

Did You Know?

A child's life....antebellum style



The Reverend James Julius Sams, one of B.B. Sams' 15 children, recalls his childhood on Dataw in his *Memoirs of Datha*. James Julius and his siblings attended family worship, school and church and asked no questions. These were the rules! They had a live-in tutor with a classroom in the west wing of the house and attended a chapel on the grounds.

But there was fun too! Older children hunted and fished and played in the barn and blade house (where "blades" of corn stalks were stored for fodder). There they hunted for hen's nests, climbed on the blades to the top of the ceiling and then slid or somersaulted down. Teasing and catching the little pigs was also a favorite pastime, but they had to be on the alert for mother pig who would rush them with a gruff. Catching pigeons, playing dominos and marbles and hunting for marsh hen eggs also were a part of their life.



The Blade House

Often women would tend and care for the children while their parents were working in the fields or tending to business -- much like day care today. One of these women on Dataw was Lillian. She lived in a very small house in the area near where North and South Boone Roads meet. There was a flowing spring near her house that ran down into a small pond. The children she cared for considered her a second mother and respectfully called her "Ma Lilly". They called the spring runoff "Ma Lilly's Run".

Arthur Robinson, a descendant of slaves who lived on Dataw, has collected detailed history records of his ancestors. He lived on Dataw while his father was a caretaker for Kate Gleason (1928-1933). He suggests that Ma Lilly may have been his great-great-grandmother, Lillian Robinson. She was born in 1795 and lived as a slave on Dataw. She continued to live on Dataw into her later years. The 1880 census indeed lists a Lilly Robinson, born in 1795, living in St Helena Parish which included Dataw. It's likely that she is "Ma Lilly," but we may never know for sure. Today Ma Lilly's legend is kept alive on Dataw with Malilly Run Road and Malilly Run Dam.



From the recollections of BB Sams' son, Rev. James Julius Sams; recollections of Dr. Larry Rowland; and recollections of Arthur Robinson.