

The Early Settlers on Daufuskie

May 1, 2026

If you live on Daufuskie, or if you have spent some time here, you are probably familiar with the names Mongin and Martinangele and maybe even Stoddard. These families were the preeminent land owners on the island in the antebellum plantation period and immediately after the Civil War, and they are generally associated with the geographic "regions" we recognize on Daufuskie today, those regions being Haig Point, Melrose, Oakridge, Dunn/Eigleberger, Bloody Point and the Historic District (comprised of the former Cooper River and Maryfield Plantations).

However, with the first European settlers arriving in the area in the late 17th century, and the first known land warrant (a request to survey and obtain land) dated 1707, there is a gap in time until the widowed Mary Martinangele buys 500 acres on Daufuskie in 1762, and the first Mongin, William Edwards Mongin, arrives in 1783.

So, who was on Daufuskie in the early part of the 18th century, leading up to the Revolutionary War? As was the pattern later, much of the island was owned by just a few families, who may be less familiar than the Mongin/Martinangele clans. To detail their history, we will build upon last month's story about how Bloody Point got its name and add a bit of South Carolina early history.

South Carolina had its beginnings as a proprietorship rather than a royal colony. King Charles II granted proprietorship of the Carolina territories on March 24, 1663, to eight loyal supporters, designated as Lord Proprietors, who had assisted him in regaining the British throne in 1660. These proprietors had absolute authority to settle, govern, and sell land in the territories, and they attempted to establish a feudal society in the region. The aim of the proprietors was profit from agriculture, trade and immigration. A plantation economy was established, including slavery.

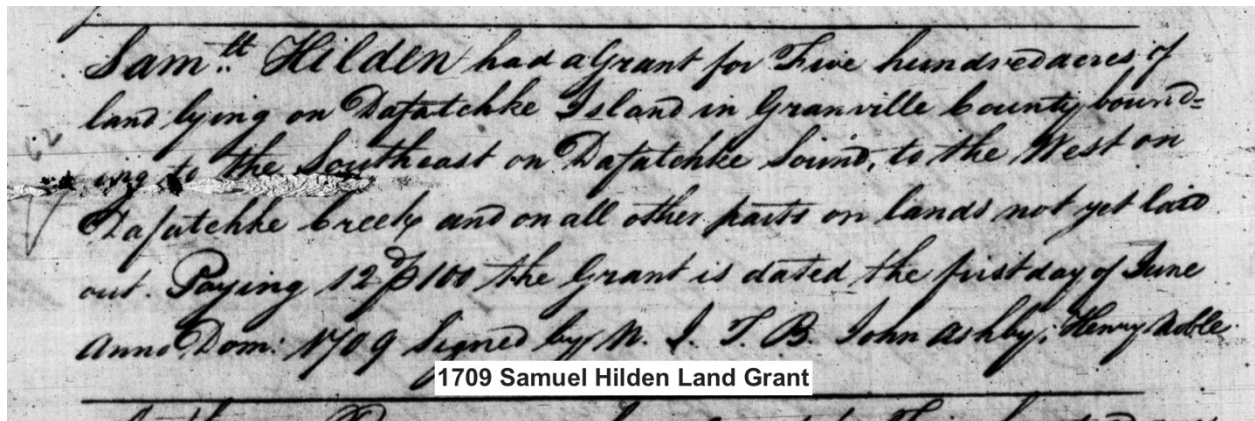
This Proprietary Rule lasted until 1719, towards the end of the Yemassee War, when South Carolina colonists revolted (known as the Revolution of 1719) due to inefficient leadership and lack of protection from the Spanish and Indians. This coup was bloodless, ending with the colonists establishing a government dedicated to the King, and a provisional royal governor arrived in 1721. The proprietors' ownership of Carolina ended through negotiations in 1729, when King George II bought the shares of the Lord Proprietors. (With the exception of holdout Sir John Carteret, Earl of Granville).

On Daufuskie, during this Proprietary Period, the economy and land ownership centered on trading with the Indians, as we noted in last month's story. Daufuskie was a geographically favorable location for traders at the seaward approach to the Savannah River, the principal river by which furs and skins were brought for trade from the interior. In our previous post, we listed Thomas Cowte as one of the first land grants in 1707, but

further research shows that he had only a warrant and never completed acquisition of any land on Daufuskie. The landowners during this Proprietary Period were:

Name	Land (acres)	Date Acquired	Occupation
Samuel Hilden	500	ca. 1709	Indian Trader
Nicholas Day	400	1710	Indian Trader
James Cockran	1000 (2 grants of 500 acres each)	1711	Indian Trader, Planter, Physician
Landgrave Robert Daniell	1220 (part of 24000 acre grant)	1714	Deputy Governor Militia Commander
John and Joseph Wright	500 (Acquired from Samuel Hilden)	ca. 1714	Indian Traders

The earliest record of a land grant on Daufuskie is 500 acres to Samuel Hilden (Bloody Point area). A copy of the abstract recorded of that land grant is provided below.



Samuel Hilden was described a "flagrant malefactor" in his relationship with local Indians. He was accused of selling rum and building significant "rum debts". Local Chiefs complained to Commissioners of the Indian trade that they were forced to go to war to obtain Indian captives for the slave trade to pay their debts. He had his license for trade suspended prior to the outbreak of the Yemassee War but was able to continue his activities due to lax enforcement. His land was obtained in 1714 by John Wright, who was also apparently unpopular with the Indians. He was killed by the Yemassee Indians on April 14, 1715 (the opening of the Yemassee War) while negotiating grievances in a Yemassee village. Nicholas Day was accused of similar unseemly practices in the Indian trade.

Only James Cockran, who had been appointed Indian Commissioner in 1709, seemed to be free of grievances resulting from the Indian trade (At least there is no mention of it.). A copy of the first land grant (he received two) from the colonial governor for 500 acres to James Cockran is provided below.

James Cockran II died in 1739, and apparently never having married, left his property to be divided equally by the children of his two sisters, Mary, who had married Richard Ash, and Margaret, who had married Samuel Peronneau, Richard and Mary Ash had a son, Richard Cockran Ash. Samuel and Margaret Peronneau had a son, Samuel, Jr., and he conveyed his property, approximately 1220 acres, to his first cousin, Richard Cockran Ash, in 1761. With the property he held, inherited from his uncle James and obtained from his cousin, Richard Cockran Ash held the 2200 acres originally owned by James Cockran on Daufuskie. Upon Richard Cockran Ash's death in 1767, his Daufuskie property was to be divided among his four sons. One of the sons, Algernon Sydney, died in 1784, before the land was divided, leaving the split to the 3 remaining sons, John, Joseph and Richard Ash.

John Ash married and had several children, one of whom was a son named Cato. Cato married and had 3 children, Theodora, Richard Russell and Mary Ash. Mary married Dr. James Fraser, who purchased 350 acres from his brother-in-law Richard Russell Ash.

Without belaboring the family succession any longer (too late?), by the eve of the Revolutionary War, approximately 2000 acres remained in the possession of Richard Cockran Ash's son, John Ash and grandson Richard Russell Ash, with another 350 acres owned by Dr. James Fraser, who had married into the family. As I am sure you have noticed, only sons inherited property, except when wives inherited from husbands.

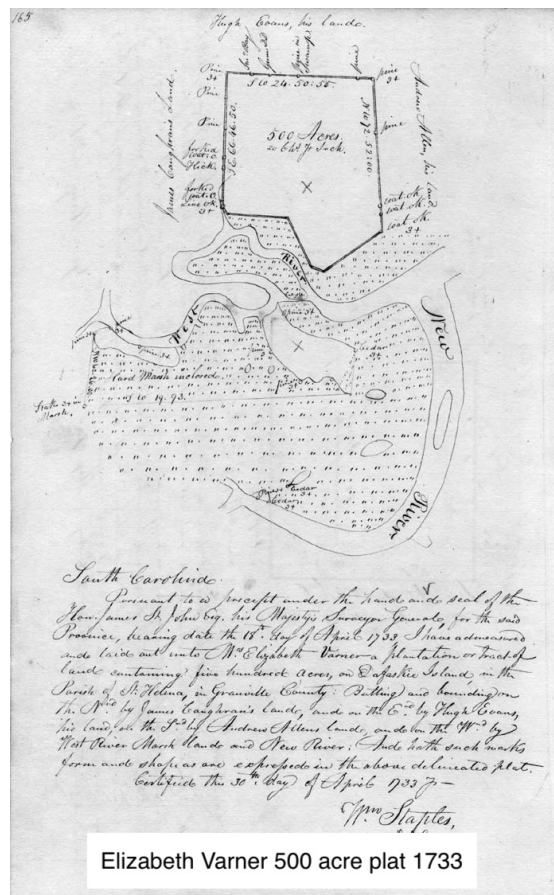
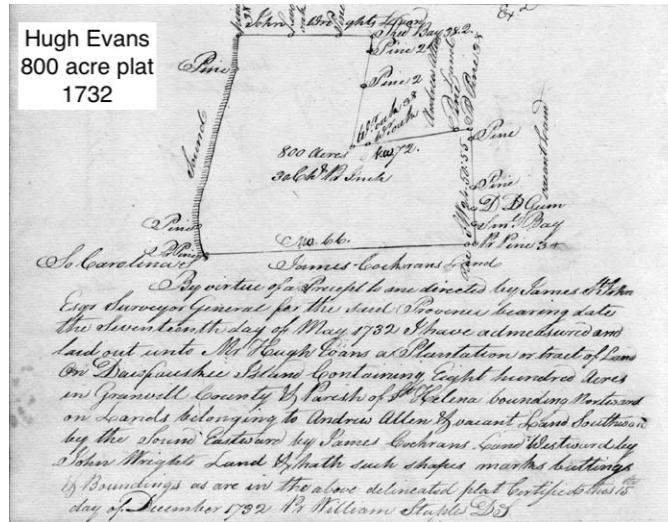
The point of the above discussion was to show that a line from the original land grant to ownership of land on Daufuskie can be drawn. The narrative shows the ownership trail from the original grants to James Cockran (and Robert Daniell), totaling 2200 acres more or less, through the Proprietorship period and into the Royal Colony period, ending in the Revolutionary War years with Richard Russell Ash, John Ash and James Fraser.

We need to back up for a moment to account for additional land transactions on Daufuskie following the Revolution of 1719 (getting rid of the Lord Proprietors) and the establishment of South Carolina as a Royal Colony.

Immediately after the rebellion against the Lord Proprietors, land acquisition essentially came to a halt due to the uncertainties about future governance, and the Indian trade was also slow to recover. While other parts of South Carolina began to show some growth from the rice trade, it did not take hold on Daufuskie or surrounding areas, probably due to the unsuitability of local conditions for rice cultivation. Another factor inhibiting growth on the sea islands was the exposure to Indian raids, which lasted until 1728. No new land grants were awarded on Daufuskie until 1732/33.

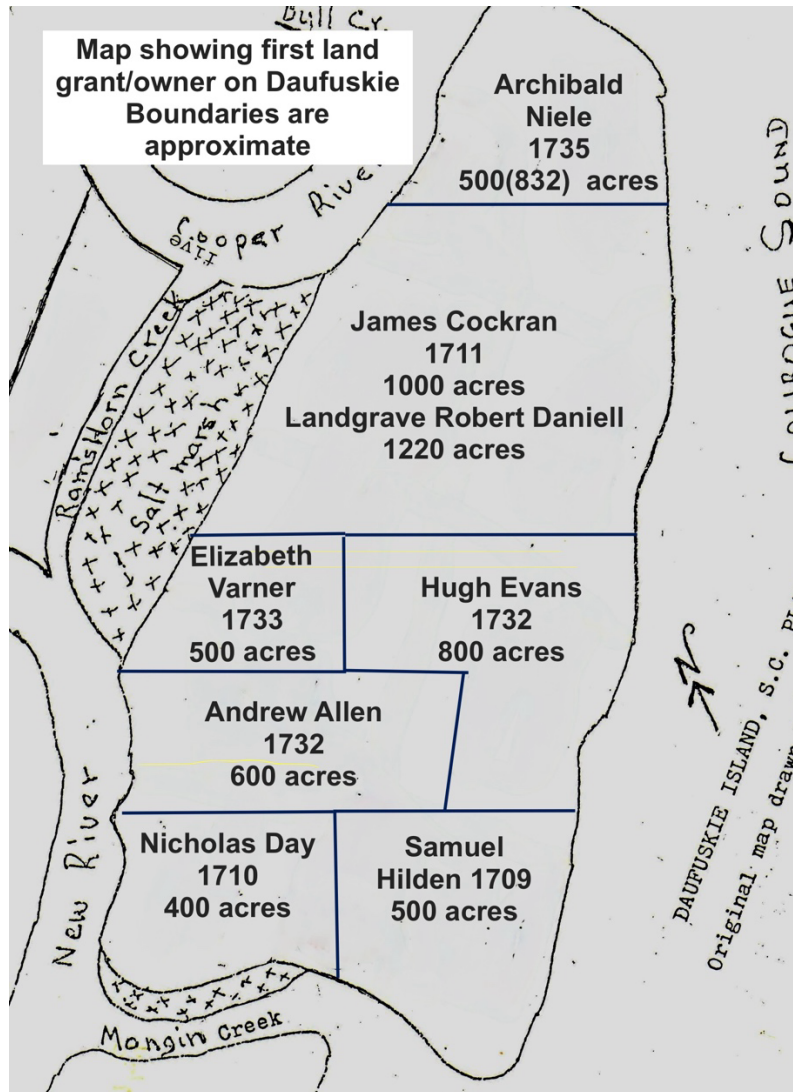
Savannah was founded in 1733, and it seemed to be a closer trading partner for Daufuskie than Charles Town. Not coincidentally, land acquisition re-emerged at this

time with land speculation by Charleston merchants being a primary driver. On April 6, 1733, Hugh Evans, a Charleston tailor, acquired a royal land grant (land grants in this period come from the King) of 800 acres on Daufuskie. Elizabeth Varner, widow of another Charles Town tailor, was granted 500 acres on Daufuskie on August 8, 1735. (Did tailors make a lot of money in those days?) Plats (surveys) of the Evans and Varner lands.



Archibald Niele was awarded a land grant of 500 acres in 1735. The Niele grant was land now known as Haig Point. (A later survey showed the property to be 832 acres.)

The Niele land grant basically accounted for the last vacant land on Daufuskie. Below is a map that attempts to summarize the original land grants awarded, pieced together from the plats/surveys available.



Hugh Evans sold his land shortly after receiving his grant to George Haig I and Frederick Myer, Indian Traders. Elizabeth Varner also sold her granted land to Haig and Myer only months after receiving it.

Frederick Myer appears to have sold at least part his share of the land in 1736, only 3 years after acquiring it. It is not known if George Haig I ever reside or traded on Daufuskie, but in 1748 he was abducted by Indians and killed. His young son, George

Haig II, who was in England, inherited his lands on Daufuskie. He traveled to America in 1768 and attempted to sell his properties, without success.

The land speculation that occurred on Daufuskie would appear to be related to the establishment of Savannah and the favorable location for Indian trade. Whether or not the Indian Traders saw it coming, the Trustees of the newly established Savannah banned the import or manufacture of rum, which had been one of the primary items traded to the Indians (and used to produce abusive debt practices). This ban included transport on the Savannah River (which belonged to Georgia). Negro slavery was also banned. The South Carolina settlement of Purrysburg was supplied via the Savannah River, but since the river was part of Georgia, transporting rum was forbidden, leading to complaints by the Charleston shippers. The ban on rum led to Daufuskie being at the center of controversy between Charleston and Savannah, as well as the island becoming a focal point for rum running.

Despite the controversy, the establishment of Savannah served to benefit Daufuskie residents and led to an increase in more permanent residency on the island. Georgia's early struggles led to an increase in demand for agricultural products from elsewhere, including livestock, and Daufuskie was ideally suited to help meet that demand. Daufuskie in the 1730's and 40's had transitioned from the Indian trader focus to small farms and cattle ranches. In 1762, Mary Martinangele purchased 500 acres from Lancelot Bland (land traced from Nicholas Day land grant in 1710) and moved to the island with her children. (A copy of the first page of her indenture is provided below)

10.) that he ... the consideration paid by the Purchaser and the
 Receipt thereof signed in consequence by the seller as within
 mentioned and that he Deponent together with Abraham Jacob
 signed their Names as Witnesses thereto. Daniel Maselle
 Town to at Puyssburgh this 26 Day of August 1765 before me
 John L. Bourgeois J. C.

Recorded this 12th September 1765 & Examined.

Indenture - Lancelot Bland to Mary Martinangele 1762

Lancelot Bland } This Indenture made the
 to } seventh Day of April in the sec-
 Mary Martinangele } ond Year of the Reign of our
 Lease } Sovereign Lord George the Third
 by the grace of God Great Britain France and Ireland King
 Defender of the Faith and so forth and in the Year of our Lord
 one thousand seven hundred and sixty two Between
 Lancelot Bland of Prince Williams Parish in Granville
 County and Province of South Carolina Planter on the one Part
 and Mary Martinangele Widow and Relict of Philip Martin-
 angele late of Port Royal Islands in the Parish of St. Helena
 and in the County and Province aforesaid Planter deceased for
 the other Part Witnesses that he the said Lancelot Bland
 for and in consideration of the sum of ten Shillings current
 Money of the Province aforesaid to him in Hand at and before
 the sealing and Delivery of these Presents well and truly paid by
 the said Mary Martinangele the Receipt whereof he the said
 Lancelot doth hereby acknowledge hath bargained and sold
 and by these Presents doth bargain and sell unto her the
 said Mary Martinangele her Heirs, Executors, Administrators
 and Assigns All that Plantation Parcel or Tract of Land
 containing five hundred Acres (or thereabouts more or less) being
 one full Moiety or half Part of a certain Tract containing one
 thousand Acres more or less situate lying and being on an Island
 commonly called Aqueduct Island in the County and Province

The introduction of indigo to South Carolina in the 1740's began a transition in local farming. Indigo cultivation and sale was far more profitable than ranching, and Daufuskie began to shift with the incentive of greater profit. Another incentive was a six pence sterling per pound (dry) weight established by the British Parliament. By 1770, Daufuskie planters transitioned to indigo as their cash crop.

Also, by 1770, shipbuilding had become South Carolina's largest industry and had spread southward from the Charleston/Georgetown area as demand for live oak used in constructing ship's hulls increased. The Beaufort/Port Royal area was particularly attractive providing both an ample supply of the prized lumber and deep-water access. Daufuskie attracted shipbuilders Robert Watts of Philadelphia and James Black, a shipwright, to Bloody Point. Watts acquired the Bloody Point property in 1770 from

John Gordon, who had received the land grant for the property in October 1770 from King George III. James Black acquired his 500 acres on Daufuskie from Benjamin Walls in 1777. (Author's note: The granting of the same property twice was not unusual, as the transition from Proprietorship to Royal Colony led to some uncertainty about ownership, and the death of John Wright in 1715 after acquiring the Bloody Point Property no doubt contributed to the second grant by King George III.)

Based on information in several grants, indentures and wills, a "census" of the residents on Daufuskie in the eve of the Revolutionary War has been constructed by other historical efforts and is shown below.

Name/Occupation	Land (Acres)
Mary Martinangele (widow) Capt. Philip Martinangele (farmer) Isaac Martinangele (farmer) Simeon Martinangele (farmer) Francis Martinangele (farmer) Abraham Martinangele (farmer) Mary Martinangele Hopkins (wife of British seaman) Margaret Martinangele William Green (farmer)	500
Robert Watts (shipbuilder)	422 (Bloody Point)
John Ash (planter)	983
Richard Russell Ash (planter)	983
Dr. James Fraser (planter/physician)	350
James Black (ships carpenter)	500
Edward Davies (merchant)	1794
George Haig II (planter/merchant)	852

Authors note: A quick exercise in addition shows that the above land totals are greater than 6000 acres, larger than the total Daufuskie land area. It appears that the Edward Davies holdings may have been taken from an 1784 record of sale, which included lands from other owners listed above. For example, it appears Edward Davies acquired Bloody Point's 422 acres in 1777 from Beaufort Sheriff John Rhodes, but the table shows those same 422 acres belonging to Robert Watts, which is based on a 1770 Indenture. We will attempt to figure that out in a future post.

We'll end the land ownership trail here during the Revolutionary War and pick up again after a couple of stories from the War period and explain how the island transitioned from being owned primarily from the Ash/Davies/Haig families to the Mongin family owning 10 of the 12 plantations. While the Martinangeles get credit for being early residents, their share of land on Daufuskie was never more than the original 500 acres.

If you have enjoyed these stories and learning about Daufuskie, please consider joining the Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation, or donating to our efforts. You can join or donate online at:

<https://daufuskiemuseum.org/join%2Fdonate>

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<https://daufuskiemuseum.org/educational-resources>