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By N.L. Willet

## RESTORATION AND OLD DATHAW ISLAND

"Restoration work appeals to my soul and in the doing of it, I am having the time of my life." So said Miss Kate Gleason of Rochester, New York (and of Beaufort) to Miss Elizabeth Sanders of Montclair, N. J., and myself, who were her guests for the day, as we were all sitting on the top of the cabin of the "Blanche." We were plowing our way, leaving a white line of foam behind us, through deep and wide green waters, as we were passing island after island that with their still brown marshes and green forests seemed asleep as they floated upon the bosom of the seas about them. On these islands stood outlined against lie blue sky, and as if it were all a picture, hosts of palmetto tree palms with never a limb or branch but bearing at their top a wide wealth of feathery fronds.

### **Our Way.**

We sailed up Beaufort River and then into the big Coosaw River. At Sam's Point we looked out ahead into big St. Helena Sound, and we saw in the distance as emptying into the sound the mouths along with their island systems, of Bull and Combahee Rivers. We turned to the right and went up Dale Creek and then turning to the left we turned and went several miles up great Morgan River that is a sound in itself. We landed at last, a two and one-half hour journey as against the tide, on a wide shell beach on Dathaw Island, while not far away from us were Coosaw, Our Lady's, Wassa, Palomana (sic) and Morgan Islands.

### **Dathaw.**

Dathaw's tradition takes us back two hundred and twenty-five years ago but the spirit of the island is the impress left upon it by the two wealthy Sams brothers who once owned all of it. It was a half and half ownership and a mound or ridge and there today divided the one from the other. On the shell beach on Morgan River side lived Lewis Reeves Sams and on the Mink side lived Ernest (sic—Berners?) Barnwell Sams.

### **The Island.**

We ate our lunch on a tall bluff that gave us a wondrous view and no wonder that Lewis Reeves Sams wanted to live here. Nearby us were the ruins of his home with its big tabby foundations and chimneys which had been sadly knocked about by the '93 storm. Over there had been an orange grove. We then trailed along the old way that led from farm to farm across the island which with its twelve hundred acres which is today inhabited by only two Negro families. We went through old-time rice fields and through darkened forests treading here to a soft deep carpet of leaves. Everywhere was profound silence. And at last near Mink's Point we came to the old home as burnt some fifty years ago, of Ernest Barnwell Sams. These ruins gave us a finer picture of an old-time exceedingly rich Sea Island planter's home than we can see anywhere else on the South Carolina Coast. The walls are here. It was all English style. It is all in tabby. Here is the old meat house, the barns, servants' houses, kitchen with an eight-foot fire place and a grinding house—the old stones that ground the corn are still there. The home itself is in somewhat the

shape of a cross. It covers as much space as an old English manor house—its proportions indeed are immense and it held many a hall and a room. Nearby and surrounded by high tabby walls is the plantation's Episcopal chapel that held perhaps two hundred and fifty in which the master and owner read the services. Outside and perhaps an acre in size was the Sams family burying ground—in which too are Fripps. One monument there takes us back to pre-Revolutionary War days. Nearby was the wild duck pond and the estuary where this wealthy man fished—the predatory sharks and porpoises were barred out by a netting.

### **Complete.**

The picture here of an old-time wealthy planter's seaside home was complete. It lacked nothing. You could scarcely think that it was now dead. The walls still seemed to be full of spirits that wanted to talk to you. It was fascinating. It held you. Your imagination fairly went wild. One who is fortunate enough to visit these remote and rather inaccessible but really magnificent ruins can never forget the scene. And what a genius was Ernest Barnwell Sams.

### **The Other Side**

The Lewis Reeves Sams side of Dathaw Island is quite accessible by boat from Beaufort or Sam's Point—at Sam's Point there is a big store and a post office and it is only some four miles away and in which trip we halfway circumnavigate Coosaw Island—a little black republic of some three hundred souls. Nearby the Lewis Reeves Sams ruins we located the place where an artesian well will now be driven for the use of some new comers from across the Atlantic who speak the French language.

### **A Restoration.**

The hope is that these two French families who will soon have homes on the island, raising turkeys, hens, sheep, kine (sic) and hogs, will be the nucleus of a small French colony. And may they be happy and prosperous and may at least the wonderful spirit of the Sams abide ever over them.

And this is the kind of restoration work, this restoration of rich but almost deserted old Dathaw that Miss Kate Gleason is doing and in which work she said she was having the time of her life. A part of her work over in France is in giving bells to poor old war-worn churches, turning wine rooms on the war front into libraries and into movies and making over again old-time deserted fortifications that once held kings and popes, it is well in life to follow your soul! In restoration work are we not bringing the dead back to life.