

Treasures of Sapelo identified with historic resources survey

Sapelo Island is a treasure, and those treasures that remain have been duly recorded during the last year in Phase 3 of the McIntosh County Historic Resources Survey Report. This is part of a four-phase county survey effort that was initiated by the McIntosh County

Commissioners, with the leadership of the McIntosh County Historic Preservation Commission.

Phase I included Darien and Phase II consisted of mainland property north of Darien to the Rossville Road and east

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Tabby ruins at Chocolate Plantation

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ONE DOLLAR

MCA Homecoming is Oct. 5!

MCA vs. Savannah Country Day, 7:30 p.m.



Positive Interaction Between Students and Police

Police Chief of McIntosh Schools Starts S.O.C.K.S. Initiative

By Martin G. Williams
Campus Police Chief
McIntosh County Schools

Last October, I became the police chief for McIntosh County Schools. It has been and is, an honor to serve. There were several requests that were made of me when I accepted the position. Please, bring back the law enforcement Explorers program and by all means, help our kids by creating other community-based initiatives.



Martin G. Williams
Campus Police Chief
McIntosh County Schools

Treasures of Sapelo *Continued from Page 1*

of 1-95.

The fieldwork and data entry were performed by Secretary of the Interior-qualified Architectural Historians Rebecca Fenwick, the principal investigator, and Ellie Isaacs, the investigative assistant, both of Lominack Kolman Smith Architects of Savannah. Fenwick has conducted the previous two survey phases. Their job was to identify and survey approximately 150 buildings, sites, structures and objects that were constructed before 1975 on the island.

There were 121 resources within the survey area that were documented that are over 40-years of age. Of those resources, 103 were buildings; eight were structures; nine were sites and one was an object...the turkey statue on the fountain at the University of Georgia Marine Institute.

It was noted in the survey that there have been preservation efforts on the island in recent decades on a large part by the State of Georgia, as related to the Marine Institute and the Department of Natural Resources.

There have been residential rehabs in the Hog Hammock community that have been conducted by private property owners.

Preservation of historic significance includes the South End House, Long Tabby, Sapelo Lighthouse and Farmers' Alliance Hall. First African Baptist Church at Raccoon Bluff was restored through efforts by the Savannah College of Art and Design, Sapelo Island Cultural and Revitalization Society and the State of Georgia.

The survey recounts, "In 1996, Hog Hammock was listed as a National Register historic district. One of Georgia's few intact examples of a grouping of structures built by freed slaves of Gullah Geechee origin, the district includes St. Luke Baptist Church, Farmers' Alliance Hall and houses built between 1920 and 1940, as well as houses added between 1955 and 1965, when the freedmen settlements were consolidated into Hog Hammock.

"Recognized for architecture, community planning and development, ethnic heritage, and traditional cultural property, the district included 80 contributing and 47 non-contributing buildings at the time of its listing.

"Examples of contributing buildings lost since the completion of the last survey in 1989 are the ca. 1910 derelict pyramid cottage known as the Gardner Hillary House, and the ca. 1900 hall and parlor Sam and Peggy Dixon House."

See Treasures Identified, Page 6



The Shell Ring on Sapelo Island is captured by photographer Ben Galland, who is the photographer for the book, Sapelo: People and Place on a Georgia Sea Island, which was written by Buddy Sullivan.

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Treasures Identified Continued from Page 2

(Photos from McIntosh County Historic Resources Survey Report: Phase Three)



Little Sapelo House, built in 1922

Of significance to McIntosh County are the recommendations that have been made in the survey by Fenwick and Isaacs. It states:

"Sapelo Island is home to an incredible collection of historic resources from a variety of eras. With roots in early Span-

ish and native American settlements, the island has the potential to yield an incredible amount of additional information pertaining to these areas in archaeology alone.



Johnson House on Johnson road, built ca 1880

ish and native American settlements, the island has the potential to yield an incredible amount of additional information pertaining to these areas in archaeology alone.

"Work has already been undertaken in these realms with recommendations by archaeological teams for continuation. Further, while some of the island's plantation era resources remain above ground, the potential for additional information to be yielded archaeologically from this era is likewise great.

"The number of historic resources which could be identified prior to 1800 is sparse; however, follow-

ing this date, almost every decade is represented on the landscape. Some of the most significant resources, which have the potential to be individually eligible for the National Register, include the South End House, the Sapelo Light-house, the First African Baptist Church at Raccoon

Bluff, and Chocolate Plantation. These resources retain good architectural integrity and were associated with significant persons and development on the island. "Thanks in large part to the interest in material culture and history pertaining to the lifeways and community surrounding Hog Hammock, many of the historic dwellings in the community have been preserved. This is made possible by the residency of descendants of the island's many freed slaves and their families. This, however, has not been a large number, as the African-American population of Sapelo Island has de-

creased steadily since the 1950s. The traditional resident population on the island is the smallest it has ever been.

"The interest surrounding Hog Hammock successfully led to the creation of the National Register Historic District in this location as well as the

creation of the Hog Hammock District at the county level. As a result, the McIntosh County Historic Preservation Commission has reviewed certificates of appropriateness for work involving the alteration of historic resources within this district, aiding its preservation. There is greater need, however, for consistency and adherence to the standards put forth in both the McIntosh County Historic Preservation Ordinance and the Hog Hammock Design Guidelines.

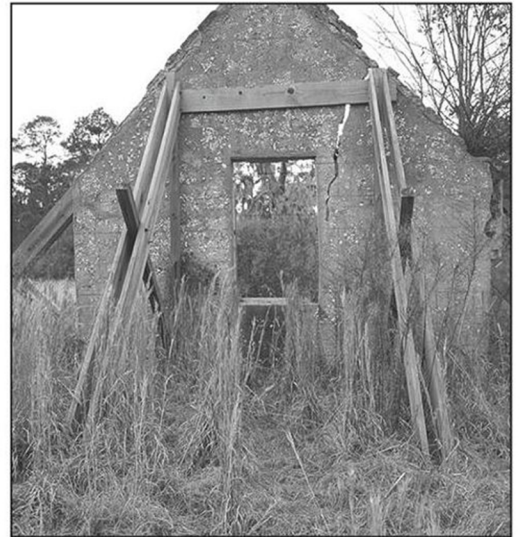
"A number of pressures have, however, amounted to significant threats on the island related to the demolition of historic resources and a potential loss of integrity to the National Register district. Discoveries of the island's many positive qualities have meant the sale of

properties by traditional residents, an influx of non-traditional residents, and the construction of several new houses.

"While this is not inherently detrimental, modern construction methods related to floodplain precautions has meant the construction of infill dwellings elevated on piers. While pier foundations were used in history house construction, the piers used on infill houses are often a story tall, allowing residents to park vehicles below their residence.

"While one infill house is not of great concern, the cumulative effect of several within the district can lead to an overall loss of contextual integrity and ability of the district to convey its significance.

"To assist in preservation of the Hog Hammock historic district, it is rec-



Tabby ruins at Chocolate Plantation. During the presentation of the Historic Resources Survey Report of Sapelo Island, Rebecca Fenwick, who conducted the survey, expressed her concern of the continued deterioration of the tabby ruins at Chocolate Plantation and discussed the need for protective shelters over the ruins. (Photo by Kathleen Russell)



Dan and Nellie Gilbert House, located east of Walker Road, was build ca 1900 in Hog Hammock.



Outhouse and smokehouse associated with the Dan and Nellie Gilbert House

ommended that the design guidelines that have been developed be placed or, at minimum be referenced, within the McIntosh County Code of Ordinances.

"With the transfer of a large number of the island's historic resources into state ownership, the preservation of the resources is better ensured. Further, the island's large Department of Natural Resources presence provides a direct link to the state organization, which exists to advise on historic preservation matters. While this does not prevent state owned buildings from neglect or demolition, such as the case of the Little Sapelo House (on Little Sapelo Island), a level of protection is invoked through state ownership.

"A handful of significant

resources, particularly those which exist within a larger landscape to include associated outbuildings, are threatened by neglect. Both the Little Sapelo House and the Dan and Nellie Gilbert House retain multiple period outbuildings of significance, however, both sites are located in wooded areas beyond easily accessible routes and have suffered from abandonment, neglect, and decay. With its inclusion as part of the Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve, no one inhabits Little Sapelo Island, thus the Little Sapelo House and its associated outbuildings remain out of sight and mind to many.

"Additionally, the Sapelo Island's rare surviving example of a double-pen

house, the Johnson House, is vacant and deteriorating. Fewer and fewer of this house type remain on the landscape. With the restoration of any of these resources, these unique combinations and types of historic resources could likewise be potentially eligible for the National Register once architectural integrity is restored.

"In conclusion, Sapelo Island is an island rich in historical resources and a place that is coveted by a variety of people and groups. The interplay of these forces, as well as the island's changing demographics and economy often equate to challenges related to the preservation of historic resources.

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Peggy Everett's
One Day Oil Painting
Studio Workshop for All Levels



Birding opportunities

More Sapelo *Continued from Page 6*

"Further, the island's coastal location poses concerns tied to climate change and natural disaster. Finding common ground between what are sometimes competing

forces, as well as the adoption of the recommendations outlined in this report, will greatly aid in the continued preservation of Sapelo's historic resources.

"While fragile and often

vulnerable, Sapelo Island is a national treasure and a vital and valuable component of McIntosh County's historic fabric that is worthy of recognition and preservation."

From Sapelo Island's beginning

(The following is a brief and rapid history of the occupation of Sapelo Island as lifted from the Resources Survey Report by Rebecca Fenwick and Ellie Isaacs)

Sapelo Island was formed some 80,000 years ago during the melting of the Pleistocene glaciers, the main part of the island wasn't formed until about 25,000 to 26,000 years ago, making it about 20,000 years older than Cabretta or even Blackbeard. It was about 4,500 BC when the Native Americans settled on the island, and the largest evidence that remains is the massive Shell Ring on the northwestern end of the island facing Mud River. The Guale Indians were on the island ca. 1350 to 1570. The Spanish then established that mission on the north end, known as Mission San Joseph De Zapala. It was abandoned in 1684.

It wasn't until 1750 before English-speaking people began cultivating indigo and other crops on the island. In the 1770s, there was cultivation of corn and cotton. Then in 1802, Thomas Spalding and Edward Swarbeck bought

the south end of Sapelo. At that time Swarbeck owned Chocolate, the plantation just south of the Shell Ring, and John Montalet owned High Point, facing Sapelo Sound.

Spalding constructed the South End House, the Spalding Sugar Mill, Long Tabby and commissioned the Sapelo Lighthouse.

Chocolate Plantation was bought by Charles Rogers in 1827 and he constructed the tabby house and the barn there in the 1830s. There were other plantations during this era, including Kenan Plantation. Slave dwelling communities developed during the plantation era at Behavior, South End, Hanging Bull, New Barn Creek and Chocolate. During that time, approximately 350 slaves lived in those communities.

Then came the Civil War. In the 1880s, Behavior Cemetery was established.

It is reported by 1910, there were 539 freedmen

living in 109 households on the island. It was in 1912 that Howard Coffin bought the island and rebuilt the South End House. He built roads, had sawmilling, agriculture and seafood harvesting. During the Great Depression Coffin had to sell the island to R. J. Reynolds Jr, who built the quadrangle farm complex and two-story brick Reynolds Dairy Barn. It was in 1953 this area was granted to the University of Georgia for marine biological research. It was also in the 1950s that Reynolds moved all of the Geechee people from all the settlements on the island into Hog Hammock. The population of Geechee residents in the 1970s was about 150 and by 1990, it had dwindled to 70.

In 1969, the State of Georgia bought the north end of the island from Reynolds' widow and fourth wife, Annemarie.



South End House