

Squire Pope a prominent Hilton Head planter

BY GERHARD SPIELER
Special to The Packet

In one of his last columns for "Sojourner's Scrapbook" in The Island Packet, Jonathan Daniels described William Pope, for whom Pope Avenue and Squire Pope Road on Hilton Head Island were named, as "a rather obscure man, whose fame seems limited to the purchase of land here...If he performed any good service, North or South, the Sojourner would like to know about it."

A letter to Jonathan Daniels concerning the "rather obscure" William Pope went unanswered; no doubt because of the former's ill health. The main gist of the communication was that Squire William Pope was a remarkable man, of a distinguished family, with many noteworthy accomplishments who should not be remembered only because two roads on the island bear his name and ownership of land.

Born in 1788, Squire William Pope was known as both William Junior and William Senior in his lifetime, since both his father and a son were also named William and both preceded him in death. The Squire was married twice, first to Ann Scott in 1806 and then to Sarah Lavinia Pope in 1816. He died on March 10, 1862, a refugee from Hilton Head Island, on which he and members of his family owned several plantations, including Cotton Hope, Coggins Point, Point Comfort, Leamington and Pineland.

Dr. Chalmers Gaston Davidson, in his book "The Last Foray: the South Carolina Planters of 1860" described William Pope as "Episcopalian (Vestryman and Warden, St. Luke's) Public Service: State Representative, State Senator; Justice of the Quorum; Commissioner of Free Schools; Magistrate. Trustee, May River Academy. Slaves: 200."

Land for the Church of the Cross in Bluffton was donated by Squire Pope. His summer residence on a bluff overlooking May River was directly in front of the church. The house was burned by Federal troops in 1864, but the church escaped destruction.

In 1853, Squire William Pope attended the Diocesan Convention of the Episcopal Church in Charleston's St. Michael's Church as a delegate from St. Luke's Parish. The convention was described by Dr. Davidson as "perhaps the greatest aggregations of wealth and position ever assembled in the State."

The closely interknit Pope family also owned plantations near Beaufort. Speaking of The Oaks Plantation on St. Helena Island, a letter by a visitor said that "there were hundreds of crepe myrtle trees on this place and on Felecianna. Mary Townsend Pope, her daughter and son-in-law (also a Pope and a cousin from Hilton Head) are buried at Brick Church next to Penn Center, the three obliques you see at front of grave yard."

Squire Pope's father, William Pope, and wife, Sara Pope, were the first of the family known on Hilton Head Island. As early as 1786, William Pope was reported

as owning land at Coggins Point. After selling 365 acres in 1791, William Pope still had remaining 803 acres. In succeeding years, the Popes added to their land holdings by purchase and marriage plantations known as Leamington, Point Comfort (Calibogue Plantation,) part of Bayley's Barony and Cotton Hope (Skull Creek Plantation) as well as Fish Haul.

The tabby foundation walls of

the old Pope home of the old Cotton Hope Plantation can still be seen near the Seabrook Landing Road. A duplicate of the Cotton Hope Plantation home was built some years ago on Coggins Point by Wayne Edwards.

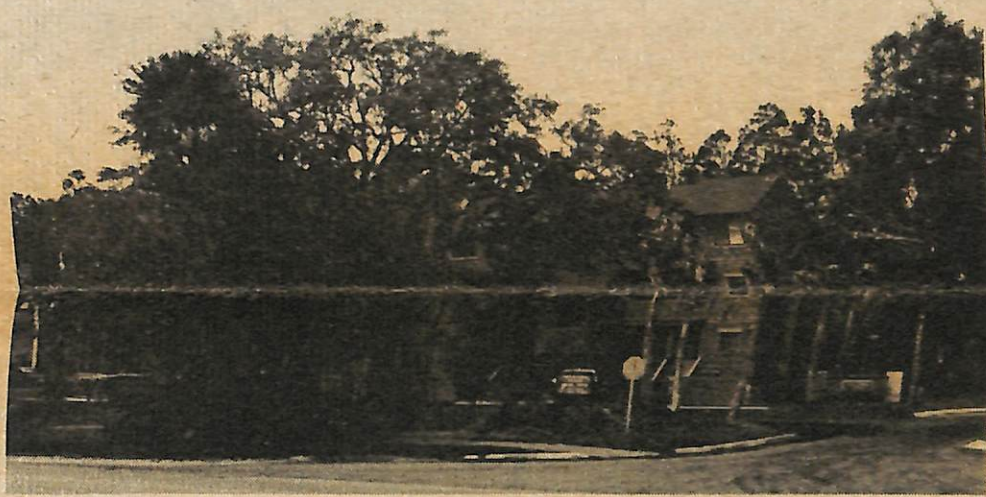
All of the Pope lands on Hilton Head Island and St. Helena Island were confiscated by the Federal government during the War Between the States for the

so-called "non-payment of taxes."

Heirs of Squire William Pope were able to regain only two of their plantations on Hilton Head Island after the war. Sara Lavinia Pope regained possession of Point Comfort in 1872, by payment of taxes and interest. The Squire's daughters, Eliza, Hepsibah and Anna, were able to redeem Cotton Hope Plantation in 1887.

A family member wrote shortly after Squire William Pope's death: "We received your letter to our dear Grandfather a few days ago and it is my painful duty to inform you that he is no longer numbered among the living—he died just ten days ago, his health was bad for a long time—but the loss of his property and the loss of his grandchildren, all coming upon him at once, was more than he could bear, he soon sank under the weight of his afflictions."

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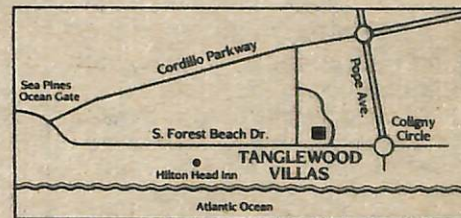
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