

TABBY TATTLER

Dataw Historic Foundation Newsletter

www.DatawHistory.org

Fall 2018

Family Reunion of the Sams Family ... KATHY KELENSKI & TERESA BRIDGES

Dataw Island was privileged to host a truly special event this past June – the first family reunion of the Sams family to congregate on the same piece of land where their ancestors lived over 200 years ago. The reunion was the vision of Teresa Bridges of Chattanooga, Tennessee. She is 7th generation to William and Elizabeth Hext Sams, who were the first Sams to live here on Dataw (*They purchased Datha Island in 1783 and built their home on the site which later became the larger home of BB Sams*) and 6th generation to John Sams, one of the older brothers of BB Sams and Reeves Sams, both of whom resided on Dataw prior to the Civil War. (*John did not move to Datha with his family. Instead he remained in Wadmalaw Island, near Johns Island, and ran the plantation there.*)

The reunion was attended by 135 family members, most of whom are pictured in the photo below. Following is Teresa's story in her words.

History is a story to be investigated and shared. Some of my fondest memories were of listening to my mother, E. Eugenia Sams Winters, tell stories of her childhood on Merritt Island, Florida. She talked about our Sams ancestors, their origin in England, wealth in South Carolina, value of education, and love for God and family. I learned how our branch of the Sams family, the descendants of William and Elizabeth Sams' third son John and sixth son B.B., moved to Merritt Island after the Civil War to become pioneers and growers of Indian River citrus.

I felt compelled to continue to uncover the stories of my ancestors who lie at rest in the St. Luke's cemetery near the chapel they built in the late 1800's. The stories were numerous and colorful.

After several years of researching my family roots in Florida, I turned toward South Carolina and the treasure trove of stories I felt certain waited for me there. What better place to begin the search than at the family ruins on Dataw. As my sister and I wandered the grounds of this historic site in October 2017, reliving the past in my mind, it occurred to me that this magical place would be the perfect spot for a Sams Family reunion. To my knowledge, the only Sams reunion ever held was in North Carolina in 1929.

For the next seven months, my cousin General John Sams and I, along with several members of the DHF, planned the Sams family reunion that ultimately was held on Dataw in June 2018. John Sams and I spread the word with our first cousins, and DHF Board member Joe Roney notified the Beaufort area cousins in addition to family members whose names are on the DHF contact list.

The reunion got off to a great start on Friday morning as with a golf tournament hosted by Tom and Charlotte Hurley, Dataw members we had met on our earlier visit. We spent Friday afternoon strolling the Beaufort Historic District with the incredibly knowledgeable Joe Roney and his wife Diane. It was not an easy task corralling more than 50 excited Sams family members taking pictures and asking a thousand questions about the homes where our ancestors once lived!

Saturday was truly a dream come true. There were roughly 135 of us taking part in a well-organized program planned by

SAVE THE DATES

December 2: VAC Holiday Boutique
Visit the DHF table and pick up a package of our holiday cards (*new for 2018!*) and a copy of *Dataw: No Ordinary Place*.
(See page 2 for more details.)

December 3: Dataw Luminary Night

January 14: Hurricane Talk

January 31: Annual Fireside Chat
Jim Jordan to talk about Reconstruction in South Carolina, especially Beaufort County

March 18: DHF 21st Oyster Roast
DETAILS TO COME!

the DHF which included Sams family history talks by John Colgan and tours of the ruins complete with docents! The day ended with the group gathering for a meal in the Gazebo. I know I speak for the entire Sams family when I say that, as a direct result of the long volunteer hours by the members of the DHF, the event far surpassed our expectations.

Descendants from three of the four married sons of William and Elizabeth Hext Sams attended, traveling from Florida, Georgia, Alabama, South and North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Colorado. My mother's brother, Thomas Sams, traveled from Tampa, Florida, and, at the age of 94, was the oldest member present. Sams cousins who had never met established friendships and opened an avenue of sharing historical family photos, documents and stories that have enriched each of our lives. A simple 'thank you' to DHF would never be enough to express our gratitude for helping us step back in time and uncover our ancestors' stories.





President's Report . . . MARILYN PECK

Dataw Historic Foundation recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of its incorporation as a non-profit organization. (See *Kathy McShane's article below.*) The DHF originated with a small group of residents who started the *Ruins Committee* in the mid 1990's to help preserve and record the Island's 300-year history. From the beginning, the primary focus of the Ruins Committee, and later the DHF, was to preserve the significant tabby ruins — the B.B. Sams Plantation Complex — and to foster the Island's history.

Along the way, DHF won three very important awards from the Historic Beaufort Foundation: the Howard E. Danner Award for Lifetime Achievement in Historic Preservation in 2006, the Historic Preservation Honor Award (Preservation) in 2011, and in March 2018, their Historic Preservation Honor Award, in recognition of DHF's 20 years of successful preservation and conservation efforts.

On March 4, 2011, the Sams Plantation Complex Tabby Ruins was listed on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places, a very prestigious honor, as a result of DHF advocacy and DIOA support. In 2016, we formally opened the Dataw History and Learning Center on the grounds of the Sams Plantation Complex which has already drawn over 2000 visitors.

Today, DHF has a vibrant and energetic 20-member board. Close to \$200,000 has been spent on structural preservation projects at Island historic sites and \$200,000 for the History & Learning Center. We continue to carry out a very important role: to foster and be the custodian of the Island's history, and promote pride in and awareness of that history.

We are profoundly grateful to all of our loyal members who have helped raise or have directly provided the funding for all of the DHF's activities.

DHF 20th Anniversary Celebration Honors its Members

. . . KATHY MCSHANE

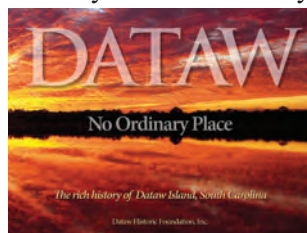
On October 22, the DHF hosted a cocktail party in honor of its 20th anniversary and to thank members for their support over the years. Approximately 125 DHF members turned out for the cocktail party at the H&LC, enjoying beautiful fall weather, music, wine and appetizers. Current DHF President, Marilyn Peck, and Past Presidents, Cathy Crocker, Joel Holden, John Colgan and Jack Brown provided a bit of history of the organization and its efforts, reminisced about their terms as president, and thanked the members for their support of the DHF mission. Among the attendees were several members of the Sams Family, including Teresa Bridges, the key person responsible for the Sams Family reunion on Dataw this past June (see *her story on page 1*). Maxine Lutz, Executive Director of the Historic Beaufort Foundation (which recently presented its Historic Preservation Honor award to the DHF), was also a guest. A great time was had by all, and we look forward to the next 20 years!



(left to right) Past Presidents Jack Brown, Joel Holden, John Colgan, Cathy Crocker, and current President Marilyn Peck.

VAC Holiday Boutique

Visit the DHF table at the VAC Holiday Boutique in the Community Center on Sunday, December 2 from 4-6 PM. DHF will be selling holiday cards and the book *Dataw: No Ordinary Place*. The holiday cards (sold in packs of 10 for \$10) feature a photo of the Sams Plantation Ruins in winter taken by DHF member, Donna McKeown. *Dataw: No Ordinary Place* (\$40) is a beautiful coffee table book containing the history and photos of our island home, a perfect holiday gift.



Visitors to the History & Learning Center

Diane Roney, DHF Vice President, has been diligently keeping track of visitors to the H&LC since its doors opened in 2016. From May 2016 through August 2018, nearly 2,000 people have visited the museum. Visitors have hailed from 41 states and the District of Columbia and seven countries, including Canada, England, Denmark, Spain, Germany, United Arab Emirates (Dubai) and Australia. The only states not represented yet are: Alaska, Hawaii, Iowa, New Mexico, Kentucky, Nebraska, Idaho and North and South Dakota.

When your relatives and friends visit, please bring them to the H&LC and for a tour of the Sams Plantation Ruins. We are certain they will find the history of Dataw Island to be fascinating. Make sure they sign our guest book just inside the doorway. We would like to see all 50 states represented as well as many more countries!

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If you are interested in working with the DHF, contact any of the DHF Board members.

TABBY TATTLER

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The Tabby Tattler is a publication of the Dataw Historic Foundation, Dataw Island, South Carolina.

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2018 Dataw Historic Foundation Members



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- **Lifetime Members** (Those whose lifetime contribution to the DHF is \$5,000 or more.)
- **Honorary Members** (Limited to those with an ancestral connection to Dataw Island. Includes Sams family descendants and family descendants of other prior owners of Dataw Island.)
- **Friends of DHF** (Those who have made a significant contribution to or have a special connection to DHF.)
- **Benefactors** (\$250) ■ **Patrons** (\$100) ■ **Supporters** (\$60) ■ **Members** (\$40)

Our history makes us unique among residential communities and our efforts to preserve and display that history are fun, educational and important to our future. Your support is important to us!

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Your Dataw Historic Foundation Membership is **IMPORTANT!**

The vision of the DHF is that the rich Dataw Island history will become an important part of the total experience among all residents of the island.

Your support of DHF assures the preservation of Dataw's historic tabby structures, the plantation site, artifacts found and all related archives. We are grateful for those of you who have generously supported us in the past, and we hope you will continue to do so. Those of you new to Dataw or unfamiliar with the work of the Foundation, please recognize the importance of your membership contribution.

Our 2019 Membership Drive will start in January. Please help support our efforts to preserve this beautiful island that we all love!



Add your family brick to the Dataw Heritage Walk this holiday season!

If you have not done so, purchase your brick now and become a part of the Dataw Heritage Walk — a living legacy to those who have made Dataw the very special place it is today. The engraved bricks include residents who came to Dataw Island over 30 years ago, up to and including residents who recently moved to Dataw. This holiday season would be a good time to add *your* mark to Dataw’s rich history.

All revenue goes towards the continuing preservation of the Sams Plantation Ruins and all related historic sites on Dataw.

To purchase a brick, use the form below.

Forms are also available in the Cannery and the Dataw Island History and Learning Center as well as on the DHF website.

www.DatawHistory.org

Dataw Heritage Walk Order Form

The Dataw Heritage Walk — A living legacy to those who have made Dataw the very special place it is today.

Brick Cost: \$150. Please use one order form per brick.

Fill in squares with inscription letters using one letter or space per square.

□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
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First 2 lines: Limit of 15 characters per line, including spaces
Third line: Year of property acquisition or move to Dataw or employment

Brick examples:

JOHN & JANE
WILLIAMS
2001

THE WILLIAMS
FAMILY
2001

JOHN WILLIAMS
FAMILY
2001

JOHN
WILLIAMS
2001

ORDERED BY:

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Return Check (Payable to “Dataw Historic Foundation”) **and Order Form to:**
 Peter Pearks, 1148 Palmetto Point, Dataw Island

Or mail to: Dataw Historic Foundation, PO Box 819, Beaufort, SC 29901