

Tabby Tattler

Dataw Historic Foundation Newsletter

Volume II, Fall 2004

Mark Your Calendars!

Annual Oyster Roast

Monday, March 14, 2005

From the President. . .

As you will see in this newsletter, DHF is involved in many activities. In an effort not to be redundant, I will just mention a couple of things that don't appear elsewhere.

This year I was invited to participate as a baker in the Cake Auction, whose proceeds went to the American Cancer Society. Not being a baker, I had to enlist the help of my friends. Thanks to Mariann Golobic I was able to present a delicious pecan cake, which sold for \$950. If you haven't been to this auction, I urge you to attend next year--it's great fun and benefits a vital cause.

Last year at the suggestion of one of our members, we began recording a history of Dataw following its purchase by Alcoa. We interviewed some of the first Alcoa employees and some of the early settlers. During the course of this work, we came across several people who had lived on Dataw before and during Kate Gleason's ownership, so we interviewed them as well. We created a notebook containing transcripts of the interviews. It makes for interesting and sometimes amusing reading. We have four copies. If you are interested in reading one of them, give me a call (0897)

As always, I have to give a hearty thank you to those who work to make the DHF a viable organization and also to those of you who support us through your membership dues.

Cathy Crocker



President Cathy Crocker with Jeanne (Sams) and Charles Aimar and T. Reeve and Betty Sams at the October 18 Fish Fry. The feature article in this issue is about the Sams family of South Carolina. It was compiled by Jack Brown after extensive interviews with both families.

DHF Sets Membership Record in 2004

Traditionally, this biannual newsletter is distributed only to our members because thanks to them we are able to maintain the rich sea island heritage that all Dataw residents enjoy. This time we are giving every home a copy with the hope that non-members will consider joining in 2005. The goal of the DHF is that every resident of the island will become involved and support the on-going efforts to maintain the ruins and artifacts, to continue exploration of historical sites, to compile historical data, to educate residents and guests, and to assure that the archives are in order.

DHF set a record of 307 members in 2004, which is 42% of our home owners. Your support is important. **In January look for our 2005 membership drive materials** asking you to renew or join. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this issue of the "Tabby Tattler."



Photos thanks to Bob Anderson

Trip to Drayton Hall Enjoyed by Members and Guests

DHF's first all-inclusive, educational trip to Drayton Hall on June 7 proved to be an informative and enjoyable day.

Thirty-two members and guests accompanied tour guides on a special two-hour "behind the scenes" look at this unique 1738 plantation house, which is one of America's great landmarks.

Fortunately, the hot, muggy days of summer had yet to arrive, so all were able to enjoy lunch on the grounds followed by a leisurely stroll along the banks of the Ashley River.

As a follow up on the successful feedback from the day, DHF hopes to arrange more trips and tours.

Mariann Golobic



Ten New Signs Highlight Ruins' History

Dedication of the new signs was celebrated with flute music, special introductions, formal thank yous, docent comments and plenty of wine and cheese. The rains held off until the conclusion of the event. Approximately 100 persons were on hand to enjoy the sound of the flute (Sarah Wagner) resonating throughout the tabby structures and to acknowledge the work of Jack Brown and Warren Dickson, who as co chairs coordinated all phases of the project.

Special thanks were given to all those who spent considerable time and effort to research, design, construct and place the signs. They were Skip Adams, Larry Rowland, Colin Brooker, Brenda Norris, Nan Bopp, Dick Golobic, Cynthia Lanphear, Peter Pearks, Terry Lurtz, John Colgan and Spectrum Signs.

Four more signs are now being designed and should be ready by the beginning of the new year.



Herb Arnold,
*originator of signs
in the ruins, along
with his wife Beryl
were special guests
at the ceremony.*

*Warren Dickson
presented him with
one of the replaced
original signs.*



Second Annual October Fish Fry a Success



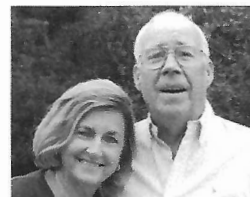
This popular event held on October 18 at the Gazebo was the best yet! One hundred twenty-six members dined on great flounder prepared by caterer Steve Brown. The meal also featured hush puppies, cole slaw, potato salad and cake along with beer and wine.

Guests welcomed the opportunity to visit with friends, many of whom had just returned from their summer travels. It was a great welcome to the fall season at Dataw.

A big thank you to our many volunteers: Herman Schmit, Dick Golobic, Dave and Ann Craigmile, Tom and Cathy Crocker, Larry and Pam Crosby, Allan and Marj Dehls, Judy Adams, John Colgan, Jane Covault, Warren Dickson, Jim Hawkins, Carol Looney, Chris Ruotolo and Barbara Titus. We couldn't have done it without you.

Our next social event will be the Oyster Roast on March 14, 2005. Hope we see you there.

Kathee Schmit and Mariann Golobic, Co chairs



The Sams Family of South Carolina

Ever since I became involved with the Dataw Historic Foundation more than five years ago, I have been fascinated with the history of the Sams family. Considered to be one of the most important and influential families in South Carolina history, the Sams family owned Dataw Island for close to 80 years from 1783 until 1861 and played a major role in the development of Beaufort, South Carolina. Some of the family's history can be found in the DHF files and the Beaufort library; yet, I wanted to learn more about this remarkable family and hoped to add important new information to the DHF files. So, this past spring, I spent some time with two members of the Sams family, T. Reeve Sams and Jeanne Sams Aimar. I had a delightful time with Reeve and his sister Jeanne at Reeve's historic home in Beaufort, and they provided me with a wealth of knowledge on their Sams family ancestors. This will let DHF members know many of the things I learned.

Jack Brown

Sorting Out and Making Sense of 300-Plus Years of the Sams Family History

Both Reeve and Jeanne have a very good sense of the Sams family history and have traced their family tree from the first Sams settler in South Carolina in 1681, through eight to nine generations, to their current families.

They have several files on the subject, and Reeve pointed out that most of what his family has been able to determine about the Sams family came from issues of the South Carolina Historical Magazine (1963, Vol. 64, No. 1-4) and a document published by a Sams family member on the memories of a daughter of B. B. Sams, Elizabeth Exima Sams ("Aunt Bet"). Other than these published pieces, plus the famous James Julius Sams diary on his life on Dataw, very few records exist on Reeve's and Jeanne's side of the Sams family because of the destruction during the War Between the States.

Reeve and Jeanne own many valuable items related to the Sams family on Dataw, including what appears to be an original sketch of the Sams family chapel, pictures of various family members and a photo of the old Dataw Island bridge.

Separately, there is a bronze plaque of what is believed to be the original Sams family coat-of-arms; it currently is part of the Sams family archives at the Dataw Clubhouse.

The Early Sams Ancestors--Establishing Roots in South Carolina, 1681 - late 1700s

According to historic records, the progenitor of the Sams Family of South Carolina was Bonum (Bonham) Sams, II, and he arrived in America with his wife, Enstis, from England in 1681. They established a homestead on Wadmalaw Island near Seabrook and John's Islands.

In the mid 1730s, one of Bonum's five children, Robert Sams, Sr., married Bridget Barnwell, a daughter of Colonel John "Tuscarora Jack" Barnwell, the famous Indian fighter who is buried in the cemetery at St. Helena Church in Beaufort. Robert has been mentioned in several history books as one of the better indigo planters in South Carolina during the 1700s. He and his wife Bridget had four children.

The third generation of the Sams family included William Sams, Sr., the third son of Robert Sams. He married Elizabeth Hext in 1761. During their life span the American Revolution freed the colonies from British rule and gave birth to the United States of America.

It was William who bought Datha (the original spelling of Dataw) in 1783. Like his father, William was a successful planter and one of the first to grow the famous Sea Island Cotton. In the first census of the U. S. in 1790, William was listed as "Head of Family and owning 84 slaves." William and his wife Elizabeth Hext had seven children--two of whom were Berners Barnwell (B. B.) Sams and Lewis Reeve Sams.

William built many of the structures on Datha, including the original "old" plantation house plus a few outbuildings and the chapel. His wife Elizabeth was a very strong woman and was responsible for much of the supervision and religious training of the Datha slaves. After William's death in 1798, Elizabeth moved to Beaufort and lived in what was called the "Riverview" house on Hancock. Today, it is called the "Hext House," and it's the second oldest house in Beaufort.

Both William and Elizabeth are buried in the "old Sams cemetery" on Datha.

B. B. Sams and Lewis Reeve Sams--Successful Planters and Much More

The fourth generation of the Sams family included the brothers Berners Barnwell Sams and Lewis Reeve Sams,

two of the seven children of William and Elizabeth Sams.

The brothers were born on Datha in the mid 1780s. Both graduated from college; Lewis became a businessman and B. B. a medical doctor; and both became very wealthy planters, large landowners and leaders in the Beaufort community.

Upon their fathers' death, B. B. Sams and Lewis Reeve Sams inherited Datha. B. B. Sams took over the southern half of the island, lived in the "old" plantation house, made additions to the house and built several outbuildings. Lewis Reeve took over the north half and built a plantation on the Morgan River (close to what is now the 14th fairway of the Morgan River Golf Course). Today, one can still see the ruins of both plantations, although the only visible part of Lewis Reeve's plantation is a chimney partially submerged in the water along the shores of the Morgan River.



The Sams brothers had a lot in common. Both of their first marriages were to Fripp sisters; their wives died at a young age and within a few years of each other. They married again and were the fathers of very large families--Lewis Reeve had 12 children by two wives, and B. B. fathered 15 children by two wives. All grew up on Datha. Yet, the brothers were different when it came to religion: While both were religious, B. B.'s side of the family was Episcopalian and Lewis Reeve's was Baptist.

In the late 1840s and early 1850s, Lewis Reeve Sams and B. B. Sams were at the height of their prosperity. Lewis Reeve owned 4,000 acres of land and over 150 slaves, and B. B. had more than 5,000 acres and over 150 slaves. Both cultivated cotton and other crops on Datha, as well as on other pieces of land, and were considered to be two of the most successful planters in the South. They also owned a number of other plantations as well as summer homes in Beaufort. Today, several of these homes are still standing and part of the famous "Point" area.

Both brothers lived into their late 60s/early 70s and died within a year of each other, with B. B. passing away in 1855 and Lewis Reeve in 1856. B. B. is buried in the "old Sams cemetery" on Datha. Lewis Reeve is buried in the churchyard of the Beaufort Baptist Church.

The Sams Family and the Orange Industry

In the mid 1800s, oranges were commercially grown on Datha Island by the Sams family and transported north. According to an old newspaper article, the stock of Datha orange trees were the first to be grown in the U. S. for commercial purposes; the trees preceded the Florida industry; and the first Florida orange trees came from Datha. Jeanne has a copy of a 1/27/27 Beaufort Gazette that had an extensive story on the subject.

The Next Few Generations--Interesting Marriages and "Alliances" Along the Way

Reeve and Jeanne are descendants of Robert Randolph Sams, one of B. B. Sams' 15 children. Robert was their great grandfather and B. B. Sams was their great-great grandfather.

And, it was during Robert's generation, the fifth generation, when in Reeve's words, "things got sort of complicated."

- In 1853, Robert "crossed over" the family line by marrying his uncle Lewis Reeve's granddaughter, Sarah Jane Graham Sams. Five children came from this marriage including Sarah Phoebe Sams.
- In 1885, the second "cross over" occurred in the sixth generation, when Robert's and Sarah's daughter, Sarah Phoebe Sams, married Dr. Milledge Bonum Sams, her uncle Melvin Melius' son. Their only child was Melvin Toland Sams, the father of Reeve and Jeanne

After Jeanne described this interesting part of the Sams family's history, she remarked: "It is mindboggling at times to try to figure out the family tree; my son-in-law is still working on my records." Reeve had a choice comment: "Because our family comes from the B. B. Sams line (two sons--Robert Randolph and Melvin Melius), plus the Lewis Reeve Sams line, I think I have figured out that

(1) B. B. Sams was my great-great grandfather, but (2) Lewis Reeve Sams was both my great-great-great grandfather as well as my great-great uncle."

Sams Ownership of Datha and the War Between the States

Following the deaths of B. B. Sams and Lewis Reeve Sams, Datha Island was split up among their sons and continued as very successful plantations. Two of B. B. Sams' sons, Horace and James Julius, took over the southern part of the island; Lewis Reeve's two sons by his second marriage, Richard and Thomas, inherited the northern section of the island.

This continued until November 7, 1861, when the Union troops took over the Beaufort area, and all of the plantation owners fled. Very few ever returned.

The Sams family connection with Datha ended on this date in 1861, and ownership of the island into the early 1900s remains somewhat of a mystery. Reeve believes the history probably includes at least the following: In 1861, the property was confiscated by the Federal Government and sold for delinquent taxes; for many years, it was owned by several people including freed slaves; at a later tax sale, a large portion of the island was sold to one Beaufort investor; and ownership of parts of the island changed hands many times until the Rowlands sold the entire island to Alcoa in 1983.

Of interest, the name/spelling of the island changed several times over the years, and it was only after Alcoa purchased the island that it became officially known as "Dataw Island."

Also, there is some mystery about the Sams family during and after the War Between the States because many of the records of this period were lost or destroyed. Reeve and Jeanne know from their family's records that several of their ancestors were in the War; they also know that Lewis Reeve's family fled to Texas and that several of the B. B. Sams family went to other parts of the South and to the Baltimore area. They know that a few family members returned to Beaufort following the War including their great grandfather, Robert Randolph Sams. Robert, who had served valiantly in the War, returned to Beaufort to put in a claim for the Datha slaves lost during the occupation. Other than these few stories, the mystery continues regarding the Sams' presence in Beaufort from the early 1860s to the 1870s - 1890s.

The "Old Sams Chapel and Cemetery" at Datha-- A History Lesson on the Early Days in the South

The chapel was probably built in the late 1700s by William Sams and was used daily by the Sams family for religious training and services. Often, Episcopal missionaries would conduct services in the chapel for the large congregation of Sams as well as for the religious training of the many slaves on the island.

Around the time of William's death in 1798, it is believed that his sons built the cemetery next to the chapel. The tabby ruins of both remain today.

The graves of 16 people are within the walls of the cemetery. The oldest gravestone is for William Sams who died in 1798; and the last person to be buried in the cemetery was Martha Fripp Sams, the second wife of B. B. Sams, who died in 1857. Of the 16 graves, 12 are of the Sams family and 4 are Fripps. And, as some indication of the harsh times back in the 1800s, nine of the 16 graves are of children.

There seems to be at least one mystery regarding the cemetery and gravesites. An issue of the [South Carolina Historical Magazine](#) claims that William Sams, Jr., a son of Williams Sams, Sr., died in 1817 and is buried in the cemetery. Yet there is no William Sams, Jr., tombstone.

Another of the cemetery's mysteries was cleared up a few years ago when the missing 1855 footstone from B. B. Sams' gravesite was uncovered in Beaufort. According to Jeanne, a small article in the [Beaufort Gazette](#) mentioned that the footstone had been found in a local park. She pressed the point with the local authorities that the footstone belonged to her family. Jeanne prevailed; it was given to her, and she stored the footstone in her house for several years. Two years ago, she returned it to the cemetery at a special ceremony during the 2003 Oyster Roast.

Reeve told an interesting story about the old drawing of the inside of the chapel. He believes the person who drew the sketch of the interior was a member of the Union Occupation Troops--an engineer named Paul Brody. The signature on the drawing matches a signature on several sketches found on the upper walls of the Elliott house in downtown Beaufort.

Although Sams family ownership of Datha Island officially ended over 140 years ago, Reeve and Jeanne and many of their relatives feel that the "old Sams cemetery" remains sacred Sams property. They have a

great respect and love for the resting place of their ancestors and visit the area several times a year.

The Early Sams Family-- Many Well-Educated Professionals

According to Jeanne, the early Sams family members "weren't big on socializing and were firm believers in education." As a result, the Sams line includes an impressive list of college-educated people--including at least 10 doctors, several ministers and a number of judges and lawyers.

Today's Sams Family of South Carolina-- Still Beaufort Based but Spread Across the Country

Reeve, Jeanne and their sister Therese continue to live in Beaufort, South Carolina; they were born there and have spent their entire lives in the area except for a brief time during and following the Second World War. All were born in the same house, Reeve's current house on Hancock Street. The house was built between 1780-1785 and was at one time owned by one of B. B. Sams' daughters, the famous "Aunt Bet." B. B. Sams lived in the house while his new brick house on the "green" was being built; while there he contacted pneumonia and died in the upstairs room where Reeve, Jeanne and Therese were born (the upstairs east bedroom). Reeve and his wife Betty have lived in the house for 42 years. Jeanne and her husband, Dr. Charles Aimar, live close by as does sister Therese.

Reeve and his sisters were born in the 1920s and never knew their Sams grandparents (Milledge Bonum Sams, MD, and Sarah Phoebe Sams) because the grandparents died before they were born. But their parents (Toland Sams and Therese Anna Talbird) were a very important part of their lives for over 45 years. Another important person in their lives was their great uncle, Horace ("Uncle Reeve") Sams. "Uncle Reeve" was a son of their great grandfather, Robert Randolph, and a brother of their grandmother, Sarah Phoebe. He was a close relative of Reeve's and Jeanne's until he passed away at 90 years old in 1949.

Reeve and Jeanne stay in close touch with a few Sams relatives and they are aware of several more who live in Charlotte, Baltimore, parts of Texas, Georgia, Florida, etc. They have wonderful stories of a few Sams reunions and of finding long-lost relatives in various parts of the United States. One of Reeve's favorite stories is about the Baltimore side of the Sams family: "When Alcoa opened up, a bunch of James Julius' family came to visit Dataw and brought with them Julius' Bible" (the Bible is now part of the Sams family archives at the Dataw Clubhouse).

Today, Reeve continues to practice law in Beaufort, and on occasion Jeanne helps out as his secretary. They remain very active in the Beaufort community, attend most of the events related to Beaufort and Dataw history and cherish many wonderful times with several of their children and grandchildren who live in the area. In their spare time, they continue their lifelong passion of compiling the history of the Sams Family of South Carolina and passing along this legacy to their families and future generations.



T. Reeve and Betty Sams



Dr. Charles and Jeanne (Sams) Aimar

The DHF is indebted to Reeve Sams and Jeanne Aimar for giving so much of their time in helping make this article possible. We are proud to call them friends and special honorary members of the Dataw Historic Foundation.

Project Updates



Cemetery Wall

Progress is being made in getting the three cracks repaired and the lean in the wall stabilized. An acceptable repair method has been determined which will provide the necessary support, be the least intrusive and align with desired archeological aesthetics.

Approvals will be obtained from the DIOA, the ARB, the Greens Committee and the Greens Superintendent. Bids are being received, and it is hoped that work will begin soon.



Well Dig

This earlier picture taken behind the plantation house shows the well that existed at one time on the property. It was filled in by 1987 without any archeological study.

The DHF plans to seek approval from the DIOA to locate the exact well site and to proceed with a formal "dig" supervised by an archeologist. When a date has been set, volunteers will be needed to assist with the process.

Restoration of the wall surrounding the well is being considered.

Question: Now that the tabby remains off of the Cotton Dike #9 green are more visible, what was that building?

Answer: To the best of DHF's knowledge, it was the house of a slave overseer for the plantation landing that was located close to the #9 men's tee.

