



The Era of Rich Estates, 1881–1965

Three significant events during the period 1881 to 1965 dramatically shaped Cumberland Island. The first was the purchase of land on the island by Thomas Carnegie and his wife Lucy. The second was Lucy Carnegie's death in 1916 and the implementation of a complex trust arrangement designed to keep the island available for her heirs' enjoyment. The trust made it very difficult to sell or subdivide before the death of all nine of her children. The third was the death of that last child, Florence Carnegie Perkins, in 1962, which ended the trust's restrictions and led to the division of the island in 1965. Thereafter, Lucy's grandchildren and their heirs were free to dispose of their portions as they saw fit. During the periods between these three events, the Carnegie family developed the island, built a substantial infrastructure that included five mansions, and then suffered the erosion of both the infrastructure and their lifestyle with the decline of the trust's assets. Despite this long and worrisome economic slide, each generation of heirs lived at least part of their lives on Cumberland Island and developed traditions, relationships, and a deep love of place that has carried through to the present.

At the same time the Candler family of Atlanta, whose fortune came from Coca-Cola, acquired most of the northern tenth of the island, which had suffered its own economic roller-coaster ride with concomitant ownership changes. Ultimately, they transformed it into a substantial vacation estate. In the process the Candlers too fell under the spell of Cumberland Island's mystical beauty and addictive lifestyle. They too became protective of its resources and proprietary over its future. The combined ownership of the Carnegie and Candler families held the island in a relatively undisturbed state and made it possible for the National Park Service to consider it for a national park.

The Carnegies Come to Cumberland Island

At the conclusion of the Civil War, the South became a source of fascination to people from the North, especially the wealthy who could afford a leisurely tour of its sights. The flow of tourists grew from small parties of scientists such as William Bartram and social critics like Frederick Law Olmsted to include well-to-do businessmen, industrialists, and political figures. Many of these visitors found the winter environment of the South attractive and its land readily available for purchase. Popular second-home and tourist destinations included Jekyll Island to the north and Amelia Island to the south of Cumberland Island.

Among the visitors to the Georgia coast in 1880 were the future owners of Dungeness, Thomas Carnegie, the younger brother of the famed steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, and his wife, Lucy Coleman Carnegie. Thomas had been born in Dunfermline, Scotland, in 1843, eight years after his brother. Economic woes beset the family, and they migrated to Pennsylvania in 1848. William Carnegie, the boys' father, died within a few years, leaving his wife Margaret to be supported by the teenaged Andrew. The older son proved to have uncommon ability and relentless drive in the business world, eventually accumulating one of the largest fortunes in American history. With brother Thomas he founded Carnegie Brothers & Company, a conglomerate of iron and steel plants plus associated manufacturing and financial operations. Thomas was an excellent businessman himself, and Andrew relied on him heavily, especially during his increasingly frequent trips abroad. The younger Carnegie knew the business well and was better liked by both their partners and their employees. Yet, Andrew was a harsh critic of his brother and sent frequent letters full of overly detailed and demeaning orders.¹

In 1866 Thomas married Lucy Coleman, the twenty-year-old daughter of a businessman and neighbor who supplied coal and coke to the Carnegie factories. She was a popular young woman and, according to one heir, included Andrew Carnegie among her potential suitors. Thomas and Lucy had nine children between 1867 and 1881. The six boys and three girls lived with their parents in Pittsburgh at Andrew's former home, which he had given to the newlyweds as a wedding present.²

When Thomas and Lucy visited Cumberland Island, they were probably familiar with its reputation. Many northern tourists visiting Florida or cruising the channels between the Sea Islands and the mainland stopped to

view the ruins of Catherine Greene's Dungeness mansion. In addition, Lucy had spent part of her childhood in a boarding school in nearby Fernandina, Florida. She may even have visited the island during that time. Furthermore, tradition claims that Lucy became fascinated with the island after she read a well-known article on its history by Frederick A. Ober in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*.³ After their visit to the island, Lucy resolved to buy the Dungeness estate for a winter home and as much island land as possible with it. She convinced Thomas to pay whatever it took to secure the property.

Negotiations with estate owner General W. G. M. Davis initially proved difficult. The retired Confederate officer did not want to sell to a "Yankee." However, the accidental death of his grandson soured the general on the island while intermediaries sent by Carnegie convinced him that the "Yankee" would care for the island. Davis sold his 1,891-acre holding to Thomas Carnegie on November 17, 1881, for \$35,000. A year later Carnegie and business associate Leander Morris bought the adjacent 8,240-acre Stafford plantation, including its mansion, from the cotton baron's heirs for \$40,000. In 1886 Lucy acquired Morris's interest in the Stafford land for a little over \$38,000. She would continue to add island lands to her estate through the rest of her life, ultimately controlling the southern 90 percent of the island.⁴

Shortly after his purchases on Cumberland Island, Thomas Carnegie retired from active business, although he remained on the board of Carnegie Brothers & Company. He planned to enjoy life and develop his new estate on Cumberland Island. Milton Meltzer, in his recent book on Andrew Carnegie, claims that the stress of working for his zealous and censorious brother had taken its toll on Thomas. He began drinking just before retirement and died in 1886 a few weeks before his mother. He was forty-three. His death left Lucy with nine children, an unfinished island retreat, and a large fortune with which to support the family and continue developing the estate. She sold the family home in Pittsburgh and established her main residence at Cumberland Island while continuing summer trips to the North in order to escape Georgia's summer heat.⁵

Before he died, Thomas spent lavishly to construct a suitable mansion on the ruins of Catherine Greene's Dungeness house. It was a relatively modest structure for a very wealthy man, subsequently described as "about 120 by 56 feet, two stories high with an attic, and built in the Queen Anne and Stick styles. A tower at the east end was 90 feet high. The outer walls consisted of a light-colored granite and the roof was covered with Vermont



Fig. 2.1. The Dungeness mansion during the life of Lucy C. Carnegie

slate.” Later, Lucy Carnegie employed the Boston architectural firm of Peabody and Stearns to enlarge the house. What resulted was a massive structure of 250 by 150 feet in an elegant Italianate style. It contained more than fifty rooms (fig. 2.1).⁶

Thomas also began shaping the larger landscape of the new estate before his death. He maintained the existing north-south road but developed elaborate driveways through adjacent forested lands. He kept the Tabby House, the Greene-Miller cemetery, and the Stafford house and farm but cleared away most of the other ramshackle structures and debris. Thomas Carnegie also tried to revitalize the various orchards on the island while widely distributing ornamental exotics to beautify his land.

Lucy Carnegie proved no less ambitious in her plans for Cumberland Island. From 1890 through 1905, while she added to the Dungeness mansion, Lucy Carnegie also paid for a variety of other buildings to provide for the family’s every want. Ultimately, the area adjacent to the main house, which came to be known as the Dungeness complex, included more than twenty buildings plus assorted walls, decorations, and a pergola (a colonnaded walkway). The most architecturally significant was a recreation and guest

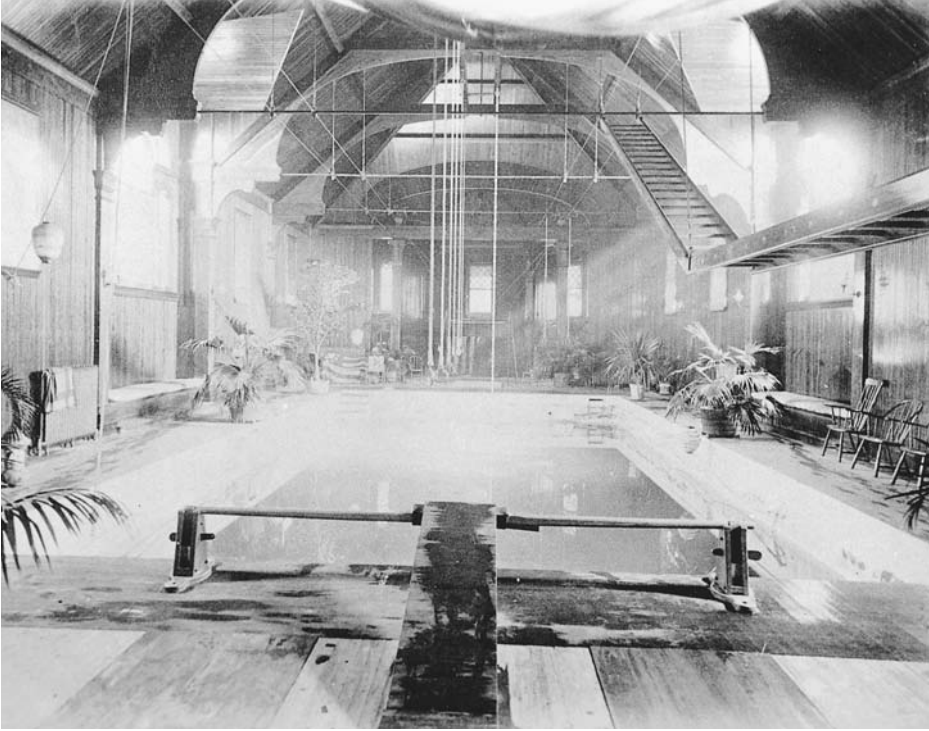


Fig. 2.2. The Recreation House at Dungeness was one of the architecturally significant structures on the island as well as a favorite of the Carnegie family.

house in the Queen Anne style erected around 1900. Lying just east of the mansion, it held a heated pool, steam room, recreation room, squash court, and guest bedrooms (fig. 2.2). It became the traditional abode of several Carnegie bachelor sons when they stayed on the island. The Recreation House was wood frame with cedar shingles and sported a variety of innovative architectural features.⁷

In keeping with her desire to have a self-sustaining estate, Lucy Carnegie spared no expense in building and staffing an elaborate residential plantation. The upper terrace of the original garden maintained its basic form and purpose, that of a scenic ornamental display (fig. 2.3). However, she had the lower garden expanded by diking and filling more marshland and converted it to a subsistence garden of vegetables and fruit. It also boasted a complex of greenhouses, primarily for cut flowers, and a waste dump at the edge of the marsh, carefully screened from the house. To the northeast of the mansion, Lucy continued to cultivate the olive orchard that came with

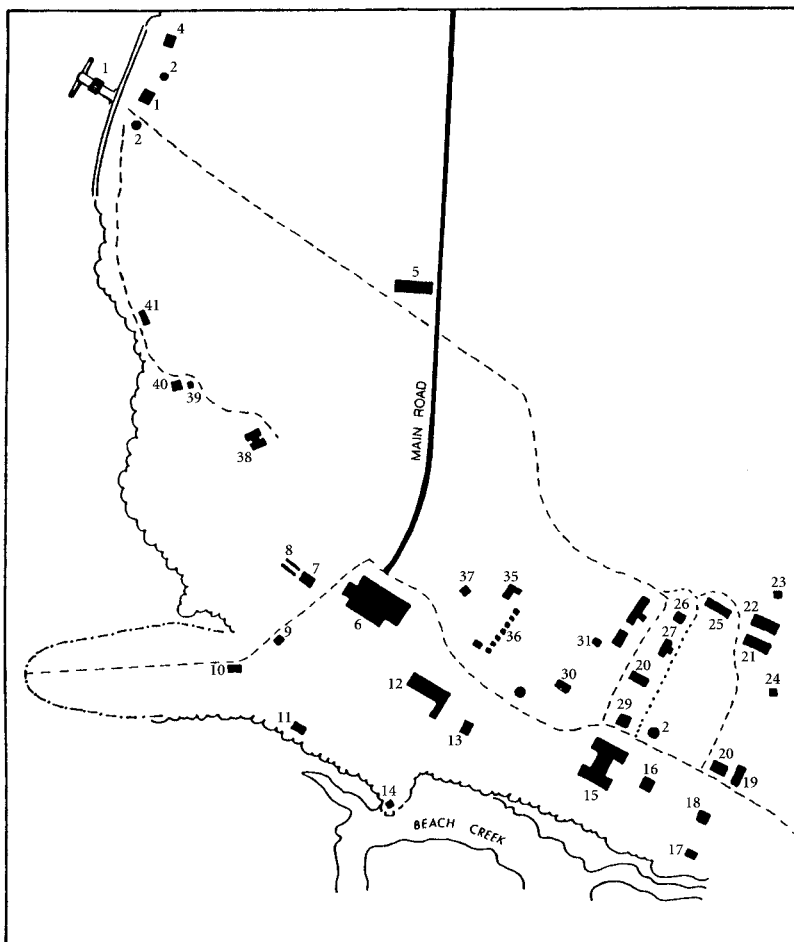
the property until a frost killed the trees in 1895. Still farther east, near the dunes, was a fenced dairy pasture. The estate also raised poultry, beef cattle, and pigs plus assorted crops on the developed fields of the old Dungeness and Stafford plantations. Some of the latter were cash crops including sea island cotton that won a state fair award in 1895. Still, the estate required daily runs of its boats to the mainland in order to supply the elaborate lifestyle of the Carnegies and their guests.⁸

Lucy Carnegie employed a staff of more than 200 who lived and worked on the island. Thus the estate ultimately included a variety of other buildings. There were separate dormitories for white and black laborers, a dairy manager's house, a poultry manager's house, a boat captain's house, and a modest residence named *The Grange* that served as home for estate manager William Page and his wife. Functional buildings included a large carriage house and stable, a kitchen-dining building, an icehouse, a water tower and cisterns, a pump house, a woodworking shop, a smokehouse, a laundry building, greenhouses, a large garden shed, and a boathouse near the Dungeness Dock (map 2.1). All together the work buildings and gardens of the "village" consumed some 250 acres.⁹

The beauty of Cumberland Island and the lavish lifestyle of the Carne-



Fig. 2.3. This photo shows the Recreation House and a portion of the estate gardens in the early twentieth century.



Structures in the Dungeness Area

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|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Dungeness Dock | 16. Gas pump | 30. Steam laundry (restrooms) |
| 2. Cistern | 17. Miller-Shaw cemetery | 31. Recreation hall |
| 3. Ice house (boat house) | 18. Kennel | 32. Dining room for white help |
| 4. Captain's house | 19. Dairy barn | 33. Dining room for black help |
| 5. Carnegie cemetery | 20. Feed barn | 34. Chimney for bakery |
| 6. Carnegie house ruins (big house) | 21. Lumber shed | 35. Poultry manager's house |
| 7. Tabby House | 22. Carpenter shop | 36. Chicken houses |
| 8. Pergola | 23. Chimney for carpenter shop | 37. Nancy Carnegie's playhouse |
| 9. Garden house | 24. Silo | 38. House of T. & C. Carnegie (NPS ranger residence) |
| 10. Greenhouse | 25. Quarters for black male help | 39. Garden shed |
| 11. Water wheel | 26. Commissary | 40. Laundry for cottage |
| 12. Pool house/ Bachelor apartments | 27. Dairy manager's house | 41. Unknown |
| 13. Manager's house | 28. Quarters for white male help | |
| 14. Little dock | 29. Ice plant | |
| 15. Carriage house | | |

Map 2.1. The Dungeness estate in 1916. (National Park Service, Southeast Region Office, 2000, *Draft Introduction to Planning Effort and Environmental Impact Statement*, vol. 1, CINS Superintendent's Office)



Fig. 2.4. Lucy C. Carnegie (in black) and her nine children in front of the Dungeness mansion

gies became a source of constant interest and envy to the mainland neighbors in poverty-stricken Camden County, Georgia. A who's who of notable businessmen, led by Andrew Carnegie, various politicians, rich friends and associates, and notable figures in the arts and sciences visited the estate. There they would relax at the mansion or recreation house, go picnicking at the ocean beach, hunt, fish, and enjoy lavish parties. Various house servants, both white and black, ensured that every want was satisfied.¹⁰

As her children matured, seven of them married (fig. 2.4). For each of these, Lucy provided a substantial wedding gift which most used to build a home on the island. Oldest son William received the Stafford house and a cash gift to help renovate it upon his marriage to Margaret Gertrude Ely. On January 5, 1900, a fire of unknown origin destroyed the antebellum mansion. A year later William built another house on the site and continued to call it Stafford. The new place resembled the old one in form, a two-story structure with a gable roof and an open porch across the front. However, it was built to better resist fire and sported a white-painted stucco exterior un-

like its predecessor. Various outbuildings stretched across the estate to the standing chimneys at the site of the former slaves' cabins. Subsequently, heirs of William's brother Andrew II built a more modest home adjacent to the ruins that is itself called *The Chimneys*. Next to *The Chimneys* lay one of the larger fields of the old Stafford plantation, which William turned into a nine-hole golf course. Later it became an airfield.¹¹

Daughter Margaret (called *Retta*) married wealthy scion Oliver G. Ricketson. Because she already had spent her wedding gift money, she used her husband's fortune to build a residence two miles north of Dungeness. This large two-story frame building, called *Greyfield*, passed to Margaret's daughter Lucy Ferguson. Her heirs now operate the only privately owned mansion on the island as a popular and upscale inn. It too lies amid a variety of outbuildings, most of them family residences and employee quarters rather than functional structures. Subsequently, Lucy Ferguson had a second area of structures built on land she received after the division of the island. This complex, called *Serendipity*, also remains in private hands.¹²

Thomas Carnegie II received a twenty-nine-room mansion called *The Cottage* upon his marriage. Unlike Stafford and *Greyfield*, this house lay only a few hundred feet west of the Dungeness mansion. This elaborate two-story home featured porches on three sides of the bottom story and two sides of the top one (fig. 2.5). Because of its location on the Dungeness estate, it required no outbuildings of its own, although young Thomas III maintained a zoo near the house for a period of time.¹³

In the late 1940s the same Thomas III started a fire that completely destroyed the house. According to Mrs. Carter Carnegie, *The Cottage* was being closed anyway owing to the cost of its upkeep. During the winter of 1951–52, after the estate bulldozed or buried the remains, heirs built a modest home in its place. In later years that home has served as the residence of the national seashore's superintendent or other Park Service personnel.¹⁴

The remaining mansion, *Plum Orchard*, was second only to Dungeness in both size and magnificence. Lucy Carnegie ordered it built for her son George on the site of a former orchard. Peabody and Stearns, the same firm that renovated Dungeness, designed the mansion. The occasion of this enterprise was George's marriage to Margaret Thaw in 1898. Eight years later the Thaw name became a household word in America as a result of a sensational murder by Margaret's brother Harry. Jealous that his young wife, Evelyn Nesbit Thaw, had been "kept" by the much older Stanford White a few years earlier, he accosted and shot dead the famous architect in front of



Fig. 2.5. The Cottage, built for Thomas Morrison Carnegie Jr. and his family ca. 1901

dozens of witnesses at Madison Square Garden. In the ensuing circuslike trial, Thaw's mother spent much of her vast fortune securing him a verdict of insanity.¹⁵

Despite the huge fortune she spent on son Harry, Mrs. Thaw had enough left to enable her daughter to enlarge Plum Orchard substantially in 1906. Adding a wing on either side of the house, Margaret Thaw Carnegie expanded it to a sprawling, 240-foot mansion with thirty principal rooms, twelve bathrooms and lavatories, and numerous smaller rooms (fig. 2.6). As befitted the second largest mansion, Plum Orchard had more than a dozen outbuildings and a dock. George died childless in 1921, and his wife wandered off to Europe to marry a French count. George's sister Nancy Carnegie Johnston then moved into the house, and her heirs maintained it until 1970.¹⁶

In addition to these four major centers, the Dungeness-Cottage village, Greyfield, Stafford, and Plum Orchard, the Carnegies also erected other facilities to serve their needs and wants. Chief among them were several "duck houses" located close to the dunes and the ocean beach. The earliest of these coastal houses was built in the 1880s, but it was abandoned by the 1920s be-



Fig. 2.6. Plum Orchard mansion, built for George L. and Margaret Thaw Carnegie, date unknown

cause of poor location and general deterioration. A subsequent one built across the island from Plum Orchard around 1900 was used as a hunting camp through the 1920s, but it was destroyed in the 1980s by a careless camper's fire.¹⁷

The Carnegie Family

The youngest of Thomas and Lucy Carnegie's nine children was born the same year they bought land on Cumberland Island (fig. 2.7). In chronological order they were William, Frank, Andrew, Margaret, Thomas, George, Florence, Coleman, and Nancy. Frank and Coleman never married while William and George married but did not have children. The remaining five had families who would become the five branches to divide the island and secure retained rights when it became a national seashore. Andrew Carnegie II had two daughters, Nancy who married James Stillman Rockefeller and Lucy who married Phineas S. Sprague, divorced him, and married Jack Rice. Hence she became Lucy Carnegie Sprague Rice. One of her daughters, Lucy Carnegie Sprague, married a man named Foster and later became the matriarch of Stafford.

Thomas M. Carnegie II (known as Morris) had two sons, Thomas III

CARNEGIE FAMILY TREE

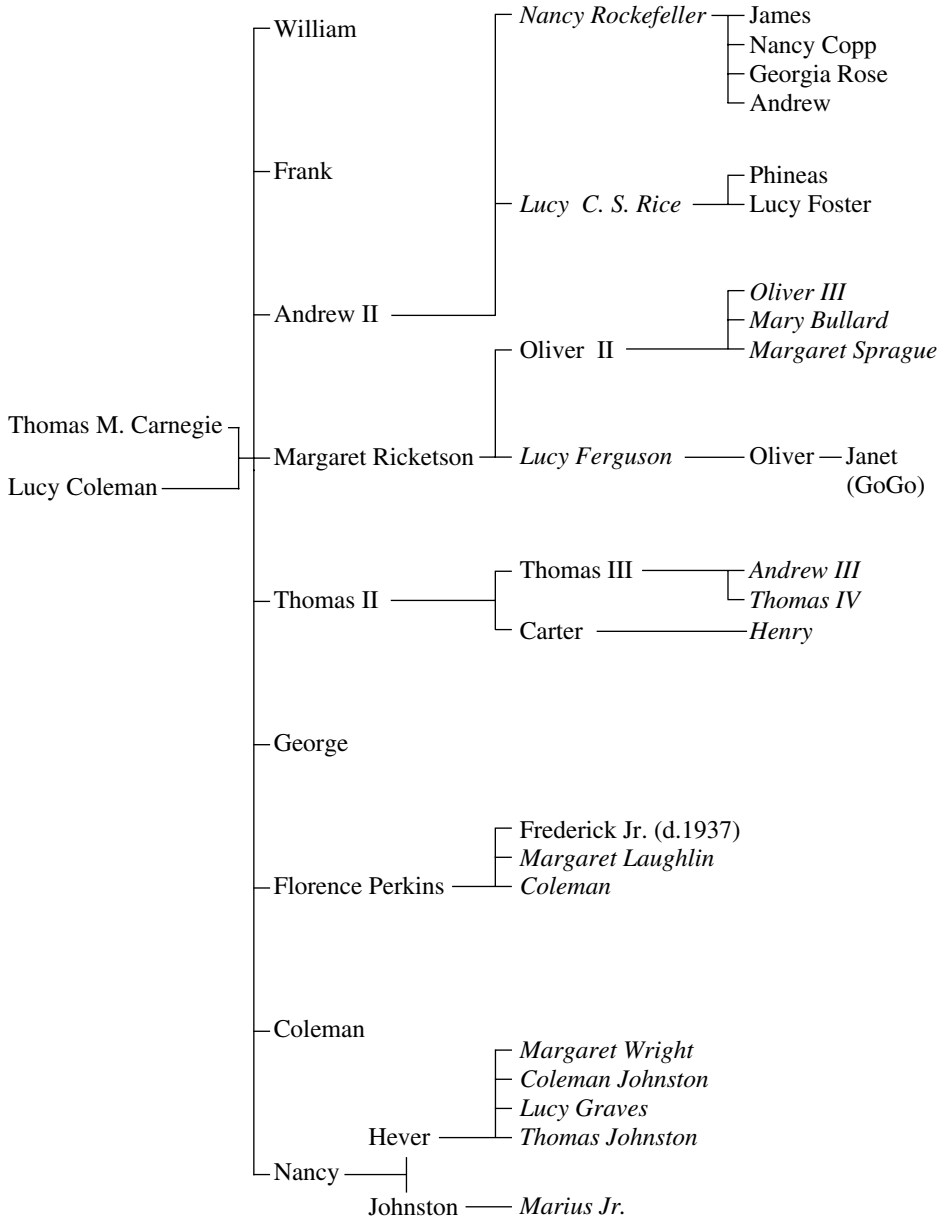


Fig. 2.7. A family tree of the Carnegies. This chart is not complete but shows all the children of Thomas and Lucy, all the grandchildren, and selected others who appear in the text. The names of those who inherited portions of the island are in italic type.

and Carter. This branch of the family, ironically the only one to continue the Carnegie name, suffered the worst financial decline, making retention of their portion of the island after the trust ended an unaffordable luxury. Margaret married Oliver Ricketson and had two children, Lucy, who married Robert Ferguson and became the dominating figure on the island during her later life, and Oliver II. Florence (called Floss) married Frederick Perkins and gave birth to three children, Frederick Curtis Jr., Coleman, and Margaret (called Peggy). Finally, Nancy eloped with Dungeness stableman James Hever and had four children, Margaret, Coleman, Thomas, and Lucy. The oldest later married and became Margaret Wright, the most vocal proponent of national park status for Cumberland Island. After the death of Hever, Nancy married Marius Johnston, the island doctor, who sired Marius II. These five divisions are called the Andrew II (subdivided into Rockefeller and Rice groups), Ricketson, Thomas II, Perkins, and Johnston branches of the Carnegie family. The fourteen grandchildren named above became the principals who would await the death of the last of their parents to decide the ultimate disposition of Cumberland Island.¹⁸

The Design of the Trust

During her long life as a widowed mother and dominating head-of-family, Lucy Carnegie shaped the future of both her children and her estate. None of her six sons ever held a job. Instead, they engaged in the recreational life of the very wealthy. Oldest son William became an avid golfer playing around the world as well as on his own course at Stafford. The others traveled, sailed, maintained rich social lives, and always returned to the enfolding embrace of their mother and her idyllic island retreat. Later James S. “Pebble” Rockefeller Jr., her great-grandson, reflected on the effect this had on the Carnegie sons: “I also came to appreciate the underlying sadness inherent in some of the Carnegie clan, exiled as they were to a remote Island with a powerful, matriarchal figure in charge, leaving them nothing to do but hunt and fish, drink too much, chase after what women could provide, and think what excitement was planned for the coming day. I can remember my grandfather [Andrew II] telling me, . . . ‘Pebble, I wish I had had a 9:00 to 5:00 job like your father. It is not healthy to not have a job.’” Pebble’s mother, Nancy Carnegie Rockefeller, later castigated her great-uncle, the senior Andrew Carnegie, for not furnishing jobs for her father and uncles in his business as he had for her grandfather.¹⁹

Lucy Carnegie took various steps to ensure that she would control the island estate. When Thomas Carnegie died, he left his fortune to Lucy. However, his children, as heirs, might have challenged that eventually. Thus in February 1899 the nine children legally ceded all interest in the lands and property of the island, as well as other holdings in Pittsburgh, to her. Thirteen years later she had a complex and binding will designed that sought to forestall any irresponsibility by her children with the island and the rest of her fortune. She set up a complex trust consisting of two major parts. The first ordered that the Carnegie office building in Pittsburgh be rented and the income from this used to maintain the island estate for her heirs. Any residual annual income was to be distributed among the surviving children. The second part prevented those heirs from dividing or selling any island land until the death of her last child unless they unanimously agreed to do so. The trustees were to be the five oldest children or a bonded, professional trust officer. Shortly after this, oldest son William married his nurse and was banned from the island. An angry Lucy Carnegie created two codicils eliminating him from trusteeship.²⁰

When Lucy died in 1916, seven of the other children survived her, Coleman Carnegie having died five years earlier. Within another five years Frank and George also died childless. Meanwhile Florence and Nancy elected to refuse trustee duties. That left a family trusteeship consisting only of Andrew II, Thomas II, and Margaret. By 1946 only Andrew remained as trustee. At seventy-six years of age, he sought relief from the onerous business of caring for the island and its financial upkeep. He, Florence and Nancy, his only living siblings, and the grandchildren secured the services of the Peoples First National Bank in Pittsburgh. Later dissatisfaction with the trust officer, Robert D. Ferguson (not to be confused with the unrelated Robert W. Ferguson, husband of Lucy), caused the family to shift the trust arrangement to the First National Bank of Brunswick, Georgia, in 1954.²¹

A New Era for the Carnegies: The Trust Years

For the first nine years of the trust, Lucy Carnegie's huge fortune comfortably maintained the surviving children and their families. In 1926 only six children remained to draw upon the trust income and enjoy the Cumberland Island estate. A report compiled by the Pittsburgh firm of Patterson, Crawford, Miller, and Arensberg that year showed that the Carnegie office building had brought in a total of nearly \$600,000 in rental fees from 1917

to 1925. Added to this were payments from the remaining stocks and a meager \$24,830 produced on the island. Over the same span of years, as the island's economically productive activities waned and the land returned to a wilder appearance, maintenance had demanded \$316,135. The highest costs were nearly \$67,000 for the Stafford farm, some \$57,000 for general expenses, and \$38,665 in taxes. The first two were predominantly for wages.²²

The trustees divided the surplus income among the heirs, and through 1924 it averaged more than \$42,000. However, in 1925 the residual income plummeted by nearly a third to \$31,500. In response to this sudden downturn, the family decided to close the Dungeness mansion and forgo its heavy maintenance costs. Four years later the collapse of the stock market further strained the resources available to support both Cumberland Island and an idle lifestyle for the heirs.²³

In the mid-1920s, between the deaths of George Carnegie and Margaret Carnegie Ricketson in 1921 and 1927 respectively, Andrew Carnegie II wrote a general letter to his siblings on the costs and potential earning power of Cumberland Island. He suggested that the surviving heirs form a corporation to run the island. He further proposed that the corporation be chartered to “buy and sell or lease or rent property—to conduct cattle and hog raising—lumbering—planting—sawmilling—fishing (shrimping), lay out ‘developments’—build hotels—roads—operate freight and passenger boats—aeroplanes—amusements, etc. Endeavoring in every way to make money by developing The Island’s resources which now go to waste.”²⁴ He concluded by urging his brothers and sisters to exclude husbands, wives, and widows of deceased siblings from the business. Although Andrew II’s recommendation for a corporation to run Cumberland Island would not be acted upon for another three decades, many of his ideas for developing the island’s resources were adopted. Unfortunately, no combination of economic activities came close to offsetting the cost of maintaining the idyllic retreat.

The heirs considered a variety of economic resources and functions on Cumberland Island. Invariably they sought expert advice from foresters, agronomists, soil scientists, and appropriate government specialists. As a well-educated group of men and women, they knew the value of science in determining the most profitable economic functions while also recognizing the environmental limitations of an island. Over the nearly five decades of the trust, they studied numerous plans that, if acted upon, would have made Cumberland Island unsuitable for a national park unit. The Carnegie

heirs were not averse to altering the landscape in their pursuits, but they also remained sensitive to unsightly change. In that half century Cumberland Island ran a gauntlet of threatening suggestions. The family's inability to agree on any of these landscape-altering plans saved the island.

Among the most obvious and available resources of Cumberland Island was its forest. Lumbering and naval stores had been the first resource to draw non-Indian settlers, and the island held thousands of acres of woodland. In 1927 Thomas Carnegie II invited the James D. Lacey Company of Jacksonville, Florida, to survey the family land and design a plan to manage the island as a "permanent forest estate." Company representative S. J. Hall reported five classes of forested land with different values. Of greatest value, he claimed, were 2,300 acres of old-growth longleaf and slash pine. These trees could be worked for turpentine before being selectively cut in such a way as to "bring the greatest return consistent with the perpetuation of a continuous timber crop."²⁵

A second category of timber consisted of "pond pine" or "pocosin." Hall noted that these trees were stunted and scattered and might contain "red heart rot." He blamed this on a hardpan in the soil fairly close to the surface in these areas. He suggested digging exploratory holes to determine the extent of the hardpan and then blasting it in order to "shatter the impervious strata which is responsible for the acid condition of the soil." Hall reported that the island held 700 acres of this type of forest.

Old and abandoned agricultural fields accounted for another 2,000 acres. Hall noted that these were being reclaimed by loblolly pine and live oak. Thomas Carnegie II wanted to clear the oak in order to improve pasturage, increase the parklike vistas, and favor the more marketable pine. Hall suggested trying to break even on the cost of cutting the oak by selling it for cordwood in Jacksonville. He then recommended the establishment of seedbeds for longleaf and slash pines for periodic transplantation to these areas in the future. These seedbeds, he suggested, should be in low places to "enhance the natural beauty of the fields."

A fourth timber resource consisted of 5,000 acres of "hardwood hammock land" (oak-palmetto community). The predominant species in these areas had little value themselves, but Hall thought that commercial hardwoods might be scattered through these groves. He suggested a careful study to locate these trees. Then they could be selectively cut to pay for clearing the rest of the vegetation. Once cleared, the area could be planted in valuable pines. A final category of land included 1,000 acres of beach,

sand dunes, old rice fields, and areas developed for residential and recreational use.

Hall concluded his forestry plan with various ancillary suggestions. His plan for fire prevention included wide firebreaks around all the commercially valuable timber stands as well as a fire tower at least eighty feet tall. He suggested leasing the forestlands for hunting and trapping in order to derive extra income while emphasizing the lumbering operation. Finally, Hall assured the Carnegies that all activities would be managed carefully to preserve the island's natural beauty.

For most of the next two decades, intermittent logging on Cumberland Island roughly corresponded to Hall's plan. Old-growth pine proved particularly valuable for telephone poles. Loggers floated up to 2,000 at a time to the mainland. Through most of that period, Hall and partner F. W. MacLaren managed the operation through their new company, Forest Managers. Cutting proceeded under strict rules to leave 100 feet of forest along both sides of any road in order to preserve the image of wildness. Still, from time to time problems occurred. In 1941 Carnegie granddaughter Margaret Wright complained to a forestry manager: "We all hope lumbering is not leaving such dreadful places as it did before and that they are really sticking to dead and infected trees. We are so glad you are there to check on them, as we were very sad over the way it was done last time."²⁶

By 1954 reforestation had increased the land dedicated to commercial pine to more than 5,000 acres. Slash and loblolly were the most common species, with a scattering of longleaf pines in the northern portion of the island. Major cuts had taken place in 1939 and 1946, and another was under way. These timber harvests left numerous stumps throughout the logged land. Trust manager Leo Larkin of the Peoples First National Bank in Pittsburgh sought to sell the stumpage, but it had deteriorated too much, according to a sorrowful note from the Hercules Powder Company.²⁷

Meanwhile, as the Darcy Lumber Company conducted a 1953–54 cut for both lumber and pulp, the Georgia Forestry Commission issued an ominous report. Its research on Cumberland Island showed poor growth of new timber in cutover areas over the previous two decades. Any future for a sustainable timber operation on the island would require burning nearly all of the land and replanting pine that would mature in twenty-five to thirty years. The financial situation on Cumberland Island had become precarious, and the Carnegie heirs faced hard choices about balancing their need for income with their desire to preserve the land's character and beauty.

Wildlife presented another group of resources for exploitation on Cumberland Island. To the heirs the most consistent and seemingly inexhaustible of these were the feral pigs. Throughout their years of owning the island, the family hunted pigs for their own use as well as for sport. In addition, they allowed commercial hunters to take pigs for a percentage of the sales. As early as 1928 Frank E. Dennis of Jacksonville sold seventy-four island hogs for \$8.60 each. Later Carnegie grandchild Lucy Ferguson and others penned pigs and fed them for sale while at the same time releasing better breeds into the forest to improve the feral stock.

By 1954, however, the efficiency of Ferguson foreman J. B. Peebles reduced the number of pigs to a point where hunting them was no longer cost-effective. Ironically, only a few years earlier the Carnegie estate manager had complained that too many pigs were destroying the forage for deer and other more desirable animals. Apparently, even such a prolific and pernicious pest as the wild pig could be reduced to economic uselessness in the limited island ecosystem.²⁸

Occasionally other animals were sought. Pig hunters took deer also, although this was sporadic and not very remunerative. Estate employees rounded up horses for sale on rare occasions while introducing stock from the mainland to improve the quality of the island herds. Commercial shell-fishing was a brief possibility, but a sudden depletion of marine life around the island in the late 1930s ended that plan. In 1937 Thomas II tried unsuccessfully to get an injunction against a Fernandina, Florida, pulp mill, claiming that its pollution had caused the decrease of marine life. One useful, if not directly profitable, enterprise was the practice of allowing the sheriff and other Camden County officials to seine and fish the island waters.²⁹

Raising cattle was the most successful animal operation tried on Cumberland Island. Like pigs, cattle had grazed the island for nearly 200 years. They furnished a ready source of extra income for Lucy Carnegie throughout her life. In 1951, as the cost of maintaining the estate spiraled upward, Lucy Ferguson and her husband, Robert W. Ferguson, submitted a plan to the other heirs to turn the entire island into a cattle ranch. The Fergusons pointed out that they had purchased 10 Hereford cows and a bull for \$2,500 in 1945. After six years they had sold 76 cattle for \$10,000 and had a herd of 100 cows and calves plus 2 bulls worth a total of \$30,000. They suggested that Cumberland Island could support 1,000 cattle if they cleared the island fields of vegetation and planted legumes or new grasses such as the cen-

tipepe grass they had introduced at Stafford Field. The Ferguson proposal required each branch of the Carnegie family to pay a share of the costs for additional cattle and the labor necessary to modify the island and work on the ranch.³⁰

Initially the other heirs responded positively. They unanimously agreed to further investigate the “cattle plan.” Lucy and Robert W. Ferguson suggested that each of the five family groups select a portion of the upland acreage for their home and recreational use while the remaining 10,000 acres would be open range. After citing the various financial and tax benefits of the plan, the Fergusons warned “this is probably the last chance the family will have to put a feasible plan into operation that will enable them to hold the property together.”³¹

Despite these exhortations, unanimity was impossible to preserve. The heirs were now a widely dispersed group of people, and many only knew their relatives from occasional meetings or short visits to the island. Some family members wanted to sell the island outright, which the Fergusons called illegal under the trust arrangement. Technically it was not, but it too would have required unanimity. Other heirs favored different forms of land use, including the rising possibility of mining. Still others, such as the wealthy Nancy Carnegie Rockefeller, did not want to relinquish the island’s traditional role as family playground.

In their frustration, Lucy and Robert W. Ferguson questioned bank trustee Robert D. Ferguson about inviting outside investment in the project. He advised against this step as long as the trust remained in effect. Eventually the grand “cattle plan” faded away, although cattle operations continued as a mainstay for Lucy Ferguson until the advent of the national seashore. A 1958 real estate appraisal, sponsored by the National Park Service, estimated between 300 and 400 cattle roamed Cumberland Island.³²

The impact of the cattle on the island’s landscape is still a matter of study and debate. The most obvious features are the infrastructure of the cattle business. Fences and cattle dips are found at several sites north of the Ferguson estate at Greyfield. Of more significance but less certainty are the lasting biological effects. Research sponsored by the National Park Service suggests that overgrazing by cattle contributed to open forests, destabilization of sand dunes near the ocean beach, and intense competition for forage that impacted the populations of deer and feral horses. Not only does this mean that cattle changed the biotic communities of Cumberland Is-

land, but that they have made assessment of horse and deer carrying capacities more difficult.³³

Crop Experimentation

With so much land at their disposal, it was only natural that the family members considered a variety of crops for their profit potential. They also showed an unusual willingness to experiment. Before 1916 the estate grew oranges and olives for sale as well as vegetables and other fruit for home consumption. However, both commercial crops disappeared by the early twentieth century.

After the death of Lucy Carnegie, Thomas II and various estate managers sought information on or experimentally planted several other citrus fruits, tobacco, indigo, sweet potatoes, taro, figs, and chayote, a tropical American vine that produces a pear-shaped fruit. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the issue of sea island cotton reappeared, but a flurry of hopeful correspondence failed to return the old mainstay to Cumberland Island.³⁴

Of all the experimental crops, tung nuts seemed to hold the most promise. Oil from these nuts was widely imported from China for use in paint, caulking, and wood preservatives. Carter Carnegie owned several orchards and processing plants on the Florida mainland and encouraged Thomas II to try the crop on Cumberland Island. From the 1930s through the 1950s, estate managers on the island experimented with tung trees planted on the edges of Stafford Field and the field immediately northeast of the dock at Dungeness.³⁵ The trust realized small profits from the enterprise, usually in the hundreds of dollars per year. Eventually petroleum-based products eliminated the market for tung oil as well as these minimal profits. Despite their poor performance as a cash crop, tung trees did succeed as invasive exotics on Cumberland Island. Today they must be periodically removed by hand from their old areas of commercial production.³⁶

Island Maintenance

As the Carnegie heirs struggled to find a profitable business for Cumberland Island, the cost of maintaining its elaborate and aging infrastructure soared. Furthermore, as the trust income declined, the estate had fewer and fewer employees to carry out that maintenance, operate the various agri-

cultural projects, oversee the logging and hunting activities, and cater to the occasionally demanding whims of different Carnegie family members. Roads, yards, gardens, cemeteries, and an airfield had to be cleared of brush and fallen limbs. The Main Road periodically required dozens of truckloads of shell from middens at Table Point. Wind and water damage to more than 100 homes, outbuildings, fences, wells, cisterns, and recreation facilities had to be repaired. All the buildings required painting as often as every five years. Four beach crossings through the dunes opposite the Dungeness, Greyfield, Stafford, and Plum Orchard houses had to be “kept open at all times.” Several dozen vehicles and two substantial yachts had to be in working order. Electric generators, water lines, and various docks needed periodic inspection and repairs. Keeping residents, visitors, and employees in supplies demanded daily trips to the mainland for groceries, ice, kerosene, gasoline, and spare parts. Garbage had to be collected daily from all the homes. Yet in 1960 a letter from bank trustee Edward Gray Jr. to new estate manager John H. Stanley listed only thirteen full-time employees of the estate plus two employed by Lucy Rice at Stafford.³⁷

In addition to the wages for full-time and occasional temporary or part-time workers, the estate also faced more serious repairs requiring contract specialists. Each building required periodic roof and foundation repairs. Termite damage posed the most insidious and serious problem. Between 1948 and 1963 every structure on the island required treatment, sometimes repeatedly. The unoccupied ones, chiefly the Dungeness mansion and the Recreation House, received almost no maintenance and suffered accordingly. An evaluation of the estate in 1951 or 1952 reported that the mansion’s roof “is in very bad shape, most of the windows are out and in general everything is falling apart.” As for the Recreation House, “the roof in general leaks badly, it is in [a] very bad state . . . the hurricane [in 1949] broke down the wood columns on the front porch, they were badly eaten away by termites.” The Chimneys house near Stafford Field needed a new floor, and the Stafford house required major repairs to its basement, windowsills, and pool house.³⁸ The fire that destroyed The Cottage in 1949 was almost a blessing because termites had badly damaged it as well. Even the modest house built on the site of that burned mansion in the early 1950s required major termite treatment within ten years.

During his short and unpleasant tenure as estate manager, J. Pat Kelly was exceptionally blunt about the condition of the island and the difficulty of managing it under the unusual trust arrangement. He began his tenure

in 1949 by summing up his first impression: “I have never seen a place so completely run-down and dilapidated as this one is. This applies to buildings, grounds, furnishings and equipment. The labor is of a mediocre or inferior type, slow, lackadaisical and ignorant. Constant supervision is necessary at all times.”³⁹

His remaining correspondence during the year he managed the estate did not become any more positive or cheerful. When questioned about a sudden rise in payroll cost, he responded that “most of the increase was caused by the various members of the family coming to the Island and each and every one wanting this and that done prior to their arrival, and all wanting something by a given time and all at the same time.” Still later he referred to his difficulties in pleasing the family members: “I of course realize that it is most difficult to please everybody, particularly when you have twelve of a different idea to please, therefore I have done the things that I thought would be of most value to the most people involved. For instance, Mrs. Rockefeller says, ‘I am against a big garden.’ Mrs. Perkins says, ‘I think it is wonderful.’ At any rate, or by any sense of evaluation, I have saved both of these heirs some money by having a large garden.”⁴⁰

Eventually the costs of satisfying their individual wants on the island as well as the maintenance of their particular homes necessarily shifted to the heirs themselves. Some of them were ill prepared to absorb the financial burden that had hitherto been borne by the trust. Despite this unpopular adjustment, the strain on estate resources continued.

The elaborate Dungeness estate was a particularly difficult burden. All attempts to maintain the gardens were abandoned by the early 1950s. Facing forbidding repair costs or the disintegration of the Dungeness mansion, either the family or trust officer Robert D. Ferguson requested a bid to demolish the house and remove the rubble from the island, hopefully for sale on the mainland. In 1952 Fernandina Beach contractors N. S. Hernandez and George T. Davis proposed several different plans for how to accomplish the work and estimated a price of \$12,500 to do it. This evidently proved too much for no further action was taken.⁴¹

Eventually the matter of the Dungeness mansion was settled in an unexpected way. For years the estate, and especially Lucy Ferguson, had suffered increasing poaching and malicious vandalism. They responded by “hunting” the poachers to chase them off the island. After employee J. B. Peebles shot at one aggressive poacher, things came to a head. On the night of June 24–25, 1959, a fire erupted in the big house and completely destroyed it. Sev-



Fig. 2.8. The ruins of the Dungeness mansion after fire destroyed it in 1959. (National Park Service photograph by Richard Frear)

eral Florida men with a history of poaching were suspected, but no arrests were ever made. Thus the most magnificent and significant of the island's structures escaped a humiliating fate and went out in a blaze that could be seen for miles up and down the mainland coast (fig. 2.8).⁴²

Strip-Mining Cumberland Island?

Finally, the efforts to make Cumberland Island self-sufficient drove the bank trustees and some family members toward an apparent solution that posed the greatest threat to the island's beauty and character in its long history. Pittsburgh trustee Robert D. Ferguson invited the National Lead Company to survey the island for useful minerals. In particular, it was to look for an ore called ilmenite, which contained titanium that could be used in the manufacture of paint. The ore was being mined successfully on nearby mainland areas of both Georgia and Florida, and the geologic prospects seemed promising for Cumberland Island too. National Lead Company officials visited the island in spring 1954. Over the next year the trusteeship

passed to the First National Bank of Brunswick in Georgia. Thus in March 1955 National Lead approached the bank's president, A. M. Harris, to negotiate a mining lease.⁴³

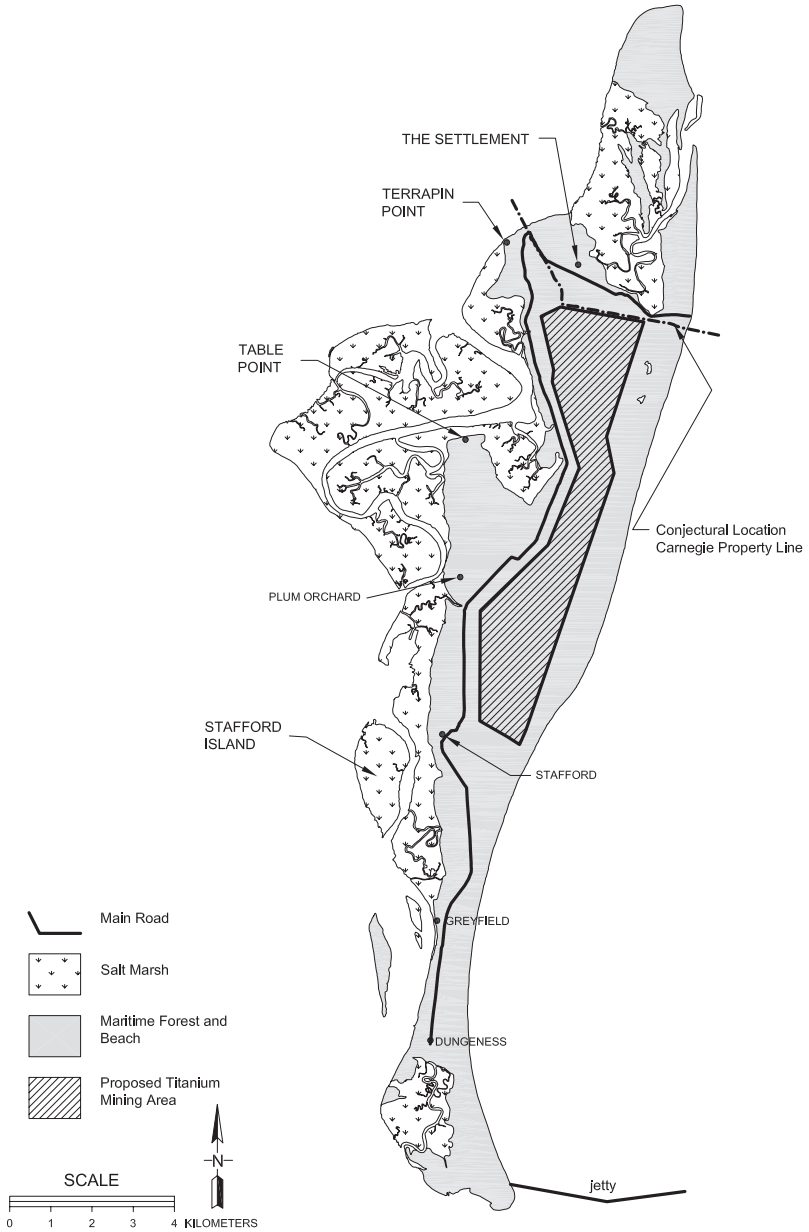
Harris immediately contacted six other mining companies, and two, Union Carbide and American Cyanamid, expressed interest in bidding. The three companies agreed to share the \$46,000 cost of a series of comprehensive tests by the Humphrey Gold Company of Jacksonville. At an April 6, 1956, meeting, the heirs unanimously approved further testing but insisted on competitive bidding before they would approve a lease to strip-mine the island.⁴⁴

Later that month Nancy Rockefeller asked that the American Smelting and Refining Company, for which her husband served as director, also be allowed to survey the island and bid. At the same time Coleman Johnston requested a similar opportunity for the Glidden Company of Cleveland, Ohio. Eventually, the original three companies agreed that all five should split the cost of the tests, which had ballooned to \$85,000. When the test results came in, they showed that a 7,000-acre segment along the central spine of the island contained economically worthwhile ore with a little over 3,000 acres of exceptional quality (map 2.2). Each of the five mining companies received a copy of the report, and the Carnegie descendants also secured one.⁴⁵

On December 1, 1956, National Lead, American Smelting and Refining, and Glidden submitted bids to strip-mine Cumberland Island. National Lead's bid was not competitive. American Smelting and Refining offered \$2 million for the outright purchase of all Carnegie holdings on the island, a plan that probably would have been impossible to achieve under the stipulations of the trust and the inability of the heirs to agree.

Glidden, however, made an extraordinary offer. For a twenty-year lease it would pay \$1.20 per ton of titanium-bearing ilmenite plus 10 percent of the value of any other minerals it recovered. Furthermore, it would guarantee the heirs \$2,225,000 even if it did not carry out the mining operation. In a later court hearing, mining experts testified that the family should easily realize twice that much over the span of the contract. In addition to the financial rewards, the heirs would benefit from free electricity brought to the island for the mining operation and free use of Glidden's boat service to and from the mainland. Glidden president Dwight Joyce called the offer "the highest I have ever heard of." Most mining experts agreed.⁴⁶

This rich offer would have solved the various heirs' problems of main-



Map 2.2. The titanium mining proposal offered by the Glidden Company. (Data from Robert M. McKey, 1958, "Appraisal: Cumberland Island Properties and Little Cumberland Island, Camden County, Georgia," National Records Center, Denver, Colo., acc. no. 079-97-0009, box 3)

taining the island. However, their reaction was not universally favorable. Indeed, there were two different negative responses. Carter Carnegie led one contingent of heirs who belatedly tried to introduce another bidder. Apparently he had taken the family's copy of the geology test results and approached a San Francisco firm, the American Exploration and Mining Company. This group suddenly offered to buy 10,764 acres of Carnegie land for a maximum price of \$9.7 million, to be paid as \$1 million at the outset and the rest in eighteen annual installments. This plan would have left the heirs approximately 1,500 upland acres in the four primary housing areas on which they could continue their island residency. However, the company reserved the right to cancel the contract after paying a minimum of \$2.5 million.⁴⁷ The San Francisco company may have thought it could strip-mine the valuable area in two or three years and then cancel the contract. This would allow it to secure the resources for less than Glidden offered.

Trustee Harris of the Brunswick bank and the Glidden Company reacted with outrage to this belated offer and to the lawsuit brought by the Carter Carnegie group to reopen the bidding. Harris testified that the San Francisco proposal and the lawsuit broke faith with the companies that had shared the cost of the tests, bid competitively among themselves, and provided a copy of the geology report to the family in an effort to be fair. He urged other mining companies to "blacklist" American Exploration and Mining Company.⁴⁸

A second group of Carnegie heirs was appalled by the potential impact of the proposed Glidden project on the island's landscape. The company planned a \$9 million installation on the island. The *Brunswick News* reported, "They would employ 100 persons, pay \$37,500 rental on a 150-acre village site, build 70 residences, fence the area to keep employees from trespassing on the rest of the estate, pay up to \$50 [presumably per acre] to reforest the mined section and shape the land into lakes or terraces as desired." Three of Lucy Carnegie's grandchildren, Nancy Rockefeller, Lucy Rice, and Margaret Wright, filed suit to block the destructive project. Nancy Rockefeller, the wealthiest of the heirs, bankrolled the legal fight.⁴⁹

Camden County Superior Court judge Douglas F. Thomas heard the cases during two intense days in April 1957. According to the *Brunswick News*, heirs who supported the Glidden plan included the last survivor of the original children, Florence Carnegie Perkins, and the family's only full-time island resident, Lucy Ferguson. After acrimonious legal presentations, Judge Thomas ruled in favor of Glidden and trustee Harris. Immediately

the other factions filed appeals that the Georgia Supreme Court rejected the following September. Disappointed heirs again appealed and filed a new lawsuit in federal court to end the trust arrangement despite the fact that one of Lucy Carnegie's children was still living. The Glidden Company agreed to delay mining operations through the rest of 1957 when it hoped the latest round of suits would be concluded.⁵⁰

Two events finally derailed Glidden's plans to strip-mine Cumberland Island. First, one of Nancy Rockefeller's appeals succeeded. Glidden and trustee Harris had worked out the lease for twenty years. However, the last child, Florence, was seventy-eight years old and in poor health. She could not be expected to live another twenty years. The trust, a party to the contract, would cease to exist at her death. Hence, the contract was ruled invalid.

The second factor was a sudden, precipitous drop in the world price of titanium. Not only did it make the Cumberland Island project uneconomical, but it forced Glidden and other companies to halt their mainland operations as well. Thus ended the most serious threat to the island's resources, serenity, and potential as a park. However, the experience created tension between the Carnegie heirs that would influence later decisions about the island, especially its future as a unit of the national park system.⁵¹

Property on the Island

Other opportunities to alter the island's character and future also arose from time to time. Various individuals and agencies approached the Carnegie family seeking property on Cumberland Island on a regular basis. In 1917 the U.S. Navy inquired about the south end of the island as a site for a "naval aircraft station." Estate manager William Page responded with a detailed letter in which he described open areas, potential airstrip sites, and the positive aspects of the island for such a use. However, the navy did not pursue this option any further. Between 1923 and 1924 Thomas II corresponded with land agent A. A. Ainsworth of New York about the possible purchase of land by the latter's client. Subsequently, Ainsworth sought to purchase the entire island, hoping to ride the speculative wave of the "Florida boom." He hoped to build a major development and cited Coral Gables, Florida, as an example of what he had in mind. In this early and unsuccessful bid for a resort, he presaged later Carnegie nemesis Charles Fraser. During the depression years Cumberland Island was briefly consid-

ered as a location for a Civilian Conservation Corps camp. However, the lack of a causeway to the mainland sank this idea.⁵²

In 1954 real estate agent Esther Angwin wrote to estate manager H. H. Sloss about a client interested in land on the island and intimated that many more would follow. Other private individuals and agents continued to approach the family throughout the life of the trust. To each of these propositions, the heirs cited the wording of Lucy Carnegie's will and the conditions of the trust as justification to decline. However, neither the Carnegie family nor the trust could stop the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from taking 518 acres at the southwestern end of the island in the mid-1950s. The corps claimed it needed the land to dump spoils from dredging the Intracoastal Waterway. After condemning the land, the agency deposited the spoils that then blocked the Beach Creek entrance to the Dungeness area by all but the smallest boats. This forced other craft to enter by a much lengthier and more difficult route closer to the ocean side of the island. Subsequently, the Brunswick trustee unsuccessfully sued to have the government dredge the opening to Beach Creek because it was the only safe all-weather anchorage for the family yacht.⁵³

Later the U.S. Air Force and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) considered Cumberland Island as a launch site for the early space program. In 1961 the two agencies studied seven sites and quickly eliminated all but Cape Canaveral, Florida, and Cumberland Island. Although NASA favored the Georgia island, the air force lobbied successfully for the Florida site adjacent to its air base. Had NASA succeeded in locating on Cumberland Island, the National Park Service could not have gained, nor the Carnegies maintained, any presence there.⁵⁴

Ironically, at one point during the long, grinding decline of the family fortune and the frequent tantalizing offers for all or parts of the island, the Carnegie heirs actually sought to increase their holdings. In 1930, when the hunting club at the north end of the island offered to sell its property, the family trust offered \$25,000 for it. The offer was politely declined, and a counterproposal was made for \$45,000. Nothing more came of this last effort to bring the entire island under Carnegie ownership.⁵⁵

Life on Cumberland Island

The lifestyle during the early years of the Carnegie era was an idyllic one filled with a mix of exciting, sometimes dangerous outdoor activities and all



Fig. 2.9. Picnics at the beach were a favorite activity of the Carnegies. (Photograph by Joe Graves ca. 1934)

the comforts that wealth and servants could provide. The former included hunting, fishing and crabbing, horseback riding, and swimming in the lakes, creeks, ocean, and pools. Roping sea turtles to small wagons for “races,” dragging alligators out of the water, and baiting rattlesnakes were less approved excitements.

Investigating the daily workings of the estate was an enjoyable activity for children. They watched the carpenters, dairymen, gardeners, and stablemen, often interfering with the work. Picnics at the beach, attended by liveried servants, were always popular (figs. 2.9 and 2.10). Exploring the vast estate was a never-ending source of fascination. Children enjoyed its many environments, abundant wildlife, and, for most of the years of the trust, the exciting possibility of exploring the closed and vaguely forbidding Dungeness mansion. Thomas Carnegie IV later recalled: “The island was a young boy’s paradise. It welcomed everybody and rejected nobody. It was a private world, running on a timetable all its own. Though I was often alone on Cumberland Island, I was never lonely.”⁵⁶

More formal outdoor recreation included golf at the course William Carnegie built at Stafford Field, skeet shooting at Old House Field, tennis and squash at the Recreation House, and croquet. Sedentary activities included dances, masquerades, card games, and singing. Nancy Rockefeller



Fig. 2.10. The fun, family, and excitement of Cumberland Island created a deep love of place for the Carnegie children generation after generation. (Photograph by Joe Graves ca. 1934)

recalled a “playhouse” built for the children’s amusement and the fun she had with favorite cousin and playmate Thomas Carnegie III climbing trees and buildings and playing impish tricks. Meals were often elaborate affairs, and dinner was always formal.

Guests were frequent and sometimes stayed for lengthy periods. Later Cumberland Island became a place to socialize between siblings and cousins who had dispersed all over the United States and even to Europe. Throughout the Carnegie years a pleasant pastime was visiting the other island mansions when their residents were present. Parties of every sort took place. Friendships, romances, and marriages began on the island.

Life on Cumberland wasn’t all rosy. Children attended school or tutorials on the island. There were duties to perform, chief among them organizing all the social and recreational events, overseeing the care of the households, and dealing with the nearly 200 employees the estate required during the golden age of “Mama” Lucy Carnegie. During the difficult trust period, the contraction of employment and services meant visiting heirs had to perform more and more of the utilitarian tasks themselves.⁵⁷

Bad things happened too. Broken bones, gunshot wounds, and a fair sprinkling of deaths occurred on the island. Illnesses, occasionally serious,

meant some Carnegie family members spent their days on the island in pain and weakness. For many, Cumberland Island became their final resting place, primarily at the family cemetery near Dungeness. Each burial there further cemented the generational tie to the island. Those ties are echoed in the words of Lucy C. S. Foster, great-granddaughter of Thomas and Lucy Carnegie, who recalled:

Cumberland Island is far from the maddening crowd . . . it's where my roots are. . . . It was . . . smelling the land way before the "Dungeness" [the yacht] docked . . . galloping ponies . . . dashing down to Greyfield to sit on the red settee to listen to the guests as they finished dinner. It was the music of the different dinner gongs . . . riding sea turtles through the surf . . . swinging on the rings at Dungeness Pool. It was sneaking up on ducks with my son at Lake Retta; throwing the net with Nate [a servant] for mullet house parties. It was the smell of magnolias; rattlesnakes being skinned; pool-hopping sprees; buggy rides at Plum; dashing for Easter eggs at the beach . . . a treasure of memories, lives of children, burying grandparents, family and friends, then the thrill of holding grandchildren to begin again.⁵⁸

James "Pebble" Rockefeller agreed: "Cumberland was, is, and will always be like that—placing her mark on so many of us who have spent time exploring her many worlds, or meeting kindred spirits who have been attracted to her shores. Her symbiosis of beauty, nature, and people make her an island to herself."⁵⁹

The North End

While the Carnegie era unfolded on the southern part of Cumberland Island, the northern tenth evolved in a very different way. The tourism business, begun during the antebellum period, continued to enjoy a modest success after the Civil War. The Clubb family sold its hotel, the Oriental House, to M. T. Burbank in 1881.⁶⁰ He enlarged the operation and changed the name to the High Point Hotel. Meanwhile, on adjacent properties, both George W. Benson and William R. Bunkley began similar businesses. The Bunkley House at the site of the present High Point Compound was such a success that in 1883 its owner began constructing a horse-drawn tramway from the Cumberland Island Wharf to his hotel. Later it would be extended to the ocean beach. During the rest of the 1880s, Bunkley built cottages, adding more rooms to those in the two-story hotel.⁶¹



Fig. 2.11. The Cumberland Island Hotel at the north end of the island ca. 1898

Despite this successful run, in 1890 William R. Bunkley decided to devote more attention to his properties and businesses on the mainland. He first set aside 30 acres for his children and for a Methodist church for whites. Then he sold some 1,000 acres of highland, 600 acres of marsh, and the hotel to the Macon Company. In 1891 the new owners reopened the resort as the Cumberland Island Hotel to banner newspaper notices. Over the next decade the hotel enjoyed its busiest time (fig. 2.11). Many visitors came with conventions, the largest of which was the Georgia Teachers Association. Some groups brought nearly 150 guests at a time and stayed for up to two weeks.⁶²

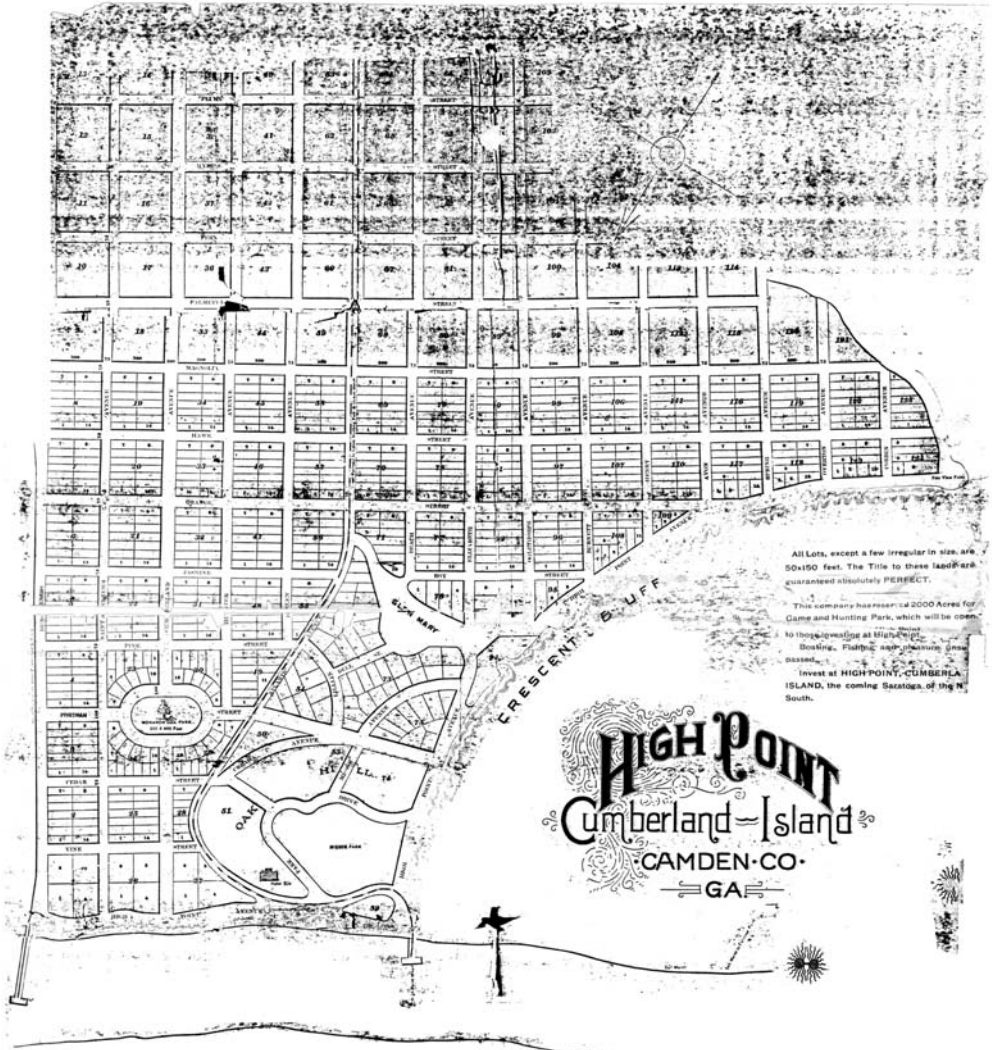
This apparent success, however, did not forestall financial problems for the Macon Company. In 1901 the company was forced to turn over the hotel to creditors in Macon, Georgia. That group in turn lost the complex to the estate of William R. Bunkley, holders of the mortgage. Robert Bunkley, like his father, preferred to live on the mainland, so he leased the hotel to L. A. Miller. Miller chose to operate the hotel more as a year-around hunting and fishing lodge than a site for teachers' conventions and genteel vacations. Eventually Robert Bunkley reassumed management, sold the hotel, bought it back again, and in 1921 sold it once more as a hunting lodge to a group known as the Cumberland Island Club. This was not an "arm's

length” sale because both Bunkley and L. A. Miller were members of the club. A few years later Atlanta businessman Howard Candler Sr. and his son joined the club. When it faltered financially in 1930, Candler bought the High Point property and buildings for a family retreat.⁶³

Another planned development at the north end might have significantly altered the island’s future. In 1891 a group called the High Point Cumberland Island Company filed a plan to subdivide property it had acquired a decade earlier near the site of Fort St. Andrew. This ambitious scheme would have divided the property into 125 blocks, most of them in a tight grid pattern, and sold 50-by-150-foot lots in “the coming Saratoga of the New South” (map 2.3). The plan also included a large hotel and a 2,000-acre “game and hunting park.” The owners auctioned lots from July 9 through July 11, but apparently there were too few takers to enable the scheme to go forward.⁶⁴

One sequence of events that did result in more settlement began in the 1890s. Island lore holds that the dispossessed slaves of Stafford and other plantations wandered to the north end of Cumberland Island where they eked out a miserable living. In 1890 M. T. Burbank acquired 5 acres along “Old Clubb Road,” subdivided them into 50-by-100-foot lots, and sold them to former slaves in the area. Among the buyers were Charlie Trimings, William Alberty, Quash Merrou, Morgan Hogendof, and Primus Mitchell (fig. 2.12). Some were able to afford more than one lot. Three years later the new owners set aside part of this land to be the site of the First African Baptist Church. In 1937 the residents of the tiny community tore down the original log structure and built the present church with wood from a house razed on the High Point property. It is widely believed that Burbank and others established this subdivision, colloquially called the “Settlement,” in order to secure a pool of laborers for their hotel businesses. The tiny hamlet would later become the focus of private land acquisition and historic preservation controversy.⁶⁵

During the half century after their purchase of High Point, the Candlers further developed their estate into an idyllic retreat, purchasing many small properties from their former neighbors. They carefully preserved the hotel and some other buildings, erected new ones, and turned the old tramway into High Point Road. They too became entranced by the island and developed a deep attachment that spans generations. The rest of the north end suffered depopulation as its residents died or moved to the mainland for more economic opportunity. The 1930s depression drove off most of the white settlers. A few African Americans remained as employees of the



AUCTION SALE OF LOTS AT HIGH POINT

Thursday, Friday and Saturday, July 9th, 10th and 11th.

TITLE PERFECT. Low Excursion Rates have been arranged for on all Railroads and Steamship Lines running to High Point

Map 2.3. The proposed subdivision in 1891 on the north end of the island by the High Point Cumberland Island Company. Note that the Cumberland River and north are at the bottom of the map. The map is part of a brochure advertising a land auction for the lots. (Georgia Archives, acc. no. 69-501, ser. 11, folder 11-1-010)

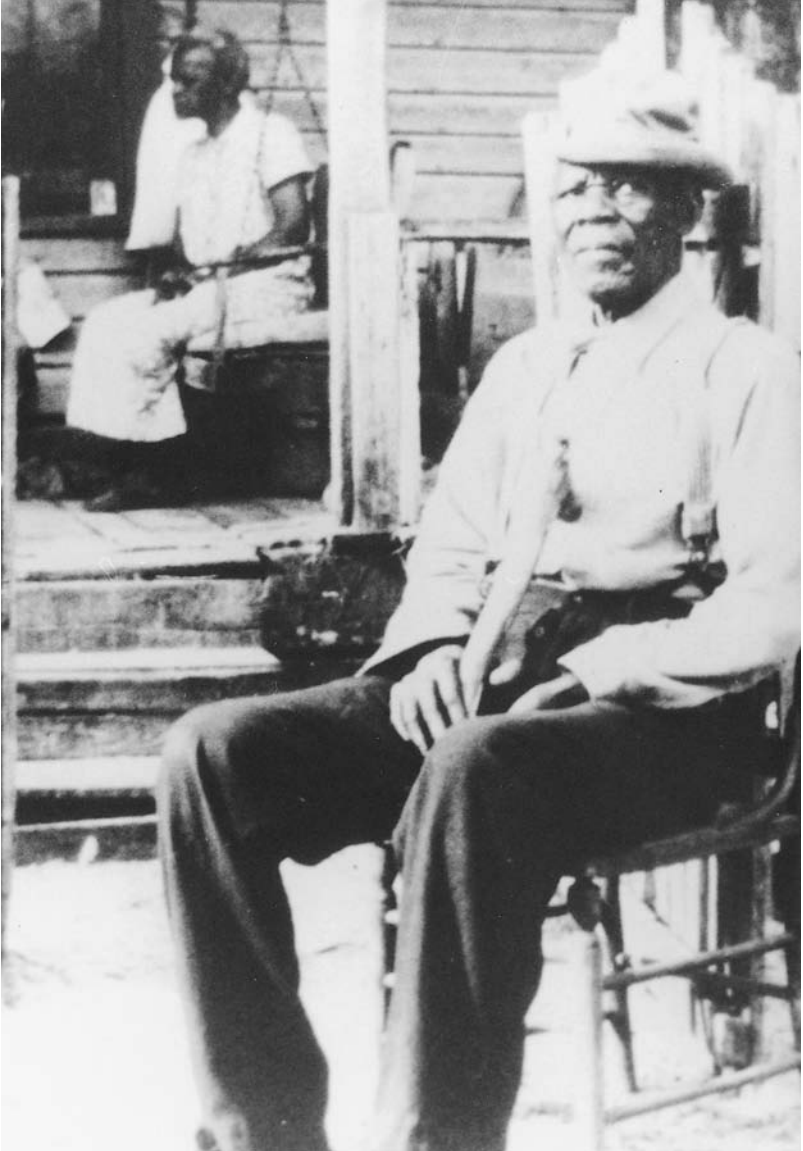
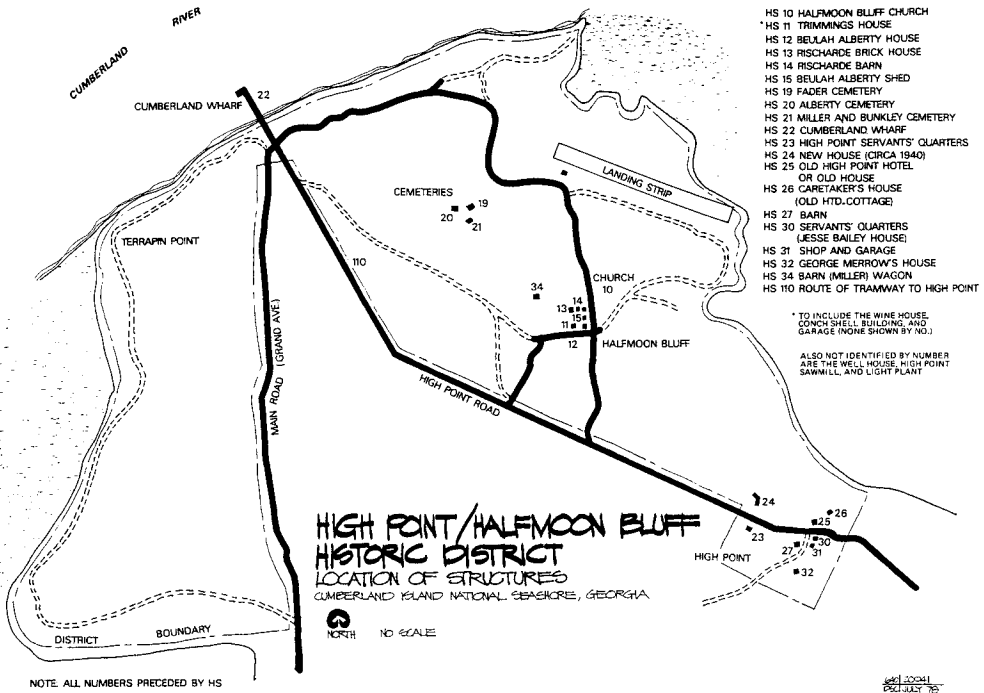


Fig. 2.12. Slave descendant Primus Mitchell at his home in the Settlement at the north end of the island



Map 2.4. The High Point–Half Moon Bluff Historic District. (National Park Service, Denver Service Center, July 1978, Map 640/20041)

Candlers. However, the Settlement too decayed under the onslaught of abandonment, storms, and termites. By the time the National Park Service arrived in 1972, only four unoccupied houses still stood.⁶⁶

The history of the north end contrasts with that of the rest of the island. The Carnegie lands consolidated into a unified and palatial estate and then suffered a declining fortune and a legal inability to divide or develop the land. Meanwhile, the north end began as a variety of parcels, many with commercial tourism operations, that the Candlers consolidated into another elaborate estate. One northern parcel became a poor settlement for former slaves and their dependents, while others lay dormant, their owners having vacated the island for better, if not richer, lives on the mainland (map 2.4).

The End of the Trust and the Division of Cumberland Island

Eventually the trust would end, and the grandchildren of Thomas and Lucy Carnegie pondered that event. When Andrew Carnegie II relinquished ad-

ministration of the trust in 1946, it spurred a lot of soul-searching about the long-term future of Cumberland Island. Pittsburgh trustee Robert D. Ferguson wanted to pursue profit-making activities aggressively. Some family members worried about the effect of such activities on their island retreat. The ultimate issue was whether the family could keep the island estate together when the trust ended by forming a family corporation. The alternative would be division of the property, which would open the door to piecemeal sales.

In 1944 Oliver Ricketson II addressed the possibilities in an exhaustive twenty-one-page letter to the rest of the heirs. He began by summarizing the five branches of the family, their attachments to the various remaining homes, and his estimate of what they would want to do with the island if given the choice. Then he listed his reasons for believing that retention of the island would not work. First, Ricketson predicted that unanimity among the fourteen grandchildren was impossible. In fact, he doubted whether a simple majority would opt to keep the island.⁶⁷

A second reason was the possibility that putting all the island holdings on the market at one time might coincide with an economic downturn, resulting in a low price. He suggested that dividing the island would allow those who could afford it to wait for the best time to sell. Furthermore, he suspected that such a “great diversity of interests, finances, and wishes among so many related heirs might result in bitter litigation” if they still owned the island in common. Finally, Ricketson pointed out that those who wanted to continue to live on the island could be “forced to move against their will and without adequate previous preparation for a change in residence.” Ricketson’s desire to act was reinforced that same year by the deaths of Carnegie sons William, who was not part of the trust, and Thomas II. He urged that a division of the island take place immediately so that each heir would know which parcel he or she would have and could plan for its eventual disposition.⁶⁸

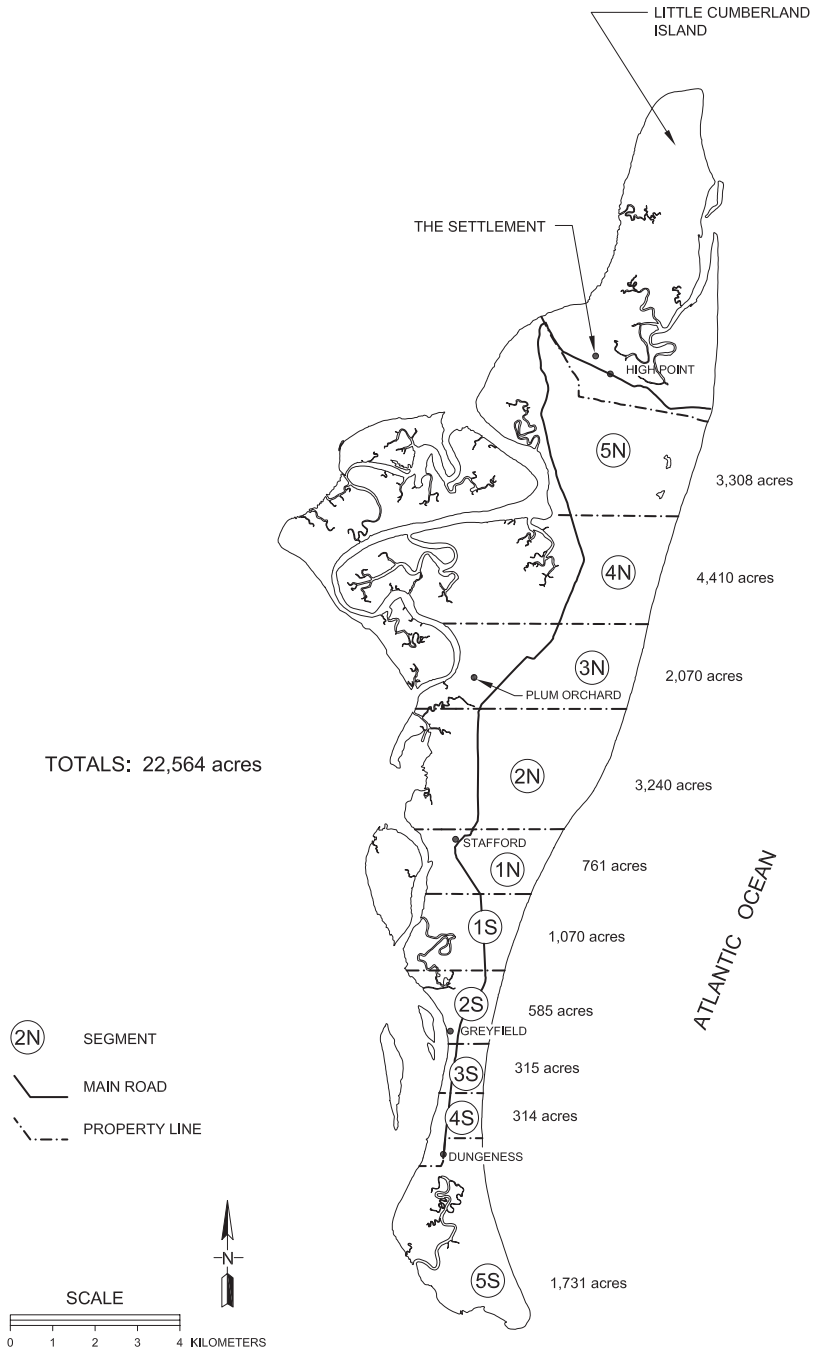
Despite Ricketson’s lengthy evaluation and strenuous urgings, too many heirs still wanted to keep the estate together. They feared that a division might reduce each individual’s access to other parts of the island, especially those who only visited occasionally. The only action the heirs took toward eventual division was to commission a careful survey by the Watts Engineering Company. After the survey Watts produced a large (48 by 96 inches) map of the island. It showed land use, natural vegetation categories, and buildings and other infrastructure as well as base points that could be used

in a later division. The Watts map became a pivotal tool when the trust did finally end.⁶⁹

After the divisive mining controversy, only one original Carnegie child remained alive. In 1959 Florence Carnegie Perkins was nearly eighty years old, in failing health, and clearly near the end of her life. The end of the trust had to be faced. Finally the family formed a corporation, the Cumberland Island Company. Florence died on April 15, 1962. Within forty-eight hours company president Coleman Perkins notified banks, businesses, and the press that the trust had ended and the Cumberland Island Company would assume control of the island and other assets. In reality, the Brunswick bank did not officially end its trusteeship until February 9, 1963.⁷⁰

During the three years before Florence's death, the family worked out a plan to divide the island among its five branches. Each branch could then further divide its land among its members. The island was to be divided into ten segments, five in the narrow southern portion of the island where most of the structures were located and five in the wider, less developed northern portion. Each family branch received one southern segment and one northern one. The acreages and land values were theoretically equal. The surviving homes, Greyfield, Stafford, Plum Orchard, the new Cottage, and The Grange (a small house near the Dungeness mansion ruins) would go with their segments to the branches that occupied them at that time. All heirs were entitled to use the entire Main Road, the Dungeness Dock and its surrounding area, and the family cemetery.⁷¹

A few problems arose in the divisions within each branch. Nancy Rockefeller of the Andrew II branch gave up her claim to Stafford to preserve amity with her sister, Lucy Rice. In some cases the grandchildren had died, and subdivision among their heirs was necessary. In the Ricketson branch granddaughter Lucy Ferguson received one-half of the holdings in the northern and southern segments. Her deceased brother, Oliver Ricketson II, left two daughters and a son. Oliver III, Mary Bullard, and Margaret Sprague inherited their father's half in common but later divided both their northern and southern segments into thirds. In the Thomas II branch, both of his sons, Thomas III and Carter Carnegie, had died, the former leaving two sons and the latter one adopted son. Some members of the corporation sought to exclude the adopted son, Henry Carter Carnegie. He sued to be included and won the right to his father's tenth in Camden County Superior Court in July 1962. Judge Douglas Thomas, the same one who had presided over the titanium case, ruled that the trust was established under



Map 2.5. The land division by the heirs of Lucy C. Carnegie. (Data from a map of the same title, Georgia Archives, acc. no. 69-501, ser. 11, folder 11-1-009)

Pennsylvania law, which stipulated that adopted children have the same rights as natural ones. A final conflict arose when Thomas M. C. Johnston, who lived in France, refused to pay his share of the court costs and was sued by his relatives.⁷²

Finally, in July 1964 the case for dividing the island went to Camden County Superior Court. The petition appeared to be an adversarial one with Mary Bullard and fourteen other heirs against Lucy Ferguson and two others. In fact this was merely a vehicle to get the case before the court. Judge W. D. Flexer readily accepted the family's division plan, complimenting them for their foresight. However, the judge did notify the family that the court would retain jurisdiction until it received a "detailed and appropriate [survey] description and easements" on the partitioned land. These were submitted in May 1965, and on June 1 of that year the final supplemental decree ended the era of a single 15,000-acre Carnegie estate (map 2.5).⁷³

Once the division was final, the full diversity of opinion over the island's future quickly surfaced. Lucy Ferguson continued as always to live at Greyfield and ranch on the island. She, her family and guests, and her pigs and cattle roamed over the entire island as before. The Nancy Carnegie Johnston branch, led by Margaret Wright, entertained the National Park Service and sought its protection for the island. Coleman Perkins devised a family corporation, the Table Point Company, to carry out further logging operations in the northern part of the island. The Rockefellers built new homes on their segment and continued to use the island as a playground. The descendants of Lucy Rice did the same at Stafford. However, the less wealthy grandsons of Thomas II looked for ways to sell their holdings. Oliver Ricketson III, living in New Mexico, also cared little for the island and looked to sell. The glorious estate of Thomas and Lucy Carnegie would never again function as a unified and idyllic family retreat. Cumberland Island suddenly and jarringly faced opportunities and threats from every direction.