



TABBY TATTLER

Dataw Historic Foundation Newsletter

www.DatawHistory.org

Spring 2019

Out of the mouths of babes . . . MT O'BRIEN

A young boy recently touring the Dataw Ruins with his family turned to our docent and asked: "When are you going to fix this place up?" That's exactly what the Dataw Historic Foundation does! As the only designated custodian of Dataw's historic structures, artifacts and archives, DHF works to preserve and protect our history so that it can be appreciated and enjoyed both today and in the future.

Preserving Dataw's history costs money. Annual membership and fund-raising drives are our only sources of income. Over the past 20 years, DHF has funded \$186,000 in structural preservation efforts at Dataw's historic sites. Since 2004, all of the restoration efforts have been 100% self-funded solely through membership and fund-raising efforts.

Highlights of some of what we have accomplished:

- Reinstalled floor beams in Plantation House
- Worked to help stabilize the Cold Room/Dairy (the only one of its kind in the United States)
- Stabilized the Blade House wall
- Wood framed windows and doors to support the tabby foundations
- Uncovered key clues on a possible pre-Revolutionary War kitchen
- Helped to stabilize the Lewis Reeves foundation on the Morgan River
- Stabilized the slave quarters

You can witness the extraordinary restoration progress of the Sams Plantation Ruins starting with Dataw's development by Alcoa in 1983 to the present on our website at: www.datawhistory.org under Video Tours.

DHF is proud to have raised close to \$200,000 to build the History & Learning Center, a capstone in the preservation and educational efforts of the DHF. In addition to funds contributed directly by DHF members, sales of the book published by DHF, *Dataw: No Ordinary Place*, and sales of bricks for the Dataw Heritage Walk helped fund the Center's completion. Since opening in 2016, the History & Learning Center has hosted over 2,000 visitors.

While we have accomplished a great deal in the past 20 years, preservation is an ongoing effort. Membership is critical to this work, which includes:

- Explore fenced yard in front of main house for unknown buildings and activity areas
- Explore further work on the Cold Room roof
- Clean cotton house on Dataw Drive adjacent to Cotton Dike hole #3
- Repair cracks in different Plantation buildings to maintain preservation
- Clean-up Cotton Dike slave cemeteries

To our members, thank you for helping us achieve our mission. And to those who devote their time and energy to bring the past to life on Dataw, we thank you as well.

If you are not yet a member, please join our 300+ DHF members and be part of celebrating the past by supporting our future! A membership form is provided on the back page of this publication. For membership questions, call either MT O'Brien (843-838-3601) or Marj Shymske (630-335-1485).



(Photo above) Plantation House, circa 1930.

(Photo below taken by Bill Riski) The Sams Plantation House today, after much restoration made possible by the DHF.



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!

Not yet a member of DHF? Fill out the membership form on page 4.

Help support our efforts to preserve this beautiful island that we all love!

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Dataw's History, Brought Right to You . . . BILL RISKI

What if someone could tell you about what you are looking at when you are standing in the ruins or visiting the History & Learning Center? Nothing too intrusive, just a little voice in your ear when you request it.

The Dataw Historic Foundation has so much information about the rich history of Dataw Island, and it is evolving all the time. Our signs and pamphlets are excellent, but they cannot be changed easily or often. Nor are they the best when you are standing in the bright sunshine at the cold/dairy house. We have begun to implement a change that will benefit us all. We are taking Dataw's History into the future by using Quick Reaction Code (QRC) labels to bring audio to your smart phone when and where you want it.

We have started the process of putting small weatherproof labels on many historic locations around the island. You can use your smart phone to scan the label which takes you to a web page containing an audio recording unique to that label, and therefore to the location where you are standing!

Here is the one at the front door to the History & Learning Center; give it a try right now. There is also one



on the Sams Plantation House model inside the H&LC. Hear the modeler, Jerry Hubbard, describe his first-hand experiences building the model almost 20 years ago.

iPhones and iPads can automatically read QR codes using the built-in camera app. If this does not work, check your iPhone settings. Go to: Settings / Camera / Scan QR Codes and ensure it is toggled on.

Android phones can use the free NeoReader® app to read QR codes. If not installed, download from neoreader.com.

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CO-EDITORS:

Kathy Kelenski
(843-838-3335; kathy.kelenski@gmail.com)

Kathy McShane
(843-612-2144; kmcshane2233@gmail.com)

LAYOUT/DESIGN: Cindy Schafer
(919-475-0153; cindyschafer21@gmail.com)

DHF, PO Box 819, Beaufort, SC 29901

The Florida Sams Family Branch . . . SANDRA LAROCHE-BRANNIN NATOWICH

Sandra LaRoche-Brannin Natowich is the great, great, great, great grandniece of John H. Sams

Last year I traveled to a well-attended Sams family reunion in Beaufort and on Dataw Island. We were given access to family homes, saw many others on a personally guided tour, and learned much about our Beaufort ancestors. On Dataw (Datha) Island, we saw the ruins of the family home, cemetery and church. Although I had previously met many Sams relatives in South Carolina, and shared family stories with them, I was surprised to discover that many Sams family members attending the reunion had no idea that a branch of the Sams family became pioneers in Florida and still exist there today.

John Hanahan Sams was born in 1839 at Wadmaw Island, SC, to wealthy plantation owners. Just before the end of the Civil War, he married his cousin, Sarah Stanyarne Sams, daughter of Dr. Berners Barnwell Sams, half owner of Dataw Island. Having lost most of his wealth after the war, John H. Sam and his family, along with his sister Henrietta and her husband, James LaRoche, moved to Florida in 1873.

The Sams and LaRoche families first tried living in Eau Gallie, Florida (near Melbourne), where John Sams built a three room cabin, housing ten family members. They attempted to grow crops there, but salt water had permeated the soil and the salt air and heat defeated their efforts. However, they heard about an island to the north, Merritt Island, to which they made several trips, finding it rich in resources. The rivers that bracketed the Island were teeming with marine life, reminding them of the Sea Islands of South Carolina.

The two families carved out a new, more successful life on Merritt Island, both agriculturally and financially, though it was hard and often dangerous. As the only way to get to the Mainland was by boat, getting medical care was extremely difficult, sometimes resulting in death before someone could get to the Mainland to bring back help.

Nevertheless, John H. Sams and James LaRoche, with their sons, managed to clear much of the hundreds of acres they obtained. They grew pineapples, sugar cane and citrus. The two men were the originators of Indian River Citrus. Citrus became the largest cash crop on Merritt Island and a huge success statewide.

When the Sams family came to Florida, there were no public schools countywide. John Sams addressed this need, and became the first Superintendent of Schools in Brevard County.

When John Sams moved from Eau Gallie, his cabin was dismantled, floated up the Indian River to Courtenay, Merritt Island and rebuilt. It is the oldest residential building in the County. The cabin and the large home that was constructed in 1888, including 800 acres, have been saved and preserved. The property is open, free to the public, five days a week. It is also a lifelong learning center for all ages. John Sams' legacy of education for all lives on.



John H. Sams Homestead in Merritt Island, Florida

DHF BOARD 2019

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- Vice President /Treasurer: Susan Converse
- Vice President/Volunteers: Diane Roney
- Recording Secretary: Kitty Trice
- Corresponding Secretary: Joe Roney

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- Director At-Large: William Riski
- Technical Consultants: Peter Pearks, Larry Rowland

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



President's Report

... MARILYN PECK

Over the last couple of years, we have had some changes to the DHF Board. Ron Jacobs, Dawn Schuster and Susan Jorgensen have retired from the Board after many years of dedicated service. All of them have my gratitude and many thanks for the wonderful contributions that they made to DHF. This year, Susan Converse was elected Vice President/ Treasurer. Kitty Trice has become our Recording Secretary, Valerie Hatcher will be our new Public Relations Chair, and Kathy Stanton has joined the Board as Fund-raising Co-Chair. Marj Shymske is our new Co-Chair of Membership and Tom Watkins is now head of Ruins Preservation/Grounds. Bill Riski has become a Director-at-Large and will be helping us with everything technology related. Over the years we, as an organization, have had wonderful residents join our Board. Each and every one of them has been a pleasure to work with and learn from.

In this issue, we have a tribute to Betty Sams, the wife of Reeve Sams. Betty was a constant supporter of DHF and in every way a true southern lady. We also have elected Jerry and Linda Hubbard to be Lifetime Members of DHF for their constant support and donations over the years. *(See related articles on the right.)*

At the beginning of every year, we start our membership drive. Our goal is for every Dataw resident to become a member of DHF, since the ruins and history of the island are such a vital part of Dataw Island, Beaufort County and the State of South Carolina. I want to thank all of our DHF members for their ongoing financial and volunteer support. For those of you who are not yet members, I encourage you to join us in our ongoing effort to preserve Dataw's historic structures and its artifacts. Dataw Island remains a unique and beautiful place to live and I feel very lucky to be a part of it.

Lifetime Membership Awarded to Jerry and Linda Hubbard

The Dataw Historic Foundation awarded its most prestigious title of Lifetime Member to Jerry and Linda Hubbard for their lifetime contribution to DHF. "Lifetime" is a special membership title that may be conferred on any person who should receive special recognition for major financial contributions to DHF of \$5,000 or more, ancestral connections to Dataw Island, or valued service in the preservation of Dataw's heritage.

Jerry and Linda have been major supporters of DHF since the Foundation was established in 1999. In the early years of the Hubbards' relationship with DHF, Jerry began the creation of a museum quality, historically accurate scale model of the original B.B. Sams Plantation House which took over 600 hours to complete. In 2002, Jerry and Linda donated the model to DHF (professionally appraised at \$12,000). The model is on display at the History and Learning Center. Also, over the years, Jerry has created and donated numerous bird carvings to the annual DHF Oyster Roast Raffle.

The Hubbards are only the third family to be elected to this distinguished list. The others are Arthur R. Sams, Jr. (patriarch of the Sams Family) and Mr. and Mrs. William Lowndes, who are significant long-term financial contributors to DHF.



DHF President, Marilyn Peck with Linda and Jerry Hubbard, in front of the model of the B.B. Sams Plantation House that Jerry donated to DHF. The model is in the History & Learning Center.

Betty Johnson Sams — 1928-2019 ... JOE RONEY

On January 11, 2019, DHF lost a dear friend when Betty J. Sams, of Beaufort, passed away after a long illness.

A true southern lady, born in Conway, South Carolina, she was a cheerleader and basketball player in high school. She had degrees in Chemistry and Biology. It was while she was a student at USC, that Betty met her husband, Talbird Reeve Sams (1924-2013). Her teaching career spanned 31 years, but we remember her most for her interest in history. Betty and T. Reeve were among the earliest off-island supporters of the Dataw Historic Foundation. They were dear, close friends of the DHF for over twenty years and made significant contributions to the history of the Sams Family and Dataw Island. She and the Talbird Reeve Sams Family were major "Heritage" donors to our new History and Learning Center.

She was also active in Historic Beaufort Foundation and the Open Land Trust.

An active member of St. Peter's Catholic Church for 62 years, Betty served in several of its ministries as a catechist, member of the Bereavement and Altar Linens Committees. She is buried next to her husband in the Historic St. Peter's Graveyard near generations of the Sams and Talbird families.



Jack Brown with Reeve and Betty Sams. Photo taken in September 2009.

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Want to support the DHF? Sign up for AMAZON SMILE (smile.amazon.com) and follow the simple directions selecting "Dataw Historic Foundation" as your charity of choice. For every purchase you make on Amazon, half a percent will come to DHF ... and it won't cost you a cent!

Homes for the Holidays

Beaufort's 17th Annual *Tour of Homes*, held November 17-18, 2018, featured seven private homes on Dataw Island and the History & Learning Center at the Sams Plantation Ruins. All the homes and the History & Learning Center were professionally decorated by local interior designers and artists. The History & Learning Center was the last stop on the tour, where visitors were met by DHF and Garden Club volunteers dressed in 18th century costumes. Saturday's volunteers at the History & Learning Center included Garden Club members Dena Dardzinski, Mary Ferguson, Bobbi Weber and Phyllis Wibby. On Sunday, DHF Board members, Diane and Joe Roney and MT O'Brien, greeted visitors in their period garb. Accolades go out to Sue Ellen Hardman, DHF member, who designed and created the women's dresses. The History & Learning Center and the Dataw Ruins were decorated for the event by the Dataw Garden Club. Proceeds from this past year's event benefit St. Peter's Catholic School.



Diane and Joe Roney, along with MT O'Brien, pose in their Sunday best!

21st DHF Oyster Roast and Raffle

Approximately 150 DHF members and guests descended on the Sams Plantation Ruins to enjoy the 21st Annual Oyster Roast, held March 18. The oysters, tasty and abundant, were provided by the Crazy Dutchman from Charleston. Jimmy Fitts served up the rest of the delicious menu, including grilled chicken, gumbo, cornbread, coleslaw and apple cobbler. Music was provided by a crowd favorite, *The Sometimes Later* band, featuring Dataw resident Dick Nalwalsky. Raffle prizes included art and gift certificates from a wide range of local restaurants, stores and services. The grand prize, "Peaceful Waters", donated by the talented Dataw artist, Kathy Crowther, was won by Sally and Bob Haxby. Proceeds from the Raffle will support the History & Learning Center displays. Congratulations to DHF's fundraising co-chairs, Arleen Cassutti and Kathy Stanton, for another successful Oyster Roast and Raffle. Many thanks to all the DHF volunteers, without whom this event could not take place.



The delicious oysters were enjoyed by all!

A Festival of Lights and Music

The Sams Plantation Ruins were the focal point for Dataw's annual Luminary Night, held December 3, 2018. Co-sponsored by the Dataw Historic Foundation and the Dataw Garden Club, this past year's Luminary Night, entitled "*A Festival of Lights and Music*", showcased the beauty of the Ruins. The event started with holiday carols at the Butterfly Garden, after which a caravan of golf carts made their way to the Ruins. The stunning voices of the combined St. Helena Island Praise Choir and Dataw vocalists capped off a perfect evening. The Garden Club contributed delicious snacks: tortellini skewers, cheese biscuits and cookies. Many thanks to all the volunteers who made this magical night a success.

Michael Row the Boat Ashore

In October, Dataw Academy students were treated to a tour of the Sams Plantation Ruins. During the class, Joe Roney, DHF Corresponding Secretary and historian extraordinaire, presented Dataw's history, including some fascinating tidbits of which many Dataw residents may not be aware.

Most of us are familiar with the folk song "*Michael Row the Boat Ashore*" and can probably sing several verses. However, while most of us likely are not familiar with the origins of the song, the Dataw Academy students are now.

The song was initially written in St. Helena Island during the Civil War. In 1862, Charles Pickard Ware, abolitionist and Harvard graduate, came to St. Helena Island to supervise plantations that had been abandoned by southern owners and were being run by freed slaves. He heard the song being sung by the freed slaves and he wrote it down. His cousin, William Francis Allen, also reported in 1863 that he heard the song being sung by freedman as he was crossing Station Creek. Since the song was an oral tradition on St. Helena Island, it most likely was sung by slaves of the Sams family, who owned not only the Dataw plantation, but several others on St. Helena Island before the Civil War.

The song has several versions, but the original, published in 1867 in "*Slave Songs of the United States*" by Allen, Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison, is presented in the Gullah dialect. The lyrics ask the Archangel Michael to deliver the singers and their ancestors to heaven.

Your DHF Membership is Important!

Help support our efforts to preserve the history of this beautiful island that we all love.

Member (\$40) Supporter (\$60) Patron (\$100) Benefactor (\$250)

The Dataw Historic Foundation is a non-profit, all volunteer organization. All contributions are tax deductible.

Last Name _____ First _____ Spouse _____

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Make check payable to Dataw Historic Foundation, Inc.

Mail form and check to: Dataw Historic Foundation, PO Box 819, Beaufort SC 29901

OR place form and check in Marj Shymske's mailbox, 237 Dataw Drive

QUESTIONS? Call Membership Co-Chairs MT O'Brien (843-838-3601) or Marj Shymske 630-335-1485