

Tabby Tattler

Dataw Historic Foundation Newsletter

Volume III, Spring 2005

Featuring "A New Chapter in Dataw's History" Discovering More, Preserving More and Recording More

From the President. . .

Cathy Crocker

The Dataw Historic Foundation continues to be a very vibrant organization with a number of exciting activities having taken place in the past few months.

Our Annual Oyster Roast, which is our major fund raiser outside of membership, took place in March; and, as usual, it was a sell out with many exclaiming "it's the best oyster roast in town." Even those who don't eat many oysters had a good time. Thanks to Kathee Schmit, Mariann Golobic and all those who helped make this event so successful.

Sonny Bishop spoke in the Carolina Room in April to a crowd of over a hundred people. Sonny's family leased land on Dataw in the 40s and 50s for the purpose of farming. With his laptop in hand, he showed us slides of Dataw during those days and told us wonderful stories. It's the fourth time he has done this, but each time with so many new residents, there is always an audience. There were several people who came to hear him again. Thanks to Marilyn Peck for organizing this activity.

Perhaps the most exciting work is that which has begun with Brockington Associates, an archaeological firm located in Charleston. As many of you know, we had relied on Colin Brooker for this area of expertise, but because he is so busy he recommended that we call Eric Poplin of Brockington so that we could get moving on some projects. First on the list was to determine the best approach for stabilizing the cemetery wall and implementing that approach. Second was to locate the former well by doing an archaeological investigation and then develop a strategy for its restoration. The interesting process for doing this work will be featured in an article by Jack Brown later in the newsletter.

It is a privilege to be president of an organization that has so many hardworking volunteers. I especially want to thank all of our members for your continuing support. Without you, the preservation of our ruins and documentation of our history would not be possible.



Cathy with Eric Poplin from Brockington, Assoc. & Greg Djouboulian from MALA Geoscience USA discussing plans for using GPR to determine the location of the well.

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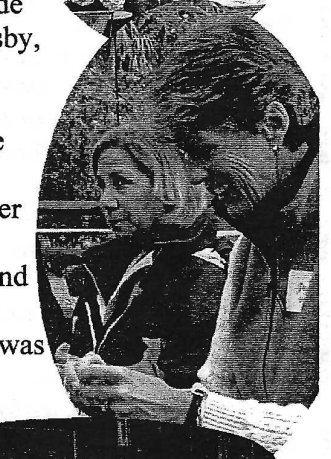
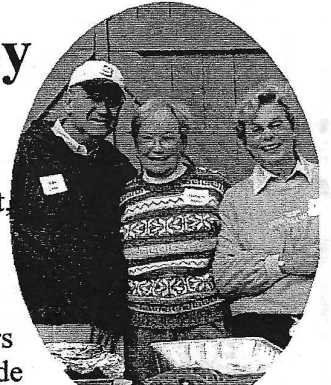


Oyster Roast Attendees Enjoy "Best Ever" Oysters

DHF's major fundraiser was held on March 14 at the Cannery. Rain and cool weather threatened the sold-out event, but all cleared away to make for a wonderful evening. "Our crowd seems to enjoy the oysters more and more each year" reported Kathee Schmit, who chaired the event along with Mariann Golobic. We thank our dedicated group of volunteers who work hard to put this popular event together. They include Herman Schmit, Chris and Ron Ruotolo, Pam and Larry Crosby, John Colgan, and Carol Looney along with many others who assisted in making the event a success.

Four lucky attendees went home with some fantastic raffle prizes. The lovely watercolor of the ruins done by Nan Bopp was won by the Aimars. The Heglins claimed the tabby planter crafted by Rick Wightman. Denise Ogden went home happy with a handbag and two scarves hand made by Pam Crosby and Chris Ruotolo. Susan Dickson's ticket was drawn for the reproduction of a circa 1750 map of the Beaufort area which was donated by the "Artist is In."

Plans have already begun for next year's event. See you in 2006!



Fireside Chat with Sonny Bishop

Over 100 residents enjoyed dinner and were entertained by stories about Dataw from the 40s and 50s told by Sonny Bishop, whose family leased and farmed the island when he was growing up. He had great slides showing a much different look to the island (there were no pine trees).

His pictures showed the screened-porch cabin built by Kate Gleason on Pee Dee Point, greatly overgrown plantation ruins, and several pieces of old farm equipment used on the island. He told about camping here with his school friends at "Kate Gleason's camp." He had a picture from the 50s where they had snow in Beaufort!

"At first the island was used to raise beef cattle and hogs, but later it was used for truck crops. I was in high school when our farm began using the island, but after I graduated from Clemson in 1957, I became a partner in the business," Sonny related. He reported that the island had about 250 acres of cleared land suitable for pastures and about 550 acres of wooded land, which provided suitable cover and natural feeding areas for cattle. One of his jobs after school was to ride over in the afternoon and help feed and water. Often he was the only person on



the island. "Getting over the causeway to the island was always exciting, especially during high tides when water covered the narrow, one-lane passage, wooden-timbered bridge." All cattle and hogs were sold after his grandfather died, and all land was farmed.

"Our farm was one of a few in this area that grew crops year round, and all the land, including Dataw, was kept busy every month. There were two areas on the island used for growing truck crops. The first was an open area of about 75 acres on the south end from Gleason's Road. (This whole area was later planted in pine trees.) The second area was about 175 acres on the north end including 20 acres of pecan orchard." That's the area where MR #s 13, 14, 15, 16 and CD #13 are now located. Sonny's pictures showed old buildings used during the farming era. He also talked about hunting on the island.

"When Hurricane Gracie hit this area in 1959, Sonny's family farm business suffered a traumatic blow because of extensive wind and flood damage. The overwhelming task of cleaning up and rebuilding afterwards brought the family decision not to renew the Dataw lease," he related.

Remembering the times spent on Dataw will always have a special place in Sonny's life. "It was and still is a beautiful island," he concluded. Thanks Sonny for sharing. It was a wonderful evening.

Two New Signs in Place

Two historic sites from Dataw's plantation era will be a lot easier for our residents to locate and appreciate thanks to informative new signs now in place at the men's white tee boxes on Morgan River #14 and Cotton Dike #5.

The sign at M.R. #14 gives a short history of the Lewis Reeve Sams house, which was located on Morgan River and was all but carried away by the hurricane of 1893. The tabby fireplace and foundation remnants can be viewed by interested golfers waiting to tee off. The convenient location of the sign at the end of Big Dataw Point Road also allows easy access for non golfers to view when the course is not in use.

The sign on C.D.#5 depicts the full extent and purpose of the dikes, built over 150 years ago to keep tidal sea water "at bay" so to speak and to allow the land to be planted in Sea Island cotton. The Cotton Dike sign can be viewed by walking or driving your golf cart to the tee box then walking to the far side. (Do this in the early evening and view the spectacular sunset as a bonus!)

Thanks go out to all who helped in this project to preserve and promote the rich history of this wonderful place we call home.

- Larry Lance, the DIC Golf & Greens Committee and the Greenskeeping staffs of both courses.
- Warren Dickson for the initial idea and for seeing the project through to completion.
- Dick Golobic for his graphic design of the signs.
- Ann Craigmile for providing the photographs used on the signs.
- Peter Pearks for making, assembling and painting the frames.
- Dean Bleckrie, John Colgan, Jim Dickson, Peter Pearks and Bruce Wager for digging the holes and erecting the sign posts.



John Dean Bruce Jim Peter
Colgan Bleckrie Wager Dickson Pearks

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Marc & Luisa Viguera

A New Chapter in Dataw's Plantation History

by Jack Brown

March 11, 9:30 am. It was an overcast day, and the forecast called for high winds and thunderstorms later in the afternoon. Two DHF members were waiting in the parking lot near the ruins for the arrival of a crew from Brockington and Associates. Shortly a caravan of cars pulled in and several Brockington people emerged along with a strange looking object called a GPR (ground penetrating radar) machine. Thus began one of the most ambitious projects in the history of the Dataw Historic Foundation.

This article will tell DHF members more about this exciting new project.



Overview

In late November 2004, the Board of Directors of the Dataw Historic Foundation decided to undertake a major preservation project in the B. B. Sams Plantation Complex. The project was expected to take up to a year to complete and cost in excess of \$20,000—funded completely by contributions from DHF members.

The project included three phases:

- Investigation of the Sams family and Cotton Dike cemeteries
- Stabilization of the Sams cemetery walls, which were cracking and in danger of collapsing
- Exploration of the well site area to locate, and hopefully restore, the centuries old well that had been covered over by Alcoa in the mid 1980s.

Alcoa had done extensive excavations of most of the Plantation Complex and major stabilization of the ruins in the 1980s. The site contains the ruins of at least 12 buildings or structures, all made of tabby. The complex began with the construction of a plantation house prior to the American Revolution. Subsequent buildings added in the 1780s and 1820s created the extensive settlement reflected in the ruins that remain today. Today's ruins represent one of the most intact examples of an early nineteenth century plantation community in the U.S.

The DHF has been caretaker of the B. B. Sams complex for over 10 years and has conducted over 15 projects to preserve these historic ruins on Dataw Island.

DHF hired Brockington & Assoc. to handle its newest and most ambitious project. Their firm is one of the foremost experts in the field of archaeological research and preservation; it had worked with Alcoa and DHF in past preservation projects. The plan was to also use the expertise of Colin Brooker, who has done most of the recent preservation work on the island.

In a major project of this kind, there is a long approval process before work can begin. The process started with a formal proposal to the DIOA in early February, 2005; as well as to the ARB. Approval was received shortly thereafter. Next a request was sent to the Sams family asking their approval to do investigative work in the family cemetery. Then Brockington began the lengthy process of gaining governmental approval for the project from the South Carolina State Preservation Officer, the Beaufort County Planning Department and the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. As of this writing, Brockington is still waiting for approval from these governmental agencies in order to proceed on to the second and third phases of the project.

Ground Penetration Radar (GPS) Survey

The first phase of the project, the GPR Survey, took place on March 11. As a prelude to actual work at the Sams family cemetery and the old well, the objective was to find the site of the well plus do investigative work at both the Sams family and Cotton Dike cemeteries to determine possible graves and gain an important census of both sites.

The Brockington crew started by setting up their GPR machine (which uses special ground-penetrating electrical and magnetic fields to detect disturbances below the ground). Shortly the search began. They started with the area around the well which is about 25 meters north of the plantation house. The well had been filled by Alcoa at the time of stabilization in 1984-85 to eliminate any potential public hazard.

The crew set out red flag stakes in a grid pattern and started walking the GPR machine in a series of straight lines. As they began, a crowd of interested DHF



members started to show up to watch the historic event. Christy Henry, the Superintendent of Dataw Maintenance, arrived with Benji Simmons, one of her staff who had been part of the original crew who had filled in the old well. Benji had previously placed a white plastic pole in the ground based on his memory of the well location. Also showing up were archaeologist Colin Brooker and members of the early owners of Dataw, the Sams family (Reeve and Betty Sams and Jeanne Sams Aimar). They stayed to watch most of the day's events and enjoyed lunch with the Brockington crew.

Within the hour, the GPR had located the site of the old well. Two red flags were placed at the site; the rest of

A New Chapter Continued

the red flags were retrieved, and it was off to the Sams family cemetery. Once the group arrived at the cemetery, the crowd had grown to 20+ people.

The Sams family cemetery wall was built in the late 1700s and the chapel was added in the early 1800s. There are tombstones for 12 graves in the cemetery, and the last person believed to have been buried there was in 1857. The cemetery is about 100 meters northwest of the plantation house.

It was important to do a GPR survey here because of the upcoming stabilization work on the wall; plus, it was hoped that the GPR machine would be of help in developing a detailed census of the grave sites.

After the grid pattern of red flag stakes was in place, some very interesting things started to happen. Over the



next couple of hours, the team passed the GPR machine along a series of straight lines throughout the cemetery and the data were captured on the computer. Several times, the crew stopped to show the crowd the images that were being displayed on the computer screen. There were a number of times when the crew indicated there were a lot of "disturbances" showing on the screen suggesting there might be more than the 12 known gravesites in the cemetery. The data were recorded, yet the major story on the cemetery won't be known until the computer data are analyzed. We were told the computer analysis would be available in a month or so.

After finishing the GPR work in the cemetery, the group took a break for lunch and then headed for the Cotton Dike cemetery at the end of Cotton Dike Road. The area was formerly a slave cemetery. In the plantation days, the cemetery was near what was the plantation's slave village, which is currently the site of the Dataw maintenance area.



It was mid afternoon, the clouds were getting very dark, and the crew started to stake out the cemetery. A neighbor of the cemetery and "resident caretaker", Jack



Borcherding, made coffee for the crew and a few DHF members. A short while later, a very dangerous storm appeared on the horizon. The strong winds blew several large tree branches to the ground in the cemetery, and it was decided to call off

this portion of the GPR survey. So, the exciting day of GPR work ended late on the 11th of March. The crew will come back at another time to do the Cotton Dike cemetery, and the mysterious data recorded by the remarkable GPR machine will remain a secret for another month or so. . .

Late Breaking News

Shortly after finishing a draft of this article, Cathy Crocker (President of DHF) and I received an E-mail from Eric Poplin, the Senior Archaeologist at Brockington. Eric wanted to pass on the GPR graphic analysis from the work at the Old Sams cemetery, and there was a real sense of excitement in his E-mail.

The graphic analysis clearly showed several major "disturbances" in the cemetery besides the 12 marked with stones. If so, it is probable that the graves were added to the cemetery after 1861. This is the date that the Sams family fled the invading Federal troops. After they left the plantation, very few of them ever returned to the Beaufort area.

This new GPR analysis on the Old Sams cemetery is a major piece of news to DHF members, and will add at least one new chapter to Dataw Island's fascinating plantation history.

Jack's Conclusion in the Fall Newsletter

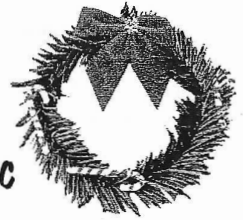
Results of the survey work, concise plans for the Sams cemetery wall restoration work and details of the well exploration and restoration will be featured in the Fall Newsletter. Stay tuned!



Jack Brown reviewing plans with T. Reeve Sams and Jeanne Sams Aimar.

Save the date. . .
Monday, October 17, 2005
3rd Annual Fish Fry
at the Gazebo

**Watch for new 2005
DHF Christmas Card
designed by Dick Golobic
on sale this fall.**



The DHF gives special thanks to Warren Dickson as he retires from the board. Warren was responsible for coordinating the new sign project, assisting with long-range planning and contributing his time and talents to all events and activities.

Jack Brown has completed a family tree of the Sams family that spans over 300 years and 11 generations. The tree begins with Bonum Sams born circa 1680 and ends with the great grand daughter of Therese Sams Colquhoun born in 1997.

Look for this informative, professionally printed and framed document displayed on the left at the top of the staircase in the Clubhouse.

Also added to the second floor Clubhouse display area will be a sign identifying the artifacts area. Barbara Clinkenbeard is working to more attractively display this interesting area to all who visit the Clubhouse.

