

Altamaha Echoes

Lower Altamaha Historical Society

October 2006

LAHS Meeting, October 19, 2006, 7:00 P.M.
Fort King George Historical Site
Dutch Treat Supper, 5:45 P.M. at B&J Pizza

“Five Things You May Not Know About James Oglethorpe” will be the program, presented by Christy Crisp, Georgia Historical Society. On February 12, 1733, General James Oglethorpe’s expedition landed at Yamacraw Bluff and proceeded to establish the planned city of Savannah on the first high bluff of the river of the same name, as the focal point of the new Georgia colony.

Christy Crisp is the Program Manager for the Georgia Historical Society. Much of her time at GHS is involved in managing the Georgia Historical Marker Program and the statewide Affiliate Chapter Program. She has a bachelors degree in international relations from Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, and a masters degree in history from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. A Georgia native, Christy grew up in Conyers, in east metro Atlanta. Before coming to the Georgia Historical Society in 2003 she worked for two years in historical interpretation at Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Lower Altamaha Historical Society

presents

Buddy Sullivan’s Historic Lecture Classes

“The History of Darien and McIntosh County” with an overview of the Georgia Coast

by Buddy Sullivan

Six Wednesday nights, November 8 through December 13, –5:30 pm–7:30pm

Fort King George Historic Site
\$50 per person

Reservations for this class will be confirmed to you upon receipt of your check to:
LAHS – P.O. Box 1405 – Darien, Georgia 31305

Darien Days, Saturday, November 11
Activities : Fort King George, Ashantilly, Trolley tours, Waterfront, Old Town

LAHS Meeting, November 16, 2006, 7:00 P.M.
Fort King George Historical Site
Dutch Treat Supper, 5:45 P.M. at B&J Pizza

"Women in the Jekyll Island Club" will be the program, presented by June Hall McCash. From its inception in 1886, the Jekyll Island Club included in its elite membership the nations most wealthy families, among them the Rockefellers, Pulitzers, Vanderbilts and Morgans. Far away from the hectic northern cities where the members tended their fortunes, the private island refuge off the coast of Georgia was one place where the wealthy could set a tranquil place and tenor for their lives.

June Hall McCash has tenure at Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee. She received her undergraduate degree from Agnes Scott College. Her masters degree in French and her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature were both awarded from Emory University. Three books about Jekyll Island, are among her many publications: *The Jekyll Island Cottage Colony* (1998), *The Jekyll Island Club Southern Haven for America's Millionaires*(1989), *Jekyll Island's Early Years* (2005).

LAHS Christmas Covered Dish Dinner Party
Tuesday Evening, December 5, 5:30 pm
Belvedere Island Plantation Club House

Decorated for Christmas, the Belvedere Island Plantation Club House will be the setting for the 2006 LAHS Christmas Celebration. Howard and Jeanne Klippel will be our host for the evening. The entree, table set up and drink will be provided. LAHS members are asked bring a Covered Dish.

***Jekyll Island**, Indian hunting and fishing ground, private stronghold held by Spain for more than a century from 1566, was named by Oglethorpe to honor his friend, Sir Joseph Jekyll, who with Lady Jekyll, contributed 600 pounds toward the founding of the Colony of Georgia. The great trees on this island are among "Georgia's seven natural wonders." The broad white beach is unexcelled.

Major William Horton, officer of Oglethorpe's Regiment, had his plantation here. Later, Jekyll Island was owned by Clement Martin and by Richard Leake. After the Revolutionary War, the island was owned by Poulain du Bignon and his descendants for a century.

*Georgia Historical Marker – formally located on Jekyll Island

Living on the Georgia Tidewater – The following excerpt from *Seas of Gold, Seas of Cotton* by Martha L. Keber describes Christophe Poulain DuBignon and his family, living in the Horton House on Jekyll Island in the eighteenth century.

Having indulged his taste for port at the home of Scotsman John Couper on St. Simons, John McQueen found himself the unexpected guest of DuBignon on Jekyll Island. He put in at DuBignon's wharf when gout seized him with spasms of great pain. Years before, McQueen's debts had clouded Dumoussay's title to Sapelo and the legal sparring that followed was one of the distractions that plagued the Sapelo Company, but the DuBignons did not hesitate to welcome McQueen. Madame DuBignon nursed him for four days and the bed rest, combined with the "exceedingly attentive" care, enabled McQueen to continue his journey.

McQueen's convalescence at the Horton House occurred during the most prosperous period of the DuBignon plantation. That prosperity may not have been obvious from McQueen's bed, as the DuBignons still lived in the modest tabby house built fifty years earlier. If the residence was considered a "handsome dwelling" in Oglethorpe's day, the two-story house, with a red-hipped roof and a back verandah that opened out from both floors, offered cramped accommodations for the family. The almost fifteen hundred square feet of living space was divided into two rooms downstairs and sleeping accommodations on the second floor. Dominating the kitchen on the ground floor was a large cooking hearth, where family and servants naturally gathered. The kitchen enjoyed the most activity in the house, but the parlor across the hall had more formality. As in the kitchen, a fireplace was the focal point of the room. A wooden wainscot, however, lent to the room a touch of refinement missing from the plain plastered walls of the kitchen. In deference to Jekyll's warm climate, the British builders of the Horton House constructed a two-story verandah that caught the spring and summer breezes and opened up onto the rear garden. The house gave the DuBignon family shelter, some comfort, a rustic setting in the shadow of the maritime forest, but little else.

DuBignon sacrificed the amenities of gracious living to the needs of the plantation. He invested instead in slaves. With the labor of slaves he could make the sandy soil yield the long, silky fiber of sea island cotton, and the expansion of his workforce was his first priority. When McQueen took his leave, the neatly hoed fields were promising with spring growth. He did not fail to appreciate the potential wealth represented by the green fields and the black hands that worked them.

From 1795 until 1799, DuBignon purchased forty-one slaves, representing an investment of well over \$8000. Thirty were adults, nearly equally divided between men and women, for which he paid an average of \$250. His largest acquisition occurred only three months after McQueen's unexpected visit, when DuBignon bought thirteen adults and five children for \$3200. Many of his slaves were probably French speaking, as DuBignon preferred to do business with his fellow emigres, such as Savannah merchants Thomas Dechenaux, Jean-Baptiste Goupy, and Peter Reigne. When the new arrivals were added to the slaves he already owned, DuBignon had a labor force in excess of sixty slaves.

With a slave population of that size, DuBignon would not be ranked among the elite of the planter aristocracy. For example, John Couper, a Scottish immigrant who settled on his St. Simons plantation about the same time DuBignon came to Jekyll, owned more than one hundred slaves. As a planter of the middle echelon, however, DuBignon participated actively in the management of his plantation. While his overseer assigned work to the slaves on a day-to-day basis and his black driver set the pace in the fields, DuBignon regularly monitored the progress of the crop and was in frequent enough contact with his laborers to know John Louis and Mitchell and Caro and all the others by name and by their capabilities. DuBignon chose not to be an absentee owner. Unlike some planters who retreated to the more social life of Savannah, DuBignon during these early years was as rooted into the sandy loam of Jekyll as were the palmettos and live oaks. He shrugged off shrill warnings of those who believed that the miasma, noxious vapors said to arise from the swamps on stifling summer nights, would poison his family with malaria. DuBignon preferred to remain on Jekyll attending to business than to dally in Savannah.

LOWER ALTAMAHA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 1405 -- Darien, Georgia 31305
www.loweraltamahahistoricalsociety.org

FORT KING GEORGE STATE HISTORICAL SITE

P.O. Box 711--Darien, Ga. 31305----- 912 437 4770
www.darientel.net/~fkgeco/

LAHS Officers 2006-2008

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LOWER ALTAMAHA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Corporate Memberships:

Sapelo National Bank, William Parker, Pres.
The Book Shop, Inc., Harold & Virginia Hicks
Coastal Georgia Historical Society
"The Lodge", Little St. Simons Island

Living History Programs for students and guest are a daily activity at the Fort. Reenactors allow an eighteenth century experience for the observer.

Halloween Spooks at the Barracks

October 27 & 28 - Friday & Saturday 7:00pm

The Fort by Candlelight

Friday, November 10 7pm - 9pm

Take a candle-lit walk back into history. The year is 1725 and the soldiers of Fort King George are engaged in a variety of evening activities, including cannon firings!

Drums Along the Altamaha

Saturday & Sunday, November 11 & 12 10am-4pm

Fort King George was a major stepping-stone to the establishment of the colony of Georgia. Commemorate its significance with British, Spanish, Native American and civilian reenactors. 18th century crafts and a battle reenactment

Colonial Christmas Dinner

Saturday, December 16th 7pm - 9pm

Reservations required

Join us for a festive dinner in celebration of the holidays. Dinner will be at the soldiers barracks and will include early 18th century courses that are sure to make your Christmas special.

81522/0252

Jim & Barbara Bruce
P.O. Box 20652
St. Simons, 31522Ga.



P.O. Box 1405
Darien, Georgia 31305

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