

DELEGALS OF SKIDAWAY

Is Philip alone on the 13th hole of Palmetto?

By Shari Lee Laist

(Another great article by Shari from a past issue of TWATL)



Imagine that you were a Gore supporter and having lost, you are now listed as an enemy and traitor, and banished from the state. Your neighbor, who secretly lusted for your marsh views, voted for Bush and so takes over your property. Such a fate awaited the Delegal family in 1782. Philip Delegal II joined other loyalist “first families” many of whom were deprived of their home and livelihood after the American Revolution.

Researching the grave on the 13th hole of Palmetto proved somewhat elusive. Death, marriage and birth records are scarce for the 18th century and the Delegals, in addition to using the same names repeatedly, married within the same families. The British, who re-took Savannah from “the rebels” in 1778 and held it until nearly the end of the war, also carried off or destroyed many of the colonial records. Adding to the confusion, a map drawn in the 1740s, by

the “Crown surveyor” shows Skidaway reaching to the Little Ogeechee River and including Wassaw Island. In spite of these puzzles, I offer what I found...

The first Delegals to reach North America, were French Huguenots. (Thomas) Philip Delegal I, born in 1684 in France, probably arrived in Virginia around 1701 as part of the Huguenot settlement in Mannikin Town on the James River. [The designation I, II, III... are mine.] His father, the Marquis Isaac de l’Aigle might have died an exile in Holland. Philip I and his brother Andrew were veterans of

the War of Spanish Succession, fighting for England in a Huguenot division. Philip I may have received his plantation in South Carolina, near Port Royal, for his service in this conflict. In 1711, Philip married another Huguenot, Eleanor Clement. He remained in the military throughout his life and traveled widely. He was back in England in 1732, for we know that he and his son (Philip II) accompanied Oglethorpe on his first journey bringing colonists to Savannah. By this time, young Delegal (Philip II) who was around 17 years old, was an ensign serving with his father. Philip I served at Fort Frederica on Saint Simons. He also advanced the crown his own money to increase the defenses of the colony, by constructing Fort Delegal on the East Point of Saint Simons in 1736. Today you can find a Georgia Historical Commission marker memorializing "the little water battery with 13 guns". The retreating Spanish mostly destroyed the battery in 1742. Philip I died on the island of Guernsey in 1762. One wonders if he was ever repaid his loan to King George II.

The younger Philip made a mad dash along the coast in 1736 to warn Oglethorpe of a threatened Spanish invasion. It is likely that in his role as coastal courier, Philip II first set foot on Skidaway. He advanced in the military becoming part of Oglethorpe's Rangers. In the 1742 Battle of Bloody Marsh, Oglethorpe credited "his trusted Lt. Delegal's cleverness in making the Spanish believe that his forces were much larger than they really were." This battle secured Georgia for the English.

(Thomas) Philip Delegal II married Jane Daley in 1739 and they had eight children four of whom survived them. Philip II left the "Regular army" in 1743 and rapidly advanced in the Georgia

Militia, which maintained law and order in the colony. He also served the colony in various offices representing the sea islands, as a justice of the peace, commissioner of roads and the equivalent of a school commissioner. He maintained a plantation, Isabella, on the little Ogeechee, and his father's plantation near Port Royal until his mother's death in 1769. He also acquired other lots, and a house in Savannah. Probably, once his sons were old enough to look after his other properties, he bought acreage on Skidaway, as did his brother George. Although physicians warned that Spanish moss caused malaria and planters complained that the cows on the island had their tails bitten off by alligators, Philip II chose to live on Skidaway rather than be an absentee landlord. His granddaughter, Betsy, wrote that his house had "a fine view" of the water and all of his property. (Would it have been where the 14th hole of Palmetto is today?) In 1767 he purchased an additional 250 acres on Skidaway from Mrs. Anna Lang, widow of William Lang. He also increased his holdings on the island by marriage. His sister and brother both married Deveauxs, large landholders on the island and his daughter Catherine married a fellow Skidaway man. Given Philip II's political leanings, Skidaway may also have been a more comfortable environment as tensions among the colonists increased. Other Huguenot families lived on the island and they may have shared his allegiances to England.

We find indications of Philip II's residence on Skidaway in the contemporary newspapers. In 1767 the American botanist John Bartram reported that Col. Delegal had 17 acres of long staple cotton on Skidaway. In 1773, Philip offered a reward of 20 s. for the return of

Continued on page 10

delegals - continued from page 9

a canoe to his plantation on Skidaway. He posts another notice in May of 1775 asking for information about a run away "Negro Fellow Jack." There are also notices of his official duties: as commissioner of roads requesting people to answer to him for not clearing a road; as school commissioner, deploring the lack of schools in some parishes; and general court of sessions notices. He continued to add to his property. One account claims he owned 4000 acres including Green Island. After his first wife Jane died, Philip II married Margaret Curtis. His granddaughter remarked that "He, poor man did not long remain a widow marrying a young woman who came from a nearby island [Little Wassaw]...She (Margaret) may not have been loved by the family."

Margaret owned land on Skidaway and the island of Little Wassaw thereby increasing Philip II's property. He had two more children with Margaret. When Philip II died, in 1781, Margaret immediately took her two children, 22 slaves and everything of value that she could fit in a boat and sailed by night to Florida. She soon married one of her husband's associates and they lived near Saint Augustine. When Florida was returned to the Spanish in 1784, she and her family, again uprooted, eventually settled in Halifax. This branch of the Delegals remained in the North.

To be continued next week...

coolbody
C O N T O U R I N G

Savannah's Leader in
coolsculpting

SPECIAL
DURING SEPTEMBER
FREE

Teeth Whitening Procedure
while receiving a
CoolSculpting® treatment

For a FREE Consultation
912-200-6000 • coolbodycontouring.com
Dr. Martin Everhard (*Landings Resident*)

FDA Cleared • No Surgery • Little or No Downtime

WORLD'S #1 NON-INVASIVE FAT REDUCTION TREATMENT

**CALL
TODAY!**