Early social work in Georgia (1732-1832)

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EARLY SOCIAL WORK IN GEORGIA (1732-1832)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY

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ATLANTA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Many books have been written about the history of Georgia and several studies have been made concerning health, education and similar fields of interest, but no one, to the writer's knowledge, has made a study dealing with the early attempts at social work in Georgia. It is for this reason that the study was made. The aim has been to give a fairly comprehensive presentation of the scope of social work from 1732 to 1832.

In order to investigate the beginning of social work in Georgia, it was necessary to start with the date 1732 for it was at this time that the charter of the Georgia Colony was made. This study arbitrarily stops with the date 1832 because it was felt wise to limit the study to the first one hundred years of Georgia's development.

This thesis will contain a study of that part of social work in Colonial Georgia, whether publicly or privately administered, that included relief for the poor, provisions for dependent children and provisions for the sick. Although social work includes other services such as care for the insane, care for the blind and provisions for other such handicapped persons, this study was limited to the services named above because there was more material in the Colonial Records about these groups of people. Very little mention was made of services for the other groups named above.

1.
The Colonial Records of Georgia, compiled and edited by Allen D. Candler, have served as the chief source of the material used in this thesis. Secondary sources were referred to when the records were not sufficiently complete to present a clear picture of the background of the topic under discussion.

Some discussion has been given to the historical background of the colony of Georgia in order to show the type of people who settled in the province; to mention the philanthropic spirit displayed by Oglethorpe; to show the effect the English Poor Laws had on colonial practices; and, to indicate that the establishment of this colony was based on charity and philanthropy, the embryonic stage of social work.

It is difficult to give an exact definition of the term "social work" as we think of it today and to apply it to early eighteenth century charity and philanthropy because social work has become complex. In order to simplify the term and yet keep its meaning, we can say that, basically, social work involves assistance to individuals or groups of individuals who are physically, mentally, socially or economically handicapped, as well as concern for the environmental factors of the individuals and the social problems of the community. Although it does not include concern for the environment of its beneficiaries in its work, charity, acts of benevolence to the poor, is a form of social work and social work, as it is understood today, is an outgrowth of the charity and philanthropy of the past.

The chief difficulty encountered while collecting the data for the study was found while studying the material in the Colonial Records. The records were not chronologically arranged and the material was unindexed.
Unlike the founders of most of the other British Colonies in America, the founders of Georgia were actuated by motives of pure disinterested philanthropy. The object of the founders of other colonies was pecuniary gain. The colony of Georgia was established, primarily, as a haven for the debtor class and the recently released prisoners of England; however the individuals responsible for the establishment of the colony of Georgia had three objectives in mind: "(1) the relief of poor subjects who through misfortune and want of employment were reduced to great necessity; (2) the increase of the trade and the wealth of the realm; and (3) the establishment of the defense of South Carolina and the provinces further north against the ravages of the Indians."  

The early eighteenth century was a period in which English society was in a chaotic state. Conditions in England and especially in London at this time were lamentable. Great numbers of people were unable to find work, and even members of the more privileged classes fell into debt from which they found it impossible to extricate themselves. The law of the land gave the creditor the right to restrain the freedom of the debtor, even to the extent of having him imprisoned, and the debtor

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1 A. D. Candler, Comp., The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia (Atlanta, 1904), Vol. III, Compiler's Preface to Vol. III. Hereafter cited as C.R.

prisons were being gorged constantly with these unfortunate Englishmen.  

James Oglethorpe, who was a representative in the English Parliament, played an important part in the settlement and the development of the Georgia Colony. Oglethorpe seems to have taken no active part in the parliamentary affairs during the first six or seven years after his election to Parliament. It was not until 1729 that he attracted any considerable attention. In that year he was made chairman of a committee of the House of Commons whose business it was to visit and report on the condition of the Fleet, Marshalsea, and the King's Bench prisons. The committee was composed of fourteen members, and it seems to have been appointed on the motion of Oglethorpe, who had learned something of the prison conditions through a visit to one of his friends who was incarcerated for debt. It is not entirely clear that he inaugurated the movement, but as chairman of the committee he was active in the work and he presented to Parliament the results of the investigations.

Some of the worst evils were remedied, and the prisons were kept in better condition. Almost all of the inmates were set free, but many of them had no homes and no ways of earning a living. So gruesome were the facts brought to light by the investigating committee that Oglethorpe began to consider the possibility of doing something to give the released debtor prisoners a new start in life. The most practicable and permanent relief seemed to be the colonising of these people in America. Oglethorpe's

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1. Emerton M. Coulter, Short History of Georgia (Chapel Hill, 1933), p. 15.
4. Charles H. Smith, History of Georgia (Boston, 1839), p. 3.
philanthropy was not confined to the debtors in the prisons, but extended to all unfortunate and oppressed people. When he obtained the charter from King George II for the settlement of Georgia, the grant included all poor subjects who, through misfortune, were not able to maintain their families. 1

To accomplish Oglethorpe's plan, extensive grants of land were to be made by the crown, and then by public aid and private contributions means were to be provided to settle needy families. The English Parliament granted £10,000 to the new colony so that in its beginning there would be no financial burden, and the English philanthropists subscribed liberally to the funds the Trustees of the Georgia Colony were securing for the project. The colonists were to have a free passage across the sea, a town lot and a section of land, and were to be fed and clothed at the expense of the Trustees for twelve months. 2

King George II signed the Charter of the Colony of Georgia on June 9, 1732. The name "Georgia" was adopted in honor of the reigning monarch. The twenty-one men who petitioned for the land grant were styled "Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia in America." They were empowered to ordain laws and regulations for the government of the colony, to appoint a governor, establish courts, transport settlers, and distribute the land to immigrants. The Trust was to last twenty-one years, and no salary or other financial profit was to be enjoyed by the members of the Trust. 3 The Colonial Records show that none of the Trustees except

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1 Ibid.
2 Adelaide L. Fries, The Moravians in Georgia (1735-1740) (Raleigh, North Carolina, 1905), p. 16
3 Robert Preston Brooks, History of Georgia (Boston, 1913), p. 42.
Oglethorpe came to Georgia, but remained in London and transacted the business of the Colony as best they could through written orders and correspondence with those who were entrusted with the local administration.

The English debtors were not the only people who composed the population of colonial Georgia, for after their settlement several European groups oppressed because of their religion came to the colony. Among them were the Salsburgers and the Moravians.

In 1734, a year after the settlement of the English colonists, the Salsburgers, a group of oppressed Germans, came to the colony as a result of an invitation given them by the Trustees. This group, which was accompanied by two ministers, Rev. Bolsius, former deputy superintendent of the Latin Orphan School at Halle, and Rev. Gronau, former tutor in the small school, was given free transportation to Georgia and support there until they could reap their first harvest from the fifty acres which were to be given to each man among them.¹

The Moravians, another oppressed group, came to the colony in 1736. A second group of Moravians arrived later in the year; they borrowed from the Trustees the funds for their passage to Georgia and provisions necessary for a year. They bound themselves jointly and severally to repay the money.²

Special mention was made of these groups because they offered something new to the colony. The Salsburgers built the first orphan home in the colony and a group of the Moravians came jointly as indentured

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¹ Adelaide L. Fries, op. cit., p. 20.
² Ibid., p. 96.
servants, the first of this class to join the colony.

For approximately ten years after the establishment of the Colony of Georgia, the government was administered by General Oglethorpe; but in 1741, by order of the Trustees, it was divided into two counties, one called Savannah county and the other called Frederica. Each county had a president and four assistants.¹ This division continued until May, 1743, when the Trustees ordered that both counties should be united under one executive, and that the presidents and assistants of the county of Savannah should administer this government.² This law was observed until 1750, when the Trustees ordered a colonial assembly to be called. This assembly was to be composed of sixteen members proportioned to the number of the inhabitants of the different districts.³ When Georgia passed out of the hands of the Trustees in 1752 she became a royal province and remained so until she became a state.⁴

The surrender of the charter to the king of England marked a new era and the form of government changed. The king now appointed a governor and a council to represent him in the province. There was a lower house of legislature in which the members were chosen by the people.⁵ On July 4, 1776, Georgia passed from a colony of the British Crown to a sovereign state thereby gaining her independence.⁶

¹Amanda Johnson, Georgia as a Colony and State (Atlanta, 1935), p. 66.
²Ibid.
³Ibid., p. 67.
⁴Cullen B. Gosnell, Government and Politics of Georgia (New York, 1936), p. 21
⁵Katherine B. Massey and Laura Wood, op. cit., p. 47.
⁶Cullen B. Gosnell, op. cit., p. 20.
CHAPTER III

EARLY SOCIAL WORK IN GEORGIA (1732-1832)

The Treatment of the Poor

The principals of poor relief introduced into America were those with which the colonists had been familiar in England. When the English Colonists came to settle in the New World, they naturally brought with them the ideas and patterns of government to which they had been accustomed in the mother country. Thus the English Poor Relief System was transplanted to the American Colonies and became the basis for American public relief practices.

In examining the development of the system of Poor Relief in Georgia it was found that its fundamental practices were similar to those with which the colonists were familiar in England. The assemblies acknowledged the public duty of caring for the poor and made the tax payers of each locality responsible.

The first few years after the establishment of the colony in 1732 there seems to have been no recognized need for relief measures. This was probably due to the fact that every individual was guaranteed subsistence for a year, after which time many were able to become self-supporting by raising silk, corn, cotton and other products.

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3. C. P. Nettles, _op. cit._, p. 461.
It was not until 1740 that conditions among the colonists seemed to warrant laws relieving the poor. About this time the colony was having trouble with the Spaniards over boundary lines.\(^1\) The disputes finally led to inimicable relationships resulting in intermittent wars. The immigrants, many of whom had been unable to earn enough in the homeland to pay their debts, now proved unsuccessful in coping with the pioneer conditions.\(^2\) These disturbances, plus sickness and death left many dependent families to be provided for and the little commonwealth found itself in a sadly disorganized condition. One historian has described this period in the following manner:

No one seemed to be prospering: the land was not fertile; there was little silk raised and no wine; rice and corn were grown only in small quantities, and cotton and indigo were curiosities; the olive tree died, and all the exotic plants which the Trustees' garden was to afford withered away; there was malaria in the swamps and the sun was hot; few people were coming to the colony and many were leaving; the people would not work for the land was not theirs; they did not like to plant mulberry trees; and they wanted more rights in the government.\(^3\)

Some critics averred in 1740 that the colony was reduced to one-sixth of its former population and that it was, "in a starving and despicable condition."\(^4\) Much discontent grew among the people so that finally a group of families assembled together and threatened to leave and go to a neighboring province. As the Colonial Records indicate:

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\(^1\) Katherine B. Massey and Laura Gleim, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

\(^2\) Oliver P. Chitwood, *Short History of Georgia* (Chapel Hill, 1933), p. 62.


\(^4\) Ibid., p. 64.
For these reasons it appeared absolutely necessary that something should forthwith be done to aid the helpless women and children who have been permitted to go up the river, and have taken up their abode in the woods as well as those men who were willing to stay in the place till the enemy's approach; and no relief being to be had from the common store at Savannah, that having been for sometime shut up by express orders from the Trustees, we were convinced some other expedient must be thought on; and after consultation, it was mutually resolved and all events agreed, that such provisions should be bought as could most readily be obtained for that purpose and that $100 be signed and issued to defray the said expense. It being thought also necessary that some of the officials go up the river to see that provisions were properly distributed among the people. Mr. Jones one of the assistants for the County of Savannah went as was directed to order Joseph Baker at the Crowun Pen to kill beef necessary for the support and maintenance of the colonists.¹

During this period there were also numerous instances of cattle stealing. People had to eat, so when they did not have money to buy food they had to resort to other means of securing it which in some cases resulted in the stealing and killing of cattle.² Other colonists, not being able to maintain themselves adequately, left the colony.³

In order to care for the poor of the colony it was necessary for the governing body to devise some means of support for them, and even in this early period the records indicate that some system of relief giving was applied. Outdoor relief, relief provided the poor in their homes, given sparingly, seemed to be the predominant method of coping with destitution. At this time persons in need of relief applied for assistance to the Board established for the handling of relief among the colonists.

³Ibid., pp. 630-631.
and the Board would stipulate a sum of money they deemed necessary for
the support of the individual applying. There were many widows in the
colony who were in dire need and there are many instances found in the
Colonial Records which indicate some of the measures provided for the
relief of widows during this early period. One widow was provided for in
the following manner:

The Widow Stevinhavel having lately lost her husband, now
petitioned this Board for relief, which we being very sensible
she stands in great need having a daughter that has been bed-
ridden for these two years past, Do order a Barrell of rice to
be given her to help her present necessities.¹

In other cases after assistance was given, the Board recognized the need
for investigation; this investigation may have been to verify the
individual’s need or to ascertain whether the relief given was sufficient.
The following provision indicates the Board’s recognition of this technique
which social case workers use in present day social work:

The Widow Bowling having petitioned this Board setting
forth her bad state and condition and without some necessary
help and assistance she must perish for want.... It is there-
fore the opinion of this Board that she has 10 shillings paid
for her present relief and ordered that a person do inquire
carefully into her present circumstances and report the same
to this Board at the meeting next.²

The Board gave temporary relief to persons who during the summer months
had no means of support, but in fall months were independent because they
could live on the profits derived from their harvests. An example of
this can be seen in the following passage:

The Widow Strutz applying to this Board for relief she
having a large family and nothing to support her till the
Harvest is ripe We preceiving her to be in great want and

² Ibid., p. 31.
an object of charity and whereas the colony has been for some months past without money and entirely supported in the credit of the Estimate by Retailers of Stores within the place ordered that provisions to the amount of twenty shillings be given her on the aforesaid credit.\textsuperscript{1}

Other widows were given aid for an indefinite time by the Board. In the case of one widow, the Board acted in this manner:

Mary, Widow of the late Thomas Young Wheelwright, having often set forth, that she was absolutely incapable of subsisting herself and two children without some relief; which appearing to the Board, they ordered her an allowance of twenty shillings a Quarter, till\textsuperscript{2} they should have reason to recall it.

In most cases, the individual desiring assistance would apply to the Board, but the records indicate a variation from this procedure. In one case a minister applied for relief in behalf of a widow. The subsequent quotation is an example:

The Reverend Mr. Bolsius applied to the Board for relief in behalf of the Widow Petts setting forth her as a very useful woman amongst her neighbors when sick at the River Ness and Abercorn, but in great distress since her late Husband’s Decease— The Board therefore ordered a relief of one shilling per week, till it shall appear, that her circumstances are better.\textsuperscript{3}

The relief during this early period was either in cash or in kind, money or materials. The following is an example where both money and clothes were provided a widow having a large family:

The Widow Stutz having a large family of children and with much hard labour made shift to maintain themselves in food, but are now totally destitute of clothing, making application for relief this Board having taken the same into

\textsuperscript{1} C. R., Vol. VI, p. 105.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., p. 343.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., p. 321.
consideration do think it most expedient to help them principally in clothing, and in consideration that they have not hitherto been chargeable, but have done their utmost to maintain themselves, do order the sum of 40 shillings to be laid out in Osnabrigs and other necessary clothing for the summer.¹

In another case, an improvident widow was given assistance by the Board in the following manner:

The Board taking into consideration the necessitous condition of the Widow Anderson who was left by the death of her husband with two small children and who by her careful management has provided for them these years past; but not business failing and times growing hard with her for want of employment, of which the Board are sensible, they therefore do order the sum of forty shillings to be paid her under this Exigence, hoping thereby she will be enabled to surmount her present necessities.²

In other cases the device for dealing with the able bodied paupers was by giving them employment. A good example for this can be seen in the case of the Widow Anderson who applied for relief and received forty shillings. She was later given employment in the silk industry in order that she might become independent. After learning the trade she was placed over a group of individuals desiring to learn the art of winding silk and was given the materials to work with by the Board. The pupils paid her for her services and, thereby, she was able to become self supporting.³

Some of the adult inhabitants, both male and female, were maintained in the orphan house of the colony; this points out the fact that the institutions housed groups of people irrespective of age or sex. To substantiate this statement, the following instance is cited:

¹ C. E., Vol. VI, p. 129.
² Ibid., p. 166.
³ Ibid., pp. 166, 206, 218, 323.
This Board being informed that there were a great many women and children who fled from Farion for fear of the enemy, and were got with great difficulty and in great distress to Fort Argyle, where providentially they found provisions to refresh and support them for a few days; but it being necessary to pursue some method for their farther support, it was resolved to send a boat to Fort Argyle, and convey them to the Orphan House, where we could more conveniently and with less charge provide for them.

During this period of depression there were some colonists who were able to maintain themselves with only occasional assistance from the government. In order to prepare for these occasions, the Board appropriated money to buy provisions to be given these individuals when in need. The following is an example of the provisions the Board made for the relief of a group of needy individuals:

The Board taking into consideration the necessitous condition of the inhabitants for want of rice and corn do order the sum of sixty pounds to be issued to purchase such commodities.

In order to prepare for an emergency, the Board acted in this manner:

The necessities still continuing in the same state with us as mentioned heretofore, obliges us to have recourse to the same methods as we at diverse times have taken, to make use of part of what cash we have in our hands to buy Sundry Provisions, (Viz) rice etc. We therefore find it absolutely needful to issue the sum of sixty pounds for these occasions.

An instance of a family receiving occasional assistance given by the Board is stated in the following passage:

The helpless and distressed State that Joseph Fitzwalter and his family have been reduced to for a long Time past being such as cannot with any certainty be relieved, it is recommended to the President to give such occasional aid as he may judge necessary for their support.

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2 Ibid., p. 170.
3 Ibid., p. 179.
4 Ibid., p. 49.
In order to indicate other measures provided for the relief of improvi-
dents, more examples are given. To aid soldiers no longer in service
and for their families, the Board acted in this manner:

Three Hundred Pounds was issued towards the defraying the
disbanded soldiers and their families with provisions.1

The benefactor of an unfortunate man, incapacitated for several months,
was given this consideration:

Mr. Abraham Minis had several times applied to the Board
to be reimbursed the expense he had been as for supporting
and finding attendance for Christopher Wypanbacher who had
formerly been his servant, and lately had the misfortune of
breaking his leg and was carried to his house, which
fracture being complicated with a large wound, confined him
a long time to his bed, of which he had sooner recovered, so
as to walk with crutches, but he accidentally fell; and
fractured it a second time; both accidents confined him up-
wards of 5 months, and he appeared to the Board to have
nothing to subsist on, and knowing the incapacity of Mr.
Minis, who has a large family; thought proper to allow him
five shillings a week for twenty weeks, believing the young
man, when able, will make him some further retaliation, he
being an industrious good natured, hard working young fellow.2

From the examples cited and the discussion made in the preceding
pages, the author readily concludes that much was done to alleviate the
distress among the colonists during 1740 and the years following this
date. Although their methods were feeble, they did recognize governmental
responsibility for the indigent.

From all indications the financial status of the colony must have
reached its lowest ebb in 1751, for in that year the Trustees asked
Parliament for an appropriation to help maintain Georgia. Having already
done much more for Georgia than it had ever done for any other colony.

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2 Ibid.
Parliament refused to give further help. The King was then approached for aid; he answered that Georgia should get no further help until the Trustees gave up their Charter.¹

In 1752, when Georgia became a royal colony, the warring had discontinued and conditions for most colonists must have improved, for the Colonial Records show little evidence of relief giving. However, in 1757, as the Colonial Records show, the following situation existed:

His Honour the Governor represented to the Board the distressed starving condition of the Arcadians in and about Savannah so afflicted by Sickness that there were not more than five Persons able to work for the Maintenance and Support of One Hundred and withal mentioned the necessity he thought there was something being Provided for their immediate Relief. Which being taken into consideration the Board were of the opinion that they should be supplied with five barrels of rice in their present distress.²

During the years from 1764 to 1780 the colonists must have prospered because many requests were made for additional land and, as was forestated, the records show no evidence of relief giving. The following are examples of the requests and grants made during this period:

Read a Petition of Donald Ross setting forth that he was an Old Settler in the Province and Possessed of only fifty acres of Land therein and having a Family consisting of a Wife and three Children are desirous of obtaining an Additional Grant and Praying for three hundred and fifty Acres of Land called Buffalo Swamp on the Alatamaha which if granted he promised to cultivate and improve the same. Resolved-- That on condition only that the Petitioner doth take out a grant for the said Land Within seven months from this Date and that he doth Also Register the said grant in the Register's office of this Province within six months from the date thereof that his Majesty may not be defrauded of his Quit-Rents, Then Part of the Prayer of the Said Petition namely two hundred Acres is granted.³

¹E. Horton Coulter, op. cit., pp. 73-74.
³Ibid., p. 596.
Read a petition of Christopher Cramer setting forth that he had two hundred acres of land granted him and was desirous to obtain additional Tract having a Wife a Child and two Negros. Therefore praying for one hundred Acres on an island opposite Ebenezer adjoining to the Westward Land of William De Braham and Southward the River Savannah and all other sides vacant Land.—Resolved That on condition only that the Petitioner doth take out a Grant for the said Land within seven months from this Date And that he doth also register the said Grant in the Register's Office of this Province within six months from the date thereof that his Majesty may not be defrauded of his Quit-Rents the Prayer of the said Petition is granted.¹

This apparent progress was interrupted when England passed the Stamp Act and other measures to force the American Colonies to assist in paying her enormous war debts. Many historians say that this compilation of grievances was the cause of the colonists' desires for independence which resulted in a war with their mother country.

In the Revolutionary Records, many references were made concerning the giving of relief to families in need. During this time an act was passed providing relief for distressed persons. It was also evidenced that persons receiving relief had to establish legal settlement in the Province. This conclusion was drawn because of the following quotation:

The House resolved itself into a Committee of the whole House to take under consideration the Bill entitled an Act for the relief of such of His Majesty's loyal subjects, as are inhabitants of the Province of Georgia, or having any property or intercourse therein.²

Each parish was made responsible for the care of its indigent and the church was the agent for collecting the taxes to aid the poor. In

1761 there was a motion made that the Churchwardens and Vestry of Christ Church Parish be ordered to lay before the House all accounts of monies received by them by the way of tax for the use of the poor in the parish.  

Some individuals who were not citizens of a certain parish had been receiving provisions from the public, and it was suggested that a committee inquire into the situation of such families and if they were not entitled to public aid it would be withdrawn. There was still another group of people who were not eligible for relief because they were employed but evidently they had been receiving aid unnoticed by the officials. This investigation was intended to discover this group, too.  

The relief of this period differed from that given in the earlier period in that it was predominately relief in kind rather than in cash. In practically every instance daily rations were issued to the poor families applying for aid. In one instance this aid was supplied to a group of needy families:

Mr. Lockhart, the Assistant Commissary appeared before the Council and represented that several widows and others, with children were destitute of provisions and no mode of supply. Therefore, Resolved, that the under mentioned persons be supplied by the Commissary, with the following rations: vis, Widow Tripllett and two children........two rations Widow Lett and five children........three rations Widow Davis and one child........two rations Mr. Henderson and two children........two rations.

During the American Revolution there was much suffering among the people

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1 A. D. Candler, Comp., The Revolutionary Records of Georgia (Atlanta, 1904), Vol. II, p. 318. Hereafter cited as R. R.

2 Ibid.

of the Province. Several references in the Revolutionary Records show where money was allowed by the Assembly for the support of families distressed by the enemy. One family was granted this assistance:

An order was drawn on the Treasury by His Honor the Governor, in favor of Ann Brown, reliet of James Brown, deceased, for the sum of three hundred and sixty dollars, being allowed by the Assembly for the support of a family distressed by the enemy.\(^1\)

In other cases, the Governor was empowered by the Board to act in the following manner:

Ordered, that His Honor the Governor, be empowered to issue orders to the Commissary, to supply Mrs. Osborn with ten bushels corn, she coming under the act for the relief of distressed persons. And that Mr. Edward Cartlodge be permitted to draw rations as a Doctor for Militia of this state. Likewise order five bushels of corn to be issued to Mrs. Susannah Haile, she coming under the act for the relief of distressed persons.\(^2\)

Some families who had become dependent on the public for their food were given daily rations, but only for a short period of time. Records specify the number of meals per day and the length of time these meals were to be given. A great number of these families were allowed food for only one month. The families of three women were aided as follows:

Ordered, That the said Mrs. Seabury be allowed two rations per day, for her family the space of one month this date.\(^3\)

Ordered, That the said Mrs. Remmet and her family be allowed three rations per day for one month this date.

Application being made by petition, to this Board, by Elizaboth Wright, for rations for herself and the same being considered—Therefore, Ordered, that four rations be


\(^2\) Ibid., p. 319.

\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 372-373.

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 373.
ordered for one month after the date hereof, for the support of herself and family.¹

A very interesting situation is mentioned in the Revolutionary Records of two men who went to Savannah, Georgia on public business. Before leaving there they found themselves without money and supplies and were compelled to apply for assistance. The application of these two men was given some consideration, for it was ordered "that they be supplied with three daily rations for four days for themselves and servants."²

The governing body of early Georgia recognized the necessity of caring for the widows living in the Province, so every widow was automatically eligible for aid under the act for the relief of distressed persons. Near the end of the eighteenth century several widows were assisted in this manner:

Ordered, that the Council do approve of the orders given by Col. Heard in favor of the following widows viz.: Mrs. Abigail Carter of Wilkes County, for twelve bushels; Mrs. Wells of Richmond County for two daily rations, they being widows and entitled to the benefit to the act for the relief of distressed persons.³

In another instance, the governor acted as follows:

Ordered, That His Honor the Governor be requested to order thirty bushels of corn to be delivered Mr. Cartey agreeable to an order of the late House of Assembly. And that four rations per day be allowed Mrs. Triplett a widow, until further orders; four rations to Mrs. Clark and six children, she being an object of charity.⁴

After the American Revolution, many counties in Georgia passed laws relating to the relief of the poor in the community. In 1792 it was

²Ibid., pp. 358-359.
³Ibid., p. 321.
⁴Ibid., p. 323.
enacted that the inferior courts in the several counties in the state have the power to inquire into the circumstances of the poor, appoint an overseer of the poor, and authorize justices and overseers of the poor to levy annually a tax and assess all taxable property.\textsuperscript{1} This money was used to support the poor.

Later, the court itself assumed responsibility for the indigent, for an act of February 21, 1786 gave the court the jurisdiction of the care of the poor.\textsuperscript{2}

The governing body, besides enacting measures for the poor as a whole, took into consideration individual cases. In 1799 an act was passed for the relief of Basil Lamar whose mill was consumed by fire.\textsuperscript{3}

In 1802, the Petersburg Union Society, an organization composed of philanthropists, was formed for the sole purpose of benevolence to alleviate the wants and distress of improvidents.\textsuperscript{4} It seems as if a great step in social work was made, for prior to this time most aid to the poor was given through governmental agencies. At this time as act was passed to incorporate the town of Saint Mary, and it is interesting to observe that among the laws of the town were special laws regarding the care of the poor.

During the year 1805, it was enacted that the Inferior Court of the

\textsuperscript{1} Oliver H. Prince, Digest of the Laws of the State of Georgia (Athens, 1837), p. 229.
\textsuperscript{2} Digest of the Laws of the State of Georgia (Milledgeville, 1822), p. 169.
\textsuperscript{3} Georgia Laws, 1799, p. 77.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 1802, p. 34.
County of Wilkes be authorized to levy an extra tax upon the inhabitants in order to complete repairs on the jail and to apply money for the maintenance and support of the poor of the county. ¹

At a still later date, 1820, an act was passed authorizing the Justice of the Inferior Court of the County of Richmond to purchase a lot of land not to exceed one hundred acres, for the purpose of erecting a suitable and convenient building for maintaining and educating the poor of the county. ² This was the first institution established exclusively for the care of improvident adults, for before 1830 there were dependents of all ages housed in the same place, then called orphan houses.

The Justice of the Inferior Court of Wilkes in 1825, was authorized to levy a tax for the benefit of the poor. ³

Another instance of the concern of the courts for provisions for the needy people occurred when the Inferior Courts of Burke and Elbert Counties were authorized to levy and assess a tax annually for the benefit of the poor of their counties in 1826. ⁴ and in this same year a law was made granting the commissioner the power to establish a lottery for the benefit of the poor in Burke County. ⁵

That the legal representatives of the people of Georgia were interested in the care of indigents is noted again, for in 1829 an act was passed authorizing the Justice of the Inferior Court of the Counties of Jasper,

³ Ibid., p. 294.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
Jones and Monroe to provide and establish an asylum for the invalid poor of the said counties and to appoint directors for the management of the same. As soon as a sufficient amount of funds could be spared Directors of poorhouses were to be appointed.

Several times during the year 1830 a motion was made in the Georgia Senate, to provide permanent assistance for the poor, but each time it was rejected. Although this effort failed some progress was made in the field of social work, for in this same year a bill was passed authorizing and empowering the Justices of the Inferior Court of Morgan County to establish an institution for the relief of the poor.

No definite progress occurred in 1832, but bills providing for the relief of individuals were copious and a bill was passed for the relief of the citizens of Talbot County.

A study of the petitions granted by the Board of Trustees for the Colony of Georgia and of the various laws passed by the Georgia Assembly show that, in Colonial Georgia, there was much concern for the citizens of that colony who were improvident. This chapter proves, furthermore, that after Georgia became a state, those in authority began to recognize the need for institutionalized care for indigent persons and that, recognizing this need, provisions were made for the institutions established for this purpose. In other words, poor relief, in the beginning, was simple.

1 William C. Dawson, op. cit., p. 294.
2 The Georgia Senate Journal, 1830, p. 146.
3 Ibid., p. 80.
home, "out-door" care, but became more complex, institutionalized, "in-door", relief as the state grew in population and in wealth.

Provisions for the Sick

The Trustees took particular precautions to safeguard the health of the colonists, for records show that before the colonists left England the Trustees had appropriated thirteen guineas for the relief of sick and child bearing women in their passage to the colony. Other interested Englishmen gave voluntary contributions toward the relief for the sick. On July 20, 1732 money was received from Mr. George Heathcote, a wealthy citizen, for relief of the Swiss sick, childbearing women, and persons likely to become ill in their passage to the colony. Mr. Purry and the Elders of the Swiss congregation contributed funds for the relief of the Swiss congregation, for the relief of the Swiss sick, for the relief of the child bearing woman and for persons likely to become ill in their passage to the colony.

Oglethorpe showed signs of interest in the health of the settlers by selecting a place of settlement he thought conducive to good health. The following, the basis for the preceding statement, is an extract from a letter written by Oglethorpe to the Trustees:

Our people are all in perfect health. I chose this situation for the Town upon High Ground. Forty feet perpendicular above Highwater Mark; the soil dry and sandy, the Water of the River

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4 Ibid., p. 15.
fresh Springs coming out from the sides of the Hills. I pitched upon this place, not only for the Pleasantness of the Situation, but because from the above mentioned and other signs, I thought it healthy; for it is sheltered from the Western and Southern winds.... The last and fullest condition of the Healthfulness of the place was, that an Indian Nation who knew the Nature of this country, chose it for their situation.¹

Despite the fact that a good location was secured, there was much suffering among the colonists. A hot summer and the absence of rain caused ague, malignant fever, and dysentery at Savannah;² the salt beef issued from the store formed too great a proportion of the diet, and this, with the frequent absence of fresh vegetables, led to the constant outbreaks of scurvy.³ Consignments of medicine and drugs were sent out from England regularly and an effort was made to combat the ravages of scurvy and dysentry. Among the remedies forwarded was a bottle of saltrium seeds. By September, in the first year of settlement, there had been forty deaths, or about eleven percent of the whole population.⁴

Many laws were enacted to benefit health conditions among the colonists. In 1735 money was appropriated by the civil government of the whole province for the public midwife, for relief of the sick and poor, for a chest of medicine, for a Surgeon, and for an apothecary to dispense the same.⁵ In 1738 a committee considering the future expenses of the Colony in America for a year were of the opinion that sums of money should be set aside for the sick in the northern and southern parts of

¹ Leslie F. Church, op. cit., p. 107.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
the province. The following year laws were passed to give a salary to 
the public midwife at Savannah who was obliged to visit the sick poor 
and trust servants, persons who owed the Trustees a sum of money and 
were paying them back by their labor, when required; and a sum of money 
was appropriated for the care of the sick, including food, apothecaries 
drugs, attendance, midwife nurses, and burying the dead, but only those 
dead who were on the poor account and who were trust servants.

Though the people were few in numbers they were scattered, and the 
outposts had to rely on anyone with a smattering of medical knowledge who 
happened to settle there. The inhabitants of Tyboo Town lived on the 
edge of a salt marsh which was flooded at the spring tides. One of the 
settlers, Samuel Pensyre, spent his time and £3 of his money in visiting 
the sick at Tybee, Skidaway, and Highgate. Oglethorpe allowed him two 
shillings per day, and he requested a 'copper lambick' to distil herbs 
for medicine. We find other instances where the local government paid 
expenses for medical purposes. The subsequent examples, passages from 
the Colonial Records, attest the validity of this statement:

That the committee then took into consideration the said 
Thomas Hawkin's claim of seventy pounds two shillings and 
four pence for medicine and attendance of the sick; for a 
Coffin Wine Nurse fresh provisions and extraordinary 
necessaries Michaelma 1739 to Michaelmas 1740.

That the said Commissioners having sent over Patrick 
Graham's account with the trust from November 30th 1937 
to October 4th 1739 for Physick administered at Savannah

2 Ibid., pp. 275-276.
3 Leslie F. Church, op. cit., p. 107.
4 September.
where on the balance due to him appeared to be forty pounds seventeen shillings and six pence, the Committee find the said account includes the following sums of two pounds three shillings and five pence, thirty six pounds eight shillings and three pence, two pounds thirteen shillings and two pence for medicine for soldiers left sick at Savannah Part of the first Detachment of General Oglethorpe's Regiment whilst those in health went to their Station at Frederica under the care of Lieutenant Col. Cochran. However as this case is circumstances, it being for the service of the colony that the health of said soldiers be restored; and no further expense of that nature arising; and that the said Patrick Graham having duly administered medicine to the sick at Savannah, and having no other means of payment the Committee were of the opinion that the said Patrick Graham ought not be a sufferer, but should be paid the sum of forty pounds seventeen shillings and six pence reported due him as aforesaid.  

During the year 1740, as has been mentioned before in this thesis, there was much distress and suffering among the colonists. The governing body, realising that the sick of the province were not able to work for their own maintenance, allowed sums of money to be given for their care in their homes. In order to show how they were assisted the following passages were taken from the Colonial Records. This action was taken in the case of a large family in which both parents were old and ill:

Thomas Young petitioning this Board for relief; he having a large family of children, and both he and his wife being infirm through age and sickness, wherein she now lies in a deplorable condition; for the present Exigence the Board thought fit to allow four shillings per week, till they saw farther.  

Here is an example of the way in which two sick widows were given assistance by the Board:

The widow Valentine Bloom late of Vernonburgh being herself in a deplorable condition occasioned by a long fit

\[2\] C. R., Vol. VI, p. 166.
of sickness and being really in want of proper sustenance; it was thought fit that the sum of twenty shillings should be given her to buy such necessaries as were needful in their present wants. The widow Bloom being in a very sickly and low condition and applied for relief tis judged proper to allow her ten shillings for her present support.

An ill woman and her aged husband were assisted in this manner:

Lawrence Radnor one of the inhabitants at Vernonburg petitioning this Board setting forth that his wife has lain for a long time sick and he himself an old infirm man almost past labour, We knowing what he set forth is true thought fit to allow him ten shillings for his present relief.

The Board rendered this aid in another instance:

Christopher Bender being reduced to a very weak and decripd state thro' old age and having nothing left wherewith to subsist upon taking his miserable case into considera- tion the Board thought proper to allow him one shilling and sixpence per week during his necessities.

The Board, in the case of an incapacitated man, acted as follows:

David Cunningham having suffered greatly by an accident in firing a great Gun on the 1st of July last, when he was cleaning them in Order to be ready for use against the enemy, whereby he was for a long time after rendered incapable of doing anything toward the support of his family, and withall at the same time having his apparel burnt and spoiled He now applies to the Board for some allowances towards his loss It is ordered that the sum of thirty shillings be paid him.

The scourge of small pox occupied much of the attention of the settlers of the colony. From the laws that were passed from about 1760 to 1773 by the colonial government, it seems that the importation of slaves from West Africa brought the disease to these shores. In fact,
this, with one or two cases of yellow fever, was the only health problem for many years. ¹

Strenuous efforts were made to guard the health of the colonists and laws attempting to prevent the spread of the disease were numerous. In order to bear out this statement, the following example is sited:

At a Council held in the Council Chamber at Savannah on Wednesday 13th February, 1760, it was ordered that to prevent the infection of the small pox among the inhabitants, The Master of all vessels coming from South Carolina shall produce a Certificate of Health from the Magistrate of the place from whence the vessels come; and shall also make affidavit that the small pox is not nor has been on board during the passage; In default whereof such vessel shall perform quarantine ten days from its arrival in the river.²

In 1763 an act was passed which required ships and other vessels coming from places infected with epidemical distempers to perform quarantine and it also ordered that the commander of such fort or battery should send a notice to the governor on the arrival of any distempered ship or vessel which had come from a place with any contagious distemper. On such notice, a doctor was ordered to visit the vessel and report the state and condition of health of the vessel.³ It was further enacted that every house keeper who kept a sailor and with whom a seaman became ill notify the Church Warden; if she failed or neglected to do so she was made liable to the whole expense attending the maintenance and care of the sick person.⁴

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⁴Ibid.
Two years later it was ordered that such passengers and other white persons on board a distempered ship who were in good health should have the liberty to go up to town, but that all Negroes must be put on shore on Tybee Island to remain there until proof assured authorities at Fort George that they had recovered from the said disease. Any vessel that came to Savannah would be permitted to enter port only after it had been in quarantine for ten days at Tybee Creek and after all proper means used to cleanse the vessel from any infection that may have been on board. From the laws that were enacted during this early period, it is clear that much concern was given for the health of the citizens.

The colonists found that many individuals came to the colony with infectious diseases and this condition presented a problem on Tybee Island, so that it was deemed necessary to erect some sort of building where care could be given these diseased persons. In 1767 a law was passed for the erection and building of a lazaretto and a house for the keeper on Tybee Island. In order to help maintain this building, two thirds of the money that was collected for forfeiture of the acts preventing the bringing into and spreading of malignant and contagious distempers in the province went toward alleviating the expense of the building of the lazaretto and for keeping it in repair.

The records are not clear as to when the first hospital was built, but from all indications it was shortly before 1782. During this year Major Habersham gave the Board two letters that had been written by

3 Ibid., p. 827.
Doctor Brownfield, the surgeon of the hospital at the great swamp, telling them of the poor condition of the hospital and asking for necessary supplies. The Board, realizing the great need of the hospital, immediately ordered that provisions be made for it.¹

During the American Revolution little mention was made of the sick in the Colonial Records and it was not until 1784 that the governing body of the Georgia Colony really concerned itself about a hospital. The War was probably the impetus for this move. In the year mentioned above, a law was passed for erecting and establishing a hospital near Savannah for the reception and treatment of sick seamen; a commission was also selected and given full power and authority to raise funds by lottery for the erection of the hospital and full power and authority to appoint a physician, a surgeon, and other officers and persons needed.² Later it was further enacted by the authority that the commission have power to draw for and to appropriate any sum of money for the use and benefit of the hospital.³

We have reason to believe that about 1793 contagious diseases among the people must have been prevalent, for many laws were enacted to try to keep them from spreading. This same year the inferior courts and corporations were authorized to provide a suitable temporary hospital for the afflicted, to furnish them with subsistence, medicine and nurses. They were authorized also to provide a guard to prevent the communication

³ Ibid., pp. 430-451.
with others by the sick and to burn infectious clothing.\(^1\)

It was not until 1829 that Georgia officials realized the great need for categorical institutions and it was at this time an act was adopted authorizing the justices of the inferior court of Washington County to provide and establish an asylum for the invalid poor.\(^2\) This idea must have spread, for in the following years similar acts were passed in other counties.

At a still later date, 1831, it was made lawful for the Mayor and Alderman of Savannah to purchase land, as they deemed wise, for the erection of a lazaretto, or suitable building, where persons infected with small pox or contagious disease could be kept until permitted to leave.\(^3\)

The last year that this study includes a bill was passed to establish an infirmary for the relief and protection of aged and afflicted Negroes in the State of Georgia, and to provide funds for the same.\(^4\)

The various laws concerning the protection of the health of the inhabitants of different communities in Georgia and legal enactments providing care for an isolation of persons suffering from infectious disease all show that in its first hundred years, Georgia’s interest in social welfare extended to the sick. Quarantine measures, potential


\(^{2}\) *Georgia Laws*, 1829, p. 112.


\(^{4}\) *The Georgia Senate Journal*, 1832, p. 61.
public nurses in the form of midwives, crude hospitals for the housing of the improvident sick all prove that Georgia, as a colony and as a newly established state, was concerned for the care of its sick, both as a means of precaution against the spread of disease and as a means for the relief for the diseased or otherwise ill.

The Care of Dependent Children

Many deaths occurred among the colonists as a result of the numerous altercations with the Indians. These deaths, plus sickness and other misfortunes, resulted in the appearance of a large number of orphans within the colony. The governing body of the Georgia Colony found it necessary to make some kind of provisions for these orphans and other dependent children. After studying the Colonial Records of Georgia it was found that the two most predominant ways of caring for this group was by binding them out or by placing them in an orphan asylum.

The Salsburgers, a religious group of Germans who came to the colony as indentured servants, seemed to have established the first orphan house in the colony at Ebenezer about 1735. They received funds from Germany for the establishment of an orphan house; “two thirds of a square” was appropriated for it, and it was among the first buildings erected by the Salsburgers. In 1738 Martin Bolsius, a minister in the province, asked the Trustees for subsistence toward the orphan house and during the following year Mr. Gronau, a minister of the colony, allowed £30 for it and also gave money to make shoes for the orphans. This institution ran in debt but was able to pay back the money by the industry

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of the orphan house. The inmates tilled acres of corn, peas, rice and potatoes.¹ This orphan house differed from those we have today in that adults as well as children were maintained in it. The older children were taught the German language.² George Whitfield, of whom some discussion will be given later in this thesis, furnished many necessities to the orphans, widows and other needy ones in the home.³ Mr. Bolzius, a Moravian minister, wrote a letter to Mr. Verelst, one of the officials of the colony who lived in England, asking for some assistance for the orphan house. The following is an extract from that letter:

Our Orphan-House having been from its beginning in some Distress is indebted to the Store at Savannah for £57:6:6 in Provisions, Clothing and Nails. I knew very well, the Honorable Trustees have all ways a particular care for poor distressed people, therefore I am in-con- fidence, they will be so generous as to allow this sum to the Orphan-House gratis, or to give me for it so long credit, till God is pleased to enable me to pay this Debt with thankfullness....⁴

Although the orphan house was a great help in caring for dependent children, many children suffered bodily injuries from hard usage.⁵ From all indications this orphan home must have been used exclusively by the Salsburgers for when Whitfield came to Georgia in 1738 he found many destitute orphan children in the colony who were not cared for in the orphan house at Ebenezer.⁶

¹ C. R., Vol. XXII, p. 159.
² Ibid., pp. 160-161.
³ Ibid., p. 297.
⁴ Ibid., pp. 421-422.
⁵ C. R., Vol. XXIII, p. 299.
Although Whitfield came to the colony for the purpose of helping in the conversion of the Indians, when he saw how many destitute orphan children were to be found in the colony, he determined to devote himself to building a home where they could be cared for and educated. The Georgia Trustees granted him five hundred acres of land for the purpose, he collected more than five hundred pounds in England and America by preaching to various groups, and Mr. Robert Hows gave his fifty acre lot for the use of such a building.

The site of the orphans' home was selected by James Habersham, about ten miles from Savannah, and the first brick was laid by Whitfield, on March 25, 1740.

When the orphanage, Bethesda, first opened, there were seventy occupants, but later in the year there were one hundred and fifty persons consisting of families, hired servants, orphans, poor children, and working tradesmen.

The building of the orphan house proved beneficial to the colony in that it created employment and helped to build up the morale of the poor people. In 1740 Whitfield wrote a letter to Mr. Verelst at the Georgia Office at Westminster telling him of what value the building of an orphan house was to the colony. The quotation below is a portion of this letter:

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5 Ibid., p. 291.
The building of this orphan house I find will be of great service to the Colony in general. It prevents many leaving the place and I believe will be an encouragement for others to come over. It is about ten miles from the town and I intend contributing largely toward making a Great Cart Road from Savannah thither which will be very serviceable to all the plantations thereabouts. I have taken in many children and am taking fresh ones daily. I propose employing some of them in the cotton manufactory. I am just setting a weaver to work and have engaged to take all the cotton that shall be planted in the colony the ensuing year....

William Stephens' Journal, from which the following passage is taken, gives a good description of Bethesda:

The principal house was a grand edifice; the design of the apartments within I am not master of; they were in such forwardness, as to be ready for raising the roof this week; it is well cellared underneath; the foundation walls are of brick, which rise several feet higher than the surface of the land, and the rooms of both lower and upper story are six good handsome edifices'; three of each side, for the following purpose, viz. a workhouse for women and children, opposite an infirmary of like dimensions; next a kitchen, opposite to it another of the same size, for washing, brewing, etc....

A description of the management of Bethesda is clearly pictured in the following paragraph:

During the year 1741, a young gentleman of Boston visited the orphan house, and he wrote a description of the management: "The bell rings in the morning at sunrise to wake the family. When the children arise, they sing a short hymn, pray by themselves, go down to wash; and, by the time they have done that, the bell calls to public worship, when a portion of Scripture is read and expounded, a psalm sung, and the exercises begin and end with a prayer. Then they breakfast, and afterwards some go to their trades, and the rest to their prayers and school. At noon they all dine in the same room, and have comfortable and wholesome diet provided. A hymn is sung before and after dinner. Then, in about half hour, to school again; and between whiles find time enough for recreation.

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1 C. R., Vol. XXII, p. 381.
A little after sunset, the bell calls to public duty again, which is performed in the same manner as in the morning. After they sup, and are attended to bed by one of their masters, who then prays with them, as they often do privately.¹

Some of the Trustees were not at all pleased with this program; they felt that there was entirely too much praying and singing and too little recreation. The discipline also seemed to them too strict.²

In the colony, too, there were complaints of the severity of the managers, especially Mr. Barber, in dealing with the children under their care. In one case, the complaints were so bitter that Barber was summoned under warrant to appear before the magistrates in Savannah to answer for the cruelty. He did not deny resorting to somewhat stringent measures to keep order among the boys at the orphanage, and that the Trustees had given disciplinary authority to the managers of the institutions. He was not punished, but warned that the magistrates would in the future inspect the orphan house and see that there was no further abuses.³

The following, a copy of a letter written by Oglethorpe relating to the orphans, clearly shows that, even in 1740, some regard was given to family ties and it also indicates that colonial practices in caring for orphans were copied from the English Laws.

As for Milledge's brother and sister I think your representation is very just, that the taking them away to the orphan house will break up a family, which is in a likely way of living comfortably. Mr. Whitfield's design is for the good of the people and the glory of God, and I dare say, when he considers this he will be very well satisfied with the Boys and Girls' return to their brother John Milledge, since they can assist him, and you may allow them upon my account the

²Ibid.
³George McCain, *op. cit.*, p. 293.
provisions they used to have upon the orphan account. Upon this head I am to acquaint you that I have inspected a grant relating to the orphan house, Mr. Seward said that the Trustees had granted the orphans to Mr. Whitfield, but I showed him that it could not be in the same sense he at first seemed to understand it. It is most certain that Orphans are human creatures, and neither cattle nor any other kind of chattles, therefore cannot be granted the Care of the Helpless Orphans to Mr. Whitfield and have given him 500 acres of land and a power of collecting Charities, as a Consideration for maintaining all the orphans who are in necessity in this Province, and thereby the Trustees think themselves discharged from maintaining any but the same time, the Trustees have not given, as I see, any power to Mr. Whitfield to receive the Effects of the Orphans, much less to take, by force any orphans who can maintain themselves, or whom any other substantial person will maintain. The Trustees in this act according to the Law of England, in case orphans are left destitute they become the Charge upon the Parish, and the Parish may put them out to be taken care of, but if any person will maintain them so that they are not Chargeable to the Parish, the Parish doth not meddle with them, and since the taking away of the Court of Wards and Liveries, the Guardianship of themselves at a certain age can chose their Guardian and the Judges, Chancellor Magistrates etc., have the same inspection over the Effects and persons of the Orphans, as they have over those of His Majesty's other Subjects, and the Effects and persons of Orphans are as much under the Protection of the Laws, as those of any other of His Majesty's subjects.¹

In May, 1740, another reference was made to John Millidge and his family. Whitfield went to New York and during his absence he left Mr. Syms to superintend the orphan house. Mr. Syms allowed two of the orphans to return home. When Whitfield returned and learned of the situation he became very angry and wrote the Trustees concerning the situation. Below is an extract from the letter written:

He has removed them I think after a very improper manner. I am verily persuaded the petition sent by John Millidge is only a contrivance of the General.² For he has got one sister near eighteen or nineteen years old that lives in his house, and can sufficiently do his business, He being but a single man. Besides I know the produce of all his land will

²General Oglethorpe.
not maintain the children and therefore they must be supported
either by Trustees or General Oglethorpe. But if children
are to be taken by force out of the Orphan House whenever any-
one says he will maintain them, on what precarious foundation
does the House stand?... The colony will never succeed, if
such arbitrary power be allowed of. Here are two children taken
away, but what provision is made for their better parts, may
even for their bodies for any considerable time? And how can I
venture to put children out apprentices if they are every day
liable to be removed in such an arbitrary manner?¹

Although Whitfield had hoped that Bethesda would be independent of
the governing body of the colony, in 1754 several laws were passed giving
the Magistrate voice concerning regulations for orphans. They are as
follows:

(1) That the Magistrates only have the power to place orphans
in the orphan house; and no person whatsoever can
take them without their authority and approbation;
(2) That if they found any orphan old enough to be employed
in any service, and if the orphan desired it, and any
master could be found willing and able to take him as an
apprentice, the Magistrates might dispose of the orphan
as seemed best to them;
(3) That they should not take any orphan from their friends
who are able or willing to take care of them;
(4) Neither, where the orphan has sufficient property to be
maintained by, but such orphans only were to be taken in
as are destitute of friends or means for their subsistence
or instruction;
(5) That they should call on the manager of the orphan house
for their improvements and employments, and the care taken
of them and once every year visit the house, inspect the
management and make reports of the Trustees; and
(6) That they should put an orphan who is a freethinker and
sixteen years old upon the work of his own plantation.²

A lengthy discussion of Bethesda has been given because the majority
of dependent children of Georgia at that time were cared for in this
institution. Whenever the Colonial Records referred to orphans, it in-
variably mentioned Bethesda. The home proved successful in that it

provided care for many dependents, but there were a few people who objected to its administration. In one instance the following statement was made:

Not a moment of innocent recreation though necessary to health and strengthening of growing children is allowed in the whole day, but much public and private prayer with frequent singing of psalms and hymns, (some of which their own immediate invention) required. The whole discipline appears to be too strict.¹

Binding out, the second system used to care for dependent children, was practiced in some instances in the early days of the Colony of Georgia, but it did not appear to be important until the last few years of the eighteenth century. When, in 1792, the inferior courts in several counties were given power to bind out orphans and appoint guardians for them.²

In connection with this, other regulations were as follows:

All guardians shall be allowed in their account, to charge all reasonable disbursements and expense, suitable to the circumstances of the orphan committed to his care. And where it shall appear to the said court that the annual profits of the estate of any orphan is not sufficient for the education and maintenance of such orphan, it shall be the duty of such court forthwith to bind out the said orphan for the whole or such part of the time of such orphan's minority as to them shall seem best; and the person to whom such orphan shall be bound, shall undertake to clothe and maintain apprentice in such manner as the said court may direct, and shall cause such apprentice to be taught to read and write the English language, and the usual rules of arithmetic.³

If the appointed guardian misused or ill treated the orphan, the court could take the orphan out of his possession and bind the child out to another person.⁴

³ Ibid., pp. 232-233.
⁴ Ibid.
41.

In some cases orphans were placed out in homes if some one would assume responsibility for the child's care. This practice, which leads us to the discussion of the second system used to care for dependent children in the early days of Georgia, was the binding out of the children. The only objection Whitfield offered was that the older children who had been housed for several years and who were capable of rendering him service were usually asked for.\(^1\) In the Colonial Records is an example of this for Mrs. Camuse, a skilled worker in the silk industry, asked for children from the orphan house to act as apprentices.\(^2\)

Some of the children who were "bound out" to families were mistreated and over worked, hence, whenever authorities heard that a child was cruelly treated, the guardian was brought before them and reprimanded. Cases in point would be that of Mr. Causton, who cruelly treated a boy he kept,\(^3\) and that of Mr. Parker who allowed the children in his home to attend school only four hours a day, but compelled them to work the remainder of the day.\(^4\)

Some of the boys apprenticed out ran away because of the harsh treatment.\(^5\) In one instance, the Colonial Records contain a very interesting discussion of a boy who ran away from home. It was rumored that he left because of harsh treatment, but it was not true, for the boy admitted

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\(^1\) C. R., Vol. IV, p. 508.
\(^3\) C. R., Vol. IV, p. 574.
that he received enough food, was sufficiently clothed and was not brutally treated. He left because he wanted a new Sunday coat but even after he returned and was given the coat he ran off again with another boy. This time he was committed to the Loghouse until plans could be made for him.  

In order to relieve the public of the care of bastards a law was enacted which stated that "a woman having a bastard child had to be responsible for its maintenance, support and education, until the child reached the age of fourteen or discover the father" who would be made responsible. If the woman was not able to do either she was imprisoned for not more than three months.  

During the year 1821, the Georgia Assembly entitled all orphans whose fathers were killed or had died in the service of the country, in the war against England or the Indians, to a draw; that is, after the territory that Georgia received from the Creek Indians was surveyed, the Governor had tickets made on which were printed numbers corresponding to the numbers of the lots in these acquired districts; the tickets were put into a wheel that revolved, and when it stopped each person could draw, and the lucky person would receive the lot designated by the ticket.

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1 G. R., Vol. IV, pp. 231, 246, 249.
2 Oliver Prince, A Digest of the Laws of the State of Georgia (Milledgeville, 1822), p. 50.
3 Ibid.
It was for this reason that the orphans mentioned above were eligible. During 1821 a number of ladies in McIntosh County formed a society to protect, relieve, and instruct orphan girls.¹ This was the first attempt made, in the history of Georgia, to separate orphans according to sex. The institution was called McIntosh County Female Asylum.²

The last enactments, relating to dependent children, passed in the first one hundred years of Georgia's history were laws to protect the estates of orphans. A bill to regulate apprentices and indenture of apprenticeships was rejected.³

That the early citizens of Georgia were social minded as far as dependent children were concerned is established by the material studied in this chapter. In the beginning, there was no definite place set aside for the care and protection of these unfortunate children, but later the Georgia Colony did make an advancement in social work, for asylums for orphaned children were established. At a later date, even more progress was made when the male and female children were placed in separate institutions and trained in fields of work which would be beneficial to them as men and women.

Again, that the social welfare of dependent children was given consideration by the early Georgians is proved by the fact that, after some years, the policy of the establishment for the care of orphans was reversed, when the emphasis was placed, not upon toil, but upon education and recreation for the inmates of the orphan houses.

¹ Ibid.
² Ibid.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The early inhabitants of Georgia were conscious of the need for provisions for the social well-being of the improvident, the sick and the dependent children who lived in the province. In the first one hundred years of its existence, Georgia, first as a colony and later as a state in the Union, made notable advancements from its early crude provisions for its unfortunate members until by 1832 the germ of true and effective methods of social work had become established.

In its earliest days Georgia provided for its poor by giving to applicants for assistance aid in the form of gifts of money. At a later date these applicants received material gifts in the form of food and clothing primarily. In establishing these methods of providing for its improvident citizens, Georgia was following the spirit of the English Poor Laws which asserted that the financially dependent members of the state should be provided for by the government. Still in accord with the provisions made by the mother country for its poor, the governing body in Georgia realized the need for a legal residence for the dependent persons within the community. This solution of this problem was first attempted by allowing the poor to live at the orphanage, but later another advancement was made when a poor house was established.

Steady advancement was made by Georgia inhabitants for its sick. Even before the first colonists coming to Georgia left England a sum of money was appropriated for the sick and child-bearing women to aid them...
in their passage to the colony. After they arrived in America, these colonists did not neglect the sick, for upon application, they were given monetary aid. The next provision for the sick was a real advancement, for a hospital was established. Still later the Georgians provided for the establishment of a lazaretto. During this period another provision was made for the sick when an asylum for the invalid poor was established. At an even later date in its first hundred years, Georgia made a further advancement when it built a hospital for the use of its Negro inhabitants.

For the welfare of its dependent children Georgia made two important provisions. The earliest of these methods for caring for the unfortunate young people was the system known as binding out, a system whereby the child was placed in a private home and fed, clothed, and educated by a guardian. In some cases the children who were bound out were taught trades which would, in time, provide them with a means for livelihood. A second means for providing for the dependent children was the establishment of an orphanage. Some of the children placed in the orphanage were later provided for by private citizens who supplied the necessities for older children in return for assistance by these children in various kinds of labor, these children in many instances being used as apprentices. Later in this one hundred year period a great advancement was made when the dependent children were divided according to sex, for a home was established for the exclusive use of female orphans.

Crude as the early social work in Georgia was if measured by the standards of today, nevertheless, there were some attempts at provisions for the social well-being of the early Georgians. Then, too, during the first one hundred years of its existence, Georgia made commendable advancement in its social work, for although at first aid was given
indiscriminately, and rather haphazardly, the state officials realized the advantage of organized, institutionalized social work and made definite steps for provisions for such organizations and institutions.
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