

TABBY TATTLER

Dataw Historic Foundation Newsletter

Summer 2010



From the President JACK BROWN

Welcome to the summer 2010 issue of DHF's semiannual news-letter. This issue will tell you more

about some of the projects we have been working on and ones planned for the rest of this year. It includes a complete report on our dynamic membership, 341 members as of the end of May.

These are truly exciting times for the Dataw Historic Foundation. DHF recently marked its 15th anniversary as a volunteer organization on Dataw Island. Today, the group continues to be the steward/caretaker of Dataw history and is responsible for overseeing the care and maintenance of all historic structures, as well as the preservation of all artifacts and historic archives.

Of late, our stewardship seems to be going through an exciting period of "discovery," learning much more about the Island's history and its secrets. A few things worth noting:

■ **Cemetery Crypt:** With the help of three teams of experts, DHF was able to solve an important mystery in the Sams Cemetery. Working with a copy of a very old 1833 sketch, DHF and archaeological experts discovered that an engraved marble slab and several marble fragments were all part of the original crypt for Sarah Fripp Sams (1789–1825). A major restoration of the historic crypt was completed a few months ago.

■ **Lewis Reeve Sams "Datha" Plantation:** As noted in John Huntley's article on page 4, DHF is in the early stages of a new exploration of the L. R. Sams plantation ruins at the north end of Dataw Island. Little has been known about this site, except for the ruins of a chimney in the Morgan River. But exploration is

revealing more. A well-known historical ruins conservator and preservationist will be working with DHF to discover much more about the history of this site.

■ **Other highlights:** There have been several recent discoveries of **artifacts** by Dataw residents, including shards and broken pottery. Many have been turned over to DHF and are now being stored in the DHF History Center. Additionally the **Sams Cemetery Oak Tree** is one of a select number of live oak trees being documented by a team of tree experts as part of Beaufort's 300th Anniversary. The tree is believed to be 400+ years old. And last, at the **Sams plantation ruins**, we uncovered tabby foundations for several of the original porch piers for the Sams House. They have been restored and capped.

Also, as part of our stewardship role, we recently launched an exciting new e-mail series — **Did You Know?** — which is sparking a lot of interest in Dataw historical facts. Further, we are now into our eighth month of managing the *Portrait of Dataw Island* history display at the Welcome Center. I hope all residents, plus

their families and friends, will have an opportunity to visit this new showcase of Dataw's rich history located in the lobby of the Welcome 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 encourage you to join us in our ongoing efforts to ensure that Dataw's historic structures and its artifacts and archives remain unique legacies of our wonderful community.

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Save the Date!

**DHF
FALL
FISH FRY**

Monday,
October 18, 2010

Coming soon: Dataw Historic Foundation Website!

DHF is creating its own website, inviting you to explore the rich history of Dataw Island through stories, photos, videos, and consultant studies, as well as to obtain information about our foundation. Although we still have a lot of work ahead of us before launch, we hope this site will be available on–line sometime this fall or earlier.

Highlights of the website will be a chronology of Dataw Island’s history from the era of Native Americans up to the present era; information about plantation layout and tabby construction; a time–line with photos and captions depicting highlights of the Island’s history; a video tour of our many historic sites, and interesting facts in our *Did You Know?* series.

You will also be able to search for and retrieve pictures of historic artifacts, copies of archives, and photos related to the history and development of Dataw Island. DHF has a significant number of archives, consisting of archeological and architectural consultant studies, Sams family information, Kate Gleason’s papers, numerous newspaper articles, and other documents concerning the history of Dataw Island. A great many of these have been scanned into searchable PDF files, and many more are in the process of being scanned. For the first time these archives will be available on–line for all interested in the history of Dataw. There will also be many scanned photos, enhanced and repaired and available for view.

Information on coming events, downloadable *Tabby Tattler* newsletters, a membership form, and a Heritage Brick order form will also be at your fingertips.

This is an exciting addition to the many projects and programs that DHF has produced since its founding. The Dataw Historic Foundation website will be a significant contribution to anyone interested in the history of Dataw Island.

Welcome page of the new Dataw Historic Foundation website. We anticipate that the site will be available on–line in the fall of 2010.



Ann Craigmile Retires From DHF Board of Directors

After eight years of service as DHF’s public relations and communications chair, Ann Craigmile has retired from the Dataw Historic Foundation’s Board of Directors. The board honored her at a gathering in the Tabby Room on February 11. Ann has made an invaluable contribution to Dataw Island’s history and to the DHF Board of Directors during her time of service. Always unflappable, cheerful and creative, she wrote many of our feature stories and membership letters and was the editor for every communication that came from DHF during her years of service.



Her work included our *Tabby Tattler*, a twice a year newsletter from the DHF for which she also did all the desktop publishing. Thank you, Ann! You have served us well, and we truly miss you.

Historic Committee Report

Dataw Island’s first residents arrived in March 1985, 25 years ago. To recognize this quarter–century milestone, we have been exploring information about the early development of the island by interviewing the dozen employees who have devoted 20 years or more of service to Dataw. Their recollections will shed light on the island’s early development.

A recollection from one of our original employees brings perspective on what huge changes have taken place in 25 years:

“I remember the very first day I came to work. They told me to park my car up by what is now Polowana Road because I couldn’t drive back in here since the roads weren’t paved yet. Charlie Webb, the Assistant Site Construction Manager, came in a four–wheel drive vehicle and picked me up at the road and we went bumpity–bump all the way back to the little cabin in the woods near the Pee Dee Point dock.”

Teddy Schultz, Architectural Review Board (ARB) Administrator, describing her first day at work, September of 1984



Teddy Schultz, ARB Administrator

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

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Dataw Historic Foundation's Annual Oyster Roast

March 15, 2010

*Good Food!
Good Friends!
Good Fellowship!*



Dataw Historic Foundation's Open House at the Ruins and the Sams Cemetery

Monday, April 19, 2010

Celebrating the new Heritage Walk and the completion of the restoration of Sarah Fripp Sams' crypt

Sacred
To the Memory of
SARAH SAMS
A Member of the Baptist Church
The Wife of
LEWIS REEVE SAMS
And Mother of
Lewis Reeve, Miles Brewton
Angerona Hext, Caroline Enings
Robert Barnwell, Stanhope Augustus
Marion Washington and Sarah Emily Sams
Who was born Dec 26th A.D. 1789
And died August 12th A.D. 1825
Aged 35 Years, 7 Months and 17 Days
Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord

(Above) The Epitaph on Sara Fripp Sams' crypt.

(Below) The crypt of Sara Fripp Sams.

(Photos right and below) Guests at the Open House study the Heritage Walk.



The Lewis Reeve Sams Plantation Ruins Project. . . J.D. HUNTLEY, RUINS PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

A recent article in the *Dateline* recalled the history of the Lewis Reeve Sams “Datha” Plantation as we know it at this time. It ended with several unresolved questions:

- Where was the original plantation located?
- What did it look like during its heydays — mid 1800’s?
- What, if anything, can be done to preserve the existing ruin?

While much is known about the B.B. Sams Plantation, very little is known about the Lewis Reeve Sams Plantation. What appear to be the ruins of a chimney in the Morgan River were thought to be the last vestige of the L.R. Sams Plantation on Dataw Island.

When William Sams died, three brothers, BB, Lewis, and Edward, inherited Dataw Island. BB and Lewis later bought Edward’s share and divided it between themselves. This would have left Dataw Island divided into two plantations with Lewis having the northern part of the island — divided by a locust fence from his brother’s plantation. The L.R. Sams Plantation would have consisted of a main house (the chimney ruins) and other buildings comprising a typical plantation complex. The surviving component of a slave village was noted in a 1993 report, but it is not there today.

Research to date has failed to reveal a depiction of this plantation. Was it “out of sight, out of mind?” For many reasons earlier efforts of preservation focused on the B.B. Sams Plantation site which today is recognized as one of the best preserved tabby plantations in the Lowcountry. Only recently have our efforts returned to the L.R. Sams Plantation site.

When ALCOA purchased Dataw Island for development, they had commenced studies on the historical ruins. Leslie Druker’s October 1982 report for ALCOA included the Lewis Reeve Sams tabby ruins which “...repose in the high marsh off the north end of the island, after having been secondarily deposited there through erosional attrition of the shoreline during the 20th century.” It reported that

the original ruins stood at least 200 feet inland from this location at the turn of the century and could have been used as livestock quarters by the black tenants.

The Druker report recommended that if “feasible within the financial and logistical parameters of the proposed community Master Plan for Datha Island” the tabby ruin be relocated to an adjoining upland location. This recommendation was obviously not followed.

DHF has recently undertaken a significant project to study the L.R. Sams ruins. We have been able to observe at low tides the remnants of *two* chimney bases along with what appear to be tabby wall fragments around the site. Colin Brooker, a well known historical ruins conservator and preservationist, who has been involved with the conservation and preservation efforts on Dataw Island since 1983, is leading our effort. To date, with assistance of Ian Hill, Historical Preservationist, Beaufort County Council, we have been able to obtain current aerial photography of the site and overlaid coastal mappings from 1872 to more accurately determine where these ruins were originally located. Colin Brooker will be working to preserve a record of this significant ruin as it

currently exists. We are conducting on-site surveys and studies that could provide us with an accurate depiction of what the L.R. Sams Plantation would have looked like during its prime. We have determined that the distance between the two chimneys is 39 feet, 9 inches — almost identical to that of the original B.B. Sams house. Does this mean the same builder and

perhaps the same plan for both plantation houses?

The question remains what can be done to preserve the ruins. Our study will provide necessary information and may be the basis of future efforts. Since the ruins are in a tidal marsh-wetland, it would be impractical to “bulkhead” the area. Even if that were done there would be limited access to the site. As the Druker Report recommendation previously noted, it may be impractical to relocate the ruins to higher ground.

This is a project with tremendous potential to provide additional information on the L.R. Sams Plantation.



Colin Brooker measuring the chimney at the L.R. Ruins.



J.D. Huntley (left) and Jack Brown (right) studying the L.R. Ruins.

Grave markers Are Proudly Upright!

We really hope you will visit the Sams Family cemetery! The Sarah Fripp Sams' crypt restoration has been completed. (See photo of the Sarah Fripp Sams' crypt on page 3.) What a remarkable restoration story that has been! (You can view the complete story — before completion of the work — in the March/April 2010 *Dateline* on-line.) And now the old stone grave-markers are standing upright.

During the recent restoration of the crypt in the Sams Family cemetery, we noticed that there were two stone grave-markers that needed to be reset to return them to their original vertical alignment. These were the graves of Robert Barnwell Sams, age three months and 14 days, and Angerona Hext Sams, age four years, 11 months and 27 days. Both were the children of Lewis Reeve Sams and Sarah Fripp Sams, whose crypt was recently restored.

The headstone of Robert Barnwell Sams is cracked in several places and must have fallen and been repaired at an earlier date. A 1930's picture reveals no such cracks. Indeed if you walk through the cemetery and look carefully at the bases of other markers, you can see cement pads which must have been poured by someone in an effort to restore fallen markers to their upright positions. We do not know who did this work or when it was done.

DHF sought the services of Colin Brooker, an archaeological consultant, and Rick Wightman, a master craftsman, for the realignment work of these two grave-markers. Under Colin's supervision, Rick excavated small pits to expose the base of each stone. He then jacked up the stones and packed the excavated pits with crushed rock to provide firm foundations to support but not adhere to the original markers. He completed the work by repositioning the markers and lowering them onto their new foundations.

So walk on into the Sams family's cemetery and appreciate both our history and our restoration work.

The Dataw Heritage Walk

Orders for heritage bricks continue to exceed our expectations. Construction of the walk began one year ago and approximately 200 engraved bricks have been purchased and placed into the Dataw Heritage Walk.

Dataw past and present residents and Dataw long-term employees have enthusiastically endorsed this program with their participation. Originally planned as a five to ten year program, forty percent of the capacity for engraved bricks has already been filled.

If you have not yet placed your "footprint" on Dataw with your own heritage brick, now is the time to do so. Brick order forms are available at the Cannery, Clubhouse lobby, or can be downloaded from the Members/Clubs page of Dataw.org.



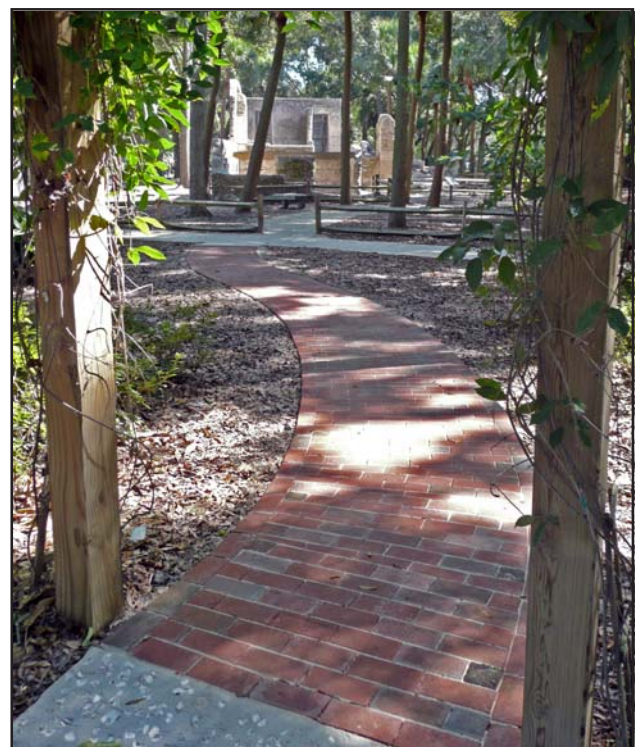
(Above photo) The work at restoring the grave markers.

(Bottom photo) The grave-markers of Angerona Hext Sams (left stone) and Robert Barnwell Sams (right stone) back in their original position.



(Top photo) A sample of one of the engraved bricks.

(Right photo) Our newly constructed Heritage Walk — with over 40% of the capacity already filled, the walk is filling up rapidly.



2010 Dataw Historic Foundation Members

Membership Categories

- Lifetime Members: Those whose lifetime contribution to the DHF is \$2,500 or more.
- Honorary Members: Limited to those with an ancestral connection to Dataw Island, This includes Sams family descendents and family descendents of other prior owners of Dataw Island.
- Friends of DHF: Those who have made a significant contribution to or have a special connection to DHF.
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Notes from the DHF Board of Directors

Did You Know?, now ten issues into publication, has proved to be a popular feature presented by the Dataw Historic Foundation. We have received many e-mails and comments from Dataw residents telling us how much they appreciate reading these stories and tidbits about Dataw Island. Some comments have provided additional information or questions that generated a follow-up story.

We are considering some suggestions to bundle the stories into a booklet to be used as a marketing tool for prospective new residents, or as a fundraiser.

If you missed an issue of *Did You Know?* you can download it from the Members/Clubs/Historic Foundation page on the Dataw Website (Dataw.org). This series will also be featured and be downloadable on the future DHF website later this year.

The Antebellum Garden between the B.B. Sams Plantation Ruins and the Sams family cemetery is boasting some new plantings! DHF contributed \$1,000 this year to the Landscaping Maintenance Department, specifically for additional plantings in our antebellum garden. Look for a new pear tree planted on the antebellum side of the garden and some new ferns, hostas and azaleas on the Heritage Walk side. Christi Henry, director of landscaping maintenance, is excited to make some additions. "This is an ongoing project," she says. "We're not done yet!"

New volunteers are always a welcome addition to the DHF. We will be distributing a volunteer interest form in the fall when our travelers to the North return. But if you would like to enlist before that time — perhaps to help with communications, work on the Fall Fish Fry, or assist in recording and archiving our historic records and archives — you can contact membership co-chair Patty Gesell at 838-2995 for more information.

Dataw Island's History Display opened in the Welcome Center lobby last September. If you have not been there yet, or you want to learn more about the rich history of the place you call home, please come and visit. The Welcome Center is open during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM. The exhibit features interpretive panels spanning Dataw's history from prehistoric times to the colonial period, to the Sams' family ownership and Civil War years, and ending with the new era of Alcoa development. Artifacts in the Welcome Center date back to 10,000 B.C.! It is well worth your time, and it is a great place to take any visitors you have.

DHF membership information is included in this issue of *Tabby Tattler*. We want support from all Island residents. So please read the information in the membership letter, and if you are not yet a member, complete and return the form to Patty Gesell's message box at 1722 Longfield Drive. 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.

DHF 2010

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Four of our honorary members came to the Sams Cemetery to admire the newly restored Sarah Fripp Sams crypt. Shown left to right are: Reeve Sams, Jeanne Sams Aimar, Betty Sams, Charles Aimar, Joel Holden (DHF Vice President), Cathy Crocker (DHF Ruins Preservation Co-Chair) and Jack Brown (DHF president.) See the Photo Display of the DHF Open House on page 3 and the Grave Marker article on page 5 for more information on Sara Fripp Sams' crypt.