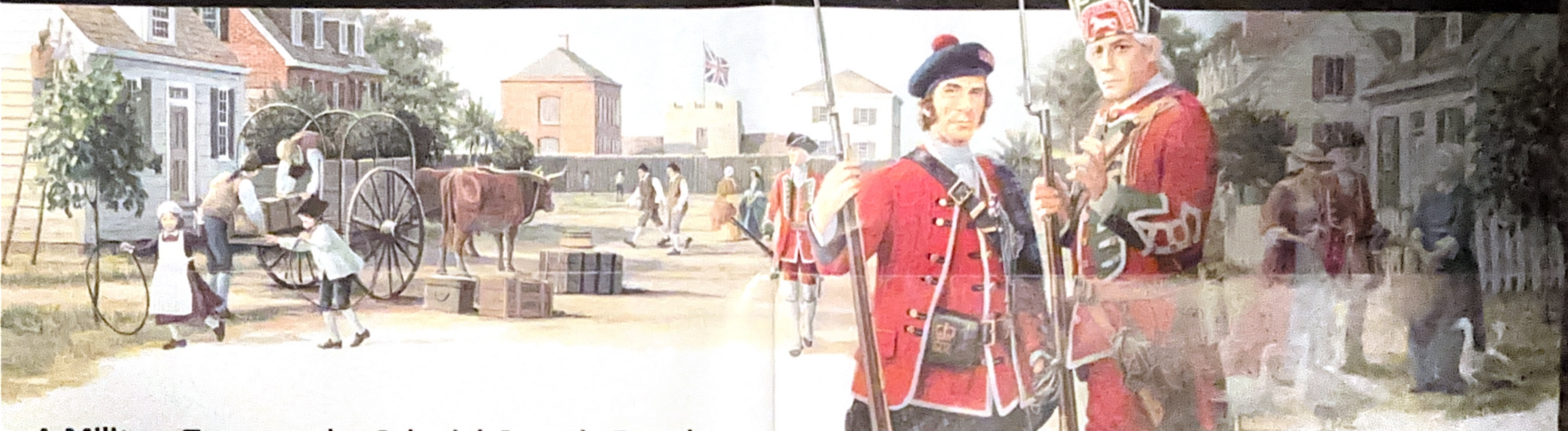


Fort Frederica

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Fort Frederica National Monument
Georgia



A Military Town on the Colonial Georgia Frontier

Defending Utopia

The ruins of old Frederica recall the struggle for empire in the Southeast in the 1700s. Ancient rivals Spain and Great Britain, the main contenders, both claimed the land between St. Augustine and Charleston. But Spain was a waning power in this part of North America while Great Britain was building a vast empire from Maine to Carolina. As a southern frontier buffer, Britain planted the Georgia colony—the last of the original 13 and the first since Quakers founded Pennsylvania half a century earlier—in the territory below Carolina.

The colony sprang as much from a spirit of benevolence as from the realities of imperial politics. Like the Quaker venture, Georgia was an experiment in idealism. In the 1720s England felt a wave of sentiment to remedy the plight of thousands of poor people drifting without jobs or languishing in debtors' jail. To salvage these "worthy poor," prominent English citizens—among them James Oglethorpe, a soldier and politician concerned with the welfare of both

ing out land, supplying the stores with provision, encouraging the faint hearted &c"—an orderly town, Savannah, rose on the bluffs.

Settlement was one of Oglethorpe's purposes; another was defense against the Spanish. In 1734 he sailed down the coast to find strategic points to fortify. He found one on a sea island just below the mouth of the Altamaha. This was St. Simons, an island thick with live oaks draped in moss, with good water and a fertile upland. Two years later he returned with the first settlers, 44 men (mostly skilled workers) and 72 women and children, and laid out a military town on a bluff overlooking a sharp bend in the inland passage up the coast. He named the town for Frederick, the king's only son. It came to be Oglethorpe's favorite town in Georgia.

The settlers' first task was to build a fort. Under Oglethorpe's direction they raised an earthen work that reflected classical ideas of the 1600s. French military engineer Vauban. Over the years Oglethorpe remade this work and the town into a formidable position. Frederica is defended, wrote a visitor in 1745, "by a pretty strong Fort of Tappan, which has several 18 Pounders mounted on a Ravelin in its front, and commands the River both upwards and downwards; and is surrounded by a quadrangular Rampart, with 4 bastions, of Earth well stocked and turfed, and a palisaded Ditch."

Behind the fort, on a field planted in corn by the Indians, Oglethorpe laid out 84 lots, most 60 by 90 feet. Each family received a lot for building and 50 country acres for crops. The first dwellings, palmetto huts, were eventually replaced by houses built of wood, tabby (a crude concrete made of burnt oyster shells), and brick in the Georgian style. Orange trees shaded the main road, 75-foot-wide Broad Street, which ran from the fort to the town gates. Frederica's artisans included a blacksmith—his shop was in the fort's northeast bastion—wheelwright, and public baker Oglethorpe brought over as an indentured servant.

Aide from lacking a church spire, 1740s Frederica might have passed for an English midlands village. The population reached about 500, and the town took on an air of permanency. Tradespeople and skilled workers prospered. Farmers cultivated crops with their own hands in the nearby fields—slavery was banned in the colony. Most families supplemented their diet with the region's abundant wildlife, shooting almost anything that moved.

Oglethorpe got along well with the local Yuchi, Yamacraw, and Creek Indians, whose trade was important to the first settlers.

In campaigns against Spain, the Indians fought alongside the British. A German settler from Salzburg sketched this Indian couple in 1736.



The first settlers at Frederica lived for several months in crude palmetto huts.



The Hawkins-Davison Houses

The families who lived in these houses were among Frederica's first settlers. Dr. Thomas Hawkins and his wife, Beatrice, lived in the house on the right.

Their neighbors were the well-liked tavern keeper, town constable, and ship inspector Samuel Davison and his wife Susanna.

His positions as the regimental surgeon, town physician, and apothecary and as an officer of the court gave him a substantial income.



This tableware and wine bottle are a few of the many domestic artifacts unearthed at Frederica.

The Battle

Having made the town a formidable position, Oglethorpe turned his attention to the Spanish. In 1740, the British captured St. Augustine, but the Spanish soon recaptured it. Oglethorpe, who had been in the north, returned to the south to help Oglethorpe. He had about 900 men but faced twice that number.

Spanish commander Manuel de Montiano, governor of Florida, sought to destroy Frederica and lay waste the coast as far north as Port Royal, S.C. After taking that town, he would strike at the English plantation system by freeing slaves in the nearby countryside.

In early July his ships ran by the guns of Fort St. Simons and landed troops a few miles up the inland passage. Outflanked, Oglethorpe pulled back to Frederica. On July 7, some 200



Spaniards advanced up the military road that connected the forts. Oglethorpe routed this column with a fierce attack.

Learning of this repulse, Montiano sent several hundred men forward to capture the retreat, but his troops ran into a British ambush and were defeated.

Legend has it that a nearby cow had been killed by a British soldier. The cow's carcass was found by the British, and the Spanish were forced to retreat. The cow was found by the British, and the Spanish were forced to retreat.

Two units of foreign mercenaries, the 42nd Regiment of Foot (Oglethorpe's) and the 25th Foot, were sent to the fort. Oglethorpe, who had been in the north, returned to the south to help Oglethorpe. He had about 900 men but faced twice that number.

The Decline

By 1742, the Spanish had been driven from the coast. Oglethorpe, who had been in the north, returned to the south to help Oglethorpe. He had about 900 men but faced twice that number.

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Fort Frederica in 1742

FREDERICA RIVER

Oglethorpe's Town

New lost to time and the wandering river, Frederica barely resembles the military town that once flourished here. From 1735 to 1740 the fort and its regimental garrison were the hub of British military operations on Georgia's frontier.

This pictorial illustration shows Frederica in the pivotal year 1742 when Oglethorpe's forces defeated Spanish troops at Bloody Marsh. Like Savannah, Frederica was a planned town, built by the military post.

Like Oglethorpe and his fellow settlers, Oglethorpe's town was a military town of spacious streets and substantial houses in the Georgian style. An 18th-century traveler described the scene for London's *Map of Georgia* in 1735: "Some houses are built entirely of brick, some of brick and wood, some of log and timber, but most of the houses are of wood only."

Of all the settlements in Georgia, Oglethorpe's town was the only one that was planned.

Frederica's military post was a small fort, built by the British in 1735. It was a small fort, built by the British in 1735. It was a small fort, built by the British in 1735.

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Frederica Today

On St. Simons Island 12 miles from Brunswick, Ga., the park can be reached via U.S. 17 and the St. Simons Causeway. Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. No camping facilities.

Blackberry bushes are a common sight in the park. They are a common sight in the park. They are a common sight in the park.

The site is marked by a state historic plaque.

Help Protect Frederica! Frederica is an archaeological site and the remains here are fragile. Please do not walk on or disturb any surviving foundations, brick or tabby.

Not only a park ranger if you see a ranger and help to help complete the picture of life here in colonial times.

Proper law prohibits digging or using metal detectors within the park.

Touring the Park

A good way to see Frederica is to stroll through the town site with this guide. Sites are marked on the map at left.

A A military road connected Frederica with Fort St. Simons, six miles away on the south end of the island. More like a path than a road, it crossed marshy ground on a causeway. British troops marched down this path to battle invading Spanish troops in 1742.

B The town gate controlled land access to Frederica. Soldiers routinely stood guard here. Outside the gate, towns-

people traded with local Creek and Yuchi Indians.

C Broad Street divided the town into north and south wards. The first settlers planted orange trees along this street, thinking that in time they would have "a very pretty effect on the view, and render the town pleasantly shady."

D The three-story Calwell house was the best dwelling in town. John Calwell made candles and soap here and his wife kept a shop.

E Two prominent families occupied the Hawkins-Davison houses. Thomas Hawkins, surgeon and

apothecary, built the west half. Samuel Oglethorpe, town constable, built the east half. They ran their businesses here.

F A tabby fort guarded the twisting water approach to the town. The fort was square with bastions on each corner and separated from the town by a palisade and moat. Inside were a magazine for guns and ammunition, officers' quarters, storehouses, and a forge. A spur battery, lost long ago to the river, mounted six or seven cannon.

G The barracks housed most of the several hundred soldiers garrisoned

at Frederica. Other soldiers lived nearby in palisade-walled huts.

H The northeast bastion, a remnant of a work that Oglethorpe built in 1735, was an ominous threat to the town with an earthen rampart, a moat six to eight feet deep, and a cedar palisade 10 feet high.

I The burying ground, of which little is known, lay just east of town.

For a Safe Visit
• Lightning storms are dangerous. Seek shelter in the visitor center or in your car but not under trees.
• Watch your step

near the riverbank; the water is swift and deep.

Don't drink, swim, or wade in the river.

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