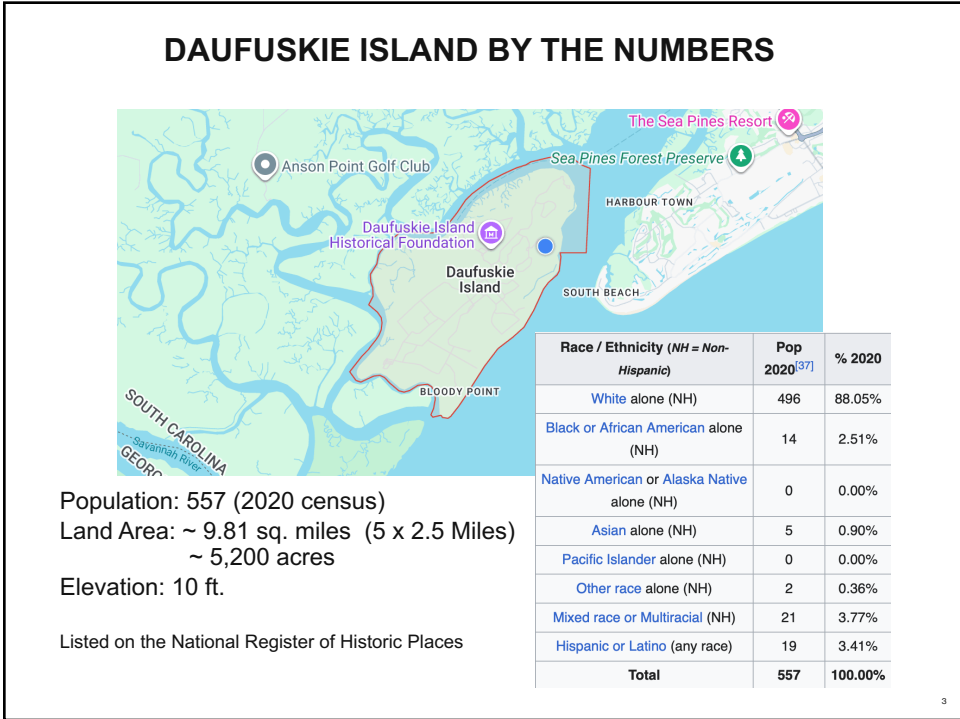


HIS209: THE HISTORY OF DAUFUSKIE ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA

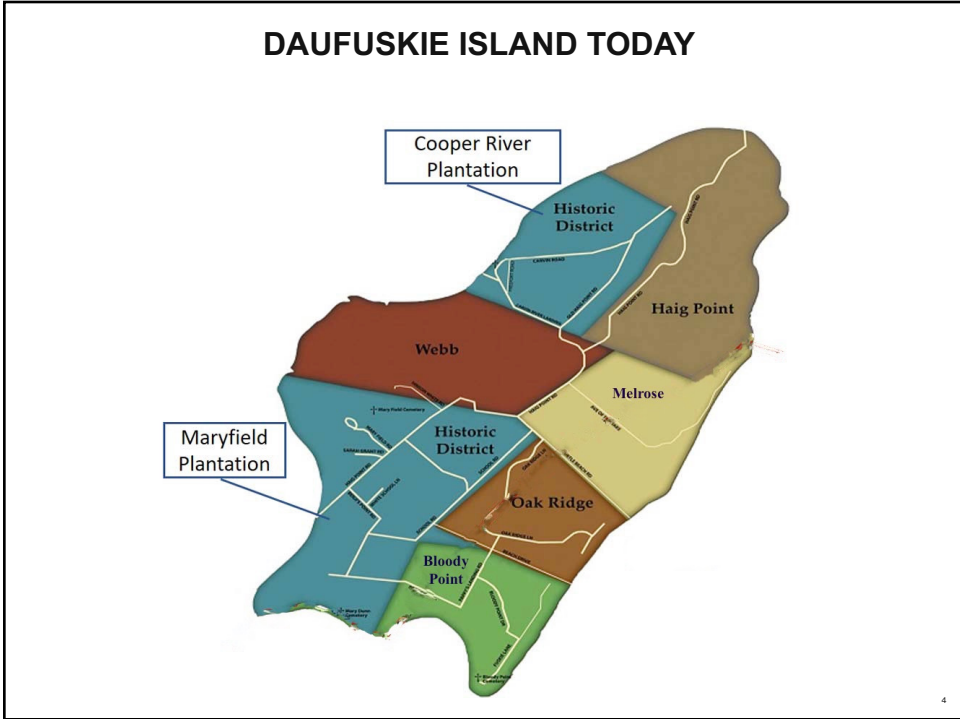
Presented by
Sam Waters, Vice President
Nancy Ludtke, Executive Director
Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation
March 30, 2026
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

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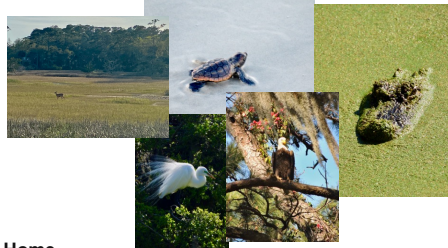
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DAUFUSKIE TODAY IS

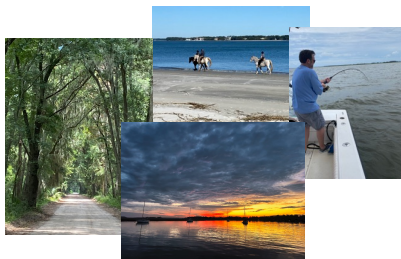
A historic site



A nature preserve



A tourist destination



Home



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DAUFUSKIE ISLAND HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Pre-1500s: Native Americans inhabit the area, leaving behind large shell mounds. 9,000 years of presence on Daufuskie.

1521: Spanish explorers arrive, claiming territory from Charleston to St. Augustine

1600's: English traders arrive

1707: First English land grant on Daufuskie to Thomas Cowte

1715-1720: Bloody Point battles occur, where Yemassee Indians fight English settlers.

Revolutionary War Period: Daufuskie earns the name "Little Bermuda"

Late 1700s-1800s: Plantation economy thrives, with enslaved West Africans cultivating cotton and indigo.

1861: Union forces occupy the island

Post-Civil War (Reconstruction): Freedmen return, establishing small farms and a community. Plantation owners reclaim property.

1881: First Union African Baptist Church is founded.

1883-1922: Haig Point and Bloody Point lighthouses guide ships through the Calibogue Sound.

1900-1930s: The population peaks at nearly 1,000, driven by a booming oyster industry.

1959: Oyster beds close due to pollution, leading to a population decline.

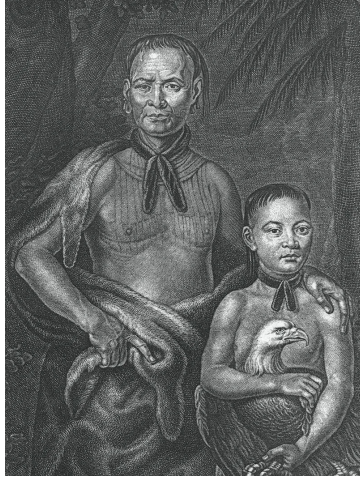
1982: Daufuskie Island Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1980s-Present: Development of gated communities (e.g., [Haig Point](#))

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PRE-COLUMBIAN NATIVE AMERICAN PRESENCE ON DAUFUSKIE



Chief Tomochichi of the Yamacraw

- Artifacts dated back 9,000 years have been found on Daufuskie
- Numerous tribes inhabited the area; it is uncertain which may have settled on Daufuskie over the years.
- There is evidence of Muscogean (Yemassee) settlement at Rabbit Point. Possible earlier Cusabo presence.
- Daufuskie comes from the Muscogee words meaning sharp or pointed feather.
- Yemassee Indians remained until the early 1700's (Yemassee War).

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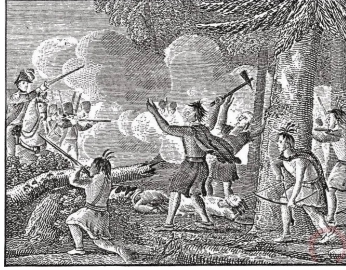
EUROPEAN ARRIVAL

- Spanish explorers arrive on the South Carolina coast in 1521. First colony established somewhere between Port Royal and Savannah by 1526, but it failed.
- French Huguenots settled in Port Royal 1563 (Charlottesville), but failed and left 1564
- Santa Elena (located on Parris Island) established by the Spanish as second capital of "La Florida" along with St. Augustine 1566-1587.
- William Hilton explores the area of today's Hilton Head Island 1663.
- Robert Sandford sails the Calibogue Sound in 1666
- The Scots arrive at Port Royal in 1684 (Stuarts Town). Settlement destroyed by the Spanish in 1686.
- English settlers arrive on Daufuskie around 1684.
- Yemassee Indians established ten towns in the Port Royal, St. Helena region around 1687, with considerable trade with the English
- Colonial Assembly establishes a lookout post at what became Bloody Point in 1701.
- Thomas Cowte acquires a warrant for 500 acres on Daufuskie Island in 1707.

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THE YEMASSEE WAR 1715-1717 AND HOW BLOODY POINT GOT ITS NAME



- Trade with the Yemassee was exploitative, leaving the Indians with significant debt. Combined with the increasing flux of settlers and loss of hunting lands, the Yemassee went to war on April 15, 1715.
- By April, 1716, the Yemassee had been driven from the area, retreating to the protection of the Spanish in Florida, but raids continued for another 13 years.

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THE YEMASSEE WAR 1715-1717 AND HOW BLOODY POINT GOT ITS NAME



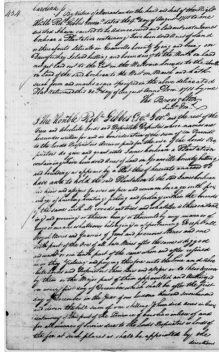
The southern tip of Daufuskie Island became known as "Bloody Point" a result of 3 incidents:

- August, 1715 – a small English fleet meets Yemassee war canoes on their return to Georgia, and when the Indians abandon their canoes and swim to Daufuskie, they are ambushed by awaiting troops. Known as the "Daufuskie Fight".
- Angry settlers pursued a Yemassee raiding party from Hilton Head to Daufuskie, ambushing them at the southern tip of the island and killing 28, with two escaping.
- January, 1728 – an English scout boat encampment at the lookout established at the southern end of Daufuskie is attacked by a Yemassee war party, and the entire crew is massacred with the captain taken prisoner. This incident firmly cemented the term "Bloody Point".

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THE FOUNDATION OF THE DAUFUSKIE PLANTATION ERA EARLY LAND OWNERSHIP AND PLANTATIONS



- The earliest provincial land grants on Daufuskie were made to Indian traders.
 - Thomas Cowte received one of the earliest known grants in 1707
 - In less than a decade, over half the island was in the hands of traders.
- James Cockran was appointed a Commissioner of the Indian Trade in 1709. He was granted 1000 acres in 1711.
- James Cockran I died intestate. His property passed through generations to Richard Cockran Ash, totaling about 2,200 acres.
- In 1785, Richard Cockran Ash's son John, sells property to William West Livingston and John Cattell Livingston. This property would later become the Freeport and Cooper River Plantations.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE DAUFUSKIE PLANTATION ERA EARLY LAND OWNERSHIP AND PLANTATIONS

- Richard Russell Ash died in 1806, leaving 2630 acres to sister Mary Ash's family. This land became Newburgh (Webb Tract), Melrose, Maryfield and Oak Ridge plantations. Lands sold in distress sales around 1818 to John David Mongin. End of Ash/Livingston/Fraser dynasty.
- In 1733, Hugh Evans was granted 800 acres on Daufuskie. He sold the land to Indian traders George Haig I and Frederick Myers 1733. Another 500 acres sold in 1735 by Elizabeth Varner.
- Freeport and Haig Point sold to Mongin (John David or David John) some time around 1810-1820.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE DAUFUSKIE PLANTATION ERA THE MARTINANGELE FAMILY

The Martinangele family was one of the first resident families on Daufuskie:



The Phillip Martinangele Ring

- Prince Filippo de Martinangelo, son of an Italian nobleman, converted to Protestantism and fled Italy to escape the Inquisition, arriving in America circa 1740 and anglicizing his name to Phillip Martinangele. He settled on Hilton Head (near Skull Creek).
- He married Mary Foster in 1743, and after his death in 1761, his widow purchased 500 acres of property on Daufuskie Island. She moved to the island with her eight children and built a mansion on the property.
- Descendents still own 4.6 acres of the original property, now the site of the Mary Dunn Cemetery.

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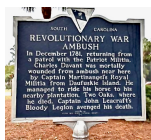
THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR PERIOD DAUFUSKIE ISLAND IS "LITTLE BERMUDA"

Daufuskie Island was fiercely Tory with strong economic ties to England due to the indigo trade and nicknamed "Little Bermuda". 11 of 16 property owners identified as royalist. Isaac, Simeon and Phillip Martinangele, Jr. are members of the Loyalist militia. Phillip, Jr. was a Captain.

Hilton Head was strongly Whig or colonialist.

Political differences contribute to tension across the Calibogue Sound, but violence is held in check by the British presence in Savannah. As the War began to turn, open hostilities resulted in a series of raids and guerrilla attacks.

- In January, 1781, Rear Admiral Richard "Tory Dick" Pendarvis, of May River, led a contingent of Royal Militia to Bear Island to apprehend James Dougherty, "an energetic leader of the Revolutionists". In the confrontation, Dougherty is killed but his men escape. One of these is John Leaycraft of Hilton Head.
- Leaycraft, possibly in response to this event, forms the "Bloody Legion" whose members include John Mongin, Sr. and David John Mongin, Jr. (more on them later).
- In April, 1781, Leaycraft and his Bloody Legion kill Pendarvis in front of his residence while on his honeymoon. His bride was Margaret Martinangele.
- To avenge his brother-in-law's murder, Phillip leads a raid on Hilton Head. Encountering a dawn patrol, he shoots Charles Davant. Mortally wounded, Davant makes it to his home where he dies in his son's arms. His last words were reportedly, "Martinangele, get Martinangele".
- Leaycraft leads the Bloody legion to Daufuskie, where they find Phillip in his sick bed. They kill him and "plunder Mrs. Martinangele and her children of almost everything they had."

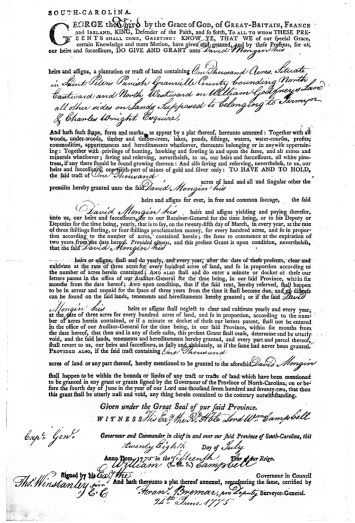


To put these events in perspective, Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown on October 17, 1781.

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THE FOUNDATION OF THE DAUFUSKIE PLANTATION ERA THE MONGIN FAMILY



David John Mongin

- Born in London, England in 1739 to David Mongin and Persille Dair, he travelled to America at age 8 with his father and siblings.
- Married to Sarah Grimkie at Walnut Grove in 1762.
- In 1766 he received the Spanish Wells Plantation from a friend as a gift.
- In 1775 he was given a land grant for 1000 acres in St. Peter's parish by King George III.
- He had five children with Sarah. He and his oldest son, John David Mongin, born in 1763, were members of the "Bloody Legion" during the Revolutionary War.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE DAUFUSKIE PLANTATION ERA THE MONGIN FAMILY



John David Mongin

- Met Sarah (Sally) Watts on Daufuskie while visiting his half-uncle, William Edwards Mongin, and his wife Mary Martinangele Pendarvis at their home. Sarah was the daughter of shipbuilder Robert Watts, owner of the Bloody Point Plantation. Upon his death, Sarah had become the ward of William Edwards and Margaret Mongin.
- John David and Sarah Watts are married in 1790. Their first, and only child, David John II, is born in 1791.
- Business success through a number of enterprises and ownership of several plantations earns John David the nickname "Money Mongin".
- Sarah Watts Mongin died in 1816. John David inherited the Bloody Point property.
- Purchased the Melrose Plantation in 1818.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE DAUFUSKIE PLANTATION ERA THE MONGIN FAMILY

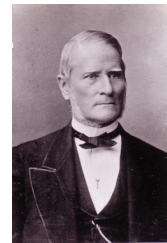


David John Mongin II

- Born at Walnut Grove on the May River in 1791
- Married Sarah Irwin in 1812. They moved to Oakley Hall, the Plantation home at Bloody Point.
- John David and Mary had five children, only two of whom lived to maturity, William Henry, born 1816, and Mary Lavinia, born 1819.
- Died in 1823 at the Bloody Point mansion.

Mary Lavinia Mongin

- Her mother remarried in 1825, to the Rev. Herman M. Blodgett.
- When her mother and grandfather died in 1833, she was 14 and went to Paris, where she met John Stoddard.
- Mary Lavinia and John Stoddard were married at the American consulate January 7, 1836.

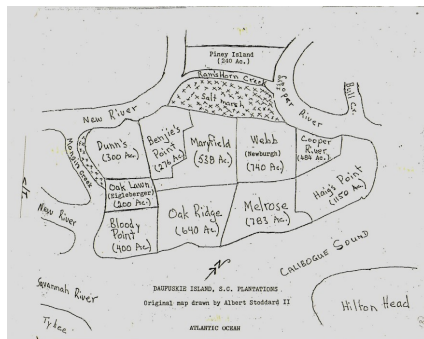


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SUMMARY OF PRE-CIVIL WAR PLANTATIONS

At some point, at least 10 of the 12 plantations on Daufuskie were in the possession of the Mongin family. Only the 300 acre Mary Dunn tract was never theirs. It is uncertain whether Newburgh (Webb Tract) was ever theirs.



Plantation	Size, acres	Year acq.	Owner
Piney Island	240	1801	John Andrew Mongin
Bloody Point	400	1816	John David Mongin
Melrose	770	1818	John David Mongin
Oak Ridge	596	1818	John David Mongin
Maryfield	530	c1818	John David Mongin
Haig's Point	358	c1820	David John Mongin II
Freeport	600	c1820	David John Mongin II
Cooper River	484	c1828	John David Mongin
Benjie's Point	276	c1830	John David Mongin
Newburgh (Webb)	740	1836	Elizabeth Webb
Egleberger	200	1831	John David Mongin
Dunn	300	1847	Mary Dunn

Note: Freeport became part of Haig Point.

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THE DAUFUSKIE ISLAND ANTEBELLUM ECONOMY



- Prior to the Revolutionary War, indigo was a prime economic crop, prized in England and elsewhere
- After the Revolutionary War, England sought indigo from India, leading to its economic decline on Daufuskie
- Sea island cotton replaced indigo as a source of economic wealth for plantation owners.
- Cotton farming was labor intensive, leading to an increased demand for slave labor.
- Rice was not a major cash crop on Daufuskie, probably due to salinity in local marshes.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURE ON THE SEA ISLANDS


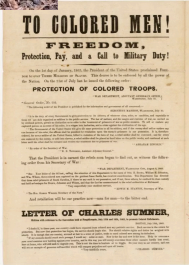
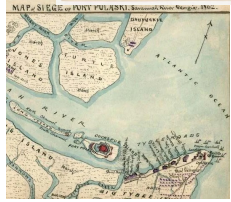


- The Gullah Geechee corridor runs from Cape Fear, NC to Jacksonville, FL.
- Daufuskie Island Gullah are descendants of slaves brought from the "Rice Coast" of West Africa. The term Gullah may be derived from Angola, where many of the Gullah people originated.
- The hostile environment along the coast for much of the year, due to heat and disease exposure, drove wealthy plantation owners away from local properties for six months or more each year. The isolation of the African community fostered the retention of African customs and heritage and led to the evolution of the people we know as Gullah or Geechees of the Lowcountry.
- This mix of Africans from different regions, speaking different languages and the interaction with English speakers dictated the development of a common language and contributed to the development of the Gullah language which incorporates English and African influences. The language is not, as some mistakenly believe, broken or pidgin English, but a complete language with its own systematic grammatical system.
- Gullah is still an important part of Daufuskie identity today.

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THE CIVIL WAR ON DAUFUSKIE

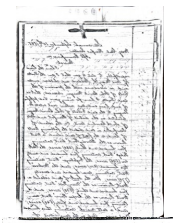
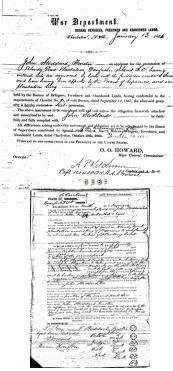




- By November 1861, Union troops occupied Daufuskie and surrounding sea islands. Approximately 1600 troops resided on the island, considered a strategic location for controlling the Savannah River entrance.
- Plantation owners fled the island in advance of the Union occupation, followed by many of the resident slaves.
- Many of the abandoned slaves enlisted in local regiments to fight alongside Union forces. Following the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, the US Colored Infantry absorbed the local troops.
- Union forces harvested timber from Daufuskie, including dismantling plantation homes, to build corduroy roads allowing troops and materials to move south for the siege of Ft. Pulaski.

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RECONSTRUCTION RECLAIMING THE ISLAND

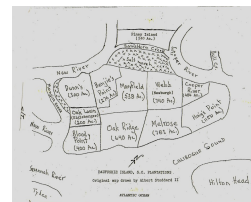



- Near the end of the Civil War, Gen. Sherman issued Special Field Order 15, setting aside a 30 mile coastal corridor from Charleston to Jacksonville where abandoned and confiscated properties would be sold to black family heads.
- Nearly 400,000 ex-slaves settled in this area as a result of the policy. Ex-slaves returned to Daufuskie.
- After the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, President Andrew Johnson reversed the policy, allowing ex-plantation owners to reclaim their lands by paying back taxes, swearing an oath of allegiance to the Federal Government, and agreeing to make accommodations for any ex-slaves residing on the reclaimed lands.
- Under the new provisions, Mary Dunn reclaimed the Dunn property, J.J. Pope reclaims Haig's Point on behalf of the Pope (Squire) heirs. John Stoddard reclaims several properties acting as agent for the Mongin estate.
- Resident ex-slaves become renters/sharecroppers rather than owners, and sign indentures with returning owners.

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RECONSTRUCTION RECLAIMING THE ISLAND



- After the death of John Stoddard in 1879, the Maryfield and Cooper River tracts were divided into roughly 10-acre plots which were sold to individuals, Maryfield in 1879 and Cooper River in 1884.
- The Maryfield property was sold by John I. Stoddard, Cooper River was sold by Henry Stoddard, the heirs of John J. Stoddard
- Lot 18 of the Maryfield property was acquired by the First Union African Baptist church. Plot 4 of the Cooper River sold to Cato McIntyre was the site of the mansion which had burned down.
- The Webb Tract, which was confiscated by the United States Tax Commission for unpaid taxes was sold at public auction on December 31, 1875 to W.D. Brown for \$260.

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POST CIVIL WAR DAUFUSKIE ECONOMY



- After the Civil War, Daufuskie became a source for prized live oak timber for shipbuilding. A narrow gauge railroad was built across the island to deliver timber to the waiting ships for transport.
- While the plantation system did not recover, small plot farmers continued to produce cotton and other crops.
- In the 1880's, the oyster industry began on Daufuskie. The L.P. Maggioni Co. operated from the 1890's to the 1950's on Daufuskie, harvesting and shucking oysters for export. Daufuski Oysters were reportedly a favorite of Czar Nicolas II of Russia.
- Daufuskie became a shipping hub for cotton, oysters and timber, and during its peak from the 1890's to the 1930's, steamships operated from Daufuskie to Charleston, Savannah and Beaufort.
- The proliferation of shipping traffic led to the construction of lighthouses on Daufuskie, the Haig Point Range lights on the northern end of the island in 1873, and the Bloody Point range lights on the southern end in 1883.
- Pollution from the Savannah River led to the death of the oyster industry on Daufuskie by the 1950's, and the population declined to less than 100.

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ISLAND DEVELOPMENT



- Following the end of the oyster industry, Daufuskie returned to its isolated natural state, and a small population, including Gullah residents.
- Electricity came to the island in 1952, telephones in 1972.
- In the 1980's development began to make Daufuskie a residential destination. Properties along the coast were targeted for development (Haig Point, Melrose, Oak Ridge and Bloody Point).
- Daufuskie Island listed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1982.
- In 1984, Melrose is sold to developers.
- In 1986, International Paper began development at Haig Point. The Strachan mansion is brought in from St. Simons Island by barge and placed at the north end of the island.
- Development disrupted the Gullah way of life on the island but did provide employment.
- Bloody Point property sold in 1988.
- Melrose closed in 2019 following years of changes of ownership and bankruptcy proceedings.
- Bloody Point closed 2008-2011, then again in 2017. Now privately owned.

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NOTABLE DAUFUSKIE ISLAND RESIDENTS



Pat Conroy - Author Pat Conroy was a teacher for one year in the 1969-70 school year at the Mary Fields school on Daufuskie Island. His book, *The Water is Wide*, was based on his experiences of that year on Daufuskie.



Sarah Grant - Sarah Hudson Grant, affectionately known as "Miss Sally" or Granny. Her work spanned decades, leaving an indelible mark on the island's history and culture. As the island's midwife from 1932 to 1969, Miss Sally delivered over 130 babies, providing skilled care during childbirth and essential postnatal support. She was a cornerstone of the Gullah community on Daufuskie.



Sallie Ann Robinson - Sallie is a sixth generation Gullah resident of Daufuskie. She was in sixth grade when Pat Conroy taught at the Mary Fields school (she is Ethel in Conroy's novel, *The Water is Wide*). She published *Gullah Home Cooking the Daufuskie Way* in 2003, followed by *Cooking the Gullah Way, Morning, Noon and Night* in 2007. Her third cookbook, *Sallie Ann Robinson's Kitchen: Food and Family Lore from the Lowcountry*, was published in 2019. She is also the co-author, with Jenny Hersch, of *Daufuskie Island*, a book about island history.

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NOTABLE DAUFUSKIE ISLAND RESIDENTS



Frances Jones - Frances began her teaching career in 1930, replacing the teacher at the Praise House/First Union Church. She moved to the Mary Fields school when it opened in 1934, teaching grades 4 through 6. In 1935, the school went to a nine-month schedule and included grades 1 through 8. Retiring in 1969, Frances Jones left a lasting legacy, educating many children on Daufuskie during her career.



Cleveland Bryan - Mr. Cleve, as he is known on the island, has achieved something of a celebrity status recently celebrating his 101st birthday. Born on Daufuskie, he is a self-educated man who has worked in Savannah and New York, but ultimately returned to the place he loves best, Daufuskie.

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NOTABLE DAUFUSKIE ISLAND RESIDENTS



Marsh Tackys - The Marsh Tacky developed from Spanish horses brought to the South Carolina coast by Spanish explorers, settlers and traders as early as the 16th century. The horses were used by the colonists during the American Revolution and by settlers for farm work, herding cattle and hunting throughout the breed's history. The breed is considered to be critically endangered. On June 11, 2010, a bill was signed into law that made the Carolina Marsh Tacky the official state horse of South Carolina.

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NOTABLE DAUFUSKIE HISTORICAL SITES



First African Union Baptist Church - The church was built in 1884 near the site of the 1881 church that was destroyed by fire. It has stood as a center of worship and faith on the island, with only one significant break in services since that time. The building was restored in the 1990s. A replica of a traditional praise house is located behind the building. Sunday services are open to all who come to worship.



Mary Fields School - The two-room Mary Fields School was built for the island's black children in the early 1930s. Leftover wood was used to construct desks for the students. The school was integrated after the last white child graduated from the White School House in 1962. The school was immortalized by Pat Conroy in his book: *The Water Is Wide*. When the Daufuskie Island Elementary School was built in 1997, the Mary Fields School was closed.



Mt. Carmel Baptist Church No. 2 (Daufuskie History Museum)
The church building and its predecessor were built by the Cooper River residents of the north end of the island. The first church was destroyed by a hurricane in 1940. This building was built shortly after that. In time, the declining population of the island caused the church to close. In 2001, the Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation bought the property, restored the building, and opened the Billie Burn Museum, named after long-time resident and island historian, Billie Burn. The museum contains artifacts illustrating periods of island history.

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NOTABLE DAUFUSKIE HISTORICAL SITES



Haig Point Lighthouse - The lighthouse can be seen from Calibogue Sound at the northern tip of the island. The lighthouse was built in 1873 and was in operation until 1924.



Bloody Point Lighthouse Museum - In 1882, the U.S. Government paid \$425 for land for the Bloody Point Light: a front range lighthouse and a rear range light tower. The lighthouse is a two-story dwelling with a small dormer window that housed the front light. The light had a brass stand and wind-up clockwork to turn the light. The synchronized lights guided ships into the Savannah River Channel from 1883 to 1922. The lighthouse had to be relocated inland a number of times as the shoreline receded.

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DAUFUSKIE ISLAND HISTORICAL FOUNDATION



The Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation is a 501(C)3 organization founded in 2001, which seeks to preserve the history and culture of Daufuskie Island, South Carolina. To further public knowledge and appreciation of the area, we have undertaken the following efforts:

- Acquired and Restored Historic Buildings
- Established an Island History Museum
- Created a Self-Guided Trail of Historic Island Sites
- Began an Island History Archive Center

Website: daufuskiemuseum.org

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