BY JUNE, 1775, Georgia's leading Whigs were certain they would uphold American rights, yet they still hoped to do this within the old government framework. A meeting of thirty-four prominent Savannah Whigs at Mrs. Cuyler's on June 13 made it clear that public peace should be preserved and that so far as this group was concerned, no person or his property should be molested so long as he conducted himself properly and expressed his opinions decently. The meeting suggested that a petition objecting to the Parliamentary acts for raising a revenue in America should be addressed to the King by a provincial congress inasmuch as the assembly was not sitting. Georgia should join with the other colonies in all just and legal measures to secure a restoration of American liberties, heal the division between Britain and the colonies, and restore the union so essential to peace and prosperity.¹ When such men as Noble W. Jones, Joseph Clay, John J. Zubly, John Glen, and George Houstoun could sign such resolutions, the colony was not irreparably lost to Britain. Both in personnel and resolutions this meeting was the last attempt of the two parties in Georgia to effect some sort of compromise before either side went so far there was no turning back. But the suggested program of petitioning the King had been tried frequently with no results. For the conservatives, a petition was one more attempt to keep peace; for the radicals, it was a measure so innocently worded that it could do their cause no harm.

At another meeting held at Tondee's Tavern in June,² the in-
habitants of Savannah and some of the other parishes agreed to abide by the resolves of the Continental and provincial congresses, to secure the rights of Americans against Parliamentary oppression, and to secure reconciliation between Britain and America. A committee was appointed to put this agreement into effect and to recommend it to the rest of the province. Finally the meeting recommended that a provincial congress be held in July and that Savannah hold a meeting on June 22 to elect its delegates and to elect a committee to enforce the agreement just adopted.³

Throughout the rest of June there were frequent meetings of various groups in Savannah. There seem to have been two main groups: one, the more radical American rights (Whig) party that was mainly concerned with preparations for the coming provincial congress; the other, composed of both radicals and conservatives who were still trying to effect some sort of a compromise.⁴ The first group elected the Savannah delegates to the provincial congress on June 22 and selected the committee to enforce the recently adopted Savannah agreement. This committee apparently was variously referred to as the general committee or council for safety. By the time a definite council of safety can be identified it consisted of William Ewen, president; William LeConte, Joseph Clay, Basil Cowper, Samuel Elbert, William Young, Elisha Butler, Edward Telfair, John Glen, George Houstoun, George Walton, Joseph Habersham, Francis H. Harris, John Smith, and John Morel, members; and Seth John Cuthbert, secretary.⁵

On July 4, 1775, Georgia’s second provincial congress assembled in Savannah at Tondee’s long room, with 102 delegates. Every parish was represented except St. Patrick and St. James, two small parishes south of the Altamaha. The representation was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Delegates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parish of Christ Church</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town and District of Savannah</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Vernonburg</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Acton</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea Island District</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Little Ogeechee</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish of Saint Matthew</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish of Saint Philip</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish of Saint George</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish of Saint Andrew</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish of Saint David</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parish of Saint Mary.......................................................... 1
Parish of Saint Thomas.................................................... 1
Parish of Saint Paul........................................................... 7
Parish of Saint John......................................................... 11

The parishes most forward in upholding American rights, Christ Church and St. John, lacked but two votes of a majority and could easily lead the congress. There were a few delegates who later refused to go along with American liberty, but few who were conservatives in July, 1775, sat in the congress. Many of the delegates were well-known Whigs and others would become well known soon. Archibald Bulloch, of Savannah, was elected president, and George Walton, a delegate from St. Matthew though he may have lived in Savannah, secretary. 8

After its organization, the congress adjourned to the meeting house where the Reverend John J. Zubly, one of its members, preached a sermon on the alarming state of American affairs, “The Law of Liberty,” taking his text from James 2:12: “So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.” Zubly expounded at great length upon the oppressive measures of Rehoboam in Israel (I Kings 12) and the grievous burdens and taxes he laid upon the people. The likeness to George III and America was obvious. Laws are necessary, said Zubly, but the only perfect law is the law of God. The Gospel of Jesus is the law of liberty, for liberty must be regulated by law to be of any value. All will be judged in the end by this law of liberty and punished if they have not measured up to its standards. Christianity commands respect for superiors but does not give them license to do as they please. Christianity requires obedience only when magistrates act for the common good. The sermon thus far might be called an application of the ideas of Locke to religion.

Next came the immediate situation in America and its remedy. Because Zubly was a believer in monarchy as the best form of government, he fell back on the old explanation that the King had bad advisers and would do no wrong when he knew the true situation. Americans were urged never to lose sight of their glorious connection with Britain and never to think of separation. They should act in moderation in all things; their opposition should be to oppression, not to law. 7 From the position enunciated in this sermon, that the colonists should insist upon their constitutional rights under law within the empire, Zubly never departed.
The American Revolution in Georgia

The first business of the congress was to request Governor Wright to appoint a day of fasting and prayer for a happy reconciliation of the disputes between Britain and the colonies. Wright's council advised that he could not consider the congress a constitutional assembly, yet the request was put in such dutiful and loyal terms that it should be complied with. Thinking that the congress would have appointed the day itself had he not agreed to do so, Wright proclaimed July 19 as a day of fasting and prayer, but did not mention that the congress had requested such a day. After arrangements had been made, word arrived that the Continental Congress had proclaimed July 20 as a fast day for the same purpose. The provincial congress decided that both days should be observed in Georgia. When the Reverend Haddon Smith, Rector of Christ Church, refused to observe July 20 because he had not been so directed by the governor although the congress twice requested him to observe both days, he was declared unfriendly to America and forbidden to preach longer in Savannah.

July 6 was taken up by congress in the consideration of a motion to put the colony on the same footing as the other colonies. Sixteen resolutions were adopted declaring that Georgia would carry out all the recommendations of the late Continental Congress, that its American Declaration or Bill of Rights was adopted, and that the association as originally adopted by the Continental Congress was to go into effect immediately. There was no doubt now that Georgia was fully bound by the association; the only problem henceforth would be enforcement. Georgians did not think this would be difficult.

On July 7 the congress elected five delegates (John Houstoun, Archibald Bulloch, the Reverend John J. Zubly, Noble W. Jones, and Lyman Hall) to the Second Continental Congress, then meeting in Philadelphia. The first four were members of the provincial congress and had been prominent in its activities to date. Hall was in Philadelphia as the St. John's Parish delegate to the Continental Congress. A secret committee was created to discover and report to the congress or council of safety all matters that these bodies should consider.

The congress approved a petition to the King drawn up by Dr. Zubly in much bolder language than had been used previously in Georgia. George III was reminded that he was the sovereign of the greatest empire on earth, recently enlarged by the acquisitions of 1763. Here the Catholic religion and arbitrary French law were
Transition from Colony to State 1775-1776

approved in place of the just and mild British constitution and the protestant religion. The acts to raise a revenue in America would enslave the Americans and any attempt to enforce them would increase the expenses of the British taxpayer rather than lessen them. Even the Crown officers in America disapproved of these acts which were driving America to the brink of despair and endangering the empire. The King should listen to the Americans instead of his ministers, recall the armies and fleets, and see that justice and the constitution replace the arbitrary and unconstitutional actions of the ministry. Then he would find that he could easily command the last shilling of American property and the last drop of American blood.\(^{13}\)

On July 10 the congress expressed its ideas about the unhappy state of American affairs in a set of nineteen resolutions. They began with the usual statement of American rights, and declared that in the British Empire the constitution was superior to every man. The colonies were declared to be subject to the Crown only and not to Parliament. Depriving a man of his property without his or his representative’s consent was contrary to the law of nature and the British constitution. Civil war had begun in the North, yet the Georgia Assembly was not allowed to sit and the congress had to meet to preserve American rights and union with Britain. The first hint made in any public meeting that Georgians even considered separation from Britain was contained in the statement that nothing but being deprived of the privileges and natural rights as Britons could ever make the thought of separation possible. The congress admitted that the British government had a right to raise a revenue in the colonies when it said that if royal requisitions were made they should be granted according to the ability of the colonies. People who disobeyed the provincial and Continental congresses should have their names sent to the Continental Congress to be published in every gazette in America, and Georgians should have as little to do with them as possible. Debtors willing to pay their debts should have a stay in the payment of these debts when the confused situation made payment more difficult. The exception of Georgia from the list of American colonies with whom trade had been prohibited by a late act of Parliament was declared an insult meant to break the American union.\(^{14}\)

These resolutions were a general compromise into which the conflicting ideas of the members of the congress were lumped. The only thing that they definitely advocated was American rights
within the British Empire; here was the one point of agreement among all the members in the controversy at that date. There was no new suggestion as to how these rights should be secured. The hint of possible separation from the empire must have been slipped in by some radical while the moderates were not looking.

The congress sent Wright an address saying that it had met because action by the people was necessary and the assembly had not been allowed to deliberate unhampered. Most Georgians, the address continued, had always considered Parliamentary taxation illegal but had done little about it previously. Now they had joined with the other colonists by adopting the association and sending delegates to the Continental Congress. Letters of Wright recently published in England were objected to as favoring the ministry instead of giving the true situation in Georgia. However, the people were still ready to acknowledge whatever Wright might do for the good of the colony in the future.\(^1^{5}\)

After considering Georgia's finances, the congress decided that £10,000 should be provided as there was no likelihood that the assembly would meet again soon. Certificates, to be sunk within three years after reconciliation between Britain and the colonies, were to be issued. All property holders were declared bound to contribute to a general tax to sink the certificates, but no actual procedure for collection was provided. Anyone who refused to accept these certificates was declared to be an enemy of the province.\(^1^{6}\)

The congress had now done its major work, but there were certain other things to be done before adjournment. In providing for its own successors, it voted that future congresses should have a fixed representation of ninety-six delegates apportioned so as to lessen the predominance of Savannah, increase that of St. John's Parish, and give representation to the Indian cession of 1773 for the first time. Electors were all who paid toward the general tax.\(^1^{7}\)

A general committee, consisting of the Savannah delegates plus all other delegates who happened to be in town, was to have power to superintend, direct, and advise parochial and district committees and to hear appeals from them. Appeals lay from the general committee to the congress.\(^1^{8}\) A council of safety was created and given full power, during the recess of the congress, to give information, propose measures, and advise the Continental delegates.\(^1^{9}\) A publicity committee was appointed to keep Georgians informed of the dispute between Britain and the colonies and of the doings of the congresses.\(^2^{0}\)
The delegates to the Continental Congress were instructed to apply to it for full incorporation with the other provinces and to pledge Georgia's faith to contribute an adequate part of the expenses to defend American rights.\textsuperscript{21} In his report to the Continental Congress, President Bulloch emphasized the fact that Georgia was now united. Every parish except two small and almost uninhabited ones had been represented in the provincial congress. Several parishes, previously backward in the American cause, had shown laudable zeal. Georgia promised full cooperation in whatever the Continental Congress might undertake.\textsuperscript{22}

On July 17 the second provincial congress adjourned until August 19, the day before it would end officially.\textsuperscript{23} There was no doubt now that Georgia had gone all the way with the other colonies in opposition to British action. The congress had made one more try at reconciliation, but it had adopted measures that were to be followed regardless of reconciliation. It had considered several matters that could be acted upon only by a legislative body (reform of the militia and the raising of money), and it stated that it met in place of the assembly which had not been allowed to hold uninterrupted sessions. The second provincial congress was Georgia's first revolutionary government.

After the adoption of the association by the congress on July 6, 1775, an all-out attempt was made to get the measure signed and enforced throughout the colony. High-pressure methods were used to secure signatures wherever they were not forthcoming voluntarily. Economic pressure and unfavorable publicity were the usual methods, but at times stronger methods were used. Governor Wright reported that a great part of the province signed.\textsuperscript{24} Trouble immediately arose over the question of whether vessels that had sailed before the association was adopted should be allowed to land. The provincial congress agreed that vessels arriving within one month of the adoption of the association should be allowed to land their goods, which would be stored until the Continental Congress decided upon a proper disposition. After a heated debate in Philadelphia, it was decided that the cargoes could be sold and any profit used for Georgia's defense.\textsuperscript{25} Even during this month some parochial committees would not allow cargo to be landed while another parochial committee might allow even the same vessel to land its cargo. Several slave ships which were not allowed to land their cargoes had difficulty in securing sufficient food to proceed elsewhere.\textsuperscript{26}
Once the association was adopted, the Continental Congress and South Carolina removed their trade bans on Georgia. Yet the association was not strictly enforced, especially in the export of Georgia produce. Exportation of indigo was not stopped until September 10. Georgians applied to the Continental Congress for permission to export their 1775 crop and to import for the Indian trade. No record of a decision by Congress has been found on this matter, but it would be safe to say that many Georgians exported, whether it was legal to do so or not. Some merchants favored exportation to pay their debts in England.28

Governor Wright reported that enforcement of the association took up much of the time of the provincial congress, the council of safety, and the parochial committees. Usually, adverse decisions of these bodies were sufficient to keep vessels from landing and selling forbidden cargoes. Vessels were reported as loading and unloading illegal cargoes in the streams south of the Altamaha, where the population was sparse and chance of detection not very great.

Besides enforcing the association, Georgia Whigs in the summer of 1775 continued the process begun by the second provincial congress of taking political power away from the royal government and giving it to Whig governmental agencies. The most important agencies of the new government were the provincial congress and the council of safety. These bodies were not bound by royal instructions, constitutions, or in any other way. They assumed what powers they considered necessary and could be checked only by the voters. The provincial congress, the only body elected by the voters, took ultimate authority; and the council of safety acted as an executive when the congress was not in session. But the council carried on legislative and judicial duties if it thought them necessary, and there was no clear-cut division between its work and powers and those of the congress. Three congresses were elected and served during 1775, and a fourth in January, 1776.

The council of safety, which met regularly once a week or oftener if necessary, was elected by the general provincial committee or the provincial congress. It elected its own officers and sometimes filled vacancies in its own ranks and called elections or sessions of the provincial congress as needed. It directed military activities completely—commissioned militia officers elected by their units, ordered militia organizations to duty, and took steps to secure arms and ammunition. It undertook Indian negotiations to counteract the influence of the British Indian Department. It bor-
rowed or issued monies and provided for expenditures. It appointed a committee to oversee the *Gazette* and to take care that nothing unfavorable to the Whig cause was printed.

The Savannah Parochial Committee took unto itself more and more of the functions of local government. It enforced the association, embargoed provisions needed locally, appointed a layman to officiate in Christ Church after the rector had been silenced by the provincial congress, and did whatever it thought needed doing for Savannah. The identified members of this committee in September, 1775, were Mordecai Sheftall, chairman, a Jewish merchant; Lyons, a blacksmith; and Peter Tondee, an innkeeper. Wright lamented the lack of people of ability and substance on the committee ("it is really terrible my Lord that such people should be suffered to overturn the Civil Government . . ."), but he was glad that the council of safety included planters, merchants, and men of substance.

The second provincial congress considered new militia regulations but adjourned without taking any action. On August 8 the council of safety informed Wright that many of the militia officers were unacceptable (probably because they would not sign the association) to the men they commanded to a degree that would impair battle efficiency and requested that officers elected by the militiamen be commissioned. Some militia organizations had already elected officers who probably served without formal commissions when Wright refused to commission them. The first records of the council of safety, for November, 1775, show that it was commissioning militia officers by that date. In October a party of back-country people forced the surrender of the garrison of rangers stationed at a small frontier fort for defense against Indians. The council of safety ordered the fort returned to the rangers, who would now come under the authority of the council of safety and not the governor.

In taking over the courts, Georgians moved slower than they did with the other branches of government and were careful to preserve the legal practices and safeguards of the English legal system. In early March a group of people in St. George's Parish agreed to let no writs or processes be served against them and actually prevented the service of writs in the parish. Governor Wright sent a strong letter to the justices of the parish, and the leaders of the movement were arrested. The people who had entered into the agreement then said they did not realize the unlawfulness of their
actions and were sorry for what they had done. At their request, all legal action against them was stopped. After the summer of 1775 none of the assistant judges met with the chief justice to hold court. Noble Jones, the judge most likely to uphold royal government, was too ill. The other two judges were Whigs, one of them having been a member of the second provincial congress. At the October term of the general court, the majority of the jurors refused to be sworn. Activity of the general court was thus severely curtailed, and the issuance of legal papers was about all the business that could be carried on henceforth.

On December 1, 1775, the provincial congress ordered all actions for recovery of debt to stop unless approved by the parochial committee of the defendant. The attorney general, James Hume, ignored the regulations of the provincial congress; so in December it ordered him to leave the province. Chief Justice Stokes issued a rule of court striking from the roll of attorneys any who delayed cases on account of the regulations of the provincial congress, but he did not have it published for fear it would cause royal officials additional trouble and would not accomplish its desired end. In December armed men took possession of the courthouse in Savannah and Stokes gave up trying to enforce laws though he remained in Georgia until April, 1776.

Such actions made it obvious that royal government had little power. The royal council continued to meet and consider rebel activities, but it could do nothing to prevent them. By the middle of September, 1775, Wright was sure that the power of royal government was gone entirely. Sometimes royal officials were not permitted to carry out their duties under threats of bodily harm, and those who tried to carry on as previously found themselves ignored by the people. Wright reported that he was governor in name only while the real power was exercised by the provincial congress, council of safety, general committee, and parochial committees. The British government recognized these facts and included Georgia in the colonies that might be abandoned by the royal officials whenever they thought it necessary to their safety.

While the Georgia Whigs were taking over the colony's government, they insisted that everyone believe as they did about British tyranny and often used strong persuasion to see that their viewpoint prevailed. Certain instances show the strong feelings of 1775 and furnish background for the bloody partisan fighting of 1779-1781. As early as June, 1775, ship captains and merchants trading
at Savannah were ordered by a committee of Whigs to leave the province because they were too forward in support of the King's cause.\textsuperscript{46} Since all the people concerned were transients who soon left Georgia, the matter had no lasting effect. The first Savannah resident to get special "Liberty" treatment was a mariner and pilot, John Hopkins, who behaved disrespectfully toward the Sons of Liberty and was said to have drunk "Damnation to America" despite warnings that his conduct was not approved. On the night of July 24 he was taken from his home, tarred and feathered, and paraded through the streets of Savannah. At the liberty tree he was told that he would be hanged unless he drank "Damnation to all Tories and Success to American Liberty." He drank as directed and did not press charges against the mob leaders,\textsuperscript{47} who were prominent Whigs, for fear of personal harm if he did so. Hopkins reported that he heard that the Reverend Mr. Smith, Rector of Christ Church, who had refused to observe the Continental Congress day of fasting and prayer, would be next and that all Tories would receive the same treatment. Smith said that a number of people entered his home the same night that Hopkins was visited but that he was out of town. Learning about this the next day, Smith went down to Tybee for a week and then took passage to England. Wright said he did not believe such conduct was approved by all the people but only the violent among the mob.\textsuperscript{48}

The most famous tarring and feathering took place in Augusta on August 2. A body of Sons of Liberty went from Augusta to New Richmond, South Carolina, to bring to account William Thompson and Thomas Brown, lately come from England, who had expressed strong opposition to the measures adopted to support American liberty and had tried to persuade the people of the area to join them. Brown was reported to be a son of Lord North, who had been sent to poison the minds of Americans. Thompson was absent when the Sons arrived, and Brown refused to return to Augusta with them. He was taken to Augusta, tarred and feathered, and ridden about the town in a cart. The next day, "consenting voluntarily," he swore that he repented of his past actions and would do his utmost to protect American liberties in the future and try to persuade a party of men operating under Colonel Fletch-all in Ninety Six District of South Carolina to do likewise. Brown reported that he lost the use of two toes and could not walk for six months as a result of the bad treatment he got in Augusta. As soon as he was released, Brown publicly retracted his "voluntary" oath
The American Revolution in Georgia

to protect American liberties. It was reported that Brown and Thompson collected 150 sympathizers to demand satisfaction of the Augusta Sons of Liberty and that Colonel Fletchall with 700 men was ready to join them in securing the leaders of the group that had harmed Brown. The Augusta parochial committee applied to James Grierson, commander of the Augusta militia, for help in protecting themselves and the town, but Grierson refused any help unless Governor Wright ordered it. Some militia came to Augusta on the order of the council of safety in Savannah, but no battle developed. Brown retired into South Carolina before moving to St. Augustine.\(^49\)

Such over-zealous action by Whigs drove some neutrals into the Tory camp and stored up resentment on the part of the Tories, which was repaid later with interest, especially in Brown's case.

In light of what was happening in Georgia and what Wright was saying about it, his proclamation of November 2, inviting loyalists from other colonies to settle in Georgia, sounds out of character. People who had been disturbed in person and property were told that in Georgia they could follow their occupations and enjoy their property peacefully with confidence that the laws of Britain would protect them.\(^50\)

One opponent of independence who got better treatment than those mentioned above was the Reverend John J. Zubly, who had left Philadelphia when he discovered that he could not stem the trend toward independence in the Continental Congress. He had been accused of carrying on a treasonable correspondence with Wright by informing him of the actions of the Continental Congress. He was allowed to go at large and to argue with Whigs, though he had now lost his earlier popularity with them. Zubly still insisted on American rights in the British Empire, the position that he had originally taken.\(^51\) By being consistent in his beliefs, Zubly came to be thought of as a reactionary Tory instead of the radical Whig he had been considered just a year earlier.

More important to most Georgians than what happened to a few Tories was the attitude of the neighboring Indians. In June, 1775, the South Carolina Provincial Congress accused Indian Superintendent John Stuart of trying to arouse the Indians against the frontier and sent emissaries to Savannah, where Stuart had gone hastily from Charleston, to get Whig help in returning Stuart to Charleston. Stuart met with Whig leaders and read them his correspondence with London and his deputies to convince them that
he was not trying to bring down Indians on the frontiers nor had any orders to do such a thing. From Savannah Stuart went to St. Augustine where he had no fear of capture by Whigs. The South Carolinians were mainly worried about the Cherokees, but the Creeks caused Georgians most concern. Relations with the Creeks in the spring had been precarious because of a shortage of trading supplies. When the gunpowder for the Indian trade arrived at Savannah in July, it was captured by the Georgia and South Carolina Whigs, and only a small amount of it ever got to the Creeks. Stuart and Wright tried to get Indian supplies in Savannah, Augusta, and St. Augustine to keep the Creeks quiet. Stuart got some powder in St. Augustine, but part of it was captured by Whigs on its way to the Creeks. Both sides were worried about what the Creeks might do and Stuart and Wright worked hard to prevent any Indian trouble, which they knew the Whigs would blame on them if it did come.

Georgia, South Carolina, and the Continental Congress sent agents (usually Indian traders) to win Indian friendship and oppose the influence of Stuart and his deputies. Both Whigs and Tories wanted to keep the Indians neutral and to prevent their joining the other side. Stuart's correspondence throughout the fall of 1775 makes it plain that he was sincerely trying to keep the Indians quiet and at the same time to counteract Whig actions and keep the Indians friendly to the British.

In the midst of this contest between the Whigs and the British Indian Superintendent, a second vessel of powder for the Indian trade was captured by the Whigs at Savannah on September 17. Part of this powder was sent to the Indians as a gift, but the rest was retained by the Georgians for their own use. Wright was so concerned about what the Creeks might do after this second capture that he privately urged Georgia Whig leaders to send the powder to the Creeks to maintain peace. All he could get was a vague promise from the Whigs to do what they could to get supplies to the Creeks.

To counteract the gifts and supplies which the Whigs were getting to the Creeks, Stuart got supplies from Britain sent to St. Augustine where they would be safe from Whig interference. The threats heard in South Carolina and Georgia against Stuart are proof of the high opinion the Whigs held of his abilities with the Indians. Stuart still wanted peace in the Indian country, and even after he received definite orders to use the Indians against the
Whigs he hoped to use them with whites so they could be controlled. Indiscriminate Indian warfare was too horrible for Stuart to contemplate, and it would be harmful to the numerous Tory frontiersmen as well as to Whigs.  

Early in January, 1776, the council of safety received word from Charleston that British war vessels were unable to secure needed supplies there and probably would come to Savannah for them. The council of safety ordered militia to Savannah, sought additional military supplies, set up a defense system, and warned all coastal areas to be especially vigilant. As a protective measure, the houses of overseers and Negroes on both sides of the Savannah River for twenty-five miles above Savannah were ordered searched for arms and ammunition.

By January 18 four men-of-war and several auxiliary vessels had arrived at the mouth of the Savannah River. Governor Wright sent for Noble W. Jones and Joseph Clay, leading Whigs, and told them that one of the vessels was to be stationed at the mouth of the Savannah, while the others desired only to purchase provisions. If the vessels were allowed to make their purchases peaceably, Wright offered to persuade the commander not to harm Savannah; otherwise Wright was sure the vessels would take what they needed and probably damage the town in the process.

The council of safety differed with Wright's program and began the execution of its own plan by arresting Wright, his council, and other royal officials immediately. After two days under guard, the arrested officials were allowed to give their paroles not to go out of town or try to communicate with the British vessels. All non-associates were required to give a like parole. More militia were ordered to duty at Savannah, and the return of the powder "loaned" to South Carolina after its capture at Savannah was requested.

In February additional vessels with some 200 troops on board arrived from Boston to purchase provisions for the British army there. Wright and several members of his council broke their parole on the night of February 11 and fled to Cockspur Island where they boarded HMS Scarborough at three the next morning. Wright informed his council in Savannah that he was compelled to leave Savannah to communicate with the officers on the British vessels since the council of safety would not allow him to do so from Savannah. No harm would be done to Savannah if the vessels were allowed to procure the needed provisions. But the naval commander, Captain Barclay, announced his readiness to help any
properly cleared vessels to proceed on their voyage regardless of actions of the council of safety or of the provincial congress. Wright announced that he was going to England to take advantage of leave that had been granted him. This letter was Wright's last attempt to turn Georgians from their "mistaken" ways. He knew it would accomplish nothing, but he could not abandon Georgia and its government without this last try.

The British were anxious to secure the rice on several vessels in the river above Savannah. These vessels could legally sail after March 1, when the Continental non-exportation agreement expired. The South Carolina Provincial Congress urged a two-month extension of non-exportation until news of any possible extension by the Continental Congress could be secured, and the Georgia Council of Safety decreed an extension on March 1. Since it was now impossible for these vessels to sail peacefully and for the British to secure provisions otherwise, it was assumed that the British would try to aid the rice vessels in getting past Savannah and to the mouth of the river.

The council of safety anticipated such action and took measures to oppose it. There were from two to five hundred militia in Savannah, perhaps a hundred South Carolinians who had come to help, two batteries of cannon on the bluff commanding the channel, and a vessel sunk in the channel to prevent the men-of-war from coming up to the town. Savannah houses and ships in the port belonging to people who had signed the association were ordered appraised so that damages might be paid if they were destroyed in the anticipated trouble. The shipping was ordered destroyed rather than let it fall into the hands of the British, and all Whigs were admonished to take part in the defense of the town rather than desert it for their own safety as some were doing. South Carolina, appealed to for help, ordered Colonel Stephen Bull to take troops to Savannah and cooperate with the Georgia and Continental commanders there. Bull and his forces did not arrive until after the armed clashes of March 2-3, but his arrival gave Georgians a stronger sense of security.

On the night of March 2 British troops landed on Hutchinson's Island, in the river opposite Savannah, and got on board the rice vessels anchored against the island above the town. The next day a party of men sent by the council of safety to take the riggings off these vessels, was surprised and detained by the British troops on the vessels. Other Americans sent to treat with the British were
also detained. The council of safety retaliated by confining all royal officers in Savannah and several prominent Tories. The Whigs on shore fired upon the rice vessels, but they were out of range of the cannon. After prolonged negotiations, the Whigs sent down a fire vessel to set the rice ships aflame. Three or four were burned, but the rest got away by sailing down a channel back of Hutchinson's Island, which the American artillery could not reach and which was not guarded because it was assumed to be too shallow for the vessels to use. Fourteen or fifteen vessels with 1,600 barrels of rice fell into the hands of the British. The prisoners taken on both sides were released, and the officials and Tories who had been imprisoned were allowed to leave Georgia, if they desired. Having secured what provisions they could, the British transports and their escort left.

After Wright escaped to the Scarborough but before the March 2-3 troubles, he requested 500 to 1,000 troops and several vessels from Sir Henry Clinton to support royal government in Georgia and allow many back-country people to return to their correct loyalty from which they had been frightened by Whig actions and lack of support by Tories. Captain Barkley agreed that royal government could not be continued without armed support, but his troops were under orders to return to Boston. Clinton was engaged in military operations in North Carolina, and could send no help. Wright and most of the royal officials sailed away with the British vessels. Royal government ended in Georgia, and the Whigs now had complete control.

At this point it may be well to pause and consider in summary the reasons why Georgia joined the other colonies in revolution. What forces contributed to revolution and what worked against it? There were many reasons why Georgia, the youngest of the rebellious colonies, should have remained loyal to the mother country. She had been settled only forty years and had received more financial help from England than any of the other colonies that rebelled. While the public and private help that had been lavished upon the colony at the time of her founding hardly influenced Georgians by 1770, the Parliamentary payment of the civil list lessened taxes and allowed her colonial officials to be more independent than those paid by the legislatures in other colonies.

Georgia, like many of the other colonies, had a diverse population background. The backbone of her population was English,
either by direct immigration or from the other colonies, but this fact had little effect in determining if an individual became Whig or Tory. Other British elements in the population were Scotch and Scotch-Irish. The Scots of St. Andrew's Parish were mainly Whig from the beginning of the troubles. The Scotch-Irish, though somewhat slower in making a decision than the people on the coast, were independent-minded frontiersmen and generally became Whigs. The Scots who were most likely to be Tories were the Indian traders. They were often recent immigrants, and their business depended upon the British Indian Department and their standing with it. The next biggest national group in Georgia were the Germans. They lacked any background of representative government and individual rights. In Georgia they had found the religious freedom they sought, they had prospered economically and many feared that they would lose their land if they opposed the royal government. They lived apart from the main stream of Georgia life because of the language barrier. At first the Germans tended to be loyal to the King, but in the end they split, with the majority probably becoming Whigs. The small number of Jews in Georgia had received some insults and unequal treatment from representatives of established church and government, and so were Whigs from the beginning.

Georgia was also divided religiously, and different religions had a greater influence upon life than national backgrounds except for the Germans. Certainly the Church of England clergymen in the colony tended to be Tories because they had not been in America long enough to lose their English viewpoint. However, the Church of England was at best a slim support to the British cause in Georgia. Its churches, clergy, and communicants were too few, though the communicants were often leaders in the colony. There were no outstanding or popular Anglican clergymen among the five in the colony. Anglicans became both Whigs and Tories, but the church had no noticeable influence upon their decision. The strong religious bodies in Georgia were the Congregationalists in St. John's Parish, the Lutherans at Ebenezer, and Zubly's Presbyterian Meeting House in Savannah. There was never any doubt about the Congregationalists; they were leading Whigs from the very first. Zubly's congregation tended to be Whigs and at first the Lutherans tended to be Tory; but in the end both split. The great majority of frontiersmen were without religious organization. It is doubtful if religion per se was of any consequence in the division
between Whig and Tory in the early revolutionary struggle in Georgia. If it was a determining factor, it probably made more Whigs than Tories.\(^{71}\)

The varied elements in Georgia's population and the physical isolation of different groups made it difficult for Georgians to cooperate fully and to agree upon a common policy in opposition to the royal government. These differences were taken advantage of by the Tories in the early days in their attempts to discount or counteract the opposition to the acts of the British government. If the diverse background of her population was not an item in favor of loyalism in Georgia, the small population and the sparse settlement, in comparison with the number and proximity of Indian neighbors, were reasons to cling to the protection that the royal government could give the frontier.

Georgia's fighting population had always been outnumbered by that of her Indian neighbors, most of whom were fairly well controlled by the British Indian Department in the 1770s. The fear of Indian trouble seems to have acted as a real deterrent to opposition to the royal government by frontiersmen at first, but the British government's constant refusal to send military help against the threatened Indian war in 1774 certainly worked to the favor of the Whigs.\(^{72}\) The proximity of the British garrison at St. Augustine to the lower parishes and the long, exposed coastline with no protection against naval depredations made some people delay open repudiation of the British.

The number and caliber of royal officials in Georgia was a definite reason for Georgia's early backwardness in revolutionary activity. Because the leading officials were often sent from England and paid by Parliament, they kept the British viewpoint. Georgia's council, being appointed mainly from these officials, was an effective check on the popularly elected Commons House of Assembly.\(^{73}\) By far the most able and influential official in Georgia was Governor Wright, whose opposition to revolutionary activity has already been pointed out. Wright knew the colonial mind thoroughly, but he never lost his sense of duty to the British government and never let the colonial opposition take the initiative out of his hands until mid-1775. Wright put law and order above everything else and always insisted that there could be no liberty without law. His ability and interest in Georgia made him respected by both Georgians and British officials.\(^{74}\) More colonial
Wright could never understand the Whig constitutional arguments. If people were willing to admit that Parliament was the supreme legislative body of the empire, then it must, Wright argued, have absolute power to tax the colonies or do anything else. While he could not see the justice of the colonial arguments, he understood the colonists well enough to know that these arguments must be settled if peace was to return to America. Wright was the virtually undisputed leader of Georgia’s government until the Stamp Act troubles. After 1765 he did not always think the acts of the British government wise, but he tried to enforce them all regardless of the difficulties he knew his attempts would create. He thought that once a decision had been made it should be adhered to and that the repeal of the acts, regardless of how unpopular they were in America, was a mistake and could only create more American demands. His solution was to enforce the laws, with troops if necessary, and he often thought British enforcement halfhearted. Such inflexibility lost Wright his earlier universal political leadership and respect and made him instead the leader of one faction. Perhaps a governor who thought compromise possible would have been better at this stage, but it is doubtful that any official in America could have prevented revolution in Georgia. Governors who did not try to enforce the unpopular acts in other colonies did not prevent revolution there. Personal respect for Wright certainly delayed open opposition to the royal government on the part of many Georgians in the early phases of the struggle.

Other than the officials sent from England, the people most influential in keeping Georgia out of the Whig ranks were leading citizens who had come to Georgia in their youth, attained wealth and position in the colony, and had been given a seat on the governor’s council and/or an office. James Habersham and Noble Jones were the best examples of this type. They had been born and reared in England and had ties there which they did not want to give up. They had lived so long in the colonies that they were thorough colonials. They were of both parties and did not want to take sides with either. They upheld the right of the British government to govern the colonies but argued strongly against the expedience of the Stamp Act, Townshend Acts, and other acts unpopular in America. Habersham said, “It is easy for People in England to
speculate and refine, but here we must act as Necessity requires, which is an infallible Rule.” Both Habersham and Jones, who had been towers of strength to Georgia and Wright, died in 1775 before Georgia made the final break with England.

Georgia’s leaders were a relatively small and homogeneous group with no notable divisions or factions. They sat in the assembly and council and occupied the important executive offices. They were the economic and social leaders of the colony. Most of them lived in or near Savannah and knew each other well personally. Governor Wright was the natural and conscious leader of this group.

These men, being the natural leaders of the colony, were able to delay revolutionary action until many Georgians were thoroughly aroused and new leaders had developed. The younger Habershams and Jones, Joseph Clay, and other consistent Whig leaders came from this influential group, and they must have found it difficult to break with their old associates and ways of doing things.

So far as the press is concerned, it does not seem to have been any clear-cut influence on the Whig-Tory division. James Johnston, the editor of Georgia’s one newspaper, the Georgia Gazette, was a loyalist so far as personal sentiments went; but his newspaper shows no evidence of having been conducted in the interest of the royal cause. He printed much on all sides of any argument, and he certainly kept Georgians informed of growing opposition in other colonies. Johnston was first a journalist and second a partisan.

Few Georgians owned vessels to violate the navigation laws. After the Townshend Acts troubles there was little objection to the Parliamentary acts on economic grounds. The argument against Britain paralleled that in the other colonies. “No taxation without representation” was first heard at the time of the Stamp Act and continued until 1775. Georgians, as did most colonials, placed great faith in petitions to the King and insisted that George III was really their friend once he knew the true facts. Most Georgians were reluctant to take sides until relatively late. They kept hoping that some sort of compromise could be worked out and that it would not be necessary to take sides. As late as the second provincial congress, in the summer of 1775, there was attempt at compromise; but this congress also took the first major stand for revolution in Georgia. By the end of the summer of 1775 it was necessary for people to take sides. The loyalist position was a negative one that would maintain the status quo, a fairly confused status quo after
the Stamp Act. The Whigs advanced a positive and progressive argument for the safeguarding of American rights, an argument that developed into the eventual demand for independence. The positive and progressive argument always has an advantage over the negative and static one in winning advocates in such a confused situation as existed from 1765 to 1775.

The original split in Georgia was between the conservative and wealthier merchant-planter class and a group of younger and less wealthy Savannahians, some of whom were the sons of the first group and some of whom were small tradesmen and artisans. The more radical Savannahians were joined by the St. John's Parish group (that often wanted to go further and faster than the Savannah group), and by the Scots from St. Andrew's Parish, to create the original Whig group. The Tories consisted of the officeholders and clergymen from England, the wealthier Savannah citizens, most of the Indian traders, recent immigrants from Britain, a good number of Germans of Ebenezer, and the Quakers from Wrightsborough. The last two groups were by no means homogeneous and were to furnish recruits for both sides as the argument continued. The frontiersmen were slow to break with the established government, but later they made up for lost time.

From the time of the Stamp Act, it was obvious that there was a party in Georgia in essential agreement with the more radical parties in the other colonies. This party showed itself in every dispute between the colonies and the mother country. It is impossible to identify individual members of the opposition until 1774-1775, but it seems that there was a continuity of personnel for the entire decade. Certainly Georgia radicals and those in other colonies took similar action. Georgians were conscious of the fact that they were Americans and must do what other Americans did. The fifteen years of rapid physical and economic expansion, and of growth in population and political independence had given Georgians a sense of belonging. With the help of the other colonies, they now felt strong enough to stand alone. Georgia was still too young and weak to begin troubles with the mother country, but she could participate in them. Her inspiration came from the other colonies—especially South Carolina, Massachusetts, and Virginia. Her actions often did not go so far as those in other colonies, and they always came later. There would certainly have been no revolution had it been left to Georgians to begin!