

# Fort Frederica

NATIONAL MONUMENT • GEORGIA

## HISTORY OF FREDERICA

Established on St. Simons Island in 1736, the fortified settlement of Frederica became Gen. James Oglethorpe's military headquarters for operations against the Spanish in Florida during the Anglo-Spanish conflict of 1739-48. At its peak, Frederica contained a population of about 1,500, and the fort claimed the distinction of being "the largest, most regular, and perhaps most costly" British fortification in North America.

The first group of Frederica settlers—116 men, women, and children—arrived in February and March 1736. Quickly they built a fort on the bluff overlooking a sharp bend in the inland waterway. Within a month the guns of Fort Frederica commanded all water approaches to the site.

Behind the fort the settlers laid out a town of 84 lots, each 60 by 90 feet. Permanent homes soon replaced the rude huts in which the people first lived, and Frederica began to resemble a healthy, growing settlement, largely English in appearance. Still, the town's architecture reflected the use of native American materials. The homes ranged from log cabins to sturdy two- and three-story houses of wood, brick, and tabby. The people, primarily artisans, soon opened shops offering goods and services that made frontier life easier.

As Frederica grew, so did Oglethorpe's concern for its safety. The town stood on land claimed by Britain, France, and Spain; should war come it would be in a dangerous position. Consequently, Oglethorpe returned to England and secured command of a 650-man regiment of British regular troops. These soldiers manned the defenses of Frederica and several other British posts in coastal Georgia.

The arrival of Oglethorpe's Regiment assured the immediate survival of Frederica, and, at the same time, changed its nature. The military payroll provided a new source of income for the artisans and craftsmen of the town; Frederica quickly became a martial community. Even then, with Anglo-Spanish relations in turmoil, it was no place for the fainthearted.

The problems between Great Britain and Spain erupted in 1739 in the War of Jenkins' Ear. Spain now saw her opportunity to regain both Georgia and South Carolina. Military operations in the Georgia-Florida area culminated in the Battle of Bloody Marsh on St. Simon's Island, where Oglethorpe's outnumbered troops defeated a Spanish invasion force on July 7, 1742. Never again was Spain a major threat to Georgia.

The War of Jenkins' Ear ended in 1748. No longer needed, Oglethorpe's Regiment was disbanded the following year, destroying the town's economy. The shopkeepers and tradesmen of Frederica, lacking the support of a military payroll, moved elsewhere. The town could not survive the loss.

The "Great Fire" of 1758, which destroyed most of Frederica's buildings, proved to be the town's death blow. The few remaining soldiers withdrew from the fort in 1763, and Frederica—born of need and nurtured by war—no longer existed as a living place.

## NATURAL FEATURES

The sprawling live oaks, festooned with Spanish moss, are the most prominent features of Frederica's landscape. The live oak is native to the coastal area and, although the most ancient of Frederica's oaks is probably no more than 200 years old, these trees have always been a part of the Frederica scene. Oglethorpe, visiting the site for the first time in 1734, sought shelter beneath an oak tree during a driving rainstorm. The moss, despite its appearance, is neither a parasite nor a true moss—it is an air plant, feeding off the air and not the tree. Strangely enough, it is related to the pineapple. The Indians made clothing, bedding, and rope from the moss.

## ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The monument, located 12 miles from Brunswick, Ga., on St. Simons Island, can be reached by automobile by taking the Brunswick-St. Simons toll causeway which connects with U.S. 17 at Brunswick. The park is open daily from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. during June, July, and August; and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. the rest of the year.

The visitor center houses an information desk and museum exhibits. The exhibits tell the story of Frederica, and objects recovered from the site are displayed. Uniformed National Park Service employees are on duty to answer your questions and help you. At the information desk you will find post cards and other sales items.

Guided tours through the historic area are offered on a scheduled basis during June, July, and August, and feature the demonstration firing of a flintlock pistol. Special groups receive guide service during the rest of the year by appointment.

Camping and picnicking facilities are not available at Frederica, but there are picnicking facilities at several points on St. Simons Island.

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**Bloody Marsh Battle Site**, a detached unit of the monument, is 6 miles south of Frederica. There on July 7, 1742, an outnumbered force of British troops ambushed and defeated a Spanish column, halting an attack aimed at Frederica. The engagement proved to be the turning point in the Spanish invasion of Georgia. The site is open daily; exhibits tell the story at the site.

## ADMINISTRATION

Fort Frederica National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 816, St. Simons Island, Ga. 31522, is in immediate charge.

**THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



