

**December 11, 2025**

## **Oyster Union Society**

Today's advent calendar post from the Daufuskie Island History Museum takes us outside the museum building to the Oyster Union Society Hall, a stop on the Rob Kennedy Historic Trail, which you may remember from a previous post.

The oyster business flourished on Daufuskie Island from the late 19th century well into the 20th. As a result of investment by the L.P. Maggioni Company, who established the first oyster factory on Daufuskie in 1883. The island became a major oyster hub, home of world famous "Daufuski" oysters. There is even a story that "Daufuski" oysters were the favorite of the Tsar of Russia.

Maggioni employed many of the Gullah men, women and children residing on Daufuskie. Men went out at low tide in bateaux to collect as many oysters as possible, taking them back to the factory where women and children performed the arduous task of shucking as many as 7 to 9 gallons a day per worker.

The Oyster Union Society was established by Daufuskie oyster workers as a benevolent and burial organization. The Society Hall was built in 1893 for meetings and social events. Membership in the Society was established through an initiation ceremony, and homemade wine, moonshine, and storytelling made every gathering a celebration of work, family, and culture.

Pollution from a paper mill on the Savannah River contaminated the oysters and, by the mid-50's, the oyster business on Daufuskie shut down, leading to a decline in the population as people sought work elsewhere, and the dissolution of the Oyster Society. (Daufuski brand oysters still exist but are sourced elsewhere.)

The building fell into a decayed state after being idle for many years. It was restored by the Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation in 2012.

