

The History of Brick Landing Plantation
found online Nov 18, 2014
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The Brick Landing Plantation history is wrapped in local legend and southern history.

Prior to 1729 much of Brunswick County was part of South Carolina. In 1729 North Carolina created New Hanover County and established a southern border known today as Little River. Little River as many know is on the outskirts of Myrtle Beach, one of the southern capitals for golf and vacation hotspot. Prior to this, the state line was considered to be the Cape Fear River, the port led Wilmington NC to its flourishing state, which was a large southern port that served The Carolinas well for many years.

In the early 18th century, the world around Ocean Isle Beach was drastically changing. By this time, the scavenging pirates of the area and the American Indians were gone, allowing for a more permanent lifestyle to develop. Seeing the vast potential in this now vacant land, English settlers took a foothold and began developing what would soon become one of the largest industries in America; plantations. Unlike land in the north, the south had optimal conditions for farming and thousands of acres at their disposal. Wealthier families began moving into the area and developing the land, most notably, the Gause family who played an integral role in developing the land that would be Brick Landing Plantation.

In 1751, William Gause, Sr. purchased land in Brunswick County and established the Gause Plantation. Gause built a two-story manor atop a high hill overlooking a channel. This channel was separated from the Atlantic Ocean by a few hundred feet of marshland, which is known today as Ocean Isle Beach. Gause developed his manor into a large plantation, nearly a few thousand acres! The manor house was described as “a great and solid two-story affair, built entirely of heart lumber” and must have been an imposing sight to see! Below is a depiction of how this house may have looked when it was first built.

depiction of gause house

The Gause family gained notoriety in the community in the late 1700's. William Gause's primary focus was on the turpentine industry in which he utilized his thousand-acre plantation for. Turpentine, and more specifically tar, were an incredibly valuable commodity in the ship industry, as they were used to seal and protect the wood ensuring the vessels stayed afloat. The end of Gause Landing Road and Seaside Landing Road were once very important and busy ports in an area that was otherwise desolate. Sailing vessels of the period would come into Tubbs inlet during high tide to unload their cargo. These ships would then be loaded with tar, pitch and turpentine derived from the local plantations and taken back to England to contribute to their shipping industry.

The Plantation did quite well and had a thriving monopoly on the local tar and turpentine industry, likely due to Gause's aptitude as a businessman. In turn, he took advantage of his success and had a large family. He had a total of five sons: William Junior, John, Needham, Charles, and Benjamin. Three of his children fought bravely in the Revolutionary war, where

William even lost his leg. In addition, his son Charles moved to Smithville (now Southport) in 1790 and was one of the founders of the city.

One of the richest pieces of local history was that President George Washington visited the Gause Manor on April 27, 1791. Washington wrote in his diary "Breakfasted at Wm. Gause's, a little out of the direct road 14 miles. After than, we, crossed boundary line between North & South Carolina about half after 12 o'clock which is 10 miles from the Gause Manor." George Washington was headed to Georgetown, South Carolina when he made this stop

Today, the Gause legacy lives on through their burial arrangements. One of the oddest arrangements in Brunswick County was that of the Gause tomb. It is located in the woods a few miles from the site of old Gause Manor at Gause Landing. The burial vault is of masonry construction, with brick walls 18 inches thick. The structure is about three feet high and extends about the same depth under the ground. The bricks were transported from England for building the vault as well as other buildings and structures the Gause's owned. This is how Brick Landing came to have its name. The tomb is one of the last standing histories of the prominent Brunswick County family.

Unfortunately, since the 1830s, vandals and treasure hunters have desecrated the vault and the old burying ground in search of some lasting wealth of the Gause's. Though its contents have long disappeared.

Many wonder what happened to the great Gause Manor. The popular story is that the manor was taken by fire. However, the facts are hazy as there is no credible date for the fire. Though the exact demise of the manor may never be determined, it cannot be debated that the Gause Family was one of the most influential and successful families of Brunswick county. The Brick Landing Plantation strives to honor the Gause's and ensure their rich legacy lives on.