



## SAIL AWAY TO SAPELO

Wednesday, March 17

### McIntosh County Historian Buddy Sullivan to Lead the Island Trip

This trip is limited to twenty (20) people. Only those whose 1999 dues have been paid are eligible for the trip.

**PLANS:** Be at Sapelo dock at Meridian, out from Darien, at 8 a.m. You will purchase your boat tickets there. \$10 per person. A 30 minute boat ride, mostly across Doboy Sound. Return from Sapelo at 12:30.

Lunch reservations have been made at Archie's Restaurant in Darien. (Good seafood.)

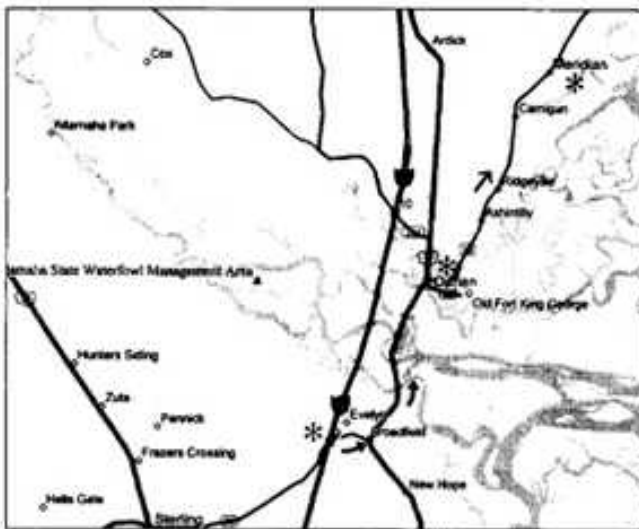
TO RESERVE YOUR SPACE, CALL PROGRAM CHAIRMAN RODNEY SHEFFIELD, 729-5245.

Directions: Leave I-95 north of Brunswick at exit 9 - this is GA Highway 99. Go right a short distance to U.S. 17 and head north to Darien. A couple of blocks after crossing the bridge to Darien, you will again see a sign on your right for GA Highway 99. Take this and go about eight miles. Watch for Sapelo Island Dock sign in the Meridian community. Turn there - it's only a short distance to the dock itself.

The salt marsh offers cordgrass, glasswort, salt grasses, needlerush, and reeds. You will hear the calls of the feeding marsh hens, and will spot egrets, soaring gulls and terns, and perhaps a flock of pelicans skimming over the water.



Front portico of the Big House on Sapelo Island, once the R. J. Reynolds Estate



### WHAT WILL YOU SEE?

This relatively undeveloped island has many surprises for you.

The lighthouse, which was in operation from 1820-1905, will be among the sites you will visit. It was reit on September 6, 1998, after a seven months \$500,000 restoration. The oil house and range beacon on the site were also restored.

The Big House, which was built on tabby ruins of Thomas Spalding's home by Howard Coffin, and modernized by R. J. Reynolds, who owned Sapelo from 1933 until his death. The structure now serves as a Conference Center for the University of Georgia Marine Institute.

The scientists at the Marine Institute, which was established in 1953, conduct research in salt marsh and estuary ecology. These are ongoing studies and various displays are of interest to visitors.

Hog Hammock, a black settlement exhibiting the unique culture of barrier island residents, represents several generations dating to the early nineteenth century Spalding slaves. The community owns approximately 400 acres surrounding the settlement.

According to A GUIDE TO THE GEORGIA COAST, you will also visit several natural ecosystems. You will discover a well protected maritime forest with live oaks covered with Spanish moss and resurrection fern, laurel oaks, holly, palmetto, grapevines, and pines.

### WHAT ABOUT SAPELO?

For a brief look at Sapelo's background, let's borrow a bit from two of Buddy Sullivan's brief histories, MEMORIES OF MCINTOSH and SAPELO: A HISTORY.

The line-of ownership of Sapelo began with the Indians, who left evidence of their lifestyle in numerous middens and mounds. Studies have shown that a 159-acre village once stood on the island. It continued to be used for hunting until 1757, when the Creeks ceded it to the English.

Spanish friars established missions on the island early in its history. Its name, Sapelo, actually evolved from the Spanish name Zapala, which came from the Franciscan mission on the island, named for Jose A. Zapala.

"In 1790, a syndicate of Frenchmen fleeing the Revolution in their homeland acquired ownership of Sapelo Island. These men embarked upon a series of events and misadventures which make for perhaps the most interesting, certainly the most intriguing, period in the history of the island."

Several other owners entered the picture until early in the 1800s when Spalding acquired 4,000 acres on the south end of the island. It was not until 1843 that Spalding bought the north end. After his first purchase, "...the island became a real income-producing plantation for the first, and only, time. Only during the period of Thomas Spalding's ownership, from 1802 until his death in 1851, has Sapelo been a profit to its owners."

"The (Civil War) ended the plantation era on Sapelo... The Island was occupied by Confederate troops until early 1862, after which the Union naval blockade resulted in Federal sailors utilizing the island for recreation and refreshment purposes."

After the war, Mr. Spalding's heirs returned to the island and attempted to farm once again. They met with little success.

"By 1900, the south end of the island was in possession of the Scottish-American Mortgage Co. following a foreclosure sale.

"After that, a group from Macon initiated plans to turn the south end into a hunting preserve; the Macon group, known as the Sapelo Island Company, partially restored the old Spalding mansion, which had laid in ruins since the Civil War, for use as a hunting lodge."

In 1911, Howard Coffin, who later developed Sea Island, visited Sapelo and soon began purchasing various tracts. By 1925, he had completely rebuilt the Spalding house into a home "reflecting the opulent lifestyles of the wealthy in the 1920s."

Early in the depression years, Mr. Coffin sold the island to R. J. Reynolds, who made further improvements to the house.

In 1949, Reynolds created the Sapelo Island Research Foundation, which led to the creation of the University of Georgia Marine Institute.

In 1969, his widow sold the north end of Sapelo to the state of Georgia. The R. J. Reynolds Wildlife Refuge was then established. The State acquired the south end in 1976.

### THOMAS SPALDING

Mr. Spalding had a profound effect on other planters of the Georgia coast with his writings in the Southern Agriculturist. He particularly influenced them with his studies on cotton and sugar production, as well as promotion of tabby as a building material. (Locally, John McIntosh used Spalding's guidance in building the Sugar Mill, located on Spur 40 in Camden County.) Spalding was a well-respected planter, statesman and writer.

The following information comes from Folks Huxford's PIONEERS OF WIREGRASS GEORGIA, volumes 5 & 6.

Thomas Spalding was born on March 25, 1774 on St. Simons. He was the only child of James Spalding of Perth, Scotland. James had come to Georgia in 1760 and formed a commercial partnership with Donald McKay on St. Simons. Together they built a general merchandise business with stores stretching from Sunbury in Liberty County southward through Spanish East Florida.

Thomas Spalding's mother was Margaret McIntosh of the pioneer McIntosh County family. She was the daughter of William and Mary McKay McIntosh. Mrs. Spalding died in 1818 and is buried in the Spalding lot in St. Andrew's Cemetery in Darien. Mr. Spalding had died in 1820 and is buried in the Lachlan McIntosh vault in Savannah.

Thomas Spalding married Sarah Leake in 1795, the only child of Richard Leake of Sapelo. They had seven children:

- James, single
- Mary Ann, died young
- Charles, married Evelyn Kell
- Thomas, died young
- Randolph, married Mary Dorothea Bass
- Jane, married Daniel Brailsford
- Catherine Ann, married Michael Kenan

Thomas Spalding served as senator from McIntosh County, inferior court judge, and as a member of Congress.

Mrs. Spalding died May 17, 1843. He died January 4, 1851. They are buried in St. Andrew's Cemetery. This cemetery is adjacent to Ashantilly, built as a mainland residence for the Spalding family early in the 1800s.

### RE GROVER ISLAND

Stay tuned, should be some news before long. Just because you haven't heard anything about it lately does not mean that the issue has died!

### MEMBERSHIPS

All dues begin on January 1. Those who have paid to

date (2-19) and who did not appear in the February newsletter are:

Family Memberships: Rodney Sheffield; Bill Joyner, Ernest Brooks; Robert White, Fernandina; Joe Chaney; John Christian; Howard Davis Jr.; Odell Hightower, Cape Canaveral; Robert Smith; James Stacy; H. A. Bennett; Jim Burnham; George Long; Roy Norton; Eugene Sheffield; Jim Shirley; Henry Williams Sr.; Charlie Davison, Vero Beach.

Individual Memberships: Joyce Warren, Baldwin (new); Carlton Bunkley; Nancy Wynn (new); June Driggers; Joyce Steinecke (new); Joyce O'Quinn; Linda Rice; Suzanne Hardee, Fernandina; Roland Loveless; St. Augustine (new); Wilbur Sheffield (new); Pauline Bossert; Patricia Gay; Betty Gruver, Homerville; Jean Lowie; Barbara Parrish, Jacksonville; Carol Ruckdeschel; Shirley Thompson; Maxine Wells; Edith Willingham.

Dues should be mailed to Treasurer Mildred Walko, 800 Margaret Street, St. Marys, GA 31558. (DO NOT MAIL TO NEWSLETTER ADDRESS)

Family \$15      Individual \$8      Student \$2

### BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Suggested reading before your trip to Sapelo:

#### For natural history:

The Georgia Conservancy's GUIDE TO THE GEORGIA COAST.

Mildred and John Teal's PORTRAIT OF AN ISLAND, The Land, The Wildlife, the Changing Moods of a Georgia Sea Island.

#### For history:

Buddy Sullivan's SAPELO: A HISTORY.

Buddy Sullivan's MEMORIES OF MCINTOSH.

#### For an in-depth study:

Buddy Sullivan's EARLY DAYS ON THE GEORGIA TIDE-WATER.

Robert L. Humphries, ed. THE JOURNAL OF ARCHIBALD C. MCKINLEY.

#### For an understanding of the island residents:

William S. McFeely's SAPELO'S PEOPLE, A Long Walk Into Freedom.

#### For more about Howard Coffin:

Harold H. Martin's THIS HAPPY ISLAND, The Story of Sea Island and the Cloister.

By the way, Buddy has a new book out — THE HURRICANE AND TIDAL WAVE OF 1898 IN MCINTOSH COUNTY, GEORGIA. For all you coastal residents, you might want to read this and know what a true hurricane experience is!

### UPCOMING EVENT

Saturday, April 17 WALKING TOUR OF ST. MARYS, led by Eloise Thompson. Watch for details in April newsletter.