

WHERE HAVE ALL OF CAUSTON BLUFF' S RELICS GONE?

"The Indian sites on Causton Bluff produced artifact materials dating back to about 4,500BC and to the present...major Indian occupations took place between 2500BC to 500AD and between 1000AD to circa 1600AD. Good evidence of an earlier Indian occupation from circa 9000BC to 2500BC was found just outside the project area."

Excerpt from "Archaeological
Investigation of Causton Bluff" by
Armstrong State University
Professor Lawrence Babits

The trail of evidence in the form of artifacts and relics tell us that Causton Bluff had a rich and varied history: Indians living here as early as 9000BC, English settlers building mansions here in 1733, Confederate soldiers building an earthen fort in 1861 and the intrusion of industry here in 1839 with the construction of a railroad, a saw mill, a brick-making area and ship building facilities. These distinctly different periods of history occurring at what we know today to be Causton Bluff left a treasure trove of artifacts/relics found in the soil and middens (trash heaps) which enabled archaeologists to reveal the details of former residents' life styles, cultural growth and accomplishments as well as their failures.

Unfortunately in the coming years, 1938 to 1985 Causton Bluff would lie dormant and unprotected making it no more than an unlivable wilderness. The train had ceased to operate, the saw mill had closed and only the brick makers and shipbuilders remained in their locations along the Savannah River banks. Chemical factories and petroleum facilities are the last known industries to locate in the vicinity of Causton Bluff. During this inactive period relic pillaging was rampant. Causton Bluff became known as a metal detector user's paradise. ATV drivers created a 'race track' road area that proved very damaging to many delicate relics along that route.

NO TRESPASSING signs were posted but were ignored by those who were enticed to come in and enjoy a true wilderness atmosphere. The most damage to relic-rich Causton Bluff were the metal detector users. In order to retrieve their "finds" it was necessary to 'stir up' the surrounding grounds which gave Causton Bluff a ravaged look. Fortunately all this soil destruction was about to come to an end.

In 1985 the property owner of Causton Bluff was Joseph Fraser, son of Charles Fraser the famed and successful developer of Hilton Head Island. Joseph aimed to create a neighborhood similar to those on Hilton Head complete with a guard gate, a marina, and elegant homes. (The cottages would not be built until 1995-2004.) But before the bulldozers could turn their first load of dirt, property owner Joseph Fraser insisted on having an archaeological study performed in an effort to save any remaining relics and retrieve as much evidence as possible that could add to the history of Causton Bluff. Joseph Fraser funded the archaeological study that lasted for 3 years ending in 1987. He also gave scholarships to talented students. The findings of the 3 year study are found in a book titled "Archaeological Investigation of Causton Bluff." Copies are available at Live Oak Library's Georgia Room on Bull Street, Georgia Historical Society on Whitaker at Gaston, and in the library at Armstrong State University, all in Savannah.

So where are Causton Bluff's relics now? My question led me to several research sites and after a phone call to the Georgia Historical Society they had a significant amount of material connected to Professor Babits which included artifacts as well as papers only understood by an archaeologist but in box # 18 labeled 'artifacts' I thought this would be our relics, but all I could identify in that box was a rusted hinge from either a gate or a door. Other items in the box could only be identified by a trained eye or carbon dating. I showed the GHS attendant pictures of the relics in question but she said they knew nothing of them. They did give me Professor Babits's address and I couldn't wait to get home to get in touch with him. He is semi-retired but still teaching at East Carolina University. They also gave me his e-mail address so I sent him

a message and the next day I received a reply. He was very congenial, anxious to help and told me the complete status quo of our relic's whereabouts. When Professor Babits left Armstrong State in 1992 he left all the relics and artifacts in the able hands of his associate. But an unfortunate event happened in the area where the relics were stored. Unsupervised workers hired to paint and remodel the room that housed the relics stole a great deal of them and later tried to sell them to a Paul Blattner who knew exactly what they were and luckily the thief surrendered them back to Armstrong State.

During my email talks with Professor Babits, he told me he remembers some of the relics, specifically a telegraph key, a brass star as one would find on a uniform and he also commented that his favorite relic was the construction of the bombproof that was located inside the berms of Fort Bartow. Some saved relics were a Union Badge and coins.

After all the research and conversations with Professor Babits himself, I felt I had enough information to call Armstrong State to confirm the presence (or not) of our relics. I was directed to the archaeologist currently in charge who told me that a number of Causton Bluff's relics are indeed there and they plan to clean them, and perhaps classify them and then house them in a secure glass case for the purpose of viewing. I am told the project will be complete in 2016. With this accomplishment not only will Prof. Babits's efforts be recognized but at the same time a piece of Causton Bluff history will be preserved. A special thanks goes to ASU President Linda Bleicken, ASU archaeologist Laura Siefert and Lawrence Babits for his knowledgeable contributions, especially the answer to the question, "Where Have All of Causton Bluff's Relics Gone?"

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