

Record: 1

Title: Oglethorpe, James Edward.

Source: Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th Edition; 1/1/2009, p1-1, 1p

Document Type: Biography

Abstract: Oglethorpe, James Edward (ō'gəłthôrp), 1696–1785, English general and philanthropist, founder of the American colony of Georgia. He had some military experience before being elected (1722) to the House of Commons, where he held a seat for 32 years. As chairman of a parliamentary committee investigating penal conditions, Oglethorpe became interested in the plight of the debtor classes. The need for a buffer colony between South Carolina and the Spanish in Florida admirably fitted his proposal to establish an asylum for debtors. He and 19 associates were granted (June, 1732) a charter, to expire in 21 years, making them trustees of the colony of Georgia. Early in 1733, Oglethorpe, leading 116 carefully selected colonists, reached Charleston, S.C., and on Feb. 12, 1733, he founded Savannah. After establishing friendly relations with the Yamacraw, a branch of the Creek confederacy, who ceded their land for settlement, he set about perfecting the colony's defense against the Spanish, building forts and instituting a system of military training. On a visit to England (1734–35) Oglethorpe obtained new regulations banning rum and slavery in the colony, which aroused opposition. He returned to Georgia with John Wesley and Charles Wesley. England declared war on Spain in 1739, and Oglethorpe led an unsuccessful expedition against St. Augustine in 1740. However, near Fort Frederica on St. Simons Island, Oglethorpe defeated the Spanish in the battle of Bloody Marsh (June 9, 1742), thereby assuring Georgia's survival. A second unsuccessful assault on St. Augustine (1743) and the displeasure of some of the colonists with his rigid management led to his recall to England. The charges brought against him were dismissed, but he never returned to Georgia. In his later years he was an intimate of the literary circle gathered around Samuel Johnson. [ABSTRACT FROM PUBLISHER]

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Lexile: 1310

Full Text Word Count: 341

Accession Number: 39025410

Database: Primary Search

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[Bibliography](#)

See *Letters from General Oglethorpe*, collected by the Georgia Historical Society (1873); biographies by L. F. Church (1932), A. A. Ettinger (1936, repr. 1968), and J. G. Vaeth (1968); P. Spalding, *Oglethorpe in America* (1984) and, with H. H. Jackson, *Oglethorpe in Perspective* (1989).

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