Shaping the Altamaha: A Spatial History of Saint Simons Island at Two Scales

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When Georgia planter and land speculator Jonathan Bryan visited Fort Frederica on Saint Simons Island in 1753 he found it "all in ruins." The decline of the settlement, which was the "key of the Bahama Straights and Gulf of Florida," and "the means of preserving. . . Carolina and Georgia," nearly moved him to tears. Originally built in 1736, the fort was meant to protect the town of Frederica, one of the southernmost British settlements. It fulfilled this role in 1742 when a collection of Indians, white militia, and British regulars repulsed a Spanish invasion of Georgia. British officials' eyes turned to other threats after the end of hostilities in the late 1740s ending the island's place in the struggle of empires.[1]

By reconstructing two spatial perspectives of this single site, this essay will examine the battle between the British and Spanish empires over jurisdiction in coastal Georgia. That conflict focused on Saint Simons Island and the mouth of the Altamaha River. Each side in this conflict envisioned the island serving divergent plans to command space in the North American Southeast through fortification, trade, and settlement. Each side sought to demonstrate control of the island through acts of occupation. To the British, Saint Simons Island represented a barrier to French and Spanish territorial expansion, a contributor to British mercantilism, a site for a new colony on the North American continent, and a forward base for offensives against the Spanish colony of Florida. The Spanish initially saw Saint Simons Island as a part of their province of Guale that they rightfully possessed through a history of occupation, the blood of Catholic martyrs, and past treaties.

By placing this territory at the center of borderlands confrontations, this spatial history approach promises to reveal fundamental differences between British and Spanish views of the

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[1] Jonathan Bryan, *Journal of a Visit to the Georgia Islands of St. Catharines, Green, Ossabaw, Sapelo, St. Simons, Jekyll, and Cumberland, with Comments on the Florida Islands of Amelia, Talbot, and St. George, in 1753*, ed. Virginia S. Wood and Mary R. Bullard (Mercer University Press, 1996), xi, 1, 24.

land. British agents and officials saw Georgia through the prism of expansion while the Spanish perceived Georgia through their recent contractions. As historian Donna Merwick has demonstrated for the town of Albany, another contested imperial place, such places can be read from multiple imperial perspectives because they were "made and remade as a result of successive, socially constructed interpretation" by those from rival empires. The Dutch and British involved different uses and expectations for the same topography that New Netherlands/New York. This essay will likewise excavate the "layers of time" that imposed different spatial meanings on Saint Simons Island from 1700 to the conclusion of the War of Jenkins's Ear in 1748.[2]

Historians typically view a military presence on a piece of land through one of two scales. At the *jurisdictional* scale empires fought, by diplomacy and war regarding sovereignty over a particular territory. This scale cannot be perceived by the naked eye. It is nuanced. Charters and history were the preferred weapons at this scale. They included Spanish claims of right of discovery due to Hernando de Soto's 1539 expedition and British claims to the Southeast due to previous expeditions such as Sebastian Cabot's in 1496.[3]

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[2] Donna Merwick, *Possessing Albany, 1630-1710: The Dutch and English Experiences,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1; More recent histories of empire have worked to integrate these scales of sovereignty and occupation. D. W. Meining attached historical significance to geography in his work *Southwest*. His major work on historical geography, *The Shaping of America,* argued that the coexistence of different geographic scales of action caused "patterns and problems" that require examination. Merwick's *Possessing Albany* examines ideas like sovereignty and dominion and the control this gave the English and Dutch over New Netherlands/New York as well as the strategic role Albany played in disruption possible French invasion routes. In 2004, Warren Hofstra continued the examination of geography and European perceptions of geography. In *The Planting of New Virginia,* Hofstra catalogued different scales of perception and how the people who claimed to possess the land were intertwined with those in distant locations who had some sort of control over those at the scale of occupation, D. W. Meinig, *Southwest: Three Peoples in Geographical Change, 1600-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), v; D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), xvii; Merwick, *Possessing Albany,* 294-295; Warren R. Hofstra, *The Planting of New Virginia: Settlement and Landscape in the Shenandoah Valley* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 4.

[3] Cabot's expedition's date is taken from "Some Observations on the Right of the Crown of Great Britain to the North-West Continent of America" (Adam Matthew Digital, April 16, 1739), http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_283_001; De Soto's expedition's date comes

At the scale of *occupation*, however, colonists attempted to occupy and develop a territory. This scale is perceivable by the individual as he or she sees a fort overlooking a piece of terrain or troops occupying an area. Georgia founder James Oglethorpe's attempts to create a grid or urban lots at Frederica and build the fortification of Saint Simons at Frederica demonstrated claims by occupation. Frederica's position made it an ideal base from which to interdict Spanish or French movements along the coast and prevent their access inland via the Altamaha River. Both sides struggled over the physical use of the land at the higher-resolution scale of occupation. Forts' status at the intersection of scales allows historians to see examine both scales at once.[4]

Fortifications enabled European powers to occupy and defend their land claims. As Ken MacMillan argues, forts allowed the British to show they were "able to defend [their] subjects and territory from attack and could, if necessary, swiftly prepare for military engagement to

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from Herbert E. Bolton and Mary Ross, *Arredondo's Historical Proof of Spain's Title to Georgia; a Contribution to the History of One of the Spanish Borderlands,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1925), 121.

[4] Previous histories of Frederica and colonial Georgia typically limit themselves to one of the two scales. Verner W. Crane's 1928 work, *The Southern Frontier,* followed Fredrick Jackson Turner's footsteps by shedding a new light on an early American frontier. He presents a regional study of Spain, Britain, and France maneuvering to control roads, waterways, and Indian alliances. John T. Lanning's 1936 work *The Diplomatic History of Georgia,* presents a mostly Spanish view of the conflict over Georgia. Trevor R. Rees' 1963 *Colonial Georgia* examines the diplomatic battles between various powers over Georgia. Trevor R. Reese's *Frederica: Colonial Fort and Town,* written in 1969, serves as the single secondary source completely about Frederica. While Reese writes only seventy-eight pages, he provided readers with an overall knowledge on the fort's history. Larry E. Ivers offers the best study on the occupation scale of Fort Frederica in his 1974 military history *British Drums on the Southern Frontier.* He writes of British colonials building a series of forts on the Georgia coast and the attacks, counterattacks, and raids between the Spanish, British, and allied tribes. Verner W Crane, *The Southern Frontier 1670-1732* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1928); John Tate Lanning, *The Diplomatic History of Georgia: A Study of the Epoch of Jenkins' Ear,* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1936); Trevor Richard Reese, *Colonial Georgia: A Study in British Imperial Policy in the Eighteenth Century,* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1963); Trevor Richard Reese and Fort Frederica Association, *Frederica, Colonial Fort and Town; Its Place in History,* (St. Simons Island, Ga.: Fort Frederica Association, 1969); Larry E. Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier: The Military Colonization of Georgia, 1733-1749* (University of North Carolina Press, 1974).

protect [their] sovereign rights." All the claims of discovery, "coupled with an intention eventually to occupy" could not hold up to somebody else physically holding the ground.[5]

But forts could generate further conflict. In Frederica's case, a fort's construction on Saint Simons Island to affirm claims the British made at the scale of jurisdiction attracted enemy attack. Debates between Whitehall and Madrid culminated with a Spanish attempt to destroy the physical structure of Frederica. Forts' status at the intersection of the two scales of possession allow historians to see what territory empires thought they owned. Empires' attempts to justify why they placed a fort at a particular location also reveals why that empire thought they rightfully owned that territory.

British forts were the genesis of and defenders of permanent settlements, the symbol of British possession claimed during the previous century. Frederica existed in a period of transition from initial European colonization marked by "ceremonies of possession" to a bureaucratic approach to showing possession in the nineteenth-century. Forts reveal that eighteenth-century empires still used many of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century arguments and practices regarding possession. A focus on fortifications also allows historians to examine beliefs about what constituted possession and what constituted sovereignty.[6]

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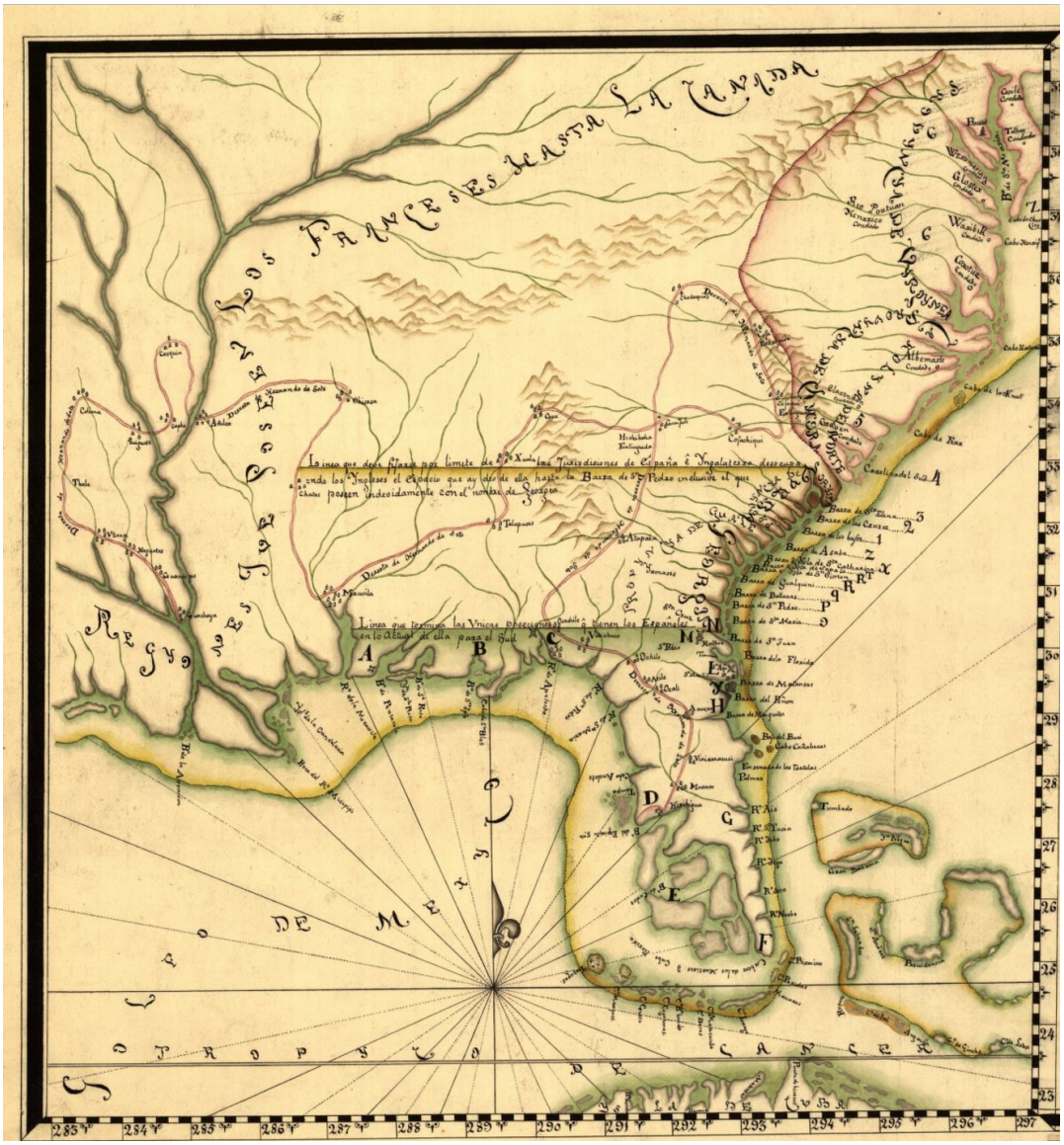
[5] Ken MacMillan, *Sovereignty and Possession in the English New World: The Legal Foundations of Empire, 1576-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 108, 122.

[6] Patricia Seed examines the differing ways that European powers signified taking ownership of the New World in her 1995 work, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640.* Although Seed's timeline ends a century before Georgia's founding, she still provides empires' tradition when settling a new land. MacMillian explores fortifications as agents of control over land. This reveal that this cultural memory still existed during the eighteenth century, even if only in traces. Later in this essay the specific ceremonies that Seed's British colonists conducted will be compared to the path that Frederica's settlers attempted to follow; Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 18, 193; MacMillan, *Sovereignty and Possession,* 121.

Two maps of the American Southeast effectively reveal the differing perceptions of Georgia at the scale of jurisdiction. The first was a 1742 Spanish map that depicted the Spanish Florida border around the Savannah River. The map accompanied a written argument by Antonio de Arredondo, a Spanish engineer in Florida in the 1730s and 1740s, about Spain's right to the Georgia coast. This essay will examine the map to a greater degree later. It provides a visual representation of Spanish perceptions of North America. Arredondo showed Spanish Florida's true border as the yellow line mid map. Georgia's founding, he claimed, illegally put Florida's border at the green line.[7]

[7] Antonio de Arrendondo, *Descripcion Geographica de La Parte Que Los Españoles Poseen Actualmente En El Continente de La Florida Del Del Dominio En Que Estan Los Ingleses Con Legitimo Titulo Solo En Virtud Del Tratado de Pases Del Año de 1670 y de La Jurisdicion Que Indevidamente an Ocupado Despues de d[Ic]Ho Tratado En Que Se Manifiestan Las Tierras Que Usurpan y Se Definen Los Limites Que Deven Prescrivirse Para Una y Otra Nacion En Conformidad Del Derecho de La Corona de España*, 1914, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3860.np000145/.

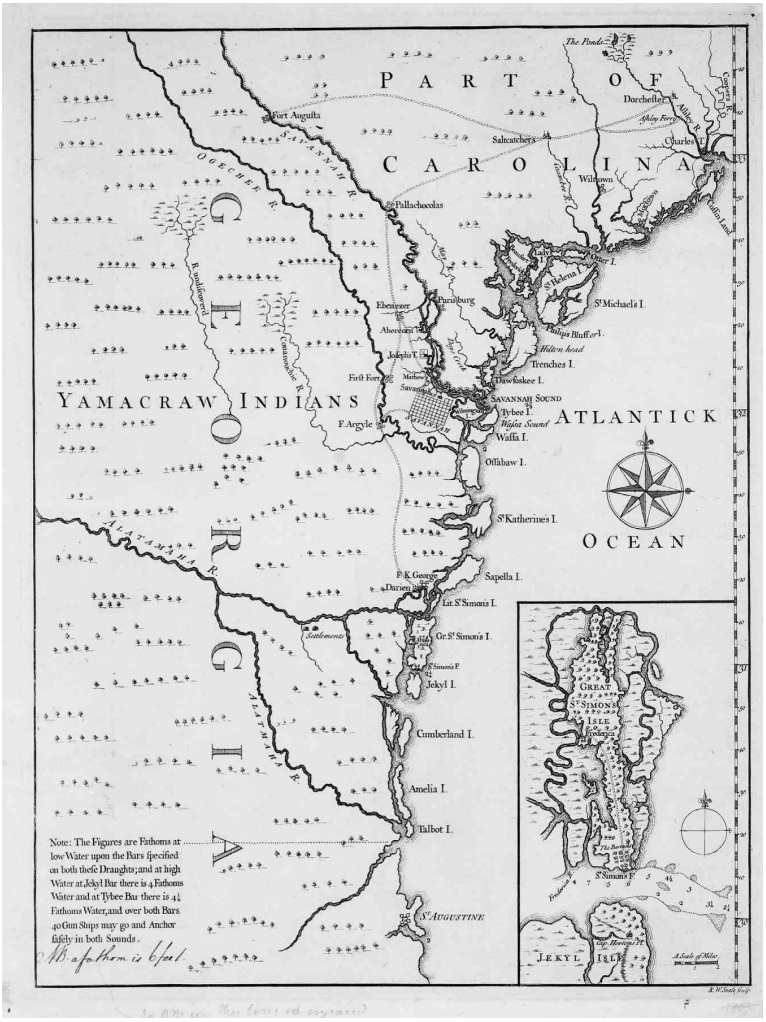


Descripcion geographica de la parte que los españoles poseen actualmente en el continente de la Florida del Del Dominio en que estan los ingleses con legitimo titulo solo en virtud del tratado de pases del año de 1670 y de la jurisdicion que indevidamente an ocupado despues de dicho tratado en que se manifiestan las tierras que usurpan y se definen los limites que deven prescrivirse para una y otra nacion en conformidad del derecho de la Corona de España
Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

In contrast, a 1741 British map depicted Saint Simons on the Georgia coast as well as Georgia's boundaries reaching to Saint Augustine. This map also serves to pinpoint the key landmarks of Frederica's story. The major grid around the middle of the map on the coast depicts

the city of Savannah, the major settlement in Georgia. The Savannah River serves as the boundary between the new colony and South Carolina. The Altamaha River bisects the map's bottom half and is incorrectly shown with northern and southern branches (only the northern branch truly exists). The settlement of Darien exists on the north bank of the northern branch's mouth. Fort King George lies next to Darien. Saint Simons Island (labeled Gr. St. Simons I.) exists south of Darien, with the island shown in more detail on the cutout. Frederica is halfway up the western side of the island. Saint Augustine, the Spanish settlement is Florida, occupies the map's bottom. In contrast to Arredondo's map, this map labels all land from the Savannah River to the (nonexistent) southern branch of the Altamaha as Georgia. This illustrates the British claim to this land.[8]

[8] Seale, "Map of Georgia and Part of Carolina," 1741, http://www.libs.uga.edu/darchive/hargrett/maps/1741s4.jpg.



Map of Georgia and Part of Carolina

Courtesy of Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library / University of Georgia Libraries

Integrating analysis at the scales of jurisdiction and occupation reveals a story of conflicts and international relations and yields new characterizations of imperial decision making beyond the contingencies of warfare. Decisions made at the *jurisdictional* scale affected the instructions given to commanders and civilian planners at the scale of *occupation*. Likewise, the actions at the scale of *occupation* influenced the decisions at the *jurisdictional* scale. Saint Simons's natural attributes made it attractive to British planners when the time came to establish a southern fort, setting off a diplomatic battle. Even if settlers and military officials failed to

successfully mark ownership over land they felt they possessed, they still reinforce their ownership of the land through physical possession. Forts provide historians an opportunity to examine how empires considered land possession since they built these forts in territory that the empire wished to control.

The British Perspective to 1739

The British saw Saint Simons Island as an anchor to their empire. The Board of Trade, a crown committee that provided facts and advice in regard to commerce and colonization, recommended in 1721 that the British "'settle' the boundaries of the mainland colonies, [and] fortify the frontier" to secure British possession of the land. The Board envisioned a "'single' Continent of America, from Nova Scotia to South Carolina." Saint Simons Island existed on the southern flank of this continental perimeter. Britain sought to secure a rapidly expanding territorial empire with points of strategic security that reflected a defensive minded plan.[9]

The use of forts, whether civilian blockhouses or fully-fledged military outposts, followed historical precedent for how the British envisioned land possession. They believed physical improvements on the land demonstrated possession, sometimes through buildings but especially through agricultural improvement. A structure or garden showed that the British intended to remain. They also relied on symbols of property like fences or hedges to show that they were molding the land. A fort, to the British, would not only provide a place for settlers to seek shelter when danger arose but acted as a permanent structure. Forts held a special place beyond a simple physical structure and garden as well. They had practical protection purposes, kept "the natural people of the country in obedience and good order," and showed other

[9] S. Max Edelson, *The New Map of Empire: How Britain Imagined America Before Independence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 22, 32-33.

Europeans that Britain could "secure crown sovereignty." They were symbols of possession with teeth. As early as 1717 Robert Montgomery envisioned an armed agricultural settlement enclosed by a fence, showing the desire to possess land via improvements.[10]

The fight for Saint Simons Island began long before Oglethorpe's settlers landed on the island. British fears that potential French forts on the Altamaha River would encroach on British frontiers inspired Fort King George's construction in 1721 near present day Darien, Ga. British claims that Sebastian Cabot's expedition gave the British the East Coast through right of discovery countered Spanish diplomatic complaints about King George. They also argued that the 1670 Treaty of Madrid guaranteed British possession of Georgia. Ultimately, disease and a fire, not the Spanish, drove Fort King George's Independent company away, leaving merely a two-man lookout post until 1734.[11]

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[10] Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession,* 16-19, 25, 34; MacMillan, *Sovereignty and Possession,* 122, 125, 128; Richard Montgomery, "A New Discourse Concerning the Design'd Establishment of a New Colony to the South of Carolina, in the Most Delightful Country of the Universe, 1717," in *The Most Delightful Country of the Universe: Promotional Literature of the Colony of Georgia 1717 - 1734* (Savannah, Ga.: The Beehive Press, 1972), 5-6, 8-9, 13; "Sir Robert Montgomery's Affidavit" (Adam Matthew Digital, August 23, 1718), http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_383_004.

[11]"Copy of Colonel Bull, President of South Carolina, His Representation to the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations" (Adam Matthew Digital, May 25, 1738), http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_384_012; "Journal, August 1720: Journal Book W | British History Online," accessed January 14, 2017, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/jrnl-trade-plantations/vol4/pp191-204; Reese, *Colonial Georgia*, 13; "Some Observations on the Right of the Crown of Great Britain to the North-West Continent of America;" Larry E. Ivers, *Colonial Forts of South Carolina, 1670-1775*, (Columbia: South Carolina Tricentennial Commission, by the University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 52-55; An Independent Company was a unit of the British Army that was not attached to a specific regiment. In theory, the Captain of this company was directly responsible to the king, although the crown's administrators would issue orders to the company. While the English army under Elizabethan times and during the English Civil War was structured into regiments, in the aftermath of the Stuart's return almost all regiments were disbanded under a general distrust of standing armies. William Alfred Foote, "The American Independent Companies of the British Army, 1664-1764" (University Microfilms, 1966), 6-8; A. M. Brooks, *The Unwritten History of Old St. Augustine: Copied from the Spanish Archives in Seville, Spain*, trans. Annie Averette (St. Augustine: The Record Co, 1909), 169; "Representation of the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations to His Majesty Relating to His Majesty's Right to Fort King George in South Carolina and the Bahama Islands [Copy]" (Adam Matthew Digital, June 20, 1728), http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_383_038. For journaling of the Fort King George's construction see Joseph W. Barnwell, "Fort King George: Journal of Col. John Barnwell (Tuscarora) in the Construction of the Fort on the Altamaha in 1721," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical*

In the 1730s the British asserted their ownership of the territory south of the Savannah River. A group of Trustees received a charter to create a colony named Georgia. James Oglethorpe, a leading Trustee with previous military and parliamentary experience, described their vision for the new colony's role in the British Empire in his 1732 manuscript, "Some Account of the Design of the Trustees for Establishing Colonys in America." Oglethorpe called colonization, rather than conquering, the most appropriate way to expand British territory. Conquest required large armies with associated mobilization and taxes. In contrast, he offered the model that he believed the Romans followed for effective imperial expansion. Roman citizens cultivated and defended newly acquired lands, rather than the state securing them through large military occupations. Georgia would follow a similar method with the poorest of British subjects, who would get a second chance in Georgia by defending the land while producing goods the empire needed. In particular, Georgia silk could replace Italian silk in British markets. Ground would be arable once cleared of timber; swamps would become meadows once drained; and unwanted animals would retreat farther into the interior though these clearing efforts or be killed. The land would meet Anglo settlers' material needs.[12]

Magazine 27, no. 4 (1926), 189-203. He includes notes about Saint Simons Island and his belief the island would be a better site for a permanent fort.

[12] Oglethorpe previously served as an infantry officer, aide-de camp, Oxford student, and member of Parliament, Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier*, 16; As British dates become more specific from this point on in this essay I must leave a note regarding the difference between the Julian and Gregorian date. During this time period the Spanish government had switched to the Gregorian Calendar, which we still use today. The British remained on the Julian Calendar. Under this system British recorded dates eleven days behind what the Spanish would report and the Julian new year began on March 25. Thus, what the Spanish and we would record as February 12, 1734 the British would record as February 1, 1733/1734. When dates are reported in conjunction with English sources the assumption is that the date is Julian. When dates are reported in conjunction with Spanish sources the assumption is that the date is Gregorian. For simplicity sake, I will count a new year beginning in either case on January 1. Thus, I will record 1734 rather than 1733/1734, "Converting between Julian and Gregorian Calendar in One Step," accessed January 30, 2017, http://www.stevemorse.org/jcal/julian.html; Reese, *Colonial Georgia*, 8; James Oglethorpe, *Some Account of the Design of the Trustees for Establishing Colonys in America*, ed. Rodney M Baine and Phinizy Spalding (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1990), xxv, xxix, 8-9, 12-13, 20-21, 45. Although originally a manuscript, I italicized the title because it is currently published as a book with an editor's commentary.

Oglethorpe's physical description of Georgia revealed specific British perceptions of Saint Simons and the Altamaha River. He described the mouth of the Altamaha as "a Day's sail to the Southward of the mouths of the Savannah." The island lay close to the colony's major town, which could offer relief in the event of attack. He described the colony "in the same Latitude with Schiras in Persia and Jerusalem in Palestine" with hot summers cooled by "North West winds and running Streams" and winters "short and the Frosts though not severe are sufficient to kill the Insects and purify the air." Additionally, the Georgia islands created "Channels between the Islands and the Continent . . . safe from all Weather." Given the lack of roadways in Georgia, the British relied on water travel. Additionally, he claimed that all maps of the Georgia coast were incorrect but the Trustees had legitimate testimony about the colony's physical characteristics. They could therefore make informed decisions regarding the placement of settlements and boundaries. The Trustees thereby asserted their version of cartographic facts. Saint Simons lay at the perfect intersection of good climate for agriculture and safe water passages, necessary elements for a permanent settlement.[13]

Oglethorpe's depicted the Altamaha River and the greater colony as frontiers of empire in need of defenses. He cited the 1715 Yamasee War and claimed it "destroyed all the English unfortified Houses to within 5 Miles of Charles Town." Even after peace, "the terror of the Massacre remains so strongly imprinted upon the people of South Carolina that they dare not attempt in single Familys to settle beyond the River . . .of Port Royal." Oglethorpe believed that a series of fortified towns along the Altamaha would shield South Carolina from Indian raids. He called the South Carolinians foolish to allow the settlement of dispersed plantations. They relied on Indian goodwill while souring Indian attitudes by extorting tribes and violating Indian wives.

[13] Oglethorpe, *Some Account,* 18-19.

Oglethorpe observed that, while Indians destroyed dispersed plantations, the colony's fortified settlements safely rode out the Yamasee War. A physical act, building forts, was necessary to protect the settlers whose presence enforced British claims of jurisdiction. Physical defense was the most practical and obvious reason for Georgia as a boundary. In addition to a military barrier, Oglethorpe's desire to place Anglo settlers South of the Savannah River reflected the British belief that presence meant ownership.[14]

Fears of rival European ownership of the Altamaha intensified between Georgia's 1733 establishment and Frederica's 1736 settlement. Samuel Eveleigh, a South Carolina entrepreneur interested in investing in Georgia, wrote to James Oglethorpe in August 1734 to express fears of Spanish or French use of Saint Simons and the Altamaha. Friendly Indians reported four Spaniards and seven Indians on the island "in search of settlements." Eveleigh worried that once the Spanish or French built a fort on the island (or somewhere that controlled the Altamaha's mouth) they would soon build another fort farther inland. Eveleigh recommended that Oglethorpe build a fort at the mouth of the Altamaha to establish British sovereignty claims with actual occupation. Eveleigh pushed further in November, arguing that a fort to thwart the expansion of Britain's rivals should be built on the south side of the Altamaha.[15]

In the words of the historian Laura Benton, empires exercised control along "narrow bands, or corridors, and over enclaves and irregular zones around them" rather than the entirety of the "vast stretches of territory" they claimed. In addition to river's navigability, rivers also allowed larger cargo shipments than overland means. Because rivers provided the primary

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[14] Oglethorpe, *Some Account,* 22-23.

[15] Julie Anne Sweet, "'An Encourager of Industry:' Samuel Eveleigh and His Influence in the Southeastern Indian Trade," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 112, no. 1/2 (2011): 5; Coleman, *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia,* vol. 20*,* 66, 101.

highway to the New World's interior, early signs possession often were created in estuaries and "announced the intention to extend dominion inland." Frederica exhibited all of these uses. Saint Simons's location along the coast and harbor made it a logical stop for ships traveling along the north/south sea corridor. Its position at the Altamaha's mouth also served to control traffic into the interior and signify British intent to extend dominion inland.[16]

Frederica's initial settlers followed the British practice of physical improvements to the land, exhibiting an optimistic outlook for the fort and town. Oglethorpe and his party made landfall in early February 1736. Adding to the good omen for the town, Creek Indians granted the British Saint Simons, providing further legitimacy in British eyes that it belonged to the empire in law as well as by *occupation*. Oglethorpe's report to the Earl of Egmont described the practice of granting plots of land within the Frederica town site and garden lots outside. The network of dedicated land for development and gardening reflecting the social vision for development Oglethorpe first attempted in Savannah. Fredericans noted the fields and forests' ability to support cattle or timber for public service, thereby using the land to support the settlement. Francis Moore (one of Oglethorpe's officials) described the island's flora, including grapes useful for wine production. He catalogued the island's animals as either to feed settlers or as menaces which would prey upon their livestock.[17]

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[16] Laura Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2, 57-58.

[17] Allen Daniel Candler et al., *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia.*, vol. 3 (Atlanta, Ga: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Society, 1904), 387; John Perceval and Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia in America, *The Journal of the Earl of Egmont: Abstract of the Trustees Proceedings for Establishing the Colony of Georgia, 1732-1738*, ed. Robert G McPherson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962), 146-147; Francis Moore, *A Voyage to Georgia. Begun in the Year 1735. Containing, an Account of the Settling the Town of Frederica, in the Southern Part of the Province; and a Description of the Soil, Air, Birds, Beasts, Trees, Rivers, Islands, &c. With the Rules and Orders Made by the Honourable the Trustees for That Settlement; Including the Allowances of Provisions, Cloathing, and Other Necessaries to the Families and Servants Which Went Thither. Also A Description of the Town and County of Savannah, in the Northern Part of the Province; the Manner of Dividing and Granting the Lands, and the Improvements There: With an Account of the Air, Soil, Rivers, and Islands in That Part. By Francis Moore, Author of Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa.* (London, 1744), 54-56.

The fortifications protected the town by halting enemy movement. Moore described Fort Frederica's location during its construction. Due to the town and fort's river bend location, the fort's cannons covered the north and south water avenues of approach. Likewise, he judged the distance to the mainland to be at least three miles of marshland (flooded at hightide). This presented a good defense against an attack by infantry from the mainland and shipborne attacks via the waterway. The fort, once completed, consisted of four bastions as well as a spur-work for further river coverage. A road connected the nearby Scottish settlement at Darien with Savannah, opening the town to communication with the rest of the empire. South Carolinians and Georgians believed that it was better to meet Spanish aggression on the Altamaha than in Charles Town.[18]

The arrival of professional military forces strengthened the island's defense, although they weakened his humanitarian plans. An independent company began to arrive in May. Oglethorpe placed them at a point he believed best covered the entrance into the harbor at Saint Simons's southern end (called Jekyll Sound). Oglethorpe's men dug a well and constructed a battery on the site. Jekyll Sound was the best place to meet an attacking force. Because any ships that sought to reach Fort Frederica first needed to pass through Jekyll Sound, the Independent Company could fall back from the southern fort to Frederica and man its defenses if enemy ships passed the Southern battery. This created an integrated defensive system on the island, capable of commanding river access and providing progressive defensive positions in the event of a forced withdrawal. The placement of defenses revealed that Oglethorpe expected serious threat to come via the sea. The Highlander settlers in nearby Darien could be mobilized to counter any overland threats.[19]

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[18] Moore, *A Voyage to Georgia*, 34, 53-54, 77; Candler, *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, vol. 3, 388.

[19] Moore, *A Journey to Georgia,* 79; Candler, *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, vol. 3, 388.

Oglethorpe's meetings and conferences with Spanish officials in 1736 reinforced his belief that Fort Frederica was a barrier to Spanish movement and signified British sovereignty. As if demonstrating the legality of Britain's action and the peacefulness of its intentions, Oglethorpe sent a message of friendship to the governor of Saint Augustine, at least attempting to create the perception of friendly coexistence between the two empires soon after Frederica's founding. In June 1736 Don Carlos Dempsey and other Spanish Commissaries met Oglethorpe on Jekyll Island. From the moment the Spanish arrived on June 18, Oglethorpe worked to convey the idea that Saint Simons Island was a place of British strength. He strategically placed mounted men and Scottish settlers to make the Spaniards watching from the sea overestimate his manpower. Likewise, he ordered his Independent Company to time their guns when saluting the Spanish ship so as to make it appear there were more guns firing than in fact existed. The theatrics continued the next day when the Spanish officers joined the British for dinner onboard a British sloop. The Independent Company in full dress lined one side of the ship and the Highlanders with broadswords and kilts lined the other. Oglethorpe sought to create the false impression that this island was manned not only by professional British soldiers but martially inclined settlers, complete with intimidating Celtic dress. Ultimately, Oglethorpe and the Governor of Saint Augustine finalized a treaty over the following months that, besides mandating the destruction of another British fort at the mouth of the Saint John's River close to Saint Augustine, affirmed the status quo. This treaty showed that actions at the scale of occupation influenced conception of the territory at the scale of jurisdiction. Frederica's

placement caused a Spanish response. This response reignited discussion between the British and Spanish as to where the border between the two empires in the South existed.[20]

British governmental responses to Spanish protests about Fort Frederica revealed London's belief that the British/Florida border lay south of Saint Simons Island. South Carolina's Governor Bull argued for British rights to the Georgia coast in 1738. Governor Bull argued that the Spanish could not claim sovereignty over Saint Simons Island because they had never physically held the Altamaha River. The Spanish never settled in this region and could not claim dominion over the local tribes. British Fort King George, the short-lived fort at the river's mouth, marked the one time a European power had established a presence on the river, further bolstering British claims. A garrison was supposed to rebuild and man the fort after the fire, not abandon it. Bull claimed that Parliament confirmed in 1729 that 29° latitude (located about halfway down the Florida coast according to a 1733 map) defined the correct southern boundary of Carolina. A 1739 British report reinforced British claims to the southeast though the right of discovery and treaty. The report's authors cited the 1670 Madrid treaty which stated that the British legally owned the territory they current held. The British claimed that this treaty represented "a bar to the Rights of the Crown of Spain, and a Confirmation of the Rights of the Crown of Great Britain," meaning that it solidified British jurisdiction over the southeast which Cabot's expedition granted via right of discovery, "the first and fundamental Right of all

[20] "Copies of Letters from Mr. Oglethorpe to the Governor of St. Augustine of the 15th of February 1735 and 10th of April 1736" (Adam Matthew Digital, February 15, 1735), http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_654_Part1_012; Moore, *A Journey to Georgia,* 103-104; "Treaty between Mr. Oglethorpe and the Governor of St. Augustine" (Adam Matthew Digital, October 18, 1736), http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_654_Part1_023.

European Nations." British apologists argued that Fort Frederica lay well within British territory, rather than encroach into Spanish Florida.[21]

A 1738 map of the island presents a spatial representation of British ownership of the island. Frederica's location on the river's southern turn reveals two points where any attacking ships had to make two ninety degree turns in front of the fort's guns. Outside the fort, the garden plots surrounded the town and the forty-five to fifty acre farms lots to the north of the town. Icons of individual houses dot the island as well, revealing projected settlements and plantations. British settlers believed agricultural development fulfilled God's command to man to be fruitful and multiply. Houses demonstrated the intent to remain on the island. Even the southern end of the island, a military space and the home of the majority of soldiers stationed at Frederica, represented a place of improvement. Buildings and lots for cultivation by the several companies of the Forty-Second stationed near Fort Saint Simons, the fort on the southern end, are marked. The cartographer envisioned Oglethorpe's regular army soldiers assisting in the cultivation that would mark British ownership as well as provide provisions for the fort.[22]

Bad crops and imminent war weakened British signs of ownership of Frederica. A 1738 drought and fear of renewed Spanish attacks kept Fredericans from cultivating their fields and gardens. The storehouse, not produce raised on-site, fed the town. The resultant drain on

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[21] "Copy of Colonel Bull, President of South Carolina, His Representation to the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations;" Henry Popple, "A Map of the British Empire in America with the French and Spanish Settlements Adjacent Thereto. by Henry Popple. C. Lempriere Inv. & Del. B Baron Sculp. To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty This Map Is Most Humbly Inscribed by Your Majesty's Most Dutiful, Most Obedient, and Most Humble Servant Henry Popple. London Engrav'd by Willm. Henry Toms & R.W. Seale, 1733.," 1733, http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps1901.html; "Some Observations on the Right of the Crown of Great Britain to the North-West Continent of America."

[22] John Thomas, *Map of Saint Simons and Jekyll Islands with Fortifications*, 1738, The Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, http://www.leventhalmap.org/id/n51585; Reese, *Frederica,* 21, Inside back cover; "An Impartial Inquiry into the State and Utility of the Province of Georgia. London: 1741," in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society.*, vol. 1, 1840, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.31951002299856x; Speer, *Ceremonies of Possession,* 18, 34.

resources required that Oglethorpe ask for more resources from Parliament to prop up the venture. Even the silk production came up short due to infections among the silkworms.[23]

The British government agreed to raise the Forty-Second Regiment of Foot for Georgia's defense. Oglethorpe returned to Saint Simons with this unit in September 1738. Its arrival brought hope that Frederica's settlers could continue their lives unmolested, creating their agricultural society. Oglethorpe claimed that, while the militia greatly assisted in keeping the Spanish at bay, Georgia freeholders would no longer be forced to serve on military duty in response to Spanish alarms. Fort Frederica served as the rallying point for the professional military force to protect the king's subjects. While Georgian frontier settlers could take heart in the soldiers' arrival, they faced the reality that their planting ventures hardly exhibited a success and one regiment could be easily overwhelmed.[24]

British public opinion about Frederica involved both the scales of jurisdiction and occupation. A 1737 issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine* reiterated Cabot's discovery, Charles II's decree setting Carolina's boundary, and the 1670 Madrid treaty as official British responses to Spanish claims to Georgia. The article also brought up Sir Francis Drake's dislodgement of the Spanish from Saint Augustine during Elizabeth's rule. Outside of Whitehall, readers of such wide-circulating claims envisioned the dimensions of British America based on these claims.[25]

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[23] Mills Lane and James Oglethorpe, *General Oglethorpe's Georgia: Colonial Letters, 1733-1743*, vol. 2 (Savannah, Ga.: The Beehive Press, 1975), 354; Allen Daniel Candler et al., *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia.*, vol. 5 (Atlanta, Ga: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Society, 1904), 58, 68, 209; For instances in which Fredericans' discontent manifested itself as hostility towards town officials read Mills Lane and James Oglethorpe, *General Oglethorpe's Georgia: Colonial Letters, 1733-1743*, vol. 1, (Savannah, Ga: The Beehive Press, 1975), 302-303, 309.

[24] "Copy of Colonel Bull, May 25, 1738;" Lane, *General Oglethorpe's Georgia,* vol 2., 346, 360-361; Ivers, *British Drums,* 79.

[25] "Great Britain's Right to Georgia Further Asserted," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1737.

The article's language also reveals that the reading public perceived territory through scales of jurisdiction or occupation. While the author acknowledged that the Spanish "resettled themselves at Saint Augustine," the British retained their rights to the coast, received submission from local Indians, and "peopled" the province of Carolina. The number of settlers strengthened the claim to territory under this argument, because populating a single Spanish city presented a smaller population than filling an entire region with colonists. The Fort King George garrison exemplified British physical possession of the coastline as well. The author claimed that France and Spain saw the "many improvements there made, and the harbours now discovered" and became "covetous." As Georgia continued to be improved, "the stronger the [Spanish] desire will be of getting [Georgia and Carolina]." Georgia settlers did the hard work to make Georgia livable, but the Spanish and French wished to steal the fruits of their labor. The British showed that they possessed the land, a stronger case than mere arguments of ownership, and they would defend this possession against another power.[26]

The British goals for Saint Simons Island remained roughly the same between the 1710s and the War of Jenkins's Ear eve. They viewed the island as important because it controlled both the routes from south to north along the seaboard and the gateway to the continent's interior that the Altamaha provided. Georgians settled and planned Saint Simons Island following the British practice of using improvements like agriculture and physical structures to signify ownership. The fort and settlement itself also followed the British belief that occupation had to happen to possess the land. The British exercised their major strength in the clash of empires, the ability to plant their countrymen on a contested territory. However, major differences existed between the island's realities and the various theories offered by planners. Crop and silkworm failures

[26] "Great Britain's Right to Georgia Further Asserted."

prevented settlers from contributing to the British economy and continued draining Trustee's coffers. Acting as an agent of empire was the one area where Frederica greatly fulfilled its envisioned purpose. Frederica had placed a sizeable British presence near Spanish Florida's capital. The fort conveyed a sense of power to the Spanish during Oglethorpe's 1736 meeting, to the extent that the Spanish tried diplomatic means at the scale of jurisdiction, rather than military at the scale of occupation, to remove a British presence they considered trespassing. Unfortunately for the British, while they demonstrated power close to the Spanish Florida homeland, agriculture failures made Frederica a shell of itself as British possession beliefs would define. The British did not separate visualization of the coast at the scales of jurisdiction or occupation. Arguments about British rightful ownership occurred at both scales side by side. Georgia belonged to the empire because of discovery and because British settlers improved the land in the colony.

Spanish Perspectives to 1739

The British empire's Spanish rivals had a more religious view of settlement and ownership. Traditionally they relied on the requirement, a scripted speech to make native people acknowledge Christianity's superiority and become Spanish subjects. The multitude of Indian nations encountered and lack of Spaniards to physically occupy the land meant that the Spanish empire was, in the words of historian Kenneth Adrian, "ethnically, culturally, and geographically diverse, yet constituted a defined political, economic, and religious space." The Spanish jurisdictional claim over the coast descended from Pope Alexander IV's 1493 Papal Bull *Inter caetera* and the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas with Portugal divided the yet non-European colonized world into Spanish and Portuguese territories. The Floridian government hoped to make "Indians into Hispanics though the agency of the Franciscan missions" which would "control . . . the

interior and its natives more cheaply and securely than could soldiers." This approach made Florida a possession claimed by religion and allied Indians, not permanent European structures. By the 1730s the Spanish accepted that they could never enforce the Papal Bull but sought to hold what territory they still occupied, however thinly. The Spanish view of Georgia and Saint Simons Island reveal the remnants of their beliefs about possession. They possessed land because of Catholic hierarchy dictations, acts in defense of the faith, and the more modern belief that governmental organizations and actions like treaties led to legitimate possession. All combined to make Spain's claims to Georgia legitimate.[27]

The Spanish viewed the southeastern coast as strategically and religiously important for decades, and the Spanish would push back when they felt that the Catholic faith was threatened. French Huguenots, acting in the name of their king (although Spanish historians claimed he was ignorant of their designs), established a colony at the mouth of the Saint Johns River in 1564. The Spanish crown ordered an expedition against these Calvinists in order to defend the Catholic faith and Spanish lands. The attacking Spanish killed all but women and children fifteen and younger. The Spanish recognized the general threat other nations posed to Guale (the Georgia Coast) and the coast's strategic importance in the 1560s. Pedro Menendez, Florida's governor, feared English and French settlement after English vessels anchored off of the coast and made contact with local fishermen. Even at this early stage, the Spanish perceived this coast in strategic terms, and a space from which water routes between Central and South America and the Atlantic could be controlled. In addition to territorial control over the Guale and Florida coast,

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[27] Speer, *Ceremonies of Possession,* 68, 70, 71, 87, 95, 180, 184, 187, Speer believes was a result of expansionist Islam's historical influence in Spain; Kenneth J. Andrien, "The Spanish Atlantic System," in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Green and Philip D. Morgan (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2009), 54; MacMillan, *Sovereignty and Possession,* 66-67; Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 78.

Menendez feared shifting Indian allegiances due to English and French settlements. Land occupation meant access to native groups, an important element for a culture built on exercising dominion over people. King Phillip II appeared to share Menendez's concern. He wrote that he too heard of English and French preparations to settle on the Florida coast. Phillip authorized Menendez to defend Florida and destroy any English or French forts established on Spanish territory.[28]

Saint Simons Island anchored the Spanish colonial system in Florida, which had contracted the previous decades in the face of Carolinian expansion. Prior to an active British threat from Carolina, the Spanish design for Florida included cooperation with local Indians. Spanish friars converted the Indians on the Guale coast, creating Christian Indian villages and missions that served as buffers against invasion and a food source for the colony. South Carolinian attacks in 1680 and 1702-1704 destroyed Spanish settlements and missions along the Guale coast, leading to their abandonment in 1706 as allied Indians and priests took refuge in Saint Augustine. The destruction of these missions and friendly Indian villages ended Spanish ability to claim the Georgia coast through the right of occupation in British eyes. Spanish memory still envisioned future control over the land because they had exercised spiritual leadership over the region. They could also point to the papal permission to settle from the late fifteenth century.[29]

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[28] Bolton, *Arredondo's Historical Proof,* 124, 128-132; Brooks, *The Unwritten History of Old St. Augustine*, 6, 10.

[29] Amy T. Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana: Spain's Support System for the Presidio and Mission Provinces of Florida* (American Museum of Natural History, 1993), 190, 192, 194, 208, 211; Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 24; Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession,* 97.

Saint Simons Island would either serve as yet another step the British took towards Saint Augustine or the beginning of Spain pushing the Florida border northward again. Spanish actions at the scale of occupation showed a lack of ability to own the island in the face of British expansion. Efforts to maintain the island through native conversion and diplomacy came up short.

Franciscans kept missions along the Golden Isles in the late sixteenth century. As the Spanish wove religion into their marks of possession much more than the British, these efforts to place and keep missions on the coast signified Spanish beliefs that they had successfully marked their ownership of the land. A series of indecisive battles with local Indians showed that Spanish physical hold on this land through the church was not as strong as they hoped. An Indian revolt (called the Juanillo Revolt) in 1597 led to the murder of Father Velascola (the monk who resided at the mission either near or on Saint Simons Island) and the general destruction of the coastal missions. Missionaries pushed back into this region in 1603. In 1680 a series of Indian wars with the English-allied Yamasees and Creeks began to reduce the Spanish mission presence in Guale. This culminated in a 1702 general uprising which led to the end of Spain's presence and ultimate withdrawal to the vicinity of St. Augustine on the Atlantic Coast. While the physical structure was more important to the British because it signified a permanent presence, the history of planting a mission, even after such settlements were disbanded, signified enduring religious influence over populations in the area to the Spanish. Guale was intertwined with the memory of Catholic missionaries' sacrifices as well as the strategic implications of its location.[30]

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[30] John Tate Lanning, *The Spanish Missions of Georgia*, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1935), 71-72, 89, 128, 215, 226, 228.

Spanish reactions to Fort King George represented the first attempts to counter British expansions south of the Savannah River. According to the Spanish, the fort's site belonged to Spain and allied Indian groups, both of whom previously settled the area. Even if Spanish missionaries or friendly Indians no longer occupied this land, their previous presence there made it Spanish territory. The Florida governor Antonio Benavidos worried that Fort King George was the genesis of an attempt dismantle and reduce Guale, island by island. He too saw the islands along this coast as the obvious means to defend South Carolina's southern border, describing the Carolinas as impregnable if British emplaced forts. He also revealed the Spanish perception of the Altamaha as a gateway to Indian country when he commented that British presence on the coast would rearm hostile Indians. Perhaps showing foresight of what would in fact take place two decades in the future, Benavidos expected imminent strikes against Saint Augustine once the British consolidated their settlement on Saint Simons. Additionally, the governor's concern about the Bahama Channel revealed Spanish perceptions about ultimate British strategic aims. He believed that the British meant to invade Saint Augustine "to capture this Fort for the protection of the New England, and the great use they could make of it in capturing your Majesty's vessels coming through the Bahama Channel."[31]

The Spanish diplomatic response to Frederica's settlement revealed the Spanish belief that Fort King George's abandonment meant the Spanish successfully defended their right to the land. Don Tomas Geraldino presented Spain's protest about Frederica to the British government. According to Geraldino, Fort King George's destruction occurred due to mutual agreement between the British and Spanish kings. The Georgia Trustees countered that the Independent Company disobeyed orders when they abandoned Fort King George. Each side recognized only

[31] Brooks, *Unwritten History of Old St. Augustine,* 168-170.

their own signs of possession. The Spanish emphasized their spiritual dominion over the islands, making them part of the Catholic communion. The British believed that Fort King George represented British possession of the mouth of the Altamaha. Even if only a two-man lookout remained and many of the original structures burned, signs of permanent British settlement remained on the land.[32]

The Spanish considered Frederica as a beacon to attract Native tribes or a British rallying point to send Indians to harass Spaniards. In early fall 1736, the Spanish sent a letter to the Duke of Newcastle and claimed that Georgians had decapitated a Spanish soldier near Saint Augustine. A Spanish spy reported in 1738 that the British at Frederica paid Indians fifty dollars for every black or white Spanish scalp or Spanish-allied Indian scalp, making the proximity of the new fort a physical threat as well.[33]

A Spanish agent, Juan Ygnacio, posed as a British allied Indian and gained an audience with Lieutenant Colonel Cochran, Frederica's commander while Oglethorpe was away in England. Cochran boasted that Oglethorpe would soon return with a force of seven thousand men to blockade and invade Florida. This exaggeration was meant to impress Cochran's guest. However, once word reached Saint Augustine the Spanish could not help but see an imminent invasion. The agent spotted military men drilling, strengthening his report. At the same time, Ygnacio described Fort Frederica in a bad condition. An imminent British invasion and weak British fortifications made the island a tempting target.[34]

The Fate of Fort Frederica During the War of Jenkins's Ear

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[32] "Memorial of the Trustees for Georgia to Her Majesty [Copy]" (Adam Matthew Digital, October 20, 1736), http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_654_Part1_027.

[33] "Memorial of the Trustees for Georgia to Her Majesty;" Brooks, *Unwritten History of Old St. Augustine,* 179.

[34] Brooks, *Unwritten History of Old St. Augustine,* 178-179.

A struggle over commercial access to the New World caused armed conflict in 1739. The war became known as The War of Jenkin's Ear after a Spanish coast guard officer severed a British navy master's ear during the years leading to war. For the Spanish, Saint Simons Island became an ever-greater threat with the outbreak of official hostilities. The war afforded them the opportunity to destroy their enemy's symbols of possession. The destruction of Saint Simons Island would not only remove a threat to the Spanish. It would also allow the Spanish to deny the British the ability to create proof of occupation. On the British side, their defense of Saint Simons Island would serve two purposes. First, the island's defense would show that Georgia fulfilled its buffer colony role. Second, the British would show that they could defend their permanent settlements, the traditional British symbol of possession. The war also revealed Spanish attempts to rely on a bureaucratic organization to demonstrate possession of the island. Before Spanish forces attempted to use for at the scale of occupation, Arredondo used diplomatic arguments at the scale of jurisdiction to claim Spain's rightful possession of Georgia.[35]

British offensive actions convinced the Spanish that Frederica was a threat that could not be allowed to exist. An unsuccessful Georgia-Carolina campaign against Saint Augustine in May 1740 used Frederica as a forward operating base, a fairly secure piece of land that amassed forces prior to a military movement and served as a logistics hub once operations began. Florida Governor Don Manuel de Montiano believed that the British occupied the best natural harbors, including Saint Simons, along the Southeastern coast and recommended the Spanish seize these key pieces of terrain. Cuba Governor Juan Francisco de Guemes y Horcasitas ordered Montiano to take Saint Simons first and then destroy all signs of British occupation up to Port Royal, on

[35] Alan Gallay, ed., "Anglo-Spanish War (1739-1744)," *Colonial Wars of North America, 1512-1763: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland, 1996).

the Carolina side of the Savannah River. The Spanish sought to strike fast before the British could rally their advantage of numbers to counter the Spanish assault.[36]

Oglethorpe did not sit idly by waiting for a Spanish attack. Fort Frederica's renovations during Jenkins's Ear reveal a practical means to defeat a Spanish invasion and a strengthening of British symbols of ownership. Oglethorpe worked to enclose the entire town with earthworks. New Tabby walls strengthened and widened the fort's earthen parapet. Fredericans also added Tabby structures within the fort. These included a large building that archeologists named the King's Magazine. This structure contained the only gate to the fort. This gate faced the river, a wise decision since any heavy materials bound for the fort would arrive by water. Additionally, a water facing gate allowed the fort to be reinforced even if the town fell. Fort Frederica's improvements demonstrated that the British intended to stay on the site and have a secure location from which to expand. Although these improvements to the fort assisted defense, they harmed the town's ability to conduct agriculture and maintain permanent civilian structures. Building the defenses took laborers from their farming duties. Additionally, the ability to make fast cash from soldiers stationed at the fort proved more tempting that working the land for sustenance. Accounts from Frederica during this time complain that settlers no longer worked their lots and instead gained income through trading with soldiers. [37]

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[36] "Duke of Newcastle to General Oglethorpe;" South Carolina, *The St. Augustine Expedition of 1740; a Report to the South Carolina General Assembly.* (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Dept., 1954), xi-xii, 45; Georgia Historical Society, *The 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.* (Savannah: Savannah Morning News, 1913) 16, 21, 30, 33.

[37] Albert Manucy, *The Fort at Frederica*, The Department of Anthropology Notes in Anthropology (Tallahassee: The Florida State University, 1962), 15-16, 28, 72; Lane, *General Oglethorpe's Georgia vol. 2,* 500-502, 573-574.

In March 1742, Antonio de Arredondo, the Spanish military engineer, wrote a summary of Spanish claims to Georgia at the request of Havana's Captain-General Guemes y Horcasitas. Later the chief of staff in Spain's 1742 Georgia invasion, Arredondo previously delivered protests to Oglethorpe regarding British settlements. His main arguments about Spanish rights revolved around conquest and treaties. He wrote that Ponce de Leon's 1512 expedition gave Spain the right of discovery to Florida and Hernando de Soto's 1539 – 1540 expedition expanded the territory as far north as 35° 40'. He marked 36°30' as the northern Spanish boundary due to further Spanish exploration. South Carolina's 33° border within Spanish territory was originally due to usurpation, not honorable negotiations. By telling the story of the extermination of the French Huguenots, he took the opportunity to claim that the Huguenots not only represented a threat to the king but also Catholicism itself, adding a defense of the faith as a sign of possession. According to Arredondo, the 1670 Madrid treaty between Carlos II and Charles II set British and Spanish borders. Article Seven allowed both nations to retain the territory they currently occupied. This meant to Arredondo that the British could claim South Carolina but could not claim anything south of that colony's border, in contrast to the previously mentioned British reported that stated Article Seven did not represent a concession from Charles.[38]

Arredondo created a map of North America's Southeast to visually represent his argument in favor of Spanish rights to Georgia. The map traced de Soto's route and showed that it reached well into British North Carolina. By this representation, Spain's true claims in southeast North America far exceed what Arredondo claimed on his king's behalf. From the Spanish perspective, this made the Spanish conciliatorily and moderate in nature because they did not demand every piece of land they had the right to. The British borders hugged the East

[38] Bolton, *Arredondo's Historical Proof,* vi, 117, 135, 146, 150-151, 172-173, 175-176, 182.

coast, with the Ohio and Mississippi valleys under the French dominion. Arredondo marked what he believed the legal boundary for Florida, around the 33° latitude.[39]

Arredondo's map also revealed Spanish fear of territorial loss in the face of British expansion. The Spanish twice had retreated from land over which they believed they could legitimately claim sovereignty. Although Arredondo depicted de Soto's expedition northern limit around the 36° latitude, Spanish territory had been withdrawn to the South Carolina border around the 33° latitude. His depiction of the present green line at Florida showed the large amount of the coast they had allowed the British to settle on. Arredondo called that border illegal. Every time Spanish territory shrank the British came closer to Saint Augustine, making Georgia an ever-increasing threat to the Spanish. If they did not push back against the British at this point, the British had little to go before they were settling at the outskirts of Saint Augustine. Oglethorpe's expedition against Saint Augustine from an island only a few miles up the coast showed that that day might have already arrived.

Montiano's actions during his invasion of Saint Simons revealed that he meant to remove British signs of possession in addition to militarily defeating the British. The Spanish landed on Saint Simons on July 16. The British forces defeated the invaders in two battles on the 18th. The Spanish retreated to Fort Saint Simons and withdrew several days later. Montiano's men destroyed the forts and batteries on the island's south side and withdrew the salvageable arms for their own use. They burned the reachable houses and fields and reported that "not a sign or

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[39] Antionio De Arredondo, and José Luis Gómes. *[Descripcion geographica de la parte que los españoles poseen actualmente en el continente de la Florida del Del Dominio en que estan los ingleses con legitimo titulo solo en virtud del tratado de pases del año de 1670 y de la jurisdicion que indevidamente an ocupado despues de dicho tratado en que se manifiestan las tierras que usurpan y se definen los limites que deven prescrivirse para una y otra nacion en conformidad del derecho de la Corona de España]*. 1914. Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/99446165/. (Accessed February 04, 2017.)

vestige remained, to show that the place had ever been settled." Such destruction removed the ultimate British sign of possession, permanent structures and agricultural lots. Spain's lack of manpower, based on decisions made about how to occupy the new world centuries prior, meant that it could not occupy remote islands like the British did. Their only choice was the British structures' destruction, not repurpose.[40]

Following the repulsion of the Spanish invasion, the island lost military value in British eyes, resulting in the decline of settlements there. Oglethorpe departed Georgia for good in July 1743 to answer his detractors' accusations about his strategic settlements plan's flaws. The Forty-Second and Fort Frederica had a series of commanders through the 1740s. The British government came to see Georgia as less of a concern and deactivated Georgia's provincial forces during the decade. The British government disbanded the Forty-Second Regiment in 1749. The majority of the troops returned to England while 151 remained in Georgia as settlers. A few joined the three Independent Companies that remained behind. For all intents and purposes, any serious military use for the island ceased.[41]

Conclusion

Two scales, always intertwined, provide the best viewpoint for Fort Frederica and Saint Simons Island's story. The British and Spanish saw geographic value in controlling the mouth of the Altamaha because it gave them control over the southeast and the ability to command travel along the coast and into the continent's interior. Both sides sought to show that they possessed this land at the scale of jurisdiction. They used actions such as arguments over treaties and which

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[40] Georgia Historical Society, *The Spanish Official Account of the Attack on the Colony of Georgia*, 70-71, 73, 93-95; Ivers, *British Drums,* 161, 163, 165-166; Lane, *General Oglethorpe's Georgia,* vol 2, 620-621; The July 16 date is on the Spanish Gregorian Calendar.

[41] Ivrers *British Drums,* 180-183, 205, 208-209, 213-214; The conclusion to this conflict occurred in October 1748 with a peace treaty signed at Aix-la-Chapelle.

nation first laid eyes on the Georgia coast. Both sides also tried actions at the scale of occupation. They attempted to create permanent structures and agriculture plots, retain native surrogates, or destroy whatever signs of possession their rivals created at this scale. The British ultimately prevailed as they held Saint Simons against Spanish efforts to dislodge Frederica. However, by the late 1740s Frederica became the shell of a settlement that land speculator Jonathan Bryan looked over in 1753. Once Whitehall's eyes turned from the Florida border a pressing need to reinforce British right to the land against a European threat ended. The military structures in the town declined, leading to the decline of a civilian town that had depended on military support.[42]

On the British side, Oglethorpe and his allies had the most at stake at Saint Simons Island at the scale of occupation. Although he certainly partook in the discussion about jurisdiction over the island through claims of treaty and discovery, Oglethorpe's actions at Frederica revealed a desire for a physical protective barrier against the Spanish as well as the physical embodiment for his vision for Georgia. Even during the period of hardship in the late 1730s, before the temporary distraction the war caused, he continued to argue that the land would "increase the Wealth, the Strength and the honour of the Kingdom more than the Edwards or the Henrys did by their glorious but destructive Victorys." Oglethorpe stated that "they burnt Towns, you will build them; they ravaged, you will cultivate large Dominions: They destroyed, you will preserve, and increase mankind." As Savannah's residents fought against the Trustees' "Georgia Plan's" restrictions, Oglethorpe claimed in February 1743 that the "Trustees' orders are obeyed in every part of [Georgia] except at Savannah." This raised the stakes for the successful establishment of a planned and well-ordered colony at Frederica. His writings to the Trustees and his show for the

[42] Wood, *Journal of a Visit to the Georgia Islands,* 24-25.

Spanish diplomatic party in 1736 made clear his wish that Frederica be stronger than it actually was.[43]

Frederica also had a role in the Trustees' overall desire to change the way the British colonized the New World, although this utopian vision failed. Rather than scattering plantations across the land, the Trustees wished to have a free labor colony with limited acreage per settler. They thought that a plantation society with slave labor would discourage white manual labor, leading to a free labor flight from the colony. Plantation owners would then purchase the vacant lands and make Georgia another colony run through absenteeism. In the 1730s and 1740s, the Trustees ran low on funds. The defeat of the Spanish invasion removed the fear that if slaves were introduced they would assist a Spanish attack as an internal enemy population. The Trustees allowed slaves into the colony in 1750 and surrendered the colony to the Crown in 1751. Planters began purchasing vast tracts of land and importing slaves to work them. The larger socio-economic transformation of Georgia into a plantation society made Frederica a symbol of a bygone era when free farmers sought to cultivate their plots while guarding a frontier against Spanish threats. That image never became reality, however, as Oglethorpe had to bring in a professional military unit to handle defense and settlers found better economic prospects serving the soldiers. While Fort Frederica had its diplomatic and military uses, it also embodied a never fulfilled fantasy of imperial development.[44]

On the Spanish side, Frederica came to represent Spanish Florida's continued contraction in the face of British expansion. The town and fort challenged Spain's traditional method of

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[43] Oglethorpe, *Some Account of the Design of the Trustees for Establishing Colonys in America,* 49; Lane, *General Oglethorpe's Georgia,* vol. 2, 537, 658-659.

[44] Paul S Taylor, *Georgia Plan: 1732-1752* (Berkeley: Institute of Business and Economic Research, University of California, 1971), 25-26, 282, 284, 286, 289, 292-93.

controlling territory through native people who either converted or at least recognized Catholic superiority. These Indians would then provide services that the Spanish needed such as agricultural labor. The British dislocated these proxy Spanish settlers by occupying the Georgia coast with their own settlers. As the British pushed farther south they overlooked more of the shipping lanes along the Florida coast that Spain used to reach its Central American colonies. To the Spanish, Saint Simons held one of a few keys to the Bahamas, second perhaps only to St. Augustine. It would serve as a good staging area for armies and navies raised to attack St. Augustine. The Spanish relied on missions and then the military to hold the territory while the British practice of planting subjects on the land brought increasing acres under their effective command. Thus, while the Spanish could point to treaties, agreements, and accounts of exploration to justify their jurisdictional claims, the British held the upper hand by possessing the land.

The scales of occupation and jurisdiction intertwined throughout the British and Spanish conflict over Saint Simons Island. Each side worked to construct a narrative that showed they had sovereignty over the Georgia coast while working to physically occupy or control that land. Oglethorpe balanced the tactical advantages of possessing the island with his social vision of Georgia as a place to redeem the British poor. Additionally, this examination of Spanish and British actions revealed the advantage that went to the nation that directly occupied the island. The Spanish repeatedly reacted to British actions, allowing Oglethorpe, the Trustees, and the British government to dictate events.

The fort protected the Georgia settlement while also physically occupying territory that the British claimed. It represented British thoughts and theories about why they rightfully owned the Southeast converted into action. The placement of the fort also showed what positions (such

as the intersection of an oceanic waterway and a river) Europeans saw as important. The arguments generated by rival Europeans' challenges to the fort forced the British to explain their views of possession and ownership. This approach can be taken with other forts located in borderlands. Their presences likely began internal discussions within empires about why the fort constituted a threat and why its builders did not have the right to possess that territory. These internal discussions would then turn into diplomatic arguments over sovereignty. A collection of case studies on colonial forts in North America from the late seventeenth to early nineteenth-centuries will reveal to what degree European beliefs about sovereignty and possession changed over the decades or between geographic regions.[45]

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