

TABBY TIMES

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Elizabeth Hext House

T

here is a saying that a lady never tells her age. That adage was taken to heart by a certain southern lady, that is, a house named after a lady, at 207 Hancock Street in Beaufort. The Elizabeth Hext House, also known as Riverview, has a befuddled history. Various dates have claimed the right to the house's birthday. In most circumstances, the construction date of a building can be determined by a corner stone, written records or anecdotal history. In the case of this lady's house, the origins are muddled and ambiguous. Many sources suggest a different building date within the span of one hundred years.

The earliest dates assigned to the house were between 1700 - 1710 by the Historic American Building Survey. This document claims that the Hext house is "... a very early house, thought to be the oldest remaining house in Beaufort." *The Majesty of Beaufort*, a book published in 2000, gives a construction date of 1720, while a Historic Homes brochure of 2013 states, "... in 1747 Francis Hext, Jr. is thought to have owned the property." Meanwhile, the Historic Resources of the Lowcountry, published in 1979, notes that the architecture is "of the Colonial Period. Built around 1765..." In a more recent publication, *Shell Builders*, the author, Colin Brooker, an expert in tabby construction, writes that the Hext House is a late 18th Century timber-framed structure. Finally, the Historic Beaufort Foundation Official Guide declares "Only a few additional buildings dating before the Revolutionary War have been documented. Among those thought to be of this period is the Elizabeth Hext House."

Hext House continued

THIS LEADS TO TWO QUESTIONS:

Why is Dataw Island interested in this Beaufort home?

Elizabeth Hext was the wife of William Sams, Sr. who bought Dataw Island in 1783 and was the mother of Berners Barnwell Sams and Lewis Reeve Sams, later owners of the island.

What can be done about this dating dilemma?

Bring in science and technology.

Dr. H. Lucius and Mrs. Darryl Laffitte, the current owners and loving protectors of this charming home, have joined forces with the Dataw Historic Foundation to employ Mr. Michael (Mick) Worthington, a dendrochronologist from the firm of

Oxford Tree-Ring Laboratory of Baltimore, Maryland. Mr. Worthington, an esteemed expert in this field, applies current technology to assist in correctly dating historic properties. A dendrochronologist is able to date a building by taking core samples of the wooden infrastructure, studying the tree rings in the sample, and comparing them to a computerized data profile of tree growth from a certain area and era. Mr. Worthington has experience on both sides of the Atlantic. His expertise in establishing the accurate age of structures includes buildings in Colonial Williamsburg, Mt. Vernon, the birthplaces of both Presidents Adams, as well as Windsor Castle, Westminster Abbey, and the Tower of London.

On March 10, Mrs. Darryl Laffitte graciously welcomed Mr. Worthington, his wife, and a team from DHF to her lovely and endearingly decorated home for the work to commence. Over the course of several hours, Mr. Worthington was able to extract eight core samples from the yellow pine rafters in the original roof. These samples resemble a long thin cigar and the light and dark rings are quite visible even without

laboratory-enhanced magnification. When he returns to his research lab in Baltimore, Mr. Worthington will closely examine these core samples and, using computer paradigms, will be able to determine scientifically the age of this grand dame of Beaufort.

Stay tuned for the results of this important study in Beaufort history to be reported in the Fall issue of the Tabby Times. —Ginny Hall-Apicella

Special thanks to the Laffitte family for their hospitality and support of the project, Bill Riski for his coordination, Jack Brown for his comprehensive synthesis of the Hext House history, and Beekman Webb for his guidance as a master Beaufort preservationist.

1. Mr. Michael Worthington takes a core sample from an original yellow-pine rafter.

2. Mrs. Darryl Laffitte, owner of Hext House, holds a 7 inch core sample.

3. Left to right: Beekman Webb, Jack Brown, Darryl Laffitte and Joe Roney



NAILS MADE BY
HAND USED IN THE
CONSTRUCTION
OF HEXT HOUSE



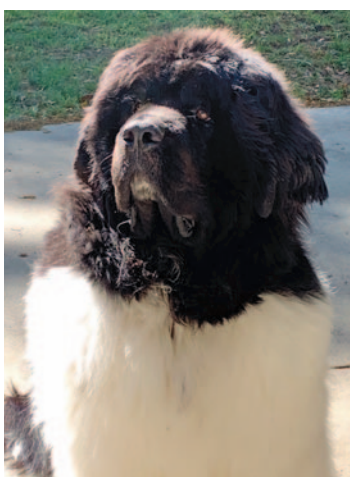
CORE SAMPLE FROM
AN ORIGINAL RAFTER
IN THE HEXT HOUSE

Dataw Dogs

If one is walking down a Dataw road at 8:00 in the morning or 4:00 in the afternoon, one is sure to encounter a Beau or a Chase, a Spike or a Daisy and even a Benji. There are a plethora of pups on the island. Most of these dogs are companions and best friends. Few have a job other than to give their owners an adoring look or an excuse for some exercise. This was not always the case.

James Julius Sams (1826 - 1918), who went by the name of Julius, was the eighth child of Berners Barnwell Sams and Elizabeth Hann Fripp. By the time of his father's passing in 1855, Julius was an Episcopal minister serving at parishes throughout South Carolina. His memoir on his boyhood on Datha (now Dataw), written circa 1905, is chock full of information about the canine life on the island. Dogs in that era had a function in addition to camaraderie.

Julius described his father as a great dog fancier preferring Newfoundlands and spaniels. Many of B.B. Sams dogs' names bear his own initials: Belisle, Breton and Beta, but there was also, Ulay and Fool. After a hunting trek or walk around his property, B.B. Sams would often rest under a live oak and then his dogs became his guardians. Woe to the man who would approach the reposed gentleman without calling out first and, at a distance. Most Newfoundlands are known for their sweet temperament but if Mr. Sams' Newfoundland was the size of Hudson, a Newfie owned by David Easley and Maureen O'Hara of Cotton Dike Court, who weighs in at 140 pounds, it certainly could be intimidating.



Hudson, Dataw Newfoundland

Belisle was subject to dropsy, a condition which today would be called edema. This is an accumulation of fluid inside tissue cavities caused by bacterial or parasitic infestation or possible liver dysfunction. Mr. Sams, who was a trained physician, acted as his own veterinarian and would "tap" the dog to release the fluid build up. Another dog, Beta, usually had good sense except when she was swimming. When she raised her paws to paddle she would yap and snap, never quite understanding that she was barking at her own flaying feet. If Fool acted like Beta, there is no questioning of his name. Ulay was passionate about being a hunting dog. Even if he was in the house and someone picked up a gun, he would whine and yelp, demanding to join the hunt. His enthusiasm and excitement, however, would do him in — his own noise would scare away the prey he was after. If the party decided to go duck hunting, Ulay's was shut in the house as his prancing and dancing was an immediate duck alarm. If he managed to escape confinement, there was no catching him.

Julius had other favorite dogs. Gouge was a bright-eyed, quick-witted black terrier with white legs. He was excellent at treeing squirrels, killing rats, and, unfortunately, snapping the necks of chickens before they were needed. Grab was also a terrier but he was more sedate and less intelligent than his kennel mate Gouge. The last dog that Julius mentions is a black and tan hound named Wallace who was know as an excellent squirrel dog.

Hunting was a way of life in the early days of Datha, not only for sport but as a source of food and as defense against wild creatures who might disturb domesticated animals or crops. Julius and his brother, Horace, were inveterate hunters. Later, Julius, as an adult and a man of the cloth, justified hunting because he considered animals as God's gift for man's use. —*Ginny Hall-Apicella*

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Marilyn Peck



The Dataw Historic Foundation has been working on a couple of new projects. The first is the dating of the Elizabeth Hext House in historic Beaufort

which is featured in this issue. The second is a drone project to explore the ruins of the Lewis Reeve Sams house that may remain in the Morgan River. Of additional excitement, is the discovery of a small woman's brooch at the Sams Planation ruins.

I would like to welcome our new Board members: Peter Bongiovanni as Membership Chair, Rosemary Patterson and Marti Johnson as Fund Raising Chairs, and Ginny Hall-Apicella as Tabby Times Editor. I know they will bring new ideas to DHF and its future.

In the beginning of every year, we start our membership drive. Our goal is to have every resident become a member of DHF since the ruins and the 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 our 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 ensure Dataw's historic structures and its artifacts will always be preserved. Dataw Island remains a unique and beautiful place to live and I feel lucky to be a part of it.

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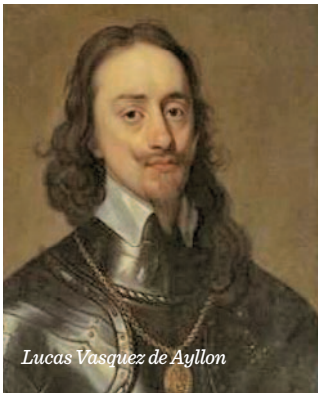
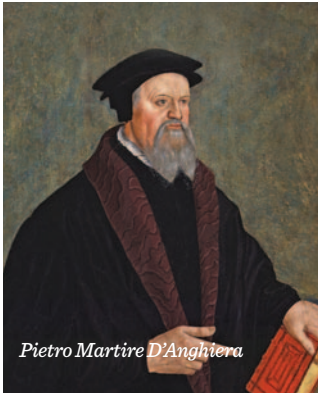
TABBY TIMES

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Layout/Design: *Lisa Costigan*
Photography: *Bill Riski, Ginny Hall-Apicella*

On the Street Where You Live

— ORIGIN OF THE NAME —

When ALCOA first began to develop Dataw in 1983, they hired a marketing firm which, recognizing the history of the island, gave the streets their names. All the roadways on the island have archival references. This column will be devoted to explaining those historical references.



THE NAME FOR CHICORA POINT precedes the antebellum origin of Dataw by at least three centuries. Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon, a sugar planter from Hispaniola sent his agents on northward on exploratory voyages in search of native labor. In 1521, on the second of such voyages, two of these ships landed somewhere on the South Carolina coast thought to be near the Pee Dee River. They learned from the inhabitants that this land was called Chicora. With the lure of gifts and a tour of the ships, the captains encouraged some 70 native people on board and then, proceeded to pull the anchor and set sail for Hispanolia with their guests as now prisoners. Back in Santo Domingo, one of these young native men became a favorite of Ayllon, learned to speak Spanish and was baptized. He was given the name Francisco de Chicora (aka Francisco Chicora). Ayllon brought Francisco as his servant to Spain and the royal court where the young native, thought to be from the Catawba group, told tales of Indian legend and life. Fortunately, these tales were recorded by Pietro Martire D'Anghiera (aka Peter Martyr), an Italian court chronicler who published "The Testimony of Francisco de Chicora" in *De Orbis Novo* in 1530. Martyr describes the young man as "not devoid of intelligence. He understands readily and has learned the Spanish tongue quite well."

Among the tales that Francisco told were of a king of gigantic size who was called Datha (ALCOA later standardized the spelling to Dataw) who ruled among a race of people with brown hair which hung to their knees. His wife

and five children were as enormous as he, and they all lived in a land called Duhare. Martyr describes a process by which the king and his children grew to such an enormous size: the infant's bones were massaged with special herbs until they became as soft as wax. Then the child's limbs were systematically stretched over a period of days. Martyr expressed some skepticism over this narration writing, "Such is the story that is told to me, and I repeat it for what it is worth. Your Excellency may believe it or not." Martyr records that Francisco de Chicora spoke of other indigenous people who kept young deer, and milked the does to use for making cheese. These people subsisted on oysters from coastal waters and grew potatoes and maize. Martyr chronicles native peoples who enjoyed dancing, held religious ceremonies, and were particularly fond of ballgames. Their priests and old women cured fevers and wounds with the juice of plants.

In 1526, Allyn, accompanied by Francisco de Chicora and 600 other would-be colonists, sailed to coastal South Carolina to establish the first Spanish colony in the territorial area of the future United States. The exact area of their landing is in dispute but many think it is at the present Port Royal. Two of the six expedition ships ran aground, Ayllon died of a fever, de Chicora disappeared back to his people never to be heard from again in history, and the settlement was abandoned. And thus, two of Dataw streets are named: one for an accredited, intelligent young man and one for a legendary king.

—Ginny Hall-Apicella

Awww shucks!

Dataw Historic Foundation 22nd Annual Oyster Roast

October 18, 2021

SAMS PLANTATION RUINS

Dear Dataw Neighbors,

Dataw Island is a welcoming place whether you are newly arrived or have been here for many years.

Dataw attracts people because of its natural beauty, its Southern charm, and its many activities such as golf, croquet, tennis or boating. One of the main draws is the history of the island. The Dataw Historic Foundation (DHF) has spent over 25 years exploring, archiving and insuring that the past is recognized and preserved.

If you have walked through the historic ruins of the Sam's Plantation, stopped at the History and Learning Center or attended a discussion of how this island has evolved over time, you can see the efforts of this organization. DHF is committed to preserving, protecting and sharing our history. The Sams Plantation Ruins are on the National Registry of Historic Places.

Please join us in supporting the DHF! Remember, DHF is a 501(3)(c) organization and is 100% dependent on the financial contributions of our members.

Pete Bongiovanni, Membership Chair

www.DatawHistory.org

PLEASE CIRCLE THE MEMBERSHIP YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT:

Sponsor (\$500) ***Benefactor*** (\$250) ***Patron*** (\$100) ***Supporter*** (\$60) ***Member*** (\$40)

Last Name _____ First Name(s) _____

Address _____

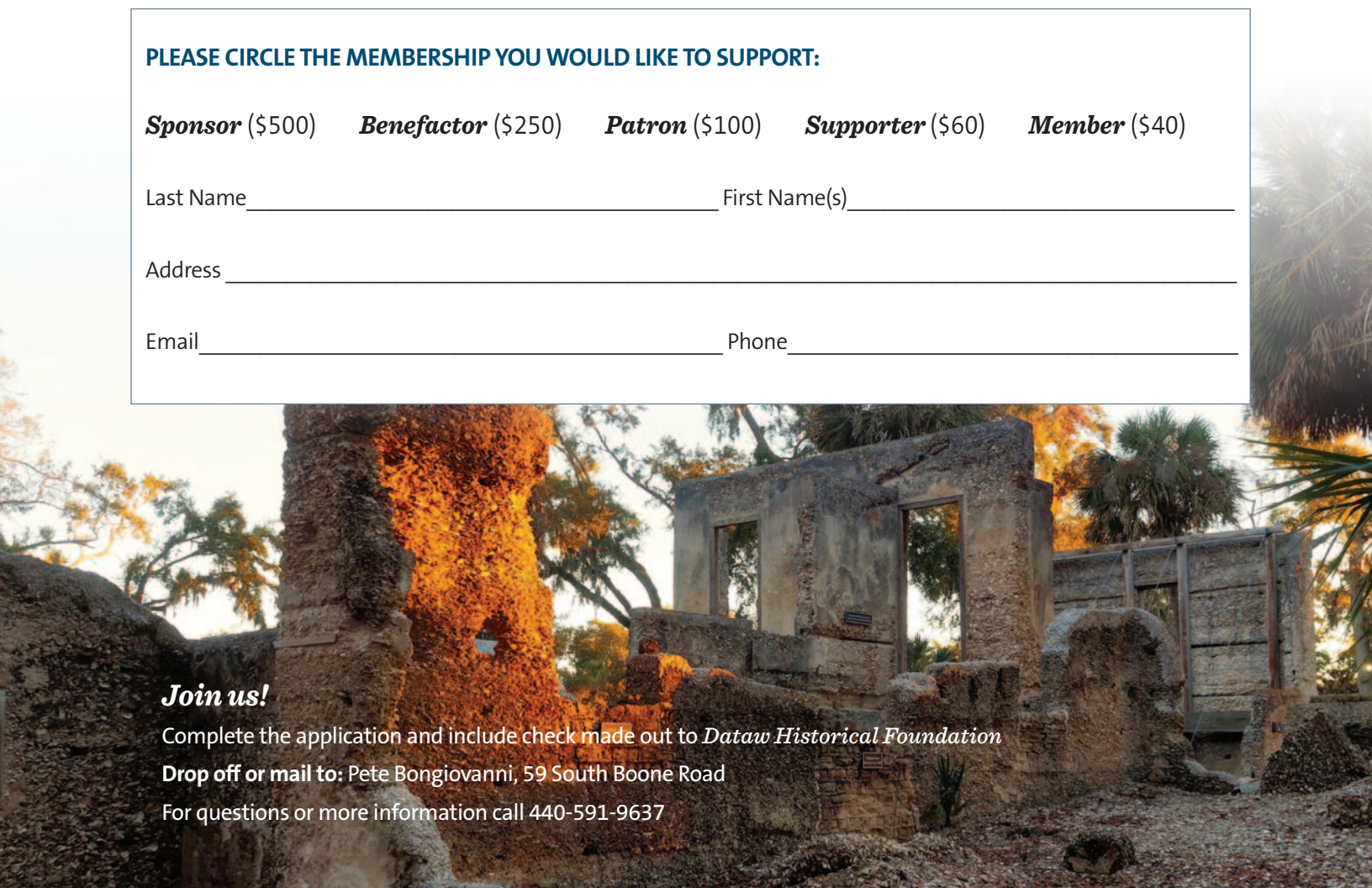
Email _____ Phone _____

Join us!

Complete the application and include check made out to *Dataw Historical Foundation*

Drop off or mail to: Pete Bongiovanni, 59 South Boone Road

For questions or more information call 440-591-9637



ADD YOUR PERSONAL BRICK TO THE

Dataw Heritage Walk

This holiday season would be the perfect time to join the island's rich history by adding your name to the Heritage Walk!

Purchase a 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 represent residents who came to Dataw Island 30 years ago, and up to and including our most recent residents.

To purchase a brick, please use the form below. Forms are also available in the History and Learning Center or on our website at www.DatawHistory.org.



ORDER FORM

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

FILL IN THE SQUARES WITH A LETTER OR A SPACE

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— EXAMPLES —

John & Jane Williams 2001	The Williams Family 2001	John Williams Family 2001	John Williams 2001
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