

TABBY TATTLER

Dataw Historic Foundation Newsletter

www.DatawHistory.org

Spring 2018

Further Investigation of 18th Century Tabby Structures

A previously discovered area behind the towering chimney of the main kitchen of the Sams Plantation complex is being further explored. The object of the present project is to preserve and restore a series of structures behind the main kitchen which were previously excavated in 2014. Colin Brooker, Preservation Consultant, is directing the project.

Also working on this project is Rick Wightman, who has been doing restoration and preservation of tabby ruins around the Lowcountry for the last 36 years. His background is fascinating, and his knowledge of tabby is a result of his work at 21 different sites, including several privately owned plantations. Rick has worked on the ruins on Dataw Island on many occasions, starting in 1982, so he knows it well.

What has been revealed as a result of the work at this point is a space about 600 square feet which includes a tabby bordered area with a tabby floor. This is unlike any other structure at the Sams Plantation ruins. Rick has been working mostly on the tabby walls which mark the outlines of these newly revealed structures. Where they are crumbling or unstable, he is recreating the bottom portion of the wall using methods that closely match the original construction of these walls and utilizing oyster shells found at the site.

The sections of the walls that Rick has repaired at this point look almost identical to the original ones, which probably date to late 18th century. What is significant about this is these structures were built quite a few years prior to the Sams Plantation as we know it. Further information about the history and use of these structures will become clearer as the project continues to evolve.



Rick Wightman at the foot of the towering chimney.

Long-Range Preservation Plan To Begin

The next important project for the Dataw Historic Foundation has been approved by the DHF Board. A new long-range preservation plan has been developed to address current and anticipated repair and maintenance needs for all of Dataw's major historic sites. These areas include the B.B. Sams Plantation Complex, Sams Cemetery/Sarah Sams Tomb, Cotton House, Cotton Dike Cemetery, and the Lewis Reeve Sams ruins on the Morgan River. *(See map at right)*

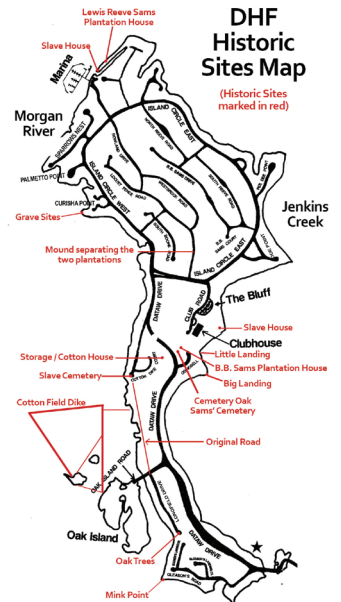
This is the first time in ten years that the DHF has proposed a long-range approach to assessing the needs of these sites. The planning process included hiring the Brooker Architectural Design Consultants firm to carefully assess each of the sites and structures, especially in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew (and Hurricane Irma to a lesser degree).

DHF and DIOA share the responsibility for maintaining Dataw's rich history. DHF has been designated as Custodian of all historic structures, artifacts, and archives. Over the last 20 years, DHF, with the support of its members, has funded over \$150,000 in structural repairs and maintenance. DHF hopes to begin implementing the early stages of the new preservation plan within the next 30-60 days. The three-year budget is estimated at \$30,000.

The DHF committee who will oversee this long-range preservation plan includes Jack Brown, Peter Pearks, John Huntley, and Tom Watkins.

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New DHF Holiday Card!

The photo on the card, called "Snowy Day," was taken at our famous ruins by Dataw resident Donna McKeown on January 3, 2018 . . . a day when Dataw had several inches of snow.

The inside message of the card is: *May the sights and sounds of the holidays bring you Joy!*

250 packages will be printed (package of 10 cards for \$10).

The cards will go on sale in late September. **To guarantee you will get cards from the first order, you can preorder them.** No payment is required for preordering.

To preorder, e-mail Susan Jorgensen at shjorgensen45@gmail.com.

Give your name, address, phone number and the number of packages you want.



SAVE THE DATE!

DHF 20th Anniversary Celebration

October 22, 2018



President's Report . . . MARILYN PECK

On August 21, 2018, the Dataw Historic Foundation (DHF) will celebrate the 20th anniversary of its incorporation as a non-profit organization. The DHF originated with a small group of residents who started the Ruins Committee in the mid 1990's to help preserve and record the Island's 300-year history. From the beginning, the primary focus of the Ruins Committee, and later the DHF, was to preserve the significant tabby ruins — the B.B. Sams Plantation Complex — and to foster the Island's history among residents, prospective residents and historians.

During the early years, DHF raised modest sums annually from interested supporters within the Dataw community. Enough was raised from oyster roasts, bake sales and annual appeals to help fund several preservation projects. Each year, as DHF gained more supporters, it was able to raise more funds to undertake additional preservation projects. Along the way, DHF won two very important awards from the Historic Beaufort Foundation: the *Howard E. Danner Award for Lifetime Achievement in Historic Preservation* in 2006 and the *Historic Preservation Honor Award (Preservation)* in 2011. On March 4, 2011, the Sams Plantation Complex Tabby Ruins was listed on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places, as a result of DHF advocacy and DIOA support. This is not only a very prestigious honor, it is particularly significant because the site is within a private gated community.

Five years later, in 2016, DHF finally realized a long-term dream of having its own museum when we formally opened the Dataw History and Learning Center on the grounds of the Sams Plantation Complex. We are extremely grateful to the loyal DHF supporters who provided all of the \$200,000 funding.

In March 2018, DHF was honored with another award from the Historic Beaufort Foundation, their *Historic Preservation Honor Award*, in recognition of DHF's 20 years of successful preservation and conservation efforts. (See the full story on page 3.)

Today DHF is at a very good point in its 20-year history. We have a vibrant and energetic 19-member board; we have funded over \$150,000 in structural preservation projects at Dataw Island historic sites; and we continue to have a very important role: *to foster and be the custodian of the Island's history, and promote awareness of that history*.

Spear Point Found . . . JOE RONEY

While walking his dog in December 2017, Eugene Gearty crossed the bridge to Oak Island. The parking area just over the bridge had ruts from vehicles and fill dirt had recently been spread to fill them in. Eugene noticed a light-colored stone in the fill dirt that was partly exposed, and some other pieces that seemed to be tabby. He dug up the stone and took it home. When cleaned up, it appeared to have the markings of human shaping and he imagined this might have been an "arrow head." Since the point had been broken off, the stone was not easy to identify.



DHF Board member, Joe Roney, took the striated stone to the Santa Helena Foundation for comparison with its collection of arrow heads and spear heads and for its archeologic knowledge. The Foundation suggested that the stone was from the Mississippian Era Native Americans (1,000–1,500 A. D.). The object's size and weight suggest it was used as a spear head by these Native Americans, who were here when the Spanish began exploring what is now Beaufort County.

Where did the fill dirt come from? Christi Henry, Dataw's Director of Landscape Maintenance, said it may have been either from Dataw or from her farm, where they have uncovered a large number of arrow heads. As some of you know, there are no natural rocks of any kind on Dataw Island. If you have a rock in your back yard, someone put it there!

Eugene and his wife, Suzie, donated the artifact he found to the Dataw Historic Foundation through DHF Board Member, John Colgan. DHF is happy to add this to our collection of artifacts that document the rich history of human life here over thousands of years.



Did You Know?

You have probably seen the old farm wagon under the lean-to near the Ruins. Did you ever wonder where it came from?

The Piedmont farm wagon was purchased in the late 1980s by Bill Cochrane, Vice President of Alcoa Properties, the purchaser and developer of Dataw Island. It was in large part due to Mr. Cochrane's vision for Dataw that the Island is the aesthetic paradise it is today.

Mr. Cochrane envisioned hitching it to a team of mules and showing prospective buyers around the Island. He also thought it could showcase Dataw in Beaufort parades. The shed beside the Cannery, he thought, could house the mules. However, his plan foundered when he found out that two mules would cost \$2,000, plus the cost of taking care of them. According to archived reports, Mr. Cochrane came within "an eyelash" of acquiring the mules.

15 years ago, former Dataw resident, John Rotelli, made repairs to the wagon and placed the wood, metal-rimmed wheels on concrete pads. Recently, when the wagon rolled off its concrete pads, Peter Pearks, former DHF Grounds/Ruins Preservation Chair, managed, with the help of a borrowed car jack, and good old fashioned muscle, to get it back on its pads, thus helping to prevent further deterioration.

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

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Sams Family History Talk with John Colgan. . . KATHY KELENSKI

The January kickoff for the *History Talk* program at the DH&LC was a big success. John Colgan, assisted by Joe Roney, gave a fascinating peek at the history of the Sams family, the principal owners of Datha (now Dataw) Island until the Civil War.

John began with Bonum Sams in 1681, the year Bonum, age 18, immigrated to Charleston along with his wife, Enstis Blake, whose uncle, Benjamin Blake, was captain of the ship that took the newlyweds to the new colony. The lure was the land the immigrants would be able to acquire. At the time, England was anxious to secure Carolina against Spanish attacks from St. Augustine. To do so, they needed more colonists. With the permission of King Charles II, English settlers were offered 150 acres of land for each family member and an additional 150 acres for each slave they imported to the colony. For colonists with capital, these incentives enabled them to have an even larger parcel of land.

Bonum and Enstis had to work as indentured servants for 13 years after their voyage. In 1694 they were awarded property on the banks of Wadmalaw River near Johns Island. They planted indigo and processed the harvest into dyestuff for export to England where it was used in the textile industry. As they prospered, they acquired additional tracts of land.

Bonum and Enstis had three children, John, William and Mary. When Enstis died in 1700, Bonum married Elizabeth Brewton and they had two children, Robert and Elizabeth. Robert, who was born in 1706, married Bridget Barnwell, the daughter of Col. John “Tuscarora Jack” Barnwell, a celebrated Indian fighter, founder of Beaufort and trustee of Beaufort College.

Robert also became a planter on Wadmalaw Island. He and Bridget had four children, including William, who married Elizabeth Hext in 1761 with whom he had seven sons. As a Loyalist during the American Revolution, William was a victim of the vehement anti-Loyalist feelings in Charleston. He felt compelled to sell his plantation on Wadmalaw and travel south to Beaufort where, in 1783, he purchased Datha Island for 55,000 South Carolina pounds (approximately \$335,000 today) from his cousin Sarah (Reeve) Gibbes and her husband.

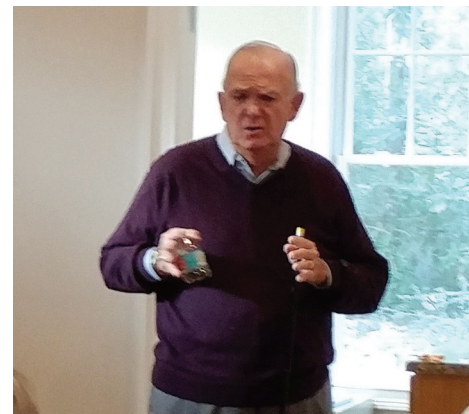
Life on Datha was difficult at first, as William tried to grow indigo but found the market was dwindling as the British tried to punish the new American Republic for breaking away. However, at this time much experimentation in growing cotton was taking place on Hilton Head Island. The cotton produced was superior and word spread to William Sams and other farmers in Beaufort, who began growing it. The British soon realized that by attempting to isolate America, they were actually cutting themselves off from a rich source of readily available raw materials vital to their economy. Trade soon resumed and Sea Island cotton became “King.”

William Sams passed away in 1898 at the age of 57, leaving his wife Elizabeth to care for his estate and hold Datha in trust for his three remaining underage children (Lewis Reeve, Berners Barnwell, and Edward Hext) until they reached their majority (age 21). The children reached their majority in 1805, 1808, and 1811, respectively.

When Elizabeth died in 1813, Lewis and Berners bought out their younger brother, Edward, and split Datha into two plantations separated by a fence of locust trees. Lewis took the north end of the island calling his plantation “Datha Point” and Berners took the south end, calling his plantation “Datha Inlet.” Lewis built his home facing the Morgan River. Berners elected to expand the existing family residence by adding two wings with a connecting hallway to accommodate his growing family. He also added a walled compound, slave quarters, and other service buildings.

In addition to growing cotton, the brothers both engaged in what is believed to be the first commercial production of oranges in the US, which were shipped to Charleston and beyond. At one time there were about 35 acres of orange groves on Datha. By 1850, Lewis and Berners Sams were two of the largest planters in St. Helena parish. They owned nearly 350 slaves and had amassed a fortune greater than \$400,000 (over \$11 million today).

Both brothers died within a year of each other, Berners in 1855 and Lewis in 1856. Neither man lived to witness the dramatic changes that came to Datha Island when the Civil War divided the nation. When Beaufort and the Sea Islands fell to



John Colgan, giving the first of the History Talks to a full (and attentive!) house.

Union troops on November 7, 1861, the area’s wealthy families fled, leaving their belongings behind. The sons of Berners and Lewis — Horace, Hames, Richard, and Thomas — lost Datha in 1863 when it was confiscated by the federal government for nonpayment of taxes. While some family members eventually returned to Beaufort, others went to Charleston, Texas, and further south into Florida and settled in the Indian River area where they helped to establish the citrus industry that is still flourishing today.

DHF Wins HBF Award

Just in time for its 20th anniversary, DHF was awarded the Historic Beaufort Foundation’s *Historic Preservation Honor Award* at HBF’s 2018 Annual Meeting on March 29, 2018. John Troutman, HBF Chairman, and Maxine Lutz, Executive Director, presented the award to DHF President, Marilyn Peck.

The preservation award was presented to DHF in recognition of the organization’s 20 years of successful preservation and conservation efforts and the expansion of its horizons with the opening of the interpretive Dataw History and Learning Center (DH&LC) in 2016.

This is the third award from HBF that DHF has won. In 2006, DHF was presented with the *Howard E. Danner Award* for Lifetime Achievement in Historic Preservation and, in 2011, with the *Historic Preservation Honor Award*.



Marilyn Peck with the HBF award.

Christmas on Sams Plantation . . . SUSAN JORGENSEN

On December 4, 2017, the DHF, Dataw Garden Club, and Dataw Island Yacht Club joined to take our Island a step back in time to *Christmas on Sams Plantation*. Dataw’s annual Luminary Night had a new look: the Ruins and the Dataw History & Learning Center and the Cannery parking area were aglow with hundreds of luminaries. The History & Learning Center and Cannery were decorated with lighted trees, boughs, wreaths, and ribbons. A dozen picnic tables, transported from the gazebo by Christi Henry’s crew and scattered throughout the area, were also decorated with hurricane lamps and greenery. The evening included carols led by the Harbormasters in the Butterfly Garden, tour of the island’s luminaries, beverages at the pirate ship, and finally a concert at Sams Plantation with the Bethesda Christian Fellowship Gospel Choir, whose voices warmed the chilly night. Typical period food of corn/ham/cheese muffins, fruit skewers, and cookies completed the evening. To quote one of the attendees, “Best Luminary Night Ever!”



The Dataw Ruins, aglow with hundreds of luminaries!

20th DHF Oyster Roast Rousing Success!

The Dataw Ruins, the Dataw History & Learning Center and the Cannery provided the backdrop for DHF’s 20th annual Oyster Roast. The evening was perfect — cool, clear and bugless. Over 200 guests enjoyed the tasty oysters roasted by the *Crazy Dutchman* from Charleston and excellent grilled chicken, cornbread, coleslaw and apple cobbler prepared and served by *Jimmy Fitts Catering*. Wine, beer, and soft drinks were also on tap. The *Sometimes Later* band, featuring Dick Nalwalsky, played classic toe-tapping songs from our younger years. Fabulous raffle prizes, including artwork donated by Dataw artists Kathy Crowther, Bill Tremiere, and Dawn Schuster, were awarded to lucky winners.

Congratulations and thanks to DHF’s Fundraising Co-chairs Valerie Hatcher and Arleen Cassutti, whose organizational skills and hard work made this year’s Oyster Roast a night to remember. Funds raised from the Oyster Roast will be used to support DHF’s Long-Range Preservation Plan for Dataw Island’s Historic Sites throughout the island. Thank you also to the DHF member volunteers who helped set up, greet guests, bartend, clean up and deliver raffle prizes.

DHF Fundraising Co-chairs, Arleen Cassutti and Valerie Hatcher



DHF/VAC Art Competition Winners

In the fall of 2017, the DHF and the Dataw Visual Arts Club (VAC) co-sponsored a competition for the best artistic interpretation of the history of Dataw Island. The competition, entitled *Make Dataw’s History Come Alive Through Your Art Media*, drew 14 entries from talented Dataw artists. The competition was fierce; DIC members cast more than 180 votes. The winning art was unveiled at a November reception at the History & Learning Center, where prizes of \$150, \$100, and \$75 for First, Second and Third Place, respectively were awarded. First place went to Nancy Walnes, second place to Tricia Gardner and third place to Rose Bowman. The three winning artworks are on display at the History & Learning Center.



Rose Bowman (left) and Nancy Walnes (right) in front of their winning art. Tricia Gardner was in Italy painting.

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

Your DHF Membership is Important!

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

Your support of DHF assures preservation of Dataw’s historic tabby structures, the plantation site, artifacts found and all related archives. 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!

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

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.

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