Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants Who Settled in America...

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In the year 1751 Samuel Urlsperger continued with his edition of the *Ausführliche Nachrichten*, from which these *Detailed Reports* are translated. However, beginning in April of that year, for reasons unknown, he abruptly changed the title of the edition to *Das Americanische Ackerwerk Gottes*, or *God’s American Husbandry*. The symbolism is clear: in John 15:1 Christ says, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.” In other words, God’s American husbandry is His spreading of His word in North America through the Halle missionaries. Despite the change in the title of the original, the *Detailed Reports* continue almost unchanged, unless Urlsperger has taken even more license in abridging the work.

This and the following four paragraphs are taken from the introduction to a previous volume of this series and may therefore be passed over by those who have already read them or who are otherwise familiar with the history of the Georgia Salzburgers. For those who come new to the field, the following resumé should suffice. Those who wish more detail may consult the *Salzburger Saga*.¹

When the Lutherans were expelled from Salzburg in 1731, not all the exiles went to East Prussia and other Protestant lands in Europe: a small number, some two hundred, were taken to the colony of Georgia, then in its second year. Georgia, the last of Britain’s thirteen North American colonies, was founded according to the grandiose schemes of a group of benevolent gentlemen in London, called the Trustees, who wished to provide homes for impoverished Englishmen and persecuted foreign Protestants, to protect the more northerly colonies from the Spaniards in Florida, and to provide raw materials for English industry.

The first Salzburger transport, or traveling party, consisted of recent exiles who had been recruited in and around Augsburg, a Swabian city just northwest of Salzburg. This group arrived in Georgia in 1734 and settled some twenty-five miles northwest of Savannah, where they founded a settlement which they named Ebenezer. By the time the second transport arrived a year later, the land that had been chosen had proved infertile and the stream on which it was built, Ebenezer Creek, had proved un­navigable. When a third transport arrived in 1736, composed mostly of Upper Austrian exiles, the survivors at Ebenezer joined them on the Red Bluff on the Savannah River, bringing the name of the earlier settlement with them. The original site, which became the 'Trustees' cowpen or cattle ranch, was henceforth called Old Ebenezer.

A fourth and last transport, consisting of Salzburger exiles who had been sojourning in Augsburg and other Swabian cities, arrived in 1741. The Salzburgers were joined by Swiss and Palatine settlers from Purysburg, a Swiss settlement a short way down the Savannah River on the Carolina side, and also by some Palatine servants donated by the Trustees. Finding insufficient fertile land on the Red Bluff, many Salzburgers moved their plantations to an area along Abercorn Creek where the lowland was flooded and enriched each winter by the Savannah River. This explains the terms “the town” and “the plantations.” After some gristmills and sawmills were built on Abercorn Creek, it was usually called the Mill River (Mühl-Fluss).

Despite appalling sickness and mortality and the hardships incident to settlement in a wilderness, the Salzburgers were the most successful community in Georgia. This relative success was largely due to the skill, devotion, and diligence of their spiritual leader, Johann Martin Boltzius, the author of most of these reports. This young divine had been trained at the University of Halle in eastern Germany and had taught in that city at the Francke Foundation, a charitable institution that was to have great influence on the development of Ebenezer. Although Boltzius was at heart a minister, his secular responsibilities in Georgia moulded him into a skillful administrator, economist, and diplomat. A few of the reports were written by Boltzius' ad-
miring younger colleague, Christian Israel Gronau, who officiated whenever Boltzius was away, in Savannah or elsewhere, until his untimely death in 1745. After that, some of the reports were written by Gronau’s successor, Hermann Heinrich Lemke.

Boltzius’ journals were edited contemporaneously by SamuelUrlsperger, the Senior of the Lutheran clergy in Augsburg. Comparison of the original manuscripts surviving in Halle with Urlsperger’s published edition shows that he took considerable liberty in deleting unpleasant reports and suppressing proper names, which he replaced with N. or N.N. So far as we know, the original documents for 1751 and 1752 no longer exist, so there is no way to know how much Urlsperger changed or deleted; but there is reason to believe that Boltzius made an entry for every day, as he had been instructed to, and that Urlsperger made major deletions for both diplomatic and economic reasons. In some cases he simply consolidated the material for two or more days into one. Urlsperger’s deletions are very illogical: he often deletes a name in one passage even though it appears in another and can be easily recognized.

The years 1751 and 1752 were a turning point in Ebenezer’s history. Despite their tragic mortality rate in their malarial climate, the populace of Ebenezer maintained their number by accepting Palatine servants and German Swiss settlers, for no more Salzburgers were available. In 1750 a new and important addition began, that of settlers from the territory of the free Imperial City of Ulm on the Danube, who had been recruited for Urlsperger by Lutheran ministers. These immigrants had been carefully screened as suitable for Ebenezer, and time was to prove that the recruiters did their job well. When the year 1751 began, the first Swabian transport had been well housed and assimilated, yet, being still “unseasoned,” many of them contracted malaria that summer and several died. In fact, although the initial hardships at Ebenezer had been largely overcome, sickness and death continued; and the death rate for 1751 and 1752 greatly exceeded the birth rate.

A few other settlers came with the Swabians, among these being the Schubdreins of Weiher in Nassau-Saarbrücken, now Weyer in Alsace. Three bothers, Daniel, Joseph, and Johann
Peter arrived in 1749 with a transport of Palatines on the *Charles Town Galley* with Capt. Peter Bogg. They had succeed in leaving home by being *auf Wanderung*, or on their travels as journeymen apprentices; and thus they appeared on their parish records. These three young men were such pious and diligent carpenters that Boltzius arranged for Johann Peter to return to Germany to bring back other members of his family. This he did in 1751, bringing his parents, his younger brother Nikolaus, a sister, and apparently several other persons, for several new surnames appear in Georgia soon thereafter, surnames identical to some of the Schubdreins' kinsmen and gossips in Weiher. The reports for 1751 and 1752 reveal how the family fared.

Fundamental changes began in 1751 in the economy and goals of the people of Ebenezer. The Trustees had wished a colony of self-sufficient small landowners able to defend their homes and to supply raw materials for England, and the Salzburgers had been their only proof that this was possible and that slavery was not necessary. The Salzburgers, who had seen slavery first hand at Old Ebenezer, were generally opposed to it and backed up Boltzius in his petitions against it. Because they had lost most of their children, the Salzburgers were desperate for servants; and the Trustees tried to oblige them with Palatines, even though few were willing to work for others where land was free for the asking. This labor shortage was the reason the Trustees bore the expense of bringing the Swabians, but the Swabians, too, preferred to work for themselves. Meanwhile, despite the Salzburgers' disapproval, slavery was permitted in Georgia, even Boltzius having reluctantly acquiesced. As these reports show, the Salzburgers themselves soon began to buy slaves to replace the labor of their lost children. The Salzburgers were now being urged to cultivate less land and to raise more silk and to prepare more lumber for export; and Boltzius, urged by the merchant James Habersham, was declaring it God's will that the Salzburgers do so.

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“This volume has been funded by the current members of the board of Ebenezer Trustees, which was originally created when the pastors turned over their TRUST to seven members of the Ebenezer congregation. From the beginning, the pastors recognized and used the lay leadership within the congregation(s). In turn, the laymen trustees of 1987 wish to honor those first pastors from Germany who laid the groundwork for the ecclesiastical and secular operation of the church and town, all of whom died in service to God, church, and Ebenezer.

Johann Martin Boltzius, 1703–1765
Israel Christian Gronau, 1714–1745
Hermann Heinrich Lemke, 1720–1768
Christian Rabenhorst, 1728–1776
Christoph Friedrich Triebner, 1740–1818
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During the eighteenth-century, when an artist or scholar wished to publish a book but was unable to obtain a grant from the crown, he would turn to the prominent gentlemen of his city and ask them to “subscribe” to his publication, that is, to “take out a subscription.” In that way the burden was shared by those who subscribed. It is fortunate that such cultural interest still survives, as is indicated by the above list of subscribers.

George Fenwick Jones
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