

A View of Savannah, Georgia, 1734

Introduction

The colony of Georgia was founded in 1733 by James Oglethorpe, a British Member of Parliament. Oglethorpe planned Savannah as a place where the poor could come to make a better life. An attempt to produce a “classless society,” this first settlement in Georgia did not permit slavery and limited how much land could be owned. As Oglethorpe’s involvement in the colony diminished, the colonists in Georgia asked to have slavery allowed in their colony. By 1750, Georgia had become a slave-holding colony like its neighbor South Carolina.

This image of the year-old settlement in 1734 shows a grid of streets and squares carefully planned out by Oglethorpe. In the foreground, sailing ships and small boats visit the new port, and cargo is hauled up a steep embankment above the river. The engraving identifies important sites in the settlement: Mr. Ogelthorpe’s tent; the courthouse, mill, public oven, and well; the “House for Stangers”; the future location of the church; the fort and guard house among them. The original sketch is attributed to Peter Gordon, who was among the first settlers of the colony and served as its chief bailiff.

Questions for Discussion

Read the introduction and study the image. Then use the evidence from the image and your knowledge of American history to answer the following questions.

1. Examine the engraving of Savannah. What evidence is there in the engraving that Savannah was a planned city?
2. Look at early sketches of other colonies. What differences and similarities are evident? What does this tell you about the different new settlements?
3. Why would James Oglethorpe have selected this site for his city?
4. Oglethorpe did not allow slavery in Georgia when he founded the colony. What does this tell us about James Oglethorpe?
5. The motto for Oglethorpe and the trustees of Georgia was the Latin phrase, “Non sibi sed aliis” (“Not for self, but for others”). Explain how the motto illustrates their desire for a “classless society.”

