

Place Of Beauty—

Gause Landing Has History

By EUGENE FALLON

"Why am I sorry, Chloe? Because the moon is far
And, however I scheme and plot,
I cannot find a ferry to the land
where I am not."
—Ernest Christopher Dowson.

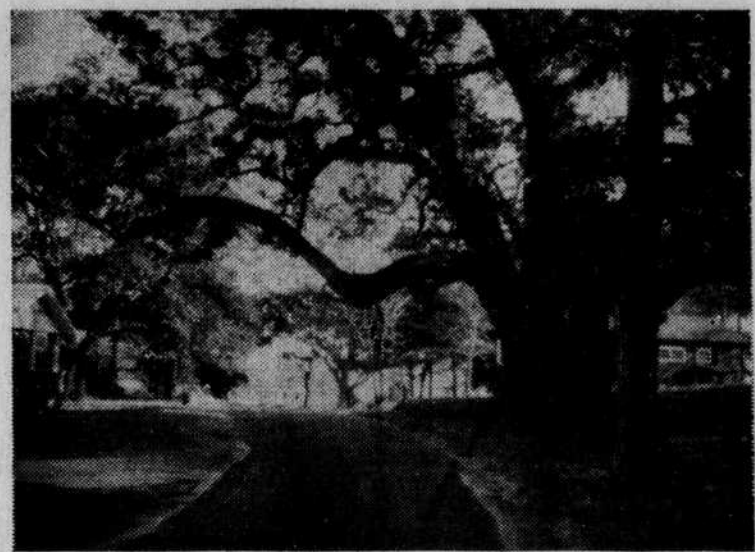
The story of Gause Landing is the story of a family once numerous and rich; a family who came to what is surely one of the most fascinating parcels of real estate anywhere along the South Atlantic coast, to flourish mightily for two-hundred years, only to vanish as mysteriously as they had arrived.

And if the Gauses built a two-story manor house atop a high hill overlooking a channel separated from the Atlantic only by a few hundred feet of marshland, and employed many slaves to cultivate their several thousand acres of land, time laid its inexorable hand upon the clan one-by-one, until today not a single one of the original Gause family walk the earth.

As to the origins of this remarkable family, there is little recorded. One story has it that they migrated northward from the South Carolina Lowcountry; another that they came to Brunswick County from the midlands of Georgia. Exactly when the first Gause arrived is also somewhat dim. A manuscript at hand states:

"Gause Landing was settled by William Gause, Sr., a former innkeeper of Prince George Parish, S. C. He is said to have purchased land in Brunswick County in 1751. There were five sons: William, Junior, John, Needham, Charles and Benjamin Gause. Charles settled in Smithville (now Southport) in the spring of 1790 and was one of the founders of this city. William Gause, Jr., John and Charles Gause all fought in the Revolutionary War in which William lost a leg."

A second manuscript studied by



BEAUTY—One of the most beautiful spots in all of Brunswick County is to be found at Gause Landing, where moss-shrouded live oaks provide a natural canopy for a view overlooking the inland waterway with Ocean Isle Beach and the Atlantic Ocean in the distance.

The writer generally agrees with the above, except that it states:

"The Gause family, fairly well-to-do farmers, departed from Woodbine in Central Georgia rather suddenly in 1749. So hurried was their departure it was said that they left some furniture and household belongings in a barn on the family farm and never reclaimed those possessions. No reason was ever given for the move, although the family who settled along the lower North Carolina Coast, were said to have 'waxed rich in their new surroundings.' So much for the origins. Now as to the disappearance of the fine old family."

The writer spent two days down on the Landing recently, during which he probed, talked and wandered about the old empire of the Gauses. This led eventually to a rather pathetic and tangled wood-

two feet. What purpose are these two holes—one through brick and the other into earth—at this lonely forest vault?

My guide said that the earthen hole had been dug many years before; dug by unknown persons hunting the gold and currency tradition says was buried with the early Gauses.

The hole blasted through the brick itself is even a more sordid story. Twice in fifty years the vault has been violated by men to whom human corpses are as nothing compared to jewelry and other valuables. Again tradition says that the first grave-robbers found and took away a quantity of jewelry and money. These did not, at least, bother the mortal remains.

But the second nocturnal visitors, after blasting through the thick walls of the tomb, entered and tore crumbling skeletons aside, searching perhaps for rings on the finger-bones, and delving like the human vampires they were, beneath the bones for valuables. Enraged, perhaps, with the scarcity of plunder, or maybe frightened of apprehension, the man or men snatched skulls and skeletons along with them on their flight, scattering the remains along the woods path.

Neither party of ghouls was apprehended. Relatives of the Gauses came from a distant point—some say Georgia, others, Alabama—to mend the broken vault following the first outrage. No one has come to patch the last violation. The Gauses, like all things of flesh and blood, approach dissolution swiftly.

Standing there in the soft winter afternoon I was reminded of a couple of lines penned long ago by the incomparable Percy Bysshe Shelley:

"Look on my works ye mighty,
And despair!"

Scattered through the thick woods within a couple-of-hundred-yard radius of the vault are an unnumbered legion of graves. Most of these bear markers, some of marble, some of cypress. The markers sag and some have rotted through at the ground and lie flat. All the marble, too, are flat upon the ground. This, com-

pared with the fallen, rotting branches, moss and earth, make



TOMB—One of the most unusual burial arrangements in the history of Brunswick County is the Gause Tomb, which is located in the woods about a mile from the site of the 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, but extends about that same depth below the ground. It is 15x15-feet, and is well preserved, except for a hole blasted at one corner by vandals.

them very hard to discover. Had it not been for my young guide, I might never have found the first one.

Three families have used the secluded graveyard situated some two miles from Gause Landing proper, and a good one-eighth mile from a dirt road in the woods—to bury their dead. They are the Gauses, the Randalls and the Russ families. The oldest grave uncovered with inscribed date proved to be that of one Samuel Russ, who was born in Charleston, S. C., July 7, 1790, and who died, presumably at Gause Landing, on August 13, 1829.

Other graves discovered were those of Anson Randall, "aged four years." No date was to be found on the cypress marker. The graves of S. B. B. Gause, "born August 1877, died October 1885" and that of "Mon Gause, born 1865, died 1868," were all that were discovered still bearing inscriptions upon the markers.

Presumably the remains of William, Charles, Benjamin, John and Needham Gause were interred in the great bricked vault. So much for the Gauses in death; now to the thin ribbons of information which link them to life on the Landing named for them.

Bishop Francis Asbury, circuit-riding Methodist preacher who wrote his way to fame in the pages of diary kept, wrote that he had "preached at William Gause's manor house in 1801."

The Bishop goes on to say: "at the great house, most pleasantly situated on the Brunswick coast at Gause Town, where I had looked forward to again greeting my once dear friend, William, death had stolen a march on me." Several years later the indefatigable Bishop came back to "Gause Manor" where he writes: "I lodged at John Gause's. Our host is a local minister, and, I trust, a dear child of God."

In yet another reference to the Gause family, the good Bishop wrote: "We came off to Town Creek and housed with Charles Gause."

But even before those visits, another great figure was sleeping at the manor house on the Landing. This time it was George Washington, surely one of the greatest sleepers in early American history. George also kept a diary. In it he records: "Breakfasted at Wm. Gause's, a little out of the direct road 14 miles." This entry was dated "Wednesday, April 27, 1791" and was written on one of Washington's Southern tours via horseback.

Gause Landing is located some six miles east of Shallotte. A paved road runs between some of the largest and most beautiful Moss falls like a benediction from the great branches of these trees and trails almost to the ground.

At the first house one reaches lives the Porter Parkers, Porter, Continued On Page 3



EDITOR'S NOTE: Southport was featured in Jane Hall's "Names In N. C." column in Sunday's News and Observer. Not only is Jane one of the better newspaper reporters, she happens to be fond of our town. We are pleased to reproduce her Sunday article today in Waterfront:

"There's an air of timelessness about Southport, seat of Brunswick County, a feeling that it has always been there and will always be there, no matter what. Location, climate and history combine to produce this pleasant quality."

"Situated at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, almost within earshot of the Atlantic Ocean, Southport has a mild climate tempered by the Gulf Stream. Its people live and work with river and sea, sand and sky. Daily aware they are part of nature's cycle, they move accordingly and are not likely to be hurried when they know hurry is useless."

"History has known Southport at least since August, 1526, when the first Christian service on the Eastern seaboard of the United States was conducted there by three Dominican priests with the Ayllon Expedition. The town really had its beginning around Fort Johnston, which was built on a bluff overlooking the river and was completed in 1764."

"Chartered in 1792, the town originally was named Smithville in honor of Benjamin Smith, Governor of North Carolina in

1810-11. Smith, a wealthy and colorful character, fought two duels and was the first benefactor of the University of North Carolina. He died in debtor's prison."

"In 1889, the name was changed to Southport because the town is the most southerly seaport in North Carolina. Some say the change was suggested by railroad men who wanted a southern terminal with a more sophisticated name, but the railroad never came."

"Southport derives its livelihood from commercial and sport fishing, traffic from the Inland Waterway, tourists and various occupations connected with the sea."

Mrs. Preston Phelps

SHALLOTTE — Mrs. Rebecca Jane Phelps, 69, wife of Preston Phelps of Supply, died early Friday in Raleigh. Final rites were held Sunday at 3 p. m. at Sharon Methodist Church by the Rev. Harold Pickett.

Survivors include her husband; five daughters, Mrs. A. E. Callender of Shallotte, Mrs. Clossie Lee Mooney of the home, Mrs. Newman Caison and Mrs. Larry Robinson, both of Supply and Mrs. Lester Winters, Carolina Beach; two brothers, George C. Lewis and O. B. Lewis, both of Wilmington; and 22 grandchildren.

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