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AUGUSTA, GEORGIA

Field Notes on Historic Sites  
October 20, 1936

Herbert E. Kahler

&

Ralston B. Lattimore

Augusta, Georgia.

Field Notes on Historic Sites

The principal historic sites in Augusta, Georgia, are well marked and cared for.

Fort Augusta

Fort Augusta, built in 1736 by General James Oglethorpe, occupied a site on the Savannah River which is now the yard of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The site is marked by a granite cross, which bears the following inscription:

This Stone Marks the Site of the Colonial Fort Augusta, built by Order of General Oglethorpe and the Trustees in 1736; and Known During the Revolution as Fort Cornwallis.

St. Paul's Church was built in 1750 under a curtain of this fort.

Congress of Five Nations

On a rear corner of St. Paul's Church, a tablet has been erected by the Colonial Dames to mark the site of the Indian Treaty of 1763. The inscription on the tablet is as follows:

To commemorate the Great Congress of five Indian nations held here at Fort Augusta in 1763, when seven hundred Indians came to meet the Governors of Georgia, Virginia, North and South Carolina.

Erected by the Augusta Committee of the Georgia Society of the Colonial Dames of America. 1830.

Fort Grierson

About a quarter of a mile west of the Fort Augusta site the approximate site of Fort Grierson has been marked with a with a bronze tablet bearing the following inscription:

Approximate Site of  
Fort Grierson

A British post during their occupancy

of Augusta, Georgia.  
 Captured by American forces on  
 May 23, 1781, under General  
 Andrew Pickens, Colonel Henry Lee,  
 Colonel Elijah Clarke.  
 Erected by City of Augusta  
 Richard E. Allen, Jr.,  
 Mayor.  
 WPA 1936 DAR

McKay's Trading Post

At 1822 Broad Street a two story white house  
 has been marked as follows:

The white House or McKay's  
 Trading Post  
 Used by the British as a fort  
 during Colonel Elijah Clarke's  
 attempt to recapture Augusta,  
 September 14-18, 1780.  
 Thirteen wounded Americans were  
 hanged from the staircase  
 Erected by City of Augusta  
 Richard E. Allen, Jr.,  
 Mayor  
 WPA 1936 DAR

Confederate Powder Works

In front of the Sibley Manufacturing Company, near  
 the Savannah River on the Augusta Power Canal is a red  
 brick obelisk chimney about 110 feet high and 25 feet  
 square at the base, which marks the site of the  
 Confederate Powder Works, which supplied the Confederate  
 forces with a considerable portion of the powder used  
 in the War Between the States. The chimney is in an  
 excellent state of repair.

Two tablets erected on the chimney bear the  
 following inscriptions:

This obelisk chimney, sole remainder of  
 the extensive powder works here erected  
 under the auspices of the Confederate  
 Government, is by the Confederate Sur-  
 vivors Association of Augusta, with the  
 consent of the City Council, conserved  
 in honor of a fallen nation and inscribed  
 to the memory of those who died in the  
 Southern Armies during the War Between  
 the States.

George Washington Rains, U. S. L. A.,

Brigadier General-Ordnance U. S. A.  
 Brevet Major, U. S. A.,  
 Captain 4th Artillery,  
 Who under almost insuperable difficulties erected and successfully operated these powder works--a bulwark of the beleaguered Confederacy.

### United States Arsenal

On Walton Way at Orange Street is the old United States Arsenal constructed in the early part of the 19th century, seized by Georgia troops at the end of January, 1861, and regained by the United States in 1865 toward the close of the war. The buildings in the arsenal enclosure are in excellent condition, and the grounds are ornamented by numerous early 19th century and civil war type cannons. The property is owned and occupied by the United States Army, but the public is permitted access to the grounds.

### Graves of Lyman Hall and George Walton

#### Signers of the Declaration of Independence

The bones of Lyman Hall and George Walton have been interred under a monument on Greene Street.

### Home of Charles Cozzcott Jones, Jr., Georgia Historian

The residence of the late Charles Cozzcott Jones, Jr., 2249 Walton Way, is owned by the Estate of Mrs. C. C. J. Carpenter, and is occupied by the grandchildren of the historian. It is in excellent condition. On the lawn in front of the residence is an iron cannon, which was removed some years ago from Fort Morris on the Georgia coast by Mr. Jones.

On the following pages are photographs of the several sites in Augusta.

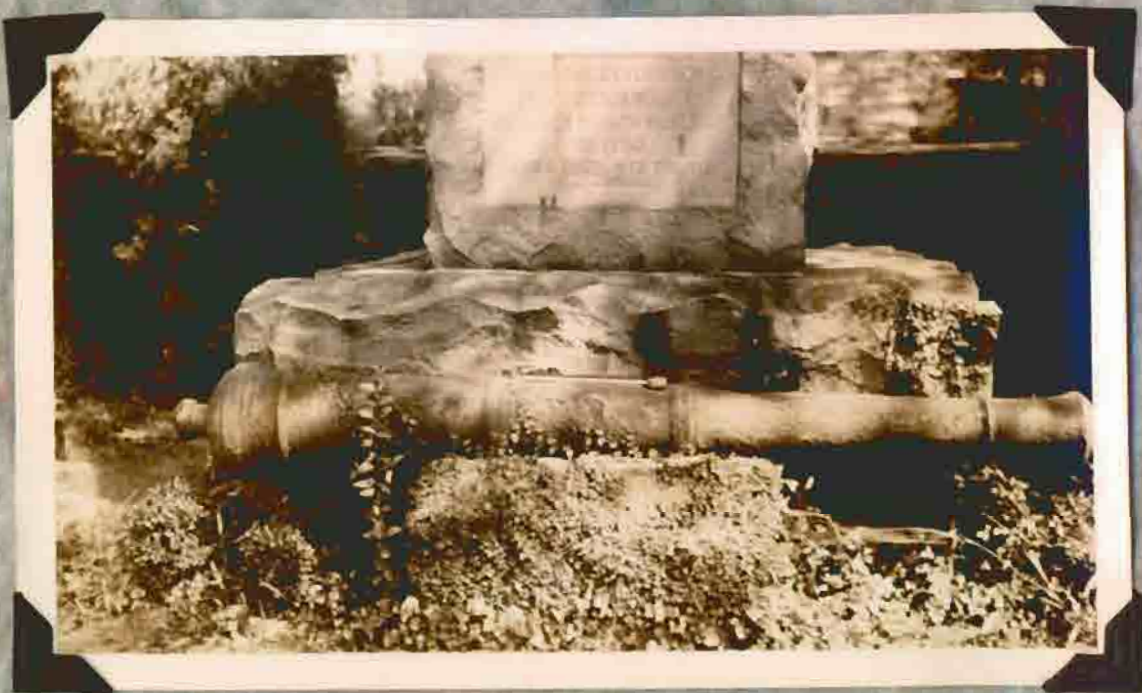


Granite cross marking the site of  
Old Fort Augusta, which was built by  
Oglethorpe in 1736. Behind the cross can  
be seen the levee of the Savannah river. The  
site of the fort is now the yard of St. Paul's  
episcopal Church, Augusta, Ga.





St. Paul's Church yard, Augusta, Ga., the site of the colonial fort, erected by Oglethorpe in 1736.



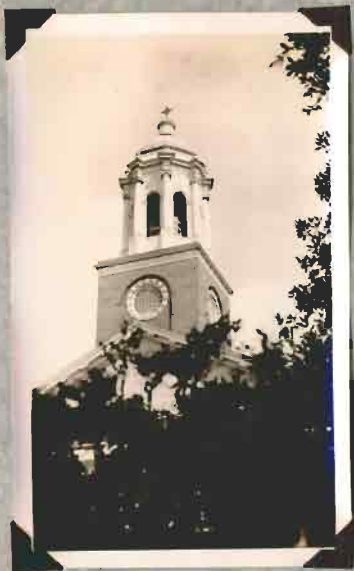
Iron cannon found on the site of old Fort Augusta. This piece of ordnance probably used in the Revolution.





St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Augusta, Georgia.

Site of the English church erected about 1780.  
The present building is a reproduction of the early  
19th century church that was destroyed in the Augusta  
fire of 1916.



Belfry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Augusta, Ga.



"The White House" or "McKay's Trading Post" used  
by the British as a fort, Sept. 14-18, 1780. Located  
at 1822 Broad Street, Augusta, Ga.



The red brick obelisk chimney, which is  
the sole remainder of the Confederate powder  
works at Augusta, Georgia.



Home of Parker Elliott Jones, Jr., Georgia  
Historical, Milton Way, Augusta, Ga., con-  
structed latter half of the 19th century.



Sincerely yours,

Herbert E. Kahler, Superintendent,  
Fort Marion National Monument.

Ralston B. Lattimore, Act'g Sup't  
Fort Pulaski National Monument.

October 20, 1936.

SOME PRELIMINARY NOTES ON THE  
LOCATION OF "BLOODY MARSH", ST. SIMONS ISLAND, GA.

James W. Holland

1937

SOME PRELIMINARY NOTES

on the

LOCATION OF "BLOODY MARSH", ST. SIMONS ISLAND, GA.

by

James W. Holland,  
Junior Park Historian

Without

Sutherland Account



## FORWORD

The site of the engagement on St. Simons Island, Georgia, in which the forces of Spain were turned back in a sanguinary encounter with Oglethorpe's men has been long, and still is, a matter of controversy. Some authorities would place it within two or three miles of the old town of Frederica; others hold that it occurred at "Bloody Marsh" or "Bloody Bend" some four or five miles farther south. At this latter point, a monument has been erected.

The purpose of the account which follows is not to attempt the settlement of the controversy; that would require extended study and even then the findings might not be of sufficient strength to warrant an unqualified statement as to the definite and exact location. The writer of this memorandum has deliberately made very extensive use of quotation, thus letting the proponents of the two sides of the question tell their own story. He reserves judgment until further study is made.

Brief and sketchy as is the following memorandum, it is based upon a study of some of the original records: these include the report of Montiano, Spanish commander; Oglethorpe's report and letters; the journal of Casins, a Spaniard who was a member of the expeditionary force; and an anonymous letter written from Frederica two days after the engagement and quoted verbatim in the Spalding account.

Introduction.-- On July 7, 1742, occurred, on St. Simons Island, a sea island off the Georgia coast, a military engagement of importance quite disproportionate to the relatively small number of men engaged in it. There the question of English or Spanish supremacy in Georgia and Carolina, the "debatable land", was largely settled, although the English leader did not at the time believe that to be the case.

Since 1736, that leader, James Edward Oglethorpe, had been preparing St. Simon's Island as the spearhead of English defense against the Spanish attack that appeared certain to come. In preparation, Oglethorpe made trips to England to raise men and supplies. Most of these he took to St. Simons and there laid out the town and fort of Frederica on the river of that name about half-way down the western coast of the island and St. Simons Fort (or Soldier's Fort) about seven miles S.S.E. of Frederica at the southern point of the island. From the 25th to the 28th of September, 1738, Oglethorpe set every man on the island to the task of cutting through a road to connect the two fortified points. It was along this road that the memorable victory was won, but at exactly what point on the road is in question.

The Road.-- No detailed description of the road, written at the time of its building, has been found. The following is from an account by Thomas Spalding (Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, I (1840), 281, n.), whose qualifications to write of the terrain of St. Simons will be indicated later:

"This road, after passing out of the town of Frederica, in a south-east direction, entered a beautiful prairie of a mile over, when it penetrated a dense close oak wood; keeping the same course for two miles, it passed to the eastern marsh that bounded St. Simons seaward. Along this marsh, being dry and hard, no road was necessary, and none was made. This natural highway was bounded on the east by rivers and creeks, and impracticable marshes; it was bounded on the west (the island side) by a thick wood covered with palmetto and vines of every character so as to be impracticable for any body of men, and could only be travelled singly and alone. This winding way along the marsh was continued for two miles, when it again passed up to the high land which had become open and clear, and from thence it proceeded in a direct line to the fort [St. Simons's Fort], at the sea entrance, around which for two hundred acres, five acre allotments of land for the soldiers had been laid out, cleared and improved. I have been thus particular in my description because it was to the manner in which the road was laid out and executed, that General Oglethorpe owed the preservation of the fort and town of Frederica."

Nothing in the foregoing description, nor even the final interpretative sentence, need be discarded by proponents of either of the possible sites of the English victory.

The Spanish Invasion.-- At Madrid, on October 31, 1741, a movement was started by Minister Don Jose de Campillo, under orders of Philip V for an expedition against the English settlers of the "desertable land." The organization of the enterprise was entrusted to Don Francisco de Guemes y Horcasitas, governor of Cuba. He, on June 8, 1742, delegated the command of the invading forces to the governor of Florida, Don Manuel de Montiano. The purpose of the attack is very clearly set forth in a letter from Horcasitas to Montiano (Spanish Official Report, in Coll. Ga. Hist. Soc., Vol. VII, pt. 3, p. 30) ". . . And I am expecting at the very least that the forces furnished will without the slightest let or hindrance forthwith destroy all the plantations as far as Port Royal . . . as far as its force will reach, and events permit, lay waste Carolina and its dependencies. But this course must be consistent with the information your Lordship may obtain from prisoners . . . looking to the secure withdrawal of our forces through the interior channels between the Keys. It is of the greatest consequence and importance to raise and destroy Carolina and its plantations. This result can be better secured by first getting rid of the regiment of Oglethorpe, which might proceed to the defense of some other point where hostilities had broken out, if not first attacked where they are now in Gualquini and Saint Simon . . . It is entirely probable and credible that surprised by this blow, they will abandon everything and flee to the woods. . ."

On June 28, the Spanish force, variously estimated from 33 vessels and 2,000 men to 58 vessels and 7,000 men, appeared off the bar of St. Simon and, on July 5, crossed over on a spring tide, being bombarded the while "very hotly from the Shipping and Batterys." The stout resistance offered by Oglethorpe was of no avail, however, and the Spanish fleet won the passage in the river. Thereupon the English commander decided to abandon St. Simon's Fort and the southern part of the island, destroy all materials which might be of use to the Spaniards, and retire to Frederica, there to make his final stand.

Evidence for Locating Site Near Frederica.-- On July 7, Montiano sent out two parties to reconnoiter, being unwilling to follow Oglethorpe over the unknown road to Frederica. One of the parties, however, through some unexplained mistake, joined the other the other, and the combined force of one hundred and seventy men and forty Indian scouts moved over the road toward Frederica. "These two [parties] continued as far as the town," reported Montiano, "in whose vicinity they were attacked by a body of English and Indians in a very narrow defile in the woods." (Spanish Official Account, in Coll. Ga. Hist. Soc., vol. VII, pt. 3, p. 91).

An English observer wrote two days after the skirmish ". . . the rangers came in, and gave account that the enemy was within a mile [of Frederica]." (Quoted in Coll. Ga. Hist. Soc., I, 277).



At this point, Oglethorpe "advanced with a party of Indian Rangers and the Highland Company . . . being resolved to engage them in the Defiles of the Woods [apparently at the edge of Frederica] before they could get out and form on the open Grounds."

The assault was successful, and the Spanish party fled in confusion. "We . . . pursued them two miles," wrote Oglethorpe in his report dated July 30, 1742 (Coll. Ga. Hist. Soc., III, 138), "to an open Meadow or Savannah upon the edge of which I posted three Platoons of the Regiment and the Company of Highland foot so as to be well covered by the woods from the Enemy who were obliged to pass through the Meadow under our fire." It will be noted that, supposing all the witnesses cited to be creditable, the position taken up would be somewhat less than three miles southeast of Frederica. Furthermore, Oglethorpe wrote: "This disposition was very fortunate," (Ibid., Italics are mine) implying that the troops maintained the position at which they were stationed and that the engagement took place there.

Meanwhile Montiano, receiving word of the defeat in the initial skirmish had "detached three companies of grenadiers to support our troops and cover their retreat." ("Spanish Official Report" in Coll. Ga. Hist. Soc., Vol. VII, pt. 3, p. 31) This force, Oglethorpe reported, "advanced from the Spanish Camp into the Savannah with Muzzaks and fired with great spirit but not seeing our men by reason of the woods none of their shot took place but some did." Some

His report continues: "Some Platoons of ours in the heat of the fight the air being darkened with the smoke and a shower of rain falling retired in disorder." The Spaniards seem not to have been aware of this retreat by part of the English force; Montiano, who in his report emphasized every accomplishment of his men, does not even mention it. It is almost certain that the routed men could not be seen in the dense wood which hid them from the Spaniards.

Oglethorpe continued the story: "I hearing the Firing [from Frederica] rode towards it and at near two miles from the place of action met a great many men in disorder who told me ours were routed and Lieut. Sutherland killed. I ordered them to halt and march back against the enemy . . . As I heard the fire continue I concluded our Men could not be quite beaten and that my immediate assistance might preserve them therefore spurred on & arrived just as the fire was done. I found the Spaniards entirely routed by one Platoon of the Regiment under the command of Lieut. Sutherland and the Highland Company under the Command of Lieut. Charles Mackey." (Oglethorpe's Report, in Coll. Ga. Hist. Soc., III, 138).

The stragglers having been rallied and having reached the scene of the late action, there then occurred a minor aftermath of the conflict which perhaps has given rise to the difference of opinion as to the location of the site of the engagement known locally as "Bloody Marsh". Again quoting Oglethorpe: "Capt. Demere and Insign

Gibbon being arrived with the men they had rallied Lieut. Cadogan with an advanced party of the Regiment and soon after the whole Regiment Indians and Rangers I marched down to a Causeway over a Marsh very near the Spanish Camp over which all were obliged to pass and thereby stopt those who had been dispersed in the fight in the Savannah from getting to the Spanish Camp." (Ibid., 137. Italics are mine.)

If Oglethorpe's own account be accepted literally, it would thus seem to place the site of the major action some three miles from Frederica and the site of the anti-climax of dealing with the remnants of the defeated Spanish force at the marsh where the monument commemorating the battle now stands. Incidentally, Oglethorpe, so far as this writer has thus far discovered, never employed the term "Bloody Marsh". On the contrary, in two different communications he referred to the site of the engagement as the "Grenadier Savannah" (Oglethorpe to Trustees, Aug. 5, 1742 in Coll. Ga. Hist. Soc., III, 123 and in Colonial Records of Georgia, LXIII, 382; Report on engagement, July 30, 1742, in Coll. Ga. Hist. Soc., III, 139).

Evidence for Locating Site Near St. Simon's Port (then the Spanish Camp)--

And now to a brief consideration of the site some two miles from the southern point of the island, where the monument now stands. Thomas Spalding, native of St. Simon's and a grandson of one of the participants in the engagement, and a man of unmentioned veracity, seems first to have advanced the thesis which would locate the site near the south end of the island. In his "Sketch of the Life of General James Oglethorpe," in Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, published in 1840 (I, 240-95), Spalding quotes verbatim a contemporary account which, in substantial agreement with the other sources, locates the first skirmish on July 7 at "within a mile" of Frederica, and states that Oglethorpe "after pursuing nearly a mile . . . halted [and] posted his troops to advantage in the wood; then came hither [the letter was written at Frederica] to order the regiments and companies to march. On his returning to the late field of action, he met three platoons in great disorder, who gave him an account that they had been broken by the Spaniards, who were extremely numerous. Notwithstanding which he rallied them, rode on, and to his great satisfaction found that Lieut. [redacted] and Lieut. [redacted] with the Highlanders, had entirely defeated the enemy, who consisted of six hundred men." (quoted in Spalding, op. cit., 277).

Spalding, however, was not inclined to accept this account, even though he quoted it verbatim and in its entirety in his work. As he pointed out: "In the details that have been given of that day, written probably in a hurry, and certainly by one not himself engaged in the action, there is some confusion of position, and some singling of events, which can only be understood by one familiar in his childhood

with the scene, and who has travelled it over often, with more than one that was himself an actor in the conflict." (Spalding, op. cit., 281).

On the basis of thorough familiarity with the terrain and relationship to and acquaintance with some veterans of the memorable defense, Spalding locates the site and reconstructs the action as follows:

" . . . the road cut out from Frederica to the south end of the island of St. Simons where the fort and sea battery were placed, . . . proceeded in a south-eastern direction, for two or three miles, where it reached the eastern marsh; . . . this marsh was bounded to the east or seaward, by a thick impracticable morass; on the west, by dense, close wood. The highway continued along this marsh for two miles, opening into wide spreads of firm land, fit for the manœuvring of men. But when it had again approached within two miles of the south end, there was a bend in crescent form, in which the firm way was not more than twenty yards wide; on the east or convex-side of the crescent an intense morass, on the concave or western shore of the crescent an extreme thick brushwood. After passing this strait, the road entered an open wood of oaks and other timber, concealing the movement of troops, but not giving passage to them. This wood continued for about a mile or two before the fort [of St. Simons] and open grounds expanded to the view." (Ibid., 281-82).

"It was in this open wood," continues the Spalding account, "General Oglethorpe had, in retiring from Frederica [sic], left a few rangers and some Indians to watch the motions of the Spaniards. And this wood was the scene of action on the morning of the seventh of July." (Referring to the first skirmish)

The account continues:

"Two companies of Spaniards and some Spanish Indians at the dawn of day issued from the Spanish camp and made an attack on the rangers and Indians within the wood [cf. Montano's report, ante, p. 2]. They drove the rangers and Indians to the mouth of the defile, but did not attempt to pass it. The first movement of the Spaniards had been communicated . . . to the General. He hurried to the scene of action, and with his advance overthrew the Spaniards and pursued them to the open field in view of the fort [meaning St. Simons fort]."

Thinking that the small Spanish force indicated a feint to draw him away from Frederica (still according to the Spalding version), Oglethorpe left two companies of his regiment, the Highland company and the Indians to guard the road and wood and returned to Frederica. Finding all quiet there, he was hurrying back to the place the companies had been posted with all forces available for that purpose. Half-way there he met

two companies and most of the Indians in full retreat. After rallying his men, he "continued . . . with hurried steps / Oglethorpe says he rode, see ante, p. 3 / until, arriving at the last bend of the marshy way, a scene opened upon him, which his proudest expectations could never have looked for . . . The last bend of the marsh was covered by two hundred grenadiers, who lay dead or dying upon the field, while not an enemy was in sight. All was still, save sometimes at intervals a Highland shout or an Indian yell proclaimed that another and another had been found and dragged from his covert. But how rose that shout, how rang that yell, when the actors stood around their chief to hail him victor of the day. And we have seen the eyes glisten, and the voice rise, fifty years afterwards as we fondly listened to the tale by one who had mingled in the strife and been a partner in the scene." (*Ibid.*, 282-83)

Conclusion: Although suffering heavy loss on July 7, the Spaniards still very greatly outnumbered the English, and did not immediately withdraw from St. Simon's. That they did withdraw without any more serious fighting was attributable to several circumstances but have no relevance to the subject treated in this paper.

It is believed that by careful research, comparison of sources now available and the possible uncovering of others, thorough checking and weighing of historical evidence in the case, and an intensive study of the terrain, the location of "Bloody Marsh" or of "Grenadier Savannah" might possibly be determined beyond any reasonable doubt. Until that time, we can still agree with the writer who, in 1913, commented: ". . . the exact site of this engagement has long been much in doubt." (*Coll. Ge. Hist. Soc.*, VII, pt. 3, p. 110)



## WORKS CONSULTED IN PREPARATION OF THIS MEMORANDUM

Primary

1. "Anonymous letter, dated 'Frederica, July 9th, 1742,'", quoted in Thomas Spalding, "A sketch of the Life of General James Oglethorpe," in Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, I, 240-295. Savannah: Printed for the Society, 1840.
2. Gandler, Allen G. (comp.) and Knight, Lucian L. (ed., rev., and pub.), The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, XXIII, 377-82. Letters from William Stephens to Herman Verelst and from Oglethorpe to the Trustees, July and August, 1742.
3. Oglethorpe, James O., "Letters," in Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, III, 1-158. Savannah: Morning News Print, 1873. Oglethorpe's detailed report on the Spanish invasion, pp. 137-40.
4. Spanish Official Account of the Attack on the Colony of Georgia, in America, and of its Defeat on St. Simons Island by General James Oglethorpe, in Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, Vol. VII, pt. 5. Savannah: Morning News Print, 1913. Translated by C. H. Wilcox from manuscripts in the Senne Library, Bordeaux, copied from original documents in the archives of the Indies at Seville. Especially useful are Montiano's report and Casins's journal.

Secondary

1. Ashmore, Otis, "Note on the Battle Ground of Bloody Marsh," in Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, Vol. VII, pt. 5, pp. 110-111. Savannah: Morning News Print, 1913. Accepts Spalding's account.
2. Bartow, T. B., "Memoir of Frederica," in Georgia Historical Quarterly, I (1917), 347-49. Undistinguished.
3. Gats, Margaret Davis, Our Today's and Yesterday's: A History of Brunswick and the Coastal Islands, Rev. ed. Brunswick, Georgia: Glover Bros., 1930. Notes Spalding on location of site.
4. Coulter, S. Merton, A Short History of Georgia. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Univ. of N. C. Press, 1938. Seems to follow Spalding in the verbal account of the engagement (pp. 45-48) and yet on p. 33 is map showing location almost exactly half-way between Frederica and St. Simons I.

5. Jones, Charles C., Jr., "The Dead Towns of Georgia," in Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, V, 1-268. Savannah: Morning News Print, 1878. Ch. II, "Frederick", pp. 45-136. Quotes Oglethorpe's report verbatim as the story of the skirmish and engagement of July 7, 1742.
6. Spalding, Thomas, "A Sketch of the Life of General James Oglethorpe," in Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, I, 240-96. Savannah: Printed for the Society, 1840. Designates the site on the basis of testimony of living witnesses fifty years after the battle.

OTHER ACCOUNTS

Of probably the greatest significance in determining questions concerning "Bloody Marsh" is the pamphlet, now very rare, published by Lieut. Patrick Outherland in London in 1743, entitled An Account of the Late Invasion of Georgia. Outherland, who, with Mackey, was the greatest individual hero of the encounter should be in a position to know much about the engagement, its site, and like points. This pamphlet is now in the DeFenne Library, Wormsloe, Ga., and has not yet been examined by the writer.

Other accounts, for the most part secondary, are suggested by C. C. Jones, Jr., in his "Dead Towns of Georgia" (p. 114, n.) His list follows:

- Harris, Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels, vol. II, pp. 340, 343. London, 1743.
- McCall, History of Georgia, vol. I, pp. 176, 190. Savannah, 1811.
- Switt, Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia, vol. II, pp. 114, 119. London, 1779.
- Stevens, History of Georgia, vol. I, pp. 180, 186. New York, 1847.
- Harris, Georgia of Oglethorpe, pp. 250, 268. Boston, 1840.
- Right, Memoir of Oglethorpe, pp. 297, 317. London, 1867.
- Hansay, History of South Carolina, vol. I, pp. 144, 147. Charleston, 1899.
- London Magazine, vol. XI, pp. 515, 516, 568.
- Gentleman's Magazine for 1742, vol. XII, pp. 494, 496, 530, 561, 593, 594.
- Gentleman's Magazine for 1743, vol. XIII, pp. 64, 638, 639.

MAPS

In The Spanish Official Account . . ., in Coll. Ga. Hist. Soc.  
vol. VII, pt. 3 (1913).

facing p. 7.-- Map of Georgia, Inset map of Great  
St Simons. Signed "R. . . Seale, sculp." No date,  
but the fact that the location of old, rather  
than new beneger is shown tends to date it at  
not much later than 1837. Shows Frederica, St.  
Simon's Fort, and the road connecting them. Original  
in the DeRenne Library.

between pp. 65 and 67.-- "Plan du Fort de Coudequini  
now called Jekill Sound in the Province of Georgia  
in North America," No date. Inaccurate. Original  
in DeRenne Library.

between pp. 70 and 71.-- "Plano de la entrada de  
algunini Rio de S<sup>a</sup> Simon . . ." "Implicado  
Havana y Mayo 10 de 1737." By Antonio de Arredondo.  
Original in the DeRenne Library.

In Otis Lathmore, "Note on the Battle Ground of Bloody Marsh," in  
Coll. Ga. Hist. Soc., vol. VII, pt. 3, pp. 110-111  
(1913).

between pp. 110 and 111.-- Two maps on single sheet.  
"St. Simons Island and Frederica" and "Battle Ground  
of Bloody Marsh". Both signed "O. A." [Otis Lathmore]  
Rough map prepared upon basis of study of the  
written accounts and on inspection of the terrain.  
The Spalding location is accepted.

In Margaret Davis Gato, Our Days and Yesterdays . . . Rev. ed.  
(1930)

page 52.-- Map of St. Simons Island from Stevens  
History of Georgia, vol. I.

page 57.-- "Map of the Town and Commons of Frederica,  
St. Simons Island, Georgia," by Joshua Miller,  
Deputy Surveyor, by order of commissioners appointed  
by the General Assembly of Georgia in 1796. Tracing  
by D. R. Paulk from a photostat of original in office  
of Secretary of State, Atlanta. On this map note  
area marked "Great Savannah", a short distance (no  
scale is given) N. E. of Frederica. It is possible  
that this may correspond to Oglethorpe's "Granadier  
Savannah."

page 60.-- Plan of the Town of Frederica on the Island of St. Simons by Joshua Miller . . . Map shows location, number, etc. of the 86 town lots, the fort, guard house, barracks, etc. Tracing by E. R. Faulk from photostat in office of Secretary of State, Atlanta.

page 68.-- "Map of the Lands in the Vicinity of Frederica, St. Simons Island, made Oct. 21, 1801 by John McKinnon, Surveyor at the request of Thomas Young, and being 'a resurvey of several tracts of land. . . formerly the property of John Graham, Esq., and sold by the Commissioners of Confiscated Estates . . . made in conformity to a resurvey made by Jacob Lewis, a Surveyor in the year 1774.' This map locates the tract of land once occupied by Oglethorpe. This tracing was made by Mrs. Maxfield Parrish from the original owned by Mrs. Agnes Hartridge."

page 75.-- "Map showing Colonial Land Grants in the Vicinity of the Town of Frederica, St. Simons Island, Georgia." Compiled by N. H. Ballard, traced by E. R. Faulk, 1930. "Battle of July 7, 1742," is indicated.

page 100.-- "Historical Map Saint Simons Island, Glynn County, Georgia. Data from Margaret Davis, etc., 1929. Site of "Bloody Marsh" shown about 2 miles from S. point of island.

In C. C. Jones, Jr., "Dead Towns of Ga.," in Coll. Ga. Hist. Soc., IV, 1-263 (1878).

between pages 44 and 45.-- "Plan of the Town of Frederica, on St. Simon's Island, Georgia." J. Bien Photo. Lith., N. Y.

In A. Barton Coulter, Short History of Georgia (1904)

page 25.-- "Coast of Georgia and Florida in the Spanish War." St. Simons Island and the Battle of Bloody Marsh are shown in inset. The location here is indicated as almost half way between Frederica and St. Simon's Fort. Taken from R. N. Brooks, History of Georgia (Chicago, 1913).

REPORT ON MIDWAY, LIBERTY COUNTY, GEORGIA

James W. Holland

1937



## MIDWAY, LIBERTY COUNTY, GEORGIA

### 1. Critical Analysis of the Site

A. Synopsis. — Settled in 1752 by some three hundred and fifty Puritans who came from a previous settlement at Dorchester, South Carolina, the Midway community was notable for its early and ardent support of the principles of the American Revolution. Strictly speaking, Midway was not a town or even a well-defined region. In general, it was composed of the plantations of the communicants of the Midway Congregational Church, built in 1756, which, in accordance with the theocratic ideals of Puritanism, became the center of the life of the community. In the Midway group of sites may be included old Sunbury, founded in 1757 as a port for the Midway planters, and in pre-Revolutionary days a commercial rival of Savannah only to disappear later and be numbered among the "dead towns of Georgia". Immediately south of Sunbury, there still stands Fort Morris, one of the best preserved of the Revolutionary earthworks, the last outpost of patriot defense in Georgia. North of the meeting house was the plantation of Lynn Hall, one of the three signers of the Declaration of Independence from Georgia. Another signer, Dutton Owensett, had his plantation residence on St. Catherine's Island, about ten miles from Sunbury which was his landing place on the mainland, his base of supplies, and his haven of refuge when dangers threatened his island home from the descent of British war vessels and patrols. George Walton, the other Georgia signer, was sent to Sunbury as prisoner of war after the fall of Savannah in 1778.

The Midway community is remarkable for at least two reasons. It has furnished a number of outstanding and useful citizens entirely out of proportion to its small population; among these may be numbered, in addition to those already mentioned, Dr. Abiel Holmes, author of the Annals and father of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jedidiah Morse, "father of American geography," John and Joseph LeConte, eminent scientists and educators, Charles C. Jones, Jr., recognized historian of Georgia, and others. Midway, too, was outstanding in the promotion of the spirit of liberty in a colony which, at best, in the early days of the movement was apathetic. It was at Midway that the American Revolution in Georgia was best exemplified.

B. Accurate Description of the Site. — Midway Meeting House. Located about twenty-five miles south of Savannah, on U. S. Highway 94W (Atlantic Coastal Highway) and in a sparsely populated region, the Midway Church (built 1756) stands in a clearing surrounded by rather heavy growth of timber and grasses. Little trace of the once thriving rice and indigo plantations can now be found. The terrain is the swampy type which lies intermediate to the salt marsh on the east and the pine woods on the west. The Church is a very well preserved frame structure, two stories in height, with a steep roof which slopes at about a 45° angle. A wooden steeple surmounts a square weather-boarded tower. The upper floor has

twenty-four windows, the large number being due to the fact that a negro balcony takes up most of the room on that floor. The church faces south on a sandy road that leads to Sunbury. Across this side-road, facing the main highway, is a newly constructed filling station and lunch room.

Sunbury.— The site of this once thriving town overlooks the broad bend of the Winy River and out over the bay. St. Catherine's Island is clearly visible. To the south is an extensive salt marsh. All traces of the town have vanished and in its stead are woodland and a cleared field. Sunbury, along with Ebenezer, Abercorn, Joseph's Town, and Frederica, has become one of the "dead towns of Georgia."

Lyman Hall Plantation.— A wooded swamp, once the rice plantation of Lyman Hall, signor of the Declaration of Independence, is crossed by U. S. Highway 17. The plantation house was located about a quarter mile from the road and about one mile north of the meeting house. No part of the building is now standing.

Fort Morris.— The colonial road from the Winy meeting house to Sunbury and Fort Morris traverses a primitive region of dense woods. The fort is only about 1,000 feet south of the limit of the site of Sunbury. It is a remarkably well preserved earthwork; its thick scarp walls enclose a parade of approximately one acre. The east face which overlooks the river and salt marsh is 275 feet in length, the north face, 101; the south, 141; and the west, 240. The parapet is ten feet in height and six feet above the parade. Surrounding Fort Morris is a moat, about ten feet wide at the bottom and about twenty feet at the top. It originally mounted eight guns, all of which have been removed. There is a growth of trees and shrubs on the parade and on the walls and in the ditch.

St. Catherine's Island.— This is one of the sea islands, or "Golden Isles" of Georgia, located between Blackbeard Island to the south and Ossabaw Island to the north. Although it apparently has never been accurately surveyed, its area has been estimated at 6,200 acres. It is typical of Georgia's sea islands in that its coast is indented by a number of estuaries. Also typical is the large amount of marshland. St. Catherine's may be seen from the site of Sunbury, and to that place and Winy it was linked politically first in St. John's Parish and later in Liberty County.

### C. Identification of Site.

Winy Church is authentic beyond any reasonable doubt. The present structure, however, is not a colonial structure, the first church, built in 1756, having been burned by the British in 1778. The present church, by vote of the congregation, was built on the site of the earlier one in 1792. From time to time the building has been repaired, some five hundred dollars having been spent for that purpose as early as 1822. The brick wall around the historic Winy graveyard dates from 1828.

Although no building in that town remains standing, the site of Sunbury is well established. An effective landmark in determining its location is Fort Morris, an earthwork easily identified because of its good condition. The site is also indicated by the old graveyard, long neglected and overgrown, but still visible. Visitors to Sunbury after its total decline have described the site. Some of these accounts are: C. C. Jones, Jr., Dead Towns of Georgia (Savannah, 1878), pp. 221-222; James Stacy, History of the Midway Congregational Church, Liberty County, Georgia (Newman, Georgia, 1890), p. 240; and Charles F. Jenkins, Dutton Owinnett: Signer of the Declaration of Independence (Garden City, New York, 1928), p. 34.

"Dutton Owinnett"house" on St. Catherine's Island may or may not have been the home of the Signer. Of tabby construction, its walls are of considerable thickness and a porch extends across the front. Southeast of the house were the slave quarters, many of these now in ruins. Charles Jenkins, a careful Owinnett biographer writes (op. cit., 43): "It is not known if this dwelling was the home of Dutton Owinnett, but it undoubtedly was the location of his home. There are no dates on the buildings, and no one apparently knows when they were constructed. Most of the buildings look old enough to date back to Owinnett's time, and in the absence of proof to the contrary, it is the writer's opinion that this was, at least, the site of Owinnett's home on the island of St. Catherine."

The road (now U. S. Highway #17) which passes by the side of the Midway Church, is one of the oldest in Georgia, having been cut through about 1736, under the direction of Hugh Mackay with the aid of Indians supplied by the friendly Mico of the Yamacraws, Tomo-chi-chi, to provide communication by land between Savannah and New Inverness (Darien). The latter town was an outpost on the north bank of the Altamaha River, garrisoned by Scottish Highlanders brought to Georgia for the protection of the frontier. Although much of the road has been relocated, in this portion of Liberty County the pavement has been laid over the old road bed as is indicated by the position of the church in reference to it.

There can be little or no doubt that the earthwork today known as Fort Morris is indeed the Revolutionary work of that name. Its location is exactly as described in the early accounts. In 1812-1813 Fort Morris was considered a possible point of attack by the British and so some efforts were made to place it in a defensible condition. Neighboring planters furnished the labor to clean out the ditch, to strengthen the parapet, and to mount such of the guns still there that were considered in fair condition. A few light pieces, in addition, were obtained from Savannah. One shot was fired from Fort Morris during the war of 1812, and since that time on the earthwork has remained without alteration or repairs.

Trees of considerable size now grow on the parapet, on the parade, and in the ditch.

D. Historical Narrative.

In the year that the Trustees for the founding of Georgia surrendered their charter to the King, some twenty years after Oglethorpe had landed the first of the English settlers on Yamacraw Bluff, the Midway settlements were established. The newcomers were a band of Puritans whose ancestors had settled in Massachusetts in the great migration of 1630, remaining there until 1690 when they moved to South Carolina and settled on the Ashley River, principally at Dorchester and Beech Hill.<sup>1</sup> Inasmuch as they desired a compact settlement in Carolina, they took up only small tracts of land, and it was found, with the dividing and subdividing of these small farms among successive generations, the small farms would not support them. By reason of economic necessity, many young persons were forced to leave the community, which in their close-knit society was more than ordinarily distressing. It was alleged by some, too, that the region around Dorchester and Beech Hill was "a very sickly part of the country." Clearly, more land situated in a more favorable climate was needed if the community were to survive, so several attempts were made to locate a suitable place elsewhere in Carolina.<sup>2</sup>

Failing in their efforts to find a promised land in Carolina, however, and "having heard a good character of the lands in Georgia", the congregation in May, 1732, sent three persons from Beech Hill to

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<sup>1</sup> James Stacy, History of the Midway Congregational Church, Liberty County, Georgia (Knoxville, Georgia, n. d. - Preface 1st. ed., 1899, 2nd ed., 1903), 2-9.

<sup>2</sup> Records of the Congregational Church, quoted in ibid., 15-16.

investigate the land at Midway which had been suggested as an attractive site for establishing a new colony. The report was favorable, but the removal to Georgia being opposed by some of the congregation, another party was sent out in the following month to inspect the Midway lands. After exploring the region for about a week, this group proceeded to Savannah where they petitioned for, and received, a grant of some 20,000 acres of land to be reserved for the Carolina Puritans for a period of eighteen months. Returning home, the emigrants found opinion divided in regard to removal to Georgia, but "an Inclination<sup>3</sup> to remove seemed considerably in the Ascendant."

About the first of August, 1732, Georgia's pioneer Puritans, set out six traveling by land and seven by water, to survey the land and begin the settlement at Midway. After a series of misfortunes, they returned to Carolina. The Church Records affirm: "These adverse Providences were very discouraging to most, and brought the affairs of our removing to a very considerable stand."<sup>4</sup>

Notwithstanding the discouraging circumstances, the van of the new colony arrived in December, 1732, when Benjamin Baker and Samuel Bacon, with their families began a settlement. It seems that only Barnabas May and his family arrived at Midway in 1733. In the following year, however, seventeen families, including that of the pastor, and two single men, migrated to the Georgia land and thus the permanence<sup>5</sup> of the settlement became more nearly assured.

<sup>3</sup> Church Records, in Ibid., 13-17. Grant later increased to 32,000 acres.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 18-19.



From year to year thereafter, other settlers took up land at Midway.<sup>7</sup> It has been estimated that when the settlement had been completely established it comprised three hundred and fifty whites and fifteen hundred negroes.<sup>8</sup>

In the development of the plantations in the swamps of the Midway district it was customary for the planter to leave his Carolina estate, with able-bodied hands, after the fall harvest and to spend the winter in clearing land and building a house. In a season or two, having prepared the way, he would bring his family and servants in the early spring and enter at once upon the cultivation of the land. Rice being the only money crop in the region, much work was entailed in the clearing, ditching and drainage of the swamps.<sup>9</sup>

With the high regard for order characteristic of the Puritans, the settlers proceeded to draw up, on August 20, 1764, "Articles and Rules of Incorporation Agreed upon by a Society Settled upon Midway and Newport in Georgia." The preamble, as indicative of the spirit of the people, is quoted:

We, the subscribers, settled on Midway and Newport in Georgia; being sensible of the advantages of good order and social agreement, among any people, both for their Civil and Religious Benefits; and especially its necessity among us as a Christian Society, being mostly a dissenting or congregational

<sup>7</sup> The name of the river is given as Midway in some of the early records. Some have held to the opinion that the district and the church were named for the river and should properly be Midway; others, that the name of the church and district was Midway due to its central location between Savannah and Darien whereas the name of the river was properly Midway. In view of the fact that the name Midway has long been sanctioned by usage, it is employed throughout this report to refer to river, district, or church.

<sup>8</sup> Charles C. Jones, Jr., The History of Georgia (New York, 1888), I, 403.

<sup>9</sup> Charles C. Jones, Jr., The Land Farms of Georgia, Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, IV (Savannah, 1878), 151-152.

church, that doth not ordinarily come under all the privileges of the establishment; and being willing to lay a foundation by the Blessing of God of peace and harmony among ourselves, and inoffensiveness to all our neighbours, and considering the necessity of forming ourselves into a corporation, by some certain and explicit rules and covenants, in order to obtain these good ends proposed; do accordingly come under the following articles of agreement, jointly among and with each other . . .<sup>10</sup>

The articles which followed were simple and direct. The signers pledged financial support to the church, agreed to meet annually at the church "to consult about the necessary business of the Society", and indicated that they would choose annually three or more selectmen, "immediately to manage our Public Business," and a clerk to keep the records of the church and society. Members of the society who were "supporters of and attenders on a Gospel Ministry among us," could vote on all matters, secular and ecclesiastical, brought before any meeting of the society, but on matters "more immediately respecting religion, such as judging of the soundness, Orthodoxy and due qualifications of ministers . . . the members of our church in full communion . . . shall have a double vote."<sup>11</sup>

On the first four Sundays after the arrival of the families in 1754, services had been held at private houses. Meanwhile a log house was being erected for temporary use as a church and the first sermon was preached there on June 7. There, too, on December 3, 1755 was observed a day of Thanksgiving for the "Tolerable good Crops ~~This~~ Year not with-

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<sup>10</sup> Records of the Midway Congregational Church, I, 1-4. The original manuscript is in possession of the Georgia Historical Society. Typewritten transcripts of volumes 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 and index, bound in four volumes are at Hodgson Hall Branch, Savannah Public Library which is also the Library of the Georgia Historical Society. (Hereafter cited as 10 Records Midway Church). Also reprinted in Stacy, Hist. Midway Church, 23-22.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

standing the Disco raging "Prospects in June."<sup>12</sup>

At a meeting of the society held on January 12, 1756, the<sup>13</sup>  
community decided upon the location for a new meeting house, and,<sup>14</sup>  
on September 8th, following, work on the structure was begun. The end<sup>15</sup>  
of the year saw the completion of the church and, on January 2, 1757  
the first sermon was preached there. The new church, located on  
the neck between the Midway and Newport rivers and immediately east  
of the Savannah-Darien road, was "forty-four by thirty-six feet, with  
eighteen feet in the story, pitched roof, hipped at one end and a small  
steeple at the other. The steeple was placed on the west end of  
the meeting house with the pulpit in the north, "it being more com-  
fortable for the minister in the heat of summer." The structure<sup>16</sup>  
was built, for the most part, of hand-hewn cypress.

"Rich in wisdom and good citizenship,"<sup>17</sup> the Midway people  
began early to show signs of material prosperity. In the early days  
their trade was conducted overland via the old military road which had  
been built by Hugh ~~Wadley~~ some twenty years before to connect Savannah  
and Darien and upon which the meeting house of Midway had been built.  
Feeling the need for a seaport, however, Midway began to work for  
its fulfillment, and Surrency was the result.

As early as July 11, 1757, the attention of the society had

12 15 Records Midway Church, I, 36.

13 Stacy, Hist. Midway Church, 34.

14 15 Records Midway Church, I, 36.

15 Ibid., 37.

16 Stacy, Hist. Midway Church, 34-35.

17 E. Warren Coulter, A Short History of Georgia (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1933), 30.

been dramatically directed to the fact that Sunbury, a bluff about ten miles due east of the meeting house, constituted the natural point of entry by water to the settlement. On that day, having been warned of the activities of privateers, a party went to Sunbury, where they "raised a couple of Batteries and made Carriages for eight Small Cannon which were at the place."<sup>18</sup> As a further protection against depredations by Indians or other enemies during this period of the French and Indian War, the Midway society enclosed the meeting house within a "defence". Governor Henry Ellis, on his tour of inspection of fortifications in the southern part of the province was much pleased with these preparations.<sup>19</sup>

The Midway people petitioned, in the early part of 1757, for twenty-two acres of land to be used as a public landing place, but action was postponed until it could be determined whether or not the land was legally vacant.<sup>20</sup> In June of the following year, Mark Carr conveyed three hundred acres of his five hundred acre tract on the Midway River, including the waterfront, in trust to five Midway commissioners, to be laid out as a town by the name of Sunbury, one hundred acres being reserved as a common.<sup>21</sup> The town of Sunbury was duly laid out,<sup>22</sup> and enjoyed a rapid rise to commercial prosperity. As early as 1763, Sunbury was declared, by Governor James Wright, a port of entry

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MS Records, Midway Church, I, 37.

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William Dumas Cowens, A History of Georgia from its First Discovery by Europeans to the Adoption of the Present Constitution in 1800, VIII. 2 vols. (New York, 1847), I, 40-42.

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Allen D. Vandler (comp.), The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia (1683-1800-1815), VII, 236.

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Jones, Early Towns of Georgia, in Collections, Ga. Hist. Soc., IV, 145.

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A plan of the town of Sunbury is reprinted in Ibid., facing p. 141.

and Thomas Carr was appointed collector, John Martin, naval officer, and Francis Lee, surgeon. From Sunbury was shipped the rice crop from the swamp regions in its back country, the principal trade being with the West Indies and the northern colonies. The town on the Midway became, too, the favorite "retreat" for planters, including Lyman Hall, whose plantations lay in the swamps. <sup>23</sup> Soon it was established as a commercial rival of the older town of Savannah.

In the same year that Sunbury was founded, the province of Georgia was divided into parishes for the encouragement of the established church. Inasmuch as the entire province was included in this division, the land of the Puritans of Midway who had little in common with the Church of England was included in one of the parishes. These parishes retained their identity until the adoption, in 1777, of the first state constitution when counties were set up. The Midway district with some adjacent islands, was given the name of the Parish of St. John. Its limits were indicated as follows:

... from Sunbury in the district of Midway and Newport from the southern bounds of the parish of St. Philip, extending southward as far as the north line of Samuel Hastings, and from thence southeast to the south branch of Newport, including the islands of St. Katherine [sic] and Bermuda [now Colonel's], and from the north line of said Samuel Hastings northwest, shall be and forever continue, a parish by the name of "The parish of St. John" . . . .<sup>24</sup>

lying between the mouths of the Midway and Sapelo rivers,

<sup>23</sup> Jones, Dead Towns of Georgia in Collections, Ga. Hist. Soc., IV, 187-88; Charles C. Jones, "r., Biographical Sketches of the Delegates from Georgia to the Continental Congress (Boston and New York, 1881), 91.

<sup>24</sup> Colonial Records of Ga., XVIII, 280.



within view of the town of Sunbury, and included in St. Johns Parish, was St. Catherine's Island. In the Fall of 1765, Thomas Bosworth advertised his willingness to lease that island to any interested person for a term of years together with the cattle then feeding there and the timber rights. Dutton Gwinnett, then a merchant in Savannah, after due negotiations, sold his business in Savannah, and became a planter on the sea island of St. Catherine. Gwinnett's residence was in easy access to Sunbury which he often visited, on business and socially. Especially significant is his strong personal and political friendship with Lyman Hall, of that town, "the leading physician in the community, and one of the earliest and most influential 'Sons of Liberty' in the Province,"

The rise in importance of the port of Sunbury made advisable the maintenance of adequate defenses. In the spring of 1780, the Legislature voted "to the Commissioners of the Parish of Saint John for the use of the Fort erected at Sunbury and for the use of the Fort erected at Rodney in the said Parish a Sum to such not exceeding twenty five Pounds. . . ." In the following year, an act that provided for the erection of a fort and battery on Cockspur Island for the protection of Savannah, also appropriated one hundred pounds for the construction of a lookout and battery on Midway River.

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- 25 Georgia Gazette (Savannah), Oct. 24, 1765. A file of this newspaper is in the library of the Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.
- 26 Charles Francis Jenkins, Dutton Gwinnett's Signer of the Declaration of Independence (Garden City, New York, 1928), 25-26, 44.
- 27 Jones, Biographical Sketches of Delegates, 50.
- 28 Colonial Records of Ga., XVIII, 412.
- 29 1694, 472-74.

inhabitants who were going to Midway meeting, a very large and well constructed place of worship, in St. John's parish, where I associated with them and heard a very excellent sermon delivered by their pious and truly venerable pastor, the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ Dugood. This respectable congregation is independent, and consists chiefly of families and proselytes to a flock which this pious man led, about forty years ago, from South Carolina, and settled in this fruitful district. It is about nine miles from Sundry to Midway meeting-house, which stands on the high road opposite the Sundry road. As soon as the congregation broke up I resumed my travels, proceeding down the high-road towards Fort Mifflin, on the Altamaha, passing through a level country well watered by large streams, branches of Midway and Newport rivers, coursing from extensive swamps and marshes, their sources; these swamps are daily clearing and improving into large fruitful rice plantations, augmenting the well inhabited and rich district of St. John's parish.

It was in this period of well-being for St. John's parish that a considerable addition had been made to the Midway Meeting House. In March, 1770, the society voted that "the Gallery shall be made convenient for the White and a Shed be made for the Negroes." Furthermore, it was agreed that an addition be made to the north side of the church "forthwith about 20 feet by 20 Foot Parson's Chancel and Hip and." <sup>35</sup> Four years later, a passage was built. It was "30 feet long and 18 wide, with a Piazza on one Side eight Foot wide, the said House to be two Stories with a pitch Roof three Rooms and a Closet above Stairs and one Chamber, and a Press <sup>36</sup> below, and likewise a Kitchen 20 feet long and 12 wide with one Partition."

Then came the American Revolution to disturb the minds of the inhabitants of St. John's parish and to halt their steady rise to prosperity. Georgia, the youngest, ~~and~~ remote, most sparsely populated, poorest, and comparatively least important of the original Thirteen was at first not

34 Ibid., 9-10.

35 Records Midway Church, I, 10-11.

36 Ibid., 15.

Sunbury, with a view toward concentrating all the trade possible from the interior, was active in sponsoring that type of enterprise known in a later era as "internal improvements". In 1762, for example, a new public road was authorized from Sunbury to join the southwest road near the plantation of Samuel Hastings.<sup>30</sup> At another time, it was proposed to connect Midway and North Newport rivers by a canal between Colonel's Island and the mainland, but the plan was not put into effect.<sup>31</sup>

The heyday of the port on the Midway came in the 1770's. In the year 1772, fifty-six vessels were cleared at the custom house at Sunbury.<sup>32</sup> William Bartram, botanist and traveler in the southern colonies in that decade, visited Sunbury and the Midway church in 1773. He observed that Sunbury was a sea-port town

beautifully situated on the main between Midway and Newport rivers, about fifteen miles south of Great Ogeechee river. The town and harbour are defended from the fury of the seas by the north and south points of St. Helena and South Catherine's islands; between which is the bar and entrance into the sounds the harbor is spacious and safe, and has water enough for ships of great burthen. I arrived here in the evening . . . one of the inhabitants . . . politely introduced me to one of the principal families, where I supped and spent the evening in a circle of genteel and polite ladies and gentlemen. . .<sup>33</sup>

In regard to the rest of St. John's parish, Bartram wrote:

In the narrow obelisk to the admittance of my attendant spirit, curiosity, as well as to gratify the expectations of my worthy patron, I again set off on my southern excursion and left Sunbury in company with several of its polite

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 505-507.

<sup>31</sup> Jones, *Dead Towns of Ga.*, in *Collections*, *the Hist. Soc.*, IV, 158.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 157. Taken from report on the condition of Province of Georgia, Sept. 20, 1773, by Gov. James Oglethorpe. *Collections*, *Ge. Hist. Soc.*, III, 161 ff.

<sup>33</sup> William Bartram, *Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia East and West Florida* . . . (London, 1792), 5.

much concerned with the discontent manifested by her sister colonies to the northward. Of the obnoxious legislation of which they complained, Georgia had experienced only the Stamp Act and that had not been enforced within her borders. The latest historian of Georgia thus succinctly states the case:

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Georgia had been the pet of English philanthropy and of the English Parliament; a million dollars had been expended upon her in addition to all the charity that had gone along with the founding and early development of the colony. Gratitude might well have made Georgia the last stronghold of British loyalty in America.<sup>37</sup>

In the arousing of Georgia to a spirit of resistance to Great Britain, the South Carolina Planters of St. John's parish took the lead, and among them probably the most zealous of all was Lyman Hall. Although Dr. Hall owned a rice plantation located on the Savannah-Multon road a short distance north of the Highway Meeting House, his residence was at Surrency. As a leading physician of the region, his influence was widespread, and he early assumed and never relinquished the stand for liberty.

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The First Continental Congress, meeting in 1774, without delegates from Georgia, had adopted a non-importation agreement and had decided that another congress should meet in the following year. The St. John's planters watched with interest the proceedings in Savannah, hoping that Georgia's metropolis would follow the course indicated by the Continental Congress. For a variety of reasons, including the personal popularity of the governor, Sir James Oglethorpe,

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(comp.)  
 37 Allen D. Candler, The Revolutionary Records of the State of Georgia, 3 vols. (Atlanta, 1898), I, 7. Compiler's Introduction.  
 38 Coulter, Georgia, 99.  
 39 Jones, Old Towns of Ga., in Collections, Ga. Hist. Soc., IV, 173-75; Jones, Biographical Sketches Ga. Delegates, 38-406; Revolutionary Records of Georgia, III, 192-94.

many Georgians later to adopt the cause of liberty were hesitant. In January, 1775, the first of a series of meetings of a body which called itself the Provincial Congress was held, but delegates from only four of the eleven parishes were present. Nothing was accomplished by this minority group.<sup>40</sup> The delegates from St. John's did not take their seats in the Provincial Congress but organized themselves into a separate body. At a meeting of this "Committee of St. John's Parish" held on January 10, 1775, with Lyman Hall presiding, the "General Association" recommended by the Continental Congress was ratified. Furthermore a message was addressed to the Provincial Congress in which they expressed hope that the larger group would adopt the same measures.<sup>41</sup>

Two days passed and no reply was received from the congress of delegates from the other parishes. Then the St. John's group again wrote in the hope that the silence had been "due rather to inattention than design." "We now assure you," the second message continued, "that if you think proper to enter fully into the measures of the late Continental Congress, we will heartily join you in every thing that may tend to enforce them."<sup>42</sup>

To this communication, a reply was soon received, inviting St. John's parish to send delegates to the provincial congress. It stated, furthermore, that every delegate was accountable to his constituents and consciences and therefore "ought not to let any other man, or set of men, judge for him." In conclusion, the answer, in-

<sup>40</sup> Coulter, Georgia, 110-11.

<sup>41</sup> Revolutionary Records of Ga., I, Committee, as here used, refers to the whole body of delegates elected by the people of a town, district, or parish to represent them in the Provincial Congress.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 54-55.



dicating that the honesty of the Provincial Congress should not, they thought, be questioned: ". . . we trust no member amongst us has any other object in view than the publick good."<sup>43</sup>

The reaction of the St. John's Committee, led by Lynn Hall, was immediate and decisive. It decided that, inasmuch as only a minority of the parishes were represented in the body that called itself the Provincial Congress it was, in fact, not the spokesman for Georgia. The parishes not represented, according to the St. John's Committee, "are not bound by the proceedings of the said Committee [meeting as the Provincial Congress], although they may arrogate to themselves such a power." It was resolved, too, that inasmuch as "the Committee of the several Parishes in Congress now sitting" had not approved and adopted the measures recommended by the Continental Congress, the delegates from St. John's could not be associated with them without violating the terms of the "general association, which they have already acceded to."<sup>44</sup>

To the indignation of St. John's parish over the non-action of the Georgia Provincial Congress was added that of the province of South Carolina. The "General Committee" of that colony, on February 8, adopted and published a resolution "that we will, from henceforth, have no Trade, Commerce, Dealings, or Intercourse, with the said Colony of Georgia; but will hold them as unworthy of the rights of freemen, and as inimical to the liberties of their country . . ."<sup>45</sup>

43 Ibid., 55.

44 Ibid., 56.

45 Ibid., 56-57.

Under the leadership of Hall, a meeting of St. John's parish delegates petitioned South Carolina to except that parish from the general condemnation of Georgia, and in effect suggested an alliance between South Carolina and the Georgia parish whereby the former would "allow trade and commerce to be continued to us exclusive (if you think proper) of this Province in general" subject to the Continental Association which "on our parts, we engage with all possible care to keep inviolate." Much of the independence of thought and willingness to secede from the remainder of Georgia is explained as the message continued:

We of this Parish are a body detached from the rest, by our Resolutions and Associations, and sufficiently distinct by local situation, large enough for particular notice, and have been treated as such by a particular address from the late Continental Congress; adjoining a sea-port . . . we are assured you will not condemn the innocent with the guilty, especially when a due separation is made between them.<sup>46</sup>

Later in February, three members of the Committee for the Parish of St. John arrived in Charleston as ambassadors to advocate the alliance of St. John's with South Carolina.<sup>47</sup> The South Carolina Committee expressed a "high sense . . . of their arduous struggles in favor of the common cause of America" and lamented "their present unhappy situation." However, they did not approve the alliance, professing to believe it prohibited by the fourteenth article of the General Association, and suggested that the matter be placed before the next Continental Congress to meet in the following May.<sup>48</sup>

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46 Ibid., 59-61.  
 47 Ibid., 58. The delegates were: Joseph Wood, Daniel Roberts, and Samuel Stevens. It is perhaps interesting to note that here we find the doctrine of secession advanced by inhabitants of St. John's parish, of New England ancestry, before the government of the United States had been established. We find South Carolina, too, at least by implication, rejecting the doctrine  
 48 Ibid., 61-62.

Dr. Hall and his followers in St. John's having failed to get the their parish into confederation, for two different reasons, either through the Provincial Congress of Georgia or the General Committee of South Carolina, convened a parish "congress" or mass meeting and elected a representative of the parish of St. John to the Second Continental Congress. The choice, naturally, fell to Lyman Hall. At the time for the meeting of the Continental Congress he went to Philadelphia and was admitted to a seat. Although he was unanimously admitted, due to his anomalous position as delegate from part of a colony only, his admission was "subject to such regulations as Congress should determine relative to his voting." Until Georgia was fully represented, although he participated in debates and voted as an individual, he did not vote on questions decided by a vote of colonies.

From the time that the news of the battle of Lexington reached Savannah (May 10), the revolutionary spirit in Savannah rapidly gained momentum. In the following month a Council of Safety was set up to direct "affairs of the friends of freedom", and within a month the government had been completely taken away from Governor Wright and the colony added to the other twelve to make up the original thirteen. The Second Provincial Congress met on July 7, 1775, and this time five men were chosen to represent Georgia in the Continental Congress. They were John Houston, Archibald Bulloch, Rev. J. J. Zubly, Noble Pemberton Jones, and Lyman Hall, any three of whom would constitute a quorum.

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- 49 Revolutionary Records of Ga., I, 62-63; Jones, Biographical Sketches of the Colonies, 54.
- 50 Revolutionary Records of Ga., I, 66-67.
- 51 Confederate Georgia, III.
- 52 Revolutionary Records of Ga., I, 240-41. Journal of Provincial Congress, July 7, 1775.

On January 20, 1776, the next Provincial Congress assembled at Savannah and two weeks later chose John Houston, Archibald Bulloch, Lyman Hall, Dutton Swinnett, and George Walton as delegates to the Continental Congress. Of these, Hall, Swinnett and Walton, gained immortality by signing the revered Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was received with joy and celebration in Georgia "but nowhere with greater approval than in St. John's Parish, the home of Hall and Swinnett.

Gallant St. John's was to suffer for her strong stand for liberty. In January, 1776, a British fleet lay at the entrance of the Savannah River and it was feared that the port of Sunbury might likewise soon be closed. The inhabitants of that town, accordingly, were enjoined by the Council of Safety to use the "utmost vigilance in watching the motions of the pilots for the harbour of Sunbury. . ." The regular annual meeting of the Midway Society was held in March but "few met this Province being in a State of alarm, and the major Part of the men of this District being at Savannah."

In June, 1776, a number of negroes were employed to "finish in a more proper manner the intrenchments about Sunbury." This work included the building of a fort just below the town at the point where the high ground ended and the broad impassible marshes between the main and Oglethorpe's Island began. In the same month, Colonel James Oglethorpe was ordered to bring the cannon from Frederick, and these were

53 Jenkins, Dutton Swinnett, 70. Information from the "Journals of the Continental Congress," May 20, 1776, Vol. IV, p. 367.

54 *Ibid.*, 91.

55 *Revolutionary Records of Ga.*, I, 91. Minutes Council of Safety.

56 *MS Records Midway Church*, I, 17.

57 *Revolutionary Records of Ga.*, I, 136. Minutes Council of Safety.

58 See map, *Collections, Ga. Hist. Soc.*, IV, facing p. 181; also photograph (1880), looking east from Fort Morris, in this report. 41

probably mounted at the work at Sunbury, which was given the name of Fort Morris. This fortification was an enclosed earthwork, so substantial that it still stands today. The walls enclose a parade of about an acre.

For the first three years of the Revolution, the major campaigns were conducted far to the north of Georgia. That colony, however, suffered much from the incursions of the Loyalists who maintained headquarters at St. Augustine. In 1776, Sunbury was the rendezvous for the forces of General Charles Lee in his punitive expedition against East Florida. In the following year, Colonel Samuel Elbert embarked troops for Sunbury against St. Augustine.

The year 1778 brought disaster to the Midway people of old St. John's Parish, which had the previous year been given the name of Liberty County, in the organization of the state government, as a tribute to the outstanding efforts of its inhabitants in the cause of independence. Early in that year some alarm was experienced for the safety of Sunbury as indicated by an order by the Executive Council: the persons appointed on December 11, 1778, were to "be required with the utmost expedition to complete the Battery and other public Works in Sunbury . . ." In the following month, it appeared "that there is reason to apprehend an attempt by Sea is intended against the town of Sunbury." Hasty measures, accordingly, were adopted for the defense of the town it was left to the discretion of the commanding officer

59 Jones, Dead Towns of Ga., Collections, Ga. Hist. Soc., IV, 151-52.

60 Coulter, Georgia, 124.

61 See Order Book of Samuel Elbert, in Collections, Ga. Hist. Soc., Vol. V, Pt. II, 15-57. The expedition was unsuccessful.

62 Jones, Dead Towns of Ga., Collections, Ga. Hist. Soc., IV, 172.

63 Revolutionary Records of Ga., II, 85. Mar. 26, 1778.



in Liberty County whether he would march the militia under his command with the Continental troops or keep them for the defense of Sunbury, in either case keeping enough men at the town to man the gallees there; it was ordered, too, that twelve 9-pound shot be delivered from the arsenal for the use of Sunbury.

The blow was struck in November, 1778. The reduction of Savannah was a part of Lord George Germain's carefully planned Southern campaign of 1778. General Robert Howe was then holding Savannah, and in an attempt to distract his attention to the southern part of the state, General Augustin Prevost was ordered to send out from St. Augustine, two expeditions. One of these, traveling by water was to make a direct attack on Sunbury; the other, by land, was to march through lower Georgia, laying waste the countryside, joining the other force at Sunbury, whence both would proceed to Savannah, to assist Colonel Archibald Campbell who was sailing from New York with 2,000 men.

Accordingly, General Prevost sent by water a detachment of infantry and light artillery under the command of Lieutenant Colonel L. V. Fuser for the capture of Sunbury. Lieutenant Colonel Mark Prevost was to lead the land force of 100 British regulars and 300 Indians and Scopholites, the latter being a group of Tories and malcontents assembled by a South Carolina Tory named Scophol.

On November 17, three deserters from the Florida forces brought the disquieting news to Midway that Col. Prevost's force

64 Ibid., 72-73.

65 Johns, Head Towns of Ga., Collections, Ga. Hist. Soc., IV, 185.

66 Coulter, Georgia, 1847.

67

was approaching. Two days later, the British column entered Georgia and began a program of destruction. At the point where the Savannah-Darien road crosses Balltown Swamp, Prevost's force was confronted by Colonel John Baker and a hastily assembled group of mounted militiamen. After a short skirmish, the Americans fell back. Col. Baker, Captain Cooper, and William Goulding were wounded. At North Newport bridge (later Nicoboro bridge) the Whig forces again vainly attempted to stop the advance toward Midway.

On the morning of November 30, Col. John White, in command of the Midway fortifications, was joined by Brigadier General James Screven, accompanied by twenty militiamen. It was resolved to abandon the defensive position at Midway Meeting House and take up another about a mile and a half in the direction of the enemy where the Darien road passed through a thick wood. Prevost had apparently selected the same position previously and the two forces reached the spot almost simultaneously, neither having time to take up a strong position. In the action that followed, Gen. Screven was mortally wounded.

Col. White fell back to Midway Church, breaking bridges as he retired across the causeway. Abandoning the meeting house, he then proceeded in the direction of Great Ogeechee Ferry where he added his troops to the American forces already there and took up a strong position. Col. Prevost pursued only about six or seven miles

67 MS Records Midway Church, I, 38.

68 Ibid.; Charles C. Jones, Jr., Address delivered at Midway Meeting House in Liberty County, Georgia . . . (Augusta, 1889), 7.

69 Jones, Address at Midway, 7.

70 Ibid.

in the direction of Savannah. Fuser had not arrived at Sunbury; the Americans had thrown up a breast work on the Ogeechee and as  
71  
Prevost did not push on but rather decided to return to St. Augustine.

Upon the approach of the British force, the "Neighbourhood of Midway fled from their Habitations" most of them going to the  
72  
encampment on the Ogeechee. Now, as Prevost withdrew to Florida he burned almost all of the houses in the community, also not sparing  
73  
the crops. The Midway Meeting House, too, the pride of the inhabitants of the region and the center of their life, was burned to  
74  
the ground. Thus did Midway pay the price for her adherence to the principles of liberty.

Sunbury, however, had not yet fallen. Fuser, delayed by head winds, did not arrive before Sunbury until Prevost had begun his retreat and was beyond the reach of communications. Late in November, his vessels anchored off Colonel's Island, and there landed his infantry and artillery. The field pieces were trained on Fort Morris and up the Midway River moved the armed vessels to a position in front  
75  
of the fort.

Fort Morris was held at this time by Colonel John McIntosh with 127 Continental troops together with some militia and citizens of Sunbury, numbering less than 200 in all. Fuser made the following demand upon Col. McIntosh for the surrender of the fort:

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- 71 Ibid., 8.  
72 MS Records Midway Church, I, 38, November 20, 1778.  
73 Ibid., I, 30, 41.  
74 Ibid., 41.  
75 Ibid., 39; James, Address at Midway, 20.

SIR,

You cannot be ignorant that four armies are in motion to reduce this Province. One is already under the guns of your fort, and may be joined, when I think proper, by Colonel Prevost who is now at the Medway meeting-house. The resistance you can, or intend to make, will only bring destruction upon this country. On the contrary, if you will deliver me the fort which you command, lay down your arms and remain neuter until the fate of America is determined, you shall, as well as all of the inhabitants of this parish, remain in peaceable possession of your property. Your answer, which I expect in an hour's time, will determine the fate of this country, whether it is to be laid in ashes, or remain as above proposed.

I am Sir,

Your most obedient, &c.,

L. V. FUSER,

Colonel 60th Regiment and Commander of his Majesty's Troops in Georgia, on his Majesty's Service.

P. S.

Since this letter was closed, some of your people have been firing scattering shot about the line. I am to inform you, that if a stop is not put to such irregular proceedings, I shall burn a house for every shot so fired.

Colonel McIntosh promptly sent Col. Fuser the following spirited reply:

FORT MORRIS, Nov. 25, 1778

SIR,

We acknowledge we are not ignorant that your army is in motion to endeavour to reduce this State. We believe it entirely chimerical that Colonel Prevost is at the Meeting-House; but should it be so, we are in no degree apprehensive of danger from a junction of his army with yours. We have no property compared with the object we contend for that we value a rank: -- and would rather perish in a vigorous defence than accept of your proposals. We Sir, are fighting the battles of America, and therefore disdain to remain neutral till its fate is determined. As to surrendering the fort, receive this laconic reply: **COME AND TAKE IT. . .**

I have the honor to be Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

JOHN McINTOSH,

Colonel of Continental Troops.

76 Reprinted in Jones, Dead Towns of Ga., Collections, Ga. Hist. Soc., IV, 189-90.

77 Reprinted in ibid., 190-92.

Instead of immediately beginning the attack on Fort Morris, Euler waited for word from scouts he had sent out to ascertain Prevost's position. When he found that the latter, after his raid on Midway, had withdrawn to Florida, Euler raised the siege of Fort Morris, re-embarked his troops and returned to the St. John's River where they met the returned forces of Prevost.<sup>78</sup>

Although the Midway region was free of enemy troops, in December, 1778, it had been left in a deplorable condition. Pathetically, the refugees who had gone to the Ogeechee came back home to view the ruins. Many were undecided whether to return to their plantations and attempt to restore the fruits of the years of labor which had been swept away or to go to South Carolina to settle.<sup>79</sup>

In December, 1778, Savannah fell into the hands of Col. Campbell; Howe's army retreating with great confusion and considerable loss, crossed the Savannah River at Sister's and Zubly's ferries and assembled in South Carolina, thus leaving the state of Georgia open to the British forces. On the retreat, Howe had paused long enough to send orders to Major Joseph Lane, then commanding Fort Morris to evacuate, retire up the south side of the Ogeechee, and join the main force at Zubly's ferry. Major Lane, however, determined to defend Sumbry at whatever cost, disregarded the orders of his superior and remained at his post.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 192; Jones, Adrook at Midway, 10.

<sup>79</sup> *MS Records Midway Church*, I, 41.

<sup>80</sup> Jones, Dead Towns of Georgia, Collection, Ga. Hist. Soc., IV, 194-95. Major Lane was later tried by court-martial and dismissed from the service (*Ibid.*, 195, n). It was the opinion of Gen. William Moultrie that since "notwithstanding his receiving positive orders for that purpose he Don Quixote-like, thought he was strong enough to withstand the whole force the British had in Georgia, for which, I think, he deserves to be hanged." — Memoirs of the American Revolution, 2 vols. (New York, 1802), I, 255.

Down in Florida, General Augustine Prevost, having heard of the capture of Savannah by Col. Campbell, left St. Augustine with an army of about two thousand men, for the purpose of joining him. On the way, Prevost stopped at Sunbury, and after three days of manouevring into position for the investment of Fort Morris, on January 9, demanded its surrender. Major Lane at first refused and attempted a defense, but soon finding his position untenable in opposition to superior numbers and armament, he was compelled to make an unconditional surrender of the entire garrison of seventeen commissioned officers and one hundred and ninety-five non-commissioned officers and privates together with a considerable quantity of stores and ammunition. The American losses were one captain and three privates killed, and seven <sup>wounded</sup> killed; those of the British, one private killed and three wounded. <sup>81</sup>

The Midway region of Liberty County, last part of all Georgia to be surrendered to the British, now was subjected to a strict military regimen. Fort Morris was renamed, by the conquerors, Fort George in honor of the sovereign against whom the American states were contending. <sup>82</sup> Nothing worthy of mention occurred at Midway during the remainder of the war; matters there continued in an "exhausted and comparatively quiet condition."

On July 11, 1783, the British, in view of the advancing columns of General Anthony Wayne, evacuated Savannah after having been in possession of it more than four and one-half years, thus freeing Georgia

<sup>81</sup> Collections, Ga. Hist. Soc., IV, 196-206; Stacy, Hist. Midway Church,

<sup>82</sup> Collections, Ga. Hist. Soc., IV, 197-204.



from British rule. The effects of the war had been disastrous to Georgia. The slave population was demoralized and reduced, "plantations burned and converted into waste places, and the seeds of poverty and distress sown broadcast."<sup>83</sup>

With the setting of peace, many who had been serving in the army or who had fled before the advance of the British troops, returned to their homes in the Midway district of Liberty County, to undertake the Titanic task of reconstruction. Few did not return, having died or settled permanently elsewhere, and so the region lost considerably in population. With commendable and characteristic energy, the people of Midway, however, proceeded<sup>84</sup> to remedy their shattered fortunes as well as possible.

There was at this time a decided effort to re-establish Sunbury as a place of importance. One phase of this is indicated in "An Act Fixing and Establishing Court Houses and Jails, and the fixing and regulating Elections in the different counties of the State," which was passed on February 26, 1784. This act established Sunbury as the county seat of Liberty County and provided for the<sup>85</sup> erection there of a court house and jail. The town, however, never quite regained its ante bellum importance. Thus, in 1788, Sunbury Academy was incorporated and became the most famous institution of learning in southern Georgia, and as late as 1801 an optimistic observer expressed the opinion that Sunbury promised without doubt

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Ibid., 205.84 Ibid., 205-206.85 Colonial Records of Ga., XIX, Pt. II, 380-81.

to become "a port of commercial consequence." However, as early as 1797 it had been apparent that the population of the town was steadily decreasing, and accordingly the county seat was removed to Nicholas. The last vessel of any consequence to visit the port of Sumbury was a Swedish brig which, in 1814, carried a cargo of cotton from that place. The decline of Sumbury became absolute, all traces of the town passing away. As long ago as 1806, a visitor to the site was moved to write a few years later: "Like Pompeii of old, the whole now lies buried beneath the ashes of years, but unlike Pompeii, utterly beyond the hope of future excavation."<sup>86</sup>

Soon after the return of the Sidney people to their homes, in 1794, the question of the erection of a new meeting house naturally arose. The first problem was one of location; whether the new church should be built at the place where the former one stood "or on some place more central." The question which soon to be one between practicality and sentiment; if so, the sentimentalists were victorious for it was decided by the narrowest possible margin - a vote of 15 to 14 - that the new church should be built on the ground hallowed by the old.<sup>87</sup>

The matter of location decided, there arose the more vexing problem, to those un-~~un~~overlashed churchmen, of financing

86 Collections, Ga. Hist. Soc., IV, 213-20.

87 Stacy, Hist. Sidney Church, 240.

88 MS Records Sidney Church, I. Apr. 20, 1794.

the construction of the new house of worship. At a meeting of the society, held on July 28, 1794, it was decided that a "meeting house" which would be forty feet long and thirty feet wide, constructed of posts in the ground, filled up with poles would serve temporarily until a more permanent structure could be built.<sup>89</sup> It was found necessary in the following year to build an addition of twelve feet to the east side and a shelter of the same width on the south end for the negroes.<sup>90</sup> The parsonage was erected in 1799.<sup>91</sup>

Under the direction and guidance of the young Rev. Abiel Holmes, the spiritual life and community activities of the Midway society revived. The Library Society, one of the institutions of happier days, was restored with the pastor as president.<sup>92</sup>

In 1790, six years after the erection of the "course" meeting house, the question of a larger and more suitable church was considered. The building was not built until two years later. It is the church that still stands at Midway.<sup>93</sup>

Notable indeed has this community been in the production of outstanding leaders in many fields and sound citizenship among her inhabitants in general. The lasting fame of the people of Midway rests in her contribution to American liberty, - a spirit epitomized by Colonel John McIntosh when, facing possible death,

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89 Ibid., I, 19. Plan of seats shown in ibid., I, 27a.  
 90 Ibid., 30.  
 91 Stacy, Hist. Midway Church, 30.  
 92 MS Records Midway Church, I, 30.  
 93 Stacy, Hist. Midway Church, 30. See also photograph facing dedication page.  
 94 For the most comprehensive list and short sketches of these and evaluation of the effect of their belief on character, see Stacy, List. Midway Church, passim.

he answered the British commander: "We have no property compared with the object we contend for that we value a rush! -- and would rather perish in a vigorous defence than accept of your proposals. We Sir, are fighting the battles of America, and therefore disdain to remain neutral . . . As to surrendering the fort . . . COME AND TAKE IT."

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A church history written at the turn of the century by the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Newman, Ga. The author had a great sentimental attachment to Midway which doubtless accounts for a tendency toward mixing a considerable amount of eulogy and theology with his history. On the whole, however, it provides a rather extensive fund of information on Midway, and the author seems to have used the manuscript records of the Church quite freely. The most important of several documents reproduced in the book is "The Articles and Rules of Incorporation Agreed upon by a Society Settled upon Midway and Newport in Georgia, 29th of August, 1754" (pp. 29-52). A photograph of the Midway Church faces the dedication page, and a map showing the parishes of Georgia in 1780 faces page 25. Chapter XVII (pp. 232-240) comprises a brief, but fairly good, account of Sunday. The work is partially documented, and a rather lengthy number of errata is shown in the preface to the revised edition.

11. Stevens, William B., A History of Georgia from its First Discovery by Europeans to the Adoption of the Present Constitution in 1845, 2 vols. New York: J. Appleton and Co., 1847-1859.

This old historical work is now sometimes discredited, but in the main it seems fairly accurate and is drawn principally from manuscripts loaned to the author by the Georgia Historical Society and other organizations and individuals. In Volume I, pp. 375-394, is a chapter entitled "Settlement of Liberty County," a good account of the exodus of the Puritans of Dorchester and Beech Hill, South Carolina, to Midway and the establishment of the settlement there.

APPENDIX

1. Coulter, E. Morton, Short History of Georgia, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933.

A very good general account of the history of Georgia. Valuable in placing the Midway society in its proper perspective as regards the history of the state as a whole. A good photograph of Midway Meeting House faces p. 90.

D. Conclusions together with a tentative evaluation of site.

The group of sites known collectively as Midway are most properly placed in Theme VI, "The War for American Independence" as classified by the National Park Service (Memorandum of July 9, 1937).

Although no major engagement of the American Revolution occurred there, Georgia's participation in the struggle is identified with this locality. The lead taken by Midway (St. John's Parish) in determining and directing the allegiance of Georgia in the days before the beginning of hostilities has been treated in the historical narrative of this report. Perhaps the easiest course the Georgians of that time could have taken would have been to ally themselves with loyalist East Florida. Had not St. John's Parish, lying between Savannah and the Florida border taken such a strong stand for liberty, it is difficult to surmise in which direction the delicately balanced loyalty of Georgia would have swung.

As it happened the Puritans of Midway, led by Dr. Lyman Hall, led the way to Georgia's becoming the thirteenth of the Original Thirteen Colonies. The devotion shown in the early days never wavered in St. John's Parish, although her fields were laid waste, her plantations and even her beloved meeting house, burned.

Of the three signers of the Declaration of Independence from Georgia, two (Lyman Hall and Button Gwinnett) were residents of St. John's Parish. Fort Morris was the scene of the heroic resolve of Col. John McIntosh, who, in his reply to a demand for the surrender of the fort, sent that typically American answer, which deserves to live with other ringing historic challenges: "Come and take it!"

As a military site, Midway could have little value. When Surrency was taken, Savannah had already fallen into the hands of Col. Archibald Campbell. The fate of the state of Georgia had already been determined, before Fort Morris, last military post in Georgia to surrender, fell before the attack of a British force which outnumbered the defenders ten to one. It is, however, of considerable interest and inspiration as the place best exemplifying the spirit of American Independence in Georgia, and is the most fitting place in the state for the consecration of Georgia's Signers.

The site is of considerable importance, too, in relation to Theme V, "The Development of the English Colonies, 1700-1775." Georgia had from the beginning welcomed migrations of diverse nationality and religious denomination, such as the Salzburgers, the Kruvians, the Scotch Highlanders, and others, not to mention Englishmen of the Established Church. The coming of the Puritans, American-born, to settle the Midway district 1808-58, was the last of the wholesale migrations and provided Georgia with a new and most valuable, population element.

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Museum development would be desirable to interpret the Puritan influence in Georgia which centered at Midway, and to illustrate the part taken by the area in the American Revolution. These themes are closely related, because of the fact that it was largely the Puritan principles of the Midway people and their sympathy for the inhabitants of Massachusetts, the original American homeland of their ancestors, that moved them to take their strong stand for liberty.

Such a museum, to be most accessible, should be located at or near the point where the old Sunbury road joins the Atlantic Coastal Highway (U. S. 17). There could be exhibited items illustrating the life of the Puritan community, perhaps a model of the colonial meeting house which was burned in 1778, material relating to the lives of the Georgia Signers of the Declaration of Independence (Hall, Gwinnett and Walton), Revolutionary ordnance, material on Sunbury and Fort Morris, and exhibits relating in general to the American Revolution in Georgia. The present meeting house itself stands as a museum exhibit, being built on the site of the older church when the United States of America under the Constitution was in its third year. The Midway cemetery, too, in the churchyard is of historical interest. On the west side of the church is the highway, at this point part of the old Savannah-Ferien military road built by Hugh M'Clamy. Ten miles east, and fairly accessible, is another museum object, Fort Morris, Revolutionary earthwork.

II. FIELD DATA

A. Ownership- Midway Meeting House - probably owned by the Midway Society. Fort Morris - tract of 175 acres, including the site of Fort Morris owned by E. A. Calder, whose post office address is Dorchester, Georgia. Sunbury - Major part of the site owned by "Joseph H. James Islands, Florida. The following advertisement appeared recently in the Savannah Morning News: "100 Acres, Part of Historic old town of Sunbury on edney river; high, level and heavily wooded; the outlook is over St. Catherine's Sound, one of the finest on the coast; about 1,000 acres of marsh goes with it. R. L. Cooper, 3-1271." (R. L. Cooper is a real estate agent of Savannah). St. Catherine's Is. owned by J. M. Lyons Estate.

B. Appraised Value. - This has proved impossible to ascertain due to the indeterminate boundaries of "Midway". In general, the undeveloped swamp land constituting the Lyman Hall plantation would be of little value; the high land on the site of Sunbury probably would be worth about \$70 an acre; St. Catherine's Island was sold in recent years for \$750,000. Probably no monetary value would be placed on the Midway Meeting House and cemetery and the property is not assessed for purposes of taxation.

C. Condition, Including previous Development. The Midway Meeting House, constructed in 1732, has been kept in good condition by succeeding generations of members of the church and society. Thus no treatment in the field of restoration has been undertaken; nor is any necessary. The Georgia Society of Colonial Names has placed a tablet on the wall of the graveyard to "commemorate the virtues and valor of the settlers of old Midway." Also, in the cemetery of the Midway churchyard is a large monument, fifty feet in height and thirty foot square at the base, erected by the United States Government in honor of two generals of the Revolutionary War who are buried there. The men thus honored were Brigadier General James Screven who died from wounds received in a skirmish with the British near Midway Church, November 22, 1778, and Brigadier General Daniel Stewart, a great grandfather of President Theodore Roosevelt. The inscription follows:

ERECTED BY  
THE CONGRESS  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES  
AS A NATIONAL TRIBUTE TO  
BRIGADIER GENERALS  
JAMES SCREVEN  
AND  
DANIEL STEWART

1730

1778

SACRED  
TO THE MEMORY  
OF

BRIGADIER GENERAL, JAMES SCREVEN  
WHO FELL WOUNDED WITH WOUNDS AT SUNBURY  
NEAR THIS SPOT ON THE 22ND  
DAY OF NOVEMBER 1778. HE DIED  
ON THE 24TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1778  
FROM THE EFFECTS OF HIS WOUNDS

[Gen. Screven was not wounded at Sunbury, but at  
a point on the Savannah-Charleston road, about a mile  
and a half south of Highway Meeting House, some  
eleven or twelve miles west of Sunbury]

1739

1826

SACRED  
TO THE MEMORY

BRIGADIER GENERAL DANIEL STEWART  
A GALLANT SOLDIER IN THE REVOLUTION  
AND AN OFFICER RESPECTED FOR BRAVERY IN  
THE INDIAN WARS

In front of the church (south) at the intersection of U. S.  
Highway #17 and the old Sunbury road is a number of Standard  
ACE (Atlantic Coastal Highway) markers, as follows:

ROAD TO PAVE MERRIS  
1776

CONSTRUCTED OF HEAVY BARKING BUILT BY SLAVE LABOR, 1776,  
GARRISONED BY CONVENTIONAL TROOPS. SOME OF SPIRITED RESISTANCE  
TO BRITISH FORCES.

ROAD TO SUNBURY  
1734

IMPORTANT COLONIAL POINT OF MEETING. FIRST MASONS LODGE MEETING  
IN GEORGIA BELIEVED TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE HERE IN FEBRUARY, 1734, WITH OGLETHORPE  
AS MASTER.

CHURCH

BUILT IN 1738. REPLACED COLONIAL MEETING HOUSE BURNED BY BRITISH  
IN 1778. SIRSHAW'S CAVALRY CAMPED HERE 1864. MIDWAY SETTLEMENT  
PRODUCED MANY OF GEORGIA'S MOST FAMOUS MEN.

A short distance north of the Meeting House, on the west side  
of the highway, is a smaller marker, which bears the following  
legend:



LYMAN HALL PLANTATION

1778

HOME OF DR. LYMAN HALL, (BORN CONNECTICUT, 1724), SIGNER OF  
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. HOME DESTROYED BY BRITISH IN 1778.  
FAMOUS FOR CULTIVATION OF RICE.

On the highway about a mile and a half south of the Midway  
Meeting House is another AM marker which reads as follows:

GENERAL HILL

BATTLEGROUND BUILT NOVEMBER 22, 1778, GENERAL JAMES SCREVEN WAS  
MORTALLY WOUNDED APPROXIMATE TO GENERAL BRITISH FORCES UNDER GEN. DAL  
MEYVOET FROM BRANCH NO SAVANNAH

[ The British officer involved in this skirmish was Lieutenant  
Colonel Mark Prevost. General Augustine Prevost was then at  
St. Augustine, Florida ]

On the counterscarp of Fort Morris, facing the Midway River,  
has been placed a bronze tablet 18 inches long by 36 inches wide,  
bearing the inscription "DON'T LET THEM IN" and a brief history of  
the fort. It is a AM marker, cast by students of the Georgia  
School of Technology, Atlanta. The tablet was unveiled and ded-  
icated, with appropriate ceremonies on July 6, 1936. [See  
Savannah Morning News, July 5, 1936, p. 14, col. 5]

A memorial tablet for Sunbury has been planned. [Savannah  
Morning News, June 18, 1936]

The present condition of the Midway Meeting House is  
excellent. Fort Morris, although trees have grown and are growing  
in the parade, ramparts and ditch, is a remarkably well preserved  
Revolutionary earthwork, probably the best preserved in Georgia,  
and possibly in the entire lower South. St. Catherine's Island is  
a valuable estate. The Lyman Hall Plantation has reverted to un-  
improved swampland. The site of Sunbury shows no trace of a town  
having once been there.

7. Care, including past, present and probable future. The Midway  
Church has received and is receiving ~~constant~~ repairs and there  
is no reason to believe that this will not continue as long as  
the Midway Society, still an active association, is in existence.  
The Lyman Hall Plantation appears to have received no care what-  
ever; the house has entirely disappeared. The same may be said of  
Sunbury. Fort Morris, although neglected since 1812-1813 when an  
attempt was made to put it in defensible condition, appears to  
need little or no care in order that it may be preserved. There is  
a possibility that, if it passed into the hands of some zealous  
farmer to whom historical associations mean nothing, the parapets  
might be leveled, the ditch filled, and the site converted into  
a cultivated field. The road from Midway Church to Sunbury and Fort

Fort is passable but, especially the three miles at the eastern end, is in poor condition. There is nothing to indicate that repairs to this road are contemplated.

- E. Accessibility.**— The Highway Meeting House is highly accessible by automobile as it is located on paved U. S. Highway #17, the Atlantic Coastal Highway, extensively used by tourists from the northeastern part of the country in going to or returning from Florida. The section of the road at this point has been laid over the colonial road built by Hugh Mackay. On the west side of the road, a short distance north of the meeting house, is the Lyman Hall plantation; the turn-off is indicated by a marker. About a mile and a half south of the meeting house, on the highway, is Spencer Hill, the site of the skirmish in which Brigadier General James Screven was mortally wounded.

At the Highway Meeting House, a sand road turns off east. This is the old road that leads to Sundry and Fort Morris and, although it is rough in places and the sand is unusually deep in others, it is passable for automobiles. About ten miles from the meeting house, the road ends at the Highway River. Here was the site of Sundry and about three hundred yards south is Fort Morris.

St. Catherine's Island, privately owned and not open to the public, is highly inaccessible. There is no bridge or ferry to the island.

- F. Possibility of preservation.**— Probable cost of repairs.— Probable cost of maintenance.— Possibility of income from fees or other charges. At Sundry and Lyman Hall plantation there is no possibility of preservation, the original structures having all disappeared. At Fort Morris, repairs to the sally port and embrasures of the work and the cleaning out of the moat would require, for the most part, only unskilled labor and could be effected at low cost. Sufficient repairs to the road to make it more passable while preserving its original character, should not exceed \$4,000. The meeting house is now in an excellent state of preservation; no repairs seem immediately necessary. The probable cost of annual maintenance of the Highway group (Highway Meeting House, Fort Morris, Sundry, and the Highway-Sundry road) would be not in excess of \$1500 unless some restoration were done and the maintenance of those structures were included in the estimate. There seems to be no possibility of any income from fees or other charges, unless a museum should be established to which a small admission fee might be charged.

- G. Suggested development, including recommended boundaries.**— In consideration of the doubtful authenticity of the baby house on St. Catherine's Island as the home of Susan Gilchrist, together with the inaccessibility of the island and its extremely high valuation, it is suggested that that island be omitted from any program of physical development. The Highway Meeting House would be the center of the developed area, with existing roads north to Lyman Hall plantation, south to Spencer Hill, and east to

Sunbury and Fort Morris.

It is suggested that the Midway group (Midway Meeting House, Spencer Hill, Lyman Hall Plantation, Sunbury, and Fort Morris) be designated a Revolutionary memorial, commemorating the part taken by Georgia in that struggle.

At or near the Midway Meeting House (at the junction of U. S. Highway 17 and the old Sunbury road) a museum developing the American Revolution in Georgia theme (as suggested in I, B, this report), should be established. At this place, attention of the visitors could be directed to other historic sites in the vicinity, relevant to the Midway story.

As illustrating Georgia's part in the American Revolution, and, inasmuch as it is without any great national significance, this site, it is believed, should be developed by the State.

#### B. Relationship of site to areas already in National Park Service.

The Midway group is related, in general and rather remotely, to all sites connected with the War for American Independence, and more particularly with those involved in the Southern Campaign. There is, however, no very close relationship between Midway and any of the areas administered by the National Park Service.

Perhaps it is most closely associated with Fort Marion National Monument, for it was from that place (then Fort San Mircos) that the expeditions under Lieut. Col. Mark Prevost and Lieut. Col. L. V. Fuser, and later that under Gen. Augustin Prevost, proceeded. It is thought, too, that some of the guns of Fort Frederica were taken to Sunbury and mounted there.

#### III. Maps. The following maps have been included in Appendix A.

1. The Parishes of Georgia, 1750-1777.
2. Plan of the Town of Sunbury.
3. Plan of Fort Morris, showing Midway River and the marsh to the east of the fort.
4. State Highway Department Map of Georgia, corrected as of July 1, 1937.
5. Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army, Tactical Map, Georgia, Historic Quadrangle (Garrison Index 2640,5700,49; Tactical Index 700-11-1/2)

#### IV. Photographs. The following photographs in Appendix B.

1. View from Fort Morris, looking east. (Taken from a point about 300 yards south of Sunbury, it is also illustrative of the view from that place.

2. The Coat of Fort Morris in 1836.
3. Midway Meeting House and Cemetery from the south,  
showing the Dunbury road in foreground.
4. Midway Meeting House from the southwest.

Respectfully submitted:

James W. Holland,  
Junior Park Historian,  
St. Pauls National Monument.

Approved:

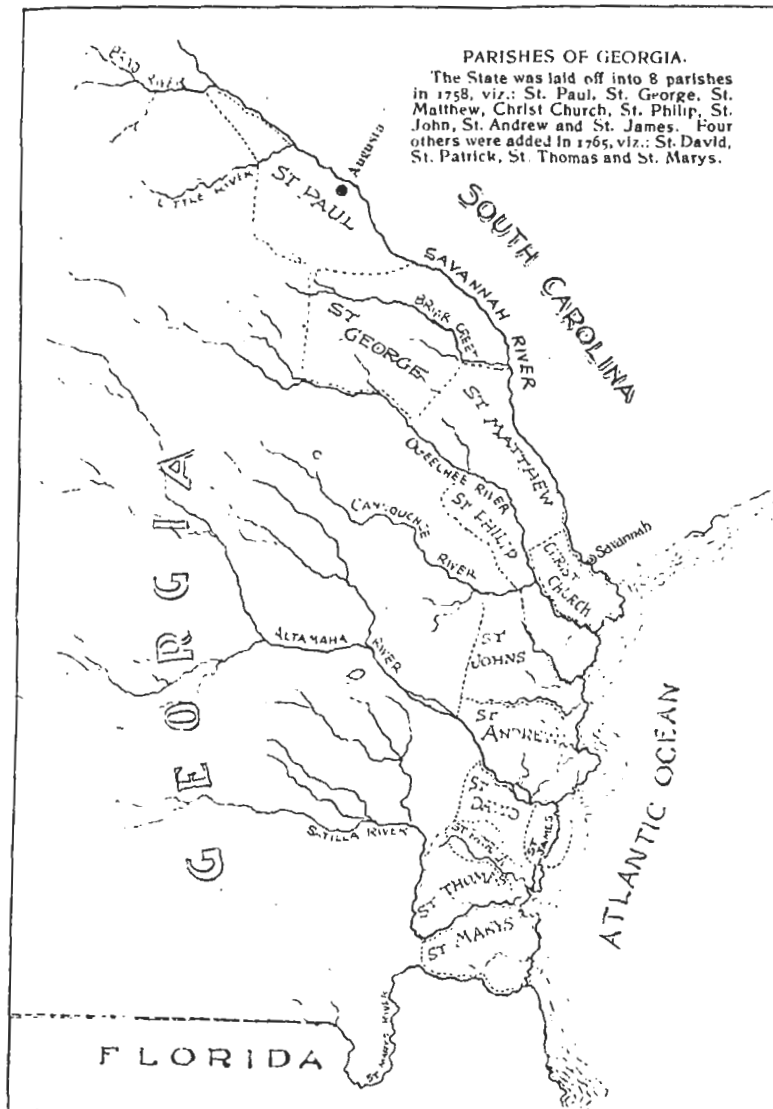
Daleten B. Lattimore,  
Acting Superintendent,  
Fort Pulaski National Monument.

September 30, 1937.

APPENDIX A

MAPS AND PLANS

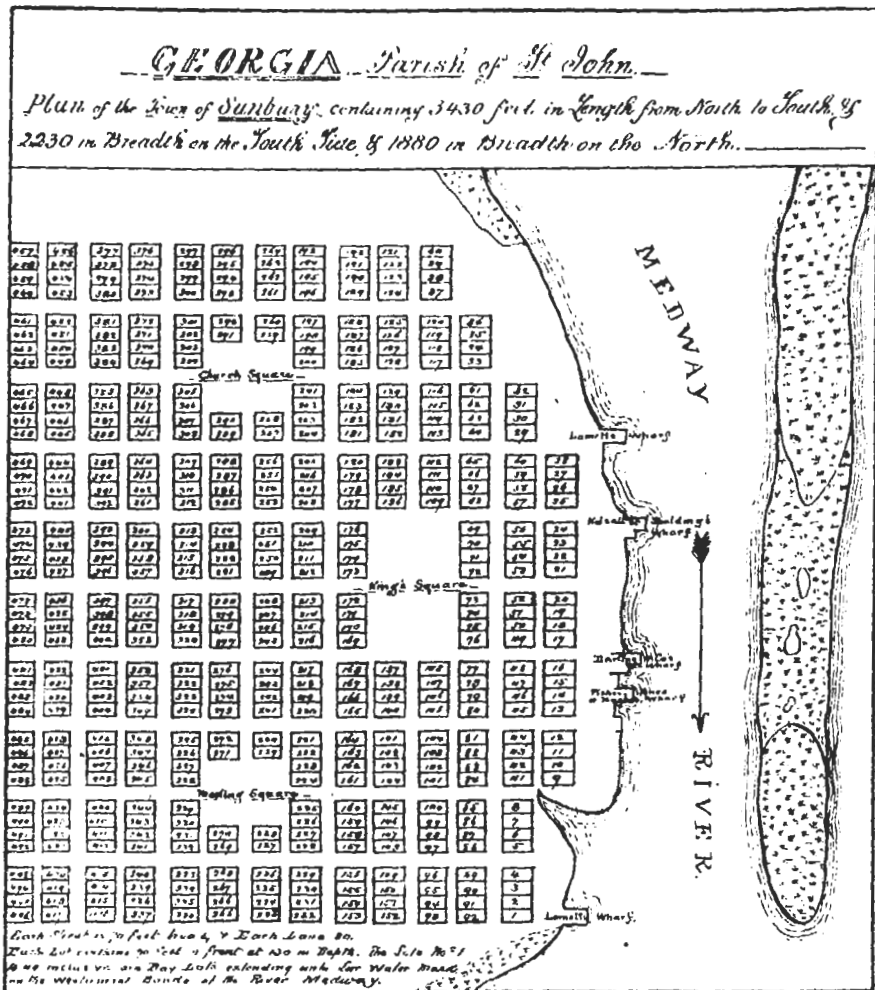
The State Highway Dept. Map of Georgia  
and Limerick Quadrangle, Engineer Corps, U. S. A.,  
included in the original and first copy are missing from  
this copy.



From James Stacy, History of the Midway Congregational Church, Liberty County, Georgia, p. 23.

PLAN OF SANBURY

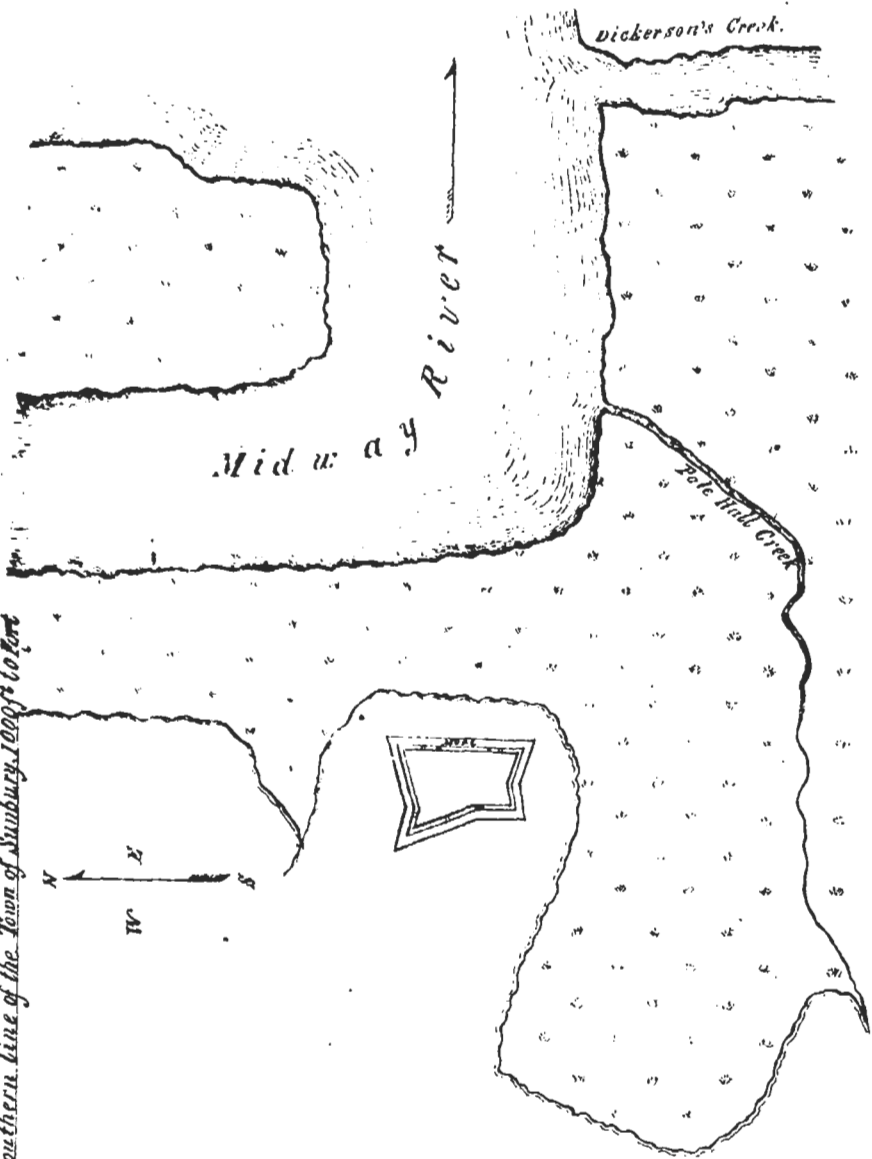
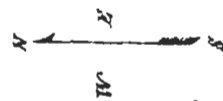
From Charles C. Jones, Jr., Dead Forms of Georgia  
 (Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, IV),  
 p. 141.



...Plan From Lot 1 & 2



*Southern line of the Town of Saubury, 1000 ft to Fort*



*Fort Morris*

*J. Esch Photo Lith N.Y.*

From Charles S. Jones, Jr., Lead Plans of Georgia  
(collections of the Georgia Historical Society,  
19), p. 101.

APPENDIX B

PHOTOGRAPHS

The two views of Midway Meeting House, included in the original and first copy are missing from this copy.



VIEW FROM FORT DENNIS  
Looking east out over the marshes  
from a point near the canteen.



FORT DENNIS  
The visitors are standing in the boat,  
facing the rocky wall of the canteen.

acting on his war risk insur-

## STUDIES LONGEVITY OF MIDWAY'S DEAD

Historical Quarterly Presents Varied Articles

Midway Cemetery is the subject of a statistical study by Roland M. Harper in the current issue of the Georgia Historical Quarterly. The article contains notes on members of the Midway community buried elsewhere. Mr. Harper refers to a pamphlet called "Some Early Epitaphs in Georgia," published in 1924 by Eugenia M. Johnston and others, from which he obtained the basic data for a study of Savannah vital statistics in the quarterly in 1931. Because of the limited scope of "Some Early Epitaphs," which made it of little use for calculations of longevity at Midway, he has obtained all the available records of the cemetery for this new study of longevity of the Midway community from 1800 to 1860. A chart illustrates the average ages at death, in the Midway Cemetery. The average length of life for 300 persons was 35.8. The figures are analyzed in detail and make a very interesting study. In a footnote, Mr. Harper calls attention to the fact that less than half the Confederate soldiers buried in Midway have their graves dated, often the only marker being the U. D. C. iron cross. Undated Confederate graves are common in other places, he points out.

The list of Midway members buried elsewhere is an interesting and often distinguished one, containing many names well known in Savannah, such as Bacon, Cay, Harden, Maxwell, Jones, Law, Quarterman, Myrick, Ward and Winn.

This issue of the quarterly continues the papers by the late Ulrich Bonnell Phillips on "The Course of the South to Secession." It also contains the first section of an article by Louise Biles Hill on "Governor Brown and the Confederacy." This section on notes and documents contains papers relating to the Georgia-Florida frontiers, and "Two Augusta Fee Bills."

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## FT. MORRIS AND SUNBURY VISITS

### ATTRACTING ATTENTION

#### Archaeologists Are to See Them This Week

An important part of the program arranged for the meeting of the Society for Georgia Archaeology in Savannah, May 6 and 7, will be a trip to old Fort Morris and to the "lost" town of Sunbury, both near Midway, about 30 miles south of the city.

The excursion will take place in the afternoon of May 7, following an inspection of the WPA excavations at Irene Mound.

Both Fort Morris and Sunbury played a notable part in the early history of Georgia, particularly during the War of Independence. The flag that flew over the fort in 1778 was the last American flag to be hauled down when the state was overrun by the British. Of nearby Sunbury, nothing remains to show that this town, formerly a port of entry, was once a commercial rival of Savannah.

In view of the interest shown by the people of Savannah in the coming meeting of the Society for Georgia Archaeology, the following brief outline, concerning the nature and history of the two sites, is given:

The once thriving town of Sunbury was located close to the mouth of the Midway river, in Liberty county. It lay only 10 miles from the present town of Midway, for which it was established, in 1758, as a much needed seaport. Sunbury rapidly became prosperous, the harbor was packed with shipping, and was made a regular port of entry only a short time after its founding.

With the outbreak of the American Revolution, Sunbury whole-heartedly indorsed the American cause and with Midway became a center of patriotic enthusiasm. It is significant that Dr. Lyman Hall and Button Gwinnett, two of the three Georgia delegates to the First Continental Congress, were closely associated with this town.

Fort Morris, named after an officer in the Continental army, was built in 1776, for the defense of Sunbury. It lay only a few hundred yards southward of the town, comprising thick walls surrounded by a moat, and an enclosed parade ground about an acre in extent. The fort was used as a base for local operations during most of the war and was held by Col. John McIntosh and a force of 200 men.

Not until after the fall of Savannah did Fort Morris capitulate, and only when assaulted by a vastly superior force of 200 British under Col. Augustin Prevost. As it was, Fort Morris was the last American post in Georgia to fall to the British. "Come and get it," the historically famous reply of Col. McIntosh to Fuser, has been immortalized in the American language.

The capture of Fort Morris and of Sunbury marked the end of the town's commercial position. Although it still numbered a few inhabitants until the War Between the States, it never regained its former prosperity.

It is still possible to trace the outlines of Fort Morris although it is almost completely overgrown by vegetation. Very little is left of Sunbury, however, and an expanse of wooded and cleared land gives only faint indications that a thriving town once occupied the site.

The members of the society and their guests will depart for the afternoon excursion to Midway from the Hotel De Soto at 2:30 o'clock. The public is cordially invited to this, as well as to all other open parts of the two-day program.

It will be the first archaeological meeting in Savannah, and the proposed activities and features. Among them a special display of Irene Mound finds, arranged for the occasion by Dr. V. J. Fewkes, are anticipated with keen interest.

MIDWAY CHURCH, LIBERTY COUNTY, GEORGIA

Field Report, October 19, 1936

James W. Holland

## MIDWAY CHURCH, MIDWAY, GEORGIA

Name of site: Midway Church.

Location: In Liberty County, Georgia, on U. S. Highway #17, 25 miles from Savannah.

Accessibility: Is located on paved U. S. Highway, on the coastal route from the cities of the Northeast to Florida. U. S. Highway No. 17 is also known as the Atlantic Coastal Highway.

Description of setting: The approach to the Midway Meeting House is through a pine wood. The surrounding country is very sparsely populated. Pasture and thriving groves of rice and loblolly shortleaf pine are now abandoned to the rank grasses and other growth characteristic of the Georgia coast.

Description of site: The Midway Church, built in 1798, is a marvelously well preserved frame structure, two stories in height, and painted white. The upper floor has twenty-four windows, the large number being due to the fact that a Negro balcony takes up most of the room on that floor. The roof is steep, sloping at about a 45° angle. A steeple surmounts a square weather-boarded tower.

Historical Narrative: The Midway region was settled in 1733 by about 500 Puritans who had previously taken up residence in South Carolina. Their ancestors had come to America in the great migration to Massachusetts in 1630. After a generation or two there they had become dissatisfied and had moved on to South Carolina. In 1733, they left South Carolina and settled on a tract of 32,000 acres secured through agreement with the Georgians. This land was south of the Ogeechee midway between the Savannah and Altamaha rivers, thus the settlement was called Midway.

The Puritan settlers of Midway had brought with them 1,000 slaves and set them to clearing out rice and loblolly plantations. They were a religious people and maintained a congregational form of church government. The first church of logs was erected on the present site in 1733 and became the center of community life for the region known as Midway.

At first the Midway people traveled and shipped their goods overland to Savannah, up the old military road built by Hugh Mackay, but progress required a seaport so they built Sunbury, which became an important port of entry and a rival of Savannah.



The Midway settlement, due probably to sympathy for the Puritan brethren of Massachusetts, was the first group of people in Georgia to take action siding with the other colonies in opposing England. Without waiting for the united action of Georgia, the St. John's Parish (Midway) people entered, on Dec. 1, 1774, the non-importation association which had recently been established by the Continental Congress. When the First Provincial Congress of Georgia met the following January, the St. John's delegation sought to force that body to accept the association and, failing, they determined to secede from Georgia and form an alliance with South Carolina, but this was not accomplished largely due to the indifference of Carolina. In March, the Midway settlement sent the only representatives from Georgia to the Second Continental Congress; their representative was Lyman Hall.

Throughout the Revolution, the Midway region held fast to its patriotic spirit, and earned for itself bitter retribution from the British when they invaded the area in 1778. At that time the old Midway Church was burned by the British. In recognition of services in the Revolution, St. John's Parish was afterward made Liberty County, and it bears that name today.

An astonishing number of prominent persons were connected with the Midway settlement in greater or less degree. Dr. John Holmes, author of the Maple, and father of Oliver Wendell Holmes, was pastor of Midway for six years. Jedidiah Morse, "father of American geography" was pastor for a time. Of the three signers of the Declaration of Independence from Georgia, two (Lyman Hall and Button Gwinnett) were from this region. It was the home of the notable scientists and educators, John and Joseph LeCote. There, too, C. G. Jones, Jr., eminent Georgia historian, lived in boyhood years. This list is far from exhaustive; to it could be added an imposing array of statesmen, scientists, educators, and clergymen along with a host of others unknown to fame who contributed their modest lives to that good citizenship.

Historical Evaluation: For leadership in the American Revolution as well as in the arts of peace, this small community is outstanding. As the center of the Puritan settlement which has had a large part in the shaping of the destiny of the State, it is most interesting. One author (Gyville A. Park, in Ge. Hist. Soc. Quarterly, XIII) is of the opinion that "a mere handful of settlers, the little Puritan colony, has wielded a greater influence in the State, and from its members have come a larger number of men of ability, character and influence than any other group of our population."

From the records, it would appear that this seemingly extravagant claim is substantially correct.

Present Ownership: Probably owned by congregation of the church.

Sponsorship: It is not known that it could definitely be termed a "sponsor", but the Midway Society, composed of descendants of the founders and early members of this church, is interested in anything pertaining to the Midway Church.

Restoration and repairs: None required; kept in good repair by congregation.

Previous treatment: The site has been kept in condition by succeeding generations of members of this church. Thus no treatment in the field of restoration has been undertaken; nor is any necessary. A memorial marker has been placed there. Also in the cemetery in the Midway Church yard is a large monument, fifty feet high and thirty feet square at its base, erected by the United States Government in honor of two generals of the Revolutionary War who are buried there. The men thus honored are Brig.-Gen. James Oglethorpe who died from mortal wounds received in a skirmish with the British near Midway Church November 22, 1778; and Brig.-Gen. Daniel Stewart, a great grandfather of President Theodore Roosevelt.

Suggested treatment: There is hardly a possibility that the congregation of the church would even consider surrendering title to the grounds. However, it is likely that they would approve recognition of the site as an historic one. It is suggested that the Midway group (Sunbury, Fort Morris, and Midway Church and cemetery) be designated a Revolutionary memorial. The State of Georgia might accomplish this by improving the road to Sunbury and Fort Morris, and placing at Midway Church, (at the junction of the Sunbury road with U. S. Highway #17) markers briefly telling the visitor the significance of the immediate region and directing him to Sunbury.

Museum: While a museum would not be indispensable, one would be desirable to interpret the Puritan influence in Georgia which centered at Midway, and to illustrate the part taken by the area in the Revolution.

Research material: The amount of necessary research varies, depending on whether or not a museum is to be established. The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia and the Revolutionary Records of the State of Georgia should prove helpful. Some secondary works to be consulted are:

1. Kirby, J. Edward, Puritanism in the South (Boston, 1908).
2. Park, Orville L., "The Puritans in Georgia," The Georgia Historical Quarterly, XIII, 345-71 (Dec., 1929).
3. Jones, D. C., Jr., Address Delivered at Midway Meeting House in Liberty County, Georgia (Augusta, 1889) 20 p.
4. Mallard, J. B., Short Account of the Congregational Church at Midway, Georgia (Savannah, 1840).

5. Martin, J. B., Midway, Georgia, in History and Legend (Savannah, 1952).
6. Meltrin, Mrs. Peter, ed., Some Early Epitaphs in Georgia (Savannah, 1924).
7. Stacy, James, History of the Midway Congregational Church, Liberty County, Georgia (Newnan, Ga., n.d.). Preface dated August 1, 1899. Second edition, 1903.
8. Stacy, James, ed., The Published Records of the Midway Church. In Library, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Ga.

Also biographies and biographical sketches of the outstanding men of this community should yield additional information.

Photographs: None available for this report. Published photographs of Midway Church appear in Stacy, Hist. of Midway Cong. Church ... facing title page, and E. M. Coulter, A Short History of Georgia (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1933), 90.

Published Map: Locations: Map of the parishes of Georgia, including St. Johns (Midway), in Stacy, op. cit., facing p. 23. Midway is shown on all Georgia road maps.

Respectfully submitted:

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Approved:

Reuben E. Lattimore,  
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ADDRESS BEFORE THE GEORGIA SOCIETY OF ARCHAEOLOGY

Meeting at Midway Church, May 7, 1938

James W. Holland

Address before the Georgia Society of Archaeology, meeting at Midway Church,  
May 7, 1938, by James W. Holland, Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings,  
National Park Service

Just before the dawn of the twentieth century, a visitor viewing the field that had been Sunbury, issued what now becomes a challenge to the archaeologists of Georgia. Wrote he: "Like Pompeii of old, the whole now lies buried beneath the ashes of years, but unlike Pompeii, utterly beyond the hope of future exhumation." Could he have foreseen the unfolding of the interest of Georgians in their state's history, he would have been more circumspect than to assume that such a project never would be undertaken. Could he have known of the scientific magic of the archaeologist to be developed in the century then at hand, he would have been more cautious than to assert its impossibility.

Sunbury, of all Georgia's historic "lost" towns - Ebenezer, Joseph's Town, Frederica, Hardwick, Petersburg, Jacksonborough, Francisville, Federal-Town, Harrisburgh, Hartford - Sunbury is perhaps the most interesting because its apparent chances for success were better than those of the others. Sunbury: in 1772 a respected rival of Savannah for commercial supremacy in Georgia; in 1792, an unmarked field to the south of the important and prosperous city of Savannah.

In the year that the Georgia Trustees surrendered their charter, some twenty years after the founding of Georgia by Oglethorpe, the Midway settlements were established. No immigrants from foreign shores were these, but a group of Puritans, descended from the settlers of Massachusetts' great migration of 1630, thus bringing with them an American background a century older than would be claimed by Georgia's first settlers. Their forebears had left the mother colony in 1696 and, turning their steps southward, had settled on the Ashley River in South Carolina, principally at Dorchester and Beech Hill. Desiring a compact settlement, their tracts of land were small and with the division and subdivision of these among successive generations, the farms became too small to support a growing population. By reason of economic necessity, then, many young persons were forced to leave the communities, which in their close-knit society was more than ordinarily distressing. Moreover, it was alleged by some that the region

around Dorchester and Beech Hill was a "sickly part of the country."

Clearly, more land, more favorably situated, was needed if the community were to survive. Several attempts to discover a promised land in Carolina had failed, when, in 1752, after thorough inspection, a delegation from the congregation applied for the Midway lands in Georgia. A grant of some 20,000 acres of land - later increased to 32,000 - was reserved for the Carolina Puritans for a period of eighteen months pending actual settlement or a movement in that direction.

The first of August, 1752, found a small band of Georgia's pioneer Puritans making their way to Midway, but after a series of misfortunes, they returned to Carolina. The Church Records affirm: "These adverse Providences were very discouraging to most, and brought the affaire of our removing to a considerable stand."

But steel-souled and stout-hearted Puritans were not long to be deterred by anything short of absolute catastrophe. In December, 1752, the van of the new colony arrived, when Benjamin Baker and Samuel Bacon, with their families, made a settlement. It seems that only Parmenas Way and his family arrived at Midway in 1753, but in the following year, seventeen families, including that of the pastor, and two single men, migrated to the Georgia land and thus the permanence of the settlement became more nearly assured. When it had been completely established, the settlement comprised three hundred and fifty whites and fifteen hundred Negroes.

There followed the typical pioneer labors of clearing land and building houses and outbuildings. The task was further complicated at Midway by the necessity of ditching and draining the swamps to prepare them for the cultivation of rice which was to be the staple crop of the region. It was, however, mitigated by the use of slave labor.

With the high regard for order characteristic of Puritans, the settlers framed in 1754, "Articles and Rules of Incorporation" for governing their society. The preamble constitutes a succinct expression of Puritan philosophy:

We, the subscribers ... being sensible of the advantages of good order and social agreement, among any people, both for their Civil

and Religious Benefit: and especially its necessity among us as a Christian Society ... and being willing to lay a foundation by the Blessing of God of peace and harmony among ourselves, and inoffensiveness to all our neighbours ... in order to obtain these good ends proposed; do accordingly come under the following articles of agreement ...

On the first four Sundays after the arrival of the families in 1754, services had been held at private houses, the while a log house was being erected for temporary use as a church. Two years later, a new meeting house was built and on January 2, 1757, the dedicatory sermon was there delivered. This church, pride of a devout people who shunned pride in material things, was a creditable structure of hand-hewn cypress, 44 by 36 feet and 18 feet in height.

"Rich in wisdom and good citizenship," the Midway people early began to prosper. In the first years, their trade was conducted overland on the old military road built by Hugh Mackay some twenty years before to connect Savannah with the Highlander outpost at New Inverness (now Darien), and upon which the meeting house of Midway had been built. Feeling the need for a seaport, however, the Midway people began to work for its fulfillment. Sunbury was the result.

Early in 1757, the Midway planters had petitioned for twenty-two acres at the site of Sunbury to be used as a boat landing, but action on the petition had been postponed until it could be determined whether or not the land was legally vacant. On July 11, attention was dramatically directed to the fact that Sunbury constituted the natural point of entry by water to the settlement. On that day, having been warned of the activity of privateers, a party went to Sunbury where they "raised a couple of Batteries and made Carriages for eight Small Cannon which were at the place. As a further protection against depredations by the Indians or other enemies in the French and Indian War, the Midway people enclosed the meeting house within a "defence".

In June, 1758, Mark Carr conveyed in trust 300 acres on the Midway River to be laid out as a town by the name of Sunbury, one hundred acres being reserved as a common. The town was duly established and enjoyed a rapid rise to commercial prosperity. Only three years after its founding, Sunbury was declared a port of entry. From this port was shipped the rice from the swamp plantations of the back country, the principal trade being 83



with the West Indies and the northern colonies. Sunbury became, too, a favorite "retreat" for planters whose plantations lay in the unhealthy swamps. Soon it established itself as a commercial rival of older Savannah.

Lying between the mouths of the Midway and Sapelo rivers, within view of the town of Sunbury, and part of the same parish, was St. Catherine's Island. It was leased, in 1765, by Button Gwinnett, who sold his mercantile business in Savannah, to become a planter on this sea island. Gwinnett was a frequent visitor to Sunbury on business and socially. Especially significant was his strong personal friendship with Dr. Lyman Hall of that town, "one of the earliest and most influential of the 'Sons of Liberty'".

The rise in importance of the port of Sunbury made advisable the maintenance of adequate defenses. In the spring of 1760 the Legislature voted "for the use of the Fort erected at Sunbury and for the use of the Fort erected at Midway ... a Sum to each not exceeding twenty five pounds ..." Late in the following year, one hundred pounds were appropriated for the construction of a lookout and battery on Midway River.

Sunbury, with a view toward concentrating all the trade possible from the interior, was active in sponsoring that type of enterprise known in a later era as "internal improvements." In 1762, for example, a new public road was authorized from Sunbury to join the southwest road near the plantation of Samuel Hastings. At another time, it was proposed to connect Midway and North Newport rivers by a canal between Colonel's Island and the mainland, but the plan was not effected.

The heyday of the port of Sunbury came in the 1770's. In the year 1771, fifty-six vessels were cleared at the custom house there. William Bartram, botanist and traveler in the Southern colonies in that decade, visited Sunbury and the Midway Church in 1773. He observed that Sunbury was

beautifully situated on the main between Midway and Newport rivers, about fifteen miles south of the great Ogeechee river. The town and harbour are defended from the fury of the seas by the north and south points of St. Helena and Saint Catherine's islands ... the harbour is capacious and safe, and has water enough for ships of great burthen. I arrived here in the evening ... one of the inhabitants ... politely introduced me to one of the principal families, 94

where I supped and spent the evening in a circle of genteel and polite ladies and gentlemen...

In regard to other parts of St. John's Parish, Bartram wrote:

On the morrow obedient to the admonitions of my attendant spirit, curiosity, ... I again set off on my southern excursion and left Sunbury in company with several of its polite inhabitants who were going to Midway meeting, a very large and well constructed place of worship ...

After listening to a "Very excellent sermon .. by their pious and truly venerable pastor," Bartram continued down the Savannah-Darien highway, "passing through a level country well watered by large streams .. coursing from extensive swamps and marshes...; these swamps are daily clearing and improving into large fruitful rice plantations, aggrandizing the well inhabited and rich district of St. John's parish."

Then came the American Revolution to disturb the minds of the inhabitants of Midway and Sunbury, and to halt their steady rise to prosperity. Georgia, the youngest, most remote, most sparsely populated, poorest, and comparatively least important of the Original Thirteen was at first not much concerned with the discontent manifested by her sister colonies to the northward. Of the obnoxious legislation of which they complained, Georgia had experienced only the Stamp Act, and even that had not been enforced within her borders. The most recent historian of Georgia thus concisely states the case:

Georgia had been the pet of English philanthropy and of the English Parliament; a million dollars had been expended upon her in addition to all the charity that had gone along with the founding and early development of the colony. Gratitude might well have made Georgia the last stronghold of British loyalty in America.

In arousing Georgia to a spirit of resistance of Britain, the Puritans of St. John's parish took the lead, and among the most zealous was Dr. Lyman Hall, ably seconded by his friend, Button Gwinnett. Although Dr. Hall owned a rice plantation on the Savannah-Darien road a short distance north of Midway meeting house, his residence was at Sunbury. As a leading physician of the region, his influence was widespread and he early assumed, and never relinquished his stand for liberty.

The First Continental Congress, meeting in 1774, without delegates from Georgia, had adopted a non-importation agreement and had decided to convene another congress the following year. The St. John's planters watched with interest the proceedings in

Savannah, hoping that Georgia's metropolis would follow the course indicated by the Continental Congress. For a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the personal popularity of the Royal Governor, Sir James Wright, many Georgians who later were to adopt the cause of liberty were hesitant. When it appeared that the remainder of Georgia would fail to ratify the non-importation agreement, a committee composed entirely of delegates from St. John's parish, with Lyman Hall presiding, ratified, independently of the rest of Georgia, the "General Association" recommended by the Continental Congress.

Equally, with South Carolina, incensed over Georgia's inactivity during the early months of 1775, St. John's parish sent emissaries to Charleston to advocate the alliance of their Georgia parish with the province of South Carolina. This proposition the South Carolina Committee rejected on the ground that it would violate an article of the General Association. It is perhaps interesting to note that here we find the doctrine of secession advanced by the New England-descended inhabitants of St. John's parish before the government of the United States had been established. We find South Carolina, too, at least by implication, rejecting the doctrine.

Then independently both of Georgia and of South Carolina, St. John's parish elected her own representative to the forthcoming Continental Congress. The choice fell to Lyman Hall who was unanimously admitted to membership by the Congress subject only to the condition that he should not vote on questions decided by a vote by colonies.

After news of the battle of Lexington reached Savannah (May 10), the dormant revolutionary spirit in Georgia stirred into action. In the following month a Council of Safety was set up to direct the "affairs of the friends of freedom," and within a month thereafter the government had been completely taken away from the Royal Governor. Five men were elected from Georgia at large for service in the Continental Congress and Georgia had followed Sunbury and Midway into the patriot cause.

In January, 1776, the next Provincial Congress of Georgia assembled at Savannah and during this session chose John Houstoun, Archibald Bulloch, Lyman Hall, Button

Gwinnett and George Walton delegates to the Continental Congress. Of these, Hall, Gwinnett, and Walton gained immortality by signing the revered "Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was received with joy and celebration throughout Georgia "but nowhere with greater approval than in St. John's parish, the home of Hall and Gwinnett."

Gallant Midway and Sunbury were to suffer for their strong stand for liberty. In January, 1776, a British fleet lay at the entrance of the Savannah River and it was feared that the port of Sunbury might likewise be closed. Accordingly, the Council of Safety advised the "utmost vigilance in watching the motions of the pilots for the harbour of Sunbury ..!" The regular annual meeting of the Midway Society was held in March, but the minutes indicate "few met this Province being in a State of alarm, and the major Part of the men of this District being at Savannah."

In June, 1776, a number of Negroes were employed to "finish in a more proper manner the intrenchments about Sunbury." This work included the building of a fort just below the town at the point where the high ground ended and the broad impracticable marshes between the main and Colonel's Island began. In the same month, Colonel James Screven was ordered to bring cannon from Frederica, for mounting at the work at Sunbury, which was given the name Fort Morris. The fortification was an enclosed earthwork, so substantial that it stands today after having been subjected to bombardment and to the rains and winds of more than a century and a half.

For the first three years of the War for Independence, the major campaigns were conducted far north of Georgia. That colony, however, suffered much from incursions of the Loyalists from their base at St. Augustine. In 1776, Sunbury was the rendezvous for the forces of General Charles Lee in his punitive expedition against East Florida. In the following year, Colonel Samuel Elbert embarked troops from Sunbury for St. Augustine.

The year 1778 brought disaster to the Midway people of old St. John's parish, which had the preceding year been given, for obvious reasons, the name Liberty County, a name she bears with justifiable pride today. Early in 1778, some alarm having been

experienced for the safety of Sunbury, measures were taken to complete the earthwork and batteries, and other emergency action was taken looking toward the defense of the port.

The expected blow fell in November. The reduction of Savannah was a part of Lord George Germain's carefully planned Southern campaign of 1778. The American general, Robert Howe, was then holding Savannah, and in an attempt to divert his attention to the more southern part of the state, General Augustin Prevost was ordered to send out from St. Augustine, two expeditions. One of these, traveling by water, was to make a direct attack on Sunbury and its guardian Fort Morris; the other, by land, was to march through lower Georgia, laying waste the countryside, and to join the other force at Sunbury, whence both would proceed to Savannah to assist Colonel Archibald Campbell who was sailing from New York with 2,000 men.

Accordingly, General Prevost sent by water a detachment of infantry and light artillery under the command of Col. L. V. Fuser for the reduction of Fort Morris and Sunbury. Col. Mark Prevost was to lead the land force of 100 British regulars and 300 Indians and Tories.

On November 17, three deserters from the Florida forces brought to Midway the disquieting news that Col. Prevost's army was approaching. Two days later, as the British column entered Georgia and began its program of destruction, the Midway patriots marched down to contest the passage. On the Savannah-Darien road at Bulltown Swamp, Prevost's force was confronted by Col. John Baker leading a hastily assembled group of mounted militiamen. After a sharp skirmish in which Col. Baker, Capt. Cooper, and William Goulding were wounded, the patriots were forced back to the North Newport Bridge (later called Riceboro Bridge) where they made another brave, but vain, attempt to stem the British advance on Midway.

On the morning of November 20, Col. John White, in command of the Midway fortifications, was joined by Brig. Gen. James Screven and twenty militiamen. A defensive position was selected about a mile and a half south of the meeting house where the Darien road passed through a thick wood. Apparently Prevost had selected the same

position, for the two forces reached the spot almost simultaneously, neither having time to take up a strong position. In the action that followed, General Screven was mortally wounded, and sleeps now in the Midway cemetery in the land he gave his life to defend.

Col. White fell back to Midway Church, destroying bridges as he retired over the causeway. Abandoning the meeting house, he then proceeded in the direction of Great Ogeechee Ferry where he added his troops to the American forces already there. But the British colonel was not to be drawn into the trap. After pursuing only about six or seven miles, Prevost, upon discovering that Fuser had not arrived at Sunbury as scheduled, decided to return to St. Augustine.

Upon the approach of the British force, the "Neighbourhood of Midway [had] fled from their Habitations," most of them going to the American encampment on the Ogeechee. Now, as Prevost retraced his steps to Florida, he burned almost all the deserted houses in the community and the crops as well. The Midway Meeting House, too, pride of the inhabitants of the region and the center of their religious and community life, was burned to the ground. Thus did Midway pay a price for her adherence to the principle of freedom.

Sunbury, however, had not fallen. Fuser, delayed by head winds, failed to arrive before Sunbury until Prevost had begun his retreat and had passed beyond reach of communications. Late in November, Fuser's vessels anchored off Colonel's Island, and there he landed his infantry and artillery. The field pieces were trained on Fort Morris and up the Midway River moved the armed vessels to a position in front of the fort.

Fort Morris was held at this time by Col. John McIntosh with 127 Continental troops together with some militia and citizens of Sunbury, numbering fewer than 200 in all. Fuser served McIntosh the ultimatum which follows:

SIR,

You cannot be ignorant that four armies are in motion to reduce this Province. One is already under the guns of your fort, and may be joined, when I think proper, by Colonel Prevost who is now at the Midway meeting-house. The resistance you can, or intend to make, will bring destruction upon this country.

On the contrary, if you will deliver me the fort which you command, lay down your arms and remain neuter until the fate of America is determined, you shall, as well as all of the inhabitants of this parish, remain in peaceable possession of your property. Your answer, which I expect in an hour's time, will determine the fate of this country, whether it is to be laid in ashes, or remain as above proposed.

I am Sir,  
 Your most obedient Svt,  
 L. V. FUSER,  
 Colonel 60th Regiment and Commander of his Majesty's  
 Troops in Georgia, on his Majesty's Service.

The American defender of the fort promptly sent his answer:

SIR,  
 We acknowledge we are not ignorant that your army is in motion to endeavour to reduce this State. We believe it is entirely chimerical that Colonel Prevost is at the Meeting-House; but should it be so, we are in no degree apprehensive of danger from a junction of his army with yours. We have no property compared with the object we contend for that we value a rush: - and would rather perish in a vigorous defence than accept of your proposals. We Sir, are fighting the battles of America, and therefore disdain to remain neutral till its fate is determined. As to surrendering the fort ... COME AND TAKE IT ...

I have the honor to be Sir,  
 Your most obedient Servant,  
 JOHN McINTOSH,  
 Colonel of Continental Troops

Instead of attacking immediately, Fuser waited for word from scouts sent out to determine Prevost's position. Finding that the latter, after his Midway raid had retired to Florida, Fuser raised the siege of Fort Morris and Sunbury, re-embarked his troops and joined Prevost at the St. John's River.

Although the Midway region was free of enemy troops in December, 1778, it had been left in deplorable condition. Pathetically the refugees returned to view the wreckage that had been homes and fruitful fields. Some returned to the ashes to build anew; others, discouraged, wearily turned to South Carolina.

Despite the failure of the two Florida forces to reach Savannah, that town, in December, 1778, fell before an attack by Col. Campbell's army operating alone. Howe's army retreated in great confusion and with considerable loss, crossing the Savannah River at Sister's and Zubly's ferries, and reassembled in South Carolina, leaving the State of Georgia open to the British forces. On the retreat Howe had paused long



enough to order Major Joseph Lane, then commanding Fort Morris, to evacuate, retire up the south side of the Ogeechee, and join the main force at Zubly's Ferry. Major Lane, determined to defend Sunbury at any cost, flatly disregarded these orders of his superior officer, and remained at his post. Thus as the year 1778 faded into history and the next began, little Fort Morris stood with a comparatively great British army to the north at Savannah and another to the south at St. Augustine, alone in all the state proudly flying the flag of liberty from her ramparts.

Down in Florida, General Prevost, having heard of the fall of Savannah, left St. Augustine with an army of about 2,000 men to join Campbell. On the way, he stopped at Sunbury, and after three days of maneuvering into position for the investment of Fort Morris, on January 9, demanded its surrender. Major Lane refused and attempted a gallant defense but, after spirited fighting, was compelled by superior force of arms to surrender.

The Midway region of Liberty county, including Sunbury and Fort Morris, last of all Georgia to be surrendered to the British, was thereupon subjected to a strict military regime. The fort was renamed, by its conquerors, Fort George, in honor of the sovereign who was no sovereign over the free spirits of the Liberty county people.

On July 11, 1783, with the columns of "Mad Anthony" Wayne steadily advancing, the British evacuated Savannah, after having held possession for more than four and one-half years, and Georgia was freed of British rule. The effects of the war had been disastrous. The Negro population, never very stable, was demoralized, "plantations burned and converted into waste places, and the seeds of poverty and discontent sown broadcast."

With commendable and characteristic energy, the people of Liberty county worked to remedy their shattered fortunes. There was at this time a decided effort to re-establish war-torn Sunbury as a place of importance. In 1784 an act established the town as the county seat of Liberty county and provided for the erection there of a court house and jail. Sunbury, however, was destined never to regain its ante-bellum prosperity. True, in 1788, Sunbury Academy was incorporated and became the most

famous institution of learning in southern Georgia, and as late as 1801 one misguided observer declared that Sunbury promised without doubt to become a "port of commercial consequence."

As early as 1797, however, it had become apparent to more discerning persons that the town was in the grip of an irremedial decline; accordingly in that year the county seat was moved to Riceboro. The last noteworthy vessel to put in at the port of Sunbury was a Swedish brig which, in 1814, carried a cargo of cotton from that port. The decline of Sunbury became absolute. All obvious traces of the town passing away, it joined the company of those which an eminent Georgia historian has called "the dead towns of Georgia."

Soon after the return of the Midway people to their homes, in 1784, arose the question of the erection of a new meeting house to replace the beloved one consumed by the flames of war. The first problem was one of location: whether to build the new church on the site of the older one "or on some place more central." The question would seem to involve a contest between practicality and sentiment; if so, the sentimentalists were victorious for it was decided by the narrowest of margins - a vote of 15 to 14 - that the meeting house should occupy the spot hallowed by the old.

The matter of location decided, there remained what to these war-impooverished churchmen was a more vexing problem, that of financing the construction of the new edifice. As an expedient it was decided that a temporary or "coarse" church be built forthwith to serve until a more permanent one could be erected.

Under the guidance of young Reverend Abiel Holmes, the spiritual life and community activities of the Midway society had a new awakening. Among other things, the Library Society, an institution of happier days, was revived.

In 1790, six years after the building of the temporary meeting house, the construction of a large and more suitable church again was seriously considered. Two years later, when the cruel war lay nine years in the past and when, with the great George Washington as president, the government of the United States under the Constitution was in its third experimental year, the new church was built. It is

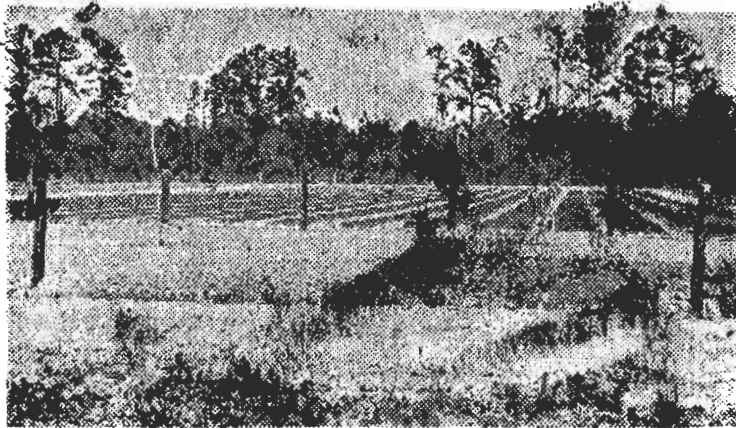
the building in which we are now assembled.

Notable indeed this community has been in the production of outstanding leaders in many fields and of sound citizenship among her sons and daughters in general. The lasting fame of the people of this region rests on their contribution to American liberty -- a spirit epitomized by Colonel McIntosh, when, into the very mouths of hostile cannon, he hurled the words: "we, Sir, are fighting the battles of America ... As to surrendering the fort ... COME AND TAKE IT."

HISTORIC SITES SURVEYS AND HISTORIC DATA

SOUTHEAST GEORGIA 1936-1938

## Union Bag Nursery Near Midway



## Union Bag Corporation to Produce Million Nursery Grown Pine Trees

BY M. H. KAHLER

Approximately one million pine seedlings are now growing in Union Bag and Paper Corporation's nursery, located on their Lyman Hall Plantation about thirty miles south of Savannah on the Ogeechee road.

This old, historic tract of land, lying approximately one-half mile north of Midway, was acquired by the Union Bag and Paper Corporation about two and one-half years ago. The plantation derives its name from its ownership at the time by Dr. Lyman Hall, a native of Wallingford, Conn., who was graduated from Yale College in 1747.

When a young man he came to Dorchester, S. C., and later came to Georgia with a band of Indians, settled at Midway in the year 1747. St. John, south of the Ogeechee river. He was an active physician and participated actively with the patriots when the American Congress was met at this place in the North against the British, and the people of his vicinity, were early and zealous advocates of the Cause of Liberty.

In response to the call of the First Continental Congress, Dr. Lyman Hall was sent as a delegate from the Parish of St. John, which embraced the area in which this plantation is located. Additional delegates came from other parishes, but at the time the Declaration of Independence was signed there were only three delegates present on behalf of Georgia; one being Button Gwinnett, the second, George Walton, and the third, Lyman Hall, whose three signatures appear on this famous instrument, representing the sovereign people of Georgia.

When the British overran Savannah and took possession of this area, he removed to the North with his family. During his absence his property was confiscated by the Royal government.

Union Bag and Paper Corporation has established its nursery on an old field long ago abandoned by the planter. The nursery is under the im-

mediate supervision of Charles H. Cannon, Jr., a graduate forester from the University of Georgia, and its nursery has a year-round program. Pine cones and burrs are gathered in September and October before they have had an opportunity to ripen and scatter their seed naturally.

The cones or burrs, mostly from slash pine trees with some from long leaf pine trees, are gathered by forest rangers in the company's employ. These rangers use ladders, or tree climbers to reach the limbs of well-formed, healthy and vigorous trees, from which they knock the cones. It often occurs that cones can be gathered from the tops of trees immediately following logging operations.

Approximately 200 bushels of cones are required for the present nursery. They are placed in long shallow trays arranged one above the other in a tobacco curing barn. Fires are started in the furnaces underneath the tobacco barn and the cones, exposed to the heated air, open. The cones are then placed in a large shaker, which is rotated, causing the seed to drop on a canvas placed beneath the shaker. Wings attached to each seed by which means nature, with the aid of the wind, disperses the seed over wide areas, are removed by beating and fanning. The cleaned seed are stored in a dry cool place until the following March.

They are then sown in beds 100 feet long and four feet wide, made in cleared and cultivated ground. Each bed has a two-foot path along side to facilitate weeding. The seed are pressed into the ground with a roller and are covered with a layer of old pine needles or mulch. An overhead sprinkler system, fed by water from a flowing artesian well, furnishes the considerable amount of water needed during the long months while the young trees are growing. By December they are from six to ten inches tall, and like most all plants, they become dormant for the winter period. They are now removed from the ground, counted in bundles of 1,000 and carefully packed in wet moss in pick-up trucks for delivery to the different planting sites.

Planting sites at present consist mostly of old abandoned fields cultivated years ago and which have not yet seeded into pine from the surrounding woods. There are several thousand acres of such fields on Union Bag's vast timberland holdings. After these fields have been planted openings in the forest land will be planted and it is possible that the company may later furnish seedlings to farmers and other small land owners in the Savannah area anxious to grow pulpwood.

The small trees or seedlings are set out in shallow furrows made by a middle buster or other type plow. These furrows are eight feet apart and the seedlings are spaced every eight feet, making a total of 680 trees per acre. Planting is usually done by turpentine hands who are mostly idle during the winter months. The men work in pairs and can plant about one and half acres, or 1,000 seedlings per day.

No cultivation or fertilization is necessary. It often occurs, especially in dry seasons, that 20 or 30 per cent of these seedlings will die. Grazing is often a cause of death. Goats and sheep will at times eat the small seedlings. The vacant spaces caused by this mortality are refilled with young seedlings the following season. Fires are especially damaging and all plantations must be surrounded by fire breaks made by plowing with heavy plows and harrows developed especially for this purpose.

After the first year, two these planted seedling will grow to the rate of from two or four feet in height per year and as much as an inch in diameter. After eight or ten years these plantations can be thinned for pulpwood and at about fifteen years of age the trees will be large enough for turpentine operations. After being worked for naval stores for eight or ten years they will be cut for pulpwood.

The public is invited to visit the Union Bag and Paper Corporation's nursery at Lyman Hall Plantation, located thirty miles south of Savannah on the Ogeechee road. The plantation and nursery are about one-half mile north of the old Midway Church.

PLANTATION HOMES OF GEORGIA

(A Listing)

PLANTATION HOMES OF GEORGIA

A. Well preserved plantation houses c. 1850  
(in order of priority)

I. Caswell Plantation

Location: High Shoals, near Athens, Clarke Co., Ga.

Extent: 6,000 acres -- much of it is wooded but enough under cultivation to produce 1400 bales of cotton annually before the advent of the boll weevil. Now farming has been considerably curtailed and abandoned fields are overrun with quail and other game. Some cotton is still raised.

When built: Oldest part of house built in 1820 of timber cut on the estate. Porch and wings are of slightly later date and in the classic style in favor at the time.

Grounds: Slave quarters have disappeared, but some of the original slaves and many of their descendants are tenants on the place. The old detached kitchen has been replaced by a modern "cook-room" but the old smoke house with its meat cutting bench still stands. A lovely garden of ante-bellum origin flourishes.

~~Significance:~~

Present owner: Miss Sally Maud Jones

Significance: One of the few cotton planter's establishments to survive, virtually unchanged. "Its claim to distinction is not for grandeur or glory in the days that were, but more for carrying into these less glamorous times a picture of a peculiarly American civilization which can never come again."

II. W. Johnson

II. Greenwood Plantation

Location: near Thomasville, Thomas County, Ga.

Extent: Present acreage 20,000. Probably not over 1500 in ante-bellum times.

When built. Built by Thomas Jones during the seven years 1830-1844.

~~Significance:~~

House and grounds - Cotton plantation. Greek revival type designed by Jean Wind, prominent English architect. Family burying ground entered through a graceful Gothic gate.

Present owner: Mrs and Mrs. Payne Whitney, of N. Y. When Stanford White was retained to make improvements by the present owner he effected many improvements in the landscaping but advised that no alterations be made on the house.



III. Isaac P. Henderson Harris Plantation

Location: Covington, Newton Co., Ga.

Extent: Originally a cotton plantation, but now the town of Covington (3,000 pop.) has grown up around it.

When built: Built in 1830 by the Harris family pioneers in Covington.

House: Neo-classical type. Still in good condition.

IV. Rose Hill Plantation

Location: Elbert Co., Ga. Near Elberton

Extent: 1,000 acres.

When built: Built in 1810, a former cottage being transformed into a large dwelling with the two-storied porch popular with many planters of the day. Two large wings have been added in the post war period.

Grounds: Characterized by an avenue of oaks. A twelve-foot cedar hedge divides the garden from the road. An attractive garden is maintained, comprising in all some 25 acres.

Present owner: Eugene Bernard Heard.

V. Pebble Hill Plantation

Location: About 6 miles south of Thomasville, Thomas County, on Dixie Highway.

When built: Date unknown. The estate was an original grant from the State of Georgia to James Jemison, and house was built in ante-bellum period.

House and grounds: House is ~~light~~ white, low and rambling, of the Southern colonial type. The central portion is old construction but wings have been added. Negro quarters are maintained for the colored servants. The plantation terrain and vegetation varies from hammocks of hard wood, cypress swamps, pine wood on high ground, to tenant fields.

Present owner: Mrs. Perry W. Harvey

VI. "Atlama"

Location: on the Altamaha River, Glynn County, Ga., about 5 miles above Darien.

Extent: A considerable acreage, but exact extent ~~unknown~~ not known.

When built: In 1855 by James Hamilton Couper on land bought from the earlier and larger Hepsten plantation.

House and grounds : A commodious tabby house on top of a knoll on ~~the site of~~ the former site of an Indian village. On all sides but one were rice fields; on that one side was a stretch of pine barren and thickets of live oaks, magnolias and palmettes. The house still stands in the original grove but the old garden is gone and the house has been modernized and is now used as a hunting lodge.

Present owner: Cater Woolford.

VII. Melrose Plantation

Location: 5 miles from Thomasville, Thomas County, Ga., on Dixie Highway.

When built: Original house built c. 1800 by Dr. Samuel J. Jones.

House and grounds : Original house forms central unit but broad wings have been added. The old portion of the house is built of pine logs cut on the place covered with broad clapboards. The old slave quarters have been replaced with neat white cottages, and modern barns, garages, etc., but are grouped as were the ante-bellum plantation settlements. The approach from the highway is a broad grass walk bordered with tea hedge.

Present owner: Howard M. Hanna

VIII. "Oak Hill"

Location: About 5 miles from Greensboro on Greene Co., Ga.

When built: Built about 1820 by Judge Thomas Stacks.

House and grounds: Cotton plantation. House two-story frame structure with colonnaded facade.

B. Ruined, Removed, or Radically Remodeled Plantation  
houses.

I. The Hermitage

Location: A few miles above Savannah on the Savannah River.

When Built.

~~1814/1820/1820/1820~~ The estate was assembled through a series of purchases begun in 1814. House was built in 1820.

House: Brick construction. Neo-classical, designed by Henry McAlpin, owner. Not occupied as residence after being sacked by Sherman's soldiers.

Present owner: Henry Ford, of Detroit, who bought the hermitage and removed it to his Bryan County estate and there restored it, brick by brick.

II. Mulberry Grove

III. Whitenall Plantation

Location: 6 miles above Savannah on Savannah River.

When built: By Joseph Gibbons c. 1760. Grant from George III.

Grounds: Rice plantation ~~was~~ for 100 years. Lands confiscated after Revolution but Gibbons effected their return to him. The house built by Joseph Gibbons stood until it was destroyed during the occupation of Savannah by Sherman. After the war a frame dwelling was built in which ~~the~~ descendants of Joseph Gibbons still reside. It is built on a bluff overlooking the river and in "a primeval grove of giant live oaks under the shade of which bloom camellias and azaleas."

#### IV. Hepeton

Location: On the Altamaha River about 5 miles above Darien, Glynn Co., Ga.

When built: Jean Couper and James Hamilton, both planters on St. Simons Island, in 1805 bought Wright's Island and Carr's Island five miles above Darien on the Altamaha. By 1816 a tabby mansion had been built at Hepeton

House and grounds: First cotton, then sugar, then rice was the principal crop of this plantation. In 1816 there were one thousand acres in rice fields, banked, ditched and under cultivation. The height of cultivation was reached 1850-60.

Present owner: Unknown. "For fifty years Hepeton has been a jungle-surrounded ruin."

#### V. Bellevue and Fairfield Twin Plantations

Location: On the Satilla River, Camden Co., Ga.,

When built: Built by Colonel Charles Floyd and son John in 1800.

Nature: Avenue of live oaks and cedars, typical of coastal plantations. First income from cotton principal crop. Both houses were burned during the "war" between the States and were not rebuilt.

#### VI. Lebanon Plantation

Location: On the Little Ogeechee River, Camden Co., Georgia.

History: A 500 acre Crown grant in 1756 by George II to James Deveaux. In 1804 it became the property of James Nabersham and in 1806 it was bought by George Anderson who developed it into a successful cotton plantation.

Present condition: The house occupied by James Nabersham in 1804 still stands. It has, however, been remodelled and enlarged. In its original condition it was a large two-story frame house on a high brick basement and surrounded ~~with~~ by a double tiered verandas. The land approach was the typical avenue of live oaks, a sections of which remain. It is now the country home of Mr. and Mrs. Mills B. Lane, the former a prominent Savannah banker.

I. Valley View

- Location: On old Rome-Cartersville road, in Bartow Co., Ga.
- When built: In late 1840's by Col. James Caldwell Spruill who had moved to Cass County (now Bartow), Georgia and developed an extensive cotton plantation.
- Nature: Large brick house built and a formal garden laid out. Both house and garden remain essentially unchanged, although the occupation of the house by Sherman's men has left its mark.
- Grounds: Passing through the entrance gate, one ~~passes~~ travels through a quarter mile of woods before reaching the house which overlooks a wide valley. The garden is bordered on one side by Carolina cherry and on the other by bush wisteria and includes dwarf box, tree box, English laurel, eunonymus, Norway spruce and fir, Persian ~~Aliaes~~, ~~Aliaes~~, crepe myrtle, mock orange, flowering holly, jasmine, Pyrus japonica and forsythia. Next to the smoke house is an unusual feature, a brick water tower. The herring bone brick walk from the gate to the porch is typical.
- Estimate: One of Georgia's best preserved mid-century cotton plantations.
- Present owner: Spruill Foucaud.

II. The group at Roswell.

- Location: Roswell, Cobb County, Ga., near Atlanta.
- Nature: a group of plantation houses arranged in a community. Founded by James Roswell King in the 1830's. ~~App~~ Community includes Barrington Hall, Bullock Hall, and Mimosa. Bullock Hall was the girlhood home of the mother of Theodore Roosevelt, who was also the grandmother of Mrs. Franklin Diane Roosevelt.

III. The "Homestead"

- Location: Ashby Street in West End, Atlanta, Ga.
- When built: Built in 1858 by Jean Parasher, when Atlanta was only a village in a tract of 300 acres.
- Nature: Brick, with two tiered porch in front and eight columns. Fine marble mantles in the original structure were carried off by Sherman's men and the equally fine ornamental iron work of the exterior was melted down by them.

## C. NOT STRICTLY PLANTATION HOUSES

### I. Kolb-Pou-Newton Place

Location: Madison, Morgan County, Ga.

Nature: Town house but exemplifying characteristics of the typical plantation house.

When built: In 1851, at the height of Georgia's ante-bellum prosperity, Wildes Kolb bought a block of property in the heart of Madison. On one-half of this block he built a house for himself and on the other half a house for his daughter, Mrs. Spears.

Description: Although a town house, the service yard, which in this case is at the side, contains not only a carriage house and stables but a cow barn as well and is flanked on one side by a vegetable garden and orchard and on the other by a pasture. Balancing these is a strip of ground running from street to street which is still spoken of as "the cotton patch"

Ownership: Was bought in 1861 by Louis Pou and occupied by his family until 1905 when it passed into the hands of Jenn Thomas Newton whose wife and daughter today make it their home.

### II. Cowles-Bond-Coleman-Cabaniss-O'Neal Place

Location: Macon, Bibb County, Ga.

Nature: A town house built about 1838, "an outstanding example of what Georgia gentlemen of that period considered a proper setting for their home life."

Additions: In the 1850's eighteen Doric columns and flanking wings were added.

Condition: Excellent.

Present owner: B. I. O'Neal

SPANISH SITES IN GEORGIA

(A Listing)

## SITES SUGGESTED FOR CONSIDERATION

### Guala (Santa Catalina) (St. Catherine's)

In April, 1566, Pedro Menendez de Aviles, founder of St. Augustine in the preceding year, visited the island now known as St. Catherine's. Was at that time given name of Guala which came to be applied to entire Georgia coast and then proceeded on to Santa Elena but on his way back in August again stopped at Guala (Santa Catalina) and left there a garrison of 30 men. This was the first of the Spanish settlements on the Georgia coast. In 1568 the first two Jesuit missionaries, Brothers Domingo Agustin and Pedro Ruiz, went to Guala with three others soon following. In 1570 however the Guala mission was deserted as a result of an Indian uprising, and the missionaries went to Virginia. First of the Franciscan missionaries to Santa Elena in 1573. After Drake's attack on Santa Elena, Santa Catalina became northern outpost of Spanish. New epoch in 1585 when five additional missionaries (Franciscans) established in Guala, Anson and Badajos on Santa Catalina. The Guala missions flourished for two years. Then in an Indian revolt in 1597, in which the missionaries of Santa Catalina, as well as those of the other islands, were killed, there being but one exception - Father Davila at Ospe who was seized and taken to Indian village in interior. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the missions were again established. Location: "On Persimmon Point or in the vicinity, on St. Catherine's Island." - Floyd.

### Santa Elena - Presidio San Felipe

Northern outpost of Spanish influence until 1587 when abandoned as a result of a raid by Sir Francis Drake, after which Santa Catalina (above) enjoyed that distinction. Jesuit mission established at Orista near Santa Elena in 1568, abandoned in 1570. In 1573 Franciscans came to Santa Elena. In 1587 the Spanish garrison removed to St. Augustine as a result of Drake's raid on Santa Elena. Location: Port Royal (Parris Island ?)

### Cofitachagua I. (Kasihta)

Indian village ruled over by a prince and visited by De Soto on his exploration. Location: "Georgians have delighted to locate it near Augusta, but others have placed it as far eastward as Columbia, in South Carolina." - Oulster. Location on Bulletin 73, plate 2, ~~Journal of~~ American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution (Swanton) shown as immediately above Apalachicola (2), on the Carolina side of the Savannah River.

### San Pedro (Cumberland Island)

Garrison and Jesuit mission established here. Deserted in 1570. Garrison at San Pedro reduced to 50 men in same year. In revival of missionary work by Franciscans in 1595, Father Chocas and Pareja located mission on San Pedro. In Indian uprising (Yamacoo) of 1597, the Indians of San Pedro remained faithful to the missionaries.

Locations: " . . . probably in the vicinity of Minkituck Creek or of Mumford's Creek, both of these being tributaries of Brickhill River. However, the site might have been about two miles south of these places." - Floyd.



WORKS CONSULTED IN PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

- Anderson, J. R., "The Genesis of Georgia," Georgia Historical Quarterly, XIII (1929), 242, et seq.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "The Spanish Era in Georgia and the English Settlement in 1733," Georgia Historical Quarterly, XVII (1933).
- Bolton, Herbert E., "Spanish Resistance to the Carolina Traders in Georgia," Georgia Historical Quarterly, IX (1925), 115-130.
- \_\_\_\_\_, (ed.), Arredondo's Historical Proof of Spain's Title to Georgia. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1926.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Mary Ross, The Debatable Land. Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1926. This also appears as introduction to the work cited immediately above.
- Coulter, E. Merton, A Short History of Georgia. Chapel Hill: Univ. of N. C. Press, 1933.
- Floyd, Marmaduke, "Certain Tabby Ruins on the Georgia Coast," in E. Merton Coulter (ed.), Georgia's Disputed Ruins. Chapel Hill: Univ. of N. C. Press, 1937.
- Johnson, J. G., "The Spanish Period of Georgia and South Carolina History, 1566-1703," in Bulletin of the University of Georgia. Special series, Studies No. 1 (1923). 23 p.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "A Spanish Settlement in Carolina, 1566," in Georgia Historical Quarterly, VII (1923), 330-345.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "The Yamacaw Revolt of 1597 and the Destruction of the Georgia Missions," in Georgia Historical Quarterly, VII (1923), 44-53.
- Lowery, Woodbury, The Spanish Settlements within the Present Limits of the United States Florida 1565-1574. New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911.
- Salley, A. S., The Origin of Carolina. Bulletins of the Historical Commission of South Carolina, No. 25. Columbia, S. C., 1920. 23 p.
- Swanton, John R., Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors. Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 75. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922.

PRINTED MAPS EXAMINED

1. Entire series of maps in Swanton, op. cit. Plate 2 shows location of Cofitachiqui.
2. Inside covers of Coulter, ed., Georgia's Disputed Ruins
3. "Map of Georgia Country in Spanish Days" in Bolton (ed.) Arredondo's Historical Proof.

March 24, 1933

Dr. John R. Swanton,  
Bureau of American Ethnology,  
Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

We have been requested to furnish information regarding "all of the known historic sites in Georgia illustrative of 16th Century Spanish exploration and colonization," for presentation to the "National Advisory Board on Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments."

As a recognized authority in the field, your opinion would be highly appreciated, and it is hereby solicited. Can you suggest any sites that should be included in the above classification? If so, will you please furnish us with their exact location and a brief statement evaluating them?

It is thought that one or more sites along De Soto's route should be included, among them, perhaps, Cofitachiqui although apparently located on the South Carolina bank of the Savannah River. Also it is thought proper to include the site of one or more of the Jesuit missions of Guale if their locations may be established beyond reasonable doubt.

Any assistance you may give us in this regard will be most sincerely appreciated.

Yours very truly,

James W. Hildard,  
Jr. Park Historian.

COPY

Smithsonian Institution  
BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY

Washington, D. C.

March 29, 1938.

Mr. James W. Holland, Jr.,  
Park Historian,  
Fort Pulaski National Monument,  
Cockspur Island,  
Savannah, Ga.,

Dear Mr. Holland:

The most important site on the Georgia coast connected with the Spanish period is St. Catherines Island where there was a presidio at one time besides an important mission. If the old mission site of San Pedro Mocama near the southern end of Cumberland Island could be located, it might be worth a tablet as it was of great importance in the mission history of Georgia and Florida.

The principal points along De Soto's route would be Bainbridge where he probably crossed the Flint, Abbeville, near the place where he came upon the Ocmulgee, the old site of Hartford across the Ocmulgee from Hawkinsville through which he undoubtedly passed. I also feel quite certain that his army crossed the Oconee River at Carr Shoals above Dublin. Silver Bluff just across the Savannah in South Carolina is generally regarded as the location of the town of Cofitachequi where De Soto met the famous "Lady of Cofitachequi." The identification is founded on an Indian tradition traceable as far back as the early 18th century. We can at least say this much that the town was certainly in that neighborhood.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ John E. Swanton

COPY

SUNBURY, LIBERTY COUNTY, GEORGIA

Field Report, October 14, 1936

James W. Holland

## SUNBURY

Name of Site: Sunbury.

Location: In Liberty County, Georgia, on a bend of the Midway River and near its mouth.

Accessibility: The site is fairly accessible. The village of Midway, Georgia is on U. S. Highway #17 (Atlantic Coastal Highway). To reach Sunbury, one turns east at Midway, leaving the highway for an old sand road, which is then followed for ten miles. The road is, in general, in poor condition and tends to become worse as it approaches Sunbury. It is, however, passable.

Description of Setting: All traces of a town have disappeared and in its stead are woodland and a cleared area, overlooking the inlet into which once sailed ships bearing wealth to Sunbury. One writer has said: "Like Pompeii of old, the whole now lies buried beneath the ashes of years, but unlike Pompeii, utterly beyond the hope of future exhumation." (Stacy, Hist. of Midway Cong. Church ... (1899), 240)

Historical Narrative: The land on which the town of Sunbury was later located was contained in a 500 acre grant to Mark Carr by the English Crown, October 4, 1757. In the following June, Carr conveyed 300 acres of this land in trust for the location of a town on Midway River, the project being instituted by the Puritan colony of Midway, which desired a sea-port. The town was divided into 496 lots, most of which were soon sold, and the career of Sunbury which was soon to rival Savannah as a commercial center, was begun.

As early as 1762, Sunbury was made a port of entry by Governor Wright. Seven square-rigged ships have entered her harbor in one day; fifteen vessels were in port at one time. At the height of the town's prosperity came the Revolution, and Sunbury joined the rest of St. John's Parish in patriotic support of American rights. Dr. Lyman Hall, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, lived at Sunbury. Button Gwinnett, another signer, though living on nearby St. Catherine's Island, spent much of his time at Sunbury, officially being "Justice of St. John's Parish" and socially, being frequently a visitor at the home of Dr. Hall. At Sunbury, too, George Hays, the only other signer of the Declaration of Independence from Georgia, was sent as prisoner of war, after the fall of Savannah in 1778.

Sunbury was the rendezvous for the forces of Gen. Charles Lee in his expedition against Florida in 1778. In the following year, Col. Elbert, marched troops from Sunbury against

St. Augustine. It was to Sunbury that, in 1778, after Gen. Howe's unsuccessful expedition to Florida, Col. C. C. Pinckney returned with his troops to rest. Sunbury's fort (Fort Morris) was the last spot in Georgia to surrender when the state was overrun by the British in 1778. Not until Savannah had fallen and the forces withdrawn from Augusta that Sunbury surrendered to British supremacy and then not until overwhelmed by superior numbers.

The war marked the doom of Sunbury; it never fully recovered and although the town remained in existence until the Civil War, it never regained its former condition of prosperity. Since the Civil War, it has been numbered among the "dead towns".

One of the most interesting of Sunbury's institutions in her prime was the Sunbury Academy, a co-educational school and the first of its class to receive state aid in Georgia. It was authorized by the Legislature under an act approved February, 1786. The curriculum of the academy included Greek and Latin, art, and other advanced subjects. Graduates entered the junior classes of Yale, Harvard, and Princeton. Dr. William Moultrie was for thirty years master of the academy.

Historical evaluation: Sunbury, Fort Morris, and Midway were places that were scenes of the development and spread of the Revolutionary spirit in Georgia. As a group they formed what might perhaps be regarded as the nucleus of the Revolutionary story in Georgia -- the first to advocate a break with England and the last in Georgia to surrender. Sunbury is interesting, too, as the site of a once flourishing town, which has entirely disappeared due to the working of a complex set of socio-economic laws. It is further noteworthy for its association with all three of the signers of the Declaration of Independence from Georgia, George Walton, Hatten Winnett, and Lyman Hall.

Present ownership: The major part of the site of Sunbury is now owned by Joseph H. Jones, Orlando, Florida.

Sponsorship: A committee has been appointed to place a memorial tablet at Sunbury. The chief members of this committee seem to be Miss Laura Fraser of Flemington, Georgia (Savannah Morning News, June 12, 1936). Also interested in the preservation of suitable commemoration of this area is Mr. E. S. Owen, president of Liberty County Chamber of Commerce, whose address is Allenhurst, Georgia.

Restoration and repairs: The road leading to Sunbury, especially that part of it near the site, should be repaired. As to the site itself, no restoration would be recommended.

Previous treatment: None.

Suggested treatment: Improvement of road; placing of marker designating the site of the town. This can be done and, it seems, is being planned, by a patriotic organization.

Research required: Enough research should be undertaken to make possible the writing of an accurate popular history of Sunbury, its fort (Morris) and its back country (Midway). Some works which should prove helpful in this regard are: General works such as histories of Georgia by McCall, Stevens, and Coulter, and, in addition, the following:

Bartrem, William, Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia . . . (London, 1792).

Capitol of the State of Georgia (Philadelphia, 1839).

Jones, G. C., Jr., The Dead Towns of Georgia, Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, IV, 141-225. (Savannah, 1878).

Kirby, J. Edward, Unitarianism in the South (Boston, 1906).

Fert, Orville A., "The Unitarian in Georgia," Georgia Historical Quarterly, XIII, 343-91 (Dec., 1929).

Savannah Morning News, June 18, 1936, p. 14. Article by Miss Laura Fraser.

Stacy, James, History of the Midway Congregational Church, Liberty County, Georgia (Newnan, Ga., n.d.) (first edition dated 1899; preface second edition dated 1903).

Photographs: See field report on Fort Morris. The scenes there shown are only a few hundred yards from the site of Sunbury and untypical of the view at Sunbury.

Plans of site: A detailed plan of the town of Sunbury is to be found in G. C. Jones, Jr., Dead Towns of Georgia, Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, IV, 141. The plan shows the dimensions of the town as 3430 feet in length from north to south, 2230 feet in breadth on south side and 1880 in breadth on north.

Respectfully submitted:

James S. Holland  
James S. Holland,  
Junior Park Historian.

Approved:

Malston R. Lattimore,  
Acting Superintendent,  
Fort Pulaski National Monument.

**83. Salt Water Property**

100 ACRES, PART OF HISTORIC old town of Sunbury on Medway river: high, level and heavily wooded; the outlook is over St. Catherines Sound, one of the finest on the coast; about 1,000 acres of marsh goes with it. R. L. Cooper, 3-1271.