started to feel the effects of Spain's undeclared war. Pirates and privateers seized more ships and insurance rates increased. Unfortunately for the exporters, the rates increased

⁸⁰ For the breadth and consequences of the widespread piracy see, Lanning, *A Diplomatic History of Georgia*.

just as the price of rice fell.⁸¹ Georgia could protect South Carolina from dangers on the land, but there was little it could do to protect the Carolina coast. Piracy threatened commerce and its frequency caused considerable concern. However, Georgia's greatest fears came from the countless conspiracies that crossed the land and sea in official correspondence and from the volunteered testimonies by participants in these plots.

By the 1730s, Britain controlled most of North America, but France and Spain saw the potential to take these colonies through force. Although the English enjoyed a larger military than its adversaries, the nature of the frontier allowed for suspect plots to seem logical and potentially damaging to the stability of a particular colony, if not an entire region.

Most colonies found their earliest years the most difficult Georgia too did not escape the usual hardships. And yet, despite the constant state of external turmoil, the Trustees considered the colony's first years successful. Spain provided Georgians many reasons to fear for the colony's safety, but aside from worrying South Carolina's slave owners and harassing British ships, Georgia seemed safe. By 1737, however, certain colonists challenged the illusory feelings of safety. Malcontents in Georgia threatened to cause war with the Spaniards; poor Indian deals tested the peace in the backcountry, and even matters of diplomacy had the potential to devastate the colony.

At best, Georgia seemed a weak colony with an uncertain future and at worse, a hopeless backwater that could collapse at any moment, taking with it

⁸¹ Chestnut, "South Carolina's Expansion into Colonial Georgia," 34.

other English settlements. From Florida, the Spaniards sent parties to raid Georgia's farms and generally created a hostile environment for the first settlers. An additional danger came through Florida's policy of providing refuge to runaway slaves. Georgia eliminated this threat by forbidding slavery within its borders, but slaves in South Carolina continued to escape and head south for Florida. The runaways that passed through Georgia invariably became Georgia's problem. From the west, Georgia felt the desires, plots, and disturbances of the French. France did not make a historical claim to the land, but saw an opening for expansion and planned to exploit Georgia's weaknesses. If necessary, the French could even depend on Canadian forces to assist in the overthrow of the young colony.

France and Spain believed Georgia represented a back door to England's North America. Spain simply wanted Georgia dismantled as it represented the further erosion of Florida's borders. France thought Georgia represented something more. The French believed if Georgia fell, then their armies could possibly overthrow South Carolina and work their way northward. Why France decided Georgia held the key to the security of all the British colonies in the Southeast is not clear. Consequently, the French started plotting the destruction of Georgia by 1736. Some believed that once they accomplished this first mission, the rest of the British settlements would quickly fall.⁸²

⁸² In an earlier report, the Trustees claimed one of their primary missions in Georgia was to stop French efforts to gain an alliance with the Upper and Lower Creeks. In 1734, the Trustees claimed the French had plans to build a series of fortifications inside or near the various Creek communities, a plan that seemed on the verge of reality two years later. If this were to happen, the Trustees warned, the French could "invade your Majesty's Province of Carolina." *CRSG*, Vol. 32, 125. Benjamin Martyn, August 21, 1734.

Georgia's founders took the outside threats seriously. After the colony's second year, they also encountered internal dissension that threatened the general security. As early as 1735, some colonists suggested the Georgia plan was destined to fail and urged the people to consider abandoning the colony.⁸³ The location of the Darien settlement carried obvious risks. From this distant outpost came a group known as the Malcontents. As their name suggests, these citizens fought almost every policy instituted by the Trustees. In particular, the Malcontents and others complained of the Trustees' vision for the future. Those upset with the Georgia plan felt the prohibition on slavery, instead of protecting the colony, only ensured its continued weakness. According to the disaffected minority, Georgia could only survive with a strong economy and the Malcontents did not subscribe to the Trustees' vision of small-scale agriculture and industry. The Trustees disagreed and allowed the slavery prohibition to stand, but the protests came just as other weaknesses surfaced.

As certain settlers protested the policies of the Georgia government, Oglethorpe faced complaints from South Carolina. South Carolina's Indian traders complained about Georgia's ban on rum and its prohibitive licensing system for trading with the Indian communities. South Carolina felt particular frustration with the Trustees as South Carolinians had paid part of Georgia's early subsidy through local taxes. Oglethorpe was careful not to alienate his closest and most important ally during these early struggles. In the backcountry, Indians constantly threatened to shift their allegiance with the Trustees to

⁸³ Trevor R. Reese, ed. *The Clamorous Malcontents: Criticisms and Defenses of the Colony of Georgia* (Savannah, The Beehive Press, 1973), vii.

another European power, causing great concern in Georgia. The English may have created the colony to fill the frontier and provide the region with an additional layer of security; but, during its early years, Georgia had to face challenges that seemed unique even to the frontier. If Georgia failed, Britain's other colonies would only weaken.

In June 1735, a Georgia settler named John Savy left the colony on a brigantine called *Two Brothers*. This happened to be the first vessel to leave Georgia carrying domestically produced trade goods. Its departure was an important event for the settlers of the new colony.⁸⁴ Georgia's first exports symbolized its first economic achievement and encouraged those weary of the colony's prospects. Savy boarded the boat as a passenger and likely kept to himself on the journey for he had just left his wife, and had no intention of returning. After living in Georgia for only a year, he determined wealth and status could not be attained in the new colony. Despite the promises of the Trustees, success did not come to Savy as he had expected.

Before he moved to Georgia, Savy lived in Charleston and married well, taking Captain Daniel Greene's daughter as his spouse. Although a member of Charleston society and an officer in the South Carolina militia, Savy could not maintain his upgraded status. Poor business decisions forced him to default on numerous loans. Captain Greene was either unwilling or unable to provide financial support to his son-in-law for Savy and his bride left Charleston for Georgia possibly in 1734.

⁸⁴ This also appears to be the ship Oglethorpe took back to England for meetings with Parliament, the Trustees, and other officials.

In August, *Two Brothers* stopped in Dieppe, France, a small port on the English Channel. Savy disembarked at Dieppe and told the captain he intended to travel to Paris where he hoped to find employment. Paris proved no more inviting than Georgia and finding himself destitute again, Savy sought another route to riches. When he reappeared a year later in Spain, the quiet traveler shocked everyone. Savy's story ultimately shook London's colonial establishment to its core, and nearly brought his nation to war.⁸⁵ When he finally emerged from his anonymous sojourn, the unhappy traveler proved himself the greatest threat to the colony he fled.

⁸⁵ SP 94/127. This volume of State Papers does not contain folio numbers, but the initial reports of John Savy's activities in Cuba appear in letters dated, April 8 and 22, 1737. Information on Savy from the testimony of the captain of *Two Brothers* is found at T 64/276A/269, British Public Records Office, Kew, England. In *The Diplomatic History of Georgia*, John Tate Lanning, claims that Savy *escaped* from the *Two Brothers* and only after "an agreement" was he allowed to leave the ship and board a fishing vessel headed into the port of Dieppe. This is possible, but the unusual circumstances of Savy's departure at Dieppe is not mentioned in Captain William Thompson's testimony. For the different version of events see, Lanning, *The Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 55; Aileen Moore Topping, "'A Free Facetious Gentleman,' Jean Savy, Double Agent?," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 56 (January, 1978) : 261-279. In each version of events, the authors provide conflicting details of the Savy affair and this lies at the heart of the story. Future references to Savy's activities will consider previously published pieces and where evidence or aspects of the tale conflict with the different secondary sources, it will be noted, but primarily this work will focus on sources found at the British Public Library, Public Records Office, and the Archive of the Indies. Savy's tale, as interesting as it becomes, should be read as the product of the far flung rumors that often plagued colonial governments. Here, one must acknowledge the difficulties in relying on the accuracy of certain tales. In an era where transoceanic communications caused enormous delays in implementing policy or reacting to the affronts of others, and the language used often distorted realities for the purpose of gaining attention, favor, or support for a particular project, the John Savy incident provides an excellent example of how rumor often became fact through distortions. Although the facts may be lost in the hyperbole used by the actors in this story, the results and fear caused by these events were real.

CHAPTER 5
PIRACY AND POLITICS:
GEORGIA IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD

In January 1730, officials of the Spanish Coast Guard boarded the English vessel *Loyal George* as it sailed from South Carolina to Jamaica. The Spaniards boarded the ship, demanded access to its cargo, and accused the English captain of carrying Spanish contraband. Out of the confusion came violence and a Spaniard killed an English sailor by slicing his stomach from end to end. Shortly after this incident, a Spanish pirate named Augustino Blanco stopped an English sloop headed to Barbados. Blanco found few valuables, but took an interest in several of the ship's female passengers. After searching the boat and harassing its crew, Blanco forced the women to strip and beat them until they collapsed. By the time Blanco had finished, two of the four women lay dead.¹

These episodes foreshadowed a similar attack with far more serious international ramifications. In July 1731 *Rebecca*, an English ship, arrived on the Thames carrying sugar and other goods from Jamaica. *Rebecca* left the Caribbean island on March 23 only to be stopped and boarded off the coast of Havana seventeen days later. According to the ship's captain, Robert Jenkins, fifty Spaniards boarded the ship in search of "money, logwood, hides, or tallow," that came from Spanish colonies.² The Spaniards forced the crew's "hands to be

¹ SP 94/105, January, 1730.

² SP 94/101.

tied, and seized them to the Foremast. They then violently beat [Jenkins's] Mulatto Servant." After the servant refused to implicate Jenkins in carrying contraband, the Spaniards tortured the boy to death while Jenkins was repeatedly hoisted up the ship's mast by a rope tied around his neck. As Jenkins lay on the ground next to the body of the dead servant, Juan de León Fandino, captain of the *guarda costa* that stopped the *Rebecca*, grabbed Jenkins, "took hold of his left ear and slit it down with his cutlass and another of his gang tore it off and ordered him to be scalped." Because Jenkins had a closely shaved head, he managed to save his scalp, but did not avoid further torture.³

According to witnesses, León handed Jenkins his ear and declared, "take this . . . to your king and tell him if he were here I would do the same to him."⁴ Although Jenkins omitted the information from his deposition, León removed gold and other contraband found in *Rebecca's* hull. The Spaniards had, it turns out, caught Jenkins with illegal goods. When word of this incident reached London, the Duke of Newcastle ordered his agents in Spain to "lay this whole case before the Spanish Ministers, and make the strongest Instances that immediate satisfaction and reparation be given these unfortunate Sufferers, and exemplary Punishment inflicted upon the Persons that were concerned in this cruel and barbarous Act."⁵ Despite the outrage these incidents caused, they occurred during a rare truce between England and Spain.

³ *Ibid.* The above quotes are taken from Robert Jenkins' deposition given in London in July, 1731.

⁴ Lanning, *The Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 176.

⁵ SP 94/101, June 18, 1731. Newcastle to Spain.

In a single letter, Newcastle instructed his agents to demand justice for Jenkins' attacker, the Secretary of State commented to Benjamin Keene, England's ambassador to Spain, about "the happy Renewal of Friendship between the Two Crowns."⁶ It is hard to imagine that, after this series of attacks, the peace was little more than a classification of diplomacy. Eight years after the attack on Robert Jenkins, England declared war on Spain and oddly enough, the sailor's ear played an important role in the declaration.

If England and Spain assumed postures of peace in Europe, expressed fears and hostile actions in North America suggested otherwise. Although tensions between Spain and England had existed for centuries, by 1730 issues in North America and the Caribbean increasingly became matters of vital importance to Europe's royal courts. A nation's security and economic stability depended on activities in distant colonies and disruptions caused by belligerent nations required action. Although Oglethorpe faced and dealt with the most direct challenges from the Spaniards and others, actions in Europe had the potential to determine Georgia's fate. Georgia became the southern focal point of intense, transatlantic imperial competition.

The Trustees controlled the basic operations in Georgia, wrote its laws, and hoped to reap its profits, but England needed this colony to succeed for other reasons. Thus, Parliament exerted some control over Georgia. Georgia not only completed England's expansion on the southern Atlantic Coast, but the colony promised to protect the profits and economy of South Carolina. After South

⁶ SP 94/101, July 26, 1731. Newcastle to Benjamin Keene.

Carolina came under royal control in 1729, the English crown stood to gain tremendous wealth from the colony's bounty. To realize this fortune, England had to ensure its safety, scarcely an easy task.⁷

Prior to Georgia's founding, relations between England, Spain, and France seemed perpetually strained over colonial claims in North America. Even when the three nations were technically at peace, they often acted as adversaries. Georgia promised to fill a gap on the North American map, but simply marking boundaries and calling the land between these lines a British colony would not guarantee the venture's success or safety.

Spain had historical ties to the land, but England's activities in North America had long since challenged the legitimacy of such claims. Indeed, by founding South Carolina and declaring that its southern border extended near present-day Cape Canaveral, Florida, the British had no intentions of respecting Spain's initial claims on North America. While Georgia's first settlers prepared to defend their colony from the French and Spanish, the British crown fought to keep the colony through diplomatic channels.

The success or failure of Georgia had the potential to determine Britain's fate in North America. When Parliament approved the charter, Sir Joseph Jekyl suggested Georgia would be such an important addition to the crown's holdings

⁷ As a point of reference, South Carolina exported 3,134,976 pounds of rice the year after the colony reverted to royal control. By the time the first settlements were established in Georgia, Carolina rice exports had increased by 46% to 6,752, 741 pounds (1734). As production continued to grow, so did the need for security. For rice import figures see, "An Account of the Quantity of Rice Carryd directly from Carolina to Foreign Parts . . .," T 64/276B/322A.

that the colony might even “strengthen [England’s] power in the West Indies.”⁸ Parliament put as much faith in the colony’s ability to protect other interests as the Trustees had claimed their venture could. However, the more important Georgia seemed to the protection of other colonies, the more its vulnerabilities were magnified.

When plots against Georgia emerged, colonial officials feared the colony’s collapse or removal might cause a domino effect, whereby other British colonies would fall throughout the continent. Planned as a bulwark against Spanish aggression, Georgia was intended as the primary, if not the only, defense between Spanish Florida and the plantations of South Carolina. Later, when Florida began inviting British slaves to flee their masters, Georgia’s importance to South Carolina’s security became especially clear. In London, officials recognized Georgia’s potential contribution to the defense of other colonies exposed to the dangers of the American frontier, but because France and Spain also fought to control the same piece of land, the struggle to maintain Georgia was destined to become an international issue.

Royal officials wanted a new settlement on the land south of Charleston decades before Georgia received its charter. Prior to Georgia’s founding, no one could say how the new colony would look, or if South Carolina might simply extend its settlements south of the Savannah River. Nonetheless, in August 1730, the Duke of Newcastle charged three senior emissaries to meet with Spanish officials to draw an official border between English and Spanish possessions. To

⁸ *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliament Respecting North America*, Vol. IV, 1728-1739, 216.

ensure a peaceful coexistence, each nation had to agree on its territorial limits. London, Madrid, Charleston, Savannah, St. Augustine, and other interested parties understood the need to carve a border from the frontier. The frontier represented an area of dispute, a territory anyone could claim and attempt to control by force. The border lent order and legitimacy and, without an official demarcation, conflict controlled the future of the Southeast.

At the time, border disputes went beyond royal directives, and Parliamentary debates. On the few maps of southeastern North America that were widely circulated, international borders rarely appeared. Sometimes, English cartographers noted Spanish settlements in Florida, but where Southwest Florida became French Louisiana, or where South Carolina ended at Spanish territory was not clear. The extent of any colony south of Carolina had to be negotiated.⁹

To prevent further confusion and controversy, Newcastle ordered Benjamin Kenne, Arthur Stewart and John Goddard to, at the very least, “relate to the Limits between Our Province of South Carolina and the King of Spain’s Province of Florida.”¹⁰ In addition, Newcastle had the emissaries demand reparations for property seized by the Spaniards. While Britain’s obvious losses included property seized by the *guardas costas* in incidents like those involving Robert

⁹ See PRO Maps, CO/700, Carolina 3 (published in 1715 and notes St. Augustine) CO/700, Carolina 2, Georgia 8. British Library Map, 73210 (Thomas Narine, 1712) shows Carolina’s border extending to the St. Johns River and declares non-British territory a part of New France.

¹⁰ SP 94/105, August 19, 1730.

Jenkins and the *Rebecca*, payment for fugitive slaves who fled to Florida were also part of the commissaries' instructions.

In the spring of 1732, Newcastle's agents reported the Spaniards were not interested in ceding territory for South Carolina's expansion. Spain demanded Florida be allowed to exist within the limits set by Charles II, or all land between St. Augustine and the Savannah River. The Spaniards demanded, "that all the Forts built in Florida, and other parts of His Majesty's Territories be immediately demolished."¹¹ In addition, Spain's emissaries refused to pay the English for property seized by its *guardas costas* and insisted that Spain, not England, should receive reparations for "the Hostilities committed in Florida."¹²

Florida repeatedly demanded that the South Carolina government dismantle minor forts it had constructed north of the St. Johns River, but the English steadfastly refused.¹³ In 1732, after representatives from South Carolina failed to remove the controversial forts, Madrid actively entered the dispute over Florida's boundaries. In late May, London seemed to agree with the Spaniards as Whitehall ordered the destruction of the controversial forts. For the first time in the Georgia controversy, Europe vetoed actions made in the colonies, but this order never made its way to South Carolina, for in July Spain reiterated its demand that the English leave the area. England's negotiators wrote to

¹¹ SP 94/106, April 15/26, 1732.

¹² The "Hostilities in Florida" appears to have been a combination of the Palmer Raids, the construction of fortifications in northern Florida, and other activities considered essential to maintaining security on Carolina's southern frontier.

¹³ Occasionally, officials ordered the destruction of such forts, but if the orders were not followed in North America, no one in the English government complained.

Newcastle that “the Spanish Commissarys set forth . . . Spain’s Right to all Countrys and Islands in America from 40 Degrees North to the South Pole, by gift of Pope Alexander 6th.”¹⁴ Apparently, if English colonists insisted on colonizing Spanish territory, then Spain would forcibly maintain its territorial limits as described in the Treaty of Tordesillas. From these initial protests, England and Spain developed their primary arguments for ownership of land in North America.

Since the founding of Jamestown, Spain watched its holdings in North America gradually wither away. England obviously controlled South Carolina, but Spain’s apparent weakness meant ownership of the land between the southern colony and Florida remained open to debate. While the English expanded into the Caribbean and increased their fortunes through a combination of cash crop cultivation and trading ventures, Spain’s economic growth seemed, at the time, to come through expanded harassment of the British merchant fleet by its *guardas costas*. Anger and concern regarding hostilities on the Atlantic brought the two parties together to find a common ground, but neither side would accommodate the other. Frustrated by the lack of progress in the early border negotiations, Spain further reiterated its claim to much of the Western Hemisphere as set forth by the Treaty of Tordesillas, a claim the British disregarded.

In a letter sent to Whitehall in the spring of 1732, Spanish officials declared, “His Majesty hath an Indisputable and Notorious Right by Sundry Title to the

¹⁴ SP 94/106, July 14, 1732.

Property and Dominions of the Spanish America, with all the Islands and Seas Adjacent, from the Time of Discovery, Conquest, and Abrogation of them, which comprehend all the Islands and Continents, Found out, Discovered, or that Shall be Discovered, between the Artick and Antartick Poles, One Hundred Leagues Westward of the Islands Azores, excepting those Places, which have since by Agreement with His Majesty, been possessed by other Provinces.”¹⁵ Spain accepted some established colonies, but demanded Britain remove itself from areas it had recently attempted to colonize, including lands settled without Spain’s permission. Settlements “within the limits of Florida” were included in the long list.¹⁶ By refusing to allow the colonization of Georgia without a fight, London quickly realized the new colony would not be a simple addition to its North American holdings. The initial point of argument for and against Georgia’s settlement focused on language in the 1670 Treaty of Madrid.

In the Treaty of Madrid, Spain and England agreed to stop plundering ports, kidnapping sailors and slaves, and other violent measures taken to intimidate the other. More importantly, Spain recognized the legitimacy of British colonies in the Americas and both nations agreed to respect colonial borders.¹⁷ From the outset of the Georgia controversy, England used the treaty to

¹⁵ SP 94/114, July 25, 1732.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* In addition to the settlements within Florida, Spain demanded Britain end its activities in the Gulf of Honduras, the Islands of New Providence, St. Catherine, St. Andrew, Virgin Islands, and elsewhere in the Caribbean.

¹⁷ *A Treaty for the composing of Differences, Restraining of Depredations, and Establishing of Peace in America Between the Crowns of Great Britain and Spain*, London, 1670. Later, Spain claimed this set its northern border at 32° 30’ or north of the Santa Elena Sound. Spain’s temporary settlement at this location later became a central point of disagreement with the English.

argue it had a right to the disputed land in North America as did Spain. Later, London used notions of Indian land sales, physical conquest, and the right to land by way of first discovery in arguing for ownership of Georgia, but from the outset, the Treaty of 1670 provided the legal foundations of the dispute.¹⁸ One of the first official complaints of English activity near the Florida border came out of St. Augustine in 1722.

In 1721, John Barnwell brought fifty Carolinians to build a settlement on the Altamaha River. Florida immediately declared the encampment an illegal violation of its borders and complained to European officials. When the interlopers constructed a wooden blockhouse known as Fort King George, St. Augustine sent representatives to Charleston to lodge a protest. The Spaniards claimed the activity on the Altamaha violated the Treaty of 1670. Officials in Charleston feigned ignorance, and told the Spaniards they were not aware Spain and England were at peace and should respect the Florida border.¹⁹ As far as the Carolinians knew, Spain and England were still at war and notions of borders were irrelevant. Shortly after this exchange, St. Augustine forwarded its protest to Madrid and gradually the activities on the Altamaha ceased. Although the English abandoned Fort King George only when it seemed the Spanish might

¹⁸ By 1739, when the plenipotentiaries finally met to discuss the border, England's representatives claimed land ownership through the right of First Discovery. England did not dispute St. Augustine's founding in 1565, but actually claimed Sebastian Cabot's 1496 voyage trumped Spain's settlement of Florida. See CO 5/283, Herman Verelst to Newcastle, April 16, 1739. For an extensive overview of legal arguments for land ownership see, John T. Juricek, "English Territorial Claims in North America Under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts," *Terrae Incognitae* (1976): 7-22.

¹⁹ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 237. TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida*, 126.

attack South Carolina in retaliation, St. Augustine based its initial claims of territorial limits on the boundaries mentioned in the Treaty of Madrid.²⁰

By the end of 1722, London informed Spain's ambassador, Jacinto Pozobueno, that the Board of Trade had ordered the South Carolina governor to respect the treaty and Florida's borders. Despite these assurances, the English did not leave the area. When the Spaniards complained again, they were told the Board of Trade had determined Fort King George sat on the frontier between Florida and Carolina and not *in* Florida as the Spaniards claimed.²¹ A border could eliminate the frontier and end the constant controversy. This decision seemed to ignore the basic tenets of the 1670 treaty and served as a reminder that diplomacy in Europe rarely had a direct impact on the struggles within North America. Thus, British troops returned to the outpost. Again, the lack of an accepted border had created a controversy, one that threatened the difficult peace on the frontier.

Officials in South Carolina told the Spaniards they would not evacuate the fort because doing so would essentially cede the land to Florida and they lacked the authority to alter Carolina's boundaries. Faced with continued belligerence, Florida threatened to invade Carolina if it did not abandon its position on the Altamaha. Only when it burned in the winter of 1725 did the issue of Fort King

²⁰ AGI/842, St. Augustine to King, April 21, 1722. TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida*, 127.

²¹ TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida*, 127. AGI/2541, Royal Cédula, June 6, 1723 and AGI/837, Council of the Indies, December 13, 1723.

George come to a close.²² As Spain and England discovered, arguments regarding the frontier usually did not end through diplomacy, treaties, or instructions from Europe. Threats of force and ultimately a mysterious fire brought an end to this particular debate, but that did not stop European officials from trying to broker a deal on colonial borders.

In Europe, the Treaty of Madrid remained the primary document used in the various debates over the limits of the Southeastern frontier. Spain tried to use this document to its advantage in disputes before Georgia's founding and, once settled, the English relied on this treaty more than any other when arguing its right to the land. England claimed that since both nations ratified the treaty in 1670, it covered South Carolina's initial boundaries, which happened to include the land declared to be Georgia.²³ Spain countered that Carolina's original southern boundary was nearly a hundred miles south of St. Augustine and thus, the charter's borders ignored Spain's indisputable right to St. Augustine. That both nations used the same document to argue their respective positions in North America only foreshadowed the future and constant difficulties over the location of Georgia's boundaries.

As wrangling over Georgia's legality continued in Europe, Parliament focused on providing support for the new venture. Because a majority of the Trustees served in Parliament, Georgia's legitimacy and budget seemed secure.

²² It is not certain whether the Spaniards destroyed the fort or it accidentally burned, but after its destruction the English did not return to the area until Georgia's formation. Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 245.

²³ Spain could also argue that, when the treaty was completed in 1667, there was no Carolina and that even when it was ratified in 1670 neither party considered it to include the boundaries of Carolina, *Ibid*.

Echoing the claims of Dr. Bray and Oglethorpe, Parliament praised the colony's mission as buffer and future home to England's poor and Protestant refugees. In May 1733, the House of Commons agreed on the colony's value to the crown and laid the basis for future Parliamentary contributions to ensure Georgia's success. In part, Parliament pointed to the "persecuted and distressed Protestants [who] would be glad to go and settle in . . . Georgia, where they may find, under His Majesty's protection, an asylum from persecution and arbitrary power."²⁴ Although speaking mainly of the Salzburgers, Parliament believed settling other displaced Protestants in Georgia created a "charity highly becoming this Protestant kingdom."²⁵ Georgia's charity played an important role in earning Parliament's continued support.

In 1734, Georgia's official Native spokesperson, Tomochichi visited London. Oglethorpe brought the Indian leader to London as an example of what Georgia could provide for the crown in North America. The currents of power in the Atlantic World switched directions. Now, Tomochichi crossed the ocean with hopes of bolstering his influence in colonial diplomacy and ensuring security for his people. London responded to Tomochichi favorably and allowed Georgia to act as an intermediary between the Native communities and English officialdom. Oglethorpe used Tomochichi's visit to underscore Georgia's value to English interests, increased security on the frontier.²⁶ In addition, the visit helped fend

²⁴ *Proceeding and Debates of the British Parliaments respecting North America*, Vol. 4: 1728-1739, 215.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 216.

²⁶ Officially, Tomochichi said he wanted to visit England to learn the "science and wisdom of the English and consequently the Christian religion." See Julie Anne Sweet,

off the controversy over the proposed ban on rum and the creation of a licensing system for Indian traders.

Through its unique social policies and congenial relationships with neighboring Native communities, Georgia would provide security for South Carolina and, if it achieved its first objective, profits might follow. That the colony began with the poor and landless and not large landholders and their slaves was important to its founding. By providing a bulk of its operating budget and fighting to establish recognized borders, Parliament protected Georgia and in return, demanded a greater role in the colony's operation. When Spain threatened Parliament's investment, the English lodged complaints with officials in the Spanish court, but this did not guarantee an end to Georgia's problems.

Between 1733 and 1736, Spain and England enjoyed a relative calm from their typical posture of war, yet in North America tensions remained high and, for the colony's first couple of years, the battle over Georgia essentially remained in North America. Spanish and English diplomats continued to meet in hopes of setting an agreeable border. To ensure peace and safety, the Privy Council ordered local colonial authorities to prohibit any citizen from settling south of the Altamaha River, an important concession to the Spaniards. Prior to 1736, it looked like both sides might peacefully set a boundary. Spain simply wanted the British to use the border described in the Georgia charter, a significant concession in light of earlier protests.²⁷ However, aside from responding to a few

"Bearing Feathers of the Eagle: Tomochichi's Trip to England," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* (Fall, 2002) : 339-371.

²⁷ CO 32 6/17, December 16, 1735.,Privy Council to Charleston.

specific complaints regarding events in the colonies, Europe did not get too involved in the conflict over border placement until 1736.²⁸ Then, as large numbers of settlers moved to Georgia and the initial boundaries seemed a little too porous for authorities in St. Augustine, tensions increased and diplomatic niceties came to an end.

Although England and Spain had agreed to find a diplomatic solution to the dispute, events in North America, belligerence on the open seas, and political pressures had the potential to force a violent confrontation. Some in the opposing governments saw war as the only way to settle the various complaints, but in 1736, diplomats could claim victory as the two crowns agreed to pursue peace. In February, Spain and Britain entered a series of peace agreements known as the October Preliminaries. Officially, the agreements addressed issues that came out of the War of the Polish Succession, but the dialogue helped ease tensions in North America.²⁹ Despite the positive developments, hope in Europe often disintegrated into hatred and suspicion over the other's activities in the Americas. Diplomatic efforts in Europe ultimately failed to influence events overseas.

As Parliament offered greater support for Georgia, the project became a controversial domestic issue. Prime Minister Walpole, for one, did not want to engage the Spaniards over the issue of Georgia. War could be costly and the

²⁸ Spain's concern with Georgia did not become an issue until St. Augustine began reporting that the interlopers had started constructing fortifications throughout the frontier Spain considered a part of Florida. Lanning, *The Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 85-86.

²⁹ Arthur McCandless Wilson, *French Foreign Policy During the Administration of Cardinal Fleury, 1726-1743* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 266.

benefits of gaining the additional territory in North Americas did not seem to outweigh the potential pitfalls in picking a fight with the distant neighbor. Furthermore, some saw Georgia as an unnecessary burden on the king's coffers. In 1737, nearly 85% of Georgia's operating budget came through direct Parliamentary grants.³⁰ In the eyes of many, Georgia was an expensive venture and England could either abandon the project and acknowledge Spain's ownership of the land, or Parliament could continue the fight and spend additional funds on an outpost designed to protect existing colonies, despite the fact that it appeared incapable of saving itself. Because so many Trustees served in Parliament, Georgia was allowed to continue, but protests about its expense and doubts of its ability to protect even itself, brought much unwanted attention to the struggle for the southern frontier.³¹

As the debate over Georgia started to interest high-ranking officials in Europe, Spain renewed its attacks on British merchant ships in the Atlantic. Privateering remained a constant feature of international and intercolonial rivalries despite the various agreements to end such activity, but Spanish efforts seemed to increase dramatically in areas where Spain and England bickered over territorial rights. In July 1736, off Florida's southern coast, a Spanish Man of War boarded an English vessel carrying rum, cotton, and sugar from Jamaica to London. According to reports of the incident, the Spanish Man of War had twenty-four guns, carried 350 men and an escort displayed ten guns and carried

³⁰ Taylor, *Georgia Plan*, 55.

³¹ Surprisingly, notions of appeasement were silenced when Spain appeared threatening. When Spain appeared ready to attack, Parliament increased funding and its support for Oglethorpe. See Taylor, *Georgia Plan*, 65-67.

nearly 100 soldiers. Here, Spain used 450 men and two ships to take a single merchant vessel back to Havana where officials confiscated its cargo and sent the English sailors to a prison in Cadiz.³²

The following year, one of the prisoners described his time in the Spanish prison. “We are put in Gaol every night among all manner of villains, such as thieves murderers, Turk[ish] fellows that has committed all manner of villany where the vermin is ready to eat us up.”³³ Typically, sailors captured at sea would be ransomed from the nearest island, but as tensions increased in the Caribbean, Spain made life more difficult for its captives. In addition, Spain assumed a more aggressive stance in declaring certain items contraband. By terrorizing British cargo ships, Spain rediscovered an inexpensive and effective way to flex its muscle in the Atlantic.

Sailing to London from Jamaica in August 1737, a Spanish *guarda costa* boarded the English vessel *Loyal Charles*. The ranking officer ordered the English ship to a Spanish port where it was searched for contraband. Often, Spain conducted these searches at sea, but as tensions between the nations increased, the Spaniards attempted to delay even the ships carrying legitimate items. The captain of *Loyal Charles* was told that if the inspectors found “no property of the King” he would be allowed to continue to London. When the Spaniards discovered two pieces of logwood, they “hoisted the colours of the ...ship at half mast, with the Union downwards, in which manner the ship was

³² SP 94/132, January 26, 1737/8 report on piracy the previous year.

³³ *Ibid.*

carried into the Harbour of Havana.”³⁴ There, Spain confiscated the ship and imprisoned its crew all because the English captain carried two pieces of Spanish lumber.

In December, a *guarda costa* boarded the English ship *Swan* while en route to Antigua. *Swan* carried corn, rice, lumber, and hogs and the Spaniards determined some of these items came from a Spanish territory and thus declared the entire ship contraband. The boat was escorted to Havana where Spanish authorities imprisoned its crew and confiscated the ship and its cargo.³⁵ Similar incidents continued throughout much of 1736 and 1737, just as the controversy over Georgia started brewing in Europe. Although such incidents cannot be directly attributed to the contest for Georgia, the timing of these grievances did not surprise many at Whitehall. Harassment at sea increased as Georgia's borders grew and, as a result, complaints from Spain and England reached a near hysteria. Spain's harassment at sea and England's refusal to respect Florida's borders were two significant controversies between the two nations, but the intensity of the protests and the fear generated by these actions led many to

³⁴ *Ibid.* For decades prior to this incident, Spain complained of English logwood cutters stationed along the Bay of Campeche, Honduras, and points southward. Spain frequently sent military units to remove the English log cutting camps, but usually the areas remained unguarded and a constant point of argument between Spain and England. At one point, England's potential for profit from the Logwood trade seemed so great that the Board of Trade considered appointing a governor to the area and declaring Central America's Caribbean Coast a colony. This, of course, ultimately led to English control of British Honduras and the Mosquito Coast, but in 1736 the fight for the land continued. Lanning, *The Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 127-128; Robert Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989).

³⁵ Lanning, 127.

predict war. While England and Spain prepared for the other's attack, France joined the Spanish in assaulting English ships in North American waters.

In February 1736, officials at Whitehall sent word to Paris that a growing number of English merchants were being harassed in the Caribbean by French vessels. Gradually, London heard tales of English "Merchant Ships that sail[ed] within a certain distance of the French Settlements, or that is drive into any of the French Ports...but she is taken, condemned as Prize, or in some way molested."³⁶ London did not immediately claim the existence of a Franco-Spanish conspiracy to disrupt England's commercial traffic, but invariably people made such a connection. When England complained, France insisted that its activities on the Atlantic were an honest effort to counter the covert wars England had launched on the frontier regions of French colonies.

Beginning in 1731, Louisiana's governor reported to officials in Paris that the English had "induce[d] the nations of Louisiana to get rid of all the French who were established there."³⁷ Étienne de Périer, commandant of French forces in the Atlantic, complained to Jean Maurepas, Minister of the Marine and Colonies that the "English are seeking a port in the Florida Strait in order to establish themselves there. If they establish themselves, they will drive the Spaniards from the entire coast of Florida."³⁸ If England pushed the Spaniards

³⁶ SP 78/214, Whitehall to Waldegrave, f. 78 .

³⁷ *Mississippi Colonial Records*, Vol. 4, 72-76.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Technically, Périer served as commandant of the Company of the Indies, the group that held the original charter for Louisiana. In January 1731, however, the Company of the Indies lost their charter to the crown, but Périer remained the commandant until Bienville arrived on behalf of the French crown in 1733. Henry

out of Florida, then Louisiana would likely be the next to go. England considered Florida and Louisiana as weak outposts, but if the Spanish and French worked in concert, their threats to English colonies could be substantial. Since it was not always clear who had alliances with whom, the lack of diplomatic clarity created an uncertainty factor the English had to consider, creating yet another problem for England's drive to dominate North America. In early 1737, the dangers of colonization and the power of rumor and conjecture became excruciatingly clear.

In April, a report from Havana caught Whitehall's attention. While in Cuba, an English agent observed a fellow countryman who seemed very close to Spanish officials. In particular, the Governor of Havana treated this man known as Colonel Michael Wall with "great distinction." Wall lived in an expensive home and received a salary from the Cuban treasury. According to those in Cuba, the governor had prohibited Wall from speaking with any English visitor. The author's brother thought Wall reminded him of a man named John Savy, a person he once met in South Carolina and was last seen disembarking at Dieppe, France, from the ship *Two Brothers*. After further investigation, the English agent determined that Wall was indeed John Savy and "he being well acquainted with the Country about Georgia, had engaged to guide the Spaniards to drive off or destroy the present incumbents." The English visitors also heard Spain was prepared to sail to North America to lead the invasion.³⁹

Putney Beers, *French and Spanish Records of Louisiana*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989) 7.

³⁹ SP 94/127, April 8, 1737.

Ironically, this report arrived in London four days after Spain sent another formal request for the British to “demolish the forts that have been set up in Florida, or in other parts of in the territories of his Catholick Majesty.”⁴⁰ By the fall of 1737, Savy reemerged in Europe, with a tale that confused and struck fear in those who heard about the information he had provided Spaniards intent on forcefully redefining the borders in North America. After reading the dispatch from Havana, English officials sought any and all information on the mysterious guest of the Cuban governor

England’s agents in Madrid had information on Savy and the plot he allegedly drew for the Spaniards in Cuba, but from the outset they did not know what to make of the Savy case. Benjamin Keene met a French military officer who claimed to have knowledge of Savy’s plan and doubted its potential if only because its architect, John Savy, was a “blustering talkative fellow” who could not be trusted.⁴¹ When Savy eventually surrendered to a British agent, officials interviewed him extensively and his story continually changed. Among the information Savy claimed to have given the Spaniards was that England was planning an invasion of Florida.

Such information confirmed the fears in Havana and St. Augustine, but apparently the Spaniards did not worry about the rumored movement because at the time, the two nations had officials in North America trying hard to find a diplomatic solution to the Georgia controversy. Perhaps Savy worried that the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, April 4, 1737.

⁴¹ SP 94/127. See also, Topping, “‘A Free Facetious Gentleman,’ Jean Savy, Double Agent?,” 261-279.

prospect of peace might hurt him financially, for he claimed Georgia could invade Florida much easier than Havana or Madrid ever imagined. Savy's value as an informant lie in his ability to create an illusion of danger and intimate knowledge of the particular plan. Spain suspected the English of planning an invasion of Florida, Savy simply supplied information the Spaniards wanted to hear. He explained to the Spaniards that although a British colony, Georgia happened to be a proprietary colony and this meant the third party that held control, the Trustees, could launch an invasion while English and Spanish diplomats worked toward a peaceful solution.⁴²

Savy's revelations nearly drove Whitehall to the brink. Just as Savy started confessing, word came from North America that Spain and England, through the actions of the governors in Florida and Georgia, had reached an agreement on the placement of the Georgia-Florida border. However, if Spain believed Savy and thought England was ready to invade Florida and English authorities thought Savy had helped Cuba plan an invasion of Georgia, any diplomatic successes in the colonies were certain to be ruined.⁴³

It was difficult to determine the validity of Savy's tale. Despite the vagueness of his story, it got the attention of high-ranking officials. If one man could guide the Spaniards on a mission against the new colony and if, as officials in Georgia and London believed, combined forces from Florida and Cuba seemed

⁴² SP 94/127, April 22, 1737.

⁴³ Newcastle started reporting Oglethorpe's success in St. Augustine regarding the border placement in March, 1737. SP 94/129.

more than adequate to overthrow the new colony, then new strategies for Georgia's security had to be developed.

Oglethorpe began his colony with the understanding that external threats might irreparably damage his experiment and because of this, he forced a domestic agenda that seemed overly idealistic and difficult for a region that had rapidly grown accustomed to vast profits by way of plantation agriculture. For outsiders, the decision to ban slavery, prohibit the consumption of rum, limit land ownership, and show basic respect to local Indian communities seemed hopelessly idealistic. To many, Georgia seemed a living promise that not all Enlightenment ideals could or should become reality. Oglethorpe, however, based many of these laws and restrictions on the fact that Georgia was a frontier colony and as such creative measures not only helped, they were often necessary to ensure a colony's security. Although fresh from Parliament and English society when he arrived in Savannah, Oglethorpe's version of idealism seemed to meet the land's unique requirements.

When London learned of the Savy plot, diplomats, bureaucrats, and others realized that Georgia would not be a typical colony. After only three years in existence, Georgia's future seemed uncertain and its weakness had the potential to harm its more established neighbors. To succeed in North America, the competing parties had two routes to victory, diplomacy or war. Over time, each nation had to exercise both options. From Europe, committees appointed by the separate crowns decided most of the decisions on border placement and determined who violated what treaty. In North America, the local governors prepared for invasion as rumors of impending attack and intricate plots to

overthrow the offending government became commonplace. By 1737, the contradiction between these disparate policies and futility in trying to enact both seemed obvious.

When Oglethorpe set out for Georgia towards the end of 1737, he left London as the commander-in-chief of the South Carolina militia.⁴⁴ Before his departure, Oglethorpe chose 250 soldiers from the Earl of Rothe's Regiment in Gibraltar to protect his colony. Oglethorpe ordered an immediate deployment of the hand-selected regiment, as he feared the Spanish were prepared to attack his colony at any moment.⁴⁵ As troops traveled to protect Georgia and possibly invade Florida, Oglethorpe visited St. Augustine in hopes of settling the border dispute amicably. England and Spain made efforts to find a peaceful solution, but every attempt at diplomacy was backed with the possibility for military intervention. Because Florida and Georgia appeared weak it seemed possible that either nation could destroy the offending colony. The scope of these plots and strategies for maintaining or increasing one's position on the North American frontier was unique to the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Once the two nations determined where to draw the lines for the battle of diplomacy, they began to concentrate on possible avenues for a military operation. If

⁴⁴ When Madrid learned of this appointment, Tomás Geraldino, a Spanish Minister, complained to Newcastle. Geraldino considered Oglethorpe being named Commander-In-Chief, a direct threat to the peace of St. Augustine. To many in the Spanish government placing Georgia's founder in charge of Britain's largest southern militia was nothing less than an act of aggression. See, SP 94/128, Geraldino to Newcastle, July 22, 1737.

⁴⁵ *General Oglethorpe's Georgia: Colonial Letters*, Vol. 2, 325. *Journal of the Earl of Egmont*, 305. Later, Spain expressed great annoyance at the point of origin of Oglethorpe's army. In 1737, authorities in Madrid believed the force England chose to invade Florida would sail from Gibraltar.

diplomacy failed, England and Spain would have to fight for their respective territories.

CHAPTER 6
THE WARS OF RUMOR, 1737-1739

Legislative, military, and financial support from South Carolina and Parliament lent legitimacy to Georgia, but its amorphous borders, small population, and limited defenses imparted a visible weakness. Oglethorpe feared Spain would challenge Georgia's legality. Before leaving for London he ordered his deputies to maintain a constant watch on the Spanish in Florida as well as the French and neighboring Native communities. For its safety and future expansion, Georgia sought Florida's elimination, but if the crown approved a plan to invade Florida it would also have to address a potentially lethal threat from the French in Louisiana. Furthermore, it was difficult if not impossible to gauge the willingness of Indian communities to join such an invasion or, more importantly, assist the enemy.

In the spring of 1736, Oglethorpe believed the French and Spaniards were attempting to "debauch our Indians" and enlist these groups in a fight to topple his colony.¹ In particular, Oglethorpe worried about French attacks on English-allied Chickasaw communities. Savannah informed London that if the English

¹ *Journal of the Earl of Egmont*, 159 (June 5, 1736). In his letter to Egmont, Oglethorpe also complained of dishonest trading by South Carolina Indian traders. Oglethorpe feared the anger Natives directed at Carolina traders could be aimed at Georgia, thus disrupting the local Indian trade. Charges of this nature began with Georgia's founding and the laws the Trustees enacted regarding the licensing of Indian traders were supposed to eliminate these concerns, but despite these legislative protections, Georgia could not shape Native opinion or control what traders did beyond its borders.

did not come to the aid of their Indian allies, “all other free Nations which lye on the back of His Majesty’s Provinces, will therby be obliged to throw themselves into the hands of the French.”² Oglethorpe saw a threat to Georgia in almost every frontier conflict. Yet, his superiors in London saw these fears as too abstract and distant. While Oglethorpe was in London agents in Georgia learned of larger, more dangerous plots against Georgia than anyone ever contemplated.

In May 1737, Cuban authorities declared John Savy, “incapable of any service except to be used as a guide in case the operation against the lands and towns occupied by the English is executed.” Apparently, Savy had become too fond of the lifestyle the Spaniards provided and at times was found “drinking so excessively as to render himself unfit.”³ Despite what the Cubans thought of him, the situation in Florida quickly changed and there seemed to be movement on the diplomatic front. If England made efforts to find a peaceful solution, Spain would not allow any attack against Georgia to go forward.⁴ Cuba, obviously irritated with the amount of time and money spent on its guest, sent Savy back to Spain. In October, he arrived in Cadiz. According to official records, Savy stayed at an inn for a few days and finally left without paying. During his stay, he

² *Colonial Records of Georgia*, Vol. 29, 167-168. Martyn to Newcastle, December 24, 1736.

³ Topping, “ ‘A Free Facetious Gentleman,’ Jean Savy, Double Agent? ” 271-272. AGI-SD/2592, Güemes to Torrenueva, May 20, 1737.

⁴ In April, Oglethorpe met with the Duke of Newcastle where Georgia’s founder was told the Walpole government did not approve of the colony. Although Parliament had generously funded the endeavor, Newcastle relayed Walpole’s fears that the colony increased the tensions between Spain and England thus, weakening Britain’s position on any number of disputes between the two nations. Lanning, *Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 69-70.

“represented himself as a native of Carolina,” and found the time to “amuse the spectators by demonstrating the ways of the American native in eating meat and navigating a boat.”⁵

Savy’s disappearance worried officials in Madrid. If English agents got hold of the spy and learned of his actions in Cuba, Spain would face additional difficulties. That England already knew of Savy’s activities in Cuba—information that had not reached Spanish agents—gave the English an upper hand in the upcoming debate over Georgia’s border. In November, Savy emerged in Portugal where he surrendered to English officials. Whitehall may have been surprised to find Savy in Portugal, but they were eager to hear his story. When Savy confessed his crimes to British investigators in the fall of 1737, the fight for the contested lands in North America entered a period where rumor and hearsay suddenly controlled policy, led military reaction, and ultimately threatened Georgia’s existence.

From the information Savy provided, English investigators realized that maintaining Georgia would be a more difficult task than ever imagined. Savy never directly threatened Georgia, but his actions and their potential threat complicated plans to ensure Georgia’s security and stability. Beginning with Savy’s testimony, rumors of Spanish aggression came to English officials from sources beyond Georgia and these took precedence over the fears and local concerns expressed by Oglethorpe and others in the colony.

⁵ Topping, “‘A Free Facetious Gentleman,’” 273, Lanning, *Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 78. AGI-SD/87-1-2/101. Varas y Valdés to Torrenueva, November 25, 1737. Again, with regards to Savy, published accounts of his activities are not in agreement.

By the time war began in 1740, Georgia had dealt with rumors of invasion from the Spaniards in Cuba and Florida, the French in Louisiana and Canada, and Indian militias from New York to the colony's southern edge. Time and again, rumors had to be treated as truth. For nearly three years, this forced the leadership in Savannah and London to prepare for war. While having to argue the colony's viability and deal with external threats, the Trustees lacked the time and resources to enact and maintain many of the social policies they hoped would distinguish their project. Ultimately, the neglect of the colony's social health created an environment where groups of citizens challenged Trustee authority.⁶ By 1737, the effort to defend against the rumored invasions seemed enough to destroy the young colony.

When John Savy arrived in Paris in 1735 he intended to earn an honest living. In a deposition he gave to Spanish authorities, Savy described himself as the son of a Frenchman, born in London, and raised as a Roman Catholic. As a young man, he trained as a sailor and navigator on British merchant ships.⁷ Apparently, he found Paris as difficult a place in which to make instant riches as Savannah or Charleston. Consequently, he offered his services to the Spaniards at their Paris embassy. After introducing himself and convincing the Spaniards that he might have relevant information regarding the security of their northern

⁶ The group that spoke against the Trustees, known as the Malcontents, began publishing their complaints in 1735. Between 1737 and 1738 widespread publication of anti-Trustee pamphlets and other propaganda spread across the colony. More on this group appears in Chapter Six. Trevor R. Reese. *The Clamorous Malcontents: Criticisms & Defenses of the Colony of Georgia, 1741-1743* (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1973).

⁷ Topping, " 'A Free Facetious Gentleman' ," 263.

perimeter in Florida, the Spaniards sent Savy to tell his tale in Madrid.⁸ There, Savy spoke of English designs on Florida and other poorly defended colonies throughout the Spanish empire. For a modest fee, Savy was willing to provide Spain with enough information to launch an attack on Georgia and other English colonies. In order to increase his value to the Spaniards, Savy told a tale sure to get the attention of his audience.

According to Savy, England had a fleet of at least twenty ships of war ready to sail against the militia in St. Augustine. Despite the strength of the presidio's stone fort, the assembled force seemed more than enough to destroy Florida's garrison. The Spaniards believed their informant, for not only had Savy lived in Georgia, but he served as an officer during the failed Palmer Raids on St. Augustine in 1728. He claimed to know more about Georgia and its vulnerabilities than officials in St. Augustine could ever hope to learn through the limited intelligence they had acquired since Georgia's founding.⁹ For years, Spain expected the English to invade Florida as they had in 1702, but this time, Spain resolved to attack before falling victim to the English. Savy told the Spaniards what they needed to hear. Nonetheless, the information he later gave to English investigators cancelled any advantage Spain thought it had gained from their informant.

⁸ Lanning, *Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 55-57. Topping, " 'A Free Facetious Gentleman,' Jean Savy, Double Agent?" 266. SP 94/126.

⁹ In St. Augustine, the most common source of information on Georgia came from disgruntled Indians who fled to Florida for protection from British agents or traders. Occasionally, Spanish soldiers patrolled the northern reaches of Florida, but these operations did not provide specific or detailed information on English activities in the area.

When he worked for the Spaniards, Savy's information led Madrid to order 300 troops in Havana to travel to St. Augustine and carry out an invasion of Georgia.¹⁰ Once he surrendered to the English, Savy suggested that, because of his plan, Havana had 400 soldiers prepared to leave for Florida at a moment's notice and he knew of "an order to the Vice-King of Mexico to send a thousand more."¹¹ Apparently, he wanted his story to be even more valuable to the authorities that had the power to imprison or execute him, for Savy exaggerated the impact his information had in Madrid. After changing his account several times, the English interrogators did not know what to believe. Rumors of impending invasions riddled Europe's royal courts throughout 1737 and many felt Savy's information was, at best, dubious. Unfortunately, the rumors and plots that emerged after Savy's testimony came as hopes of ending the border dispute grew.¹²

Throughout the Atlantic World, rumors caused considerable difficulty. In North America, simply reacting to a rumor could weaken a colony, create internal confusion, and challenge the integrity and competency of the affected government. It is important to understand that rumors were not necessarily the byproduct of contrived stories or focused campaigns of misinformation. Often,

¹⁰Topping, " 'A Free Facetious Gentleman'," 266. See also, AGI-SD, 2591. Patiño to Juan Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas, June 24, 1736, AGI-SD, 2591, April 23, 1736.

¹¹ SP 94/128. Savy's depositions and descriptions of his claims appear in communications dated on July 1 and October 22, 1737. Other details of his plot can be found in Lanning, *Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 55-84.

¹² In April Whitehall informed Benjamin Keene that numerous rumors in London claimed the Spaniards were prepared to invade Georgia. Whitehall wanted Keene, the ambassador in Madrid, to make it known that England was prepared to defend its colonies. SP 94/129, Whitehall to Keene, April 7, 1737.

and in the case of the rumors that arrived in Georgia in the mid-1730s, rumors emerged from confused facts, or fabrications termed a “subjective construction of reality.”¹³ In several incidents, the importance of a particular piece of information was overshadowed by ambiguity, repetition and questionable interpretation. Often, when solid information arrived in Georgia, distortions had transformed it into a potentially dangerous rumor.¹⁴ By the time Savy’s information crossed the Atlantic, returned to Cuba, and snaked through various diplomatic channels, significant damage had occurred.

Despite reservations about Savy’s story, his information prompted both England and Spain to prepare for the other’s invasion. And while the respective armies prepared for battle, diplomats in Europe worked towards a peaceful solution. Spanish officials in St. Augustine, Madrid, and London complained to English authorities about Georgia’s location, English activities within Florida’s borders, and more. Perhaps sensing Florida’s weakness, London refused to give in to Florida’s demands that Georgia either vacate the land or assume a more northerly position on the frontier. Nevertheless, the crown agreed to listen and at least try to find an acceptable border between the two colonies. In an effort to state their case and provide a basis from which to defend their land, the Trustees responded to Florida’s complaints in February.

¹³ Jean-Noël Kapferer, *Rumors: Uses, Interpretations, and Images* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 3-5.

¹⁴ For a larger examination of the potential of rumor see, Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1789: Rural Panic in Revolutionary France* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), 148-162.

Spain's most serious charge against the English involved a near assault on St. Augustine in late 1736. According to the Spaniards, "a Party of three hundred English had appeared on the Frontiers of the Province of Apalachee." There, the English sought Indian assistance in waging war against the Spaniards. The Spaniards learned the army first planned to attack an outpost at St. Marks and from there, invade St. Augustine. The Trustees did not deny the plot or even the movement of troops in Apalachee, but blamed the incident on an Indian trader from South Carolina who traveled with a small, armed contingent determined to retrieve a debt.¹⁵ The Trustees suggested that, because of Spain's reaction, the incident provided another example why Georgia required a defined and properly defended border.¹⁶ The Trustees complained to Whitehall that, without a secure border, "disorderly persons" might find safety in "the woods on the frontiers . . . to commit Murders and Ravages and all kinds of Disorders."¹⁷ Still young and weak, the Trustees displayed two disparate attitudes.

While the Trustees boldly claimed a right to land that Spain considered a part of Florida and demanded the Spaniards vacate the area, they also believed Florida could invade and destroy their colony at any moment. Mixed emotions

¹⁵ *CRSG*, Vol. 29, 172-173. Martyn to Newcastle, February 9, 1737.

¹⁶ In the same letter to Newcastle, Benjamin Martyn explained that the Trustees removed "the Garrison at Fort George" at the request of officials in St. Augustine, but they also pointed out that England had a presence in this corner of the disputed territory since "Sir Francis Drake established a fort" in the same area. Although the Trustees confused their historical facts, the fort in question was located on Cumberland Island and marked the closest British outpost between Georgia and Florida. See, William Ramsey, "The Final Contest for the 'Debatable Land': Fort William and the Frontier Defenses of Colonial Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 77 (Fall, 1993): 497-524.

¹⁷ *CRSG*. Vol. 29, 172-173.

of bravado and trepidation frequently guided colonial policy regarding Georgia and its boundaries. The emergence of Savy's plot only exacerbated the contrasting postures; but the threat that came from his story caused colonial authorities in Europe to pay better attention to Georgia's defenses. After all, the controversial outpost was intended to protect South Carolina but first it had to protect itself. Ultimately, England's reaction to Savy's tale solidified support for Georgia in the colonies and increased Parliament's resolve to defend the fledgling outpost.

By the end of 1737, Spain acknowledged the odd reversal of fortune that resulted from Savy's story. Spain's agents in London reported to Madrid, "the Directors of Georgia make use of the information pro[v]ided by the said [Savy], in order to strengthen their pretensions and to claim the support of the government here who will find it difficult to avoid it in the circumstance they are at present."¹⁸ When London heard Spain was preparing to invade Georgia, arguments over parliamentary expenditures and the need to remove fortifications located in areas close to Florida came to an abrupt halt. London no longer complained of Oglethorpe's activities at Frederica and outposts previously considered illegal became Georgia's crucial first line of defense. In Spain, Savy's tales caused a different reaction.

Few in Madrid believed Savy's information could be used to stage an invasion of Georgia and others doubted the accuracy of the informer's claims. When Madrid learned of Savy's confession to the English, Spanish officials told

¹⁸ SP 94/246, December 19, 1737, Gerladino to Madrid, *f*.29-30.

their agent in London that Savy was nothing more than a “vagabond [and a] cheat . . . [who] fled Cadiz for fear of the Gallows.”¹⁹ Instead of expressing gratitude for Savy’s information, many Spaniards feared the repercussions of being associated with the informant. Madrid’s London representative, Tomás Geraldino, reported the English press had published numerous tales of Spanish mobilization against the English colonies. Although these reports were false, Geraldino understood such rumors could be enough to build support for a preemptive attack against Florida, Cuba, or other Spanish colonies in the Americas.²⁰ Geraldino attempted to deny the rumors, but London seemed convinced Spain was preparing an invasion of its North American colonies.

The confusion that stemmed from Savy’s tale helped accelerate diplomatic and military strategies for control of the distant frontier. By the end of 1737, officials in Europe were certain the dispute over Georgia would soon be settled. Whether the disagreement would lead to a negotiated treaty or a war for conquest was not clear, but both sides sensed imminent closure on the subject.²¹ Geraldino tried to convince Walpole that Madrid had never trusted Savy’s claims and reiterated their position that the Spanish government considered Savy a man of

¹⁹ SP 94/246, December 12, 1737 Madrid to Geraldino. *f* 19-20. This information came from Spanish communications intercepted by British agents and decoded at Whitehall. That Spain chose to encode this communication is particularly telling.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Through much of December, Spanish and English diplomats suggested peaceful routes to a border agreement while they also openly discussed potential strategies for military conquest should negotiations fail.

“ill repute.”²² Instead of preparing for war, Geraldino believed the greatest hope to maintain Florida’s territory rested on the activities of plenipotentiaries, officials from England and Spain appointed to set an official border between the colonies in North America. Still, Savy planted at least the idea that Spain might soon invade Georgia. While many in London discounted these rumors, preparations were necessary, should fiction become reality. As authorities in Europe determined what they wanted to do with the Georgia border, their counterparts in North America took matters into their own hands; as was so often the case, Florida and Georgia prepared to fight.

Oglethorpe returned to Georgia hoping to peacefully settle the border dispute. Although there were enough hawkish members in Parliament willing to support a quick military operation against Florida, Georgia’s safety came first. Diplomacy, not war, seemed the preferable route to success and many in the Spanish government agreed. As the controversy continued, Whitehall maintained power despite the Trustees’ connections to Parliament and desire to take control of their own colony. In a letter to Benjamin Keene, a Spanish official assured the English ambassador, “his Catholick Majesty had not authorized any Person whatsoever, or the Governor of . . . Havana to make any military preparations,” against Georgia. Furthermore, the Spanish king had ordered his diplomats “if any disputes should happen to arrive between the governors of the respective countries, about the limits of their respective jurisdictions...that

²² SP 94/246 f. 47-49, Geraldino to Madrid, December 26, 1737. This claim did not account for Savy’s journey to Cuba in 1736 where the Spanish paid the man of “ill repute” to assist Cuba’s governor in preparing an invasion of Georgia. Lanning, *Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 59.

instead of proceeding *á des Voyes de fait*, such disputes should be amicable, adjusted, and settled, between the Two Courts.”²³ Spain, of course, had its own reasons to avoid military confrontation as St. Augustine was weak and would require significant reinforcements in the event of war. Spain’s stated desire for peace seemed to clear the storm Savy helped create. Still, what was pledged in Europe often took time to root in the Americas and during the delay colonial activities could trump royal desire.

In the colonies, Spanish and English officials did not wait for a solution to come out of Madrid or London. Havana, acting as Florida’s protector, prepared to forcibly remove what it considered an illegal outpost on Spanish territory, but when Europe moved toward a peaceful solution, Havana placed its plans on hold. As the governments prepared to meet over the disputed borders, Madrid ordered Havana to send an official to Georgia to lodge a complaint over its disregard for Florida’s historic boundaries. Güemes y Horcasitas, Havana’s captain-general, sent Antonio de Arredondo to deliver Spain’s protest to the English at Frederica, site of an outpost constructed by Oglethorpe against the wishes of the Trustees and beyond Georgia’s original border.²⁴

In addition, Arredondo was to survey land “best adapted for the settlement of families,” Spain hoped to send to the northern periphery. This part of his mission was to be taken with “prudence so that neither the Indians nor the

²³ SP 94/129, Keene to Newcastle, September 12, 1737.

²⁴ Herbert E. Bolton, ed. *Arredondo’s Historical Proof of Spain’s Title to Georgia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1925), vi-vii.

English shall detect our purpose.”²⁵ It took time, but Spain gradually accepted the idea that settlements had to be built in order to maintain northern Florida. Florida could no longer rely on treaties and land claims to hold the limits of its territory. Just as the English had attempted with Georgia, Spain had to expand to maintain Florida and challenge English growth.

When he returned from his meetings in Georgia, Arredondo drafted an extensive report outlining English violations of Florida’s sovereignty and previous royal agreements. Arredondo relied on Spain’s history in the area to make his case, but unlike the English, he could not point to an established settlement on the northern frontier. While Arredondo completed his survey, agents in Madrid made overtures to the French to create an alliance in the North American backcountry. As before, Spain hoped an agreement with the French might discourage the English from making additional moves on Florida territory. From London, similar plans were developed in case the border negotiations failed.

Like Spain, Whitehall ordered a reconnaissance of Florida’s territory to determine Spain’s ability to defend the land. By 1737, residents of South Carolina and Georgia began preparing to invade Florida. Although the official stance in London stressed diplomatic possibility, those in the colonies saw war as the only certain solution to the constant bickering over Georgia. In the early part of the year, the South Carolina Commons House collected information from people familiar with the defenses and topography of northern Florida and interviewed

²⁵ *Letters of Montiano*, 19-20.

former soldiers who had fought against the Spaniards. London also asked its colonists in other parts of the region to pay close attention to any movements or actions that might be aimed against any English colony. In South Carolina many of those interviewed did not consider Florida a threat. According to many, Spain had essentially abandoned the land north of St. Augustine years earlier.

Joseph Parmenter, a resident of the South Carolina lowcountry, could not recall, in a “space of twenty-six years,” the construction or maintenance of any Spanish fortification north of the St. Johns River.²⁶ Parmenter thought the land between the St. Johns River and Georgia’s southern boundary had remained virtually uninhabited since the Yamasee War. A few months later, John Bee agreed, stating that since the 1702 invasion no Spaniard had attempted a large-scale settlement beyond the St. Johns River.²⁷ In other reports, veterans of Moore’s 1704 raids on Apalachee Province suggested Spain had also abandoned any hopes of developing settlements along the Florida panhandle. London found great value in these testimonials as they provided ammunition in the debate over Georgia’s boundaries. As negotiations continued in Europe, some in South Carolina urged London to ignore the debate over Georgia’s legitimacy and instead consider *extending* Georgia’s territorial limits to stretch as far south as the limits listed in Carolina’s original charter. Again, arguments for settlement expansion focused on the need for increased security and were motivated by the potential for profit. Moving onto land claimed by the Spaniards did not seem dangerous or

²⁶ PRO 30/47/14/1 -f.17, February 16, 1737.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, f.19, April 26, 1738.

ill advised. Instead, many saw the potential for growth, a further erosion of the Spanish threat, and possibly a way for the complete removal of the Spaniards from the region.

William Drake, South Carolina's Commissioner of Indian Affairs, devised a plan to expand Britain's southern boundary. Drake had spent considerable time in the backcountry living with various Creek, Cherokee, and Chickasaw communities and understood the debated territories perhaps better than anyone in the colonies, certainly better than those sent to find a mutually acceptable border. Drake argued strongly against allowing the Altamaha River to remain Georgia's southern territorial limit. He wanted officials in London to reinstate the southern boundary stipulated in Carolina's original land grant. This grant included territory *south* of St. Augustine, but Drake did not concern himself with Spain's historic tie to the land. He saw the territory between the Altamaha River and Carolina's original southern boundary, at twenty-degrees latitude, as a potential windfall for British planters, traders, and others.²⁸

If the English set the boundary at the Altamaha River, they would cede access to the Gulf of Mexico and the Chatahoochee River. Not only did Georgia's original boundary recognize Spanish sovereignty over land Spaniards had not controlled for decades, but Drake also warned the border gave French Indian traders and military planners unencumbered access to Creek communities that might be used against the English. Drake offered a compromise. If the English found an "inevitable necessity having over us to oblige" to the boundary on the

²⁸PRO 30/47/14/1 – f. 33, William Drake's report to Charles Pickney, July 20, 1736.

Altamaha, they should, at the very least, base the boundary on the river's southern branch.²⁹

According to Drake's understanding of the land in dispute, if the southern branch of the Altamaha became the official border, Britain could maintain access to the Gulf of Mexico by way of the Chatahoochee River. Drake feared what might happen if another power occupied the debated areas on the Gulf of Mexico. Whoever took control of the unsettled areas, "would not only have it in their power in case of a war, with greater facility to invade us," but Drake also realized this territory promised a quick route to the other's commercial vessels in the Caribbean. In other words, Drake saw the Gulf of Mexico as an excellent staging ground for privateering. He warned London if the crown lost access to this section of the coast, the new owners "were they so minded, [could] distress our trade from Jamaica and the Bahamas and wholly command the navigation through the Gulph of Florida, and when they are masters of these seas it is easy to forsee that they will extend their views, and in time make themselves masters of the land also."³⁰ Although Drake's warnings betrayed his ignorance of the land in question, his statement points to a significant change in the debate over Georgia's boundaries.³¹

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 33-34.

³¹ Drake seems to have ignored French settlements on the Mississippi, particularly New Orleans, and the Spanish outpost at Pensacola. Whatever the outcome of the border dispute, England's adversaries would still control land with access to the Gulf of Mexico and thus access to English cargo. Drake did mention that an English presence on the Gulf Coast would halt the expansion of French settlements and might be enough to overtake the French trading post at Mobile, but his plan could not be realized without conflict.

Drake did not concern himself with the debates and bickering between Savannah and St. Augustine. Instead, the astute official saw a more important and potentially ruinous conflict over Georgia's southwestern boundary and suggested a settlement and military outpost on the Chatahoochee River in order to stop French expansion.³² The Indian Commissioner reminded his superiors of past oversights regarding the potential value in settling a frontier. "Let it be remembered," he wrote, "that not above a century and half ago America [was] itself not accounted of much consequence and the Possession thereof . . . was looked upon as a very trifling acquisition to their power and dominion." Drake saw western Georgia as an untapped frontier filled with potential. The lands he crossed on the Chatahoochee seemed better than anywhere in the backcountry and he believed the mouth of the river deep enough to serve as a safe port for damaged or threatened ships. Finally, Drake warned of a potential French menace.

By settling along the Chatahoochee, England might prevent future growth of French settlements on the Mississippi. Drake saw France, not Spain, as the greatest military threat to Georgia and other English colonies. Extending England's boundaries to the Chatahoochee "would effectively prevent the [French from] . . . spreading in those Countries, but above all it would be the best barrier we can possibly have against the encroachment of the French on the Mississippi."³³

³² PRO 30/47/14/1-. f. 34.

³³ *Ibid.*, f. 34.

Drake closed his petition with an ominous vision for the future of western Georgia. “That the French are endeavoring to unite their strength and join hands from all their settlements from Canada and the bay of St. Lawrence to the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico in the South, by which means they will in time either gain all the Indians from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi to their interest or destroy and root out all those Indians who will not come into their interest as they are now attempting.”³⁴ Although London had considered a French threat in the past, Drake’s vision of a massive French-Indian force west of England’s colonies had escaped the attention of even the most concerned officials.

In Europe, diplomats in charge of the border debate in North America paid little or no attention to the opinion of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, but local officials did and acknowledged that Georgia’s territorial weaknesses could harm much of British North America. Drake did not view Georgia as a collection of towns near the coast between Charleston and St. Augustine, but considered the future of the entire area Georgia might occupy in the future. In the unexploited territories he saw the potential for wealth if allowed to be part of the British colony. If English authorities ceded this land, however, England’s enemies might gain a military and economic advantage few considered. The border controversy focused on the governments in St. Augustine and Savannah, but Drake understood that the discussions on border placement would ultimately affect areas far removed from the coastal capitals.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 35.

Shortly after Drake sent his petition to the South Carolina governor, the French threat emerged in grand fashion. In January 1738, frightening news arrived in Charleston. A Commander of English forces in New York sent South Carolina's governor, William Bull, an intelligence brief regarding a French plot to destroy either of the Carolinas or Georgia. Albany received this information from a member of the Five Nations. The informant described a plan that included military assistance from Native communities in the Northeast. Its author warned, "the Governor of Canada intends to set . . . on a Warlike Expedition, not against the Foxes, but as the Interpreter thinks, against the Indians belonging to your Government in . . . Carolina." This was not the first time the English thought the French might attack their colonies with the assistance of Native warriors, but the details of this plot seemed particularly troubling. After eliminating Native resistance, the letter claimed, "the French King has sent eight hundred men with cannon up the River Mississippi, who are to winter at Old Ottasawa and are to be joined by a thousand men from Canada."³⁵ Once joined, the two armies planned to move against the unguarded western frontiers of the lower Southeast.

Furthermore, the author believed the French had invited warriors from the Five Nations to join the expedition. Although the Five Nations were allied with England, relations between them were strained at the time and it was not clear if the Native federation would fight for the French. Some thought the Indians delivered this message in an attempt to determine England's enthusiasm for its

³⁵ PRO 30/47/14/1 f. 27, January 16, 1738.

alliance with the confederation, for the messenger made it clear that the Five Nations had not decided if they would fight for the French; they simply wanted the English to know of France's request. Regardless of their decision, this information caused great anxiety in the Southeast.³⁶ Several months later, Charleston and Savannah received additional information on potential attacks.

In April, while being held prisoner in St. Augustine, an English sailor named James Howell learned of a Spanish plot to invade Georgia. Howell heard the St. Augustine militia and 200 Indians intended to march on Georgia sometime that summer. The local forces were to be bolstered with ships of war and additional soldiers from Havana. All told, Spain had the potential to attack with 7,000 soldiers. The force seemed more than sufficient to destroy the young colony, but Howell heard more. Once Spain launched its attacks, "it was spoken . . . that 1500 French from Canada were to joyn [*sic.*] the Spanish Forces on their Settling of Georgia."³⁷ Howell's warning came on the heels of Savy's tale. Many believed his information only confirmed London's fears of a Spanish attempt to take Georgia. Savy claimed Havana had decided against launching an invasion. Thus,

³⁶ Colonial powers often feared Indian invasion. That Southern colonies expressed great concern over a potential invasion from Northern Indian communities only highlights this unusual aspect to power relations in colonial America. Only three decades before this rumor landed in the Carolinas, the governor of New York feared utter ruin of his colony in the event of an invasion by the Wabanaki communities. The English and others may have drawn boundaries and constructed forts to defend their respective territories, but the Native communities throughout much of the eighteenth century had the power and ability to destroy the European communities. See, Emerson W. Baker & John G. Reid, "Amerindian Power in Early Modern Northeast," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61 (Jan., 2004), 77-106; Jeremy Black, *European Warfare, 1660-1815* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

³⁷ PRO 30/47/14/1/ f.21—April 21, 1738. It is not clear how Howell left St. Augustine, but since the sailor was captured on a privateering vessel, it is likely the English paid a ransom for his freedom.

English authorities had to determine whether Howell's story was part of the Savy plot that had been cancelled or if the Spaniards in Florida had considered another type of invasion. Regardless of the plot's source or the probability, officials in Georgia saw two options; prepare for an invasion or strike first.

In Europe, Spain was considered the greatest threat to Georgia, but by 1737, many in Georgia claimed France was as dangerous as the Spaniards. Those who feared the French argued Spain had the potential and a willingness to threaten Georgia, but did not pose an immediate hazard as Florida's local militia remained weak and ineffective. With its armies in Canada and alliances with powerful Indian communities, France seemed the most capable of executing a massive offensive against Georgia's unprotected western perimeter. In May, William Bull informed London of the French conspiracy.³⁸

Unlike previous rumors, the information that came out of New York seemed more dangerous. London ordered its diplomats to listen for any additional details about these movements, and South Carolina requested the crown send every available ship of war to the Georgia and Carolina coasts for additional protection.³⁹ Local authorities also made sure to bolster existing alliances with Native communities. In South Carolina, many officials started to argue for a preemptive action against the French and Spanish, otherwise English forces would be left waiting to be attacked. By 1737, Georgia seemed the most likely

³⁸CO 5/283 f.32-37, May 25, 1738 William Bull to the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations.

³⁹ J. H. Easterby, ed. *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, Nov. 10, 1736-June 7, 1739* (Columbia: The Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1951), 216. Hereafter, documents from this collection are abbreviated as SCJCH.

target for a French invasion as the young colony represented the soft underbelly of England's southeastern territories.

Prior to the increased tensions of 1737, Oglethorpe and others in Georgia frequently mentioned France and Spain as possible collaborators in a plot to overthrow the colony. Sometimes, instead of fearing a direct invasion, Georgia authorities believed the two nations worked together to destroy Georgia from different, but coordinated approaches. In a letter written in 1736, the Earl of Egmont, John Percival, claimed, "the French and Spaniards are trying to debauch our Indians." Percival feared this might cause an internal disintegration if the plan succeeded.⁴⁰ French activity on Georgia's western edge had caused concern since the colony's beginning. When Georgia started trading with Creek communities, France constructed numerous outposts in the backcountry in hopes of gaining an advantage over the newcomers, or at least intimidating the Georgia traders. As such, the French seemed much closer to Georgia officials than their far off settlements in Louisiana.

To get a better idea of France's potential plans, London ordered its agents in Paris to pay close attention to the activities between French and Spanish officials, but these efforts revealed little. Still, many in London believed an attack on Florida would force France to provide military assistance to the Spaniards as required in a mutual protection treaty known as the Family Compact of 1733.⁴¹ If this treaty were to take effect, those who wanted a war against Spain had to

⁴⁰ *The Journal of the Earl of Egmont*, 159.

⁴¹ Trevor Reese, *Colonial Georgia*, 66.

consider the possibility of a third party. Increasingly, diplomacy seemed the least confused way to solve the problem, but in the event diplomacy failed, London wanted to be prepared. On the frontier, preparations required extra attention to the myriad possibilities for danger.

If a French-Indian force from Canada planned to invade western Georgia and South Carolina, there was no telling how far France might go to remove other English settlements considered threatening to Louisiana. In the larger debate over Georgia, the French had no place at the negotiating table, as the borders in question did not apply to Louisiana. If France wanted any part of Georgia, it would have to be taken by force and this alarmed those in the colonies more than officials in Europe. As locals feared French invasions and conspiracies, Spaniards in Florida displayed their ability to further destabilize British colonies by using unconventional tactics.

In addition to the effective use of rumor as a weapon, piracy off the coasts of British colonies markedly increased during the mid-1730s.⁴² Aside from lodging complaints about offenses committed by Spaniards at sea, London did not take the concerns expressed in Georgia or South Carolina seriously. London agreed that Spain posed a danger in North America, and the crown hoped talks in Europe could diminish this threat. Officials in Florida took a different view.

⁴² The increase of piracy in the Caribbean likely reminded many British officials of extreme threats posed by the Barbary pirates that preyed on British vessels in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. As in the Caribbean, the corsairs threatened British plans for empire and upset an economy linked to maritime commerce. Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the Worlds, 1600-1850* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 46-48.

In November, St. Augustine governor, Manuel Montiano made officials in Cuba and Spain aware of his fears of England's plan for Florida. Montiano claimed his adversary in Georgia had requested permission to invade Florida's Apalachee province. The governor believed Oglethorpe considered Apalachee "more useful to Great Britain than all its remaining colonies and islands in America." If Oglethorpe took Apalachee, Montiano warned, the British could "guarantee that no [Spanish] ship . . . could pass through" the Florida Straits and this meant Spain "could not enjoy the treasures produced by the Kingdoms of Peru and New Spain without his [Oglethorpe's] consent."⁴³ The wide-ranging letter described a region quickly distancing itself, if not ignoring, direction from Europe. Although Spain and England were engaged in talks to settle the border dispute, Montiano described Oglethorpe as determined to take Florida. "Although Parliament opposed any invasion during the peace," Montiano believed Oglethorpe was ready to invade and insisted the "preservation of this post is of the greatest importance to the security of all America."⁴⁴ Montiano accepted St. Augustine's weaknesses, and knew the presidio's flaws were not closely held secrets.

Because Whitehall considered Florida militarily weak, if not impotent, Georgia did not receive immediate protection for its borders. As late as December 1737, authorities in London thought Spain lacked the resources to mount an offensive against Georgia.⁴⁵ Still, some local observers remained

⁴³ *Letters of Montiano*, 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 9

⁴⁵ SP 78/216 f.201-202, December 18, 1737.

cautious, as they believed Spain could easily make itself more menacing and attack on short notice. A year before London declared Florida an unlikely threat, Oglethorpe acknowledged his fears in a letter to New York Governor George Clarke, where he described a Spanish plot to destroy Georgia.

According to Oglethorpe, Spain's strategy involved an attempt to "corrupt the Indians to forsake His Majesty's alliance."⁴⁶ Oglethorpe understood the value in altering Indian alliances for purposes of military success. Like others, he believed Indians would be used in an invasion of the English colony, but Oglethorpe saw what officials in London could not. On the frontier, battles were not necessarily determined by the size of European forces, but frequently depended on Indian alliances and creative planning. At any moment a weak colony could become strong and a forgotten empire could threaten the existence of another.

In early 1738, Spanish officials believed Oglethorpe was ready to strike, with or without London's permission. Although a unilateral attack would be considered a "notorious infraction," by the English general, Montiano understood swift action would destroy Florida, rendering moot any arguments of Georgia's legality. Should Oglethorpe not invade, Montiano believed the English would still "seize whatever they can without let from their King."⁴⁷ Spanish intelligence provided St. Augustine with more reason to expect an English invasion.

⁴⁶ *Colonial Records of New York*, Vol. 6, 70-71.

⁴⁷ *Letters of Montiano*, 13.

In February, Spanish intelligence reported the English had ordered “60 ships of the line to take station off Cadiz.” As the navy moved toward Spain, Oglethorpe would receive nearly 1,600 troops to command in an invasion of Florida. Furthermore, Spanish informants on Florida’s northern frontier believed nearly 6,000 Indians had pledged military support to Georgia’s governor. Spain’s agents were cautious, however, and warned Montiano that the information from Spain and the frontier had the potential to be nothing more than “a ruse to cause us to suspend operations.”⁴⁸ Again, rumor had the potential to change the metrics of the dispute. Montiano, like Oglethorpe could not be certain of the information they received, and erring on the side of caution often required military preparations and plans for attack. St. Augustine could not wait to determine the truth of the new information and Montiano sought help in creating a plan to invade Georgia.

Just three months after Whitehall declared Florida all but impotent, the English sailor James Howell announced that the Spanish were prepared to join forces with the French in an offensive against Georgia. England knew Spain had designs on Georgia, but it did not expect direct participation by France. Yet in 1738, England’s emissaries in Paris confirmed the rumors reported in the colonies. Intelligence from Paris described two frigates and a 50-gun man of war that left France destined for the Louisiana coast.⁴⁹ England’s agents in France claimed “it has been reported for some time past that the French intend to send

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁴⁹ SP 78/217 f. 107, SP 78/218 f. 25, May 6/11, 1738.

twelve or fourteen hundred men to New Orleans, and I know that as long as three months ago a Memorial was presented by . . . some Proprietors of Lands on the Borders of the River Mississippi . . . complaining that the Wild Indians . . . had killed . . . four or five hundred of the French Subjects of that settlement.”⁵⁰ Because of these attacks, thought to be orchestrated by the English, French settlers requested that “enough arms be sent to defend them for the future against the attacks of the Savages.”⁵¹

That spring, France seemed ready to move against the English. Where and when they would attack was not clear, but preparations had to be made. The Carolinas and Georgia prepared for the invasion, but Georgia, being the weakest of the colonies, seemed an obvious target and its defenses received the greatest attention. Two years earlier, Oglethorpe had prepared his colony for a Spanish invasion and ordered the construction of defenses on Georgia’s coastal islands and open areas in the southern interior.⁵² Yet, when France seemed the greatest threat to British interests in late 1737, Georgia’s southern defenses seemed less important. Suddenly, Oglethorpe needed men and munitions on the western frontier, a difficult task for a militia already stretched thin. Spain still appeared dangerous and because Florida might send troops to assist the French, the

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ SP 78/217 f. 107, March 8, 1738.

⁵² CO/5 5/722/ f.12-15. At the same time, Georgia became aware of French and Indian movements in the West, Georgia learned of Spanish efforts to bolster Indian alliances and return to the “Apalachee Old Fields, south of the forks of the Apalachicola.” Corkran, *The Creek Frontier*, 100.

original defenses had to be tended, further straining Georgia's available resources.

While Savannah sought military assistance from Charleston and London, other preparations had to be made. Alliances with Native Americans in New York had to be assured and strengthened, for if the Five Nations joined Canadian troops on their march southward, defeat in Georgia seemed likely. Diplomats listened for information or conspiracies that forever leaked out of the royal courts, and other diplomatic efforts had to be doubled if England wanted to prevent the escalation of potential conflicts in North America.

Authorities in South Carolina and Georgia worked in concert to repel the predicted attack, but it is possible the intelligence that caused such a commotion was inaccurate and maybe even outdated. The feared attack from France may have been nothing more than the result of various French-Indian disputes that had little to do with Georgia, the Southeastern frontier, or the potential to force English settlers from the area.

Prior to 1738, the French had attempted a similar battle plan that involved forces from Canada and Louisiana backed by a large and diverse Indian contingent. In 1735, the French began a series of conflicts against England's long-time ally the Chickasaw. During these campaigns, issues of Native-European alliances, access to trade networks, and the increasing independence of Indian traders led to hostilities.⁵³ By 1730, the French began plotting their move against

⁵³ In 1736, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville planned an invasion of Chickasaw and Natchez settlements to protect French trade interests. For the unsuccessful invasion, Bienville used Canadian soldiers as well as warriors from the Illinois and Wyandot nations. This operation was followed by a similar but more

England's native allies in hopes of gaining complete control of the western Indian trade and bolstering their defenses by incorporating conquered Native communities. The strategy favored by Louisiana's leadership included the use of Canadian forces. After careful planning, French and Indian soldiers from Canada marched southward toward Chickasaw villages in early 1736. The northern forces traveled down the Mississippi River to a spot just north of Memphis. From there, they traveled along the Mobile Bay Trail into Chickasaw territory and waited for the arrival of reinforcements from Louisiana.⁵⁴ The plan failed. In short decisive battles, the Chickasaw destroyed the northern and southern allied contingents.

Despite the Chickasaw victory, Georgia and South Carolina expected the French to try a similar plan in the near future. In all likelihood, what the English colonies figured a plot against their western frontiers was another French campaign against the Chickasaw. After all, when New York informed Charleston that the French were plotting to attack either of the Carolinas or Georgia, the French had to first defeat the Indian communities in western Carolina on their eastward advance. At the time, the high volume of intelligence that suggested an invasion of the western edges of South Carolina and Georgia required the English militia to remain vigilant regardless of what happened to the French in their battles with the Chickasaw.

elaborate attack the following year. See, Steele, *Warpaths*, 164-166. Daniel Usner, *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 82-85.

⁵⁴ Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier*, 124.

In late 1738, the French moved against the Chickasaw and again attempted to join northern and southern armies for the attack.⁵⁵ Again, the plan resulted in failure, yet were the French aware of the fear their movement caused in Savannah and Charleston they might have skipped the Natives and headed straight for the Europeans. It is not clear if the information sent from Albany was little more than a misunderstood piece of intelligence, or if after conquering the Chickasaw, the united French army intended to march against Georgia or South Carolina. A flurry of correspondence between English and French diplomats suggests the French had no intention of invading Georgia. Yet, the colonists did not know this. As they had before, the residents of Georgia and the Carolinas had to respond to the rumors with certainty. How each side reacted to rumors highlighted the tensions on the southern frontier. In Europe, authorities had a difficult time gauging the level of threat posed by different European powers along the frontier.

As English authorities in the colonies developed strategies to defend themselves from French aggression, Whitehall ordered agents in Paris to determine France's plan for the contested region in North America. By the spring, England's ambassador to France, James Waldegrave, reported to his superiors in London that the French had no intentions of invading Georgia. French activity, Waldegrave wrote, depended on Spain's actions. French officials reminded the English ambassador of previous treaties of mutual protection that required France to defend Spain in the event of an attack.⁵⁶ However, if Spain

⁵⁵ Steele, *Warpaths*, 165.

⁵⁶ In particular the 1733 Treaty of Friendship.

attacked South Carolina, Georgia, or another British colony, France would be “discharged from giving any assistance” to the Spaniards.⁵⁷ In other words, if England wanted to avoid French involvement, it would have to shelve its plans to invade Florida.

From Paris, Waldegrave offered his superiors a more thorough picture of the potential for conflict in North America. If England attacked Florida for its belligerence, the English would likely face French troops and their Indian allies in retaliation for the attack. If the Spanish decided to attack the English, however, the French would not assist in the aggression. In other words, the rumors coming from St. Augustine, New York, and elsewhere, were not to be taken seriously. France did not want to fight the English unless it had to, and to underscore this position, Waldegrave thought France seemed willing to sign a secretive treaty that would ensure neutrality should hostilities between Spain and England erupt over Georgia.⁵⁸ There was little incentive to fight when many in Paris believed neutrality in a Spanish-English conflict could increase French power throughout North America. Waldegrave heard France had decided “to let England and Spain exhaust themselves by war whilst France will grow rich at the expense of both.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ SP/78/218 f. 72. Waldegrave to Whitehall, May 11, 1738.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, f.80. The “secret treaty” mentioned in these documents focuses exclusively on Georgia. Here, France agreed to ally itself with English interests in North America and if hostilities arose between Spain and England, France would not be obligated to fight for the English. Apparently, the French did not want to fight with the Spaniards either.

⁵⁹ SP 78/219 f. 10-11. Waldegrave to Whitehall, August 20, 1738.

While discussions continued between the royal courts, leaders in the colonies prepared for an armed conflict. Regardless of what was said between ambassadors and other officials, those in the colonies had to assume the many rumors were real. That Georgia and South Carolina prepared their towns for invasion after being warned of an attack against Indian communities on the periphery illustrates the widespread fear these rumors created. On the frontier, the line between rumor and reality was often thin and easily crossed. Attacks on western frontiers had the potential to seriously weaken defenses throughout the colonies.⁶⁰ Violence against the enemy could assume many forms. Spain used slaves to threaten internal upheaval while Oglethorpe drafted loyal Indians to attack Spaniards. At one point, Montiano accused the English of offering any Indian “50 dollars for the scalp of every Spaniard they might kill.”⁶¹ Violence could be random and to defend against such uncertainty each side had to constantly prepare for the unexpected. Such concern is evident in the contrasting policies toward slavery on the frontier.

Georgia banned slavery partly to stem the flow of runaway slaves from South Carolina, but despite its efforts, fugitive slaves continued a steady migration into Florida. In 1738, Montiano attempted to exploit a perceived weakness of British colonies and moved the runaway British slaves to a fort called *Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose*. Montiano wanted to reassert Florida’s

⁶⁰ Although he addresses a later period, Gregory Evans Dowd shows the power rumor had on the western frontiers. Gregory Evans Dowd, "The Panic of 1751: The Significance of Rumors on the South Carolina-Cherokee Frontier," *William and Mary Quarterly* (July, 1996): 527-560.

⁶¹ *Letters of Montiano*, 26 (August 31, 1738).

power and to do so he drafted the men of Fort Mose into the St. Augustine militia. Thus, Montiano created the first state-sanctioned free black settlement in North America and armed its male population.⁶² A policy that once simply irritated slave owners near the Florida borderlands, suddenly posed a direct challenge to the security of neighboring colonies. In March, a correspondent to the *South Carolina Gazette* acknowledged his colony's problem by declaring slaves could "be the Bait proper for catching a Carolina planter, as certain Beef to catch a Shark."⁶³ With Fort Mose in place, St. Augustine provided the bait. The specter of a militia comprised of former slaves created significant anxiety to the governments already tormented by threats and rumors from other directions.

Constructed approximately two miles north of the Castillo San Marcos, Fort Mose provided the garrison inside St. Augustine's walls with an early warning system. If the British or others attacked the city from the land, Fort Mose would be the first hit. As such, the fort did not provide its residents with the best living conditions or sense of total security, but the former slaves were free and enjoyed certain rights and privileges. Built on the westernmost bend in a small tidal creek, the fort had an earthwork wall and wooden palisade for protection. A three-foot deep dry moat was dug in front of the walls and filled with Spanish yucca or bayonet cactus. The small outpost was protected, but would be the first

⁶² Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999) 29. See also, Landers, "Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose: A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida," *American Historical Quarterly* 95 (February, 1990), 9-24.

⁶³ Darold D. Wax, " 'The Great Risque We Run': The Aftermath of Slave Rebellion at Stono, South Carolina, 1739-1745," *The Journal of Negro History* 67 (Summer, 1982): 137. *South Carolina Gazette*, March 9, 1738.

attacked. Socially, the fugitives enjoyed many privileges denied as slaves in British colonies. For their freedom, the fugitive slaves converted to Catholicism and to facilitate this change, St. Augustine assigned a Franciscan priest to the town. Aside from the religious figure, the former slaves controlled the small settlement.⁶⁴ Service in the militia was compulsory, and the population chose leaders, but Mose's greatest power came from what the fort and its population symbolized.

The utilization of Fort Mose as a defensive outpost reflected St. Augustine's fears of British aggression. If arming former slaves helped destabilize South Carolina's plantations and thereby weaken Georgia's position as a defensive bulwark, St. Augustine believed it could make gains in its fight for territorial sovereignty. If, however, the border dispute led to war, St. Augustine's new soldiers were prepared to fight their former owners. In a petition sent to the governor, the residents of Mose declared "we promise that every time the opportunity arises we shall be the most cruel enemies of the English and that we will risk our lives in servitude of the [King] until we have spilled our last drop of blood in defending the crown of Spain."⁶⁵

With Fort Mose, St. Augustine directly challenged South Carolina. Consequently, Charleston had no choice but to respond to the peculiar menace. The fort and its militia existed, but the British blew its potential to harm English interests out of proportion. The climate of fear, created by the effective use of

⁶⁴ Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 32.

⁶⁵ AGI 58-1-31/62 (Fugitives to Spanish authorities, July, 1738).

rumor, inflamed British sensibilities to the point where the most minor conflicts seemed to hold the potential for catastrophe. In this way, Fort Mose became a crucial weapon in inviting a preemptive attack from the British. It also forced the English to reexamine its actions on the Southern border. Fort Mose's potential to create widespread racial unrest had to be considered. South Carolina no longer wanted to negotiate the Georgia border.

In May, William Bull requested that the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations end talks with the Spaniards over the Florida border and recognize Carolina's original southern boundary as Georgia's terminus.⁶⁶ A month later, Bull claimed a Spanish expedition had set out to "settle the Old Town of Apalachia" where the Spaniards could "invade Georgia and Carolina."⁶⁷ Based on this information, the Carolina governor requested an immediate shipment of small arms to the southern colonies.⁶⁸ Bull had grown tired of the activities in Florida and believed an English force could easily conquer its disrespectful neighbor, but his actions suggest another point of tension. By making requests on behalf of Georgia's defense, Bull assumed the local voice of authority. Here, the South Carolina governor, not Oglethorpe or the Trustees, spoke for the needs of Georgia.

In a letter to London, South Carolina's governor tried to convince royal officials that Florida was already weak and the land he wanted for the crown

⁶⁶ PRO 30/47/14/2- William Bull to Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, May 25, 1738.

⁶⁷ CO 326/17, South Carolina Letters. William Bull to London, June 6, 1738.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Bull to Newcastle, June 9, 1738.

virtually uninhabited. In his letter, Bull repeated much of what William Drake had argued earlier, regarding Georgia's border placement, and he reminded officials at Whitehall that according to the king's charter, the southern boundary of Carolina extended beyond St. Augustine.⁶⁹ Bull did not care if the Spaniards had occupied the contested region for over a century when England set the Carolina boundary. In Bull's view, the king's signature trumped historical reality.

"I humbly hope," wrote Bull, "I may be indulged in a wish that the Boundaries might be extended to the utmost limits expressed in the charter."⁷⁰ Bull may have anticipated his superiors would counter this argument with a mention or two of Spain's history in the area, for he added an additional thought regarding Britain's historical right to the southeastern frontier. South Carolina's leader believed Britain's 1717 victory over the Yamasee and earlier successes against the Apalachee in 1704, provided the crown indisputable rights to the frontier south of Charleston. Bull feared St. Augustine could become an imminent threat to his colony. If London refused to flex its muscle from Europe, Bull prepared to defend against an invasion.

In Florida, Montiano had similar difficulties. As early as 1738, Florida's governor believed he could invade Georgia and drive the British off Spanish territory for good. Diplomacy in Europe, however, threatened these plans. Time and again, Montiano received orders to delay or suspend operations. In early June, Montiano openly expressed regret over the suspension of a plan to invade

⁶⁹ PRO 30/47/14/1-f. 33. Drake to Pickney, July 20, 1736.

⁷⁰ CO 326/17, South Carolina Letters. William Bull to London, June 6, 1738.

the English, a plan that “would have led to the expulsion of the enemy.”⁷¹

Although Montiano was ordered to postpone the invasion, Spain made it clear that the governor should be prepared for “any sudden attack,” by the British. Despite discussions in Europe and calls for a peaceful resolution, neither side could trust the other and the tensions only increased.

South Carolina’s concern over Florida, as well as London’s impatience with Spanish activities throughout the Atlantic world, reached a crescendo in early 1739. In January, Bull addressed the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly about the dangers in Florida’s policy on runaway slaves. Bull declared, “The desertion of our slaves is a matter of such importance to this province...that the most effectual means ought to be used to discourage and prevent it for the future, and to render as secure as possible so valuable a part of the estates and property of his Majesty’s faithful subjects.”⁷² Georgia’s founding may have secured additional territory for the British crown, but according to South Carolina’s leader, the young colony had failed to provide effectual security to more northern plantations. Bull, impatient with the progress of diplomatic efforts, again spoke for Georgia and urged London to declare war on Spain.

Since 1738, South Carolina planters increasingly expressed concern about runaway slaves. In November, Captain Caleb Davis reported nineteen of his slaves had fled to Florida. Davis traveled to Florida in an attempt to recover the missing slaves, but when he arrived in St. Augustine, the governor informed him

⁷¹ *Letters of Montiano*, 16-17 (May 28, 1738).

⁷² *South Carolina Gazette*, January 25, 1739.

that “it was the express command of his Catholic Majesty . . . to declare all slaves to be free that should desert thither from this province, and instead of giving up any deserting slaves, the said Governour said he had...published a proclamation declaring all slaves to be free.”⁷³ The next spring, Reverend Lewis Jones, a missionary in Beaufort, South Carolina reported 23 local slaves missing. According to Jones, the slaves left for St. Augustine and successfully crossed Georgia undetected. He warned authorities that the flight of these slaves would cause a “considerable increase [in] the prejudice of planters ag[ainst] the Negroes, and occasion a strict hand to be kept over them by their . . . owners.”⁷⁴

In response to the repeated desertions of 1738, the Assembly hired sixteen men to patrol local waterways for fugitive slaves. In addition to the increased patrols, South Carolina offered large bounties for anyone who captured a runaway. If a captor returned a slave from beyond the Savannah River, the bounty hunter earned £40 for each male, £25 per female, and £10 for a child. Anyone who produced an adult scalp with both ears intact received a £20 reward.⁷⁵ With the new regulations and louder complaints from the colonial assembly, South Carolina underscored the danger posed by Florida’s actions. Florida also did its part to keep Carolinians aware of the lengths it would go to unsettle the slave owning colonies.

⁷³ *The Colonial Records of South Carolina. November 10, 1736-June 7, 1739*, 595-596.

⁷⁴ Wilbur H. Siebert, “Slavery and White Servitude in East Florida, 1726-1776,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 10 (July, 1931): 4.

⁷⁵ Wood, *Black Majority*, 310.

In March, Florida governor Manuel Montiano wrote the South Carolina government to reiterate his policy of protecting any runaway slave that made it to Florida. According to one South Carolina legislator, this policy promised “fatal consequences to the safety and welfare of this province.”⁷⁶ One month later, two slaves were captured on their way to St. Augustine. Sentenced under the new slave code, one was publicly whipped and the other hanged. Following the execution, officials displayed the body at “Hang-man’s point for all the other slaves passing by water to see.”⁷⁷ In light of increased racial tensions and slave difficulties, South Carolina asked Georgia to pay closer attention to slaves traveling through the colony, but internal problems made the maintenance and support of local patrols difficult. Again, Georgia seemed unable to fulfill the duties of a buffer zone.

Georgia should have prevented St. Augustine’s threats from any impact in South Carolina, but South Carolina soon realized it could not rely on Georgia alone to deflect Spain’s threats. Bull had requested the navy send a ship of war to patrol the Georgia-South Carolina coast, but his request was rejected. The navy claimed it could not justify the additional protection. Bull did not give up, however, and by the end of January he and the House of Commons established the “Committee of Council on the St. Augustine Affairs.”⁷⁸ In Georgia, internal difficulties threatened to cause additional troubles for the Trustees.

⁷⁶ *SCJHC*, March 16, 1739.

⁷⁷ *South Carolina Gazette*, April 5-12, 1739.

⁷⁸ *SCJHC*, January 23, 1739.

Already, the Trustees faced growing opposition to its stance against slavery. By 1738, many in Georgia demanded the right to own slaves. One of the first actions of the Malcontents came in the form of a pamphlet that called for significant changes in the administration of the colony. In particular, the Malcontents sought the reversal of the slave ban and liberalized land policies.⁷⁹ In light of Spain's creative use of British runaway slaves, Oglethorpe and the Trustees were in no mood to reconsider one of their earlier social policies. Slavery, its presence or absence, seemed likely to cause a problem for Georgia in ways not immediately understood.

Officials in Charleston acknowledged the growing problem with runaway slaves and the danger in Spain's policy of arming the fugitives. Despite its best efforts, nothing could halt the confusing yet relentless forces that seemed to control events on the frontier. Bull and Oglethorpe were prepared to invade Florida, but members of the British Parliament disapproved. From his view of events in Madrid, Benjamin Keene suggested London sue for peace over the Georgia question.

According to the British envoy, Spain had a legitimate claim to Georgia. In one of the first admissions to Spanish ownership of the contested land, Keene agreed with his Spanish counterpart that Georgia should order "the evacuation and demolition of the forts said to be built of late by Mr. Oglethorpe."⁸⁰ Keene fought for England's right to settle Georgia, but agreed Oglethorpe had gone too

⁷⁹ Harvey H. Jackson, "The Darien Antislavery Petition of 1738 and the Georgia Plan," *William and Mary Quarterly* 34 (October, 1977) : 618-631. Reese, *The Clamorous Malcontents*.

⁸⁰ SP 94/120, Keene to Whitehall, April 12, 1738.

far in stretching the limits of his colony. If nothing was done to reign in the increasingly independent governor, Keene predicted there would be war. In Europe, officials attempted to ensure peace in the distant colonies. The final hope to avoid war came in an agreement known as the Convention of Pardo.

If there was to be a war, many believed the fight would span the globe. The war would be for domination of the western hemisphere; it would be Britain versus France and Spain, and it would be justified by past depredations against British interests. Georgia was not the center of the controversy, but the fight between the British, French, Spanish, and Indians over the North American frontier provided a near complete microcosm of the day's larger debates.

The Convention of Pardo marked the final attempt at a peaceful solution to the larger English-Spanish conflict. The convention discussed complaints from the opposing crowns on such diverse topics as trade limitations, border disputes, and acts of piracy on the open seas. From this agreement, representatives from England and Spain promised to avoid war at all costs. Regarding the conflict over the Florida-Georgia borderlands, Britain agreed to consider Spain's charges of improper border placement and the illegal construction of forts within Florida's limits, but this came with a fight.

After examining the early drafts of the agreement, officials in Madrid worried that the convention could be detrimental to Spain's possessions in southeastern North America. Among those most concerned was King Philip V who directed his anger at what appeared to be a British game of semantics with the potential to alter the Florida border. According to Keene, it was not clear if the Spanish king even knew the convention took place. When presented with an

early draft of the document, King Phillip allegedly grew furious over a single sentence in the agreement. The line, nothing more than a parenthetical description, described Georgia as a region within South Carolina.⁸¹ To Spain, placing Georgia within the limits of South Carolina seemed particularly troubling. Because the Treaty of 1670 recognized South Carolina's territorial legitimacy, the Spanish king believed Georgia's boundaries would be untouchable if the convention considered Georgia a part of South Carolina. Ultimately, the King's objections were noted and the representatives struck the passage from the document. Yet, the concern caused by a simple descriptive sentence illustrates the importance each nation placed on the Florida-Georgia debate.⁸²

In the Convention's final draft, England and Spain agreed to send plenipotentiaries to the colonies to conduct a survey of the disputed land. Thus, the convention directed officials from Europe, not the local governments, to determine the territorial limits of Florida and Georgia.⁸³ The authors of the convention hoped the document could serve as the basis for a treaty that might

⁸¹ The line at issue stated: "*Les Frontières de la Caroline Meridionale/ sans laquells on entendêtre comprise la Colonie de la Georgia.*" Several months before the convention, the Duke of Newcastle ordered Benjamin Keene to make sure Spain understood "that Georgia was part of South Carolina." See, SP 94/132. Newcastle to Keene, April 13, 1738.

⁸² SP 94/121, Keene to Newcastle, October 13, 1738. In the early negotiations, both sides placed great importance on the Treaty of 1670. At one point, Spain and England agreed that whatever came out of Pardo would adhere to the fundamentals of the 1670 Treaty of Madrid stating, "that what England or Spain had a right to at that epoch, they have a right to this very day." Spain took this to mean they would own the land being claimed as Georgia. Britain understood it to mean the opposite.

⁸³ Article Two of the convention also stated both sides would halt all new construction or development in the disputed territories until an agreement could be reached. For a more detailed discussion of events leading to the convention, see Lanning, *The Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 124-153.

“prevent the heavy evils and calamities of war.”⁸⁴ This agreement caused outrage in Georgia, confidence in Florida, and mixed emotions in London. Spain believed its historical right to the land trumped any claim made by the British. Many British, however, viewed the convention as a needless capitulation to a weak adversary.

Thomas Gage, Viscount and future governor of Barbados, declared the Convention of Pardo left the citizens of Georgia, “naked and defenceless, exposed to the mercy of the Spaniards, whenever they please to attack them, by being restraun’d from the Means of Self-Preservation.”⁸⁵ Gage, and others detected a conspiracy to weaken England’s contested colonies in the January agreement. Some accused Walpole of giving the Spaniards everything they wanted and then some, just to avoid a war England could easily win. The meeting at Pardo followed Spanish attacks on Gibraltar, increased piracy in the Atlantic, conflicts over logging operations in Mexico and Central America, and more, but much of the outrage over the agreement focused on the possibility of losing Georgia to the Spaniards.⁸⁶

In another pamphlet, Benjamin Robins described the result as an “extraordinary concession . . . on our side.” “It is necessary to take notice,” Robins wrote, “that a large tract of Land in South Carolina has been purchased

⁸⁴ Thomas Gordon, *An Appeal to the Unprejudiced, Concerning the present Discontents Occasioned by the late Convention with Spain* (London: Printed for T. Cooper, 1739).

⁸⁵ Thomas Gage, *The Speech of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Gage in Parliament Against the Convention with Spain* (London: Printed for F. Style, 1739).

⁸⁶ Benjamin Robins, *Observations on the Present Convention with Spain*, (Dublin: Printed for George Faulkner, 1739).

with the publick money during the current administration...that by its situation would very much protect our other colonies against the insults of the Spaniards.”⁸⁷ Like others, Robins still considered the maintenance of Georgia to be the most effective defense against Spanish depredations. Without Georgia, Spain could invade other British colonies. If Spain maintained its belligerence at sea, Georgia could protect English shipping lanes. Robins commented “all the treasure transported from New Spain to Europe, must of necessity pass almost within sight of [Georgia’s] coast.”⁸⁸ And if properly used, the colony could provide an excellent offensive position for the British navy. Still, despite the widespread opposition to the Convention of Pardo, the agreement cleared Parliament in early March, but the debate did not end.

Parliamentary hawks challenged Walpole’s efforts to avoid war with the Spaniards. On March 17, 1739 Parliament invited Robert Jenkins, a victim of piracy, to speak of Spanish treachery on the open sea. Jenkins spoke of his encounter with the Spanish pirate Juan de León Fandino. He recounted how Fandino savagely beat him and his crew for being nothing more than English. Finally, he relived the moment when Fandino cut off his ear, threw the bloody appendage at Jenkins. The Spaniard then ordered the Englishman to deliver the ear to his king with the message that Fandino would do the same to the sovereign, if given the opportunity. At the end of his impassioned plea to avenge

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Here, Robins suggests Georgia assume the role Spain intended for St. Augustine. Instead of defending a passing treasure fleet, however, Georgia could serve as the primary staging port for raids on the ships of the Spanish Main.

the violence committed against English sailors, Jenkins produced the ear.⁸⁹

Jenkins' display was more than enough to turn the tide against Walpole's plan for peace.

Parliament, the king, and eventually even Newcastle called for war against Spain. Jenkins' talk was dramatic and brought a flood of vitriolic speeches against the Prime Minister's pacifism, but pamphlets published to rebuke the diplomatic efforts, ultimately placed the nation on a war footing. While Parliament debated war, events in the colonies continued with little consultation. The speed of information prevented England from playing a very direct role in the diplomatic efforts in the colonies. Oglethorpe could not wait to hear from Whitehall when it was believed war between Georgia and Florida might begin at any moment.

The route to the War of Jenkins' Ear took numerous turns. During the three-year period before the fighting began, the institution of unusual policies and use of rumor helped create an environment that actually facilitated war. The information that became rumor did not necessarily begin as false or misleading. When Florida constructed Fort Mose and invited British slaves to flee their masters, a weak Spanish outpost became a menacing threat to Georgia and South Carolina. Fort Mose cost the Spaniards little and its occupants did not demand

⁸⁹ There remains some debate as to what was said and whether or not Jenkins produced a pickled ear. For different versions of this tale see, Lanning, *The Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 144-145, 176; Edward W. Lawson, "What Became of the Man who Cut Off Jenkins' Ear," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 37 (July, 1958), 34-36; *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America*, Vol. IV, 1728-1739, 426n-427n. Some of Jenkins' contemporaries consider the "incident as a fable," and others dispute whether the sailor carried his ear with him to Parliament. On March 16, Parliament officially ordered Jenkins to testify and he appeared the following day.

much, yet its presence did more to upset the leadership in British colonies than any official complaint on border placement ever could have. Likewise, the very thought of Canadian and Northeastern Indians invading the young colony to create a foothold in a larger war for conquest made Louisiana seem more menacing to British authorities. Ultimately, the emergence of Fort Mose and the rumors reported by the Five Nations actually made Georgia stronger. The nimble colony confronted the unusual challenges. Accordingly, Georgia solidified its position and transformed a frontier to a definable borderland.

CHAPTER 7
FADING OF THE FRONTIER, 1740-1742

By 1740, war seemed inevitable. Spain demanded that Georgia be removed or at least scaled back. England feared that would expose South Carolina to danger from the Spaniards. Diplomacy continued in the face of increased belligerence between the two parties. Few believed a peaceful solution possible. Frontier rumors, the unusual policies designed to disrupt the tenuous peace and the constant dispute over territorial limits all pointed to hostilities.

For much of 1739, numerous challenges made Georgia appear weaker than ever. To protect the colony from potential Indian attacks orchestrated by Spain or France, Oglethorpe made efforts to placate the potentially explosive Indian armies on the colony's western periphery. Within months, he earned small, but important victories in the battle for Indian loyalty. In February officials in Savannah reported that members of a Choctaw community once allied with the French had declared loyalty to the English. This reversal made the English realize that although Georgia remained vulnerable and needed greater alliances, they could convince French allies to accept Savannah's authority.¹ As Georgia reached more agreements with Native communities, the colony's leadership turned its attention to the Spaniards in Florida. In February 1739, Oglethorpe

¹ *General Oglethorpe's Georgia: Colonial Letters, 1733-1743, Vol. 2*, 390-393. Thomas Jones to Harman Verelst, February 17, 1739.

attempted to open a dialogue with St. Augustine by inviting Governor Montiano to visit him at Frederica to discuss their differences.

Ostensibly, Oglethorpe called the meeting to resolve the border dispute peacefully. However, in letters to Savannah, Oglethorpe claimed Spain could not be trusted. "The Governor of Augustine is wonderful civil, but I believe the reason is patience perforce," Oglethorpe wrote. He believed the Spaniard was preparing an invasion of his colony and he asked for the meeting in hopes of reaching an agreement before shots were fired. Prior to their meeting, Oglethorpe made it clear he would "not trust" the Spaniards, "nor permit any of their boats, nor so much as one of their men, to come amongst us."² As Oglethorpe finished his letter, English and Spanish plenipotentiaries met in Madrid to find a solution over the Florida-Georgia debate. Oglethorpe did not want to wait for Europe's decision on his colony's borders as he believed an agreement by him with the Florida government, would override any settlement reached in Europe.

Regardless of what happened in Madrid or London, the meeting at Frederica gave the governors an opportunity to determine the other's willingness to fight for the contested land. Oglethorpe did not guarantee the removal of any forts or outposts recently constructed, and Montiano reiterated his policy of offering refuge to fugitive slaves.

In terms of an immediate threat, Montiano's refusal held the greatest potential to cause trouble. Oglethorpe may have made progress in keeping the

² *Ibid.*, 405. For a description of what happened in Europe while Florida and Georgia representatives met at Frederica see, Lanning, *The Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 165-168.

peace with Indians, but the specter of an African militia ready and willing to seek vengeance on their former owners caused concern throughout the British South. The fear of Fort Mose's potential to upset order within the slave community was frequently expressed in South Carolina's House of Commons. Throughout 1739 and Charleston sent several protests to St. Augustine, Madrid, and London. When Spanish officials bothered to acknowledge these complaints, the Spaniards only reaffirmed the policy that created such fear and dread in the British colonies. Authorities in Europe understood these fears. In a climate of increased tension, Oglethorpe received permission to engage the Spaniards.

Months before the declaration of war reached the colonies, King George II ordered Oglethorpe to launch a campaign of harassment against the Spaniards. The English planned to destabilize the Florida government by using strategies similar to the approach Spain took.³ Oglethorpe considered rapid border raids, the use of piracy, and placing additional pressure on Indian communities allied with the Spaniards. Montiano did not believe Oglethorpe capable of leading an army on Florida and assumed a cavalier attitude while Oglethorpe plotted his next move. In March, Montiano wrote Oglethorpe "is making but little progress," and he could not count on support from other British colonies as his "daring disposition" had disappointed his peers.⁴ Montiano, however, had poor information. Oglethorpe enjoyed the support of regional authorities, Indian leaders, and others willing to assist in his plan for Florida. Georgia and South

³ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 88.

⁴ *Letters of Montiano*, 29 (March 3, 1739).

Carolina had sought authority to invade their troublesome neighbor for years and events in Europe finally seemed ripe to sanction military aggression.

Elsewhere in the British Atlantic, authorities interpreted the king's order as support for increased piracy and privateering. In May, 1739 a Spanish official complained of English aggression in the Caribbean. Spain claimed ships of the British Navy had increased patrols in the West Indies and following the Convention of Pardo, which banned such activity, English ships actually crept closer to Cuba and Puerto Rico. Furthermore, Spanish intelligence discovered "several ships were coming to reinforce [the English] squadron," actions that breached the agreement.⁵ Keene admitted London had ordered reinforcements to the West Indies, but he claimed this was in response to Spanish actions. Despite Spain's assurances that it would disarm or remove several of its vessels in the West Indies, the Spaniards had actually bolstered their presence in the Caribbean, forcing a British response. Again, events in the colonies failed to reflect the desires of European diplomats.

That summer, a war of words erupted between Spain and England. England accused the Spaniards of attempting to create a "labyrinth of useless disputes," as a means of distraction while preparing to attack English settlements. England's ambassador felt Spain clearly had the upper hand in the growing dispute. At every bend on the road to war, Keene believed Spain found and exploited another weakness. Expressing his frustration with what he viewed to be a constant losing fight, Keene quipped to the Duke of Newcastle, "surely we must look . . . worse

⁵ SP 94/133, De la Quintana to Keene, May 18, 1739.

than [the] Chinese to be duped at this rate.”⁶ But, Spain also accused the English of planning a war while insisting on peace and regarded London as the stronger party in what many considered the inevitable conflict.

Efforts at diplomacy ended in August. King Phillip V of Spain declared a “fatal rupture” in relations with England. King Phillip said he could no longer watch the English prepare to invade his colonies and informed Keene that English “ships, goods, and effects” would be “seized by way of reprisal.”⁷ Shortly after King Phillip announced his intentions, Whitehall recalled its agent in Madrid.⁸ In Europe, a rupture in the tenuous peace seemed certain, but in the colonies, Oglethorpe had reason to believe a general calm might be possible. Oglethorpe entered the summer confident that issues would be resolved despite the deterioration of diplomacy in Europe.

The Convention of Pardo promised a diplomatic solution to the border dispute with Florida and none of the rumors that plagued the region had emerged. Indians from New York never joined French forces to rout the English of South Carolina. John Savy, unable to convince the Spanish or English of a need to attack the other, proved to be little more than a paper tiger. Plots that seemed certain to bring an entire region to war never materialized. And then, on September 9, violence erupted from a surprising, but not unlikely source. That

⁶ SP94/133, Keene to Newcastle, June 9 and 25, 1739.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Keene to Newcastle, August 20, 1739.

⁸ SP 94/133, Whitehall to Keene, August 31, 1739. Keene reported to London that the English delegation would leave Spain through Portugal and the embattled agents were leaving under the protection of an official Spanish escort.

evening, slaves from Stono, South Carolina rose against their masters in what became the largest slave revolt in colonial North America.

Led by a slave named Jemmy, the group of Catholic Kongolese broke into a store on the western branch of the Stono River and stole small arms and gunpowder.⁹ Once armed, the slaves headed south toward Georgia, intending to march to freedom in St. Augustine. Along the way, the group burned and plundered houses and killed approximately twenty-five whites before local forces extinguished the rebellion. In the end, nearly forty slaves were killed and Spain received most of the blame for inciting violence.¹⁰ The resistance quickly came to an end and none of the slaves made it to Florida. Still, South Carolina reacted with fear and anger towards the Spaniards. Georgia did not have the opportunity to prove its worth to South Carolina, but perhaps because the colony lacked slaves, Carolinians quickly contained the revolt. Nevertheless, in the days and weeks following the Stono Revolt, the South Carolina government prepared a response. Locally, slaves paid for the actions of those involved in the revolt, but authorities in South Carolina also insisted Florida be held responsible.

Later, in the official report published by the South Carolina Commons House, the government declared, “The Negroes would not have made this insurrection had they not depended on St. Augustine for a place of reception

⁹ Mark Smith, “Remembering Mary, Shaping Revolt: Reconsidering the Stono Rebellion,” *The Journal of Southern History* 67 (August, 2001) : 513-534. John K. Thornton, “African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion,” *The American Historical Review* 96 (October, 1991) : 1101-1113. Wood, *Black Majority*, 315-319.

¹⁰ In the months prior to the invasion, English officials reported several Spanish ships off the South Carolina coast. Later, this led investigators to assume the Spaniards actively suggested the rebellion to the slaves of Stono. See, Thornton, “African Dimensions,” 1102.

afterwards was very certain; and that the Spaniards had a hand in prompting them to this particular action there was but little room to doubt.”¹¹ Spain may not have supplied the weapons or provided the slaves with a protected route to Florida, but its policy of granting asylum to escaped slaves had the same effect nonetheless. In South Carolina, the rebellion highlighted a serious miscalculation of the needs for colonial security.

The Georgia buffer protected South Carolina from direct land assaults by the Spaniards, but this safeguard did little to diminish internal threats. In South Carolina the greatest dangers lurked within the colony’s black majority. Georgia’s slavery ban could not eliminate the draw of St. Augustine and its fugitive slave policy. After Stono, South Carolinians demanded internal changes. By November, the Commons House declared it “absolutely necessary to get a sufficient number of white persons in this province.”¹² In the meantime, something had to be done to Florida for the damage its policy had created. The dispute over the contested frontier, thus brought to a head the simmering tensions between Britain and Spain, threatening global repercussions.

Six weeks after the events at Stono, on October 19, England declared war on Spain. The decision placated two separate factions. In the colonies, an organized militia could rightfully retaliate against the Spaniards for inciting the rebellion at Stono. In London, those who felt Walpole coddled the Spaniards believed war was England’s best opportunity to solidify its domination of the Americas.

¹¹ *SCJCH*, July 1, 1741.

¹² *Ibid.*, 25-27 (November 10, 1739).

Parliament's hawks believed Spain had seen its dominance peak. Now, with a simple victory, England could control the bulk of the Americas, the greatest colonial prize on earth.

"It is in America, where we can make them feel most sensibly the weight of our resentment: it is by conquests in that part of the world where we can most effectively secure or enlarge our commerce and navigation," commented Lord Carteret in front of Parliament in November. Prior to the Convention at Pardo, Carteret believed England could easily defeat Spain and had disagreed with the attempted peace. In his published remarks, Carteret did not fear a potential Spanish-French alliance and felt confident of a decisive victory. "The navies of France and Spain joined together," Carteret claimed, "are no match for the navy of Great Britain."¹³ Sir William Pulteney suggested Britain "attack [Spanish] settlements in the West Indies with such a force that as cannot be defeated." Still, others were not as eager to fight.

In the same session, the Duke of Newcastle responded to Carteret by suggesting a war with Spain promised to be "more injurious to our trade, than a war with any other nation in Europe."¹⁴ Newcastle's concerns reflected a larger ambivalent attitude towards war with Spain. Victory in the West Indies promised to fill the king's coffers, but the potential for French participation added an element of uncertainty. Almost immediately following the declaration of war, a

¹³ *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America*, Vol. 5, 1-3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

French threat did emerge, causing many to rethink their promises of easy and decisive victory.

As Members of Parliament published various denunciations of the Convention of Pardo and advocated war, the French government circulated a pamphlet about the state of affairs in France and its colonies. Completed before the war, the internal communication outlined France's desires for future expansion and examined the dimensions of the lingering disputes between Spain and England. Through his connections, Waldegrave obtained a copy of the pamphlet and passed the information to his superiors in London. According to the author, the friction between Spain and England focused squarely on the dispute over Georgia and increased piracy along the North American coast. Only war, he concluded, could solve their differences.¹⁵

Despite its weaknesses and potential drain on the royal coffers, the King of England could no longer pull out of Georgia. The anonymous author believed that "after the bustle that has been made about [Georgia] in Parliament" the colony's fate rested with the legislature and other interested parties.¹⁶ Likewise, Spain was not willing to leave Florida or abandon its claim to the land occupied as Georgia. The French report predicted "whoever are masters of Florida [would] likewise [be] masters of the passage between that country and Cuba." In other words, whoever controlled the Florida Straits would, by default, have the ability to control French vessels operating out of Louisiana. If France could

¹⁵ SP 78/221 f. 216-221 (October 12/13, 1739).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

maintain positive relations with Spain and England, then easy passage through the shipping lanes would not be a problem, but considering the tension between Spain and England, peace on the seas could not be certain. The pamphlet stressed France might be asked to pick a side in the debate that seemed destined for armed conflict. In the event of war, the document offered some suggestions for the French government.

The author recognized the possibility of a secretive alliance with the English, but admitted, “the Emperor has neither the power nor the will to do anything for England.”¹⁷ The battle envisioned would occur in the colonies and along the contested frontiers. According to the author, the English would find it difficult to take Cuba considering Spain’s certain defense of the important island. Likewise, any attempt to take Panama would be met with significant reinforcements from Mexico and Peru. Thus, Florida remained the most likely candidate for an English invasion. Florida was “most exposed and . . . the most convenient in all respects both to be attacked and defended by the English.”¹⁸ If the English invaded Florida, France would have to pick an ally, as the conflict promised to affect its colonial interests in Louisiana and elsewhere.

Should England and Spain fight in North America, France, according to the report, had three options; it could join the Spaniards, offer to mediate the dispute, or declare neutrality. That the author never considered fighting for the English likely distressed those who read the report in London. If French

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

indifference bothered the English, the final comments in the pamphlet had the potential to cause greater concern. The author believed the governors of Louisiana and Florida should “enter into a convention betwixt themselves for the mutual defense of their respective governments.” The pamphlet also urged authorities to reach a diplomatic agreement that considered French and Spanish fears of English expansion, but would also highlight France’s willingness to use Native allies against any colony that threatened their existing borders or penetrated the frontiers controlled by the French or their Indian allies.¹⁹ Finally, the document offered some guidelines for the most effective use of French power in the colonies.

According to the French, nearly 6,000 soldiers from Canada could move to Louisiana. As this army headed south, the author speculated that the force could be used to “drive the English out of Georgia, to ravage Carolina, and to carry off 15,000 Negroes, which will add such a strength to the new Colonies of Louisiana, as to put them beyond a possibility of being disturbed any more by their neighbours.”²⁰ The problem with the English, the author claimed, was that they had prevented French domination of the region. As the dispute over territorial sovereignty in the Southeast grew, France felt threatened. In the dossier France seemed willing to do anything possible to maintain its borders and possibly expand its territories in the name of security. When Whitehall got hold of the confidential work, officials were stunned.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, f.220

The pamphlet's emergence changed the metrics of the dispute over Georgia and forced London to view the threats posed by Spain and France in a different light. England could no longer hope for an alliance with France and had to reconsider its approach towards border disputes with Spain.²¹ If only a fraction of the pamphlet proved true France became the greatest threat to British security in Southeast North America. Still, things had a tendency to change quickly. In October, just weeks after Parliament announced the declaration of war, Whitehall received good news from its agent in Paris. Waldegrave heard reports of a Florida missionary who, on a visit to Europe, told his hosts Florida was so weak that the English could easily conquer the Spanish settlement. In addition, the missionary suggested an English victory might provide a "great encouragement to the people of Louisiana to withdraw from the French Dominion, which they do not like so well as that of the English."²² Whether French authorities believed colonists in Louisiana might revolt is not clear, but the missionary from Florida provided some good news.

While officials in London and Madrid considered the information from Paris, a rumor in South Carolina described a French offensive against the English colonies. According to a tale that circulated through Charleston in October, "a French Man of War and a Merchant Man are... on the coast of St. Domingo, with troops on board which are to be transported to Mississippi." These troops were to be used against England's allies, the Chickasaw. Once finished in the West,

²¹ At the time, tangled diplomatic conventions connected France, Spain, and England in various favorable agreements, but many were either secret pacts or long-since ignored agreements.

²² SP 78/221 f. 250-253. Waldegrave to Whitehall, October 29, 1739.

their gaze could easily shift to Georgia and South Carolina.²³ For Georgia's safety, action had to begin before France or Spain could gain a tactical or numerical advantage. Alone, Florida was weak, but if soldiers and ships from Spain and France reached North America, Georgia and even South Carolina could be lost. Oglethorpe sought all the assistance he could find. Time and again, Oglethorpe worked hard to earn the allegiance of surrounding communities and always sought new ways to defend his core settlements.²⁴

Throughout 1738, Oglethorpe sought and received assurances from Creek leaders that, in the event of a Spanish or French invasion, Native armies would aid the Georgia militia.²⁵ More than other communities, Oglethorpe needed Creek support. Previously, the Creeks were the largest Indian nation to maintain a semblance of neutrality in the dispute between Europeans. France and Spain attempted to gain their favor, but both nations failed. With the support of the Creeks, Oglethorpe could stop worrying about the difficulties of holding his

²³ *South Carolina Gazette*, September 15-October 13, 1739.

²⁴ Six months before Oglethorpe left to invade Florida, the Privy Council advised the local government in Georgia to begin monitoring correspondence leaving the colony. The Privy Council feared letters that described the military preparations could make it into the hands of the Spaniards or French. See, Privy Council Minutes (PRO coll. PC) 5/8, June 20, 1737 *f.* 96.

²⁵ As early as August 1738, even the Privy Council suggested Georgia officials do their best to ensure Indian support for not only did the local Native communities support English trade, but they could ensure "the security of the frontiers." PC 5/8, August 1738. In October, after meeting with the Headmen of several Lower Creek Towns, Oglethorpe received assurances that, in the event of enemy aggression, "the Nation would march 1,000 Warriors wherever [Oglethorpe] should command them." During these meetings with the Creek leaders, Oglethorpe learned of Spanish activity on the perimeter and French attacks on Creek settlements. In these discussions, Oglethorpe convinced many Indian leaders that only his army could protect vulnerable communities. See Juricek, *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607-1789*, Vol. XI, 87, 88-89, 91, 95.

western flank.²⁶ But as usual, truth proved elusive on the frontier. Although Oglethorpe believed he could count on the Cherokees, during the summer, some Cherokee towns had signaled a willingness to work with the French despite giving Oglethorpe similar assurances.²⁷ Oglethorpe also faced other difficulties closer to Florida.

On Georgia's southern limits, Oglethorpe needed Indian support and intelligence more to defend against Indian attacks, not Spanish aggression. In November, Yamassee warriors began a series of raids aimed at the British camped on Amelia Island. Spain had always considered Amelia Island a part of Florida and even if Spain accepted the British boundaries for Georgia, Oglethorpe had moved well beyond the southern border stipulated in the colony's charter.²⁸ The Yamassee maintained their allegiance to the Spaniards, but because the attacks took place on land the Yamassee frequently inhabited, it was not clear if the Indians fought for their land or at the request of the Spaniards. Whatever the case, Oglethorpe blamed Montiano.

Oglethorpe did not ignore the news from Europe and likely paid particular attention to the report from Paris. As in the past, Oglethorpe saw utter ruin in a French-Spanish alliance. In November, Oglethorpe reported to the Trustees, "the French have attacked the Carolina Indians and the Spaniards have invaded us." If England failed to respond, he wrote, the combined armies could very well "root

²⁶ Bolton, *The Debatable Land*, 83-85.

²⁷ Claude C. Sturgill & E. R. Turner, "The Importance of Being at War: General James Oglethorpe's Accounts and Imperial Affairs in Early Colonial Georgia," *Military Affairs* (October 1976): 130.

²⁸ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 90-91.

the English out of America.”²⁹ Spain had complained about Georgia’s borders and sought the removal of the illegal colony, but if pushed, many felt the Spanish had the potential to remove more than just Georgia. When the declaration of war reached the colonies, Oglethorpe wasted little time in beginning the push to take Florida and rid his colony of its principle difficulty. Before he could march, the general had to consider his defenses as well as his resources.

Beyond the difficulties in predicting weaknesses on his western edge, Oglethorpe required substantial numbers of laborers to build and fortify defenses along Georgia’s southern edge. Georgia did not have the population to assist in this crucial endeavor and thus, British officers brought approximately 800 African slaves to act as combat pioneers. Clearly, the British understood the allure of Fort Mose, but they had no choice. Ditches had to be dug, forts modified, and new outposts constructed before battle could begin. The English were confident of their ability to maintain control over their enslaved laborers for the legislature in South Carolina reported “all Negroes employed or carried from the Province of Carolina during the Time of the Expedition, and until the Return of the Troops, shall have liberty to pass and re-pass without interruption; or being subject to forfeiture.”³⁰ After insisting slavery could only harm their colony, the Trustees now depended on slave labor to ensure the colony’s protection. If anything, preparations for war gave Georgia’s Malcontents a boost

²⁹ *Oglethorpe’s Letters*, Vol. 2, 421. (Oglethorpe to the Trustees, November 16, 1739.

³⁰ *SCJCH*, Vol.5, 199-200.

in their fight to bring slavery into the colony. Oglethorpe could not deny the need for additional labor.

In the earliest expense estimates, Oglethorpe's militia requested provisions for the 800 African pioneers and the nearly 2,000 Cherokee and Creek warriors slated to defend the western front from French forces. If needed, the Native warriors could help assist in an invasion of Florida. On the eve of battle, Oglethorpe felt confident of his chances against the Spaniards, but Spain had already prepared a response to English aggression and would not be the easy target authorities in Georgia envisioned.

During the period of endless border negotiations in Europe, authorities in St. Augustine assessed the presidio's defenses and uncovered systemic weaknesses. In 1737, Montiano conducted a survey of his city's defenses and found St. Augustine worse than many imagined. The walls of the castillo were falling apart, cannons needed repair, soldiers lacked basic equipment, powder houses leaked, and more.³¹ From Cuba, there was a different outlook. In the event of war, particularly should King Phillip give his approval to attack Georgia, Cuba's resources would play an important role in the military action.

More than three years before England declared war, Cuban governor Juan Fernando Güemes y Horcasitas ordered the construction of numerous vessels to be used against Georgia. Furthermore, Güemes y Horacsitas's generals prepared an entire army to take the frontier. The Convention of Pardo forced each side to consider the possibility for peace as brokered in Europe, but this did not halt

³¹ TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida*, 138.

plans for aggression. Still, Cuba had familiarized itself with the problem of Georgia, had developed battle plans, and was ready to help when the mood changed.³² Preparedness eased Montiano's fears, but it was preferable to be the aggressor than the attacked.

On December 20, Oglethorpe reported Spain had "invaded" Georgia at Frederica, "killed some of the inhabitants and . . . fomented an insurrection of the Negroes in Carolina who murdered several families there."³³ The invasion Oglethorpe described followed the pattern of the constant skirmishes that marked life on the frontier, and thus was not a unique event, but he pointedly reminded his readers of the explosive insurrection at Stono, a rebellion inspired by Spanish policies. After Stono, every act of violence on the frontier had the potential to cause war and Oglethorpe frequently reminded the public and his superiors of what Spain could do for the slaves of South Carolina.

Oglethorpe responded to the attack on Frederica with a small vanguard. English and Chickasaw soldiers routed the Spaniards from fortifications along the coast and chased "a body of negroes and Indians" towards St. Augustine.³⁴ The General came close to his objective of striking at the heart of Spain's outpost, but did not pursue.

In early December some Georgians, in search of a wartime profit, began individual campaigns of piracy. Captain Caleb Davis, a man who once accused the Spaniards of harboring his runaway slaves and sought restitution, outfitted

³² *Ibid.*, 137-138.

³³ *South Carolina Gazette*, January 19-26, 1740.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

his sloop “for the design of privateering.”³⁵ Weeks later, *The South Carolina Gazette* cheerfully reported that General Oglethorpe and an advance contingent of 170 soldiers had left South Carolina for St. Augustine. Thus, the battle to secure the frontier and remove the Spaniards began gradually. What became a war of conquest began as little more than petty theft and raids on ranchers in northern Florida.

Oglethorpe’s soldiers began their campaign by burning the huts of Indians loyal to Spain and stealing Spanish cattle.³⁶ English activity started on a small scale and took time to be noticed in St. Augustine. On December 22, nearly three weeks after the campaign to harass began, Spanish scouts found the ominous marks of a military presence. According to Indian informants loyal to Florida, “the tracks of more than three hundred white men,” could be seen on the banks of the St. Johns River.³⁷ Two days later, Montiano called a war council to determine Florida’s preparedness and the discussion revealed immediate weaknesses. The nearest outpost to the English soldiers was Fort Diego and the council’s first meeting considered whether Spain should abandon or reinforce the first line of defense. Montiano decided to send more troops to the fort, but many inside the presidio were troubled that the Spanish even considered running before England fired the first shot. With Oglethorpe’s vanguard on the ground, Montiano ordered additional surveys of existing defenses, requested residents on

³⁵ William Stephens, *A Journal of the Proceedings in Georgia*, Vol.2, 213 (December 10, 1739).

³⁶ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 91.

³⁷ *Letters of Montiano*, 33 (January 31, 1740).

the periphery to collect their cattle and move closer to St. Augustine, and offered Uchee Indians “twenty-five dollars to take an Englishman, or hostile Indian prisoner.”³⁸ By the end of December, word arrived of the declaration of war and Spain’s limited presence north of St. Augustine became a visible weakness to all.³⁹

In the final days of 1739, “240 English and Indians” attacked Fort Picolata, a small fort west of St. Augustine on the eastern edge of the St. Johns River. According to Montiano’s report, Picolata’s *seven* soldiers defended the fort and forced the English to make a “shameful retreat.” In another, likely more realistic account from an English officer, England attacked, realized the fort could not be “carried sword in hand without cannon,” and regrouped to gather the proper armaments.⁴⁰ When the British forces returned they quickly took Picolata and the adjacent Fort Pupo on January 7. The destruction of the forts gave Oglethorpe a significant advantage, for the outposts protected a ferry that crossed the St. Johns River. Without the small fortifications, the path between St. Augustine and Apalachee could not be protected. In effect, Oglethorpe had severed Florida in two. Spaniards could still communicate and travel to Apalachee, but the route would be circuitous and considerably more dangerous. Now, Oglethorpe essentially controlled the St. Johns River and Florida was

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *South Carolina Gazette*, December 22-29, 1739.

⁴⁰ *Letters of Montiano*, 34 (January 31, 1740). *General Oglethorpe’s Georgia: Colonial Letters, 1733-1743*, Vol. 2, 443, (Oglethorpe to Newcastle, January 22, 1740).

reduced to an island of territory between the river and the sea, an even smaller collection of missions, settlements, and ranches.⁴¹

Oglethorpe had a clear advantage over the Spaniards and his plan to remove the belligerent neighbor seemed certain to succeed. After destroying the two forts, Oglethorpe returned to Frederica where he continued preparations for a full-scale invasion of St. Augustine. As the English regrouped, Oglethorpe sent Indian scouts to continue harassing the Spaniards. In January, a scout delivered a scalp, believed to be taken from a resident of Fort Mose.⁴² Montiano lacked the forces to return fire and instead attempted to find out what the English were planning. He had no doubt England would try to invade St. Augustine, but the intelligence lacked many details. Montiano could guess the English strategy and urged Cuba to send ships and arms to immediately retake Pupo and Picolata, but he needed more information on the English army.⁴³ Throughout January, Montiano sent scouts to find information on English movement. Time and again, Spanish agents attempted to capture an English soldier or allied Indian, but failed with each effort.⁴⁴ As Montiano tried to devise a plan of defense, Oglethorpe gathered his troops.

⁴¹ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 92-95. Lanning, *Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 223-224.

⁴² *General Oglethorpe's Georgia, Colonial Letters*, 447 (Mark Carr to James Campbell, January 28, 1740). The letter did not identify the race of the victim, but it described "Moosa" as a place "inhabited by runaway slaves from Carolina.

⁴³ *Letters of Montiano* 45. (March 24, 1740) Here, Montiano made it clear to his superior that until they could recapture the forts on the St. Johns River, St. Augustine could not depend on the assistance of its allies in the Apalachee communities.

⁴⁴ *Letters of Montiano*, 36-37.

After the decisive victory on the river, there was reason for optimism in the British colonies. According to the *South Carolina Gazette*, Spain did not seem interested in expanding or even holding onto Florida and once Oglethorpe conquered the neglected town, the British would have to consider St. Augustine's limitations. "This place is only a bay," the newspaper declared, and if conquered "would be of no service for trade, and but little use to England."⁴⁵ Oglethorpe might remove the danger Florida posed to Georgia, but many leaders expressed little interest in expanding Georgia's limits to include the peninsula.

Victory in Florida seemed so certain that in March, a "great number of Gentlemen designed to go as volunteers" and "share in the Honour of that expedition." The "gentlemen" volunteers offered their services after it was reported the French would not aid the Spaniards. Indeed, prior to the outbreak of major hostilities, only good news came to the British colonies. In Charleston, the newspaper reported 10,000 soldiers left England to invade and capture Havana. Once England took Cuba, the army would invade Puerto Rico. This war promised to not only rid the Caribbean of a Spanish presence, but would ensure English dominance in the larger Atlantic World.⁴⁶ In St. Augustine, Montiano sounded glum. "They have got the better of us," he declared in March, and without immediate assistance, Florida would fall.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *South Carolina Gazette*, February 16-23, 1740.

⁴⁶ *South Carolina Gazette*, March 29-April 4, 1740. Reese, *Colonial Georgia*, 76-80.

⁴⁷ *Letters of Montiano*, 47 (March 24, 1740).

By May, Oglethorpe's army had grown to several thousand troops and six vessels of war.⁴⁸ In contrast, Oglethorpe estimated St. Augustine's militia to have a little more than 1,300 troops, a number that included an estimated 200 "armed negroes."⁴⁹ This was a generous estimate. Two months earlier, Montiano reported he had only 613 available soldiers, including 40 at Mose.⁵⁰ Oglethorpe believed his force could quickly conquer Florida, remove the Spaniards, and finally ensure the safety of Georgia and its neighbors. Before the invasion began, the only thing that shook the general's poise was money. Oglethorpe needed funding, and what he received could only support an invading army for six months, but in light of St. Augustine's weakness this seemed enough.⁵¹ If Oglethorpe could rout the Spaniards, issues of territorial legitimacy would simply disappear.

Later in the month, the English militia began its primary invasion of Florida. Oglethorpe's troops took Fort Diego, a small blockhouse north of St. Augustine, in late May and moved onto St. Augustine on the 31st. On June 2, English scouts described Fort Mose, a "four square with a flanker at each corner banked round with earth," as the first target on the final push to St. Augustine. A

⁴⁸ *South Carolina Gazette*, March 1-8, 1740. *South Carolina Journal of Commons*, 1744, 199-200. Chatelain, *The Defenses of Spanish Florida*, 91.

⁴⁹ *General Oglethorpe's Georgia, Colonial Letters*, 454 (Oglethorpe to William Stephens, February 2, 1740). *South Carolina Journal of the Commons House of Assembly*, February 4, 1740.

⁵⁰ *Letters of Montiano*, 49 (March 25, 1740).

⁵¹ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 97. Oglethorpe requested South Carolina provide £200,000 for the campaign, but Charleston, likely overly confident of St. Augustine's weakness, offered only £120,000 or enough for a six month mission.

violent rainstorm postponed plans to attack that afternoon, but at first light on June 3, British soldiers breached Mose's walls and found the fort abandoned. Just before the attack on Mose, Montiano ordered the residents of St. Augustine, including members of the African militia, to take refuge in the *castillo San Marcos* and sent word of the invasion to Cuba. Oglethorpe used Mose, just two miles north of the city walls, as a staging ground for an offensive on the fort and positioned a larger garrison on Anastasia Island, on the opposite side of the Matanzas River, but within the range of his artillery.⁵²

Intermittent fighting continued for several days as the British dug in on Anastasia Island. On the 25th, 300 Spanish soldiers moved on Mose and quickly routed the occupying force. The English defeat marked the turning point in the war for Florida, but did not necessarily give the Spaniards an advantage over the English. Oglethorpe's forces clearly outnumbered the Spaniards, but the loss of position at Fort Mose made the siege more difficult.

Throughout June, the English shelled the *castillo* from Anastasia Island, but nothing could penetrate the dense coquina walls. During the early part of the siege, Montiano seemed more concerned with running out of food than of British cannons breaching the walls of the fort.⁵³ For the English, time became an issue. The longer it took for the English to rout the Spaniards, the more time reinforcements from Cuba had to reach Florida. On the ground, Oglethorpe's "gentlemen volunteers" grew tired of a campaign that had gone awry. On June 14,

⁵² *Letters of Montiano*, 55-58. Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 108-111, Lanning, *Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 224-225. *South Carolina Commons House Journals*, December 1, 1741.

⁵³ *Letters of Montiano*, 57 (July 6, 1740).

a British soldier deserted to the Spaniards and delivered Montiano crucial information as to the British strategy and strength.⁵⁴ Morale dropped further when, on the 26th, Oglethorpe and accompanying soldiers marched north of St. Augustine and came upon the bloated, decaying bodies of those killed at Mose.⁵⁵ Oglethorpe had run out of options.

His last hope to take St. Augustine involved an audacious plan to blockade the presidio along the Matanzas River, Atlantic Ocean, and the St. Johns River. By preventing access to any water escape, Oglethorpe could take the city, but it was too late. Cuban galleys slipped through the blockade to bring supplies and in a matter of days ships of war would be in range of the English navy. With few options and many soldiers sick with dysentery, Oglethorpe ordered a retreat from Florida on July 4, but refused to surrender. After only a few direct confrontations with the Spaniards, what was considered certain victory deteriorated into a bewildering defeat. Skirmishes continued in Florida for the rest of July as the remaining British soldiers found their way home, but the invasion had ended.⁵⁶ Florida was safe from destruction and Georgia was no more secure than when the battle began.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 58

⁵⁵ Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 128.

⁵⁶ George Cadogan, *The Spanish Hireling Detected* (London: Printed for J. Roberts, 1743) and *A Full Reply to Lieut. Cadogan's Spanish Hireling, &c. And Lieut. Mackay's Letter Concerning the Action at Moosa* (London: Printed for J. Huggonson, 1743) offer contemporary accounts of the conflict from the British perspective. Montiano offers his thoughts in letters, but there does not appear to be an officially published account from the Spanish perspective.

In attacking Florida, Oglethorpe took conventional measures to conquer and secure an unconventional landscape. England's initial successes at the outlying forts seemed to verify the image of a poorly protected Florida. Despite the unusual tactics that led to the war, Oglethorpe approached Florida like any other military operation. In the summer of 1740, Oglethorpe, already versed in the nuances of frontier politics, discovered the difficulties in taming the uncertain terrain. Building a borderland required more than brute force. Certainly the elimination of Spain's presence in Florida would provide Georgia with the territorial legitimacy that was elusive, but necessary. Now, England found it difficult, if not impossible, to reach a peaceful conclusion to the struggle for the southern frontier. Having survived the British offensive, Montiano wasted little time in planning a counterattack.

The Florida governor took great pride in the "patriotism, courage, and steadiness of the troops, militia, free negroes, and convicts" who endured the attack.⁵⁷ Montiano considered Florida's avoidance of defeat a victory. As Oglethorpe's army marched home, the Spaniards planned to pursue the invaders, ambush England's allies, and take Georgia. The plan involved the direct assistance of French forces and reinforcements from Cuba and this required patience for all the elements to come together. As Montiano plotted his revenge, Oglethorpe anticipated retaliation and rushed to secure his defenses in Georgia.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Letters of Montiano*, 61 (July 28, 1740).

⁵⁸ *Letters of Montiano*, 64-65 (August 3, 1740), Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 133-134; Lanning, *Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 226-227; *General Oglethorpe's Georgia*, 462-465 (July 19, 1740).

Montiano called for additional troops and Oglethorpe did his best to save face. England's failure to take Florida outraged colonists throughout the empire. As each side openly prepared to continue the conventional fight, the eccentric activities of the frontier reappeared as the greatest, most pressing threat to Georgia's safety. Again, the fear centered on a creative use of British slaves and as before, the odd approach seemed more promising and threatening than the standard military attack. While the British responded to a new series of rumors, Montiano could wait for the required soldiers and arms to arrive.⁵⁹

In 1741, rumors of a widespread slave rebellion emerged in New York and other parts of the Atlantic seaboard.⁶⁰ According to many versions of the similar tale, French agents intended to work with English slaves to overthrow New York in a manner similar to what happened at Stono. News of the Stono Rebellion may have stayed out of local newspapers, but concern of similar uprisings ran throughout the colonies. The conspiracy linking the two nations to a similar plot was not unusual.⁶¹

In a report sent to the Board of Trade, New York Lieutenant Governor George Clarke described the plot where whites, "supposed to be papist" and a "Romish Priest" along with several free Africans planned to infiltrate a town and

⁵⁹ Lanning, *Diplomatic History of Georgia*, 226.

⁶⁰ Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 116-117.

⁶¹ Contemporaries and historians have found other reasons for the conspiracy, but French and Spanish collusion held the greatest danger to New York and other colonies. For a larger consideration of the conspiracy's origins see, Ferenc M. Szasz, "The New York Slave Revolt of 1741," *New York History* 48 (July 1967): 215-230, Thomas Davis, "The New York Slave Conspiracy of 1741 as Black Protest," *The Journal of Negro History* 56 (Jan. 1971): 17-30.

rally English slaves to arms against their masters. According to Clarke, the conspirators were connected to the “villany committed in New Jersey,” where two slaves were executed for burning homes and barns in Newark.⁶² Clarke passed additional information to London that suggested a more widespread and coordinated plan on the part of Spanish and French officials. He also included a letter from Oglethorpe. Here Oglethorpe described a “villainous design” of the Spaniards “to burn all the magazines and considerable towns in the English North America.”

To achieve their goal of massive internal disruptions, Spaniards would employ Catholic priests who, according to Oglethorpe, “pretended to be physicians, dancing masters and other such kinds of occupations . . . to get admittance and confidence in families.”⁶³ With their guards down, the Spanish agents could enact their plans of destruction. Closer to home, Oglethorpe feared another Stono. In a letter to the Trustees, he claimed “the Spanish emissaries are very busy in stirring up discontents amongst the people, hence their principal point is Negroes, since as many slaves as there are so many enemies to the government and consequently friends to the Spaniards.”⁶⁴ Oglethorpe and Clarke saw what they considered a convergence of the most potent threats to British America, slave revolts and a French-Spanish military alliance; the papist infiltration provided an additional bonus for those demanding more attention

⁶² *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Vol. 6, 197-199 (Clarke to the Lords of Trade, June 20, 1741).

⁶³ *Ibid.* Letter from Oglethorpe (Frederica May 16, 1741).

⁶⁴ *General Oglethorpe's Georgia*, Vol. 2, 585 (Oglethorpe to Trustees-June 29, 1741).

from the British government. And as Oglethorpe worried about dangers in the North, dissent within Georgia threatened his hold on power.

Defeated and humiliated, Oglethorpe endured personal attack and ridicule from nearly every corner of the British Empire. Although the loss in St. Augustine made Georgia more vulnerable, the Malcontents increased their demands for access to slaves and land reform. Dreams of a colony of small towns supported by local industries had faded years earlier, but demands to change this vision were now sent to Europe. Following the failed siege, Oglethorpe lost much of his authority in Georgia and found it difficult to convince Georgians that he knew best. The Malcontents and others argued that without slavery, Georgia would fail economically and, should the colony not be able to support itself, issues of security or border placement would be as unnecessary as the colony itself. Having failed against the Spaniards, Parliament seemed more receptive to calls for changes in the Trustees' plan. Although the Trustees maintained a charter for Georgia, a bulk of its budget, not to mention its membership, came out of Parliament.

In 1740, William Stephens, the Secretary of the Trustees, published a pamphlet entitled *A State of the Province of Georgia*. Stephens wrote the tract to counter the complaints made by the Malcontents. According to Stephens, the Trustees had created a plan that enjoyed wide support in Georgia and *because* of the colony's unusual regulations Georgia would prove itself an economic and social success. Only a year earlier, officials in the colony proudly circulated the Darien Antislavery Petition. In this document, residents of Darien, normally a town associated with violently independent Scots, called for the Trustees to

maintain the slave ban. The petitioners argued that slavery only promised to bring rebellion, strife, and failure to Georgia.⁶⁵

Despite the glowing portrait the Trustees offered, certain difficulties and concerns could not be ignored. Where farmers had to assist in the invasion of Florida, crops were neglected and with stores low, the potential for additional strife increased. While Oglethorpe and the Trustees defended their plan from the Malcontents, others in Georgia expressed a lack of confidence. Even the Salzburgers, typically considered Oglethorpe's staunchest allies, seemed to lose faith in the colony's grand scheme. Perhaps signaling their increasing independence and isolation from the rest of the colony, Reverend Boltzius issued his own currency and even suggested a need for slaves shortly after the Siege of St. Augustine.⁶⁶

The Malcontents and others made their voices heard. Through pamphlets and direct lobbying to members of Parliament, former Georgians and would-be investors in the colony described a type of "slavery under the Trustees."⁶⁷ In April 1742, Parliament considered forcing a change in Trustee leadership after hearing complaints by disgruntled Georgians. Parliament's consideration came after the publication of a particularly damaging pamphlet by Thomas Stephens. In *The Hard Case of the Distressed People of Georgia*, Stephens outlined a litany

⁶⁵ Harvey H. Jackson, "The Darien Antislavery Petition of 1738 and the Georgia Plan," *William and Mary Quarterly* 34 (October, 1977): 626. See also *CRSG*, Vol. 3, 52-55.

⁶⁶ George Fenwick Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 76.

⁶⁷ CO 5/640 (William Stephens to the Trustees). Reese, *The Clamorous Malcontents*, ix.

of grievances that included land ownership restrictions, the prohibitions on slavery and rum, and discouraging inheritance regulations. Stephens placed blame solely on the Trustees. The Malcontents insisted if Parliament removed the laws of the Trustees, Georgia could flourish and protect other British colonies. It did not take long for members of Parliament to side with the opposition.⁶⁸

In one speech to Parliament, a member described Georgia a “failure,” and the Trustees’ plans “utterly impracticable.” Although members of Parliament had suggested certain changes to Georgia’s operation, the Trustees had refused and instead allowed the colony to stagnate, “incapable of fulfilling his Majesty’s most gracious designs in establishing it.”⁶⁹ Now, even members of Parliament ignored Georgia’s mission to protect South Carolina and instead, sought a way to alleviate Georgia’s financial burden.

At one point, it seemed Parliament might strike a fatal blow to the colony before Montiano could even assemble his troops. After the siege, Parliament joined the Malcontents in questioning the viability of a slave-free society. A frequent critic of the Trustees, Sir John Cotton complained, “since Carolina (which can raise all the produces Georgia can) is its near neighbor, and uses negroes, it is impossible Georgia can ever support itself.”⁷⁰ Others argued against the prohibition on rum. A group of planters who later urged Parliament to force changes in Georgia explained that timber was the only valuable

⁶⁸ The entire pamphlet and other writings by the Malcontents appear in Reese, *The Clamorous Malcontents*.

⁶⁹ *Journals of the House of Commons*, Vol. 32, (April 30, 1742).

⁷⁰ Taylor, *Georgia Plan*, 163-164.

commodity readily available, but because the best market to sell the timber happened to be the English sugar islands, Georgia traders were effectively denied the right to do business, for rum was the only item the islanders had for trade.⁷¹ Would-be investors and settlers claimed that unless Parliament removed the crippling restrictions, Georgia would fail or continue to burden the state's coffers.

After his defeat, Oglethorpe began to lose power from within his colony. Before the founder had to accept additional sanctions, however, Oglethorpe saved Georgia one last time. After failing in Florida, Oglethorpe readied his defenses for Florida's inevitable retaliation. Repeatedly, Oglethorpe expressed concern that Florida might again exact revenge by influencing another slave rebellion, for unconventional approaches had the greatest potential to disrupt the frontier. However, the Malcontents seemed poised to start their own revolution. Thus, Oglethorpe had to consider the possibility that the absence of slaves might ultimately cause Georgia's downfall. Following the siege of St. Augustine, many Trustees believed internal threats posed the greatest danger to colonial authority.

In the larger struggle for the frontier Oglethorpe, his allies, and adversaries understood the unexpected and unusual could always change perceptions of power. But in Florida, the truism seemed lost on Montiano and the Spaniards. On July 7, 1742, almost two years to the day Oglethorpe ordered his troops out of St. Augustine, Spanish forces clashed with an English garrison on St. Simons Island. The raid was Spain's first and only invasion of Georgia.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

Known as the Battle of Bloody Marsh, the attack would help resolve the simmering conflict for the Georgia frontier. Montiano sought retaliation for what the English did to his colony, but the Spanish governor waited two years to make his move. Between battles, the English prepared for such an invasion. From building new and bolstering existing defenses on Georgia's southern perimeter, to revisiting the potential for a united French and Spanish attack, the English spent the interim revisiting past mistakes and sought ways to prevent them from happening again.⁷² When Montiano made his move, Oglethorpe was ready.

On July 7, Spanish soldiers moved toward the English outpost on Frederica. Alerted to the movement, Oglethorpe personally joined his soldiers in battle. The Georgia militia protected Frederica, but Spain had more troops off the coast and sent them into the surrounding marshes on St. Simons Island. Again the Spaniards were defeated at an area called Bloody Marsh.⁷³ The Spaniards did not lose many men during the battle, but the decisive nature of their defeat and the failure to advance inland left few alternatives to the original battle plan. Six days later, Montiano ordered his men out of Georgia. In two short skirmishes, Georgia proved it could not be easily defeated. Oglethorpe reestablished himself as a capable general and, more importantly, the fight for Georgia seemed to come to a quick, even anticlimactic end. For Oglethorpe and the rest of the colony, victory brought confidence. Montiano left as his adversary had after the siege of St. Augustine, confused, defeated, and demoralized.

⁷² Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 145-150. CO 326/17-Index of South Carolina Letters, August 5, 1742.

⁷³ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 182. TePaske, *Governorship of Spanish Florida*, 139-152. Wright, *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America*, 96.

Like Oglethorpe, Montiano found many excuses for his failure to take Georgia, but his superiors did not accept these answers. In Cuba, officials accused Montiano of ineptitude, “lack of diligence and inefficiency.”⁷⁴ Having removed the yoke of defeat, Oglethorpe gave the Spaniards chase and launched a series of raids in Florida, but the brief counterattacks were designed to weaken, not destroy the enemy. Oglethorpe gained the upper hand and wanted to convince St. Augustine that the border dispute had come to a draw.

After the victory at Bloody Marsh, Georgia’s principle concerns turned to internal strife over the policies of the Trustees and the continued danger posed by the French. Britain no longer feared a Spanish attack and concerns that an invading force could easily overrun Georgia diminished after Oglethorpe and his soldiers proved the colony could defend itself. The frontier between Florida and Georgia had shrunk if not disappeared. By 1743, Georgia seemed a struggling, but viable, colony and a permanent addition to the British Empire. And, after surviving the assault of an English army, Florida proved it too would remain in place. For Florida, however, visions of future settlement expansion and official acceptance of its ancient territorial limits died at Bloody Marsh. How the two colonies managed to survive these difficult years is remarkable.

Oglethorpe’s siege of Florida failed in every measurable way. Because England could not remove the Spaniards, Georgia remained vulnerable to external forces and its borders could be challenged. The Spaniards, however, proved their weakness and inability to assert authority of Florida’s northern

⁷⁴ TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida*, 151-152.

frontier at the Battle of Bloody Marsh. By the end of 1742, the fight for the frontier stood at a draw. Both Florida and Georgia were weak, but Georgia had what Florida lacked—population growth, a large and battle-ready militia, and fiscal support from Europe. Between 1740 and 1742, the leaders of Florida and Georgia learned that a conventional military operation was not enough to exert order on the frontier. Yet, because military intervention failed, both Florida and Georgia emerged from the conflicts more stable than when the fighting began.

If Spain could not remove Georgia and England the same for Florida, Georgia's borders could be considered safe. Bickering over the limits of the colonies continued, but military failures made it clear that removing a colony could not be the easy task imagined several years earlier. After the Battle of Bloody Marsh, Georgia did not gain a border so much as it lost or diminished its frontier. Challenges remained; but the most pressing issue, that of Spanish protests of Georgia's placement and questions of its legitimacy, faded in light of its survival during the tumultuous period.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION: ACKNOWLEDGING A BORDER

After the Battle of Bloody Marsh, Oglethorpe had reason to celebrate. Despite the general's inability to remove his enemy in St. Augustine, Georgia proved to its critics that the colony could defend itself. If Georgia could deflect an attack, then its mission to protect South Carolina could be realized. The border between Florida and Georgia did not materialize in the days or months following the Battle of Bloody Marsh; but after the war, Georgia entered a stage of maturity that promised strength and even permanence. Other rumors caused concern in Savannah, but nothing substantial.¹

Following his successful defense of St. Simons Island, Oglethorpe left Georgia for London in 1743. The general never returned to his colony and, with his departure, Georgia entered a new phase. Governor Montiano maintained his hold on St. Augustine until 1749. Later, he suggested he had plans to expand Florida's settlements north of St. Augustine, thereby marking Spanish territorial claims through settlement. However, Montiano failed to gather the resources or interest for such an undertaking. The French continued to challenge Georgia, but after the war, the greatest concentration of French activity was on Georgia's western edge, an entirely different frontier.

¹ In September, 1742 English spies operating in Paris received information that Cuba was outfitting a large army to invade Georgia in the coming months. Although the encoded document contained false information, British officials used every available resource to determine the threats posed to Georgia. See, SP 78/227b, *f. 380-381* (Ant. Thompson, September 19, 1742).

The Battle of Bloody Marsh did not settle the territorial dispute that began with the 1670 founding of Carolina. After organized warfare seemed to end, intermittent attacks continued along the Florida-Georgia border. If Oglethorpe succeeded in keeping the Spaniards out of Georgia, the land between St. Augustine and the Altamaha River remained open to dispute. In September 1744 Creek Indians allied with the British, attacked Spaniards patrolling the area north of St. Augustine. After a brief skirmish, the Native warriors killed twelve men and four horses, captured several others, and reminded St. Augustine of its continued weakness.² Gradually, Georgia felt more comfortable within its original boundaries and shied away from expansion plans advocated by many colonists. Growth meant additional difficulties and for the time being, Georgians had more than enough land to develop.

In 1743, Spain challenged the English with familiar tactics when slaves in South Carolina again conspired to rebel. As before, the slaves intended on fleeing to Florida after killing their masters.³ After Bloody Marsh, the English backed off most plans to expand Georgia's limits. Continued belligerence suggested Spain could still strike the weak colony, but now Georgia's security came through traditional means of defense, not settlement expansion as officials had attempted decades earlier.

The War of Jenkins' Ear ended with the 1748 Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. According to the agreement, all disputes that lead to the conflict returned to the

² *CRSG*, Vol. 27, 7.

³ Wax, "The Great Risk We Run': The Aftermath of the Slave Rebellion at Stono South Carolina," 142. *SCHCJ*, Sept. 14, 1742-Jan. 27, 1744, 263-265.

“*status quo ante bellum*.”⁴ Even though the treaty admitted no resolution to the Georgia dispute, it ended hostilities on the frontier. Within two years of the treaty’s passage, Georgia pulled many of its fortifications from areas south of the Altamaha River.⁵ St. Augustine tried to take advantage of the British retreat, and shortly after the peace agreement, Spaniards started moving people onto Amelia Island. Just as the Georgia controversy began, the actions of the Spaniards suggested settlement expansion was a convenient route to additional security. Still, the fight for the frontier seemed destined to continue.

Immediately following the declaration of peace, Florida resumed its efforts to destabilize British interests by way of creative policies. Again, issues of slavery and race provided the most effective means of disrupting English activities. Although Oglethorpe destroyed Fort Mose, the Spaniards still offered refuge to fugitive slaves, creating fear throughout the British colonies. In Georgia, calls for the legalization of slavery continued and in 1750 slavery was allowed. The removal of the slave ban followed significant internal debate, particularly involving arguments over the colony’s security. Nonetheless, slavery only became legal when the Trustees lost their charter. Georgia’s new leadership decided slavery, under certain restrictions, could be allowed in a colony still vulnerable to outside attack.⁶ Shortly after Georgia allowed slavery, the Spanish government

⁴ Bolton, *The Debatable Land*, 99. Wright, *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America*, 100.

⁵ Wright, *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America*, 102. By 1750, the southernmost fortification for the Georgia militia was Fort William on Cumberland Island.

⁶ Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia, 1730-1775*, 82-85.

reaffirmed its policy toward British fugitive slaves. The order renewed announcements made in 1660, 1673, 1733 and 1740 that gave the governor of St. Augustine the authority to provide British runaways asylum and citizenship in the Spanish city.⁷

St. Augustine's ability to disrupt the internal security of British colonies seemed unending. The Spanish outpost again displayed its unusual ability to create distant panics in 1753. In New York, a British sailor had captured a Spanish ship that carried, among other things, several black sailors. The British captain assumed the Africans were slaves and thus, legitimate spoils of the capture. When word of the incident reached St. Augustine, Florida's governor reacted with utter disbelief and anger. The Africans captured were not slaves, the governor wrote, but officers in the Florida militia. By refusing to demand a ransom for the captured men and enslaving them "without just motive...when they were free," the English sailors had violated Spanish sovereignty, argued the governor.⁸ Instead of treating the men as Spanish sailors, the men were "made slaves by accident because they were of color."⁹ St. Augustine understood there was little it could do to guarantee the return of its citizens. The men captured as slaves were literally thousands of miles away and Spain's authority meant little in New York. Florida was not powerless, however, as Governor Fulgencio García de Solís used the power of rumor where he could not exert force in order to free the enslaved Spaniards.

⁷ SP 94/144, *f. 151-161* (September 14, 1753).

⁸ AGI 86-7-21 and AGI 86-5-21.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Governor García warned officials in New York that if they did not release the prisoners, he would declare the incident a breach of Spanish sovereignty and a violation of treaty agreements. García's threat to use the military against New York would not have caused an immediate panic in the British colony, as Spain's weakness was not a carefully held secret. To get the attention of other officials who had the power to free the captured sailors, García threatened an invasion of Georgia by all-black militias. Florida's governor claimed he was preparing several armies composed entirely of former slaves to be used against British plantations in the event New York failed to release the Spaniards.¹⁰ Although García's claims were baseless, British officials released Spain's prisoners.

That Florida could still use the image of former slaves marching against their owners under the flag and protection of the Spanish crown is important. Florida continued to remind the British that although small, the Spanish outpost could maintain order and defend itself when necessary. Spain wanted to make sure the British understood how far it would go to disrupt English colonies if Florida again felt threatened. Although English officials expressed concern over these threats, St. Augustine could not cry wolf forever.

Gradually, fear of Florida shrank from the imagination of British authorities in the colonies and Europe. Concern over Florida's potential remained, but by the middle of the eighteenth century, France emerged as the greatest threat to English holdings in North America. As they had earlier, the French used a variety of strategies to disrupt English expansion. Rumors and threats of force often

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

proved more useful than actual engagement. In many ways, the fears expressed about French activities materialized when the Seven Years War began. The tactics used during this war mirrored much of what happened in the fight for Georgia. Still, the story of Georgia's transformation from frontier to borderland requires a definitive border to be complete. Unfortunately, this is not an easy task.

Just as it is difficult to offer a precise chronology of the development of the Southeastern frontier and equally difficult to place a range of dates for the internecine war fought for the territory, it is also impracticable to definitively mark the end of the frontier. After the hostilities of the 1740s ended, officials in Spain and England dropped plans to destroy one another's colonies, gradually acknowledging their respective borders. Peace proved tenuous, but from the calm, borders gradually emerged. The crucial lines in the sand did not materialize instantly, but eventually assumed their place on the land. Braudel wrote that Mediterranean began where the first olive tree appeared. Unfortunately, the Southeastern frontier did not have such an indicator. Just as there is no sign to mark the beginning of the frontier, it is not possible to say with absolute certainty when the frontier became a borderland.

Because Florida ultimately lost its claim to the Georgia territory, English opinion provides a fair gauge of when Georgia graduated from a frontier outpost into a borderland colony. In a 1749 geography of the British Empire, George Bickham reiterated Georgia's original boundaries as the land between the Savannah and Alatomaha rivers. However, seven years after the Battle of Bloody Marsh, Bickham claimed Georgia's economy remained stagnant for the young

colony's primary purpose remained "chiefly Military, to form a barrier against the Spaniards who made a futile attempt on it in 1742."¹¹ That same year, another geography described Georgia's borders.

In Thomas Salmon's *A new geographical and historical grammar*, Georgia's northern and southern borders were the rivers mentioned in its original charter. According to Salmon, Georgia occupied the land to "prevent the Incursions of the Spanish and French Indians, who used to disturb our settlements in South Carolina."¹² While Salmon suggested the Spaniards had stopped disturbing settlements in South Carolina thanks to Georgia's effectiveness as a buffer zone, his geographical history included current fears about the remaining frontiers in southeast North America.

In particular, Salmon mentioned periodic disputes and skirmishes between the Spaniards and the French in the western backcountry, and he feared the two nations might still join forces and attack the English from the west. In 1749, Salmon declared that Georgia had a southern border, if "in a very unsettled condition," the English could now claim Georgia's legitimacy. The colony had survived an attack and despite earlier failures, seemed a secure addition to the British empire. However, a western limit had not yet emerged and this, wrote Salmon, had the potential to cause significant problems.¹³ In the event Spain and

¹¹ George Bickham, *The British Monarchy, or a new Chronographical description of all the dominions subject to the King of Great Britain . . .* (London, 1749), 183.

¹² Thomas Salmon, *A new geographical and historical grammar: wherein the geographical part is truly modern . . .* (London, 1749), 489-490, 535-536.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 535.

France could put aside their differences, the combined forces could prove fatal to the English interests in the area. Again, fears from the past remained a constant, but, the borders had finally emerged. Georgia's current southern border came much later and still, the magical line, the absence of which threatened the colony's legitimacy from the outset, did not end the contest for the land.

In 1763, the Treaty of Paris transferred ownership of Florida to the British. Shortly thereafter, the English moved Georgia's southern boundary to where it rests today, on the St. Marys River. When Spain regained Florida twenty years later, the new boundary stood. Borders lent the colony legitimacy, but disputes with the Spaniards remained. Even after the Spanish government accepted the new limits of Georgia, Florida continued its campaign to disrupt or overthrow its neighbor.

When Spain regained control of Florida in 1783, the Spaniards returned to a landscape dramatically altered by the British planters who settled the area during Spain's absence. For the most part, Spain allowed the newly settled plantations to remain, but Spanish tradition and law returned to the peninsula. In 1783, however, Florida's northern neighbor was not under the control of the English crown, but the new government of the United States of America. Spain allowed Florida to adapt to the changes the British made in the twenty year interlude and, among other policies, the Spaniards created a headright system where each head of a household received 100 acres of land and an additional 50 acres for every

additional family member or slave.¹⁴ Florida, it seems, returned to the area ready to follow the model for success in southern North America. Unfortunately for the Spaniards, these changes came two centuries too late. Despite the economic changes made to Florida's settlements, Spain allowed old habits to return, and those promised to have a detrimental effect on Georgia.

When the Spaniards returned to Florida, people of color owned slaves, former slaves entered the territory to purchase plantations, and again, runaway slaves received government protection from their former owners.¹⁵ Planters in Georgia protested the actions of the Spaniards and, in response to these fears, Georgia officials threatened to invade Florida if the fugitive slave policy did not end. By 1790, Georgia's state legislature declared Florida should be occupied for the safety and welfare of its residents.¹⁶ Ultimately, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson convinced the Spaniards to stop providing refuge to the runaway slaves. In a letter regarding Florida's change of heart, Jefferson wrote the decision to finally deny the fugitive slaves entry into Florida "may be a means of preventing wars, and finally shews that they are eradicating every where the remains of those laws which subsist to our shame."¹⁷

¹⁴ William S. Coker & Susan R. Parker, "The Second Spanish Period in the Two Floridas," in *The New History of Florida*, Michael Gannon, ed. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 160-161.

¹⁵ Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 87-101.

¹⁶ Eugene Portlette Southall, "Negroes in Florida Prior to the Civil War," *Journal of Negro History* (1934), 81.

¹⁷ Julian P. Boyd, ed. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), vol. XVII (6 July to 3 November, 1790), 645. Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 79.

Florida's decision to end the long-standing policy helped bring closure to the conflict over Georgia. Just as it is difficult to offer an exact date for the acceptance of Georgia's border, it is difficult to point to a particular act that marked Spain's acceptance of the new borders. Ultimately, the 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty brought Florida under the control of the United States and this certainly ended any lingering controversy for the Southeast. In the end, Florida remained a struggling outpost and in transferring ownership to the United States, Spain lost little in territory and even less in treasure and prestige. When the border dispute became moot in 1819, a long chapter in the larger struggle for the Atlantic World came to a close.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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