

Georgia

ALARGE part of the land in Georgia was within the grant made by Charles II, in 1663, to the eight Carolina lords proprietors.

Sir Robert Montgomery in 1717 was granted by these proprietors all the land between the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers. He published a pamphlet to attract settlers, proposing districts or allotments, twenty miles square, [50] but apparently nothing came of it. Spaniards objected to the English settling in Georgia, claiming it as Spanish territory.

In 1729 the crown bought of the Carolina proprietors a seven-eighths undivided part of the Carolina-Georgia grant.

General James Oglethorpe, a member of the British Parliament, became interested in relieving the distress of the many persons of respectable families who were confined in prison in England as insolvent debtors.

Upon a petition by him and other influential persons, George II, in 1732, made a grant of land to a board of trustees for the purpose of establishing a colony where these unfortunates and others might find homes; and at the same time be a military outpost against the Spaniards.

This grant was for land lying between the rivers just named, running west in two parallel lines from the sources thereof, extending in a direct line to the South Sea (Pacific Ocean), with all islands lying within twenty leagues (60 miles) of the Atlantic coast. Annual land rent was 4s per hundred acres, payable to the king.

Contributions amounting, it has been stated, to £200,000, including £10,000 by Parliament, were made to promote the object. This was the only American colony which apparently did not emanate from a desire by the promoters for personal profit through land ownership.

Georgia was granted a charter as an independent colony. Oglethorpe was appointed governor and, in November, 1732, with 130 men, women and children, sailed from Gravesend in a chartered vessel, the "Anne," of two hundred tons. Included were necessary artisans and equipment for a pioneer settlement.

They arrived at Charles Town after a two months' voyage, where they were cordially received, and were recognized as forming a protection to the Carolina settlers against attacks by the Spaniards and Indians from the south. The Carolina assembly presented them with one hundred head of cattle, also hogs, and a barrel of rice.

Proceeding to the Savannah River, where they found the Indians friendly, they entered into a treaty with an Indian chief.

On a high bluff they cleared the land of heavy timber and erected tents. Streets, a public square and forty home lots, each sixty by ninety feet, were laid out. Erection of the first house, of clapboards, and a palisade, were begun that day, to become the future delightful city of Savannah.

Fifty acres were allotted to each family by tail male (inheritance thereof limited to male descendants), of which five acres were for a garden. Allotments of outlying land were limited to tracts of five hundred acres each. Augusta was founded five years afterwards.

More than one thousand colonists were sent to Georgia by the trustees, while hundreds of other immigrants, including thirty-eight Salzburgers, came at their own expense. There were Swiss, Germans, Moravians, Portuguese Jews, Italians, Piedmontese, Highlanders and English, and some settlers from New England. All were allotted land along the river. [119]

The qualification for a voter was fifty acres in his district; for a representative five hundred acres anywhere in the province. This latter permitted legislation by land speculators, who soon

became possessed of large areas, to the detriment of future settlers. [169]

The charter had reserved a perpetual annual land rent of 4s per hundred acres payable to the king; and the colonial government added 20s per hundred acres for revenue for its support, the rent beginning ten years after date of each allotment of land. But on town lots, the rent was 2s per fifty acres, with a purchase-price of 5s proclamation money. For large tracts, rentals were reduced, which encouraged speculative holding of land unused. With land to be had in other colonies at less cost, the legislature, ten years after the initial settlement, declared that land cost should be reduced to attract settlers.

The trustees in London proposed to the king repeal of the royal land rent, so that land could be granted on more favorable terms. The Board of Trade in London, representing the king, favored a reduction from 4s to 2s, which was adopted, to begin at the end of the tenth year after allotment. [12] No rent roll was ever prepared for the crown and apparently no attempt was ever made to collect land rent for the king.

Complaint was made later that the colony was suffering through Oglethorpe's selfishness, greed, despotism and fantastic pursuits of social chimeras. [169] The probabilities are that these complaints arose from his restricting the greed of some of the colonists for more land, to be held by them on speculation, free of rent during the ten years' no-rent period—later to be sold by the speculators at increased prices, created by the demand for land by the influx of settlers.

The Cherokee and Creek Indians, who inhabited that region, were amiable until the outbreak of the French and Indian War, when the Cherokees, incensed at the appropriation of their lands by the whites, plundered and killed some of the settlers.

The charter had prohibited slavery and liquors for the first twenty years but in the nineteenth, the trustees surrendered the charter and Georgia became a crown colony, with a royal governor appointed by the king, and a council and assembly. Negro slavery and liquors were then permitted. Land tenure was "enlarged and extended to an absolute inheritance, or private ownership in fee, and alienation of land was permitted."

Thirty years after the first settlement, there had been granted 546,770 acres, in addition to 89,400 acres granted along the Carolina border by the governor of South Carolina. [12]

The population, five years after that, is placed at fifty thousand, perhaps one-half slave. [48] As this would represent an average of only twenty-five acres for each white person, no doubt large tracts held by speculators had not been registered.

By the treaty between Great Britain and France at the close of the French and Indian War in 1763, the western limit of British sovereignty was fixed at the Mississippi River, and that river, instead of the South Sea, became the western limit of all royal colonial land grants that had been made. At the same time, the king extended the Georgia grant to the Florida border, and forbade white settlers locating west of the Appalachian Mountains.

Population in Georgia increased slowly until after the American Revolution, when the new state took possession of the unallotted land. In 1786 it granted to one Webb and associates 165,000 acres.

Georgia claimed all the land between its present western boundary and the Mississippi River, details of the sale of which, through bribery of members of the legislature, and resulting frauds, are related in the chapter on the Gulf Region.

Within the present area of Georgia, the state, between 1803 and 1831, distributed by lottery 22,404,250 acres, in 130,000 lots, averaging 172.3 acres each, but only about three-fourths of them were taken up.