

Altamaha Echoes

Lower Altamaha Historical Society Newsletter January 2005

LAHS Board of Directors Meeting, January 20, 2005, 4:30 P.M. –

St. Andrew's Parish House

LAHS members, are always welcome

LAHS MEETING, JANUARY 20, 2005, 7:00 P.M. - St. ANDREW'S PARISH HOUSE
DUTCH TREAT SUPPER, 5:45 P.M. at B&J PIZZA

“Dodge Land Troubles” will be the program, presented by Chris Trowell, co-author of a new book by this title by Jane Walker & Chris Trowell. The sets of this study focuses on the Big Bend Region of the Ocmulgee River. During the post-Civil War period wealthy and organized entrepreneurs moved onto the economic and political vacuum existing in the South, William E, Dodge and William Pitt Eastman were the principal figures, which acquired vast tracts of timber, built large sawmills at St. Simons Island and Darien, and extracted the previously unexploited resources. The company encountered resistance from many local landowners; a legal and occasionally violent struggle dragged on for decades. It was a culture war, a struggle between the forces of economic development and progress and forces of “traditional values” that focused on the past, land, kin, and individual independence. Court battles and murders made the news from around 1873 until 1893, and echoes persisted until 1923.

Chris Trowell is an Associate Professor Emeritus of Social Science at South Georgia College in Douglas, Georgia. Before his retirement in 1992, he taught history, geography and anthropology. Trowell has spent 40 years researching the past of South Georgia, especially the history of the Okefenokee Swamp and Kolomoki Mounds State Park. Trowell is a charter member of the Okefenokee Wildlife League www.owlleague.org. He has assisted many writers and film producers. This newest book, which he co-authored, presents the story as told by participants and observers. It includes commentary, maps, and an extensive index.

LAHS MEETING, February 17, 2005, 7:00 P.M. - St. ANDREW'S PARISH HOUSE
DUTCH TREAT SUPPER, 5:45 P.M. at B&J PIZZA

“Memories from the Marshes of Glynn: World War II” will be the program presented by Sonja Olsen Kinard. German U-boats lurked off the Atlantic coast, torpedoing American supply ships and depositing spies along the eastern seaboard..., blackouts were imposed... sirens alerted citizens that an air raid was eminent. The war was brought to American shores when two oil tankers were torpedoed about 15 miles off St. Simons Island. Olaf Helmer Olsen, resident of St. Simons, father of two young girls Thora and Sonja, was the first to reach the tragedy. He rescued 54 survivors by taking their lifeboats in tow. This event remained vivid in the minds of the Olsen family. As the young girls aged they realized there were many, many others in Glynn County at that time who played vital and heroic roles in winning the war. In 1993, the sisters started collecting the oral history of those who lived in Glynn County during World War II. The result is their book, “Memories from the Marshes of Glynn: World War II”.

Sonja, was graduated from Lenoir-Rhyne College, Hickory, NC. She taught in parochial

and public schools for 18 years. She directed adult and children's choirs and was soloist in the Concert Choir in Salisbury, NC. In Atlanta, she was Executive Assistant Callanwolde Fine Arts Center. She moved back home to Glynn County in 2001. She substitutes in public schools, directs the children's choir at St. James Lutheran Church, gives talks, and is working on a children's book about her childhood on St. Simons and spending time on all sorts of adventures on Cumberland Island.

LAHS Board of Directors Meeting, March 17, 2005, 4:30 P.M. –

St. Andrew's Parish House

LAHS members, are always welcome

LAHS MEETING, March 17, 2005, 7:00 P.M. –St. ANDREW's PARISH HOUSE

DUTCH TREAT SUPPER, 5:45 P.M. at B&J PIZZA

“Georgia Sea Turtle Center, Jekyll Island” will be the program presented by Elizabeth Shields Hines. In May of 2004 over 70 sea turtles washed up on Georgia's beaches including the highly endangered Kemp's Ridley, green and leatherback turtles, as well as the threatened loggerheads. While most were dead three turtles were forced to be transferred to rehabilitation facilities in other states, with one dying during transport.

The highly anticipated, \$2 million Center will be dedicated to the rehabilitation of these mysterious animals, while serving to educate the public about their story. The facility will occupy the 1903 Power Plant within Jekyll's Historic District. The renovated building will house educational exhibits, surgical and rehabilitation areas, an information center and gift shop.

Elizabeth Shields Hines, CFRE is the Executive Director of Jekyll Island Foundation. She has held this position since May 2003. Elizabeth was graduated from Georgia College and State University with a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science. She is a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE), Prior to coming to Jekyll Island, Ms Hines worked at Georgia Military College as Vice President for Institutional Development

Gratitude to Pam Mueller and Betty Ewing

Pam donated a Gift Basket of her authored books to LAHS. Included in this beautiful basket was “Hello, Goodbye, I Love You: The Story of Aloha, A Guide Dog for the Blind” and “Neptune's Honor”. Oscar Brinckmann handled the Raffle and awarded the basket at the Christmas Party. Proceeds to LABS.

Betty donated a handmade Ginger Bread Centerpiece for the LAHS Christmas Table. Betty created the detail and design of this outstanding piece. Oscar Brinckmann auctioned the centerpiece at the party. Proceeds to LAHS.

Congratulations:

Ken Akins, Superintendent

Etowah Indian Mounds Georgia Historical Site

Cartersville, Georgia.

Ken came to Darien over 20 years ago as Interpretive Ranger at Fort King George, Georgia

Historical Site. A few soldiers graves was all to see at this landmark site. Ken's leadership as Superintendent of Fort King George has brought many state awards to the Fort including "The Most Outstanding Historic Operation" in the state and "The Most Innovative Programming" awards statewide. In 2002, Akins was named State Parks and Historic Site Manager of the Year.

Lower Altamaha Historical Society, since the inception in 1980, has always supported the Fort. Bessie Lewis, one of the original incorporators of LABS, was a noted historian of McIntosh County. Miss Bessie had thoroughly researched the history and location of the Fort. It is through her efforts that this site was recognized by the state of Georgia. Bill Haynes and Will Dean are other original incorporators of LAHS. They were especially persistence in money raising projects and grants for the Fort. It was a joyous occasion when the Block House was dedicated in 1988.

Ken has always been a supportive member of LABS. He served on the Board of Directors for many years. Ken and Monica Akins will be miss in McIntosh County. Etowah Indian Mounds Historical Site and Cartersville, Bartow, County, Georgia is fortunate to have this outstanding couple.

Living on the Georgia TidewaterExcerpts:

The land that is now the state of Georgia was once one of the most coveted territories in all of North America Throughout the 1600s and early 1700s, years before General Oglethorpe settled Savannah, three of the world's mightiest powers, Great Britain, France, and Spain, all vied for a claim to this area's rich resources of timber, wildlife, animal firs, and bountiful river systems

The British considered the territory to be a part of its southern most colony in North America, South Carolina, established in 1670. The Spanish regarded the settlement of South Carolina as an intrusion upon their empire They had colonized St. Augustine, Florida in 1565 and went on to establish an extensive string of missions throughout the Southeast in efforts to Christianize the Natives These missions extended all the way from St. Augustine, westward around the Apalachicola River region, and as far north as Paris Island in South Carolina.. In addition to Christianity, the Spanish missionaries sought to teach the Indians agricultural methods that would produce surplus grains to furnish the colonists and soldiers of St. Augustine Many of these missions were maintained throughout the 1600s until the Spanish retreat from the area during the 1680s.

In 1698, the French settled Biloxi thus creating the colony of Louisiana Soon they were anxiously colonizing neighboring areas, Mobile in 1702 and New Orleans in 1718. In 1717 they built Fort Toulouse in northern Alabama in an attempt to expand their empire eastward, guard against British encroachments, and establish diplomatic alliances with the area's Natives, especially the Creek Indians, Also, the French coveted the Altamaha river with waters that stretched for miles across the southeast and emptied into the Atlantic about one hundred miles north of Florida The French valued it for its appeal as a conduit of transportation to the Atlantic. These developments helped launch the French strategy of imperial encirclement, a plan to contain British colonies along the eastern coast and ultimately "choke" them out

Forced to choose sides, the Southeastern Native Americans were drawn into this international power struggle The many tribes were most familiar with the land and its rivers and, in many instances, held the potential to tip the balance of power into one nation's favor All too aware of this, the Europeans were eager to establish loyalty from the Indians, and they fought to extend their influence and control over various Indian tribes throughout the Southeast.

With the threat of French and Spanish imperialism, and the unpredictability of Indian alliances and loyalty, the British grew anxious over the security of their southern colonies By 1720 South Carolinian colonists and officials, fearing enemy attacks, began clamoring for some sort of protection

along their southern borders.

The following year Fort King George was built along the Altamaha River under the direction and leadership of Colonel John “Tuscarora Jack” Barnwell. Given that rivers were the only source of transportation in this remote frontier he chose the location in order to guard access to the river and prevent any foreign intrusions into the area. The fort consisted of a blockhouse, soldiers barracks, officers’ quarters, and a guard house which doubled as a hospital, all made from cypress timbers and planks cut and processed by sawyers Barnwell brought with him.

The garrison that manned the fort was known as His Majesty’s Independent Company of Foot. Most of them were mustered for service from England. Though Colonel Barnwell and Governor Francis Nicholson of South Carolina had requested ‘robust young soldiers to garrison Fort King George, instead they were sent a company of “invalids” from the Royal Hospital at Chelsea in England.

Invalids, as they were referred to then, were products of a system in England devoted toward the welfare of elderly, infirm, —or maimed soldiers from the British Regular Army. This system dated back to 1681 and provided government subsidized hospital care and pensions for these seasoned veterans. In time, invalids were divided into in-pensioners and out-pensioners. By the early seventeen hundreds, as domestic and foreign conflicts once again began to surface in England, the out-pensioner invalids were put back in service. However, these out-pensioner invalids were given lighter duties such as guarding prisoners of war, attending the sick, and securing small forts or towns.

As the British-American colonies expanded in the 1600s, conflicts with neighboring powers and Natives began to increase and, consequently, the need for military provisions and reinforcements were in demand. In 1719, a Regiment of Invalids was created from among the out-pensioners in England and was to be broken up into twenty-five Independent Companies. Most of these men were formed into the 41st Regiment of Foot and sent to Portsmouth to serve under Colonel Edmund Fielding. However, a small fraction of them, arriving in May, 1721, were ordered sent to Port Royal, South Carolina to render service unto that province. The company consisted of 100 privates and several officers with Governor Nicholson serving as Captain. Later, in 1721, Colonel Barnwell was named commander-in-chief of the garrison and Fort King George.

It was a tough ride over to the New World for these soldiers upon the ships *Mary* and *Carolina*. On their way about half of them contracted scurvy, most likely as a result of their general debilitation combined with a poor diet. Many of them were heavy drinkers as well. As a result of their condition, the men had to spend a lengthy period recovering in a hospital at Port Royal, South Carolina after their arrival there in Spring of 1721. They did not make it down to Fort King George until nearly a year later in 1722.