

THE ANTEBELLUM POPES

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by Robert E. H. Peeples

Pope Avenue starts at Sea Pines Circle and runs to the beach. Pope Road (also Squire Pope Road) runs across the north end of the Island. Every Islander knows the name but who were the Popes?

When you start researching Hilton Head history, there's a close interweaving of events and families on Hilton Head and nearby Bluffton that doesn't always follow a neat pattern.

On Thursday, 4 June 1863, Union troops from Hilton Head Island invaded and burned the village of Bluffton, including the town houses of five gentlemen-planters of the Pope family. On Saturday following, the *Charleston Mercury*, edited by Robert Barnwell Rhett, a native of Beaufort who was well-acquainted with Bluffton, printed the list of residences burned which included: "W. Pope, Dr. F. P. Pope, R. R. Pope, J. J. Pope and Squire Pope". Also burned were the homes of three Pope ladies: Catherine Pope who had married Gen. Thomas F. Drayton, C.S.A., Martha Pope who had married Dr. Alexander G. Verdier and Sarah Pope who had married Dr. Joseph H. Mellichamp.

The progenitor of the dynastic Pope family of St. Helena's and St. Luke's Parishes was James Pope (c. 1725-1765) who married in 1755 Susannah, widow of Paul Cole and daughter of John and Susannah Wells of John's Island. James Pope was the elder son of George Pope of St. John's Parish, Colleton County, who married in 1723 Sarah, daughter of James Humphreys of St. Andrew's Parish. His younger brother, George Pope (1728-1815) never married.

The owners of the five Bluffton residences which were burned were therefore closely related:

W. Pope was William Pope, born 31 May 1792. His father was James Pope, born 14 Sept 1756 to James and Susannah (Wells) Pope of St. Helena's Island. On 9 Jan 1787 James Pope married Martha Norton, born 20 April 1757, baptized in St. Helena's Church 30 May 1757, daughter of planter Jonathan Norton (1705-1774), Vestryman of St. Helena's, and his wife, Mary Ann Chaplin (1716-1764). Martha was the childless widow Scott and she brought to James Pope a handsome plantation near St. Helena's Chapel-of-Ease with a substantial number of slaves to work it. Their son, William Pope, married Mary Adams and settled in St. Luke's Parish. Since they had no children, William and Mary adopted Sarah Pope, daughter of his brother James, and her sister Eleanor. Sarah would grow up to marry Dr. Joseph Hinson Mellichamp (1829-1903) who had graduated from the Medical College in Charleston in 1852, after which he studied in Dublin and Paris. He

became a much-beloved local physician and a world-renowned botanist. After the burning of his Bluffton home, William Pope died at Bull Hill Plantation, St. Luke's Parish, in 1864.

Dr. F. P. Pope was Franklin Perry Pope, born at Fish Hall Plantation, Hilton Head Island, in 1814, son of Capt. William Pope (ca 1760-1823) and his second wife, Sarah Scott, born at Grasslawn Plantation, Hilton Head Island 4 April 1779, daughter of Joseph James Scott (1754-1804) and his wife, Catherine Adams. Dr. Pope was the principal heir of his brother, Joseph Adams Pope (1819-1846) who died unmarried, leaving him the handsome Jenkins Island Plantation with its complement of slaves. Dr. Pope studied medicine in both Charleston and Paris but preferred the life of a planter to that of a practicing physician. In 1848 he married Mary Elizabeth Pope, daughter of Joseph James Pope (1792-1864) whose story is told below. They were parents of five sons and three daughters, apparently all born in the Bluffton house he built in 1848.

R. R. Pope was Richard Richardson Pope, born at Fish Hall Plantation, Hilton Head Island, in 1817, a brother of Dr. Franklin Perry Pope. In 1849 he was married by Rev. David McElhuan in St. Helena's Chapel of Ease to Martha Julia Scott, second daughter of Dr. John A. F. Scott of St. Helena's. Their two sons and five daughters were apparently born in the Bluffton house he built in 1849. He died in Charleston in 1873.

J. J. Pope was Joseph James Pope, born on Edisto Island 18 April 1792, son of Joseph Pope (1764-1818), planter of St. Helena's Island, and his wife, Theodora Theus, a granddaughter of the distinguished colonial artist, Jeremiah Theus. Her mother was Theodora Ash, a granddaughter of the noted South Carolina Agent, John Ash, who died in London in 1704 while presenting a petition on behalf of the colony. Joseph James Pope was baptized in St. Helena's Church 17 Sept 1794 by the Rev. Mr. Tate and was thereafter a staunch Episcopalian. He was married in Zion Chapel-of-Ease, Hilton Head Island, by Rev. Philip Mathews in September 1818 to Sarah Jenkins, younger daughter of Isaac Ripon Jenkins of Jenkins Island Plantation who had died accidentally falling down the stairs of his plantation home in 1802 just shortly after the birth of Sarah. Her elder sister, Catherine Adams Jenkins, married in 1815 Dr. George Mosse Stoney (1795-1854) and was the mother of Col. John Joseph Stoney (1817-1899) whose waterfront Bluffton home was also burned by Union troops on 4 June 1863. Joseph James Pope subscribed a substantial amount for building the Episcopal Church of the Cross in 1854. His Leamington Plantation on Hilton Head Island, now known as Palmetto Dunes, boasted a substantial 1-1/2 story "sand hill" type cottage. The Cemetery for the people of Leamington is still known as "Joe Pope Cemetery". Following the November 1861 invasion of Hilton Head Island and the confiscation of his Leamington Plantation, Joseph Pope refugeed in the vicinity of present Allendale. He was buried in St. Luke's Churchyard where his wife had been interred in 1857 following her death in Bluffton. His chief plantation seat was Mullein Hill on St. Helena's Island. Six of his children grew to maturity, two sons and four daughters. His distinguished son, Col. Joseph Daniel Pope (1820-1908) was the first Dean of the School of Law of the University of South Carolina in Columbia.

Squire Pope was William Pope (1788-1862), son of Revolutionary War Captain William Pope (1760-1823) of Fish Hall Plantation, Hilton Head Island, and his first wife, Sarah Green, widow of Thomas Tucker and daughter of planter Samuel Green and Sarah Norton. Sarah Green was a wealthy heiress, owning Fish Hall, Springfield, Pineland, and Coggins Point Plantations. Squire Pope built the handsome Coggins Point House in 1806 when he married Ann Scott of Grasslawn Plantation, younger sister of his father's second wife. Two of their children grew to maturity. Following Ann Scott Pope's 1815 death, Squire Pope married in 1816 his cousin, Sarah Lavinia, daughter of his uncle John Pope and Elizabeth Theus. In 1832 he purchased one thousand acres of Skull Creek Plantation and its House at the estate sale of Thomas Henry Barksdale (1795-1832), renaming it Cotton Hope Plantation. There Squire Pope seated himself, giving Coggins Point Plantation to his son William John Pope who married in 1847. It was there on 7 November 1861 that Fort Walker in its front yard bore the brunt of the Union attack as 13,000 Yankees stormed ashore. Coggins Point House was confiscated to become the Headquarters of the Department of the South of the U.S. Army. To this day the Pope family has not been reimbursed for this seizure of their property. Meanwhile, Squire Pope, having served honorably as S.C. State Representative and Senator from St. Luke's Parish, having founded May River Academy for the education of the youth, and having given in 1842 the property for the Episcopal Church of the Cross in Bluffton, was forced to flee from his Bluffton home which stood on May River directly in front of the Church of the Cross and refugee in Georgia at the home of his cotton factor in Sandersville. There he died on 10 May 1862. Thus, his Bluffton home was actually part of his estate when it was burned on 4 June 1863. Its carriage house survived the holocaust and has since served as a residence for several of his heirs. It is ironic that Squire Pope, with all his fine houses and possessions, should die a refugee in Washington County, Georgia, in a borrowed house and be buried in an unmarked and now lost grave.

On Monday, 8 June 1863, the *Charleston Mercury* published the list of the "lucky thirteen" Bluffton residences which survived the Union arsonists. Three of these had intimate Pope connections: the mistress of the J. J. Cole home was the former Eliza Pope, while the mistress of the Ephraim H. Baynard home, now called the "Card House", was the former Lizzie Van Pelt, daughter of the Rev. Peter Van Pelt, former Rector of St. Luke's Parish, and Catherine, daughter of Captain William Pope (1760-1823) of Fish Hall Plantation and his second wife, Sarah Scott of Grasslawn Plantation, Hilton Head Island.

Beside the Ephraim H. Baynard House stands the home of James Pope, born 13 September 1788 on St. Helena's Island and baptized in St. Helena's Episcopal Church by the Rev. Mr. Tate. He was the eldest child of James and Martha (Norton) Pope. James Pope and his younger brother William, as noted earlier, married Adams sisters, James' wife being Eleanor. James and Eleanor (Adams) Pope removed to St. Luke's Parish where they raised three children: Catherine who later died unmarried and Sarah, the daughter adopted by her uncle and aunt, later married to Dr. Joseph Hinton Mellichamp (1829-1903) as noted above. The third child was Dr. James L. Pope, a practicing

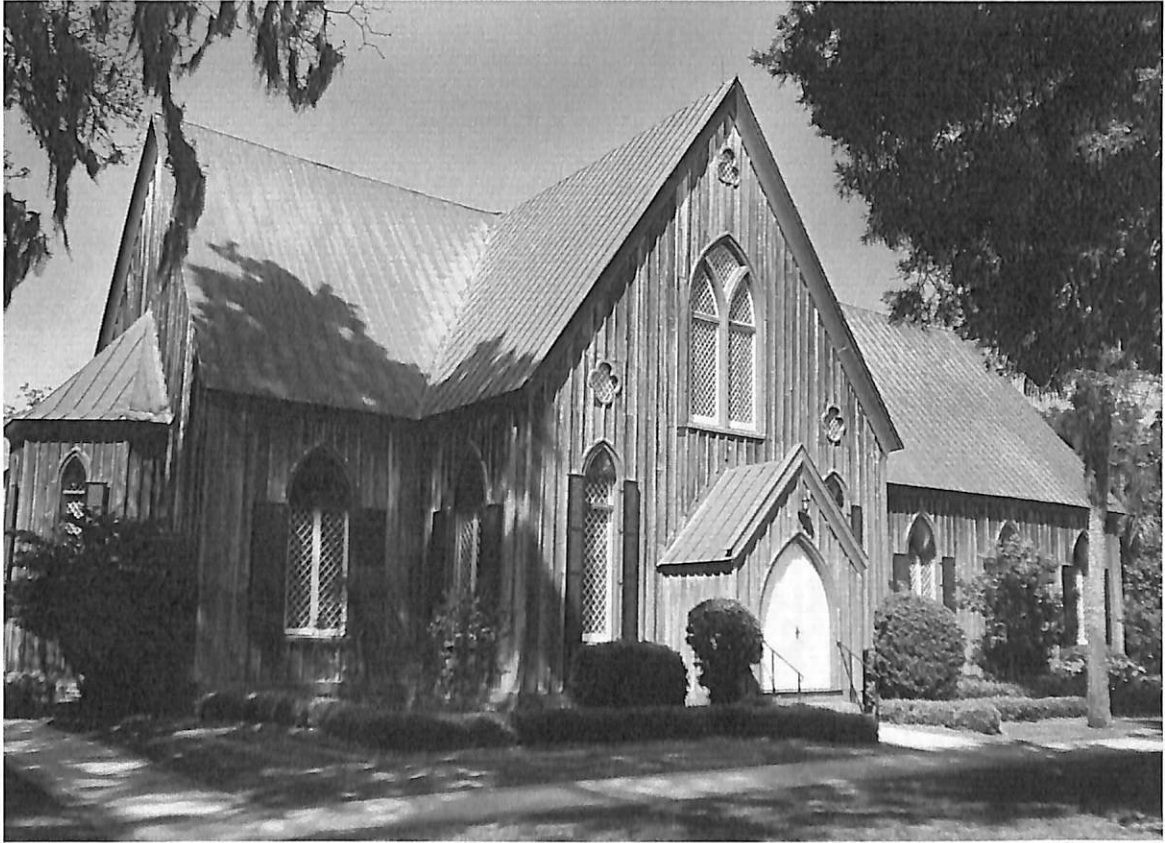
physician. He was twice married: first, to Miss Caroline Crowell of Savannah by whom he had a daughter, Caroline Pope, and secondly to Miss Eliza Bruin, also of Savannah, by whom he had a daughter, Elizabeth. His second wife and both daughters survived him, his daughter Caroline marrying George Graaham in 1873.

James Pope died in 1863 in his 75th year, survived by his wife Eleanor, their three children, and his Bluffton town house. This Bluffton residence of James and Eleanor (Adams) Pope was inherited by their son, Dr. James L. Pope, who later sold it.

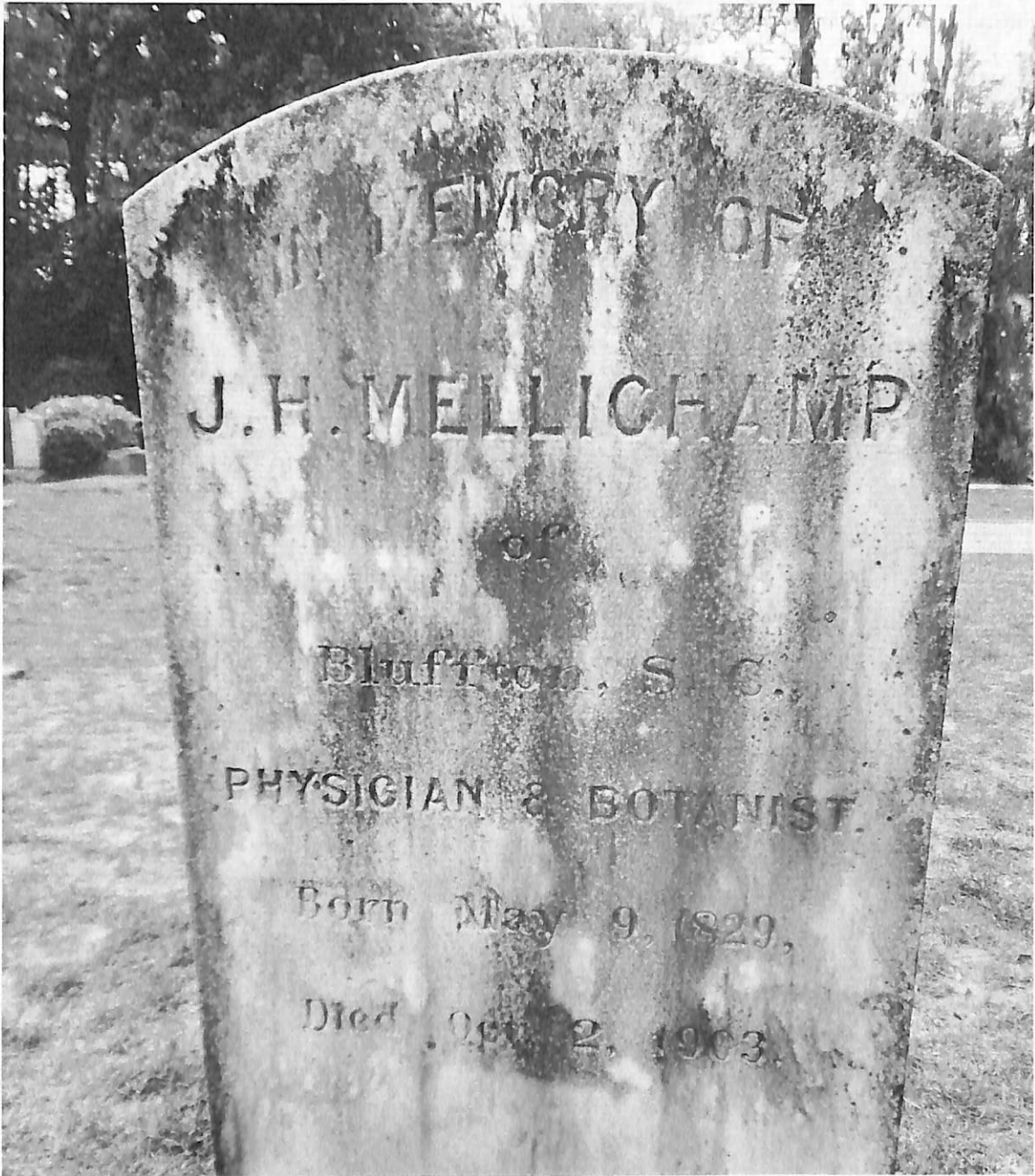


Card House, Bluffton, SC

Church of the Cross in Bluffton was built on land donated by Squire Pope in 1842.



Squire Pope's carriage house which now sits at 111 Calhoun Street, Bluffton, SC



Headstone of Dr. J. H. Mellichamp, world-renowned botanist. His wife, Sarah Elizabeth Pope, was the daughter of James Pope. Dr. Mellichamp is buried at old St. Luke's Church on current-day Rt. 170.

IN MEMORY OF

SARAH ELIZABETH,

Daughter of James Pope

and beloved wife of

DR. J. H. MELLICHAMP,

Born Feb. 22, 1826,

Died Dec. 3, 1895.

devoted wife and mother.