

August 1, 2026

The Jacksonborough Assembly of 1782

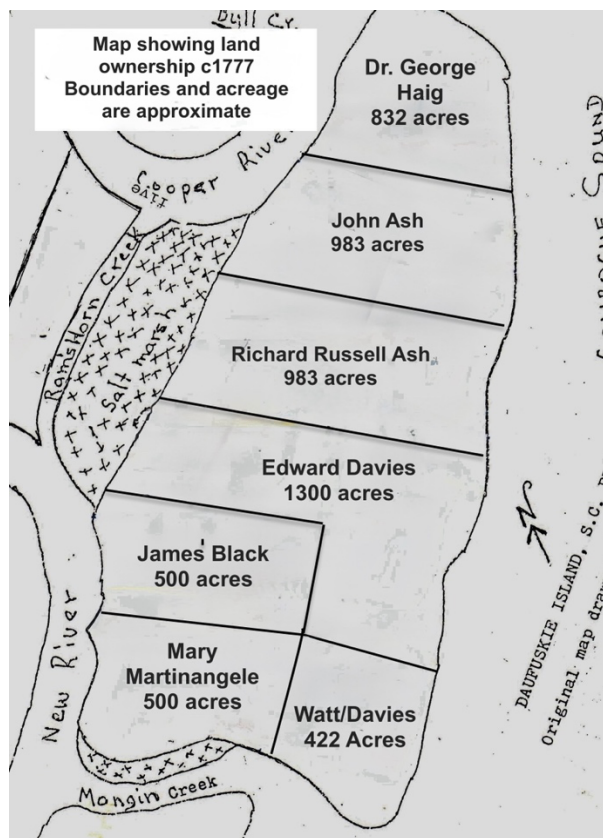
Hard to believe it's August already. Way back in May, we began our discussion of the earliest settlers on Daufuskie, following the trail of land ownership from the earliest land grants during the Proprietary (1670-1719) and Royal Colony (1729 to the 1776) Periods. To quickly review where we ended up, a "census" was created from historical documents by different sources showing the landowners on Daufuskie at the dawn of the Revolutionary War. We followed up in June with a discussion of shipbuilding on Daufuskie, and in July with a post detailing how Daufuskie became known as "Little Bermuda" during the War, identifying land owners as Loyalist or Patriot.

To review, here is the list of land owners we presented in July.

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	Loyalist
Robert Watts (shipbuilder)	422 (Bloody Point)	Loyalist
John Ash (planter)	983	Loyalist
Richard Russell Ash (planter)	983	Loyalist
Dr. James Fraser (planter/physician)	350	Loyalist
James Black (ships carpenter)	500	Patriot-absentee
Edward Davies (merchant)	1794	Patriot-absentee
George Haig II (planter/merchant)	852 (Haig Point)	Patriot-absentee

This would represent land owners around 1770 to 1777. A map is presented below that attempts to create the ownership parcels around 1777. In our July post, we also noted that the Bloody Point property appeared to be transferred at a sheriff's sale to Edward Davies in 1777, so we are showing Bloody Point belonging to either Watts (who died in 1775) or Davies. The acreage on the map does not quite match totals in the table above, but we have not included Pine Island property (about 244 acres) in the map as one possible difference, and surveys tended to be approximate (the original land grant

awarded to Archibald Niele of 500 acres, which evolved into the Haig Point Property turned out to be 852 acres by this period.)



Now we can return to a timeline of events and a discussion of the broader political events that affected Daufuskie land ownership. While Daufuskie was entangled in the bitter back and forth skirmishes with Whigs on Hilton Head and surrounding areas we have previously described, Britain was pursuing a Southern strategy, based on a belief that the Southern colonies were more favorably inclined to continued Royal rule than the contentious northern colonies that had started the War, that the Southern colonies were an extremely valuable economic resource, and that resistance could be disrupted by offering freedom to enslaved peoples who would abandon their patriot owners.

Savannah fell to the British in 1778 and Charleston in 1780 as the British pursued a military campaign based on this strategy. One impact on South Carolina of the Charleston occupation was a disruption of governance by the colonial assembly. For two years there was no meeting of the South Carolina legislature as representatives were forced to flee Charleston and return to their homes or seek safer havens. A government in exile was operated out of Hillsborough, NC.

By late 1781 British forces had withdrawn from the South Carolina countryside to the extent that Governor John Rutledge decided that the time was right to reinstate the

legislature and hold elections. Details on the elections are scarce with a state of war still in existence, but in December 1781 an election was held (Loyalists were excluded from voting) and a legislature formed with a scheduled assembly in January of 1782. The assembly barely achieved a quorum and began its session in Jacksonborough, about 45 miles from Charleston, (Charleston was still occupied) on January 17, 1782.

The new legislature was in session for approximately one month, with members returning to their military duties afterwards. The delegates were not in a conciliatory or forgiving mood, having lost their own property or fled from their homes. The most notable accomplishment of the session was the passage of the Confiscation Act of 1782 to seize and sell loyalist properties, which was intended to help pay for the war effort. (and frankly, get some revenge) The confiscation act established a tiered list of royalists who were to be fined, have their property confiscated and or be banished. The list of 237 individuals was published in the Charleston Royal Gazette in March 1782. A copy of that newspaper article is presented below.



The tiers established by the act were:

CLASS I. Comprehends all British subjects who have property in this country, that is to say, such persons as never have submitted to the American Government.

CLASS II. Such of the former inhabitants of this Country, as presented congratulatory addresses to Sir Henry Clinton and Admiral Arbuthnot.

CLASS III. Those who petitioned to be armed in defence of the British Government, after the conquest of this Province.

CLASS IV. Those who congratulated Earl Cornwallis, on the victory gained at Camden.

CLASS V. Those who have borne commissions, civil or military, under the British Government, since the conquest of this Province

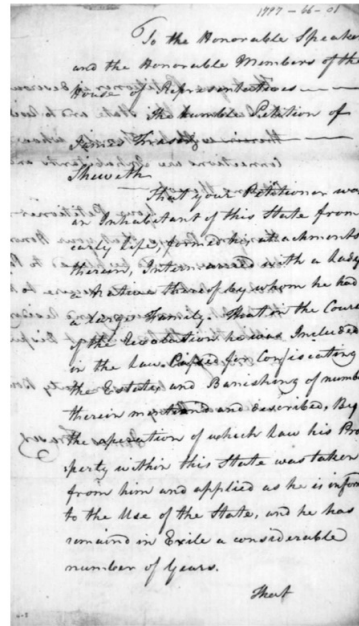
CLASS VI. Obnoxious Persons.

The classes go from least objectionable (Class I) to the most heinous (Class VI. Obnoxious persons). This last classification consisted of 11 names initially, and likely those who actively fought for the King (or maybe they were just extremely unlikeable!) None were from Daufuskie. This initial list underwent several revisions over the remainder of the War and afterwards. By 1787, approximately two thirds of the Royalists listed for confiscation or banishment had their punishments reduced, including return of property.

The only name of a Daufuskie property owner appearing on the list was that of Richard (Russell) Ash, Class V. His property on Daufuskie and other South Carolina properties were confiscated and he was banished. It would seem that Daufuskie, nicknamed Little Bermuda because of its strong Tory sympathies as shown in the table above, would have had more names on the list, notably the Martinangeles, who were considered staunch Loyalists. James Fraser also does not appear on the list.

Regarding the Martinangeles, the series of events we described in a previous post ending with the death of Capt. Phillip Martinangele in 1781 basically resulted in the confiscation of the Martinangele property and the banishment of the family prior to the Jacksonborough Assembly. As we noted following those events, The *British Royal Gazette* in Charlestown reported on January 30, 1782, that the Patriots "plundered Mrs. Martinangele and her children of almost everything they had", a de facto confiscation. We also know that surviving brothers fled the country.

Concerning Dr. Fraser's property, while he was not on the Jacksonborough list, his land does not appear to have been confiscated. We do have his petition to the South Carolina House of Representatives requesting that he be allowed to return from exile. The petition, dated 1797 and included below, does mention confiscation of property, but it appears his purchase on Daufuskie was never transferred to his name and therefore may not have been confiscated (It was part of the Ash property.). As with other landowners, he did likely have other properties in South Carolina subject to confiscation.



There is no record of what happened to the property of John Ash. The family did retain his property after the War, but there is no mention of confiscation or banishment. It may be that the land belonging to his father, Richard Cockran Ash, was not formally divided after his death in 1767 until 1785. Or it just might be related to the fact that Richard Cockran Ash's widow, Ann, married John Berwick, a powerful Whig who happened to be a Commissioner of the Confiscation Act of 1782.

The property of Robert Watts appears to have been in the hands of Edward Davies by the time the confiscation act was written, and Watts had died as we have noted in previous writings, in 1775. Davies, along with James Black, who was killed in the War, and Dr. George Haig II, were all listed as patriots and therefore not threatened with confiscation, at least by colonial action.

[Authors note: History sources note that very early in the conflict between Great Britain and the Colonies the seizure of property belonging to persons loyal to the Crown became commonplace. What began as a simple isolation or shunning soon evolved into banishment, indictment for treason and confiscation of property. The Continental Congress advised states to seize and sell loyalist properties.]

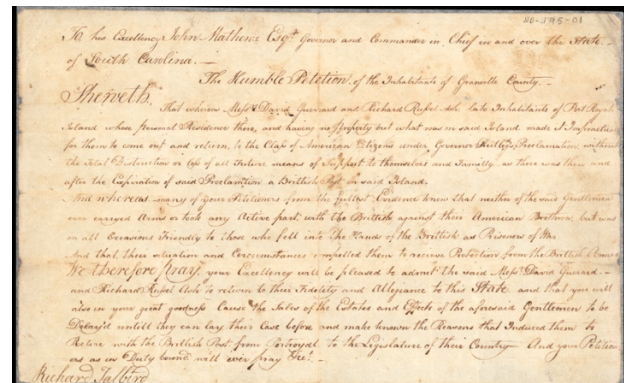
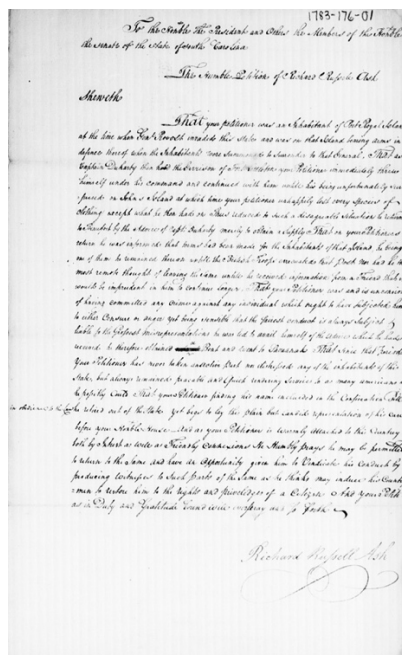
Thus, the Jacksonborough Assembly and Confiscation Act of 1782 was not the first instance of confiscation of loyalist property. In fact, both sides embraced the practice. On September 16, 1780, Lt. Gen. Earl Cornwallis issued a proclamation appointing Commissioner John Cruden to

" take into his charge, custody and possession the estates both real and personal of those who have abandoned their plantations to join the enemies of Great Britain, and of the estates both real and personal (not included in the

Capitulation of Charles Town) of those in the service or acting under the authority of the rebel Congress, and of the estates both personal and real of those persons who by an open avowal of rebellious principles or by other notorious acts do manifest a wicked and desperate perseverance in opposing to the utmost of their power the re-establishment of His Majesty's just and lawful authority."

Is it possible that Bloody Point was confiscated by colonialists upon the death of Robert Watts, and that is why it is being sold at a Sheriff's auction in 1777? His cousin Charles, who had joined him in the shipbuilding business at Bloody Point, was tarred and feathered and forced to flee Daufuskie because he would not join the rebel association in 1775, the very year of Robert's death.]

In 1783, Richard Russell Ash submitted a petition for return of his property and return from exile. A copy of the first page of that petition is provided below. Also presented below is a petition from the Inhabitants of Granville County, who support Ash's return from exile and repossession of his property.



So, we can summarize the outcome of the years of turmoil at the end and following the War as a return to pre-War conditions for the most part. The Martinangeles returned, Sarah (Sally) Watts remained the inheritor of her father's Bloody Point property, the Ash's remained owners of most of the land on Daufuskie, including it appears, the land that had been owned by James Black and Edward Davies, and Dr. George Haig remained in control of the northern property on the island.

In a later article, we'll attempt to trace the land ownership from the period following the Revolutionary War into the early 19th century. Records are sparse, but we do know who owned most of Daufuskie after the War and we have some idea as to how the present-day boundaries of the various plantations came to be formed. This period will introduce the Mongins more heavily into the ownership rolls on Daufuskie.

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>

copies of this post are available at:

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