



Ossabaw Oracle

Revealing the voices and mystery of Ossabaw Island

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Winter 2009

A publication of the
Ossabaw Island Foundation

Boarding House Restoration Complete!

In October, the Ossabaw Island Foundation completed restoration on the Boarding House, a two-story/wood frame structure located in “downtown Ossabaw Island” on the island’s north end, between the Club House and the three tabby cabins. Restoration began in 2005 with installation of a new roof. In 2007, full restoration began.

Since its construction in 1918, the 4,000 square foot residence has housed dozens of people working in various key roles on Ossabaw Island—the kennel man and island superintendent when the island was a private hunting retreat; workers who built the Torrey West House from 1924 – 1926; and staff for the Torrey family (the last private owners of the island) from the late 1920’s until the 1980’s.



Restored to its original style and use after over twenty years of vacancy and decay, the Boarding House sleeps eight (8) people, and is available to researchers, teachers, artists and others working on Ossabaw Island, designed to accommodate long-term stays. The house features three semi-private bedrooms, a See Boarding , p. 2

Thanksgiving at Middle Place, Circa 1974

Note: The essay below is an excerpt of an email from Genesis Project alumnus Kevin Donovan. He describes his Genesis group’s planning for an Ossabaw Island Thanksgiving meal.

We had a hardy group on Ossabaw Island at that time. The idea began to form that we wished to have a [Thanksgiving] feast that consisted only of what the Island Mother would provide. Domestic or wild--both were acceptable.

We also decided that to heighten the experience we would all fast for twenty four hours prior to our feast. What a lofty goal--a 24 hour fast at Genesis. And with all participating--amazing!

In addition to the physical fast we decided to refrain from verbal communication, i.e. talking, for the same period. This, too, promised to be somewhat difficult as we still had to continue working as a group, but it seemed an appropriate way to encourage an introspective and thankful mood in our little community.



Shorty Boucher, Kevin Donovan

See Thanksgiving , p. 2

Upcoming Events Sponsored by The Ossabaw Island Foundation

Mark your calendar for these Ossabaw Island Foundation-sponsored educational trips to Ossabaw Island, then watch this space for more information.

Day Trips to Ossabaw Island in 2010

- Saturday, March 20, 2010
- Saturday, April 17, 2010, Birding on Ossabaw
- Saturday, September 25, 2010

\$50 for Friends of Ossabaw Island, \$65 for future Friends of Ossabaw.

Donors to The Rookery, the major giving society of The Ossabaw Island Foundation, are invited to a May 15, 2010 trip to Pine Barren Rookery, on Ossabaw Island. Rookery members, contact Elizabeth DuBose at elizabeth@ossabawisland.org.

Save the Date! The 2010 Ossabaw Island Foundation Pig Roast & Art Auction is Saturday, October 16, 2010.

Pig Roast 2009 Recap: Another Festive Island Day

A cool October day on Ossabaw Island was the perfect setting for The Ossabaw Island Foundation’s eighth annual Pig Roast and Art Auction on the lawn of the Main House. Three hundred supporters and friends of Ossabaw Island

spent October 17 on the island for TOIF’s sole annual fundraising event to support the Torrey West House Fund.

Highlights of the day included Eleanor “Sandy” West’s remarks during lunch, reminding us to experience nature first hand and not rely on technology for all of our experiences. Impromptu caterer-turned-auctioneer

Daniel Epting entertained the crowd as bids rolled in for the found-object table centerpiece—a driftwood stump pulled from the marsh just hours before the Pig Roast started.

This year’s Pig Roast raised



Sandy West thanks TOIF Chair Helen Downing for the foundation’s work on Ossabaw. Photo courtesy of Doug Herrick

See Pig Roast , p. 2

Boarding House, con't from Page 1

gathering/dining area, kitchen, laundry facilities, bathrooms, and an upstairs apartment for island staff. Hot water is provided to the Boarding House by a solar hot water system. The Boarding House will be furnished and ready for use by early 2010.

The Boarding House is a contributing structure on the Ossabaw Island National Register listing, and is the recipient of a 2009 Preservation Award from The Historic Savannah Foundation.

The \$495,000 restoration project was financed by \$375,000 in donated funds, and in-kind donations of materials and labor valued at \$120,000.

Thank you to the following individuals and organizations for generous financial and in-kind gifts to the Boarding House restoration project.

Alternative Energy Technologies
Patricia Barmeyer
Jay Boanen/The Warehouse
Board of Regents of the University
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Eric Cash
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State of Georgia Department of Natural
Resources, Historic Preservation Division
Zelda Tenenbaum
Judge and the late Mrs. Randolph W.
Thrower
Jeremy Upchurch
Brad Wallace
Glenn and Paula Wallace
William B. & Leslie Hodge Fund

The following people and organizations participated in the restoration of The Boarding House:

The Ossabaw Island Foundation
Mitch Amidon
Boaen Mechanical Contractor, Inc.
Mark Frissell
Francisco Hernandez, Jr.
Francisco Hernandez, Sr.
David Stroud
Weeks Electrical Contracting
Trevor Wells



Boarding House interior. Photos courtesy of Diane Kirkland.

Pig Roast, con't from Page 1

over \$55,000 (before expenses) including sponsorships, ticket sales, host committee contributions, and income from the Art Auction, with 62 artists donating 100 paintings, photographs, mixed media pieces, and other works.

Thanks to our sponsors and host committee, listed below:

Sponsors: Holland, Henry & Bromley, Mitch Jacoby, J T Turner Construction Co., King & Spalding LLP, Longwater & Co., Spanish Moss Printing, SunTrust, Tacqueria Del Sol.

Host Committee: Gail Andrus, Patricia Barmeyer, Linda Bleicken, Susie Clinard, Callie Downing, Helen Downing, Peggy Galis, Laura Hardman, Bill & Gigi Haile, Jim & Susan Noyes, Paul & Jane Pressly, Rob Rivers, Zelda Tenenbaum.

Thanksgiving, con't from Page 1

On Wednesday we started foraging. Oysters from Cane Patch Creek were gathered and, I believe, clams from the Middle Beach slough. We caught fish from Buckhead Creek and Roger brought down a turkey from Middle Place field. There was deer meat from the North End freezer, but to my recollection no pork appeared on the menu. Your beverage of choice was Daisy's milk unless you wanted something from the wine list.

Starch and vegetables were mostly represented by the humble purple-topped turnip.

The stuffing for the big bird was with North End pecans and those oysters. Dessert came from Queenie's orange tree, which I've not noticed since. Queenie (the cook at the Main House) also provided a bottle of homemade wine. May God bless her for it in perpetuity.

Lastly were our seasonings, numbering two. We had bay leaves from the bay trees common in the woods and salt painstakingly boiled down from Buckhead Creek water.

Preparations went on in the Cook Shack for hours, in a very soothing silence punctuated only by the sounds of chopping, nuts cracking, and the occasional grunt or giggle.

We ended our fasting with the usual hand holding silent grace and started eating and talking.

Al's fish was superb, even if he had no cooking oil. Afterwards we all lay down in the sun in front of the Cook Shack (chigger season was past) like so many contented cattle chewing their cuds, nourished in body and soul.

I thought I heard somebody say, "We don't need no stinkin' pumpkin pie!"

Note: Seeking OIP/GP alumni. If you participated in the Genesis Project or the Ossabaw Island Project, please let us know via email @ elizabeth@ossabawisland.org.

Getting Around the Island

Getting around Ossabaw Island has been easier this year for staff and visitors, thanks to two new all-terrain vehicles donated to TOIF in 2008. The Kawasaki Mule is a four-seat open-air vehicle that looks like an oversized golf cart, with a roof to protect passengers from sun and rain. The Polaris utility vehicle is similar in design but seats six people. The



Kawasaki Mule



Polaris

vehicles are rugged enough to withstand the roadway conditions of Ossabaw Island, are easier to maintain than a truck and are perfect for small groups. Thank you to Marv and Jean Burton and the Burton Family Foundation for donating the Mule, and to Mitch Jacoby for donating the Polaris.

We Love our Ossabaw Artists!

Thank you to the following artists who contributed work to the 2009 Pig Roast:

Nicole Augustine, Anne Jarrell Berry, Gordon Boice, Melinda Borysevich, Jill Brougher, Betsy Cain, Alan Campbell, Elizabeth Church, Rod Cook, Trey Coursey, Tim Coy, Ches Crow, Henry Dean, Harry Delorme, Nancy Doolan, Stephanie Dwyer, Emily Earl, Susan Earl, Paula Eubanks, Barbara Fertig, Leanne Frank, Chantal Gadd, Rachel Green, Curt Hames, Eric Hartley, Doug Herrick, Paul Hill, Lind Hollingsworth, Carla House, Marion (Sissie) E. Jarrell, Laura Liu, Hunter Logan, Tina Logan, Laurie Lovell, Robert Lewis Jarrell, David Kaminsky, Jan Kapoor, Carrie Kellogg, Diane Kirkland, Felix Kirkland, Deborah Mack, Gloria Mani, Irene Mayo, Robert Medders, Lauren McSwain, Mary F. Mistak, Blair Moore, Bruce O'Donnell, Betty Oliver, Anna-Kelley Polatty, Russell Regnery, Helen Rogers, Erica Scales, David Smalls, William Steinhauer, Dicky Stone, Bryan Stovall, Fran Thomas, Matthew Toole, Melissa Turner, Patricia Walker, Justin West.

Special thanks to Doug Herrick for use of his Pig Roast photos. For more Ossabaw photos please visit www.dougherrick.com



Main House Gardens: Designer Shipman's Concept Came Alive with Nell Torrey's Personal Touch

Note: Gillian Shallcross, the author of this essay, is the daughter of Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West, and a board member of The Ossabaw Island Foundation.

When Henry and Nell Ford Torrey (my grandparents) built the Main House in the 1920s, they hired Ellen Biddle Shipman to create the gardens on the sheltered side of the house. Shipman (1869–1950) was a noted landscape architect who designed some 650 gardens between 1914 and 1946 and was a pioneering advocate for women in the profession. Among her gardens in the south are Longue Vue Gardens in New Orleans and the Cummer Estate (now the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens) in Jacksonville, Florida. Many photo essays of her gardens appeared in such popular magazines as *House Beautiful*.

Shipman's concept drawing for the Ossabaw project—created from notes and sketches she made when she visited the island—still hangs in the Main House.

It is unclear how much of Shipman's design was realized at Ossabaw. A graduate student at Cornell University, who wrote her doctoral thesis on Shipman several years ago, believes that in the end, the only evidence of Shipman's hand was a modified form of the rose garden (which no longer exists) and the patio, which has

Shipman's trademark, double-bordered flowerbeds leading to the tiled wall fountains.

Perhaps my grandmother found Shipman's ideas too formal for Ossabaw? Nevertheless, over time, Nell Torrey created the rest of the gardens—more rustic and relaxed, more southern, especially the long azalea and camellia walks. Nell also conceived the Peter Pan Pond, with statues of Peter Pan and Tinker Bell and concrete trees on an artificial island. (The latter seems crazy in such a burgeoning natural environment, but the concrete trees are a favorite family reminder of 1920s taste.)

My grandmother had a tall fence built all around the Main House yard to keep out the deer, which would eat her flowers. The fence is gone now and the deer are both welcomed and appreciated. But the camellia trees still are there—some about fifteen feet tall—and their copious blooms are intoxicating.

Ellen Shipman was known for creating intimate gardens—usually fruit or vegetable gardens—close to the house. She saw this as a way of empowering women. Although, the graduate student at Cornell told me: "I do not think your grandmother needed empowering. She seemed to be a very strong woman."

The Ossabaw Gift Shop



Newly designed t-shirt and totes by Longwater & Co. features the bone yard tree in blue at sunrise on an off-white organic cotton.

Books include *Evocations of an Island* hardcover book, by Jack Leigh, Alan Campbell & James Kilgo, as well as boxed note cards featuring four different images from the book, (8 cards total, with 2 cards each image). Also, Ann Foskey's *Images of America: Ossabaw Island*, and *The God of the Hinge, Sojourns in Cloud Cuckoo Land* by Elizabeth Pool and Eleanor West. We also offer prints of William Armstrong's painting of Bradley Beach.

- Please send ___ copy(ies) of *God of the Hinge* @ \$16.95 _____
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...With a Lot of Help from our Friends

Every year TOIF relies on the hard work and support of volunteers to help us make the annual Pig Roast and Art Auction a success. In 2009, approximately 25 volunteers staffed the Delegal Marina dock to take tickets and load guests onto the pontoon boats; provided guest transportation between the dock and the Main House; set up the art auction; staffed the art check out table and wrapping stations; sold t-shirts, totes, books and other gift items at The Ossabaw Store; set up and broke down tables and chairs on the Main House lawn; bartended; provided assistance to the catering team; and many other tasks.



Jack Sinopoli, Pat Gallagher & Jennifer Zdunczyk make the Ossabaw store a success each Pig Roast

Several volunteers have participated every year since our first Pig Roast in 2001. While space prevents the listing of all the volunteers who have helped over the past eight years, here are a few noteworthy volunteer alumni.

Brad Christman, a Magistrate from Akron, Ohio holds the "Longest Journey" award. He has made the twelve hour drive to help us out five times. Brad's love of driving

makes him the perfect Director of Transportation for the event.

The "Frequent Flier" award goes to Jennifer Zdunczyk. She has stepped away from her role as Director of Dining Services at a retirement community in Philadelphia to fly in and volunteer four times.

Not all of our volunteers travel from so far away. Jack Sinopoli of Savannah is our longest running volunteer with six years of service. Through the years his experience in retail sales and management and his IT degree have come in very handy organizing the Ossabaw Store and coordi-

nating many of the volunteers.

Pat Gallagher, a Savannah real estate agent and owner of Colour Masters Painting Company has attended the Pig Roast both as a guest and as a volunteer. We always appreciate it when she puts away her "Open House" signs and sets down her paint brushes to help.



How Green was our Pig Roast?

Each year TOIF works to minimize the environmental impact of our annual fundraiser by finding ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Past “greening” that continued this year included:

- Serving our meal using reusable plates and cutlery, transported and washed by Lee Epting Catering.
- Serving beverages in compostable corn-based plastic cups.
- Collecting trash in compostable brown paper trash bags.
- Using biodegradable plastic liners for the indoor trashcans.
- All paper products were made from recycled paper.

New “green” practices this year:

- Transporting drinking water in 5-gallon jugs instead of the 600 individual plastic water bottles used each previous year.
- Recycling all bar items, and using wooden stir sticks instead of plastic.



Sam Candler of Cumberland Island and Sandy West of Ossabaw Island. Photo courtesy of Doug Herrick



Roger Parker making sure the main course is just right.



In an effort to raise additional funds for TOIF, Daniel Epting held an impromptu live auction for the centerpiece/stump that graced the food table.



Selden Frissell, Verity, Leila and Fiona Sullivan enjoy visiting the donkeys. Photo courtesy of Doug Herrick.

Our Generous Supporters

Thank you to the following for your contributions to The Ossabaw Island Foundation since January 1, 2009. Thank you for your support all year long.

In memory of John Reiter:

AIA Savannah, Albert Wall, Eric Meyerhoff, Lisa & Mason White, Margaret & John C. Wylly Jr., Diane Sutlive, Board of Directors of ESL & Immigrant Ministries, Dick & Connie Williams, Shirley Grove-Munderloh, Paul & Jane Pressly, Lillian Lindsay, Marie Winters, Neal & Gail Purvis, Bob Kuzelka, Coastal Heritage Society

In memory of Dougless Bitler, mother of On-Island Coordinator, Jim Bitler:

Louisa Abbot, Susie Clinard, Tom & Tess Fesko, Jane Fishman, Elizabeth & Cecil Johnson, Sheila Meredith, Paul Pressly, Stephanie & Jack & Stephanie Sinopoli, Zelda Tenenbaum, Lisa White, Jennifer Zdunczyk.

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A gift from Ron Weller in honor of Sandy West and in memory of John Earl.
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Lucky the Ossabaw Pig (\$100-\$499)

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 Mr. & Mrs. Philip Solomons
 Mr. & Mrs. Randolph Thrower
 Art & Krista Williams

Great Egret (\$5,000-\$9,999)
 A gift from Patricia T. Barmeyer in honor of Sandy West's 96th birthday.
 Helen Downing
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael Klank

Great Blue Heron (\$10,000 and above)
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BOLD: New Friend

Contributions to the Ossabaw Island Foundation, a 501-c-3 not-for-profit corporation, are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Did Blackbeard the Pirate Really Seek Refuge on Ossabaw Island? And How Did Lucky the Ossabaw Pig Get There?

The Georgia Historical Society (GHS) is pleased to announce the much-anticipated opening of the Ossabaw Island and Torrey Family Papers archival collection for public research. From the hunting grounds of Native American peoples, to its role as one of the ancestral homes of the Low-country's Gullah-Geechee community, to a modern-era ecological and heritage preserve, Ossabaw Island's diverse and gripping history has spurred legendary tales and its role in the Atlantic World has garnered the attention of researchers from a wide



Barbara Fertig examines the newly reproduced 1760 map of Ossabaw. The original is now housed at the Georgia Historical Society as part of the Ossabaw collection. Photo courtesy of Doug Herrick.

range of academic disciplines and backgrounds. Research demand for access to the materials has steadily increased over the past several years and now, thanks to a generous grant from The Frances and Beverly DuBose Foundation, the collection has been processed and is accessible to anyone interested in exploring the documented history of the island.

Records in the collection date from 1699 to 2007, providing insights into the people, events, and use of the is-

land and its history for over four centuries. Some materials in the collection include the original grant from King Georgia II in 1760, slave inventories from 1812 to 1817, historical maps from the 18th through the 20th century, photographs, and extensive records and research compiled during the Ossabaw Island Foundation's era when the island was used as an artist colony and interdisciplinary studies residential think-tank.

To learn more about the Ossabaw Island and Torrey Family Papers archival collection, please visit the Georgia Historical Society online at www.georgiahistory.com or join us in GHS's Reading Room during public research hours.

(Reprinted from the Georgia Historical Society website.)



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Mark Your Calendars!

Ossabaw Island Foundation Annual Meeting

Thursday, January 14, 2010

Coastal Georgia Center, 305 Fahm Street, Savannah.

Free and open to the public

6:30 pm Reception with complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres

7:00 pm Annual Meeting.

- Keynote presentation: Remarks by classical composer Dr. Stephen Darsey, with a performance of an excerpt from his oratorio, "The Marshes of Glynn," composed in part during a sabbatical on Ossabaw Island.
- Emory Campbell, Chairman, Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission will share with us exciting news about Gullah-Geechee culture in the 21st century.
- Jim Bitler will preview our new website and what is new on Ossabaw.

8:00 pm Birthday Cake in honor of Sandy West's 97th birthday.

The 2010 Annual Meeting is generously sponsored by Harley Lingerfelt.

What is Ossabaw Island?

Ossabaw Island is a barrier island on the Atlantic Ocean owned by the State of Georgia and located in Chatham County.

Who is the Ossabaw Island Foundation?

The non-profit Ossabaw Island Foundation, through a public-private partnership with the State of Georgia, inspires, promotes, and manages exceptional educational, cultural, and scientific programs that are designed to maximize the experience of Ossabaw Island, while minimizing the impact on its resources.

