

Altamaha Echoes

Lower Altamaha Historical Society Newsletter January 2001

LAHS Board of Directors Meeting, January 18, 2001, 4:30p.m. –
St Andrew's Parish House

LAHS Meeting, January 18, 2001, 7:00 P.M. –St. Andrew's Parish House
DUTCH TREAT SUPPER, 5:45 p.m. at B & J PIZZA

“Bessie Mary Lewis and McIntosh County History” will be the program presented by Buddy Sullivan. Buddy was a protege of McIntosh County historian Bessie Lewis, having known her during his adolescence and spent many hours with her learning about the history of McIntosh County. Bessie Lewis was the county historian from the 1920s until her death in 1983. Buddy has since “sort of” assumed that role, following in Bessie’s footsteps and carrying forward much of her research. Lewis specialized in the Scottish history and colonial history of Darien and the McIntosh County region. Her small book, *“They called Their Town Darien”*, was published in 1975 and was primarily the result of her many years of research into the formative years of the town and county. She was the editor of the weekly newspaper in McIntosh County in the 1940s and wrote a popular feature column called *“So Sings the Mighty River”*, a series of stories about the Altamaha River region. She later wrote the popular *“Low Country Diary”* column in the Darien News. Lewis did the early primary research about Fort King George. Her work on the fort was largely responsible for its becoming a state property and eventually a state museum and historic site.

Buddy Sullivan is on Board of Curators of the Georgia Historical Society and serves as Vice-President for Coastal Georgia for this organization. He is President of Richmond Hill Historical Society, and immediate past president of Lower Altamaha Historical Society. He is Director of the Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve. Buddy is author of twelve books on various aspects of coastal Georgia history, including comprehensive histories of McIntosh and Bryan counties. His primary areas of research interests are nineteenth century tidewater rice cultivation and Georgia coastal maritime and navigational history.

LAHS Meeting, February 15, 2001, 7:00 P.M. –St. Andrew's Parish House
Dutch Treat Supper, 5:45 p.m. at B & J Pizza

“The Scots in McIntosh” will be the program, presented by Michael Higgins. Mr. Higgins reviews the history of the Scottish presence in Georgia, their contributions to the society, and the impact on the history of the area and the country. He also brings in some of the interesting customs and side lights of the Scots.

Michael P. Higgins, vice president of the Propeller Club, Port of Brunswick was born in Chicago. His family moved to New Jersey, and then South Carolina. He holds degrees from Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Ga. and The State University of New York Maritime College at Fort Schuyler, New York. Michael was a founder of the Confederate Navy Historical Society and served as Project Manager for the CSS *Alabama* project. He served as an advisor to the U.S. Department of State, Office of Ocean Law & Policy. His efforts resulted in a treaty between the United States and France, with France respecting U.S. title in the wreck of CSS *Alabama* and her

associated artifacts, and the return of her artifacts to the United States. He sailed on oceanographic research ships for Columbia University and Duke University as scientific crew, and later for American President Lines on containerships and Military Sealift Command tankers. He served as a shore captain and port manager for Wallenius Lines. He will soon be involved with the development of his own marine/air cargo handling equipment company –ICS, Integrated Cargo Systems, LLC. Currently a resident of Darien, he will relocate to Atlanta.

LAHS Board of Directors Meeting, March 15, 2001, 4:30p.m. –
St Andrew's Parish House

LAHS Meeting, March 15, 2001, 7:00 P.M. — St. Andrew's Parish House
Dutch Treat Supper, 5:45 p.m. at B & J Pizza

Shadow Chasers: The Woolfolk Tragedy Revisited, will be the program presented by the author, Carolyn DeLoach. Ms. DeLoach, with 30 years of knowledge about this case, will bring to this program her historical artifacts, photographs, and visual aids. In addition, forensic and historical research techniques will be discussed. This tragedy has been called " *The Murder of the Century*"

In the early morning hours of August 6, 1887, in rural Bibb County, Georgia, Captain Richard Woolfolk and eight members of his family died at the hands of an axe murderer. A single member of the household survived the attack, Torn Woolfolk, the Captain's eldest son, escaped the slaughter and sounded the alarm, only to be arrested for the crime. On October 29, 1890, after languishing in jail, chained to the wall of his cell for three years, enduring countless trials, he calmly climbed the steps to the gallows, proclaimed his innocence for one last time, and forgave those who were about to kill him.

After extensive research and in vivid descriptions, Carolyn DeLoach has been able to capture the emotions of the period. It is a factual account of one of the most horrendous crimes in the history of the State of Georgia, as told by some of the actual participants, in their own words. Ms. DeLoach guides the reader through the tangled web of tragic events and subtly presents haunting new evidence that reveals the actual mass murderers were protected by the political forces of the State and an innocent man was sacrificed. The killers of the Woolfolk family went on to kill again because authorities ignored evidence that would have brought the real killers to justice.

Carolyn DeLoach will autograph books which will be available at the meeting.

Fort King George State Historical Site

Lower Altamaha Historical Society was inspired and encouraged by Miss Bessie Lewis, LAHS charter member, to support the creation and on going activities of Fort King George State Historic Site. The growth and development of this site has brought pride and satisfaction to LABS and its members. We salute Ken Akin and his executive ability for making Fort King George a Site of Excellence for our community and State.

February 10, 2001 –Saturday –Georgia Day Celebration

The Highlanders will have an encampment on the grounds. Many activities will be in progress for the public to observe and enjoy.

March 23rd & 24th –Friday and Saturday –Scottish Heritage Days

Celtic Music will be featured during Scottish Heritage Days.

In 1736, General James Oglethorpe brought a group of Scottish Highlanders to Southeast Georgia. Valued for their tenacity on the battlefield, these men were commissioned along with their families, to defend the southern frontier from possible Spanish incursions. In this event we pay tribute to those brave Scots who settled Darien and were so instrumental in expelling the Spanish as a threat to Britain's hold over this area. A reenactment of the Battle of Bloody Marsh will be conducted along with other festivities related to Scottish culture and activities.

Living on the Georgia Tidewater --- Bessie Lewis was editor of the weekly newspaper in McIntosh County in the 1940's. She wrote a popular feature column called "So Sings the Mighty River". Below are some excerpts from her columns in THE DARIEN GAZETTE COMBINED WITH McINTOSH COUNTY NEWS.

"So Sings The Mighty River"

BY BESSIE LEWIS

All through the centuries the mighty Altamaha has been singing –the words of its song are the story of the people who live in its basin, the music an ageless melody, changing in rhythm and tone with the shifting seasons and times.

The song of the Altamaha has been heard around the world, it's music has drawn to the shores of the great stream people from near and far—the river has sung of romance and riches, the rise and fall of cities and fabulous enterprises—and it will continue to sing until the end of time.

No one will ever know all the words and music of the song of the Altamaha, parts of it have been buried forever in the years that are past—because they were unrecorded. "So Sings the Mighty River" is the score of the Altamaha insofar as I have been able to find it—it is written in the hope that it may preserve that score for those who may be interested and dedicated to the men who since the beginning of time have been lured by the song of the mighty river to follow its fortune.

CHAPTER 1

The scene is Darien, the time a moonlit night in spring of the year 1874. Eight vessels are in port, loading with lumber from the mills and logs from the rafts in the river.

Negroes are loading the vessels, strong arms lifting, backs bending and rising to the rhythms of a river chantey:

Above the bluff and through the town, and out over the marshes the deep haunting tones of the melody filled the night, while the rhythm lifted the great timbers and lumber into vessels destined for northern and foreign ports.

Eight vessels in port— three barks, the Margararetta, the Saga, the Tegner; three schooners, the Stephen Burnett, the Sm. G. Mosely, and the Helen A. Bowen; one brig. The Der Prommer, and a ship the Melicite.

Those vessels meant a great deal more to Darien and other places in the basin of the Altamaha than the business involved— the checking and loading, the sale of the timber and lumber and of the supplies to the ships and all the other financial transactions which revolved about them—

they were a symbol of the courage and ingenuity of men, with the resources of the Altamaha. Only nine years before, at the close of the War Between the States, Darien had been an ash strewn waste, with only its blackened chimneys rising to tell of the busy little city it once had been. Nine years of toil and struggle, against obstacles and through trials that seem almost unbelievable when we read and hear of them today, and in 1874 Darien was again on the way to becoming a prosperous business city and port. A glance through the pages of the Darien Timber Gazette for almost any week during the summer of 1874 shows the general stores of A.&R. Strain and of Atwood and Avery advertising almost every item necessary for human comfort at the time, from china dishes to ship chandlery. O.Hopkins and D. B. Wing were timber inspectors; Wm. M. Young was the city watchmaker and Wm. Shenck made boots and shoes; Chas. O. Fulton advertised a MI line of the best meats at his market and WA. Burney was a plasterer and bricklayer.

Of bar rooms, both as to number and character, there are still many tall tails, but one at least is on record—the Altamaha House operated by Mike Mahoney, who advertised.

AT. Putnam ran the livery stable and sold Black Sumatra Chickens on the side.

Down by the river front the Magnolia House, operated by A.E. Carr, was a favorite stopping place for travelers who came to Darien. A page of its “arrivals” for a day in 1874 is interesting. They were: Col. S. Spencer, Ridge; E.A. St.Clair, Doboy Island; Charles Belsighner, Cincinnati, Ohio; Thomas Spalding,(IJ), Sapelo Island; Wm. Almo, Str. Ajax; Capt. John L. Day, Str. Clyde; H. E. Daniels, mate, E. E. Dorband, 1st Engineer, Thomas Bowher, 2nd Engineer, officer Str. Clyde; Burr Winton, Brunswick; P.T. Donnelson, Jacksonville, Florida; M. L. Mershon, Brunswick; James Roache, Savannah; Captain Thomas White, Str. Ajax; Milledge Carvell, New York; P. C. Brown, City; J. J. Robertson, Appling County; Joseph Tillman, Appling County; M. Danforth Macon; B. P. Mosely, City; Wm. C. Clark and wife, Ridge.
[Str. = Steamer]

SAPELO ISLAND FORT KING GEORGE STATE HISTORICAL SITE

National Estuarine Research Reserve

Sapelo Island enables visitors to see virtually every facet of a bather island's natural community, from the diversified wildlife of the forested uplands, to the vast expanses of salt marsh and the complex beach and dunes systems. The Visitor Center, located near the mainland ferry dock brings to life both the natural and cultural history of Sapelo, while guided tours of the island enable visitors to experience the African-American community of Hog Hammock, the University of Georgia Marine Institute, the Reynolds Mansion and Sapelo Island's 1820 Lighthouse.

SAPELO ISLAND VISITORS CENTER 912 437 3224 in Meridian is open daily except Mondays. This interpretive center for Sapelo has much to offer. Reservations for the four hour regular tours of the Island on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays and the six hour extended tour on the last Tuesday of each month are made here. Sapelo Island Visitors Center also has the information on special group tours and School Field Trips and privately owned and operated opportunities and activities at Sapelo Island. A Gift Shop which includes Books, Art Objects, Pictures and Posters and wearing apparel is available at the Visitors Center.

SAPELO ISLAND NATIONAL

ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE

P.O. Box 15, Sapelo Island, Ga. 31327

Phone 912 485 2251, FAX: 485 2141

The SINERR is managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources

Division, and is
administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Fort King George State Historical Site
P.O. Box 71 1—Darien, Ga. 31305 912 437 4770

February 10, 2001 Georgia Day Celebration

March 23rd & 24th Scottish Heritage Days

LOWER ALTAMAHA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 1405-- Darien, Georgia 31305

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 P.M. The Society extends a hearty welcome to all.

LAM-IS OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2000—2001

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LOWER ALTAMAHA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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