



Robert T. Kennedy, Founding President of the Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation



Robert T. Kennedy was born in Hartford, Connecticut. Rob, a successful business man, and his wife Dottie lived in many places including Hong Kong, Calcutta, New York City, Seattle and Atlanta. They retired to Daufuskie Island in 1991. An avid history buff, Rob became a student of Daufuskie's

illustrious past. He served as island tour guide and became the first president of the Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation when it was established in 2001. Rob was a natural raconteur and shared Daufuskie stories with visitors and locals alike until shortly before his death in 2009.

Rob Kennedy enjoyed a good laugh, a martini and his many friends. His compassion and dignity, and the grace with which he lived, reside in our hearts. He was the finest of gentlemen. The Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation dedicates this trail to his memory.

The Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation

The Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation was founded in 2001 to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of Daufuskie Island, South Carolina. To further public knowledge and appreciation of Daufuskie Island, the Foundation has acquired and restored historic buildings, established an island history museum, created a self-guided trail of historic island sites, and begun an island history archives.

The Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation is a 501(C)3 charitable organization. Contributions may be sent to:



Box 52 • Daufuskie Island, SC 29915

DAUFUSKIE ISLAND HISTORY

Daufuskie Island, tucked between Savannah, Georgia, and Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, was inhabited by numerous native tribes until the early 1700's when they were driven away from their land by explorers, traders and settlers. While under British rule, plantations were developed, growing indigo and later Sea Island cotton. Slaves tilled the fields while plantation owners and their families spent much of the year away. The slaves' isolation provided the setting for the retention of their African culture.

Plantation owners and slaves fled the island at the start of the Civil War. Union troops then occupied the island. After the war, freed slaves (Gullah people) returned to the island, purchasing small plots of land or working for landowners. The boll weevil destroyed the cotton fields in the early 1900's. Logging and the Maggioni Oyster Canning Factory provided jobs for the predominately Gullah populated island at the turn of the 20th century. Oysters continued to be harvested and shucked on the island after the cannery closed and were shipped elsewhere for processing. Daufuskie Island oysters were sold world-wide. Life was hard, made more so by being cut off from the mainland. As a result, island residents created a caring, close-knit community, one crossing racial lines.

When pollution in the Savannah River closed the oyster beds in the 1950's, the island's economy declined. The Gullah began to leave the island for better opportunities. By the 1980's the population of the island decreased from a high of around 2,000 to less than 60. At that time developers came to the island, and Haig Point, Melrose, Oakridge and Bloody Point were subsequently built. The island's Historic District has retained its breathtaking natural beauty. The entire island is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The history of Daufuskie Island is rich, diverse and fascinating. The fact that the island has no bridge to the mainland has allowed it to retain its Lowcountry mystique. We hope you will enjoy your historic tour down the dusty roads of Daufuskie Island's history.

The Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation.



DAUFUSKIE ISLAND

- ① Mt. Carmel Baptist Church No. 2
(Billie Burn Museum)
- Jane Hamilton School
(Gullah Learning Center)
- ② Tabby Ruin
- ③ Cooper River Cemetery
- ④ Haig Point
- ⑤ Melrose
- ⑥ Oyster Union Society Hall
- ⑦ Hinson White Home
- ⑧ Mary Field Cemetery
- ⑨ Sarah Grant Home
- ⑩ Public Dock
- ⑪ White School House
- ⑫ The Council Tree
- ⑬ First Union African Baptist Church
- ⑭ Mary Fields School
- ⑮ Moses Ficklin Cottage and Oak Tree
- ⑯ Mary Dunn Cemetery
- ⑰ The Railroad
- ⑱ Bloody Point
- ⑲ Bloody Point Cemetery
- ⑳ Bloody Point Lighthouse and Silver Dew Winery



* Approximate time for the entire trail is 3 - 3.5 hrs.

* The trail may be started at any trail marker.

We ask that you do not enter the grounds of private residences and that you be respectful when exploring the cemeteries.

Daufuskie Island Historic Sites

① Mt. Carmel Baptist Church No. 2

(Billie Burn 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.



Jane Hamilton School (Gullah Learning Center)

Cooper River children attended school in the Mt. Carmel Baptist Church No.1 until it was destroyed by the hurricane of 1940. The one room Jane Hamilton School was then built and was open for ten years. After that, transportation was

provided to take the children to the Mary Fields School. In 2008 the Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation leased the structure from the Beaufort County Board of Education and restored it. This historic structure is currently home to the Gullah Learning Center and the island's community library.



② Tabby Ruin

Tabby is a building material made from a mixture of ground oyster shells, sand and water. This material was used for buildings on Daufuskie Island, especially on Haig's Point Plantation. Many slave quarters were constructed of wood and

these have long since disintegrated, but remnants of structures made from the very durable tabby remain on Daufuskie Island, Hilton Head Island, and throughout the Lowcountry.



③ Cooper River Cemetery

A very important segment of Daufuskie Island Gullah life was providing a proper burial for loved ones. Cemeteries were usually set next to moving water in keeping with the Gullah belief that the soul would travel home to Africa via the water. This cemetery borders the Cooper River. There are grave



⑦ Hinson White Home

This charming 1916 house is representative of Daufuskie Island Gullah architecture. Residences were enhanced by porches which provided cooling shade in the hot, muggy summer. Residents could

rock on the porch and enjoy the breeze. This house was built by Gullah craftsmen but always occupied by white families. House trim often was painted blue to ward off the evil spirits or "haints" (the native pronunciation of "haunts"). This color is usually referred to as "Haint Blue". Watch for blue trimmed homes as you tour the island. *Private residence.*

⑧ Mary Field Cemetery

Mary Field Cemetery is the largest Gullah cemetery on the island. There are grave markers dating from 1926 to the present. Earlier wooden markers have disintegrated from all the Gullah cemeteries and the only indications of those graves are low areas where wooden

caskets have collapsed. Graves were usually dug by friends of the family. Following the funeral service, mourners would walk behind the carriage bearing the casket, singing all the way to the cemetery. *Please be respectful.*



⑨ Sarah Grant Home

Sarah Grant was midwife, Sunday school president, and PTA president during her influential life. She bought this 1910 house from Fuller Fripp for \$15 and had

it moved to its present location at a cost of \$25, thereby paying \$40 for her home. Sarah Grant was married to the island undertaker. When he passed away in 1962, she took his place. As she was already the island midwife, someone remarked that "Granny bring 'em 'n she take 'em away." In recent times the renovated house has served as the Daufuskie Island Art Gallery. *Private residence.*



⑩ Public Dock

In 1883, near this location, Maggioni & Company opened an oyster cannery which provided employment for many islanders. After the cannery closed in 1903, islanders continued to harvest and shuck oysters and transport them to nearby canneries.

⑭ 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. The building was recently renovated and is used for church and civic activities.



⑮ Moses Ficklin Cottage and Oak Tree

The enormous ancient live oak fronting this restored Gullah home is thought to have greeted Spanish explorers when they first came to Daufuskie Island. The classic Gullah house was constructed under its shady, cool branches circa 1925. Moses Ficklin was a deacon of the First Union African

Baptist Church and the Gullah undertaker, assisted by his wife Grace. He always kept a supply of \$100 caskets on hand. The old carriage that was used as a hearse can be viewed outside the Mt. Carmel Baptist Church No. 2 at the Billie Burn Museum. *Private residence.*



⑯ Mary Dunn Cemetery

This cemetery is the only historic cemetery for white people on Daufuskie Island. Established in the 1700s, it borders the Mongin Creek on land provided by Mary Dunn for a family cemetery. In later years permission was given for white people who were not relatives to be buried there. There are

grave stones in this cemetery dating as far back as 1790. The cemetery is privately owned and still used today. *Please be respectful.*



⑰ The Railroad

In the early 1900's, logging became a profitable island investment. Materials to build a narrow-gauge railroad were barged to the island and railroad tracks were laid from the Mongin Creek to Freeport. Flatbed cars transported logs to Jimmy Lee's Mongin Creek Landing. A canthook flipped logs into the water



markers in the cemetery dating as early as 1917, but the cemetery itself dates back to plantation days. *Please be respectful.*

④ Haig Point



Haig Point, was known as Haig's Point in plantation days. It is home to the 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. Haig Point also has extensive tabby ruins and a Gullah cemetery on the property. *Private residential community – no access.*

⑤ Melrose

Daufuskie Island was divided into eleven plantations at the start of the Civil War, varying in size from two hundred to eleven hundred acres.

Plantations such as Melrose were self-contained with almost everything needed produced within the plantation. Very little was purchased. Heavy labor was handled by the slaves and plantation life



was hard and mean. The slaves worked from "till to can't". The island was abandoned at the start of the Civil War and was subsequently occupied by Union soldiers. After the war freed slaves (Gullah) returned to the island where some lived in the old slave quarters and worked for landowners, while others purchased land and built small cabins of their own.

⑥ Oyster Union Society Hall

From the turn of the 20th century until pollution in the Savannah River ruined the oyster beds in the 1950's, the primary economy of the island was the harvesting and shucking of oysters.

The oyster workers established the Oyster Union Society, a benevolent and burial society that held meetings and social events in this 1893 building. The latter events were often enhanced with local moonshine or homemade wine. An initiation ceremony was necessary for membership in the Society. The Society was dissolved after the oyster beds were closed.



enterprise continued until 1959 when pollution in the Savannah River ruined the oyster beds and curtailed the harvest of oysters. After that, the island's population declined as people left the island to pursue job opportunities on the mainland.



Prior to the arrival of steamboats to the Lowcountry, islanders had to row their bateaux (small boats) to the mainland and back. Steamboats provided not only easier access for islanders to conduct their "across the water" business, but also brought folks to the island for lively parties and picnics. It was always a highlight of the day when the steamship pulled into the dock.

⑪ White School House

The White School House was built in 1913 by the Beaufort County Board of Education for white children who lived on



Daufuskie Island. Whether there were twenty students or just one, a teacher was sent to the island. The school closed when the last white child graduated in 1962. Since then, the White School House has been used as fire department headquarters, island library, and thrift shop. Currently the White School House is home to the Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation's archives.

⑫ The Council Tree

After Sunday church services, men would gather under a tree such as this stately oak and talk at length about non-church topics: their families, animals, oystering, crops and other island issues. The men felt it improper to discuss these matters on church property. There are references to a Sister Tree where the women met to chat.



⑬ First Union African 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 1990's. A replica of a traditional praise house is located behind the building. Sunday services are open to all who come to worship.



flipped logs into the water where they were rafted together and towed by tugboat to Savannah or Darien, Georgia. After ten years, logging ended. If you look carefully, you can see the raised rail bed and drainage ditches to either side.

⑱ Bloody Point

April 15, 1715, was the date of the first of three skirmishes at this site between the Yemassee Indians and settlers. It was said that there was blood in the water from the dead and injured – and the name Bloody Point has been engraved upon this beautiful shoreline ever since.



Robert Watts built ships on Bloody Point in the 1770's and was known to be an excellent shipwright. His cousin and fellow shipbuilder, Charles, was tarred, feathered and banished from the island for not joining the rebellion against England.

Bloody Point is the southernmost inhabited point of South Carolina.

⑲ Bloody Point Cemetery

The Bloody Point Cemetery, one of the six Gullah cemeteries on the island, was established along the Mongin Creek for the burial of slaves during the plantation era and was used until late in the 20th Century. Unfortunately, a portion of the cemetery has been lost to beach erosion. *Please be respectful.*



⑳ Bloody Point Lighthouse & Silver Dew Pottery

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. The small building that stored kerosene for the light now is known as the Silver Dew Winery. *Private residence.*

