



Seabrook Island Through the Years

By Sue Holloman and Bob Guiffreda

As you drive onto Seabrook Island and admire the beauty, so you ever wonder what the island was like in early times and how it has changed over the years? Seabrook Island has a rich history and was part of the historical events that helped shape our nation.

The Island was inhabited by coastal Indians as early as 1400 BC and the ocean, forest and wildlife provided an abundant harvest of food, clothing and shelter. Their tribal designations, Kiawah, Stono and Bohicket, are still evident as place names in surrounding areas.

English explorers reached Seabrook Island in 1695 and claimed the land for the King. They quickly enslaved many of the Indians. The local Indians had no resistance to white settlers diseases and they soon began to die off in large numbers.

The Island was sold to Thomas Jones, who named the Island after himself, Jones Island. He had to agree to keep Haulover Creek (now a small waterway visible just before the turnoff to Kiawah) dug out so that goods could be transported between the Kiawah and Bohicket Rivers.

The area around the islands was a great place for ships to hide and Privateer Creek on Seabrook was a favorite place for boats to lie in wait for unsuspecting ships to pass by.

Indigo, rice and finally cotton began to be planted on the Island. Ebenezer Simmons purchased the property around 1763 and changed the name to Simmons Island. Black slaves were imported to do the manual labor to support plantation life. At one time 158 African slaves toiled in the fields or worked about the plantation. By 1710 a road was built on Johns Island, but travelers still had to take a ferry across the river to reach Charleston. Large barrels of rice, weighing 350 to 500 lbs. were transported by barge from the plantation.

The Revolutionary War brought British and Hessian soldiers to our Island. In 1779 they landed on the beach and began to build flat-bottomed boats to be used to go up the Bohicket River. The Americans formed a militia to fight the British, but were defeated and Johns Island was occupied by the British from 1780 to 1782. General Nathaniel Green liberated Charleston in 1782 and the British quickly left the Island. After the war, cotton became king on the sea islands and plantation life continued.

William Seabrook bought the Island in 1816 and changed the name once again. This time to its current designation, Seabrook Island. They owned the property until the start of the Civil War.

The Civil War and eventually reconstruction, changed life on Johns and Seabrook Islands. General Robert E. Lee ordered the evacuation of Johns Island and the adjoining sea islands because he could not defend them. The Seabrook family was forced to leave their plantation house (which was located near Haulover Cut on the Johns Island side) and move inland. In 1863 the Seabrook family sold the Island to the Gregg family for \$150,000 Confederate money. Seabrook became a staging area Union troops. These troops came into ports at Privateer Creek on Seabrook and occupied Seabrook Island. The Stono Scouts, a South Carolina militia, sent a scouting patrol onto Seabrook Island to determine what Federal troop activity was taking place here. These troops used a road that roughly paralleled the current Haulover and traces of this old road are still visible on the Stevenot property. "The Battle of Haulover Cut", which lasted three days and saw 34 men killed, was fought on the land right across the Haulover Cut on what is now the property of the Andell family.

The Civil War changed forever the way of life on the Island and in 1880 William Andell bought the property from the Greggs for \$16,500 and by the early 1900s cattle, hogs and horses roamed the Island. The Andell family loved the trees and refused to allow the land to be logged, which accounts for some of the very large and Significant trees still visible on the Island.

Seabrook Island entered a period of quiet with very little change until 1938, when the Andells sold a large portion of the Island to Victor Morowitz, from New York City. After Mrs. Morowitz's death, the land was left to the Episcopal Church, which was running Camp St. Christopher. The church was not allowed to use their tax exempt status for all of the property, so in 1970, the church sold all but 230 acres (the current Camp St. Christopher) to the Seabrook Island Development Corporation, which also purchased an additional 600 acres from the Andells. This development corporation began extensive planning for a community that combined residential and resort living in a secure, gated environment.

Modern Seabrook Island

1970 Seabrook Island Limited Partnership headed by Charleston developer William C. Whitner, purchased the bulk of the property from the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina. The property is later transferred by Whitner to the Seabrook Development Corporation.

1972 Seabrook Island Company, a South Carolina Limited Partnership with the firm of Gerry Brothers and Company of New York as the limited partner and Land Logistics of Florida as the general partner, purchased the island from the Seabrook Development Corporation and officially began sales of property for residential purposes on Seabrook Island.

1973 Ocean Winds Golf Course, designed by Willard Byrd, opened for play.

1974 Seabrook Beach and Cabana Club (the "Beach Club" held its official opening.

1975 The Gerry Brothers and Company purchased the equity interest of Land Logistics Corporation in the Seabrook Island Company. John W. Kessler was named managing director and president of the Seabrook Island Company.

1978 The Seabrook Island Men's Golf Association (MGA) was founded in September: Don Rhodes was elected the first President; Ed Hickey, Treasurer and John Downen, Secretary.

1979 Robert Trent Jones was selected by the Seabrook Island Company to design the Crooked Oaks Golf Course in August. The course opened for play on October 15, 1981.

1980 Bohicket Lounge, half of the Island House officially opened on June 30.

1981 Crooked Oaks Golf Course opened for play in October. A partnership headed by John W. Kessler (Thistle Corporation general Partner) purchased Seabrook Island Company in December.

1982 The second half of the Island House officially opened in June. The Seabrook Management Corporation headed by John W. Kessler replaced the Thistle Corporation as general partner of the Seabrook Island Company.

1984 Developer, Jack Kessler, turned the POA over to the property owners in an amicable and co-operative arrangement. Bob Johnson was elected the first president under these new terms.

An election for the POA Board was held and new by-laws were written. Prior to this, board members were selected by the Developer controlled board.

1985 Three Seabrook Island residents; F. Parker Hudson, Robert Russell and Dennis R. Haydon bought the Island's undeveloped properties and resort amenities. The Seabrook Island Ocean Club owned by Russell took title to the assets in the summer of 1986

1986 Seabrook Island Members Tennis Association was founded.

1987 Property owners vote in favor of the incorporation of the Town of Seabrook on May 19th. The first municipal election was held in May, and in August, Joel Thompson was elected as the town's first mayor.

1988 First meeting of the Equity Conversion Committee was held on February 25.

1989 SIPOA incorporated Seabrook Island Associates (SIA) on June 19th to act as prime mover in equity conversion effort,. It's first organizational meeting was held on October 27.

1989 The Seabrook Island Ocean Club filed for bankruptcy protection on September 20th with approximately \$21 million in debts.

1989 Hurricane Hugo struck Charleston on September 21st.

1990 Foreclosure actions were initiated against the Seabrook Island Ocean Club with eventual takeover of the amenities by Bank South, the principal mortgage holder.

1991 Seabrook Island Associates and Bank South executed an agreement for the purchase of SIOC assets for \$9.5 million on March 19th.

Seabrook Island Associates began its "On Board in April" membership drive on April 4th

The Incorporation of Seabrook Island on April 22nd.

The initial meeting of the Board of Governors on April 29th.

Transaction between Seabrook Island Associated and Bank South closed in escrow on June 28th.

Club members officially assume control of purchased assets on July 12th.

The Club at Seabrook Island was formed upon the purchase of the amenities from Bank South by about 900 property owners, This milestone allowed the owners of property at Seabrook Island to control their own destiny, in that roads, rights-of-way, beach trust, amenities, etc. were now owned and controlled by the property owners.

1992 The SIPOA purchased 1.55 acres of land for the Administration building.

The first Member-Member golf tournament was held on February 29th.

1992 The first Men's Member-Guest Tournament was held on October 8th.

The first USTA Senior Clay Court Championship was held on October 10th and 11th.

1994 The SIPOA Administration Building was completed.

1995 The Town established the Water/Sewer Commission.

Kiawah and Seabrook men competed for the first annual "Island Cup" in May.

1996 After litigation, the Commission negotiated the purchase of the water and sewer facilities from Minnesota Power and Light.

The SIPOA purchased 14 acres of the Lake Entry tract for use as a future Community Center/Recreation area.

The Club became a fully certified member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System in July.

1998 "Palmetto Lake", a 7-acre lake, was constructed adjacent to the SIPOA 14 acre site for eventual turnover to the Association.

The fitness center opened in February.

The Alan Fleming Senior Claycourt Classic was held on October 8th - 11th.

2000 Hurricane Floyd hit Charleston in June.

2001 Seabrook Island road extension was completed.

2003 Club exited conference and villa rental business on October 30.

2004 Ballots mailed for the Island One Referendum on September 20th. Results announced November 15th. Referendum passed by a significant margin.

2006 Club switched to "non-refundable" equity memberships effective January 1.

Ballots were mailed for the Horizon Plan Referendum on June 26th. Results announced August 8th showing the referendum passed by a significant margin.

2007 The name of the Club was officially changed from "The Club at Seabrook Island, Inc." to the "The Seabrook Island Club" in April.

2008 Construction began on the Club's Horizon Plan facilities January 29th.

2009 Official opening of the Pelican's nest in May, of the Lake House in August and of the Island House in September.

2010 Official opening of the Racquet Club and Equestrian Center in May.

While change is inevitable, Seabrook Island remains a natural, unspoiled environment that allows people to live securely, in harmony with nature. This is an Island whose lovely beaches are home to residents and visitors alike. It is a haven for those who love the outdoors and enjoy silence. It is a never ending story of beauty, wildlife and nature.