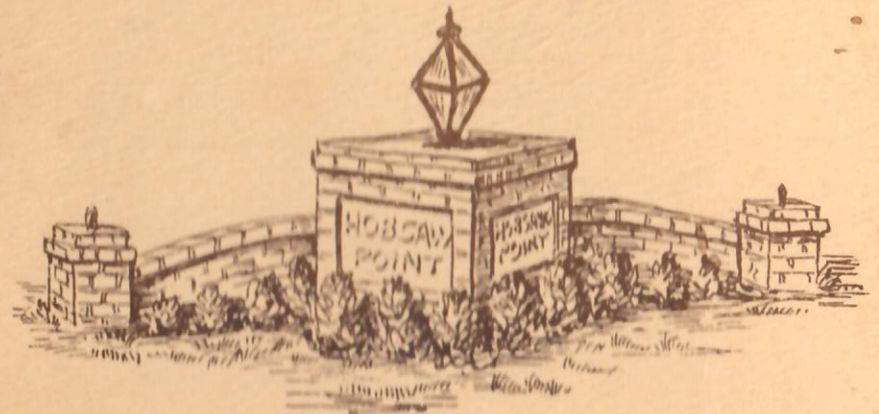


The
History of
Hobcaw

HOBCAW POINT
MOUNT PLEASANT, S. C.



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Hobcaw is an Indian word meaning 'creek of the Wando.' The Indians who inhabited this land were Sewees, Santees or Etiwans, and their language was Muskogean. William Hilton, an explorer sent north in 1663 by Barbadoes planters to find a site for colonization, tells that the Indians of this coastal region built 'great round houses covered with palmetto leaves, at least two hundred feet in diameter and twelve feet high.' It was the debris from many feasts encircling these houses that formed the great shell heaps found here at Hobcaw, Porcher's Bluff, and Bellevue Plantation. As late as 1925 some of these heaps were still undisturbed. Since seafood played such an important role in the Indian diet, historians wondered why these heaps were located as far as a half mile or more from a beach. The explanation became clear with the discovery of fresh water underground springs at Hobcaw and additional springs located near the sites of the other shell

heaps. These were found to be the only springs in the parish.

Hobcaw originally included Remley's Point and other land to the east. From records of early grants of land, one would judge that David Maybank was one of the earliest settlers in Christ Church Parish. He purchased land at Hobcaw in 1678 and lived there until his death in 1713. On September 2, 1706, it was at this same Hobcaw that the celebrated 'fight at Hobcaw' took place. Governor Nathaniel Johnson had received word that the Spanish, French, and some of their Indian allies were plotting to invade Carolina, which was at this time the southern frontier of the British Empire in America. Governor Johnson gave the necessary orders for preparation and sent forth Indians who were in alliance with the colony. (On August 24, 1706, smoke signals from Sullivan's Island indicated that five ships had been sighted.) Council of War was held, and all

vessels in the harbor were put in command of William Rhett. The same day a message was received from the enemy demanding surrender of the town.

On the 29th of September, part of the enemy went ashore between the river and the ocean and burned two vessels on Colonel Dearly's Creek (now known as Shem Creek). A small party went ashore on James Island and burned several plantation houses, (but the Indians had driven the invaders to their boats before the militia could get there). Word was brought to town that they had landed at Hobcaw, and one hundred men were silently conveyed across the river before day-break. They surprised the enemy feasting on their plunder and sharp fighting ensued. A considerable number were drowned, wounded, and killed before the enemy was sorely defeated.

David Maybank's daughter Susannah married Jacob Bond in 1715. For many years Jacob was a

vestryman for Christ Church Parish, a Justice Commissioner of Peace, and also a member of the General Assembly. Jacob came into possession of land at Hobcaw Point on Wackindaw Creek, two hundred acres of which came to him through his wife. On the U. S. survey map Wackindaw Creek is known as Hobcaw Creek, and other records call it Quelch's or Coinbow. Susannah and Jacob Bond had five daughters and one son. The Bond family touches most of the old families of Christ Church Parish. They married into the families of I'on, Maybank, Read, Rose, Lempriere, Simons, Ashby, Lowndes, and others. The South Carolina Gazette of February 17, 1759, carried the following announcement: 'On Sunday evening last, Doctor Samuel Caine married Miss Catherine Bond, daughter of Jacob Bond, Esq. of Christ Church Parish. A very agreeable lady of known merit and genteel fortune.' Hester, another daughter, married John Rose, a shipwright,

who later became owner of Hobcaw and operated a shipyard there, Sarah Bond became the third wife of Captain Clement Lempriere who also engaged in shipbuilding and evidently came into possession of land through his wife. (He was lost at sea on December 28, 1778).

What later became known as Hobcaw Plantation was granted by the Lord's Proprietors to Benjamin Quelch in 1709. This land went to his son Andrew, attested by his will dated July 17, 1716. On October 2, 1753, the land was sold by the Provost Marshall to Thos. Bolton, merchant. On October 4, 1753, Thomas Bolton sold it to John Rose and James Stewart, shipbuilders, who, taking advantage of the unusually deep water running along the shores of Hobcaw, constructed one of the first five shipyards in the colony.

The South Carolina Gazette of April 27, 1767, reported: 'On Tuesday the 16th of April 1767 a complete merchant ship designed for the British

trade was launched at Hobcaw, to be commanded by Captain John Lestay, and built by John Rose, and called the Liberty.' On February 15, 1769, John Rose sold the plantation to William Begbie and Daniel Manson who were also shipbuilders. Frequent mention of the fine ships built by them was made in the newspapers of that time.

On June 29, 1778, the property was deeded to Abraham Livingston and Paul Pritchard, and it's name was changed to Pritchard's Shipyard. Immediately a keel was laid for a fine new ship for the London trade. Paul was one of three brothers who emigrated from Ireland about 1766. He came from a family of shipbuilders of Welsh origin, whose family's stern old Gaelic motto was 'we break before we bend.' Paul had four children: Paul, William, Catherine, and Aphra Ann. His granddaughter married Colonel Wade Hampton, father of General Wade Hampton, the great cavalry leader of the Confederacy. The value of the

shipyard was realized by the government, and in 1778 it was taken over by the commissioners of the navy. The 1778 issue of *Journal of Commissioners of the Navy* carried this item, 'Mr. Paul Pritchard attended the board and executed titles to the Commissioners of the Naval Department of three fourths of the shipyard at Hobcaw and bill of sale for fifteen negroes; also his agreement for his performance as Director and Manager of said yard, the amount involved was 77,700 pounds.' It was further agreed that the Commissioners were to go to Hobcaw on Saturday, October 31, 1778, to take possession of the shipyard, negroes, etc., in the name of the state. Just when the shipyard was returned to Pritchard is not recorded, but Ramsey says, 'shipbuilding has been resumed and prosecuted in South Carolina with much spirit.' The Pritchards owned and operated a shipyard on the Charleston side of the Cooper River also. Paul Pritchard was also associated

with the building of the frigate 'John Adams.' A treaty with France was drawn in 1778 and the colonists became angered with the French because they did not live up to the treaty. They were seizing our ships and cargoes. On July 3, 1798, the citizens of Charleston held a meeting for opening a subscription to build a frigate of thirty-two guns. From this meeting originated the John Adams, the first naval vessel built at the Pritchard's shipyards.

Paul Pritchard died in 1791 and left by will to his son William 'his plantation at Hobcaw with the wharf, buildings and other appertenances thereto belonging together with the furniture, stock, and the use of his negroes until his son Paul should come of age. Gave son-in-law Christopher Fitzsimmons the right and privilege of shipping and landing his goods and wares at his wharf in Charleston. Gave daughter Aphra Ann wharfage privilege in Charleston. Gave son Paul

wharf and all the rest of his land in Charleston Gave canoe and boats belonging to the shipyard at Hobcaw to William.' William was affectionately known as 'Hobcaw Bill' to distinguish him from a cousin by the same name. He lived at Hobcaw for many years, and with his brother Paul, operated large shipyards across the river near the site of the present Naval Shipyard, in addition to the shipyard at Hobcaw. They also owned and operated a fleet of ships which plied the English and West Indian coasts. 'Hobcaw Bill' was a most original character, headstrong and opinionated. At one time he was a wealthy man by inheritance, as well as through his own business ventures, but he died comparatively poor, having lost many ships during the French directorate and some unfortunate business deals. He is buried at Hobcaw as is his father, his mother Ann, the children of Catherine and Christopher Fitzsimmons, John O'Callahan, (cousin of Chris-

topher Fitzsimmons) and John Norris Pritchard, who died in infancy and was thought to be a son of William.

All that remains of the once substantial ancestral home of the Hobcaw branch of the Pritchard family is a sagging brick chimney. The ruins rest on a slight rise at the end of a majestic avenue of oaks. Paul's daughter Catherine, grandmother of Wade Hampton, referred to the avenue as 'Flirtation Walk.' It was here the young people strolled hand in hand when they crossed the river to attend the innumerable ship launchings which were gala affairs and lasted the whole day through. The one hundred and sixty one year old graveyard was neglected for many years but it was recently restored by Miss Jean Pritchard, descendent of 'Hobcaw Bill' who is still maintaining it. It is in a remarkable state of preservation and the inscriptions on the marble slabs are still discernible.

From the Pritchards Irish ancestors perhaps comes their own particular banshee. Most old plantations had a ghost somewhere in their background; the Pritchards furnished one for Hobcaw. She is a lovely young lady with flowing red hair, dressed in a long black robe. She appears only to the Pritchard clan, usually wailing and shrieking and wringing her hands. It is said she was a Pritchard who had a most unhappy love affair. Her parents opposed the match and disciplined her sharply, separating her from her sweetheart. She felt very mistreated and blamed her parents for ruining her life. Her hatred was so profound that she grieved herself into an early grave. On her deathbed she cursed her family. She vowed that she would come back. Whenever she appeared to a member of the family they would have cause for grief. She would always bring death to a member of the family, usually someone dear to the one to whom she appeared.

The 'Lady in Black,' as she is called by the Pritchards, has kept her word. For generations she has been appearing to her particular branch of the family. Only a Pritchard may see her and she appears to only one member of each generation. Several times she has appeared when some serious misfortune has threatened her family. She is very fond of walking through doors and often appears in daylight. She will glide up to her victim, wail, scream, and wring her hands. Her favorite act is to walk directly up to the unsuspecting person, shake her clenched fists, and hiss in his face. When Hobcaw Plantation passed from the Pritchards, she simply transferred herself to the abode of the particular Pritchard to whom she was appearing at that time. She has been known to warn a Pritchard who was staying with friends or traveling. Distance makes no difference to the 'Lady in Black,' and always her appearance has brought tragedy in its wake.

The property passed through several different owners but remained rather unproductive until purchased in November of 1853 by Mr. Robert Muirhead. Hobcaw became famous for the fine asparagus he grew here and some of the tile from his underground drainage system can still be found in the area. Also, during Mr. Muirhead's possession, water was sold from the famous bubbling spring to the Naval Station at Port Royal. The government bought approximately 60,000 gallons of water daily, transporting it by ship. During the War between the States, Robert Muirhead was taken prisoner at Hobcaw by a company of Yankee negro troops. Orders for his execution were issued, but as he was led out to his fate he gave the Grand Mason, hailing sign of distress, which met immediate response from one of the negro officers who was also a mason. Mr. Muirhead was subsequently released and given his freedom.

From Mr. Muirhead the land went into the hands of a land company and later it was purchased by H. L. Erckmann. The land lay undeveloped and idle and only the sound of the birds broke the calm quiet of Hobcaw.

The tract was purchased (Hobcaw as we know it today) in 1953, by R. M. McGillivray. Hobcaw has been awakened again.