

CAUSTON BLUFF'S HERITAGE: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

As modern day Causton Bluffers we are fortunate to be able to avail ourselves of old registers, journals, and a lot of history prose dealing with the Bluff's early landowner's activities. For the record our first landowner was not Thomas Causton, It was an Englishman named John Hendricks who took residence here in 1715, 18 years before Thomas Causton put his footprint on 260 acres here in 1733. Does this mean we should change our neighborhood's name to "Hendrick's Bluff"? No. Mr. Hendricks did not leave any record that he had the talents of a community organizer (where have we heard that term before?). But from 1733 to 1745 Thomas Causton almost single-handedly turned this large peninsula into a thriving, plantation-filled settlement that pleased his trustees to no end. Causton was also known for promoting himself in one way or another which included his naming this community after himself and through the years no one has challenged his decision.

So, what's in a name? In 1987 archaeology professor Lawrence Babits and his team chose to include a listing of Causton Bluff landowners and how ownership changed through the years from 1715 to 1938. It has the framework of a soap opera but without the intrigue and personal details. Read on!

1715 – Trustees located in Granville Co., S.C. awarded John Hendricks the first land grant on record for this bluff area.

1733 – Portions of land granted to a number of early settlers including Thomas Causton. Descendants of this group will hold the land for nearly 40 years.

1738 – Causton built and developed his plantation "Ockstead" which later had to be held as security for his debts. In 1740 Causton reestablished residence at Causton Bluff.

1741 – Causton attempts to clear his name from financial wrong-doing but dies in 1745 on a return voyage from England.

1750 – Causton had named William Williamson as administrator of his estate.

1763 – Ockstead Mansion finally belongs to Williamson and receives the actual grant for the plantation.

1785 – Causton Bluff incorporates Plats 6 & 7 of Brewton Hill, 1,133 acres total but only 760 acres were suitable for cultivation.

1790 – Williamson dies leaving Causton Bluff to his son, Reverend Joseph Williamson. .

1802 - Rev. Williamson sells the plantation which was now in disrepair to John McQueen, Jr for 100 pounds. Good cotton land there made cotton a new and valuable commodity.

1823 – Causton Bluff goes to McQueen's wife Margaret after his death.

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1829 – Margaret McQueen sold Causton Bluff to Mary R. Cowper, her sister.

1831 – All lands formerly belonging to John and Margaret McQueen were retained in the family by becoming the property of Cowper. Plats 6 & 7 were soon divided becoming plantations New Hope and Sedgebank.

1836 – William Mackay was planting rice on New Hope plantation which he either rented or leased from Copwer. Later that year, Copwer sold Sedgebank to John Mackay.

1837 – 1843 Panic and depression overcame the entire area. Causton's Bluff and adjoining farm lots were given to William and Virginia Mackay by M.A. Cowper with Thomas and Joseph Bryan acting as trustees. In 1839 William Mackay sold Causton's Bluff to Ralph King for \$15,000, reserving a 50 acre tract, Then, in 1842 Planter's Bank foreclosed on a note endorsed by William Law with Causton Bluff and New Hope being held as security. The planations became the property of William Law who paid the notes and took over the deeds to the tracts.

1848 – John Mackay dies leaving Sedgebank to his mother, Eliza McQueen Mackay.

1849 – Law sold Causton's Bluff (and New Hope) to Harman Blodgett for \$25,000 giving the deeds to the plantations as security to William Mongin. The debt was cancelled in 1852. After their acquisition by Blodgett, Causton's Bluff and New Hope were consolidated and thereafter became known just as Causton's Bluff.

1850 – Robert Habersham purchased 197 acres of Causton's Bluff. The portion consisted of lowland for rice culture. Therefore, one-fourth of Causton's Bluff was owned by Habersham.

1851 – Blodgett sold a 50 acre tract of Causton's Bluff to Habersham.

1852 – Habersham purchased the remainder of Causton's Bluff from Blodgett.

1888 – 1893 Causton Bluff was managed by J.F. Sweat and partners Rowland and G. Purse.

1896 - Rice was once again planted by Rowland, but the market for rice here began to decline due to competition from Louisiana and Texas. Another factor was the deepening for the Savannah River causing erosion of the planter's banks. Salt water also inundated the fields.

1898 – Rowland leased Causton's bluff to Joseph A Huger.

1898 to 1904 – Huger operated Causton's Bluff.

1904 to 1910 – Causton's Bluff operated by Rhodes and Roberts. From 1891 to 1908, Causton's Bluff was owned by J.C. Rowland. In his will dated 1907 he left Causton's Bluff to his children Clifford G., Charles P. and Helen Rowland.

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1910 - Lease to Rhodes and Roberds expires. Plantation placed under the management of Ernest Rhodes. Another attempt at cultivating rice was a disastrous failure.

1918 – Waterfront acreage was purchased for shipbuilding during World War I but the armistice was signed and the company dissolved. The land was sold to local owners.

1919 - City of Savannah purchased the part of Causton's Bluff and Deptford between the Savannah River and the Tybee railroad. This included part of Sedgebank. Rowlands retained the highland or original 260 acres granted to Thomas Causton.

1933 – 1938 The Rowlands leased the property to Thomas Morgan as a sawmill site. Sawmill and tenant houses were erected on the bluff and remained until 1938 when the sawmill shut down and was removed.

BARBARA HOFER

NOTE: With the railroads coming through, the sawmill, the shipbuilding and the brick making Causton Bluff became so industrial that it ceased to be an ideal place to live. The plantations were either in a state of disrepair or they were torn down during that time. It has taken years but thanks to careful planning and close monitoring of development, Causton's Bluff is once again one of Savannah's most preferred places to live. From large elegant homes to charming cottages the residences here offer a delightful lifestyle for everyone.....welcome to the 21st century!

Sources: "Archaeology Investigation at Causton Bluff" by Lawrence Babits and "Savannah River Plantations" by Frank Wheeler, and "The Journal of William Stephens 1741 – 1743" edited by E. Merton Coulter.



Deptford changed owners rapidly. In 1885 it was sold to John C. Rowland and Captain D. Purse. For the most part Deptford was idle between 1908 and WW I, when shipbuilders began to use the land. In 1877 some of the land was purchased by the city to construct a pesthouse. The pesthouse was used for people who had to be isolated due to communicable diseases. These photographs were taken by W.E. Wilson in the late 19th or early 20th century. His description of the photographs states, "slave cabins at Deptford."