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**James Oglethorpe and the Founding
of Georgia - I**

Lead: The founding of the North American English colony of Georgia emerged from the happy confluence of political shrewdness and personal dedication in the life of James Edward Oglethorpe.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: What would become the Royal colony of Georgia got its start because of social problems in the mother country and a serious military threat to Britain's interests in North

America. The mid-wife to the colony's birth was James Oglethorpe. One of the interesting features of liability law in England during the 1700s was the power of a creditor over a debtor. A creditor was permitted by law to take possession of the debtor's body. If you owed a debt and could not pay it, your creditor could throw you in jail until you paid. Not surprisingly, prisons were filled with people whose only crime was that they had fallen on hard times and could not pay their bills. Studies of prison conditions at the time revealed pitiful stories of corrupt judges and prison officials, bribery, extortion, brutality, and disease. If they survived and were released, these so-called debtor criminals had little hope of a decent

or productive life.

At the same time, as each year passed the incredibly rich southern colony of Carolina was ever threatened by powerful and hostile native American tribal groups south and west of the Savannah River and, even more dangerously, the Spanish military presence in Florida. Spain had been on the peninsula for two centuries and there was little to prevent it from moving north and threatening Carolina from putative bases on the barrier islands such as Saint Simon or even established settlements on the mainland. Two problems: debtors and the Spanish. James Oglethorpe moved by compassion and political savvy

tackled them both. Next time: making the right case for a new colony.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

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