

Written History of Crab Point Dates to 1722

Porters Were First Family To Deed Land in That Area

By F. C. SALISBURY
Recorded on page one, book "A" in the office of the Register of Deeds, Carteret County, is a copy of a deed given by Katherine and Joshua Porter to George Coydell for 120 acres of land on the south side of Newport River and Dawson's Creek. It's dated 1722.

This acreage is believed to have been part, or whole of one of the first grants (or purchase) of land in that section known today as Crab Point. The river and creek are the only boundaries given. As the name Porter appears many times in the land transfers of that section, it is reasonable to believe that Porter and descendants may rightly be called the first settlers on Crab Point; the name of which was not attached to the section until over a hundred years later.

Eight years later, following the purchase by Coydell, one Sarah Porter, wife of John Porter, deceased, is granted 240 acres near the mouth of Newport River, on the south side. The land was known by the name of "Hershaw." For the next century the name of Porter appears in various and transactions, both on the Point and elsewhere in the county.

In 1739 Joshua Nash became the owner of Point property through a grant given by the Lords Proprietors consisting of 223 acres. It bordering on Shepards Creek, known today as Calico Creek. It is this grant most often referred to in establishing boundaries in later transfers. Also part of this tract was known in the county as the Pigott place, which today embraces a subdivision of the town of Morehead City.

Along with Porter and Nash of those early days appears the names of William Dennis, George Read and George Coydell as large land owners. Passing years brought John Jones, David Owens and William Adams into the section to be followed by Laughtons, Oglesbys and Willis's and their descendants.

Probably one of the earliest tracts to be cleared and buildings erected thereon was on the property of Joshua Nash bordering on Shepards Creek. The house, torn down several years ago, was made of hewed timbers, joined with wooden pegs. Interior trim of doors and panels, mouldings and stair construction, were hand wrought. The building, no doubt, was on the property at the time Levi Pigott purchased the 100 acres from Nathaniel Porter in 1838.

Further evidence that this location was the home place of Nash, is a clause in a deed of this property given by him to William Dennis in 1744 which reads: "All except the grave yard to be reserved for Joshua Nash." He could not have been an educated man for his signature is an "X".

This cemetery reserved by Nash, known today as the Pigott cemetery, contains the remains of many of that family, is thought to have been a community cemetery for families living along the southern part of the Point. Wooden slabs

once marked the graves of those early pioneers.

Only one slab remains standing. A marble marker outside the Pigott enclosure marks the grave of Ester Reed Porter, 1805-1844. The families of Reed and Porter at one time were neighbors of Nashes on adjoining plantations.

The contour of the land embracing what is known as Crab Point is almost a two-mile square peninsula, formed by the Newport River on three sides and Calico Creek. It contains some 2,500 acres. Timber once nearly covered the area, but today the land is of the best in the county for agricultural purposes.

Several small industries thrived on the Point at one time. During the ten-year period of the building of Fort Macon, 1825-1836, with the demand for the millions of brick which went into its construction, a brick yard was put in operation along the north shore where suitable clay for making of brick was abundant. This yard flourished for several years.

On the William Adams tract a grist mill, powered by one of those old-timey windmills, ground corn. The site of the mill was at the most northern part of the Adams tract where it extends into Newport River. This point is shown on maps of the section as Penn Point, so named from a later owner of the property, one Penn Adams.

Along the east shore jutting into the Thorofoare is an area that in years past was given the name of Crab Point. This name, through passing years, has designated the entire section. The story has come down through the years that the quantity of crabs caught along the east shore of the river was responsible for the naming of the point.

It was at this point that a lumber concern under title of The Carolina Lumber Co., F. W. Pelton, of Boston, president, purchased from John Jones, Jan. 14, 1865, three acres of land, erecting thereon a saw mill. Operation of this mill was of short duration. Two years later the property was purchased by Arthur M. Fales of Morehead City for \$15,000.

Later, he added to the property by the purchase from Jones of six acres. He built a large house for his family where they made their home for several years. During the period the family lived at the mill site, a daughter, Lillie Fales, conducted a school for young children in the home.

Records show that Fales sold the mill two different times. The property must have reverted to him in both cases for in 1890 he leased the plant to the American Lumber Co., a northern concern. It was during the operation of the mill by this concern that it was destroyed by fire. The home place did not burn. Following the fire, the Fales family moved to Beaufort.

One of the first menhaden fish factories to be put in operation in the county was built on the sawmill site by C. S. Wallace in the latter part of 1890. Processing oil and scrap at that time was the crudest of methods. Presses for



This building is part of the Ward house, built at the turn of the 19th century. It originally had two stories with dormer windows that lighted the upper rooms. Hand-hewed timbers form the framing. Doors and trim and the paneled side wall show remarkable hand work. All mortise and tenon are fastened by pegs. Cupboard doors swung from "H" hinges, much sought after by antique hunters. The building now serves as a storehouse on the Laughton farm.

extracting the oil from the cooked fish were of the lever type operated by manpower.

Drying of scrap for fertilizer was of the solar process. It was spread out on large open wood floors to be dried by the sun. Until cured, the scrap had to be turned frequently. In case of storm the scrap was scraped into piles and covered with canvas. Like the sawmill, this factory was destroyed by fire.

In 1936 when Cecil Nelson of Morehead City became interested in the processing of sharks for their skins, and oil from the livers, he selected the former sawmill site on which to build his plant. He continued work until the start of World War II, which stopped his boats from going out.

In the days of brick making and lumbering, the north shore of the Point became a small port. Large schooners found ample depth of water to reach the loading wharfs.

One of the early homes at the Point was that of John Jones who owned considerable land along the east shore. During the Civil War, the house was taken over by the Federal Army for use as a hospital. In later years when the



It was to the Adams' windmill of this type, that farmers living on Crab Point went to have their corn ground. This mill operated up until about 1870. The last operators were Penn and Octave Adams. (Photo copy by F. C. Salisbury)

joined by his wife. Here they lived until establishing their home on Crab Point.

For a short period during the Civil War, Laughton served on a Confederate hospital ship, carrying sick and wounded to southern ports where hospitals had been established. The gruesome sight of the maimed and wounded so affected him that he gave up the work.

After the close of hostilities, Laughton opened a ships' store in the vicinity of the railroad pier. He operated it until 1870. It was that year he purchased from the Ward heirs the land on Crab Point known as the Alice Ward homestead. It lay along the south and west sides of Newport River and contained 550 acres.

This site became the homeplace of the Laughtons down through the years and is still owned by members of this family. With passing years, his holdings of farm property increased until they consisted of nearly 1,000 acres, almost half the area known today as Crab Point.

Seven children were born to this couple, four sons and three daughters. The first child, a son, George, died in infancy from neglect on the part of his nurse from over-exposure in the hot sun. A son, Edwin, died at the age of 3. From the son, John, the present generation has descended to carry on the name of Laughton. The son, William, had no issue.

It was to his daughter, Alice, who married David Ward, that Borden gave a large tract of his land along the Newport River in 1798. This became the home site of the Wards. This family was represented by their descendants in that section up until about the time of the Civil War.

Emanuel Jones came into the county about the time of Joshua Nash, 1743. He became quite a large land owner throughout the county. Among his descendants was John Jones who located along the east shore of the Point. Descendants of neither Ward or Jones are property owners to any extent in this area, if any, today.

For nearly a century the name of Laughton has been identified with the ownership and farm operation on Crab Point. George Laughton, the progenitor of all present-day families of this name, came from England shortly before the outbreak of the Civil War. He was married to Mary Anne Roberts in 1859 at Sheffield, which no doubt was his early home. He was born in 1830.

Arriving in the states, he first settled in Beaufort, later moving to Morehead City where he was

tween the Laughton and the Oglesby families. It results from the marriage of Laughton men to Oglesby girls and Oglesby men to Laughton girls, creating a relationship of double cousins among the present generation.

Two stories about changing the name of the creek bordering the south boundary of the Point, from Shepards Creek to Calico Creek have come down through the years. The older story relates that a schooner seeking anchorage in the mouth of Newport River during a severe storm was wrecked.

Among the cargo was a quantity of calico which drifted ashore where the wind draped long yardage of this once popular material on the fences and underbrush along the creek. From this happening is said to have come the name of Calico Creek.

The late Fred Royal would tell the story that the father of a large family of girls living on the Point bought calico by the bolt in which to garb his wife and daughters.

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Known as the old Pigott house, long since torn down, this home is believed to have been built by Joshua Nash, who was the first owner of the land that later became known as the Pigott farm. A family cemetery on the land, mentioned in a deed given by Nash in 1744, would bear out this belief.

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