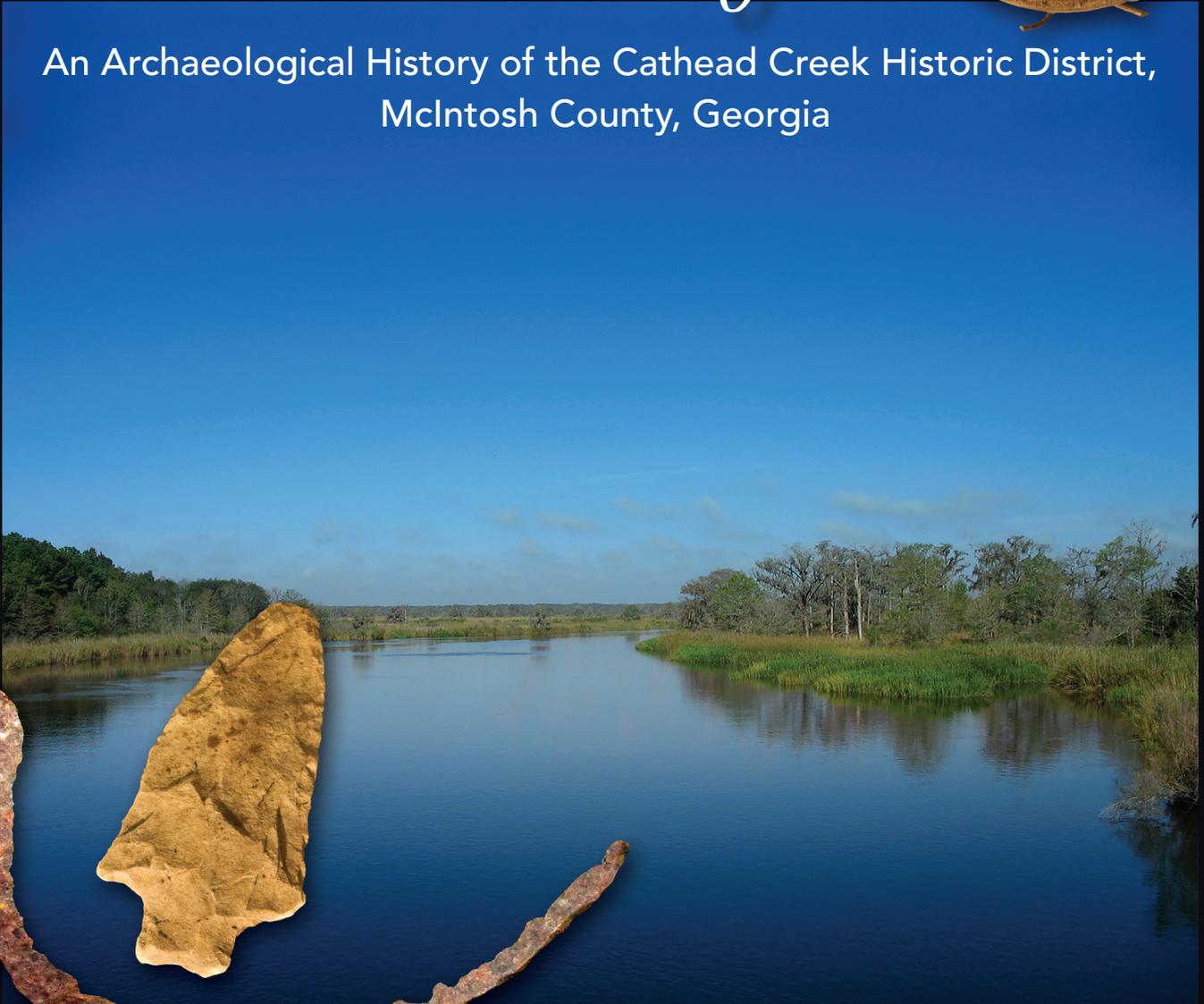


# Telling Time By the Tides

An Archaeological History of the Cathead Creek Historic District,  
McIntosh County, Georgia



Georgia Department of Transportation • New South Associates



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McIntosh County, Georgia

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# Acknowledgements

This book tells the story of human life along Cathead Creek in McIntosh County, Georgia through the lens of archaeology. Cathead Creek's natural environment shaped the lives of those who lived along its path, and the cultural landscape they created has changed little since the days of historic settlement in the 1700s. The authors are deeply indebted to the work of historian Buddy Sullivan, whose *Early Days of the Georgia Tidewater: The Story of McIntosh County and Sapelo* (Sullivan 1992; 2012) provided the foundations upon which this volume was built. We thank Mr. Sullivan, not only for his research, but also for sharing his knowledge and love of the region with the authors.

Cathead Creek was home to large rice plantations; the descendants of the enslaved Africans who worked in the rice fields continue to call this area home. The story of Cathead Creek is thus in many respects an African American history. Various African American residents along Cathead Creek shared their stories of the region with us. We appreciate the interviews provided by Cornelia Bailey, Clarence Baker, Willie Cook, Nathaniel Govner, Cornell Hawkins, Griffin Lotson, Josephine Lotson, Eunice Moore, Mary Moran, Wilson Moran, and Sammie Pinkney. While not all of their words have made it onto these pages, we hope that their love and appreciation of life along Cathead Creek rings clear.

The Environmental Review staff of the Georgia Historic Preservation Division in the Department of Natural Resources provided comments on the study that have improved its content and the efforts of Jennifer Dixon, Program Manager and Leslie Johansen, Review Archaeologist, are greatly appreciated.

This project was initiated by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Office of Environmental Services as part of the I-95/SR 251 interchange improvements. Jim Pomfret and Siska Williams at GDOT served as technical reviewers and administrators. Both shared materials and references that they had gathered in their research of the region, and we are deeply appreciative of their collaboration and interest. Siska in particular provided us with a number of sources and details that have greatly improved this study. The work was completed as a subcontract with Atkins Global where Wendy Dyson and Henry Borovich served as project managers, and we thank both Wendy and Henry for managing a project with multiple tasks that encountered more than its share of curves and bumps. New South Associates completed this study, with assistance from Jennifer Wilson, Editor.

The authors and designer of this book thank all who have cooperated and collaborated in this effort to tell the story of the people who lived along Cathead Creek.

# I. Currents from the Past



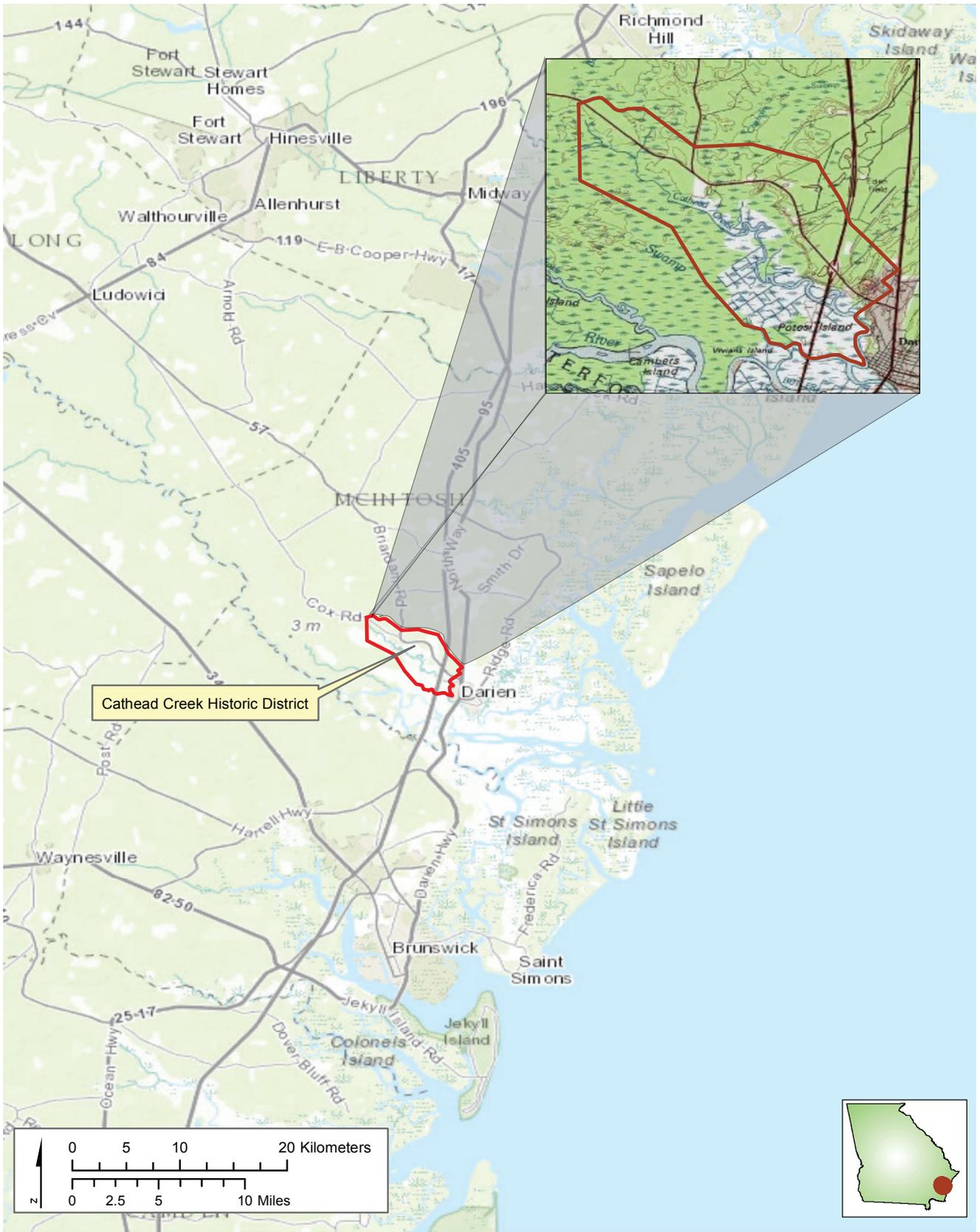
The late afternoon sun blankets the marsh in gold. Diamonds of light dance off the inlet snaking its way through the tall marsh grass. A flock of white egrets flies in low to roost. Reeds rustle faintly in the wind. Closer to shore, a blue heron stares intently into the water, releasing its stance with lightning speed at the touch of a perch against its leg. Nearby, the ancient form of an alligator absorbs the last rays of sunlight. Time is not immediately visible in this eternal landscape; it could be 2015, 1745, or 2000 B.C.

This scene along Cathead Creek, a tributary of the Altamaha River that joins the river at Darien in McIntosh County, Georgia, reminds us of the natural beauty of the Georgia coast. But the marsh also holds traces of the historic past: canals and gates from rice plantations and pilings along the creek that mark the former locations of docks. This area is known for both its cultural and natural charm. In recognition of the historic significance of the well-preserved cultural landscape along Cathead Creek, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) recorded the Cathead Creek Historic District in 2008 (Pomfret 2008).

Nearly 7,000 acres in size, the district encompasses a vast history visible in remnants of small houses, large plantations, barns, outhouses, water towers, silos, sheds, and other structures. Below ground are less visible but equally important historic archaeological features such as hearths, middens, trash pits, cellars, and cemeteries. Europeans, Africans, historic period American Indians, and their descendants created and used these features.

The Cathead Creek Historic District also contains older archaeological sites, consisting of places where American Indians lived, worked, and played in camps, houses, and villages. The historic district has been determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the nation's register of significant historic sites. This book is about the many people, places, and activities that occurred along Cathead Creek and the surrounding area.

Few places along America's east coast reflect the continual use of an environment better than the tidewater region of Georgia. For centuries, the Altamaha River and its tributaries have connected a tidewater ecosystem comprised of the Atlantic Ocean, bays, rivers, creeks, marshes, and adjoining uplands. As one of the Altamaha's tributaries, Cathead Creek was a major transportation link between Georgia's coast and its interior. This exceptional environment, which drew human exploration and settlement, formed a cultural

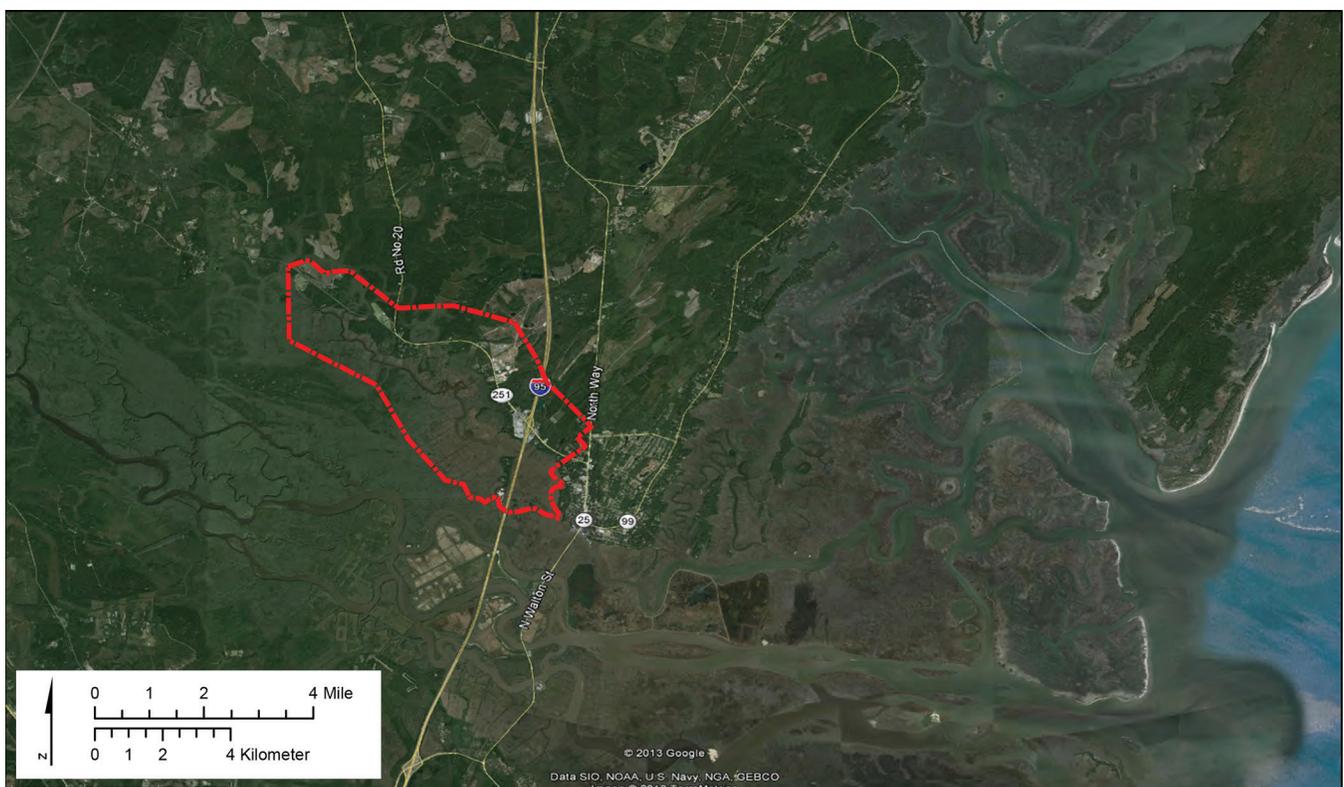


The Cathead Creek Historic District. The Georgia Department of Transportation identified the district and the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office determined that it was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is maintained by the National Park Service and is the federal list of places that have been determined to be important to American history, architecture, and archaeology. The red outline shows the district boundary. (Map by New South Associates, 2015)

landscape – a place where human interaction with nature created a common landscape. American Indians, Spanish priests, enslaved Africans, Scottish immigrants, British soldiers, shrimpers, timber men, and tidewater rice planters all shaped the land along the banks of Cathead Creek. Each group interacted in its own unique ways with this environment, one that was both beautiful and dangerous, periodically wrecked by hurricanes and floods. Near Darien, winding rivers and creeks flow past low, rolling sand hills and plains, typical of Georgia’s Coastal Plain. Cathead Creek lies along the eastern edge of this plain. Wide areas of marshland, tidewater rivers, and creeks separate this land from the Atlantic Ocean. The highest ground lies only 25 feet above sea level.

The dynamic geological processes that helped to shape this area of coastal Georgia continue into today. Strong winds, waves, and ocean currents continuously move huge quantities of sand, eroding, regenerating, and reshaping barrier islands. Rivers and creeks frequently change course, creating steep, sandy bluffs. Floods deposit silt in the lowlands between the mainland and sand dunes. This process formed the large areas of tidal marsh along Cathead Creek, as well as along the Altamaha River and its tributaries. Over time, salt-tolerant marsh plants such as *Spartina* grass stabilized the marshland area making these coastal marshes an important source of food to American Indians and to later historic people.

An aerial photograph showing Cathead Creek Historic District in relation to its environment. The incredibly rich and diverse natural environment of this area supported human life over a long period. The area outlined in red is the Cathead Creek Historic District. (Map by New South Associates, 2013)



 Cathead Creek Historic District

Source: Google Earth Pro

American Indians, and later Europeans and Africans, learned to adapt to the rhythm of the environment. They recognized that ocean tides reversed the currents of nearby rivers approximately every six hours. This tidal flow was an important factor in transportation, fishing, and agriculture. For example, boating up or down river requires little effort when moving in the same direction as the tide but is difficult work when rowing against the tide. Along Cathead Creek, time was told by the tides and residents of the area scheduled their activity based on them. The tides also affect the salt content of nearby rivers. A tidewater river often contains enough salt to harbor ocean fish. Saltwater fish and other animals constantly move up and down the tidewater river depending on the change in salinity. This provided an ever-changing source of food for people along the

Altamaha River and Cathead Creek. The tides also created an ideal landscape for rice agriculture. High tides backed freshwater rivers into rice canals, enabling the flooding of rice fields, while low tides allowed fields to be drained through rice gates at harvest time.

A mosaic of trees still provides habitats, nuts, resources, and shade along the creek. Though evergreen forests dominate the area, forests of oak, hickory, maples, American sycamore, sweetgum, American elm, and pines are also common. Live oaks, which grow to immense stature, were planted to line the entry drives to rice plantations. Loblolly pine also occurred frequently and was and is harvested by the timber industry. Typical shrubs in the area include palmetto, bayberry, and sumac.



Bluff along Cathead Creek. People preferred to live on high ground like this, using nearby creeks and marshes as sources of food and commerce. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)



Cathead Creek. The waters of Cathead Creek rise and fall with the tide, making this an exceptionally rich environment that attracted people. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

Due to wide plant diversity, the upland and wetland areas of Cathead Creek have been home to many animal species throughout time. American Indians and later settlers hunted a variety of mammals in the maritime forest. These included black bear, white-tailed deer, raccoon, opossum, rabbit, and squirrel. Locals also captured turtles and alligators from the tidal creeks and other reptiles from ponds and fresh water rivers. Both also hunted wading birds, migratory waterfowl, and wild turkey. Fish and shellfish provided additional protein. An abundant food resource, shellfish were a major part of the diet for both American Indians and historic people. They ate a variety of shellfish including barnacles, clams, whelks, and crabs. Both also harvested oysters, periwinkle snails, ribbed mussels, sea urchins, and shrimp. Individual shellfish in the area were not large but were plentiful and easy to collect and cook.

The natural diversity of this environment is reflected in its cultural diversity and history. The many coastal resources were a major reason why American Indians first settled this area and more than 2,000 years later, emigrants from Europe and Africa successfully adapted to this varied environment. Residents understood its salt marsh ecosystem and were able to harness the riverine environment, contributing to the coastal history of southeastern Georgia.

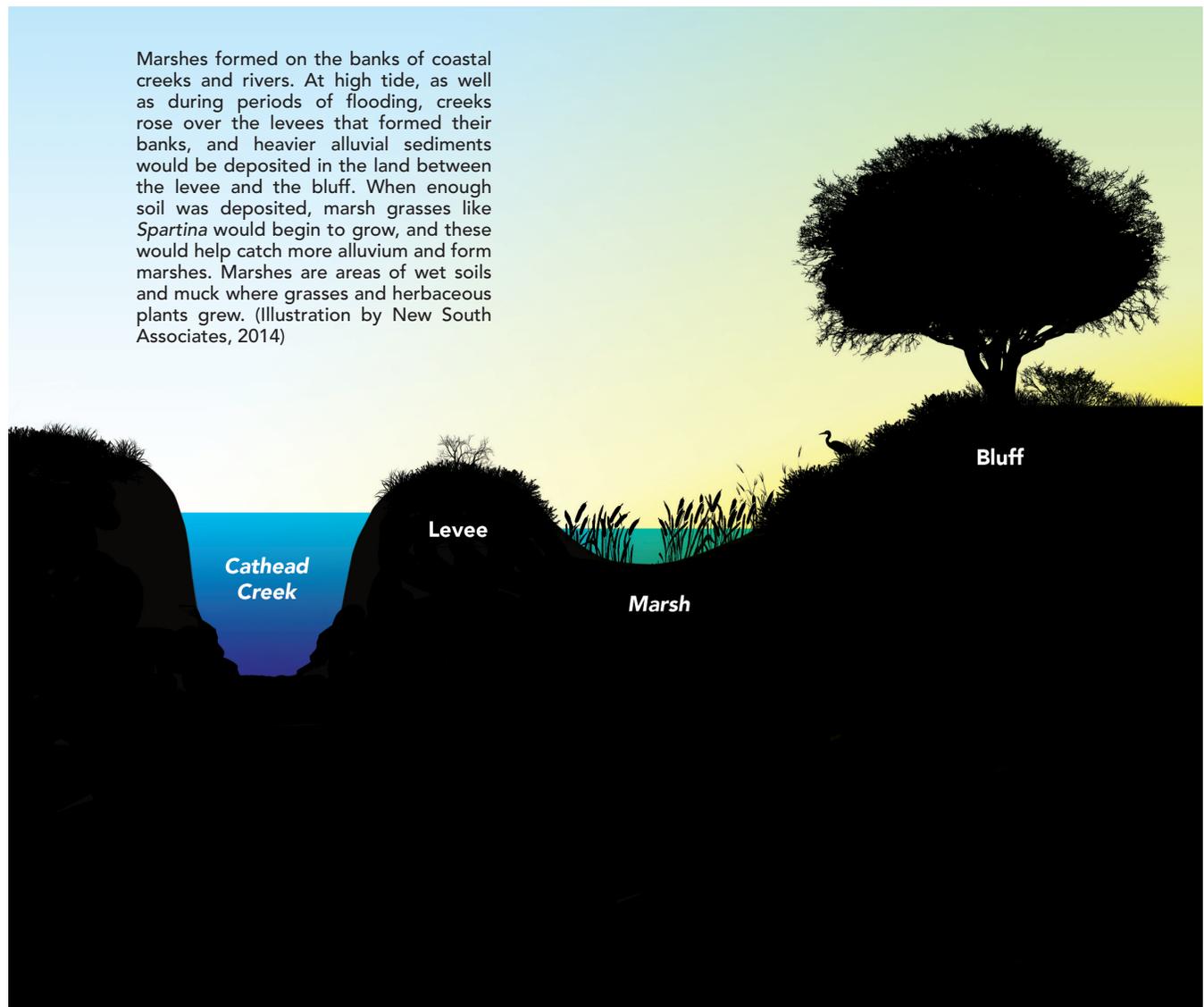
GDOT came into this environment during planning for interchange improvements to the intersection of I-95 and SR 251. Recognizing the history of this landscape, GDOT's Office of Environmental Services created this archaeological history as part of the mitigation efforts associated with interchange improvements to the intersection of I-95 and SR 251, which is within the Cathead Creek Historic District. Because GDOT

determined that the Cathead Creek Historic District was eligible for nomination to the NRHP, and the Georgia State Historic Preservation Division and Federal Highway Administration concurred with that determination, GDOT sponsored several actions, including the preparation and distribution of this book, to mitigate the effects of the interchange improvements on the historic district. Other efforts sponsored by GDOT include the design and installation of interpretive panels at Dunwoody and Ceylon plantations.

Our story begins with American Indian life along Cathead Creek, which is the subject of Chapter II. The region of

Cathead Creek was home to early European exploration and saw the creation of Spanish Missions, and Chapter III tells the story of the contact between American Indians and Europeans. The British colonization of Georgia is the subject of Chapter IV. Rice agriculture used the marshes along Cathead Creek for fields, and Chapter V tells the history of rice plantations and their people. The Civil War and Reconstruction is the topic of Chapter VI. Chapter VII provides the 20th-century history of the region and national and international events. Finally, Chapter VIII provides a look at Cathead Creek as it exists today.

Marshes formed on the banks of coastal creeks and rivers. At high tide, as well as during periods of flooding, creeks rose over the levees that formed their banks, and heavier alluvial sediments would be deposited in the land between the levee and the bluff. When enough soil was deposited, marsh grasses like *Spartina* would begin to grow, and these would help catch more alluvium and form marshes. Marshes are areas of wet soils and muck where grasses and herbaceous plants grew. (Illustration by New South Associates, 2014)



# II. American Indian life Before Contact

American Indians called the Cathead Creek area home for thousands of years before Europeans and Africans arrived in what is now Georgia. These days, most people are familiar with tribes like the Creek and Cherokee, but few recognize that American Indians were here long before these tribes came into existence. American Indians were living along the Georgia coast by at least 13,000 B.C. Much of what we know about their lives comes from archaeology, the excavation and analysis of past human activities. Archaeologists give names to periods of the past when American Indians made major cultural changes. In Georgia, these are the Paleo-Indian Period, the Archaic Period, the Woodland Period, the Mississippian Period, and the Contact Period. Each of these periods is defined by changes that occurred in settlement, technology, art, religion, diet, subsistence, and government. This chapter details four of these periods, while the last to occur, when Europeans arrived, is covered in the next chapter that discusses the era of "Contact." Archaeologists refer to the first four periods of American Indian life as the Precontact era, which begins about 13,000 B.C. in what is known as the Paleo-Indian Period.

## **PALEO-INDIAN PERIOD (13,000–8000 B.C.)**

Some of the early people coming to North America traveled from Siberia. Extremely cold weather prior to 13,000 B.C. created massive ice sheets over a large part of the continent. Tremendous glaciers caused ocean levels to recede. Ultimately, receding water exposed the Bering Strait (Mason 1962). Siberians entered North America by walking across this strait or "land bridge" that connected Siberia and Alaska. A few hundred years later, American Indians occupied most of North America, including what is now coastal Georgia (Anderson et al.

1990). Archaeologists refer to these people as Paleo-Indians – "paleo" is a Greek word that means "very old."

Lower ocean levels also affected the location of the shoreline at this early time. Land that is submerged today was dry during the Paleo-Indian Period. So locations like Cathead Creek would have been further inland, away from the ocean.

Paleo-Indians lived and traveled in small groups, often camping along the coast. Because of changes in sea level over time, most of these early coastal campsites now lie beneath the Atlantic Ocean. Paleo-Indians also



PALEO-INDIAN

EARLY ARCHAIC

MIDDLE ARCHAIC



Clovis



Palmer



Big Sandy



Kirk Corner Notched



Stanley



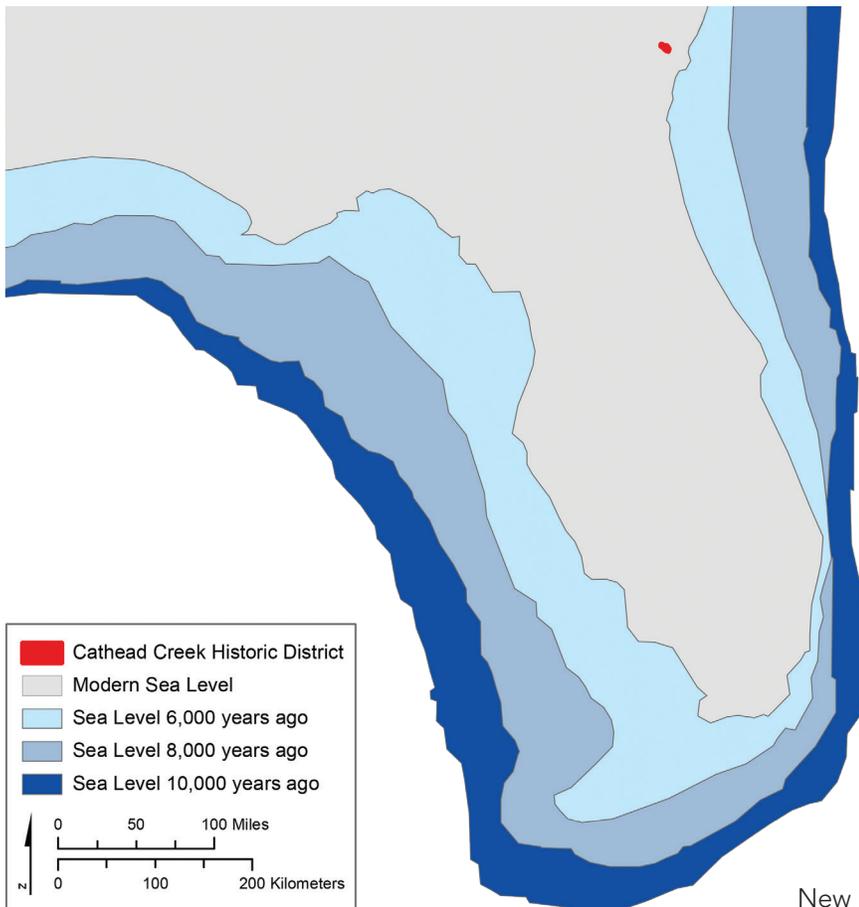
Morrow Mountain



Eva



Gulfport

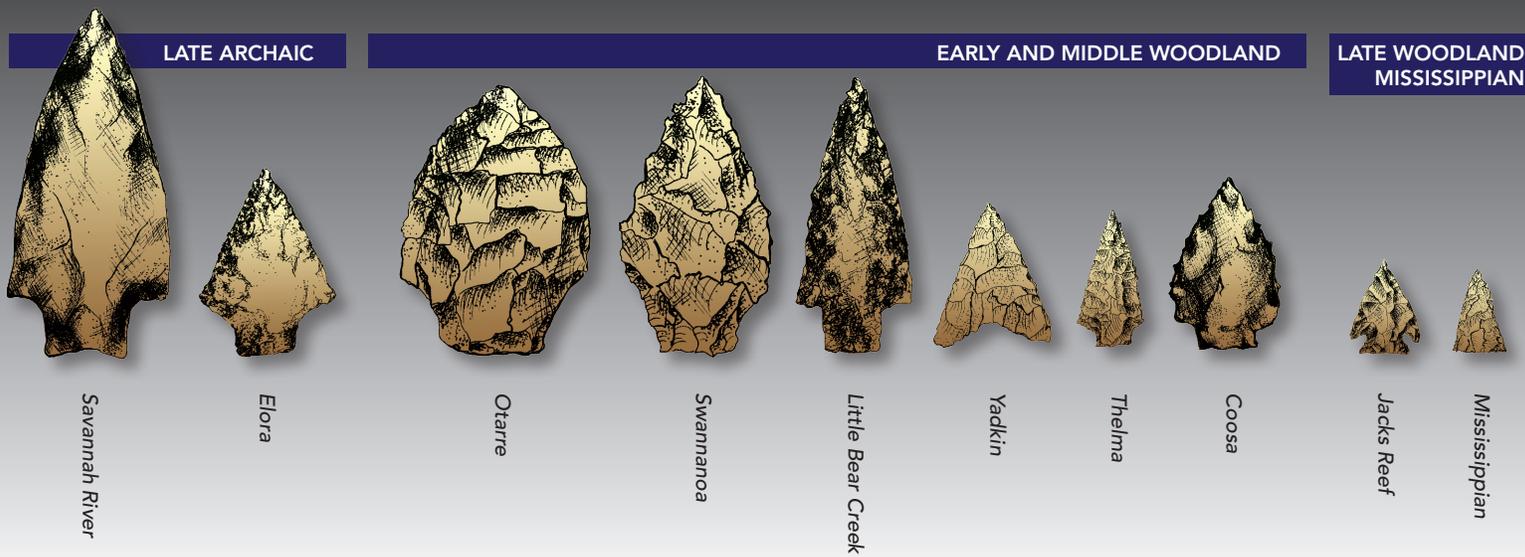


Changes in the shoreline of Cathead Creek over time. The climate was much colder in 13,000 B.C. and glaciers held large amounts of water, which meant that the sea level was lower. This figure is based on work by archaeologist Michael Faught who has mapped changes in the location of the shoreline of Florida into southern Georgia over time (Borremans 1990). (Map by New South Associates, 2013)

lived near watering holes and springs. They traveled inland occasionally to hunt game and to find resources such as chert rocks to make into stone tools.

One of the most recognizable Paleo-Indian tools is the Clovis spear point. This large stone spear point contains a flute, or channel, down the middle of both sides that was used to haft, or connect, the point to a wooden shaft. Paleo-Indians thrust spears lashed with Clovis points into large, now extinct, animals like the mastodon and woolly mammoth. The spear points earned their name after one was found among mastodon and mammoth bones in Clovis,

New Mexico. Paleo-Indians supplemented this infrequent big game kill by gathering a variety of edible plants and by daily hunting smaller game such as white-tailed deer, fish, and birds. Paleo-Indians do not appear to have used the land that is now McIntosh County very frequently and no Paleo-Indian sites have been found along Cathead Creek.



(Above) Projectile Points of Georgia through time (GDOT 2013). Archaeologists refer to "arrowheads" and to larger points attached to spears or used as knives as "projectile points." The shapes of projectile points changed over time. (Image created by Tracey Fedor, New South Associates 2013)

## ARCHAIC PERIOD (8000-1000 B.C.)

By 8000 B.C., the environment in North America was changing. The climate became drier and the sea level rose. Oaks and grasslands dominated other vegetation and mastodons and mammoths were now extinct (Carbone 1983). American Indians adapted to these environmental changes by eating a wider variety of food, most notably shellfish, as well as wild game, nuts, and plants. Between 5000 and 3000 B.C., the weather became moister, similar to today's climate. Sea level stabilized and pine trees replaced large portions of what had been oak woods and grassy plains. By 3000 B.C., the shoreline looked similar to what it is today.

Important cultural changes occurred during the Archaic Period. By its end, American Indians began staying in places for longer periods and living in larger groups. Archaeological surveys indicate that American Indians began living on and around Cathead Creek during the final part of the Archaic Period. Seasonally nomadic, they moved between semi-permanent camps throughout the year, harvesting plants and animals when and where

they were most abundant. For example, coastal camps saw an accumulation of oyster, clam, and whelk shells from years of seasonal harvesting of shellfish. Archaic Period Indians often threw other trash, such as broken tools and food remains, onto the heaps with the empty shells. This created layers of trash deposits called middens. Archaic people continued to travel away from their settlements for hunting and foraging. They made small camps while traveling, and archaeologists search for artifacts from these camps, such as stone tools like spear points, knives, and scrapers.

Changing stone tool technology enables archaeologists to date campsites. Archaic Period hunters made a different style of spear point than the Paleo-Indians and archaeologists call this new style the Savannah River Stemmed Projectile Point. Late Archaic Period Indians could throw this point, attached to a spear, rather than thrusting it directly into the prey. They designed a special tool, an atlatl, to increase the length and speed of the spear's throw. Archaic Indians fashioned stone axes to cut vegetation and trees when necessary. They used flat stones as mortars, and elongated pestles and



(Right) The atlatl was a tool that American Indians of the Archaic period invented to throw spears farther and with greater velocity. An atlatl consisted of a wooden shaft with a cup at one end. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

round "hammer" stones to grind nuts and plants. American Indians during this period discovered soft soapstone rocks in the hilly Piedmont region, including Soapstone Ridge near present-day Atlanta, 233 miles to the northwest. Soapstone was easy to carve and held heat well, and Archaic Indians carved soapstone into bowls, cooking stones, tobacco pipes, and other tools and ornaments. Soapstone and soapstone artifacts became trade items throughout what is now Georgia and eastern and central North America.

From storage to jewelry, coastal Archaic Indians invented other technologies. The Late Archaic Indians made the first clay pottery, from a mixture of clay and Spanish moss. Late Archaic Period women potters usually made plain pots, however, sometimes they decorated the pottery by drawing lines in the wet clay or by pressing the round end of a whole or split cane into it (Howard et al. 1979). Other creations of this period included objects made of bone and shell. During the Late Archaic Period, American Indians carved "pins" from bone that were used in leatherwork as well as for hair ornaments. They also made holes in shark teeth to wear as ornaments and they made other tools from whelk shells.

(Right) Unlike the earlier fluted Paleo-Indian spear points, Savannah River Points like this one had a stem at the base that was used to attach it to a shaft. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

American Indians first appear to have occupied the lands along Cathead Creek in the Late Archaic Period. Late Archaic projectile points were found by excavations at the Sidon Plantation site (Matternes and Windham 2014:85) and the Indigo Harbour site (Botwick and Joseph 2007:34).

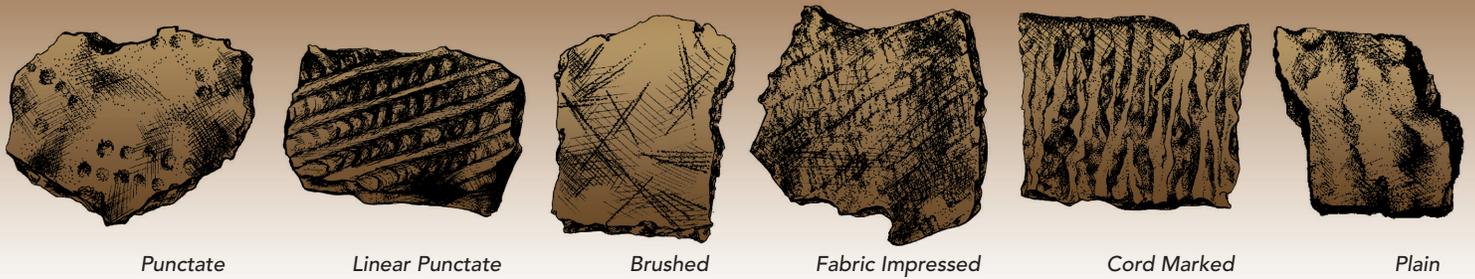


### WOODLAND PERIOD (1000 B.C.-A.D. 1000)

New changes to American Indian culture began around 1000 B.C. These changes, however, did not result from the natural environment, which was now stable. These changes came because human populations were increasing in size and complexity. This new stage in American Indian cultural history is known as the Woodland Period.

Woodland American Indians lived in villages. Bell-shaped underground pits and pottery storage vessels enabled Woodland Indians to stockpile and preserve food, allowing the formation of villages where greater numbers of people could live together. Villages contained round houses





Punctate

Linear Punctate

Brushed

Fabric Impressed

Cord Marked

Plain

(Above) American Indians decorated their pottery in different ways, including incising lines, impressing wet clay with nets, rubbing clay with corncobs, and stamping with designs carved from wooden paddles. These different styles as well as the temper used to make clay pots help archaeologists date American Indian sites and recognize different social groups in the region. (Illustration by New South Associates, 2013)

built of individual wooden posts or posts set in shell-filled trenches. Wattle and daub walls were made by plastering wet clay over walls made of woven reeds. Wattle and daub kept cold winds out of the house and central fire hearths heated these houses efficiently in the winter. Pits in the floors of houses provided storage areas for food. Cooler, rectangular "summer houses" had walls of thatch rather than clay.

Women and children now made small gardens to supplement the plants and large amounts of nuts and seeds they gathered. They made whelk shells into hoes. Gardens included corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, and

sunflowers. The men continued to hunt deer, rabbits, and other game using spears, blowguns, and traps. They added a new weapon, the bow and arrow, to their arsenal that allowed them to hunt with greater success. Fishing and gathering shellfish using fishhooks and nets were also part of the diet of Woodland Indians along the coast.

American Indians of the Woodland Period began making and using clay pottery in greater amounts and created new vessel shapes to cook and store food. They discovered new "recipes" for pottery, adding sand or crushed quartz as temper instead of Spanish moss. Women decorated pots with a variety of both simple and complicated motifs, ranging from a checkerboard design to elaborate, curved designs carved on wooden

A bowl being carved out of a soapstone boulder. Soapstone artifacts appear on American Indian sites along the Georgia coast, but soapstone rock originates in the Georgia Piedmont. This tells us that American Indians along the coast were either traveling or trading with those living in the interior. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)



paddles and stamped into the wet clay pot. Changing pottery designs help archaeologists date sites where American Indians lived.

Archaeologists have recorded several Woodland sites along Cathead Creek. Salvage excavations by the Golden Isles Archaeological Society and Armstrong State University at the Sidon Plantation site in advance of the construction of the Magnolia Bluff Outlet mall, identified



Clay pots being fired in a fire pit. Southeastern American Indians of the Late Archaic period made the first pottery in North America. Archaeologists call it "Stallings Island pottery" after the site where it was first found. Women made both coil and pinch pots. (Photographs by New South Associates, 2013)



26 circular storage pits from a Middle Woodland village (Matternes and Windham 2014:67). During construction of the mall, an American Indian burial was found in association with a Middle Woodland pit house as well as a second burial containing Middle Woodland pottery and a shell bead. Both were recovered and relocated by archaeologist Fred Cook (Matternes and Windham 2014:75). Survey at the Indigo Harbour site on Cathead Creek also identified a Middle Woodland occupation, as well as the presence of Late Woodland ceramics (Botwick and Joseph 2007:30).

### MISSISSIPPIAN PERIOD (A.D. 1000-1540)

By 1000 A.D., coastal villages became more permanent and populations increased greatly. These large permanent populations required a change in culture and society and led to the formation of the Mississippian Period. The Mississippian Period marks the development of chiefdoms and agriculture, which supported population growth. Chiefdoms were a more complex form of government than previously used by American Indians groups, in which American Indians in a territory lived in multiple villages and settlements, all of which were governed by a chief. Chiefdom territories were usually associated with boundaries of floodplains, which were used for agricultural fields. Mississippian villagers farmed the rich, fertile flood plains within their territory. Unlike the previous small gardens of the Woodland Period, American Indians in Mississippian villages cultivated large fields of corn, beans, and squash. Each chief would redistribute the crops between the outlying communities and village center. Crop failure from weather or other natural forces could threaten the ability to feed a village, so villagers continued to gather wild foods and hunt game.

Villages of this period were some of the earliest “planned towns” in North America. Chiefs fortified their villages with ditches and palisades, creating a “gated community.” Warfare between Mississippian villages across the southeast made such defensive features necessary. Mississippian Indians organized villages with specific areas for religious, recreational, political, agricultural, and residential activities. Villages contained flat-topped earthen mounds that were used for burying the dead, and for religious and political functions. Villages of the Mississippian Period also contained soil-covered ceremonial structures called earth lodges, open grounds for playing stick-ball and other games, community grain-storage areas, and summer and winter houses for residents.

Archaeologists have uncovered small camps used when American Indians gathered nuts and plants or hunted game on overnight trips away from their villages. During this period, some American Indians lived in hamlets made up of several houses that were occupied seasonally rather than year-round.



Drawing of a Mississippian period pot excavated from a mound on Cathead Creek by Clarence B. Moore in 1896. Moore excavated four mounds near Darien, as well as others along Georgia's coast (Moore 1998 [1897]).

Many Mississippian Period Indians lived in smaller settlements. Some sites included cemeteries used just once, as well as cemeteries used repeatedly over time, like a contemporary cemetery. Often, the latter would become burial mounds in important villages.

Stone tool technology changed yet again. By this time, American Indians shaped stone into very small triangular arrowheads. These points were useful in the continued hunt for deer and small game. They continued to hunt with darts and blowguns as well as bows and arrows.

Pottery became more elaborate during this time, although potters continued to make plain vessels. Mississippian potters made impressions on wet clay using nets and cord, as well as lines made with sticks. Paddle stamping included simple check stamped as well as linear and curved designs that were quite complicated. Archaeologists named some pottery types, St. Catherines, Savannah, and Irene, based on certain characteristics.

As with their predecessors, American Indians from this period enjoyed colorful fashions and decorations. This included body tattoos, beads, earrings and ear spools, decorative hairdos, and ornate clothing. Such symbols likely represented specific aspects of art, religion, and identity within the Mississippian culture. Valuable items like these became status symbols. Like their Woodland predecessors, American Indians of the Mississippian Period participated in an extensive trade network linked by rivers and creeks. They traded exotic materials, artifacts, food, and ideas among villages throughout the southeast and the Mississippi River



Several different examples of Precontact pottery found during excavations of the Ceylon and Sidon Plantations conducted by the Golden Isles Archaeological Society (GIAS) and Armstrong Atlantic University in 1993 and 1994. (Photographs by New South Associates, 2013)

Valley. Archaeological evidence of such trade appears in artifacts found in the burials of chiefs, nobility, and other elite. This includes artifacts of shell, copper, and non-native materials indicating trade with distant American Indian groups, as well as elaborate pottery. These items indicate a society with different status levels. The presence of grave goods suggests that the Mississippian Indians practiced religious ceremonies and believed in an afterlife.

Certain environments in the Cathead Creek area contain sites from the Mississippian Period, including barrier and marsh islands. The edges of marshes on the mainland as well as highland areas next to swamps, but away from the coast, provided good locations to live. Bluffs along major freshwater rivers provided prime real estate for settlement – not only for the American Indians but also for new arrivals, the Europeans.

Mississippian Period Indians constructed multiple mounds in McIntosh County, including one on Cathead Creek. An early avocational archaeologist, Clarence B. Moore, traveled the Georgia coast in 1896 in his steam-powered riverboat, the *Gopher*, exploring and recording mound sites. Moore examined 16 mound sites in the McIntosh County, some of which contained multiple mounds. On the northern edge of Darien, he examined the Lawton's Field site, which contained three burial

mounds, all of which had been damaged by years of plowing. Mound B at Lawton Field contained 32 burials. Along Cathead Creek at a location reportedly "one mile northwest of Darien" (which would place this site southeast of the Cathead Creek Historic District), Moore examined the Passbey Mound, which he described as 5 and a half feet high and 48 feet in diameter. Eleven burials were recovered from his excavations at Passbey. Based on the artifacts, it appears that American Indians constructed most of the mounds during the Mississippian Period and the late 1500s (Moore 1998:15-24).

Mississippian artifacts were found during survey of the Indigo Harbour site on Cathead Creek (Botwick and Joseph 2007), which is located at the current residential community of Cathead Landing, and were also found in the Golden Isles Archaeological Society's salvage excavations at Sidon Plantation, where Middle and Late Mississippian pottery was recovered (Matternes and Windham 2014:90-91). The density of Mississippian sites along Cathead Creek and in McIntosh County indicates that the area was a major population center for Mississippian people.



## III. Making Contact: American Indians and Europeans Meet

### WHO WERE THE AMERICAN INDIANS WHEN EUROPEANS ARRIVED?

By the time Europeans arrived in North America, the complex Mississippian Period society was already collapsing as a result of European-introduced diseases and warfare between chiefdoms. American Indians had no immunity to European diseases like small pox, cholera, malaria, typhus, mumps, and the flu. As French and Spanish explorers traveled through the southeast, they introduced these and other diseases that led to very high rates of mortality. Death and disease led to social instability, which in turn led to warfare between chiefdoms (Sale 1990). All of this resulted in drastic cultural, technological, and social changes to American Indian life. American Indian society along Cathead Creek and the coast was dramatically different when the Spanish arrived in the mid-16th century than it had been a century earlier.

The Spanish were the first European explorers to settle the Georgia coast. They called the natives that lived in the Cathead Creek area the "Guale" (pronounced "Wally"). This name referred to the section of coastline the Guale occupied when the Spanish first arrived and a neighboring province, "Mocama," extended south from Guale territory into northern Florida (Worth 1995). The Guale and Mocama shared the same culture and had similar experiences with the Spanish.

The Guale were matrilineal, meaning they traced their kinship through the mother's family line. They practiced agriculture in small, scattered farm plots located on high ground away from the coast. The towns sat along the banks of rivers or tidal creeks, and agricultural plots lay behind the town center, opposite the riverbank. Guale

towns that had a village leader, or headman, served as political centers. Like their Mississippian Period predecessors, Guale women planted corn, beans, and varieties of squash as well as melons. One 17th-century English account suggested that the American Indians harvested more than one crop annually (Hilton 1911; Thomas 2008). The women dried corn and ground it into flour that they used to make a drink and a form of flat, round cake (San Miguel 2001).

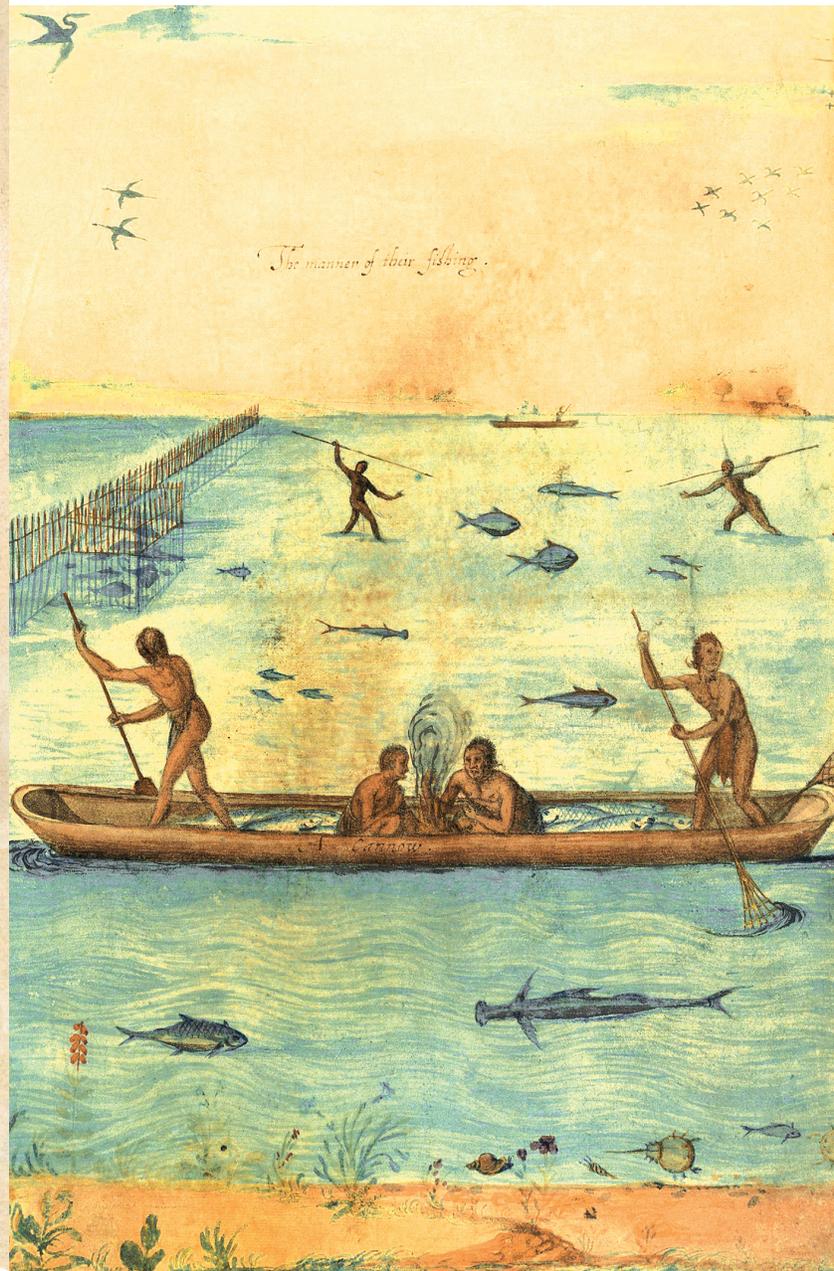
From summer to early fall, the Guale stayed in village communities and ate their harvests. They supplemented this by gathering wild berries, persimmons, and grapes. In the fall, Guale women collected hickory nuts and acorns. They stored some acorns for later use and specially processed and ground others to make edible

*The manner of their attire and painting them selves when they goe to their generall huntings, or at their Solemne feasts.*



Left) Painting of an American Indian at the time of European Contact. Our earliest images of American Indians of the southeast come from the work of John White. White was an artist involved in English efforts to explore and settle North America. White was part of the English settlement at Roanoke Island and made water color paintings of American Indians while on the coast of what is now North Carolina. In this painting, White comments that this is an image of an American Indian decorated for hunting or feasts with paint, beads, and other adornments. (Image courtesy of Virtual Jamestown, 2013)

(Below) Watercolor painting of American Indians fishing. This painting by John White shows the various ways that American Indians fished along the coast. Fish weirs were made of wooden stakes that funneled fish into traps. American Indians speared fish in shallow waters and caught fish on hooks from dug-out canoes. They also gathered shellfish, such as oysters. American Indians cut down trees and used fires to soften the wood, allowing them to chop or dig it out into a canoe. The Guale traveled along the coast by dug-out canoe. (Image courtesy of Virtual Jamestown, 2013)



flour. Most Guale appear to have been permanent residents of a village. Some, however, traveled during winter, gathering firewood and edible plants, as well as hunting and fishing. Paddling a canoe remained the quickest, easiest way to travel, and the Guale moved along Cathead Creek and beyond in dugout canoes made from tree trunks.

The Guale men continued the Mississippian Period tradition of hunting and fishing. They used bows made of tupelo, Osage orange, mulberry, and cedar and made arrows from reeds and cane, and arrow tips from fish bone or chipped stone. The Guale continued the tradition of hunting deer, bear, and wild turkey for food, clothing, and trade items. Fishing involved a variety of tools such as nets, fish weirs, spears, and handheld lines (Thomas 2008). Women undertook the laborious process of tanning animal hides.

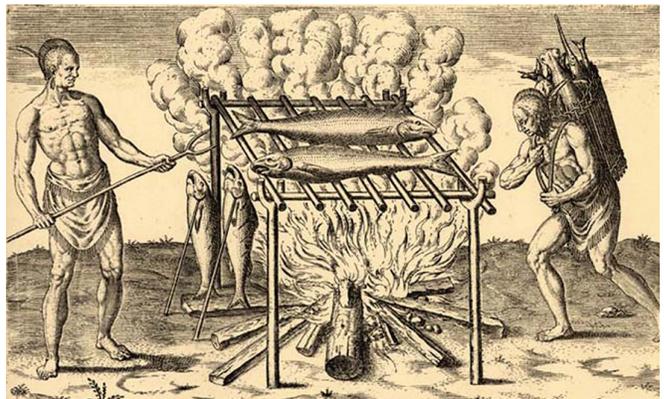
Like their ancestors, the Guale took advantage of the oyster beds along the coast. They often dried oysters on cane grills and strung them on lines for storing. Preserved in this way, dried shellfish were portable and available when other food was scarce. The Guale traded smoked oysters by the basket-load to other inland American Indian tribes. American Indians often harvested, shucked, and dried oysters at certain sites, but may have consumed them months later and miles away, leaving no evidence (Thomas 2008).

Guale women continued to make pottery. In the Cathead Creek area, archaeologists named the early Guale pottery "Irene" and the later period pottery "Altamaha." Pottery characteristics such as the type of material (temper) added, the decorations, and the vessel shapes define these pottery types.

Like other coastal American Indian cultures, the Guale culture followed many of the same practices as the earlier Mississippians, sharing many of the same concepts of diet, technology, social and political networks, kinship, agriculture, and pottery that the Mississippians had used. This suggests to archaeologists that the Mississippian culture had fragmented due to stresses from disease and warfare, with smaller cultural groups like the Guale emerging from the ashes of the once powerful Mississippian culture.



Shell midden along Cathead Creek. American Indians harvested oysters from beds along Cathead Creek to cook and eat. They threw the shell onto the ground where it became middens mixed with other trash, forming huge piles or ring shapes. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)



American Indians roasting fish. American Indians along the Georgia coast were accustomed to roasting and smoking fish to eat or preserve for a later date. (Image courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, 2013)

## THE EUROPEANS ARRIVE

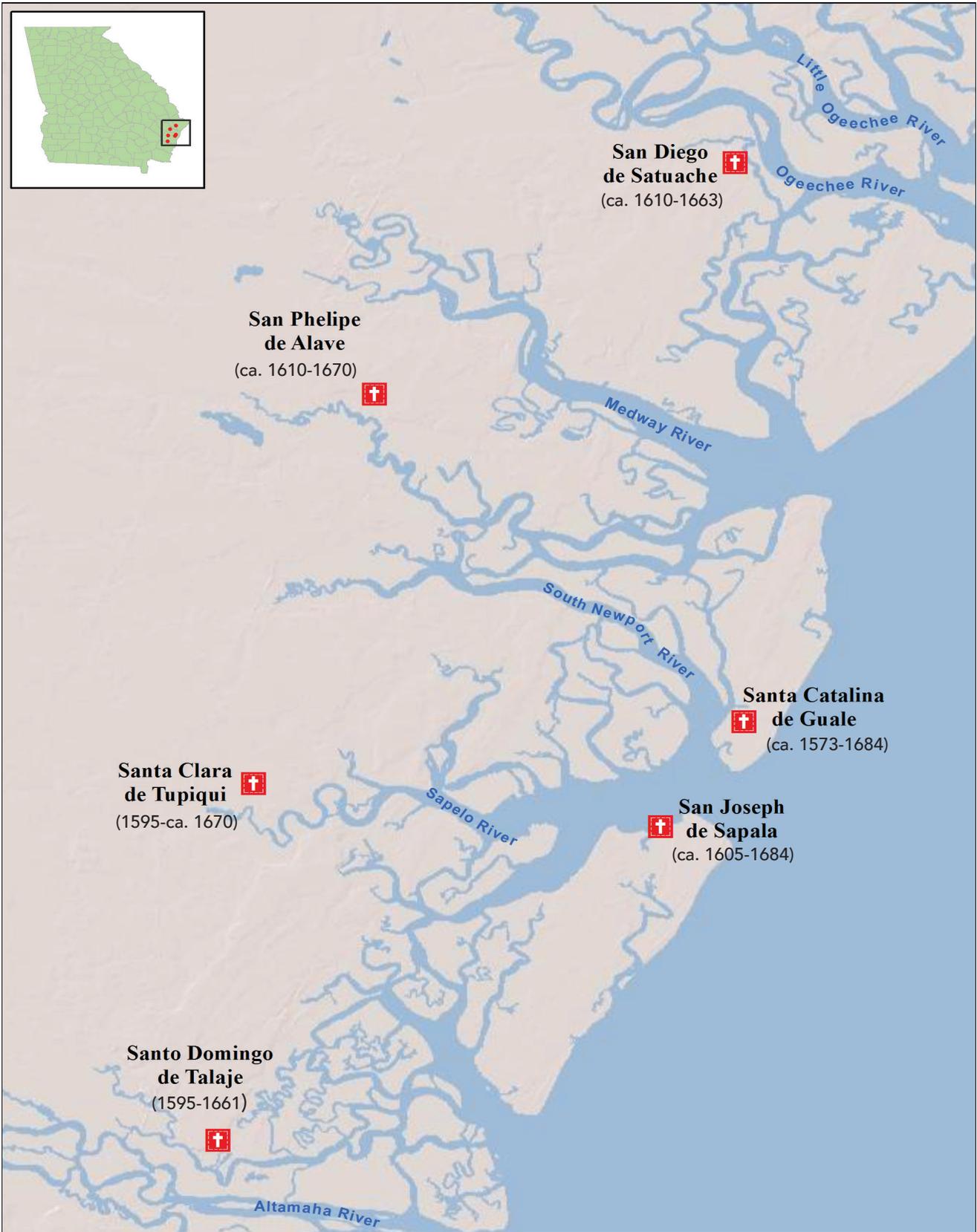
The history of Europeans along the coast of Georgia began with Spanish and French explorations along the Atlantic shoreline during the 1500s. Spanish settler Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon founded the first European settlement in what is now Georgia in 1526 (Coleman 1976:9). It was also the first European settlement in what is now the United States. This was San Miguel de Gualdape, likely located in Sapelo Sound, though its location is unconfirmed (Coleman 1976:9, Sullivan 1992:6-9). Although the Ayllon settlement survived only a few months, it had a serious effect on the local American Indians by introducing Old World diseases for which American Indians were not immune (Dobyns 1983).

The French were the next to attempt to settle the region, establishing Fort Caroline in 1564, possibly on the St. John's River. The French efforts to establish a settlement at Fort Caroline prompted the Spanish to return to the region. The Spanish began settlement along the coast following the establishment of the town of St. Augustine in 1565 and Santa Elena (on what is now Parris Island, South Carolina) in 1566. From the 1560s to the 1680s, Spain dominated Georgia's early colonial history, with an emphasis on the introduction of Christianity to American Indians more than settlement. Spanish Catholics sought to expand their religion through the Christianization of American Indians in the New World, which would spread the influence of the Catholic Church. The first Spaniards to arrive were the Jesuits, who met with Guale tribal members on St. Catherines Island in 1566. The Jesuits

were not successful in their efforts to Christianize the Guale, and were succeeded by a second Catholic order, the Franciscans, who arrived in 1573 and who proved to be better missionaries (Coleman 1976:9-10).

When most people think of Spanish missions in North America, they might picture adobe churches in California and Texas. The Spanish mission system actually began nearly two centuries earlier along northern Florida and coastal Georgia. Spain used these missions to legitimize its claim to land from the Carolinas to the southern tip of Florida. For over a century, Spaniards established Catholic missions at American Indian villages along the Georgia and Florida coasts.

The Franciscans introduced the "Mission Era" Period to the Georgia coast, which began with the arrival of a group of Franciscan friars (unlike monks, who live in isolation, friars live among people with the objective of converting them to Catholicism) and priests. Spain established Catholic missions within existing Guale settlements. Guale chiefs made a strategic military decision in permitting the Franciscans to live in their villages. They hoped that accepting the Spanish Franciscans would keep the Guale safe from disease, the origins of which were not understood. They also saw an opportunity to continue the flow of new and desired items such as plates, cups, glass beads, guns, and iron objects into their community. The Guale chiefs thought a Spanish alliance would make the Guale more powerful than neighboring chiefdoms. The military decision had dire consequences for the Guale (Spalding 1991:9-13; Worth 1995:11).



Location of Spanish missions among the Guale Indians along Georgia's coast. Missions were first established in the 1570s and continued until 1684 (Jeffries and Moore 2012). (Map by New South Associates, 2013)



The Spanish adopted the American Indian construction of wattle and daub to build portions of their missions. This photograph shows a wattle and daub wall under construction. It was made by placing posts in the ground and weaving sticks between them. American Indians then covered the inside and outside with wet clay which hardened. This construction technique provided insulation and resistance to insects. (Image courtesy of S. J. Wells, 2013)

This painting shows a typical simple wood and thatch Spanish mission church. The Spanish created missions in Guale towns to create a Christianized, slave labor force. In addition to the church, there would have been a convent where the Spanish friars lived and a kitchen, and a plaza in front of the church where religious activities occurred. (Image courtesy of Mission San Luis, 2014)

The Spanish strategically established missions at the political centers of local American Indian chiefdoms – in the villages where a chief lived. Each mission was a small compound within a much larger American Indian community. Missions included simple wooden churches with thatched roofs where the Spanish celebrated Catholic Mass and buried Christianized Indians in the mission building and compound. Missions also included convents where a single friar lived alone. Catholic friars served the much larger group of hamlets and villages lying throughout a chiefdom (Milanich 1999).

The goals of the Spanish were to control the American Indians by teaching them the Spanish language, converting them to Christianity, and developing a new system under which the American Indians served as laborers (Milanich 1999). Spanish documents record that the Guale chiefs were required to send laborers from each town to work for the Spanish. During the late winter, these tasks included working in the soldiers' cornfields in St. Augustine (Worth 1995). The Spanish called this forced labor practice the *repartimiento* system, and it was used throughout the New World.

Some of the Guale refused to be Christianized, which led to conflicts with the Spanish friars. In 1597, Father Pedro Corpa opposed the leadership of a Guale named Juanillo, who was about to become chief, because Juanillo was not a Christian. In response to this opposition, Juanillo killed Father Corpa and led a Guale revolt that resulted in the deaths of four more missionaries. The Spanish governor in Saint Augustine sent 150 soldiers north, who quelled the rebellion, killing Juanillo (Doherty and Doherty 2005:23-24). David Thomas (1993:27) reported that a catalog card in the archives of the Fort King George Museum in Darien records a "human skull found on the bank of the river in what may have been the Guale trash pile. The skull is believed to be that of the Spanish priest, Father Corpa. The Indians beheaded Father Corpa in the 1590s. His head was placed on a stake in a trash pile and the rest of his body was fed to the dogs." Archaeologist Shelia Caldwell donated the skull, sometime between 1952 and 1954 (Thomas 1993:26-27).

By 1595, the Guale province contained six primary mission towns: San Diego de Satuche (or Chatuache), San

This is a piece of a dish known as tin glazed majolica. Archaeologists excavated it from a village site along Cathead Creek. American Indians lived there before and during the arrival of Europeans to the area. The American Indians traded with the Spanish at Mission Santo Domingo de Talaje and at other missions for ceramics like this, as well as beads, religious medallions, guns, and glass. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

Phelipe de Alave, Santa Catalina de Guale, San Joseph de Sapala, Santa Clara de Tupiqui, and Santo Domingo de Talaje (Worth 1995:10). Other Spanish missions were built in neighboring American Indian territories in other locations along the coast. The Guale missions extended from the mouth of the Ogeechee River drainage to the mouth of the Altamaha River drainage (Worth 1995:10). The Santa Catalina de Guale Mission on St. Catherines Island later became the mission capital (Thomas et al. 1978). Two missions in the southern part of the province were located in or near Darien. One, Mission San Joseph de Sapala may have sat near the northern end of Sapelo Island (Jefferies and Moore 2010, 2012). Captain Dunlop, an Englishman, reported seeing brick remains of a small mission chapel with fruit trees and a garden, although given that the structure was described as “brick” it likely dated later than the Spanish Period (Sullivan 1992:8). Spanish documents and recent archaeological work may have located Mission San Joseph de Sapala on Sapelo Island (Jefferies and Moore 2010, 2012).

The southernmost mission town in Guale Indian territory lay on the north bank of the Altamaha River. Spanish documents mention a Guale settlement named Talaje. The Santo Domingo de Talaje mission operated between 1595 and 1661 in the area of what is now Darien (Jefferies 2010). Later, the British used this site to construct Fort King George (Caldwell 1952; 1954; Worth 1995; Jefferies 2010). Archaeological excavations conducted in the



1950s at Fort King George by Joseph and Shelia Caldwell of the University of Georgia uncovered remains of the mission, including fragments of Spanish olive jars and majolica and European burials.

For a time, the Franciscans achieved their goals of missionization, but only at great cost to the culture of the American Indians. Native games, marriage practices, religious traditions, clothing, and language were changed or forbidden, to conform to Christian ideals, practices, and dress. Those who refused to obey were punished and often killed by soldiers. Estimates from 1675 indicate that approximately 676 American Indians were living in missionized territories, of which an estimated 350 were non-Christian and the remaining 326 were Christianized (Worth 1995:28). European diseases like smallpox infected the American Indians,

causing sickness and widespread death. A 1657 Spanish document noted, "this province of Guale has been left destitute of human forces on account of so many deaths" from disease (Worth 1995:13). Over the course of the mission period, some areas saw over 90 percent of the American Indians die from these new diseases (Dobyns 1983).

Depopulation, English raids, and the forced relocation of many American Indians eventually led to the abandonment of Georgia's missions along the coast. British forces from Virginia and American Indian allies known as the Chichimecos conducted a deadly raid in 1661 on the Santo Domingo de Talaje Mission (Worth 1995:16). Following the 1661 raid, the mission was relocated to St. Simons Island, where it was renamed

Santo Domingo de Asajo (Worth 1995:18). Following the British raid of 1661, armed slave raids by Indians allied with the English increased (Worth 1995:16-18).

During the 1660s and 1670s, American Indian refugees from the north, called the Yamasee, settled briefly in the Guale region. The Yamasee soon left the area, moving away from the coast, as a result of raids against the missions by British privateers and various pirates. They later joined the English in slave raids against other Indians. A final pirate raid in October 1684 left Georgia's remaining missions in ruins and ended the mission period in the state (Sullivan 1992:9; Worth 1995:20, 42). By 1700, there were few surviving Guale people in the area (Worth 1995:42).



## II. Defense, Land, and Labor

### THE ENGLISH FORTIFY AND SETTLE DARIEN

Two countries – Great Britain and Spain – coveted southeastern coastal Georgia during the 18th century. While Spain was entrenched in Florida, it regarded the coastal lands of Georgia that it had once occupied as its territory. Great Britain, however, saw the Spanish presence in north Florida as the immediate threat to British coastal settlements in South Carolina. In 1721, in reaction to the threat of Spanish attacks, British Colonel John Barnwell created Fort King George under direction of the British crown and the Governor of the Carolina colony, Francis Nicholson. Colonel John Barnwell established the fort near the location of present-day Darien.

#### FORT KING GEORGE

Colonel Barnwell constructed Fort King George on a peninsula below Altamaha Bluff called the lower bluff, on the same location as the Spanish mission of Santo Domingo de Talaje. The triangular-shaped earthen Fort King George included a palisaded moat along the fort's two land-bound sides. The northern branch of the Altamaha River bordered the third side of the fort. A 40-foot tall, 26-foot square cypress blockhouse rose above the palisade. The three-story blockhouse had powder, ammunition, and supply areas on the first floor. The second floor gunroom held cannons for firing through the gun ports to vessels on the river below. The third floor had a lookout post. Fort King George also contained barracks and an officers' house (Sullivan 1992:10-11).

Barnwell's journal details the many challenges of building a coastal fort, including rampant mosquitoes. Barnwell's troops consisted of veterans of other wars, many of whom had debilitating injuries, and nearly all of his troops suffered from scurvy, a disease caused by not eating enough foods with vitamin C; scurvy was a common ailment of travel by sea at a time when fruits and vegetables could not be preserved and taken along for consumption during the journey (Sullivan 1992:10). In addition to disease, soldiers at Fort King George suffered from boredom, malnutrition, and a chronic threat of Spanish attacks. At least 140 British soldiers stationed there died from disease and malnutrition during its seven-year occupation. Their burials nearby created a military cemetery. In 1725, four years after construction, the fort caught fire. The blaze damaged the blockhouse and destroyed the barracks. Soldiers

## HIGHLAND SCOTS AND THE FOUNDING OF DARIEN



The British established Fort King George on the Altamaha River in 1721. The goal was to defend British interests in the Carolinas from advances by the Spanish in Florida. The fort was abandoned in 1727. In 1733, when General James Oglethorpe led the founding of the Colony of Georgia, he selected this location for the construction of a fortified town. The town's name was New Inverness. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

partially rebuilt the fort. Damage from the fire, in addition to chronic disease, took their toll and in the fall of 1727, most troops transferred to Carolina. For the next seven years, Fort King George operated with a total force of only two lookouts (Sullivan 1992:12-14).

In 1733, General James Oglethorpe (1696-1785) showed renewed interest in the military defense of this region when he established the town of Savannah to the north. Fearful that the Spanish in Florida would attack Savannah, he successfully petitioned the Trustees of the Georgia colony to approve the construction of two fortified towns. Both were built in the Altamaha region. The sites Oglethorpe selected were at the derelict Fort King George and on St. Simons Island. The former became the town of New Inverness (later Darien) and the latter took the name Frederica. Darien was located at the mouth of Cathead Creek.

Between 1735 and 1748, hundreds of young men and their families agreed to move from the highlands of Scotland to the Georgia coast. The Highland Scots had agreed to immigrate to the New World because of religious conflicts they had with the British and other Scots living in the Lowland Region of Scotland, who sided with Great Britain. Great Britain waged a series of attacks against the Highlanders that culminated in the Battle of Culloden in 1745. The Acts of Proscription in 1746 banned the Highland Scots' language, weapons, clan society, and manner of dress. Given these conflicts, members of the Highland Scots accepted General Oglethorpe's invitation to leave Scotland and immigrate to Georgia (Dobson 1999).

Oglethorpe expected the Scots to be farmer-soldiers on the British frontier. The Highlanders suited the task perfectly. Frontier military training was part of their heritage and the popular films *Braveheart* and *Rob Roy*, based on historical figures, exemplify this culture. The Highlanders maintained their traditional plaid kilt dress and customs in Georgia. Highlanders practiced hospitality and had excellent relations with Indians. Their bravery in war, in addition to these traits, made the Highlanders popular with General Oglethorpe (Parker 1997; Dobson 1999). A portion of an unsigned letter from March 1736 reflects their mutual respect:

*Oglethorpe paid a visit to the Highlanders at Darien, whom he found...with their plaids, broadswords, targets, and muskets, making a fine appearance. They had provided for Mr. Oglethorpe a fine soft bed...and plaid curtains. But he chose to lie out of doors upon the ground in his cloak between two gentlemen,*

*which example they followed by lying 'round him (Extract of an Anonymous Letter 1736, as quoted in Sullivan 1992:18).*

Oglethorpe showed insightful military strategy in placing the Scottish Highlanders as the first line of defense on Georgia's southern frontier. Their fierce bravery in battle created a reputation that intimidated the Spanish. The Highlanders renamed the New Inverness settlement "Darien." The name honored a Scottish settlement in the Republic of Panama that had failed in 1697 (Parker 1997).

John McIntosh Mohr (1698-1761) took command of the Highlanders. Mohr and his family moved to the Georgia colony from Badenoch, Scotland in 1736, and he became a leader of the Scots in Georgia. Mohr and General Oglethorpe followed the settlement plan used in Savannah to establish Darien, which similarly consisted of a series of town squares. Darien residents began building houses and sawmills, and establishing agricultural plots in the area around Darien. Surveyors laid out the District of Darien in 1739, which covered approximately the same area as modern day McIntosh County (Sullivan 1992:16-24).

#### DEFENSE THROUGH ASSAULT

Increasing tensions between Spain and Great Britain lead to the War of Jenkins' Ear, which lasted from 1739 to 1743. Both Great Britain and Spain felt assaults were the best defense against the enemy, which led to various skirmishes and battles along the Georgia coast.



General Oglethorpe recruited the Scottish Highlanders to help settle and defend Georgia. The Scots were farmers and fighters who helped defend Savannah from the Spanish. This painting (Eyre-Todd 1923) shows the typical attire of the Scots, including wearing plaid kilts. The Scots renamed New Inverness, "Darien."

Soon after the establishment of the Darien District, Oglethorpe led an assault on Spanish Florida. He seized two forts west of St. Augustine, Florida: Fort San Diego and Fort Picoletta, as well as the settlement of free Africans at Fort Mose, north of St. Augustine. His third attack, besieging the St. Augustine fort in 1740, failed. Oglethorpe returned to Fort Frederica on St. Simons Island, Georgia and southern Georgia residents braced themselves for a counter-attack by the Spanish.

Two years later, a Spanish contingent took Fort Saint Simons, on the southern tip of the island. Oglethorpe and the Scottish Highlanders attacked a Spanish scouting party at Gully Hole, a mile and a half east of Fort Frederica in 1742 and later that same day skirmished in the marsh with another regiment of Spanish reinforcements. The second skirmish was known as the Battle of Bloody

Marsh. The British forces and their Indian allies won both battles, and as a result, Spanish forces retreated to Florida. These battles were the prelude to Oglethorpe's final offensive in Florida. In 1743, he again unsuccessfully attacked St. Augustine. While the Georgia-Florida raids and skirmishes appear minor, they served to establish British control of Georgia and to discourage the Spanish from further attacks (Sullivan 1992:22-29).

#### DARIEN AND THE DISTRICT GROWS

In 1742, a new small wave of Scottish settlers increased Darien's population. However, the English Crown gave land grants to the Scots and others for military service



the Georgia Trustees divided the colony into parishes, the Darien District became St. Andrews Parish in 1758 (Sullivan 1992:46). The selection of the name St. Andrew was not surprising as he was the patron saint of Scotland.

Darien's expansion continued and the mid-18th century saw improved transportation systems. The Barrington Ferry across the Altamaha River linked the roads between Savannah and Florida beginning in the 1768; the ferry keeper was allowed to transport five horses across the river at a time (Sullivan 1992:79-80). A road from Savannah to Darien had been established in the 1730s, and a 1764 Colonial decree required the road to be improved and maintained. This decree also established the River Road, a road along the Altamaha River to the south where it connected to the Barrington Ferry and roads on the opposite side of the Altamaha leading to Florida. Roads to the interior were also improved during this period (Sullivan 1992:46).

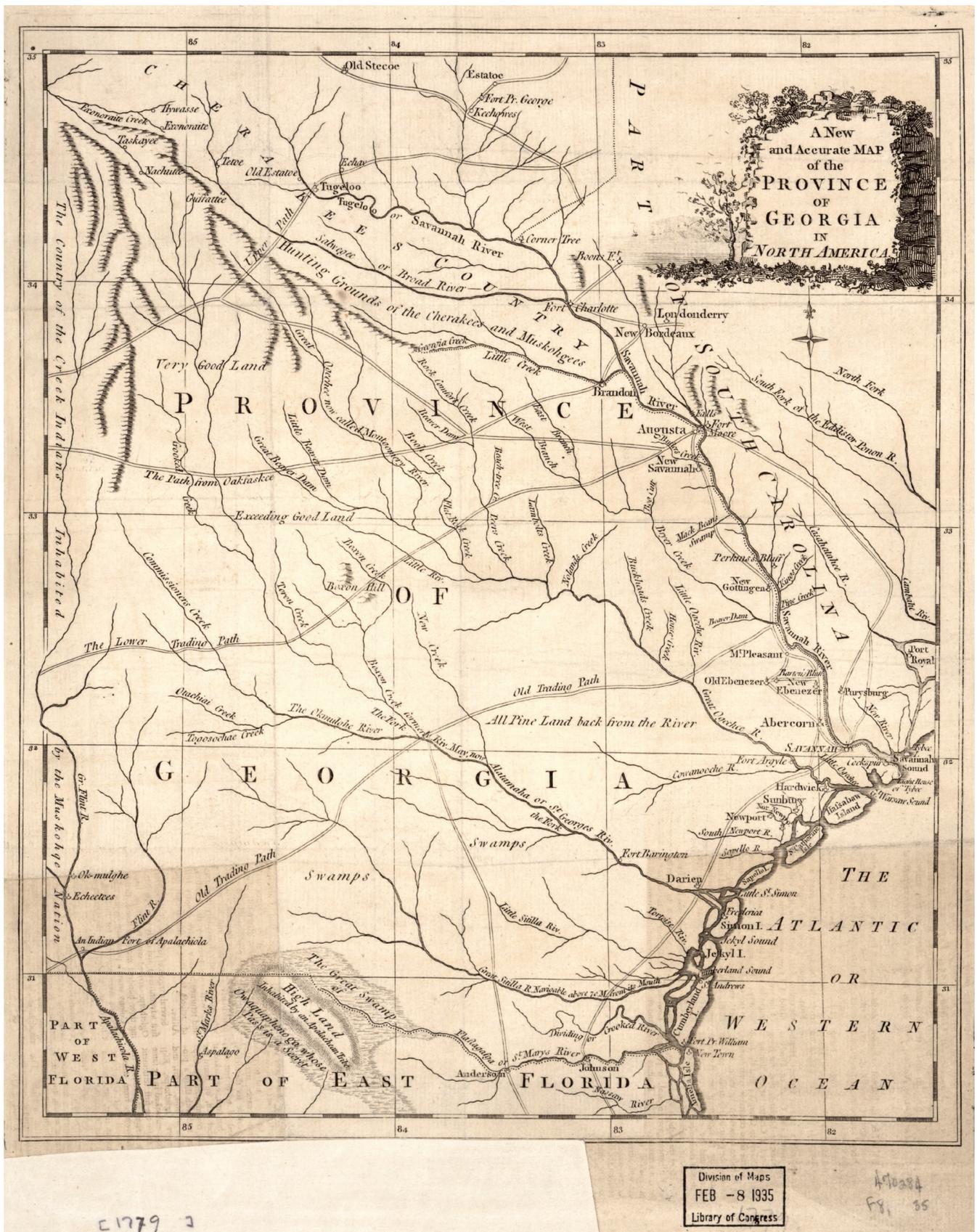
In 1767, influential landowner Lachlan McIntosh (1727-1806), John McIntosh Mohr's son, expanded Oglethorpe's town plan to accommodate Darien's growth. Lachlan McIntosh was born in Scotland and came with his father to Georgia in 1736. Following his father's capture during General Oglethorpe's 1740 attack on Fort Mose, he was raised and educated in Savannah, and then traveled to Charleston where he worked as a clerk to Henry Laurens, a prosperous planter, merchant, and politician. Lachlan McIntosh returned to Georgia in 1756 where he acquired land along the Altamaha and Cathead Creek, and became a prosperous planter himself (Sullivan 1992:38-39).

## LAND AND LABOR

About half of the Europeans who came to North America during the 17th and 18th centuries came as indentured servants. These servants were primarily Scotch-Irish, Irish, or Germans (Hofstadter n.d.). Indentured servitude provided labor for farmers, planters, and merchants who could not afford to pay employees. For poor European workers, it enabled them to come to America. Indentured servants worked for an employer for four to seven years in exchange for the payment of their ocean passage, food, clothing, shelter, and training. Servants did not earn money. They were not free to move where they wanted, to marry, or to work for themselves until they completed their indenture.

As the colony developed, the indentured servants allowed by the charter of Georgia were inadequate to perform all the tasks needed on large landholdings. Clearing and cultivating land required intensive physical labor by a great number of people. Indigo, rice, turpentine made from pine sap, and food crops were all labor-intensive products of coastal Georgia planters. Indigo was an early cash crop grown along the coast, valued for the dark blue dye it produced that was used in making fabric and clothing (Sullivan 1992:33).

Many large landowners, including those in Darien, became increasingly displeased with Georgia's anti-slavery stance. They earned the label "Clamorous Malcontents" because of their opposition to colonial policies and prohibitions on slave ownership and rum, and some returned to England (Sullivan 1992:33). Patrick Talifer, a leader of the Malcontents, published a pamphlet in 1740 entitled "A True and Historical Narrative of



The 1779 New and Accurate Map of the Province of Georgia in North America shows the colony at the time of the American Revolution. Darien was located on the road from Savannah to Florida as well as the Altamaha River, two important transportation routes of the era. (Map Courtesy of the Library of Congress Geography and Map Division)

the Colony of Georgia in America" that outlined their complaints. Increasingly, planters throughout Georgia demanded to be allowed to purchase laborers brought from Africa (Sullivan 1992:33).

However, some of the Scottish settlers of Darien dissented and signed a petition against slavery, an action that has been called the first recorded protest against slavery in America. Signed by John McIntosh Mohr and other prominent planters in Darien, including John McIntosh Lynvide, Ranald McDonald, John McKay, Alexander Clark, Archibald McLean, William Munro, and others, a portion of that petition read:

*Introduce slaves and we cannot but believe that they will one day return to be a scourge and a curse upon our children and children's children (Colonial Records of Georgia, as quoted in Sullivan 1992:33).*

Despite their petition, the Trustees allowed slavery in the Georgia colony in 1751. The Scottish planters in Darien adopted slavery, in spite of their initial opposition. Plantation slavery reshaped the population of the coast. By the end of the colonial period, enslaved Africans outnumbered whites almost two to one in the southern colonial tidewater region (Sullivan 1992:45).

## **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN GEORGIA**

Political, economic, and military disagreements between colonists and Great Britain increased in the 1760s and the Revolutionary War erupted in 1775. Like many in the 13 colonies, Georgians were of mixed opinions about the war. Pro-revolution forces in Darien organized in early 1775; they formed a committee and elected Lachlan McIntosh as its leader and representative. The Darien

Committee fully supported freedom from British rule. McIntosh rose through the military ranks, first as a colonel and later as general. In early 1776, he took control of Savannah from the British Royal Governor, James Wright. McIntosh commanded American troops in the Battle of the Rice Boats, the first battle of the Revolutionary War in Georgia, on March 2-3, 1776. He would advance to serve with General George Washington at the Battle of Valley Forge in 1778 (Sullivan 1992:57-59).

Coastal Georgia was an exposed target for British raids during the Revolutionary War. However, most area conflicts occurred at sea. American ship captains John Howell, John McCleure, Samuel Spencer, and others guarded the Georgia coastline and made it hard for the British to receive and send supplies (Sullivan 1992:62). Privateers in the area captured British vessels stocked with food and supplies. Like Great Britain, the colonial government in Georgia authorized privateers by issuing Letters of Marque, which were government licenses for a privateer to attack enemy ships. The practice of issuing Letters of Marque dates back to the Middle Ages (Frayler n.d.). These letters authorized privately owned, armed merchant ships to prey on enemy merchant ships carrying goods. Without the documentation, these same activities were considered acts of piracy and subject to prosecution (Frayler n.d.). This quote from a letter by Colonial Commander Colonel Samuel Elbert to General Howe reflects Darien's role in naval aspects of the revolution:

*Dear General ... I have the happiness to inform you, that, about ten o'clock this forenoon, the brigantine Hinchinbrooke, the sloop Rebecca, and a prize brig, all struck the British tyrant's colours, and surrendered to the American arms. Having received intelligence that the above*

vessels were at this place, I put about three hundred men, by detachment, from the troops under my command, at Fort Howe, on board the three galleys, --the Washington, Captain Hardy, the Lee, Captain Braddock, and the Bulloch, Captain Hatcher, --and a detachment of artillery, with two field-pieces, under Captain Young, I put on board a boat.

With this little army, we embarked at Darien, and last evening effected a landing at a bluff about a mile below the town, leaving Colonel White on board the Lee, Captain Melvin on board the Washington, and Lieutenant Petty on board the Bulloch. Immediately on landing, I dispatched Lieutenant-Colonel Ray and Major Roberts, with about one hundred men, who directly marched up to the town, and made prisoners three marines and two sailors belonging to the Hinchinbrooke. It being late, the galleys did not engage until this morning. You must imagine what my feelings were to see our three little men-of-war going on to the attack of these three large vessels, who have spread terror upon our coasts, and who were drawn up in order of battle; but the weight of our metal soon damped the courage of these heroes, who took to their boats, and as many as could abandoned the vessels, with everything on board, of which we immediately took possession. What is extraordinary, we have not one man hurt. Captain Ellis, of the Hinchinbrooke, and Captain M., of the Rebecca, made their escape. As soon as I see Colonel White, who has not yet come to us with his prizes, I shall consult with him. I send you this by Brigade-Major John Habersham, who will inform you of other particulars. (Colonel Samuel Elbert, L.C., quoted in Braddock 2004).



Planters bought quality furniture and decorated their homes with European items and furnishings as a way of displaying their wealth. These items, including glazed fireplace tile and brass furniture fixtures, were likely made in Europe. They were found during the excavation of Ceylon and Sidon Plantations by the Golden Isles Archaeological Society (GIAS) and Armstrong Atlantic University in 1993 and 1994. (Photographs by New South Associates, 2013)



Porcelain from China and Japan was the most sought-after and expensive pottery of the 18th and early 19th centuries. Serving tea in Oriental porcelain was one way that the upper classes displayed their wealth. These fragments of Chinese porcelain were excavated from Ceylon and Sidon Plantations by the GIAS. (Photographs by New South Associates, 2013)

## BEYOND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The American Revolution ended in 1783. The war damaged the economy and halted development in the Darien region. The British had burned agricultural fields and crops and many vessels were sunk or captured and



During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the ceramics industry in Great Britain made a series of improvements to earthenware pottery that made it more durable and appealing. One example was creamware, a refined earthenware invented by Josiah Wedgwood in 1763. Queen Elizabeth's use of creamware helped establish this industrial earthenware as a status symbol. Potters experimented with different ways of decorating white earthenwares, including handpainting, and later developing transfer printing. These decorations were all intended to look like Chinese porcelain. (Photographs by New South Associates, 2013)

their cargo lost. After the war, residents made efforts to resume their agricultural way of life and many planters recovered from the effects of the Revolutionary War. Some, however, never regained their former levels of agricultural productivity and profit. Loyalists suffered greatly, since the new American government confiscated their property and as a result, they had few opportunities to earn an income. Patriots often regarded the Loyalists as outcasts and many fled to the Bahamas, Canada, Florida, and Great Britain.

Following the Revolutionary War, the American government made large tracts of confiscated land available to Patriot soldiers, which further spurred plantation development. Many plantation owners cultivated rice, which grew very well in coastal Georgia. By 1795, long-staple cotton agriculture on Georgia's sea islands also began to flourish. Cultivation of rice and sea



Pearlware was a British ceramic made by adding cobalt to the creamware glaze. Shell edging was a popular decoration used on pearlware in the late 18th century. The rims of bowls, plates, and other forms were impressed with a mold and then tinted blue, green, black, red, or yellow. The style of embossing and tinting changed over time and is used by historical archaeologists to date sites. Planters and their families at Ceylon and Sidon Plantations dined from these shell edged pearlware dishes before they broke. All of these sherds were recovered from Ceylon and Sidon Plantations by the GIAS. (Photographs by New South Associates, 2013)

island cotton dominated most large plantations. Some plantation owners continued to try experimental crops such as oranges, corn, and sugar cane. Small farmsteads and small fields on plantations grew limited amounts of food crops.

In 1793, the Georgia legislature converted St. Andrews Parish into a new county. The legislature named it for the prominent McIntosh family. John Mohr McIntosh had actively participated in the founding, defense, and growth of the Darien area, while his son Lachlan McIntosh became a prominent planter and Revolutionary War officer, rising to the rank of general. The town of Darien saw growth in the early 1800s. New



Archaeologists recover artifacts from archaeological sites in a variety of contexts. The most significant contexts where artifacts are found are called “features” – features are locations where evidence of past landuse can be found in the ground. This view shows a privy shaft on Ceylon Plantation during excavation. The outline of the privy can be seen at the base of this unit, as dark soil intruding into the surrounding natural tan sand. When this privy was abandoned it was filled with artifacts and debris, including brick fragments that can be seen in the unit wall. This privy was excavated by GDOT in 2004. (Photograph by Jim Pomfret, 2004)

street names, sub-divided house lots, and new buildings appeared throughout the town. Religious congregations constructed three Presbyterian churches, the traditional denomination of the Scottish Highlanders (Sullivan 1992). Successful plantations on Butler, Champney, Generals, and Broughton islands, south of Darien, fed the town’s economy, as did plantations along Cathead Creek. Darien served as a commercial outlet for crops and a source of hardware and supplies for planters. The port of Darien enabled plantation owners to ship rice and cotton to Savannah, Charleston, and northern ports, and to receive goods from Europe and the northern U.S. with the money they made.

Planters displayed their wealth and social stature in their homes through the use of imported furniture, fixtures, and finishes, such as glazed fireplace tiles. Planters could also afford a variety of decorated dishes. Oriental porcelain was the most expensive and desirable ceramic of the time and planters display their social standing by serving guests tea from porcelain tea sets. They also purchased the latest British ceramics as a way of demonstrating their social standing and economic prowess. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, British potteries were fiercely competing with each other and constantly producing new and improved styles.

Some Darien area residents followed non-agricultural pursuits. Timber became increasingly important to the area economy after the Revolutionary War. Local sawmills turned trees into lumber. Animal labor, water, and later steam engines, were used to power the sawmills. By 1819, Darien boasted two steam-powered sawmills, one of which could saw 40,000 board feet of lumber daily (Sullivan 1992:146-147).

Man-made and natural catastrophes slowed Darien’s growth (Vanstory 1956). Destructive fires in 1812 and 1824 destroyed the town’s waterfront area. A hurricane in September 1824 damaged portions of the town. Darien recovered after each setback and by 1830 was exceeded only by Savannah and Charleston in the volume of cotton shipped (City of Darien 2008).

The financial Panic of 1837 led to a historically significant economic recession in America that lasted into the mid-1840s. This recession brought an end to the economic boom and some Darien businesses failed, including the Darien Bank. Despite this, timber, naval stores, cotton, and rice continued to produce revenue for McIntosh County until the Civil War (Sullivan 1992:148).

# V. Rice Plantations and their People



Cultural landscapes are locations where the interaction of humans with the natural environment creates a combined landscape, reflective of natural and human impact. The rice plantations of the Georgia and South Carolina coast represent one of the nation's largest and most important cultural landscapes. Rice agriculture harnessed the tidal flow of the region's rivers and streams to flood and drain fields that were carved out of marshes. The result was an agricultural empire that provided the best opportunity for individual profit that 18th-century America had to offer (Opala n.d.); thanks to coastal resources, rice agriculture was a thriving and lucrative business.

The tidal method of growing rice was highly productive. It took advantage of high tides pushing freshwater rivers upstream into rice canals to flood rice fields. Conversely, low tide could allow for the drainage of the fields through dry canals. Tidal rice cultivation was practical only along a few coastal rivers from North Carolina to northern Florida (NPS 2005). The greatest number of tidal rivers flowed through Georgia and South Carolina, and hence most of the rice plantations were found in those states.

Rice was grown in South Carolina as early as 1690 and the development of tidal rice culture fueled the economy, making it one of America's richest colonies by the 18th century (Pearson 1949; Stewart 1996). With the abolition of slavery in Georgia, the rice landscape extended south. As rice plantations grew rapidly in the tidewater region of coastal Georgia, plantation owners grew wealthy. Coastal South Carolina and Georgia produced more rice than any other region prior to the American Civil War and were known as the "Rice Kingdom of the

World" (Sullivan 2012:1). This "kingdom" functioned in many ways like a separate country, with planters, slaves, knowledge, innovations, and money moving frequently across state borders. Thus the history of rice agriculture in Georgia is inextricably linked to the history of rice in South Carolina.

Rice was one of the crops the British sought to establish in the Carolina colony; rice seed from Madagascar was shipped to Charleston as early as 1685. The first rice fields were inland swamps, where planters grew rice along swamp edges. As rice agriculture developed, planters realized that people from certain African countries knew how to plant, harvest, and process the crop. This realization made planters interested in purchasing slaves from traditional rice-growing regions of coastal West Africa. Slave traders often advertised slaves' place of origin on auction posters and in newspaper announcements to increase their sales. West Africans brought with them knowledge of tidal rice agriculture, which provided greater production and led



A number of tribes along Africa's west coast engaged in rice agriculture. That area became known as the "rice coast" in the slave trade. (Map by New South Associates, 2014)



A 1790 newspaper advertisement for the sale of enslaved Africans at Ashley Ferry in Charleston, South Carolina, noted that they had been captured from the “Windward & Rice Coast.” Planters sought Africans from the rice producing regions of West Africa because of their knowledge rice agriculture. African agricultural skills made the rice plantations of Georgia and South Carolina extremely profitable. (Image Courtesy of Library of Congress, Gladstone Collection of African American Photographs, 2013)

to the spread of rice plantations along the Georgia and South Carolina coast (Carney 2001).

The greatest number of enslaved Africans coming to the British colonies of Georgia and South Carolina came from the windward coast (Wood 1975; Littlefield 1981; Opala 1986; Carney 2001:39), which was also known as the “Rice Coast,” as it was the traditional rice-growing region of West Africa. The Rice Coast encompasses the modern countries of Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria. It was a region of diverse cultures, languages, and geography. During 1749-1787, about 60 percent of enslaved Africans brought to South Carolina and Georgia came from the rice-growing regions of West Africa (Pollitzer 1995:37-39).

Inland swamp rice agriculture used the edges of swamps as fields, which were naturally flooded. However, West Africans had used the tides to flood and drain rice

fields, and South Carolina and Georgia planters began to incorporate African knowledge to develop tidal rice agriculture, including how to grow rice, how to utilize the tides to flood and drain fields, how to harvest rice, and how to process rice once harvested. Without African knowledge, rice agriculture would not have been as successful in South Carolina and Georgia as it was.

## THE PLANTATIONS OF CATHEAD CREEK

The Cathead Creek region is part of the Altamaha River delta. The bottomlands here provided a perfect environment for rice cultivation. Rice plantations flourished, reaching their height in number, population, and production from the late 1790s up to the Civil War. There were seven plantations along Cathead Creek: the Oasis, Greenwood, Windy Hill, Hopestill, Cathead/Sidon, Ceylon, and Potosi plantations. Table 1 lists the Cathead Creek plantations, from northwest to southeast, along with their primary owners (Sullivan 2012).

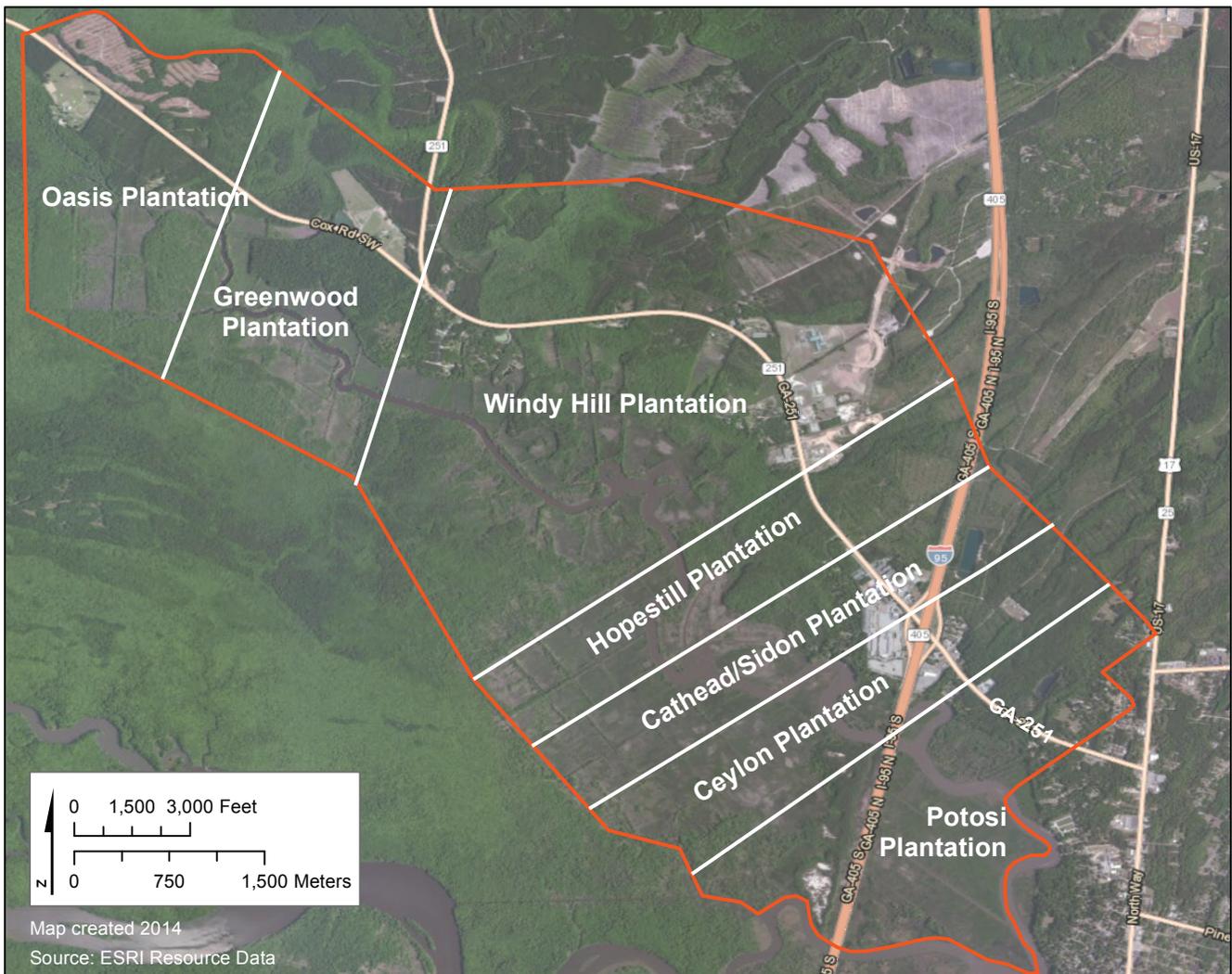
**Table 1. Plantations and Primary Owners at the Cathead Creek Historic District in the 18th and 19th Centuries**

Plantation	Owner(s) and Duration
Oasis	James Nephew, later William R. Gignilliat, later Thomas Mallard
Greenwood	Gignilliat family
Windy Hill	Gignilliat family
Hopestill	James Smith
Cathead/Sidon	Sir Patrick Houston*/James Smith
Ceylon	James Nephew, later the Morris family
Potosi	Major Jacob Wood, later Richard Morris

\*Alternative Spelling of Houston is Houstoun

The Cathead Creek plantations shared a number of physical characteristics. Each contained high ground along the eastern side of the creek and broad marshlands across the creek on the western shore; some also had narrower marshlands along the eastern bank. The creek was important for travel to and from Darien while the marshland was used for rice fields. Typically, the high ground bluff held the owner's house and overseer's house, if the plantation had an overseer, as well as slave dwellings, outbuildings, gardens, and fields for cotton and other crops. The planters' homes overlooked the marshland rice fields (Sullivan 2012). Slave villages

typically occupied locations on the edges of the main house area, sometimes near agricultural outbuildings. Slave houses were sometimes placed in parallel rows along a street, which provided views of the village and its inhabitants and which also presented an orderly landscape following the then-popular concepts of symmetry and structure in homes and their landscapes. Planters placed docks at the creek's edge, near high ground. The River Road ran beside Cathead Creek to Darien and then south of Darien along the Altamaha River, and connected the Cathead Creek plantations with the town and other locations.



Cathead Creek was home to seven rice plantations – Oasis, Greenwood, Windy Hill, Hopestill, Sidon, Ceylon, and Potosi. These were home to a handful of whites and hundreds of enslaved Africans. (Map by New South Associates, 2014)

Limited information is available about the individual Cathead Creek plantations. Some primary documents, such as ownership records in deeds, exist, but many of the plantations left few historic records of their existence other than deeds, some of which have been lost or destroyed over time. At various times, neighboring plantations were purchased and operated by the same owner. The following provides an overview of the plantations along Cathead Creek. It is followed by a review of Major Pierce Butler's Butler Island Plantation, located on the Altamaha River at its confluence with Cathead Creek, which is one of the most historically documented plantations in the region.

#### OASIS, GREENWOOD, AND WINDY HILL PLANTATIONS

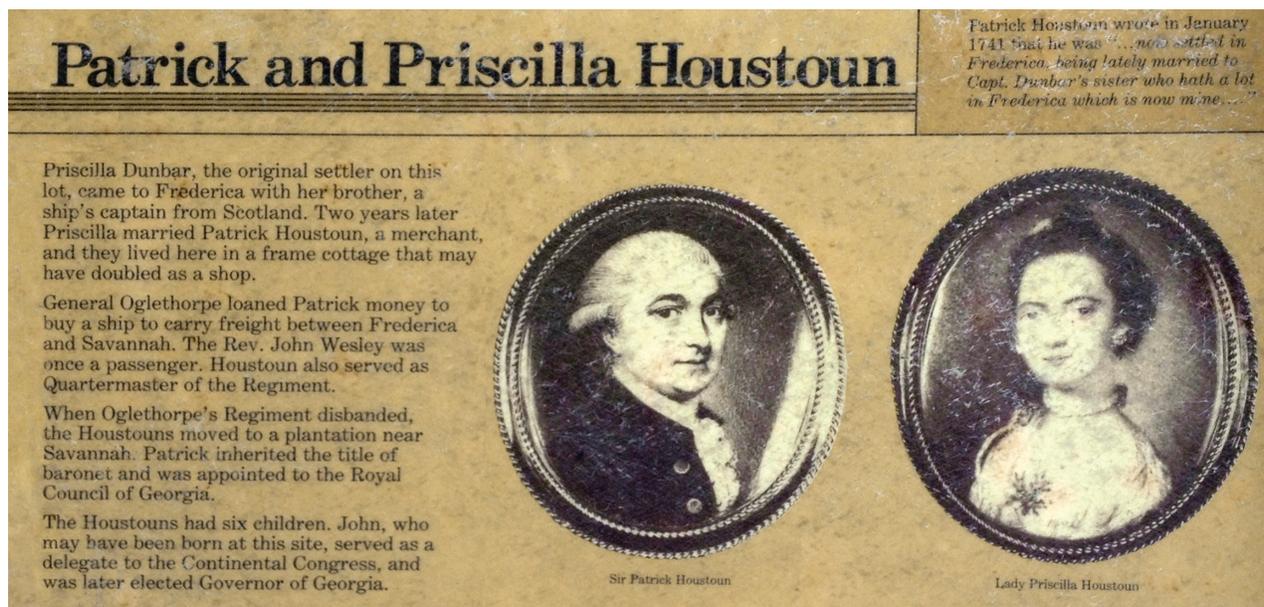
Oasis Plantation lay farthest from Darien along the creek. It contained 2,200 acres and sat adjacent to Greenwood Plantation. Oasis, originally owned by James Nephew, was later passed on to William Gignilliat (pronounced Jinlat) and then to Thomas Mallard (Sullivan 1992:209, 219-221, 223). Various members of the Gignilliat family

owned the Oasis and neighboring Greenwood and Windy Hill plantations. The Gignilliat family lived in McIntosh County as well as other coastal Georgia counties. The extended family, many who owned plantations, was well known for growing rice along Cathead Creek. Norman Page Gignilliat bought the 3,000-acre Windy Hill plantation in 1832 and became one of the wealthiest planters in the state of Georgia. Sullivan notes that he owned about 10,000 acres of plantation land in Georgia (Sullivan 1992:219).

#### HOPESTILL AND CATHEAD/SIDON PLANTATIONS

Planter James Smith owned Hopestill Plantation and expanded his plantation holdings with the purchase of Cathead Plantation to the south. Smith changed the plantation's name from Cathead to "Sidon" after his purchase (Weidlich 1996:23). Sidon Plantation occupied tracts that were part of a land grant awarded by the English crown to Sir Patrick Houston (1698-1762) (sometimes spelled Houstoun) in 1757 (Johnston 1950:129; Weidlich 1996). The land remained in the

In 1757, the English Crown granted Sir Patrick Houston land that would become Sidon Plantation. Following his death, his wife Priscilla gained possession of the plantation. Houston descendants owned the property until 1798. This interpretive panel at Fort Frederica includes images of Sir Patrick and Lady Priscilla Houston. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013; Images courtesy of the National Parks Service-Fort Frederica National Monument)



Houston family until Houston's death in 1796; just two years later, James Smith would acquire it. Sidon's namesake was a biblical city in the Middle East. A later deed transaction from 1857 described Sidon as:

*The property of said James Smith, situated on Cat Head Creek in said County containing three hundred acres more or less of Rice Tide Land, and Two Thousand acres more or less of Pine land, together with dwelling House, Negro houses, and all out-houses and also steam engine (McIntosh County Deed Book C:180).*

Historic records list some of the other buildings at Sidon. There was an overseer's house and slave homes, and the plantation also included a rice mill and a hospital. Smith's correspondence mentions a well and a cistern for collecting and holding rainwater (Weidlich 1996:26). Sidon's main house stood where the 20th-century Magnolia Bluffs Mall was constructed. The tabby ruins of the former slave quarters were visible about 300 yards south of this location until the late 20th century, when they were lost to development.

James Smith's daughter, Elizabeth West Smith, married James Dunwoody in 1811. The couple owned and managed Sidon and Hopestill plantations after James Smith moved to north Georgia in 1837 (Sullivan 1992:224, 279). At that time, the Sidon property consisted of about 300 acres of marshy rice fields and 2,000 acres of high ground. An inventory of slaves on Sidon Plantation dated 1855 lists 108 individuals (Matternes and Smith 2014:20). The African American Dunwoody Cemetery is known to have been associated with Sidon Plantation.

James Smith died in 1856 and his plantation was sold at public auction. Mary E. Dunwoody, James Smith's granddaughter, purchased Sidon in 1857 (Matternes

and Smith 2014:19). The plantation sold again several times thereafter. Deed records indicate that the property was eventually sold to David Sinclair in 1885. Shortly after Sinclair bought Sidon, he decided to abandon rice agriculture and leased the parcels of pineland to turpentiners (McIntosh County Deed Book 1863:C:478).

#### CEYLON PLANTATION

Ceylon Plantation takes the name from the exotic Kingdom of Ceylon, where rice and tea plantations dominated the landscape. The Ceylon Plantation and cemetery lay on property granted to Lieutenant James Nephew for his military service during the Revolutionary War (Bishop 2008). Nephew and his wife, Mary Gignilliat, became prominent planters. They owned several plantations in South Georgia including Manchester, Northampton, South Hampton, Oasis, and Ceylon (Sullivan 1992:209). Nephew, whose plantations grew a number of crops, cultivated rice on Ceylon Plantation. The Nephews' daughter, Catherine, married Barrington King in 1822. They lived at Ceylon Plantation thereafter while managing it (Gladstone 2000).

Samuel Bond later purchased Ceylon. He then sold the property in the early 1850s to Charles M. Morris (Sullivan 1992:225). In 1859, 120 enslaved African Americans lived and worked at Ceylon Plantation (Matternes and Windham 2014). Following the Civil War, Charles turned day-to-day operations at Ceylon over to his brother Richard Morris, and the focus of the plantation shifted to less labor-intensive revenue sources such as turpentine and timber harvesting. Richard Morris was one McIntosh County's prominent plantation owners and the owner of a large number of slaves (Sullivan 1992:226). Charles Morris died sometime during the latter part of the 19th century and his wife, Clementine H. Morris, presumably inherited

the property (Matternes and Windham 2014). A 1905 sketch map shows the location of the Ceylon Home Place.

### POTOSI PLANTATION

Major Jacob Wood, a Revolutionary War veteran, started Potosi Plantation. He located it at the southern end of Cathead Creek, immediately west of Darien's town limits. Wood began planting rice at Potosi soon after 1800. He adapted small portions of those lands for cultivating sugar cane and cotton. Wood represented McIntosh County in the Georgia Senate from 1830-35 (Sullivan 1992:138).

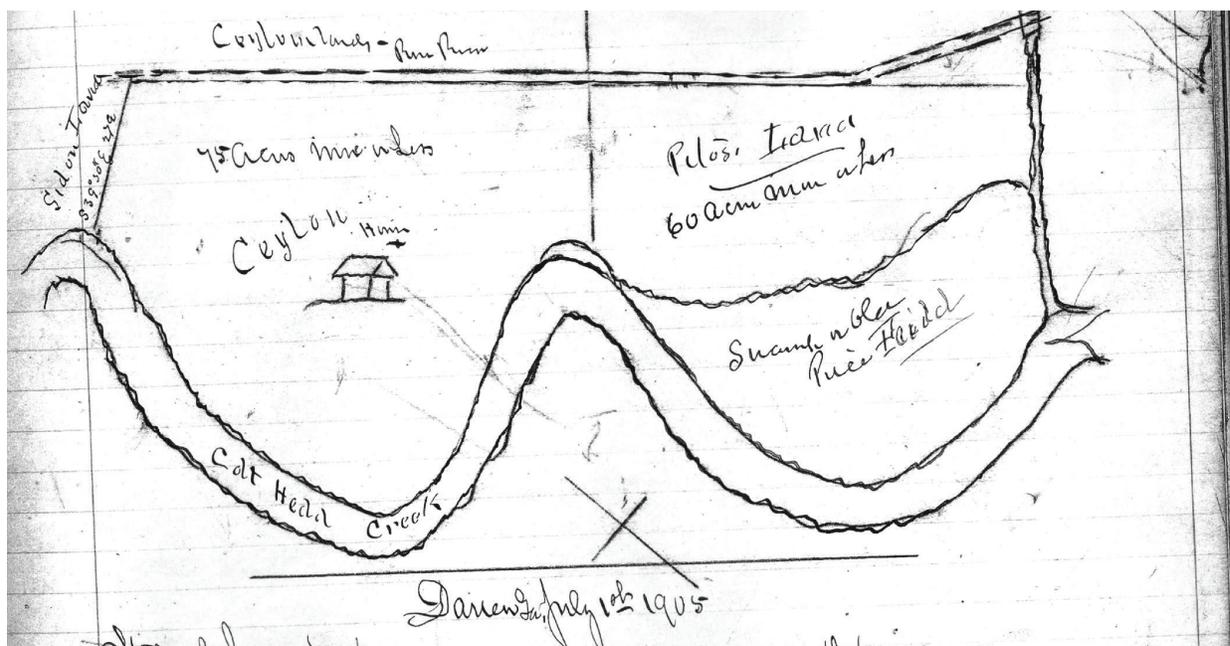
### BUTLER ISLAND PLANTATION

Perhaps the most successful and best-known example of a plantation in the area is Butler Island Plantation. It was comprised of 1,500 acres on Butler and Generals Island opposite Darien. Prominent members of the family included the patriarch, Major Pierce Butler (1744-1822); his grandson Pierce Mease Butler (1806-

1867); Pierce Mease Butler's wife, Frances Anne (Fanny) Kemble (1809-1893); and his great-granddaughter, Frances Kemble Butler Leigh (1838-1910). Fanny Kemble was a British actress and author of the book *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839* (Kemble 1863; Bell 1987), which was an indictment of slavery and the treatment of African Americans on the plantation that was cited by anti-slavery and abolitionist forces. Her daughter Frances Kemble Butler Leigh, provided her own journal of life on the plantation in the years following the Civil War (Leigh 1883).

Major Pierce Butler amassed a fortune from his plantations and passed fortune and plantations on to his heirs. Five generations of the Butlers resided in Georgia and the name Pierce was used in each generation; Malcolm Bell (1987) provided a Butler family tree, on which the name Pierce Butler appears eight times, as some generations of the family had more than one "Pierce."

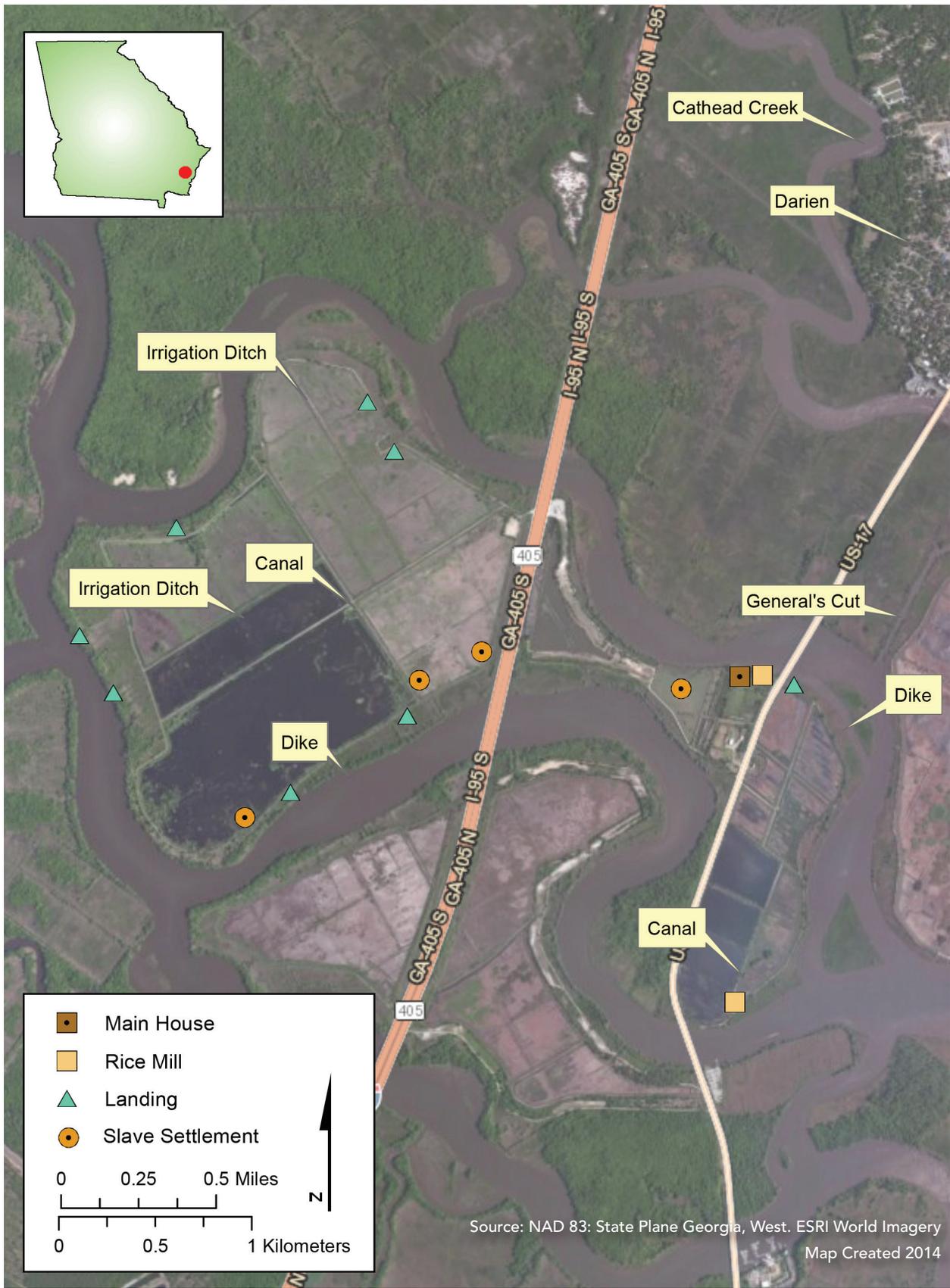
This 1905 sketch plat map in the McIntosh County Courthouse (MCC Lease Book 1902 A:75) shows Cathead Creek and the location of Ceylon Plantation's homeplace. Note that swamp lands on neighboring Potosi Plantation are still labeled as Rice Fields.





The Butler Plantation on Butler Island supported two rice mills: one that was steam powered and a second that was powered by the tides. The taller smoke stack shown with the Butler Plantation main house in the rear was from the steam-powered mill, while the smaller structure is gate for the tidal powered mill that allowed tidal flow through a turbine wheel that powered the mill. Butler Plantation slaves were responsible for the construction and operation of these mills. (Photographs by Irene M. Fleck, 2014 with permission)





The features of the Butler Plantation on Butler Island, as mapped by Malcolm Bell (1987), are shown on this aerial view of Butler Island, General's Island, Darien, and Cathead Creek. Fanny Kemble referred to the slave settlements and other landscape features of the plantation in her journal. (Map by New South Associates, 2014)

Major Pierce Butler belonged to a group of South Carolina planters who saw the potential for rice agriculture in the Altamaha River delta of coastal Georgia. His father, Sir Richard Butler, had purchased for him a commission as Major in the British army and Major Butler married Martha Middleton of Charleston, the daughter of a wealthy planter (Bell 1987:17-20). Enjoying his life as planter, and perhaps foreseeing future conflict with Great Britain, Major Butler sold his military commission and used the money gained to purchase a 1,700-acre plantation on St. Simons Island known as Hampton Point (Bell 1987:24). Major Butler served on the colonies' side during the American Revolution (Bell 1987:26).

After the war, Major Butler served multiple roles. A South Carolina delegate to the Continental Congress during the Revolutionary War, he was chosen as South Carolina Senator to the U.S. Congress from 1789 to 1819 (Bell 1987:82). During this time, he also developed and expanded his plantation holdings on the Altamaha. Eventually, Major Butler would own Hampton Point Plantation and Little St. Simons Island, Generals Island, and Butler Island and Butler Island Plantation (Bell 1987:108-109). Major Butler owned marshland rice tracts where Cathead Creek enters the Darien River.

When Major Pierce Butler died in 1822, the majority of his estate went to his daughter Frances and two grandsons John Mease (1806-1847) and Pierce Mease (1810-1867). To these grandsons, Major Butler left his plantations and property, including slaves, with the stipulation that as a condition of their inheritance, the boys change their last names to Butler. This they both did (Bell 1987:231-232).

Neither Pierce Mease Butler nor John Mease Butler lived in Georgia, and it was customary for one or the other to make occasional trips to Georgia to look after the

plantation business. In 1838, the Butler Island Plantation overseer, Roswell King, left, and Pierce Mease Butler traveled to Georgia from his home in Philadelphia to supervise the plantation while seeking a new overseer. He brought with him his wife Fanny Kemble, their two young daughters, and nursemaid. Arriving on Butler Island by boat from Darien on December 30, 1838, Kemble wrote, "I propose, while I reside here, keeping a sort of journal..." (Kemble 1863:xxxvi). Kemble kept a journal in the winter and spring of 1838-1839 during a stay at the plantation (Kemble 1863; Bell 1987). Her written words provide a first person account of what she saw at the Butler Island Plantation and provide a look at how rice plantations were organized and operated.

Fanny Kemble was an English actress with little knowledge of the South when she married Pierce Mease Butler. As the wife of a planter, Fanny Kemble enjoyed complete access to plantation affairs. She saw for herself the conditions of the people enslaved at Butler Island. Kemble had personal interactions with enslaved African American men, women, and children, and her observations are unique for the time. She fought often with her husband Pierce Mease Butler over harsh treatment of slaves. This contributed to the couple's increasing problems, resulting in a separation in 1845 and a divorce in 1849 (Bell 1987:306-308).

Kemble kept her diary private for over 20 years. During the Civil War, when her diary was about to be published, she introduced the volume with this statement:

*The slaves in whom I then had an unfortunate interest were sold some years ago. The islands themselves are at present in the power of the Northern troops. The record contained in the following pages is a picture of conditions of human existence, which I hope and believe, have passed away (Frances Kemble 1863, from the book's Preface).*

From Kemble's descriptions, Bell (1987:118-119) illustrated how the Butler Island Plantation was laid out. Butler Island was bordered by the Altamaha River, the Butler River (which separated it from General's Island, which was also part of the Butler plantation), and the Champney River. The main house settlement was found on Butlers Island, directly opposite Darien. The "General's Cut," a canal through General's Island, provided a direct water route from the main house complex to Darien. The main house was located on high ground adjacent to a landing where boats would dock. A series of support structures and agricultural outbuildings flanked the main house and included a steam-powered rice mill. A slave village, known as Slave Settlement No. 1 lay next to the main house.

Most of the remainder of the island, as well as much of General's Island, was divided into rice fields. Dikes,

Many less-wealthy residents of McIntosh County lived in modest cabins such as this 1850s log cabin in Ridgeville, about eight miles northeast of Darien. The chimney was made of sticks covered in mud, because brick and stone were too expensive to import from where they were made or quarried. (Image Courtesy of the Library of Congress, HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Call Number GH-283, 2013)

which were earthen embankments, surrounded the rice fields on the river's edge. Canals with floodgates were used to flood and drain the island's interior while smaller irrigation ditches divided the fields themselves. There were three other slave villages on Butler Island. Slave Settlements No. 2, No. 3, and No. 4 were dispersed along the Champney River and the enslaved African Americans living in each would have worked the fields around them. There was a boat landing at Slave Settlement No. 4, the furthest from the main house. There was also a second rice mill, powered by the tides, where the Champney River and Altamaha River merged (see Bell 1987:118-119).

## PLANTERS, FARMERS, OVERSEERS, DRIVERS, AND SLAVES

### PLANTERS AND FARMERS

In the 19th century, most Georgians were farmers who made their living through agriculture. A few made their living as planters, and while they lived off the land like



farmers did, planters lived a different life. For example, farmers normally lived on their property all the time. Planters of coastal Georgia were usually absentee owners. They could visit the plantation when necessary and avoid it during summer and fall when outbreaks of disease prevailed in the hot, humid weather. Farmers often had smaller tracts of land in one area. Planters owned more land, often on multiple tracts, and some owned multiple plantations. Farmers were more likely to grow an assortment of food and cash crops. Planters generally devoted most of their land to cash crops such as rice and cotton. Farmers did most of the work in their fields and on their farms by themselves with the help of their family. Planters owned African American slaves who labored in the plantation fields, supervised by an overseer and sometimes slave drivers, rather than supervising the plantations themselves. Finally, plantations generated significant income, while farms typically did not.

As a result, farmers fell lower on the economic scale and held a lower social status than planters. Along the coast, planters bought up lands like those on Cathead Creek that were suited for plantation agriculture, while farmers lived further away from the water, often in smaller or more rustic homes. The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) photographed an 1850s log cabin possibly built by a German settler eight miles northeast of Darien area. This photograph shows that the building had a wood shingle roof, chimneys built of mud-and-stick (these were log chimneys covered in clay), and wooden shutters. A passage connected the detached kitchen at the back of the house. This simple cabin was typical of the residences of farmers and others

with less wealth than planters enjoyed. In contrast, plantation homes of the era where frequently two stories in height, had bedrooms and family space on the upper floor, contained central hallways so that visitors would not have access to private space once they were inside the house, and were formally designed and furnished. Planters built houses that expressed where they stood on the economic landscape. Farmers built houses so they had a place to rest after a hard day's work.

The Cathead Creek planters lived in Savannah or other coastal cities for most of each year. During the hot and deadly summer months, the planters often traveled further inland (Genovese 1976). Whether present or absent, a planter needed to make and spend money to keep the plantation operating. Daily operations on the plantations usually came under control of a white overseer. Because most of the owners did not live on their rice plantations, they depended on overseers to manage them. On larger plantations, overseers in turn supervised the work of drivers, who were African American slaves responsible for the supervision of teams or gangs of workers. In a letter describing the organization of his plantation on St. Sullivan's island, Major Pierce Butler wrote, "I ordered to Hampton about 115 workers... These I wish divided into 3 or 4 distinct gangs, with a driver to each, to work separately" (Bell 1987:110; Pollitzer 1995).

#### OVERSEERS AND DRIVERS

Overseers carried out all of the organizational tasks and management of the plantations to enable continued production during the months when the planter was absent. Overseers were usually white men, although in a few cases a skilled African American slave assumed these



African American drivers were responsible for the supervision of other enslaved African Americans on the plantations. A traveler made this drawing in 1829. (Lizers and Hall 1830)

duties. Overseers arose early with the slaves, assigned work tasks, maintained the schedule for planting and harvesting the crops, and supervised the work of the slaves. They inspected the slave dwellings and other agricultural buildings and delegated responsibility for repairs. They ordered and maintained the food supplies for the slaves. They prepared reports for the planter on the operations and production of the plantation and assisted the planters in the sale of the crop. During the winter, the overseer made certain that necessary repairs were made to buildings and fields and, when requested, oversaw the clearing of new fields. Overseers set daily quotas for how much work was to be accomplished and made provisions to ensure that these goals were reached. Lashings or beatings were doled out to those who did not work at the required pace. An overseer's job also included getting treatment for sick slaves (Otto and Burns 1983:194–196). Overseers lived in houses on the

plantations during their employment. During the 1840s and 1850s, the overseers at rice and cotton plantations on St. Simons Island received yearly salaries ranging from \$200 to \$400 (Otto and Burns 1983:194).

On larger plantations, it was common that African American drivers oversaw the work of slave gangs. Slaves would be divided into different teams or gangs that would work in different fields with each gang under the direction of a driver who reported to the overseer or owner. Slave drivers understood the day-to-day task work and would give out orders and oversee completion of the work. Interestingly, many planters relied on African American slave drivers more than they might admit at a time when African American capabilities were not readily acknowledged by whites (Genovese 1976:366). Because of their size, many coastal Georgia rice plantations, including those along Cathead Creek,

would often have one or more drivers who supervised work in different fields (Buddy Sullivan, 2012, personal communication). An image made by an 1829 traveler depicts a well-dressed African American driver. The individual on the left of this image was a driver on a South Carolina plantation. The traveler said of the driver, "He was a man of information, and really very well bred – though he could neither read nor write. I did not suppose it possible that a negro in the situation of a slave-driver, could be so much like a gentleman – but so it was" (Hall 1829). He described the figure on the right side of the drawing as a native African captured at the age of 12 who was now part of a Georgia plantation (Hall 1829).

## SLAVES

By the early 1800s, slavery was a common practice in the South. African American slaves who were brought to the plantations on Cathead Creek came from other plantations in South Carolina, the Mid-Atlantic region, and the Caribbean, as well as directly from Africa. African Americans were enslaved on small farms, large plantations, in cities, in homes, and in industry and transportation. Slaves were considered property and the law maintained this status. The institution of slavery was economically critical to southern planters. An account from South Carolina in the early 1700s estimated that each African slave produced rice worth \$975, at a time when an adult could be purchased for \$150. Rice planters used their profits to buy additional slaves and to buy more plantation land. As one individual noted, "Rice is raised so as to buy more Negroes, and Negroes are bought so as to get more rice" (West n.d.).

This resulted in the staggering growth of the African American population in America in the decades before the Civil War. Historian Eugene Genovese (1976:5) estimated that there were 400,000 enslaved people in colonial America, but by 1860, this number increased to more than 4,000,000 individuals. The slave populations on the Cathead Creek plantations also grew during this period, although the size of the slave population varied from plantation to plantation based on the size and economic success of each. Slave ownership for Cathead Creek planters in 1860 ranged from less than 10 to as many as more than 200 slaves on a plantation (Sullivan 2012; Matternes and Smith 2014; Matternes and Windham 2014).

Many slaves in the South lived and worked on cotton, corn, rice, sugarcane, and tobacco plantations. Besides planting and harvesting, there were many other tasks to complete on the plantations such as clearing new land, digging ditches, cutting and hauling wood, raising livestock and making repairs to buildings and equipment.

During the growing season slaves moved through the rice fields in a line. They sang as they hoed, which kept them in unison across the fields. Following the harvest, women pounded the rice to remove the husks. They used large wooden mortars and pestles identical to those in West Africa. They fanned the rice in round, shallow baskets made of marsh grasses to separate the grain from the chaff (National Park Service [NPS] 2005; Pollitzer 1995; Stewart 1996). These African customs and technologies appear throughout the rice plantations of Cathead Creek in the cultural landscapes they left behind.

Rice plantations were different from cotton or tobacco plantations because of the way rice was grown along the coast. Agricultural skills were not the only abilities planters needed in their slaves to keep these plantations working smoothly. Many enslaved men and women had been skilled artisans in Africa. They brought these valuable skills with them to America. African women often had knowledge of herbal cures, nursing the sick, and midwifery, helping women in childbirth. Depending on their training, many slaves worked in specialty jobs as mechanics, blacksmiths, carpenters, and in other skilled trades. These skills contributed to the success of the plantation and the wealth of the planter (NPS 2005).

*...the slaves on this plantation are divided into field hands and mechanics or artisans. There are here a gang (for that is the honorable term) of coopers, of blacksmiths, of bricklayers, of carpenters -- all well acquainted with their peculiar trades. The latter constructed the washhand stands, clothes presses, sofas, tables, etc., with which our house is furnished, and they are very neat pieces of workmanship (Frances Kemble 1863).*

Plantation owners and overseers often knew the value, skills, and learning abilities of the people they owned. Slave owners took advantage of those skills whenever possible. Many plantation owners would send some of their workers to other plantations to learn desired skills. A particular owner, for example, might have a slave who knew how to operate steam machinery. A neighboring plantation owner might send his slaves over and pay to have his workers trained (Sullivan 2012).

Some slaves worked as household butlers, maids, and cooks for the families of the master or overseer. These house servants did not work the fields. They

were, however, always visible and available for tasks appointed by their masters and mistresses. Since they were always working and living in and around the main residence, house servants had far less privacy than those who worked in the fields.

*Our servants -- those who have been selected to wait on the house -- consist of a man, who is quite a tolerable cook (I believe this is a natural gift with them, as with Frenchmen); a dairywoman who churns for us; a laundrywoman; her daughter, our housemaid, the aforesaid May, and two young lads of fifteen to twenty, who wait upon us in the capacity of footmen (Frances Kemble 1863).*

*Returning to the house, I passed up the "street." It was between eleven o'clock and noon, and the people were taking their first meal of the day.... how do you think Berkshire [Great Britain] county farmers would relish laboring hard all day upon two meals of Indian corn or hominy? Such is the regulation on this plantation, however, and I beg you to bear in mind that the Negroes on Mr. [Butler's] estate are generally considered well off (Frances Kemble in Smith 1984:99).*

In addition to their own daily assigned tasks, slaves also had to care for their own families. They made furnishings, baskets, and pottery for use in their homes. For women, family care included cooking and childcare, as well as spinning, weaving, and sewing. Males and females tried to augment their family's sparse diet when possible. This included growing food crops in a garden, fishing, collecting shellfish, and trapping animals.

## HOW DID A RICE PLANTATION OPERATE?

Regardless of location, rice plantations shared common characteristics. This included physical access to the fields, housing, arrangement of buildings, work schedules, and

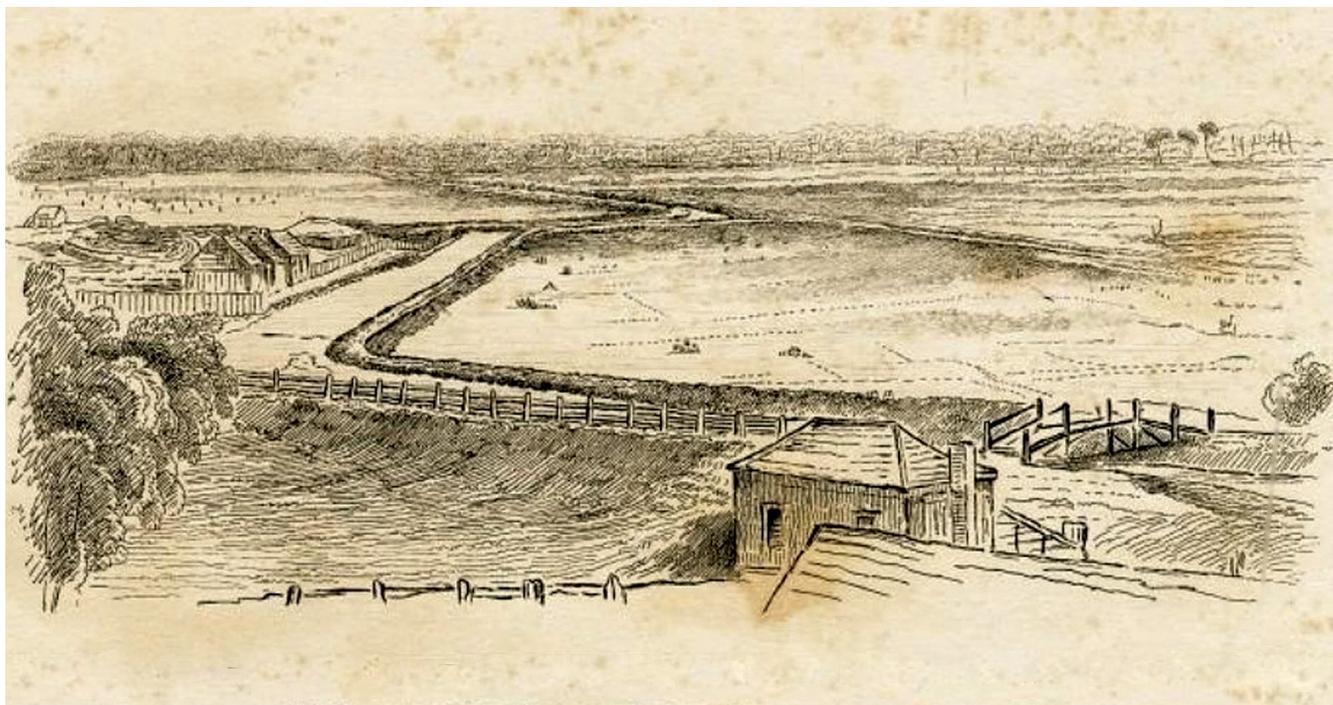
the range of tasks involved in growing rice. An 1829 sketch made by Basil Hall (1788-1844) illustrates part of the Hopeton Plantation near Darien. Hall was a British naval officer who traveled through North America and published a book with sketches from his travels. Note the levees, roads, and structures in his drawing. Rice fields were made in the marsh along rivers and streams while the plantation main house and other buildings were placed on the high ground.

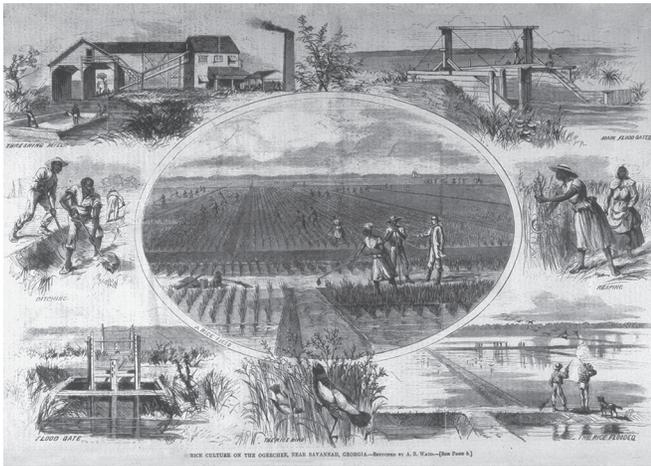
### PREPARATION AND PLANTING

Tidal rice plantations required large sums of money for infrastructure and a great deal of slave labor to reshape the land (Stewart 1996). Tasks associated with rice cultivation were often gender specific. Tasks performed by males included digging ditches, building embankments and levees, and making and repairing the trunks. The men also operated the rice mill machinery and the flatboats used to transport the harvested rice back to the plantation complex.

Rice agricultural skills such as planting, hoeing, weeding, harvesting and processing rice came directly from African women. Rice cultivation was a female domain in the West African rice-producing countries (Carney 2001:107-108). The development of rice agriculture led to the establishment of large numbers of rice plantations with labor forces dominated by enslaved African females. Historians stress that, "...without African women and their daughters, the phenomenal explosion of the... rice-based economy arguably, would not have occurred" (NPS 2013). Rice export statistics support this argument. Export of rice from the tidewater area of Georgia and the Carolinas skyrocketed during the colonial period. Planters exported 17 million pounds of rice in 1730 contrasted with 66 million pounds in 1774 (NPS 2013). This meant an increase in difficult and sometimes debilitating manual labor for women and others involved in rice agriculture.

An 1829 sketch of Hopeton Plantation (Lizers and Hall 1830), near Darien, shows a large earthen levee extending into the marsh, with agricultural buildings on the higher ground. Levees allowed planters to flood rice fields at high tide or drain rice fields at low tides through gates.





This illustration from *Harper's Weekly Magazine* (1867) shows a Georgia rice plantation on the Ogeechee River. Rice plantations required the clearing of trees and vegetation from marshland and the construction of dikes, levees, and gates.

Initially, laborers cleared riverside swamps of timber and undergrowth. They constructed earthen levees and a complicated system of dams, dikes, floodgates, ditches, and drains. This system enabled workers to harness the rise and fall of water in tidal rivers to irrigate fields throughout the growing season. Controlled irrigation reduced weeds and pests, while allowing the crop to flourish. At high tide, water entered fields through wooden gates known as "trunks." This name may have come from West Africa where farmers used hollowed tree trunks for this function (Carney 2001:94-97).

Work occurred year-round and the entire water system of a rice plantation required routine maintenance by skilled workers (Pearson 1949; Smith 1984). The workload of rice cultivation was heaviest from spring through fall each year, with the planting staggered through the spring. The description of a rice plantation by archaeologist Leland Ferguson underscores the extensive amount of physical labor demanded of the enslaved:

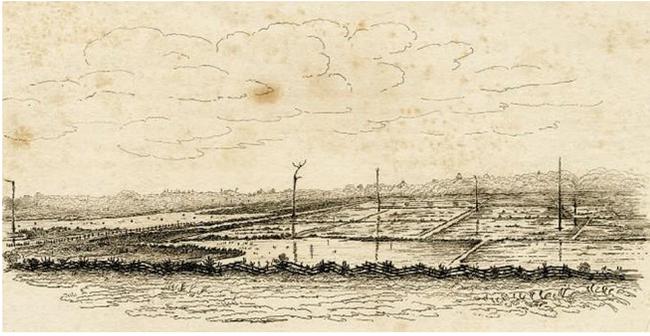
*These fields are surrounded by more than a mile of earthen dikes or 'banks' ... these banks ... were taller than a person and up to 15 feet wide. By [1800], rice banks on the 12½*

*mile stretch of the East Branch of the Cooper River measured more than 55 miles long and contained more than 6.4 million feet of earth ... This means that ... working in the water and muck with no more than shovels, hoes, and baskets ... by 1850 Carolina slaves ... on [tidal] plantations like Middleburg throughout the rice growing district had built a system of banks and canals ... nearly three times the volume of Cheops, the world's largest pyramid (Ferguson 1992:vii).*

While an intricate network, rice cultivation did not require a large amount of land. Generally, an average rice plantation contained 200-500 cultivated acres at any



Rice hoes and a cotton hoe like these recovered from archaeological excavations at Ceylon and Sidon Plantations were common tools on plantations. Note how the blade of the one hoe has been repaired with a new blade bolted on after the old one had worn out. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)



Rice gates allowed water to flow into the fields when the gates were open at high tide. The gates kept the water in the fields when closed. Finally, when the gates were open at low tide, they allowed the fields to flood. (1888 Engraving by Basil Hall of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 2013)

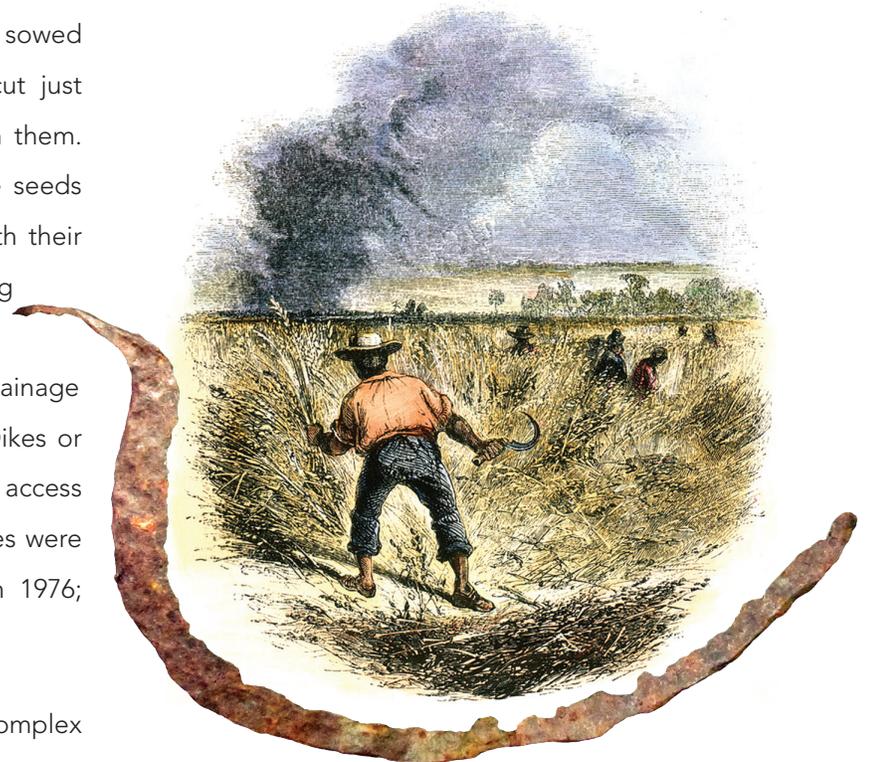
one season. Workers planted 30 or 40 acres every week so that the harvest times would vary depending on when a field was planted, rather than having to harvest the entire crop all at once (Sullivan 2012). Plans divided the acres into relatively square plots for cultivation. Workers established 10-20 acre plots along rivers or creeks. They divided these areas into half-acre plots. Each plot contained 100-125 furrows where women sowed the seeds (Smith 1985:48-49). Furrows were cut just wide enough to allow workers access between them. Prior to sowing, women first prepared the rice seeds for planting by pressing them into wet clay with their feet. The clay coating kept the seeds from floating out of the trenches when workers flooded the fields. Each field contained a grid of internal drainage ditches to allow the tidal exchange of water. Dikes or levees separated the fields and provided foot access for workers tending the fields. The largest levees were those along the riverbanks and creeks (Smith 1976; Sullivan 2008).

The grid-like layout of a rice plantation was a complex hydraulic system that allowed water to move from one area to another (Sullivan 2012). Tide gates or trunks were built at intervals in the river levee to allow the transfer of fresh water to and from the fields to irrigate the rice crop.

Typically, there were four flooding and four draining episodes during the early April to early September growing season. The first flooding occurred immediately after sowing the seeds. After the rice sprouted, workers alternately flooded and drained the fields. Proper irrigation required "ditching" by the workers to prevent the buildup of silt from the flooding and drainage of the rice fields. While flooding minimized weed growth, hoeing was required constantly. On average, each slave hoed one half-acre field plot per day (Smith 1976, 1985).

### HARVESTING

Rice harvesting occurred in the fall and early winter. During planting and harvest times, workers worked from sun up to sun down. Harvesting began with the threshing, or cutting, of the rice after draining the fields. Workers took sharp, curved blades called rice hooks or



This 1859 painting shows the harvesting of rice using a rice hook, similar to this rice hook excavated from a Cathead Creek plantation. (Painting courtesy of the Granger Collection, 2014; Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

reap hooks, and cut off the rice plant near the ground. They stacked the rice stalks, tied them into bundles, and left them on the ground until they harvested an entire square or field. At that time, they carried the bundles to flat boats, which brought the rice to the plantation for drying and processing.

Rice processing consisted of several steps. First, workers removed the grain from the shaft by using one of two methods. Threshing included beating the shafts with a stick or having animals or people trample them. A common threshing method required women to pound the rice using wooden mortars and pestles, following the African technique. Pounding the rice was a highly skilled and grueling job. An experienced woman could pound rice in such a way as to remove the husk but not break the grains. Plantation owners tried using African men to pound rice, in order to increase production. They did so with poorer results, decreasing the quality of the rice through breakage, and women were thus used for this task. Planters expected slave women on rice plantations to process rice on a mass-production level. On low country plantations, this meant beating 44 pounds of rice daily. As a result, a skilled female slave would raise and lower a 7-10-pound pestle repeatedly for five hours a day (NPS 2013). This intensive level of labor occurred in addition to other work required of the women during the remainder of the day. The other method was mechanical hulling or "milling," where slaves or animals turned rotary stones to remove the grain. Later, water-powered mills hulled

rice. In time, rice hulling used steam engines to power the stones (Vlach 1993:126-127).

The second step of rice processing consisted of separating the rice kernels from their inedible covering, the chaff. Workers could do this by placing the



African American women removed the husk from rice seeds by pounding rice with a mortar and pestle. Women were preferred for this task as they could remove the husk without damaging the rice seed. (1900 Photograph Courtesy of Georgia Department of Archives and History)

material in hand-woven winnowing baskets. They would toss the rice into the air, catching the grain in the basket and allowing the breeze to blow away the chaff. Winnowing houses made this process more efficient. A winnowing house consisted of a shed sitting on very tall posts. Workers dropped the hulled rice through a large hole in the floor, where the chaff blew away in the wind and the grain fell to the ground. After processing, the rice was prepared for shipment out of Darien to the markets in Savannah and Charleston (Smith 1985:54-55).

Following the harvest, slaves prepared the fields for spring planting by burning or tilling the remaining rice stalks. Plowing began in January and continued into February. Planting started in late March and early April when the planting cycle began again (Smith 1985:52-57).

## THE PLANTATION LANDSCAPE

Numerous plantation owners were aware of the local environment and appreciated the shade cover provided by live oaks. Many kept large trees on the upland part of the plantation to provide shade for the family, and more



Coastal plantations grew subsistence crops to help feed the enslaved community. Slaves also maintained their own small gardens where they grew vegetables and fruit to supplement their diet. This 1862 image shows African Americans harvesting sweet potatoes. (Courtesy of Library of Congress, Gladstone Collection of African American Photographs, 2013)

importantly, for the workers. Tree lines also improved the appearance of the plantations. Many owners had slaves plant rows of oaks on the drives from River Road that ran along the Altamaha and Cathead Creek to their plantation complexes. These oak-lined drives signified the presence, age, and importance of each plantation. Greenwood, as well as Sidon and some of the other plantations, would have had oak-lined drives (Sullivan 2012).

In addition to rice fields, each plantation contained large gardens with substantial crops of vegetables. This included sweet potatoes, peas, corn, and other vegetables. Some of the plantations grew fruit including oranges, grapefruit, and melons, and some grew sugarcane. Such produce was strictly for the use of the workforce and the plantation family.

A variety of animals served plantations. This included draft animals such as horses, mules, and oxen, as well as animals raised for food. Fanny Kemble described the variety of livestock on her husband's plantation.

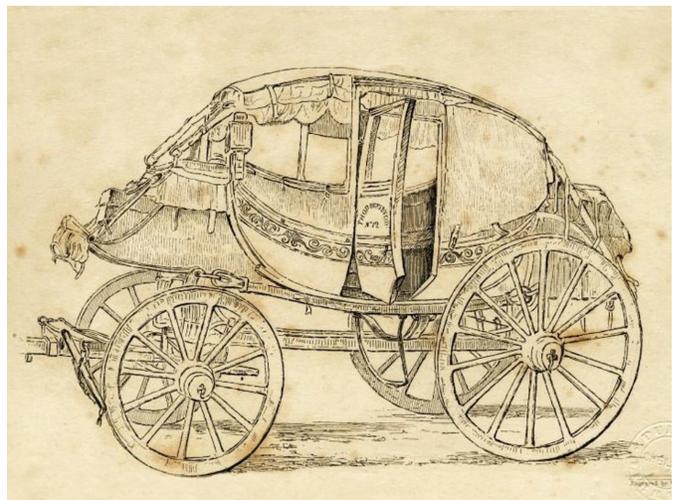
*Upon this swamp island of ours we have quite a large stock of cattle, cows, sheep, pigs, and poultry in the most enormous and inconvenient abundance. The cows are pretty miserably off for pasture, the banks and pathways of the dykes being their only grazing ground... both the cows and sheep are fed with rice flour in great abundance... The pigs thrive admirably here, and attain very great perfection of size and flavor; the rice flour, upon which they are chiefly fed, tending to make them very delicate. As for the poultry, it being one of the few privileges of the poor blacks to raise as many as they can, their abundance is literally a nuisance -- ducks, fowls, pigeons, turkeys [the two latter species, by the bye, are exclusively the master's property] (Frances Kemble 1863).*

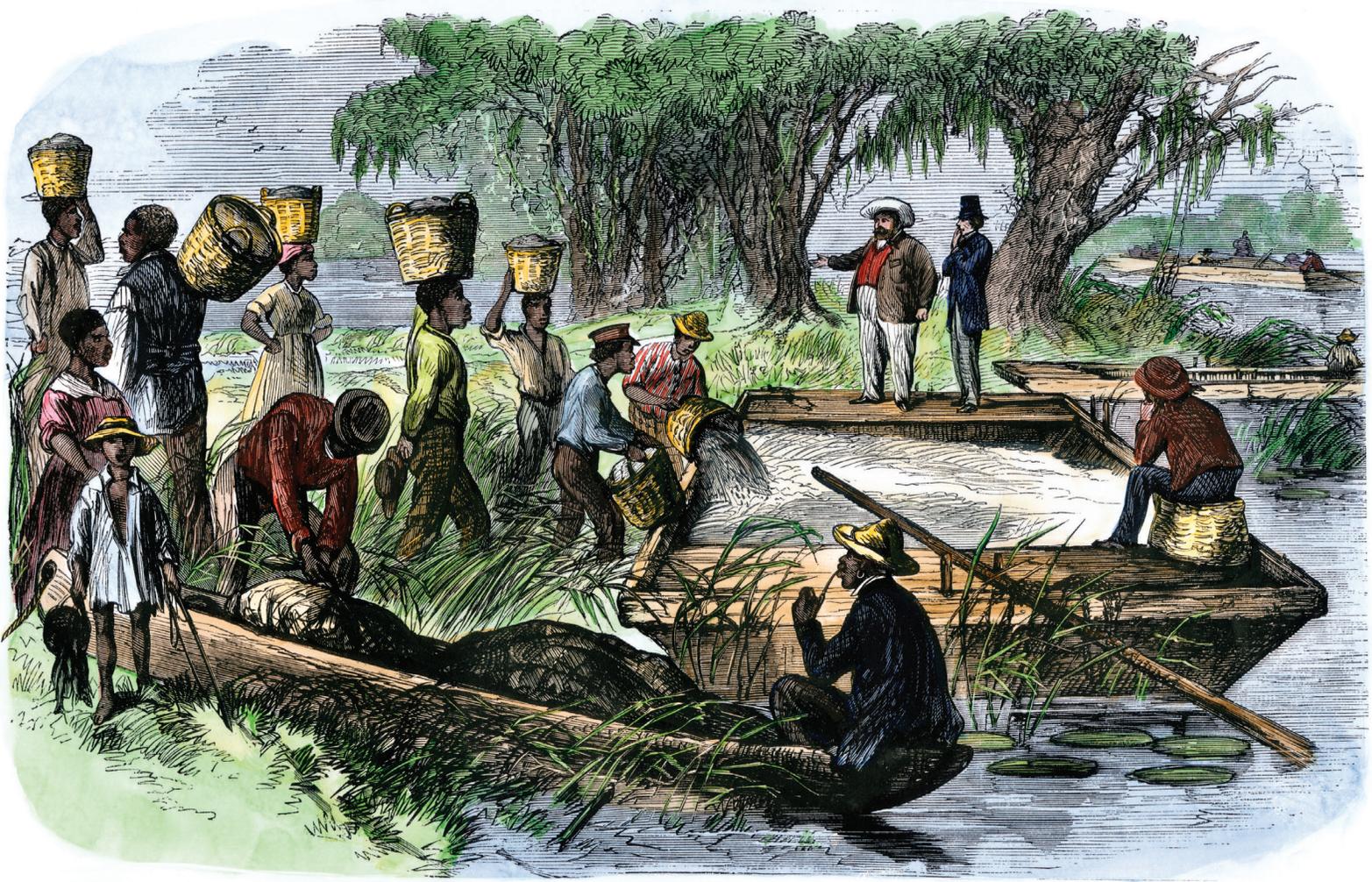
## TRANSPORTATION AND PLANTATION ACCESS

### *Travel By Land*

Travel by land during the 18th and 19th centuries in the American southeast was slow and uncomfortable. Roads were dirt and were often poorly maintained and heavily rutted. Carriage and stagecoach rides were usually dusty, bumpy treks. The traveler who made a sketch of a stagecoach wrote, "And if the sight of this sketch does

*This sketch of a stagecoach was made by Basil Hall, a British naval officer who traveled extensively through coastal Georgia and South Carolina (Lizers and Hall 1830). In 1829, Hall published *Travels in North America*, which contained his travel sketches and narratives.*





Rice was loaded onto barges and bateaus for transport to market. Planters and slaves used the rivers and creeks, like Cathead Creek, as highways and often traveled by boat. (1859 Engraving by Granger, courtesy of North Wind Picture Archive, 2014)

not recal [sic] to persons who have traveled in America the idea of aching bones, they must be more or less than mortal!" (Hall 1829). There were only two roads into and out of Darien prior to the Civil War. One was known as the Darien-Savannah Stage Road. This ran along the route of present-day Highway 17. It ran along the coast from Savannah south to Jacksonville. As its name implies, it connected Darien with Savannah and points north, as there were no bridges across the Altamaha delta until the early 1900s. A second land route was called River Road. It crossed the Stage Road north of Darien. River Road ran roughly parallel to present-day Highway 251, which ran from Darien into the interior of

Georgia. This was a very important overland mail route. The original River Road ran into the section of Darien known as Mentionville and is now known as Old River Road. This route provided a connection with the western part of Darien and the plantations along Cathead Creek.

#### *Travel By Water*

In antebellum days, most transportation along the coast was by water. Rivers and creeks crisscrossed the coast, which made travel by land time-consuming since it required many ferry crossings. Travel by boat was easier and quicker. Vessels could navigate Cathead Creek from the north branch of the Altamaha River. Travel on a single-mast, flat-bottomed, barge-type boat called a bateau was common. Each plantation had a dock, which was necessary for multiple reasons. Docks provided



access for slaves and plantation personnel to get from the plantation out to the rice fields. Crews would depart by flatboats, skiffs, or canoes from the plantation dock. They traveled through canals and ditches to their places of work in the rice fields (Sullivan 2012). The dock was also important as a collection point for the rice brought in at harvest time. In addition, docks provided a way for supplies to be brought from town to the plantations and unloaded. Likewise, landings and docks enabled visitors to and from plantations and towns to embark and disembark.

#### PLANTATION HOUSES AND BUILDINGS

The planters' houses along Cathead Creek were not large mansions with tall Greek-style columns. Rather, they were simple, functional, wood-frame structures. While many of these plantation houses were wood, some may have had tabby foundations or walls. Tabby was a mortar made of a mixture of lime from burned oyster shell, crushed oyster shell, water, and sand. At the Sidon Plantation along Cathead Creek, archaeologists found

*These ruins once were four tabby houses for enslaved Africans on a plantation near Darien. Most slave housing was made of wood or earth and wood, although along the coast planters sometimes made houses of the more durable tabby. Some sources misidentify these ruins as the remains of the Spanish Mission Tolomato. (Image Courtesy of the Library of Congress, HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Call Number 14-71, 2013)*

evidence of tabby foundations. Excavations suggested that overseers and slaves lived in wooden houses with tabby foundations although these could have been the remnants of tabby walls (Weidlich 1996). The overseer's house would have been smaller and simpler in design than the owner's house, and with fewer rooms. Slave quarters would have been even smaller and generally consisting of one, or possibly two, rooms. Planters often expected as many as 10 slaves to live in a single room.

*These cabins consist of one room, about twelve by fifteen, with a couple of closets smaller and closets smaller and closer than the staterooms of a ship, divided off from the main room and each other by rough wooden partitions, in which the inhabitants sleep.... Two families (sometimes eight and ten in number) reside in one of these huts, which are mere wooden frames pinned, as it were, to the earth by a brick chimney outside... (Kimble 1863:67).*

*Chairs, tables, plates, knives, forks, they had none; they sat...on the earth or doorsteps, and ate either out of their little cedar tubs, or an iron pot, some few with broken iron spoons, more with pieces of wood, and all the children with their fingers (Frances Kemble 1863).*

Other historical accounts supplement Fanny Kemble's description of plantation houses. In one case, an English traveler recorded these details about plantation houses of southern planters:

*...almost all of wood, covered with the same; the roof with shingles, the sides and ends with thin boards, and not always lathed and plastered within; only those of the better sort are finished in that manner, and painted on the outside. The chimneys are sometimes of brick, but more commonly of wood, coated on the inside with clay. The windows of the best sort have glass in them; the rest have none, only wooden shutter (Vlach 1993:2).*

On occasion, some planters allowed slaves to build dwellings using African architectural styles. Archaeologists have discovered that early slave villages on plantations were African in appearance and used African architectural styles and techniques. Such was the case at Thomas Spaulding's Sapelo Island plantation (Georgia Writers' Project 1940:178-182). Ben Sullivan, a former slave, described the house of an enslaved man named Okra. Okra worked on James Couper's Hopeton plantation near Darien. He built a house following traditional African construction methods. Sullivan described the house as follows:

*[it] wuz bout twelve by foeteen feet an it hab dut flo an he buil du side lak baket weave wid clay plastuh on it. It hab a flat roof wut he make from bush an palmettuh an it hab one doe an no winduhs (Georgia Writers' Project 1940; Vlach 1993:165).*



Some enslaved African Americans made earth-walled type houses including wattle and daub houses made with a wall of woven branches covered in clay. This type of construction was used in Africa and was also used by American Indians and the Spanish in Georgia. The clay plaster on the wall kept bugs out of the house and also kept it cooler in the summer. (Photograph courtesy of John Atherton, 2013)



By the 1830s, slave cabins on the coastal plantations were typically made of wood, consisted of a single room, had chimneys made of mud and sticks or brick and had openings for windows covered by shutters rather than by glass. Planters arranged the houses on streets to provide an organized landscape where slave activities could be seen and supervised. (Photograph Courtesy of Library of Congress, Gladstone Collection of African American Photographs, 2013)

The house described by Ben Sullivan sounds similar to the "wattle and daub" method of wall construction used by African tribes such as the Yoruba in West Africa (Joseph 2008). Since Okra's dwelling did not blend with other buildings at Hopeton Plantation, the plantation owner, James Couper, had it demolished.

By the 1830s and 1840s, many planters restricted the use of African architectural types. They imposed a more formal landscape plan that aligned slave quarters along dirt roads of the plantations. Organizing slave houses



(Above) Larger rice plantations constructed winnowing houses raised on stilts. Workers at these houses poured hulled rice through a hole in the floor. As the rice fell through the air to the ground below, the wind blew away the chaff. (Photograph Courtesy of the Library of Congress, HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Call Number 476A-1, 2013)

in rows made it easier for planters and overseers to supervise life in the slave village. In general, one-room, wood-frame cabins housed most of the enslaved in the tidewater region. The cabins had stick-and-clay chimneys and lacked glass windows (Forten 1864:589–592). Inhabitants of slave houses often dug pits in the dirt floor and in the yard outside of the house. Archaeologists discovered that they used pits to store an assortment of articles. This included personal items, root crops, and - when they no longer needed the pit for storage - trash. The yards were often swept with a broom.

*There are four settlements or villages (or, as the negroes call them, camps) on the island, consisting of from ten to twenty houses, and to each settlement is annexed a cook's shop (Frances Kemble 1863).*

(Below) This photograph from archaeological excavations at 9CH1205, an African American slave settlement, shows the dark outline of a rectangular house made with trenches for the placement of walls. Posts with wattle and daub or rammed earth were used to build the walls of houses like this, using construction techniques also seen in Africa. In this view, trees have grown into the opposite corners of the house, so its full dimensions can not be seen. (Photograph courtesy of New South Associates, 2013)

Other plantation buildings varied a great deal in size and purpose, but all served the operation of the plantation. These included barns and stables, kitchens, pigpens and other livestock enclosures, smokehouses





for curing meat, a tool room, a carpenter shop, and a blacksmith shop. As one Federal soldier during the Civil War observed regarding southern planters:

*They have a queer way of building on one thing after another, the great point being to have a separate shed or out-house for every purpose, and then a lot more (Phillips 1929).*

Planters constructed these buildings as they could afford them. Some structures, such as winnowing houses and rice mills, made rice processing more productive. Rice mills automated the process of threshing rice.

*... the rice mill...is worked by a steam-engine of thirty horse power, and besides threshing... our own rice, is kept constantly employed by the neighboring planters, who send their grain to it in preference to the more distant mill at Savannah...Immediately opposite to this building is a small shed, which they call the cook's shop, and where the daily allowance of rice and corn grits of the people is boiled and distributed to them by an old woman, whose special business this is (Frances Kemble 1863).*

Larger plantations would have had a praise house where African American slaves worshipped and held religious services. They would also have contained a cemetery where the plantation slaves were buried. Typically,

The task labor system used on rice plantations allowed slaves time of their own once their tasks were complete. Slaves hunted, fished, grew crops, and made things to sell. They used the income they made to purchase goods that were not provided by the planter, such as better clothing, jewelry, musical instruments, and tobacco. Shown are artifacts from Ceylon Plantation that slaves may have purchased, including a harmonica plate, belt buckle, a button, an eyeglass frame, a pocket watch case, and tobacco pipes. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

plantation owners were buried in church cemeteries in nearby towns while slaves were buried on the plantation, often in a location overlooking water.

## TASK LABOR

Most of the Cathead Creek plantations used the task system of labor (NPS 2005; Sullivan 2012). Under task labor, each worker was given an assignment to complete according to his or her physical condition, age, technical skills, or knowledge. Planters classified African American slaves as "hands." This system defined a healthy adult male as a "full hand." Females often were classified as a "three quarter hand." Children and the elderly were usually "half hands." A planter would define the hoeing of a half-acre plot as a "full hand" task. This meant that a "full hand" should take one day to complete this task, while a "half hand" required two days. Under the task system, slaves completed tasks more efficiently and required less supervision (Joseph 1993).



Enslaved African Americans stored root crops they had grown in pits dug into the ground. In the days before electricity when ice was a luxury the enslaved did not have, these pits acted like refrigerators and allowed crops to be stored at cooler temperatures below the ground surface. Once abandoned, pits would have been used for trash disposal, as can be seen in this pit with the fragments of pottery and metal artifacts in the wall. Archaeologists first bisect a cultural feature, like this pit, to record it in profile drawings and photographs, before excavating the remaining half. The dark soil of the pit fill can be easily distinguished from the light tan sand subsoil of the site. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

*...on one estate...the proprietor had made the experiment, and very successfully, of appointing to each of his slaves a certain task to be performed in the day, which once accomplished, no matter how early, the rest of the four and twenty hours were allowed to the laborer to employ as he pleased (Frances Kemble 1863).*

When a task was finished, a worker's time was his or her own. In the evenings or on Sundays, slaves were able to work for themselves and their families. Under the task system, the slaves could make money and purchase goods. They were able to tend small gardens, raise poultry and livestock, fish, gather oysters and crabs, and make baskets or pottery. These foods supplemented the rations provided by the planter, which typically consisted

of rice, corn, and pork (Smith 1985:113). There was also time to play music, and to sing and dance with others in their community (Genovese 1976; Pollitzer 1995).

Often, slaves that grew crops were allowed to carry extra produce into Darien to sell on a day off from work, typically a Saturday or a Sunday (Sullivan 2012). Some of the vegetables grown on coastal Georgia plantations originated in Europe. Other plants came from Africa or elsewhere through the slave trade (NPS 2005:62). Africans introduced over 20 plants into the Americas. These included different types of yams, the akee apple, pigeon pea, black-eyed pea, broad bean, hot peppers, maroon cucumber, okra, rice, peanuts, sesame or benne seeds, sorghum, and watermelon. Africans brought to the American colonies were familiar with growing many crops, almost half of which came from their homeland (Pollitzer 1995:96-97). Many, such as the black-eyed pea, became staples in southern cooking. Food crops also included plants that American Indians had used, such as berries, corn, squash, and tomatoes.

Plant use included medicine as well as food. In order to heal themselves, slaves utilized many local plants. Knowledge of plant use was shared among American Indians, Europeans, and Africans (Pollitzer 1995:99-104). If one had a cold or cough, the remedy might be found in the herb "life everlasting." Boiling its leaves, stem, and flowers created one of the most popular cold medicines available at the time.

*...the roots of the blackberry is for diarrhea... you'd dig up the roots and clean it and boil it and make a tea out of it and it was good for that purpose. Beauty berry bush was for fever... sassafras was blood cleanser...and for measles if you happened to catch the measles... Spanish moss for asthma (Cornelia Bailey 2012).*

*And we have—it was a leaf they call deer-tongue...it was a mixture that we go in the woods and find it and we dried it out. We'd sell those deer-tongue then they mix it...to make tobacco (Clarence Baker 2012).*

Since all the rice plantations had water access, plantation slaves also traded vegetables and other items with people living along the rivers and creeks.

*...[a man] who had been over to Darien, mentioned that one of the storekeepers there had told him that, in the course of a few years, he had paid the negroes of this estate [Butler] several thousand dollars for moss, which is a very profitable article of traffic with them -- they collect it from the trees, dry and pick it, and then sell it to the people in Darien for mattresses, sofas, and all sorts of stuffing purposes (Frances Kemble 1863).*

Men and boys could hunt and fish to add to their food rations, and they could sell or trade excess meat, fish, and animal hides for clothing and other goods. In some cases, they built their own small boats or canoes to use to catch fish and collect shellfish for sale or to eat. On

the barrier islands, slaves consumed a variety of marine fishes, mollusks, and sea turtles, while those living near freshwater marshes caught freshwater fish and turtles. In both areas, they hunted small mammals such as muskrats, opossum, rabbit, raccoon, and squirrel, as well as a variety of birds and ducks (Singleton 2011).

Enslaved Africans cooked creatively when it came to making something from almost nothing. They were experts at making the amount of food go farther by adding fish and game to a meal or adding vegetables grown in their own gardens. They added leftovers from their masters' hog butchering. They shared these large stews with neighbors in the tradition of their African ancestors (NPS 2005:63). Archaeologists discovered the use of such soups and stews in the diet of the enslaved at different sites. Food remains at the slave quarters of Cannons Point Plantation on St. Simons Island provided much evidence. The majority of the cow, sheep, and hog bones excavated there had been chopped into small pieces. This suggested that stews were the common way to eat meats, as opposed to roasting large pieces or cutting the meat into steaks (Otto 1984:59-60). This pattern of chopping meat, rather than sawing it, was a common practice among African Americans living on plantations (Deetz 1977:152). The preference for soups, stews, and dishes like Hoppin' John made small amounts of meat go further while continuing African cultural traditions (Pollitzer 1995:174-175). Many of the meat by-products of hog butchering, such as pigs' feet, ears, jowls, heads, and entrails are still favorites in African American households today.

During the year, plantation owners would occasionally provide their slaves with luxuries like sugar or coffee.

Clothing was distributed twice a year: in the summer and again in the winter. Slaves were also provided with blankets and shoes that were supposed to last through a season of fieldwork (Sullivan 2012). Much of the clothing, fabric, and blankets were manufactured specifically for the enslaved, so the quality could suffer.

*The allowance of clothes made yearly to each slave by the present regulations of the estate, is a certain number of yards of flannel -- an extremely stout, thick, heavy woolen cloth, of a dark gray or blue color... This, and two pair of shoes, is the regular ration of clothing (Frances Kemble 1863).*

An interesting difference between overseers and slaves was that while the enslaved received rations of food and clothing, the overseers had to buy their own. As a result, much of the overseers' income went for food and perhaps a few luxuries. This left little for purchasing land or for buying laborers of their own (Otto 1975, 1984:115). Slaves could use money they earned from the sale of extra produce or handmade items to buy things like tobacco and tobacco pipes, liquor, jewelry, and fabrics (Joseph 1987, 1989).

*It is Saturday -- the day of the week on which the slaves from the island are permitted to come over to the town, to purchase such things as they may require and can afford, and to dispose, to the best advantage, of their poultry, moss, and eggs. I met many of them paddling themselves singly in their slight canoes, scooped out of the trunk of a tree, and parties of three and four rowing boats of their own building (Frances Kemble 1863).*

There were periods after the crop was harvested when the workforce was allowed to have several days off. Many used this time to visit with family and friends enslaved on other plantations along Cathead Creek.

Christmas Day was a universal holiday when slaves could prepare community meals and have social and religious gatherings (Sullivan 2012).

## CRAFTS

Activities at plantation sites were many and varied. Beyond the typical work day, personal work after hours included making fishing nets, household necessities, sewing/mending, and producing crafts. Many day-to-day items were made on the plantations by the slaves themselves out of clay, cloth, wood, or iron, using knowledge brought with them from their homelands and handed down through generations (Pollitzer 1995:165-186).

A distinctive pottery called "colonoware" developed among American Indians and enslaved Africans in southern America. While the design was similar to pottery found at American Indian sites along the coast, it differed in several ways, and may have been the result of enslaved American Indians working alongside enslaved Africans and developing a new, shared tradition of homemade earthenware pottery. African-made colonoware pottery had a distinctive shape, coarse paste, thick vessel walls, loop handles, and round bases. Potters would have collected clay along Cathead Creek and formed it into coils or pinched it into pots. They fired the clay pots in pits of firewood. Archaeologists have discovered samples of African-made pottery along the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina from the plantation era, including from the plantations along Cathead Creek (Ferguson 1992).

Both woodworking and metalworking were practiced on the plantations. From the early years of the colony, men of African origin were blacksmiths in the manufacture of

iron goods. They made nails, hinges, screws, bolts, hoes and rakes, tubs, weights, and all other metal products and goods (Pollitzer 1995:175-176). Carpenters of African descent made wood products for the plantation that included furniture, carts, wagons, hand tools, and other items. Many continued traditions of carved, decorative works of art.

Some of these woodworking traditions continued into the 20th century. William Rogers of Darien was a cabinetmaker in his youth. In his spare time, he carved a variety of wooden objects such as walking sticks. As late as the 1930s, Rogers' skill appeared in the scrollwork on his porch, and in a cupboard and chimney in his dining room (Georgia Writers' Project 1940:143-145). Rogers made large cedar spoons with the carved head of a man on the handle sporting eyes made of nails. He carved walking sticks to look like large alligators with blue-beaded eyes nailed onto them. He added the head of a man (painted black) on the top of the stick.

Some aspects of woodworking related directly or indirectly to boating and fishing, activities familiar to those enslaved on plantations. Many slaves' woodworking and marine skills had roots in coastal Africa, where fishing with nets was common. Men made new nets and mended old ones using a needle of palmetto wood. They added wooden sinkers or purchased lead sinker to weight the nets. Net sinkers have been recovered from archaeological contexts at many plantations (Singleton 2011:171). The making of a flat-bottomed boat called a bateau also came from an old tradition in Africa (Pollitzer 1995:178-179).

Men, or elders who were unable to work in the fields, also made baskets for agricultural and household uses on the plantation (NPS 2005:64-67). The design and methods of coiled basket making have clear roots in African culture. Basketry and other crafts became important trade items and another source of income for enslaved Geechee people. Today, both sweetgrass baskets and their male

American Indians and African Americans produced a low-fired earthenware pottery known as colonoware. They were made for cooking and other uses on the plantation and were also sold to planters and at market. These colonoware sherds were found at Ceylon and Sidon Plantations, while the intact cooking pot with handle is from a site in Charleston. (Photographs by New South Associates, 2004 and 2013)



and female makers have become almost symbolic of Geechee and Gullah culture along the coast.

*The sweetgrass basket is an example of a significant retention of the African heritage transported across the Atlantic. The sweetgrass basket, originally designed as a tool of rice production and processing, had a very real and significant religious connection for the displaced Africans... Sweetgrass basket sewing is viewed as a gift from God. The basketmakers profess to continue their craft as long as there is material available. The art form is continuing to be passed down to new generations (M. Jeanette Lee, Coordinator, Original Sweetgrass Basket Makers Coalition [NPS 2005:66-68]).*

Quilt-making was a common activity among women on the plantation. Quilts supplemented blankets given out by plantation owners. Enslaved women gathered in the evenings to make quilts in the bright colors of African tradition. Quilting enabled women to work together to create finished products quicker. It also provided social time among friends and family (Pollitzer 1995:179-181; NPS 2005:61-62).

#### THE GULLAH-GEECHEE

The presence of large numbers of Africans living and working together on coastal plantations with limited interaction with whites led to the creation of a creole culture known as the Gullah-Geechee. The Gullah-Geechee culture formed from the merger of various ethnic African groups enslaved on rice plantations into a new culture. These African groups did not represent a single geographic location, environment, language, or culture (Pollitzer 1995:43-45). The Gullah-Geechee blended features of their West African heritage with Euro-American culture. They also included aspects of Caribbean culture. The Gullah-Geechee combined these many characteristics with their own adaptations necessary to meet the challenges of servitude on

plantations (Campbell 2011:281–282). They developed their own creole language, one that combined West African and English words and phrases. Gullah was the name used for this culture in South Carolina and is believed to derive from slave traders' referral to West Africans as being from Angola, which was shortened to "A'Gola" or "Gullah." The term Geechee is used by, and applied to, Gullah-Geechee people in Georgia and is believed to have originated along the Ogeechee River. The Geechee are sometimes referred to as Saltwater Geechee or Freshwater Geechee, depending on location (Bailey 2000; Crook et al. 2003; NPS 2005). The term Geechee is used below to represent the Gullah-Geechee descendants along Cathead Creek.

The relative isolation of the Geechee people lasted throughout the period of slavery. It continued through the U.S. Civil War (1860-1865) and the freeing of the slaves. Due to their coastal isolation and strong community life, the Geechee were able to preserve more of their African heritage than any other group of black Americans (Opala n.d., 1986:1). The Geechee still enjoy a rich cuisine based primarily on rice.

*...they say how to determine a Geechee is that they love rice and I love rice. Seven days a week I could eat rice (Griffin Lotson 2012).*

The Geechee are known for a language similar to that in Sierra Leone. They use African names and words and retell African folktales. The Geechee made creative African-style handicrafts such as baskets, wooden carvings, and walking sticks. In the 1940s, a black American linguist named Lorenzo Turner found Geechee in rural Georgia who could sing songs and count by numbers in the Guinea/Sierra Leone dialect of Fula. In his book *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, Turner (1949) found hundreds of Geechee words and first names that

had a West African origin. The rice plantation area of coastal Georgia and South Carolina is the only place in the Americas where Sierra Leoneans and other West Africans came and left a rich legacy. Their large numbers and length of time in the area resulted in the formation of a new language and development of a unique culture. Sierra Leoneans can look to the Geechee as a kindred people sharing many common elements of speech, custom, culture, and cuisine (Turner 1949; Bailey 2000; Campbell 2011).

*...if you notice, if you listen at our songs we sing it basically the same but there's always a little difference in the sound of it (Mary Moran 2012).*

Enslaved Africans wove baskets of sweetgrass and other plant materials using the same traditions and techniques that were used in Africa. This rice fanner basket would have been used to “fan” rice and remove the chaff by tossing rice into the air. (Photograph by Elizabeth Joseph, 2013)



## MUSIC, DANCE, AND BELIEFS

Music, song, and dance were also important parts of the plantation community and culture. Songs provided multiple outlets of expression. They became an integral part of a slave's culture, work, play, religion, and hopes at a better life. On plantations, work songs created a rhythm workers followed during field tasks. Work songs may have helped ease the labor and make it more bearable (Parrish 1992). Songs included versions that helped rowers keep time in a boat. Work songs that spoke of freedom, often symbolically, were part of the African American heritage. Songs were also an important part of religion and funeral services:

*I'll never forget as long as I live the sounds I heard as a child when we sang burial songs and our devotional songs. And some churches even today they still sing it in a way that you might consider it eerie, very, very — it goes to a deep place within the spiritual realm and some people still sing it in those ways (Wilson Moran 2012).*

Dance was as important as music in everyday life and drew on African heritage. As one writer succinctly stated – “Africans dance” (Pollitzer 1995:155). Dancing not only celebrated births, weddings, and funerals, but it is also related to healing, as well as to work. For example, different occupations – hunters, farmers, woodcutters, or fishermen – had their own dances that mimicked movements used in their work. Other dances represented the movements used in sowing seeds or grinding corn.

The ring shout is a specific type of movement accompanied by call-and-response singing that took place at religious services. The Geechee on tidewater plantations exclusively practiced the

ring shout. It is a rich example of African American song, rhythm, and movement merged with elements of Christian tradition. The tradition of the shout is known more for the excitement of the hand clapping and the foot stomping, rather than in the song itself (NPS 2005:69). The ritual consisted of small, concise steps made in a counter-clockwise circle. This shuffle intentionally avoided the appearance of dancing, as "...shouters may neither cross their feet nor lift them high" (Fox 2013). Beating a stick and clapping hands maintains the rhythm. There is no shouting during the activity. The term "shout" may have originated from the Afro-Arabic word "saut" describing a ritual dance performed at a sacred site in Mecca, Saudi Arabia (Fox 2013). Plantation owner, Thomas Spaulding, described the ring shout as midway between a shuffle and a dance, and he is said to have called it a "religious exercise...a natural and rational expression of devotional feeling" (Pollitzer 1995:152). Today, the McIntosh County Shouters preserve this tradition by continuing the practice of the ring shout (The McIntosh County Shouters 2013).

Many enslaved people turned to religion for inspiration and comfort. The religious practices of the Geechee combined elements of African religions, Islamic customs as practiced in some African nations, and Christianity (Smith 1985:161-163). Initially, Islamic religious tradition was strongest among the enslaved due to the number of Muslims brought from Africa. During the early days of slavery, Darien was described as being right in the center of the Muslim world in coastal Georgia (Gomez 2011:122).

Over time, Christianity began to compete with Islam as the dominant religious tradition for African Americans on the plantation. Most rejected the form of Christianity that their masters practiced, which justified slavery, and

instead practiced a form of Christianity that included strong African or Islamic elements. Young people began attending church services within their communities. The founding of the First African Baptist Church on Sapelo in 1866 represented a change in local beliefs, and then after the pursuit of Islam became increasingly rare (Gomez 2011:110-111).

*[one] thing that was very important in the community then was the church, everything revolved around the church. And we had a bell. Now the bell is very, very significant in any event that goes on in the Gullah/Geechee community, especially when somebody dies (Wilson Moran 2012).*

Many plantations had a praise house, a small building where the slaves met for religious services (NPS 2005:75). Religious and community life were centered on these praise houses, and they became the buildings used for both spiritual and community activities. The First African Baptist Church, Saint Cyprian's African Episcopal Church, and later the Grant Chapel Presbyterian Church called Darien home. The roots of the religious services of the Geechee people - with singing, dancing, group praying, and the ring shout - were clearly African as adapted to the New World through the influences of both Islam and Christianity (Pollitzer 1995:138; NPS 2005:F11).

*The church was like the headquarters of the community so everything start and stopped. You got christened there, starting, and you got buried there, that's passing on...from childhood I knew how important the church was and birthing and burial (Wilson Moran 2012).*

## **DEATH ON THE PLANTATION**

Rice plantations were some of the most dangerous locations in which African Americans labored. Working in wet, muddy conditions under the hot Georgia sun,

enslaved African Americans faced snakes, alligators, and rodents. Mosquitoes and other insects exposed them to diseases like malaria. Mortality rates on the rice plantations were extremely high. Estimates suggest that a third of newly imported Africans who worked on rice plantations died in their first year. Poor diet and the lack of healthcare also led to the deaths of large numbers of infants and children. Plantation slave inventories from one Georgia rice plantation show that 80 percent of the infants who survived birth had died before the age of five (Lockley 2013:640).

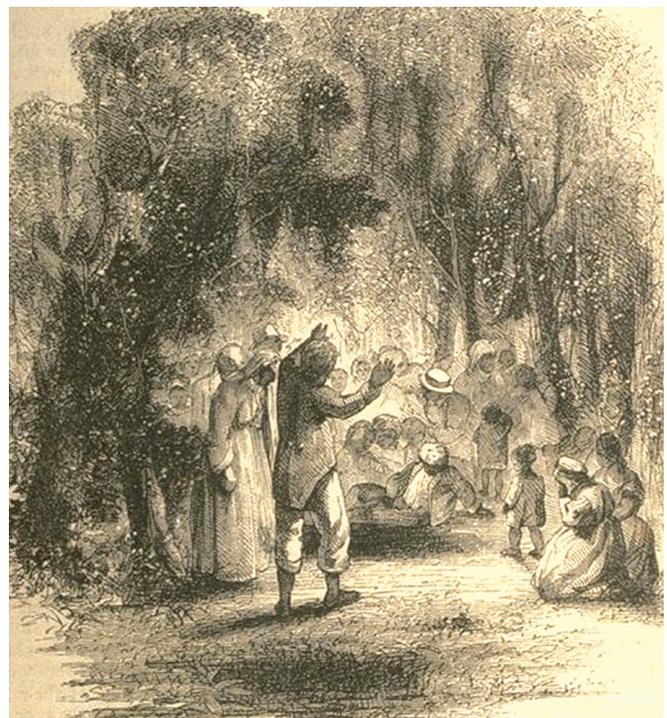
Slaves had little control over conditions leading to their illness and death. They could regulate, however, events following death. Many cultures view death as a transition between this world and the next, so a funeral fulfilled an important purpose. It allowed the living to say goodbye to someone they knew and care about, and it prepared the deceased for the journey to the afterlife. On plantations, funerals were sometimes held outside and at night because planters would not allow the enslaved time off from the workday. The community bell was rung to let people know that someone had died (Matternes and Smith 2014).

*...when someone died in the community there was always an individual that would go to the church and ring the bell. They would toll the bell and that sound would go for miles. And they knew — it was a special way that they tolled the bell to let them know that someone had passed. And people would come. They would come from all over the...community. And they would gather together and they would cook...It didn't matter whether they were related or not (Sammie Pinkney 2012).*

*The sexton...he'd go to the church and...begin to toll the bell and everybody in the community would know automatically...that somebody died...and then everybody...would start*

*preparing themselves to find out whose house it was and they'd go and they'd start going through the ceremony of getting these people for their celebration to be buried (Wilson Moran 2012).*

Preparation of the dead was the first step prior to a funeral service. The body was placed on a "cooling board," and was washed and dressed. A cooling board was often a plank of wood set between two chairs. Usually, a person would be buried in their best clothes. Burial had to take place quickly in the summer months because the weather was usually hot and the body would not stay unblemished for long. Friends and relatives who lived nearby would come to the house to pay their respects during a "settin' up." Sometimes, a "secondary funeral" was held if relatives and friends wanted to visit the grave later and have a memorial service (Matternes and Smith 2014).



This 1859 woodcut shows the funeral of an enslaved African American (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 1859:731). Members of the enslaved community were buried where the plantation owner allowed, and their cemeteries were rarely defined by tombstones or durable markers.

*They'll take you and lay you on the cooling board... The body was...wrapped in a sheet, a white sheet, and then they'll...dress the body...dressed in their best finery and if it was summertime you were buried that same day. You didn't have time to wait for relatives...you couldn't wait for a letter to get to New York or even Savannah in August and said your sister passed...And later when ice was prevalent [in the later 20th century] they would keep the body on ice for a while...They would lay it on ice and put ice all around, you know, until—but they only kept you then for like two or three days...So ice helped preserve for a little while (Cornelia Bailey 2012).*

*...then you died today they bury you tomorrow. They put a penny on each eye to keep them eyes closed and salt on top of your stomach... Yeah, they washed them and dressed them and put that salt on the stomach say that salt kept them until the next day (Mary Moran 2012).*

Often, personal items that meant something special to the dead person would be placed with the body. These were put in the casket before the deceased was taken to the cemetery by cart or wagon.

*And the men that have a truck or ox and wagon or horse and wagon they would put your body on there (Griffin Lotson 2012).*

Graves were marked in a number of ways from wooden sticks to stone slabs to carved wooden markers. Some graves were marked using plants such as cedars or yuccas. Archaeologists working with plantation cemeteries have observed artifacts left on the surface that reflects African burial practices. Possessions, including toiletries, glasses, plates, cups, tools, false teeth, and medicines were commonly left on top of the grave for the dead's use. Frequently, these objects were among the last touched by the deceased, and it was believed that they were still charged with the decedent's



**This early 20th-century photograph shows an African American burial on Sapelo Island. Things that the deceased had used were believed to be charged with the spirit of the dead and were left on the surface of the grave as offerings. (Photograph Courtesy of Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, 2014)**

spirit (Pollitzer 1995:183-186). Items were left on the surface of a grave that the dead had used, so they could use them in the afterlife. Stones, shells, and plants often marked the border of a grave. The enslaved often used whelks and other shells to mark or outline gravesites, and this practice continues today. The use of seashells to mark graves has been described by people as a connection to the water that brought them from and would hopefully take them back to Africa after death (NPS 2005:76). Other popular grave markers included white or silver objects and other objects associated with water (Matternes and Smith 2014).

Water was an important symbol of the transition between life and death, as West Africans thought great bodies of water separated the worlds of the living and the dead. They commonly left jars of water, silver utensils, coins, foil, shiny potsherds, glass, shells, and other reflective materials on top of the grave. These reflections were believed to trap or dazzle a wandering spirit and provided them a pathway to the spirit world. These common practices illustrate the ways that African beliefs and customs shaped African American life in Georgia and elsewhere in the New World.

Now their favorite thing that they wanted them to have in the afterlife was actually put in the casket — your glasses, your false teeth, your other things. Some things were...put on top of the grave...as a marker because people did not have money to put a headstone, so they'll know where grandmamma is all the time because grandma favorite cup is on her grave (Cornelia Bailey 2012).

Songs that were sung at funerals were often the last chance for the community to say goodbye to a person and send them on their journey to the afterlife.

*I sing to a lot of funerals off and on for different families...some of them request certain songs to be sung, old slave songs or something like...they used to sing when they were in the fields picking cotton and the slave master was watching...those type songs (Sammie Pinkney 2012).*

African American cemeteries were not treated well by southern planters. Fanny Kemble observed the following on Butler Island:

*We skirted the plantation burial ground, and a dismal place it looked; the cattle trampling over it in every direction, except where Mr. King [Roswell King, the overseer] had had an enclosure put up round the graves of two white men who worked on the estate...by virtue of their white skins, their resting place was protected from the hoofs of the cattle, while the parents and children, wives, husbands, brothers and sisters, of the poor slaves, sleeping beside them, might see the graves of those they loved trampled upon and browsed over, desecrated and defiled, from morning till night. There is something intolerably cruel in this disdainful denial of a common humanity pursuing these wretches even when they are hid beneath the earth (Kemble 1863:vii).*

Most of the African American plantation cemeteries along Cathead Creek have been lost and forgotten,

although two, the Ceylon and Dunwoody cemeteries, are marked and remembered.

## CEYLON CEMETERY

The Ceylon Cemetery is associated with the Ceylon rice plantation and dates to the 1800s (Pomfret 2008). It is the original burial ground for the plantation's African American slaves and later tenant workers. Most of the graves are unmarked now, but archaeologists estimate that there are at least 76 burials present. Wooden markers, shells, stone, and grave goods likely once marked the burial locations. Over time, the wood decayed and the shells and stones became covered with accumulated vegetation and soil. Grave goods, such as lanterns, dishes, and other materials were often removed unwittingly by people involved in "cleaning" cemeteries. Those known to be have been buried in Ceylon Cemetery include the Bailey, Blige, Butler, Carter, Cooper, Gibbs, Harris, Mansson, Mungin, Sheffield, Wilson, and Young families and other community members.



This sign marks the location of the Ceylon Plantation African American cemetery, where slaves from the plantation and other community members are buried. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

Today, it lies just east of the State Route 251 and Interstate 95 interchange, on the north side of SR 251. An archaeological survey of the area in 2000 revealed burial depressions, but no headstones on most of the graves. Archaeologists more recently estimate that there are probably "...hundreds of unmarked graves from the 19/20th century" in Ceylon Cemetery (Pomfret 2008).

#### DUNWOODY CEMETERY

Dunwoody Cemetery lies within Sidon Plantation. The cemetery is located just west of Interstate 95 and north of State Route 251, between a convenience store and a trucking company. This 1.6-acre tract represents the last surviving part of the original plantation main house landscape. Graves of the enslaved Africans working at Sidon Plantation and African Americans date from the 18th through 19th centuries are present in the cemetery as are later burials of descendants and other African American community members. While most of the burials in the cemetery are now unmarked, historically many would have been defined by hand-made wooden markers, personal possessions, and/or shells. Twenty-seven graves were removed from an area slated for construction of a road and parking lot within the cemetery, and were relocated to the preserved portion of Dunwoody Cemetery in 1993 (Cook 1993). These graves were removed and reburied to protect them from construction damage. American Indian burials from Ceylon Plantation were also re-buried at the Dunwoody Cemetery. Archaeologists estimate that there are a total of at least 313 burials at Dunwoody Cemetery, including the relocated graves (Matternes and Smith 2014:105).

African American family names known for the Dunwoody Cemetery include Butler, Frazier, Howard,

LeCount, Shaw, Singleton, Waldburg, Wilson, and West. Archaeologists recorded only five marked graves in the Dunwoody Cemetery (Pomfret 2008:22). These include Rebecca West (1843-1912), Rena Wilson (1869-1934), Emily Frazier (died 1953), Little Carl Butler (died 1958), and Mary Butler LeCount (died 1959).



This concrete monument marking the grave of Renard Wilson was probably a later replacement for a wooden monument that has since decayed. The marker was handmade with the name and birth and death dates scratched into the wet concrete. At a later point in time family members have added paint to the inscription. (Photograph by GDOT, 2011)

# VI. The American Civil War and Reconstruction

## THE CIVIL WAR



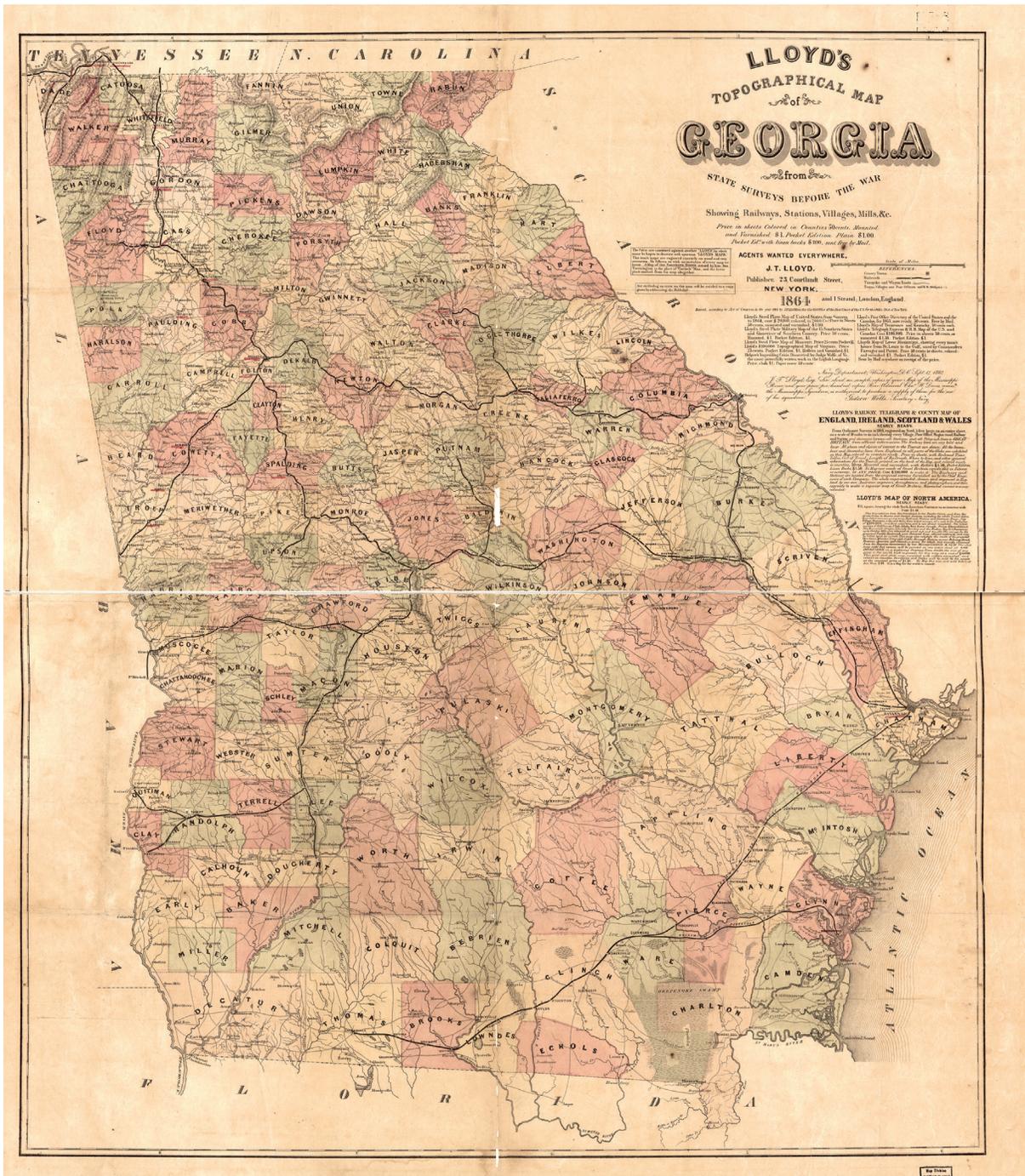
On January 19, 1861, Georgia seceded from the United States of America, 30 days after South Carolina began the secession movement. Like other southern states, Georgia firmly believed in strong states' rights and a weak Federal government. Slavery provided a fiery example of this power struggle, as Southern states argued it was the right of each state to determine whether it would allow or prohibit slavery and reinforced their argument by rapidly leaving the Union. The Federal government sought to keep the nation united, and thus began the most devastating event in American history, the Civil War. While the war lasted from 1861-1865, its impact continued far beyond those years. Between 620,000-850,000 soldiers died during the war (Civil War Trust 2013). The larger estimate by historians equals more soldiers than have died in all the U.S. wars and conflicts since the Civil War – the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan combined. Nineteenth-century reporter William Howard Russell referred to the Civil War's toll as the "magnitude of disaster" (Civil War Trust 2013) and it fell heavily on places like McIntosh County.

### MCINTOSH COUNTY ON THE EVE OF WAR

At the brink of the Civil War, landowners in 71 Georgia counties owned less than 10 slaves on average (University of Virginia Library 2013). McIntosh County, however, had more slaves per owner than any other county in Georgia (University of Virginia Library 2013). On average, each slaveholder in McIntosh County had 26 slaves. Other coastal Georgia counties followed, with an average of 24 slaves per landowner in Camden, 22 in Liberty, 21 in Bryan, and 20 in Glynn County. It is no coincidence that landowners in these five counties had the greatest

number of slaves in the state of Georgia (University of Virginia Library 2013). All were coastal counties with numerous rice and sea island cotton plantations. All plantations used slavery to increase the yields, and thereby their profits. Slave labor fueled McIntosh County's flourishing pre-war economy. Therefore, the impact of the Civil War was particularly damaging to the plantation economy.

Who was living in McIntosh County when the Civil War began? A total of 5,546 residents called the county home. Of these, 1,429 were white (Blake 2001). For every



Georgia had 71 counties at the time of the Civil War, as shown on this 1864 map made from surveys completed before the War. Much of the state's wealth, and the majority of the enslaved African Americans, resided in the coastal counties, with McIntosh County claiming the highest average number of slaves per plantation in the state. (Map courtesy Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, 2013)

white resident, there were almost three enslaved Africans or African Americans. Slaves totaled 4,063 individuals. There was a very small population of 54 freed blacks living in the county at that time as well, many of whom

lived in Darien and found work as carpenters, tailors, seamstresses, washers, and domestic servants as well as in the timber industry (Sullivan 1992:148; Blake 2001). Given the large slave population, it is easy to think that McIntosh County consisted entirely of elite planters. However, while they made a formidable social and economic class, they were a minority of the population. Only 11 percent of McIntosh County white residents

were slaveholders. The remaining 89 percent did not own slaves. These individuals farmed their own lands or were merchants, shopkeepers, or tradesmen. They lived in small cabins and houses across the county or in houses in the town of Darien. Despite the fact that most McIntosh County residents were not slaveholders, the county's slaveholders controlled huge portions of wealth. While most white county residents had something to lose economically, the Civil War threatened wealthy planters to the greatest degree, since their wealth lay in the monetary value society put on their slaves and their real estate, real estate that would diminish in value greatly without a labor force to harness its productivity. A Union victory in the Civil War would lay claim to both. At the other end of the social scale, for McIntosh County's enslaved African American citizens, the war offered the potential to change their situation from slavery to freedom. There could not be a greater difference in how the war was perceived and what it meant to white planters versus their African American slaves. The Civil War threatened the Cathead Creek plantations, such as Ceylon, which held 120 slaves on the eve of the war.

#### WAR AT THE DOORSTEP

The Confederate Army did not exist when the Civil War began, and the Army developed as local volunteers were organized into units to support the war efforts. McIntosh County males joined the military in support of the Confederacy. Area military units included Captain Hopkins' Company, 1st Battalion Georgia Cavalry and the 5th Georgia Cavalry, Company K. Lt. Colonel Charles Spalding commanded the 1st Battalion Georgia Cavalry. In May 1862, the McIntosh Light Dragoons organized under the command of Captain Octavius Caesar (O.C.)

Hopkins. The dragoon unit was designated as Company K, 5th Georgia Volunteer Cavalry Regiment. Captain O.C. Hopkins' Company of the 2nd Georgia Cavalry became Troop K of the 5th Georgia Volunteer Cavalry in 1863 (Pollette 2013). The McIntosh County Guards mustered under Company M, 26th Regiment Georgia Volunteer Infantry (Sullivan 1992:328). In August 1861, Company M established camp near the community of Ridge, approximately three miles northeast of Darien. In late September, the company was sent to Brunswick, Georgia and then on to St. Simons Island the following month (Sullivan 1992:331).

The open coastline of Georgia made it easy for Union ships to attack settlements. In April 1862, the Union blocked the port of Savannah, captured nearby Fort Pulaski, and occupied St. Simons Sound. Women, children, the elderly and non-enlisted residents of Darien, feeling threatened by the Union forces, abandoned the city in the early part of the war. Most of them sought safety at the Ridge community, three miles northeast of Darien, and other places in the interior (Sullivan 1992:296). Between 1862 and 1864, Union troops raided and destroyed most of the plantations along the Altamaha River in McIntosh County (Sullivan 2003). Many of the raids were the result of Union retaliation against plantation owners who served as officers in the Confederate Army.

Some of these raids included African Americans among the Union forces. While Union troops battled throughout the state, many slaves ran away from the plantations to seek their freedom with the northern military. Despite the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which specified that runaway slaves should be returned to their owners, in 1862, the Union began to allow African

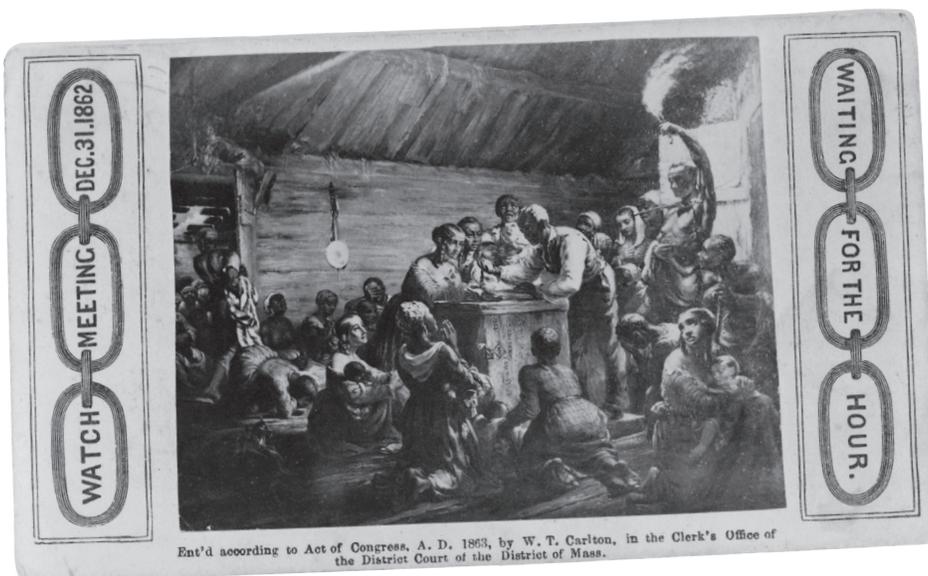
This is photograph is of an un-named freedman in the years immediately after the Civil War (Moses 1864). Note the military cap, which may indicate this man's service in the Union Army. (Photograph Courtesy of Library of Congress, Gladstone Collection of African American Photographs, 2013)

Americans to join the Army and Navy. Many of these African American recruits came from the Georgia coast (Mohr 1986; Wetherington 2005). African Americans were further encouraged to join the Union forces by the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, which declared, "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free," allowing African American men to legally join the Union Army and Navy. Although the Proclamation did not end slavery in the nation, it made millions of African Americans feel hope for the future, and changed the character of the war. By the end of the war, more than 3,500 African American soldiers and sailors from Georgia had fought for the Union and freedom (Mohr 2014).

On June 11, 1863, Colonel James Montgomery (1814-1871) entered Darien with several hundred Union troops, although few townspeople remained at that time. Troops looted and burned approximately 80



houses, 12 stores, and numerous other buildings (Sullivan 1992:295-304). Colonel Montgomery, along with Colonel Robert G. Shaw, was blamed for the destruction. The movie *Glory* (1989) tells the story of Shaw and includes the



This historical image depicts Watch Night, held on December 31, 1862 as a religious service where African Americans and their supporters prayed and watched for signs of deliverance from slavery (Heard & Mosley 1863). The Emancipation Proclamation, that ended slavery and allowed their freedom, was signed on January 1, 1863. (Photograph Courtesy of Library of Congress, Gladstone Collection of African American Photographs, 2013)

burning of Darien. The devastating fire destroyed most of Darien's written records and pre-Civil War buildings.

*Within a few hours all the valuable property... of a movable character, was transferred to the ships. Included in the plunder was a great deal of household equipment, along with livestock, corn, and rice. What could not be carried off was consigned to the flames, for soon the town was put to the torch (New York Daily Tribune 1863).*

On December 21, 1864, Union forces reached Savannah after their long "March to the Sea," which crossed the state from Atlanta to Savannah, passing northeast of Cathead Creek and Darien. In celebration, Union General William T. Sherman (1820-1891) telegraphed President Abraham Lincoln: I beg to present you as a Christmas gift the city of Savannah with 150 heavy guns and plenty of ammunition and also about 25,000 bales of cotton. Soon after, the war ended. In 1865, the 13th Amendment officially outlawed the institution of slavery and people who were formerly enslaved were free.

*I felt like a bird out of a cage. Amen. Amen. Amen. I could hardly ask to feel any better than I did on that day (Houston Holloway, former slave from Georgia recalling the time when slavery ended, in Foner 1988:35).*

#### FORTY ACRES AND A MULE

To solve problems caused by the large number of formerly enslaved people dislocated and looking for work, Union General William T. Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15 from Savannah in January 1865. With this Special Order, General Sherman confiscated approximately 400,000 acres of coastal land stretching from Charleston, South Carolina to near Jacksonville, Florida. Sherman sought to redistribute these coastal



General William T. Sherman's Special Field Order No. 15 proposed providing formerly enslaved African Americans along the coast with 40 acres of "abandoned land" belonging to Confederate plantation owners. The Union Army also discussed providing surplus mules to the freedmen, and hence this order became known as "40 acres and a mule." This promise was not fulfilled, and many African Americans ended up living and working as tenant farmers rather than sharecroppers. (Photograph Courtesy of Library of Congress, Gladstone Collection of African American Photographs, 2013)

plantation lands to African Americans, many of who had flocked to the Union Army's position. This was a plan to give 40 acres of "abandoned lands" to freed families along the coast of Georgia. While the original field order did not mention mules, the idea of providing surplus Union Army mules to freedmen materialized later. The order served two purposes: it provided land where African Americans who had flocked to the Union Army could live, thus removing from the Army the burden of caring for them, and it punished coastal plantation owners, many of whom had served the Confederate Army as officers (Myers 2014).

Eventually over 40,000 formerly enslaved people settled on 40-acre tracts along the southeastern coast of the U.S. This included the barrier islands and the rice fields along the rivers for 30 miles inland from the sea. While the plantations of Cathead Creek would have fallen within these limits, there is no indication that these lands were ever redistributed, as the initial focus was on the sea island plantations. Regardless, these settlements were short-lived, because President Andrew Johnson

reversed Sherman's order less than six months later. Johnson issued special pardons to Confederate rebels, returning much of their land to them. The phrase "40 acres and a mule" has come to symbolize an empty promise (NPS 2005).

*We has a right to the land where we are located. For why? I tell you. Our wives, our children, our husbands has been sold over and over again to purchase the lands we now locates upon; that the reason we have a divine right to the land ... And then didn't we clear the land, and raise the crops of corn, of cotton, of tobacco, of rice, of sugar, of everything? (Wyat 1866).*

After the war, Geechee people acquired land in many ways. Some did receive lands via the Special Field Order, some joined in groups to buy lands, and others claimed land that had been abandoned by the former owners. Geechee formed their own settlements, apart from other free African Americans who worked as tenant farmers on the former plantations. Settlements often began as family compounds, and sometimes these settlements were on lands where the new landowners had previously been enslaved. Bound together by family ties, members of these small communities helped one another through extreme poverty during the years following the war (NPS 2005). Using the resources available to them and living in relative isolation on the sea islands, Geechee people developed a coastal way of life that ensured community unity and self-sufficiency. The Geechee fished, hunted, and undertook their own small-scale farming. These activities provided both food and income. Because of this independence, Geechee people were not subjected to the share cropping system that developed in the post-War era to the same extent as freedmen farther inland (NPS 2005).

## **RECONSTRUCTING A NEW LIFE AFTER WAR**

While the 14th and 15th Amendments adopted in the Constitution in 1868 and 1870 provided African Americans with equal civil and political rights, the abolition of slavery did not end racism, discrimination, and segregation, all of which structured life along Cathead Creek in the Reconstruction era. With its substantial African American population, struggles over the place of African Americans in post-war society dictated the history of McIntosh County in the years after the Civil War.

McIntosh County residents, like most Americans, began the difficult task of trying to put their lives back together following the Civil War. Planters, farmers, merchants, soldiers, former slaves, and others had to negotiate strange new economies, new social relationships, and new ways to make a living. Official "Reconstruction" imposed on southern states by the Federal government occurred from 1865 through 1877, although actual recovery from the war took many more decades. Reconstruction greatly changed Georgia politically, socially, philosophically, and economically (Douglass 1866; Conway 1881; Thompson 1915).

By 1870, the population of McIntosh County had decreased for both whites and African Americans to 4,717 residents. There were 16 percent fewer white residents in the county than 10 years earlier, while the African American population decreased by almost 20 percent. African American inhabitants continued to outnumber white residents, however, with 3,288 African Americans and 1,429 whites living in the county (Blake 2001).

With the end of war, the South had to be rebuilt, both physically and economically. Many buildings, including factories, shops, mills, churches, houses, farms, and plantations, in addition to entire towns like Darien, had been damaged or destroyed during the Civil War. In addition, much of the South's capital had been invested in slaves, and planters did not have the money to rebuild or even to pay freedmen to sustain their large plantations. Many freed slaves had nowhere to go and no money to rent or purchase a place to live.

As a result, a system of sharecropping developed across the South where landowners broke up large plantations into small parcels that African American freedmen farmed in exchange for giving a share of the harvest to the landowner. Landowners provided seed, fertilizer, tools, and other items on credit to the sharecroppers, who were to pay back the costs of those articles with money from their own share of the crop. The system worked against the sharecroppers, who were often cheated out of their fair share of the harvest. Many had to pay unfairly high prices to the plantation owner or at the company store, which put them in perpetual debt. Regardless of the merits or evils of sharecropping, it did change the South. Coastal areas like Cathead Creek were transformed from large plantations to subdivided areas of tenant farms (Douglass 1866; Conway 1881; Thompson 1915). Their landscapes did not change dramatically, as the freedmen and women lived in the old slave quarters and worked upland field locations that had already been cleared. Over time, sharecroppers built their own homes, or had new homes built by the landowner, that were closer to their fields.

Frances Butler Leigh, Pierce Mease Butler, and Fanny Kemble's daughter, traveled to Butler Island with her father after the Civil War and visited the plantation

from time to time for 10 years, from 1866-1876. Like her mother, she kept a journal of her time on the plantation, but unlike her mother, Frances Butler Leigh sided with her father in her views of African Americans (Bell 1987). Quotes from her journal provide us with views of plantation life in the post-Civil War years including the transition of the plantation economy to sharecropping and dealings with the Freedmen's Bureau.

#### THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU

*Such was the work of the Freedmen's Bureau. To sum it up in brief, we may say: it set going a system of free labor; it established the black peasant proprietor; it secured the recognition of black freemen before courts of law; it founded the free public school in the South (Du Bois 1901).*

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, often referred to as the Freedmen's Bureau, was formed by an Act of Congress on March 3, 1865. The Freedmen's Bureau was created to provide food, clothing, fuel, educational opportunities, and advice on getting work with white landowners. Also, with the help of the Bureau, the recently freed African American men began voting, forming political parties, and being more involved in the improvement of their work conditions (Wynnes 1991:225). The Freedmen's Bureau was in charge of all government actions concerning freedmen and was in operation from 1865 until 1872, when it was disbanded, partially in response to an economic depression (Avery 1881; Du Bois 1901). The Freedmen's Bureau members from northern aid societies tried to report and stop abuse of freed slaves in the years following the war. Many of these attempts were unsuccessful, however, as most southern states had few laws and little interest in protecting African Americans or ensuring their rights. Many freed slaves



The Freedmen's Bureau was established to help African Americans after the Civil War. One of the things the Bureau provided was education. This photograph by Samuel Cooley (1862) shows African Americans at a school on Edisto Island, South Carolina, around 1865. (Photograph Courtesy of Library of Congress, Gladstone Collection of African American Photographs, 2013)

faced dishonesty in business dealings, threats, physical abuse, and even murder.

*We had, before leaving the North, received two letters from Georgia, one from an agent of the Freedmen's Bureau, and the other from one of our neighbours, both stating very much the same thing, which was that our former slaves had all returned to the island and were willing and ready to work for us, but refused to engage themselves to anyone else, even to their liberators, the Yankees; but that they were very badly off; short of provisions, and would starve if something were not done for them at once, and, unless my father came directly (so wrote the agent of the Freedmen's Bureau), the negroes would be removed and made to work elsewhere... my father ... reported that he had found the negroes all on the place, not only those who were there five years ago, but many who were sold three years before that. Seven had worked their way back from the up country. They received him very affectionately, and made an agreement with him to work for one half the crop... (Frances Butler Leigh 1883:14-15).*

*[1867] My father reported the negroes on Butler's Island as working very well, although requiring constant supervision. That they should be working well is a favourable sign of their improved steadiness, for, as last year's crop is not yet sold, no division has been possible. So they have begun a second year, not having yet been paid for the first, and meanwhile they are allowed to draw what food, clothing, and money they want, all of which I fear will make trouble when the day of settlement comes, but it is pleasant to see how completely they trust us.*

*On both places the work is done on the old system, by task. We tried working by the day, indeed I think we were obliged to do so by the agent of the Freedmen's Bureau, to whom all our contracts had to be submitted, but we found it did not answer at all, the negroes themselves begging to be allowed to go back to the old task system. One man indignantly asked Major D - what the use of being free was, if he had to work harder than when he was a slave (Frances Butler Leigh 1883:54-56).*

## THE BLACK CODES AND RECONSTRUCTION

Freed slaves faced discriminatory treatment following the Civil War as politicians throughout the southern states created a series of laws known as the Black Codes. The Black Codes were intended to limit the freedom of former slaves and compel them to work for low wages or in positions they did not want (Moore and Mitchell 2006). Not only did whites want to control former slaves, but they also needed them as laborers. The Black Codes did both of these things, by regulating personal rights and by restricting legal rights.

Laws were different in each state but all had a common feature; the Black Codes forced freedmen to work. In many states, African Americans without jobs could be arrested and charged with vagrancy. For those that did work, the Black Codes dictated how many hours they worked, the tasks they did, and the behavior expected of them as agricultural workers. The codes did not allow former slaves to own guns, knives, or any weapon. They regulated marriages, the right to hold and sell property, and mobility in public spaces. The codes redefined vagrancy and forced African Americans to have annual labor contracts to avoid vagrancy charges. Essentially, the Black Codes defined freed slaves solely as agricultural laborers.

Penalties for virtually all lawbreaking were far harsher for African Americans than for whites. Many penalties resulted in involuntary labor of the convicted and often of the children of those convicted. They allowed the state to put an African American to death if they encouraged rebellion or were accused of raping a white woman. The Black Codes also allowed police to arrest African Americans and sentence them to forced labor for up to a year. Whether they were called Slave Codes

(pre-1865), Black Codes (1865-1875), or later, Jim Crow Laws (1876-1967), they were a group of laws meant to separate, degrade, and oppress African Americans (Moore and Mitchell 2006). Historian W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963) and his students created a handwritten list of the Georgia Black Codes for the 1900 Georgia Negro Exhibit in Paris, France, to demonstrate how the law had specifically been used to discriminate against African American people. Three hundred pages of legal material were copied out by hand. Du Bois included a list of these laws he had collected by that date in his classic book, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade* (Du Bois 1896).



William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B.) Du Bois was the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard University and became a professor of history, sociology, and economics at Atlanta University. Du Bois and his students researched and published on the conditions of African Americans in the late 19th-century South. Du Bois also promoted equal rights and civil rights as a leader of the Niagara Movement. Du Bois was a co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NAACP, which was founded in 1909.

After the Civil War, President Andrew Johnson supported a moderate reconstruction that would return the rights of citizenry to the former Confederates and limit the rights of the freedmen. However, the Radical Republicans opposed this approach, and with anger over the Black Codes and other southern actions, the Radicals took control of Congress in 1866. This initiated the "Radical" period of Reconstruction during which the former Confederate states were placed back under military rule. During this period, the Federal government controlled the laws and legislatures of the southern states and removed former Confederates from office, with the objective of imposing Civil Rights on the South. Under Radical Reconstruction, African Americans were given the right to vote and hold office (NPS 2013, Coleman 1976:69-75).

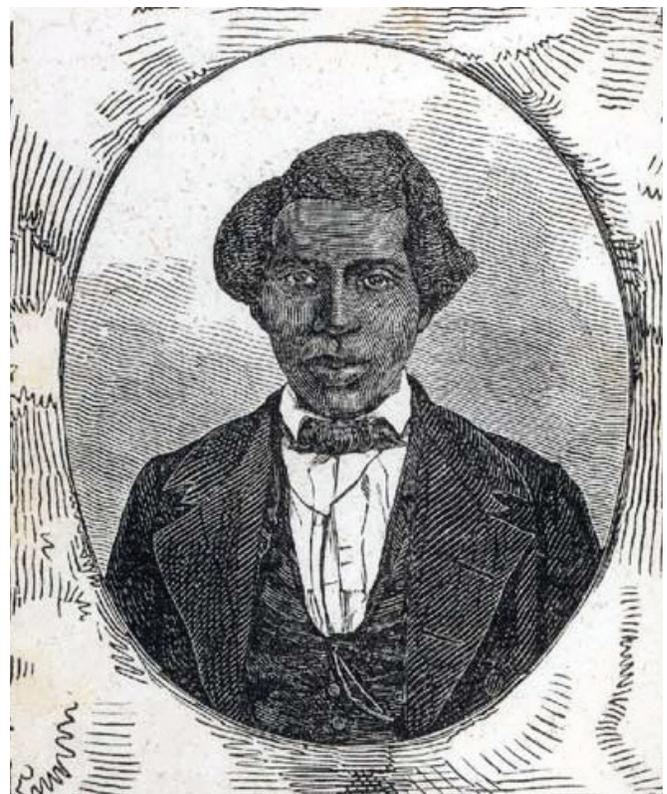
#### A CHANCE FOR CHANGE

African Americans had more political power in the years immediately following the Civil War than they would for the next half a century or more. African Americans appeared in state politics to a greater degree during this period. In 1868, 28 African Americans were elected to the Georgia legislature. State Senators and House of Representative members attempted to expel the new officials. The following year, the Georgia State Supreme Court reinstated the African American legislators (NPS 2013). The Federal government's passage of the 15th Amendment in 1869 stated that the right to vote was not abridged based on "race, color, or previous condition of servitude." This and other measures by the Federal government enabled some African Americans to be elected to local, state, and national offices. White Georgians remained defiant, however, and the State legislature voted against ratifying the 15th Amendment.

This resulted in Federal military rule of Georgia until the legislature passed the 15th Amendment, in 1870, after which time the state was readmitted to the Union (NPS 2013). In 1870, Jefferson Franklin Long of Macon, formerly a slave, was elected to the U.S. Congress as Georgia's first and only African American elected during Reconstruction (Avoice 2013).

#### TUNIS G. CAMPBELL

Locally, Tunis G. Campbell (1812-1891) became the first African American state politician elected by McIntosh County. Tunis G. Campbell was one of the most noted African American politicians during Reconstruction in Georgia. He would become one of the highest-ranking politicians in the state, and drew white scorn as a carpetbagger who relocated to Georgia after the



Sketch of Tunis Campbell from his 1848 book *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide*.

Civil War. Born in New Jersey to free African American parents in 1812, Campbell attended a white school in New York. As a student, Campbell trained to be a missionary with the notion of working with the American Colonization Society's efforts to transport African Americans to Liberia to create an African American colony.

After graduation, Campbell joined the Methodist Church, preached against slavery, and established schools. In 1832, he vowed to "never leave this country until every slave on American soil was free" (Duncan 1986, 2014). He sometimes appeared with the famous writer and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, and he became nationally recognized as a result.

After the Freedmen's Bureau was established in 1865, Campbell was sent to Georgia to supervise land claims and assist African American settlement on five Georgia islands: Ossabaw, Delaware, Colonels, St. Catherines, and Sapelo. He moved to St. Catherines Island and started a community of freed African Americans while serving with the Freedmen's Bureau. After leaving the Bureau in 1866, Campbell started a similar community of African American freeholders on 1,250 acres at the former BelleVille Plantation in McIntosh County located near the present community of Crescent, about 8.4 miles up coast from Cathead Creek. Campbell maintained that BelleVille's owner, Charles H. Hopkins, agreed to sell him the plantation under a "rent-to-own" plan at a price of \$14.50 per acre (Sullivan 1992:333). Campbell divided the property into parcels for farms as well as to sell and make profits from the land (Duncan 1986, 2014). However, in 1871 Hopkins disputed the "sale" of the property, maintaining he had only agreed to lease

it to Campbell, and the courts agreed with Hopkins, returning the land to him (Sullivan 1992:333-334).

As vice president of the Republican Party in Georgia, Tunis Campbell worked to register African American voters. African American voters helped him win elections as a justice of the peace as well as State senator from the Second District, which included Liberty, McIntosh, and Tattnall counties, in 1868. As a senator in the Georgia legislature from 1868 to 1874 and as a representative from 1874 to 1875, Tunis Campbell fought for laws for equal education, fair voting, and a variety of other measures of importance to African Americans. Campbell also organized African Americans in McIntosh County to protect freed people from white abuses (Duncan 2014). His actions led to conflict with whites, and in response, he formed an African American militia of 300 people that guarded him and other African Americans from the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). The KKK was formed during Reconstruction as a white supremacist group that challenged African American rights through violence and intimidation. Despite the protection offered by the African American militia, Campbell's home was burned and his family was routinely threatened (Duncan 2014).

The Democrats regained state power in 1871 and began efforts to end Reconstruction. In 1875, Georgia Governor James Smith appointed Henry Thompkins, a Confederate veteran, as McIntosh County judge and Smith in turn filed false arrest charges against Campbell for an arrest he had made as justice of the peace in 1873. Tunis Campbell was convicted by a jury of 11 whites and one African American, was arrested, and sent to jail in Chatham County. On his arrest, Campbell was removed from the Georgia legislature. He was released on bail

and returned to McIntosh County, where he was then indicted by a Grand Jury for malpractice in office and false imprisonment and again arrested and placed in jail. Hundred of African Americans surrounded the McIntosh County Courthouse demanding his release, but he was convicted and sent to a convict labor camp for one year (Sullivan 1992:337-338; Duncan 2014). Following his release, he left the state and met with U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes (1822-1893; President 1877-1881) to discuss his treatment in Georgia. He later wrote a book, *Sufferings of the Reverend T. G. Campbell and His Family in Georgia* (Campbell 1877). Tunis Campbell died in Boston in 1891 (Duncan 2014).

Reconstruction came to an end in 1877 with the election of Rutherford Hayes and a new U.S. Congress. Democrats, who opposed Reconstruction, gained control of the House of Representatives in that year and agreed to support the Republican candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, as President if the Republicans agreed to remove Federal troops from the southern states and end Reconstruction, which they did (Coleman 1976:69-75). With the removal of the Federal military, the Reconstruction era was brought to an end and the economy of McIntosh County and Cathead Creek began its recovery from the impact of the war.

## CHANGING ECONOMIES

The second half of the 19th century saw massive economic changes to the Cathead Creek area, Darien, and McIntosh County. Changes in the workforce, the cost of doing business, and competition from other markets brought about economic changes. These resulted in new and different sources of revenue. The



These are examples of timber tools found during archaeological studies of Ceylon and Sidon Plantations. The axe is an American felling axe and likely had a wooden handle made at the Altamaha Woodworking Company, a plant built at Kell's Landing outside Darien that specialized in axe handles. The other tool is a turpentine puller, which was used to strip bark off a pine tree to allow sap to run so it could be collected in jars. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

natural environment, however, did not change so drastically. Cathead Creek and its riverine environment continued to be a stable ecosystem. The Geechee and other African Americans continued to use its bountiful food, medicinal, and transportation resources, perhaps more than ever before. On Windy Hill plantation, former plantation slaves purchased land and created their own farms. As a result, the settlement pattern shifted from a concentration of plantation buildings and homes to dispersed farm homes, fields, and houses (Matternes 2013:10). Others who could not afford their own land worked as tenant farmers on the former plantation lands of Cathead Creek.

The burning of Darien by Union troops ironically provided some employment, as there was a need for workers to rebuild the town's waterfront district, docks, and shipyards. Darien's rebuilding was successful, as evidenced by an 1892 city directory that listed businesses and residents of Darien. The directory listed numerous tradespeople, shops, and businesses occupying Darien (Sullivan 1992:350). In addition to the Darien Bank and a newspaper, the town by this time had clothing stores, inns, horse stables, and steamboat companies. A jeweler, baker, saloonkeeper, cashier, sheriff, merchant, lawyer, druggist, butcher, postmaster, and doctor provided necessary and useful services. These professionals were rounded out by a number of preachers, a high school principal, and – because of the growing importance of timber – a number of lumber merchants and turpentine manufacturers (Sullivan 1992:350).

#### FROM RICE FIELDS TO TIMBERLANDS

Rice cultivation continued following the Civil War, but it experienced a serious and continual decline for several reasons. In the 1870s, the vast majority of McIntosh County's laborers were African American, who had previously been enslaved. Some of these former slaves continued to provide labor to the rice fields but now as paid laborers. However, planters had difficulty in paying for the level of labor done previously under slavery. Other freedmen found opportunities for paid labor that was not involved in rice agriculture. This resulted in an overall smaller labor force. These and other factors contributed to a decrease in revenues and a decline in rice production (Sullivan 1992:332-354).

John Girardeau Legare (pronounced Lagree) (1852-1932) came to Darien in 1877 from South Carolina and managed rice plantations at Generals Island and

Champneys. From 1877 until his death in 1925, Legare kept a journal of his observations on the gradual decline of the rice industry in Darien and its development as a center for timber exports (Sullivan 2012). Similar to the diaries of Fanny Kemble and her daughter Frances Butler Leigh, his journal is a valuable first person account of life in the region. Unlike the earlier journals, however, Legare documents the end of a way of life – the era of rice cultivation.

At the peak of rice production in 1859, plantations in the McIntosh County produced over six million pounds of rice. Sixty years later, in 1919, they produced only 177,570 pounds (Stewart 1996:194). By 1920, rice was no longer an important economic factor in McIntosh County (Stewart 1996:194; Sullivan 2008). This led to a shift from an economy focused on agriculture to silviculture. Timber planting and harvesting, lumber processing, and turpentine production made up the new economy of McIntosh County.

*I will make an effort to quit rice planting after this year. It is hard to have to give up a pleasant occupation followed for 15 years, but I see no help for it (diary of John Legare: July 29, 1893 in Sullivan 2012).*

#### TIMBER AND FOREST INDUSTRIES

Timber cutting and land clearing in the Altamaha delta began with the area's first settlement. After the Civil War, however, timber cutting and lumber production became the new money-making operation of coastal Georgia. Between 1870 and 1900, Darien became an international timber port and a leading exporter of pine. Even the name of the town newspaper in this era (1874-1893), the *Darien Timber Gazette*, highlights the town's focus on the timber industry (Sullivan 1992:844). During the lumber boom, railroads increased in the



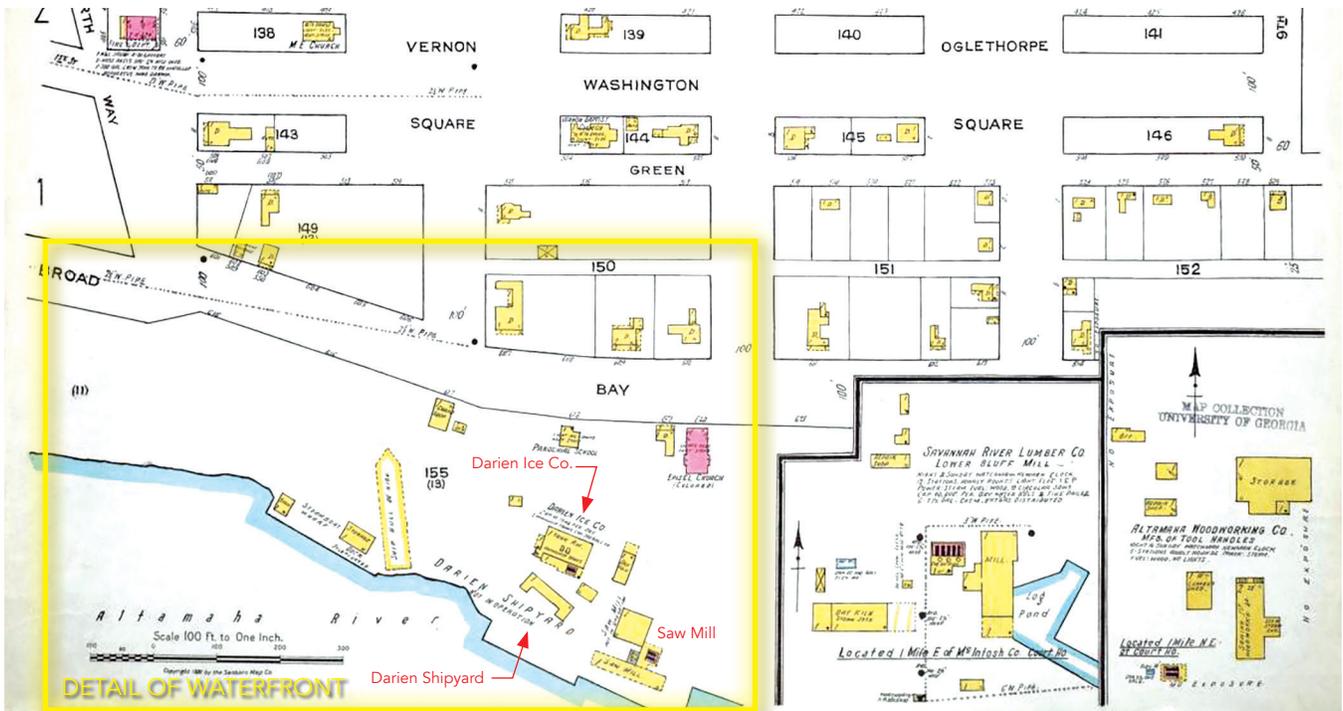
Timber dogs were iron rings that were pinned to logs to allow them to be roped or chained together and floated down river as log rafts. Also known as lumber, rafting, or wood dogs, these examples were recovered from archaeological studies by the Golden Isles Archaeological Society at Ceylon and Sidon Plantations on Cathead Creek. Their recovery indicates that the plantations were involved in timber production after rice agriculture had come to an end. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

county, providing more business opportunities, better transportation, and faster communication (Sullivan 2013).

*I find it impossible to get hands. The lumber people are paying common laborers from \$1.25 to \$2.50 pr. Day & rations and the negroes will not therefore work for me for 75 cents pr. Day and so not much has been accomplished so far (diary of John Legare: Oct 18, 1898, in Sullivan 2012).*

At the same time that the timber industry prospered in McIntosh County, naval stores and shipyards enjoyed similar success. People found work associated with a shipping-based, maritime culture. African Americans could get work in sawmills, as boat builders, as ship captains moving timber, as dockworkers known as

This detailed Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1920, shows a section of the Darien waterfront including the location of the Darien Ice Company and a saw mill. Ice was critical to the success of the shrimping industry, since it allowed shrimpers to travel farther and catch and refrigerate more shrimp before returning to port. By 1920 the timber industry in Darien was in decline – the note on the Sanborn map indicates that the saw mill and the shipyard are “NOT IN OPERATION.”





stevedores, and loading timber onto ships. Additional lighthouses were built around Sapelo Island to facilitate increased marine traffic and larger steamboats. Because steamboats had larger cargo capacities, the docks and warehouses along Darien's waterfront were expanded in size, number, and capacity (Sullivan 1992:432; 2013).

Timber was cut inland and floated down coastal creeks and rivers to port cities and lumber yards such as those in Darien, where wood could be made into timber and shipped to other locations. The felled trees were lashed together into rafts for the trip down river. Huge rafts made of pine and cypress felled in Georgia's interior were floated down the Oconee, Ocmulgee, and Altamaha rivers. Some of these 200x100-foot wide timber rafts completed their journeys at sawmills in Darien. After the raw wood was cut into lumber, it was loaded onto boats bound for Europe, Asia, and South

Timber was floated down Cathead Creek to Darien for cutting and processing and then loaded onto boats for shipment to other ports in the U.S. and abroad. This photograph shows lumber being loaded onto a schooner (Detroit Publishing Co. 1900). Savannah and Darien were Georgia's major ports for the shipment of lumber in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. (Photograph Courtesy of Library of Congress, Detroit Publishing Company Photograph Collection 2013)

America. Some of the lumber was also used for building structures in Darien and in other parts of the country (Sullivan 1992). The area timbering industry reached its greatest production in 1900, when more than 100 million linear board feet of timber and cut lumber were shipped out of Darien.

The former plantations of Cathead Creek were part of this new economy, which shifted its emphasis from the marshland rice fields to the upland pine forests. This industry, silviculture, operated with paid employees but in other ways mimicked the earlier plantation landscape. For example, Windy Hill plantation in the early 20th century had a sawmill, tram lines to move cut lumber from the forests to the mill, housing quarters, and a

commissary (Matternes 2013:10). Lumber was shipped down stream along Cathead Creek, like rice had been transported in the previous century. The rice fields themselves remained untouched.

The timber industry also provided jobs in factories for local African Americans. African American Henry Todd established the San Savilla Union Sawmill and employed African Americans from Cathead Creek and other locations to work in his mill. As the settlement grew it became known as Mentionville, named for members of the Mention family who worked at the San Savilla Union Mill. Todd died in 1886, leaving money for an African American school in his will and James Grant, an African American educator, established the Todd-Grant Industrial School in 1930 with these funds and support from the Julius Rosenwald Fund (Cyriaque 2003). While this school no longer stands, Todd-Grant Elementary School stands on its grounds. The school is located on the west side of Darien approximately 1,000 feet from Cathead Creek.

Production declined over the next several years, negatively affecting Darien, however, as the supply of timber from upriver was reduced due to over-harvesting and as other forests to the west surpassed Georgia's production (Sullivan 2013).

As timberlands along the Gulf Coast were developed, business directly and indirectly associated with the industry lost revenue and the opportunity for future work. One by one the timber business failed, and in 1916, the last of Darien's big sawmills, the Hilton and Dodge Lumber Company, went bankrupt (Sullivan 1992:590, 2013). Real estate investors purchased land once held by timber companies, some for use grazing cattle and others for speculation (Sullivan 1992:589-592). Smaller industries, including seafood processing and small-scale farming, provided other economic opportunities. This commerce contributed to a "Golden Age" of Geechee economic self-sufficiency, relative freedom from the outside world, and artistic growth (NPS 2005).



Oystering became an important part of McIntosh County's economy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Oysters were pulled with rakes or tongs from oyster beds and piled on the decks of bateaux's for shipment to port and market. (Photograph Courtesy of Library of Congress, National Child Labor Committee Photograph Collection 2013)

## OYSTERS

By the end of the 19th century and the early days of the 20th century, Darien's economy had begun to shift its emphasis to commercial fishing, including oysters, shrimp, and crabs. In 1889, investigations by J.C. Drake on behalf of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey revealed huge oyster beds along the Georgia coast, particularly in the McIntosh County waters and marshes near Sapelo Island (Sullivan 2008). By 1905, large numbers of wooden oyster sloops and bateaux were collecting shellfish from local waters during the winter harvesting season. Oyster canneries developed and some became large-scale operations. In addition to Darien, the busiest canneries in McIntosh County operated at Cedar Point, Harris Neck, Sapelo Island, and Valona (Sullivan 2008). It was a boom time for the local economy, and from 1880-1910, McIntosh County oyster harvests were among the largest in the world. Men using long-handled tongs grasped and removed oysters from their muddy beds. The oystermen would fill their small bateaux and unload the oysters into 50-foot sloops. The sloops would transport the harvest to canneries, where workers would shuck and can the oysters (Sullivan 2008).

Coastal Georgia was a leader in the processing of oysters in the first decades of the 20th century. However, the oyster industry went into a long decline after the early 1900s. By 1978, the harvest in McIntosh County totaled only 38,000 pounds. The decline was mostly blamed on overharvesting, although disease is another reason for the loss of healthy oyster beds (Sullivan 2008). To add to their incomes, commercial fishermen in McIntosh County also started harvesting blue crabs and whelks (Sullivan 2008).

*To tell the story of this region, it is necessary to tell of boats. Not necessarily fancy or large craft, just plain, get-from-here-to there boats that could live with the mud, the oyster rakes, the narrow tidal creeks, and the short, choppy seas of the sounds, and would be simple and cheap to build and operate... (Fleetwood 1995).*

## SHRIMPING

As the oyster beds were declining, a new commercial fishing economy developed – shrimping. Boats with large trawling nets caught shrimp off the coastal waters of Georgia. The use of ice and refrigeration, as well as shipping by train, increased the non-local demand for shrimp. The Fernandina, Florida area became the shrimp capital of the Atlantic coast, and the popularity of shrimp soon spread north to Georgia. The invention



Shrimp joined oysters as part of Darien's commercial fishery economy and by the mid-20th century, Darien and Brunswick were major seafood markets in Georgia. (Photograph Courtesy of Library of Congress, Carnegie Survey of the Architecture of the South Collection 2013)

of diesel engines, better nets, and custom-made shrimp boats increased harvests and profits (Sullivan 2008).

The Darien shrimp industry began to develop by 1920. The growing involvement of local African Americans as well as Portuguese migrants from Fernandina helped support this industry. Darien and Brunswick evolved into successful seafood markets. By the 1940s, the Georgia shrimping industry was a key component of the coastal economy (Sullivan 2008).

### OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME

In addition to the timber and fishing economies, many African Americans and whites added to their tables and pocketbooks by farming small plots. African Americans and whites continued small-scale local agriculture that had begun in the plantation era. This became known as truck farming since trucks brought this produce to market. In addition to produce, African Americans supplied town markets with eggs, fowl, and dairy products (Stewart 1996:198). Many of the African Americans along Cathead Creek were truck farmers.

In addition to truck farming, African Americans in the tidewater region supplemented their diet and income in other ways. This included hunting or trapping an assortment of animals such as deer, turkey, opossum, raccoons, squirrels, and rabbits. African Americans gathered Spanish moss, wild berries, deer's tongue, and queen's root to sell in local markets (Stewart 1996:199).

They harvested palmetto leaves, seagrass, pine needles, and white oak to make baskets. African Americans continued the tradition of making products and craft items of clay, cloth, wood, or iron. Artistic expression was possible in basketry, woodworking, metalworking, and in making cast nets, quilts, and other items. These talents provided additional ways to earn a living, be successful, and start the new millennium of the 20th century.



Building on traditions developed in the plantation era, Cathead Creek's African American community grew crops; hunted and fished; and made crafts including baskets, pottery, quilts, carvings, and iron working to sell at market. (Photograph Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, 2013)

# VI. The Great Migration, Civil Rights, and the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century



Between 1915 and the 1970s, approximately six million African Americans left the South as part of the Great Migration and moved to the West, Midwest, and Northeastern United States (Halpern 2005). This movement was mainly to major cities like New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Kansas City, St. Louis, San Diego, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. The migration began slowly, but increased quickly so that by the 1920s, about 555,000 African Americans had left the South (Wilkerson 2010).

*Our authorities do not realize how nearly dead the town is – we have lost about 600 inhabitants since the census of 1910, and the houses are going to ruin... (diary of John Legare: June 5, 1920 referring of Darien in Sullivan 2012).*

## SOUTHERN EXODUS

African Americans left the South for a number of reasons. One was that racial discrimination, segregation, and violence all increased during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The birth of the modern KKK led to an increase in violence against African Americans (Grossman 1989). Even though African Americans were free, Jim Crow laws limited their rights and freedoms. Jim Crow was the name of an African American character in a minstrel show portrayed by a white actor in “black face” makeup (Moore and Mitchell 2006). During the Jim Crow era, African Americans were forced to sit in the back of buses, drink from water coolers marked “Colored Only,” and could not sit or be served at drugstore counters. Schools, facilities, equipment, and public places provided for African Americans were

inferior to those used by whites. Many African Americans were still denied the right to vote, in violation of the 14th Amendment. African Americans were not permitted to mix with whites to enjoy music or engage in other social settings (Grant 1993; Tuck 2001). Under these conditions, African Americans sought better treatment in other parts of the nation.

A second reason for the migration was the inability of sharecroppers to earn enough income. This problem worsened with the boll weevil epidemic that hit cotton in the late 1910s. Yet, a third reason for the mass exodus of African Americans from the South was the rise of northern industrialism. The expansion of factories in the North, Midwest, and West offered stable paying jobs. The Great Migration served to decrease the South’s population and brought African Americans into cities across the country in record numbers (Grossman 1989).

Pulitzer Prize winning historian Isabel Wilkerson (2010:9) in her book, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration* described the Great



African Americans left the South during the Great Migration, traveling to cities in the northeast, Midwest, and west in search of jobs and to escape violence and repression. This photograph by Woodward (State Archives of Florida 1921) shows a crowded segregated African American waiting room at the Jacksonville, Florida, train station in 1912. (Photograph Courtesy of State Archives of Florida, 2013)

Migration as a "silent pilgrimage...It was vast. It was leaderless". Unlike the well-known African Americans who had fought to end slavery, or the Civil Rights leaders that followed, the Great Migration did not require leaders. Instead, it occurred because millions of people made personal choices to seek a better life.

While many African Americans wanted to leave the South, white landowners did not want them to leave. Landowners were dependent on African American tenants to work in their fields, and as tenants left the region, fields were abandoned and farmers lost income. Those African Americans wanting to leave usually sold off their belongings slowly and kept travel plans secret to keep white landowners and employers from stopping them from leaving (Wilkerson 2010:216-217).

*Everybody seems to be asleep about what is going on right under our noses. That is, everybody but those farmers who have wakened up on mornings recently to find every negro over 21 on his place gone – to Cleveland, to Pittsburgh, to Chicago, to Indianapolis...*

*We must have the Negro in the South (Macon Telegraph, September 15, 1916).*

Travelers in the Great Migration caught the main rail and bus lines north from southern states. To avoid being stopped, some people bought tickets to cities that were not too far away and later bought a long distance ticket in a town where no one knew them. Travelers were crowded into waiting rooms at rail stations across Georgia, as the state had multiple rail lines that led to cities in other places. Southern states and cities passed Anti-Enticement Laws to stop northern and midwestern cities from trying to offer work opportunities. The police and local authorities in many southern cities interfered with migrating African Americans. Trains were often stopped at stations and dozens of African Americans were removed to keep them from leaving the region. Today, many people believe that these measures had the opposite effect on the Great Migration – instead of stopping it, they made people even more determined to leave (Wilkerson 2010:162-165).

Darien was not immune to the Great Migration. The town's population in 1900 was 1,739 residents, which included 304 whites and 1,435 African Americans. By 1930, however, the town had only 937 people, including 432 whites and 505 African Americans, remaining. This staggering 54 percent loss in population resulted in large part from the Great Migration (Sullivan 2013) as the African American population declined by 930 individuals over this period while the white population actually increased by 128.

*Parents were glad to help you go somewhere but don't live here -- go somewhere. So I went to Washington, D.C. with my uncle and brother (Griffin Lotson 2012).*

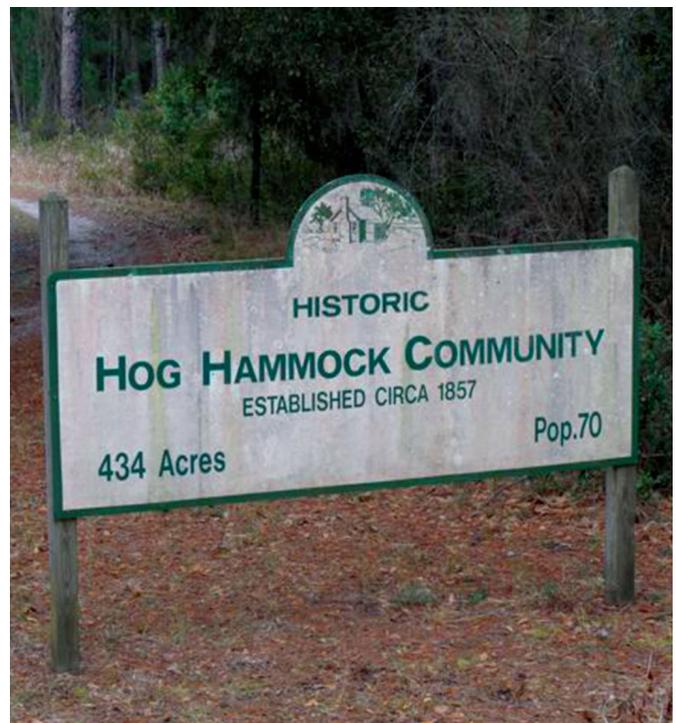
## CHANGES IN DARIEN AND MCINTOSH COUNTY

By 1925, McIntosh County had a number of roads, most of which were dirt thoroughfares. During 1936-1938, a major road-paving project was completed on the Shell Road from Darien to Meridian, Georgia. Named U.S. 99, the road went through Crescent, Eulonia, and to the crossroad at Atlantic Coastal Highway (U.S. 17). In 1943, the bridge over the South Altamaha River was completed, linking McIntosh and Glynn counties (Sullivan 1992). The construction of roads and bridges linking McIntosh County to other places along the coast proved critical as the nation entered World War II.

After the 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii by the Japanese, World War II brought significant changes to the Georgia coast. The need for defending America from outside attacks during the war can be seen in this quote from the *McIntosh County News*:

*Let us not get caught napping...It would be a pity, indeed, if our homes are destroyed and many of us killed by bombs simply because we failed to heed these simple instructions. Remember Pearl Harbor and do your part (McIntosh County News, January 1, 1942).*

One area of change occurred in the community of Harris Neck in McIntosh County, 20 miles northeast of Cathead Creek. African Americans had settled this area at the end of the Civil War, in accordance with General William Sherman's Field Order 15. In 1942, the U.S. government acquired lands in the Harris Neck area to build airstrips to defend the coast from aerial attack. Land acquisition included 1,200 acres of privately owned land. The government took this land and destroyed existing houses and other buildings prior to building a large airbase, which was known as the Harris Neck



This photograph by Cathy Gunn (2010) shows the entry to the historic African American community of Hog Hammock on Sapelo Island. African American communities like this developed in McIntosh County after the Civil War, although many have come to an end due to pressure from development and increases in property taxes. (Photograph Courtesy of Cathy Gunn, 2014)

Army Airfield (Sullivan 1992: NPS 2005). People living there had to move immediately. In a matter of months, the community of Harris Neck ceased to exist. African Americans who were displaced from Harris Neck and other coastal locations would have moved to existing communities, such as the African American community along Cathead Creek. Cathead Creek was otherwise untouched by the war.

*...even though there [was] a lot of vacant land all around Harris Neck the local government convinced the federal government to take Harris Neck...but my grandfather owned over 100 acres of land. It was very difficult...they gave my mom and them two weeks to move (Wilson Moran 2012).*

*...that's why we huddled up on this little twenty acres, a bunch of families on twenty acres of property... We were treated like cattle, out here in a pine woods (Mary Moran 2012).*

During World War II, the young men and some young women of McIntosh County went to war, while other older county residents found work at the new Naval Air Station (Glynco) in Brunswick. There was also military activity around Townsend, 10 miles to the northeast where a bomb testing range was established (Sullivan 1992:735).

The end of World War II led to a post-war economic boom. The strong economy, the completion of highways, and the invention of air conditioning led to an increase in the population of the South, as well as increasing construction along the Georgia coast, as middle class residents purchased second homes for vacation residences. Demand for real estate led to displacement of African Americans from a number of communities, including settlements at Raccoon Bluff, Lumber Landing, Belle Marsh, Hanging Bull, and Shell Hammock areas

of Sapelo Island. Residents of these communities were forcibly resettled into the Hog Hammock area in the south-central part of the island (Bailey 2000; NPS 2005).

Darien's population grew in the post war years as well, although not much beyond what it had been in 1900. Darien's downtown businesses were successful and continued to grow. The local grocery at the corner of U.S. 17 and Broad Street reflected local prices and commodities in 1953:

*Premium bacon, 69 cents a pound; Premium coffee, 69 cents a pound; Peppy Dog Food, 3 cans for 25 cents; Hellman's mayonnaise, 59 cents a quart; Holsum and Claussen's bread, 15 cents a loaf; Fresh local medium eggs, 59 cents a dozen; Fresh Fryers, 49 cents a pound; Oil Sausage, 39 cents for 1 ½ lb. can (Darien News 1953).*

While the mid-twentieth century was a period of prosperity and calm in McIntosh County, the seeds of change were blowing in the winds of history. African American veterans, who had served the military with distinction in World War II, sought treatment as equals at home and in times of peace. This would lead to the Civil Rights Movement and a new era in history.

## **THE CHITLIN' CIRCUIT AND MENTIONVILLE**

With the emergence of the automobile in the early 20th century, African American musicians journeyed throughout the South and the North on what was called the Chitlin' Circuit (Lauterbach 2011). During the era of Jim Crow, African Americans in Georgia were kept from playing music or seeing performances at white theatres. For that reason, some African Americans opened their own theatres from the 1930s on to host a variety of acts



Ray Charles Robinson, best known as Ray Charles, was born in Albany while Richard Wayne Penniman, know by his stage name, "Little Richard," was a fellow Georgian born in Macon. They, and other African American musicians, played the "Chitlin' Circuit," a series of clubs and venues in the northeast, south, and west that catered to African Americans and provided African American rhythm and blues, soul, and jazz performers. Jake's Place in Mentionville was a stop on the Chitlin' Circuit. (Photograph by Victor Diaz Lamich, 2008)

and all types of music. In many towns, these theatres were the only form of entertainment that was not controlled by the white community.

Many African American performers traveled from town to town on the Chitlin' Circuit to sing, dance, and entertain. It provided places for African Americans to enjoy food and music that developed in the South during the days of slavery. The Chitlin' Circuit got its name from "chitlins" or "chitterlings," which are pigs' intestines cooked in a variety of ways. Chitlins became known as "soul food," first cooked long ago when enslaved southerners were given leftover meat scraps by plantation owners. Just as jazz music is often said to be America's homegrown music, chitlins and soul food were created in the South by African Americans and evolved with limited European influence (Poland 2010).

By the 1960s, the circuit provided African American areas of the American South with contemporary rhythm and blues (R&B) artists specializing in traditional soul music

(Lauterbach 2011). The Chitlin' Circuit showcased many Georgia natives including Ma' Rainey, Gladys Knight and The Pips, Ray Charles, Otis Redding, Little Richard, and James Brown. While many of these performers became famous on the northern circuit at the Apollo Theater in New York, the Fox Theatre in Detroit, and the Regal Theatre in Chicago, they began their careers in Georgia. Other non-Georgians included Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Lena Horne, and B.B. King. Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding, The Supremes, The Temptations, and Muddy Waters played the Chitlin Circuit as well.

In the early 20th century, Georgia had the second greatest number of African American-owned theatres (behind only Texas) in the nation. These included the Royal Peacock in Atlanta, the Morton Theatre in Athens, and the Douglass Theatre in Macon (Lauterbach 2011). While most of the well-known theatres in Georgia were in large cities, some smaller towns offered entertainment establishments. One of the stops on the southern leg of the Chitlin' Circuit, Jake's Place, was located in Darien along the edge of Cathead Creek (Poland 2010).

#### JAKE'S PLACE

Jake's Place was a popular stop on the Chitlin' Circuit. Established sometime in the 1940s, and recently closed, Jake's Place hosted a number of noted African American musicians and performers who came through town to play there. The list includes B.B. King, James Brown, Little Richard, Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding, Muddy Waters, and the Temptations, as well as many other lesser-known bands. Variety acts performed at Jake's Place as well, such as a dancing couple known as "Hot Pop and Cool Mama." There were several Chitlin' Circuit stops along



Jake's Place was located in Mentionville in the Cathead Creek District. Established by Jake Mention in the 1940s, Jakes Place hosted many notable African American musicians and was the hub of the African American community of Mentionville. In the 1950s and 1960s, there was a baseball field across the street for Jake's, where teams from Brunswick, Blackshear, and Savannah came to play. (Photograph Courtesy of the Jacksonville Times Union, 2009)

the coast, which made them popular with entertainers. These included the Ritz Theater in Jacksonville and several juke joints on Amelia Island, near the historically black community of American Beach (Johnson 2007).

*It would start, Lord have mercy, on Friday night. They traveled in those big Greyhound buses, and you would see the names on the side of the buses, like 'James Brown Revue' (Margie Washington, quoted in Johnson 2007)*

*Miss Melinda used to cook collard greens. She was Jake's mom. We called her 'Ma Linda (Cornel Hawkins, quoted in Johnson 2007).*

Jake's Place, opened by Jake Mention in the 1940s, was in Mentionville, along Cathead Creek and was owned by various members of the Mention family, who were prominent and active in the African American Mentionville community until it closed in 2009. Jake's niece, Priscilla Mention Jones grew up around Jake's Place, became a cook at the restaurant at age 15. Prior to that she worked in her grandmother's nearby restaurant, Stella's Café, starting at age 11 (Johnson 2007).

*He [Uncle Jake] loved the people and he didn't have no problems. He had a bat because the sheriff, Tom Poppell, used to tell him, 'If you can't run it, shut it up.' That's what he used to tell him (Priscilla Mention Jones, quoted in Johnson 2007).*

## THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

African American veterans returned to the U.S. to discover that their service in World War II had not changed southern segregation and attitudes. Their fight for democracy in Europe, where Europeans treated them as equals, encouraged them to fight for equality at home. The veterans demand equality and riots occurred on Georgia's Army bases (Grant 1993; Tuck 2001).

In response to Jim Crow laws, the Civil Rights movement was born in the American South. It has been called one of the most significant and successful social movements in the modern world (Grant 1993; Tuck 2001, 2014). African Americans in Georgia were a large part of this struggle for local rights and the larger national effort for racial equality. From Atlanta to the most rural counties in Georgia, African American activists protested in many ways. This included legal actions, mass demonstrations, marches, and labor strikes. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., an Atlanta native and preacher, led the cause for equality, and eventually gave his life for it (Tuck 2014).

Organized African American protests were more common in larger Georgia cities like Atlanta, Macon, and Savannah. But even in those cities, strict segregation continued and violent assaults on African American residents were frequent. Finally, the federal civil rights legislation of 1964 and 1965 brought a new phase to



During the Jim Crow era, blacks and whites were segregated into their separate places. Blacks were only allowed to use restaurants, water fountains, rest rooms, waiting rooms, and other facilities that were marked with a "colored only" sign. (Photograph Courtesy of the U.S. Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black & White Photographs Collection 2013)

the struggle for racial equality. While these civil rights laws prohibited segregation and discrimination at the national level, many cities and small towns ignored the law. Protests to force integration began only after 1965, and often continued many years later. By 1965, civil rights laws at the national level prohibited segregation and discrimination. Governor Jimmy Carter first officially welcomed this new phase of race relations into Georgia in 1971 (Tuck 2014).

*I worked at the restaurant...cooked the food, served the food, but my mother and those would have to come to the back door...You know you had to come to the back door and nobody complained about it. (Josephine Lotson 2012).*

Melissa Fay Greene (1991) described McIntosh County during the early 1970s in her book, *Praying for*

*Sheetrock*. She wrote, "the civil rights movement was still a fabulous tale about distant places to the black people of McIntosh." Because of the power wielded by Sherriff Thomas Poppell, the Civil Rights movement was slow to develop in Darien. However, in 1972, Darien's police chief shot and wounded an African American garbage worker for disturbing the peace, and the African American community rose up to join the Civil Rights Movement and fight for their rights in McIntosh County (Greene 1991; Tuck 2001). Race relations slowly improved as a result.

## DARIEN IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY

During the 1950s and 1960s, McIntosh County and Darien had a reputation for allowing gambling and other illegal activities along U.S. 17 (Greene 1991). Part of the Dixie Highway and later known as the Coastal Highway, U.S. 17 was the main automobile route used by tourists traveling south to Florida. Crooked gambling houses called "clipjoints" used a variety of unfair and impossible schemes to win gambling games. These were designed to "win" the proprietor traveling money from people going south on vacation. Attempts to shut down the illegal activities were unsuccessful until Interstate 95 (I-95) was built in 1970. The new highway was faster, and it took travelers and their money down a different route, putting the illegal operations out of business (Greene 1991).

The 1950s and 1960s were known as the "gold rush" days – a time when shrimp harvests were at their peak. For a number of years, the county led the region in the annual number of shrimp trawlers in use. Ice-making



Darien was a major center for commercial shipping in the 20th century. Here, a shrimp trawler is seen lining up for the blessing of the fleet boat parade. (Photograph Courtesy of Brian Brown/ Vanishing Coastal Georgia, 2014)

technology enabled vessels to preserve their catches and fish the offshore waters for longer periods. Thus, local boat captains could work year-round by wintering

in the warmer waters of Florida and the Gulf of Mexico and returning to Georgia in the spring.

By 1960, shrimp trawlers had evolved into bigger boats with powerful diesel engines that allowed them to travel farther and longer. Large shrimp boat fleets docked at Darien, Valona, and Cedar Point, making those small communities the centers of the local shrimping culture. In the early 1960s, McIntosh County had the largest shrimping fleet on the Georgia coast, with several shrimp and oyster packinghouses located in town along the banks of the Altamaha (Sullivan 2008).

Darien has held a Blessing of the Fleet for the shrimp trawlers each year since 1970. The Blessing of the Fleet is a Catholic tradition meant to ensure safe voyages and a bountiful catch for fishing vessels. Shrimp trawlers are decorated, based on each year's festival theme, and sail down the Altamaha past residents and visitors in Darien. Religious services, a fish fry, parades, and other events take place during the festival (Schmidt 2014).

# VIII. Cathead Creek in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



Cathead Creek flows for about eight miles through McIntosh County. The creek is a tributary of the Altamaha River and drains part of Buffalo Swamp, a tidal forest containing bald cypress, sweet black gum, and water tupelo trees. Horse Creek and Otter Creek are the only small waterways flowing off of Cathead Creek, with Horse to the southeast and Otter at the far northwestern end of the Cathead Creek Historic District. Much of the swamp on the southwestern side of Cathead Creek is within the Altamaha State Waterfowl Management Area, where a variety of birds and other wildlife are protected.

## **THE VISIBLE REMAINS OF HISTORY AT CATHEAD CREEK**

Much of the area along Cathead Creek remains in a relatively unspoiled, natural state. The shoreline of the creek is developed with houses, docks, and businesses near Darien and at the I-95 intersection, less construction lies along the banks further away from town. Only the northeastern banks of the creek contain modern construction, while the western banks remain clear of development. The southern and central portions of the creek are the widest, with gradual narrowing to the northwest where it comes to an end in what was once the Oasis Plantation. Several remnants of the Cathead Creek plantations can be noted along the creek. Some of the piers for historic docks can be seen when the tide is low, such as the pier at Greenwood Plantation and a ramp for loading and unloading from the former dock at Ceylon Plantation.

Today, many of the irrigation canals within the abandoned rice fields are visible when traveling by boat or when seen from above in aerial photographs. Just as they were during the days of rice growing, the fields and swamps are inundated twice a day by the tides. Many of the tidal gates that regulated the flow, however, are no longer intact. A topographic map of the area shows one location along the creek at Oasis labeled "Ruins," although nothing is visible on the surface at this location when viewed by boat. It is not known if these ruins date from the plantation era or not.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE DISTRICT**

Seven historic plantations lay within the Cathead Creek Historic District as well as six recorded historic and American Indian archaeological sites. Since there has been relatively little archaeological work done within the district, beyond the archaeological salvage investigations conducted on Sidon and Ceylon



This photograph of the upper reaches of Cathead Creek within Buffalo Swamp, a rare tidal forest. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

Plantations by the Golden Isle Archaeological Society and the archaeological surveys carried out in the area by GDOT and consultants, it is likely that many more sites lie within the district boundaries.

Evidence of nine Woodland Period villages and campsites from the Archaic through Mississippian Periods, reveal their presence. Plantations, cemeteries and other sites associated with later Europeans and Africans living in the area dot the district's landscape. Four of the 13 sites in the district contained evidence of both Indian and historic occupation. This confirms that these specific locations were attractive for settlement throughout time, in part because they contained high, dry ground.

Tangible remains of historic occupation include African American plantation cemeteries, which sometimes are lost and forgotten. The graves of African American slaves and their descendants often do not have durable stone markers or fences surrounding the burials. Wooden markers, small rocks, shells, and manmade items used to mark graves often decayed over time, were removed, or became covered with leaves and buried. Vegetation covers the areas and then trees begin growing throughout. Tree harvesting, followed by the planting of new seedling trees in deep furrows, often obscured the depressions of where graves once were.

Archaeologists with New South Associates and GDOT have searched for the Oasis and Windy Hill plantation cemeteries along Cathead Creek. The Oasis Plantation

Cemetery was successfully recorded and documented so that it will not become lost again (Matternes 2013). However, the Windy Hill Plantation Cemetery could not be relocated. The locations of Ceylon Cemetery and Dunwoody Cemetery are well known, and were formally documented. The boundaries of the Dunwoody Cemetery are considered to be larger after survey by GDOT archaeologists (Matternes and Smith 2014). A Cemetery Preservation Plan was developed to ensure that the entire area is protected from further damage, including road construction. In addition interpretive signs were created for both Ceylon and Dunwoody cemeteries which share historical and archaeological information about the cemeteries, African American

burial traditions as well as information about the Cathead Creek Historic District and its people.

## **WHAT CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED IN THE DISTRICT AND DARIEN?**

While the Cathead Creek Historic District remained relatively unchanged since the plantation era compared to many areas of the Georgia coast, there have been major changes to part of this landscape in recent years. State Road 251, which bisects the district, follows the same route as the Old River Road that connected Darien to the rice plantations along Cathead Creek and to interior areas of Georgia further to the west. Major

The east bank of Cathead Creek is home to modern development as the creek approaches Darien. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)





Evidence of historic landuse can be found along the creek, such as these pilings from a dock at Greenwood Plantation. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

changes to the marsh and part of the plantations along Cathead Creek began in 1970 with the construction of highway I-95 and in particular, where I-95 intersects with SR 251. Prior to the interstate, disturbances to this area were few and limited to timbering and the construction of scattered residences. Since the development of I-95 and the intersection with SR 251, business and parking areas have impacted the archaeological resources of the district, both east and west of Exit 49 on I-95. This is especially true at portions of Sidon and Ceylon plantations, as seen in an aerial photograph from 1998 (Gladstone 2000). The aerial photograph shows the extent of gas stations, convenience stores, truck stops, restaurants, motels, an outlet mall with approximately 100 stores, an automobile dealership, an RV Park, and other development.

The construction of such facilities damages or destroys archaeological sites. This damage is more than just the breaking or removal of artifacts. Digging areas for building foundations, trenches for utilities, and holes for gas tanks destroys the important clues in the soil, such as features like trash pits, wells, and privies. When features are destroyed, the history of the area is permanently lost. If trained archaeologists excavate features scientifically, then, just like a crime scene, the features and artifacts provide fascinating clues about what happened in the past.

The area west of the businesses at the I-95 exchange is largely wooded and undeveloped, with the exception of a few residences, mobile home parks, miscellaneous buildings, and small farms. Clear cutting and timbering is occurring in the area, such as at the extreme northwest

end of the district. A large tract of land on the former Oasis Plantation there has recently been cleared of timber.

## **THE VISIBLE REMAINS AND INTANGIBLE HISTORY OF CATHEAD CREEK**

There are 42 state historical markers lining the roadsides throughout McIntosh County. These provide short introductions to local events from the past. Of those, 32 provide information on historic activities in Darien. Two markers document the Old River Road and nearby Butler Plantation across the Altamaha River from Darien.

Ruins of Darien's tabby warehouses still stand, in spite of encroachment by modern structures.

The extensive rice fields of the Cathead Creek District are one of the most long-lasting, visual reminders of the plantation history of Darien. Portions of rice fields remain for each of the seven Cathead Creek plantations.

In Georgia, these are recorded as cultural landscapes; which are landscapes created by the interactions of humans with the natural environment. This transformation is seen within the marshes of Cathead Creek which were reshaped into rice fields by African

**This photograph shows an earthen ramp at Potosoi Plantation that was constructed to allow wagons to bring rice, and later timber, down to a dock in Cathead Creek. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)**



American slaves during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The rice fields echo the hard labor of enslaved men, women, and children. They changed the land by building dikes and levees, cultivating a complex system of square rice plots, and harvesting the crops.

Less evident are the living and social spaces of the plantation owners to the landscape. These exist in the oak-lined drives, introduced plants, and archaeological remains of plantation buildings and daily life.

African Americans were initially brought to Cathead Creek to work the rice fields. Their descendants stayed. Their lives transitioned from plantation rice agriculture

to silviculture to shrimping and fishing to truck farming. They formed a community, Mentionville, with its own schools and clubs like Jake's Place, where they enjoyed performances by now famous African American performers. Today, the entrance to this community has a new sign that says "Cathead Landing," which is the name of a modern housing development along the waterfront on the edge of Mentionville. There used to be a sign that said, "Mentionville," but residents say it has been lost. Jake's Place is still owned by the Mention family, but the McIntosh County Board of Commissioners revoked the bar's license in 2009, causing it to close.

The signs of tidal rice agriculture can still be read in the marshes along Cathead Creek. This aerial view shows the locations of canals and ditches for rice fields. Commercial development at the intersection of I-95 and SR 251 can also be seen in this view. GDOT completed this popular archaeology study and other investigations to mitigate the effects of intersection improvements on the Cathead Creek Historic District. (Map by New South Associates 2014)





A rice canal in the Ceylon Plantation rice fields. Excavation of canals and creation of the rice fields was a massive undertaking that can be seen in the marshes along Cathead Creek. (Photograph by New South Associates, 2013)

The Cathead Creek Historic District is an important place in African American history and culture that deserves to be recognized and remembered. It is like a distant drum beat calling out to the present from the past. Its importance is reflected in the district's inclusion in the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, a National Heritage Area and unit of the National Park System, which stretches from Wilmington, North Carolina to St. Augustine, Florida (Guinta 2013). The corridor includes coastal lands and offshore barrier islands in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida connected by I-95. The corridor physically defines the historic landscape of the past and the unique Gullah/Geechee culture, and it remains home to Geechee descendants of the people who worked the coastal

plantations through the mid-1800s (NPS 2013). This culture connects the Geechee people of Georgia to their ancestors across the Atlantic.

When linguist Dr. Lorenzo Turner visited Harris Neck in the 1930s, he met Amelia Dawley, who sang him a short song in an African language. Amelia did not know the meaning of the song she had learned from her grandmother, who told her never to forget it. Her grandmother told her the song was her connection to the ancestors. Turner did not recognize the language, but it was later identified as a women's song once used to call villagers together for a funeral. The language was Mende, which was spoken in Sierra Leone, West Africa (NPS 2005).

In the 1980s, historian Joseph Opala was studying the early slave trade in Sierra Leone. Dr. Opala and his team traveled to Georgia where they located Mary Moran, daughter of Amelia Dawley and an area resident who was interviewed for this project. Mary remembered hearing her mother sing the song and was able to sing it herself for the researchers. A documentary film entitled *The Language You Cry In* (Toepke and Serrano 1998) was produced to commemorate the story of Amelia's song and the reunion trip of her daughter, Mary Moran to Africa. In a review of the film, historian Dr. Philip Morgan commented:

*That a Mende burial song has survived among the Gullah/Geechee people and can be traced to a particular location in Sierra Leone is a testament to the remarkable tenacity and spirit of an enslaved people.*

The song is included below in both Mende and in English translation:

Ah wakuh muh monuh kambay yah lee luh lay tambay

Ah wakuh muh monuh kambay yah lee luh lay kah.

*Ha suh wileego seehai yuh gbangah lilly*

*Ha suh wileego dwelin duh kwen*

*Ha suh wileego seehi uh kwendaiyah.*

*Everyone come together, let us work hard;*

*the grave is not yet finished;*

*let his heart be perfectly at peace.*

*Everyone come together, let us work hard:*

*the grave is not yet finished;*

*let his heart be at peace at once.*

*Sudden death commands everyone's attention,*

*like a firing gun.*

*Sudden death commands everyone's attention,*

*oh elders, oh heads of family*

*Sudden death commands everyone's attention,*

*like a distant drum beat.*

– (translated by Tazieff Koroma, Edward Benya, and Joseph Opala).

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# Caption Sources

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9. Photograph of a cabin in Ridgeville, McIntosh County, by L. D. Andrew, 1936, Historic American Buildings Survey, Call Number GH-283, Washington, D.C.
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7. Sketch of Tunis Campbell from his book *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide* (1848). Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.
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4. Photograph of Jake's Place by Terry Dickson. Courtesy of the *Jacksonville Times Union*, February 24, 2009

5. Photograph of the Colored Waiting Room sign at the Rome, Georgia Greyhound bus station, 1943 by Esther Bublely. Courtesy of the U.S. Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black & White Photograph Collection
6. Darien shrimp boat in Blessing of the Fleet ceremony by Brian Brown. From <http://georgiacoast.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/wild-georgia-shrimp-boat-boats-lining-up-for-parade-blessing-of-the-fleet-darien-ga-mcintosh-county-atlantic-coast-endangered-way-of-life-picture-image-photo-copyright-brian-brown-photog.jpg?w=500&h=489>

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