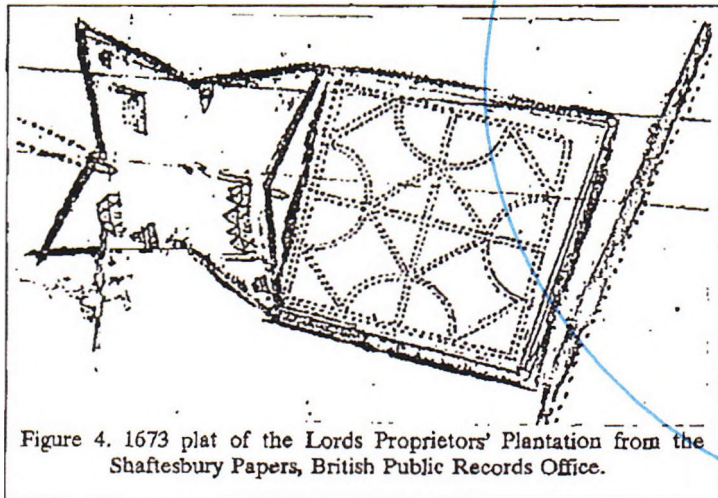


Notes
on

Ghost Island (Burial Ground) Chas. Co.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The Brown Cemetery has not been previously recorded as an archaeological site, nor has it apparently attracted any previous attention outside of the community which has used it at least for the past 100 or so years. Even the Maryville area, in spite of its rich and unique history, is relatively unexplored. Although a portion of the Maryville area associated with the Lords Proprietors Plantation was documented for a National Register of Historic Places nomination in 1974 (form on file, South Carolina Historical Society, 30-15-157), it was apparently never processed and there is no listing on the National Register (Anonymous 1991). Nor is the area mentioned in the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Historic Preservation Plan (Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Regional Planning Council 1972).



Piecing together at least a portion of the area's history, however, is not difficult. The general area is variously referred to in the early records as the "Proprietors' Plantation" or the "Governor's House," with the initial ownership under three of the Lords Proprietors — Ashley, Carteret, and

Colleton. It included a star-shaped palisade, in which Governor West had his "mansion" and around which were a number of additional buildings and gardens (Figure 4). The palisade may have encompassed something around 30 acres, although the total plantation ranged up to about 500 acres. Although no archaeological study has been conducted to identify this plantation, the palisaded fort is thought by some historians to have been situated in the Maryville area near the intersection of Main Street and Fifth Avenue and an abandoned railroad bed (Jaycocks 1973).

In 1675 the Proprietors attempted to divest themselves of the plantation and offered it to West as partial payment for his service as "store-keeper or agent." West declined and in 1696/7 and again in 1699 the plantation was included in grants to John Godfrey (Smith 1915). Although there seems to be little indication of the subsequent use of the tract, it continued to be called either "Governor's Point" or "Governor's Creek." Ownership continued in the Godfrey line, becoming known as Hillsborough Plantation in the eighteenth century. One of its owners, Dr. John Lining, was likely buried on a small island, known locally as "Ghost Island," in the marsh (Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Regional Planning Council 1972: 58). Lining is best known as a leader in colonial science.

About 1834 the property left the Godfrey line and was held by several different owners and this nineteenth century occupation has not been very carefully researched. The 1863 "Map of Charleston and its Defences," however, reveals that the owner at the time of the Civil War was "Brown" (Figure 5). It is likely from this antebellum owner that the cemetery took its name, suggesting that the cemetery was used by African-American slaves at

After the Civil War the property was apparently owned by C.C. Bowen, a sheriff of Charleston County during Reconstruction. In the 1880s the property, still known as "Hillsborough Plantation," was sub-divided and sold to local

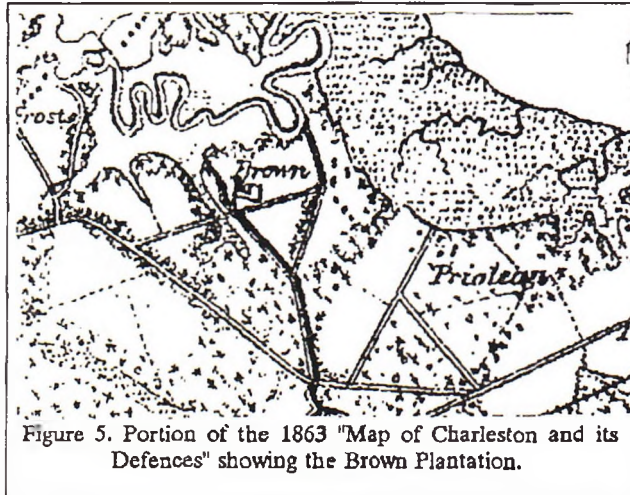


Figure 5. Portion of the 1863 "Map of Charleston and its Defences" showing the Brown Plantation.

blacks by General W.N. Taft and the widow of C.C. Bowen.

Taft is a rather interesting individual in his own right. He was born in Providence, Rhode Island and served as a private in Company B of the Third Rhode Island Heavy Artillery and was stationed in Charleston when released from active duty. He acquired a bar on East Bay and a small dry goods store. He also became active in Charleston politics, holding a variety of local offices ranging from alderman to coroner. Eventually he was elected to the State Senate, serving from 1876 through 1880. In 1881 he married the widow of C.C. Bowen. He served as the Charleston Postmaster, Supervisor for Charleston Schools, and Commissioner of the Charleston Orphan House. As an owner of considerable property in St. Andrew Parish (west of the Ashley River), he is also credited by some with the founding of Hillsboro and Maryville (Bailey et al. 1986:1574-1575).

There is, however, another side to the Maryville story. Mary Mathews Just is credited by many as the more immediate leader and founder of the Maryville community (which was named after her). Manning (1983:14-17) provides a brief

overview of her life, noting that she was an exceptionally strong black woman who went to work in the phosphate fields, unheard of during the period. She invested her substantial savings in real estate, purchasing a substantial holding. She is reported to have persuaded the other residents to "transform the settlement into a town" (Manning 1983:15). Manning notes that Maryville, "was one of the first purely black town governments in the state, a model community for blacks not only in South Carolina but throughout the United States" (Manning 1983:15). Mary went on to organize both religious instruction classes and educational opportunities for the Maryville residents. Little more is currently known about the community.

In 1950 Lawrence M. Pinckney, Estelle McN. Harris, Ferdinanda I. Legare Waring, Hermena B. Legare Kerrison, Julia Gadsden Legare Porcher, and Lila Rhett Birthright signed a quitclaim deed transferring a cemetery lot, known today as the Brown Cemetery, to the St. Paul A.M.E. Church, the Emmanuel A.M.E. Church, the First Baptist Church, and the Jerusalem Church R.M.E. The tract was described as being "a part of Hillsboro, called Maryville" and as containing "2.8 acres of Highland, more or less, and 2.5 acres of Marsh land" (Charleston County RMC, DB B53, p. 453). A plat prepared at that time shows the parcel butting lots 7 and 524 to the south with Simon Street (today Justin Street) dead ending on the property line (Figure 6) (Charleston RMC, PB H, p. 20). This plat, in turn, references a 1947 plat showing portions of Hillsboro, including the cemetery (Charleston RMC, PB G, p. 25A) (Figure 7).

The Charleston County Tax Assessor lists the property as "Hillsboro Cemetery" at the end of Justin Avenue. The owner of record is St. Paul AME Church, et al., in care of Mrs. Victoria Stewart, 930 Main Street, Charleston, SC 29407. The only St. Paul A.M.E. Church listed in the Charleston directory is on Rivers Avenue, although the Emmanuel A.M.E. Church is still listed at 1057 Fifth Avenue in the Maryville community.