



Photo by Robert S. Cooper

Georgia is A Better Place Because of Sandy West

Honoring the life of Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West (1913 – 2021)

Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West, preserver and champion of Ossabaw Island, died on January 17, 2021 at her residence in Garden City, Georgia. Mrs. West died on her 108th birthday.

Mrs. West embodied the spirit of Ossabaw Island. She was always eager to share that spirit, and her island, so that people could reconnect with the natural world, and with each other, in important and powerful ways. Her enthusiasm, joyful spirit, and her love of the experience of Ossabaw, inspired thousands of people over her long and fruitful life.

"It is hard to imagine that the death of someone at age 108 is surprising, but we are in shock over the loss of our visionary and friend," said Elizabeth DuBose, Executive Director of the Ossabaw Island Foundation

(TOIF). "Ossabaw Island, as we know it, exists because of Mrs. West, and Georgia is a better place because of her life's work."

"I am truly distressed and saddened to learn of Mrs. West's death," said TOIF Board Chair M. Tyus Butler, Jr. "It was Mrs. West's vision, determination, sensitivity, and generosity that made the island's preservation possible, all to the benefit of the State of Georgia, the public, the arts and sciences, the environment—all of us. God speed, Sandy. What a wonderful life! You are already sorely missed."

The Ossabaw Island Foundation extends our deepest condolences to Mrs. West's children, grandchildren, many other relatives, and legions of close friends.



Executive Director's Letter

Sandy West's Love Affair with Ossabaw Island

Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West's love affair with Ossabaw Island did not begin when her parents purchased the 26,000-acre barrier island in 1924 as their winter retreat. As an 11-year-old future heiress from Michigan, who was used to spending winters at Greenwich Plantation near Thunderbolt, she was unimpressed with island life and missed being in town close to her Savannah friends.

The flame of Sandy's Ossabaw passion was first lit when she and her brother Bill would sneak out the back door, escaping their tutor to explore the island. Bill and "Sis" (her childhood nickname) were often on horseback--the best way to really see Ossabaw Island, according to Sandy West. Ossabaw's 26,000 acres of forest, marshes, and lagoons, and its thousands of wild creatures (hogs, deer, alligators, birds, snakes, racoons) transformed Eleanor "Sis" Torrey into Sandy West--from a Grosse Pointe, Michigan debutante to a fierce conservationist for coastal Georgia.

Sandy's love for Ossabaw Island bloomed in 1959 after she and her brother's young heirs inherited the island together. She wanted to share her special place with others. Sandy wanted Ossabaw's visitors to be transformed by the island instead of vice-versa.

She believed that Ossabaw Island could inspire new thought and creativity. She often said that by quieting ourselves, away from people and cities and civilization, ideas as fundamental and transformational as the invention of the wheel could be ignited.

As leader of the family, in 1961 Sandy and her filmmaker husband Clifford West established the Ossabaw Island Project, followed by the Genesis Project, and programs for Public Use, Education and Research. The interdisciplinary focus of her programs, the no agenda style of the Ossabaw Island Project, and the self-sustaining "back to the land" approach of Genesis were all revolutionary concepts in their day.

She funded and managed those programs until 1983, five years after she and her family sold Ossabaw to the State of Georgia with the condition that the island remain protected. Sandy retained life estate ownership in the family home on Ossabaw and lived there from 1987-2016.

With her death last week, on her 108th birthday, Sandy West has passed the Ossabaw flame to "Ossabaw's Army"—her name for the thousands of people who have been transformed by the island over the decades.

As part of Ossabaw's Army, The Ossabaw Island Foundation is committed to carrying forward the legacy of Sandy's love affair with the island. Our vision is "to reveal the voices and mystery of Ossabaw Island." Sandy did not always agree with the way our organization reveals those voices or shares them; the use of technology, leading history tours, or offering structured programs. Nor was she satisfied with the State of Georgia's ownership--especially the DNR's hunts that keep the wild hog population under control. But she was gratified by our preservation of Ossabaw's historic buildings, and was especially fond of the artists and ecologists and college students that came to the island under our watch. She loved our late island coordinator Jim Bitler. From time to time, she dropped in on our programs--always candid and gracious with visitors, always sharing her love of Ossabaw and her concern for its future. And, she knew that we are determined to protect Ossabaw from falling into private hands, and to preserve its unspoiled and natural state.

Thank you Sandy West for entrusting to all of us in Ossabaw's Army the protection of your magnificent place. May we always hear your voice in the island's quiet.

Elizabeth DuBose
Executive Director
Ossabaw Island Foundation

This essay originally appeared in the print edition of Savannah Morning News (SMN) on January 25, 2021.

Listen to Elizabeth DuBose's interview with SMN Opinion Editor Adam Van Brimmer:





Visit Ossabaw Island in 2021!

Photo by Julian Buckmaster

For the trips listed below, the maximum group size has been reduced in order to maintain physical distancing on the boat and in our buildings. All check-in activities will be done using safety protocols. Sanitation procedures have been implemented. All visitors are required to wear their own masks during check-

in, on the boat and inside the buildings, and maintain 6-foot distance from all other visitors unless they are members of your household. Our highest priority is the safety of our visitors and staff. Thank you for your understanding as we all work together to make your Ossabaw Island experience the best it can be.

How to Register: The following trips are sponsored by The Ossabaw Island Foundation and are open to the public. Fees vary. To register, visit ossabawisland.org or 912-344-3900. Pre-registration required.

Super Museum Sunday on Ossabaw Island
Sun. May 2
Visit Ossabaw Island as part of Georgia History Festival’s statewide Super Museum Sunday event. This afternoon walking tour of Ossabaw’s history is free-of-charge for island admission, with only a \$40 boat fee.

Ossabaw Island Descendants Heritage Day
Sat. May 8
Did your parents, grandparents or other ancestors live, work or own land on Ossabaw Island from 1760 - 1980? Were they tenant farmers, enslaved people, Torrey Family employees, land owners, Freedmen, hunting guides, timbermen, or cattlemen? This springtime gathering brings Ossabaw’s people together for a day of food, friendship, history, and remembrance.

Get Creative on Ossabaw: Day Trip
Sat. June 5
Paint, sketch, write, or take photos on Ossabaw Island. Let the island be your muse. After a brief history presentation, you’ll have several hours to wander the North End on your own and make art.

To sign up for emails on the latest information on Ossabaw events, text OSSABAW to 22828 from your phone.

Lift Every Voice: Ossabaw Island and Pin Point Fee-Free Day Trip
Sat. August 14
This morning walking tour of the North End Plantation site provides an overview of Ossabaw’s African-American and Gullah-Geechee culture and history; followed by an afternoon visit to the Pin Point Heritage Museum in the community established by formerly enslaved people from Ossabaw Island.

Turtle Hatching Weekend Trips
Fri. September 3 – Sun. September 5.
Weekend Two-Night Trip
Accompany Georgia DNR Sea Turtle Conservation Program interns as they inventory loggerhead turtle nests for eggs and live hatchlings on Ossabaw Island’s South Beach. Weekend trips include an ecological tour of Ossabaw, led by coastal ecologist/ naturalist John “Crawfish” Crawford.

A Hands-On Indigo Dyeing Experience: Ossabaw Island Indigo Day Trips
Fri. September 17, Sun. September 19, Sun. September 26.
Elizabeth DuBose and Mark Frissell share the history of Ossabaw indigo, provide instruction on creating fresh leaf indigo dye vats and guide participants through the dyeing process.

Sandy West, Matriarch of Ossabaw Island, Dies on Her 108th Birthday

by Mary Landers, *Savannah Morning News*

Eleanor “Sandy” Torrey West, once owner and always champion of Ossabaw Island, died Sunday [January 17, 2021] in the early hours of her 108th birthday.

Her grandson and a member of the Ossabaw Island Foundation board, Beryl Gilothwest, confirmed her death Sunday as did Elizabeth DuBose, executive director of the Ossabaw Island Foundation.

“It is hard to imagine that the death of someone at age 108 is surprising, but we are in shock over the loss of our visionary and friend,” DuBose wrote in a prepared statement. “Ossabaw Island as we know it exists because of Mrs. West, and Georgia is a better place because of her life’s work.

“We extend our deepest condolences to Mrs. West’s children, grandchildren, many other relatives, and legions of close friends.”

Born Jan. 17, 1913, West was 11 when her father and mother, the latter an heir to the Pittsburgh Plate Glass fortune, bought Ossabaw. At 26,000 acres of beach, marsh and maritime forest, it’s the third largest of Georgia’s barrier islands, located just south of Skidaway Island in Chatham County.

The island’s wilderness captivated West from childhood when her Michigan-based family used the island and the Spanish Colonial Revival mansion they built as a winter retreat.

“She felt so extraordinarily lucky to have Ossabaw in her life,” Gilothwest said Sunday. “It completely changed her life from the moment she stepped foot on it when her parents bought it in 1924.”

West made Ossabaw into an intellectual and artistic haven after inheriting it in 1960, spending much of her wealth underwriting retreats for artists, writers and scientists. Her guests there included writers Ralph Ellison, Annie Dillard, Olive Ann Burns, Margaret Atwood, T.C. Boyle, and Alice Walker; poets Edwin Honig and David Hamilton; composers Aaron Copland and Samuel Barber; ecologist Eugene Odum; and art historian H. W. Janson.

Property taxes jeopardized her long-term ownership, but she rebuffed wealthy developers. Instead, when West was 65 she and her family sold the island to the state for \$8 million, half its assessed value. The sale ensured the island would be a heritage preserve used only for “natural, scientific and cultural study, research and education and environmentally sound preservation, conservation and management of the island’s ecosystem.”

West retained a life estate on the island, which is accessible only by boat, living there fulltime from age 74 to 103.

“You know, it was a relationship with the island that was the great love affair of her life,” Gilothwest said. “She dedicated her life to saving it and preserving it, but in a way that she thought would protect it. And she wanted to share all of the incredibly unique components of that with others.”

Gilothwest said his grandmother should also be remembered for her empathy.

“She always found things to love and people that you know, that others didn’t,” he said. “She was very observant and could make people feel like they were the only person in that room.”

Her empathy extended to animals, too, which seemed drawn to her, and she to them.

“She had this menagerie around her and when I was little, when we would go out in the morning, they would all just follow her around the house, outside the house but sometimes inside,” Gilothwest said. “And one of my favorite things that she always said to me as a kid was the fence around the main house keeps the people in, it doesn’t keep the animals out. The island really belongs to them. And they’re just letting me stay here.”

News of her death spread quickly through her wide circle of friends and admirers in Savannah.

“Sandy was a complex marvel at the same time she marveled at the world and its complexities,” said Savannah artist Betsy Cain. “Always curious and wanting to know what you thought and what you saw on Ossabaw she would say: tell me in detail what you saw today and what you did. I want to know it all.”

Cain helped care for West, sometimes painting with the centenarian.

“She had a painter’s eye and a penchant for great humor and tease,” Cain said. “I think she was an artist in the broadest sense... an artist of spirit. She wielded a mean brush when she did paint and we had extraordinary sessions painting in her bed!”

In 2016 West moved from Ossabaw to an assisted living facility in Savannah. She was staying with a friend and caregiver in Garden City when she died.

Her children are the late Michael Torrey Shallcross, Gilian Ford Shallcross, John Post Shallcross, and Justin Paynter West. She leaves her grandchildren, Melanie Shallcross, Angela Ladson, Patrick Shallcross, Benjamin Wohlauer, Katherine Wohlauer, Torrey Shallcross, John Shallcross, Jr., and Beryl Gilothwest.

This article first appeared in the Savannah Morning News print edition on Monday, January 18. Reprinted with permission.



Photo by Lucinda Bunnan



Photo by Elizabeth DuBose



Photo by Betsy Cain



Photo Courtesy of Sandy West



Photo by Jeff Carmel



Photo by Betsy Cain

The Magic of Sandy West, Ossabaw Island and the Number 108

By Jane Fishman

I never heard Sandy West say she wanted to live to 95 or 100 or 105. If you mentioned any of those numbers she'd turn her head and shrug. She'd wave her graceful hand, her long, tapered fingers, nails frequently painted blue, and say, "Ridiculous" or "Don't tell anyone." Sandy, whose parents passed away much younger than she, lived for the moment. She lived in the moment.

And yet you have to wonder: how was it that two hours into her 108th birthday in the wee hours of the morning this woman who loved to keep people guessing, who appreciated symmetry and the unknown, quietly chose this number at which to peacefully die. No muss, no fuss, her earthly "thinking tours" (the term she used for planning her next shenanigan, her next crusade) put to rest. If she were alive, she would say something else was going on for that to happen. She'd point to Hermes, that trickster of a god who showed up at the oddest of times in Sandy's life.

She had it made, you might think. Why bother fighting with the state, confronting the Department of Natural Resources, squabbling with people who wanted her to leave the island before she was ready, standing up to people who preferred she sell the island for big bucks. Relax, lighten up, kick back. Can't you just pretend to be interested, pleaded her lawyer who had been contacted by Aristotle Onassis, an interested buyer, "so I can meet Jackie Kennedy?"

How many people at age 65 have the wherewithal, the gumption, to negotiate their way to a bargain sale with the bureaucrats of the state of Georgia for the future of Ossabaw Island? This after Chatham County hiked her taxes up to a prohibitive amount on an island with no police services, no highway maintenance, no fire department, no school taxes.

This is when it helps to be friends with former governor Jimmy Carter. Carter understood Sandy unlike the state's actuaries who talked right in front of her – "as if I were so old I couldn't hear them" – figuring out how long she might live and what they could do to gobble up the island for themselves. Well, she fooled them. Carter, that beautiful iconoclast of a man, a nonconformist, like Sandy, understood the importance of keeping something wild and untamed. Governor George Busbee, in office at the time of the sale, played a big role as well--creating and signing the Executive Order that established Ossabaw as the state's first Heritage Preserve.

In her way she was wild and untamed, as well. I'm sure her mother did not bring her up to make Ossabaw her home for so long. From the oil painting of Sandy and her brother and all the

accoutrements of the rich, I'm not sure she would have approved of Sandy's frayed jeans, her scruffy Keds (a style preferred by our new vice-president, Kamala Harris), her occasionally salty language or one of her favorite T-shirts that read, "Life is a Hoax," although maybe she would. Sandy was fond of quoting her mother. "If someone called and she didn't want to speak to them she'd say, 'Tell them I have a bone in my leg.'"

I would not put it past Sandy, who paid attention to numbers and what they meant, to know that 108 has long been considered a sacred number in Hinduism and yoga. Mathematicians view 108 as a number that connects the sun, the moon and the earth. Mystics claim the number represents a key to our own intuition and high aspects of our being. Pranayama – or yoga breathing – are often repeated cycles in sequences of 108. The same with sun salutations, which are completed in nine rounds of the 12 postures. When multiplied they add up to 108.

Leonardo Fibonacci, who taught us about the golden ratio, or the spiral arrangement of leaves of petals, said the number 108 represents the wholeness of existence. Once a month the distance between the earth and the sun is 108 times the diameter of the sun. The Yoga Institute says when the number 108 appears in our life it may mean that we are about to attain a long-desired goal or achievement.

Did Sandy know there are 108 hand-stitched stitches in a Major League Baseball? Maybe. There was no second-guessing Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West. You never knew what she'd say. We thought she'd live forever.

But now is when things get real. In the spring of 2020 with the near passage of HB 906, we barely escaped legislation that would privatize historic structures and allow the state to sell up to and including 15 acres of Heritage Preserve property, such as Ossabaw – just the thing Sandy warned us about. The bill is going to come up again; count on it.

As Sandy exhorted us time and again, we have to be in her army. We have to be her army. Now it's our time to step up to protect Ossabaw and other coastal islands. She did her part. Now it's our turn.

A version of this column originally appeared in the print edition of Savannah Morning News. Savannah Morning News columnist Jane Fishman, a friend of Mrs. West, is the author of The Woman Who Saved an Island, the Story of Sandy West and Ossabaw Island. To purchase book, visit OssabawIsland.org/shop



Remembering the life of Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West

Pictured: Clairview Estate, Grosse Pointe, MI



No one in the last 125 years had as much influence on Ossabaw Island as Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West, the matriarch and muse of Ossabaw Island. Mrs. West lived on Ossabaw Island full-time from 1987 until May of 2016, when, at age 103, she moved to Savannah. She first visited Ossabaw in 1924 at age 11 when her parents, Dr. Harry Norton Torrey and Nell Ford Torrey of Grosse Pointe, Michigan, purchased Ossabaw Island as their winter residence.

In 1978, Mrs. West led her family's negotiations with the State of Georgia during their sale of Ossabaw Island to the state. The Torrey-West family agreed to sell the island to the state for \$8 million, half its appraised value, and gift-deeded the remaining half-value to the state.

As a condition of the sale agreement, Ossabaw Island was designated Georgia's first Heritage Preserve by executive order of Governor George Busbee. Mrs. West was given a life estate of 23 acres on the island, including the Torrey-West House.

Mrs. West moved off the island in 2016. Her life estate "ownership" of the Torrey West Estate continued until her death at her home in Garden City, Georgia on January 17, 2021 (her 108th birthday).

Many people are familiar with Mrs. West's Ossabaw Island history and legacy but are curious about lesser-known chapters of her life story. This timeline, originally published in the July 2019 edition of *The Oracle*, provides a wider look at her long and active life.



January 17, 1913 Eleanor Ford Torrey is born in Detroit to Dr. Harry Norton Torrey and Nell Ford Torrey of Grosse Pointe, Michigan. Eleanor is the second of two children; her brother William Ford Torrey was born in 1911.

1916 The Torrey family moves to their new estate, Clairview, located on Grosse Pointe Shores.

1917 The Torreys purchase Greenwich Plantation, Thunderbolt, Georgia, for a winter residence.

1923 The main house of Greenwich Plantation burns. Ten-year-old Eleanor and her nurse escape from the second floor of the burning house. No one is injured but the house is destroyed.

1924 Nell and Harry Torrey purchase Ossabaw Island for a reported \$150,000 for use as their new winter getaway. A house is designed by architect Henrik Wallin and construction begins by Farquhar McRae, contractor. Eleanor Torrey's first visit to Ossabaw occurs this year.

1926 Ossabaw Island Main House is completed. Henry Ford (no relation) is the first guest of the Torreys at their new "retreat in the woods" on Ossabaw.

1928 Eleanor graduates from Grosse Pointe Country Day School (now University Liggett School), a private, independent day school serving students from kindergarten through 9th grade.

1929 – 1931 Eleanor attends The Masters School in Dobbs Ferry, New York, graduating in 1931. She was a member of Phoenix, the honorary drama society.



PHOENIX

BOTTOM ROW: Kathleen Evans, Marion Gibbons, Evelyn Parker. MIDDLE ROW: Eleanor Torrey (*Property Manager*), Anne Sims (*President*), Miss de Banke (*Faculty Adviser*), Nannette Streit (*Vice-President and Secretary*), Louise Stimson (*Treasurer*). TOP ROW: Neville Buck, Julia Blossom. NOT PRESENT: Barbara Chadwick, Laurita La Cour, Barbara Hunt, Peggy Primrose, Esther Vanamee.



ELEANOR FORD TORREY
Attempt the end and never stand in doubt
Herrick

1935 Eleanor Torrey meets Elizabeth Pool, the sister of John Shallcross, Eleanor's fiancé. Over the next 70 years the two women make annual travel pilgrimages together. During one of their earliest trips, a stranger gives redheaded Elizabeth and blonde-haired Eleanor their lifelong nicknames—Rusty and Sandy.

1935 Eleanor Torrey marries John Shallcross. They move briefly to Savannah where John works for Charles Herty at the Savannah Pulp and Paper Laboratory. The couple lives on Washington Avenue in Ardsley Park and occasionally visit Ossabaw Island.

1937 – 1944 Eleanor and John Shallcross, now living in Detroit, have three children: Michael (1937), Gillian (1940), and John (1944). They visit Ossabaw annually during this period. The marriage ends in divorce.

1945 Dr. Torrey, Eleanor's father, dies.

1952 Eleanor "Sandy" Shallcross marries Clifford Bateman West, an artist and film maker affiliated with Cranbrook Institute of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. The Wests reside in Bloomfield Hills, making at least one trip to Ossabaw each year.

1953 Justin West, son of Sandy and Clifford, is born.

1957 William Torrey, Sandy's brother, dies in Savannah.

1959 Nell Torrey, Sandy's mother, dies. Sandy and the children of her late brother William inherit Ossabaw Island. Sandy receives a life estate to the Main House (now known as the Torrey-West Estate).





1961 Sandy and Clifford West launch the Ossabaw Foundation, and its seminal program, the Ossabaw Island Project, an interdisciplinary retreat at the Main House on Ossabaw Island, for established creatives in many artistic, scientific, and cultural disciplines.

1964 – 1968 Sandy, Clifford and Justin West make frequent trips to Europe to produce 16 films on sculpture and the Italian Renaissance. Clifford is cameraman and producer, and Sandy is the scriptwriter.

1965 Sandy and Clifford West acquire a herd of eleven donkeys for their son Justin as a Christmas present. The herd eventually grows to over 150 animals.



1968 Sandy West participates as a panelist at the Conference on the Future of the Marshlands and Islands of Georgia, held at Sea Island. This conference led to the state legislation known as the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act, passed in 1970.

1970 Sandy and Clifford West launch Genesis as another program of their Ossabaw Foundation. This interdisciplinary program for emerging creatives (mostly undergraduate and graduate students) is conducted in a near-wilderness environment at Middle Place on Ossabaw Island.

1970s Sandy West pursues her passion for painting scenes of the island.

Mid 1970s Sandy West meets with major landholders of Georgia barrier islands, environmental activists, and officials from the State of Georgia (including Governor Jimmy Carter) seeking ways to protect Ossabaw Island from private development. She rejects many offers from developers seeking to purchase Ossabaw Island.



1976 Beehive Press publishes *Maria Bosomworth and William Rodgers*, a 70-page picture book written by Eleanor Torrey West, with 30 photographs also by West.

1978 The Torrey-West family, led by Sandy, sells Ossabaw Island to the State of Georgia for \$8 million, which is half the appraised value. Ossabaw is designated as a state heritage preserve, protected from development and limited to use for natural, cultural or scientific education, research or study. These protections are stipulated by Sandy and her family as a condition of the sale. Sandy, now divorced, retains life estate to the Main House and the surrounding 23 acres.

1978 – 1994 Sandy's private Ossabaw Foundation enters a use agreement with the State of Georgia and continues to operate public use and education programs on Ossabaw Island, and for a time, continues to operate OIP and Genesis. The public use and education programs include yearly visits by Shorter College, trips by the Smithsonian Institution, and educational camping and day trips.

1983 Sandy suspends operations of the Ossabaw Island Project and Genesis, due to funding deficits.

1987 Sandy becomes a year-round resident of Ossabaw Island, moving into the Main House.

1994 Sandy's private foundation, The Ossabaw Foundation, is dissolved. A new public nonprofit, the Ossabaw Island Foundation, is established, to manage programming and facilities on Ossabaw Island and to serve as steward of the heritage preserve. Sandy becomes Chair Emerita.





2002 The State of Georgia declares March 2 of this year as “Eleanor Torrey West Day” on the occasion of the dedication of the restored Club House on Ossabaw Island.

2003 The Garden Club of America awards Mrs. West the Cynthia Pratt Laughlin Medal for outstanding achievement in environmental protection and the maintenance of the quality of life. Other honoraria over the years include the Governor’s Award from Georgia Humanities Council and from the Georgia Council of the Arts.

2006 Eleanor “Sandy” West and Elizabeth “Rusty” Pool write and publish *The God of the Hinge: Sojourns Into Cloud Cuckoo Land*, a memoir of their travels and their friendship.

2016 Sandy moves to Savannah, where she resided with her dog Toby.

2021 Eleanor “Sandy” Torrey West dies on January 17, her 108th birthday, at the Garden City, Georgia home of her friends, Sherrie Jamison and Bobby Black, with whom she lived since March 2020.

Sources and photo credits:

Betsy Cain

Jeff Carmel

Detroit Free Press

Elizabeth DuBose

Georgia Historical Society

The God of the Hinge: Sojourns Into Cloud Cuckoo Land, by Elizabeth Pool and Eleanor West (2016)

Helen Hamada

“Keeper of the island” by Dan Chapman, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, March 6, 2016

The Masters School alumni office

Ossabaw, by Eleanor West (1973)

Ossabaw Island, by Ann Foskey (2001)

Sally Speed

University Liggett School website, uls.org

Eleanor Torrey West

Lisa White

The Woman Who Saved an Island, the Story of Sandy West and Ossabaw Island, by Jane Fishman (2014)





Photo by Julian Buckmaster

What's next for the Torrey-West House and Ossabaw Island?

Preserve the Torrey-West house through the Sandy West Memorial Donations

A point of confusion has always been Mrs. West's life estate for the Torrey-West House on Ossabaw Island. In 1959, Nell Ford Torrey willed the Torrey West House and its 23 surrounding acres and outbuildings solely to her daughter Eleanor (Sandy) as a life estate. This meant that Mrs. West retained exclusive lifetime use and management of the home that her parents built on Ossabaw in 1924-26, as well as the 23 acres surrounding the Torrey West House. In the 1978 sale of Ossabaw Island to the State of Georgia, this parcel of Ossabaw Island was purchased along with the rest of the island, and it was agreed that Mrs. West's life estate would continue until her death, unless she chose to relinquish it during her lifetime. All management, maintenance, and access for the house and acreage was solely hers. At her death, management of that parcel would convey immediately to the state. In essence Mrs. West was the controlling tenant until her death.

At Mrs. West's death, the 23 acre Torrey West Estate (house and grounds) immediately became part of the Ossabaw Island Heritage Preserve, as mandated by the 1978 sale agreement, and is now under the management of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Ossabaw Island Foundation. The defined uses in the Heritage Preserve requiring that all activities on Ossabaw Island be for "natural, scientific and cultural education, research and study" now apply to the Torrey West Estate; during Mrs. West's life this property was exempt from those defined uses.

The Torrey West Estate (the house and 23 acres) is now part of the five year renewable use agreement between the Foundation and the State of Georgia, meaning that The Ossabaw Island Foundation is coordinating and leading the management of the property, in the same way that TOIF provides access and use to the northern half of Ossabaw Island.

Mrs. West's family has been granted time to collect any remaining personal effects and to hold any private memorial service if they wish.

The Ossabaw Island Foundation will add any Sandy West memorial donations to the existing Torrey-West fund to be used for renovations to the Torrey-West house. This fund was established when TOIF raised funds to purchase the Torrey West Home's original furnishings and art from Mrs. West. Her brother's heirs graciously donated their share of those furnishings to TOIF.

Both the Georgia DNR and the Ossabaw Island Foundation will continue to work together to honor the legacy left to our state by Mrs. West and her family, as we care for and share the island that so many Georgians have enjoyed visiting over the years, while preserving it for future generations.

Island Vision: Introducing a new film about Sandy West's Ossabaw Island

A new documentary tribute to Sandy West and her vision for Ossabaw Island is online and available for viewing.

Island Vision, by filmmaker Max Ramming, premiered at the Ogeechee International History Film Festival at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro on February 25-28. The 20 - minute film includes footage of an interview from the mid-2000s with Mrs. West.

Watch here for free: vimeo.com/513580785



20TH ANNUAL OSSABAW ISLAND THREE LITTLE PIG ROASTS

FRIDAY OCTOBER 22

SATURDAY OCTOBER 23

SUNDAY OCTOBER 24



BENEFITING THE OSSABAW ISLAND FOUNDATION

We've redesigned our Ossabaw Island Pig Roast in the era of social distancing. Due to the unpredictable pandemic, instead of one big HOG of a party we're having three small events.

Once again, we are spreading out our signature fundraising event over three days to accommodate smaller groups of visitors. With a limited number of guests each day, visitors will be able to spread out as they enjoy our traditional Ossabaw pig roast fare, Savannah-brewed craft beers and organic wine.

The Ossabaw Island Pig Roast is the annual fundraising event for the Ossabaw Island Foundation, held on the grounds of the Torrey-West Estate on Ossabaw Island.

Sponsorships available now. Individual tickets, if available, will go on sale September 15. Visit ossabawisland.org for more information or call 912-344-3900.

Artwork by John McWilliams

CALL FOR ARTISTS TOIF ONLINE ART AUCTION

Due to the pandemic we moved our fall Art Auction online in 2020. Because of the overwhelming success, and the increased availability for all of our Ossabaw friends to bid, we are continuing with the online platform.

Donated artwork must be inspired by Ossabaw Island. All types of visual art and fine crafts are welcomed that reveal the voices and mystery of Ossabaw Island. Contributing artists are invited to the Donor Artists Creative Day Trip and pig roast lunch Monday, October 25 on Ossabaw Island (space is limited). Details on art donation and the Donor Artists Creative Day Trip are available on ossabawisland.org.

Artwork Donation Deadlines

- **Friday, October 2:** Images and description for the online auction site to be emailed to elizabeth@ossabawisland.org.
- **Friday, October 9:** Online Art Auction will go live.
- **Friday, October 16:** Artwork to be delivered to the TOIF Office, 13040 Abercorn Street, Suite 20, Savannah, GA 31419

Coastal Nature, Coastal Culture: Conversations on Georgia's Environmental Histories

*A Virtual Lecture Series presented by the
Ossabaw Island Education Alliance and
The Learning Center at SCI*

Lecture 1: Why Does the Georgia Coast Matter?

Paul Pressly, Director Emeritus of the Ossabaw Island Education Alliance, uses Ossabaw Island as his focus as he introduces the “big ideas” behind Georgia’s coast and the environmental, geographical, historical, and cultural characteristics that set it apart from the remainder of the American coastline.

Lecture 2: St. Catherines Island: A View of the Coast

Royce Hayes, Retired Manager of St. Catherines Island, discusses revelations from archaeological discoveries on St. Catherines Island in Liberty County, based on academic research and his more than four-decade career as the island manager.

Lecture 3: The Tragedies of Ebo Landing

Dionne Hoskins-Brown, Director of NOAA programs at Savannah State University and Chair of the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission, examines the singular historic event of St. Simons Island’s Ebo Landing. An act of defiance in 1803 by a group of newly enslaved African people determined to control their own destiny helps define the Gullah Geechee culture of the Georgia and South Carolina coast.

Lecture 4: The Rhetoric of Ruin: Coastal Georgia Plantations in the Early Twentieth Century

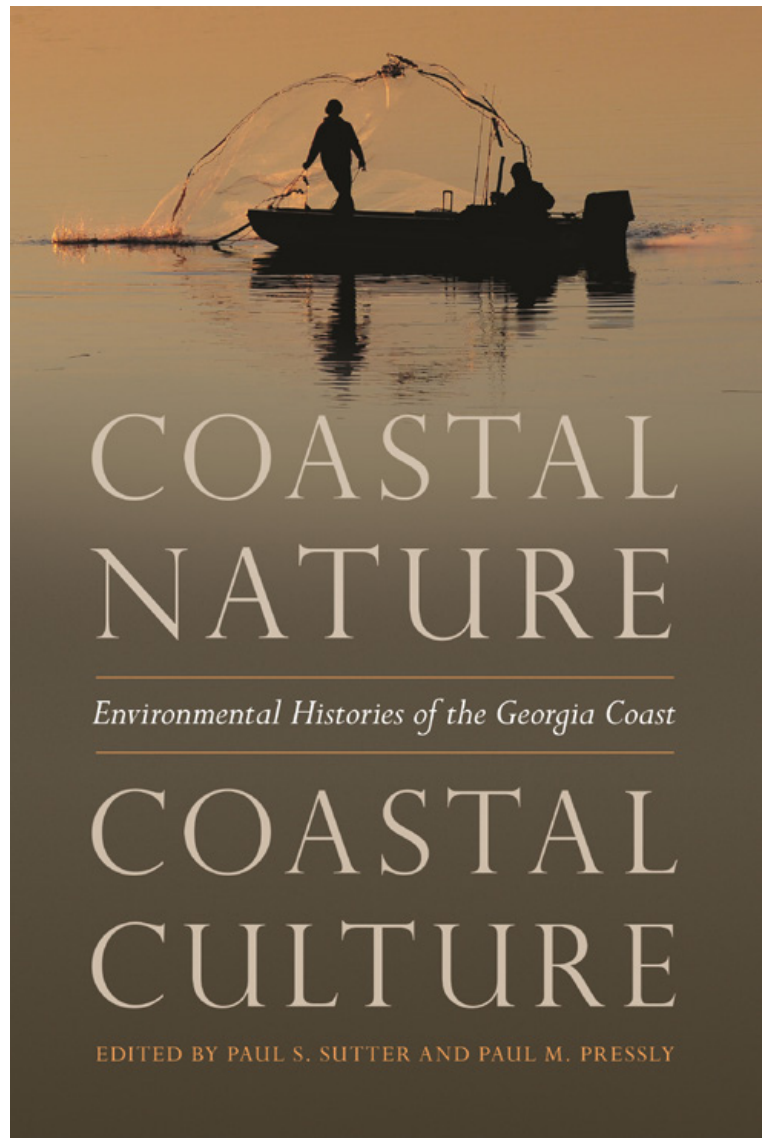
Paul Pressly, Director Emeritus of the Ossabaw Island Education Alliance, looks at the “Ruined South” as a tourism trope in the early twentieth century—both in the imaginations of vacationing northerners in coastal Georgia and in the hearts of Jim Crow-era southerners.

Lecture 5: Preserving Georgia’s Coastline for Fifty Years

Clark Alexander, Director of Skidaway Institute of Oceanography and Trustee of the Ossabaw Island Foundation. Fifty years after the passage of the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act, Clark Alexander offers analysis on its merits, its drawbacks, what’s changed, who has benefited from it, and what the future holds.

Lecture 6: “The Place Where Water and Land Meet”: Writing and Reading the Coastal Georgia Story

Jane Fishman, Savannah Morning News columnist and author of *The Woman Who Saved an Island With the Georgia coast as her muse*, Jane Fishman talks about writing, her friendship with Sandy West, and her own connection to Ossabaw.



This six-part lecture series, based on the book *Coastal Nature, Coastal Culture: Environmental Histories of the Georgia Coast*, explored how, for more than 5,000 years, Georgia’s 100-mile coastline has been home to human communities who have influenced and been influenced by the natural world.

Originally produced in Fall 2020, the entire series is back by popular demand. Register to watch all of these lectures at your leisure, through July 31.

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Virtually adopt an Ossabaw donkey on the Georgia Gives donation site: gagives.org/story/donkey

Thank you for the following adoptions from November 2020-January 2021.

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Barbara Baker dedicated to

Sofia CoFrances-Burega, Freddie Barkowitz, Evan Barkowitz, Charlie & Tessa Palermo, EvaRae and Lorenzo Rivera, Max and Oscar Morse, Charlie and Tessa Palermo, and Sylvie Alper

June Ball in honor of Sarah Ball-Damberg

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Brooke Bass in honor of Carol Chambers' birthday

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Michele Botic Folta dedicated to Sugar

Rob & Jessica Bowden in honor of "Grandma Jane" and Dr. "Papa" Paul Pressly

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Ellie Etter in honor of Susan Hood, lover of almost all living things, especially donkeys.

Leslie Ferst

Kathleen Flieman

Ed Fogarty

Kellie Frissell in honor of my clients who have continued to stick with their work all year. Thank you for employing me. In your honor this year I'm donating to preserve peace on Ossabaw Island!

Sharon Gainey

Kali Gates on behalf of Molly Gates

Patricia Gillis

Hermina Glass-Hill dedicated to Kamryn and Kalli Mae

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Linda Gravitt on behalf of Joy Gravitt Chaffin

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Cindi Griffith dedicated to John Griffith

Karen Groce dedicated to Kate Groce

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Carol & David Harper in honor of our grandchildren

Melanie Helmken dedicated to John C. Helmken, II

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Jan Hulgán Hutchinson in honor of Andrew Maxwell Butcher, Jr.

Anne Hunt on behalf of Oakley Deison

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M., Sam L., and T-34
Beth Logan dedicated to Steve Ellis
Jennifer Loomis dedicated
to Loomis family
Joanne Lukacher dedicated to
Katherine Lukacher and
Julia Lukacher
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Mary Madden
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of Elizabeth DuBose
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to Charlotte Lauer
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Mary Georgia Mohr in honor of
Mr. & Mrs. Edwin Bradshaw, Mr.
& Mrs. Boyce Norris, and Mr. &
Mrs. Martin Miller
Pat Mooney
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Nancy Morgan in honor of my two
beautiful grandsons
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Carol Ann Stovall on behalf of Bryan,
for introducing me to Ossabaw
Dougless Strickland
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a passion!
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of Charlie Briggs
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*Pictured: Cinnamon and Charlie Wells
Photo by Stacey Wells*



ABOUT OSSABAW ISLAND:

Ossabaw Island is a 26,000-acre undeveloped barrier island on the Atlantic Ocean, owned by the State of Georgia and located in Chatham County. Georgia's first Heritage Preserve, accessible only by boat, is undeveloped and set aside by an Executive Order for natural, scientific and cultural study, research and education; and for environmentally sound preservation, conservation and management of the island's ecosystem.

The Ossabaw Island Foundation (TOIF) is a non-profit 501 (c) 3. Through a partnership with the State of Georgia, TOIF inspires, promotes, and manages exceptional educational, cultural, and scientific programs that are designed to maximize the experience of Ossabaw Island, while minimizing the impact on the island's resources.

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Join our Facebook group: Ossabaw Island Lovers
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