

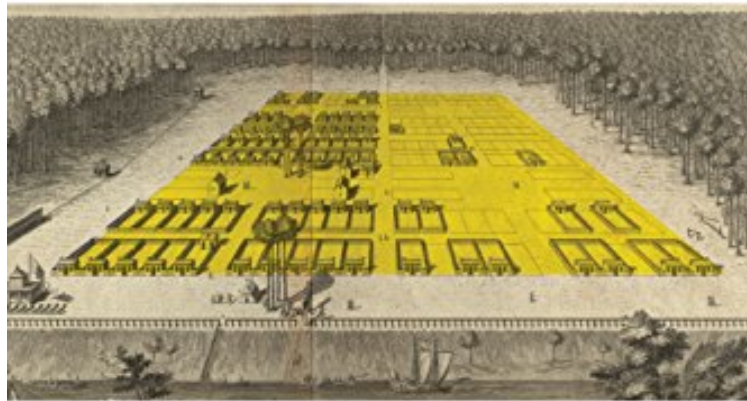
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Thomas D. Wilson

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Thomas D. Wilson : The Oglethorpe Plan: Enlightenment Design in Savannah and Beyond before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Oglethorpe Plan: Enlightenment Design in Savannah and Beyond:

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy I. E. QuastlerGreat book about a popular topic0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Must read for anyone interested in Savannah.By Tom CrossI skipped over this book a few times because I mistakenly thought that it was a text book for professional city planners, but I'm really

glad that I finally decided to give it a read. It is an absolutely fascinating discussion that takes the beautiful and unique layout of Savannah and places it in the context of the Enlightenment political philosophy of the early 1700's from which it was born. My grade school history classes dismissed Oglethorpe's plan as a crazy utopian experiment that quickly failed and was not worthy of discussion. But it is worth discussing. Although the colony was overrun in the short term with the slavery based system of its northern neighbors, this author argues that the long term arc of history, in many ways, has favored Oglethorpe. His experiment had an impact on the thinking of slavery abolitionists in London, who in turn influenced slavery abolitionists in the United States. Embedded within his plan are a variety of other ideas that also have long term social value, including the unique ward design of the city itself. The book provided me with an entirely new perspective on the city of Savannah, on the history of Georgia, and on the philosophers of the Enlightenment.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A must-read for Savannah folk and planners.

By L. A. Norris

This wonderfully researched probe into the life, education, and influences on James Oglethorpe opens a much broader interpretation of the man's intentions with his, still celebrated, 1733 settlement plan of Savannah known as the Oglethorpe Plan. The author Wilson describes the ordinary and extraordinary opportunities James had while growing up in and educated during the flowering of the intellectual influences of the Enlightenment Age. Not a mere retelling of the history of the times, the story is about Oglethorpe's family and the personal and political intrigue that molded James' character and humanity. Though dense with newly minted detail, the writing is clear and easily comprehended. We find that J.E.O. was a man with high purpose and passion, yet knew better than to advertise his full intentions to those whose politics or faith might have opposed his humanistic experiment in Georgia. Yet, he apparently quietly shared his plans with those of similar and cautious mind. The social reformist discussions are just as controversial and interesting today as they were 300 years ago. And as such, they directly address many of today's community planning issues. After unveiling Oglethorpe's most extraordinary goals for the early Georgian community, Tom Wilson, a veteran urban planner himself, drops those principles directly into the churning waters of the current New Urbanist planning to highlight certain strengths and weaknesses. The book definitely gives J.E. Oglethorpe a boosted profile in the history of planning. And relating the goals of the early Savannah community model to current planning strategies should make for some interesting and constructive dialogue among planners today.

The statesman and reformer James Oglethorpe was a significant figure in the philosophical and political landscape of eighteenth-century British America. His social contributions—all informed by Enlightenment ideals—included prison reform, the founding of the Georgia Colony on behalf of the "worthy poor," and stirring the founders of the abolitionist movement. He also developed the famous ward design for the city of Savannah, a design that became one of the most important planning innovations in American history. Multilayered and connecting the urban core to peripheral garden and farm lots, the Oglethorpe Plan was intended by its author to both exhibit and foster his utopian ideas of agrarian equality. In his new book, the professional planner Thomas D. Wilson reconsiders the Oglethorpe Plan, revealing that Oglethorpe was a more dynamic force in urban planning than has generally been supposed. In essence, claims Wilson, the Oglethorpe Plan offers a portrait of the Enlightenment, and embodies all of the major themes of that era, including science, humanism, and secularism. The vibrancy of the ideas behind its conception invites an exploration of the plan's enduring qualities. In addition to surveying historical context and intellectual origins, this book aims to rescue Oglethorpe's work from its relegation to the status of a living museum in a revered historic district, and to demonstrate instead how modern-day town planners might employ its principles. Unique in its exclusive focus on the topic and written in a clear and readable style, *The Oglethorpe Plan* explores this design as a bridge between New Urbanism and other more naturally evolving and socially engaged modes of urban development.

This is a fascinating book that shifts perception of Oglethorpe's Savannah plan dramatically from that of a beautiful but essentially limited example of utopian design to an urban model fully representative of mainstream eighteenth-century intellectual thought. (Jack Williams, Professor Emeritus, Auburn University, author of *East 40 Degrees* (Virginia))

Thomas Wilson brings a fresh perspective on the planning accomplishments of James Oglethorpe, situating Savannah's famous urban plan within the broader framework of Enlightenment philosophy, social reform, religious philanthropy, and agrarian idealism. His study challenges accepted notions of Oglethorpe's intentions and makes a compelling case for understanding the urban plan of Savannah as part of an integrated system of land use planning. This book will be a valuable resource to anyone interested in the history and planning of American cities. (Robin Williams, Savannah College of Art and Design)

Wilson is deeply familiar with Savannah.... [His] detailing of this history is serious but accessible, not stuffy or academic. It's a fascinating tour of the potential, and the limits, of design. (Landscape Architecture Magazine)

To make the familiar unfamiliar is one of the most powerful acts of a historian and Wilson does this. His carefully researched story describes both Oglethorpe's contribution to the Enlightenment and the rich intellectual context for both the idea's initial generation and its manifestation in Georgia. Wilson successfully challenges the "static portrayal of Oglethorpe's role in history" and is able to persuasively argue for his contributions to "social reform, political theory, and town planning" (p. 1). The description of Oglethorpe's efforts to create social equity through physical design remains relevant today. In addition, Wilson's careful analysis points to a

frequent misrepresentation of the plan as infinitely expandable, demonstrating instead that there is an ideal scale at which the plan as a whole is optimal. (Thaisa Way H-Environment)Wilson considers this philosophy, the present-day physical ambience of Savannah (with 18th-century urban design filled in with 19th-century architecture protected by 20th-century historic preservation districts), and its implications. What can it say to planners today?... Wilson handles both the history and the planning issues with delicacy and precision. Don't miss this treat. (Planning Magazine)The Oglethorpe Plan: Enlightenment Design in Savannah and Beyond fills a gap in Georgia colonial history, carving out a place for a contextual history that brings the influence of Oglethorpe, Georgia, and Savannah to the present day through the premise that social change can be rooted in urban design. (Georgia Library Quarterly)Wilson's insightful analysis opens new avenues of study regarding the implications of Oglethorpe's timeless design of Savannah, both in its historical context and for current urban planning. (Georgia Historical Quarterly) This is a fascinating book that shifts perception of Oglethorpe's Savannah plan dramatically from that of a beautiful but essentially limited example of utopian design to an urban model fully representative of mainstream eighteenth-century intellectual thought. (Jack Williams, Professor Emeritus, Auburn University, author of East 40 Degrees) Thomas Wilson brings a fresh perspective on the planning accomplishments of James Oglethorpe, situating Savannah's famous urban plan within the broader framework of Enlightenment philosophy, social reform, religious philanthropy, and agrarian idealism. His study challenges accepted notions of Oglethorpe's intentions and makes a compelling case for understanding the urban plan of Savannah as part of an integrated system of land use planning. This book will be a valuable resource to anyone interested in the history and planning of American cities. (Robin Williams, Savannah College of Art and Design)About the AuthorThomas D. Wilson, AICP, is a town planning consultant in South Carolina. He previously served as director of comprehensive planning in Savannah, as planning director for Beaufort County, South Carolina, and as a planning official and research analyst in Miami, Key West, and Philadelphia.