

# THE CABIN BLUFF STORY

## EARLY HISTORY OF THE CABIN BLUFF AREA

The Cabin Bluff Tract, scene of many hunting parties today was first inhabited by Timucuan Indians, as far as is known of fairly modern history. They were a peaceful tribe, and no doubt found the land greatly conducive to good hunting, as most of the land along this coast was.

Europeans arrived in 1562 when French colonists sent out by Admiral Coligny explored this coast in their work of establishing settlements in South Carolina and later in Florida.

Never one to be far behind other daring explorers, the Spanish came in 1565, led by Menendez de Avilles, known as Spain's ablest seaman. Orders were to dislodge the French along the coast and hold the lands for Spain.

Following the defeat of the Spanish on St. Simons Island in 1742, the English held sway over this section of the Atlantic Coast from that time on. In those Colonial Days, King George III of England deeded certain tracts of the lands to his subjects. Following the Revolutionary War, the State of Georgia deeded lands, now within the property of Cabin Bluff, to certain individuals.

During the interval between the Revolutionary War and the War Between the States, the land supported plantations with large scale operations as well as small ones.

## DAYS OF GLORY

The Cabin Bluff area's most illustrious era came with the Floyd family who moved to Camden County in 1800. Charles Floyd, founder of the Camden County branch of the name was descended from a distinguished Welch family. He served in the Revolutionary War in a company whose motto was "Liberty or Death". Three times the home of Charles Floyd had been burned by Tories during the War when he lived in South Carolina.

In Camden County Charles built a home in the early 1800's which he called Bellevue. His only child, John, built one which he called Fairfield. Both homes were known as places of culture and refinement.



John Floyd served his new state in politics, being elected representative from Camden County to the Georgia House of Representatives and to the Senate. He served as presidential elector in 1824 and 1832, and also represented this district in the Congress of the United States.

In addition to his political work John Floyd was in military life. He served as Brigadier General of the First Brigade in 1806 and as Major General of the Georgia Militia from 1815 until 1829. During the War of 1812, as a major general, he served in Savannah.

During this war the plantations of the Floyd family, being on the coast, suffered damage from English raids. Fairfield was plundered and partially burned, being saved only by a Negro slave left as caretaker who managed to extinguish the flames and save the building.

In 1813 Major General John Floyd commanded an expedition against the Creek Indians of Alabama and was successful. As testimony to John Floyd's service to his state, Floyd County, in North Georgia, is named for him.

One of John Floyd's 12 children, Charles Rinaldo Floyd, having served with his father in the War of 1812, received a military education at West Point. In 1824, when Marquis LaFayette visited America, Charles R. Floyd commanded the military corps sent to New York City to receive the Marquis.

Following in his father's footsteps, Charles R. Floyd represented Camden County in the Georgia Assembly and held many military appointments. Commissioned to remove the Indians from Florida, he led one expedition into the Swamp as far as a large island, heretofore unexplored by white men, and known ever since as Floyd's Island.

Besides being a servant of government and of the military, Charles R. Floyd was a man of creative talents, being a poet, musician, and a painter.

At the age of 48 Charles R. Floyd died and was buried near his home, Fairfield, which his father, John, had given him. The Federal Government in honor of his service, erected a monument at this grave to the memory of his patriotism.

One of Charles R. Floyd's children, Mary Faith, married W. G. McAdoo, and became the mother of the late William Gibbs McAdoo, secretary of the treasury under President Woodrow Wilson.



## EARLY SPORTS OF CABIN BLUFF

During the great days of the plantation era, the Floyd family were part of the group in this area of the South devoted to sports indigenous to this section. Hunting parties were given and boat races held when challenges were sent as far away as New York.

The Camden Hunt Club was organized in 1827, possibly the first hunting club to be so founded in America. The Floyd family was prominent in the organization of the Club, Gen. Charles R. Floyd being the first president and Richard F. Floyd, the first (secretary. Still another Floyd, James F., Sr., was a member.)

This Club invited other nearby clubs to be their guests and in turn were invited to join other clubs in their activities. One formal invitation found in the Camden Club papers, reads: "The Agricultural and Sporting Club of St. Simons requests the honor of the company of the Camden Club, and the members' ladies, at Frederica on the 16 of February, next, the centennial anniversary of the landing of Gen'l. Oglethorpe."

## MOOD OF THE TIMES

Another invitational hunt was held on the Anniversary of American Independence, in 1838, given by the Camden Hunt Club. Following the hunt, at 3:00 P.M. the Club and guests sat down to a sumptuous dinner, "sufficient for a hundred men." Many toasts were drunk that afternoon, and several preserved for posterity. The president of the day gave as his toast: "The State Rights Party of the South. They will draw the sword and deluge the country with blood before they will yield a particle of their 'Reserved Rights'."

The vice-president spoke thus: "Capt. Jones and Capt. Robinson, the Richmond Blues and the Camden Volunteers. Victory is certain with such leaders and such men."

A C. M. Pratt toasted: "May the freedom of election be preserved, the trial by jury maintained, and the liberty of the press secured to the latest posterity."

L. A. Holtzendorf said: "The Abolitionists of the North-- let them dare pollute our soil with their footsteps. The way we will use them up will be a 'caution'."



Capt. J. H. Dilworth toasted. "With a cowhide in one hand and a halter in the other, we put Northern fanaticism at defiance."

Though Gen. John Floyd could not attend that day, he sent the following thought for a toast: "The eternal sovereignty of the independent States of our Republic; the safeguards of its Constitution and the bulwark of our Nation."

All of the toasts were accompanied by music, such as that of Gen. Floyd's which was accompanied by Hail Columbia.

Obviously these gentlemen of the Old South sensed the danger to their property, their economy, and their way of life and of liberty which was to come a little more than two decades later.

Another sport engaged in by these early residents of the Cabin Bluff Tract was that of boat racing. Joining with Thomas Butler King, of Retreat Plantation on St. Simons Island, and Henri duBignon, of Jekyll Island, Charles R. Floyd helped to form the Aquatic Club of Georgia.

The boats were generally "dug-outs", hewn by hand out of single cypress logs. They were usually about 30 feet long, three feet wide and one inch thick. Power was furnished by eight to ten Negro slave oarsmen,

With many races held by the Club, the purses went as high as \$10,000 and challenges went out to the New York Boat Club. The race was usually rowed over a mile course and the time was six or seven minutes.

The Brunswick Advocate of 1837 gave quite an account of one of these sensational races. More than 4,000 witnessed the race and bets ranged from high cash amounts to a "beaver hat, a pair of Durfee's best-made boots . . . a chew of tobacco or a picayune."

The slaves who were oarsmen were given training similar to renowned football teams of today. For three months prior to a big race they did not work, spending all their active time in practice.

#### END OF AN ERA

But the War Between the States, as do most wars for a conquered people, put an end to the business days of the great

plantations and to virtually all that was cultured and leisurely along with it. With no Marshall Plan to help in recovery following the War's devastation, the lands reverted again to great forests during the decades following 1865.

And today hunting and fishing parties at Cabin Bluff are carrying on some of the tradition set by the Floyd family in the first part of the nineteenth century, and descendants of early turkeys and deer are today sending out the challenge to marksmen to follow in the moss-covered paths roamed by the early Floyds.

### CABIN BLUFF'S TWENTIETH CENTURY ECONOMY

The Cabin Bluff Tract is the largest single tract of forest land in Camden County, Georgia. The total area comprises about 61,400 acres, of which 39,250 are forested area and 22,150 acres are marsh land.

In the early 1900's extensive railroad logging operations were carried on by Hilton-Dodge Lumber Company, either as owners of the property or as operators for the Savannah River Lumber Company, who owned the property for some years.

After this period the property passed to the Camden Pine and Cypress Company. ✓

The late Howard E. Coffin purchased 52,000 acres from the Camden Pine and Cypress Company in November, 1927. During the year following this purchase, Mr. Coffin purchased additional parcels of land lying within or adjacent to the original property.

In 1928 and the years immediately following, a number of improvements were added to the property. A hunting lodge was built at Cabin Bluff, the property was fenced, artesian wells were drilled, roads and fire lines were built by the owners and the Civilian Conservation Corps, telephone lines were constructed by the owners in cooperation with the State, and a turpentine still was installed together with the appurtenances relative to a naval stores operation.

A form of integrated forest management was established and the property managed for naval stores, game, and cattle.

In 1942 the Brunswick Pulp and Paper Company, through its subsidiary company, Timber Lands, Inc., purchased the property from the heirs of Mr. Coffin.



The property is bounded principally by physical features; on the north by the Satilla River and marshes; on the south by Crooked River and marshes; and on the east by the Cumberland River and marshes. The Seaboard Railway forms the western boundary, while lands under various ownership bound the property on the northeast and southwest.

The property is accessible by railroad over the Seaboard Railway, and by highway over U.S. 17; a distance of 35 miles from Brunswick to Colesburg.

The property is also accessible by water by way of the Inland Waterway. The Cumberland, Satilla, and Crooked Rivers are navigable by all water craft ordinarily plying the Inland Waterway System. The distance from Brunswick to Cabin Bluff by water is approximately 20 nautical miles.

The area is fairly typical, in point of relief, of the extreme eastern portion of the Coastal Forest Plain. It may generally be described as very flat, and while the property extends inland over 12 miles, the highest elevation on the property is 35 feet.

The Cumberland, Satilla and Crooked Rivers provide the main drainage system, with a number of creeks, notably Todd, Shellbine, Grover, and Sadler, forming a secondary drainage. These in turn are fed by numerous small streams which meander through the property.

At several points along the shoreline, rivers and creeks, following their meandering course through marshes, have cut channels abutting the higher lands. At such points the drop in elevation normally occurring between timber line and river bank, is concentrated to form "bluffs". Notable bluffs are at Ceylon on the Satilla River, at the air field and Schooner Landing on Todd Creek, Black Point on Crooked River, and at Harriet's Bluff on Sadler's Creek.

Since the property was purchased by Brunswick Pulp it has been managed on a sustained yield basis, with all advances presently known to forestry science being practiced in order to make the most of the "renewable natural resource" policy. The property provides a payroll which includes caretakers, rangers, forestry helpers, pulpwood dealers and their crews of laborers, and road and tract maintenance men.

The hope of the present owners is that the Cabin Bluff area will continue to remain an important part of the South's new forestry economy and of its recreational pursuits.