

DELEGALS OF SKIDAWAY

Is Philip alone on the 13th hole of Palmetto?

By Shari Lee Laist



This is the second part of Ms. Laist's article which began last week.

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

WHY WAS PHILIP II A TORY?

Even though Philip II died in Oct 1781, he and his son Philip III, both appear on "A list of persons at this time within our Act of Attainder, Banishment and Confiscation..." passed in May 4, 1782. The names of Philip II's brothers, George and Isaac, do not appear on the list. Did they support the revolution? Philip was the oldest — the namesake. He and his father had been loyal military officers. Did he feel bound to honor his father and support the government they had served? The family owed its very existence to England for giving their Huguenot forebears refuge. Added to his personal history, Savannah was

not a hot bed of rebellion like Boston or Philadelphia.

Even though Georgia was a young, sparsely populated colony, its people still benefited from British largesse. Georgia was the last of the colonies to join the Federation and send delegates to the Continental Congress. During the period of "rebel dominance" in 1776, a Delegal girl reported, "our teachers became officers in the rebel army and everywhere the scum rose to the top." Georgia remained under British control from 1778 until 1782 and life seemed to go on as usual. — For example on January 3, 1782, the Royal Georgia

Gazette (The word Royal was added to the masthead in February 1779) advertised a lottery for the relief of families “driven from their homes by Rebels.” With the unpleasantness turning into war, Philip II withdrew from his representative positions in Savannah and may have thought he could wait out the war on his island.

However, in at least one instance, he did get into trouble. In 1778, he is ordered to appear before the Board of the State of Georgia Executive Council to answer for his conduct. “Whereas it appears to this board, that Philip Delegal, Esq., hath in a late instance when a plundering party landed on the Island of Skidoway acted in a manner highly improper and which gives room to suspect him of not being well disposed to the State.” Although he did not lose his land at this time, his estate was doomed once the British evacuated Savannah, in July of 1782.

AFTERMATH

Ironically, war brought devastation to his home from the people to whom he had remained loyal. Purportedly the last skirmish of the American Revolution fought in Georgia took place on Skidaway. A British raiding party came ashore and clashed with local troops resulting in the destruction of his home and property on July 25, 1782. Only Philip II’s ghost remained to witness the tragedy since his wife and children had already fled to Florida. After the war, Philip III and his brother David both fought to gain back their lost ancestral lands. Finally, in Feb. 1787 some of the confiscated lands that had not already been sold at public auction were returned. We find a note in 1792 that “David De Le Gal [sic] is appointed Commissioner of Roads in Harris Neck,” near Saint Catherines Island. David also

had a son named Philip. David Delegal’s son Philip IV married his cousin Jane Delegal and they had three sons who served in the Confederate army: Major Thomas Philip Delegal, Colonel Edward Delegal, Jr. who was a staff officer to the Governor of Georgia and Colonel Henry Harday Delegal, M.D.

IS PHILIP II ALONE?

It is likely that the enclosure was a family burial ground. In 1953, one of the Halifax descendants asked Col. Travis, the then owner of the property on which the grave site rests, to describe the enclosure. He told her the “vault was large enough for at least 8 graves.” Another relative writing in the 1940s, lamented that her fear of snakes prevented her from closer investigation of the enclosure. “If only I dared to venture just once into that ancient and overgrown burial ground on Skidaway where markers to several departed Delegals still can be read.” She also says that Catherine Delegal Liechtenstein (var.) “may rest beside her parents” (Philip II’s and Jane’s eldest daughter who died in 1774 on Skidaway) Perhaps members of his family who died before Philip II also rest on this spot. His mother-in-law, his first wife, Jane and four of their children, a son-in-law, grandchild, and his brother George’s only son all predeceased Philip.

The Delegals were defending the southern borders of the American Colonies before Oglethorpe brought colonists to Yamacraw Bluff. Philip II continued to serve Georgia, first as part of Oglethorpe’s rangers, and later in the militia and in various “civil service” posts. The tide turned against Philip and he died as the world changed around him. Yet, he still occupies a small patch of the island he loved near Hoptree Cross.♦