

## **The Name**

The source of the name "Goose Creek" has been lost to history. Some have theorized that the area was named after the gooseneck turns in the creek that extended off the Cooper River. Others say the name came from the prominence of geese in the waterway. It is possible that the name has Native American origins. No matter the source, since the late 1600s this area of the low country has been known as Goose Creek.

## **Native Americans**

It is unknown exactly how many Native American tribes were present in the low country before the arrival of the British settlers, but early accounts record the presence of Etiwan and Sewee tribes. These semi-nomads were an invaluable help to early settlers, teaching the English how to modify their food, housing and methods of travel in order to survive the harsh conditions in the frontier. Like most native populations, however, the Etiwan and Sewee tribes gradually disappeared as the new settlers became the dominant population.

## **Early Settlers & the Frontier**

Most early Goose Creek settlers were from Barbados. As early as 1672-1673 these white Europeans were settling the land along Goose Creek, defying the wishes of the Lord Proprietors who planned to develop the land into an orderly settlement. These early pioneers faced hunger and disease as they struggled to build new lives in the frontier.

In 1715, the Goose Creek community was in danger of annihilation at the hands of the Yemassee Indians. Angry at the increasingly abusive treatment the Native Americans suffered at the hands of traders and settlers, the Yemassee Indians began an advance through the low country. Over 400 people were killed during the short war, and the Goose Creek people became angry about the lack of support from the Lord Proprietors during the conflict. This was one of the major factors that promoted the Goose Creek people to protest against the Lord Proprietors and appeal to the British government to be made a Royal Colony. South Carolina was soon under the protection of England, and the frontier period in Goose Creek's history was coming to an end.

## **Early Plantations**

The planters from Barbados brought with them a social order based on slave labor and landed gentry. This early group of settlers guided the development of the Goose Creek area for nearly 150 years.

With the hardships of the pioneer days behind them, Goose Creek residents began to enjoy the business as well as social opportunities available on the numerous area plantations. Some notable Goose Creek Plantations included Medway, Yeamans Hall, Windsor Hill, The Elms, Otranto, Martindales, The Oaks, Crowfield, Liberty Hall, Howe Hall and Brick Hope.

The success of the area relied on the rice, indigo and other crops grown on the large

plantations, which in turn relied on slavery.

Blacks quickly outnumbered whites in Goose Creek and in South Carolina. In 1709, 80 families owned 450 slaves. In 1720, there were approximately 1500 slaves in Goose Creek with approximately 80 white families. By 1790, there were more than five slaves for every white inhabitant in the parish. Despite the constant fear of rebellion, the planters in Goose Creek became economically dependent on large amounts of slave labor.

### **American Revolution**

As experienced planters and frontiersmen, the Goose Creek people became a leading influence in the political development of South Carolina during the Colonial Period. Frustrated over the issues of currency, political representation and taxation, these colonists revolted against British rule.

While the Revolutionary War gave America its independence, it altered the economy of the area. Many Goose Creek inhabitants began to move out of the area, and planters began to spend summers in Charleston to avoid the bad health associated with life in the swamplands.

### **Civil War**

While no Civil War battles were fought in Goose Creek, residents felt the impact of the war. The end of slavery meant the end of the plantation system, shattering the Goose Creek economy.

A writer during the last decades of the 19th century gives a good account of Goose Creek during the prosperous days compared to its desolation of the latter years.

'The Parish so stripped, so denuded of inhabitants, once swarmed with a thickly settled and increasing population. Here at this chancel once knelt more communicants than could be found at Old St. Philip's on Easter Day. These fields and swamps, which nature has long since reclaimed and where solitude now reigns, save where broken by the shriek of the water fowl, or the hunter's horn, once resounded with the hum of busy industry and bear upon their faces even now, the mark of old time enterprise, energy and skill. Those lawns and pleasure grounds; those elaborate terraces and artificial lakelets; those walks once beautiful with imported gravel from Holland but now tickly matted with the pine and the oak and the myrtle; were once the resorts of refinement and elegance and beauty.'

### **After the War**

By the late 1800s, most plantations were abandoned. An 1875 State Census revealed a black to white ratio of nearly four-to-one. During this period, Goose Creek became a collection of settlements. Black communities of small farms were formed around country churches. The area became most known for the rail stop at Mt. Holly. During the decades following the war, Goose Creek lost much of its identity.

## **A New Century**

From 1900 to 1950 Goose Creek became a collection of settlements of small farms clustered near country churches. The small black settlements had community names such as Grove Hall, Casey, Bowens Corner, Mount Holly, Back River, Howe Hall and Liberty Hall. Beside the 10 to 20 acre farms, there was an occasional lumber or gristmill, a few general stores and a number of small white-washed churches.

The city stayed undeveloped until after World War II, when the military began to occupy and invest in the area. Secondary commercial interests and the subsequent flow of investment capital followed. The influx of new military and civilian personnel led to a re-birth of the area, and was the beginning of a new Goose Creek.

## **Building a City**

In the early 1960s the farmlands began to be subdivided to provide housing for the booming population. A 1969 survey rated Goose Creek the fastest-growing area in the United States.

The area was unprepared for such radical growth, resulting in problems with water, wastewater and sanitation systems. Roads were overcrowded and fire and police service were inadequate. In order to address these problems, community leaders incorporated a section of the greater Goose Creek area as the City of Goose Creek on March 22, 1961. The first mayor of the City was Hilton W. Bunch. From a modest beginning evolved a city that was to become the population center of Berkeley County. Within ten years after the incorporation, the population numbered more than 6,000. From 1958 to 1968, an average of ten families a week moved into Goose Creek.

The lack of public services and a shortage of operating revenue were formidable obstacles to the young city. Melvin Mann emerged as a community leader during those early years, and went on to serve as mayor for four terms.

In 1978 the City of Goose Creek began a process of reorganization with the election of Mayor Michael J. Heitzler and his six city council running mates. The council set forth on a mission to provide efficient municipal service in a most cost effective manner.

## **Goose Creek Today**

Today over 30,000 people proudly call Goose Creek home. Residents enjoy the sense of community that has emerged over the area's long history, and appreciate the natural beauty that drew early settlers to Goose Creek. A new Municipal Complex built in 1999 is home to City Hall, the Police Department and the Municipal Court. The Department of Public Works continues to provide superior water, sanitation and maintenance service. The Fire Department has grown to staff two stations. Over two hundred years after it was first settled, Goose Creek is just beginning to realize its potential.

***Taken from Historic Goose Creek, South Carolina, 1670-1980 by Michael J. Heitzler***