

Did You Know?

...how ice came to Dataw?

Behind the main house at the B.B. Sams Plantation ruins is the Blade/Dairy House. It was designed to store dairy products using ice. But where did the ice come from?

An enterprising Frederic Tudor was the creator of the ice shipping business out of New England in the 1800s. Frederic harvested the ice from nine local ponds around Boston. He shipped ice to Havana, Calcutta, New Orleans, and other far off Places.



Tudor saw that many of the ships arriving in Boston Harbor came from Charleston and Savannah laden with cotton and indigo bound for the textile mills popping up throughout New England. With no return cargo, these ships would then load on ballast rock for the return trip to the South. Tudor proposed to substitute his blocks of ice as ballast in return for a very favorable shipping rate.

He built an ice house at Fitzsimon's Wharf in Charleston and later in Savannah as well.

While it is not certain whether the Sams family shipped its cotton and indigo to Charleston or Savannah, one can rest assured that the small coastal ships that visited the Sams Plantation dock at Big Landing -- near the Bluff Villas where the few remains of the overseers house exist -- unloaded "crystal blocks of Yankee coldness" before taking on bales of Sea Island cotton.

Did you also know? - that a relative of Frederic Tudor currently lives on Dataw. Doris Tudor Robertson is a first cousin (four times removed) to Frederic Tudor. Frederic's grandfather is Doris' fourth great-grandfather.

With many thanks to research and original authorship of John Colgan

"Did You Know?" is a feature presentation of the Dataw Historic Foundation. This is one in a series of fascinating facts and short stories about our Island.