

Did You Know?

.....an exotic export business on Dataw?

Orange trees on Dataw probably dated back to the early 1800s. Perhaps a total of 35 acres on the island were planted in oranges. One of the groves was northwest of the B.B. Sams plantation house, between the house and the cemetery.



Dataw produced and shipped whole schooners loaded with oranges bound for Charleston and ultimately the Northeast.

Sams Family written records recall a family belief that Dataw oranges were the first commercially produced oranges in the United States. Florida was a Spanish possession until 1821, and the first commercial grove of Florida oranges was established in 1824. It is possible that Dataw orange production predates the Florida orange commerce, but documentation is lacking to prove that claim.

It should also be noted that orange and other citrus seed were sown on St. Elena (Parris Island) as early as 1576. However they were sown in a haphazard manner resulting in wild scattered trees rather than cultivated citrus orchards.

The end of the oranges on Dataw may have come as a result of a white fly infestation or from economic conditions after the Civil War. Several members of the Sams family relocated to Florida after the war and were growing oranges in the late 1880s on Merritt Island, Brevard County, Florida, near the Indian River now known for Citrus Fruit production,

Other fruit trees grown by B.B. Sams were pears, plums, figs, and apples.