

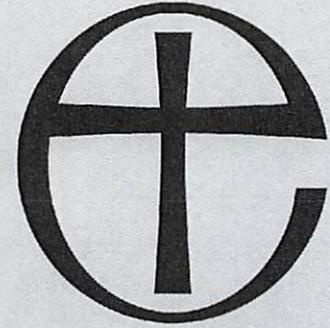
Fort Frederica

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Fort Frederica National
Monument



Charles Wesley in Georgia



Charles Wesley

Charles Wesley was instrumental in the founding of modern Methodism though his brother John is more famous. Charles is known as a writer of over 6,000 hymns, including “Hark, the Herald Angel Sings” and “Christ the Lord is Risen Today.” As a young minister with his first parish in the frontier of Georgia, he found his evangelical duties very trying. His experiences at Frederica illuminate many of the difficulties for settlers from British cities as they attempted to create a home in the wilderness.

Charles Wesley Before Georgia

Charles Wesley was born in Epworth, England in 1707 and was the 18th of 19 children. His father was an Anglican preacher and Charles followed in his footsteps after his education. He attended Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford where he graduated in 1729.

Working as a college tutor, he was a founder of the Holy Club at Oxford. In September 1735, however, he was ordained as a deacon and then as a priest in the Anglican Church in September of 1735. Within a month he was on a journey to the first trial of his life as a minister.

Charles Wesley In Georgia

Charles Wesley set sail for Georgia on October 21, 1735 with his brother John who was doing missionary work for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. While John was assigned to be the minister at Savannah, Charles served as General Oglethorpe’s secretary of Indian affairs and minister to the soldiers and settlers of Frederica. He arrived on March 9, 1736 and recorded in his journal, “about three in the afternoon, I first set foot on St. Simons island, and immediately my spirit revived. No sooner did I enter upon my ministry, than God gave me, like Saul, another heart...”

When Charles arrived at Frederica he found very primitive conditions and he held services in the open and small prayer meetings in the temporary palmetto huts the settlers constructed. Preaching, however, was not his only job at Frederica. Seven days after his arrival he recorded in his journal, “I was wholly spent in writing letters for Mr. Oglethorpe. I would not spend six days more in the same manner for all Georgia.”

Wesley was constantly involved in the personal struggles of Frederica’s settlers and quickly earned James Oglethorpe’s disfavor.

In his journal, he noted, “At half-hour past seven Mr. Oglethorpe called me out of my hut. I looked up to God, and went. He charged me with mutiny and sedition; with stirring up the people to desert the colony.”

At this point in his life, Charles lacked the physical, emotional and mental stamina needed to cope with such a difficult life on the Georgia frontier. While Charles had no love for the conditions in Georgia, many of the Georgia settlers had no great love for the Wesleys. To recent settlers struggling to survive on the harsh frontier, the immediate needs of safety and survival mattered far more than the strict piety espoused by both John and Charles Wesley.

On May 12, 1736, Charles left Frederica eventually bound for England. He recorded his feelings in his journal, “I was overjoyed at my deliverance out of this furnace, and not a little ashamed of myself for being so.

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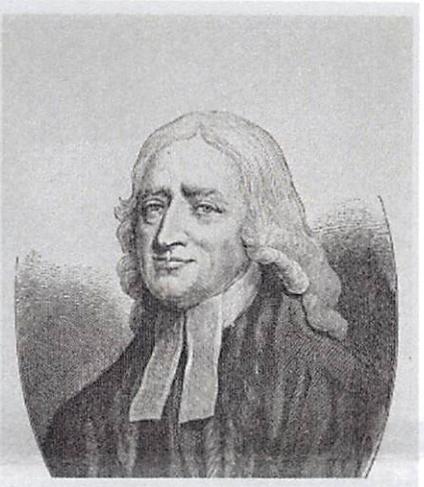


John Wesley in Georgia



Tuesday Morning James Oglethorpe, Esq, set out by Land for Gravesend, and the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, Student of Lincoln College, Oxon; the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley, Student of Christ-Church-College, and the Rev. Mr. Ingram of Queen's, in order to embark for Georgia.

There were sent along with these Gentlemen, as a Benefaction of several worthy Ladies and Gentlemen, 550 of the Bishop of Man's Treatises on the Sacrament, and his Lordship's Principles and Duties of Christianity, for the use of the English Families settled in Georgia.



John Wesley

John Wesley is considered the founder of the modern Methodist Church. As a young man, he spent time in Georgia which helped prepare him for this later evangelical work. The physical, ministerial and spiritual challenges that Georgia afforded Wesley enabled him to meet later challenges with renewed vigor and a broader understanding of himself, the Holy Scriptures, and his fellow man.

John Wesley Before Georgia

Born in 1703 at Epworth, England, John Wesley was the son of an Anglican minister and the 15th of 19 children. He attended both Charterhouse School and Oxford where he graduated in 1724. Three years later he was ordained as a minister at the age of 24.

In 1729, he joined his brother Charles' Holy Club whose members were derisively called Methodists. His education prepared him for life as an Anglican minister in England, yet his first real field of work lay far from England's shores.

John Wesley in Georgia

John Wesley set sail for Georgia with his brother, Charles, in 1735. After arriving in early 1736, John saw the venture as a key to the rebirth of what he termed 'Primitive Christianity.' He would carry the Gospel to a new land, encounter hardships, and thereby experience a new understanding of what the Christian faith entailed. He was stationed in Savannah while Charles was sent to Frederica to serve as James Oglethorpe's secretary and Frederica's minister. Early on ill health forced Charles to leave and John assumed some of Charles' duties as minister to Frederica. John made five separate visits to Frederica from April 1736 to January 1737. In all, he spent roughly three months at Frederica.

Creek and Cherokee of the region. He never was an effective missionary and wrote in his journal, "I came to convert the Indians, but, oh, who will convert me?"

Controversy forced John from the colony. He became embroiled in court proceedings when he refused communion to Sophia Hopkey Williamson – a woman he had courted before her marriage to William Williamson. Many in the community felt that he was being vindictive towards the woman who scorned him. Convinced that he would not receive a fair trial John left the colony of Georgia on December 2, 1737 noting in his journal, "about eight o'clock...I shook off the dust of my feet and left Georgia, after having preached the gospel there (not as I ought, but as I was able)."

In addition to his duties as a minister at Savannah, John hoped to perform missionary work amongst the

John Wesley After Georgia

After returning to England John Wesley had an experience he described as an 'infilling of the Holy Spirit.' He first field preached at Bristol in 1739 and soon after formed Methodist societies. During the 1740s, John approved of lay preaching for Methodists and he conducted the first Methodist conference.

In 1784, he began ordaining ministers for America. The Methodist movement grew, yet he affirmed that Methodists in England should remain Anglican in 1786. John Wesley – founder of Methodism – died on March 2, 1791, and is buried at City Road chapel in London.