Accounting Historians Journal

Volume 12	Article 2
Issue 2 Fall 1985	Alticle 2

1985

Financial reporting for the Georgia colony

John H. Engstrom

Randolph A. Shockley

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/aah_journal Part of the <u>Accounting Commons</u>, and the <u>Taxation Commons</u>

Recommended Citation

Engstrom, John H. and Shockley, Randolph A. (1985) "Financial reporting for the Georgia colony," *Accounting Historians Journal*: Vol. 12 : Iss. 2, Article 2. Available at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/aah_journal/vol12/iss2/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Archival Digital Accounting Collection at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Accounting Historians Journal by an authorized editor of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

The Accounting Historians Journal Vol. 12, No. 2 Fall 1985

> John H. Engstrom NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

and

Randolph A. Shockley UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

FINANCIAL REPORTING FOR THE GEORGIA COLONY

Abstract: Stewardship reporting was an important tool in the establishment and development of the American Colonies. In 1732 the King of England created the Colony of Georgia as a haven for England's "worthy poor." A corporate trust was established to implement this purpose, and it was necessary for the trustees to account for the many private contributions to the cause as well as the grants from the crown. This article discusses the early history of the Georgia colony, presents a thumbnail sketch of Harman Verelst, the Trust's accountant, and illustrates by example the financial reporting he developed for the Georgia Colony.

King George II signed the charter for the new colony of Georgia on June 9, 1732, thereby creating a corporation unique in the history of the American colonies. It had been more than a hundred years since England had used a corporation as a colonizing device.¹ However, events, public sentiment, and the founders' objectives combined to make the choice effective and practical.

Three primary motives led to the establishment of the Georgia colony. The notion with which present-day Americans are probably most familiar is that Georgia was to serve as a haven for English debtors. Unfortunate debtors in English prisons were to be given a new chance in the colony. This idea proved very popular in England of 1732, for concern over prison reform was prevalent, and it was expensive to maintain the debtors in prison. James Oglethorpe, often honored as the "father" of Georgia, was a leading critic of prison abuses and advocate of reform. There is little doubt that these sentiments created great public support for the colony. However, research has shown that few if any debtors actually sailed to Georgia.² Instead, most of the early settlers given free passage to Georgia were either poor townsmen from England (not debtors) or European religious refugees who were carefully

screened by the colony's trustees for their potential to prosper and contribute to the new colony's success.³

The second motive was to provide a defense buffer for England's existing colonies in America, particularly South Carolina. Both England and Carolina perceived threats to their security from the Spanish to the south, the French to the west, and the Indian allies of both enemies. Georgia was partially conceived as a colony of citizen-soldiers whose presence south of the Savannah River would enhance the security of South Carolina and its existing and profitable Indian trade.⁴

Third, the colony was desirable for the usual economic reasons associated with expanding the trade resources of the English Empire. For example, the Georgia climate was considered ideal for the production of silk, a much desired commodity in England but one not suited to the climate of the mother country.⁵

Thus the founding of the new colony had both charitable and pragmatic motivations, with the stated purposes of charity and defense being most apparent in the Charter. The colony's unusual nature was evidenced in many ways. For example, the charter guaranteed religious freedom to all but Catholics.⁶ Both Negro slavery and the consumption of rum were prohibited by the colony's bylaws, since they were considered detrimental to the industry and perseverance of Georgia's new transplanted citizens.⁷ Most unusual, however, was the organization of this hybrid entity.

The charter created a corporation: "The Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia in America." Its life was to be 21 years, after which complete control of the colony reverted to the King. In the meantime, administrative power was vested in a 21 member Board of Trustees. The Trustees, many of whom were Lords or members of the House of Commons, essentially managed the operations of the colony. This included the duty to solicit and manage the private contributions which were expected to support the colony.^a There was no separate legislative body. The trustees made all laws and ordinances and settled all but minor disputes among the colonists. Consistent with the philanthropic nature of the endeavor, the charter specifically forbade the Trustees from owning land in the colony or receiving any salary or income in any form from their efforts on behalf of the colony.8 When one considers the length of time which many of the Trustees served and the effort they expended as documented in their minutes and journals, it is evident

alt proved impractical to support the colony entirely from donations; the colony eventually depended on annual appropriations from Parliament.

that their ideals of charity and service to the Empire were genuine. The charter also directed

... that the said corporation every year lay an account in writing before the chancellor or speaker, or commissioners for the custody of the great seal of Great Britain, of us, our heirs and successors, the Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench, the Master of Rolls, the Chief Baron of the Exchequer ... of all moneys and effects by them received or expended for carrying on the good purposes aforesaid.⁹

To aid in raising money, the Trustees also promised contributors that all contributions would be recorded in a book maintained for the purpose, and that all important contributors would receive printed copies of the accounts.¹⁰ The need for some form of financial reporting was inescapable. The resulting reports for 1732-33, the first year of the colony's existence, are reproduced in this paper.¹¹

The reporting needs of the Georgia colony in 1732 were similar in many ways to those of today's nonprofit organizations, and focused on the stewardship of resources provided by others. Before examining the statements, however, it is interesting to first reflect on the role and responsibilities of professional accountants of that time, as reflected in the following thumbnail sketch of the life and services of Harman Verelst, the Trustees' accountant.

Harman Verelst

Harman Verelst served as accountant to the Trustees for the entire Trusteeship period, signing each of the corporation's reports from its inception in 1732 to its dissolution in 1752. Before his position with the Trustees he was described simply as "an extra man at the Customs House."¹² He left no published works other than the reports discussed herein; consequently his contribution to the Georgia colony has been largely overlooked. However, he filed a great many of the letters he received from the colonists, and many of his letters to the colonists have also been preserved. Some of these have been published in the *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, while others are available in the University of Georgia's collection of the Earl of Egmont's manuscripts (Egmont Papers). Many additional references to Verelst exist in the minutes of the Trustees' Common Council, the Journal of the Trustees, and particu-

larly the diary and journals of the Earl of Egmont, first president of the Board of Trustees and one of the colony's most ardent supporters in England.¹³ These sources suggest that Verelst played a significant and extensive role in establishing and administering the colony.

Verelst maintained a continuing correspondence with many of the colonists, especially those with financial and other responsibilities for administering the colony. For example, the need for internal control and receiving reports is evident in the following rather grim excerpts from Verelst's letter to Thomas Causton, the manager of the Trustees' supply store in Savannah:

Several German Familys having indented themselves at Cowes as Servants to the Trustees, Captain Dunbar who went down on that occasion will inclose You the Indenture which they all Sign and a List of each Family and the Heads contained therein. These Familys are to be delivered at Tybee by the Ship Three Sisters. Captain Hewitt who will send You notice of his Arrival That you may go and receive them in such craft as is proper to bring them thence to Savannah. You are to call over the Familys by the List computing the Number of heads the whole amount to; and then you will find if they all arrive or if any shall have dyed at Sea. Those that Arrive and are delivered to You are the Heads the Trustees are to pay for, and You are to give the Captain a Receipt for the Number of Heads you receive.¹⁴

He maintained individual accounts for some of these men as a necessary part of his duties in preparing reports for the Trustees and the House of Commons. This was not always an easy task, as evidenced by the following excerpts from another of Verelst's letters to Thomas Causton, who had been accepting goods from independent merchants without authorization for the purchases:

You see the Confusion created by your making Expences before You had Sola Bills to defray them, and thereby are now unprovided for; and you must regulate Your self to [authorized expenditures]. And the Trustees direct You not to Certify any Accot. for the future to any Person whatsoever, nor Contract any Expences but those you are ordered to make, & have Sola Bills to defray ...¹⁵

("Sola bills" were financial instruments which promised payment for goods when presented to the Trustees in England. They are

described more fully later.) Apparently the decentralization of the colony's management and the difficulty of communication caused Verelst some headaches in cash flow management as well as in preparing accurate financial statements.

However, the scope of Verelst's correspondence suggests that his duties included many matters not directly related to finance. Verelst found himself in the role of a principal intermediary between the colonists (especially Oglethorpe) and the Trustees.¹⁶ The colonists had a great many complaints, such as the inequity they perceived in the prohibitions on rum and slaves, and generally would address their grievances to Verelst rather than the Trustees. Verelst would present the various problems for resolution at the Trustees' meetings, at which he was usually present. Thus he provided an important communication link between the colonists and the Trustees.

It probably would be fair to attribute altruistic motives to Verelst's service, for he volunteered to work for the Trustees without salary until the corporation could afford to pay him.¹⁷ He even made nominal contributions of personal effects to the colony, donating a Bible and a book of homilies to the cause, as recorded in his first report.¹⁸

Though they could not at first afford a regular salary, the Trustees deemed his services so valuable that they bestowed occasional monetary rewards for his services, ranging from 25 to 200 pounds. After 1736, the accountant received a yearly allowance of 150 pounds, or about one percent of all the colony's expenditures for that period.¹⁹ For comparison, Gilboy gives the median daily wage of London skilled laborers in 1736 as about two shillings,²⁰ or about 31 pounds annually for a six day work week. While this would be a poverty level wage at that time, it appears that professional accountants were paid far above the rates for manual workers in the eighteenth century.

Verelst was versatile in his service to the Trustees. For example, when Oglethorpe brought several Indian chiefs to England in 1734, it was Verelst who managed all the arrangements for the visit. He apparently did it so competently that the Council awarded him fifty extra guineas for his efforts.²¹ He was appointed to help with the purchase of presents for the Indians in the colonies,²² and each year was authorized to collect Parliament's appropriation for the colony from the exchequer and deposit it In the Bank of England.²³ It was Verelst who managed the logistics of provisioning the ships which carried the new settlers to Georgia.²⁴ In sum, Harman

Verelst was a trusted, versatile, and indispensable aide to the Trustees, and his contributions to the colony should not be over-looked.

Like many accountants today, Verelst did not restrict his services to one employer. Among others, he also worked for the Duke of Newcastle, who retained him to collect evidence to aid England in its boundary dispute with Spain over title to Carolina.²⁵ In 1739 he served as the secretary to the Corporation of Foundlings.²⁶

The Statements

The reports prepared by Verelst took the form of charge and discharge statements, a format which was in common use by contractors with the British government at that time.^b The primary statement was the *General Abstract*, which summarized the funds for which the corporation was responsible (charges), the uses to which they were put (applications and expenditures), and the balance available at the end of the period. Exhibit 1 shows the general abstract for the year 1732-1733, the colony's first year. As is evident in the statement, receipts exceeded disbursements sub-stantially, leaving an "unapplied" cash balance of £1468.

It is apparent that Verelst used a form of fund accounting. Exhibit 1 identifies four separate funds:

- 1. particularly to the Swiss and Palatines,
- 2. for Establishing the Colony,
- 3. for the Religious Use of the Colony, and
- 4. for encouraging and improving Botany and Agriculture in Georgia.

The fund for Establishing the Colony was apparently in the nature of an unrestricted fund, though a few of the contributions were to be used for specific purposes. The three other funds were clearly restricted in nature and would correspond to the current restricted funds of modern nonprofit organizations. For the first two years these four fund classifications were used exclusively in accounting for all receipts, disbursements, and unexpended balances. In later years more funds were added as the colony's operations became more complex (see Exhibit 5, described later).

^bFor additional background on the use of the charge and discharge statement see William T. Baxter, "The Account Charge and Discharge Statement," and William Holmes, in "Governmental Accounting in Colonial Massachusetts."

Published by eGrove,	1985
----------------------	------

	I	1 1	σ		Ξ	8		'1	~ [
		٩٢	S	16	∞	18	ç	2	<u>5</u>	
		тота	ы.	16	2 3,426	164 18	0 F F		3,723	untant
			σ	•	N	8		•	2	Accol
		Monies remaining unapplied	S	ı	6	16	ç	2	15	elst / 173
		Mo rema unap	ы	I	1,265	162	ç	40	L 2,254 17 9 1,468 15 10 3,723 13 7	Harman Verelst Accountant 13 June 1733
			σ	,	0	•			6	Harn
		Monies ap- plied, and expended	s	16	19	N		•	17	
	CT	Monies ap- plied, and expended	ы	16	2,160 19	2	L F	6	2,254	ster
EXHIBIT 1	THE GENERAL ABSTRACT	DISCHARGE	destroites - Lating	Monies applied particularly to the Swiss and Pala- tines	lishing the Colony	Religious Use of the Col-	Monies expended for en- couraging and improving Botany and Agriculture in	Georgia	L	Georgia Trustees Office, Court Westminster
	F		σ	ı	Ŧ	- '	ω	•	2	
		LAL	S	16	c	0	2 3	2	13	
		TOTAL	പ	16 16	007.0	e ap- gious		115 10	3,723	
		CHARGE		Monies received to be ap- plied particularly to the Swiss and Palatines	o shin	Colony	Uses of the Colony Monies received to be ap- plied for encouraging and	improving Botany and Agriculture in Georgia		

Engstrom and Shockley:	Financial	Reporting	for	The	Georgia	Colony

The general abstract was supported by two schedules. Exhibit 2 reproduces the first page of the first, entitled "Monies Received from the Several Persons Hereafter Named for the Following Purposes: That is to Say." This is a listing of the sources of all the receipts and their intended use, with subtotals for each fund. "Charges" (revenues) were reported by name of the donor, often

EXHIBIT 2

MONIES RECEIVED FROM THE SEVERAL PERSONS HEREAFTER NAMED FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES; THAT IS TO SAY

1732		£	S	d
	To be applied particularly to the			
	Swiss and Palatines viz: from			
20 July	George Heathcote Esqr;, for relief of the Swiss sick			
	and Child bearing Women, and likely to be brought to Bed in Passage to Purisburg	5	_	_
	William Belitha Esq; for the same use	18	13	_
31 Aug.	The Right Honourable George Lord Carpenter for			
-	the German, Swiss and Palatines then going for			
	Carolina	1	1	-
	James Vernon Esk; for the same useJames Oglethorpe Esq; for the same use	1	1	-
			<u>.</u>	
		£ 26	16	_
	To be applied for establishing the			
1732	Colony, vizt: from			
	The Associate Petitioners for incorporating the			
	Trustees, remaining unapplied at the Date of his	159	13	5
22 June	Majesty's Royal Charter Mrs. Elwes Wife of Robert Elwes Esg; by the hands	159	13	5
LE GUILO	of Mr. Hales	50	-	-
23 Aug.	Dr. Thomas Cranmer of Kingston in Surry, by the			
	Hands of Mr. Belitha	1	1	-
	An unknown Benefactor, by the Hands of Mr. Belitha	5	5	-
25 Ditto	Mrs. Anne Coghill by the hands of Mr. Hucks	5	5	-
	Peter Abraham Mazeres Esq; by the same			
60 D'II.	Hands	5	5	-
29 Ditto 5 Sept.	S. John Barnard	21	-	-
5 Sept.	an unknown Benefactor by the Hands of Mir.			
	George Jackson	100	-	-
8 Ditto	Contributors to the Collection made by Sr. Gilbert			
	Heathcote under the Commission granted to him by the Trustees vizt. £ s d			
	Sir Gilbert Heathcote 21			
	The Honble Horatio Townsend			
	Esq; <u>21</u>			
	Carried over £42	347	9	5

indicating that the funds came "by the hand" of another person. (A surprisingly large proportion of the colony's benefactors preferred to remain anonymous.) An examination of the entire schedule would reveal that the largest single receipt was £500 from the Right Honorable Sir Joseph Jekyll. In later years, the majority of funds came from appropriations by Parliament rather than private individuals.

Exhibit 3 is the first page of the second supporting schedule, entitled "Monies Applied and Expended for Carrying on the Several Good Purposes Hereafter Mentioned, in the Respective Services attending to Each Purpose, That is to Say." The largest expenditure of £628 was for the "Freight and Charges of Shipping the said 152 Persons, and their Baggage, together with the other Lading for the Use of the Colony." These 152 people comprised the first group of "worthy poor" to settle in Georgia. They arrived in the sloop *Anne*, and landed at Yamacraw Bluff in February 1733 to establish the settlement of Savannah.

It is evident that the expenditures were reported in great detail On the one hand, the descriptions were of things purchased, e.g., "for charges of a Seal, of Stationary Ware, etc.," and would correspond to present-day objects of expenditures. On the other hand the description was often of the purpose of the expenditure, e.g., "for charges of sending 152 persons to Settle in Georgia," "to enable . . . to proceed on his voyages to collect plants, etc."

EXHIBIT 3

MONIES APPLIED AND EXPENDED FOR CARRYING ON THE SEVERAL GOOD PURPOSES HEREINAFTER MENTIONED, IN THE RESPECTIVE SERVICES ATTENDING EACH PURPOSE, THAT IS TO SAY

	Applied particularly to the Swiss and Palatines. viz. to			
1732		£	S	d
20 July	Mr. Purry and the Elders of the Swiss Congregation, for Relief of the Swiss Sick and Child bearing Women, likely to be brought to bed in their Pass-	_		
31 Aug.	age to Purrisburgh Jacob Vinckler, and the Six other families of German, Swiss and Palatines, to buy Tools and for their Subsistence, until they went on Ship-	13	13	-
	board for Carolina	3	3	-
	£	16	16	-

Expended for Establishing the Colony, viz:

Colony, viz:	•		
	£	s	d
For Charges of a Seal for the Corporation, a Con- veyance, Grants of Land made by the Trustees, and Commissions to collect Benefactions For Charges of Stationary Ware, printing several	42	6	10¼
Books and Accounts, of the Designs of the Trustees, and publishing Articles and Advertise- ments in the Publick News Papers For Charges of sending 152 Persons to settle in Georgia, viz: 60 Men, 39 Women, 32 Boys and	133	9	10
21 Girls. viz: For Stores, working Tools, and Necessaries provided by the Trustees, for the Use of the Colony and			
Passage to Georgia 502 11 7 For Provisions for three months after their arrival			
in Georgia and until they could be had in Carolina			
and for Refreshments in the Passage			
For Arms and Ammunition for the Use of the Colony 73 19 -			
For Watch Coats and Bed- ding to those Passengers for Georgia that wanted			
them			
Persons, and their Bag- gage, together with the			
other Lading for the Use of the Colony			
For Charges of the Silk People from Piedmont and	1,414	4	5
for necessary Materials for Production of Raw Silk in Georgia	149	5	9
For House Rent for the Trustees Office, and Neces- saries for the house, and Petty incidents	50	9	10¼
Carried forward £	1,789	16	81⁄2

An examination of the monies received and expended in Exhibits 2 and 3 demonstrates a strict adherence to and respect for individual preferences underlying the donors' gifts. Many of the contributions were restricted narrowly. For example, monies were received towards building a church, for the use of people in their passage to Georgia, for the relief of the necessitous women and children during passage, and for the three restricted funds. The report of monies expended carefully indicates the purpose of the disbursements as well as the objects procured.

Not all the colony's benefactors made their contributions in cash. Many contributions were in the form of supplies and other items to be taken to Georgia with the new settlers. Such gifts in kind are not included in the general abstract. However, Verelst took pains to report even the smallest gifts. Exhibit 4 is a listing of inkind contributions entitled "Effects Received from the Several Persons Herein Mentioned, and Applied by the Trustees, Viz." Listed in the exhibit are gifts of maps, globes, and tables. In addition, the complete schedule mentions gifts of Bibles, Common Prayer Books, Psalters, other religious books, nails, tools, powder flasks, bayonets, medicines, spelling books, clothes, and two hundred copies of the booklet, "Friendly Admonition to Drinkers of Brandy."²⁷ Thus, readers of the statements were provided a com-

EXHIBIT 4

EFFECTS RECEIVED FROM THE SEVERAL PERSONS HEREIN MENTIONED, AND APPLIED BY THE TRUSTEES, VIZ.

Na	mes of Contributors	Effects contributed
1732 July	James Oglethorpe Esq; for the Use of the Trus- tees Office	Two dozen of matted Chairs A Map of the World A Map of England and Wales Two Sheets of Arms or common Seals of Cities and Boroughs in England & Wales Two Maps of North America A Map of South America A Map of the improv'd part of Pensilvania in America Two Globes mounted on Frames with Covers
	The Reverend Mr. Ste- phen Hales for the same Use	A Map of the Province of Carolina
Aug.	James Oglethorpe Esq; for the same Use	An African Mahogany large Table
	The Right Honourable John Lord Viscount Tyrconnel for the same Use	A North Carolina Carpet, for the said Table

RGE		TOTAI.	р в 15	122 10	697 9 9		398 2 11 1	41 15 6				418 17 43	108 6 8	33 2 7
DISCHARGE	k		£ 31.781		ŭ	5						43 4	- 	6 33,563
	the Ban he end o npt	Balance re- naining to h applied	£ 8 d 913 12 11 3	. 0	574 15	2	236 11 104					403 7 4	46 13 4	
	ining ir d at t	ed Ba	F 6	=		5						4		2,275
1	Moniee remaining in the Bank of England at the end of this Year's Accompt	To answer Sola Bills of Ex- Balance re- charge issued in Georgia for maining to be the Service of applied the Colorry	£ .				, I		,			;		951 .
	Σ I	the BB	d 1.9	1				1				1		32 1,951
l	Monies applied Monies ap- and expended A merson and	pred and real taken from the Arepending on pender in taken from the sevent Pennen England Accounds there in America with in the of which came the 90 of June Time of this Unclude the 90 of June Account of this Accounds	11 91	, L	1		i	1	•			- [,	52 8,976 11
	ed ed	upt the reverse of the level of the reverse of the	d 13 8.9	1		i.	10	ا ب	,			1 10		
l	Monies applied and expended in America and	taken from the Accompts there- of which came to England within the Time of this Accompt	£ 8	i I	1	l.	36 13 10	41 15				15 10		6 19
	Moni and Ay	Acco Acco of the of the	d 13.47		 		~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~							1 33 13,567
	ties ap-	plied and ex- pended in England with in the Time of this Accumpt	8 5 11	10	117 14 9		124 17 3					÷	1 13	
F			£ 6.466	53				•	1.92	e 3 c			19	6,793
THE GENERAL ABSTRACT	THE SEVERAL PURPOSES	OR WHICH MONIES HAVE BEEN RECEIV 3D, AND AP. PLIED AND JXPENDED.	For establishing the Colony	For the use of particular Persons 22 10	For the rollowing Keligious Uses of the Colony, viz! The Ruilding of Currebes	2 114 The use of the Missionaries and	Schools for instructing and con- verting to Christianity the Na- tive Indians	The Use of the Minister to the Scot's Settlement in Georgie	42 And for the Religious uses of the	Colony in general such as the buying of Books, the cultivat- ing Landa to ruise a Provision	for the Maintenance of a Minis- ter and the Appropriation to	chist	ror encouraging and improving Botany and Agriculture in Geor- gia	TOTAL8
1			04	•		2 111		9	7 4%			0 0 0	0	2 7
		TOTAL	£ 31.781	122 10		398		41 15	418			001		1 1
		in ithin f this of.	648	•					1			-	*	-1 33,563
	Moniee re	taken from the ceived in taken from the ceived in thereof which England within thereof which England within and within the Time of this Accompt	£ 6	10 10	390 10	69 7		ļ	10			61 301	er on1	20,649 19
	d in and	m the pta which I Eng. t ithin ithin ompt	10 2	1		,		3	ĩ					10 2
	(raise remaining in the Bank of England the 9 th of June Monies re- 1737 America and	taken from the Accompta thereof which came to Eug- hand within the Time of this Accompt	£ 260]			1					ĺ	260
	e Bank f June	हु ह	8 d	1	a. a			5 6	7 42			•	*	3 11
	ng in th he 9ª o	Balance to applied	£ 8 921 12	112	371 19	328 1		41 15	408 17			-	-	2,186 13 11
	Monies remaining in the Bank of England the 9 th of June 1737	er Sola f Ex- sent to there there vervice	р •	i i) 		,	•		·			12
	A .	wever for the second se	£ 1.333					1	1				1	92 1,333
CHARGE	5	June 1737	8 d	, ,		5 - 3 5 - 3		1					с 1	8 941
CB	Derandine on	everal Per- sons in Ameri- ca the 9 th of June 1737	£ 9.133						1					9,133

EXHIBIT 5

54

https://egrove.olemiss.edu/aah_journal/vol12/iss2/2

The Accounting Historians Journal, Fall, 1985

NOTE: That £171:5:7 of the above Sum of £913:12:11 is appropriated towards building a Church in Georgia.

HARMAN VERELET Account 6. December 1738.

GEORGIA TRUSTEES OFFICE | Palace Court Westminster

178. 174

plete summary of all resources available to the Trustees for the settlement of Georgia.

The statement format presented in the first four exhibits remained essentially the same throughout Georgia's Trusteeship period. However, as the colony's operations became more complex the general abstract also evolved to a more complex form. As an example, the general abstract for the year ended June 9, 1738 is presented in Exhibit 5.²⁸ Several additional funds have been established, and receipts and expenditures have been geographically dichotimized according to whether the transactions occurred in England or Georgia. In an interesting reflection of today's standards, Verelst added a footnote warning that certain funds were restricted for the building of churches.

Disclosure of a further restriction on the general funds was necessary because of the Trustees' use of "sola bills." After the Trustees had approved necessary levels of expenditures in the colony, sola bills for that amount were printed and sent to those colonists in Georgia authorized to make the expenditures (e.g., the Trustees' storekeeper). Since the bills could be presented in England for immediate payment, they took on many of the characteristics of money in the colony. In the later years of the Trusteeship period the Trustees refused to pay any claims arising in the colonies unless they were accompanied by the required sola bills. Thus the Trustees were able to use the bills as a means of enforcing their cash budget. As the statements indicate, it was necessary to restrict funds in the Bank of England until these "outstanding checks" returned across the Atlantic and were presented for redemption.

Amounts "Depending on Several Persons in America . . ." represent funds advanced to colonists, usually administrators such as Oglethorpe, the use of which had not yet been reported. Timely communication of transactions was of course a problem because of the time needed for correspondence to cross the Atlantic. Separate disclosure was appropriate because the funds may already have been spent.

The Trustees' financial statements certainly differed from statements which might be prepared under today's standards. For example, the statements reflected only cash and in-kind receipts and cash disbursements. They did not disclose any receivables or promises to contribute. Liabilities, either long or short term, were also omitted,^c as were long term assets, either purchased or con-

eThe Trustees scrupulously avoided debt. Nevertheless, they frequently found themselves paying for goods delivered in the colonies by independent merchants

structed (for example, the churches). Nevertheless, they appeared to serve the Trustees' purposes well. As a form of stewardship reporting, these statements might be considered as predecessors to present-day governmental and nonprofit accounting. The Trustees certainly had similar objectives in preparing them, as they were accountable to both the British government and private contributors.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper examined the first charge and discharge statements of colonial Georgia as one example of financial reporting used to help establish the Colonies in America. It is immediately apparent that a serious and conscientious effort was made to account for all the monies and goods received for the support of the people who were to settle in the new colony.

The Trustees were accountable, or held a public trust, for the funds and other items made available for the settlement of Georgia. Due to the plight of the debtors and other poor, many individuals and (later) Parliament were moved to contribute generously toward their support and emigration to America. These individuals were entitled to an accounting of their contributions. Harman Verelst met this reporting need well by providing a detailed and clear stewardship report.

FOOTNOTES

^IMcCain, p. 17.

²Saye, p. v.

³Many accounts of the Trustees' interviews with potential colonists may be found in the Diary of the Earl of Egmont (Historical Manuscripts Commission), volume 1.

⁴Charter of the Colony, p. 11-12.

⁵See Saye, Chapter 1, for an extensive analysis of the motives underlying the Georgia colony's establishment.

⁶Charter of the Colony, p. 21.

⁷Bylaws and Laws, pp. 45, 51.

⁸Charter of the Colony, p. 16.

⁹Charter of the Colony, p. 17.

¹⁰Reese, T., (1963), p. 29.

¹Contributions and Names of Contributors, pp. 7-24.

¹²Historical Manuscript Commission, vol. 1, Aug. 3, 1732, p. 289.

who accepted the assertions of the colony's Georgia based officials that the Trust would pay in England (e.g., see the previous quote). This proved to be a continuing cash control problem to the Trustees, who eventually absolutely forbade ordering or accepting any goods not specifically ordered or approved by themselves.

¹³Coleman, p. 18. ¹⁴Verelst, 17 Sept. 1738, p. 45. ¹⁵Verelst, 17 Feb. 1737-8, p. 80. ¹⁶Reese, 1955, p. 352, ¹⁷Historical Manuscript Commission, vol. 1, p. 289. ¹⁸Contributions and Names of Contributors, p. 23. ¹⁹Candler, vol. 2, p. 180; Candler, vol. 3, p. 149-150. ²⁰Gilboy, p. 11. ²¹Candler, vol. 2, p. 78. ²²Candler, Vol. 1, p. 519. ²³See for example Historical Manuscripts Commission, Eqmont diary, vol. 2, p. 130, 144. ²⁴Candler, Vol. 1, p. 127, 470, 474. ²⁵Reese, p. 351. ²⁶Historical Manuscripts Commission, v. 3, p. 26, ²⁷Candler, vol. 3, pp. 20-24. ²⁸Candler, vol. 3, pp. 173-74.

REFERENCES

- Baxter, W. T., "The Account Charge and Discharge," Accounting Historian's Journal (Spring, 1980), pp. 69-71.
- Bylaws and Laws, A. D. Candler, ed., Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, vol. 1, Atlanta: Franklin Printing and Publishing Co., 1904.
- Charter of the Colony, A. D. Candler, ed., Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, Vol. 1, Atlanta: Franklin Printing and Publishing Co., 1904.
- Candler, A. D., ed., *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, 26 vol., Atlanta: Franklin Printing and Publishing Co.
- Coleman, K., Colonial Georgia: A History, New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1976.
- Contributions and Names of Contributors, A. D. Candler, ed., Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, v. 3, Atlanta: Franklin Printing and Publishing Co., 1904.
- Gilboy, E. W., Wages in Eighteenth Century England, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934.
- Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont, Diary of the First Earl of Egmont,* 3 vol., London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1923.
- Holmes, W., "Governmental Accounting in Colonial Massachusetts," Accounting Review (January, 1979), pp. 47-57.
- Journal of the Earl of Egmont, First President of the Board of Trustees from June 14, 1738 to May 25, 1744, A. D. Candler, ed., Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, vol. 5, Atlanta: Franklin Printing and Publishing Co., 1904.

McCain, Jr., Georgia as a Proprietary Province, Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1917.

- McPherson, R. G., ed., The Journal of the Earl of Egmont, Abstract of the Trustees Proceedings for Establishing the Colony of Georgia, 1732-1738, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962.
- Minutes of the Common Council of the Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia in America, A. D. Candler, ed., Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, vol. 2, Atlanta: Franklin Printing Co., 1904.
- Reese, T., "Harman Verelst, Accountant to the Trustees," Georgia Historical Quarterly, vol. 39, 1955, pp. 348-352.
- Reese, T. R., Colonial Georgia: A Study in British Imperial Policy in the Eighteenth Century, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1963.

58

The Accounting Historians Journal, Fall, 1985

- Saye, A., New Viewpoints in Georgia History, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1943.
- Verelst, H., "Letter to Thos. Causton dated 17 Sept. 1738," in volume 14209 of the Phillips Collection: Egmont Manuscripts, Letters to Georgia, University of Georgia Library.
- Verelst, H., "Letter to Thos. Causton dated 17 Feb. 1737-8," in volume 14209 of the Phillips Collection, Egmont Manuscripts, Letters to Georgia, University of Georgia Library.