

# NEWSLETTER

Lower Altamaha Historical Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 1405

Darien, Georgia 31305

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Meetings are held at the Ida Hilton Library, Haynes Auditorium, on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 P.M. The Society extends a hearty welcome to all.

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**LAHS MEETING, JANUARY 18, 1996, 7:30 P.M.** : This will be a membership business meeting. The objective is to make LAHS a more effective and efficient organization in McIntosh County and Georgia. Topics for discussion and decision will be : Goals for the Society, Programs, Field Trips, Special Projects, and Organization Changes. The membership is urged to attend and bring your input and ideas and contributions of interest to this LAHS Meeting.

**LAHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING, JANUARY 18, 1996, 7:00 P.M.**

## **LIVING ON THE GEORGIA TIDEWATER**

Charles Joseph McCosker [c.1856-1898] and his wife Annie Columbia Cannon [1856-1916] were the Grandparents of Annie Cannon Fisher Gill and Mary Leontina Fisher Barber. The McCosker's daughter, Ann Elizabeth [1883-1930] was the mother of Annie Gill and Mary Barber. The following is just a portion of their living experiences on the Georgia tidewater.

Annie Columbia & Charles Joseph were living at Cannon's Bluff on August 31, 1886, when an earthquake occurred at 9:25 P.M., lasting for about one minute.

The newspaper reported that the quake caused considerable damage to Charleston, and South Carolina, slight damage to Savannah, and tremors felt in McIntosh County. Ann Elizabeth was only three years old at the time, the impression of this experience would be long lasting. She would tell of going on the White Marsh in front of the house and how frightened they all were and how upset the animals were. The White Marsh referred to is thought to be the location where salt was distilled from sea water. Ann's grandfather, William James Cannon and her great grandfather Henry Cannon had been Salt Ketcher's, here at Cannon's Bluff since 1805.

At sometime between 1886 and 1890 the McCosker family and Annie Columbia's unmarried brothers moved from Cannon's Bluff to Hird Island. The men went to work at Aiken's Saw Mill on Hird Island. When Aiken closed this mill, Charles Joseph went to work at Hilton Dodge Lumber Company. This was a saw mill at Lower Bluff, which is today the Fort King George Historic Site. He walked to and from Lower Bluff, the family walked every Sunday to the Roman Catholic Church at the Ridge, the children walked to and from school at the Ridge, the families that lived on May Hall Island would walk to Hird Island to visit their neighbors.

At sometime prior to 1871 a series of plank walks were constructed across the marsh which connected the islands in the Altamaha Sound to each other and the mainland. The " 1871 US Coast Survey Chart #446, Doboy & Altamaha Sounds", show these plank walks. A segment of this chart can be seen on page 442, *Early Days on the Georgia Tidewater*

The route which the family walked to the mainland started at the north end of Hird Island. They proceeded across the plank walk to Union Island then across the trail on Union Island to Black Island Creek {Ridge River}. There was a ferry which operated daily across Black Island Creek to the high land, which is today Blue'n Hall landing. George Francis was the Ferry Boat operator.

They then proceeded across the plank walk to the mainland. This section of plank walk is today the causeway connecting Blue'n Hall Landing to the mainland. Another plank walk was from May Hall Island to the South end of Hird Island. The Corlette family of May Hall Island would walk to visit the McCosker & Cannon family on Hird Island.

On June 19, 1898, Charles Joseph McCosker was killed in a boiler explosion at the Hilton Dodge Lumber Company, Lower Bluff. On October 2, 1898, a hurricane-tidal wave destroyed all the buildings on Hird Island, the plank walks, the ferry on Black Island Creek and created wide spread destruction in McIntosh County.

October 2, 1898 was a Sunday. The McCosker family was preparing to walk to the Roman Catholic Church at the Ridge. They were first alerted of different weather conditions by a rapidly rising tide , which had already covered the plank walk, making it impossible to walk to church. The Cannon men, and McCosker's quickly gathered planks and boards, which were abundant on the Island, because of the saw mill location, and proceeded to build benches up in the live oak trees for the family to escape the rising water. The baby was wrapped in the oil cloth from the kitchen table. There was not time to collect food or water. From the trees the entire family watched the water from the incoming tide, flood the ground below them. The outgoing tide proved to be the most terrifying. Buildings, lumber, and animals rapidly rushed by in the fast moving water below them. During the night the very wet and frighten group came down from the trees to find everything washed away. the boards, outbuildings, houses, animals, and everything gone. Their fresh water supply on Hird Island was an open well. This was filled with salt water and gave no satisfaction to the family. The sugar cane patch was flattened, they striped and chewed the cane , attempting to satisfy their thirst, however the sweet juice only enhanced the want for water. When the water receded friends and neighbors from the Ridge, came by boat looking for the Cannon's and McCosker's. They were rescued to the Ridge , where provisions were made for them by the caring friends and neighbors. At Ashantilly, the water rose eight and one-half foot in two hours, above the spring tide mark.

[ excerpts from *Early Days on the Georgia Tidewater* ,page 511-514 ]

Sweeping in from the Atlantic without warning, the hurricane made landfall in the center of McIntosh County.

The full force of the storm came at high tide--which also happened to be a full-moon spring tide--and this caused extraordinary flooding throughout coastal McIntosh and Glynn counties. Tides were reported at 13 feet above the mean high water mark at Darien and 18 feet at the Sapelo Island lighthouse.

It was a real tidal wave. It is said that the tide rose about five feet in about twenty minutes. It was from ten to twelve feet higher than ever known before. At the Ridge the tide was fifteen feet higher than ever before.

It is estimated that between 40 and 50 people lost their lives.