

HAPPY 400th BIRTHDAY BLUNT POINT!

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Long ago, before the City of Newport News or old Warwick County existed, “Blunt Poynt” was part of the new English colony in “Ye Kingdome of Virginia.” Located on a high bluff at the confluence of the James and Warwick Rivers, it is opposite and slightly below Mulberry Island.

An early state highway marker (no longer standing) stated “Blunt Point...was named for Humphrey Blount (*pronounced Blunt*) who was killed by the Indians in 1610.” It is one of the earliest English place names in use in America today. By the 1930s “Blount” had become the accepted spelling by all but the older natives who would continue to spell it “the correct way.”

It was on 9 Jul 1610 that Sir Humphrey Blount, while attempting to recover a drifting longboat, was attacked, tortured and killed there by Nansemond braves. Rather than taking revenge on that tribe at Dumpling Island near Chuckatuck, the settlers retaliated by attacking the Kicotans and driving them from their village in present day Hampton.

Needless to say, Native Americans had been at Blunt Point long before the Europeans arrived. On 18 Nov 1928, a *Daily Press* article stated, “Indian relics have been found both on the bank and the beach in the vicinity of the (Roscow) estate and on one occasion human bones were uncovered. Recent finds of pieces of clay pipe, pottery and a tommyhawk (sic) and arrow heads, after a cave in of the river bank led to the conclusion that the spot was an Indian camping ground in the very early days of Virginia history...”

Exactly when the English first inhabited the area is not known although most riverfront property had been “taken up” by 1621. When the colony was divided into four corporations, Blunt Point was in the Borough of Kiccowtan. At the first legislative assembly in 1619, this “savage name” was changed to Elizabeth Cittie.

In 1622, Samuel Each, Captain of the *Abigale*, convinced the Virginia Company that the plantations upriver could be better defended by building a blockhouse on the oyster rocks off Blunt Point. He was hired to do so but died soon after arriving in the Colony.¹ Governor Francis Wyatt felt constructing a fort in the river was impractical; however, a comparable defensive post was erected there on the mainland.² Its location *may* have been on the point just below the mouth of Fishers Creek for that land was long called “Bunker Hill”.³

Virginia Company records state that in 1623 the plantations at “Newport’s News and Blunt Point were very fruitful and pleasant seats, free from salt marshes, very healthful and upon high land.”

“A List of Tithes and Landowners in Virginia” was prepared in 1625 by William Clayborne, the Virginia Company’s official surveyor. It showed 2,200 acres at Blunt Point had been patented or granted by order of the court. Beginning on the north with the lands of William Clayborne and John Baynham at Potash Quarter, it included Edward Waters at Waters Creek on the south.⁴ The tracts ranged in size from 50 to 500 acres.

Clayborne's list named property owners in the following order: William Clayborne, John Baynham, Captain Hamor, Gilbert Peppett, Francis Gifford, Captain Mathews, Thomas Hothersall, Cornelius May, Richard Craven, Richard Tree, Richard Domelow, Percival Ibbison and Edward Waters. While the entire waterfront between Lucas Creek and Lake Maury seems to have been considered Blunt Point, only Hothersall's 200-acre tract was listed *at* Blunt Point.⁵

In 1628, John Laydon (1581-aft.1640) a carpenter who came with the 1607 settlers, patented 100 acres on the east side of Blunt Point (Fishers) Creek.⁶ His wife Anne Burras, who arrived the following year as the 13-year-old maidservant of Mistress Thomas Forrest, was one of the first two women at Jamestown. Theirs was the first Anglican marriage in the colony and their daughter, Virginia Laydon, was the first English child born in the settlement.

Both Laydon and Richard Tree were Virginia Company carpenters who *may* have been sent to Blunt Point to construct the blockhouse. It is possible that Ann was related to the Anthony Burrowes who was two miles below Blunt Point on land adjoining Laydon's 1628 patent,⁷ or to the John Burrowes who was killed near Blunt Point on New Year's Day of that same year.

The incident occurred at the home of Benjamin Jackson during a scuffle between Burrowes and a young laborer named William Reade. John Gay, Jackson's servant, testified that Reade "stabbed Burrowes into the belly below the Navell and about an hower after this Burrowes dyed." Reade insisted he was simply holding the knife when Burrowes came at him and "ran his belly upon the knife." A jury of the General Court convicted Reade of manslaughter but the records fail to state if he was hanged or branded.⁸

Warwick River Shire was created by 1634 when the colony was divided again for governing purposes. At that time Blunt Point, Denby and Mulberry Island were "fully settled" and were Warwick's centers of activity. In 1642, the county's boundaries were set and the name officially changed to Warwick County. Due to the destruction of county records during the War Between the States, little has survived of Blunt Point's early history or of the people who lived there.

FEHAA member, Richard Dunn has published a collection of all colonial Warwick records he was able to locate. Not only those in the archives of the Library of Virginia, the Virginia Historical Society and Swem Library are included but also some found in other repositories including the New York Historical Society. This book is invaluable to anyone interested in early Warwick County.⁹

A 1696 entry mentions "milo ffisher's creek". That year a small patent was issued to John Mallicote (*pronounced Malicut*) on a branch of Fisher's Creek and the following year James Floyd patented land on Merrie Point Creek. Col. Prichard's old field divided the two tracts, both of which bordered William Roscow and John Edwards thus placing them in the vicinity of Blunt Point.¹⁰

Mallicote's name appears several times as a witness on legal documents, a member of a grand jury, a plaintiff in a court case and as an estate appraiser. His will dated 1719, names wife Mary, son Thomas and deceased son William. An undated codicil indicates Mary had died and he had married Joan. He willed his land to grandson, John Mallicote, son of William, deceased. Other grandchildren were Elizabeth, Mary and William Mallicote, children of William; Moore, Francis and John Mallicote, children of Thomas; John and Mary Townsend and Anne Bates, daughter of

Oliver Bates. All were underage. Witnesses to the will were Roscow and Joshua By 1729, Mallicote was dead and one of his granddaughters had married Robert Morgan.

In 1688, James Floyd petitioned the court to relieve him of a debt he had been ordered to pay to John Langhorne (*pronounced Langon*). He apologized “for his abuse” to Mr. Langhorne, stating he “was not himself” at the time and in the future would conduct himself civilly. The decision of the court is not known. A 1690 list of county expenditures stated Floyd was to be paid “for fetching bricks for the courthouse.” Floyd was dead by 1700 and his orphan Richard was bound to Thomas Allardes(?). After marrying Floyd’s widow Rebecca, William Holden petitioned to have the estate appraised in 1714. Nath: Hoggard, Wm Bressie and Tho: Mallicoat were appointed to do so.

Thomas Merry and William Roscow appraised the estate of John Edwards on 21 Mar 1695. Payments were owed to James Floyd “for worke” and to John Mallicote. The settlement was presented on 21 Jan 1696/7 by John Mallicote who had married Mary, Edward’s widow and administratrix.

Lieftenant Colonel Thomas Prichard was security for Edward James in 1663, when he administered the estate of Thomas Stevens, his brother-in-law. Prichard was a Warwick Justice who died by 1690, leaving a will. Richard Floyd and John Townsend, identified only as “two children”, were each willed a cow calf. The remainder of his estate was equally divided between Jeffery Williams, Christopher Chrah(?) and Ann Townsend, a widow. It included furniture, numerous household items, linens, one old back sword, a parcell of old iron and livestock. Love, Kindly, Old Blossom and Young Blossom were among the names of his cows.

The date when William Roscow, Gentleman (1664-1700) of Lancashire, England acquired “Blunt Point Plantacion” has not been determined. It would seem he was there by the Christmas holidays of 1693/4 when Robert Roscow borrowed a dappled gray mare from Ralph Flowers of York County “to goe to his brother’s in Warwick.” Returning a week later without the horse, he said “he rid the mare to Maj. Wilson’s in Kickatan and that there he had lost her.” The court ordered him to pay Flowers 1000 pounds of tobacco.¹¹

A WPA report erroneously states the Roscow property at Blunt Point was formerly called “Derbys” and was purchased from Mr. Langhorne. Derbys, however, was the name of a 700-acre Roscow tract “on the *east side* of Waters Creek.”¹²

In 1694, William Roscow and Thomas Merry purchased the Waters Creek Mill from Maurice (*pronounced Morris*) Langhorne.¹³ Roscow served as Warwick’s High Sheriff, Justice, and Burgess. He was County Commissioner until 1696 when he deliberately failed to carry out an order of the Council concerning the Denbigh Parish and the Governor removed him from office. He was co-owner of the ship *Prize of Harwich* and served on “the committee to try pyrates” in 1700.

Roscow’s wife, Mary Wilson, was the daughter of a wealthy Scottish merchant in Elizabeth City County. Reported to be one of the peninsula’s most beautiful and charming young socialites, she did not live a fairy tale life. Married by age 16, Mary had four little children and was “big with” another when widowed at 25. By 1709, she had four more children and her second husband, Miles Cary, Jr. of “Richneck”, was also dead. Three of her Roscow children died young. After the death

of a third husband, Archibald Blair of Williamsburg, Mary is believed to have returned to Blunt Point and in 1741 was buried beside William Roscow.

Wilson Roscow (1692-1714), the eldest son, inherited "Blunt Point", married Euphan Wallace and died childless at age 22. His father's will had included a reversion clause to insure his fortune would remain in the family. Although Euphan had produced no Roscow heirs, she wanted Blunt Point! She soon married William Dandridge, Martha Washington's uncle, who supported her claim for the estate. After a lengthy legal battle, the property was rightfully returned to the Roscow family and William, Jr. inherited Blunt Point. He and his sister Mary, who married William Cole of "Bolthorpe", were the only Roscow children who left heirs.

William Roscow, Jr. (1698-1752) married Lucy Bassett, a daughter of William Bassett of "Eltham" in New Kent County. He rose to the rank of colonel in the Warwick militia, held the offices of Burgess, Justice and Sheriff and served on various committees including one to inquire into the condition of the battery at Point Comfort. In a 1755 deposition, Lucy stated their minor children were Elizabeth, James, Wilson, Mary, Martha, and Lucy Bassett Roscow. A record of some of the items belonging to William, Jr.'s estate has survived.¹⁴

By 1768, James Roscow was William's and Lucy's only living male heir and he was experiencing financial difficulties. Though he had inherited a great deal of land, it was useless for he had no one to work it. That year he petitioned the House of Burgesses for permission to sell "Derbys" and use the proceeds to purchase slaves. The bill passed and the House named a committee to sell that tract and purchase slaves for his other lands.¹⁵ In 1770, he was still in trouble and wished to sell "Stanley Hundred" and "Blunt Point" for less than their value, enabling him to pay off his debts. In 1774 and 1775 he made two more unsuccessful attempts.

During this period, a "Great Fresh" struck the colony. The loss of human life, livestock and property along the flooding James River was unequaled. Crops in the fields were destroyed as was the tobacco stored in public warehouses. This surely added to James' problems and devastated others living along the creeks in the Blunt Point area.¹⁶

On 1 Jan 1777, the General Assembly passed a resolution that required those with certain connections to Great Britain to leave the Commonwealth and gave them permission to dispose of property.¹⁷ Within days, Roscow advertised several tracts for sale in the *Virginia Gazette* and stated he was leaving for England as soon as he settled his affairs. Blunt Point was described as "containing about 1000 acres, on which is a very good two story brick house with four rooms on a floor, pleasantly situated on the river, a brick kitchen with two rooms above, a large stable, coach house and such."

The home also included a bricked in underground passageway about three feet wide that led from the cellar to a nearby ravine, giving access to the beach. This tunnel was not discovered until around the turn of the twentieth century when a mule, hitched to the plow of Edwin Vantley Wilbern fell in it.¹⁸

Wilbern's son, Wilmer Linwood Wilbern (1920-2008), had no memory of the mansion's brick walls for they had been torn down and used to build chimneys in nearby homes. He recalled that the cellar ruins had contained many eroded and mossy half bricks and smaller pieces. He

believed the house had burned but had no idea when, or if it was occupied at the time. Combining recorded and oral history, the disaster would have occurred between 1777 and 1865.

It has not been determined if James Roscow was successful at selling the property or if the new government confiscated it. After the war, however, the Roscow name did not appear on Warwick's tax books.

Though few court records have survived, much can be gleaned from the land and personal property tax records that began in 1782.¹⁹

That year, John West was charged with the 1000-acre tract and after his death in 1786, it descended to Thomas West. It seems *probable* these Wests were members of the same family as Thomas West (Lord de la Warr) and his brother John. It was Lord de la Warr's party that met the evacuating Jamestown colonists off Mulberry Point in June of 1610 --- one month before Humphrey Blount's death.

Although the Roscows and Wests had listed their property as containing 1000 acres, it proved to be nearly 200 acres short when surveyed and divided in 1798. Perhaps it had never contained 1000 acres *but* perhaps it had....

Pearl Haughton Mason (1900-1995), who worked in the County Clerk's office in the 1940s, recalled the day a gentleman requested her assistance in locating a large number of acres at Blunt Point that had "just vanished" from the tax records. She told him she knew where it was but they could not find it in the books "because it had caved in the river."²⁰ Wilmer Wilbern stated that when he sold his riverfront tract at the end of Blount Point Road in 1992, at least 65 to 70 feet had eroded since he was a boy.

The 1798 records charged the land to five new property owners. West had deeded 350 acres to Richard McIntosh, 236 acres to William Haughton, Jr. and 128 acres to Thomas Patrick (who conveyed it to McIntosh in 1800). William Gray and Behathland Ridley each owned 46 acres.

William Haughton, Jr. (*pronounced Horton*) was the son of Peter Haughton (1724-1798). His grandparents, William Haughton (1691-c.1756) and Ann Manson (1699-aft.1757), of Charles Parish in York County, had moved into Warwick by 1737 when he received a patent for 27 acres. Bordered by Anthony Armistead, William Langley, Thomas Curle and Col. Roscow, it included a marsh and an unidentified dam. It, too, was on the east side of Waters Creek. The name of the Roscow tract there, which by 1768 was called "Derbys", may have been a corruption of Deberry or Dewbre for a 1697 patent mentions a Samuel Deberrie in that vicinity.

No record has been found of William, Jr.'s first wife who appears to have died by 1783, or of his occupation. Evidently he was a man of some means for at the time of his death, he owned nearly 1200 acres and one of the few "chairs" or riding carriages in the county. There are indications he may have been involved in the logging and/or lumber business.

In 1814, when the land books began to include a description and location of each tract, the McIntosh and Haughton lands were listed on the James River, seven miles south of the 1810 courthouse. The Haughton land began at Fisher's Creek and ran along the river to the Merry

Point Creek or marsh where it joined McIntosh. The Gray and Ridley properties were east of Haughton. After this time, only the Haughton tract would be known as Blunt Point.

When William Haughton, Jr. (bef.1761-1801) married Mrs. Aphia Wallace in Norfolk on 8 Aug 1799, John West was his security. Any relation between Euphan Wallace Roscow and Aphia Wallace Haughton is unknown.

William and his bride enjoyed only a brief time at Blunt Point for he died two years later, leaving a will with Peter Haughton, Jr. (1769-1805) as the executor. Aside from the widow's dower, Peter and Robert Haughton inherited his entire taxable estate. The Blunt Point land was willed to Robert. Since slaves, livestock and vehicles were the only personal property listed and since the will no longer exists, there is no record of other relatives who may have been mentioned.

It appears that Robert Haughton (1771-1806) and his wife Ann (believed be a descendant of the aforementioned Anthony Armistead) relocated at Blunt Point. Their family included a daughter, Judith who died by 1818 and another who married George Mallicote and died before 1820. Other children were Armistead (1798-1864) who married Patience Godwin Langhorne (1799-1863) and John (1801-bef.1850) who left a daughter named Virginia Ann who married William C. Presson. Another daughter, Ann "Nancy" (1806-1857), married William Lee (1793-1863) and lived on the old Lee-Haughton tract below the James River Bridge.

Robert seems to have died intestate and his widow was the administratrix. A docket book²¹ covering the years 1813 to 1818 lists several suits brought by and against Haughton administrators, heirs and orphans. With several family members having died in the previous decade and without court records for that period, it has not been determined if the Blunt Point property was involved.

When Robert's estate was settled in 1820, the land was divided among his children and Mallicote grandsons. The young men soon sold their shares to Hinde R. Dunn and William T. Wilbern while Nancy and William Lee retained her share on the riverbank at the end of Blunt Point Road.

To be continued.

1. *Virginia Immigrants and Adventurers 1607-1635: A Biographical Dictionary*, p. 270; Martha W. McCartney; Baltimore, MD; 2007

2. *Newport News, VA 1607-1960*, pp. 35-36; Annie Lash Jester; Newport News; 1961

3. *Warwick Co. Deed Book 1*, p. 215.

4. *Cavaliers and Pioneers, Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants*, Vol. 1, 1623-1666, pp. 4, 48, 149, 326, 374; Nell Marion Nugent; Virginia State Library and Archives; Richmond; 1992. Hereafter referred to as Nugent, Vol. 1.

5. Nugent, Vol.1, p. 2

6. *Ibid.*, p. 11

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 12

8. *The Second Church of Elizabeth City Parish 1623/4-1698*, pp. 18,19; Eleanor Sayer Holt; Hampton; 1985

9. *Warwick County, Virginia Colonial Court Records in Transcription*, pp.1, 2; Richard Dunn, Editor; Revised Edition, Williamsburg, VA; 2002. Hereafter referred to as Dunn.
10. Nugent, Vol. 3, pp. 8, 17
11. *York Orders, 1694-1697, Book 10, Part 1, Abstracted and Compiled*, p. 71; John Frederick Dorman; Washington, DC; 1979
12. Henings Statues At Large, 1764-1773, Vol. 8, p. 301. Hereafter referred to as Henings
13. Dunn, pp. 1,2
14. Dunn, p. 368
15. Henings, 1764-1773, Vol. 8, pp. 301-303
16. Virginia Cavalcade Magazine, Vol. 1, 1951-52; "The Great Fresh of 1771", pp. 20-22.
17. *Journal of the Council of the State of Virginia*, 12 Jul 1776-2 Oct 1777, Vol. 1, p. 303
18. Personal communication with Wilbern's children, Bernice W. Harris (1904-1997) and Wilmer L. Wilbern (1920-2008)
19. Warwick County, VA Land Tax Books 1782-1860; Microfilm Reel 331, Library of Virginia (LVA). Warwick County, VA Personal Property Tax Lists 1782-1861; Microfilm Reel 110, LVA.
20. Personal communication with Pearl Mason (1900-1995)
21. Warwick County Court Docket Book 1813-1818, LVA