

## MANSION

## AN IDYLIC ISLAND'S STORMY HISTORY



**SPARSELY POPULATED** A house for rent, above, at the Bloody Point Golf Club and Beach Resort, located on the southern tip of the island. Of the 112 buildable lots in Bloody Point, 21 homes have been constructed to date, only five of which are occupied by full-time residents. Although the resort is currently for sale, the golf course, pool, tennis courts, clubhouse and a bed-and-breakfast are still in use.



**SOUTHERN HISTORY** Chase Allen, above left, is a metal artist who owns a workshop called the Iron Fish Gallery. Above right, the porch of Mr. Allen's home, one of the few remaining Gullah homes built by African-American descendants of former slaves. Mr. Allen also offers tours of the island's ecology and Gullah history.

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area to area is like entering different planets, populated by home-owners like musician John Mellencamp and former NFL star Mark Messier. The divergent fates of these communities reflect the ups and downs of the market for high-end golf communities in the South.

At one end of the spectrum is a gated, member-owned community called Haig Point, home to wealthy retired business executives and professionals. Its meticulously manicured grounds set it apart from other developments and neighborhoods on the island.

"When you go out our back gate, you enter a different world," says John Tietjen, a 75-year-old former executive at Colgate-Palmolive who lives in a 3,600-square-foot Haig Point home there that he has filled with ancient American Indian artifacts and fossils he has found on the shores.

Within the gates, there's a rare combination of warm camaraderie and privacy, says Rick Wagoner, former chairman and CEO of General Motors, who has a second home there.

Haig Point residents, about half of whom live there full time, pay a \$20,000 initiation fee and an annual fee of \$23,000 for golf and

tennis, a stately clubhouse with a wood-paneled bar and formal dining area, a beach club with a heated pool and a restaurant, a fitness center with a lap pool and a sprawling equestrian center with more than a dozen horses.

A fleet of six private boats ferries residents every hour to an embarkation center on the mainland, where they keep their cars. A water taxi can be reserved at any time to go to nearby Hilton Head.

When the real-estate bubble burst in 2008, growth within Haig Point essentially came to a standstill. Since then, management decisions, investments in infrastructure and the steep initiation fees have helped it rebound.

About two years ago, Haig Point hired a chief executive, Doug Egly, whose mission is to expand the current 360-member roster to 500 and add about 35 homes by 2020. (Currently there are 265 houses.) To that end, Mr. Egly brought in more builders, including Osprey Construction, a local company that has built three spec houses that start at about \$600,000 each.

The average home listing price in Haig Point is now \$763,000, nearly double what it was in 2015, according to Haig Point's marketing director Adam Martin. Lots

start at around \$50,000 and homes on the market range from a quaint, three-bedroom cottage listed for \$297,500 to a commanding 5,842-square-foot waterfront mansion listed for \$2.85 million.

Next door to Haig Point is a decaying former luxury resort called

"I've never seen it this bad," says Elizabeth Noonan, 47, a consultant from Lexington, Ky. She and her family spend a week at a time vacationing at a home that her husband and his brothers built on the beach in 2006. Despite the dismal surroundings, the beach remains stunning, and about 17 families live in Melrose full time. Homes can still be pricey, like the 1,500-square-foot beach cottage that is listed for \$925,000 and described in the real-estate agent's ad as offering "lots of privacy."

Also facing an uncertain fate is the Bloody Point Golf Club and Beach Resort, located on the southern tip of the island that includes a golf course, swimming pool, tennis courts, clubhouse and a bed-and-breakfast. After going bankrupt in 2008, the resort was won in an auction in 2011 by floral-business magnate Brian McCarthy, who restored the golf course and put in a dock and a boat service with six round-trips to Savannah, Ga., a day. Since then Mr. McCarthy has been trying to sell the resort because it is losing money. A group of investors expressed interest, which had islanders hopeful, but the deal fell through in June.

Despite its financial woes,

Bloody Point Club and its facilities are still up and running. Day trippers from Savannah pay to play golf, have lunch and use the swimming pool. Of the 112 buildable lots in Bloody Point, 21 homes have been constructed to date, only five of which are occupied by full-time residents, including a 7,700-square-foot white mansion owned by John Mellencamp, who uses it as a retreat. A five-bedroom house just a couple doors down from Mr. Mellencamp's home is on the market for \$1.75 million.

Rich and Gayle Silver built a \$3.4 million, 5,500-square-foot single-style home on the ocean in Bloody Point in 2005, attracted to the area's white-sandy beach and tranquility. Mr. Silver, a 70-year-old retired mutual-fund executive, and Mrs. Silver, an interior designer, moved to Daufuskie from Boston and now live there full time.

The Silvers own two other lots in Bloody Point and want to build a smaller house. But when they put their current home—fully furnished—on the market for \$3.99 million last year, it didn't sell. Mr. Silver says prices in the area have remained stagnant. Recently, they took it off the market and will wait awhile before relisting.

Melrose, with abandoned beach cottages, a shuttered inn and a Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course covered in weeds. Its owner, Utah-based developer Pelorus Group, filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in March, saying it owed creditors about \$35 million. It is currently seeking an investor willing to put up at least \$19 million in cash.

Daufuskie Island map showing the location of Haig Point, Melrose, Bloody Point, and the historic district.

## For Sale on Daufuskie Island



**\$529,900**

**Haig Point**

Three bedrooms, three bathrooms

This one-story home measures 2,691 square feet. Interiors have hardwood floors and high ceilings. A flex room could be used as an office, craft room or media room. The home has expansive porches and golf-course views.

Agent: Charl Cilliers, Exit Hilton Head Realty



**\$795,000**

**Haig Point**

Four bedrooms, four bathrooms, one half-bath

An open floorplan in this 3,250-square-foot home features a custom staircase. A second-floor gallery bridges the main living area with guest quarters. Outside there's a courtyard, with mature trees and water views.

Agent: Andre Cilliers, Exit Hilton Head Realty