

The Altamaha Echoes

Lower Altamaha Historical Society Newsletter April 2003

LAHS Meeting, April 17, 2003 – 7:00 pm – St. Andrew's Parish House
Dutch Treat Supper, 5:45pm at B & J Pizza

“Coastal Issues of the Southeast” will be the program, presented by Roger Pinckney. Pinckney lives on Daufuskie Island, S. C., where he writes and works to preserve land and local culture. He will use slides to discuss these unique issues and read from *Signs and Wonders*, a collection of essays to be released by Wyrick and Company in 2004.

Roger Pinckney is an award winning journalist and the author of four books on SE coastal culture. A native of Beaufort, SC, Pinckney was educated at the University of South Carolina and at the Iowa Writer's Workshop. His first novel, *Little Glory*, currently available from Wyrick and Co. has been optioned by an independent West Coast film maker. Pinckney lives on Daufuskie Island SC where he writes and works to preserve land and local culture.

Roger Pinckney's books will be available at the meeting for signing. Books courtesy Virginia and Harold Hicks, The Book Shop, Inc. – Books on the Bluff.

The election of Officers for 2003 –04 and four Board of Directors for 2003 –05 will be held at the LAHS Meeting on April 17. In addition to the slate of Officers and Board of Directors submitted by the 2003 Nominating Committee, additional nominations for these positions may be accepted from the floor. Nominations will be accepted for any LAHS member in good standing that has given their consent for the nomination.

The 2003 Nominating Committee Myrtle Newberry, Ann Baggett, Jeanne Klippel submit the following slate of persons for LAHS consideration:

OFFICERS 2003 – 2004

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|------------------|-----------------|
| President | Dinah Jackson |
| Vice – President | Dyson Flanders |
| Secretary | Betty Cleveland |
| Treasurer | Elfie Legg |

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2003 – 2005

| | |
|--|------------------|
| | Ann Baggett |
| | Oscar Brinckmann |
| | Howard Klippel |
| | Kelly Spratt |

LAHS Board of Directors Meeting, May 15, 2003, 4:30 P.M. –
St. Andrew's Parish House

First LAHS Board Meeting for 2003 – 2004. LAHS members, are always welcome

LAHS Meeting, May 15, 2003 – 7:00 pm – St. Andrew's Parish House
Dutch Treat Supper, 5:45pm at B & J Pizza

“Georgia Historical Society - the founding and history” will be the program, presented by Mandi Johnson. The Georgia Historical Society, founded in 1839 is one of the oldest historical societies in the country. Hodgson Hall, the home of the Society, is a repository for books, newspapers and manuscripts relating to the history of Georgia.

Mandi D. Johnson is Visual Materials Archivist at Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia. Ms Johnson was graduated from Miami University, Ohio with the degree of History of Art and Architecture. She holds a Masters degree from Armstrong Atlantic State University, Savannah, in History, Public History concentration, archival focus. She has co-authored several publications about Savannah.

CONFEDERATE MEMORIAL DAY APRIL 26

For several years, LAHS member, Everett Moriarty has honored, remembered and recognized the Confederate Veterans of McIntosh County. Each year on April 26, Confederate Memorial Day, a basket of flowers is placed on the Confederate Monument at the McIntosh County Courthouse, and over 120 Confederate Flags are placed on the graves of McIntosh County Confederate Veterans. Some of the cemeteries where you may observe these flags are: St. Andrews, Ebenezer, Upper Mill, Holland, Plum Orchard, Young Island, McIntosh Family, Baillie Plantation, Reynolds Chapel, Robson Family.

Georgia Historical Marker, located on GA 99, 0.8 mile east of US 17 and near Old Fort King George

BIRTHPLACE of John McIntosh Kell

Laurel Grove, at the end of this avenue, was the birthplace of John McIntosh Kell, 1823 - 1900, distinguished Naval officer. He was a member of the expedition of Commodore Matthew C. Perry to Japan in 1853, and was Master of the flagship *Mississippi* on the homeward cruise. When Georgia seceded from the Union, John McIntosh Kell resigned his commission to join the Confederacy. He was Executive Officer of the *Numer*, then of the *Alabama* throughout her brilliant career on the seas, and in her final battle with the *Kearsarge* off Cherbourg. Later in life, John McIntosh Kell served for several years as Adjutant General of the State of Georgia.

Living on the Georgia Tidewater - John McIntosh Kell (1823 - 1900) was McIntosh County's most celebrated participant in the Civil War, and one of the most distinguished officers of the Confederate Navy. Below are excerpts from *Early Days on the Georgia Tidewater* by Buddy Sullivan.

Born, January 23, 1823 at Laurel Grove plantation near Darien, Kell was a descendant of the founding Scottish Highlanders, being the son of John and Margery Spalding Baillie Kell. John McIntosh Kell's closest friend was his cousin, Randolph Spalding.

In 1841, Kell received an appointment as a midshipman in the United States Navy and, by 1855, had advanced to the rank of lieutenant. His 20-year career in the U.S. Navy was one of distinction, highlighted by his participation in Commodore Matthew C. Perry's expedition which opened Japan to American trade in 1853, and the Paraguay expedition of 1858. On Perry's voyage to the Far East, Kell served as Master of the steam flagship *Mississippi*.

In 1856, John McIntosh Kell married Julia Blanche Munroe. He returned with his bride to McIntosh County that year and was entertained by Randolph Spalding at South End House on Sapelo Island.

Kell resigned from the United States service on the day Georgia seceded from the Union in January 1861. His younger brother Alexander Baillie Kell (1828 - 1912) also served the Confederate cause by joining a local cavalry unit as a lieutenant. John M. Kell served briefly in the tiny Georgia navy under Commodore Josiah Tatnall at Savannah until April 1861, after which he received orders to

report to Commander Raphael Semmes, CSN, at New Orleans: Kell biographer Norman C. Delaney notes that Semmes "personally selected Kell to be his Executive Officer aboard the *Sumter*," one of the first Southern commerce raiders.

Sumter was decommissioned in 1862 after which Kell joined Semmes, again as second-in-command, of the new Confederate raider *Alabama* which had been secretly built and fitted out at Liverpool, England. Kell provided outstanding service aboard *Alabama*, and Semmes and other Confederate officers praised Kell for his efficiency in managing the ship and its crew of mostly English sailors.

After the *Alabama* sank USS *Hatteras* in a gun-duel off Galveston, Kell was promoted to Commander. *Alabama* went on to become by far the most successful of all Confederate commerce raiders, accounting for sixty-five Union vessels captured or sunk in less than two years.

His ship worn and in need of repair, and his crew tired and battle-weary from the constant attrition of time spent on the high seas, Semmes brought his ship into the French port of Cherbourg on the English Channel where the U.S. steam sloop *Kearsarge* finally caught up with him.

Although the two ships were almost evenly-matched, *Alabama* with eight guns to *Kearsarge*'s seven, the Yankee vessel had the heavier armament, including two 11-inchers. In addition, *Kearsarge*'s guns would be better served: she was a fresh ship with a crew at peak efficiency. Semmes would have been wise to seek accommodation with the French as long as possible and remain in port at Cherbourg. Nonetheless, he accepted the challenge of Winslow of the *Kearsarge*, and steamed to the outer harbor to do battle.

For just over an hour the two wooden steam warships maneuvered in concentric circles about 900 yards apart, firing broadsides at each other. The marksmanship of the *Kearsarge*, as expected, proved to be the most effective, and the Northern vessel began landing shots with telling effect on *Alabama*. The Confederate raider, holed several times below the waterline, sank, and Kell, Semmes and other survivors were plucked out of the water by a nearby English yacht and transported to England - much to the disappointment of Winslow who was hoping to capture Semmes and Kell and take them to the United States to stand trial for what many Northerners were convinced was piracy on the high seas.

After the war, Kell retired to a life of farming at his Sunnyside, Georgia home in Spalding County near Griffin. In 1886, he was appointed Adjutant-General of Georgia by Governor John B. Gordon, an event which focused new attention on Kell as a Confederate naval hero.

The final years of Kell's life were greatly satisfying for him. His work in the state capital in Atlanta kept him active. The Kells also spent a great deal of time, in the 1870's, with the well-known poet and flutist, Sidney Lanier, who was a close friend. Lanier, before his death in 1881, played his flute and read poetry on numerous occasions in the parlor of the Kells' home at Sunnyside.

In his memoirs, published just before his death in 1900, Kell described the satisfaction of a man who has reached the end of a productive and fulfilling life.

"I have reached three score years and ten. My life has been long, happy and eventful. Of course it has been checked with the grief and sorrows that fall to the lot of all, but nearing the sunset of my days, beyond which are the 'hills of light,' I can look backward into the past of holy memories without regret, and hopefully into the future, my lifeboat gliding on, no anchor dragging, Christ's love at the helm, and God aloft."

SAPALO ISLAND

National Estuarine Research Reserve

Sapelo Island enables visitors to see virtually every facet of a barrier 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.

SAPALO 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. A Gift Shop which includes Books, Art Objects, Pictures and Posters and wearing apparel is available at the Visitors Center.

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).

LOWER ALTAMAHA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Corporate & Life Memberships

Corp. Sapelo National Bank, William Parkes, President
The Book Shop, Inc. Harold & Virginia Hicks
Coastal Georgia Historical Society

Life: Muriel Bell - Darien Telephone Co
Mrs. Caroline B. Davis - Gus & Mary Hallam
Alfred W. Jones - Chris & Ward Milner
John Reeling - John & Mary Dean
Everett Mortuary - Enterprise Rent-A-Car

FORT KING GEORGE STATE HISTORICAL SITE

P.O. Box 711-Darien, Ga. 31305-----912-437-4370

ALTAMAHA CANOE EXCURSIONS

May 3, 2003 - Black Creek (intermediate)

Black Creek - This winding creek meanders through huge spartina groves and several quaint piney islands that are home to much wild life.

October 11, 2003 - Cathead Creek (Beginners)

Cathead Creek - Enjoy old rice plantations, ruins from an old rice mill, and a variety of Spring birds and vegetation.

November 22, 27, 2003 - Lewis Island (intermediate)

Altamaha Overnighter - Enjoy a scenic trip down the Altamaha to Lewis Island where you will "rough" it in the wild and sleep beneath the stars.

LOWER ALTAMAHA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 1405 - Darien, Georgia 31305

LAHS Officers & Board of Directors, 2002-2003

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| President | Ed Meyer |
| Vice-President | Dinah Jackson |
| Secretary | Ann Baggett |
| Treasurer | Ellie Legg |

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Carolyn Baker | Dyson Flanders |
| Bob Hawkins | Constance Johnson |
| Peyton Little | Jeanne Klippel |
| Mirtle Newberry | Don McClain |

Director Emeritus - Buddy Sullivan



Darien, Georgia 31305
P.O. Box 1405

Lower Altamaha Historical Society, Inc.