

**A History of the Brickhouse Point  
Area on the Pasquotank River**

by

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Brickhouse Point, on the south side of the Pasquotank River, lies just downstream from an area conveyed in one of the very early patents for land in the historic Albemarle region. This area, situated along the middle portions of Davis Bay, later became the subject of complex and protracted litigation involving various claimants and their heirs. Some of these parties came to be associated with the Brickhouse Point area as well.

In a controversial patent of 25 September 1663 (the very year of the Carolina Charter), one Thomas Keel (or Keell) of Bermuda received title to 800 acres of land on what is now Davis Bay from Sir William Bartlett, governor of Virginia.<sup>1</sup> This land was conveyed to Keel in the expectation that others from Bermuda would follow him to the Pasquotank River and establish their homes there. In an effort to encourage their coming, Keel undertook a voyage to Bermuda, leaving the management of his Pasquotank property in the hands of Captain William Crawford. Having progressed, however, only as far as "Coratuck," he was:

there seized with a Violent Impostume in his breast so that he lay there a whole year in such a Languishing Condition, that at length it was confidently reported he was Dead.<sup>2</sup>

As Keel's heirs and others later alleged, Crawford took possession of his lands under the pretense of having purchased them prior to Keel's departure. Having presumed this far, he then leased to one Derby Sexton a portion of these lands which was later seized and occupied by Augustine Scarbrough. Part of the old Keel patent, including the land occupied by Scarbrough, was subsequently claimed by Robert Wallace (or Wallis), who himself received a patent for 400 acres of land on Davis Bay in 1694. A portion of the land was also claimed at length by Augustine Scarbrough's daughter Mary and her husband Samuel Wilson.<sup>3</sup> Finally, it was in 1694, ~~the~~

also, that the Samuel Davis for whom Davis Bay is named received his patent for 326 acres situated between the disputed lands on the west and Brickhouse Point on the east.<sup>4</sup>

Several of those involved in the foregoing machinations were men of considerable prominence in early colonial government. Augustine Scarbrough served in the colonial assembly for Pasquotank Precinct in 1703 and 1708.<sup>5</sup> Robert Wallace subsequently represented the precinct in the assembly of 1711.<sup>6</sup> Most prominent, however, was Captain William Crawford, who seized the Davis Bay lands initially from the hapless Thomas Keel. Crawford was a member of the Albemarle council and a principal leader in the Culpeper Rebellion. Indeed, it was at his residence just above Davis Bay, easily within sight of Brickhouse Point, where some of the key events of the rebellion transpired. It was there that acting governor Thomas Miller and other colonial officials were held prisoner for two weeks, while weapons and supplies were dispensed to the rebels from Captain Zachariah Gilliam's vessel, anchored just offshore. One of Crawford's confederates, William Sears, also maintained a residence in the vicinity.<sup>7</sup>

An eye-witness to many of the early events along the shores of Davis Bay was Alice Billet, daughter of Samuel Davis and later the wife of the John Billet who would receive Brickhouse Point and 300 acres of adjacent property in a patent of 1714. Although her father did not receive title to his own land until 1694, it is evident that he had settled his family on the property more than a quarter century earlier. Long afterward, in 1714, Alice Billet testified in the Court of Chancery concerning early land transactions and events in the area, including what must have been the launching of one of the first vessels known to have been built in present-day North Carolina:

Alice Bittell [sic, Billet] age 57 years or thereabouts on her Oath on the Holy Evangelist taken sayth that when she was about 11 years old she came to live in pasquotank river the next plantation to the Land now claim'd in this controversie between Keell and Scarbrough, and this Deponent under stood by the Generall report that the Land now Crawford's and that the Said Keell bought part of the Same and built a vessell for Said Crawford which was ... part of Payment for the Said Land, which Vessell the Deponent see Launched and about ten years after this Deponent came to Live there as this Deponent best remembers the said Keell Dyed possessed of the Same part so bought by him and in all the time that this Deponent Lived there during the Lifetime of the Said Keell, this Deponent never understood that the Said Keell claimed any more than the Same part So bought, and there was three more plantations then Settled, whereon Robert Wallis Lived, William Seers and Derby Sexton, and this Deponent does not remember that they were never mollected by Said Kell or that he claimed the Same, but that it was always understood and reported among the Neighbors that Kell had formerly Sold all his right to Crawford.

Just as Samuel Davis and his family had apparently been living on Davis Bay long before the land was formally patented to him in 1694, there are indications that his daughter Alice and her husband John were living on or near Brickhouse Point long before receipt of the Billet patent of 1714. This, at least, is one inference that can be drawn from a semi-literate petition which Alice Billet submitted to the governor and executive council in 1703, in which she sought to protect certain long-held property from the incursions of her brother:

For the honorable the govonor and the lords proprietors deputes now seating. The humble petation of Else beleit [sic, Alice Billet] humblely sheweth that my brother Samuel davis hath taken parte of my plantation by a servey which land my father bounded by marked trees and seattled us upon the said land and we have had quiet pession [i.e., possession] of it from the datt of a Rescalt given by Robert houlding in the year 1679 untell the time my said Brother maid his surveye now if plesis the govonor with his asesttance to Consider your petetioner that I may have my just Right in my land Restord to me againe and your petetioner shall for Ever as in duty pray.

Else Belleit<sup>9</sup>

In 1714 Brickhouse Point and some 300 acres of adjacent land just below Davis Bay were formally patented to John Billet, quite possibly after many years of the Billets' residence there. The property conveyed was described as:

A Tract of land of 300 acres lying in Pasquotank Precinct on the South Side of the River beg[inning] at a White Oak by the river Samuel Davis's corner tree.<sup>10</sup>

In 1717 John and Alice Billet conveyed half of this land to Samuel Wilson, "it being the land whereon the said Samuel Wilson now lives." Later, however, it was alleged that the deed of conveyance to Wilson had been a forgery.<sup>11</sup>

John Billet died in the early months of 1720. His will provided that his 300-acre plantation should devolve primarily to his son Daniel, with a smaller portion left to his daughter and son-in-law. His personal property was to pass to his wife Alice:

I give and bequeath to my loving son Daniel Billet two hundred and fifty acres of land with ye Plantation next adjoining to Benj[amin] Pritchard.... I give and bequeath to my loving son in law James Bell and his wife Mary Bell fifty acres of land and [the] plantation next adjoining to ye plantation of Benj[amin] West ... and after their decease I give it to my grandson Nevell Bell son of the sd. James & Mary Bell...<sup>12</sup> I give to my wife Alice Billet all my personal estate.

On at least three other occasions, Alice Billet had cause to appear before a judicial body concerning the land at and near Brickhouse Point. In 1719 she complained to the executive council, "that Captain Benjamin West [had] dispossessed her of a part of the Estate left by her Father without any manner of pretence that she knows of," whereupon West was ordered to attend the next council meeting to explain his actions.<sup>13</sup> Having apparently not received satisfaction, Alice Billet was herself ordered to appear in

court in 1721 "to answer for a forceable entry made by her on the Plantation of Mary West of Pasquotank County widow."<sup>14</sup> Finally, by 1723 Samuel Wilson was dead, and Alice Billet was acting as his executrix. Representing her in a case involving Wilson's debts was a promising young lawyer named Thomas Swann, who was soon to acquire the Billet lands and establish his residence there.<sup>15</sup>

On 22 July 1724 Daniel Billet sold to Thomas Swann, "of the Precinct of Currituck," the land formally patented to his father some ten years earlier. The land conveyed was described as being:

one Messuage, plantation, and Tract of Land cont[aining] by Estimation Three hundred acres ... situate lying and being on the So[uth] Side of Pasquotank River beginning at a White Oak by the River Sam<sup>d</sup> Davis Corner Tree....<sup>16</sup>

The property description went on to relate that 200 of the 300 acres had passed through the ownership of Samuel Wilson and that of his nephew and heir Joshua White prior to Daniel Billet's recent purchase.<sup>17</sup>

Careful to obtain a clear title, Swann secured surrenders of any claims to the land held by Daniel Billet's wife Mary and John Billet's widow Alice. Incorporated into the language of the deed, as well, was the complete wording of the 1714 patent to John Billet. That the property already contained extensive and possibly long-existing improvements is clearly reflected by the total purchase price of some £500.<sup>18</sup> Finally, as if to complete the transfer of the property and all its contents, Alice Billet accepted twenty-five shillings from Swann in return for "a percil of Hoggs now Running in Pasquotank Precinct."<sup>19</sup>

Thomas Swann was the son of Major Samuel Swann and his first wife Sarah Drummond, daughter of Governor William Drummond. Prior to their removal to North Carolina in 1694, Samuel and Sarah Swann had resided at Swann's Point

on the James River of Virginia, the ancestral seat of the Swann family. It was there that Thomas Swann had been born on 29 October 1689 at about seven o'clock in the morning.<sup>20</sup> As a youth he enjoyed the advantages afforded by favorable connections in society and politics. His father served variously as a deputy to one of the Lords Proprietors, as surveyor general, and as collector of customs for Port Roanoke. Earlier he had been a burgess in the Virginia legislature.<sup>21</sup>

As early as 1709 Thomas and William Swann had been granted powers of attorney by their brother Henry to transact business and collect debts on his behalf in Pasquotank Precinct, he being a "merchant" in Perquimans Precinct.<sup>22</sup> In 1713 Thomas Swann himself was referred to fleetingly as a "merchant" in Pasquotank Precinct.<sup>23</sup> It was not until the mid-1720s, however, and his purchase of the Billet property, that he came to reside permanently in Pasquotank Precinct.

During the few years left to him after his settlement on the Pasquotank River, Thomas Swann rose to positions of the highest prominence, serving as treasurer of Pasquotank Precinct, member of the colonial assembly, and finally as speaker of the lower house of that body.<sup>24</sup> It should also be noted that he was half-brother to John and Samuel Swann of the lower Cape Fear region, the latter of whom served as speaker of the lower house of assembly for a period of twenty years.<sup>25</sup> By virtue of his political prominence, family connections, and considerable affluence, Thomas Swann circulated comfortably through the highest ranks of society in both North Carolina and, presumably, Virginia as well.

In 1726 Swann purchased an unimproved tract of 127 acres on the Pasquotank River for his "well beloved Cousin William Drummond late of

Virginia."<sup>26</sup> During the following year he added to his own holdings along the Pasquotank by acquiring a sizable portion of the old Keel and Wallace tract from John Wallace, grandson and heir of Robert Wallace, the recited consideration for which was £150 sterling.<sup>27</sup>

The Edward Moseley map of 1733 clearly records the presence of the "T Swann" plantation just opposite the mouth of the unnamed Areneuse Creek and in the immediate vicinity of what is now Brickhouse Point.<sup>28</sup> Swann's death, however, occurred during this same year. In his will, which was drawn on 7 May and proven on 10 August, he bequeathed to his "Son Samuel Swann ye Plantation were [sic, where] I now Dwell to him & his heirs for ever."<sup>29</sup> To his son William he left the upriver plantation purchased six years earlier from "ye heirs of Robert Wallis." Provisions also were made for his daughters Rebecca and Elizabeth, for his wife Rebecca, and for the sale of "my part of ye Sloop Swann," which may well have anchored at Brickhouse Point on a number of occasions. The executors of his will were to be his wife Rebecca and his friend Edward Moseley—the same Edward Moseley whose map had so recently recorded his place of residence.<sup>30</sup>

For more than three decades, Thomas Swann's plantation at and below Brickhouse Point was the residence of his eldest son Samuel, who like his father achieved considerable prominence. The younger Swann served only briefly in the colonial assembly relatively late in life, but he may well have surpassed his father in the accumulation of material wealth.<sup>31</sup>

In 1752 Samuel Swann more than doubled the size of his plantation by the acquisition of a Granville grant for an adjoining 367 acres.<sup>32</sup> In 1758 he added still further to his landholdings with the purchase of fifty acres from his step-father Thomas Hunter, who had married his mother in 1734.



This tract had also been a part of the John Billet patent, and had been left in Billet's will to his daughter Mary and her husband James Bell.<sup>33</sup> Thomas and Rebecca Hunter died in 1760 and 1762, respectively. Through inheritance from them, Samuel Swann also received a plantation of nearly 300 acres known as Ivey Neck, located on the opposite or north side of the Pasquotank River.<sup>34</sup>

In February of 1763 Samuel Swann purchased 200 acres of the old Thomas Keel land from his brother William for £400.<sup>35</sup> During the following month he also purchased 100 acres of land from Samuel Davis, adjoining the land upon which Davis resided. The recited consideration for this second tract was £300.<sup>36</sup>

Samuel Swann's will was drawn in 1766 and presented for probate in 1768. It provided that his son Samuel, Jr. receive as a portion of his inheritance "the plantation whereon I now dwell, together with the land I took up, and obtained ... from Lord Granville's agents."<sup>37</sup> These two tracts of 300 and 367 acres together comprised the manor plantation known, at least in later years, as The Elms.<sup>38</sup> To son Samuel, as well, were bequeathed "one pair of large Sconce Glasses with all the pictures in the hall" of the manor house. The Elms having been left to Samuel, other bequests of land were made to sons Stephen and John, to wife Mary, and to "the child which my wife is bigg with."<sup>39</sup>

The inventory of Samuel Swann's estate contained an impressive quantity and variety of household furnishings, chinaware, silver, and books, as well as numerous plantation implements and upwards of twenty slaves. The slaves were bequeathed to his various heirs, but a considerable portion of his personal property was sold at public auction.<sup>40</sup>

Samuel Swann, Jr. established residence at The Elms following his father's death, and continued to reside there for the remainder of his life.

Like his distinguished forebears, he was actively involved in public life, having already served several terms in the colonial assembly during his father's lifetime.<sup>41</sup> The location of his plantation residence was recorded on the Collet map of 1770 and on a much more detailed map of the Albemarle Sound region drawn at about the same time. As indicated earlier on the Moseley map, the Swann residence appears to have been situated in the immediate vicinity of Brickhouse Point, or perhaps slightly downstream.<sup>42</sup>

Samuel Swann, Jr. died late in 1786 or early in 1787, his will being presented for probate in April of the latter year. To his brother John he bequeathed "the plantation given me by my father," together with various specific items in the manor house such as his law books and pictures. Other bequests were made to his brothers Thomas and William Wilson; to kinswoman Mary Blount, daughter of Frederick Blount; and to Mary Templeman, his mother-in-law.<sup>43</sup>

The brother John who inherited The Elms was perhaps the most wealthy and prominent of all the Pasquotank County Swanns of the eighteenth century. Born in 1760, he had studied under the Reverend ~~Esquire~~ Earl at Edenton and later attended William and Mary College. Following acquisition of The Elms, he was a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1788; and during the next year urged the adoption of the federal Constitution at the convention in Fayetteville. Finally, from 1791 until his death in 1793, he represented Pasquotank County in the North Carolina Senate.<sup>44</sup>

On 4 January 1790, John Swann took as his bride the young Penelope Johnston, daughter of former governor and future United States senator Samuel Johnston of Edenton.<sup>45</sup> There are scattered indications that he undertook extensive renovations at The Elms soon after his marriage. Among

the debts outstanding at the time of his death, for example, were those to the firm of Shakespear and Madren for "2 days work putting in window glass 105 lights of sashes," for "Repairs done on the house," for "Repairing a looking glass frame," and for building a "Mahogany Case."<sup>46</sup>

Regrettably, John Swann had only three years left to him at the time of his nuptials. On 3 March 1793 he "Died suddenly ... at his house in Pasquotank County ... a gentleman much esteemed and greatly regretted."<sup>47</sup> Somewhat surprisingly for a man of his wealth and learning in the law, he died intestate; and his father-in-law was compelled by circumstances to serve as the administrator of his considerable estate. His bond as administrator was set at £10,000. Among the early expenses incurred by Johnston in this capacity was that to the firm, once again, of Shakespear and Madren, on this occasion for building a mahogany coffin for the deceased at a cost of £29. The most authoritative biographical sketch of Swann states that he was interred "on the grounds of his plantation, 'The Elms,' in Pasquotank County."<sup>48</sup>

The estate of John Swann was both large and complex. In the first federal census of 1790 Swann had been listed as the owner of sixty slaves—more than anyone else in Pasquotank County.<sup>49</sup> His estate also included a voluminous and eclectic library, fine furnishings, plantation implements, and two boats.<sup>50</sup>

The Elms descended initially to John and Penelope Swann's only child, Samuel Johnston Swann; but this child died on 11 February 1796, leaving the future of the plantation under a cloud of nearly impenetrable darkness with respect to legal issues. Indeed, the rightful possession of the property was to be the subject of protracted litigation for more than two decades to come. Finally, the tangled issues involved would be placed before the North Carolina Supreme Court for resolution.<sup>51</sup>

Brevity forbids a detailed discussion of the issues and parties involved in the settlement of John Swann's estate and, more particularly, The Elms plantation. Suffice it here to say that Samuel Johnston Swann's death in 1796 opened the way for claims on the property by the heirs of the Samuel Swann who had held ownership at the time of his demise nearly thirty years earlier. This Samuel Swann's second wife and widow had subsequently married Frederick Blount. Their marriage, in turn, had produced a daughter Mary, who married William Shepard of New Bern. Additional claims on the property were also presented on behalf of Samuel Swann's brother and sister, William Swann and Elizabeth Vail.<sup>52</sup>

During the long years of controversy, both Frederick Blount and William Shepard are said to have lived for a time at The Elms. Frederick Blount was the son of Colonel John Blount, who had been closely associated with Governor William Tryon. William Shepard was a prominent Federalist, ship owner, planter, and merchant, who profited greatly from his activities as a privateer during the War of 1812.<sup>53</sup> The Blounts, Shepards, and the Pettigrews, as well, were closely interlinked by marriage during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Indeed, the earliest known reference to The Elms by name encountered by this researcher occurs in a letter of 22 April 1794, which Charles Pettigrew wrote to Andrew Knox of Wixonton, a physician and friend of the Pettigrew family. In this letter Pettigrew asked that Knox convey his regards to "Your Uncle & my worthy friends ... at the Elm."<sup>54</sup>

In November of 1803 Penelope Swann reached a settlement with William and Mary Shepard after several years of litigation. In this she conveyed her rights to The Elms and other plantations belonging to her husband for a

token consideration of five shillings. The deed of conveyance made note of the fact that the Shepards had already "entered into possession of the said plantations." In return, she secured undisputed lifetime possession of a plantation on Areneuse Creek, the Camden County stream which ~~discharges~~ into the Pasquotank River opposite Brickhouse Point.<sup>55</sup> To further complicate the issues pertaining to the John Swann estate, it appears that The Elms and other properties were leased on at least two occasions to outside parties, who were then forcibly ejected from the premises.<sup>56</sup>

References to the antebellum period are somewhat conflicting with regard to The Elms or Elmwood as it came to be called. It was during this period that the property formerly associated with the Swanns came to be linked to the prominent Pool family. Unfortunately, the changing sizes and configurations of the former Elms tracts and adjacent properties create some uncertainty as to the precise involvement of Brickhouse Point.

It was almost certainly in 1823 that the Pool family came into possession of Brickhouse Point, the former Swann residence, and a substantial portion of The Elms plantation, although much of The Elms land, contiguous with the former, remained in the Shepard's possession. On 23 May of that year Solomon Pool purchased from William and Samuel Pritchard 190 acres of land adjoining "the lands of the heirs of William Shepard of Newbern." The recited consideration was \$3,040.<sup>57</sup> In 1826 and 1830 Pool acquired additional tracts formerly owned by members of the Pritchard family.<sup>58</sup>

There is no direct statement in the 1823 deed that the land purchased by Solomon Pool contained the former Swann residence; but the purchase price clearly indicates the presence of extensive improvements on the land.

Moreover, published sources agree that Elmwood was the birthplace or boyhood home of several distinguished offspring of Solomon and Mary Gaskins Pool, and that Elmwood and The Elms were one and the same place of residence.<sup>59</sup>

George Decatur Pool, eldest child of Solomon and Mary Pool, was born in 1817, apparently prior to the acquisition of Elmwood. His younger brother John, however, is said unquestionably to have been born at Elmwood in 1826, lending support to the conclusion that the purchase of Elmwood had occurred during the intervening years.<sup>60</sup> As an adult, George Decatur Pool would become a prominent planter and philanthropist. For many years he was a Pasquotank County official, and in the early 1850s represented the county briefly in the North Carolina General Assembly.<sup>61</sup> John Pool rose to even greater prominence than his older brother. He served several terms in the state Senate; was a Whig candidate for governor in 1860; was a delegate to the state constitutional convention of 1865; and was later elected to the United States Senate.<sup>62</sup> Still another notable son of Solomon and Mary Gaskins Pool was the Reverend Solomon Pool, born at "Elmwood on the Pasquotank" in 1832. For six years during Reconstruction he served as professor at the University of North Carolina.<sup>63</sup>

The sons of Solomon and Mary Gaskins Pool who rose to distinction did so despite the tragic loss of both parents. Solomon Pool the elder died in January of 1832, less than a decade after his purchase of Elmwood.<sup>64</sup> In September of the same year, his widow Mary petitioned the Pasquotank County Court for her dower rights. Her petition stated that her husband had died:

Seized and possessed of the following tracts of Land To Wit, one tract the manor plantation ... adjoining the lands of Mary Shepard & others Containing about one hundred & ninety acres [and] one other tract ... called the Pritchard tract, containing by estimation thirty two acres more or less.<sup>65</sup>

Pursuant to this petition, the commissioners appointed by the court laid off to Mary Pool some seventy-four acres of land "including the Dwelling House & all the out Hausses [sic]." But Mary Pool, herself, was to die within the next few years.<sup>66</sup>

By the fall of 1839 Mary Pool had passed away. As the eldest child, George D. Pool was now responsible for the care and education of his four brothers and two sisters.<sup>67</sup> He was responsible, as well, for the family homeplace and other property. In this capacity he petitioned the Pasquotank County Superior Court on behalf of himself and his wards for permission to sell the unnamed Elmwood. His petition represented that he and his brothers and sisters were:

tenants in Common of a Tract of land ... joining Benjamin Pritchard & Josiah Jordan on the East, and the lands of Mrs. Sheperd on the Southwest and bounded on the North & North East by Pasquotank River, containing about one hundred & ninety acres, which descended to them from their Father....<sup>68</sup>

During the following year, 1840, the Pool homeplace on the Pasquotank River was sold at public auction at the courthouse in Elizabeth City. Last and highest bidder at \$6,000 was Thomas Gaskins.<sup>69</sup> Within a few years, however, George D. Pool had regained possession of the property, for in October of 1852 he conveyed it to Robert Pendleton for a recited consideration of \$4,000.<sup>70</sup>

Robert Pendleton had been acquiring tracts of land along the southwest shore of the Pasquotank River since the 1830s, several of which had been adjacent to the lands of Mary Shepard and the heirs of Solomon Pool. With the purchase from George D. Pool in 1852, his holdings embraced nearly half of the shoreline between Brickhouse Point and the mouth of New Begun Creek.<sup>71</sup>

During roughly this same period, Mary Shepard had sold at least two sizeable tracts of land to John Holowell, tracts which now lie within the confines of the United States Coast Guard Air Base, just above Brickhouse Point.<sup>72</sup>

Robert Pendleton died on 12 March 1858. Among the provisions of his will was one which directed his executor, George D. Pool, to seize the opportunity to buy "should [ever] the Shepard farm, near Davis Bay, be offered for purchase," with the proviso that no sacrifice of existing property be made for the purpose. Pendleton's widow Mary was to continue to reside on "the tract of land on which I now live containing about one hundred & fifty acres," and was also to have the "twenty five acres of woodland" adjoining the Shepard land. The remainder of Pendleton's extensive estate was bequeathed to his minor children.<sup>73</sup> In addition to his landholdings along the Pasquotank, it should be noted that Pendleton died possessed of some thirty-nine slaves valued at more than \$25,000.<sup>74</sup>

Once again, the property at and near Brickhouse Point became involved with complex legal issues and protracted litigation. Of the two minor children provided for in Robert Pendleton's will, one had actually predeceased him. The other died well before reaching his majority. Still a third child, a daughter, was born after Pendleton's death, and was not provided for in his will in any fashion. Moreover, she also died before coming of age. The death of Pendleton's three children left his widow Mary as heir to virtually all of his estate; but she had remarried within two years of her husband's death. Her new husband was a young native of Camden County named Thomas J. Mirden.<sup>75</sup>

Robert Pendleton's will had provided that George D. Pool would assume management of his lands for the benefit of his children; however, Pool had



apparently declined to assume this responsibility. Upon his marriage to Mary Pendleton, Thomas J. Murden assumed legal guardianship of these children; but it was not until 1868 that litigation between the Pools, Murdens, and various other claimants to the Pendleton estate was finally laid to rest.<sup>76</sup>

In 1872 Thomas J. Murden carried out at last Robert Pendleton's wish that the Shepard lands be annexed to his own. In doing so he apparently rejoined portions of the old Swann property which had been separated at some point in transactions of the early antebellum period. On 25 June 1872, for a recited consideration of \$4,500, Murden purchased from John R. D. Shepard of Wake County:

all that tract or parcel of land lying in the County of Pasquotank on the Pasquotank River known as "Elmwood" or the Shepard Farm adjoining the lands of Thomas J. Murden and others and containing Four Hundred and twenty acres....

Although the lands taken up long before by Thomas Swann and his son Samuel had now been acquired by a single owner, the house in which they had lived was apparently no longer standing. Accounts differ slightly as to the time and manner of its destruction, but they are in agreement that it had not survived the Civil War. Indeed, at least one account maintains that the house was maliciously destroyed by Union soldiers, who salvaged the bricks, presumably, for military purposes.<sup>78</sup> Two descriptions of the house, published in the early years of this century, convey some impression of its design, location, and elegance. The earliest of these, published in 1909, was that of J. Bryan Grimes, who had taken a special interest in its history:

On a beautiful eminence overlooking the wide waters of Pasquotank River as it loses itself in Albemarle Sound is the site of Elmwood or The Elm, the

old colonial seat of the Swanns. Here stood a brick house, one of the first built in the colony.... Judge Iredell said it was celebrated for a more lavish hospitality and more generous entertainment than any other home in the colony.

A second and more detailed description of The Elms or Elmwood was written by Catherine Albertson and published in 1914. Moreover, her description had sprung initially from one of its former residents:

On a low bluff, overlooking the waters of the beautiful Pasquotank River, some five or six miles south of Elizabeth City, there stood ... an old colonial mansion known as "Elmwood," the home for many years of the historic Swann family....

Mrs. J. P. Overman, of Elizabeth City, whose father, the late Dr. William Pool, of Pasquotank County, spent his boyhood days at Elmwood, then the home of his father, has given the writer a description of this historic house as learned from her father: "The house was situated on the right hand bank of the river, and was set some distance back from the road. It was built of brick ... and was a large, handsome building for those days. As I recall my father's description of it, the house was two stories high; a spacious hall ran the full length [sic, depth?] of the house, both up-stairs and down; and in both the upper and lower story there were two large rooms on each side of the hall. A broad massive stairway led from the lower hall to the one above. The house stood high from the ground, the porch was small for the size of the building, and the windows were high and narrow. The ceilings of the rooms on the first floor had heavy, carved beams of cedar that ran the length of the house. On the left of the house as you approached from the river road, stretched a dense woods...."<sup>80</sup>

Significantly, it was not until after the Civil War and the destruction of the old Swann residence that Brickhouse Point: (or Brick House Point) began to be designated as such on area maps, the earliest such reference appearing on the map drawn in 1868 by W. H. Weatherly and C. A. Nash.<sup>81</sup> The same designation appeared again some ten years later on a map executed by Elizabeth City resident H. T. Greenleaf.<sup>82</sup>

Unfortunately, the destruction at and near Brickhouse Point was not confined to the colonial residence of the Swann family, for the nearby graves of several members of the Swann family were later desecrated by vandals, apparently during the early years of this century. This regrettable incident was discovered by J. Bryan Grimes in the course of his research on The Elms or Elmwood at the end of World War I. Moreover, the once large estate associated with the house and graves had been cut up into numerous smaller parcels by the time of his investigations:

The old estate has now been sold and divided into smaller farms. In the preparation of a sketch not long since, the writer was anxious to get inscription records from the Swann tombstones, but was informed that the Swann bricked in graves had recently been dug up by treasure hunters and such stones as might be there were covered with brick and dirt from the excavations of the gold diggers and grave robbers.<sup>83</sup>

Thomas J. Murden and his wife Mary retained ownership of their extensive landholdings along the Pasquotank River until the end of the nineteenth century, when apparently they were compelled by financial difficulties to borrow large sums of money with their land as collateral. Indeed, within a few short years Murden lost both his wife and his land. Mary Murden died at some point in the late 1890s; and the vast majority of Murden's property was sold at the courthouse in Elizabeth City in public auctions of 20 November 1900 and 4 February 1901.<sup>84</sup> Murden himself passed away on 24 November 1901 at the age of sixty-nine, sadly reduced from the financial status he had once enjoyed. His administrator estimated the value of his estate at only \$250.<sup>85</sup>

It was at this point that the once large tracts were subdivided and sold off. On 26 August 1903 Brickhouse Point was purchased by J. E. Wilson of Pasquotank County as part of a narrow strip of land comprising 57+66

acres, this property being described as "part of the T. J. Marden farm." The recited consideration was \$1,093. The tract purchased by Wilson secured a debt to Nina and David Cox of Perquimans County.<sup>86</sup> By the late summer of 1907 Wilson had defaulted on his debt, and on 7 September the Brickhouse Point tract was sold to Ben F. Bray and wife Della, last and highest bidders at \$2,055.<sup>87</sup> The Brays would continue as owners of the property for nearly half a century.

A county highway map of 1938 indicates that several structures were located on the east side of the secondary road which ran along the south shore of the Pasquotank River; but no structures were indicated on Brickhouse Point itself or within a one-third-mile radius.<sup>88</sup> An aerial photograph of that same year supplements the map information considerably by revealing the extent to which land in the general vicinity of Brickhouse Point was being cultivated. At the point itself, however, there existed a sizeable wooded area, where no farming was being carried on. This photograph also reveals the presence of a large house much closer to Brickhouse Point than those shown on the map, but still well back from the shoreline on the south side of the wooded area along the river.<sup>89</sup>

Within a few years after the above photograph was taken, the area just above Brickhouse Point was altered drastically by the development of the United States Coast Guard Air Station, located largely on the lands of the old Hollowell plantation. Much of this land, in turn, had been part of the land taken up by Samuel Davis in 1694. From modest beginnings in 1940, this base has since developed into the largest and one of the most important facilities of its kind in the world.<sup>90</sup> A map published in 1947 omits data pertaining to the developing air base, but indicates that the house near

Brickhouse Point was now gone, and that a secondary road had been cut northward from the river road to the very tip of the point. Just east of this road and along the shoreline, the wooded area remained.<sup>91</sup>

Ben F. Bray and his wife Delia retained ownership of Brickhouse Point until 10 October 1951, at which time they conveyed it to Charles T. and Thomas Smith, its present owners.<sup>92</sup> A map published in 1966 by the State Highway Commission indicates the presence of a school and one other building along the east side of the river road just below the air base, but no structures are shown in the immediate vicinity of Brickhouse Point.<sup>93</sup> The most recent Geological Survey map of 1982 continues to show the road earlier constructed to the tip of Brickhouse Point, but also indicates that no structures had been erected at the point. This map, however, shows that the cultivated fields now extended nearly to the shoreline at and below the point, and that the wooded area had been reduced to a fraction of its former size.<sup>94</sup> At the present time there are no standing structures on Brickhouse Point. But the area may now be threatened by encroachment from both sides, situated as it is between the sprawling air base and residential development along the shoreline just downstream.

Within the past few months, scattered bricks and a rich assortment of colonial artifacts have been located in the water and along the shore just below the tip of Brickhouse Point; and the site may well prove one of considerable archaeological and historical significance. Documentary and published sources suggest very strongly that it marks the former location of the Swann residence, particularly if shoreline erosion has taken a heavy toll since the colonial period. Throughout eastern North Carolina, the erosion process has claimed many colonial structures that once stood a considerable distance from the water's edge. If not the Swann residence itself, the

artifacts and brick rubble may represent the remains of an ancillary feature, such as a small warehouse or plantation landing. Depending upon the age of these materials, it is also possible that they may be associated with one ~~or more~~ structures which existed even prior to Thomas Swann's acquisition of the property in 1724.

The Brickhouse Point area on the Pasquotank River is one which is extremely rich in terms of its history and archaeological potential. It is significant not only for Pasquotank County but for North Carolina in general. Particularly during the colonial and antebellum periods, it was associated with a series of prominent individuals who made it the base of their social, economic, and political activities. It is hoped that the area can be studied by a professional archaeologist at some point in the near future, and that this report will provide a useful historical background for that study.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>William S. Price, Jr. (editor), North Carolina Higher-Court Minutes, 1709-1723, Volume V of The Colonial Records of North Carolina, Second Series (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1977), 492. Hereinafter cited as Price, Higher-Court Minutes, 1709-1723.

<sup>2</sup>Price, Higher Court-Minutes, 1709-1723, 492.

<sup>3</sup>The events and controversies summarized here have been greatly simplified for the sake of brevity. For a much fuller, though dispersed account, see Mattie Erna Edwards Parker (editor), North Carolina Higher-Court Records, 1697-1701, Volume III of The Colonial Records of North Carolina, Second Series (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1971), 546 (hereinafter cited as Parker, Higher-Court Records, 1697-1701); William S. Price, Jr. (editor), North Carolina Higher-Court Records, 1702-1708, Volume IV of The Colonial Records of North Carolina, Second Series (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1974), 129-130, 227, 248-249, 279, 437, 442, and 448 (hereinafter cited as Price, Higher-Court Records, 1702-1708); and Price, Higher-Court Minutes, 1709-1723, 108, 129, 476-477, and 492-498. For 1694 patent to Wallace, see Margaret Hofmann (editor), Province of North Carolina, 1663-1729: Abstracts of Land Patents (Weldon, North Carolina: Roanoke News Co., 1979), 10.

<sup>4</sup>Pasquotank County Deeds, Book J, 14-15, North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>5</sup>John L. Cheney, Jr. (editor), North Carolina Government, 1585-1974: A Narrative and Statistical History (Raleigh: Department of the Secretary of State, 1975), 1226.

<sup>6</sup>Cheney, North Carolina Government, 1226.

<sup>7</sup>William L. Saunders (editor), Colonial Records of North Carolina, 10 volumes (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 1886-1890), I, 299. See also pp. 293 and 309-311. For a biographical sketch of Crawford, see William S. Powell (editor), Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, Volumes I and II (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979 and 1986), I, 457-458.

<sup>8</sup>Price, Higher-Court Minutes, 1709-1723, 497.

<sup>9</sup>Robert J. Cain (editor), Records of the Executive Council, 1664-1734, Volume VII of The Colonial Records of North Carolina, Second Series (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1984), 393. The punctuation of the published text of this petition has been altered slightly to eliminate numerous colons. See also p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Pasquotank County Deeds, Book A, 173-174.

<sup>11</sup>In 1721 one William Morris was presented for forging the deed of 1717 between John and Alice Billet and Samuel Wilson. The action against Morris, however, was subsequently dropped. See Saunders, Colonial Records of North Carolina, II, 471; and Price, Higher-Court Minutes, 1709-1723, 241, 253, and 290.

<sup>12</sup> Secretary of State's Wills, will of John Elliot, North Carolina State Archives. The tract of fifty acres was to be purchased in 1758 by Samuel Swann, Jr. from his step-father, Thomas Hunter. See Pasquotank County Deeds, Book F and G, 273-274.

<sup>13</sup> Cain, Records of the Executive Council, 82; and Saunders, Colonial Records of North Carolina, II, 41.

<sup>14</sup> Saunders, Colonial Records of North Carolina, II, 440.

<sup>15</sup> Price, Higher-Court Minutes, 1709-1723, 372 and 443-444.

<sup>16</sup> Pasquotank County Deeds, Book A, 318-319.

<sup>17</sup> Pasquotank County Deeds, Book A, 318-319.

<sup>18</sup> Pasquotank County Deeds, Book A, 318-319.

<sup>19</sup> Bill of sale dated 5 July 1725, Charles S. Bryan Collection, North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>20</sup> Swann Family vertical file, North Carolina State Library, Raleigh. Genealogical information on the Swann family was kept current by Samuel Swann himself up until the time of his death in 1707. He died as a resident of Perquimans County.

<sup>21</sup> Swann Family vertical file; and Saunders, Colonial Records of North Carolina, IX, xxxix.

<sup>22</sup> Pasquotank County Deeds, Book A, 24-25.

<sup>23</sup> Price, Higher-Court Records, 1709-1723, 47.

<sup>24</sup> Saunders, Colonial Records of North Carolina, III, 546 and 578; and Cheney, North Carolina Government, 36 and 1226.

<sup>25</sup> Saunders, Colonial Records of North Carolina, IX, xl. John and Samuel Swann of the lower Cape Fear were born to the union of Major Samuel Swann and his second wife, Elizabeth Lillington. See Swann Family vertical file.

<sup>26</sup> Pasquotank County Deeds, Book A, 379.

<sup>27</sup> Pasquotank County Deeds, Book A, 407-408.

<sup>28</sup> See Edward Moseley map in Appendixes.

<sup>29</sup> Secretary of State's Wills, will of Thomas Swann.

<sup>30</sup> Secretary of State's Wills, will of Thomas Swann.

<sup>31</sup> For the younger Swann's brief service in the colonial assembly, see Cheney, North Carolina Government, 1226.



<sup>32</sup>Granville Grants, 1752 grant to Samuel Swann, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh. See also Supreme Court Papers, William B. Shepherd et al v. William Shepherd, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh. Hereinafter cited as Supreme Court Papers.

<sup>33</sup>Pasquotank County Deeds, Book F and G, 273-274. Billet's will had further provided that this land should pass finally to his grandson Nevell Bell. The latter had sold it in 1738 to one John Jones, who subsequently sold it to Thomas Hunter's father, also named Thomas Hunter. The younger Thomas Hunter had acquired it in 1740. For the marriage of Thomas Hunter and Rebecca Swann, see Weynette Parks Haun (compiler), Old Albemarle County North Carolina Pasquotank Precinct (County) Births, Marriages, Deaths, Brands, Flesh Marks and County Claims, 1691-1833 (Durham: published by the compiler, 1981), 7.

<sup>34</sup>Pasquotank County loose wills, wills of Thomas and Rebecca Hunter, North Carolina State Archives. It is of genealogical interest to note that Rebecca Hunter's will makes mention of son William Swann; of grandsons Thomas, William, John, Joseph, and Samuel Swann; and of granddaughters Rebecca Swann and Mary, Rebecca, and Elizabeth Vail.

<sup>35</sup>Pasquotank County Deeds, Book D and E, 180.

<sup>36</sup>Pasquotank County Deeds, Book D and E, 188.

<sup>37</sup>Secretary of State's Wills, will of Samuel Swann.

<sup>38</sup>Supreme Court Papers. The earliest reference located by this researcher to The Elms by name occurs in a letter of 1794 from Charles Pettigrew to Andrew Knox. However, the name may well have been associated with the property since the days of Thomas Swann. See Sarah McCulloh Lemmon (editor), The Pettigrew Papers, Volume I, (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1971), 130.

<sup>39</sup>Secretary of State's Wills, will of Samuel Swann. His widow Mary was to have use of one-half of The Elms during her lifetime. She also received a plantation in Currituck County, purchased from one John Perkins. After the death of her husband, Mary Swann gave birth to a son, Thomas.

<sup>40</sup>Pasquotank County Estate Papers, Samuel Swann folder. For inventory of Samuel Swann's property, see Appendixes.

<sup>41</sup>Cheney, North Carolina Government, 1226.

<sup>42</sup>See the Collet and Albemarle Sound maps in Appendixes. For a description of the latter, located in the William L. Clements Library, see William P. Cushing, The Southeast in Early Maps (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 242.

<sup>43</sup>Pasquotank County Wills, Book K, 148-149; and Supreme Court Papers.

<sup>44</sup>Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), 1778; and Cheney, North Carolina Government, 769 and 1227.

<sup>45</sup> For date of the marriage, see Raymond Parker Fouts (compiler), Abstracts from the State Gazette of North Carolina, 1787-1799, 3 volumes (Cocoa, Florida: Gen Rec Books, 1982), II, 31.

<sup>46</sup> Hayes Collection, folder 122, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill.

<sup>47</sup> Fouts, Abstracts from the State Gazette, II, 12.

<sup>48</sup> Hayes Collection, folder 122; and Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1778. The John Swann who died in 1793 should not be confused with his cousin of the same name who died some five years earlier. For information on the latter, see Pasquotank County Wills, Book K, 172; and Pasquotank County Estates Papers, John Swann (d. 1788) folder.

<sup>49</sup> Walter Clark (editor), State Records of North Carolina, 16 volumes (Winston and Goldsboro: State of North Carolina, 1895-1906), XXVI, 872-888 (John Swann listed on p. 885).

<sup>50</sup> Pasquotank County Estates Papers, John Swann folder. For copy of this inventory, see Appendixes.

<sup>51</sup> Supreme Court Papers.

<sup>52</sup> Supreme Court Papers.

<sup>53</sup> J. Bryan Grimes, Why North Carolina Should Erect and Preserve Memorials and Mark Historic Places [address reprinted from the North Carolina Review, Literary and Historical Section of the News and Observer (Raleigh)]. [Raleigh: 1909], 9, (hereinafter cited as Grimes, North Carolina Memorials and Historic Places); and David T. Morgan (editor), The John Gray Blount Papers, Volume IV (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1982), 55.

<sup>54</sup> Lesson, Pettigrew Papers, xvi and 130.

<sup>55</sup> Pasquotank County Deeds, Book Q, 170-171.

<sup>56</sup> Supreme Court Papers.

<sup>57</sup> Pasquotank County Deeds, Book W, 344.

<sup>58</sup> See Pasquotank County Deeds, Book Y, 23-24 and Book Z, 234.

<sup>59</sup> See Grimes, North Carolina Memorials and Historic Places, 9; and John Elliott Wood and others (editors), Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook, 3 volumes (Elizabeth City: Pasquotank County Historical Society, 1956, 1958, and 1975), I, 122-123.

<sup>60</sup> Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook, I, 122-123.

<sup>61</sup> Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook, I, 122; and Chesney, North Carolina Government, 1228.

<sup>62</sup>Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1556; and Cheney, North Carolina Government, 426, 691, 693, 695, 744n, 832, and 1227-1228.

<sup>63</sup>Grimes, North Carolina Memorials and Historic Places, 9; and Observer (Raleigh), 3 September 1950.

<sup>64</sup>Pasquotank County loose wills, will of Solomon Pool. This Solomon Pool should not be confused with the Solomon Pool who died in 1829.

<sup>65</sup>Pasquotank County Estates Papers, Solomon Pool folder.

<sup>66</sup>Pasquotank County Estates Papers, Solomon Pool folder.

<sup>67</sup>Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook, I, 122.

<sup>68</sup>Pasquotank County Estates Papers, Solomon Pool folder.

<sup>69</sup>Pasquotank County Deeds, Book DD, 313-314; and Pasquotank County Estates Papers, Solomon Pool folder.

<sup>70</sup>Pasquotank County Deeds, Book KK, 73-74.

<sup>71</sup>For the most significant of Pendleton's acquisitions, see Pasquotank County Deeds, Book AA, 371; Book CC, 51-52; Book GG, 42; Book JJ, 161-162 and 444; and Book LL, 430.

<sup>72</sup>Pasquotank County Deeds, Book X, 333-334 and Book CC, 317.

<sup>73</sup>Pasquotank County loose wills, will of Robert Pendleton.

<sup>74</sup>Pasquotank County Estates Papers, Robert Pendleton folder.

<sup>75</sup>Pasquotank County Estates Papers, Robert Pendleton and Thomas J. Murden folders; Pasquotank County loose wills, will of Robert Pendleton; and Pasquotank County Census of 1860. At the time of the 1860 census Thomas J. Murden was twenty-six; his wife thirty.

<sup>76</sup>Pasquotank County Estates Papers, Robert Pendleton folder. See also Pasquotank County Deeds, Book OO, 435.

<sup>77</sup>Pasquotank County Deeds, Book RR, 165-166 and 191-193.

<sup>78</sup>Grimes, North Carolina Memorials and Historic Places, 9. See also Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook, II, 74.

<sup>79</sup>Grimes, North Carolina Memorials and Historic Places, 9.

<sup>80</sup>Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook, II, 74. Still a third description, recorded much more recently, adds that the house was "dominated by four tall chimneys," and that it faced "a dusty road lined by two rows of enormous elms." See Swann Family vertical file.

- 81 Weatherly and Nash map of 1868 in North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.
- 82 H. T. Greenleaf map of 1878 in North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.
- 83 Grimes, North Carolina Memorials and Historic Places, 9.
- 84 Pasquotank County Deeds, Book 22, 473-474 and Book 23, 199.
- 85 Pasquotank County Estates Papers, Thomas J. Murden folder.
- 86 Pasquotank County Deeds, Book 26, 611-613.
- 87 Pasquotank County Deeds, Book 31, 305.
- 88 Pasquotank and Camden County map of 1938, North Carolina State Archives (not copied for Appendixes).
- 89 See aerial photograph of 1938 in Appendixes.
- 90 An Historical Tour of Pasquotank County (Elizabeth City: Museum of the Albemarle [1976]), n.p.
- 91 See map of 1947 in Appendixes.
- 92 Information provided by Barbara E. Taylor, curator of the Museum of the Albemarle.
- 93 Map of 1966 in North Carolina State Archives (map not copied for Appendixes).
- 94 See map of 1982 in Appendixes.

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**APPENDIXES\***

(Not identified by number or letter in report)

**Moseley Map (1733)**  
**Wimble Map (1738)**  
**Collet Map (1770)**  
**Price-Strother Map (1808)**  
**MacRae-Brazier Map (1833)**  
**Aerial Photograph (1938)**  
**U.S.G.S. Map (1947)**  
**U.S.G.S. Map (1982)**  
**Inventory of Samuel Swann Estate (1768)**  
**Inventory of John Swann Estate (1793)**  
**Map of Albemarle Sound Region (1770s)**

**\*The Appendixes to this report have not been filmed due to considerations of both economy and feasibility. They are retained with the archival copy of the report in the library of the Research Branch of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History at 109 East Jones Street in Raleigh. They are listed above.**