

**DATHAWISLAND, ORANGES AND
TWO BROTHERS OF THE SAMS FAMILY**

by N. L. WILLET

The Beaufort Gazette, Beaufort, S.C., 27 October 1927, page two

Our War and Naval Chiefs, jealous of their profession, have filled the earth with monuments to men of their tribe—but who ever heard of a monument to an agricultural economist?

Just why is it that these heroes of agriculture who give us new plants and new crops go down to graves of earthen mounds and without ever an eulogy or song or story! Just why is it that we can not learn that peace too hath her victories! Just why is that as a Nation we love best of all to see a prize fight! If we could indeed only let the bloody arena go and give ourselves to reason why there would be down here a monument to Landgrave Smith the man of rice and to those great men too, who gave first to this Country the industries of Silk, Indigo, Long Cotton and Phosphate Rock.

But who is it that knows by name these old heroes and agricultural saints with the invisible halo, and who is it that cares for them! But whether the world cares or not I am going today to add the names of two more Saints to the calendar—two brothers who gave first, and over on old Dathaw Island, to this Country the orange industry.

Of The Gentry

The Sams family were of the English gentry—and the family still remains "of the Gentry." This story mostly comes from Mr. B. S. Sams¹ of Beaufort and when I say it concerns the grandfather² and grand-uncle³ of this venerable man why we can see that it is not a story of yesterday or the day before. Dathaw (Dartaw) Island is in the big marsh (Johnson River⁴) on St. Helena Island with Warsaw and Polawanna Islands on either side.

Dathaw is a twelve hundred acre Island, with high elevation, very rich in soil and reached by batteau (one and one-half miles) from Ladies Island and landing on the Island at Minks Point. It was owned in early history by two brothers—Dr. Barnwell Sams and Mr. Lewis Reeve Sams. It was Long Cotton and Slavery days—these men were rich. There is here today an oil painting of one of these old big Colonial homes, rich in its furnishings. There was an Episcopal Church largely for the Slaves—all Negroes then were Episcopalians—and Dr. Barnwell Sams read the Services. These two men died before the Civil War but the Island was still held in the family. At the War's end the family found that they had lost the Island—the Negroes had become owners of it—there are one hundred and fifty of them there today and with no White man on the Island. Soon the old Colonial Mansions were burnt—the foundations are there today. Later on a subsequent owner of Dathaw, Mr. Gus Sanders, deeded (free) in perpetuity to the Sams family, several acres which holds the old family cemetery with its old time monuments and these graves are the only holdings today of this old time family. But what contrast is Dathaw of the old days and Dathaw of today! But Dathaw is potentially rich of course today. Though only eight miles away from Beaufort few people have ever been in anyone of the trinity of marsh Islands over on St. Helena. In later

¹ Barnwell Stanyarne Sams (1845 – 1928)

² Dr. Berners Barnwell Sams (1787 – 1855)

³ Lewis Reeve Sams (1784 – 1856)

⁴ Johnson River does not exist in this area near St Helena Island, nor has there ever been a body of water by that name that I can find. This may be a mistake, and the author might have meant Jenkins Creek or Morgan River.

days the son of Lewis Reeve Sams and bearing the name⁵ and who was St. Helena's physician, owned Polawanna. The Doctor lived in St. Helena Village, on the Seaside Road near Coffins Point —the remains of that village are there today. There too the wealthy Eddings family lived along with still other families.

The Orange Industry

Along with Sea Island Cotton, Dathaw possessed an Orange Industry. Even after the Civil War "lighters" were carrying as Mr. B. S. Sams well remembers boat loads of Oranges from old Dathaw. It seems the white fly killed out the trees, whose age, tradition places, at one hundred years. The trees probably dated back to the early eighteen hundreds. At one time the Orange Industry was large—whole schooners going out from Dathaw for Charleston for transmission North. It is not known whether there were two groves on the Island or only one grove of thirty-five acres. I imagine the young trees came originally from Southern France—this whole Country here was in constant and closest touch with England and France in those days.

Florida

As Florida only became a State about eighty years ago, I think, it is plain that the Orange Industry first obtained in this Country on old Dathaw—and antedating the industry both in Florida and California. And as all Beaufort believes and certainly as I believe the Citrus Industry should put up on Dathaw a monument to this beautiful Industry and on it should be the names of Dr. Barnwell Sams and Mr. Lewis Reeve Sams. And so we add Citrus to our Silk, Indigo, Rice and Long Cotton and Phosphate Rock. And I repeat that if men would only reason then they would see brighter halos about the heads of our agricultural Saints than about the heads of our Saints (?) of war.

⁵ Dr. Lewis Reeve Sams Jr. (1810 – 1888)

Seized

Mr. B. S. Sams tells me that his father's house in which he lives at the present time in Beaufort was seized for hospital purposes in Civil War times as were the Paul Hamilton home the Rhett home and many others. St. Helena Church was a missionary. At War's end these homes were put up at auction and Northern men were largely the bidders. His own home was bought back by his father for there was, kindly, no other competitors, for the taxes.

These fine old Mansions—the Hamilton and Rhett places—brought as Mr. Sams remembers it \$1,000 or \$1,200 each. These homes of Beaufort were seized as hospitals because this was a concentration point for the Union forces. The National Cemetery here holds over ten thousand Soldier graves with their marble headstones. There are over two thousand trees in the Cemetery set out as I am told by Mr. Neils Christensen, Sr. There are here trees of the North—White Pines and Firs— as well as trees of the South. The Civil War here was a terrible and horrible story. One turns from it with gladness to these two agricultural Saints on Dathaw who never lived to know the terrors of it all. It is time I repeat to revise all of our concepts as to monuments. The world has been led long enough by War and Naval Departments. There will probably never be a heroic Sams monument in these later days erected on Dathaw but these two acres over there and the graves should be given perpetual keeping. And perhaps for the sake of the Oranges you eat for breakfast, you will sometimes care to be rowed to Minks Point and pay reverence to these old-time graves of the grandfather and grand-uncle of venerable Mr. B. S. Sams of Beaufort.⁶ Such a trip and more is due these old founders in this Country of the Citrus Industry.⁷

⁶ Grandfather B.B. Sams is buried on Dathaw, but Granduncle L.R. Sams is not. He's buried in Beaufort in the Baptist Church graveyard.

⁷ Transcribed from the original, July 4, 2024, by Bill Riski, Dathaw Historic Foundation. Simple spelling errors were corrected, and footnotes were added. However, spelling of the period (i.e., 1927), grammar, and punctuation are as per the original.

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REV. F. H. SCULER BURIED OCT. 17

Sumter Methodist Pastor Was Laid To Rest—Well Known In South Carolina

Sumter, Oct. 18.—A congregation which fielded Trinity Methodist church to capacity was present Monday afternoon in attendance upon the services which were held over the body of the Rev. F. H. Shuler of the South Carolina Conference.

Participating in the services were the Rev. Peter Stokes, presiding elder of the Sumter district, who paid a short but touching testimonial to the fine qualities and Christian character of Mr. Shuler; the Rev. J. H. Graves, of Bishopville, and the Rev. J. M. Wells, pastor of the Sumter Presbyterian Church, and president of the Sumter Ministerial Union, who read "Crossing the Bar," described by Dr. Stokes as Mr. Shuler's favorite hymn.

Miss Pauline Haynsworth sang "I Shall See Him Face to Face." Other hymns were sung by the choir. Following the church services the body was interred in the Sumter cemetery and the grave covered with many beautiful flowers, tributes from many friends of Mr. Shuler.

In attendance at the funeral were between sixty and seventy members of the South Carolina Conference, who had known and served with Mr. Shuler for years. The board of stewards of the church acted as honorary pallbearers.

NEW STATE ROAD OPEN

Florence, Oct. 18.—Completion of a new through route from Florence and the eastern section of the State to Orangeburg was marked by the announcement at the local office of the State Highway Department today that Route 4, is now open from via Summerton and the new Santee river bridge to Parlers on the south