

## Kelvin Grove Plantation

Situated on St. Simons Island, site of the Battle of Bloody Marsh, Kelvin Grove was one of the more prolific plantations, long after the Civil War. Unlike many plantation lands, Kelvin Grove continued to produce money for it's owners, when others were failing miserably due to the lack of "employees."

Upon the arrival of **General James Edward Oglethorpe**, a road was put in from the town and fort at Frederica on the northwest part of the island, and traveled in a southeasterly direction, along the marsh, crossing Frederica Road [as it is today], to Harrington, and followed the edge of the marsh that was host to the Battle of Bloody Marsh, where it finally ended at Fort St. Simons, where the lighthouse stands today. The road was 6 miles long and cut out in three days, but very little of it remains today.

The path of military road led to key points on the island, and the fatal marsh, where numerous men lost their lives, tinting the water red, thus christening the Battle of Bloody Marsh. This land was later granted to **Col. William McIntosh**, then later to **Thomas Cater** and **William Page** [Retreat Plantation]. **Thomas Cater** was the one to settle this land, his home rumored to be standing within a hundred yards of the "Bloody Bend" as it was named.

Kelvin Grove may have been named by **William McIntosh** after an old family home in Scotland with a similar name, but no one knows for sure if that is the case. It is also unknown if **William Page** owned any of this property, or if he was just mentioned as part owner, since his lands of Retreat Plantation abutted that of Kelvin Grove. No matter what happened, the land was settled by **Thomas Cater** and family.

Around 1798, **Thomas Cater**, his wife, and small child moved from Liberty County, Georgia to their new home on St. Simons Island. Their house, a large brick and tabby structure stood for many years, later being torn down and rebuilt. His wife **Elizabeth Franklin**, was soon engulfed in the passions of the ante-bellum south, just as if it were a novel, she fell in love with the overseer. A dreadful happening to say the least, but she dealt with it in the only way she knew how, she and the overseer killed her husband, **Thomas Cater**.

**Denbow** [or **Dembo**], a slave, and under the occupation of a "driver" [one who had charge of slaves under a white overseer], saw the turmoil about to erupt, thinking only of the life and safety of the young son, **Benjamin Franklin Cater**, rushed in and scooped the boy up, then ran to the neighboring plantation of **Mr. William Page**. **Elizabeth** and her new beau, fled the island, never to be heard from again.

**Thomas Cater** is purported to be buried on the Kelvin Grove land, just south of the slave graveyard close to a magnolia tree at the edge of the marsh. Neither of these "cemeteries" have markers noting their presence, but the neighborhood that is now standing there, have taken measures to protect this tract of land from any desecration. Rumors abound that **Thomas Cater** was buried standing up so that he would be ready, if ever his murderers came back to the scene of the crime. On quite nights, a century after his death, many of the local African-Americans reported seeing old **Mr. Cater's** ghost walking the grounds near Bloody Marsh. This story of **Thomas Cater** being buried standing up is unfounded though.

After the death of his father, **Benjamin Franklin Cater** was raised on Retreat Plantation by **William Page** and family. **Mr. Page** was constantly helping children in need, giving them a home, education, etc. **Benjamin** later attended Yale, with the help of **William Page**, and when he was of age, assumed the role of plantation master at Kelvin Grove, with his new bride, **Anne Armstrong**.

**Anne** was the niece of **Margaret Armstrong** and **Alexander Campbell Wyllly**, her husband.

Her grandmother, and **Margaret's** mother, was credited with bringing the sago palm to this area. **Ann Armstrong** was the recent widow of **William Armstrong**, of the Bahamas. She, with her children came to Georgia after the death of **William**. Young **Anne** and her grandmother, might be credited with the long drive of sago palms that line the avenue leading up to Kelvin Grove.

The marriage of **Benjamin** and **Anne** did not last, at the young age of 33 years in 1835, **Anne** died giving birth to twin daughters, only one of which lived. **Anne** and her baby are buried at Christ Church Frederica. Her sister **Margaret**, named after their aunt, was recently widowed as well, she decided that someone had to care for this young babe of **Benjamin Cater's**.

Maybe to avoid scandal, or maybe due to some sort of kinship, the bereaved couple later married. This marriage, too, was short lived, as **Benjamin** died just a few years later in 1839 at the age of 43 years. His daughter, named **Anne Armstrong Cater**, known as **Annie**, became the heir of Kelvin Grove. **Margaret** remained to raise **Annie**, she lived nearly 40 years longer, after her husband's death. She died in 1876 and she too is buried in Christ Churchyard, yet not next to her husband and sister.

Young **Annie** had married long before her stepmother/aunt's death, on 23 February 1853, to **James P. Postell** of Savannah. They, along with **Margaret**, lived in the old home at Kelvin Grove, and unlike the previous owners, they filled the home with children, ten children, only five of which had families of their own.

Unlike most plantations, Kelvin Grove was the only one to have an ocean view, with a widow's walk that overlooked the Atlantic. **There were 1600 acres which today are the Bloody Marsh, Kelvin Grove residential neighborhood, East Beach, Massengale Park, the King & Prince Hotel, the Meadows, Oglethorpe Park, Postell Street, Broadway Street, Peachtree Street, Wesley Oaks, Highland Acres, and the McKinnon Airport.**

**James Postell** planted the lands with sea island cotton, and he was very successful in his ventures. He was a well read man, and he began collection shells long before the War Between the States. This collection was eventually purchased by the Roanoke College in Virginia in 1876. Not only was he an avid collector of shells, but of books too. His was boasted the best library in the area, brining many notable literary men and scientists to Kelvin Grove for study and reading. He never stopped collecting, he started a new species collection that was later donated to the Young Men's Library Association in Atlanta, Fulton Co., Georgia.

When war struck, the **Postells** evacuated with most of the St. Simons Island families. **James** found a home for his family in Mt. Pleasant, Wayne County, Georgia, then went off to serve the C.S.A.

War brought ruin to most plantation owners, their homes burned, livestock stolen, the bonds people, many of which who stayed, were no longer bound to their white owners. The **Postell** slaves were found living in the grand home, in horrible conditions, not knowing where to go or what to do now. New homes were found for them, and the **Postells** tore down the house, as it was beyond repairs, and built a new home on the same site.

Kelvin Grove had a rocky start, losing both male ownerships early in its growth, the lands were not as productive or as noticeable as many of the other island plantations. With the coming of **James Postell**, things started to look better, then war hit. But, unlike many of the other lands after the war, Kelvin Grove began to thrive, and unlike many owners, **James Postell** saw to the future. He knew, as a scientist, that you couldn't rely on things to stay sound forever, and that you had to be willing to make changes and adapt to your surroundings.

**Captain Jim** endeavored to start a new means of survival, that of the lumber mill. Long gone were the days of cotton fields, with slaves to do all of the back breaking work, no more would there be indentured servants of any kind. It was a new world, and lumber was going to build it piece by piece.

**James Postell** became involved in everything about the county. During the years of 1880 to 1885, he was featured in many articles in the local newspapers, holding socials, boosting the economy, and being a general man about town. He gave lands to the building of the St. Simons Hotel, modeled after the Oglethorpe Hotel that stood at Brunswick's waterfront. However, this hotel never really got off the ground, as it burned down, and was rebuilt a couple of times. Today this land is dedicated as a park, Massengale Park.

At the age of 65 years in 1898, **James Postell** died, his wife survived him by 13 years, both are interred at Christ Church Frederica. The lands were thusly divided amongst the surviving children and local land developers. Kelvin Grove was no more.

## Bibliography

**Huie, Mildred Nix; Murphy, Mary Dean; Wilcox, Mildred Huie** Kelvin Grove Plantation 1736-1986, Hallowed Ground of The Military Road, The Battle of Bloody Marsh, The Cater-Armstrong-Postell Plantation, and St. Simons Beaches; Glover Printing Company 1986; 32 pages, history of the family and lands of Kelvin Grove Plantation, written by Mary Dean Murphy with the aide of Mildred Nix Huie and Mildred Huie Wilcox.

## KELVIN GROVE PLANTATION

### Land of the Golden Isles

KELVIN GROVE PLANTATION (sometimes spelled Kelvyn Grove), which included the site of the Battle of Bloody Marsh, belonged to the Caters and to the Postells of the well known Huguenot family of South Carolina. The big house burned in the early twentieth century, and the property was owned for years by Mrs. Maxfield Parrish, who spent more than a score of winters in a cottage on the plantation. Intensely interested in the history and earl customs of the coast, Lydia Parrish worked indefatigably to revive the old shouts and chanteys described in her *Slave Songs of the Georgia Coast*. She organized a group of singers among descendants of the slaves, and visitors to the island looked forward each winter to the weekly sings" in an old cabin on the plantation grounds. After Lydia Parrish's death the site of the Bloody Marsh Battlefield was bought by the Fort Frederica Association to be added to the .National Parks system.

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**Golden Isles Book**

The last place on the island was Kelvyn Grove, which bordered the old battlefield of Bloody Marsh. The land was originally granted to William McIntosh, and had been bought by Thomas Cater. The house was a large and substantial one, built of brick and tabby, and stood in its dark setting of trees until recent times, when it was destroyed by fire. Here Thomas Cater lived with his young and attractive wife, who had been Elizabeth Franklin, and here an awful tragedy took place.

A handsome overseer won the heart of Elizabeth Cater, and plotted to murder her husband. On the night of the dreadful deed old Benbow, Thomas Cater's "man," saw his mistress and the murderer consorting, and feeling that little Benjamin, the only child, was in danger of his life, he took the boy on his back and made his way through the woods to Major Page at Retreat.

The guilty pair fled from the island and were heard of no more, and the courts made Major Page the guardian of Benjamin Franklin Cater. He had the boy well educated, sending him finally to Yale, and managed his property so well that when he became a man he was able to take his proper place on St. Simon's as the master of Kelvyn Grove.

These men now established on St. Simon's belonged to a distinctive class. They were men of education, often of travel and wide experience. To a certain extent they were overbearing in opinion, for the habit of command necessitated by their position brought with it a dogmatism not open to argument. In speech and manner, however, they exhibited a constant courtesy to equal and inferior, and were distinguished by a universal desire for the upbuilding of their country and a love of the Union.

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## **OUR TODAYS AND YESTERDAYS**

### **KELVIN GROVE**

Kelvin Grove was originally the home of Thomas Cater, whose only son, Benjamin, married Ann Armstrong. An only daughter of this marriage, Ann Cater, married James P. Postell of South Carolina and in this way the plantation came into the Postell family.

The old Cater home was built of tabby, being one of the few homes on St. Simons built of that enduring material.

James P. Postell possessed a splendid library of valuable books on many subjects, including the best literature of that day, as well as scientific works. He was a conchologist of note, classifying and labeling a valuable collection of shells, which was sold to Roanoke College.

A notice in *The Brunswick Advertiser* of August 9, 1876 says:

"Roanoke College of Virginia has purchased that superb collection of shells owned by Mr. James Postell of St. Simons. It consists of 6,000 varieties of the rarest kinds and quite a number of each variety. This collection, the labor of years of Mr. Postell's life, is probably one of the finest on the continent and well worth triple the amount paid for it. Roanoke College might well be proud of such a collection."

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Kelvin Grove, the site of the Battle of Bloody Marsh that decided the destiny of this section, is now the property of Mrs. Maxfield Parrish, the wife of the artist.

From Family Tree on our web [www.oatland.org](http://www.oatland.org)

**Descendants of Capt. Charles George Stevens  
[CC – location at Christ Church Cemetery]**

3 Maude Estelle Taylor [CC B2-E] b. 1888 d. 1968      Brother was Herman Douglas Taylor

m. James Postell Shadman [CCB2-G] b. 3 Jan 1886 d. 3 Feb 1933

4 James Postell Shadman ,Jr. [CC 82-F] b. 18 Sep 1921 d. 12 Sep 1944