

# TABBY TATTLER

Dataw Historic Foundation Newsletter

[www.DatawHistory.org](http://www.DatawHistory.org)

Fall 2017

## The Sams Family of South Carolina . . . ANN CRAIGMILE

In light of Jeanne Sams Aimar's death last June, it seems appropriate to once again look at the important role the Sams family has played not only in Dataw's history, but in the history of South Carolina going back to 1681. This article is compiled from prior research and publications on the family done by past DHF presidents, Jack Brown and John Colgan.

Prominently displayed in the DIH&LC are two Sams' family trees created in 2005 by Jack Brown. Each tree shows 11 generations of Sams' descendants: one is for the family of Arthur Raoul Sams, Jr., a descendant of Berners Barnwell Sams (B.B.); and one is for the families of Beaufort siblings Talbird Reeve Sams (Reeve), S. Jeanne Sams Aimar (Jeanne), and Therese Sams Colquhoun (Therese), who are descendants of both Lewis Reeve Sams and Berners Barnwell Sams (through two 5th and 6th generation "crossover" marriages in 1853 and 1885).

While compiling the family trees, Jack spent considerable time with T. Reeve Sams and his sister Jeanne Sams Aimar, at Reeve's historic home in Beaufort, learning their interesting ancestral stories. The Sams are considered to be one of the most important and influential families in South Carolina history. The family were among the early settlers in "Carolina", owned Datha (the original spelling of Dataw) Island for close to 80 years from 1783 to 1861, and played major roles in the development of Beaufort. The family maintains leading roles in the community today.

According to historic records, the progenitor of the Sams Family of South Carolina was Bonum (Bonham) Sams II. He was baptized into the Anglican Church in England on February 2, 1663. In that same year, King Charles II, as a reward for *(The Sams Family of South Carolina is continued on page 3)*

### JEANNE SAMS AIMAR APRIL 25, 1926 – JUNE 16, 2017

Beaufort has lost one of her most cherished native daughters at age 91.

Jeanne had a wonderful memory of her Sams family lineage which includes the owners of Dataw Island who established the plantations here. She was a descendant from both Berners Barnwell (B.B.) Sams and Lewis Reeve Sams and all the way back to Colonel John "Tuscarora Jack" Barnwell, one of the founders of the town of Beaufort in 1711.

Jeanne was an avid supporter of the DHF and was here with other members of her family for the April 2016 opening of the DIH&LC. She was an active parishioner in St. Peter's Catholic Church and her sharp memory of the historic church on Carteret at Duke Street was appreciated during the restoration in 2012. In her younger years, she walked to that church daily and loved to tell people about her relatives interred in its graveyard. They include Franklin Talbird, a Civil War Veteran, who built the brick wall around the church and grounds in the 1840's that is still there.

We will miss "her sweet Beaufort accent", and noted by a former neighbor, "hers is a dying breed that our once smaller, less harried, more genteel Beaufort shall not see again."



For more information, see "Upcoming Events" on page 2.

Island-wide Reception  
Best Artistic Interpretation of Dataw History  
**Monday, November 13, 4-6 PM**

Dataw Luminary Night  
**Monday, December 4**

Dataw History Lectures  
Monthly, starting in January, information to come

DHF Oyster Roast  
**Monday, March 12, 2018**

## Docent Training Classes

Docent training classes are available for those interested in helping to staff the DIH&LC and tour visitors around the Ruins. If you are interested, contact Diane Roney at 843-838-4972.

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## Christmas on the Sam's Plantation Luminary Night 2017 Monday, December 4, 2017

The Dataw Garden Club, along with the Dataw Island Yacht Club and the Dataw Historic Foundation, will give us a night shining with lights and singing! Started by the Dataw Garden Club 27 years ago, the night is our gift to all of you on our beautiful island. Join us as we celebrate the holiday season!

### 5:00 PM - Butterfly Garden

Caroling and entertainment by members of the Harbor Masters.

### 5:45 PM - Pirate Ship at the Gazebo

Partake of a hot toddy, courtesy of the Dataw Island Yacht Club.

### 6:30 PM - Dataw Ruins

Bethesda Christian Fellowship Gospel Choir Concert

### 7:00 PM - Dataw Ruins Parking Area

Light Plantation style refreshments will be served by the Dataw Garden Club. Dessert, coffee and tea will be available in the Cannery. BYO other beverages.



The 8th generation descendants of Bonum Sams: Therese Sams Colquhoun, Arthur Raoul Sams (1914-2014), S. Jeanne Sams Aimar (1926-2017). On the right is Dr. Charles Schley Aimar, Sr., (1924-2012) husband of Jeanne. Not pictured is Talbird Reeve Sams (1924-2013). Photo was taken on Dataw at a Sams family tribute in 2011. There are now 11th generation Sams (their great grandchildren) living in the Beaufort area.



## President's Report ... MARILYN PECK

It is a pleasure to welcome everyone back to the Island from all their summer adventures! As always, fall is a very busy time here, and this year is no different. In October, DHF hosted our Low Country Boil, which is our way of thanking all our members for their support throughout the year. In November, we had a Fireside Chat with Larry Rowland and Michael Allen. We will have a table at the November VAC Holiday Boutique where we will be selling our book, *DATAW, No Ordinary Place* and have membership information. The Monday, December 4 Luminary Night, "Christmas on the Sams' Plantation" will be sponsored by the Dataw Island Garden Club in partnership with DHF and the Yacht Club. We hope you will all join us for these events.

This year John Colgan, our History Chairman, is starting a speaker series at the DIH&LC. The series is to educate residents about the rich history of the island both past and present, so please watch for further information.

The DIH&LC is open to all residents from 8:00 AM–8:00 PM. Please go over to see our displays. If you would like to tour the ruins you can either call Diane Roney to arrange a guided tour or use our self-guided tour booklets that you will find inside the Center.

In closing, I want to thank all of our DHF members for their financial and volunteer support. For those of you who are not yet members I hope you will join us in 2018. Our mission to *foster the rich Sea Island plantation history and to be the custodian of Dataw's entire history, from the prehistoric to the present*, is the basis for all of our efforts. It is very important for *all* of our residents to be part of this effort to preserve these very special ruins.

## The DHF Has Been Busy!

**Camp Dataw** — The campers were introduced to games that were played by children during the Colonial Period. It was noted that some of the games were played by sailors while they were at sea on long voyages. The presenters, Dwayne Pickett and his mother Peggy Pickett, were dressed as colonial settlers.

**Lowcountry Boil** on October 23 — Not even the rain could dampen the evening! The Lowcountry Boil has traditionally been an event where Dataw reunites after the summer. This popular evening also provides an opportunity for the DHF to thank our members for supporting the many DHF events and projects throughout the year. As always, the evening was great fun with a wonderful Lowcountry feast provided by Jimmy Fitts accompanied with plenty of wine and beer. Chairs Kathy McShane and Valerie Hatcher did a great job with the planning and setup. Special thanks go to all the volunteers who made this evening possible, including Laura Bricker who stepped in to help when Kathy McShane had a last minute family commitment.

**Fireside Chat** on November 2. The evening was part of a continuing series of Fireside Chats, sponsored by the DHF for the benefit of Dataw residents and their guests. Dr. Lawrence Rowland and Michael Allen, of the National Park Service, were the speakers for the night.

### DHF Board 2017

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Tabby Tattler, Layout/Design: Cindy Schafer

Directors At-Large: Kathy Kelenski  
Barbara Titus

Other: Technical Consultant, Larry Rowland

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

## Upcoming Events in Detail!



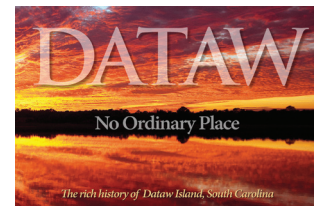
**Competition for the Best Artistic Interpretation of Dataw History — Making Dataw's History Come Alive Through the Art Media!** The event, partnered by VAC and DHF, will have all the entries on display at the Community Center from October 29 through November 9. Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three vote getters, to be determined by Dataw resident's voting. Visit the Community Center to admire all the work and to vote for your top pick. The winners of the competition will be announced *at a reception at the DIH&LC on Monday, November 13, from 4:00–6:00 PM. All Dataw residents are invited to attend the reception.*

**Dataw Luminary Night 2017**, Monday, December 4. This year's Luminary Night event will have a slightly different format than in the past. The Island will still be aglow with luminaries, and everyone will have a chance to get into the holiday spirit with good food, drink, and special music. *See flier on page 1.*

Under the leadership of John Colgan, the **DHF History Committee** will host a series of *history lectures on various aspects of Dataw's history*. The first lecture of the series will be in January. The intent of the series is to educate Dataw residents about the rich history of our island, both past and present. Further information will be sent out via the Dataw net.

The DHF's 20th Annual **Oyster Roast** will be on **Monday, March 12, 2018**. The event, along with the DHF raffle, is a Dataw favorite. For now, save the date!

## Dataw, No Ordinary Place



Sales of this beautifully illustrated book about the rich history of Dataw Island have been strong. We have a limited number of copies left. ***We are not going to do a reprint of the book.*** All proceeds from sales will support the Dataw Island History and Learning Center. Copies will be available for sale at the VAC Holiday Boutique on Sunday, November 12. The price is \$40.

### TABBY TATTLER — Fall 2017

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

Executive Editor: Ann Craigmile  
(843-838-3713, anncraigmile@gmail.com)

Layout/Design: Cindy Schafer  
(843-838-7517, cindyschafer21@gmail.com)

Dataw Historic Foundation  
Post Office Box 819, Beaufort, SC 29901



## The Sams Family of South Carolina (continued from page 1)

their help in restoring him to the English throne, granted a charter to eight noblemen and soldiers to establish a colony in the New World. They named the colony “Carolina” and formed a company called The Lords Proprietors. The first “Carolina” settlers arrived in 1670 and named the settlement “Charles Towne”, after their royal benefactor.

Eighteen-year-old Bonum Sams emigrated from England to the American settlement in 1681. He eventually acquired 100 acres on Wadmalaw Island (near Seabrook and John’s Islands) and became a successful indigo farmer. In the mid-1730s, one of Bonum’s five children, Robert Sams (2nd generation), married Bridget Barnwell, a daughter of Colonel John “Tuscarora Jack” Barnwell, the famous Indian fighter who is buried in the cemetery at St. Helena Church in Beaufort. Robert Sams has been mentioned in several history books as one of the better indigo planters in SC during the 1700s. He and Bridget had four children.

Their third son was William Sams (3rd generation), who married Elizabeth Hext in 1761. During the American Revolution, William was a Loyalist and a magistrate for the British wartime government of “Charles Town.” After the war, with anti-Loyalist sentiments running high, William felt compelled to sell his plantation on Wadmalaw Island. In 1783, he purchased Datha Island for 55,000 SC pounds currency (approximately US \$335,000 today). William built many of the structures on Datha, including the original “old” plantation house plus a few outbuildings and the chapel. He was a successful planter and one of the first to grow the famous Sea Island Cotton. William and Elizabeth had seven children, and both are buried in the Sams’ Cemetery on Dataw.

Two of their children, Berners Barnwell (B.B.) Sams and Lewis Reeve Sams (4th generation) were born on Datha in the 1780s. Both graduated from college; Lewis became a businessman and B.B. a medical doctor, and both became very wealthy planters, large landowners, and leaders in the Beaufort community. The brothers inherited Datha after the death of their parents. B.B. (who had 15 children) took over the southern half and made additions to the “old” plantation house. Lewis Reeve (who had 12 children) took over the northern half and built a house on the Morgan River. In the late 1840s and early 1850s, they were at the height of their prosperity. Lewis Reeve owned 4,000 acres of land and over 150 slaves; B.B. had more than 5,000 acres and over 150 slaves. They owned a number of sizeable plantations as well as summer homes in Beaufort. Today, several of these homes are part of the historic “Point” area. One is still in the family.

Following the deaths of B.B. Sams in 1855 and Lewis Reeve in 1856, Datha was split among their many 5th generation sons, and several intrafamilial land transactions took place. It continued as a successful plantation until November 7, 1861, when the Union troops took over Beaufort, and all of the plantation owners fled the area. There is some mystery about the Sams family during and after the War Between the States because many of the records of this period were lost or destroyed. Reeve and Jeanne know that several of their ancestors were in the War; that many of Lewis Reeve’s family fled to Texas; and that several of B.B. Sams family went to Georgia, Florida and the Baltimore area.

In March, 1863, all Datha property was confiscated by the Federal Government and sold for delinquent taxes. This included

the northern plantation, termed Datha Point, and the southern plantation, termed Datha Inlet. In the years that followed, the land was divided, and there were over a dozen land transactions recorded between 1863 and 1905, when Gustave Sanders reunited Datha Island under sole proprietorship for the first time since the death of William Sams in 1798.

Reeve, Jeanne and Therese are great grandchildren of Robert Randolph Sams (5th generation, 1827-1910, one of B.B. Sams’ 15 children). Robert Randolph served valiantly in the Civil War, was one of few family members to return to Beaufort at its conclusion. Sometime before his death, he secured the title to the Sams Family Cemetery from Gustave Sanders, and the cemetery continues to be “heir’s property” of the Sams family.

Several additional land transactions followed Gustave Sander’s 1905 ownership until the Island was purchased by Kate Gleason in 1928. Upon her death in 1933, she bequeathed Dataw to Libby Sanders Rowland. Libby’s sons, Larry and Richard Rowland sold the Island to Alcoa in 1983.

All three Sams’ siblings were born in Beaufort and spent most of their entire lives in the area. All were born in the same house on Hancock Street. The house was built between 1780 and 1785 and at one time was owned by one of B.B. Sams’ daughters. B.B. Sams lived in the house while his new brick house on “the green” was being built. While there he contracted pneumonia and died in the upstairs room where Reeve, Jeanne, and Therese were born. The house has remained in the family. All three have lived near to one another in the Beaufort “Point” neighborhood, and several of their children and grandchildren live in the Beaufort area. They know of Sams relatives in Charlotte, Baltimore, parts of Texas, Georgia, and Florida. Many of them have traveled to visit Dataw. Although Sams family ownership of Datha Island officially ended over 150 years ago, Reeve, Jeanne and Therese and many of their relatives feel that the “old Sams cemetery” remains sacred Sams’ property. They have been honorary members and supporters of the DHF and have attended many of our events through the years. Their combined 11 children (9th generation) continue to pass along the Sams’ legacy to their children and great grandchildren

Stop in to the DIH&LC to see the family trees, the photographs, and many of the artifacts that have been donated by the Sams’ family. The Center is open daily from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM.

**The Dataw  
Island History &  
Learning Center  
(DIH&LC)**

**Funded by  
generous  
donations from  
Dataw residents  
and DHF  
supporters, the  
building is open  
every  
day from  
8 AM-8 PM.**

**The beautiful  
‘table tree’ was  
created by  
Board member  
Peter Pearks.**





# 2017 Dataaw Historic Foundation Members



## Membership Categories

- **Lifetime Members** (Those whose lifetime contribution to the DHF is \$5,000 or more.)
- **Honorary Members** (Limited to those with an ancestral connection to Dataaw Island. Includes Sams family descendents and family descendents of other prior owners of Dataaw 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 Dataaw Historic Foundation Membership is **IMPORTANT!**

*The vision of the DHF is that the rich Dataaw 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 Dataaw'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 Dataaw or unfamiliar with the work of the Foundation, please recognize the importance of your membership contribution.

**Our 2018 Membership Drive will start in January. Please help support our efforts to preserve this beautiful island that we all love!**