

Kate Gleason's Sea Wall at Gleason's Landing - Excerpt from
Dataw Island Cultural Resources Survey - by Larry Lepionka - 1988
Pages 79 & 80

3. 38BU638 (UTM E 537880 N 3586680)

The site is a stone sea wall paralleling present high ground for a linear distance of 980* along the southwest shore of Dataw (see General Site Map). It has been breached by erosion and is separated from the high ground to the east for its entire length; distance from the shore varies from 5' on the south to as much as 25' on the north. In the south half it is bordered by marsh fringe vegetation on the inland side and Spartina on the creek side. Farther north, the eroded remnants are in direct contact with the deep water channel of Jenkins Creek and are inundated at high tide; Spartina or bare beach are on the inland side. However, even at the south end, the exterior marsh fringe is narrow, The wall is placed at the estuarine margin of the poorly drained Tomotley (north end) and somewhat poorly drained Coosaw (south section) soil that constitutes the adjacent high ground.

According to local informants the wall was built during the Gleason tenure (1928-1933). Other sea walls (38BU551, 639) were built or planned during this period, all with the intent of protecting shore lines directly exposed to erosion by tidal channels; 38BU638 is the best preserved example.

The principal building material is phosphate rock, bonded with a mortar that includes shell flecks. The rock is the by-product of a local industry that flourished between 1868 and 1893; phosphate bearing rock was dredged from river bottoms and processed into fertilizer. The material used in the wall was presumably obtained from factory tailings, which are common in the region. The hardness of the mortar suggests the inclusion of Portland cement, but the presence of shell flecks indicates that the mortar was, at least in part, locally produced from calcined shell,

Maximum height of the intact wall above marsh level is 2'8", level with the high ground shore (maximum elevation 8') to the east. The base is 14" wide, tapering to a 9" width at the top. Though erosion has occurred behind it, the first 300' of the wall from the south end is intact, and a further 100' is partially so. The north section (ca. 580') is, however, totally destroyed and exists only as a line of rubble at the shore edge.

National Register Status; 38BU638 is recommended as eligible for the National Register, It is of historical interest as an example of recycling of local industrial materials, and of land management practices with respect to erosion control. It provides a contrast to the Dataw high marsh earth dike system (38BU640; see Section 20 below) of 19th century date, an earlier attempt to exert control over the tidal marsh and shoreline system.

Further development will not infringe upon the integrity of the wall. Passive preservation in place is recommended; it must be noted that there is no feasible way to protect the wall from the effects of continuing shoreline erosion. Under normal tidal conditions the intact south end should remain in place for several more decades.