

THE FLEDGLING COLONY OF GEORGIA (1743)

by

EDWARD KIMBER (1719-1769)

Articles published in "The London Magazine", Volume XIV, 1745,

under the general title of

Itinerant Observations in America

Accessed on <www.archive.org>

Transcribed by Duncan S. Campbell

INTRODUCTION

1733 saw the establishment of the British North American colony which would one day become the modern state of Georgia. The first settlers were transported free of expense; the city of Savannah was founded and houses and defensive structures were built. A treaty of friendship was drawn up with the neighboring Creek Indians; but there were hostile encounters with Spanish forces.

During 1745-46, a series of articles entitled *Itinerant Observations in America* was published in "The London Magazine". These describe a visit during 1743 to parts of the eastern seaboard of North America, including Georgia, Virginia and Maryland. Their "author / observer" was the magazine's editor, Edward Kimber (1719-69).

Working from the original materials, accessed on <www.archive.org>, we have transcribed that part of the articles dealing with the recently-established Georgia colony. Our transcription uses modern spelling and retains the original author's footnotes in full.

Duncan S. Campbell,
September 2019

N.B. The complete series of articles has been comprehensively edited by Kevin J. Hayes (published 1998).

[The London Magazine, Volume XIV, pp. 395-396]

(1) Frederica, on the island of St. Simons, the chief town in the southernmost part of the colony of Georgia, is nearly in lat. $31^{\circ} 15'$ north. It stands on an eminence, if considered with regard to the marshes before it, upon a branch of the famous River Altamaha, which washes the west side of this agreeable little island, and, after several windings, disembogues itself into the sea at Jekyll Sound. It forms a kind of a bay before the town, and is navigable for vessels of the largest burden, which may lie along the wharf in a secure and safe harbor; and may, upon occasion, haul up to careen and refit, the bottom being a soft oozy clay, intermixed with small sand and shells. The town is defended by a pretty strong fort, of tappy,¹ which has several 18-pounders mounted on a ravelin in its front, and commands the river both upwards and downwards; and is surrounded by a quadrangular rampart, with 4 bastions, of earth, well stockaded and turfed, and a palisaded ditch, which include also the king's storehouses, (in which are kept the arsenal, the court of justice, and chapel) two large spacious buildings of brick and timber. On the rampart are mounted a considerable quantity of ordnance of several sizes. The town is surrounded by a rampart, with flankers, of the same thickness with that round the fort, in form of a pentagon, and a dry ditch; and since the famous attempt of the Spaniards in July 1742,² at the N.E. and S.E. angles, are erected two strong covered pentagonal bastions, capable of containing 100 men each, to scour the flanks with small arms, and defended by a number of [cannons]. At their tops are lookouts, which command the view of the country and the river for many miles. The roofs are shingled,³ but so contrived as to be easily cleared away, if incommodious in the defense of the towers. The whole circumference of the town is about a mile and a half, including, within the fortifications, the camp for general Oglethorpe's regiment,

¹ A mixture of lime, made of oyster shells, with sand, small shells, etc. which, when hardened, is as firm as stone. I have observed prodigious quantities of saltpeter to issue from walls of this cement.

² See Lond. Mag. 1742, p. 461, 515, 516, 567.

³ Shingles are split out of many sorts of wood, in the shape of tiles, which, when they have been some time exposed to the weather, appear of the color of slate, and have a very pretty look; the houses in America are mostly shingled.

at the north side of the town; the parades on the west, and a small wood to the south, which is left for convenience of fuel and pasture, and is an excellent blind to the enemy in case of an attack; in it is a small magazine of powder. The town has two gates, called, the land-port and the water-port; next to the latter of which is the guard-house, and underneath it the prison for malefactors, which is a handsome building of brick. At the north end are the barracks, which is an extremely well contrived building, in form of a square, of tappywork, in which, at present, are kept the hospital, and Spanish prisoners of war; Near this was situated the bomb magazine, which was blown up on March 22, 1744,⁴ with so surprisingly little damage.⁵ The town is situated on a large Indian field. To the east it has a very extensive savanna, (wherein is the burial place) through which is cut a road to the other side of the island, which is bounded by woods, save here and there some opening glades into the neighboring savannas and marshes, which much elucidate the pleasure of looking. Down this road are several commodious plantations, particularly, the very agreeable one of Capt. Demery, and that of Mr. Hawkins. Preeminently appears Mr. Oglethorpe's settlement, which, at a distance, looks like a neat country village, where the consequences of all the various industries of a European farm are seen. The master of it has shown, what applicated and unabated diligence may effect in this country. At the extremity of the road is a small village, called the German Village, inhabited by several families of Salzburgers, who plant and fish for their subsistence. On the river side, one has the prospect of a large circuit of marshes, terminated by the woods on the continent, in form like an amphitheater, and interspersed with the meanders of abundance of creeks, formed from the aforesaid river. At a distance may be seen the white post at Bachelor's Redoubt, also on the Main, where is kept a good lookout of Rangers. To the north are marshes, and a small wood; at the western extremity of which are the plantations of the late Capt. Desbrisay, and some others of less note; together with a lookout, wherein a corporal's guard is stationed, and relieved weekly, called Pike's, on the bank of the river, from whence they can see vessels a great way to the northward. On the south is a wood, which is, however, so far cleared, as to discover the approach of an enemy at a great distance; without it, to the

⁴ See Lond. Mag. 1744, p. 359.

⁵ I have been told, that in this explosion, near 3,000 bombs burst, which, had they not been well bedded, would have done much mischief.

eastward, is the plantation of Capt. Dunbar; and to the westward, a corporal's lookout. The town is divided into several spacious streets, along whose sides are planted orange trees,⁶ which, in some time, will have a very pretty effect on the view, and will render the town pleasingly shady. Some houses are built entirely of brick, some of brick and wood, some few of tappywork; but most of the meaner sort, of wood only. The camp is also divided into several streets, distinguished by the names of the captains of the several companies of the regiment; and the huts are built generally of clapboards and palmettos, and are each of them capable to contain a family, or half a dozen single men. Here these brave fellows live with the most laudable economy; and though most of them, when off duty, practice some trade or employment, they make as fine an appearance upon the parade, as any regiment in the king's service; and their exact discipline does a great deal of honor to their officers. They have a market every day. The inhabitants of the town may be divided into officers, merchants, store-keepers, artisans, and people in the provincial service; and there are often also many sojourners from the neighboring settlements, and from New York, Philadelphia, and Carolina, on account of trade. The civil government does not seem yet to be quite rightly settled by the trustees, but is, at present, administered by three magistrates, or justices, assisted by a recorder, constables, and tithing-men. The military is regulated as in all garrison towns in the British dominions. In short, the whole town, and country adjacent, are quite rurally charming, and the improvements everywhere around, are footsteps of the greatest skill and industry imaginable, considering its late settlement, and the rubs it has so often met with; and as it seems so necessary for the barrier of our colonies, I am in hopes of, one time, seeing it taken more notice of than it is at present.⁷

- 0 -

⁶ The inhabitants begin to plant this charming fruit very much, and, it is to be hoped, will banish their numerous peach trees to their country settlements, which are nurseries of mosquitos, and other vermin. The season I was there, they had oranges enough of their own growth for home consumption.

⁷ This was written in the beginning of 1743.

[The London Magazine, Volume XIV, pp. 549-552]

(2) At the south point of this island of St. Simons, are the ruins of the town of St. Simons, destroyed by the Spaniards at their invasion. By the remaining vestiges, it must have been a very uniform place; and the situation is quite charming, though it now makes one melancholy to see such a desolation in so new a country.⁸ The only building they left standing, was a house which they had consecrated for a chapel. How different the proceedings of the more generous English! even in these parts,⁹ who never leave behind them such direful remembrances; but here religious fury goes hand in hand with conquest, resolved to ruin whom they can't convert. The fort has some remains still, and seems to have been no extraordinary affair; though no place was ever better defended, and the enemies seem, by their works and entrenchments, to have thought themselves sure of keeping the town, but found themselves woefully mistaken. Down the beach, to the westward, is a lookout of tappywork, which is a very good mark for standing over the bar into the harbor; and on the opposite point of Jekyll Island is a remarkable hammock of trees, much taken notice of by seamen on the same account. Somewhat lower, and more northerly, is the plantation called Gascoigne's, which underwent the same fate with St. Simons. An officer's command is stationed at South Point, who disposes his sentries so as to discover vessels some leagues at sea, and upon any such discovery an alarm-gun is fired, and a horseman sent up with notice to the headquarters, which is nine miles from this place. If they appear to make for the harbor, a perpendicular mounted gun is fired, as a signal, which, by the ascent of the smoke, is a direction to a ship a long way in the offing, and is a most lucky contrivance. The road from hence to Frederica is cut through the woods, and through the marshes raised upon a causeway. To make a good horseman in America, is no easy matter, without considerable practice; and accidents often happen to the best of us, by the intricacies of the tracts and paths. The horses are the most hardy beasts imaginable, and though they can't all size with European horses, they make it out in service.

⁸ It very much surprised me to see such an incredible quantity of purslane growing amongst the foundations of the houses, for I never saw so much anywhere else. It should seem that lime and shells were a very proper bed for it.

⁹ As at Portobello, Chagres, and even before, at the siege of St. Augustine.

Nature, in all its gay varieties, seemed to open her charms to delight our senses, in our little inland voyage from St. Simons Island to the chief town of the north part of the colony. My mind will ever retain the diversity of scenes that presented to our admiring eyes in this passage and now I endeavor to commit some faint sketches of them to paper, I am lost, methinks, in the prodigious confusion of objects, that all at once crowd before me, romantically pleasing, and, as it were, make imagination sick with wonder. Here let the atheist, if such there be, view these rudest footsteps of a Creator, and own himself convinced of his folly and absurdity, to suppose chance the Producer. What a judicious mixture of light and shade in the landscape! how excellent the coloring! how artfully disposed the parts! how conducive to the harmony of the whole! Rivers and creeks that glide with a peaceful, and, as it were, contented current, into wide arms¹⁰ and breaks of the sea, which seem indignantly to resist their low and servile community, forgetting, like some of the race of Adam, that they had the same original, foaming and lashing the shores with repeated fury. The marshes and savannas extended along their borders, disposed with so seeming a regularity, as to make the whole prospect look like one continued canal, the effect of the most studious contrivance; whilst at a distant view you take in a large tract of hoary woods, interspersed with verdant spots that bear the semblance of the most refreshing meadows; rustic grottos, rugged caverns, mossy caves, and cooling cells, seem to border their sides. Here the lofty oak, with all his kindred tribe,¹¹ clad in robes of antique moss,¹² seems, by its venerable appearance, to be the real monarch of the woods; the cedar, sweet as the cedar of Lebanon; the towering evergreen pine, the fragrant hickory, the mournful cypress, and here and there the triumphant laurel, are seen in full

¹⁰ Called Sounds, as, in this route, Sapola, Offabaw, St. Catherine's, Ogechee, etc., taking their names from those islands. These are all good harbors, but, with little wind, very dangerous navigation for open boats.

¹¹ As the live oak, water oak, swamp oak, marsh oak, holy oak, etc. Live oak is much more hard and solid than the wood of Brazil, and full as heavy. I believe it would turn to account to import some quantity of this wood for the use of refiners, etc., who require very strong fires.

¹² You'll see, in this part of the world, trees dressed from the tops to the roots in this vegetable, which hangs together net-wise, and quite obscures the tree. It seems an excellent provision of Nature, for the subsistence of some orders of creatures, who, especially in the winter season, feed much on it; nor is it [without use] to Man, [as] it has often afforded us comfortable beds, pillows, and tinder.

luster, and preside over an infinity of lesser products, that seem to venerate, beneath, their more advanced and distinguished neighbors. The savory sassafras shrub perfumes the air, the prickly-pear shrub offers his tempting fruit to the hand, but wisely tells you, by the points that guard it, not to indulge to excess; the delicious mulberry, the swelling peach, the olive, the pomegranate, the walnut, all combine to furnish out the paradisiacal banquet. The vine, alone, luxuriantly climbs over the highest oak, and invites with loaded clusters, to partake of his refreshing juice. Across the glade trips the timorous deer, the nimble squirrel skips from tree to tree, and at their roots, scour through the breaks; the wonderful possum,¹³ the squeaking raccoon,¹⁴ and millions of the changeable lizard. Now harmony breathes forth her choicest airs, and music fills the vocal groves. The silver-breasted mock-bird diversifies her note, now briskly chirps, like the soaring lark, now melts in the softer strain of saddening philomel; the magnificent red-bird joins in the chorus, which seems now and then interrupted by the turtle's melancholy wailing.¹⁵ Adown the stream the view is still more enchanting, by the sporting of the finny race; the shining mullet, the noble bass, the warrior stingray with his redoubted tail, the drum, the nimble catfish, alternately shoot their heads above the waves, in which large banks of oysters appear like frightful rocks; here the dreadful alligator sports himself in the canes, and there the heavy porpoise rolls in sluggish wantonness.—Now night succeeds the day, which seems just to have withdrawn its beams, to give place to new scenes of wonder; what clear and serene skies! how bespangled with those glittering sparks, those worlds unknown!¹⁶ And now, as Milton says, the apparent queen throws her silver mantle over the deep,—silence seems pleased;—but hark,—what a confused

¹³ The possum is a creature sized like a hare, and very remarkable for its false belly, in which, at a time of danger, her young ones creep, and so she carries them off with her; it eats like pig, and is very nourishing.

¹⁴ The raccoon is delicate eating, somewhat tasted like lamb; its pizzle is very commonly used as a tobacco-stopper. Squirrels are also most delicious food.

¹⁵ There is a very extraordinary bird in this country, which frequents the sea beaches, etc., called a sand-bird, which almost melts in the mouth, and is every way like the celebrated ortelans, though you may kill them by scores every evening. Snipes are also vastly plenty and good; and, I think, I have seen woodcocks.

¹⁶ You perceive here, also, thousands of minute stars, attracting your eyes, and floating before you; these are the fire-flies, which look like so many glow-worms; they are a very small insect, with some luminous qualities or particles, that I never could well examine; but surprise a stranger much.

multitude of sounds from yonder marshes! all the tumult and cries of a great city are imitated.¹⁷ Another way the hissing of serpents! Here the rustling of the deer amongst the leaves, in yonder wood, and now and then the prowling wolf, with the discontented bear, more disturb the stillness of the night, and make the air tremble with their superior voices.¹⁸ What glaring eyes are those in the neighboring thicket, that beam fire upon us?—we present our pieces,—we fire, and the whole country echoes back the groans.—Streaks of red and gold paint the skies, and now Sol just arises from the ocean, and is confessed in our horizon.

This voyage took us up six days on account of the halts we made, and our waiting for tides, and the winds not much favoring us; though the distance is only about 100 miles. Our vessel was an open six-oared boat, in which we stowed both baggage and provisions, and slept and watched by turns, finding, from being frequently inured to it, no more incommodity in this method of traveling and resting, than what we felt from the sand-flies, mosquitos, and other vermin, that, like a swarm of locusts, infest the hot months in these countries. The sand-fly is so minute an insect as scarce to be perceivable with the naked eye, only appearing like the sporting particles of dust that float in the sunshine. It even intrudes itself into the mouth as you breathe, and insinuates into all the small apertures of your garments, nor can you any way [defend] yourself entirely from them. Mosquitos are long sharp flies, whose venom, I believe, according to their bulk, is as baleful as that of a rattlesnake; I have felt then, and heard their cursed humming too often for it ever to be obliterated from my memory. Raising a thick smother of smoke is the best means to drive them from a house or apartment, against which pressure their wings are unable to support them; and with us smoking tobacco is generally the subterfuge. There are abundance of other torments in these climates, as cockroaches, wood-ticks, etc. etc. And this colony is either not so enervated as their neighbors, or else are poor enough to scorn umbrellas and mosquito-nets, as Jamaican and Carolinian effeminacies.

¹⁷ By the bullfrogs, lizards, marsh frogs, etc. etc. etc.

¹⁸ Other wild beasts there are not that I have seen, except the wild hog or boar, who is very dangerous to hunt, whose tracks you often descry by the holes he has made with his tusks after the ground nuts and chinquapin nuts. In some islands there are also numbers of wild horses and cattle.

Our first stage, we made to New Inverness, or the Darien, on the continent, near 20 miles from Frederica, which is a settlement of Highlanders, living and dressing in their own country fashion, very happily and contentedly. There is an independent company of foot of them, consisting of 70 men, who have been of good service. The town is regularly laid out, and built of wood mostly, divided into streets and squares; before the town is the parade, and a fort not yet finished. It is situated upon a very high bluff, or point of land, from whence, with a few [cannons] they can scour the river. [Otherwise] it is surrounded by pine-barrens, and woods; and there is a route by land to Savannah and Fort Argyle, which is [stated to be] reconnoitered by a troop of Highland Rangers, who do duty here.¹⁹ The company and troop, armed in the Highland manner, make an extreme good appearance under arms. The whole settlement may be said to be a brave and industrious people; but were more numerous, planted more, and raised more cattle before the invasion, with which they drove a good trade to the southward; but things seem mending daily with them. They are forced to keep a very good guard in this place, [as] it lies so open to the insults of the French and Spanish Indians, who once or twice have shown stragglers some vey bloody tricks. They have here all sorts of garden stuff, and game in abundance in the woods and marshes; as ducks, wild geese and turkeys,²⁰ partridges, curlews, rabbits, if one may call them so, for the rabbits of America partake much of the nature of a hare, and are very numerous; and the rivers abound with fish. We stayed here two days, and in a day and a half, arrived at St. Catharine's, which is an island reserved to the Indians by treaty. We found about eight or ten families upon it, who had several plantations of corn. It seems to be a most fruitful soil, and to have larger tracts of open land than any I have observed, and to abound in all kinds of game, on which the good Indians regaled us, and for greens, boiled us the tops of china-briars, which eat almost as well as asparagus.²¹ When we departed, they gave us a young bear which they had just killed, which proved fine eating. Passing over more minute adventures, which, though entertaining to us, would be tiresome elsewhere in the

¹⁹ They often patrol also 300 miles back in the country, as far as Mount Venture, known by the unfortunate story of the murder of Francis's family by the Yamasee Indians.

²⁰ The turkeys and geese are more delicate than those in Europe; and, which is almost incredible, I have seen them in all parts of North America, weighing from 40 to 60 pounds.

²¹ Though there is no want of herbs for the pot in any wood you pass, particularly wild spinach, or, as we call it, poke, which is also agreeably medicinal to the body.

repetition, we arrived in somewhat more than two days at the narrows, where there is a kind of Manchecolas fort for their defense, garrisoned from Wormsloe, where we soon arrived. It is the settlement of Mr. Jones, 10 miles S.E. of Savannah, and we could not help observing, as we passed, several very pretty plantations. Wormsloe is one of the most agreeable spots I ever saw, and the improvements of that ingenious man are very extraordinary. He commands a company of Marines, who are quarters in huts near his house, which is also a tolerable defensible place with small arms. From this house there is a vista of near three miles, cut through the woods to Mr. Whitefield's orphan house, which has a very fine effect on the sight.

[The London Magazine, Volume XIV, pp. 602-604]

(3) The route from Wormsloe to Mr. Whitefield's orphan house is extremely agreeable, mostly through pine groves, where we saw the recent appearances of a storm of thunder and lightning, that happened the day before. Some of the tallest trees were riven to their very roots, and their branches spread far and wide; others had only some strips taken off, from top to bottom, as regularly as a lath-maker splits his laths, and at the roots there seemed to be an aperture in the ground, as if the igneous matter had penetrated into the very bowels of the earth. Everywhere the shrubs and bushes retained the marks of fire, and the whole woods offended the smell with the sulfurous taint. In all woody journeys, in these countries, you perceive millions of trees quite stripped of their honors, and burnt up by this means, and the ruin spread many miles. It is, indeed, some surprise to observe these hurricane tempests, which rise in a moment, without warning, and as soon spend their fury and subside.—The whole ocean, in a foam, breaking mast-high; the adjacent woods resounding, through their remotest bounds, with the weighty ruins, that, as Milton says,

Bow their stiff necks, laden with stormy blasts, Or torn up sheer.—

Thus, the fierce sons of Aeolus, rushing abroad with resistless force, scour the wild waste, and drive the fiercest inhabitants of the plain to their caves and dens. The impetuous rains almost crush you; the element is kindled into flames; and the hoarse thunder growls with deafening roar.

It gave me much satisfaction to have an opportunity to see this orphan-house, as the design had made such a noise in Europe, and the very being of such a place was so much doubted everywhere, that, even no farther from it than New England, affidavits were made to the contrary. It is a square building, of very large dimensions, the foundation of which is brick, with chimneys of the same, the rest of the superstructure of wood; the whole laid out in a neat and elegant manner. A kind of piazza-work surrounds it, which is a very pleasing retreat in the summer. The hall, and all the apartments are very commodious, and prettily furnished. The garden, which is a very extensive one, and well kept up, is one of the best I ever saw in America, and you may discover in it plants and fruits of almost every clime and kind. The out-houses are convenient, and the plantation

will soon surpass almost anything in the country. The front is situated towards Mr. Jones's Island,²² (to which, the way on any side is impassable, unless by boat) to whose plantation the aforementioned vista is cleared, which affords to both settlements a good airing and prospect. We were received by the superintendent, Mr. Barber, a dissenting minister, in a genteel and friendly manner. They were at dinner when we arrived, the whole family at one table, and sure never was a more orderly, pretty sight. If I recollect right, besides Mr. Barber, the schoolmaster, and some women, there were near 40 young persons of both sexes, dressed very neatly and decently. After dinner they retired, the boys to school, and the girls to their spinning and knitting. I was told, their vacant hours were employed in the garden and plantation work. Prepossessed with a bad opinion of the institution, I made all the inquiries I could, and, in short, became a convert to the design; which seems very conducive to the good of an infant colon. And whatever opinion I may have of the absurdity of some of their religious notions, tenets and practices, yet so far as they conduce to inculcate sobriety, industry and frugality, they deserve encouragement from all well-wishers of their country. And, indeed, I could not here perceive anything of that spirit of uncharitableness, and enthusiastic bigotry, their leader is so famed for, and of which I heard shocking instances, all over America.

It is near eight miles from [the orphanage] to Savannah, the road cut through the woods, which has a hundred curiosities to delight the attentive traveler, and is diversified with plantations here and there, though now in no very good order, for a reason that will be seen by and by.

(4) Savannah is situated on a navigable river, which goes by the name of the town, and vessels of considerable burden may lie close to the shore, which is between 40 and 50 feet above the water's edge. One main street runs through the whole town, from the landing place. It has very near 350 houses, huts and warehouses in it, beside the public buildings, which are, the storehouse of the trustees, a handsome court house, a jail, a guard-house, and a public wharf, projected out many feet into the river. The streets are wide and commodious, and intersect each other at right angles. The while town is laid out very commodiously, and there are several large squares. Many of the houses are very

²² Called so, though some ways it is only bounded by a marsh, which is sometimes dry.

large and handsome, built generally of wood, but some foundations are bricked. They have plenty of water, and very good; and the soil is dry and sandy, which I reckon the most wholesome in this country, as the rains entirely dry up, and leave no noxious steams, as in a moist, low situation, like that of Charleston, in South Carolina, where the people are much afflicted with agues, etc.

The houses are built some distance from each other, to allow more air and garden room, and prevent the communication, in case of any accident by fire. The town is divided into wards and tithings, which have their several constables and tithing-men. The magistrates are three bailiffs and a recorder, who have power to judge in capital crimes, as well as affairs of *meum* and *tuum*, in that part of the colony. They have a public garden, in a very thriving way, which is a kind of nursery for the use of the inhabitants. The town stands about ten miles from the sea up the river, (which is navigable some hundred miles up the country,) and is, certainly, a very good harbor, and well seated for trade. The land, a considerable space round the town, is well cleared, and the passages lie open; a handsome roadway running above a mile from it, and making the prospect very lightsome. The air is pure and serene, and, perhaps, never was a better situation, or a more healthful place. Pity it is, that a spirit of opposition to the wholesome rules this colony was first established upon, in gratitude to their great and human benefactor; an ignorance of their true interest, and a cursed spirit of dissension amongst themselves, has rendered this sweet place so much less flourishing than it was at the beginning of the settlement; but, it is to be hoped they will learn to hate one another less, be less prone to faction and bickering, and things may, possibly, still be restored to their pristine state. The inhabitants may be divided into magistrates, planters, merchants and store-keepers, artisans and servants, besides sojourners from the northward and southward. There are many pretty plantations in the country about Savannah, belonging to the inhabitants of that town, particularly Col. Stephen's, Mr. Causton's, etc. A lighthouse is erected on Tybee island, which is a very good sea-mark, and the only one south of Carolina; though for the use of the harbor there is little occasion for it, at present, there being very little business stirring.