

# Tabby Tattler

Dataw Historic Foundation Newsletter

Volume III, Fall 2005

Featuring

## "A New Chapter in Dataw's History" Update



From the President. . .

*It is with mixed emotions that I write my last "Letter from the President." It has been four years, and it is time for new leadership. I have enjoyed almost every minute, and I look forward to continuing my association with the*

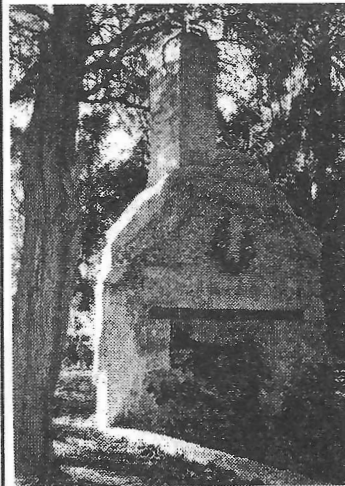
*Foundation as Chair of the Ruins Committee.*

*I have some great memories, but one special moment happened this summer when Darlene called me to say "Sam Arthur" had been trying to reach me, but she wouldn't give him my number since she had no idea who he was. I called the number in Charlotte, NC, and it turns out his name was Arthur Sams, and he is a patriarch of the Sams family. He is 92 and is an utterly charming southern gentleman. We had a wonderful conversation, which I thoroughly enjoyed. He was born and brought up in Beaufort and used to come back for a week every summer, but physical ailments do not allow him to do so now. He is a cousin to our local Sams, Jeanne Sams Aimar and T. Reeve Sams (B. B. Sams was their great, great, great grandfather). I sent him copies of our newsletters, and he in turn made a VERY generous contribution to the Dataw Historic Foundation as thanks for the work we are doing.*



Jeanne Sams Aimar, Arthur Sams, Charles Aimar

### 2005 Christmas Cards Selling Fast



Your friends will enjoy receiving this special DHF holiday greeting photographed and designed by Dick Golobic.

\$20 for 18 cards

Available in:

- ♦Community Center
- ♦Golf Shop

or call:

Jean Morgan 7689  
Kathee Schmit 7446  
Mariann Golobic 7904

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*I would like to thank all Board members, both past and present for helping me be so successful. I feel I am turning over a very healthy and vibrant organization to my successor, who will be named shortly. Thanks to all the members of the Dataw Historic Foundation for your support.*

*Cathy Crocker*

Save the Date -- March 6, 2006  
Seventh Annual Oyster Roast

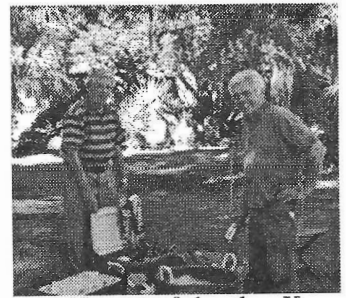
# 2005 Fish Fry Fair Weather, Fabulous Food, Fine Drink and Fun Made for a Fantastic Evening

Chairs Kathee Schmit and Mariann Golobic expressed gratitude to all who helped make October 17 such an enjoyable evening. The event at the Gazebo was sold out with over 125 in attendance. Steve Brown's flounder was "better than ever." The table of tasty desserts provided by several members (coordinated by Pat Bell) capped off the fine eating and camaraderie shared by DHF members.

The \$1,000 profit, which was the result of careful planning and extra work done by volunteers, will help enable the extensive restoration projects described later in this issue.



Kathee & sister-in-law  
Carla serving salads



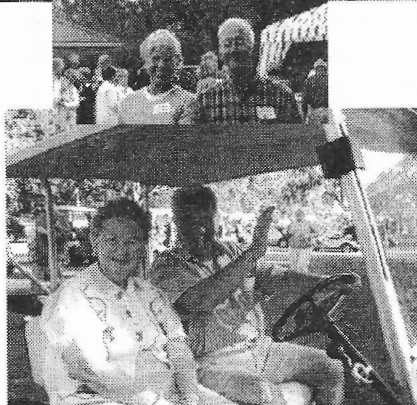
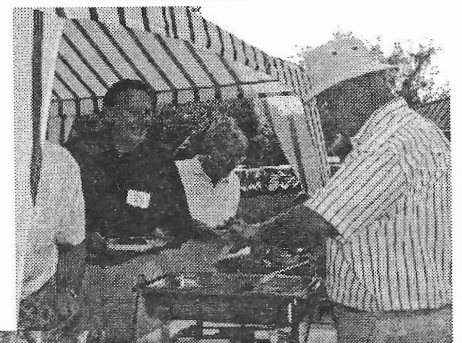
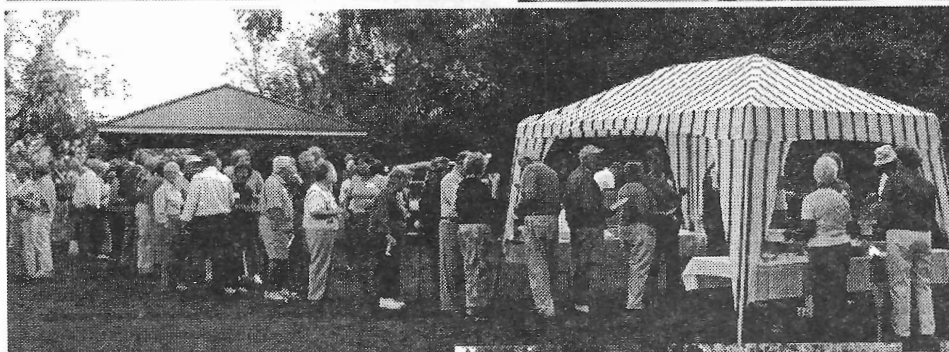
Herman & brother Ken  
setting up drink station



Mariann & Kathee



Joanne Bent & Pat Bell



## Special Thanks to Cathy Crocker

After four action-packed years as president of the DHF, Cathy has decided that it is time to relinquish her leadership role. The new officers will be voted on at the December meeting.

Cathy's enthusiasm and dedication has resulted in significant strides for the Foundation. There is greater awareness of the important role of the DHF to the Dataw community; the DHF has become a self-funded organization; membership and fund-raising numbers are at all-time highs; the ruins have been carefully maintained, and new preservation projects to ensure future stability have been carefully planned and acted upon; the archives have been updated to reflect recent history; numerous special projects have been initiated, and special events have been enjoyed by all participants.

Above all, Cathy has been fun to work with--meetings have been efficiently run, and the camaraderie among the board members has been incredible. Cathy's love for Dataw, love of history and love for people combined with her leadership skills made her an effective president.

Thank you Cathy for a job well done. The DHF membership and the Board are grateful that you will continue your involvement with the organization as Chair of the Ruins Preservation Committee. It will be a pleasure to continue to work with you.

## Great Opportunities to Get Involved

Do you have an interest in the rich history of our beautiful island? Do you enjoy showing your guests the ruins? Are you anxious that our past be documented and preserved? Are you seeking a new interest, or are you new to Dataw and looking for opportunities to become involved?

With 2006 fast approaching, now is a great time to consider working with the DHF. Your time is minimal, your talents are always appreciated and you work with a great group of people.

The DHF Board is considering some new "at-large" positions so that interested persons can get to know the functions of the Board and the activities of each of the committees.

Jobs are varied within six committees. You may assist with fund-raising events like the Oyster Roast and Fish Fry, help with membership details, be a part of managing the artifacts and archives, assist with research and long-range planning, arrange special events such as tours and guest talks. You may enjoy financial or communication details or publicity assignments such as working on publications and brochures; or you may choose to become involved in ruins preservation.

If some of these activities spark your interest, and you think you may enjoy being part of a dynamic team, call Cathy Crocker at 838-0897 or Jack Brown at 838-4289.

## Tattler Tidbits

In an attempt to document the early years with Alcoa, DHF members interviewed several of the first Dataw employees and residents. One of those interviewed was Debbie Tenyck, who reported to work as Coordinator of Special Events and Catering in April, 1985. She told about the first social group gatherings, the Friday night "happy hours" in the original Grill Room (which was upstairs). It started with all the first residents, but the real estate office would always tell those staying in the Bluff units to attend so they could meet residents who would answer their questions. Geoffrey Hutchinson, known as "Hutch," was the first bartender.

One Halloween Angus Trask and Debbie wrote a murder mystery, which was performed at the club with residents playing the various roles. "It was great fun," she reported. A second murder mystery was written by Martha Browne and Chuck Henry, and again all residents participated. Martha and Pat Jardine wrote a third one, and everyone on the island again participated. Soon there were so many residents that the event had to be discontinued.

Debbie also told about a classic car show coordinated by Dick Browne. Many beautiful cars were parked on the lawn behind the clubhouse. Several of the cars belonged to residents.

One particular event she remembered was a luau held on a particularly hot summer evening. The pool area was beautiful--flower rings and candles floating in the pool, tiki lights, a delicious buffet and dancing. . . Suddenly, the electricity on the island went out, and people started jumping in the pool. . . Security arrived shortly with flash lights! The lifeguard on duty was very nervous!

*John Colgan compiled some interesting facts about many of Dataw's street names. Here is a first installment:*

### Locust Fence Drive

Upon the death of their father, Lewis Reeve Sams and Berners Barnwell Sams inherited Dataw Island. They decided to divide Dataw Island into two distinct parts with Lewis owning the northern half, and B. B. owning the southern half. They planted a fence of Locust trees across the island to serve as the boundary line.

### Island Circle East/West

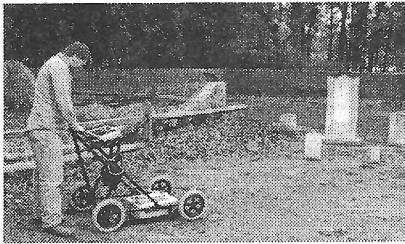
In 1984, Alcoa retained the Austin Kelley Advertising Company to develop street and place names as part of its marketing plan for Dataw. The planned perimeter road, which would encircle the island was appropriately (if not creatively) named "Island Circle East/West."

# A New Chapter in Dataw's Plantation History

by Jack Brown, Cathy Crocker and Ann Craigmile

## Continued from Spring Newsletter

In the Spring Newsletter the comprehensive, three-phase preservation project to (1) investigate the Sams family and Cotton Dike cemeteries, (2) stabilize the Sams cemetery walls and (3) locate, explore and hopefully restore the well site which had been covered over by Alcoa were explained. The Ground Penetration Radar (GPR) surveys conducted by Brockington and Associates (experts in the field of archaeological research and preservation) were described. The preliminary results of one of the GPR surveys, which indicated that several graves were added to the Sams' cemetery after the family fled the invading Union troops in 1861, were revealed.



*Eric Poplin using the GPR device.*

On November 7, Dr. Eric Poplin, the principal archeologist for Brockington & Associates, Inc., made a formal PowerPoint presentation to the DHF Board on the results of the archeological investigations at both cemeteries and at the well site in the plantation complex. Included in his report were detailed plans for stabilizing the cemetery walls and for reconstructing the well. This article will describe some of Brockington's two-day survey results and their two-day well excavation activities. Sections of their report and the recommended future actions by the DHF will be highlighted.

## **GPR Work at the Two Cemeteries**

### The Sams Cemetery

Since the stabilization of the cemetery wall may involve excavation into the archaeological part of the cemetery, the GPR (Ground Penetration Radar) survey of the cemetery and the surrounding area was necessary to determine if there were graves adjacent to the cemetery wall. GPR creates images of changes in the soil chemistry, texture, hydrology, or other materials underground. It records the length of time necessary for the radar signal to bounce back from soil layers or objects. The survey identified multiple anomalies throughout the space within the cemetery wall. Anomalies of similar depths and configurations that occurred on three or more adjacent transects were interpreted as *probable* graves. Other configurations were interpreted as *possible* graves. There are 14 marked graves. Based on the results of the GPR survey, Brockington estimates that the cemetery contains at least 5 - 12 additional graves. Most importantly, it showed that the planned excavation of 1 foot of soil adjacent to the wall footing, which will be taken during the stabilization of the wall, should not intrude into any grave shafts.

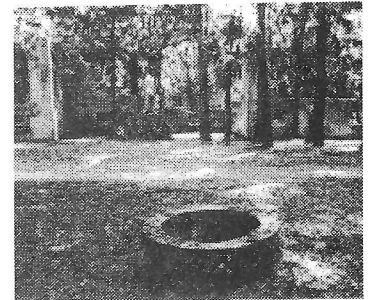
### The Cotton Dike Cemetery

The DHF wished to know the number and location of graves within the Cotton Dike Cemetery to permit better management of this preserved African-American cemetery. The cemetery contains four grave markers and 27 or more depressions that are or may be graves. The GPR survey conducted on May 4 showed at least 38 possible/probable graves at the site.

## **The Well – Exploration, Excavation and Reconstruction**

### Background and Original Plans

As noted earlier, Alcoa filled in the well at the time of stabilization work back in the 1980s. A long-time goal of the DHF was to uncover the centuries old well and restore it to its original condition. In so doing, the restored well would complement the setting of the remaining elements of the former Sams Plantation settlement and contribute to the interpretation of plantation life in antebellum Beaufort County.



*Picture of well taken in early 1980s*

The well is shown on most historic maps of the plantation complex. The picture in this article was taken in the early 1980s. Since there has never been any architectural study on the well, it was "hoped" that excavation would uncover many artifacts.

The "original" DHF plan called for three major stages in the well "dig":

1. Excavate and expose remnants of the well and any facilities like a well house or path that experts believe existed near the well.
2. Investigate the bottom of the well for possible artifacts.
3. Restore the well to its original condition.

Unfortunately, this plan proved to be far too ambitious, which is explained later.



*Eric Poplin and "the dig" team.*

The Actual "Dig"— Reported "on-the-scene" by Cathy Crocker

"On June 13, one of the hottest days of the summer, Eric Poplin of Brockington Associates arrived with three people to undertake the archeological investigation of the well that once stood north of the plantation house. They had employed GPR to determine its approximate location when they were here in April to survey the cemeteries. Now they were here to excavate a 10 x 10 foot section around the well by hand.

They arrived with a truck loaded with two-by-fours, rope, screen devices and shovels as well as copious amounts of water. They constructed teepee-like triangles with the 2"x4"s which were tied together with rope, and from which they hung the screening devices. The screens were approximately 2'x 2' with 2"x 4"s around the outside. They carefully measured off the area around the well, and the first level of digging began. Every shovel of dirt was screened for artifacts. I tried working with the screens, but it was incredibly hard work as they were very heavy. This tedious, hot and dirty work continued throughout the day based on only a shadow of darker soil, which indicated where the well might have been. We did recover some artifacts, which are being cleaned and cataloged by Brockington.



The second day, it became apparent that the well was actually located at the very southern end of the area that had been excavated. Rather than continue in the same manner, Christie Henry was asked to bring in a backhoe to dig the final few feet where the well was located. We did, in fact, find the brick collar that Alcoa had pushed into the well when they closed it.

Having found a nominal amount of valuable artifacts and given the enormous expense of further investigation of the well, it was decided to fill it back in again and to do the reconstruction above the location of the well. DHF money would be better spent on an archeological investigation in another area of the complex.

I couldn't believe that after two days of backbreaking, grueling work, it almost appeared that nothing had happened! They assured me that the work of an archeologist often ends up like this when they are working with developers. Now we know the precise location of the former well, and we can reconstruct this important component of the Sams plantation settlement so that visitors can understand its relationship to the main house and other outbuildings."

Excerpts from Brockington's Report on the Well Excavation

Fill was removed in 0.5' arbitrary levels. The fill was screened through 1/4" mesh hardware cloth, collecting or documenting artifacts that remained on the screen. Brick, tabby, mortar, and shell (defined as rubble) were weighed and discarded adjacent to the site. All other artifacts were retained for cleaning and identification. Three 0.5' levels were removed.



Due to time restraints, a backhoe was brought in from Dataw Maintenance Dept., and a trench was excavated in which the intact portions of the brick lining of the former well were encountered. Excavations stopped at this point. Several members of the local community were present to observe the archeology, while some actually took part in finding artifacts in the screens.

Level 1 revealed a dense layer of rubble. 128 pounds of these materials were removed. 53 artifacts were recovered, the majority of which were bottle glass fragments, architectural debris (window glass and nails) and ceramic shards from the 18th and 19th centuries. The most interesting artifact recovered was a brass jews harp fragment.

Level 2 contained 440 pounds of rubble. 242 artifacts were recovered with the majority being architectural debris and ceramics similar to those in Level 1. Numerous bottle glass fragments were recovered representing various bottle types and forms.

Level 3 brought forth 536 pounds of rubble and 260 artifacts. Again architectural debris made up the majority of artifacts, with ceramic shards being the second most prevalent. A few buttons were found along with door and/or window hardware.

With the backhoe, one large fragment of the former well lining that extended above the ground surface was removed.

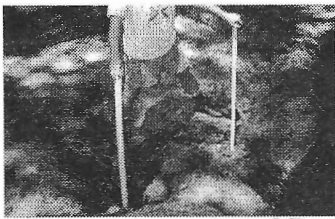
Included in the Brockington report was a detailed list of all the artifacts removed.

A New Chapter continued

### Well Reconstruction Plans

The DHF desires to reconstruct the portion of the well that extends above the ground surface to provide visitors an appreciation of this important feature.

The inside diameter of the brick lining, approximately 42 inches across, has been marked with white PVC pipe. The new structure will be built using these marks as guides. It will rise 2-2.5 feet above the present ground surface, with sufficient subsurface courses to support the new structure. The new brick should match as closely as possible those that were present in the original structure. A portion of the former well that once stood above the ground surface, which was recovered during the excavations, is available at the well site for inspections to note methods or patterns of construction.

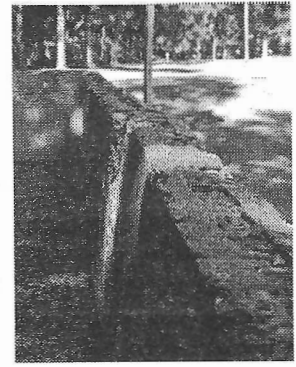


### **Sams Cemetery Wall Restoration Plans**

The cemetery wall, originally constructed in the late 1700s, has several large cracks on its east and west sides. One side is leaning, and that entire wall is in danger of total collapse. The plan is to stabilize the wall by creating a new subsurface foundation to support it.

Three possible solutions for stabilizing the wall were considered, and the one chosen will entail the construction of a gravel footing to either side of the existing tabby footing that supports the wall. First, a trench will be excavated on each side of the wall to the base of the existing tabby footing to a depth of approximately 12 in. below the ground surface. The trench will extend approximately 24 in. to either side of the wall. Then, approximately 8 in. of compacted crushed limestone gravel will be placed in the trench on each side of the wall. The gravel will prevent the footing from shifting to the side as the wall leans. Natural fill will be replaced into the trench, covering the gravel and restoring the original contour of the ground surface. This activity will be repeated in 6-foot segments along the wall until the entire structure

has been stabilized. This tedious repetition will prevent a loss of stability due to the removal of fill from large segments of the wall at the same time.



### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

Despite the disappointment of not getting to the bottom of the well or being able to fully restore the site, the entire process of surveying and excavating proved to be a positive, useful and interesting experience for the DHF.

Eric Poplin with Brockington and Associates out of Charleston has provided professional leadership throughout the lengthy process of planning, securing permits and preparing contracts for cemetery wall stabilization and well reconstruction. ***The DHF approved the contracts on November 7, and work should begin shortly.*** Eric along with Colin Brooker will supervise this important and critically sensitive work.

From the beginning almost one year ago, this wall and well project has been one of the most ambitious undertaken by the DHF. It will cost over \$30,000—all funded by DHF members. It's been exciting so far. Notification of work being done will be sent by E-mail, so that you can stop by and see the process and progress. We greatly appreciate your support and hope for your continuing support during our 2006 membership drive in January. Remember: *We only have one past, and if it's destroyed, it's gone forever. Preservation is the one thing we can do to ensure that future generations will have a past to appreciate.* (Nick Honerkamp, Historical Archaeologist)

