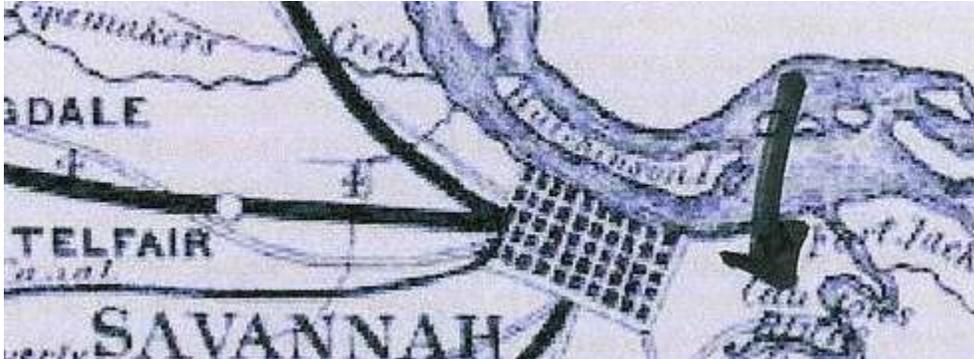


The Ockstead and Bathurst Plantations

By Jeannette Holland Austin



Causton's Bluff

Thomas Causton, a calico printer and his wife came over with Oglethorpe on one of his first voyages from London. Beforehand, he was appointed the Magistrate of Savannah and the Storekeeper. Both offices involved official duties, nonetheless, the inexperienced Causton was appointed, and from the beginning, there were multiple complaints concerning his dealings in both occupations. Causton was simply not a trustworthy fellow. As was the tradition of the trustees, he was granted 500 acres of land on a bluff overlooking Augustine Creek west of town, named Causton's Bluff. The intent of the trustees (entrepreneurs) was that the settlers plant Mulberry trees for the purpose of helping the gardeners cultivate the silk work industry in the colony. Although some passengers paid their own passage, the Trustees advanced monies to those who would indenture themselves as servants. The trustees intended to make their profits from the production of silk. Oglethorpe sent several samplers to London, and the silk is said to have been as fine as any produced in China. Thomas Causton called his plantation "Ockstead" and in 1737 built a house which was described in the Journal of William Stephens "handsome, fit for any gentleman!" The 500 seedlings were provided from the filature, and after several years Causton and his wife harvested the first leaves.

His nearest neighbor was Lord Bathurst, an Englishman of the peerage whose family fortunes came to a close when he assumed the title of baron. His lordship brought his family and servants to Georgia where they'd hoped for a new opportunity. The Bathurst servants did not fare well in the hot climate and were soon overtaken with fevers.

They got sick and ran away. More bad luck overtook the family with the death of his wife, and drowning of a daughter in Augustine Creek. The other daughter who might have married well and helped the family, instead ran away and married a sailor. Thomas Causton helped Bathurst several times in his garden, but also gave up on the cause. Bathurst decided to relieve the situation by marrying a wealthy widow in Savannah, but after marrying her, discovered that she had even more debt!

A draught followed by a wet season wiped out crops and the settlers were in distressed situations. By 1740, most of the indentured servants sent by the trustees to Savannah ran away to Charleston.

Meanwhile, the Ockstead plantation did not fair well under the management of Thomas Causton. Had he added cattle, as others did, perhaps he would have had more success. Instead, he had his hands in lots of different pies. For one, he was charged with not properly dispersing the estates of his neighbors.

And then there was the matter of bringing ridiculous charges against the minister, John Wesley. Ultimately, all of his cheating and swindling was caught up with and he determined to make voyage to London and explain the circumstances to the trustees, who would clear his good name. Once in London, Causton waited and waited for his case to be heard by the trustees. Finally, having no good luck with the trustees, he decided to return to Savannah.

On the return voyage, however, the ship struck a sand dune within site of Savannah and sank. Although the captain was able to save some of his

cargo, the forty-two year old Thomas Causton drowned. After the funeral, Mr. Williamson, the lazy husband of Causton's only heir, assumed control of the plantation and allowed it to go to ruin, eventually abandoning it.